Now is the winter of our disconnect

Description

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We live in a connected world, ie everything is, or has the potential to be, connected to everything else. The Internet makes this connectivity palpable. But the web of all things is hardly a new view of the universe. Marcus Aurelius advanced such a proposition two thousand years ago.

> Always think of the universe as one living organism, with a single substance and a single soul; and observe how all things are submitted to the single perceptivity of this one whole, all are moved by this single impulse, and all play their part in the causation of every event that happens. Remark the intricacy of the skein, the complexity of the web.

This is the ancient philosophy of the Stoics. Donâ??t be the discontent, complaining about your discomfort. If you only realised how interconnected your circumstances are to the rest then you would be content with your small place in the organic order of things.

Stoic philosophy is the unsung, scarcely acknowledged, substrate to much intellectual life, having an influence on thinkers as diverse as Roman architect Pollio Vitruvius, founder of modern economic theory Adam Smith, and radical philosopher Gilles Deleuze.

Dare I say a tacit receptivity to things Stoical has also prepared the way for the evolution of that network of networks, the Internet, especially as people contemplate the prospect of an â??Internet of things.â?•

Tins of beans are tagged, inventoried and tracked, in the company of countless other products, components, and assemblies, with the potential to be linked to one another, places, events, and of course peopleâ??s profiles and bank accounts.

Some absent home owners can receive an email, text message or tweet from their domestic central heating system, or other sensor-enabled commodity services.

Some might say that modern communications technologies are at last realising what was seen only dimly by the ancients as a mythic dream of total connectivity.

I would rather say that we are heirs to legacies that predispose us to think it important to be so connected, the antidote for which is a counter-tendency in the practical world towards a network of disconnects, if not discontents.

Reference

Aurelius, M., *Meditations*, trans. M. Staniforth, London: Penguin, 1964, p.73.

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Category

1. Techno-utopias

Tags

1. Internet
2. Internet of things
3. Marcus Aurelius
4. stoicism
5. technology
6. things
7. Vitruvius

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