Technology and crime

Cybercrime, hacking, blackmailing, fraud, theft and extortion; these are the first few types of crimes come into my mind when we are presented with the words " technology" and " crime". One of the reasons might be that we all have been prone to the nuisance caused by any of these crimes at least once, as almost everyone these days has access to the computer and the internet. Lets us start by considering the fact that Crime has existed as long as humans and will only become extinct with us. Why?

Because offending and violating laws is defined as crime, and laws are created by man. One should, nevertheless, accept that technology gives us a lot of improvements as regards health, communication, transport etc. But at the same time no one can deny that technology has elevated crime rates and has even given birth to a variety of new crimes, and as Albert Einstein said technological progress is like an axe in the hands of pathological criminals. Before a conclusion is made, this topic will be assessed by using various examples.

The first thing that needs to be said is that Cell phones, email and instant messaging have facilitated the criminals into " doing their job" by lessening their communication gap to only seconds. It is important to add that criminal masterminds from different countries no longer have to sit in the same conference room and plot, with the fear of any law enforcement agency locating their secret meeting place. All they have to do is either talk to each other on their cell phones using conference calling and send and receive written and graphical information on the same device, or simply send an email.

This is one of the major reasons why crimes such as car theft, robbery, stalking and terrorism have mounted. Crimes like drug dealing don't depend on letters, or dealers to visit the purchaser personally anymore. A simple phone call will suffice as a source of contact between the two parties. A phone call and the price will be arranged between the two. A phone call and the dealer will be told where to drop the drugs. It seems that criminals nowadays think on their feet.

Equally relevant to the issues mentioned above are the crimes which came into being because of modern technology. Being the most well known and famous crime of the modern era, hacking, can now be done anywhere, anytime. Every innocent computer can be used to hack, either into a bank, a firm, or a house, depending on the hackers skills. Once he or she is successful in doing so, results can be disastrous. Millions can be stolen from a bank in minutes after the hacker sneaks in. Valuable and personal information about an individual can be accessible once their system is broken into.

To illustrate this point what home computer users should also be aware of is a recent technique developed by cyber criminals called phishing, pronounced the same way as fishing and uses a similar technique. New internet users or naive internet users are the main target of phishing and this is what the process is. The criminal creates a web page which looks totally identical to a respectable online shopping website. Next, the link to the web page is sent via an email to random users.

The user when clicks the link, he or she is taken to that web page, and there the user enters all their personal information, like credit card number, address, whatever the page ask for but in fact from that moment the victim is being stolen by a hacker ; everyone is prone to these crimes. Up to here I have really presented the dark side of technology. But If no counter measures are taken to prevent these, then people must have stopped using the internet and stopped going out of their homes in fear of these criminals on the streets and behind every computer screen.

Banks and business would have ceased their functions, but they have not. May be because there is something out there which is as strong as the technology which criminals possess; I am pointing towards technology. Yes, it is technology itself which is preventing these criminals from committing new crimes, even though it is itself who taught them how to perform it. Technology is fair. When it helped criminals by providing them with new and seemingly flawless techniques, it also provided law enforcement agencies and the general public with skills and gadgets to fight against the criminals.

For instance house and car's alarms finger print detectors, the metal detectors and infrared baggage sensors, most seen at airports, are essential part of preventing crime. Now it seems like the balance is equal. We now see that though technology has evolved crime, it has also given birth to new techniques to solve and prevent it. It has been equally just to criminals and law enforcement authorities. It is like giving a child a toy car, but also giving the parents a remote to control that toy.

Saying that technology progress is just an axe in the hands of criminals does not seem true because from the examples we have learnt that for every crime created by technology or aided by technology, an opposite is also created which cancels out those crimes. This leads us to believe that technology equally solves crime as much as it increases it. When on one side technology can be blamed for the increase in crime rates, it also has to be given credit for solving them. It is like a balance, an equation, with positives and negatives cancelling out each other.