

CHRISTIAN FAITH IN A HYPER(DIS)CONNECTED WORLD

Dr Mark Chan | Trinity Theological College | 4 October 2023



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- The irony of the internet: from interconnected “global village” to “resurgent isolationism”
- Hyperconnectivity as sociotechnical phenomenon

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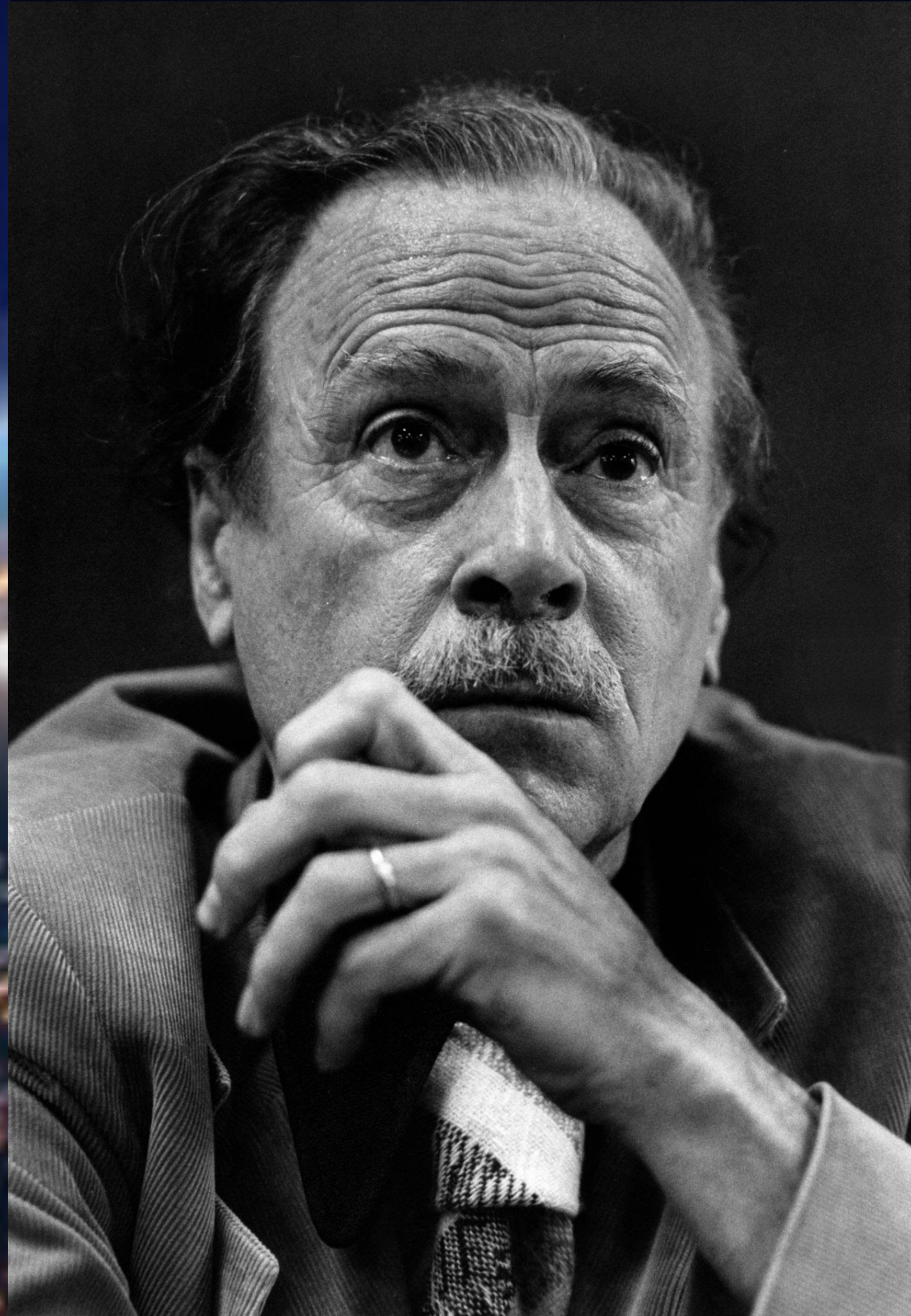
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DESCRIPTION | DIAGNOSIS | DISCIPLESHIP

HYPERCONNECTIVITY

Digital hyperconnectivity: “the condition in which everyone is (potentially) connected to everyone, to an exponentially growing array of sensor-embedded things, and to an infinity of digital content, everywhere and all the time.” (Roger Brubaker)

DESCRIPTION



Marshall McLuhan

“a new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace.”

DESCRIPTION: Impact



- * Social connectivity
- * Access to information
- * Emergency dissemination of vital information
- * Democratising political participation

DESCRIPTION: Impact



- * Automation and convenience
- * Working collaboratively and remotely
- * Greater learning opportunities
- * News and entertainment
- * Advocating for the disadvantaged and needy

DESCRIPTION: Impact



- * Data security: leaks and undermining privacy
- * Algorithms that divide
- * Radicalization
- * Misinformation, fake news and deep fakes



DESCRIPTION: Impact



- * Data security: leaks and undermining privacy
- * Algorithms that divide
- * Radicalization
- * Misinformation, fake news and deep fakes
- * devices as weapons of mass distraction

DESCRIPTION: Impact



- * Crime and vices
- * Hacks and cyberattacks
- * Social and mental health impacts
- * Undermining trust in institutions
- * Work overload

DESCRIPTION



Perpetual connectivity

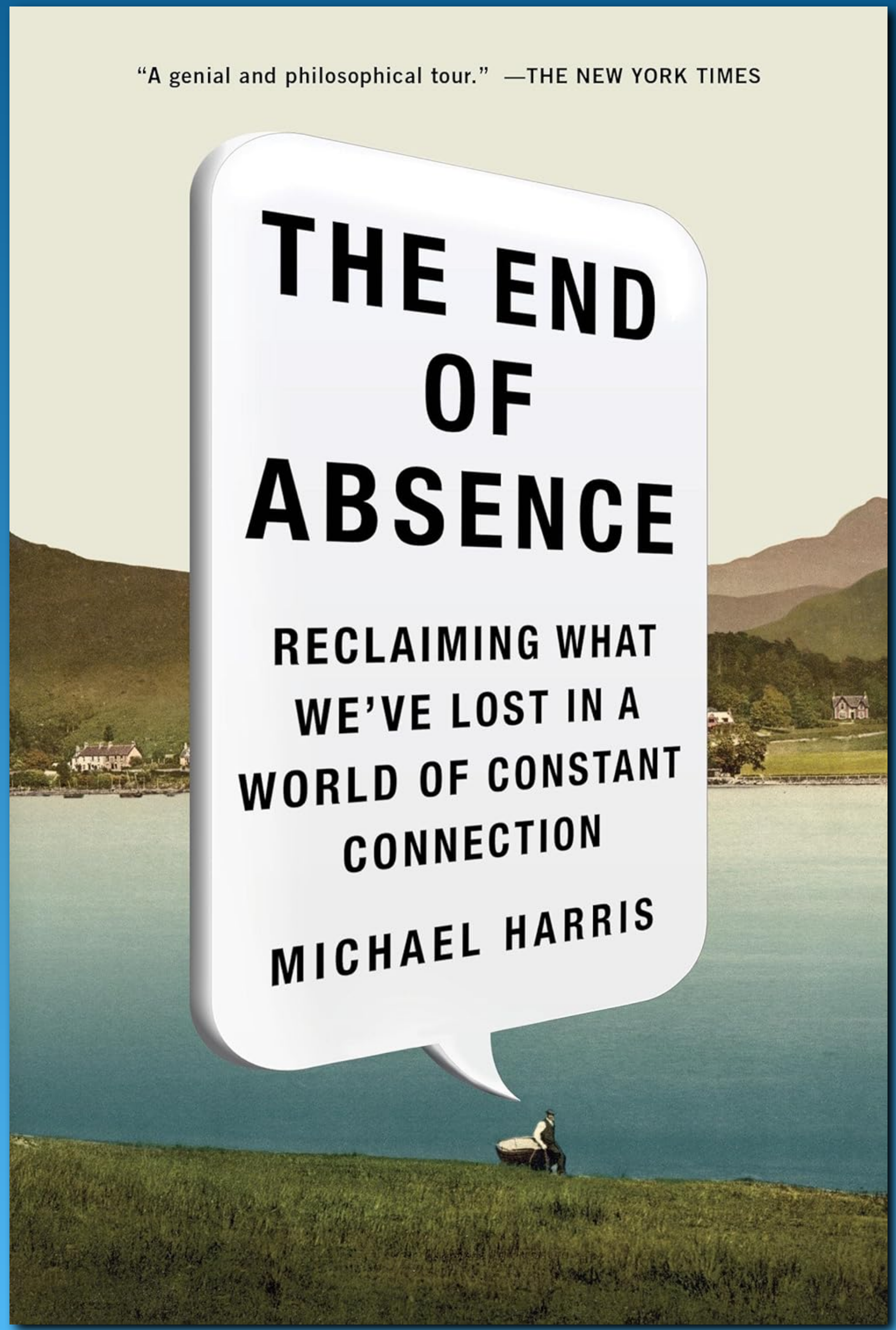
- “a state of pervasive or permanent connectivity”
- transparent, invisible, and natural

"A genial and philosophical tour." —THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE END OF ABSENCE

RECLAIMING WHAT
WE'VE LOST IN A
WORLD OF CONSTANT
CONNECTION

MICHAEL HARRIS



DESCRIPTION



Perpetual connectivity

- “a state of pervasive or permanent connectivity”
- transparent, invisible, and natural
- tethered to our devices

Felicia Wu Song

Restless Devices



Recovering
Personhood,
Presence, *and* Place
in the Digital Age

Felicia Wu Song

“

Even as we succeed in multitasking our way through the day in order to store up time to enjoy, when we try to rest, we are restless. And when we are restless, we reach for our phones and devices because in some curiously deep and unexplored ways, our bodies and our imaginations have forgotten what else there is to reach for.

DESCRIPTION



Easier, Faster, More, and Wider

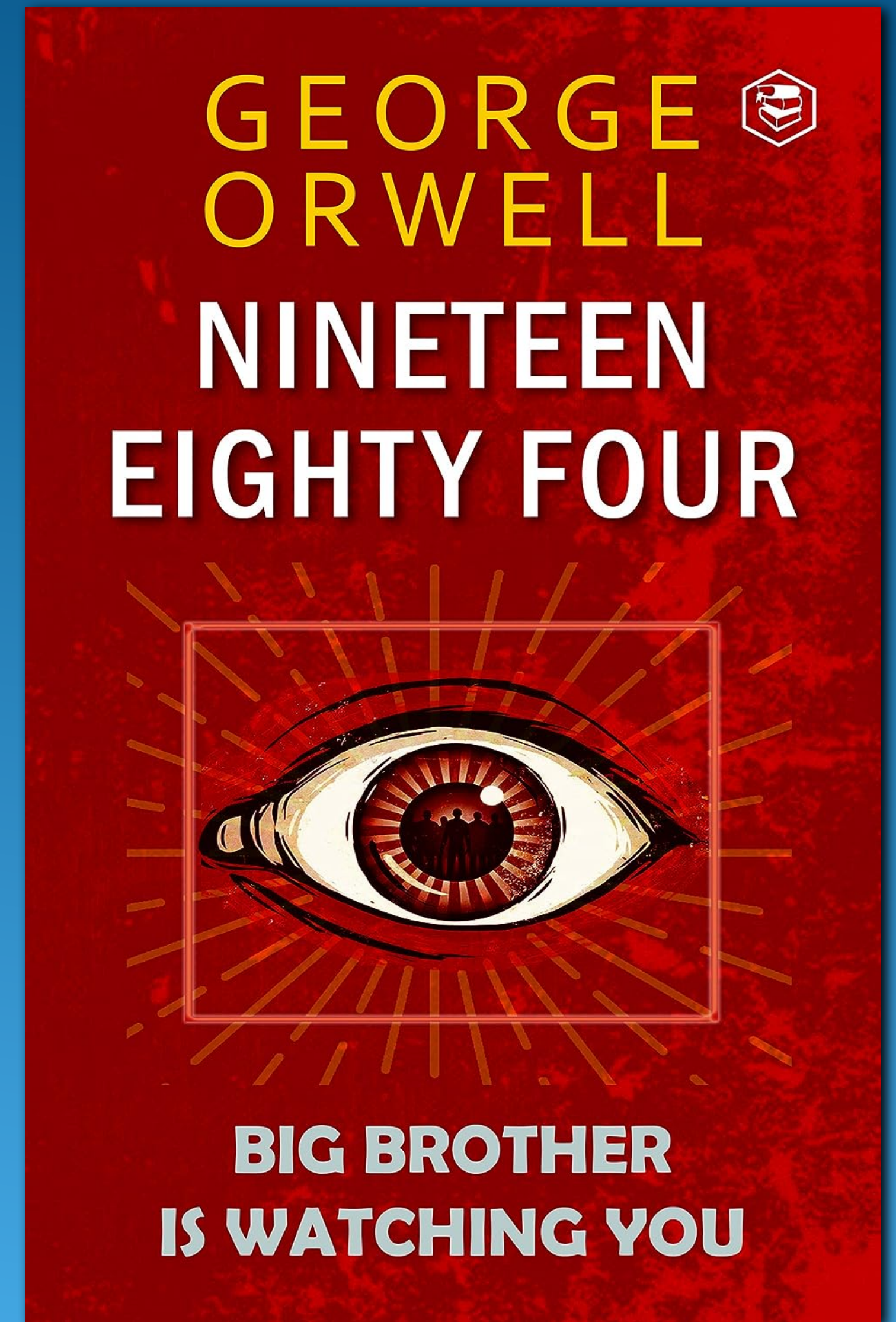
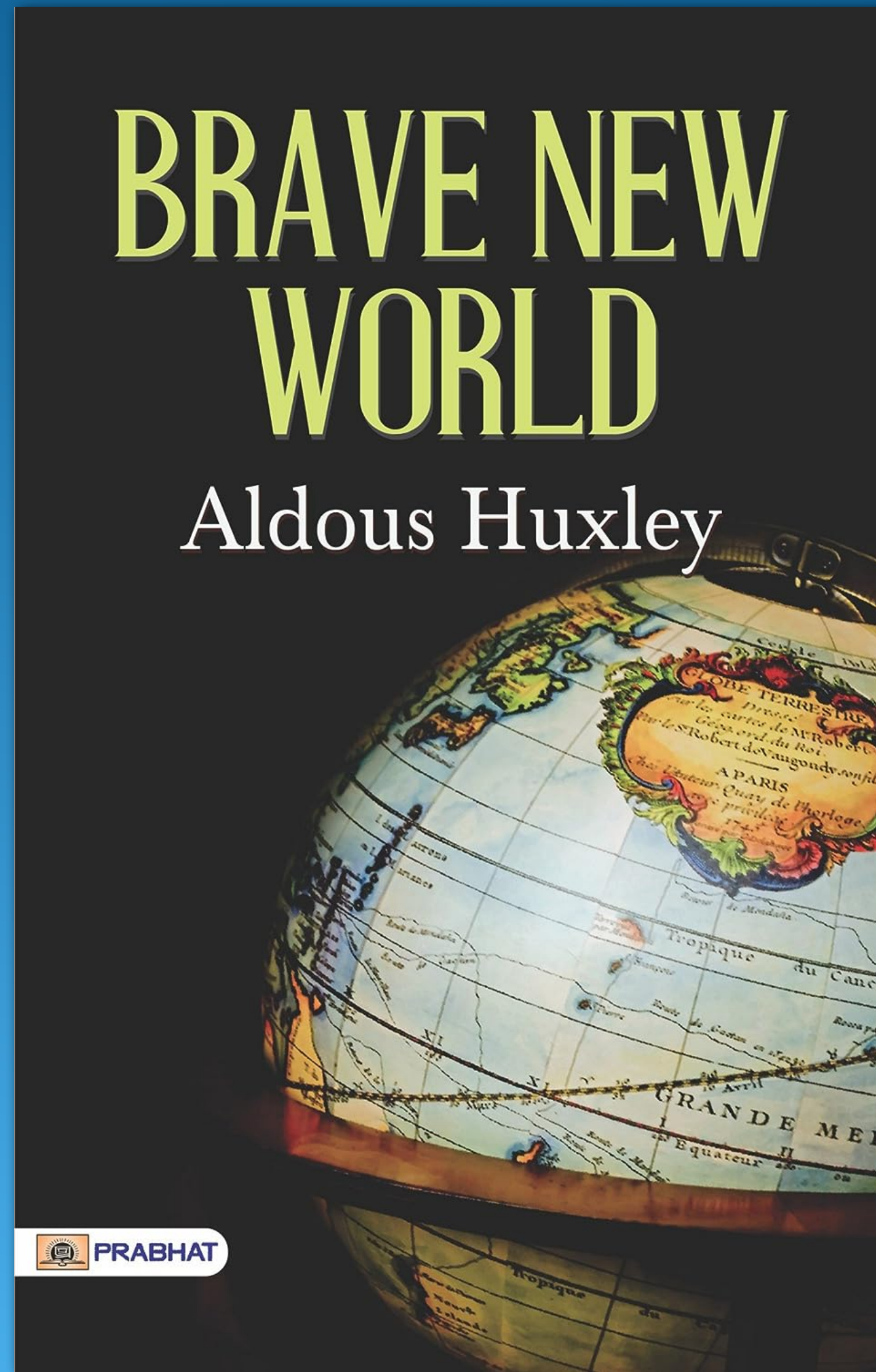
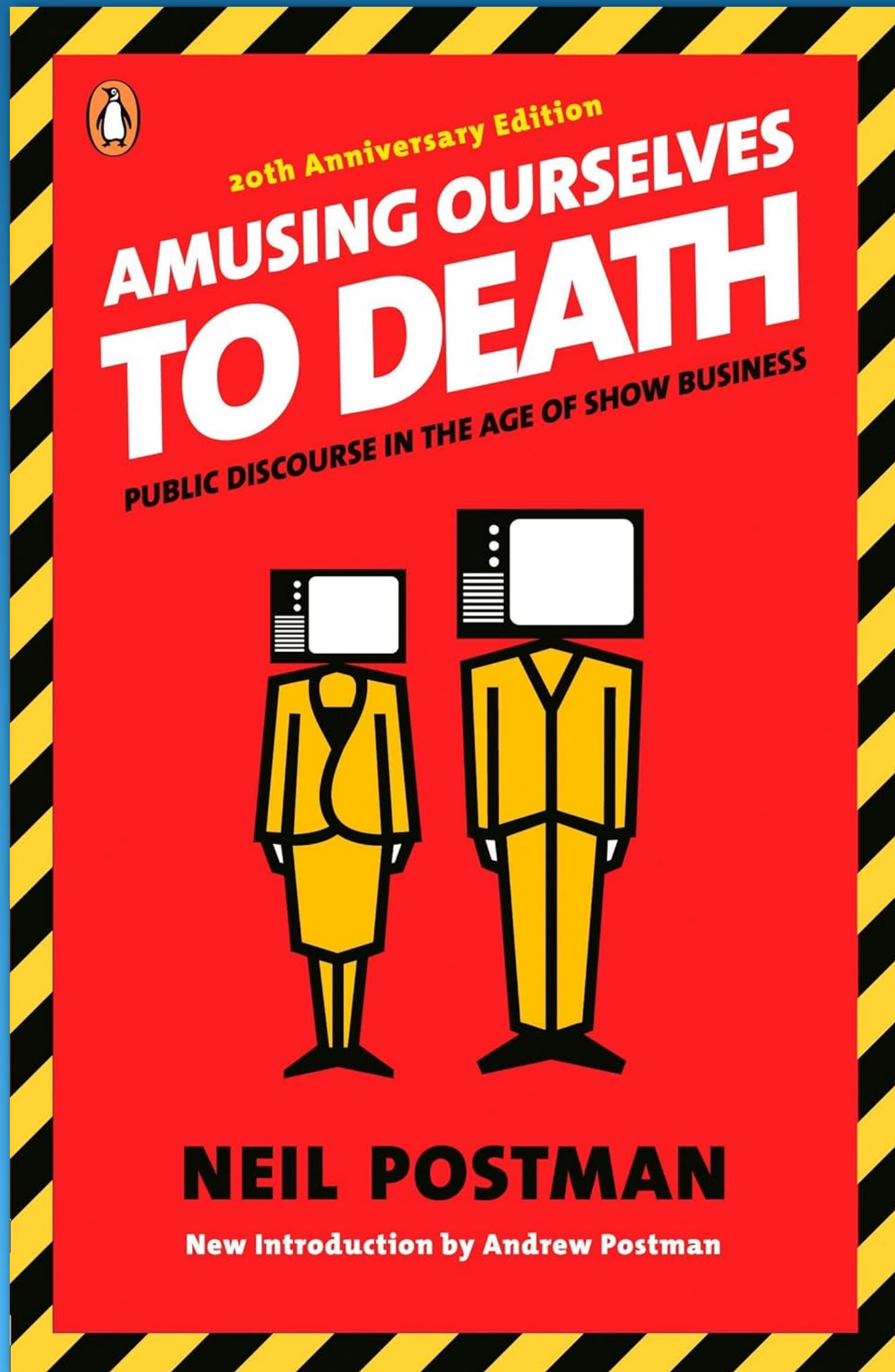
- Frictionless interface: ease of use and convenience
- Immediacy: the tyranny of instantaneousness
- Accessibility: when more becomes less

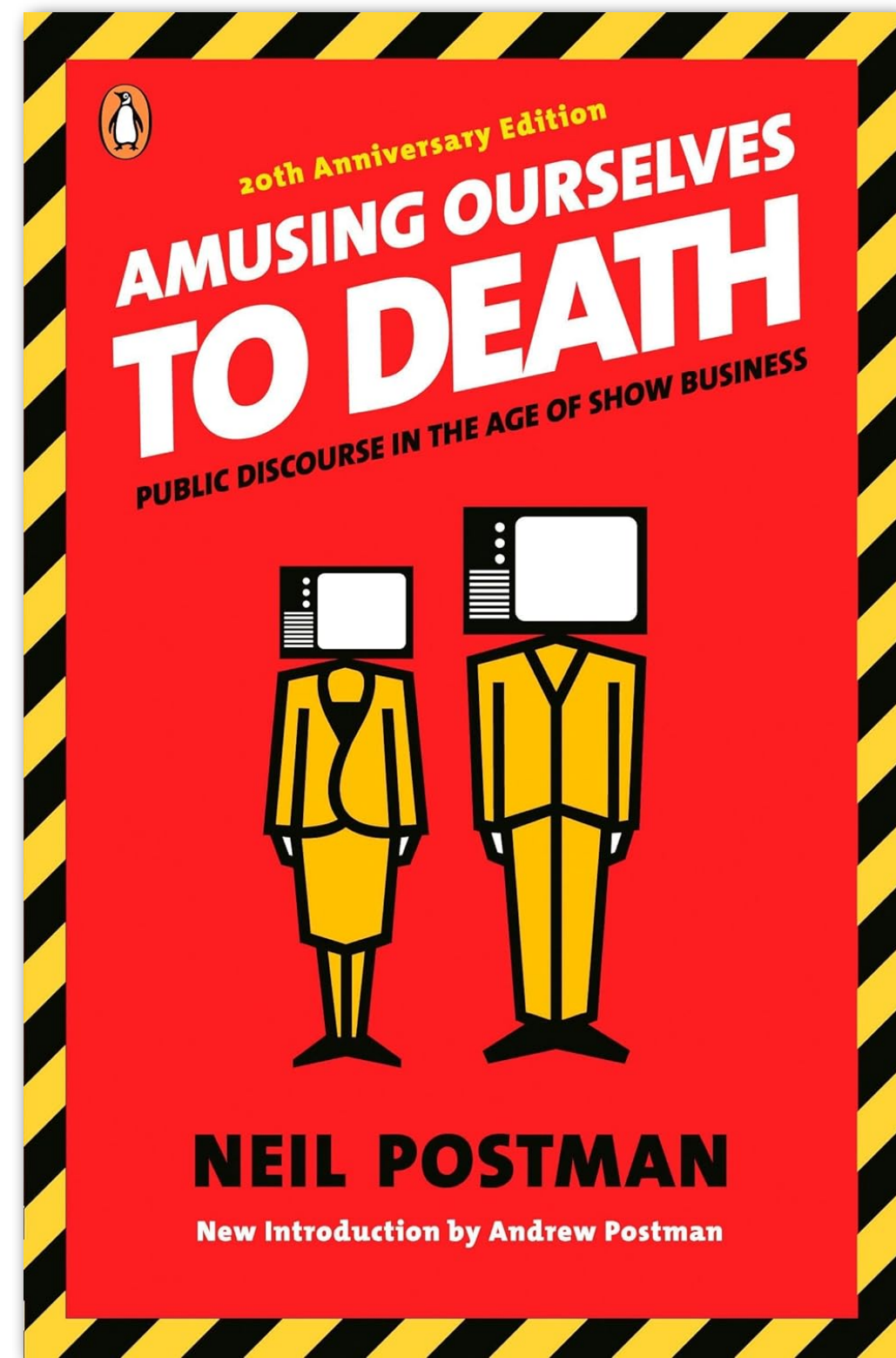
Where is the Life we have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

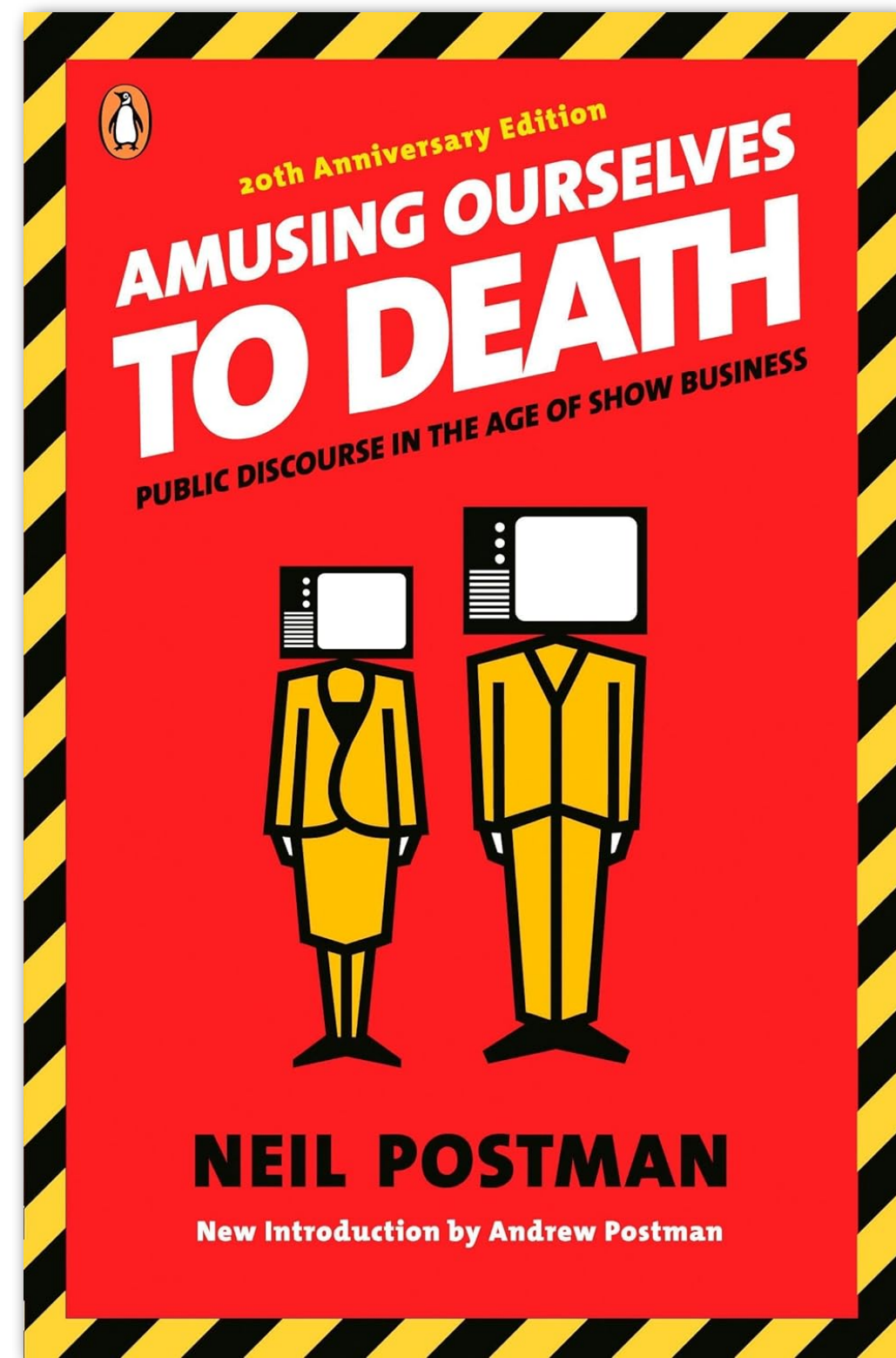
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

- T. S. Eliot, *The Rock*

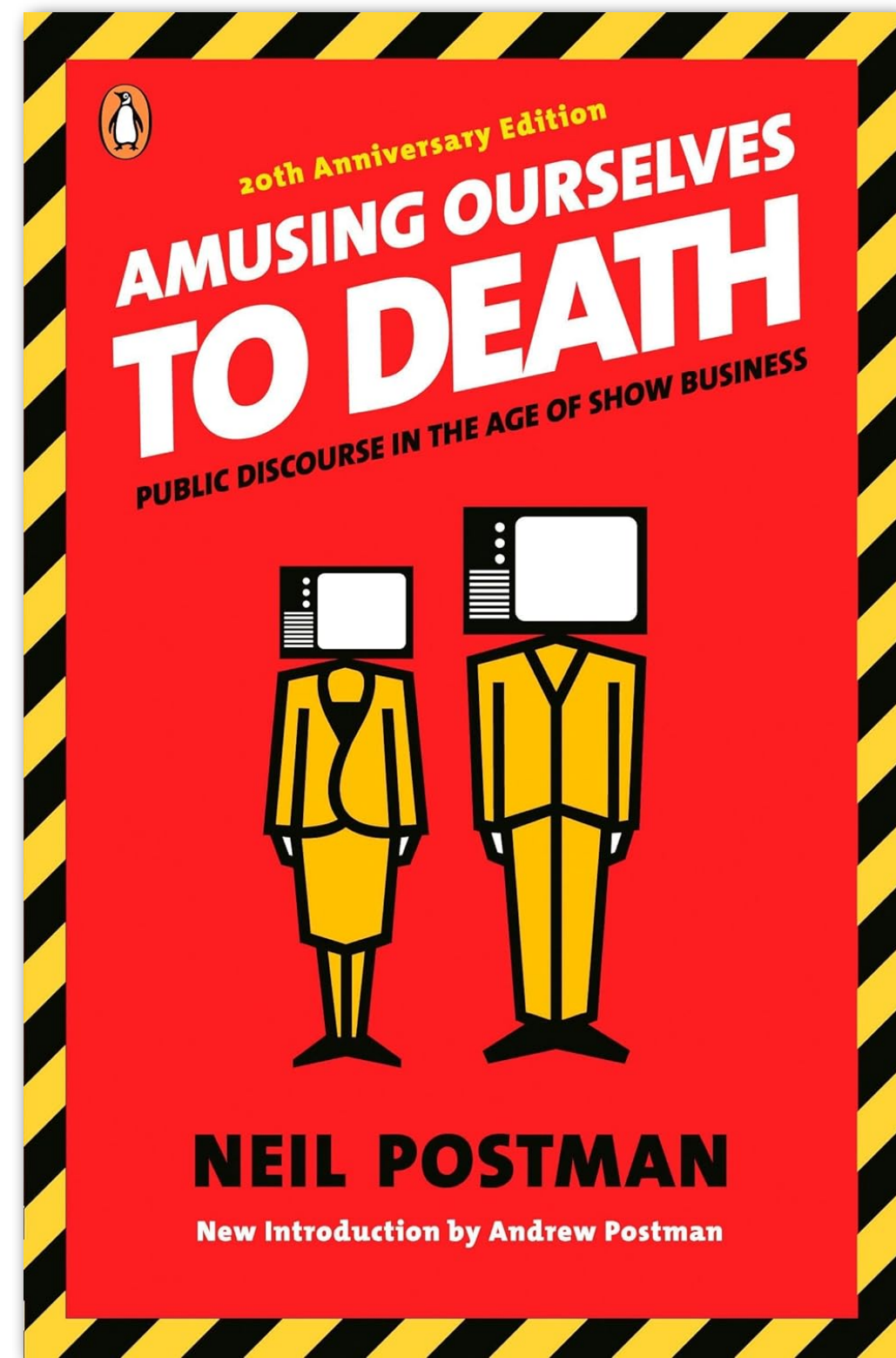




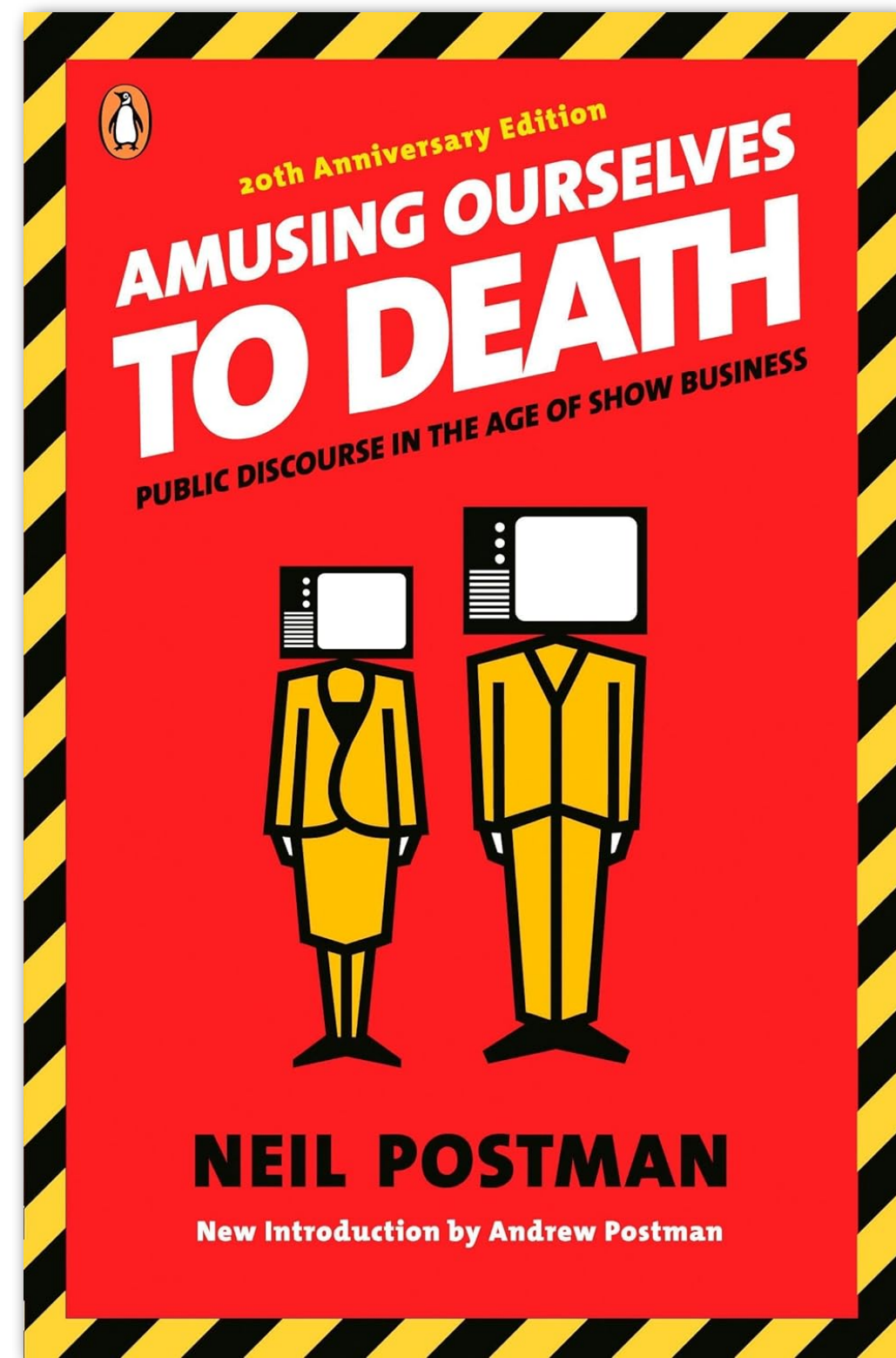
“What Orwell feared were those who ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one.



“Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism.



“Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.



“Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture...”

DESCRIPTION



Easier, Faster, More, and Wider

- Frictionless interface: ease of use and convenience
- Immediacy: the tyranny of instantaneousness
- Accessibility: when more becomes less
- Superficiality: skimming the surface

DESCRIPTION



The Attention Economy

- Value-laden digital technologies
- Monetisation of attention: competition for eyeballs

DESCRIPTION



Digital conformity

- Liberation or incarceration?
 - We are more captives than we know
 - Persuasive Technology Lab in Stanford University, started by B. J. Fogg, who founded a new field of study, “Captology” (Computers as Persuasive Technology)

WESTWORLD



DESCRIPTION



Digital conformity

- Liberation or incarceration?
 - We are more captives than we know
 - Ideological indoctrination

DESCRIPTION



Digital conformity

- Liberation or incarceration?
- Shaping of identity
- When solidarity gives way to 'solitariness'

DESCRIPTION

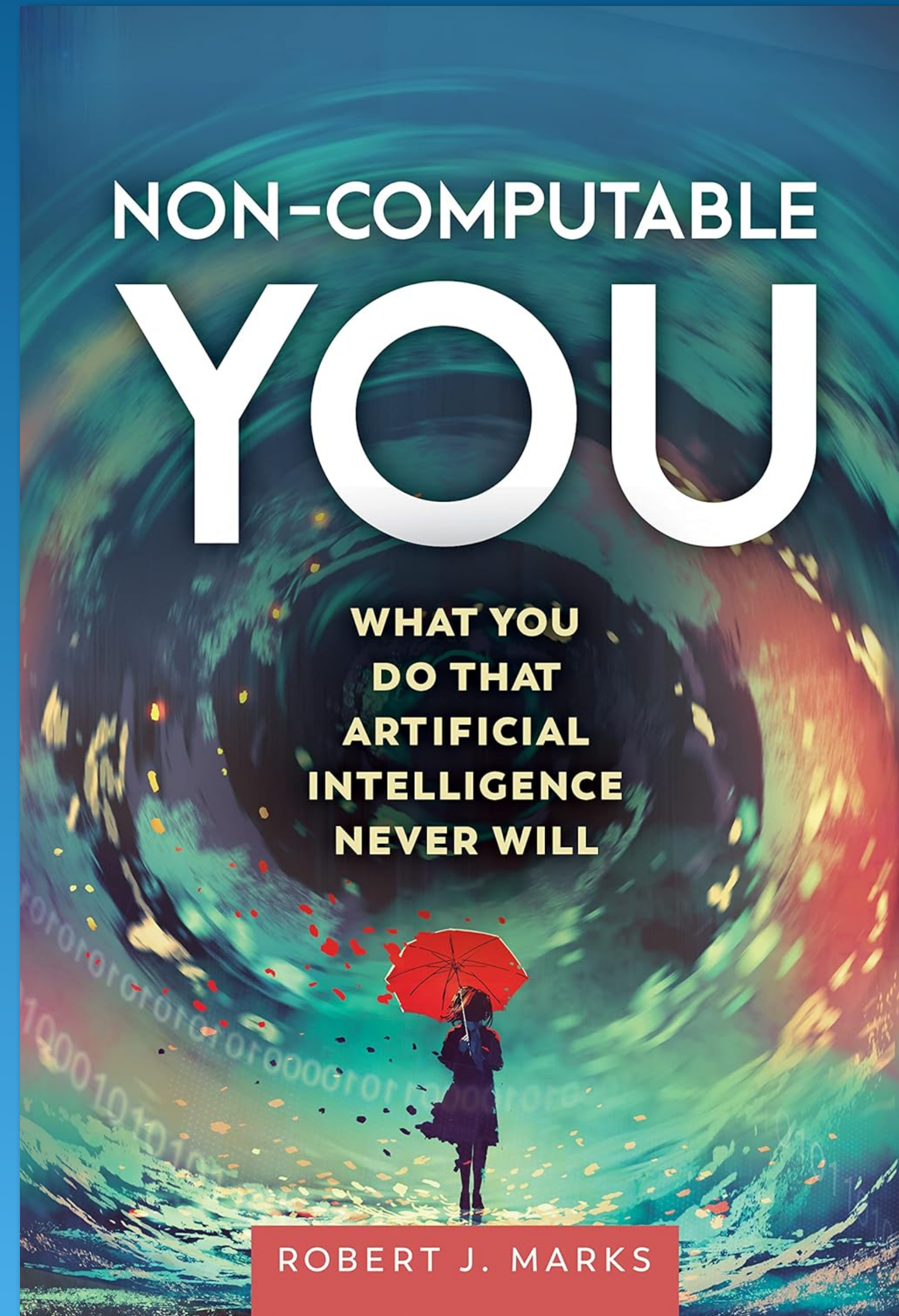
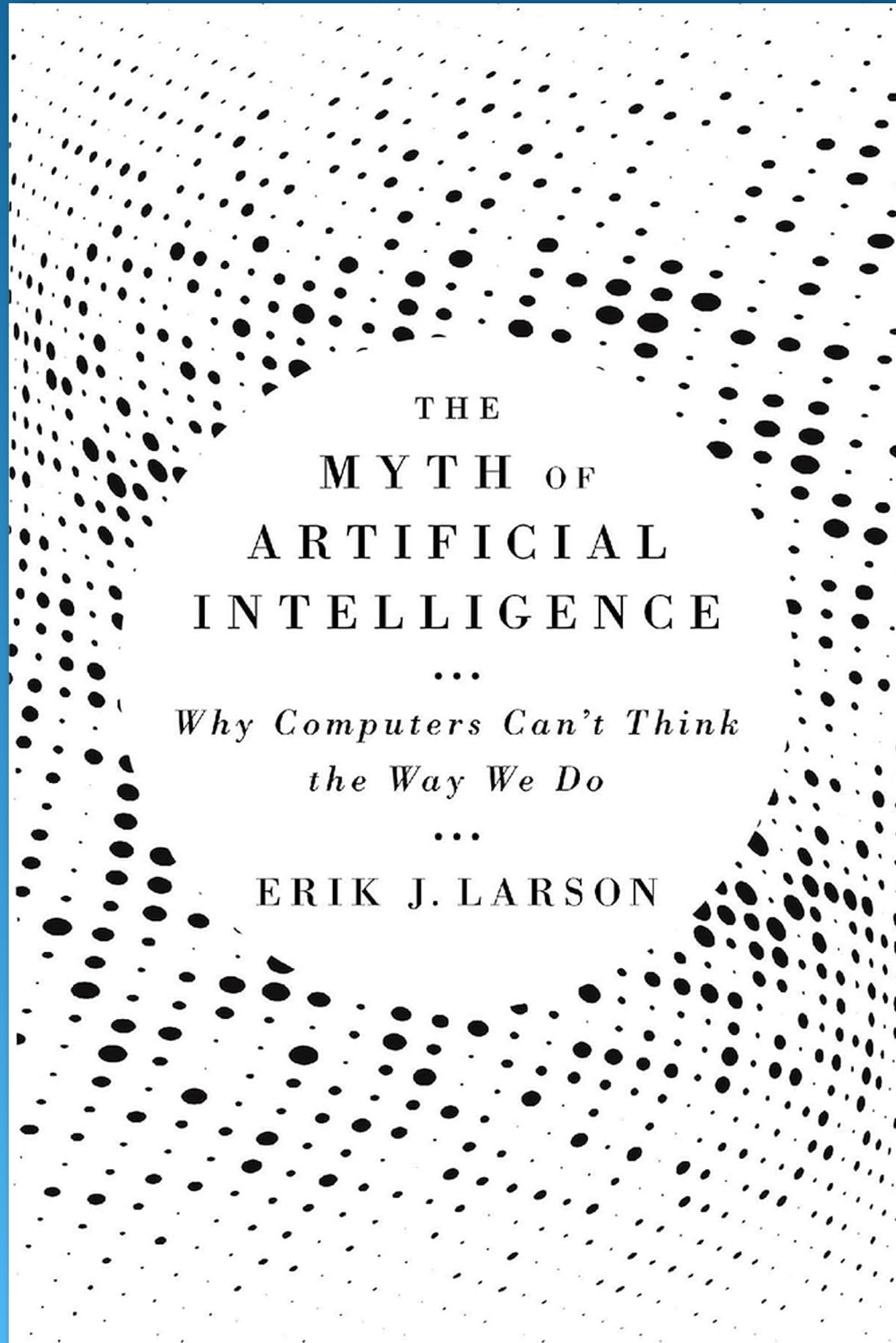


Artificial Intelligence

- The materialist worldview of AI
- AI utopianism: en route to the AI promised land?

AI-ready but Not Yet

AI-ready but Not Ever



**AI, Power and the 21st Century's
Greatest Dilemma**

'Essential
reading'
**DANIEL
KAHNEMAN**

'Extraordinary ...
awe-inspiring'
**ALAIN
DE BOTTON**

**THE
COMING
WAVE**

'Fascinating, well-written and important'
YUVAL NOAH HARARI

MUSTAFA SULEYMAN

co-founder of
DEEPMIND and INFLECTION AI

with
MICHAEL BHASKAR

DIAGNOSIS



Human creativity and hubris

- Humans as “created co-creators” (Philip Hefner)
- God-like pretensions and the spirit of Babel

Christoph Wulf

“

Just as God created man, man creates the machine. He thus seeks to become like God. His narcissistic fantasies of omnipotence can be realized through the production of the human-like machine.

Charles Chaput

“

[T]echnology does not have a conscience. As easily as it gives us iPads and smartphones, it also gives us Nagasaki, Zyklon B gas, genetic screening, and abortion pills. The more we subordinate the sanctity of the human person to the tools we create, the less human we become.

DIAGNOSIS



Turbo-charging erosion of truth and trust

- Truth replaced by truths
- Decentering anti-authoritarianism

DIAGNOSIS



Technological dehumanisation

- When I-It eclipses I-Thou
- Ironic dehumanisation

DISCIPLESHIP



On being a changing unchanging church

- A changing church in a changing world

SAME SAME
BUT DIFFERENT

DISCIPLESHIP



On being a changing unchanging church

- A changing church in a changing world
 - Adaptive and innovative faithfulness
 - Die for your message, not your method

DISCIPLESHIP



On being a changing unchanging church

- An unchanging church in an unchanging world

DIFFERENT
BUT SAME SAME

DIFFERENT BUT SAME SAME

DISCIPLESHIP



On being a changing unchanging church

- An unchanging church in an unchanging world
 - Realism about human fallenness
 - Primal human needs unchanged
 - Commandment and commission still in force

DISCIPLESHIP



Counter-cultural formation

- Commit to counter-liturgies
- Growing deep by going slow

Richard Foster

“

In contemporary society, our Adversary (the devil) majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in ‘muchness’ and ‘manyness,’ he will rest satisfied.

Andrew Sullivan

“I Used to be a Human Being”

“

If the churches came to understand that the greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction, perhaps they might begin to appeal anew to a frazzled digital generation. Christian leaders seem to think that they need more distraction to counter the distraction.

Andrew Sullivan

“I Used to be a Human Being”

“

Their services have degenerated into emotional spasms, their spaces drowned with light and noise and locked shut throughout the day, when their darkness and silence might actually draw those whose minds and souls have grown web-weary.

DISCIPLESHIP



Counter-cultural formation

- Commit to counter-liturgies
- Growing deep by going slow
- Stewardship of attention

DISCIPLESHIP



Incarnational faith

- The "discarnate man" (McLuhan)
- Embodiment and community

Wendell Berry

“

There can be no such thing as a 'global village.'
No matter how much one may love the world as
a whole, one can live fully in it only by living
responsibly in some small part of it.

DISCIPLESHIP



The Cross as antidote and anchor

- The Cross for digital inhabitants

DISCIPLESHIP



The Cross as antidote and anchor

- The Cross for digital inhabitants
- Carthusian stability



The Carthusians

stat crux dum volvitur orbis

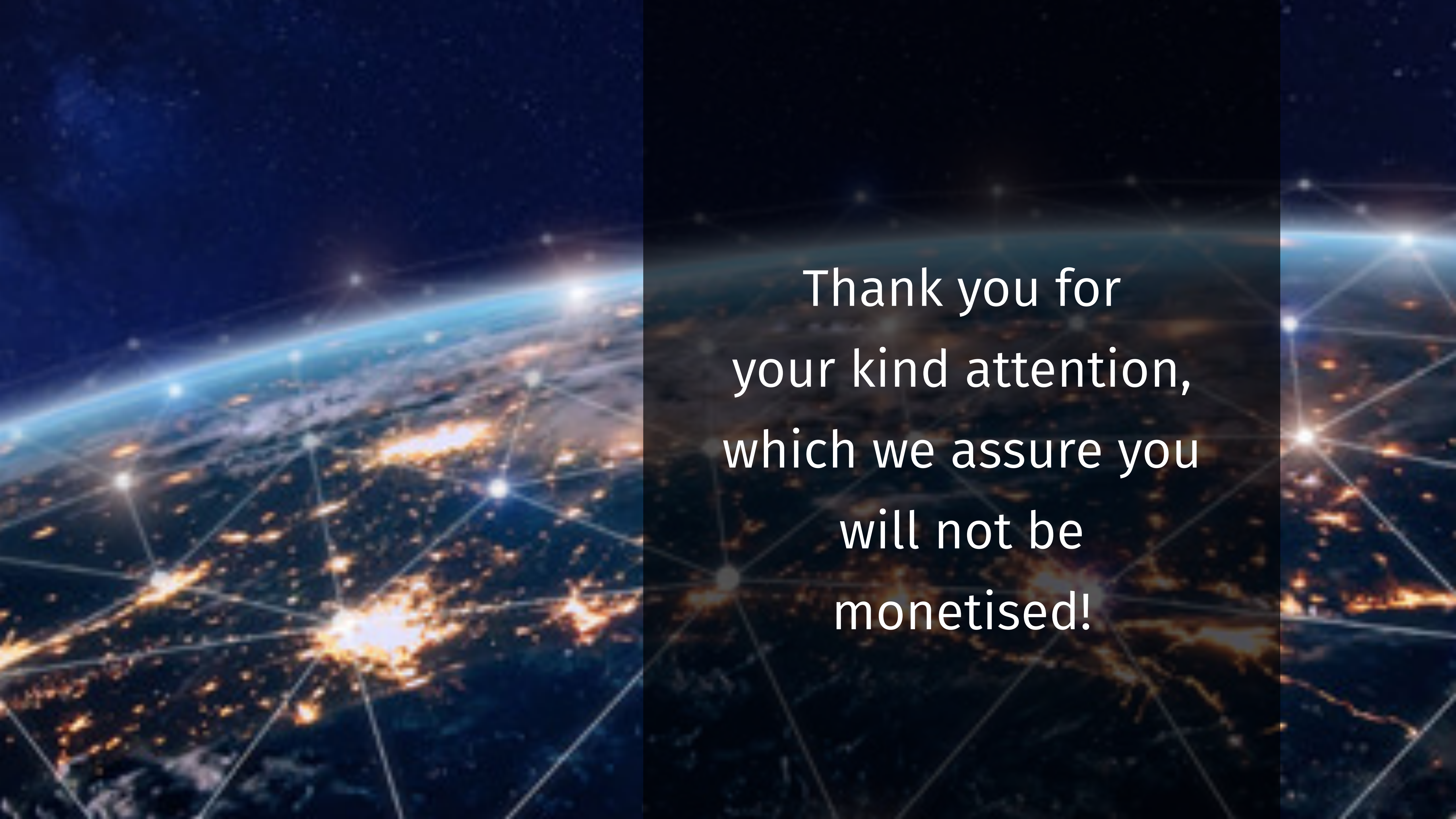
The cross is steady while the world turns



The Carthusians

stat crux dum volvitur orbis

The cross stands, while the world is changing



Thank you for
your kind attention,
which we assure you
will not be
monetised!

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