Accordingly, the philosophy of technology must become the love of truancy. Some of the best in contemporary moral philosophy has been moved by a similar aspiration, by the recognition of how arid the pursuit of general and abstract moral principles is and by the turn to the eloquent particularity of the world. But truancy and aspiration must both mature into something more settled and substantial. We must work to move focal concerns from the outside to the center of the contemporary culture and allow the truants to become celebrants of the things and practices that finally matter.

What stands in the way of such a reform is not so much a lack of good will as a misconception about ethics. Most people, when prompted, would agree with mainstream philosophers that the right ethical theory will guide us to the good life and that the crucial moral problem is to discover which theory is correct. But this is half right at best. The factor that most decisively channels the daily course of life is not moral theory but material culture.

Modern philosophy has been at two removes from the real world. First, in aspiring to theory, it has been distanced from practice. Theory can inform practice, but practice is richer than theory and, above all, self-sustaining. Practice can survive without theory while theory arises from a practice and perishes without the nourishment of a practice. Practice, as philosophers have always seen it, is in turn removed from its tangible settings. Yet material culture constrains and details practice decisively. Practice, abstracted from its tangible circumstances, is reduced to gesturing and sometimes to posturing.

Philosophy as we know it began with Plato, and in the beginning material reality was thought to be the adversary and seducer of philosophy. To philosophize was to rise above the tangible phenomena to the intelligible ideas. And while Aristotle acknowledged the life of pleasure and the life of honor and action, it is the life of contemplation that constitutes human fulfillment. Contemplation in Greek is *theoria*; with Aristotle, the word and the vision that were to rule philosophy came to the fore. They continued their reign through the Middle Ages, when the *vita contemplativa* was considered superior to the *vita activa*.

Practice, to be sure, was never far from ancient and medieval theory. To know the good is to do the good, says Plato. Virtue, says Aristotle, is a skilled practice. The 119 metaphysical questions of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* are followed by 303 questions on ethics, 189 of them
ous ways. But none dares to proceed to an explicit moral assessment. That is left to the professional moralists, the philosophers. Thus the moral significance of the material culture falls between the stools of the professions.

In at least one case, however, a sociological analysis of an important segment of our material setting, the home, leads right up to and some ways into a moral examination. Equally important, sociologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton remark expressly on how little is known about The Meaning of Things. Lifting the veil of inconsiderability, the authors uncover what I take to be the crucial issue in the study of material culture.

It is a distinction between two kinds of things or reality. The first constitutes globally “a universe that speaks to humans.” Locally it comes to the fore in any object that conveys “meaning through its own inherent qualities” and through “the active contribution of the thing itself to the meaning process.” It is a kind of reality, however, that the authors find to be rarely acknowledged in their extensive interviews. Things are largely treated as semantically pliable material whose significance is shaped through an investment of psychic energy. There is much leeway for the emotional and moral shape a certain thing can be given.

Let me call these two kinds of things and reality commanding reality and pliable or disposable reality. The latter kind is not unstructured, of course. We know as much from our command of common-sense distinctions. Nor is it intuitively obvious or trivial what kinds of things people especially endow with value in their homes. But for an understanding of the moral salience of the material culture, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s key finding is as important as it is disappointing—of itself material culture does not seem to matter much one way or another. They discovered two kinds of families, one they called “warm” and another they called “cool.” Warm families talked about themselves in affectionate and positive terms while cool families described themselves and their concerns in neutral and guarded ways. Moreover, the two types of families exhibited strikingly different syndromes of goals, participation in the public sphere, and choice of role models and personality patterns, and yet “the kinds of objects mentioned by the two groups were essentially the same. . . . What did separate the two groups was simply the interpersonal meaning associated with the objects.”

Yet this disappointment rests on the assumption that the eclipse of commanding reality and the prominence of disposable reality as the norm...
The Ethical Implications of Artificial Intelligence in Business and Society

In the era of digital transformation, businesses are increasingly relying on artificial intelligence (AI) to improve efficiency and competitiveness. However, the ethical implications of AI cannot be overlooked. This paper examines the ethical challenges associated with AI and proposes several strategies to mitigate these issues.

1. Bias and Discrimination

One of the primary ethical concerns in AI is the potential for bias and discrimination. AI systems are often trained on historical data, which can lead to biases that are perpetuated over time. For example, if an AI system is trained on data from a particular gender or ethnic group, it may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and discrimination.

2. Transparency and Accountability

Another significant ethical issue is transparency and accountability. AI systems are often complex and difficult to understand, which can make it challenging to determine how decisions are being made. This lack of transparency can lead to a lack of accountability, as it becomes difficult to trace the decision-making process and hold those responsible for any negative outcomes.

3. Privacy and Data Protection

Privacy and data protection are also critical ethical concerns in AI. The use of personal data in AI systems raises questions about consent and the rights of individuals over their data. Additionally, the potential for data breaches and cyber attacks can have serious implications for individuals and organizations.

4. Job Displacement

Finally, the ethical implications of AI extend to issues of job displacement. As AI systems become more advanced, they may replace human workers in various industries, leading to significant economic and social challenges.

In conclusion, the ethical implications of AI are multifaceted and require a multidisciplinary approach to address. By considering these concerns, businesses can work to develop AI systems that are not only innovative and efficient but also ethical and responsible.
Telephone and television are the technological devices that have weakened literacy and impoverished the culture of the word. Electronic machines have disburdened us of the demands of reading and writing. Once we had to impart our worlds through the work of writing or telling, and we had to gather our worlds laboriously from the promptings of writing and our fund of experiences and recollections. Now information is handed to us as readily available sounds and sights. Engagement with the world has been yielding to the consumption of news and entertainment commodities.

If we move outside the home to consider the balance of things and devices and of practices and consumption in the public realm, we come to see not only that things have yielded to devices as they have in the home, but also that the machinery side of public devices is much more prominent than their commodity side. Consider the two most imposing public devices that the second half of the last century has produced, the highway system and high-rise buildings. They serve the productive and administrative machinery by providing for trucking, accounting, or lawyer ing. Or they serve private rather than public consumption as they do in furnishing personal transportation or housing. Settings for public consumption are relatively rare though they are prominent enough. Examples are Disneyland and Disney World, theme parks, and shopping malls.

The prevalence of the instrumental side in the public realm is mirrored in the activity that is typically devoted to it, namely, labor. We pay for the liberty and prosperity of (largely private) consumption through labor, the construction and maintenance of the technological machinery, and labor is done almost entirely in the public realm if largely in its private sector.

Assessing the moral significance of the material culture, then, comes in large part to asking what the moral consequences of the rule of the device paradigm are. Here again we can depart from the findings of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s investigation of the attitudes and reactions that correspond to stereos and musical instruments. Music plays a stronger role among children and adolescents than among adults, but quite generally stereos are used by people individually “as a modulator of emotions, a way of compensating for negative feelings.” A musical instrument, to the contrary, condenses “a whole complex set of meanings.” Consider Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s account of a baritone ukulele’s significance in a man’s life.

It allows the man to use his skills in musical expressions, to have fun in the present while reliving past enjoyment, and at the same time, sharing the fun with those he loves. The ukulele in this case is a catalyst for a many-sided experience; it is not only an instrument for making sounds but is also a tool for a variety of pleasurable emotions. In playing it this man recaptures the past and binds his consciousness to that of others around him.²²

Stereos appear to disengage people from their physical and social environment. When household objects are ranked according to the percentage of their meanings that respondents say refer to oneself, stereos rank second after television among eleven kinds of objects. Musical instruments rank fourth. When reference to others is the criterion, instruments rank fifth and stereos eighth.²³

Considering other objects and criteria in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s table, one finds, not surprisingly, that television, the only other technological device on the list, ranks even higher than stereos as a self-oriented object and as low as stereos in other-orientation. It is equally unsurprising if even more distressing that television and stereos rank first and second when it comes to meanings referring to experience (instruments ranking fourth). They rank last and third to last when reference is to memories (instruments rank seventh). One would also expect, as it turns out, that books, culturally most like instruments, rank very closely with the latter except in reference to others where books naturally rank much lower.²⁴

Such objective data provide abstract lineaments that need to be given color and concrete detail as well as a broader interpretation. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton provide the latter through a concentric conception of the self. The narrowest sphere is the individual and personal, inevitably embedded in a wider social sphere, and in need of an inclusive, cosmic orientation.²⁵ Every traditional culture shows some such structure. But Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton were surprised to find at most “a glimmer of the cosmic self” in the ways people talked about their homes.²⁶ The balance of the personal and the cosmic self seems very much upset in favor of the personal.²⁷

In sum, material culture in the advanced industrial democracies spans a spectrum from commanding to disposable reality. The former reality calls forth a life of engagement that is oriented within the physical and social world. The latter induces a life of distraction that is isolated from the environment and from other people. There are pairs of terms that detail further the styles of life corresponding to the end points of the cultural continuum, namely, excellent vs. banal, deep vs. shallow, communal vs. individualist, celebratory vs. consumerist, and others.
Communities of Participation

Celebrate the communities of participation.