Aryeh Winter 04/30/17

Response to Group #1

Group one asked a few interesting discussion questions, but one of them stuck out to me in particular. They asked, like television, how can new technology and social media make people feel happy versus unhappy? As this is a subject of particular importance to me, I figured I’d tackle it.

New technologies, and in particular social medias, have a vast influence on people’s psyche. On one hand, social medias connect us to one another, allow us to share ideas and opinions, debate with other people we otherwise would never have met, and overall expand out horizons. Though the increased socialization this causes would seem to only be a pro, the nature of it, specifically the fact that people don’t feel that their words and actions can directly affect them, can cause a vast array of negatives to affect other users. It’s a difficult topic to truly critique though because of the nearly as vast, if not a greater, array of positives that social media and new technologies bring to people. For younger people who were born into this technology, this is all they know. They are more connected than we’ll ever be, can find and track data, and voice opinions they would otherwise never have had. Social media has given them the ability to communicate on a vast scale. The joy of learning, of meeting these new people, some of whom can become close friends, of being able to post videos and have fun online cannot be understated. They can chat and play games with friend both new and old, in any part of the globe. You can watch movies and upload videos all from your own home, as well as join in forum discussions and voice your opinion with people who in person would not even look twice at you. The fact that this can truly bring people together and happiness to some is undeniable. However, this increased socialization through new technologies and social media causes other problems which can undeniably hurt people.

There are quite a few negatives and problems that social media and new technologies have caused, problems that younger people especially do not understand. To begin, we often meet and befriend people we have only met online, people we may come to intimately trust, people who in the end may not have our best interests in mind. On the internet, we stand among a group of billions of people, and yet are utterly alone. There is no one to protect us, check on us, except the few people we know in person, if they happen to be there. Even though we are interacting and socializing with people online, in person we are alone and as much as online may seem to be enough, people need physical interaction with other people to help maintain their sanity and remain healthy. If you are only socializing online, then the second you log off you are suddenly completely alone. And yet, you were always alone. It was only ever you, staring at your screen. This is a major source of depression, anxiety, and overall unhappiness.

This is why this is such a difficult topic. Unlike television, which had its own host of problems, new technologies and social medias are more likely to cause people to remain alone and only socialize online, as opposed to television which caused family and friends to gather as they had to physically be there to see the screen together. I have only listed a few things in each category, but it is a very complicated subject and it is even more difficult to say whether it is better or worse for a person. In the end, my opinion is that everything is good in moderation and we need to be physically interacting with people as often as possible, if only to make up for the increased time we will be online.

Ps. Once full dive virtual reality comes out this question will become even more complicated as then for all intents and purposes we will be physically interacting with other people. But that’s still quite a few decades down the line and I’ll leave that for some other hapless student writing a paper about this very same topic.