

## Planet of the Apps: The Myth of Innovation

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God terms: words that have an “inherent potency”

-Richard M. Weaver

Revolution



Frontier



## New Frontier



Today's “**god term**” identifies an object of worship  
in:

- Universities
- Think tanks
- Corporations
- Wall Street
- Dreams of social elites

Today's **“god term”** is widely associated with:

Creativity  
Ingenuity  
Success  
Wealth  
Fame  
Personal virtue  
National prosperity  
Cultural vitality

and all good things



**INNOVATION!**

From the Latin: “innovare,” to renew



Tech Park, Bangalore

Scholarly discussions tend to emphasize the search of the kinds of *ingredients* that can help innovation happen. What blends of science, technology, entrepreneurship, government funding, education, architecture, etc., are successful?

Many young people in universities today are involved in **Veneration of The Gadget**: the search for the next great iPod, iPhone, iPad, etc.

... or the next fabulous App!



The Audi self-parking car



## “The Internet of Caring Things”

**Cuptime:** The plastic cup connects wirelessly to a cellphone, allowing consumers to monitor their water intake.



It is impressive to see such ingenuity and devotion lavished upon such products and apps. Yet one has to wonder . . .

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Is this becoming the **Planet of the Apps?**



## **Benign innovation**

-- graceful, largely beneficial changes  
within traditions of practice

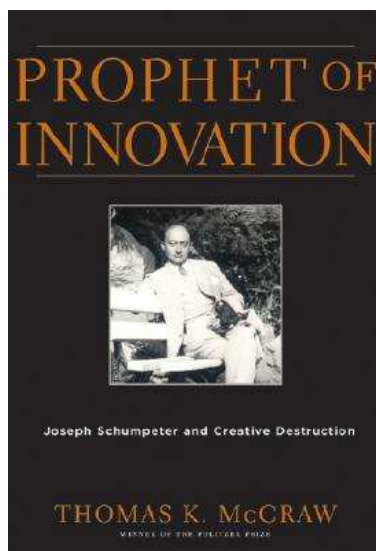


**Miles Davis**

**Creator of several  
New genres of jazz**

In contrast, today's favored style of innovation upholds  
"Creative Destruction."

**Joseph Schumpeter**  
1883 - 1950





“The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers’ goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates.”

[the] “process of industrial mutation—if I may use that biological term—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.”

“This process of **Creative Destruction** is the essential fact about capitalism.”

- Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942)

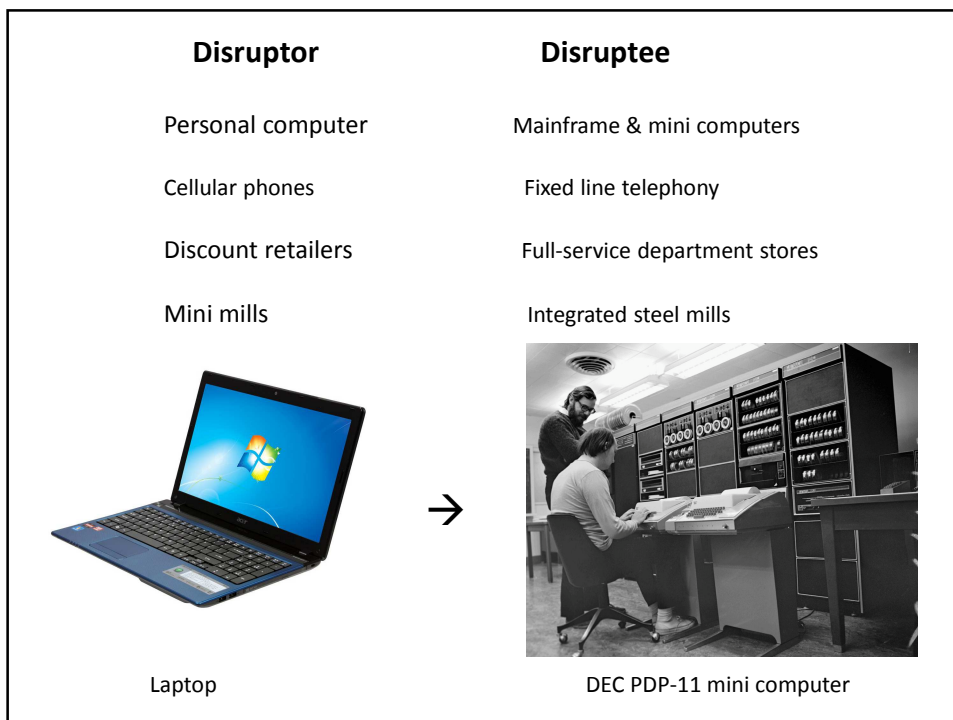
### Latest version: “**Disruptive innovation**”

A “theory” and strategy promoted in many business schools

. . . phenomenon by which an innovation transforms an existing market or sector by introducing simplicity, convenience, accessibility, and affordability where complication and high cost are the status quo. Initially, a disruptive innovation is formed in a niche market that may appear unattractive or inconsequential to industry incumbents, but eventually the new product or idea completely redefines the industry.

-- **Clayton Christensen**






UPDATED AND EXPANDED NEW EDITION

# Disrupting Class

*How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*



**Clayton M. Christensen**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE INNOVATOR'S DILEMMA*

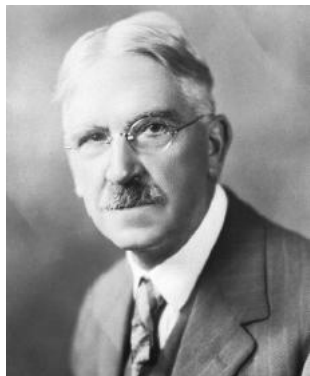
Michael B. Horn & Curtis W. Johnson

Disruptive innovation methods are applied in many areas of business and social life, including education.

“The tools of power and separation, though they seem foreign to leaders who have been schooled in consensus, are the key pieces of the puzzle of education reform. As you face budget crises and difficulty finding teachers, don’t solve the problems by doing less in the existing system. Solve it by facilitating disruption.”

*Disrupting Class*, p. 227

### Trajectory of American Philosophy of Education



**John Dewey**

- Pragmatism
- Education for democracy



**Clayton Christensen**

- Disruptive innovation
- Education for neoliberalism

Traditional saying:

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Today's advice from disruptive innovators:

**If it ain't broke –**

**by all means ...**

**BREAK IT!**



In comparison: **The Idea of Progress**

Modernity brought the almost universal conviction that humanity's prospects depend upon continuing expansion of scientific knowledge, embodied in technological advance, leading to inevitable improvement in nutrition, health, mobility, and other kinds of material wellbeing along with general improvement in social, moral and political conditions.

**Today's ideas of "innovation" inherit the optimistic aura of the idea of progress, but with significant differences.**

Innovation is often conceived as a matter of limited application and market-centered benefits.

A product or idea is useful, accessible, flexible, lower cost than the available alternatives. It helps a business or organization to vanquish the competition and capture savings and profits.

The belief in an **inevitable, universal tendency** toward improvement in living conditions for **all of humanity** – that's **no longer part of the scheme.**

Innovation is perhaps best seen as the **jewel in the crown** of the **neoliberalism**.



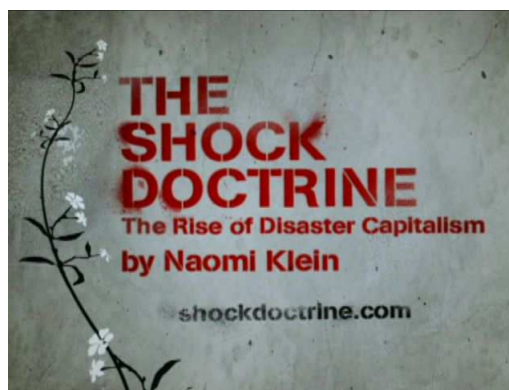
**Neoliberalism:** an economic and political philosophy that advocates “support for great economic liberalization, privatization, free trade, open markets, deregulation, and reductions in government spending in order to enhance the role of the private sector in the economy.” [Wikipedia]

In this ideology, market approaches are thought superior because they foster a spirit of innovation by those who hope to profit from their success.

The core belief is that the world will improve incrementally by the proliferation of clever innovations that succeed in the global market.

Seen in the mode of “creative destruction” and “disruptive innovation,” theories and projects of innovation bear a strong resemblance to the episodes of “**Shock Doctrine**” described in the writings Naomi Klein.

When an earthquake, tsunami, war, revolution, coup d’etat, or financial crash upsets the existing order of things, there are grand opportunities for radical, right wing, market-centered restructuring.



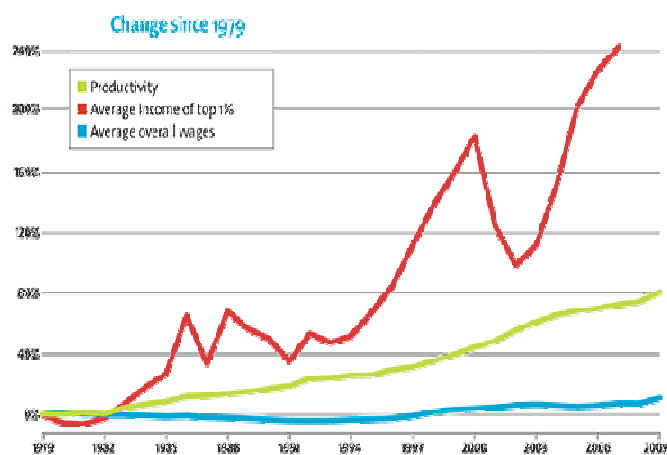
Innovation is sometimes upheld as the ultimate solution to humankind’s greatest problems:

World poverty, inequality, energy crisis, resource depletion, global climate change, etc.

**“If only we were *innovative enough*, these problems would surely be solved.”**

**[Is this confidence warranted?]**

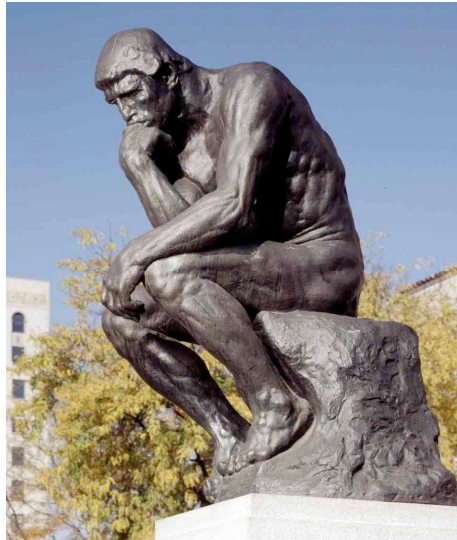
Will we *innovate ourselves* out of the glaring gaps of **inequality** that now afflict many world societies?



Will we *innovate ourselves away from* the utter **dependence upon fossil fuels** upon which modern civilization depends?



Will we *innovate* in ways that remove the rapidly moving threat **global climate crash** poses to modern civilization and countless biological species including our own?



It's a serious puzzle



Example: Bill Gates vision in his TED Talk on global warming, **“Innovating to Zero”** (Feb. 2010)

“We need solutions -- either one or several  
-- that have unbelievable scale and unbelievable reliability...”  
“These **breakthroughs**, we need to move those at full speed, and we can measure that in terms of companies, pilot projects, regulatory things that have been changed.”

Gates argues that if the expected technological miracles all happened as expected, then the world will reach ZERO carbon emissions in a few decades.

Gates holding a bottle of fire flies  
for TED audience



### **Reports of the climate emergency are published each week!**

#### **U.N. I.P.C.C. Report 2014**

- Profound effects of global warming are already felt around the globe
- Rate of greenhouse gas emissions is rising twice as fast as in late 20<sup>th</sup> century
- U.N. target of no more than 2 degrees Celsius increase already in serious jeopardy
- 40%-70% reduction in greenhouse gases is urgently needed by mid-century

**Only 15 years left** to bend the emissions curve downward, otherwise the costs become prohibitive

Question: Are we engaged in “**innovation**” or  
“**evasion**”?

Design, Innovation and Society  
or:  
Design, **Evasion** and Society?

Global Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation  
or  
Global Center for Entrepreneurship and **Evasion**

#####

Today innovation is often the brand name for  
a strategy premised upon **evasion** and **delay**.

Talk of “innovation” is often an excuse – a self-centered,  
self-interested excuse to justify **evading and delaying**  
**practical steps** that might be taken immediately:

For example, steps relevant to global warming:

instituting stiff carbon taxes worldwide;  
taking well-known measures to reduce energy use,  
e.g., lowering highway speed limits right now!

An emphasis that insists up upon finding new blends of  
science, technology and social cleverness – “innovation” –  
delays offering more immediate, perhaps simple solutions  
that may be close at hand.

“Reform” in the schools of the U.S.A. typically involves one or more of the following “innovations:

- More rigorous forms of “**high stakes testing**” (with tough discipline for teachers and schools whose test scores do not rise)
- Nationwide “**Common Core**” curriculum
- **Privatization** of public schools (“Charter Schools industry)
- Infusions of the latest generation of **computers** along with ideas of “**student-centered learning**” [Christensen’s proposal]

Most of the intensive, “innovative” reforms:

- devalue the knowledge, skill and personal creativity of teachers;
- deemphasize students’ love of learning
- show little if any improvement in students achievement

Today's education headlines:

**“U.S. Student Performance Slips on National Test”**

[test scores in math & reading fall, not rise after  
“reforms”]

**“Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for  
Colleges”**

[students educated with incessant standardized testing  
and with *no love of learning* are in a **panic!**]



Thinking outside the Box . . .



**IS ... the new Box**