

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Tristan Harris: Hey, everyone, it's Tristan. And this is a bonus episode of Your Undivided Attention, the podcast from the Center for Humane Technology. As you may have heard, last week The Wall Street Journal released The Facebook Files, a huge investigation of the extent to which Facebook's problems are known inside the company all the way up to Mark Zuckerberg. To respond to the story, I was invited by pollster Frank Luntz to talk about this on his weekly webinar, together with my friend Daniel Schmachtenberger.
- Tristan Harris: Daniel is a founding member of the consilience project, which is aimed in improving public sensemaking and dialogue. And you may remember him from Your Undivided Attention Episode 36: A Problem Well Stated is a Problem Half Solved. Frank Luntz is a political and communications consultant, pollster, and pundit, who deeply understands the hopes and fears of Americans. So without further ado, here's my conversation hosted by Frank Luntz with Daniel Schmachtenberger about The Wall Street Journal's Facebook Files.
- Frank Luntz: As people get brought into the Zoom, I don't know if I've ever done a Fridays with Frank that was more appropriate and more timely because of all that has happened in the last seven days. Tristan Harris, congratulations on winning two Emmy Awards. You're the first personal friend I have that is actually a multiple Emmy Award winner. Good for you, you should feel very proud.
- Tristan Harris: Thank you.
- Frank Luntz: And you're already getting a comment from one of the people who is listening in. And, Daniel, what you are trying to achieve with a more constructive, a more open, a more useful dialogue and the teaching of civility and decency in how we communicate in the public square is something that we should all emulate. I am a proponent of technology. I am a supporter of it. We're going to hear a lot of criticism today because of the problems. I do want to open up saying that I believe in it, believe in what it has done for us.
- Frank Luntz: And in fact, I'm going to do something I've never done one of these Fridays with Frank, which is I'm actually going to show some data that was not shown publicly until now. Even looking at technology, how people react to it, this is important. We ask the question in the opposite way that most people do. How would your life be different if you didn't have all that technology? The stuff that we use every day, Google, Amazon, YouTube, and the public apps by almost two to one say that the quality of their life would be better without that technology.
- Frank Luntz: However, men wanted to know whether technology has made their life easier or more difficult. and overwhelmingly, they say that technology has

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

made it much easier to keep in touch with people as well as issues that are important to you. Another example, it's given people more choices, it's actually made their lives, easier to consume because you get more services and more products. And again, numbers are overwhelming. In terms of making shopping hassle free, 63% easier, only 6% harder.

Frank Luntz:

We got more for these. Saving money on the things you buy, overwhelmingly easier. One more, has it made it easier or harder to get involved in politics? By 47 to 10, They say it's made it easier. Again, I go back to that very first statistic I showed you. Not easier but better. The public has an issue with that. So let me go to you, Tristan. And again, congratulations on your success. We've talked about this. You and I have known each other for a year and a half. Our meeting, was a chance encounter by a friend of mine who said I must sit down with you.

Frank Luntz:

And I admit that I was going to not show up, I was going to cancel the meeting and probably in the year 2020, you're the single most important person I met. You look at that data, you know how much people need and want in value technology, but you also know the consequences. What have you learned in the last seven days? The Wall Street Journal has been pummeling Facebook, and really shining a bright light on social media. What have you learned over the last week that would be helpful for all the people who are on this Zoom?

Tristan Harris:

Thank you, Frank. And really pleasure to be here with both you and Daniel. So for those who don't know, over the last seven days, last five days, I think, The Wall Street Journal has released a new series called The Facebook Files. This looks like it's the largest event, I would say, we'd call this the largest event since Cambridge Analytica, in terms of revealing research that the company has been aware of harms across the balance sheets of teenage mental health, increases in teen suicide, body image issues for teenagers, the radicalization of political parties.

Tristan Harris:

There's evidence of the way that Facebook changed its ranking systems that then caused political parties to actually tell Facebook, "We know that you changed your algorithm and we switched it to – We know because we have to publish now 80% negative content about our opponents to even get any attention the way that we used to." We know that publishers had to learn to publish more negative content to get any attention. I just really recommend that people check out The Facebook Files because it's really the first time that there's evidence of so many of the things, Frank, that you and I, because we've done one or two of these before,

Tristan Harris:

have been saying for a long time and then what we said in The Social Dilemma. For those who don't know The Social Dilemma just also won a couple Emmy Awards, it came out a year ago, we're coming up on the one year ... we just passed the one year anniversary. And really what The

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

Social Dilemma is about, to answer your question, Frank, is it's not about technology, it's about these, certain kinds of incentive systems that are built into technology. So if you take a look at Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, what do they have in common?

Tristan Harris: They seem like they're different products. Like one is a video broadcasting site, that's YouTube. The other is a social networking tweet site, Twitter. So they seem like different categories, but their business models are all optimizing for the same thing, which is whatever gets people's attention. And so I think that is the generator function of all the harms because in the same way that values blind economy, that's counting GDP, well, war is good for GDP, prostitution and drugs are good for GDP, human trafficking is good for GDP.

Tristan Harris: In the same way, things that are good for attention that are not things that we want, well, body image issues that have kids basically infinite looking at anorexia videos, that's really good for keeping time spent, up. Addiction is really good for keeping time spent, up. Negativity and outrage and things that go viral that are, as we said in The Social Dilemma, fake news spreads six times faster than true news because the speaker who can say anything that they want to unconstrained, meaning they can lie, is going to do better than a person who has to wait and say, what's actually true? the unconstrained actor is going to win.

Tristan Harris: So per your slides, Frank, that the thing here is not that it's about technology being good or bad. It's about the kind of technology and incentives that we bind to the technology. And the business model of maximizing engagement. What we found out in The Wall Street Journal articles, and I could run through some of the things that we found. But basically Facebook knew, for example, that they were increasing some of the negativity in society. And they had research showing that they knew that. But Zuckerberg didn't want to change the ranking algorithms of Facebook if it was going to hurt engagement.

Tristan Harris: And now you could say he's just greedy, or he just wants the profits, or he just needs to keep his share price up. He also is bound because he's set up a set of incentives, all of his employees, all those people at Facebook, most of them are incentivized by how much they can get engagement up. So all throughout the company, imagine you have a bonus structure where everyone's salaries and paychecks come in through maximizing engagement, but then you find out that, let's say, 50% of that engagement is causing genocides in Ethiopia, is causing body image issues in kids, you can't say we need to halve our engagement because now all your employees are going to leave because they won't be able to get their benefits. You've actually gone against the own incentive structure for your own employees.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Frank Luntz: So what is it – so I want to know what it is causing, and I'm going to add a little bit of pressure on you. Which is that we have two members of the judiciary committee — by the way, I'm in Belfast. I'm actually here in conflict capital of the globe. And that's why I'm so happy, Daniel, that you're involved, but Tristan, I got one more for you. You've got two members of the judiciary committee, say that fast five times, they have to deal with this. What should they know? If I gave you 30 seconds, what should they know that you know about what's happening?
- Tristan Harris: Well, I think, Daniel, in a moment I think will help elevate the conversation to what kind of change is needed. Because unfortunately, while I wish that there was, you know, a couple of laws or bills that we could pass to get to some better state, the challenge is that this is based, this is now baked into the infrastructure that we use, is now the fabric of our democracy, and virality, the thing that is causing this,
- Tristan Harris: I think of this, everyone's now familiar with the idea of a lab leak in Wuhan, the Wuhan Institute of Virology that was doing potentially gain-of-function research on what viruses can go viral. Well, people now know what "R0" is, the idea of something that can go viral and how many people does it infect? The purpose of Facebook is to be the Zuckerberg Institute of Virology. The purpose is to create and allow for things to go viral across the world and be spread to millions of people, and to literally take the R0 to be as high as possible.
- Tristan Harris: We want it to infect as many people, and spread to as many people because that makes engagement go up. And that's the core thing, so when you say what's the law that we can pass? What's the issue that we can change? It's not going to be as simple as that. I think have to change the nature. We can't have it be the Zuckerberg Institute of Virology. It has to turn into something safer.
- Frank Luntz: So, I will warn you that there is a Facebook executive that's on this conversation. So don't be surprised if I challenge you. Harry Clark, who is one of the best minds in communication, public relations, he's asking as part of the Q & A one more, and this will go to both of you, Why not just boycott Facebook? Why – is that a strategy you're considering? And I don't want to sandbag you. Someone from Facebook is going to hear this. Why not boycott Facebook? He wants to know.
- Tristan Harris: Well, I mean, if people could boycott Facebook and there was meaningful alternatives that were not the same problem, and TikTok is basically has the same problem, YouTube has many of the same problems, Snapchat has different, but some of the same problems. So boycotting, and then going, there's nowhere safe to go. That's one of the issues, and the second issue is that you can't really boycott it when your life depends on it.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Tristan Harris: So one of the problems that's actually in the article about teenage girls, is that you can't actually say, it's not an individual choice to say, I don't want to use these things, because I'm going to ostracize myself. And if all my friends are still on it, you'd have to get the entire world to boycott it together and move to something else. Because it's fundamentally been baked into our lives. Small businesses have to use it to advertise. How else are they going to reach their users and their customers?
- Tristan Harris: They have owned the capacity to reach people. If we want this video to reach as many people as possible, we probably want to post it on not some random, tiny video site no one's going to click on, but you want to post it on the one that gets as many views and likes, et cetera. So you're going to post it on Facebook and you're going to post it on YouTube. So they have a monopoly on reach, which makes it very hard for people to boycott it and say, "Let's go somewhere else."
- Frank Luntz: Daniel, you, even though you're involved in this issue, I look at you as being essential to public discourse. Because you're looking at it – You're looking for solutions, you're looking for results, you are one of the strongest thought leaders in how we talk to each other now in society. I'll ask you the question I asked Tristan, would you recommend a boycott knowing that there's a Facebook person on this conversation, and do you have any solutions to the problems that Tristan has raised?
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: I think it's kind of like what Tristan said that there's a monopoly, but not a monopoly in terms of a government contract monopoly, but in terms of a network dynamic monopoly. Network dynamics create natural monopolies where one, as you get increasing returns on the more people that are in a network, then, you fundamentally have to engage with that thing, because there's something like exclusive value offered there. If some somebody decides they're not going to sell on Amazon and they have a small business, they just can't compete with the ones that are doing that. Or similarly, if they're advertising on Facebook.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: So one of the things is when we built the laws around monopoly and antitrust, network dynamics didn't exist yet, those were built before internet and those dynamics. So, we actually have to take the emergence of the internet and the emergence of network dynamics and Metcalfe law and say, we actually have to rethink that monopoly didn't just mean a crony capitalist government contract thing. It means-
- Frank Luntz: Can you – for those of us who only went to the University of Pennsylvania, can you dumb it down just a little bit, so we understand what you're talking about?
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: Nobody wants to use 20 different social networks and have to remember all the logins and find some friends in one place and some friends in

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

another place just like they don't want to use 20 different kinds of currencies. So if there's a currency that everyone accepts, that currency kind of gets a monopoly value. If there is a network that everybody's on and can see your friends from high school and your family and the news and all the things you're interested in with one login, like those stats you showed, people said it was easier and made their life worse.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Like everyone who has conveniences where they don't exercise and don't do the things that actually strengthen them or read or study, there's a lot of things that make life easier and worse. And so, where something has a network dynamic where the more people that engage with it, the more value it has. Because now everybody's producing content, everyone I want to find is a on there. The AI will curate all the content to show me exactly what I want to see, but which part of me wants to see.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Well, the AI's going to optimize based on my behavior, and how long I spend on site and how many things I like and comment on and share. And it happens that the things that appeal to my existing biases and increase my sense of certainty in an uncertain world and the things that scare me and kind of create emotional responses, that make me less clear about the fact that I don't want to be on Facebook and go do other stuff with my life, and the things that reinforce tribal identities, maximize time on site and engagement. So, it's one of those things where you can manufacture demand from the supply side and then say, "We're just giving people what they want." But you're appealing to the weakest, lowest angels of people's nature and then doing so. With radical asymmetries of power.

Frank Luntz: So Richard Dreyfuss, who's always been a friend of these Fridays with Frank and his, just his brain is incredible – Is there proof that social media is leading to incivility, leading to anger? We may think it, but, Daniel, is there proof of this?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Well, this is what you were talking to Tristan about regarding what The Wall Street Journal has been showing this week. And there are obviously previous cases and it's this week and what will be continuing, as more information comes out is, stuff that Tristan and Jaron Lanier have been saying would happen for nine years because the business model guarantees it. Now there is increasing proof in the form of hard internal documents and disclosure.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: But, for anyone who's been kind of paying attention, the business model of maximizing people's time on site and maximizing engagement, combined with the technology of behavioral modification AIs, was bound to be antithetical to democracy and antithetical to health. So Tristan can give the proof. But for the people who've been paying attention, it's kind of like saying, is there proof that deforestation is happening? And as soon as you're looking at the financial incentive to cut down the trees in an area

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

where the trees alive or worth less than the trees dead, you're kind of like it's going to happen.

Tristan Harris: Right. And the same way that a tree's worth more dead than alive, and a whale's worth more dead than alive, in this case, our attention, it's easily more sought with outrage it will be, that will be the profitable model. Us being happy or civil, talking to each other off screens and not on screens is not profitable for any of the social media companies, specifically some of the data. And again, I recommend people check, I think it's the third article that The Wall Street Journal released.

Tristan Harris: They talk about actually, due to some of my own work, Facebook had changed its core metric. It used to be maximizing for time spent, I was part of a movement called Time Well Spent, that was my first TED Talk, Facebook decided actually Mark Zuckerberg wrote in his January 2018 post, his yearly goal, his new goal for the year was to take Facebook in the direction of Time Well Spent, not time spent. He took my words. Then he said, we're going to change the way we measure success at Facebook, we're going to use something called Meaningful Social Interactions, MSI.

Tristan Harris: And this Wall Street Journal article, I recommend everybody reads it, showed how meaningful social interactions they were trying to give... They assign different points, so for example, you got one point, for a post would get one point if it had a like. It got five points, if it got a reaction or a reshare without any text. It got 15 points for what they call a non-significant comment. And then it got 30 points for significant comments and significant reshares. What that really meant was, the more long comment threads an article created, which is to say more arguments, the more those things got boosted to the top.

Tristan Harris: So whenever there was an argument, it was like, Hey, let's put that at the front and center for everyone's feed, and then do that in a decentralized way for the entire world all at once, for 2 billion people. And when you basically highlight divisiveness and disagreement and incivility, which is the thing, Frank, that you're trying to fight. And one thing, you and I were just at the Milken conference and there's a lot of people who are funding things like, Hey, how do we do America in one room? How do we fund with hundreds of millions of dollars of depolarization for the country? And let's have people together physically in rooms talking to each other.

Tristan Harris: That's great. But how's that going to compare to the four hours a day people spend seeing incivility every single day? And if 90% of people became civil, but only 10% are left that are incivil, then what does Twitter and Facebook show you? Well, they only show you all the bad faith in-civil people, so that keeps just completely blasting over and plastering your whole feed. And so it continues to look like the world is in-civil even if many people are starting to get better.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

Tristan Harris: We cannot have that system with democracy period. Open societies cannot allow this situation to be. And, Daniel, I'd love for you to speak about that because I think, the reason why I wanted to have Daniel here, Frank, is I think this isn't just about less toxic social media. How do we just rein in? Let's take the reins and if we just move it five degrees this way, we would suddenly have a better democracy, plus Facebook. We have to look at a deeper problem statement there to get to where we want to go.

Frank Luntz: Okay. So I'm going to ask both of you and you can go in either order, solve it. By the way, we've got a lot of parents on this, and I'm going to ask you in a moment to scare the living hell out of them. Give me your most frightening conclusion based on all the research you've done on young people. But before I do, we're adults, do either of you have an actual solution that you're going to be presenting to Congress? Either of you.

Tristan Harris: Daniel, do you want to try to describe?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: I can say some things that would be directionally right. So we read all the documents around the founding of this country and know that the idea of universal public education and a adequate Fourth Estate were considered prerequisite institutions for democracy to function. The people had to be educated and they had to have access to the information to participate in governance. There's a very deep question of how-

Frank Luntz: Hold on one second. Those people who are watching, because you, actually, we're 25 minutes into this, and I can see the number of participants is actually growing. I'm going to focus on kids in about five minutes. So if you guys want to send out an email, want to send out a text to people saying tune in, in about five minutes, we're going to specifically focus on what social media's doing to your children. So I suggest you stay on. Daniel, please continue.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: So you can actually see how the critical role of the Fourth Estate following the printing press and it's been well analyzed, the role that the printing press had and the formation of democracy, we don't need a small educated nobility who rules everybody because everyone can have access to textbooks and newspaper. They can be educated and we can come to a town hall and participate in our own governance. But this was based on the idea that we could get something like fair and independent news and all read the same thing and then be able to have an educated discussion about it.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: So when you have an internet where there's radically more information, than anyone could begin to parse, what information you see ends up being determined by curation processes. I'm not going to see all the videos, I'm

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

not going to see all the news, I'm not going to see all the posts. And so it's not like we respond as rational actors to the best information. We respond to whatever YouTube's algorithms and Facebook's algorithms put in front of me. And they put it in front of me based on a business model, that's maximizing time on site based on engagement.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: And it happens to be that that which appeals to my existing biases and emotions, maximizes time on site. So, someone on the far right, and the far left when they're looking at their newsfeed and how they're coming to understand the world might see nothing in common. And yet, it's representing the world to them. So you have to say, if democracy doesn't exist without a Fourth Estate and people having a shared sense of what base reality is, and the internet, and specifically network curation based internet, has destroyed the Fourth Estate irrevocably. How do you remake a democracy post-internet network age? Because, people can't do shared choice making if they don't have a basis for shared sense making of what's going on.

Frank Luntz: So answer that question then. How do you do it? It's the right question, but I'm pushing you now. How do you do it?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Well, you can see that China decided, well, let's control our internet and not have radically divisive ideas that end up making people against being good citizens. And you can see that there's an effectiveness in that, but it's antithetical to the idea of an open society. So you either keep an open society with these type of network dynamics and it just becomes increasingly chaotic and fails, or you try to apply the China model. Those are the only two things currently as the possibilities.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: And what we want is how do you have something like open speech, but with this degree of radical amplification possibility that doesn't become total chaos? And you have to look at what is the incentive for the amplification. If there's a tool that can curate it and make stuff radically more amplified, what is the incentive guiding it? And so let's say for instance, if Facebook is the most powerful behavioral modification machine in the history of the world, that can gather micro targeted information on people and then specifically put information in front of them to control their behavior for advertisers,

Daniel Schmachtenberger: but the people who it's gathering information about and influencing are not the customer. But it's gathering privileged information about people to then sell it to the customer, who is the advertiser. This should be a break of a fiduciary contract where you're not allowed to gather privileged information about someone and then use it against.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: If the user was the customer, rather than the advertiser being the customer, and as a result, the optimization algorithm was not to sell

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

people ads or to maximize time to sell them ads, but was to find the metrics that actually correspond to people's real quality of life, and the AI's were oriented to that, we might start to get somewhere, but that's the beginning of a radically different business model. An ad-based business model with AI controlled behavioral mechanics will break democracies. They don't go together.

Frank Luntz:

Tristan, I know you agree with this, but can you explain it to someone who only went to Penn? Daniel, half of Congress is not going to understand this. They still call the tape recorder a machine, or, sorry, a microphone, speaking the machine. No, it's actually a microphone. They don't even know what the internet is. Tristan, go ahead.

Tristan Harris:

Well, I think the thing that Daniel's saying is that, an advertising-supported... Imagine, Frank, I put a brain implant in you and I actually talked to the guys at Neuralink once about this, right? Imagine Neuralink, Elon Musk's Neuralink project, I'm going to put a brain implant in your brain. It's going to shape the thoughts ... it's going to give you thinking superpowers. But let's imagine that brain implant in your brain, is going to intimately shape every thought that you have from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed and your dreams.

Tristan Harris:

That someone attached the advertising business model to that Neuralink brain implant. So now you start having thoughts that you didn't even intend to have, and it's actually in control. We would just say immediately when I say it that way, it should be clear. Maybe we can have brain implants, but we certainly would never allow brain implants with an advertising-based business model. What Daniel is saying, is that we cannot have democracy, and the primary brain implant of that democracy, be an advertising based business model. When Daniel says fiduciary, what he's referring to is a brain implant that would have your best interest at heart.

Tristan Harris:

Just like a doctor, theoretically is supposed to have your best interest at heart. And a psychotherapist, you're going to tell the psychotherapist, all this privileged deep information that's deep in your psyche, they have to have your best interest at heart. What we're saying is such a deep change. That we have to have technology that's humane with our best interests at heart. Now, the reason that's such an uncomfortable conversation is that I believe Facebook's stock price has not moved that much this week, despite the fact of these awful revelations. And it's worth about a trillion dollars.

Tristan Harris:

And that trillion-dollar valuation comes from the advertising-based business model. So it's as if we had an entire industry of psychotherapy that was based on a manipulative business model, that was worth a trillion dollars. But now we have to switch to what does it look like to be in the interest of people? And the question is, that's a very dramatic economic

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

change. So I think it's more that our brain wants to shy away from that, because it's so uncomfortable that we'd have to make a change as deep as that. That's one of the big things that has to change.

Frank Luntz: I want you guys to know that one of the comments is, maybe we need more people like you in Congress, that it's not your fault that you're speaking the truth, it's their fault for not understanding it. And actually that's not such a bad idea. Let me ask, really –

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Actually, I wanted to speak to what you said earlier about what people in Congress would understand. Because of who the people in government are, or the structure of government, if it cannot understand the nature of the issues it's supposed to regulate. And particularly, as technology is evolving rapidly faster, than the people who are in there are able to understand the consequences of, then it will just break, right? If the regulatory apparatus can't understand the effects of what it needs to regulate, it will just break.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: And, this is, the key thing that we're talking about is we're right now talking about the case of social media tech, following a business model, but we could also be talking about CRISPR and tabletop. CRISPR emerging, where we're getting very, very close to cheap ability to make bio weapons for everybody. And with regard to AI and generative text AI, we're getting very, very close to the ability to make content in your voice, saying anything, that anyone can do and flood the internet with more information that passes the Turing test.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: And Elon said this. He said, If we wait to regulate AI and the other technologies that operate this quickly, AI specifically, he was talking about, till after the effects have been seen for as long as we did with cigarettes or DDT it's way too late. The effects will have been irreversible. So when we say exponential tech, what we mean is exponentially faster to scale, exponentially larger effects that can happen from exponentially smaller groups of people.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: It doesn't take state actors, like it did to make news, to make AI weapons, bio weapons, CRISPR weapons. And so the big question becomes in the presence of the speed and scale of emerging technologies, our processes of governance are just inadequate. They're too slow, they are too divided. And this is why China has done a good job of saying, "No, we actually have to control these technologies, otherwise they'll break the country. How do we do it?"

Daniel Schmachtenberger: But it's in a particular direct. If we want something like an open society in the presence of exponential tech, how do we make a regulatory apparatus capable of regulating what it needs to, in time and ahead of time, that is

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

aligned with the civil values of an open society? That's the central question of our time, I believe.

Frank Luntz: I want a simple number. A number. Daniel, what percent of Congress, the House and the Senate, is really intellectually not ready to tackle this issue? What percent?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: I don't know. I don't know them enough.

Frank Luntz: What would you guess?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: I would trust your guess over mine on this.

Frank Luntz: Okay. Tristan, you've been testifying, so you, I am not letting you out of this. What percent really shouldn't be regulating this that they do not know?

Tristan Harris: I think it's very understandable why people are skeptical of Congress to regulate this effectively when they hear senators ask Mark Zuckerberg questions like, "How do you make money?" And he responds famously, "Senator, we sell ads." If I was Zuckerberg, I would've paid for that moment to happen and maybe I did. Because it generates the impression forever in people's minds. It sticks, Frank, in your language, into the minds of the public. That government cannot regulate this, right?

Tristan Harris: So I've created the outcome that I want. And someone, I noticed in the chat, was talking about, do social media companies own the members of Congress? Well, let's say that this narrative gets really strong. Well, it's a trillion dollar market cap corporation. It's not very hard to start buying off any of the members of Congress that get critical. And a couple will make some public statements, but what's really what we're trying to do here and what Daniel's really saying. Is that this is existential for our society continuing to work.

Tristan Harris: This will break our society, we've been saying that for eight years, The Social Dilemma says that. It's clearer than ever. January 6th, I had text messages from people, Joe Rogan saying, Oh my God, I thought The Social Dilemma. That's so eerie, all this stuff is coming true. I remember in the film, people may remember, the guy who invented Facebook's business model, Tim Kendall. He was asked on camera, "What are you worried about is the consequence of this?" And I think he was recorded saying this in 2019 or 2018. And he said, "Civil War."

Tristan Harris: And I remember that, I think Netflix wanted that to not be in the film, because it sounded like it was too aggressive a statement to make. It sounded like that wasn't where we were. That was before the pandemic. And when people saw January 6th, and they see the results, and people

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

should read this Wall Street Journal article about the outrage economy and how it drove up, basically more insanity. It makes perfect sense. And the point Daniel's trying to say is that, we're trying to ask the question. If we don't want to beat China by becoming China, then we have to develop an open society alternative to exponential technology that does not result in catastrophe and chaos.

Tristan Harris: And I spent some time in Washington, D.C. And part of the reason, Frank, I wanted to do this with your audience, because I know you have a lot of listeners that are in D.C. and that are curious to get to this point, is that we're trying to see who resonates with this and wants to have a serious conversation about the more comprehensive change that's needed.

Frank Luntz: But I'm being asked again and again, both in people who are texting me, emailing me, and in this comment right here, everybody says we got to do something, but I don't trust Washington to do it. What's the answer? The direct language – I don't want Washington making the decision for me or my children, what we're going to see. Well?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: I can speak to this. One of the things we've seen during COVID is the breakdown of the sense of a shared trustable authority or institution. And, when it comes to news media, and even when it comes to scientists and public intellectuals weighing in on the science, there's just radical polarization of what would be a trusted authority. And so, people rightly don't trust Washington, but they would also rightly not trust private companies that have interests that are exactly opposite of their own, and radical asymmetries of data manipulation capability.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: So the question becomes when you have technology that is this asymmetrically powerful, who could you trust to govern it? Given humanity's track record with power. And yet, whoever had the cannons in the past is nothing like who has the AI's and all the world's information, the behavioral dynamics on your children. And so as we follow an exponential curve of power, there's this core governance question of we've never done all that good a job of being great stewards of power, and now we have radically increasing exponential power. How do we govern it?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: And the whole thing with we don't trust Washington is, Washington was never supposed to be a thing separate from a form of by the people governance. It was supposed to be that the state was given the ability to regulate predatory market interests while still allowing healthy market interests, to ensure the values of the people that were encoded into law could be implemented with a monopoly of violence. But the state could only check the market if the people checked the state. And that ... everything you can read by the founding fathers and the declaration and

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

the constitution was all about the people's ability to oversight and check the state and be engaged in governance.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: When the people stop checking the government, the government gets captured by the market and you get short-termism, crony capitalism, regulatory capture, those types of things. So ultimately there is a cultural revolution that has to happen of people who get committed to actually being able to make sense of reality together and make effective choices together and participate with the remaking of 21st century governance. 21st century Democracy, Republic, Open Society, whatever you want to call it. And the creation of institutions that actually can be trusted because of the right types of checks and balances on power and oversight process, with this technology.

Frank Luntz: Okay, I'm going to ask this, I'm going to read it from Eric Schwartz. "Due to forceful regulation, banks are obligated to know their customers and there's no room for anonymity. Why shouldn't social media be governed the same way? If there was no anonymity and the platforms were obliged to know how to access participants, would that help?" Either of you.

Tristan Harris: I'll just respond. Something that we've been saying also for about five years, just like banking has Know Your Customer laws and so on, KYC, there is eventually especially going to need to be that with social media and online publishing because of what Daniel was talking about with GPT-3. So for those who don't know, when you say GPT-3, or deep fakes, people have heard about this term, right? I'll just quickly say what this was.

Tristan Harris: Daniel and I were actually just with one of the top AI research people in the entire world. And they were saying how much this field has progressed. You can basically say, "Write me a novel in the voice of James Joyce about the topic of, democracy or something like that." And it would write you a hundred page book. I could say, Hey, write me a article about why the COVID vaccine is dangerous and with lots of charts and graphs and, and actually criticize with the names of the logical fallacies that people are using, that makes them wrong about the vaccine and why they actually shouldn't trust it.

Tristan Harris: And it'll actually generate like a hundred page research paper with charts and graphs that it'll take biostatisticians like a year to actually parse out what's right or what's wrong about that. That capacity to instantly flood the internet with information ... And by the way, for those who don't believe me, do a Google search for "open AI." And I don't know what they call this video, they can actually do programming. So you can actually tell this GPT-3 AI, Hey, write me a computer program, a game, where there's a moving asteroid. Whenever I hit the letter, the left and right arrows, it goes back and forth, make the asteroid bigger.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Tristan Harris: I say all that and it writes the entire code of the video game for me, I'm just saying in natural language what I want. So in the next election, Frank, we're moving to a world and this is not sci-fi. So people might hear this as alarmism or moral panic, and for who believe that this is moral panic, listen to the fact that we were saying these things eight years ago and all of them have come true. We're about to hit a world where, in the next election, midterm elections, for those who don't remember in 2016, there is this popping up of these fake local news websites, The Denver Post, The Cincinnati Herald, I don't know the names of the fake ones, you can basically make them up.
- Tristan Harris: GPT-3, you can also say, Spin up a local news website with the fonts and everything, and the big sections at the top. It'll generate the entire website. And it looks perfect, it looks totally indistinguishable. Then generate lots of articles about why the other side is untrustworthy and he beat his dog and whatever. And it'll actually just generate thousands of these websites. We're getting so close to that being possible. And the reason I'm saying this is to answer Eric Schwartz's question about why we need to know our customers, why we need verified identity.
- Tristan Harris: Because if we don't have the sense that someone who generated this comment or this post, or this text, is a human being, that's traceable to some kind of ID, we're not going to have a working open society. So table stakes going into the future is we're going to have some kind of zero knowledge proof identity. And people who are following this closely know that that's one of the big changes that's going to need to make. When we talk about Congress regulating these issues, we're often talking about looking backwards in time at the historical issues –
- Tristan Harris: How do we deal with these comment threads on Facebook, or like the stuff from like four years ago issues. We're missing the fact that, what Daniel's saying, is the first derivative of how technology is constantly changing and generating new issues, second- and third- order effects, faster than any of our governance process is keeping up. So what we really need is a new kind of governance process. We need a Manhattan Project for governing exponential technologies that move faster.
- Tristan Harris: And I would actually say similar to the Einstein–Szilard letter that was written to FDR in 1939, that said, if we don't do this and open society values don't have nuclear bombs, if Nazism gets the nuclear bomb, or if Communism gets the nuclear bomb, they will run in the future. Because whoever wield the power of exponential technologies will run the world. And, we're at another choice point today, where we have to have open societies consciously employ this technology and buy into the predatory negative aspects. Otherwise we're seeing what China's doing and moving much faster.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Frank Luntz: Well, I don't want us to become China. And so there have been several comments about that. Just because China is doing it doesn't make it right. They don't value freedom, they don't value democracy, they don't value the things that we insist on.
- Tristan Harris: Agreed. And that's why what Daniel was saying is actually ... Go ahead, Daniel, sorry.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: I'd like to connect what Tristan is saying to the question that you asked about rigorous identity. So obviously being able to know, was this a human that produced it? Or was this AI? It'd be pretty valuable. But even just, is this the human that it seems like it is, or is this a fake account sock puppet that is part of a state actor propaganda farm? That's pretty valuable. Because we forensically find those types of bot farms and fake actor firms all the time.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: And what they can do, is use Facebook's split testing algorithm to see what is stickiest for certain populations and continue to modify the content they produce even without AI, to push vulnerable populations. Now, the AI just gets to take that exponentially. So obviously, rigorous identity would be valuable. But then this question that comes back again, it's like saying regulation would be valuable, who do we trust to have the rigorous identity associated with all of someone's online behaviors?
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: Including, through changes in government that will never forget that, where now some despotic government comes in in the future, someone that I didn't vote for, or didn't like, but now that is an unerasable memory. So we get to see on either sides here. We're like, okay, we actually want anonymity because we don't trust anybody. On the other side, the anonymity makes it to where there's no possibility for justice or knowing what is true or not true.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: This is a hard issue. And it corresponds to ... It's pretty hard, as Tristan was mentioning about the war for, the arms race for nukes, it's pretty hard to make nukes. Enriching uranium's difficult, the precision engineering that was needed for the rockets was hard. It's not hard to make drone weapons anymore, home-based drones with homemade bombs on them. It's not hard to take papers that are written about the cutting edge of AI and reverse engineer them and make crypto, cyber-weapons and AI-tech weapons.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: The thing about exponential tech is that the idea of decentralizing tech, we have this kind of romantic Silicon Valley idea of this means democratized is power for everyone. But it also means catastrophe weapons for everyone. When you have catastrophe weapons for everybody and it's non-state actors, and there's no way to even be able to visualize it, you can't have mutually assured destruction. You can't create

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

equilibrium. So then the only other answer so far has been okay, well, either catastrophe weapons for everyone, if you want something like freedom. Or, ubiquitous surveillance.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Ubiquitous surveillance is a good answer. If we know what everyone's doing in their basement, nobody can do work on AI weapons. Those two answers are both so terrible. We need a better answer. So in the presence of decentralizing exponential power, how do you not have ubiquitous surveillance, and not have centralized access to that personalized data, and yet still have something that can create anti-fragility in the presence of that much power that even small actor groups could engage with?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: There are some answers that are neither, just allow the chaos to continue or become oppressive. But we'd say civilizations typically teeter between – a civilization is, how do we get a lot of people to participate in some way that creates order? We can get the order through imposition and it becomes increasingly oppressive, or we fail to get the order and it becomes chaotic, and it fails on either side. The idea of democracy is that we can have emergent order rather than imposed. Because we can all make sense of the world together and make sense of each other's values, and have some basis for shared choice making. This is ultimately cultural.

Frank Luntz: I promise to focus on kids. And I've actually got a young person who's watching this right now. I'm going to read her question. I'm a senior in high school, inspired after watching The Social Dilemma, I'm spending a year researching practical ways for young people to limit their use of social media. I'm curious to know your view on the following. How do the tactics to curb social media use differ by age youth groups, specifically preteens, teens in college? What advice, what guidance would you give her as she seeks to understand the difference between those three age groups?

Tristan Harris: Can you say the age groups again? Preteen, teen-

Frank Luntz: Preteen, teen in college.

Tristan Harris: Preteen, teen in college. I mean I will say that I'm actually, I don't consider myself an expert on the developmental psychology of children at these different ages. What I can speak of is, so long as the business model of TikTok and Snapchat and Instagram is, I have to race down your brain stem and create artificial social obligation and artificial social reciprocity that you feel the pressure of getting likes, if the other guy does and then you don't get it. That's thing is just not compatible with children's development.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Tristan Harris: It turns kids into validation seeking machines. And it creates social pressure and anxiety. That's simply not... Frankly, it's not good for any of those populations, right? It's not good, I don't feel good, none of us feel good when we feel like ... Frank, I'm sure you get this all the time. So if you get a comment on Twitter, you post to Twitter a lot, I follow you, and you get 100 comments on a post that you make. And 99 of the comments are positive, and one of the comments is negative. Where does your attention go?
- Frank Luntz: Of course, of course.
- Tristan Harris: You've got 99 to one positive.
- Frank Luntz: But doesn't matter.
- Tristan Harris: Not neutral, our brains focus where? On the negative. And do you think you're alone in this experience or do you think that everyone feels it? And do you think that children feel it more than you or less than you? More than you. So what we have, is essentially a system that creates overwhelming pressure and negativity and the conditions for, just not psychological health. Daniel has this nice line about, how do you measure the health of a society? And it's a hard thing to even measure the social health of a society, but you could measure it as the inverse of the amount of addiction in society. And then I don't know if you want to riff on that, but I don't have an answer to your question.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: I would like to answer her question.
- Frank Luntz: Go for it.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: Because the thing Tristan is saying relates to the question someone asked about boycotts earlier. When you have a trillion dollar organization with 2 billion people's behavioral data run by AIs, and then you have a person, which is the little person, the asymmetry of that info war. Because the person wants to control their own thoughts and behavior, but Facebook wants to control their thoughts and behavior. But it is a many orders of magnitude, asymmetric info war to control their thoughts and behavior.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: That's such a problem that you can't just say, Well, let's leave it up to the individual person. It's like saying, Let's leave up to individual people, turning their lights off as the solution to climate change and environmental destruction. It's like, No, that just really doesn't work. This needs solutions that are at the scale of where they're coming from. And switching the burden of responsibility from the juggernauts to the individual is just, like, a bad move, both ethically and from effectiveness. So that's what Tristan's trying to get to. But we have this person here who's asking a question about what she can actually do. So I want to speak to it.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Frank Luntz: And by the way, this has been Jordan's focus now, since you all created, you got people agitated, you got people focused. Now you got to start to deliver for them. What would you say to her?
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: I'm not going to make a distinction between the three age groups. I'm going to say what's true in general, and then the developmental application of it is something that you should totally work on. People are more susceptible to addictive things. What we'd call a hyper-normal stimuli, stimuli that gives more dopamine or hit faster, whether it is sugar or drugs or social media type stimulation or porn. They're more susceptible to that when they're in a hypo-normal environment, meaning they're less fulfilled than in an evolutionary environment.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: In an evolutionary environment, humans evolved to be part of a tribe where you were having a lot of rich social interactions, a lot of embodied movements, a lot of time in nature, those types of things. So, the lonelier people are, the more susceptible they're going to be to Facebook and Instagram. The less creatively fulfilled they are. If you can find groups of friends, groups of people and create richer possibilities of offline engagement, it's the thing that'll help them the most.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: If they can have a place where there's drum circles every Friday night and everybody's dancing and having drum circles, if there's musical things where they're getting together and having kind of jazz fun stuff, if there's craft places, if there's places where they get to have circling, to do meaningful, like, sharing about what's going on for them. If people feel a richer fullness and other opportunities, they will be less susceptible to that. Then you can actually start to have, not only are there more fulfilling other opportunities, but there's actually social connectivity and status associated with something else.
- Frank Luntz: We've got seven minutes to go, and there are more people on this now than there were after 10 minutes. I've never of had that happen in any of these. Jared Carney asks: The primary issue for me is not manipulation, although it's a big issue, it's surveillance. If Facebook's business model is predicated on conflict, plus knowing everything and trying to steer commerce, how do you counteract that?
- Tristan Harris: I mean, this is real the topic of Shoshana Zuboff's book Surveillance Capitalism. That when you control this much of people's lives then you can – let's say, someone builds an alternative social platform funded by venture capitalists. There's got to be some investors I'm sure on this call, many people might be wondering, well, what if we funded some alternative social network that because we want to do it in a way that doesn't capture people's data? Well, that will be funded by venture capital.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Tristan Harris: Venture capital expects big multiples of returns. There's actually no way to exit that, except by getting acquired by one of the existing, big surveillance capitalism companies. Whether it's Google or Facebook, et cetera. You'd have to do it in some way where it's an independent thing. Something more like a Wikipedia or a blockchain type project where the data is kept separate somehow. But you're not going to be able to transition these existing platforms. Daniel, do you want to jump in?
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: You could, you need something that is like the equivalent of HIPAA.
- Frank Luntz: Which is.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: The medical privacy regulations. So, if I have a medical file so that I go into a ICU somewhere, they can pull up what I'm allergic to and those types of things. It's very sensitive information about me. Everything that's in my life medical file. That information could be sold to drug companies, it could be sold to lots of places that would be interested in doing stuff with it. It's really, really important that that isn't sold.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: So there is state based governance of that data and how that data can be shared and not shared. And so, when you're saying manipulation is second to surveillance, the purpose of surveillance is manipulation, right? The gathering of the data is to use the data for a purpose. And whether it's to effect how you vote or to effect your market behavior or to effect how you effect the cultural zeitgeist that will effect market behavior and voting of others, or to be able to arrest you for things that we decide later are seditious or whatever it was. Ultimately, it's the control of behavior that we're gathering the data for.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: And so, how do we create safety of the data? And this is where the question has been. Do we trust Facebook with it? No. Do we trust Washington with it? No. Do we want there to be a place where there is data so that we know that it's a person and not a bot putting the information out? Yes. So do we need to create a better checks and balances and oversight process to ensure trustworthiness? Yes.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: Do technologies like blockchains do part of the thing? Where you can do provenance on data and see how it moves and have things where the data only becomes released if certain flags happen, otherwise it's in a decentralized rather than the centralized database. There's partial solutions there, and we could work on full solutions. But like with the HIPPA kind of thing, it's that that data, there's a Hippocratic oath that is saying, that data is being gathered by the doctor who has serving your interest, not the pharmaceutical or anybody else's interest in mind. And we can see it's not perfect.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

- Daniel Schmachtenberger: If Facebook's business model shifted, where the user was the customer, and either that, and / or, as a state, say it got made into being a state utility. So the interest of the state, which would mean that people didn't take views in such antipathy to each other in the state that was basically like second order treason and sedition, but where the interest of the integrity of the state and the interest of the wellbeing of its citizens were actually what was directing its AI and its use of that data as opposed to advertisers.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: And there was the appropriate privacy and protections on it. And I got to adjust the settings and say, "I'm interested in learning these things, I'm interested in being exposed to these other kinds of ideas. Here's what I want my time on site to do. Of all the information, here's what I want it to curate for me. Now we have a situation where, the behavioral data that happens by the fact that I click on stuff, I can't have technology where I click on stuff and not gather behavioral data. But who is storing it and for what purpose? And how is it being stored? Becomes really critical. And it could be stored where, the legal binding of it kept it from being used for purposes other than the ones that I am actually consenting to.
- Tristan Harris: It's like personalized learning, Frank. I mean, think about things like Khan Academy where, yes, you're personalizing information, you're gathering lots of information about where people look like they're getting stuck or what lessons they might want to learn more of, but the purpose of Khan Academy isn't to manipulate you and to click bait and to make you hate the other political party, it's to help increase learning, right? So you could have, that's the kind of thing that we're talking about. Is personalized in the interest of helping society get wiser and more thoughtful, not the direction of whatever gets their attention. I wanted to answer the question –
- Frank Luntz: You can't get these... This conversation doesn't happen. There is no news program that has a conversation like this. Like I'm embarrassed, I have to keep saying to Daniel to simplify, I shouldn't have to do that. And I've got-
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: Well, just like we said the Fourth Estate has broken, obviously, so has education. Because the idea in the founding of this country following the enlightenment and modernity, was that everyone could be educated well enough to understand the issues that law was going to be creating. That would effect and bind their life. If I'm going to be bound by law, I need to understand the issues well enough to get to have a say in that.
- Daniel Schmachtenberger: If the people are not educated well enough to have a say in the law that's going to bind their life, it's not a democracy, it's just a story or a simulation of it. In which case, monarchies might actually be better. And not have all the attention go to flipping back and forth with every four years in internal divisiveness. If we really want it to be a democracy, an

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

effective Fourth Estate and education are prerequisites at the level that is needed for people to understand the issues well enough to participate.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Now, we have to say, using AI and attention tech and all of the modern technologies, could we make new, better educational systems and better participatory governance systems where everybody can't fit in the town hall, but everybody can give input that now these AI can semantically parse and help create propositions that are not vested interest group propositions, but that are saying, What would the best proposition that fulfills the interests of everyone look like? And now we get to work on proposition crafting.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: We could use these same technologies that are destroying open societies to build better ones. That though has to become the central imperative of the time. And it does require a new cultural enlightenment. It does require an educational rise to understand the issues well enough, or it just doesn't matter. It's over. Like, if Congress and the public don't understand the issues well enough then of course, the corporate interests are just going to run and authoritarian nation states employing exponential tech. See both Facebook and Google on one side and China on the other side are deploying exponential tech towards purposes, but neither of them are open societies.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: If the open societies are not also developing and deploying where the power is, then they will just lose. And what we're saying is that, the open societies have to develop and deploy the full suite of modern technologies to create new digital era open societies that can protect against catastrophe, but also protect against dystopias. And that has to be the central imperative.

Frank Luntz: Okay. I got one last central imperative, which is to keep people alive during this, and hopefully at the back end of COVID. And I don't know of any example that frightens me more or angers me more than the crap that's put out against the vaccines. And I go absolutely crazy. And I read it, and I shouldn't because it makes my head explode. Help me here. What can we do? We are coming down to the end of the vaccine process, and we are not going to hit herd immunity.

Frank Luntz: And the US is not even in the top 15 on vaccines anymore because of the crap that's being generated in America about, from social media. How do we combat it when it comes to health? Because, Tristan, your idea that they're going to be able to create these stories with these reports, I've read them, I've seen them. They look real, and I know they're not. How do we combat it right now? Because we don't even have a year to wait on this. We have to do this right now.

Tristan Harris: That's a big question. Daniel, you ...

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Sure. We're not going to. That just loses. In the same way that we're not going to prevent climate change from creating droughts and affecting areas of poverty that will create massive human migration. There are a lot of impending catastrophes that will just happen and we'll just lose that. We could have done a better job with this pandemic at a million points, and so this is why we're thinking a little bit more long range about, what are the even worse catastrophic things that we possibly have time to address and why are we doing so badly at all of them? And what would it take to do a better job at all of them?

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Because if we can't coordinate for climate change, or overfishing, or biodiversity things, or nuclear deproliferation, or stopping AI arms races, or stopping CRISPR arms races, or getting misinformation right, we just fail at everything. So ultimately we have to get better global coordination capacity for global level coordination challenges. If we get that, we get all the other things, otherwise we don't. And so you're talking here about a shared sensemaking of what is true, what is base reality. But in a world where there's a breakdown of trust and a breakdown of trust in what is legitimate authority, you will not get shared sense making.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: So then you either do have to become China and say, I don't care if you don't believe it. And if you think it's terrible, we're going to force it on you. Or you have to say, Well, we're going to just fail. Or you have to say, Oh, we actually have to be able to recreate legitimate authority and not people's faulty belief in it, but a good basis for it. How do we do that? How do we recreate a shared sense of sensemaking? But also not just that. The social contract and social solidarity, that if someone thinks something different than me and they're a fellow countryman, I don't just instantly have antipathy for them.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: I try to steelman rather strong man. What might be true? What values might they hold in their perspective? Because if I just go to a culture war with my fellow countrymen and China doesn't have that problem, but we get to amplify our antipathy towards each other using exponential information tech, then our country's just destroyed, it's over. Open society is. There has to be a process of, how do we do better sense making, but also better understanding of the partial truths and the values in each other's perspectives so that we can find new attractors together.

Frank Luntz: Okay. Daniel, if you're right, we're screwed.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Yeah.

Frank Luntz: If your conclusions are right. Because we're not going to be able to do the things to address the challenges that you lay before us. It cannot, it will not happen.

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Not in the timescale of the issue you're focused on. For this timescale we're screwed.

Frank Luntz: Tristan, you're going to have the last word. You do not have to make people feel good. I want you to end in 45 seconds with what you want people to take away from this conversation. Don't screw it up.

Tristan Harris: I was just going to say that, I think people think that trust can't be recovered from where we are. And I feel, just to say something very concrete, is that if people were to communicate and feel like they're in a way that reflected why people distrust the CDC. That showed ... and if those institutions came out and said, "Yeah, we did flip flop on this and this." People need to feel like they're being told the truth, and with earnestness and sincerity, and not gaslit.

Tristan Harris: And I think the problem in communication is when you communicate to large audiences and you feel like people aren't going to get it, you simplify the message. And you say something that's not completely true, but you force it down people's throats. And those who know that that's happening get rebellious. And we're not going to create a unified understanding until we come with sincerity. And I think, trust is the sort of the fuel that undergirds all of this conversation. And I feel like sincerity and earnestness is the vehicle to reestablishing that trust.

Tristan Harris: And I feel like that's what we're trying to do now. And just to name one thing is, Daniel and I, and some others, are really looking to see in Washington, D.C., especially in the national security community, who resonates and understands with what we've laid out. And we're not trying to be pessimists. We're trying to be very clear about the space of problems and what it will take to actually look ahead so we don't just have another COVID and climate change, we mess those up too.

Tristan Harris: We have a chance right now to not mess up some of the future tech impending dooms that's coming, and we're looking for help. So if you're interested, hope we can all connect through Frank. And I really appreciate, Frank, you giving the opportunity to have this conversation, I think, happy to do more. I know we kept this to an hour. But I think it's incredibly important. And each of the issues go very deep, I mean, the teenage mental health stuff versus the polarization, and how do we deal with the exponential tech issues.

Frank Luntz: Wow. This is incredible. And as Harry Clark says, "Go see Ben Sasse". I need to have the two of you sit down with him. And you don't have to simplify it. Daniel, you can say it exactly as you say it right now, and he'll be with you every step of the way. You guys are brilliant, you guys are the way it should be. Your parents, I'm sure were or are proud of you. You

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Bonus: The Facebook Files with Tristan Harris, Frank Luntz, and Daniel Schmachtenberger

got a great education. This was probably the most important session I've ever done.

Frank Luntz: And I'm grateful for you all for not pulling any punches. For not dumbing things down. And the next time I will go to sleep, will probably be never after all the things that you've just said. So, everyone, thank you. We are not going to do this that often, I'm only going to do it when it really matters, and this time it really matters. So Daniel, I hope people pay attention to you. Tristan, I hope you do another documentary, win another couple Emmy Awards, you deserve them.

Frank Luntz: This session's done, and, Heta do me a favor, post this on YouTube now. Unedited, complete. Let's use Twitter to take a couple segments from this. We're going to use social media the right way to get your message out to as many people as possible. Everyone, goodnight. Good afternoon.

Tristan Harris: Thank you so much.

Daniel Schmachtenberger: Was an honor to be here. Thank you.

Tristan Harris: Thanks, Frank. Your Undivided Attention is produced by the Center for Humane Technology. Our Executive Producer is Stephanie Lepp, our Senior Producer is Natalie Jones, and our Associate Producer is Noor Al-Samarrai. Dan Kedmey is our Editor-at-Large. Original music and sound design by Ryan and Hays Holladay. And a special thanks to the whole Center for Humane Technology team for making this podcast possible.