**To Own, or Not to Own, a Computer**

As we conclude this century, we begin to explore the question of should I own a computer? Wendell Berry, a well respected American novelist, poet, and farmer, would argue that modern technology is not required for a content life. In 1987, Berry wrote an article titled, “Why I’m Not Going To Buy A Computer” in which he explained why he did not find computers necessary for his life. Although many valid points were made, it is no secret that technology plays an integrated role in the modern life.

Wendell Berry says that the newest technological advancements are not necessary in order to work more efficiently. He uses the example of using a pencil and paper to write and his wife revising and typing instead of the traditional setup of using a computer. He claims this method is simpler to understand and just as effective, therefore rendering a computer unnecessary. This argument is fundamentally flawed in that using a computer to type would be faster and more efficient than doing it all manually. Computers are beginning to become mandatory for work and urban life in this era. And as we approach the twenty-first century, the number of household families relying on these machines will only continue to grow.

A critical detail to his opinion is his agricultural upbringing. He hails from nine generations of farmers, who have always depended on their shovels, pencils, and hands, rather than the advanced technology of today. Knowing this, his position suddenly seems a bit less extreme and more understandable. If you had done something the same way for years, and if generations before you had done the same thing for years, a change like this might be too sudden. But the issue with this way of thinking is brought to light when considering the effect of exponential growth. The more technology advances, the faster it advances, and society advances with it. But the longer you willingly leave yourself in the dust of rapid innovation, the more difficult it becomes to recover. If someone like Mr. Berry waits too long, they may get to a point where their life will absolutely require something like a computer, and they’ll not be able to catch up when they need to because they left themselves so far behind.

To briefly acknowledge his credentials to define the idea of a “perfect machine”, they are simply unreasonable. Technology has a tendency to become more expensive as it advances, it tends to use more energy as it gets more powerful, and it will always be manufactured by a corporation. There is next to nothing anyone can do to change these facts, they are just given properties of technological advancement.

In short, Berry’s strong belief of a life without the modern technology is understandable when considering where he comes from and where he still is now. However, most aspects of his argument do not apply to the twenty-first century global community that we are beginning to know and live in today.