



The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World

Laurence Scott

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A constellation of everyday digital phenomena is rewiring our inner lives, argues Laurence Scott. We are increasingly coaxed from the third-dimensional containment of our pre-digital selves into a wonderful and eerie fourth dimension, a world of ceaseless communication, instant information and global connection.

Our portals to this new world have been wedged open, and the silhouette of a figure is slowly taking shape. But what does it feel like to be four-dimensional? How do digital technologies influence the rhythms of our thoughts, the style and tilt of our consciousness? What new sensitivities and sensibilities are emerging with our exposure to the delights, sorrows and anxieties of a networked world? And how do we live in public, with these recoded private lives?

Tackling ideas of time, space, isolation, silence and threat – how our modern-day anxieties manifest online – and moving from Hamlet to the ghosts of social media, from *Seinfeld* to the fall of Gaddafi, from Twitter art to Oedipus, *The Four-Dimensional Human* is a highly original and pioneering portrait of life in a digital landscape.

The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World Details

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Author : Laurence Scott

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From Reader Review The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World for online ebook

Douglas Lord says

Talk about 'waxy.' This Scott dude can certainly stretch an idea. He argues, semi-convincingly, that digital devices and social media are the 4th dimension. We're somewhere else when we're really here. Or vice versa or something.

“Social media...makes a moment four-dimensional by scaffolding it with simultaneity, such that it exists in multiple places at once” (xv). But he also gives an example of writing a postcard doing the same thing, so isn't it *any* distraction removing you from the present?

The text is devoid of non-self reference; I've not read an author so entirely consumed by himself and his own thoughts since, maybe, Henry David Thoreau. Scott seems to only make comparisons to his own experiences. It's a great book – if you're in his family. DNF'd.

Though this isn't one of them, you can find reviews of books for men at Books for Dudes, Books for Dudes, the online reader's advisory column for men from Library Journal.

Libby Greene says

I very much enjoyed reading this book, but whenever I talk about it, I feel the need to reserve myself. *The Four-Dimensional Human* explores the ways in which digital networks have changed our ways of living and being in the world-- a highly worthwhile subject, imho. Laurence Scott uses the pop academic's medley of sociological, mythological, literary, and crit. theoretical lenses to examine our modern fascinations and to subsume our behaviors into conceptual frameworks, all snugly fitted into his rollicking prose. He treats his subject with a commendably refreshing lightness of touch: he's sad without dourness, hopeful without zealotry: his analytical discussion is suffused with a gentle mood that only on occasion approaches melodrama. My beef with *The Four-Dimensional Human*, and with books of its kind, is that sometimes the desire to understand our behaviors-- to analyze, typify, and conceptualize-- eclipses the behaviors themselves. This work contains plenty under-supported theories and intuitive leaps, and that disappoints me, as I feel the topic (really, "how do we live well, given the circumstances?") merits the best our thought has to offer. I understand the limits of the genre, and I also understand that enthusiasm and market pressure encourage us to jump to conclusions. It's enthusiasm that would lead me to gush over *The Four-Dimensional Human*'s relevance and timeliness, but when I think, instead, about the depth and prescience of Umberto Eco's *Chronicles of a Liquid Society*, which deals with similar topics, I know that we can do much better.

Obeida Takriti says

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Jen says

I recieved a free copy of this book in return for an honest review. It's been a few months & I've made many attempts to reach the end but have finally had to admit defeat, this book really isn't for me.

A non-fiction book written in highly styled prose is an interesting concept, but such a book needs to retain the essential elements of expertise or insight & I just didn't find that here.

Great read for style, but sadly the content was just not to my taste.

Blair says

This is a difficult book to write about and very hard to describe. It's basically a study of how 'networked life', ie 24/7 connection to the internet and social media and the ability to constantly communicate across almost all physical borders, has transformed the human experience, and what that means for us. But it's a sprawling sort of book that goes in loads of different directions, rather than presenting a single argument. If this sounds a bit incoherent, it sometimes can be, yet Scott's writing is so beautiful it barely matters. It's an academic thesis written like a novel. Pop culture references are woven in very naturally and nothing about it feels gimmicky. I'm not a big non-fiction reader, but this really grabbed me.

(Possibly to be continued/expanded later)

Angela says

Full of fantastic metaphors and penetrating, striking and stinging insights into our all-encompassing digital world and the creation of an always-on uncannily haunted screen life, mixed in with some labored comparative literature analysis that just did not work. And he really dropped the ball with the last chapter on the "desertification" of reality and the internet. Labored comparison after labored comparison. A good editor would have trimmed Scott's escapades into intertextual analysis and chopped off that last chapter, which may have made this a touchstone reflection on the meaning of now and what's happening to us as consumer-producers.

Karel Baloun says

Scott deeply understands the internet, and wastes few words on empty ideas, and covers vast ground accessible from his Comparative Literature PhD and broad artistic interests. Carefully choose descriptive words and obscure yet appropriate metaphors and examples, this book often sent me to google for erudition, and never wasted my curiosity.

Best moments are countless, including: Duschamps' Toilet. Timescales as Porn. Proust. Dorian Grey. Flatland, and several personal brushes with death.

I couldn't read this book without a 4D world, because so much context I didn't know. Also it's better on an ereader; so many quotes and comments and ideas to keep track of.

Exhibit A on why academic study of English is valuable is Intensely challenging read, and I am unable to Justice to it in any short review. Through making parallels in our shared deep knowledge of things Internet, Scott taught me our rich heritage of literary and artistic gold. This book may be timeless, a precious time capsule of this literary century and the generation that came of age just as the internet and mobile were born.

Paul says

You are no doubt reading this on a screen, most likely some sort of tablet or phone, but it could be on a computer. This constant interaction with the 1's and 0's of the digital world is starting to have an effect on our own lives, as we are drawn into a world of constant connection, information at your fingertips and 24 hour communication. Scott calls this new persona, the four dimensional human, and in this book considers the ways that this influx of digital consciousness will affect us. Some of his subjects include the private and public faces that we show online, how the digital sphere is affecting us and our thought processes and the perils on our sanity with a constant stream of news.

It was an interesting book in lots of ways, almost everything we do these days has some sort of interaction with a computer or screen, and Scott has made a good attempt to try and see what sort of human being we will become with the constant digital feeds in our lives. The first part of the book dragged a little, but thankfully picked up in the last half where he gave a number of examples on social media and his own experiences on it as well as illustrations from the film and fiction worlds. Overall good, and it would be a subject worth re-visiting again in five years or so with my children's generation who have only know this world.

Celine says

The Four-Dimensional Human invites us to think about how digitization has changed our lives. It's not a book about dooms-day warnings of how technology will ruin us, but rather, gently nudges us to think about what it means to be connected to the cloud at all times. What does it mean for our sense of a body, when we are constantly "bodiless" on the net? What meanings do space and place have, when I can be where you are with the click of a button or a swipe on a screen?

Scott's writing style combines a strong background in literature with metaphorical language and anecdotes into a narrative that is engaging, witty, and recognizable. It's not an academic work, nor is it, in my opinion, truly a work of "popular non-fiction". It's straddled somewhere in between, in a comfortable and confident way.

Pete Foley says

The introduction alone is worth the price of admission.

I feel like sometimes he gets a little carried away in his grand and super verbose similes and references, but

then he'll turn around and slap you with beautiful insights.

It's such a pleasure to read about our modern, connected lives without it sounding like your grand mother is disappointed in you.

Chris Baker says

The internet has become all pervasive. Like Mr Tickle, Scott suggests, it has the magical ability to reach into every frame of our lives. Smart phones and tablets have become palm-sized windows onto new vistas. The tropes of social media are changing the way that we view the world. Notifications are creating new rhythms, communication is at once instant and overwhelming.

While we struggle to catch breath, time to reflect on what is happening is increasingly important. Yet here we get the space to share in Scott's own astute observations. Unlike many books on the subjects, he doesn't appear to set out with an agenda or a pre-determined narrative. Instead he meanders through a series of themes, each a metaphor for life in a "Four Dimensional" world.

The four dimensions in question are a nod towards a trend in late 19th century literature which fantasised about a collapse of space and time that would allow voyagers to cross instantaneously into distant locations. This is a good illustration of how Scott applies his creative imagination to the questions that he poses, and explores them within a wider cultural context of literature, film and fashion.

Like the cultural commentators of a pre-internet age, language is often a major signifier, with sections on social media speak and Digital Detox being particularly droll. Scott's day job as a lecturer in creative writing also shows through in the quality of his own prose.

While there are moments where Scott sails close to pretension, and occasional sections that feel overdrawn, his practice of pulling focus back to everyday life and all too familiar behaviours keeps things grounded and engaging throughout.

In a decidedly non-digital hardback form the book is an analog pleasure in itself. Switch off your data service and read it now. It might just change how you behave when you reconnect.

Neil Mcrobert says

As a piece of philosophical and critical writing this book has its flaws. As a piece of entertaining commentary on daily digital interaction it is hugely effective. Scott adopts a fairly systematic approach early on. He reminisces about some piece of pop culture trivia or literary moment and then finds a way to use it as a metaphorical entry into the changing themes of his study. He zips along from tennis, to Oscar Wilde, via 80s children's TV and a late (and ineffective) use of the desert as spiritual and geographical analogue for the emptiness of modern digital existence. Whilst this tactic is repetitive once you notice it, it remains an entertaining and often hilarious way to examine the mediated situation we find ourselves in.

Also as a Gothic scholar I enjoy Scott's own approach to the Internet as an inherently spooky place. I'd recommend the book for anyone with any interest in digital humanities, contemporary philosophy. It is heavily weighted towards a literary analysis of the Internet, and this is no bad thing. But if you are looking

for a detailed, technical examination of human/digital interaction then this is not the book for you. Scott paints with very broad strokes, but he creates a hugely enjoyable, and consistently non-judgemental vision of our overly-technologised present.

Kristina says

Though the book was vaguely relevant to my MA thesis on posthumanism and virtuality, it was difficult to read at times. The style itself is witty and a pleasure to read, and the anecdotes as to how the author came to think about a certain consequence to our existence in 4D do make it all more clear. Indeed, I could not blame the author for having bad style or poor writing skills - 80% of the time, it is a good read.

The only drawback that I see is the the author's tendency to repeat the same thing multiple times, but from a slightly different perspective and wording. While I can recognise this as a useful method to explain a certain concept to a reader unfamiliar with the topic or the philosophy behind it, it does get tedious after 100 pages or so. Moreover, it does not seem to function as the aforementioned technique, but rather more of a "mental loop", a circular thought process that the author cannot break out of.

All in all, it is a philosophically sound work with a few glitches that can put the reader off from time to time. But a decent book nonetheless.

Karel Baloun says

Scott deeply understands the internet, and wastes few words on empty ideas, and covers vast ground accessible from his Comparative Literature PhD and broad artistic interests. Carefully choose descriptive words and obscure yet appropriate metaphors and examples, this book often sent me to google for erudition, and never wasted my curiosity.

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Stuart says

Summary Of The Book:

Thank You to the publisher and Net Galley for the opportunity to review this book.

This is predominantly a philosophical and existential book of musings of our entry into and existence in the

digital world. Lawrence discusses how things have changed due to digitisation and the dynamics of social media and how we have evolved to use it for better or worse (*cough* over-sharing...). Lawrence takes us on a journey through modern day digital workings, evaluating where the line now blurs between where our physical presence ends and online/digital begins.

Lawrence answers questions like, how have phone calls changed? Do we catch up with friends any more, or do we just confirm what we already have learnt from social media profiles? Will the internet be able to unite race, gender and sexual orientation? Is this shared consciousness or hive mind we have created help or hinder us? Is originality going out the window? any many more.

The Four-Dimensional Human talks us through how death and mourning has changed due to family being able to carry on the memory of their loved one through social media, and also people's pain and suffering being so available to everyone they know. LS explains that how we treat people has changed due to social media, how we may forget people quicker if they don't share, like our content or interact. Digitisation can affect your home life, work life and social life in so many different ways and LS takes us through those eventualities and shows us what can happen.

There are some sad truths here, but with negativity comes positivity and there is plenty of positive thoughts and opinions that weave themselves through this thought inducing and life changing material. Are we more united due to the internet? Is having a clearer picture about the companies we buy from good for the soul? We can see more of the world than ever before and with exploring comes perspective, and there is plenty of perspective here!

My Review:

When I finished this book it left a confusing taste in my brain. But having reflected over the meaning of the book and what it actually represents I believe that The Four Dimensional Human is definitely worth a read.

The format of this book is very informal, introduction, 7 chapters and an epilogue. The writing style is quite informal too, it comes across to me as if the author was just talking to himself about this subject and we were just there for the ride, it is a bumpy ride but overall it has a lot of impact.

The content of the book is important, informative and thought inducing. Lawrence walks a fine line between positivity and negativity but I believe negativity won the war. LS is not actively negative but upon finishing I was left with the impression that maybe the internet is not a force for good. Lawrence covers plenty of happy and inspiring aspects of the internet but there is a lot of room for evil online,

I really enjoyed all the metaphors, similes and analogies in this book, also Lawrence uses lots of classic and modern literature references to bring his point home and that really helped the flow. LS flow in TFDH is choppy at times but its bearable. The information and opinions in this book are sometimes overwhelming but there is something for everyone, I found one of my all time favourite quotes from a book nestled in chapter 4 of this tome.

"The best moments in reading are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - which you had thought special and particular to you. And now, here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours."

Alan Bennett - 'The History Boys'

Lawrence Scott did an impressive job here and I would recommend this to anyone as I feel it covers enough important, relevant issues and aspects of the digital world which people should be taking into consideration. I look forward to reading more of Lawrence Scott's work.

7/10

If you enjoyed this review then seek out more on www.alwaystrustinbooks.blogspot.co.uk we post on Twitter, Facebook, Goodreads, Amazon UK/US, Net Galley and Bookbridgr. I really appreciate you spending your time reading this piece and have a great day!!
