

JUSTIN FIRESTONE

High-tech stuff misleads society

I watch a lot of television. The programs and commercials I've seen lately have made me worry that our society is headed in the wrong direction.

While there's debate about whether or not television actually influences peoples' actions, it doesn't concern me. What does concern me is what people feel is important.

Specifically, I'm concerned that people look to science for answers now instead of looking to philosophy or the classics. To demonstrate what I mean, let me tell you about the new Tylenol Gelcaps commercial.

If you're like me and a fan of the boob tube, you've seen the commercial I'm talking about. In "man on the street" style, we see various people being introduced to the new Tylenol Gelcaps. Eventually, we see a lady holding two gelcaps in her hands.

She looks at the gelcaps and says, "It looks so high-tech!" For all we know, she's never used the product, but she is impressed enough with its high-tech appearance that she will use the product soon.

Sure, people are naturally attracted to shiny objects and the like, but would you take a medicine merely because it looked high-tech?

Here's another way to look at this: I, as a human being, am naturally attracted to shiny objects and fire, and would rather be in the light as opposed to the dark.

But when I walk downtown at night and see a lamppost with a light on it, do I walk over to it and stare at it like a moth? No, I don't.

While I like the light, I realize I shouldn't be infatuated with it. For this same reason, I don't go around town setting things on fire, nor am I easily impressed with high-tech-looking medicine.



Sure, people are naturally attracted to shiny objects and the like, but would you take a medicine merely because it looked high-tech?

As a human, I'm also attracted to charts and figures. I especially like charts that are brightly colored, like those found in USA TODAY.

The best facts and figures are those with decimal points. That means they're scientific, and if they're scientific, they're true.

These charts and figures have influenced the earth's population to think the entire planet will self-destruct by the year 2000. Scientists have figures (with decimal points) to show that the earth has gotten warmer during the last 100 years, but they can't say for sure what has caused it.

For all they know, it could be a natural cycle of change in the ellipticity of our orbit around the sun. If this is the case, I would like to be the first to propose that everyone in China jump up and down at the same time to correct our malignant orbit.

I figure that if I can get some brightly colored, high-tech charts and some figures with decimal points in them, I can prove it will work.

The medical scientists are the biggest hoot. I remember reading an article in a local newspaper about a new drug that was going to aid in open-heart surgeries.

When tested on dogs, it worked wonderfully. When humans tried it, they died. The punch line here is the scientists couldn't understand why the drug killed the humans.

Allow me to suggest dogs are just slightly different biologically from humans, and what's good for a dog isn't necessarily good for a human.

Scientists are looked up to as great problem solvers, yet scientists make two problems for every one they solve.

Remember the DDT debacle? Sure, we killed dem bugs, but we also killed many birds and polluted the air.

It's as if scientists create new technologies simply because they can and never think about whether they should. This was the moral behind "Jurassic Park," although the book seemed to stress this point a little more than the movie.

What if a scientist wants to help Wendy's out by genetically engineering a tomato to grow in cubes, so that the slices more easily fit their square hamburgers? They could call it "Dave's Deluxe Tomato" or just "Davato."

That's fine, you may say, but this leads to the greatest threat of all. Soon, we could genetically engineer people so that everyone looks like Oprah.

I hope people make intelligent decisions about what they think is important and aren't easily convinced to buy things simply because they look high-tech.

Now if I could just quit staring at those brightly lit lampposts ...

Firestone is a sophomore economics major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

JAY CRUSE

Yet another McEducation to go

I won't be in class today.

In fact, I'm not even in town. I'm several hours away finding out more about a job awaiting me after I graduate — knock on wood. Of course, one obstacle prevents my entering the real world. I must first put the finishing touches on my McDegree.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's that little Mc-prefix that has come to mean bland and mass-produced.

That's a little bit like how I feel after five years at this university, bland and mass-produced. I know a number of people who dropped out because of the impersonality of life at a large university. I guess I've grown accustomed to it.

Take the class I'm missing today. There's no need to bother the professor with a "What did I miss?" phone call.

He wouldn't even know I had flown the coop except for the absence of my name among dozens of others on the attendance sheet — a veritable menu of today's McStudents.

My college experience didn't have to be this way. I received a plethora of pamphlets from colleges during my senior year of high school.

Most of the smaller schools had a common selling point: They promised a personalized education, complete with photos reminiscent of Lulu and Sidney Poitier, "To Sir With Love"-type friendships.

But I chose dear old Nebraska U. Why? It was nice that the university had a journalism college with a great reputation and that tuition was relatively low, and of course it helped considerably that the campus was incredibly close to friends and family.

When I went to the Nebraska football games that fall, as I had been going to as long as I could remember, my decision was finally made for me.

Yes, academia nuts, the football program runs the university. Accept it.



Crowds funnel in, attend Mr. Frat's Wild Party, take a ride on the Roommate Express and generally enjoy the same manufactured experience that everyone else is having.

It's fun to watch Nebraska play an opponent that provides worthy competition. That one Saturday in October when all the planets are in perfect alignment and Mother Nature provides an ideal weather situation, it's nice to have an excuse to just sit outside for four hours.

But the best part of the football games is being one of the red crowd of 76,000 united in a common goal of watching the Huskers win.

If the game dissolves into another whomping of some nonconference opponent, one can always watch the lucky few in the crowd who successfully snuck their flasks past the yellow-jacketed ticket takers.

The same experience also is available Monday through Friday. It's fun to hear a professor discuss a topic that provides worthwhile information.

During that one class a semester when a controversial subject is brought up and a spirited debate erupts, it can be nice to just sit and listen.

But the best part of going to this college is being one of the 25,000 bookbaggers united in a common goal of "getting an education."

If the class dissolves into another obscure lecture on an uninteresting topic, one can always watch the brave few in class who sneak a few Z's right in front of the corduroy-jacketed instructors.

Classes are some of the things that interrupt one's college experience. College is just like an amusement park, another Disneyland.

Crowds funnel in, attend Mr. Frat's Wild Party, take a ride on the Roommate Express and generally enjoy the same manufactured experience that everyone else is having. When it's time to leave, everyone has a smile and a few souvenirs in hand.

The beauty of the experience comes not from actually interfacing with the attractions at Disneyland or the professors at the university. Its being able to go home and tell everyone where you were and what you saw.

All this was thrown off kilter this week when a professor greeted me with a "Hello Jay, how are you?" It wasn't just me; all of the students in my class received the same. For a split second, I felt uncomfortable.

I learned my lesson in high school when I went back to visit my favorite teacher after two years, and she didn't remember my name.

Let's keep it impersonal, professor. No attachment, no difficult goodbyes. Treat me like the visitor at Disneyland, the fan at Memorial Stadium and the customer at McDonald's. Just give me a depersonalized experience and send me on my way. I've come to expect it.

I'll suggest a class of '94 going-away gift to the university. Let's erect an "OVER ??,000 GRADUATED" sign right under the large red N on the west side of Memorial Stadium. Let's leave no doubt that the emphasis is on quantity and not always quality.

Cruse is a senior advertising major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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