Old Media's Time Has Come, Says Alexander Bard

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Humans don't change very much over time, but technology does, and that change is wreaking havoc in societies across the globe. Whether that change ultimately helps us or hurts us remains to be seen, but Alexander Bard, self-proclaimed cyber philosopher, is deep in the study of those technological tectonics.

"We're reaching a point where technology is taking off at such a rapid pace that we're getting more and more confused about what's happening in the world," says Bard, who hails from Sweden but travels the world.

When he speaks at PromaxBDA Europe 2018 on March 12, he will address how the internet's open nature is breaking down media's traditional structures.

"In the old top-down media, there were few voices heard. You had to be clever, smart, talented and be able to talk as well as be in connection with power and have resources," he says. "The internet is a flat medium in which everyone can participate. That creates chaos, which we are living in now, but no one wants to return to the old way. We aren't going to turn it off and go back to just listening to something."

While that flat structure might be ultimately more appealing and democratic, at

the moment it's making many things - such as politics - far more complicated.

"We communicate radically differently than the way we communicated 30 years ago. Now everyone is shouting over each other. If you look at Facebook forums, they don't operate very well. There needs to be a platform that is more human and respectful to how humans actually communicate. That's the next generation of technology," he predicts.

Bard has written four books with his writing partner, media theorist Jan SÃ¶derqvist. These include The Futurica Trilogy - a series of three books which have been translated into over 20 languages- and Syntheism: Creating God in the Internet Age, which "set out to construct a completely new metaphysical system for the digital age."

The pair's fifth book, Digital Libido, comes out in August.

"This book offers a deep Freudian understanding of internet society," says Bard. "Freud is a rich source [through which] to understand our relationship to the machines."

"All of our books are based on one simple assumption: human beings do not change much at all," he says.

Moreover, human beings aren't really very different from one another, and no matter what culture they are in, they don't behave very differently. What really differentiates people from each other are their personalities, Bard says.

The internet allows people to divide themselves differently and more in accordance to their interests instead of their geographic locations. Instead of hanging out with Chinese people because you are in China or Americans because you are in the United States, you might find closer kinship with people from other countries online because what you share with them draws you closer than just proximity: you enjoy and are fascinated by the same kinds of things.

"The future is in subcultures," says Bard. "That world is borderless but still tied to language."

And it's that kind of information that technology companies are now trying to figure out how to mine. For example, companies such as Amazon, Facebook, Google and Netflix are looking for ways to measure people's emotional responses and engagement with products, services and content so that they can then deliver more of that to them.

"I call it 'deep tech' and it's the next thing to happen in technology," says Bard. "Cultural engineers are going to be the big winners of the next 25 to 30 years. I always recommend that kids study art, technology and human psychology right now, so they can become an engineer who understands technology but also understands culture. These people can then develop technologies to reach

these subcultures and to hit them right and not irritate them. The kind of technologists and mathematicians that built these companies aren't going to be the same kind of people who understand the cultures."

The present is complex and chaotic, but the future is bright: "The more freedom we can handle the better off we all are in the end," Bard says. "If anyone is intruding on the internet it tends to be the old establishment - government, academics, media. The internet will eventually kick out all of those old institutions, but it must not happen too quickly."

Alexander Bard - cyber philosopher, academic, author, former music industry executive and TV star - is appearing at PromaxBDA Europe 2018 at the Rome Cavalieri on Monday, March 12 at 4 p.m. with a keynote titled: "The Swarm versus The Mob - The Driving Forces and Identities of Social Networks."