

Destroying Your Children's Minds Is the New Business Model

There's a sign that pops up on the internet and in yards in upscale neighborhoods that cuts to the quick of the dysfunction in society. It says: "We believe love is love; science is real; black lives matter; water is life; no human being is illegal; feminism is for everyone; kindness is everything."

If you've seen it, what have you thought about it? The talented observer Ted Bauer asked this question in an Oct. 2021 post of his blog, *The Context of Things*. In answering he goes straight to the performative nature of it, the weird virtue-signaling meant to tell the world, "I'm a good person, and look, I'm showing it!"

These signs are posted by good-hearted people, so what's the harm, right?

No harm. Interesting, though, that when these tony liberal neighborhoods find too many minority families moving in, many times new signs go up. "For Sale" signs. This is the harsh truth of the liberal mindset. Minorities want the same things everyone wants—to raise their families and be safe. Liberals don't really want to share their special spaces.

We see it in the neighborhoods; we see a generation lost to it on the internet.

Social media platforms most certainly did not create this weird performative virtue-signaling, as Bauer calls it. A more likely culprit is German chemist Justus von Liebig, who in 1835 invented the mirror. But today's platforms have sure hastened this vanity trip.

Social media has made everyone a performer of varying quality. Folks under 30 know this in their bones, and without questioning it, go about constantly putting on a show, trying to outdo others with an even better post, deflecting attention from the deficiencies in their lives, cherry-picking the moments that reveal them covered in their own awesomesauce.

❌ Lost is that great old advice, “Be yourself; everyone else is taken.”

To say this is unhealthy is too obvious. It is more than unhealthy and mentally retarding; it has created a tension in society that sometimes explodes in “culture wars” and other times simply degrades the values we once held dear.

Gone is the enjoyment of, say, an astounding spring sunrise. Instead of stopping to revel in the beauty of it, the first instinct now is to take a picture and post to Instagram, add filters, shoot it over to Twitter with a slew of attention-grabbing hashtags and emojis, then wait for the likes, comments and favorites to roll in, constantly checking to see if the post has been properly appreciated, waiting for that dopamine hit of approval, that curtain call for such a wonderful performance!

Ask the performer what the sunrise actually looked like, or the feelings it elicited, and stop them before they reach for their phone; you’re apt to get a blank stare.

We hear a lot about fake news; this is fake life.

A generation has grown up knowing less about being human than about playing the role of one. Children are no longer being children, developing true identities and a sense of who they are. That time for many is spent broadcasting the filtered, hashtagged version of the future writers, artists or changemakers they want to be. No wonder today’s young writers, artists and changemakers often appear half baked. They often are.

And the platforms have been doing the baking.

Our society's breakthrough understanding of this came with the whistleblower testimony of Frances Haugen in Oct. 2021. Haugen was a longtime Facebook employee who became sickened by the tactics she saw Facebook and Instagram engineers employing to damage the mental health of children and teenagers. She showed Congress the proof—the internal studies done on increases in suicidal thoughts and eating disorders among young girls using the site.

Strangest to me about Haugen's testimony: Everyone acted surprised by it. It was well-known that the tech platforms were addictive, injurious beasts. That was a feature, not a bug, as they say. It was the actual business model.

So how much did Facebook and the others contribute to the mental health crisis we're seeing among young people today?

 This isn't something that can be easily measured. But if you were to say that 80% of the problems we're seeing in young people are the result of the tech platforms, I wouldn't disagree. And the remaining 20% would come from the reality-shredding virus known as COVID and, more specifically, from the government's handling of the crisis, which added all kinds of emotional, psychological and social stressors on children.

The platforms won't change. Half-baking people is a business model they don't know how to improve upon and still make money.

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