Industrialized Synapses and Memories: Sites of Intercultural Adaptation

In 2011 the European Union has invested roughly € 9 billion on boosting "super-fast broadband" internet speed. Other than the EU, developing countries including Taiwan have been trying to accelerate the speed of the internet. It is believed that the faster the internet speed, the quicker the economic growth. Along with the market force, the development of technology accelerates beyond the learning curve of human capacity. The byproduct of the accelerated culture is that technical gadgets are oftentimes designed for obsolescence and thus pose a threat to the environment. Although it is debatable that humans are biologically attuned to enjoy speed, in her "Psychological Effects of Thought Acceleration," Emily Pronin discovers that thinking fast not only makes one feel happier and motivated but also more prone to take risks. To keep consumers "hungry" for more and make them engaged, the capitalist system produces new commodities momentarily. This appetitive speed generated by the consummer society is at once stimulating and risky to the well-being of our society. I intend to provide a critique on the speed culture as examplified in industrialized network where synapses have been at risk of being curtailed so far. The representations of industrialized synthetic memories in cyberpunk cinema are invisible markers of our speed culture. How memories are duplicated, dissimulated, and disseminated has been discussed at large, but how industrialized memories curtail our synapses, experiences, and existence, along with how organic memories collaborate with prosthetic memories, however, is underexplored. I argue that aside from a tool for self-reflection, these synthetic memories, as products of intercultural adaptation between human and machine, can be passed on to the next generation in the form of cultural heritage that determines how we perceive and evaluate risks.

Keywords: risk society, speed culture, synapses, industrialized memories, intercultural adaptation