To Wendell Berry,

While we generally agree on what qualifies for a technological advancement, we feel that one requirement should be considered at worst, and added to your own list at best. That would be “Has additional functions or practical uses than the compared piece of equipment.” Comparing a computer to a typewriter, it certainly meets that requirement. A good example of, specifically, where a computer has more practical use, is in the field of communication. Something you don’t need, but what other people need, and Berry certainly seems to forget that.

Look at the late Stephen Hawking, who received multiple medals and accommodations simply in the study of astrology, Black Holes and the Physics around them, and yet is paralyzed by his condition of ALS to the point where he cannot speak on his own. With his wheelchair’s “Equalizer” He is able to communicate well enough to push scientific discovery forward. While you, Mr. Berry, may not need this yourself, you must realize that the use of a computer in this way is a practical solution, and easier to do than carry a typewriter, and allows for more scientific discovery by one of our greatest minds.

What about the other end of communication, with sending messages, whether small and private or public. Using the TV set as an example, look all the way back to the Kennedy vs. Nixon presidential debate, where people across the country could see for themselves from the comfort of their home. That would be a new and practical use of technology. What about the use of TVs as a local warning system, broadcasting messages if a tornado were coming in that direction, for instance, and alerting those in its path of the danger. Certainly that promotes safety, at least to a lesser degree. Computers are as capable of doing these functions as well as a TV could.

So in conclusion, while a computer may not beat the reliability of the typewriter, or the critique skill of another human being, it certainly triumphs in other fields that you, Mr. Berry, seem to neglect or not talk about. And while you may not need a computer for communicative reasons, you must accept that there are those who do in this world who absolutely need those devices, and the practical use a home computer has beyond simple writing.

We are excited to see your response,

Anonymous.