Chapter 5
Healthcare Digitalized: Patient/Counsellor Interaction in the Digitalized Era

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ABSTRACT

Ever since medicine became a recognized profession, the relationship between patients and physicians was marked by authoritarian paternalism. With the advent of bioethics in the 1970s, patients' right to participate in decision making led to proclaim autonomy as the primary principle in clinical medicine and biomedical research, practically exercised as informed consent; yet, the issue remains contended and poorly regulated. Healthcare digitalization disassembles persons into clouds of data. Individual decision making is interfered with and replaced by dominant algorithms, supposedly delivering a P4 composite of precision medicine: personalized, preventive, predictive, participatory. Biomedicine develops into medicalization, marketization contractual client/provider relationship, and neglect of personal care for the ill and frail. These trends become dominant in digitalized healthcare as personal healthcare relationships, and ethically unsatisfactory medical services replace the psychosocial, existential elements of health/disease.

INTRODUCTION

From Holocene to Anthropocene

Holocene (*holo* 'whole' + Greek *kainos* 'new') is the name for the era where the earth became warm enough to be habitable, initiating the evolution of living organisms including the human species. While all vegetal and animal species either adapted to changing environmental conditions or disappeared, human beings rapidly expanded their ability to develop tool-making, replacing slow biological adaptation by actively pursuing cultural achievements that mine natural resources to not only satisfy needs but also give vent to ever more sophisticated desires demanding increasingly cost-intensive production. Mankind

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also was quick to engage in competitive practices and developing warfare as an effective way of securing survival of the fittest, as Hobbes succinctly characterized as *homo lupus homini.* In time, exploitation of nature overshot the mark of sustainability, turning into a destructive exspoliation carried out in plunderous an ravenous ways that could not but trigger socioeconomic inequities. As instrumental development peaks, one third of world population remains undernourished, suffering hunger and multidimensional poverty.

Transforming nature to fulfill human whims exacted the inevitable price of maiming the goose that lays the golden eggs, and of creating shortages that lead to a monumental divide between the have and the have not, the privileged and the dispossessed, disingenuously featured as the difference between rich and poor as if some charitable redistribution might make the gap more palatable.

Uncontrolled expansion and irreversible plundering of nature stress the seams of the Holocene, seriously putting to question the era of wholeness. As wholeness looses meaning, so do its etymological cousins holy and healthy. Nature's integrity suffers increased manipulation by humans, as the era of anthropocene erases the traditional dichotomy between nature and artifice. Many philosophical doubts and questions emerge, but the call for urgency requires facing the question about what is at stake why.

Social rejection of man-made machinery was initiated by the 19th century aggressive Luddite movement objecting against industrialization that would lead to underpaid unqualified labour and unemployment, eventually becoming a systemic feature of profit seeking capitalism and its persistent quest for cheap labour.

Modern humanity lives in and cannot avoid relying on, technological instruments that thrive in times of digitalization introduced in all wakes of life, from day to day chores to highly sophisticated production and use of goods and services. Even those too poor to profit from technical advances, are nevertheless influenced, often negatively, by technology and its consequences. Luddite technophobia is as obsolete as uncritical technophilia bent on "progress" is irresponsibly oblivious to the enormous and to a great extent negative impact it has on world affairs, fuelling growing divides between affluent consumers and majorities that lack access to technical means to relieve their daily toils to secure basic necessities.

In 1978 the Club of Rome warned that the limits to growth are being overstepped, causing additional alarm when a 20 years follow-up report showed that natural resources were being exploited with enormous polluting effects that had gone way beyond the limits of growth. The United Nations issued the Brundtland Report and the idea of sustainable growth (1987); in its traditional meaning sustainability is defined as corporative, national, even global economic growth that can be maintained without running into financial problems, but the ecological perspective sees sustainable global as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This very bland formulation does not define or quantify present needs, presenting a very vague call for saving resources that future generations will need. As long as a considerable proportion of actually living humans are far from having their basic needs met, it is implausible to save resources for the future, unless massive redistribution is undertaken to cover the present essential needs of the world's population before assessing how much can be saved for the future. Since nothing of this has happened in the last 30 years, s evolving into a mild but persistent minority that criticizes technoscientific expansion, merging with current calls to save the planet from destructive exspoliation, and fuelling crusades to resort to a "small is beautiful" use of technology. Sustainability is reduced to a window dressing effort at proclaiming global justice.

The 20th century has been prodigal in presenting critical views on unfettered positivism and its faith in science as the one and only font of true knowledge. Beginning wth C.P. Snow's "The Two Cultures" pleading for a better understanding between science and "traditional" culture, mainly literature, Günther