

Context Blindness: Digital Technology and the Next Stage of Human Evolution

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Review of [Context Blindness: Digital Technology and the Next Stage of Human Evolution](#)

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As the author of a collection of essays titled Perspective & Context, I was more than keen to dive into Dr. Eva Berger's study of context blindness - caetextia in Latin (Griffin, Tyrell 2007) - borne from our uneasy relationships with technology. Berger's work with Neil Postman, her use of media ecology in the title of her book, as well as Douglas Rushkoff's praise are all signals that this is a welcome and timely work.

Having myself grown up speaking 2 languages on 3 continents (Europe, North America, Asia), Dr. Berger's explanation of her "interest in context [as] a result of this life in three languages, a dozen different apartments (literally), in three countries on two continents." resonated profoundly with me.

Dr. Berger's sharp analysis of how our current technologies (first TV and now digital networks) have fostered a veritable tyranny of instant gratification that reverberates far and wide. She adroitly connects context blindness, media fueled decontextualization and the reorientation of society to the present moment, at the expense of historical knowledge and the art of small talk. The absence of context and of non-verbal elements in a conversation creates dissension as "online interactions lack the human-to-human feedback loop and the cues for emotional empathy, and we pick up little or none of what the other person actually feels, reacting mainly to what they write or text. As an environmental activist focused on shifting the narrative, Dr. Berger's inclusion of our collective numbness in the face of global warming also spoke to me: "The human footprint on our planet should be evident to all, but it is not because we are context-blind." Dr. Berger's evocation of the Trump years and the experiment of living life online in the manner of millennial are powerful reminders that, as she writes "We are all indeed a bit caetextic (and not temporarily) as life in the digital age is inherently erratic and stressful".

Context Blindness is therefore a necessary read for those of us seeking deeper knowledge in media ecology.