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Assignment #2

**When humans stop being human: a view into our coevolution with technology**

Technology is defined as the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, often resulting in machinery and equipment. Technology developments have made our lives easier in various aspects, such as providing help doing homework or facilitating communication. One of the most popular results from these developments is the existence of cell phones. The main purpose of cell phones was to make a phone call. Today, that is not the case. They have transformed into state-of-the-art electronic gadgets that compete to become the ultimate personal assistant in everyday jobs.

One of the most current applications of the cell phones that have impacted the world is taking pictures of documents. The documents can then be converted into Portable Document Format (pdf) files. Another useful application is assisting on urban navigation by guiding the driver through the shortest and fastest path to the destination. Finally, a cell phone can take high quality videos and pictures, stream movies online, and show up to date worldwide news in different languages. With these applications, cell phones have respectively replaced scanners, global positioning systems (GPS), digital video and photograph cameras, television, and newspapers in many situations.

Depending on their hardware design, the newest models of cell phones, often called “smart phones,” support different operating systems (OS). An operating system is the software that supports a computer’s basic functions, such as executing applications. The company that manufactures the phone defines the OS. Different OS share the same ability of installing, commonly referred as “downloading,” external applications that will allow the phone user to control the gadget according to various necessities. The software that helps in this variety of tasks is called “apps,” which derives from the English word “applications.”

In our modern fast-paced lives, cell phone apps are time savers because they constantly help us to be more productive. This productivity is due to apps allowing us to better manage our time. One of the reasons that we have developed impressive time management skills result from online shopping and getting the products delivered to our homes.

As a college student that needs to manage time wisely in order to have a strong academic performance, I have become a constant user of online shopping and cell phone apps that will help me save time in daily tasks. A very popular app among the student population in the Southern California region is Tapingo. Tapingo is used to order food online and, then pick it up at the restaurant where the order was placed. Therefore, this app allows students to buy food without having to spend time in line waiting to order. Normally, a Tapingo order will be ready by the time a student walks out of class and bikes to the on-campus restaurant. One of the best features of this app is that there are different payment methods. Students can pay using credit cards, debit cards, or dinning dollars that are given to students when they buy their meal plan at the beginning of each semester or academic year.

Although I am a strong advocate for quality of life improvement as an outcome of technological development, I am aware of the social consequences that occur as side effects. One side effect is that an increasingly part of our society is using these objects without rationale. Using technology without justification brings an increasing negative effect on popular culture. Even though many applications and gadgets were created to unite individuals, they have had the opposite effect as well. One of the negative aspects of creating a society dependent on technology is that people interact less with each other. Unfortunately, many individuals have lost contact with the outside world, since social media has distanced humans by pushing them to live online. As a result, social media users have distanced people who are physically next to them. It is effortless to observe that the dehumanization of our lives is a product of technological development.

Similarly, GPS apps have decreased our social interaction. It may have had greater negative consequences than benefits. Before GPS services and applications, adventurous travelers would buy maps. Soon after, they would go on road trips asking locals for directions if the maps could not orient them. Regrettably, our generation does not have the experience of getting lost in an unknown town trying to find the closest road. In my experience, these experiences give travelers unforgettable memories because they teach them different ways of solving problems in difficult situations. I have developed a tolerance to stress due to the aforementioned situation. At the present time, GPS apps limit us to merely follow the instructions of an inexistent person.

In addition to social media and GPS, an additional unconstructive effect on technology users is that they get to choose the news they want to read. As a result, Internet users enjoy autonomy from mainstream media. Nevertheless, they are narrowing their points of view in the news broadcast and politics realm. At first, I thought that reading and watching the news online could enhance the process of getting informed on a daily basis, but after a few months of trying this innovative and modern way of news broadcast I realized that the audience was solely receiving a narrow insight of the events. Resulting in the reason online users despise mainstream media and opted for online news. Even if my political and social ideologies do not agree with the information on mainstream media, which conveys the interests of the wealthy and the powerful in American society, I have the obligation of understanding the different points of view on the same issues. A well-rounded education on issues will result on a diverse perception on how to approach a specific political situation.

In contrast of developing good habits such as time management, multitasking is an outcome of technology. Multitasking is the ability to do different tasks at the same time. In American culture, this skill is a lifestyle because it has become extremely popular in busy and productive lives. However, multitasking misrepresents a productive lifestyle. Quantity is frequently viewed as higher in priorities in contrast to quality. Thus, the work is done regardless of the quality of the performed task.

Besides the uncountable benefits of technology, it is obvious that electronic gadgets alienate us from each other. Promoted by our device dependence, our fast and goal-oriented lifestyle stimulates only academic and professional goals without taking into consideration personal life. Due to the previous reasons, technology dehumanizes us. However, it is difficult to arrive at this conclusion if the concept of being human is not clearly defined.

Throughout time, different cultures have tried to find the meaning of life and, as a collateral result, we try defining what it means to be human. Analyzing and understanding the human being’s position in its different levels will lead us into discovering the true meaning of being human and what makes us human. The most fundamental level of the human being is the biological plane. Within this realm, the human race is at the top of the spectrum of living matter because of its development due to evolution. Nevertheless, humans share aspects with other living forms. Some of these overlaps were previously thought to be uniquely part of human nature, such as our complex social lives, emotions, creativity, communication, and the concept of having a soul.

Although these aspects put us at the same level as the rest of the living organisms, the differences need to be evaluated to understand our human nature, which separates us from animals and makes us humans. According to Aristotelianism, the main and core aspect of a human is the intellectual soul. This term is defined as intelligence that has the ability to search for the truth about everything that exists. Besides the intellectual soul, humans have freewill, which is the capability to control direct our actions. With freewill and intelligence, the human race has been able to improve the quality of life in different eras using technology, machinery and equipment developed from the application of scientific knowledge.

As an example, ancient civilizations built mechanisms to defend themselves, such as the Great Wall of China that prevent invasions into the country. Additionally, humans have used tools developed by them to give a meaning to their lives in a spiritual level. Pre-Hispanic civilizations indigenous to this continent built pyramids as a religious symbol to connect to the afterlife.

By studying in detail the history and development of humans throughout time in different civilizations, it is feasible to conceive that human nature is to use our intelligence to develop technology that will improve our lifestyles. However, are we actually doing this? Currently, are we trying to understand who we are first before modifying our lifestyles with technology?

In order to use technology wisely, we need to first understand the meaning of being human. By distinguishing between electronic devices and human beings, we will be able to unravel the purpose of technology. The justification is that humans control technology. By identifying this hierarchy, we will start recognizing its benefits and drawbacks. As a result, we will use technology wisely. This process is necessary to avoid our dehumanization and be conscious about electronic device reliance. If this dependency is avoided, then social interaction and personal life will be improved. Thus, a fulfilling balanced lifestyle with proper operation of smart phones will be achieved. Therefore, cell phone apps will keep making our lives easier and more practical.

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