

Falé Do

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DART 449 The Language of the Web

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Reflection on “The Social Dilemma” featured on Netflix and Vimeo

This documentary discusses the dangerous human impact of social networking, with technology experts from Facebook, Google, Twitter, Apple and several other social media platforms, sounding the alarm on their own creations. With that, they imply on the fact that big technology companies innovate their platforms in various ways to improve performance and to especially attempt to manipulate and influence society, which has been observed over these past years.

From my understanding, it is a social dilemma because engineers, technology experts and all the specialists around this field create platforms like social media and functional platforms like Outlook, Gmail, Google Drive to help provide useful tools for society. However, due to the “goals” set by the big technology companies, that was not the “true” goal for the creation of these platforms. In fact, they were created to keep people’s attention online at all times, wherever they are in order to collect their data to improve and enhance AI in a manner that would make these AI smart enough to customize our feeds showing what we want to see, what we are interested in, what we could learn about despite never known that the topic existed before. For example, the Pizzagate conspiracy theory. This shows that a lot of rumors that eventually could become misinformation are being spread out worldwide and this could slowly destroy society dividing people, like what happened to the U.S. Democrats and Republicans, in a manner that would harm innocent people. On top of gathering people’s data to keep them online scrolling through a variety of content, these platforms are created to make people do so, so that the big

technology companies and companies investing or contributing to these platforms can earn money.

“If you’re not paying for the product, then *you are the product*.” I found this statement incredibly powerful as it opens our eyes to what we are actually doing to ourselves. It is like receiving a big slap to the face waking us up from this nightmare and detrimental experience we are going through. Yet, we would dive back in because we feel estranged or alienated from others and our surrounding if we are not doing the same as others. But, once again, we are not exposed to the same information, or so to say data, as our family, friends, peers and everyone else and yet we feel safer diving back in the world of being just a product for these innovators. All this to say that, as inspiring as this statement can be, the addiction of “picking up your phone to look at the notifications” is much stronger than one’s determination to try and do better one’s mental health, proved by many of the technology experts stating that they, themselves, are trapped by their own creations. For example, they would check their emails or go on Pinterest arriving home from work, despite knowing that they should be spending time with their children. With that said, their solution to prevent their children from going further down this line of addiction is to deprive them of their smart devices during certain periods or to prohibit social media during their time at home. However, that solution is not the best solution as some may rebel against this idea of not being able to touch their smartphone, tablet or any other smart device.

What I meant by that is that we cannot escape the era we are living in, which is swamped by technological innovations and virtual realities. So instead of running away from and blocking the social media and all of these platforms, we should face them, learn how to co-exist with this era and how to use them properly. In other words, if one knows how to use them moderately, then things will move forward for the better instead of moving backward keeping our feet in the

wrong place, and eventually this ideal solution would spread out and change the world's perspective on the use of technology, slowly but progressively.

Bibliography

Orlowski, Jeff. "The Social Dilemma" *Vimeo*, directed by Jeff Orlowski, distributed by Netflix, commentary by Tristan Harris, Jeff Seibert, Tim Kendall, Jaron Lanier and many more contributors, 9 Sep. 2020, <https://vimeo.com/462049229>. Accessed 3 Feb. 2022.