

Does technological innovation mean progress?

Historically, technology has been depicted as a determining factor of our world and human progress. The greater the innovations, the greater the quality of our lives. Although humans evolve with it and vice-versa, technological innovation does not always correlate to progress. There is no defined progress with specific accomplishments, but rather improvements with limited goals. In addition, technological competition may create exploitation and hostility through immoral means to an end. These two reasons give a clear indication as to why technology does not always lead to general progress, more specifically, socially.

When technology is said to make progress, it is never defined what kind of progress and specifically whether it is good or bad. The user nor the creator of a specific invention familiarize themselves with the social impact it cultivates, but rather the short-term gratifications and efficiency it is primarily created to carry out. Many inventions were introduced with a very specific reason in mind, without foreseeing any repercussions for society, human kind and natural evolution as a whole. Alfred Nobel accidentally created dynamite and his invention was quickly used to dig canals, blast tunnels and build railroads. Through different iterations, he created safer versions of explosives that effectively helped the creation of gigantic infrastructure projects that would be impossible to create otherwise. Nobel chose the word dynamite from the Greek word "*dynamis*", which means power [1]. He believed it would be used mainly for peaceful purposes, because "as soon as men found that in one instant whole armies can be utterly destroyed, they surely will abide by golden peace [1]". Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to witness the horrors of the First World War and the destruction explosives caused across Europe.

Moreover, technological innovations do not always thrive from collectivism. Throughout history, many important inventions that are foundational for modern society and civilization today, were created through unhealthy forms of competition, resulting in greater levels of exploitation and hostility among civilization. Competition can be beneficial in teaching perseverance, but exceeding the conditions of rivalry can result in catastrophic and relentless behavior [2]. The Cold War was a competition of ideologies, a period of who will survive under the hostility and pressure the nuclear arms race has inevitably become. In 1963, at the height of the Space Race, Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy were closing on a deal for a joint lunar mission that would eventually bring an end to the war and make technological progress beneficial from a standpoint of collaboration rather than competition [3]. The Soviet Union had far better rocket technology and the United States had more advanced computers. If the two superpowers had settled on an agreement, the strongest economical, technological and sociostructural benefits for human kind would have been realized. This is a perfect example of how competition and cooperation can represent the perfect balance on how technology can progress with a clear vision for humanity's evolution. A week after the decision by Khrushchev was allegedly made, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Because of the distrust of the new administration, all plans for a joint mission to the Moon die along with John F. Kennedy [3].

In conclusion, technological innovation does not always mean progress. The unclear vision of society's perception of technology and the moral imbalance that comes with it are the determining factors that will lead to the downfall of social progress in the near future. As a species that always strives for more and better, it is time we do not ignore our action's consequences and ensure greed does not lead to our imminent destruction.

References:

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