

David P. Stuhr, Fordham University
Introduction of George Gilder, The Discovery Institute
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I'm here today to introduce a man most fitting to the subject of the day: Among his many talents is his extraordinary rhetorical skill, as we will hear in a few moments. But first a few words of background. This morning we have been reintroduced to the genius of Richard Weaver and the power of rhetoric in an age where the ability to communicate and to transfer data, information and images continues to grow geometrically. In our age, just keeping up with the new applications of digital technology is almost impossible let alone understanding the mechanisms behind the new gimmicks on our cell phones and cameras. For one who enthusiastically applauds the science and engineering behind and the economic implications ahead for technological innovation one can not help but question the impact on human action of the ever increasing appetite for more and more, faster and faster in a mad race to see who can so clutter their mind with immediacy that there remains no room for developing coherent thoughtful analysis.

When we need a quick précis on the latest news item who can resist goggling the subject to learn more? But how do we evaluate what we find in the endless list of citations brought to us in a fraction of a second? Back in the dim age when information was hard to come by, if you wanted an answer to a real world question, it made sense to spend some time developing your

argument in some detail to insure that when it came to collecting data to support or disprove the argument it would be the right data.

But now we are overwhelmed with information, some relevant, some irrelevant, some factual, some erroneous. As a community of ordered liberty will we be able to reconcile the technological benefits of the digital age where we “do it fast and do it now” with the corrosive impact that the mentality of speed has on the thoughtful development of ideas that have consequences. How do we insure that we do not fall victim to what Weaver, quoting Socrates, referred to as “peculiar craftiness”? That is the rhetorician who deliberately uses his argument to deceive.

I wish I knew the answer. Those who should be guarding us against false rhetoric, referred to by Dick Armey at a Philadelphia Society meeting some years ago as the talking professions -- the professors, politicians, preachers, attorneys, authors and the press -- are, for the most part, the worst offenders. How do we educate our youth in “right thinking” if few of those they are exposed to are capable of or wish to practice discernment?

To think takes time and in a world of impatience where distractions are in *abundance*, time to think seems to be our principle *scarcity*. And that brings us to our speaker who has written extensively on the implications of abundance and scarcity.

George Gilder and I crossed paths in 1966 when he was interviewing Bill Buckley shortly after Bill's unsuccessful (some would say successful) run for Mayor of New York. At that time George was a leading light of the Ripon Society writing (with Bruce Chapman) a less than laudatory book on Goldwater's run for the presidency titled The Party that lost its Head.

He went on in the seventies to take on the Women's Movement with the book: Sexual Suicide (later published as Man and Marriage which earned him the distinction of being named Time Magazine's "Male Chauvinist Pig of the Year."

Undeterred by the feminist movement, he turned his attention to the study of wealth and the nature of the economic organization of society. In his best selling book Wealth and Poverty he developed the relationship between supply side economics and the creation of wealth.

With the Reagan revolution in full swing the innovative genius of America came alive with unprecedented technological advances as one new technology displaced another with dizzying speed leading to the creation of wealth overnight. It was only natural that George would turn his attention to the study of this phenomenon. His work in the area has resulted in a series of books beginning with Life After Television and including Microcosm, Telecosm, and The Silicon Eye. His renown as a technology futurist has led to his demand as a speaker as well as editor of the Gilder Technology Report and host of the annual Gilder Telecosm Forum. He is Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute where he studies technology and public policy.

With this background its hard to imagine anyone better qualified to provide us with insight into the Digital Age and its impact on Rhetoric -- I am

looking forward to finding out (with apologies to fifties radio) what's up the
Great Gilder's sleeve.

David P. Stuhr