Technopoly

I. Neil Postman raising question concerning technology

A. on the one hand a friend

1. gives us gifts - longer, easier, healthier life

2. asks us for trust and obedience

B. dark side

1. destroys vital sources of our humanity

a. creates a culture without moral foundation

b. undermines mental processes and human relationships that make life worth living

2. technopoly self-justifying, self-perpetuating system

wherein technology is granted sovereignty over

all social institutions and all personal and cultural life

II. Technology and society - three types

A. Criteria

1. relationship between technology and non-material

culture - symbolic world and institutions

a. beliefs and ideas -

b.religion and ideology

c. education, marriage andfamily, military

2.

B. Tool-using cultures

1. technology developed to solve problems of physical

life

2. technology developed to serve symbolic culture

3. technology is not autonomous in these cultures; it

subject to binding cultural and religious beliefs

a. beliefs guide invention and limit use

b. Samurai and Yir Yoront

c. Europe in early Middle Ages

4. technology or tools are integrated into the belief system

5. even in these cultures the power of symbolic system

to limit technology is limited

a. clock

b. Samurai

B. technocracy

1. technology begins to dominate culture as an ideology -

it is a set of ideas, beliefs, and values

2. symbolic world begins to be shaped by technology

3. tools attack culture

a. printing press

i. attacks oral tradition

ii. role of monks as transcribers

iii. Bible in every hand, makes everyone a

Pope

b. telescope - Judeo-Christian theology

i. new conception of univierse, earth is not

the center and man's place may not be special

ii. world begins to be explained by science

iii. new ideology and beliefs - power and

progress

4. competing ideologies in technocracy

a. religion is subordinated, but still existis

b. traditional social arrangements - family

4. First technocracy

a. 19th century England and a little later America

i. idea of invention and the impulse to invent

ii. progress

iii. if something could be done, it should be

done

b. techniques of the factory

c. technology of machine production

d. and laborer as tending the machine

e. new values: objectivity, efficiency, expertise,

standardization, quantification, productivity,

growth - Social Darwinism

f. traditional values: Religion and social Gospel

C. technopoly

1. totalitarian technocracy; it eliminates all alternative

world views

2. not by outlawing, but by redifining to fit its requirements

3. all forms of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs are

and institutions "technologized"

a. technique

i. calculation

ii. quantification

iii. method

iv. vocational aptitude tests, sexual attraction

tests, marital compatibility tests

b. accept the values of technology

c. experts rule, people drool

i. administer tests and evaluate them

ii. write books, guest appearances

iii. no experts, on love-making, friendship,

or child-rearing

d. subjectivity or personal experience is irrelevant

i. Girl who drove to Bakersfield

4. America is only technoopoly

a. no limits to progress

b. technological success

c. no overarching belief system to counteract