***Is Your Online World Just a ‘Filter Bubble’ of People With the Same Opinions?***

**By**[**KATHERINE SCHULTEN**](http://www.nytimes.com/by/katherine-schulten)**SEPT. 29, 2016, New York Times**

Where and how do you get your news? How much comes via a social media feed? How diverse is that feed in terms of demographic details like the ages, races, religions, geographical locations, interests and political affiliations of the people you follow?

In honor of News Engagement Day on Oct. 4, we’d like to invite you to take a critical look at your “news diet” and think about how to broaden it. In “How Facebook Warps Our Worlds,” a May 2016 Op-Ed column reacting to news that month about alleged liberal bias at the company, Frank Bruni writes:

*Those who’ve been raising alarms about Facebook are right: Almost every minute that we spend on our smartphones and tablets and laptops, thumbing through favorite websites and scrolling through personalized feeds, we’re pointed toward foregone conclusions. We’re pressured to conform.*

*But unseen puppet masters on Mark Zuckerberg’s payroll aren’t to blame. We’re the real culprits. When it comes to elevating one perspective above all others and herding people into culturally and ideologically inflexible tribes, nothing that Facebook does to us comes close to what we do to ourselves.*

*I’m talking about how we use social media in particular and the internet in general — and how we let them use us. They’re not so much agents as accomplices, new tools for ancient impulses, part of “a long sequence of technological innovations that enable us to do what we want,” noted the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who wrote the 2012 best seller “The Righteous Mind,” when we spoke last week.*

*“And one of the things we want is to spend more time with people who think like us and less with people who are different,” Haidt added. “The Facebook effect isn’t trivial. But it’s catalyzing or amplifying a tendency that was already there.”*

*... By bookmarking given blogs and personalizing social-media feeds, we customize the news we consume and the political beliefs we’re exposed to as never before. And this colors our days, or rather bleeds them of color, reducing them to a single hue.*

*We construct precisely contoured echo chambers of affirmation that turn conviction into zeal, passion into fury, disagreements with the other side into the demonization of it.*

Critical Reading and Analysis

(Acc)Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**For your FIRST read, please *Highlight in Color:*** Important information about the Frank Bruni presents

**For your SECOND read, please annotate for the following:**

***\*In Pen/Pencil\**** Personal Reactions (THREE TOTAL) in the margins

**Then, after you are done reading, please answer the following questions:**

1. Summarize the article in 3 sentences.

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1. What is your reaction to this essay? Is Mr. Bruni right? Does your own social media feed give you a steady stream of information that is culturally and ideologically similar to your own?

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1. Why might this lack of diversity matter? What are people missing if their social media and news sources are what Mr. Bruni calls “a single hue”?

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1. How do you think this issue affects you personally? For example, during this contentious election season, has what you’ve seen in your social and news feeds mostly validated and enforced the opinions you already held, or challenged them?

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1. Mr. Bruni writes: “*But that’s not about a lopsided news feed. It’s not about some sorcerer’s algorithm. It’s about a tribalism that has existed for as long as humankind has and is now rooted in the fertile soil of the internet, which is coaxing it toward a full and insidious flower*.”

Do you agree that we are “tribal” and that we tend to reproduce that on the internet? How do you see that in your own life?

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1. If you wanted to break out of your “filter bubble,” how might you do it? What people and organizations might you follow? What new perspectives might you seek out? How could you find them?

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