

Neo-Luddites and The Disadvantaged; What an Ordeal

It seems almost like human nature to reject new technological developments over the use of what is old and familiar. I myself don't like or try to use Internet of Things devices or social media. However, Neo-Luddites are kind of like taking this idea and putting it to the extreme. These people are heavy critics of technology, seeing technology as something that detracts and disenchanters our society as a whole. According to our book, some of these people have spoken out against developments like the telephones and the printing press as they seem to destroy the original values of humans where we live in small communities not impacting nature. However, Neo-Luddites' main issue is against computers, since these systems are worse than all technology than before them. Computers can be used in a multitude of ways and can perform actions extremely fast. To these people, this just steepens the curve of negative impactful human society. According to "A Gift of Fire", they say, among other ideas, that computers cause problems like people dehumanizing others and isolating themselves or children failing to develop socially. As well, they argue that computers fail to solve real human issues like "Why are we here?" and actually generates more issues like social inequity.

With the impending idea of inequity, it brings into question about the similarities and differences between Neo-Luddite technology rejectors and someone who is just not able to afford or obtain access to technology. I think the clear and obvious difference between the two is choice and understanding of technology. Neo-Luddites are people that, in order to reject technology, have to have interacted with technology enough to see and understand the effects that it brings. Ultimately, these people know what technology does and are in a position where they can choose to not use it. As well, according to our course book, some of these computer critics use these systems through services like email to spread their beliefs. This is in exact contrast with those not fortunate enough to own or use computing systems in their day to day life. People in poverty or in many third world countries lack access to the internet, computers, or even electricity at all. They have no choice in the matter, and these people have less to potential no understanding of computers and their effects on human life and society. However, what connects these two groups of people together is equally as simple. How they are disadvantaged and disconnected from those that are able and choose to use technology.

Both of these groups of people, to some extent, are losing access to technological developments that help save and better lives and add convenience over basic needs. For example, our book talks about how in third world countries, farmers use the internet to find the best merchant crop prices to sell to. This adds a great deal of conveniences and productivity, since then farmers don't have to ask around to find the best deal, saving quite a bit of time. However, a Neo-Luddite could likely claim that since this technology isn't vital and is a solution to an already solved issue that is not needed and promotes disconnectivity with others. In this example, people like a Neo-Luddite or those without internet access are put to a disadvantage over those using the internet to find store prices. Those who can quickly look and find who to sell to make the most possible amount of money whereas the other two would end up wasting time and likely not find the best merchant. And if they did find the best merchant, he/she would probably not want any more product as they have already bought from the one using the internet. This is a simple example but shows the kind of disadvantages these people can be put into. Another example for how someone like me, an technology user, is advantaged over those that can't or refuse to use it is a piece of biomedical technology that I use every day to keep myself alive. I have to use a glucose monitor, being a diabetic, to manage my blood glucose levels. There are diabetics in the world that don't have

the ability to use this or even insulin. This just puts me at a survival rate higher and allows me to reduce my chance to have all sorts of medical problems that are caused by mismanagement of diabetics.

So how should we factor in such disadvantaged groups into ethical decisions regarding the incorporation of technology into our lives? This is less a question for an individual such as myself and more so one for political and economic systems to decide. What do they do about their citizens or customers that lack access to technology that is needed for some policy or system to function? Ultimately, what should be followed is the idea that was talked about in the beginning of the semester of Rawls' difference principle where those that best off and worst off should have their differences lessened. This can be done by ensuring that the worse off aren't further worsened by a decision. One option to do this is to provide an alternative to those that lack the technology. As an example, let's say the US was going to mandate an online election system, terrifying I know. Well, not everyone has a stable internet connection, some may refuse the internet, and some people may have religious beliefs that would be violated by voting in such a way. So to accommodate these people the normal voting system that we have today would still have to be available. Another option would be to provide the technology to those that want it. A good example for this is with big tech companies reaching the next billion users like what we went through in class. Many companies started providing limited free access to the internet in rural developing countries to gain more users for their own sites. This helps improve these people's lives while also earning the companies money through these new users. Ensuring that those that are disadvantaged at least are given some options, either as alternatives or handouts, is ultimately the best that can be done when a certain technology is vital to the function of our lives.