Contents

1 Introduction: The Stories of Big Tech 1
1.1 Related Stories 5
1.2 Stories of Psychological Harm 6
1.3 Stories of Economic Harm 11
1.4 The Cause of Communication 13
1.5 The Problem of "Large" 16
1.6 The Problem of "Technology Companies" 18
References 19

2 What is Algorithmic Media? 23
2.1 What is an Algorithm? 24
2.1.1 Abstraction 26
2.1.2 Deterministic Algorithms and "Correct" Answers 27
2.2 Opinionated Algorithms 28
2.3 Auditing Algorithms 34
2.4 Words as Tools 36
2.5 What About 'Social Media?' 39
2.6 Miscommunication Through Algorithmic Media 42
References 46

3 News Through Algorithmic Media 49
3.1 The Flow 53
3.2 Filter Bubbles as Folk Theory 54
3.3 Civic Responsibility 56

3.3.1 Sidebar: Would Filter Bubbles Always be Bad? 57
3.3.2 Ethics of the Front Page 58
3.4 Values in Algorithms 61
3.5 Case Study: Apple News 66
3.5.1 No Personalization in Apple News 67
3.5.2 Long-Term Apple News Data 68
3.5.3 Will the Revolution be in Apple News? 71
References 75

4 Advertising Through Algorithmic Media 79
4.1 The Microphone Myth 83
4.2 Your Digital Scrap Doll 84
4.3 Discrimination in Algorithmic Advertising 87
4.4 The Blessing of Intent 91
4.5 Distance is Forever 94
4.6 A ZIP Code Experiment 96
4.7 Suspicious Clicks 99
4.8 Ad Nauseam 100
References 103

5 Social Communication Through Algorithms 107
5.1 Enshittification 109
5.2 Case Study: Enshittification of the Instagram Experience 111
5.2.1 Phase One: Good to the Users 111
5.2.2 Phase Two: Good to the Advertisers 112
5.2.3 Phase Three: Unabashed Abuse 113
5.3 The Communicative Structure of Enshittification 116
5.3.1 Phase One, Direct Social Flows (Good to Users) 116
5.3.2 Phase Two, Pay-to-Say Flows (Good to Businesses) 116
5.3.3 Phase Three, Pseudosocial Flows (Abuse) 119
5.4 Pseudo-Social Media 121
5.5 Collapse 123
5.5.1 Context Collapse 123
5.5.2 Time Collapse 125
5.5.3 Relevance Collapse 126
5.5.4 Sidebar: What is Noise? 128
5.6 Is There a Better Algorithm? 129
5.7 What Can Be Done? 134
References 137

6 Tomorrow's Media 141
6.1 Prisms and Mirrors: AI as Media 143
6.1.1 Risk #1: Wasting Resources 144
6.1.2 Risk #2: Blurring Information 147
6.1.3 Risk #3: Mangling Sources 148
6.1.4 Risk #4: Non-cooperation 150
6.2 Some Humble Suggestions 153
6.2.1 Suggestion #1: Manage Your Algorithm Time 154
6.2.2 Suggestion #2: Curate Media Intentionally 155
6.2.3 Suggestion #3: Socialize 156
6.2.4 Suggestion #4 Contribute to an Organization 156
6.3 Real Grounds for Hope 157
References 159

Index 163