Carr Essay

In the 1700s, humans conformed to a society primarily based upon agriculture and interactions in close-knit communities; however, beginning with the Industrial Revolution and ever since then, humans adopted a more fast-paced society wherein they were constantly competing for information and resources. Suddenly, people were pushed to obtain what they needed as quickly as possible and as efficiently as possible. They were forced into a lifestyle in which they rivaled each other for success, only the best managing to secure the necessities required for survival. In an environment as competitive as this, the only way to scrape by was to attain information before anybody else, and this ultimately led to the need for adapting quickly to any situation, being able to switch from thinking about one subject to the next at a moment’s notice. People have learned to accept this, and this ability to process information more quickly is more of an asset rather than a sign of our deteriorating mental stamina.

In “Is Google Making Us Stupid? What is the Internet doing to our brains?” Nicholas Carr begins with an allusion to a scene in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* in which astronaut Dave Bowman is disconnecting the brain of the AI “supercomputer” HAL, further comparing this with an phenomenon Carr has been experiencing for a few years: Carr feels like his brain is being tampered with, just as HAL’s was in the film, and like HAL, he, “…can feel it.” Carr goes further, explaining that Google, and the immediate nature of Internet search engines in general, is depriving humans of the rigorous—yet in today’s standards, slow—thinking process of their (pre-Industrial Revolution) ancestors.

Carr makes valid points that very well can concern humans in stagnant societies with dormant brains, for it is possible that humans can become too dependent upon technology. Although mentioning it in his article, he disregards the fact that the human brain is a self-adapting machine. Therefore, humans may now, as he and many others claim, be developing shorter attention spans and less meticulous learning mechanisms, but this generation of humans who were born with computers in their homes and iPads in their hands are the first to do so. The brain has yet to sort itself out given the “two million results in .09 seconds” world that humans live in today.

If the brain does not adapt, this may pose problems relating to the survival of the human species. For example, simple tools and thinking were principal methods for early, hunter-gatherer humans to escape dangerous situations. Later, more advanced weapons (e.g., gunpowder, metal welded weaponry, etc.), as well as more advanced strategies, were used. From tanks to nuclear weapons to drones, humans have evolved in order to prevent themselves from destruction, and the brain will continue to adapt in order to prevent us from this era’s danger: utmost failure. Failure, which will come in these times by working slowly, just as our ancestors did before the Industrial Revolution and before Google.