

Textaufgabe I

**WHAT THE INTERNET CANNOT DO**

"It is impossible that old prejudices and hostilities should longer exist, while such an instrument has been created for the exchange of thought between all the nations of the earth." Thus Victorian enthusiasts, acclaiming the arrival in 1858 of the first transatlantic telegraph cable. People say that sort of thing about new technologies, even today. The wildest optimism has greeted the Internet. A whole industry of cybergurus<sup>1</sup> has enthralled audiences (and made a fine living) with exuberant claims that the Internet will prevent wars, reduce pollution, and combat various forms of inequality. However, although the Internet is still young enough to inspire idealism, it has also been around long enough to test whether the prophets can be right.

Grandest of all the claims are those about the Internet's potential as a force for peace. One guru, Nicholas Negroponte, has declared that, thanks to the Internet, the children of the future "are not going to know what nationalism is". His colleague, Michael Dertouzos, has written that digital communications will bring "computer-aided peace" which "may help stave off future flare-ups of ethnic hatred and national break-ups". The idea is that improved communications will reduce misunderstandings and avert conflict.

This is not new, alas, any more than were the claims for the peace-making possibilities of other new technologies. In the early years of the 20th century, aeroplanes were expected to end wars, by promoting international communication and (less credibly) by making armies obsolete, since they would be vulnerable to attack from the air. After the first world war had dispelled such notions<sup>2</sup>, it was the turn of radio. "Nation shall speak peace unto nation," ran the fine motto of Britain's BBC World Service. Sadly, Rwanda's<sup>3</sup> Radio Mille Collines<sup>4</sup> disproved the idea that radio was an intrinsically pacific force once and for all.

The mistake people make is to assume that wars are caused simply by the failure of different peoples to understand each other adequately. Indeed, even if that were true, the Internet can also be used to advocate conflict. Hate speech and intolerance flourish in its murkier corners, where governments find it hard to intervene. Although the Internet

PLEASE TURN OVER

undeniably fosters communication, it will not put an end to war.

30 What about the belief that the Internet will reduce inequality? According to a recent study, American households with annual incomes above \$75,000 are more than 20 times as likely to have Internet access as the poorest households. Bill Clinton, struck by the "digital divide" between rich and poor, argues that universal Internet access would help to reduce income inequality.

35 But, as the cost of using the Internet continues to fall, the true reason for the digital divide will become apparent. The poor are not shunning the Internet because they cannot afford it: the problem is that they lack the skills to exploit it effectively. So it is difficult to see how connecting the poor to the Internet will improve their finances. It would make more sense to aim for universal literacy than universal Internet access.

40 Yet, even inequality may, in some cases, be reduced thanks to the Internet. A computer programmer in Bangalore or Siberia can use the Internet to work for a software company in Seattle without leaving home, and can expect to be paid a wage that is closer to that of his virtual colleagues at the other end of the cable. The effect is to reduce income inequality between people doing similar jobs in different countries, but to increase the inequality between information workers in poor countries and their poorest compatriots.

45 The Internet changes many things. It has had a dramatic impact on the world of business. Firms can now link their systems directly to those of their suppliers and partners, can do business online around the clock, and can learn more than ever about their customers. For individuals, e-mail has emerged as the most important new form of personal communication since the invention of the telephone.

50 The extent to which the Internet will transform other fields of human endeavour, however, is less certain. Even when everyone on the planet has been connected to the Internet, there will still be wars, and pollution, and inequality. As new gizmos<sup>5</sup> come and go, human nature seems to remain stubbornly unchanged; despite the claims of the

55 techno-prophets, humanity cannot simply invent away its failings.

From: *The Economist*, 19 August 2000

**Annotations:**

- 1 cybergurus: (*derog.*) computer experts
- 2 to dispel a notion: to prove it wrong
- 3 Rwanda: African country, notorious for its ethnic conflict between the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes
- 4 Radio Mille Collines: a Hutu radio station that was accused of encouraging the massacre of large parts of Rwanda's Tutsi population
- 5 gizmo: (*informal*) a small piece of equipment, often one that does something in a new and clever way

**WORKSHEET: What The Internet Cannot Do**

maximum number of  
points attainable

**I. Questions on the text**

Read all the questions first, then answer them in the given order.  
Use your own words as far as is appropriate.

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|---|----|
| 1. Why does the writer mention "the first transatlantic telegraph cable" (ll. 3/4)?<br>Examine other historical references that reveal a similar intention. | 20 |
| 2. What claims do Negroponte and Dertouzos make for the Internet and how<br>does the writer view them?  | 10 |
| 3. What, according to Bill Clinton, should be done about the "digital divide" (l. 32)<br>in the US and what does the writer think of this proposal?         | 10 |
| 4. Prove that the headline does not cover all the aspects dealt with in the text.   | 20 |
| 5. What conclusion about the potential of the Internet for human progress does<br>the writer reach in the final paragraph?                                  | 10 |
| 6. How does the writer's use of language reflect his attitude?  | 10 |

New information technology offers huge benefits, but it comes at a price: less and less privacy. Most people have long accepted the need to provide some information about themselves in order to vote, pursue a business or even borrow a library book. But exercising control over who knows what about you has also come to be seen as an essential feature of a civilised society. Without the "right to be left alone", to shut out on occasion the prying eyes of both government and society, other political and civil liberties seem fragile. Today most people in rich societies assume that, provided they obey the law, they have a right to enjoy privacy whenever it suits them.

They are wrong. Despite a raft of laws, treaties and constitutional provisions, privacy has been eroded for decades. The power to gather and disseminate data electronically is growing so fast that it raises the unsettling question: in 20 years' time, will there be any privacy left to protect?

From: *The Economist*, 1st May 1999

**II. Composition** **40**

Choose **o n e** of the following topics. Write about 120 to 150 words.

1. Surfing the Internet is a conscious decision to waste time. Discuss.
2. Do you think books will ever become obsolete?

**III. Translation** **40**

Translate the following text into German:

Textaufgabe II

It was June, the first really decent day of the summer. Nicole was eating her dinner with her legs sticking out the kitchen door, grabbing the bit of sun before it was hijacked by next door's wall. All four of the daughters had sunglasses parked on top of their heads. Laurence, the son, had sunglasses as well, like the ones Edgar Davids, the Dutch footballer, wore. On Edgar Davids they looked impressive, terrifying, even sexy. On Laurence they looked desperate – he looked like a day-old chick that had just been pushed out of the nest. Larry's heart went out to him.

And that was why he wasn't tuned in to the girls' chat that evening. He was trying to come up with a nice way to tell poor Laurence to bring the glasses back to the shop. So he'd heard none of the usual prying and slagging, the good-natured torture and confession that he loved so much.

He was wondering if Laurence still had the receipt for the goggles when he heard Vanessa asking, "What's he do for his money?"

"He's an accountant," said Stephanie.

Larry sat up: no daughter of his was going to get stuck with a bloody accountant.

"At least, he would be," said Stephanie, "if they let him work."

"What's that mean?" said Larry.

They all looked at him. The aggression and fear in his voice had shocked even him.

"They won't let him work," said Stephanie.

"Who won't?"

"I don't know," she said. "The government."

"Why not?"

"Because they haven't granted him asylum yet."

"He's a refugee?"

"Yeah. I suppose so."

"Where's he from?"

"Nigeria."

Larry waited for the gasps, but there were none, not even from Mona<sup>1</sup>. He wished now he'd been listening earlier. This mightn't have been a boyfriend she was talking about

30 at all; it could have been someone she'd never even met.  
But Vanessa put him right.  
"You should see him, Da<sup>2</sup>. He's gorgeous."  
And all the other girls nodded and agreed.  
"Dead serious-looking<sup>3</sup>."  
35 "A ride<sup>4</sup>."  
He stood up.  
"He is not gorgeous!" he shouted.  
Nicole laughed, but stopped quickly.  
"He's not gorgeous or anything else! Not in this house!"  
40 He realized he was standing up, but he didn't want to sit down again. He couldn't.  
Mona spoke. "What's wrong?"  
He looked at six faces looking up at him, waiting for the punch line, praying for it.  
Frightened faces, confused, and angry.  
There was nothing he could say. Nothing safe, nothing reassuring or even clear. He  
45 didn't know why he was standing there.  
"Is it because he's black?" said Mona.  
Larry didn't let himself nod. He never thought he'd be a man who'd nod: yes, I object  
to another man's color. Shame was rubbing now against his anger.  
"Phil Lynott was black, love," Mona reminded him.  
50 Phil Lynott had been singing "Whiskey in the Jar" when Larry and Mona had stopped  
dancing and kissed for the first time.  
And now he could talk.  
"Phil Lynott was Irish!" he said. "He was from Crumlin<sup>5</sup>. He was fuckin' civilized!"  
And now Stephanie was right in front of him, tears streaming from her, and he  
55 couldn't hear a word she was screaming at him. And he wished, he wished to Christ they  
could start all over again, that he could sit down and listen and stop it before all this had  
to happen.  
It was Mona who rescued him. "We'll have to meet him," she said. This was just after  
she'd hit the table with the frying pan.  
60 "No," said Larry.  
"Yes, Larry," she said, and he knew she was right. If he kept saying no they'd all  
leave, all the girls. It was what he would have expected of them. "Stand up for your

rights." That was what he'd roared after them every morning, on their way out to school.  
"Get up, stand up. Don't give up the fight."  
65 The house was empty now. Mona had imposed a ragged<sup>6</sup> peace. Larry and  
Stephanie had hugged each other, yards of brittle space between them. The girls had  
taken her down to the local. They'd be talking about him now, he knew. Racist. Bastard.  
Racist. Pig.  
"It could be worse, love," said Mona.  
70 Larry looked at her. "He could have been an estate agent," she said.

From: Roddy Doyle, *The Dinner*, 2001

**Annotations:**

- 1 Mona: Larry's wife
- 2 Da: Dad
- 3 dead serious-looking (*teenage slang*): stunning
- 4 a ride: *here*: fantastic
- 5 Crumlin: a part of Dublin
- 6 ragged: *here*: unstable, not likely to last

**WORKSHEET:**

maximum number of  
points attainable

**I. Questions on the text**

Read all the questions first, then answer them in the given order.  
Use your own words as far as is appropriate.

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. What do the first two paragraphs tell us about the relationship between Larry and his children? | 10 |
| 2. Outline the step-by-step escalation of the conflict between Larry and his daughters.            | 20 |
| 3. Trace the development of Larry's inner conflict.  | 20 |
| 4. What different feelings does Larry evoke in the reader?   | 10 |
| 5. Describe the role Mona plays in this scene, her position in the family and her character.       | 20 |

**II. Composition** 40

Choose one of the following topics. Write about 120 to 150 words.

1. What can be done at school to promote racial and cultural tolerance?
2. "Stand up for your rights" - a maxim for your life?

**III. Translation** 40

Translate the following text into German:

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Immigration is the subject Europe's politicians would rather not talk about. No issue generates more emotion, and few others seem as difficult to solve. Vowing to act tough on illegal immigrants and false asylum seekers plays well with the masses; but crackdowns merely send refugees underground, forcing them to take ever-deadlier risks to get in. Easing entry requirements makes good economic sense, since Europe needs 75 million new workers over the next 50 years to replenish its aging population.

The Continent's long-standing "zero immigration" policy seems premised on<sup>1</sup> the hope that the problem will go away: if you build a "Fortress Europe", they won't come. But they're still coming. Flung out of their native lands by war or persecution or poverty - or simply the promise of a better life - immigrants are crossing Europe's borders in unprecedented numbers. Europe may still resist the idea that it is a continent of immigrants. But in order to thrive, it has no choice but to become one.

From: *TIME*, 19 February 2001

<sup>1</sup> premised on: based on