

## BOOK REVIEW

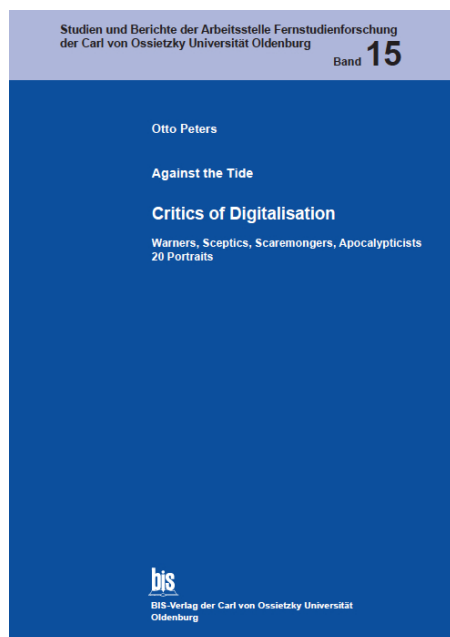
### AGAINST THE TIDE: CRITICS OF DIGITALISATION; WARNERS, SCEPTICS, SCAREMONGERS, APOCALYPTICISTS, 20 PORTRAITS

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#### INTRODUCTION

People are overwhelmed by the technology. We use them in every phase of our lives: while shopping, communicating, learning, exercising and many more. Thanks to digital technologies, we have an easier and happier life, but is it really so? After all, can we imagine a right without left, a sun without moon, water without fire, love without hate, life without death, a digitalization without corruption?

#### REVIEW OF THE BOOK

Otto Peters, as a researcher, educator and theorist, has made great contributions to the development of distance education with his theory “The Industrial Model” and with his numerous other works. As a fact, this book came out of the motto of Peters “Nothing is true anymore without its opposite.”, so the whole book is framed upon paradoxes: a) the users use the digital tools to shape their environment but ultimately, the tools shape the users, b) the

technology makes people lonely and people use the very same technology to overcome their loneliness, c) so called time-saving technologies force us to use the time faster, and d) what is the real? We are surrounded by the copy of the copy. In this resource book, Peters gives a place to 20 critical voices of prominent and internationally acclaimed experts including heretics, critics, individualists, activists, traditionalists, distopists, humanists, cultural pessimists and many more. Each chapter in the book presents a critic of digitalisation and consists of five parts; a biographical background of the author, their motivation, main features of their work, reception and comments by Peters and others in the field.

In the first chapter, Joseph Weizenbaum, as a heretic, provides a critical view into Artificial Intelligence (AI) and states humans are not machines because they are autonomous, and are capable of creating meaning and making interpretations. There is nothing like pure science or pure technology. None of them act alone apart from human beings.

In the second chapter, Juan Luis Cebrián, as a concerned critic, has both great expectations and great concerns on digitalization. He provides some excellent remarks on the dark side of technology. He believes technology makes our lives easier and simpler but at the cost of what. For him, there is an information chaos on the

internet which not only threatens law and order but also the logic of the humans by hypnotizing them until they no longer know what is real or unreal, what is true or false. We all become addicted to the Internet and technology subconsciously.

In the third chapter, Jaron Lanier, as a nonconformist, assures that humans are not gadgets but humans. He challenges AI by saying what is real is humans not information. He also proposes the concept of “cybernetic totalists” which can be defined as a global technological brain in which all human brains are connected to each other on the web and criticizes it, since it vanishes the personal traits and individual bits.

In chapter four, Bill Joy, as an individualist, sees the dangers of technology such as the violation of individual rights and privacy. He warns us on the use of technologies such as mobile phones, credit cards, and smart dust which allow tracking of people. One small fault that we make with technological systems may result in chain reactions and with AI or intelligent robots may result in extinction of human race.

In chapter five, Don Tapscott, as an activist, expresses his hopes of digitalization such as its use for creation of a global wealth, education and health system as well as the dangers approaching. For him, technologies; a) change the governments and social institutions in a country, b) change the way we do business work or think, c) cause great problems in economy since traditional norms, plans and rules are not valid for digital economy, and d) cause the digital divide between the generations; the ones using the Internet and the ones not.

In the sixth chapter, David Franklin Noble, as a traditionalist, declares a war against modern open and distance learning and considers it as a digital diploma mill and automation of higher education.

In chapter seven, Aric Sigman, as a polemicist, draws attention into the negative biological effects of reduced social contact and states that social networking not only causes loneliness but also makes us ill by changing our sleeping habits, causing immunological and genetic changes in our bodies and increasing mortality.

In chapter eight, Andrew Keen, as an alarmist, is concerned on Web 2.0 tools since they let “amateurs” replace “cultural gatekeepers, professional critics, journalists and moviemakers” in digital settings. On the internet, there is a huge amount of content published by anonymous authors which threatens the credibility of the online resources.

In chapter nine, Susan Greenfield, as a dystopist, provides some scenarios for the future effects of digitalization on neurophysiology, psychology, pedagogy, and sociology. In one of the remarkable scenarios, she directs the question “what will happen to the kiss in the digitalized future?” and asserts there will be no demand for kiss by humans in the future digitalized world because we will all turn into beings lack of empathy and full of isolation.

In chapter ten, John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, as reformers, focus on the different identities formed in the generations grown up exposed to the digital tools and the internet and draw a picture of a person in agricultural, industrial and internet ages. Also, they emphasize the worst effects of digitalization will be experienced in themes: *overload, dossiers, aggressors, security, private sphere, and privacy*.

In chapter eleven, Hartmut von Hentig, as a humanist, criticizes people since he thinks they surrender to the new technical media and believes that in this circumstance young people have three options: participate, drop out or “stand up to technological civilization”.

In chapter twelve, Philip Bethge, as a satirist, declares the Internet as God departing from the similarities between the Bible and the Internet: Both of them have an answer to all questions, have a host of disciplines and promise “eternal life”.

In chapter thirteen, Susanne Gaschke, as an admonisher, finds the new medium, that is the internet, “breathless” and “rapid” and the information on the internet “contextless”. For her, learning is no longer a dynamic process of understanding, internalizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and creating but mere passive absorption of knowledge through computer screens.

In chapter fourteen, Nicholas G. Carr, as a man of letters, implies that the internet is changing our brains by its negative influence on our cognition and concentration and at the end creates “shallows”; that are people no longer use their brains efficiently.

In chapter fifteen, Frank Schirrmacher, as a debate instigator, departs from disturbing experience of his own with the technology and confesses he loses control of his mind and thoughts. At the end, he proposes power training and self-control as a remedy for this problem to the readers.

In chapter sixteen, Botho Strauß, as a dramatist, criticizes the secondary world; that is virtual world, and starts a revolt against it because this world is characterized by poverty of ideas, soulless economy and technological nihilism.

In chapter seventeen, Sherry Turkle, as a hesitant sceptic, emphasizes that as a direct result of the digitalisation we lose our human characteristics and end up as loneliners. One reason of this is that we lost our confidence into humans and see the internet as a way to escape from our problems, disappointments, and pains.

In chapter eighteen, Jean Baudrillard, as a cultural pessimist, discusses two concepts “hyperreality” and “simulacrum”. He states that via the technology we can go beyond our capabilities and enter a new world, a kind of world doesn’t need us. The postmodern world is full of simulations, images that pretend the real and if we are not careful, there will be surrounded up with the copy of the copy, that is simulacrum.

In chapter nineteen, Paul Virilio, as an apocalypticist, defends the idea that everything comes with its side effects, so does the technology. Because of the internet, there is a mass of information that can be used for bad.

In chapter twenty, Miriam Meckel, as an intellectual gamester, criticizes digital communication and questions the concept “permanent reachability”. To him, if a person is always reachable, he/she is not really there for anyone or anything. People feel obliged to reply all mails and texts they get, so they are not free anymore to do their own plans.

“*Against the Tide*” is a book that must be read cautiously and repeatedly. In the book, none of the critics wants to block the digital development. However, they accept and welcome it with its both positive and negative sides. As a fact, digitalization is a tide, it is approaching, it is unstoppable, so it is meaningless, time consuming, and in vain to resist it. For specifically open and distance learners, instructors, researchers and practitioners who constantly use digital technologies in their practices, it will be wise to control it, take its power behind and surf.

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