

WHY TED TALKS ARE THE SICK AND EVIL AFTER-BIRTH OF YUPPIE FRAT BOY NARCISSISM CULTURE

- A Compilation of Sociology Studies of the TED Cult Pyramid Scheme

- TED TALKS are self-aggrandization shows for Silicon Valley ego-maniacs
- Many of the speakers at TED TALKS are covertly sponsored by corporations or corporate investors trying to push a false-hood that will sell their product brand
- Speakers are chosen for their symmetrical facial frat house/sorority house-type attractiveness and frat party-style "bubbly" mannerisms and tend to be superficially verbose but conceptually vapid
- It is the largest Look-At-Me ego promotion event outside of Burning Man, it's sexually disturbed cousin
- TED TALKS are one of the single largest asshole collections of deer-in-the-headlights looking millennial tools you will ever find
- TED TALK organizers, themselves insular assholes that live in the Palo Alto tech bubble, will never allow any but their own kind to speak.
- TED TALKS were the brand sponsors of Elizabeth and Theranos, one of the largest technology scams in world history.
- TED TALKS organizers choose people who appeal to cult followers and who are likely to not expose the Silicon Valley hype scam culture upon which TED cultists are embedded
- TED TALKS is a sneaky pyramid scheme for tech addicts

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TED Talks Outed as a Masturbatory Self Aggrandizement Scheme For Silicon Valley Rich Kids

TED TALKS are an absolutely BS load of horse-crap designed to self- aggrandize elitist yuppie millionaires

By Sigmund Fraud

Does establishment media believe that it alone knows what we all should think about science and history? The internationally revered organization TED has in the past created controversy for attempting to censor talks that do not fit with its version of reality, causing many to see TED as an establishment organization that engages in

global thought control.

TED's slogan is, 'Ideas Worth Sharing,' yet it is clear that there are some ideas that TED feels should not be shared.

Author and historical investigator Graham Hancock has sold millions of books and inspired many more people around the world with his game-changing thoughts on human history and the development of human consciousness, yet his talk, *The War on Consciousness*, was banned by TED in attempt to prevent the public from considering and sharing his paradigm-changing ideas. At the same time, a researcher into the field of parapsychology, Rupert Sheldrake, gave a fascinating and enlightening presentation for TED which was also censored for not meeting the guidelines of TED's advisory board, an entity which apparently has been tasked with the job of deciding what new ideas should be available for public consideration.

These are two highly prominent and forward-thinking scholars with huge international followings. The critical thing they have in common is their willingness to subvert dominant scientific and intellectual paradigms in their quest for truth and understanding of the human experience.

Furthermore, talk by billionaire Nick Hanauer on wealth inequality in modern society was also accused of being passed over and censored by TED because it did not present an acceptable worldview in TED's eyes. All three of these thought-provoking and paradigm-shifting presentations can be seen, [here](#).

Fast forward to the present, journalist and author Graham Hancock has recently posted another case of TED censoring his presentations, this time by displaying an obnoxious disclaimer over a talk he gave entitled, 'Is The House of History Built on Sand?'

Shockingly, the entire 18 minute presentation is flagged and smeared with the following warning to viewers, as though it were a medical threat.

This talk, which was filmed at an independent TEDx event, falls outside TEDx's curatorial guidelines. [Read More Below](#).

Who exactly is TED protecting? The explanation reads as follows:

NOTE from TED: Please be aware that this talk contains outdated and counterfactual assertions, and should not be understood as a representation of modern scholarship on ancient civilizations. Comments on this matter by Graham Hancock himself are quoted here: TED claims it's about ideas worth spreading, but this is what TED does to ideas put out on its forum that it judges to be alternative or non-mainstream — see attached screenshot, and full talk at this link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyfE3IvDWR8>).

They stick an orthodox health warning over the speaker's face, smear the talk as "outdated and counter-factual" (see the video description), give no evidence to

support the smear, and use the opportunity to big up some of their pet mainstream speakers.

If I was ever in any doubt that TED is a tool of the dominator society that seeks to keep us all asleep, and that believes itself to be the fount and guardian of all legitimate knowledge, my latest encounter with the TED organisation has settled the matter for me. The attached screenshot is from my TEDx talk, given in the city of Reading in the UK in March. It's a talk about my latest research into the possibility of a lost civilization and sets out some of the evidence presented in my new book *Magicians of the Gods* (<https://grahamhancock.com/magicians/>).

I was very careful with this talk. Indeed I did something I've never done before which was to read it to make sure no slip of the tongue, or over-running of the extremely limited time allocated, could be used by TED to delete it from Youtube as they did with my last one (<https://grahamhancock.com/ted-war-on-consciousness-hancock/>)

I don't like reading talks from a carefully pre-prepared script, but having done so in this single case I am quite certain that the ideas I present are NOT "outdated and counter-factual" as TED allege and I challenge them to provide evidence to support this smear.

Human experience is more rich and has more depth than we fully understand, yet there is no question we live in an age where thought control and social engineering is important in maintaining the status quo of strict cultural and scientific materialism which keeps us locked into the corporate-consumer paradigm, serving the economy rather than serving the spirit. If TED is an organization which truly is about presenting 'ideas worth sharing,' then why are well-documented, well-researched presentations countering this paradigm being censored and minimized by TED?

Who is TED really working for?

The absolute and utter bullsh*t of the narcissists who do TED TALKS!

- Big words with no meaning make the self-importance of Silicon Valley assholes sink to new depths.

The instigator of THERANOS and the greatest meeting of assholes in history

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1. [Ted Sucks - YouTube](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaNxsCZ3VmQ>



[1:35](#)

Mar 18, 2016 · Inspired by TheSimpsonsYesTheNutshackNo. This feature is not available right now. Please try again later.

- **Author:** Austin Alexander
- **Views:** 1.8K

2. [A TED talk about what's wrong with TED talks : videos - reddit](#)

https://www.reddit.com/r/videos/comments/1umnlb/a_ted_talk_about...

Everyone at least understands the difference between **TED talks** and TEDx **talks**, right? **TED talks** are the "official" **talks** given at the **TED** convention. The speakers are vetted and apply beforehand. TEDx **talks** are local functions that allow anyone to give a **talk** in the "**TED** Style." They are **run** by local groups and not the national organization.

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To my vast disappointment I recently learned that TED talks are evil.

They are engaged in extreme censorship.

And that would be bad enough, but they also act like a cult. "[Scientology summer camp](#)", one former TED fellow described the experience. Cult psychology is one of my specialties, usually for its application to military recruit indoctrination. At least I can still have an interest in TED for the purposes of a case study.

I may even get a paper out of it. And a libel suit.

But I doubt, however, I'll ever be allowed to give a TED talk on corporate influence or faceless ivory tower censorship.

The story goes thus:-

As of 2013, I have just learned TED removed talks by [Sarah Silverman](#); [Dr Rupert Sheldrake](#) (ironically talking on dogmatic science); lawyer, entrepreneur and Vice journalist [Eddie Huang](#); and a drug taking hippie named [Graham Hancock](#). I am sure

there are others I do not know about.

The censored talks, that I have identified above, can now be found online; though often **with the TED logo blurred out**. And the release of the material at all did not come easily.

Now, I have no time for drug culture; especially the South American "[hallucinogen's will fix the world, so stop trying to take responsibility for your actions and go get high](#) - with a Shamanic context to justify a break from habits (that you obviously already know are unwelcome in your life), since you lack the internal constitution to do so on your own without an alter present and some ritual" approach to life.

But that doesn't mean I do not want to hear about it. Parts of it are actually quite fascinating.

For as much as I dislike too much hippie nonsense; I dislike [censorship](#) far more.

TED has had other drug talks. So that is a false reason for removal. They also knew Hancock's caper when they invited him. The first line of his Wiki says something akin to "*Hancock is a sociologist and writer who specialises in unconventional theories*".

So either TED is incompetent, unable to research even as far as Wiki; or TED is not TED anymore. Which, frankly, seems more likely to be the case.

TED has had talks about people catching poems "by the tail" and, thus, having to write them backwards for crying out loud!

They've had people who have severe brain damage, following a stroke, who make claims about finding God via [spiritual thrombosis](#). But that was apparently OK.

And, actually, it is a great talk. I'm glad it wasn't censored; but had it been described to me I certainly would not have sought it out.

And that would have been my loss.

Luckily, it came up in the TED search one day. Something the above videos could never have done; since they were **removed from the search** even once public pressure compelled them to be returned online.

Why is a guy, whose only deal is the "*unconventional*", suddenly a problem for talking about using shamanic mysticism to quit weed? Especially when there is research for psychedelics currently underway looking at this, and similar, [clinical applications](#) in mainstream schools as of 2013.

Hancock gave what was, essentially, a short and very basic [anthropology lecture with a personal touch](#). After all, it is only 20mins? It was already recorded? YOU invited HIM! This is a problem now?

The only answer can be that TED has become [corrupted](#) by [sponsorship](#).

TED is beholden to big money, not sharing ideas. Not anymore.

These lecturers were selected. Approached. This was done because of interest already identified.

Should the talks be of no value, people will get a glimpse into how some other people think, at the very least. Then not pass them on if they do not like them, like most TED talks. Not watch them again, this kind of thing. That is part of sharing ideas, one could be forgiven for thinking. Seeing differences in opinion.

And bear in mind; I hate this hippie crap.

But there are bigger ideals at stake here. Or must everything be censored in America now? Just all the time?

There are no TED accidents. Even the audience tickets include no equity. But we'll get to that.

These speakers have already been selected, for reason of interest, and they aren't being paid for their time.

Eddie Huang pointed out some of the bizarre behaviour that goes on at TED conferences after **his REQUESTS to travel a few suburbs to record a pre-booked radio show, or see to his partner on his birthday, which fell during the conference, WERE DENIED.**

And pause for a moment to consider how completely controlling it is that TED invited these speakers, pays them nothing, makes such high demands of these people (like ~15hrs per day for 7 days); only to then remove the speakers' presentations *post hoc*.

But this they did. They either refused to post them at all, or took down their presentations after some much needed "censorship reflection time".

Then, after people (accurately) cried "censorship", TED pretended "*oh no, that whole event was cancelled*". O_0.

When that flimsy excuse fell over, since the other lectures from the event were posted, TED re-posted the talks; but **removed them from the search** so they could not be found without scrolling through the whole webpage; ie one would need to already be on a mission to find them. Talk about spreading ideas. One would have to know they were there before searching.

They also **changed the page code so they could not be embedded** or shared or downloaded: only for the "marked" videos at that conference.

And it gets weirder. As mentioned, one former TED fellow described the whole experience as **"Scientology summer camp...you [even] share a room with someone assigned to you"**, **"...your own partner is not allowed to stay with**

you" (in this case even for their birthday), "**you are forbidden to hire your own Hotel room**", and "**YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE**". The conference is a week.

You are expected to give a week of your time **where they schedule your every activity** for ~15hrs a day.

Again, **YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE**. If you value your TEDness.

Even for the audience there is no equity.

There is **an application process to even be allowed to buy a ticket**.

For **the** lucky and **chosen** few: you **are then "allowed" to pay US\$8'000** per person. Yes, that is thousand.

In the 2'000 seat auditorium: that is **US\$16 Million dollars just on tickets sales**, and remember: no speaker is getting paid.

But why should they, TED talks are for the people after all. And TED have costs. Overhead. And to speak at TED, why, it is a public service, right?

Well, I mean, sure; they do have *some* sponsors.

Only companies, for example, like "**Sony**"; "**Samsung**"; "**Gucci**"; "**Intel**"; "**Target**"; "**American Express**" and "**GE**": real Ma and Pa, grassroots style companies who are barely scraping by following the financial crisis (*they helped cause).

Another banned talk, by millionaire [Nick Hanauer](#), was on the dire need for taxing the wealthy. Nothing suspect regarding censorship there, given the sponsors. The claim was that it is having people to *spend* money in the middle class that creates jobs - that if the rich were really job creators, since the rich are currently richer than ever before - where are all the jobs?

Where indeed.

Correct or flawed; it is an interesting thought problem none the less. And one that is sure to spark an interesting and informative debate.

Or, to use TED speak; ***DELETE***.

This is not about the sharing of ideas, as it was when TED first began to gain in popularity. The very reason TED became what it did, is no more. The soul has been stripped from TED, and been replaced with "TED inc".

TED needs to be replaced in its entirety.

TED no longer allows the spreading of novel ideas for our consideration; the consideration comes first. And then again later. And again if need be. And again after that, this time more surreptitiously.

It seems unlikely an accident that all the banned talks just happened to say “question orthodoxy” in one form or another, as all those who moved us forward in science have done in the past. On paper, this is a cornerstone of science. But it is not a cornerstone of TED science.

[Sheldrake](#) was interesting. The kind of talk that inspires you to think outside of the box, if only for a brief moment. To see what might be possible. Isn't that what TED was suppose to be all about?

And I did not even get to Sarah [Silverman](#) and adoption.

Or Pamela Wible MD, the doctor who wanted to talk about [physician suicide](#) to “*end the suffering silence*“, being dis-invited last minute. When asked why she had been dis-invited, she was told it was because it made people “uncomfortable to talk about”. (*In that case, there was push back that allowed her attendance at a later AMA focused conference - but it shows the mind set of these people. Unfortunately).

Regular philosopher/neuroscientist Sam Harris has even [spoken about](#) about it being cult - like, if you “have never been and arent prepared. And Harris knows cults, having studied with some of the most famous controlling Gurus, in the mountains of India and Tibet, including Guru [Maharishi](#), among others.

No artist or scientist appreciates having their thoughts pre-thought for them.

Therefore, TED is no longer for artists or scientists.

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JJR (a2018). TED is Evil. *J. Chron. Lett. Sci*, 2(7), Sept. Ed11.(Ed0 2013).

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TED Talks Aren't Making My Generation Smart - They're Making Us Stupid

**I haven't had an independent thought in years.
Sometimes, I forget my own name.**



Image [via urban data](#)

This article originally appeared at VICE UK

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about thinking about thinking.

Over the last few weeks, for example, I've been making a sustained effort to watch at least one TED talk a day. I'm not sure what it is about my generation, exactly, but I've noticed a weird trend to watch or listen to "informative", *Horrible History*-style things for adults rather than actually *think*. It seems to be a cultural reference point to think about the idea of thinking, rather than actually engaging the old noggin.

Which is why I basically sleep walk through everything. I haven't had an independent thought in years. Sometimes, I forget my own name.

Maybe it's because I'm a card-carrying member to a tinfoil hat society for the infuriatingly smug, but I think there's something inherently wrong with passivity. And yet I write this from my bed. The most common response I received when I told people I was working on this was, "What? Have you never enjoyed one?" Which, I suppose, is my whole point. When thinking about thinking becomes entertainment rather than a challenge, something has fucked up.

It feels like almost bad manners to have a go at something that is so overwhelmingly positive. But, fuck it, I'm going to do it because, just as Justin Lee Collins making a handful of people laugh didn't mean he wasn't [a horrible, horrible man](#), TED entertaining you doesn't mean it isn't a sneaky pyramid scheme, designed to suck off your ego while pretending to inseminate your mind with world-altering concepts.

From my vantage point, swinging from the nether regions of society, TED (and all other "thinkies") is the road of least resistance to thought, dishing out toilet stall profundity willy-nilly for those like me whose cognitive ability languishes somewhere between a turtle's and a slice of bread.

I have watched, I'd wager, 50 videos at least, because a) I have a lot of time on my hands and b) I wanted to see what all the fuss was about. And I've concluded that it's basically having Alain de Botton in your house with a biro scribbling: "AdB woz ere," on the back of the shitter door and getting applauded for the effort.

Because I'm a reasonable person, I started re-watching the classics. I didn't learn anything.

An error occurred.

Try watching this video on www.youtube.com, or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

[I was told that porn made me an angry, violent man](#) and yet I navigate my browser to my old favourites, regardless. I was informed [that the secret to happiness is a really good cake](#), but I continue to pass up the option of dessert. [I was even told that, like a twat, I've been tying my shoelaces wrong all these years](#), but I still do, because I'm clearly beyond help.

Tickets to an actual TED talk costs [thousands of dollars](#). No TED event [pays their speakers](#), because the whole thing is an honour. A privilege, for both them and us. But they will get you a nice hotel.

I think my dissatisfaction with this form of learning has got something to do with the fact that being super, super self-satisfied often does not bode well for rigorous debate or discussion. In all the videos I watched, each speaker and every audience member looked so pleased themselves that I had half the mind to think they were all being fellated by invisible ghosts.

A lot of people I know watch TED talks. A lot of people you know watch them. It's a pleasure mechanism, really. And I don't know about you but, as soon as I've touched myself, I have precisely zero desire to do anything but pretend my self-loathing isn't a logical reaction to what I just watched. I really need to get out of bed.

Nothing gets done when you're a self-contented shit surrounded by your acolytes and your ghost mates. Trust me.

But it's not all bad. What I do like about TED is the video rating system. It is absolutely amazing. You can choose from all sorts of over the top adjectives, ranging

from "ingenious" and "funny" to "jaw-dropping". The nearest option to "fucking shit" is "obnoxious", which is what I rated all the videos I didn't understand (all of them). I gave the one about shoelaces "inspiring" because, fuck it, I'm fed up with these Velcro loafers.

What really honked my horns about this (and the whole of TED shebang, really) was how close it was to the [theme tune of The Lego Movie](#), a song so insistent that a completely random assortment of things are "awesome" that to hear it is to think that there is literally no conceivable way to believe otherwise.

It's so mind-numbingly positive that the next time someone steps up on a TED talk stage everyone should have to sing along to that song and reflect on precisely what went wrong in their lives, because, despite what Sean Connery might have you believe, it's the failures that [fuck the prom queen](#). I'm calling it now: no one who has ever been involved with TED has ever gotten laid.

Nothing gets done when you're a self-contented shit surrounded by your acolytes and your ghost mates. Trust me. A far improved set up would be an international tour of the world's finest curmudgeons spouting well-worn put downs designed to inspire the ego to prove them wrong. What mouth-breather wouldn't, after a year of Duncan Bannatyne calling you up in the morning and informing you that [he's out](#), be motivated to succeed? Bannatyne is dripping in it.

The reason (if it isn't obvious) why I bring up *The Lego Movie* is because its whole conceit is that everything is *not* awesome. That, regardless of what the Octan Corporation tells you, people are sleepwalking through their [uninspired, pantless existence](#) because they think that average, systemised thought and behaviour is AWESOME.

It's not. All of our ideas are not amazing. Everything we think isn't epic. We are capable of being average, of peeing in our pants or spilling the contents of a Subway sandwich all over the desk. And that's fine.

We've got a generational problem where we're so concerned about being amazing that we can't be arsed to acknowledge we're average. And it's TED's fucking fault. And Paul McKenna's. And Gok Wan's.



Ken Robinson. Image [via Wikimedia Commons](#)

It's embarrassing that a film starring Will Ferrell knows more about thinking than Jane Fonda, Chris Anderson and Ken Robinson. A kid's movie about building blocks is, to me, inexplicably more profound about the state of ideas and independent

thought than a real-life company that claims to be dollop out intelligence like an exceptionally erudite dinner lady.

These entertainments about thinking are as intellectually rigorous or challenging as *Noel's House Party*. But they are fun, and entertainment is fundamentally about making the audience continue watching for as long as possible and also feel good. There's nothing wrong with a ghost sucking you off, as long as you know what its motivation is.

Infuriatingly, I found that there are TED talks about everything except what people really need them for, like how to use the fucking Underground without stopping in the way of EVERYONE, or how to eat a pizza in bed and not get grease absolutely everywhere. But, maybe I do these things because I've seen so many thought provoking talks that I am quite literally seized in the moment by an idea of such profundity that to continue functioning would be an affront to mythical epiphany.

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THE ARROGANCE OF TED

I remember when I was fifteen, and **TED Talks** were becoming really popular. If you were interesting, you watched **TED**. They were an easy way to learn a little about a lot. However, about two months ago, I came to the realization that **TED Talks** don't do their job.

This realization came to me when a teacher of mine decided to show a **TED Talk**, which had to do with philosophy, in class. The talk itself wasn't *wrong*, but it completely borrowed ideas from philosophers all the while not saying where those ideas came from. At the end of the video, we split into groups and I heard a lot of my classmates say how interesting and fresh they found the talk to be. The problem was that what they were hearing was only a fraction of a whole idea. They didn't know where the idea came from, let alone that there were other possible outlooks to it.



The point of **TED** is to give insight to people on innovative ideas that they might not learn about otherwise - and I think that's definitely a commendable goal to keep in mind... but they're doing it wrong. **Ted Talks** that involve a speaker talking about an "idea" are made for people to hear a quick and easy opinion told to them in a way that makes it sound brilliant. **TED** Talks have made people lazy by making them feel like they're learning something just because of the way they're being told.



It's a gimmick; they hook in a viewer who doesn't know much about a subject, leaving them feeling like they know all they need to know. Problem is, no one **ACTUALLY** learns anything *just* by watching a 10-minute video of a person speaking about their experiences.



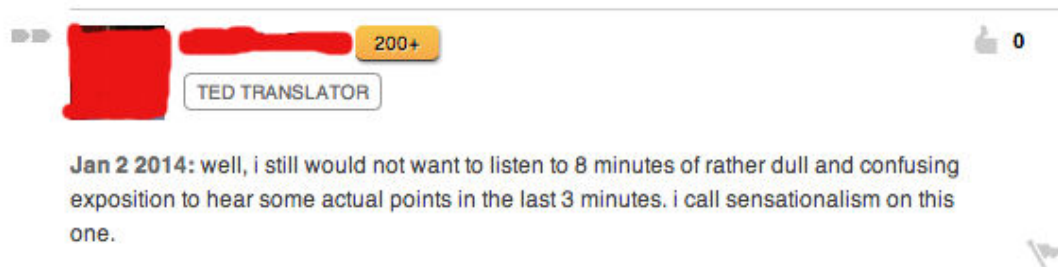
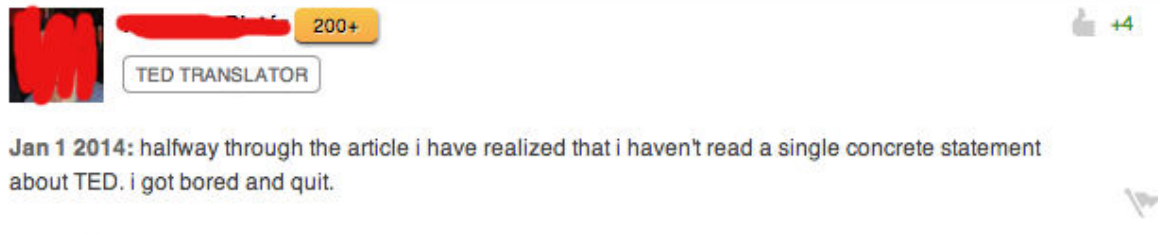
Having people explain smart ideas in a way that a majority can understand is a good thing, and I'm all for it - but **TED** goes way beyond this. They over simplify ideas in a way that the listener can swallow them up without even chewing. Having everyone know a little more about things, and think differently is definitely a solution to one of the world's problems - but the way that **TED** goes about this is only feeding into a new problem. No one is asking questions beyond the initial idea anymore because they're being spoon-fed information at the most basic level.



I recently read an article about a scientist who gave a presentation, who later had someone in the audience say that they should be more like **TED talks**. That's terrifying, if you ask me. **TED** is gearing to a generation of people who only care about what they're hearing if they feel entertained while listening to it. The world is not run on the model of a variety show, and philosophy, science, art and activism should not be judged as such.

What makes this more ironic is that the first comment on the article stated, "I got bored and quit." That's the point. That's it. If you want to take what I'm saying to the most basic level, people listening to **TED** talks do not want to know more. They don't think, "Hey, this is inspiring! I'll go read a book about it now!" They think, "Great, now I know all I need to know, let me go tell everyone about this one idea which must be right because I heard it on a **TED** talk, and **TED** talks are *serious*." No one

is thinking skeptically, no one is asking questions, no one is looking for anything more than a 10-minute video that will lead to 3 seconds of eye opening wonder, at which point they turn back to their episode of **Keeping Up with the Kardashians**. No offence, I'll be the first to admit that that show is entertaining. The problem is, that all we care about is being entertained – it's not a reward, but rather the only thing we do.



TED talks are the punch line without any of the buildup. They're a weak orgasm without the foreplay. **TED** epitomizes our dependence on a dose of quick and simple solutions when it comes to complex problems. **TED** is popular entertainment confused with insightful information. While it generates exposure, it's a placebo, which in the end might end up doing more harm than good.

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https://www.reddit.com/r/videos/comments/1umnlb/a_ted_talk_about_whats_wrong_with_ted_talks/

He's calling out TED talks for what they are. Good or bad, they're mental masturbation. that's it.

Most of them remind me of something along the lines of a pre game pep talk or inspirational movie monologue before a big battle. They are not meant to accomplish anything by themselves save for inspire the audience and help you get lost in 'the majesty that tomorrow could be with this breakthrough technology'. It's marketing of course, not teaching.

I don't really buy his argument that it's a waste of time for the audience. Are we

kidding ourselves when we think about how the world can change due to some new breakthrough technology? Most likely. But the TED platform is definitely a good way to popularize very niche topics that probably wouldn't see the light of day otherwise. I'm also assuming that the exposure and networking available during TED conferences is the actual draw, not necessarily the talks themselves.

He does point out a serious flaw in research today though in terms of trying to get funding, in the fact that you shouldn't have to try to be Billy Mays and dumb down your research to try to get it to stick with a funding source. But such is the game.

EDIT: [This](#) video pretty much implicitly says the same thing but as a complete troll to the TED organization essentially. It's hilarious to boot. This guy pretty much straight up lied to event organizers to get on stage and proceeded to give a 20 minute nonsensical speech that calls out all the TED tropes.

level 2

[MasterShorty](#)

I upvoted you for a well thought out argument, but I am going to slightly disagree with you. The reason why TED, and environments like TED, are bad or unhealthy for the audience is because it takes something that is generally looked upon as healthy and sensationalizes it. I look at this in the same way I look upon the business philosophies of pyramid schemes and multi-level marketing. In the same way that these businesses are blatant attempts to manipulate someones emotions for money, TED is drifting more and more into a blatant attempt to manipulate the way our *emotions* react rather than our *actions*. It is a "circle jerk" of our technological and social advancement into the future. We takes something as arguably healthy as advancement and turns it into something that is inherently detrimental and/or empty.

I think that part, if not all, of what he is saying is that by only focusing on the feel good aspects of technological advancements we bring upon ourselves equally bad things (like NSA spying.)

What do you think?

(Edit for clarity)

level 3

[acasey07](#)

Oh, I completely agree with everything you say, but I don't think that the 'emotional manipulation' as you call it is inherently a bad thing. That's how TED makes money. Part of his argument is that TED has such a great potential for actually being down to earth and being a platform for getting these ideas into reality, but chooses instead to squander this opportunity.

TED is essentially a self-aggrandizing community that claims that they have 'ideas worth spreading' and uses this 'we got some real important stuff going on, so you

should watch this' attitude to get you to watch and share their videos. That's all they do.

The more popular they get, the more people pay to attend the conferences and that's how they make money. To go to a TED event you literally have to apply, and your intellectual accomplishments or stature must be able to pass muster, then you get to shell out bucks.

It really truly is a community that loves to blow smoke up its own ass and feel good about it. A real life circle-jerk as you say. Just look at how they tag videos: 'fascinating', 'beautiful', 'inspiring', 'courageous', 'ingenious'. Seriously? That's how this 'agent of change' community decided to categorize their videos?

level 4

[MasterShorty](#)

Once again, I agree with you on almost everything. Except I feel that I should make myself more clear in my point. It's hard to create an argument against emotional manipulation because its such an abstract idea. Is buying your S.O. flowers emotional manipulation? In a way it is. You are buying him/her flowers in order to evoke an emotional response. So for the sake of clarity I will contend that emotional manipulation has the potential to be incredibly wrong. Take my previous example of sensationalized business philosophies like MLM's. The type of emotional manipulation that goes on in that case has actually put people behind bars. Now, since I have had time to think it over a little bit more, I am now of the opinion that this potentially detrimental form of emotional manipulation could (and probably is) community based. So at the end of the day, it is the TED community that is at fault and, ultimately, has to fix it.

Good talk :D

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Joe Rogan had a guest on eddie huang who talked about his experience with the TED talks and he described them as a cult like scientology

http://blogs.hbr.org/haque/2013/03/lets...m_the.html

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some talking points:

he recieved no financial compensation even though attendies paid 7k each

he was required to attend all events all day long (12hrs of events each day)

he was required to stay with a roommate for the 6 days of his stay

he was unable to leave for the afternoon to do the podcast with joe rogan and when he did he was kicked out of the TED

TED talk is so full of PC and feminism that I avoid it like the plague. Even the " your brain on porn " talk has mangina fingerprints all over it.

They are intellectual though, but you have to make peace with PC if you are going not listen to them. Also the arrogance coming off from them is unbelievable, they are so narcissistic that it becomes very hard to tolerate after awhile.

Better off rocking up to a university, and listening to their talks or looking up journal articles on Pubmed or Medline. Even gong ot a uni library and looking up their books is very useful. [/php]

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The trouble with TED talks

In the cult of TED, everything is awesome and inspirational, and ideas aren't supposed to be challenged, says Martin Robbins.

By [Martin Robbins](#)

I've long been amused by the slogan of [TED](#), makers of the ubiquitous *TED* talks. *TED*'s slogan is this: 'Ideas worth spreading.' Apparently *TED* has some ideas, and we should spread them. What ideas? Ideas that *TED* in its infinite wisdom has picked out for us, ideas which are therefore implied to be true and good and right. What should we do with these ideas? We should build a message around them - slick presentations by charismatic faces captured in high definition - and we should spread that message far and wide. If this doesn't yet sound familiar, try replacing 'TED' with 'GOD'. 'Ideas worth spreading' sounds more like the slogan of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

It's nearing midnight, and I'm sitting in my pants in front of the computer holding a tumbler of scotch, the curtains closed, the lights off, doing something I don't do enough of these days - just watching. This is not how *TED* Talks are supposed to be consumed. The genius of the format is that nobody really watches them: we play them on iPods or we run them in our browsers while working on other things, but it's rare that people put one on the television and sit down and really focus on them. They come at us from the side of our vision, sneaking past our preoccupied neural circuitry and planting little seeds in the nooks and crevices of our minds, like mould spores on a damp window frame. In the darkest hours of countless nights I've woken convinced that a solar-powered cup holder will end third world debt, but not really knowing why.

I start with a talk by [Rob Legato](#), and sixteen minutes later I'm aware of only three things: the talk was awesome, I can't remember anything of substance from the talk, and I'm now watching a weirdly artificial standing ovation - by sheer coincidence a camera happens to be pointed at some of the first audience members to rise to their feet; then the rest of the audience follows, compelled by social instinct to follow their peers. Of course standing ovations occur more frequently in homogenous audiences, and what better crowd could there be than social elites who've invested thousands of dollars for the opportunity to bask in the warm glow someone else's intellectual aura.

I choose a talk by [Ben Goldacre](#) next, a man whose work I know and enjoy. Ben's high-speed presentation style was once described by a fan as like being 'skull-fucked with his data-cock', and his appearance at *TED* did little to restrain his exuberance, but I found myself switching off after a while; I'd seen his talk before, at The Royal Institution. In fact, virtually none of the talks I watched were particularly new or original - presentations that are that well-polished rarely are.

One of the common charges against *TED* is that it's elitist, and yet many of the

speakers were the sort of people you might find at your local 'Skeptics in the Pub' event. The genius of *TED* is that it takes capable-but-ordinary speakers, doing old talks they've performed many times elsewhere, and dresses them up in a production that makes you feel like you're watching Kennedy announce the race to the moon.

The videos aren't given star ratings; instead you have to rate them by checking words from a list: 'jaw-dropping', 'persuasive', 'courageous', 'fascinating', 'beautiful' and an array of similarly vapid adjectives. Cameras lurk below the eye-line of the speakers looking up at their sharply defined forms, picked out by spotlights against dark backgrounds like a Greek god's statue in a museum display case. The crowd acts as a single helpful entity; laughing when it should laugh, whooping when it should whoop, awwing when it should aww. Quotes are picked out and highlighted as if they carry some profound truth: "There's no such thing as a dumb user," says Timothy Presterio, a designer who has clearly never read the user comments on Comment is Free. Or indeed the articles. There are no questions here: in the cult of *TED*, everything is awesome and inspirational, and ideas aren't supposed to be challenged.

The problem with this evangelical approach, discarding the voice of scepticism and mindlessly parroting 'fascinating' ideas instead of challenging them, is that you risk spreading some utter codswallop. A couple of weeks ago, *TED* posted [a list of the 20 most-watched TED talks](#) to date. Occupying third and fifth place is pair of talks viewed more than sixteen million times, dedicated to a "paradigm-shifting" technology with "thrilling potential" from 2009. It was called '[SixthSense](#)'.

Nope, nor me. And yet its inventor, Pranav Mistry, is described by the on-stage *TED*ster as a 'genius' and "*truly one of the two or three best inventors in the world right now,*" the latter assertion based, amusingly, on "*the people we've seen at TED.*" That Mistry is talented and clever I wouldn't dispute for a second, but words are cheap, and they get cheaper when overused. The presentation looks to my tired eyes like a slightly ropey sales pitch, except the ruthless interrogators of *Dragons' Den* have been replaced by a whooping, clapping audience displaying the world-weary cynicism of an arena-full of Beliebers. Anyone who posed a meaningful question in this environment would be treated like they'd thrown a shit in someone's face.

With the world's easiest audience, many inaccuracies and errors go unchallenged. A talk by Terry Moore on algebra was littered with [unsourced claims about Spanish language and history](#). Their coverage of science topics is at best superficial, and sometimes downright misleading. Felisa Wolfe-Simon's infamous claim that bacteria could incorporate arsenic into their DNA led to a [huge backlash from the scientific community](#), during which she refused to engage with critics and said that: "Any discourse will have to be peer-reviewed in the same manner as our paper was, and go through a vetting process so that all discussion is properly moderated." Not long afterwards, she signed up to do a [distinctly un-peer-reviewed TED talk](#). 'Ideas worth spreading' . . . except in this instance the ideas [didn't survive peer-review](#).

Ultimately, the TED phenomenon only makes sense when you realise that it's all

about the audience. TED Talks are designed to make people feel good about themselves; to flatter them and make them feel clever and knowledgeable; to give them the impression that they're part of an elite group making the world a better place. People join for much the same reason they join societies like Mensa: it gives them a chance to label themselves part of an intellectual elite. That intelligence is optional, and you need to be rich and well-connected to get into the conferences and the exclusive fringe parties and events that accompany them, simply adds to the irresistible allure. TED's slogan shouldn't be 'Ideas worth spreading', it should be: 'Ego worth paying for'.

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We need to talk about TED

[Benjamin Bratton](#)

Science, philosophy and technology run on the model of American Idol - as embodied by TED talks - is a recipe for civilisational disaster

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▲ Alain de Botton speaks during during TEDGlobal 2011, in Edinburgh.
Photograph: James Duncan Davidson/TED

In our culture, talking about the future is sometimes a polite way of saying things about the present that would otherwise be rude or risky.

But have you ever wondered why so little of the future promised in [TED talks](#) actually happens? So much potential and enthusiasm, and so little actual change. Are the ideas wrong? Or is the idea about what ideas can do all by themselves wrong?

I write about entanglements of technology and culture, how technologies enable the making of certain worlds, and at the same time how culture structures how those technologies will evolve, this way or that. It's where philosophy and design intersect.

So the conceptualization of possibilities is something that I take very seriously. That's why I, and many people, think it's way past time to take a step back and ask some serious questions about the intellectual viability of things like [TED](#).

So my TED talk is not about *my* work or *my* new book - the usual spiel - but about TED itself, what it is and why it doesn't work.

The first reason is over-simplification.

To be clear, I think that having smart people who do very smart things explain what they doing in a way that everyone can understand is a good thing. But TED goes way beyond that.

Let me tell you a story. I was at a presentation that a friend, an astrophysicist, gave to a potential donor. I thought the presentation was lucid and compelling (and I'm a professor of visual arts here at UC San Diego so at the end of the day, I know really nothing about astrophysics). After the talk the sponsor said to him, "you know what, I'm gonna pass because I just don't feel inspired ...*you should be more like Malcolm Gladwell.*"

At this point I kind of lost it. Can you imagine?

Think about it: an actual scientist who produces actual knowledge should be more like a journalist who recycles fake insights! This is beyond popularisation. This is taking something with value and substance and coring it out so that it can be swallowed without chewing. This is not the solution to our most frightening problems - rather this is one of our most frightening problems.

So I ask the question: does TED epitomize a situation where if a scientist's work (or an artist's or philosopher's or activist's or whoever) is told that their work is not worthy of support, because the public doesn't feel good listening to them?

I submit that astrophysics run on the model of American Idol is a recipe for civilizational disaster.

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What is TED?

So what is TED exactly?

Perhaps it's the proposition that if we talk about world-changing ideas enough, then the world will change. But this is not true, and that's the second problem.

TED of course stands for *Technology, Entertainment, Design*, and I'll talk a bit about all three. I think TED actually stands for: *middlebrow megachurch infotainment*.

The key rhetorical device for TED talks is a combination of epiphany and personal testimony (an "epiphimony" if you like) through which the speaker shares a personal journey of insight and realisation, its triumphs and tribulations.

What is it that the TED audience hopes to get from this? A vicarious insight, a fleeting moment of wonder, an inkling that maybe it's all going to work out after all? A spiritual buzz?

I'm sorry but this fails to meet the challenges that we are supposedly here to confront. These are complicated and difficult and are not given to tidy just-so solutions. They don't care about anyone's experience of optimism. Given the stakes, making our best and brightest waste their time - and the audience's time - dancing like infomercial hosts is too high a price. It is cynical.

Also, it just *doesn't work*.

Recently there was a bit of a dust up when TEDGlobal sent out a note to [TEDx](#) organisers asking them not to book speakers whose work spans the paranormal, the conspiratorial, new age "quantum neuroenergy", etc: what is called woo. Instead of these placebos, TEDx should instead curate talks that are imaginative but grounded in reality. In fairness, they took some heat, so their gesture should be acknowledged. A lot of people take TED very seriously, and might lend credence to specious ideas if stamped with TED credentials. "No" to placebo science and medicine.

But ... the corollaries of placebo science and placebo medicine are *placebo politics and placebo innovation*. On this point, TED has a long way to go.

Perhaps the pinnacle of placebo politics and innovation was featured at TEDx San Diego in 2011. You're familiar I assume with [Kony2012](#), the social media campaign to stop war crimes in central Africa? So what happened here? Evangelical surfer bro goes to help kids in Africa. He makes a campy video explaining genocide to the cast of Glee. The world finds his public epiphany to be shallow to the point of self-delusion. The complex geopolitics of central Africa are left undisturbed. Kony's still there. The end.

You see, when inspiration becomes manipulation, inspiration becomes obfuscation. If you are not cynical you should be sceptical. You should be as sceptical of placebo politics as you are placebo medicine.

T and Technology

T - E - D. I'll go through them each quickly.

So first technology ...

We hear that not only is change accelerating but that the pace of change is accelerating as well. While this is true of computational carrying-capacity at a planetary level, at the same time - and in fact the two are connected - we are also in a moment of *cultural de-acceleration*.

We invest our energy in futuristic information technologies, including our cars, but drive them home to kitsch architecture copied from the 18th century. The future on offer is one in which everything changes, so long as everything stays the same. We'll have Google Glass, but still also business casual.

This *timidity* is our path to the future? No, this is incredibly conservative, and there is no reason to think that more gigaflops will inoculate us.

Because, if a problem is in fact endemic to a system, then the exponential effects of [Moore's law](#) also serve to amplify what's broken. It is more computation along the wrong curve, and I doubt this is necessarily a triumph of reason.

Part of my work explores deep technocultural shifts, from post-humanism to the post-anthropocene, but TED's version has too much faith in technology, and not nearly enough commitment to technology. It is *placebo technoradicalism*, toying with risk so as to reaffirm the comfortable.

So our machines get smarter and we get stupider. But it doesn't have to be like that. Both can be much more intelligent. Another futurism is possible.

E and economics

A better 'E' in TED would stand for economics, and the need for, yes imagining and designing, different systems of valuation, exchange, accounting of transaction externalities, financing of coordinated planning, etc. Because states plus markets, states versus markets, these are insufficient models, and our conversation is stuck in Cold War gear.

Worse is when economics is debated like *metaphysics*, as if the reality of a system is merely a bad example of the ideal.

Communism in theory is an egalitarian utopia.

Actually existing communism meant ecological devastation, government spying, crappy cars and gulags.

Capitalism in theory is rocket ships, nanomedicine, and Bono saving Africa.

Actually existing capitalism means Walmart jobs, McMansions, people living in the

sewers under Las Vegas, Ryan Seacrest ... plus – ecological devastation, government spying, crappy public transportation and for-profit prisons.

Our options for change range from basically what we have plus a little more Hayek, to what we have plus a little more Keynes. Why?

The most recent centuries have seen extraordinary accomplishments in improving quality of life. The paradox is that the system we have now –whatever you want to call it – is in the short term what makes the amazing new technologies possible, but in the long run it is also what suppresses their full flowering. Another economic architecture is prerequisite.

D and design

Instead of our designers prototyping the same "change agent for good" projects over and over again, and then wondering why they don't get implemented at scale, perhaps we should resolve that design is not some magic answer. Design matters a lot, but for very different reasons. It's easy to get enthusiastic about design because, like talking about the future, it is more polite than referring to white elephants in the room.

Such as...

Phones, drones and genomes, that's what we do here in San Diego and La Jolla. In addition to the other insanely great things these technologies do, they are the basis of NSA spying, flying robots killing people, and the wholesale privatisation of biological life itself. That's also what we do.

The potential for these technologies are both wonderful and horrifying *at the same time*, and to make them serve good futures, design as "innovation" just isn't a strong enough idea by itself. We need to talk more about design as "immunisation," actively preventing certain potential "innovations" that we do not want from happening.

And so...

As for one simple take away ... I don't have one simple take away, one magic idea. That's kind of the point. I will say that if and when the key problems facing our species were to be solved, then perhaps many of us in this room would be out of work (and perhaps in jail).

But it's not as though there is a shortage of topics for serious discussion. We need a deeper conversation about the difference between digital cosmopolitanism and [cloud feudalism](#) (and toward that, a queer history of computer science and Alan Turing's birthday as holiday!)

I would like new maps of the world, ones not based on settler colonialism, legacy genomes and bronze age myths, but instead on something more ... scalable.

TED today is not that.

Problems are not "puzzles" to be solved. That metaphor assumes that all the necessary pieces are already on the table, they just need to be rearranged and reprogrammed. It's not true.

"Innovation" defined as moving the pieces around and adding more processing power is not some Big Idea that will disrupt a broken status quo: that precisely is the broken status quo.

One TED speaker said recently, "If you remove this boundary ... the only boundary left is our imagination". Wrong.

If we really want transformation, we have to slog through the hard stuff (history, economics, philosophy, art, ambiguities, contradictions). Bracketing it off to the side to focus just on technology, or just on innovation, actually *prevents* transformation.

Instead of dumbing-down the future, we need to raise the level of general understanding to the level of complexity of the systems in which we are embedded and which are embedded in us. This is not about "personal stories of inspiration", it's about the difficult and uncertain work of demystification and reconceptualisation: the hard stuff that really changes how we think. More Copernicus, less [Tony Robbins](#).

At a societal level, the bottom line is if we invest in things that make us feel good but which don't work, and don't invest in things that don't make us feel good but which may solve problems, then our fate is that it will just get harder to feel good about not solving problems.

In this case the placebo is worse than ineffective, it's harmful. It's diverts *your* interest, enthusiasm and outrage until it's absorbed into this black hole of affectation.

Keep calm and carry on "innovating" ... is that the real message of TED? To me that's not inspirational, it's cynical.

In the US the rightwing has certain media channels that allow it to bracket reality ... other constituencies have TED.