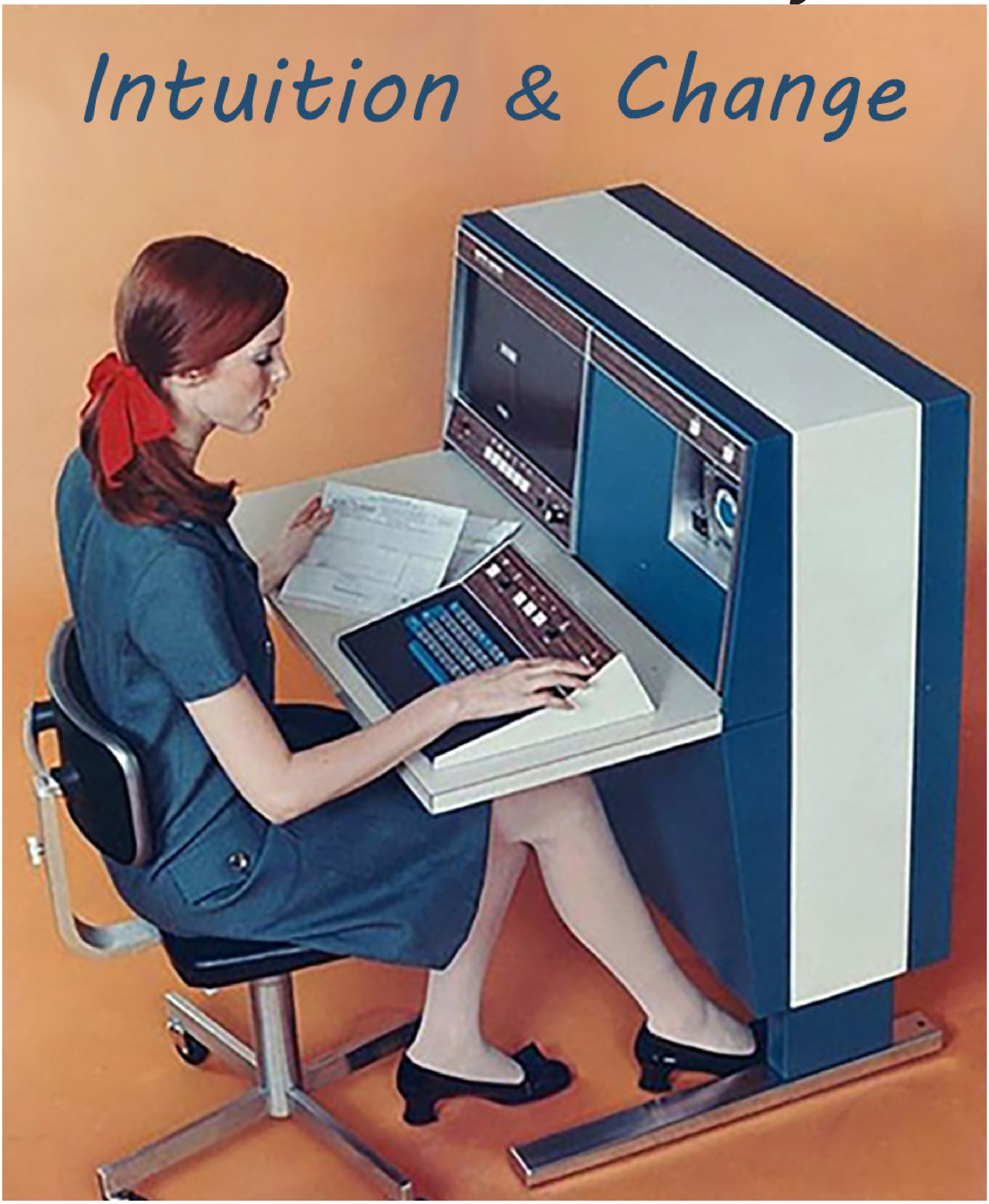
Summer 2025

In Statu Nascendi

NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

Magazine



Summer 2025

NASCENT STATE

Magazine

Intuition and Constant Change

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From the Editor

We live in a time of constant and ongoing change. We live with change in the way past ages lived with tradition. If we don't see the rate of change for what it is, perhaps it is because we are too consumed with keeping up with it.

This Edition of Nascent State Magazine is devoted to change in its most important aspects, namely;

Tradition and Change
Technology and Human Nature, and
Intuition and Change

Constant change means that all we presently regard as true may one day - perhaps sooner than we think - no longer be held as true. The world is changing, and yet our thinking remains locked in the past.

Nascent State Magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure. For enquiries, contributions and comments, email:

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15th century farming

'The press, the machine, the railway, the telegraph are premises whose thousand-year conclusion no one has yet dared to draw.' Nietzsche

The hallmark of the Modern Era is change. There has always been change - history is the record of change - but the rate of change is higher now than at any other period in recorded history.

It is possible to observe change through fashion, language, novel products and mechanical inventions; but measuring the rate of change is more difficult. Had we lived at the time of the two world wars and the two major revolutions of the last century we would have regarded our own age as uniquely subject to change. And yet what gives our age its unique flavour is not the magnitude of events, but their frequency. It took more than a century from the invention of the heavy plough for it to be disseminated throughout medieval Europe. Contrast this with the Smartphone, which was released in 2007 and was in use worldwide within a decade.

Until the Renaissance, change was marked by the succession of rulers and wars. Wars were ongoing - between the Franks, the Danes, the Saxons, and the Moors - but daily life was otherwise unaffected by them. Food was still produced by hand, travel was by horse or by foot, and marriage was for life.

Beyond the records of conflict and war, the Copernican revolution is regarded as one of the most significant changes in history. What made it significant was not just any debate about the nature of the universe, but that it marked a shift from an age governed by religion to one governed by human thinking. It was from this, slowly at first, that the idea of progress first emerged.

The cultural shift from an age governed by tradition to one governed by change was not immediate, but from the Renaissance onwards, it was unstoppable. The Industrial Revolution that followed became almost an inevitability. The mill towns and factories replaced the cottage industries and artisans, the printing press replaced the hand-engraved page, and the spinning jenny replaced the solitary hand-weaver.

The idea of progress meant that all human activities were now subject to change. Tradition still held sway over life - the Sunday sermon, the wedding ceremony, the observation of 'holy days', and the solemnity of the funeral - but life was now affected by the very real and daily impact of technology.

Prometheus by Jan Cossiers, 1637

It could be said that the first technology was fire; once we could create fire, we could melt metals, cauterize wounds, and burn villages. The discovery of fire was embodied in the myth of Prometheus, and then later into the novel Frankenstein or 'The Modern Prometheus', by Mary Shelley. We now live in an age of constant communication, mass production, global economics, unmanned drones, robot soldier dogs, and active denial systems. The woodfired oven has given way to the nuclear reactor, the waxen wings of Icarus have been made real by the superjumbo, and the vision of Mary Shelley has been made real by the Tesla Bot. We can no more go back to an age governed by tradition than we can go back to one governed by superstition.

And yet, for all the progress we have made in technology, the Modern Era is still governed by war, ethnic tension, polarisation, fear, uncertainty, and mistrust. In short, everything has changed except human nature. It is perhaps for this reason that, in spite of technology, we still cling to tradition. We still mark religious festivals; attach a special value to the sanctity of marriage, adhere to the ethics of 'thou shalt not kill', believe in saints and sinners, and perhaps most of all adhere to the idea that good and evil are universal principles existing independently of human nature. All this comes from tradition.

Constant change means that what was once visionary is now commonplace, and what is presently visionary will - perhaps sooner than we think - become commonplace. The only thing preventing a world of designer babies, assisted dying, and eugenics is the technology to make them viable.

We can't undo the past. We can't return to a world of innocence and nature and forbid mankind from dabbling in the grey arts of technology. Even less can we hope that those most invested in its development - industry and the military - will temper their actions for the greater good of humanity. Technology is now as much a part of life as the weather; indeed, even the weather now is subject to modification through cloud-seeding. We live in a world of our own making much as previous ages lived in a world governed by seasons and unseen gods.

Provided technology continues to deliver benefits, few will object to its further development. But the very nature of technology is that it is amoral; as with fire, technology can be used to create and destroy in equal measure. The problem is not technology, but human nature. And that is the odd thing; we have made significant advances in technology, but our understanding of human nature - particularly with respect to what we call 'good and evil' - remains the same as it was in millenia ago.

The values that have guided mankind until now are being erased by ongoing change. If we can no longer rely on tradition as a guide for human values, then new values will have to come from something more than being guided by what is made possible through technology, or - like the Victor Frankenstein of the novel - we may find ourselves haunted by our own creation. Either we give greater attention to the inner life, or developments in the outer world will demand it. It was Machiavelli, no less, who said 'The wise man does willingly today what the fool is forced to do tomorrow.'

Human v Machine

United States Air Force Ghost Dog

'Come, let us build us a tower whose top may reach unto the stars! And at the top of the tower we will write the words: Great is the world and its Creator! And great is Man!'
Metropolis, 1927

A little more than a hundred years ago, any loss of electricity would have had little impact on society; now it would shut down whole cities - even whole countries. We now live in a world largely of our own making, and our relationship to technology is no longer that of the cottage farm with an electric light, but that of a patient on a life support machine.

The development of technology has led to two distinct visions of the future; one utopian and one dystopian. The utopian vision gave us Nikola Tesla and the alternating current motor, wireless electricity, remote control and the ever-present camera. The dystopian vision gave us The Time Machine, Brave New World, 1984, Fahrenheit 451, and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. For all the benefits of technology - without which we wouldn't pursue it at all - it has come to represent not just our aspiration for a better future, but our unconscious fear that its blind pursuit will have unforeseen consequences.

Technology has come to affect all aspects of society, quite apart from electricity and the internal combustion engine. It now affects everything from debates about vaccines, to the impact of automation on employment, to the emergence of a new tech-aristocracy, to trade wars, gender surgery, globalism, mass migration, the emergence of social media, electronic communication between friends, families and nations, and even the way we define human nature itself. As the geneticist Richard Dawkins put it:

'We are survival machines — robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes.'

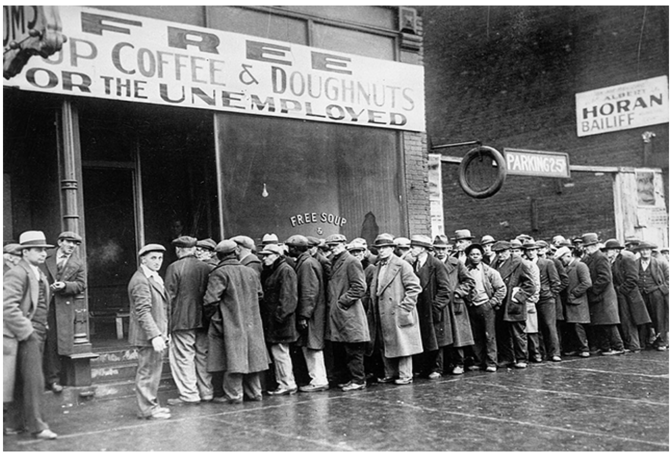
Technology so informs the Modern Era that those who choose to live without it are deemed backward. While many are in thrall to technology - those for whom the new tech-aristocracy are heroes - most accept it as a necessary part of life and no more. If it wasn't for the ongoing development of technology, this would be sensible enough; but new technologies are constantly emerging which will have a profound impact, not just on life, but on that which is most essential to our independence as human beings - namely employment. While this might appear unduly pessimistic, Norbert Wiener, regarded as the father of Cybernetic (upon which

AI is based), was frank about this prospect:

‘Let us remember that the automatic machine, whatever we think of any feelings it may have or may not have, is the precise economic equivalent of slave labor. Any labor which competes with slave labor must accept the economic conditions of slave labor. It is perfectly clear that this will produce an unemployment situation, in comparison with which the present recession and even the depression of the thirties will seem a pleasant joke.’ (The Human Use of Human Beings, 1950, p. 162

Geoffrey Hinton, regarded as the godfather of AI, echoed the same views on BBC Newsnight, 8 Oct 2024 (available on Youtube):

‘I’m very worried about AI taking over lots of mundane jobs...that should be a good thing, it’s going to lead to a big increase in productivity which leads to a big increase in wealth. If that wealth was equally distributed that would be great but it’s not going to be. In the systems we live in that wealth is going to go to the rich and not to the people whose jobs get lost and that’s going to be very bad for society, I believe, so it’s going to increase the gap between rich and poor which increases the chances of right-wing populists getting elected.’ (at 5.35).



Soup Kitchen, c. 1930

If, or perhaps when, such a situation arises, the emergence of a reactionary ‘anti-tech’ movement will become almost inevitable. A new Luddism will depict technology as ‘anti-human’ and therefore as a threat. It is not too fantastic to imagine that, as with the original Luddites, it will inspire individuals to take direct action to disrupt any further technological advances. Such a movement will be just as divisive - and perhaps just as global - as Capitalism versus Communism.

Ned Ludd, depicted 1812.

It is possible to make such a prediction, not owing to any form of clairvoyance, but owing to the nature of logic and the part it plays in Western culture. Logic polarises ideas into pairs of opposites - good versus evil, right versus wrong, left-wing versus right-wing, atheism versus religion, the individual versus the state, free will versus determinism, tradition versus progress, rich versus poor, and so on. Consequently a ‘tech versus human’ clash is inevitable because logic demands it. Many will feel tempted - even duty bound - to take sides.

An alternative to taking sides, is to regard the coming years as a prompt to refocus on what it is that makes us most fully human. We are, for all the protestations of the geneticists, much more than blind robots. What that ‘more’ is, has to be established by something more than argument; it has to be made real by direct experience.

If we are to be more than machines, we have to make effective that very element of human nature which machines are incapable of mimicking, namely to think and act and feel intuitively. Intuition is very different from logic; logic can only deal with what exists, but intuition can imagine what we presently do not know. This visionary element of thinking is what created technology; it now has to be applied inwardly.

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Intuition

and Change

Alice, drawn by Sir John Tenniel, 1865

> "I don't think they play at all fairly," Alice began, in rather a complaining tone, "and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak — and they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them — and you've no idea how confusing it is all the things being alive..."
>
> (The Croquet Match, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)

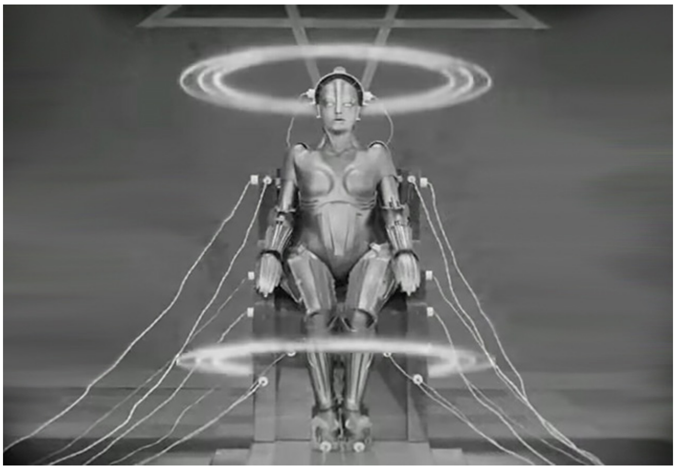
We live with change in the way past ages lived with tradition. Change is now so much a part of life that we barely notice it. Within a generation we have gone from banknotes, to bank cards, to digital wallets, to smartwatches, and soon blockchain will replace banks, and bank tellers will be a curiosity seen in old photographs.

Change is most visible through technology. Each new announcement - dimming the sun, deepfake news, starlink panels, data harvesting - indicates not just a new form of technology, but a new world in the making. Technology now affects all aspects of life, from politics, to ethics, to medicine, to the economy, to employment, to attitudes and outlooks, and even to our understanding of what it is to be human.

And yet, in spite of constant change, we still retain many ideas and attitudes drawn from a time when society was governed by tradition. Not long ago sons followed their fathers into the family trade, daughters were expected to marry well, and children went to the same school as their grandparents. Today, a child at school may work in a trade that doesn't exist yet. The world is changing, but our conception of life is taking much longer to catch up.

Technology has always had a psychological element, even if this was not always apparent. The plough, the stirrup, and the saddle were not necessary for survival - mankind had existed for millennia before them - but of a desire to master nature. The telescope and the microscope were born of the belief that attention to detail would reveal the secrets of nature; and the steam and petrol engines were born of a desire for greater power than the plough and the horse. Such inventions didn't emerge in a vacuum, but from human motives. Technology isn't separate from human nature; it is the product of human nature.

Until recently, considering such a motive was regarded as largely a philosophical matter; this is due to change. Recent developments in technology means that it now increasingly mirrors not just the outer world, but the inner life. The crude, brute-force technology of the nineteenth century has given way to the computer, the internet, the automated robot, the self-guided missile, the self-driving car, and now the 'thinking machine' in the form of Artificial Intelligence.



From Fritz Lang's Metropolis, 1927

Without any grand announcement, we now find ourselves in the same position as the Rabbi Lowe of Prague, or the haunted Victor Frankenstein, who discovers that the desire to mimic the Creator carries with it an unforeseen consequence. Norbert Wiener, the founder of Cybernetics, the science on which AI is based, was in no doubt about the seriousness of this development:

'In the past, a partial and inadequate view of human purpose has been relatively innocuous only because it has been accompanied by technical limitations that made it difficult for us to perform operations involving a careful evaluation of human purpose. This is only one of the many places where human impotence has hitherto shielded us from the full destructive impact of human folly.'

Our capacity to create technology without considering our 'human purpose' means that - not even at some point in the distant future, but now - we are facing the prospect that the world we are creating may not be to our liking. The problem is no longer what we are capable of achieving, but rather 'What do we want?.'

The answer to this will come, not from the further development of technology, but from a better understanding of human nature.

We have achieved much in technology because it has been created, not by logic and reason, but by inspiration; in spite of its mechanical aspect, technology is the product of visionary thinking. One of the most outstanding examples of this visionary element came from Nikola Tesla, who invented the alternating current motor, the radio, the remote control and the neon light. He recalled that, in Budapest, in 1882, while walking through a park with a friend, he suddenly saw an alternating current motor running, as a vision, there before him:

'Don't you see it?' he called out to his friend. 'See how smoothly it is running? Now I throw this switch - and I reverse it. See! It goes just as smoothly in the opposite direction. Watch! I stop it. I start it. There is no sparking. There is nothing on it to spark.'

Nikola Tesla, c. 1896

Invention, innovation and insight are not born of logic - which can only process existing knowledge - but of intuition, which operates very differently from logic.

Logic assumes tomorrow will be like the past. With logic, A must always be A and it can never be B. We assume that the issues of today - net-zero, gender politics, racism, nationalism, ecology, democracy, socialism or capitalism - will be the issues of tomorrow, and furthermore, future ages will agree with our sentiments. We cannot imagine that a future generation will look back on our present era in the way we look back on the Victorian Era and wonder at its quaint self-obsessions.

Changes that were once measured in centuries are now measured in decades. Yesterday's conspiracy theorist can become tomorrow's President. For those who cling to the certainties of logic, constant change will be a problem.

QAnon Shaman, White House, January 6, 2021.

In the past, owing to the stability provided by tradition, intuition was regarded as a personal matter, and therefore subjective and unreliable. In the Modern Era, constant and ongoing change will make intuitive judgement a necessity in the way that keeping up with technology has become a necessity. If the outer world is changing, the inner world must change with it or we will find ourselves increasingly dislocated from the world we live in.

Intuition isn't taught in school or university, nor is intuitive judgement respected in society as a whole. We are aware we possess it - a 'refined instinct', as Henri Bergson put it - but we do no more than that. The coming years will force us to attend to our intuitive thinking as never before. We will need it to decide how much to adapt to change, which changes are important, whether we should be alarmed by new developments, how much of the past we are willing to give up, and whether our ideas have to be abandoned, adapted or retained in spite of change. All of these judgments are intuitive.

Logic is black and white and unconditional. Intuitive thinking is fluid, emotional and dependent on context; what is true in one context may not be true in another. For example, we understand the difference between a word said carelessly and a word said unkindly, just as we know the difference between a war born of necessity and one born of a hidden motive. We know this because we have an intuitive mind.

In the past we could ignore our intuitive mind because the greater decisions in life were determined by tradition. This is no longer the case. We have no choice but to refer to our own intuitive mind to make the more important decisions and judgements in life. Failure to do so will result in a future in which human nature is governed by technology, rather than the other way round. Again, to quote Wiener:

'What is used as an element in a machine, is an element in the machine. Whether we entrust our decisions to machines of metal, or to those machines of flesh and blood which are bureaus and vast laboratories and armies and corporations, we shall never receive the right answers to our questions unless we ask the right questions.'

The greater questions in life, the greater decisions and judgments, are all intuitive. Paying the rent is important, but so is keeping your head.