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English 1

Exploratory Writing #1

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I feel that my life has intersected with automated technology in numerous ways. For example, on an average day, I encounter/use various pieces of technology that have some level of automation. To get to place to place, I predominately use a car, which is automated (having a vehicle as transportation instead of a manual task such as walking). Cars are great examples of abstraction as well, as the complex mechanics of the car are hidden from the user (the user must only worry about things such as braking, steering, etc.). Automatic transmission (which is in the cars that my family own) make it where we don’t have to change gears while driving. On top of that, newer cars are getting more automation that makes driving even easier. Whenever I am driving on the highway on a long road trip (usually to Chicago) I sometimes turn on cruise control which manages the car’s speed and doesn’t require me to keep my foot on the pedal. Another example of newer automation is when my family went down to Florida for volleyball nationals where we got a rental Tesla which had access to a variety of smart technology such as autopilot and security cameras. While in Florida, we also heavily relied upon Google Maps (GPS) which uses complex algorithms to find the fastest/most fuel-efficient route to your destination (in contrast to you having to manually chart your path).

Automation also impacts my use of technology. Search Engines (such as Chrome), not only provide access to the World Wide Web (which makes getting access to information easier), but also use algorithms to tailor specific information and ads to you by using information such as previously visited sites, keywords that you typed in, etc. There is an interesting current debate on whether big companies use your electronic devices to listen to your conversations (even when you aren’t using the technology) and using that information to tailor ads to you. I personally have had this sort of situation happen. There have been numerous times when my family has talked about something (ex: painting our living room) and we find tailored ads (ex: certain brands of paint/painters who can paint the room quickly) without ever searching anything. This raises ethical concerns on whether the companies are using technology as essentially “ad surveillance” and if it is legal/moral for them to do so.

On a bigger scale, automation is also involved in my house. My mom, dad, and I have smart watches, which we use to track metrics such as steps, heartrate, and calories burned (metrics that we would otherwise have to tediously, or even impossibly, track manually) as well as to do things such as playing music. We have a smart thermostat that we can use to control the temperature for anywhere using our phones (instead of having to manually change it), or to set the temperatures of certain rooms at certain times of the day. We also have smart plugs connected to our lamps that we can use to turn of the lights faster (whether it be pressing the button or doing so on our phones). The TV also has a timer that makes it where it automatically turns off at a certain time. For cleaning, my family has a Roomba which automates the task of vacuuming. Instead of having to manually vacuum a room, we just need to activate the Roomba using our phones and it will clean the room while we are busy with other tasks.

For these reasons and more, I believe that my life has intersected with automated technology in numerous ways.

**600 Words**