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The Meaning of Technology Final Paper

The dictionary definition of technology is “the branch of knowledge that deals with the creation and use of technical means and their interrelation with life, society, and the environment.” So in short, this definition is defining technology as something that we intertwine into our lives and use as a tool to better our lives. I feel as though this definition of technology is pretty good at defining technology but technology has a different meaning for me. At the beginning of the semester, the meaning of technology to me then was quite different from what its meaning is to me now. Before I learned all of the things in this course, my meaning of technology was that it was something that I have lived with my whole life and that I could never live without it. I also thought it was just a step in human evolution just like the agricultural and industrial revolution, the technological revolution. Now, I feel like part of this meaning has still stuck with me, but after learning everything I did in this course my meaning of technology has definitely been deepened and I have a much wider perception of it. I now realize that my current meaning of technology is something that cannot be summarized in only a sentence or a paragraph, it includes many things that I have learned and come to see in class.

One the very first things we talked about in class was how the internet affects us and how it might be detrimental to the way we live. The one article that we read that really hit me with this idea of how it might make us less intelligent in a sense, was Nicholas Carr’s “Is Google

Making Us Stupid". In this article, Carr talks about how the internet such an easy and quick source of information that it is changing the way we think and do things in our everyday lives. My favorite quote from his text was, "Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski." This quote is a metaphor to how we take in information on the internet as opposed to before when the internet was newer and not many people had access to the internet so they got their information from physical texts and from other people. This is similar to that activity we did where Chris asked us how we would get information on something if we had no access to the internet. All the responses we had were much harder than if we could just use Google to search it up. Going back to Carr's quote, when I was in elementary and middle school I was the "scuba diver in the sea of words". I would be able to get immersed into any book and just read it for hours straight without getting distracted by anything. Now, I can barely even read a reading for class without opening a new tab and hopping on to social media. This fast-paced nature of the internet is the blame for this since it transitions our brains from a state of obtaining information in a more attention to detail kind of way to a state of obtaining many pieces of information very quickly. I might have noticed this transition in my lifestyle a couple of times, but I only really realized this change in my mindset after learning about this in class. Carr believes that this transition that the internet has caused us to become less aware of things and less intelligent. However, I believe that this way of taking in information is not bad at all. This way of taking in information is just more fast-paced and the internet is putting information out there that is more accessible and information that is clearer and not having to go deeper to find the meaning of something. I believe that this example of the fast-paced internet is also applicable to technology as a whole. We use technology so that

we can make our lives easier and it has changed our lives for the better. So technology in this sense is not bad like Carr says, but to me it is a very good thing that just changes the way we view certain things.

Social media is a very large area that technology has opened up for us. It is something that a huge percent of people are involved in and use every day. I really liked the social media challenge because it had a huge impact on my life and it changed my view on technology. Before the challenge, I never really thought about how social media had such a huge impact on my life and how much it had consumed me. Going through this challenge was a huge struggle and I had a hard time keeping up with it. However, with some help from friends and family I was able to get through the whole challenge without going onto social media as much. I say “as much” because there were some forms of social media that I could not live without such as YouTube, which really says something about my relationship with technology. At the start of the challenge, it was hard for me to get rid of my habit of having to check social media often and I sometimes failed because I had a somewhat of a schedule to always check social media before bed out of fear of missing something important in someone else’s life. I never really thought there was any meaning to this habit of always checking social media and that there weren’t any drawbacks to using it. As the challenge went on, I started to realize how important it was to keep up with this challenge to see how social media affected my life. Towards the end of the challenge, I never checked any social media apps such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat and I did not feel as though I missed anything important and I felt really good about myself. This challenge helped me realize there is, in fact, meaning to social media and it affects everyone very deeply. I realize now that social media is just a commodity and isn’t really

necessary in our lives but I was absolutely consumed by it and that I was weighed down by it.

This challenge helped me to lift the chains of social media and do other things with my time like studying without getting distracted. However, it is not all bad though. Social media can be used for advertising or promoting a cause and for reaching out to people since there are so many people who use it. Now, I have gone back to using social media but at a far lesser extent and I only use it in ways that would benefit me. Social media has shown me that technology can steer you in the wrong direction but if it is used in the right way, it can make a huge positive difference in your life.

Technology is something that I always thought was something amazing and greatest thing that ever has ever happened, and it is. It has evolved humanity at an insane rate, as seen in Moore's Law where the number of transistors in a device double every two years. However, something that made me think different about technology was when we talked about the Singularity. At the rate at which technology is growing, it is easy to believe that someday we will be able to create a being of artificial intelligence. At this point, we would have no idea of what would happen after the Singularity since we would have no control by then and all the artificial intelligence would either destroy us all or help us to do everything we need. This is where technology falls out of humanities hands and where technology becomes its own species with its own sentient mind and no human to control them. This, to me, is quite frightening and makes me think about *The Terminator* and how all these artificial intelligences can take over all of humanity. However, as I said before, achieving the Singularity might not turn out bad at all and instead greatly increase our quality. There is absolutely no way we can predict what will happen since the technology would be so advanced that we can't even fathom what all the

things this artificial intelligence would do to humanity. Even today, technology is really unpredictable and never ceases to surprise me how we can make all of these different kinds of technology. The Singularity really made my view on technology one that saw technology as being really powerful but also very unpredictable.

I feel like technology is something that benefits everyone that uses it, but one thing in this class showed me that not everyone can use it. The digital divide is something that is a huge problem in our society. I always knew that some people didn't have access to the same types of technology we have but I never knew that it was to the extent that only a small percentage of the world had at least some type of technology that has an impact on that society. Technology is something that greatly boosts a society's ability to develop. So, when these societies are developing drastically because of technology, the societies without technology are getting left behind. In class, the video that stuck out to me was the one with the woman who had children who had to use the internet for school but they could only use the internet at their library. I never knew that even people in the United States had trouble getting access to certain technologies even though the United States is one of the most developed countries. This then made me realize that there are even people that are worse off than these who have little access to technology or no access to any technology at all. Many efforts are made to give these societies some form of technology, like the One Laptop per Child, but are not enough or just do not work out. However, one effort that I think is a start is trying to give internet to everybody like with Project Loon. The internet is a huge part of technology and so by giving societies internet, it makes them able to be self-sustainable and able to create their own technologies through the knowledge they gain from using it. The digital divide is something created by

technology and it is something that should be destroyed by technology. In the end, the digital divide is something that has shown me how powerful technology is and how it can completely change a society and develop a society immensely.

One thing that I found to be a controversial topic that we talked about at the beginning of the course was net neutrality. I did not even know this was even a thing until Chris asked if we were for or against net neutrality in class. Net neutrality is something that I find to be a step in eliminating the digital divide and in creating equal access for everyone. Without net neutrality, internet service providers would be able to control what and what not to provide for their customers and at what cost and internet speed. An internet without net neutrality creates a kind of a tiered internet where there will be some “fast lanes” and some “slow lanes”, much like how television works with cable and satellite with some restricted channels. An example of the internet without net neutrality is that a company like Comcast could slow down Netflix streaming speeds to better promote their own video streaming service. In a recent event, there are some people who wanted to repeal net neutrality to provide more “innovation” and have succeeded in repealing it (for the time being). I completely disagree about how repealing net neutrality does any good for innovation, I think it does quite the opposite. Without net neutrality, smaller and newer companies will have a harder time getting started because they would have to pay more for faster internet speeds. This kind of unlevel playing field completely goes against removing any kind of digital divide which is a big part of my meaning of technology; technology creates a better life for anyone who has access to it. Our lives are centralized around technology and internet so any change to the internet is going have a huge impact on the majority of the people involved. I am really surprised that I never knew

about net neutrality before and I am really glad we were able to go over it in class because it plays a large role in my meaning of technology.

Technology plays a huge role as our lives revolve around it and we depend on it every day of our lives. It is one of those big parts in human history that is as important or more important than the agricultural and industrial revolutions. In my first response to what the meaning of technology is to me, I was kind of selfish about it by talking about how I could not live without it. Now, I can see that the meaning of technology to me has evolved and become much more than it was before. Technology is something very powerful and can be used to do many incredible things and at incredible speeds. With this, technology can be very detrimental to our lives and well-being just like how social media can take over one's life, which is why we must know how to use it. This is very relatable to the cliché Spiderman quote, "With great power, comes great responsibility". I also believe that we should spread technology with others and make it equal to everyone and get rid of this digital divide. There are definitely some positives and negatives to technology, but my general perception of technology is that the positives outweigh the negatives and that it is a blessing to have and should be given equally to everyone in the world.