

The machine stops

[Philosophy](#)



Machine Stops Draft 24 March 2010 The Machine Stop's published in 1909 by E. M Forster is an amazing prediction of a future where humans live below the surface of the earth in " The Machine. " Connected by something similar to the internet and communicating only by webcam, their every need is met and physical contact has become obsolete. There is a lot in this story that can be compared with our lives now in regards to dependence on technology and the way that it controls our lives, I am going to discuss that in this paper along with how this story and David Strong's article can be compared.

I will try to analyze the time's that Forster grew up in and the impact they may have had on his view of the future, also the benefits and downfalls of modern technologies and a quick summary of the novella by Forster. The story takes place below the earth's surface in ' The Machine. ' The Machine does everything for the people from playing music to making their beds. For example if they dropped something they didn't have to bend over to pick it up, because the machine would elevate the floor to their level. The Machine completely takes away the need for the people to physically do anything for themselves.

Kuno is the son of Vashti, a woman who like the others worships the Machine. Kuno questions the machine and takes it upon himself to leave the machine without permission to go to the surface of the earth to explore. Once Kuno reaches the surface the mending apparatus of the Machine entangles him because on his journey to the surface he tears the machine. After Kuno's experience on the surface of the earth he gets in contact with

his mother on the other side of the world to convince her to visit him face to face so he can explain his adventure to her.

Kuno convinces Vashti to take the airship to visit him in spite of the fact that Vashti does not enjoy seeing the surface of the earth because it gives her “no ideas”. Once Vashti arrives Kuno explains his adventure and tells her that he is being threatened with ‘homelessness’ which is equivalent of death and that is the reason why he wanted to see her face to face and let her know what happened. Vashti cannot believe that this man is her son because of his actions and beliefs and shortly after arriving she leaves telling him that they have nothing in common. Vashti does not talk or try to contact her son for a few years after.

After sometime passes Kuno gets in touch with his mother and tells her that The Machine stops, and he believes the Machine is beginning to shut down. Kuno’s mother finds this quite funny and blows off his idea, but within a short period of time Vashti begins to notice that things are not working properly. Starting with Vashti noticing the sleeping apparatus was no longer working properly. The machine begins shutting down and falling apart. Kuno gets to Vashti and before she dies is able to touch her and let her know that there are people on the surface who will not make the same mistake of letting something like the machine happen again.

The way that I see this story and David Strong’s article coming together is very clear, Kuno and Vashti are the perfect representation of good vs. goods life. I say this about Kuno because the way he is portrayed shows that even though he has all of his needs met by “The Machine” he is left unsatisfied.

Not only is he left unsatisfied but he is also left lonely and detached from the natural world, to the point that he has lost his ability to physically support himself.

Vashti on the other hand is a great example of a progress trap in the way that what she worshipped (technology) is what ended up killing her. The reason I compare her with a progress trap is because she was brought up in the machine it was all she knew and it ended up getting out of control and killed her and the rest of its occupants, when they blindly accepted it as a good thing not expecting faults. E. M Forster's story the Machine stops is an unbelievably accurate prediction of modern times for when it was published. The technologies Forster creates we see now and also some of the problems.

The dependence we have on technology now is to the point where it is questionable if some people could survive without electricity, what does this mean to our societies? Not to say that technology is completely a bad thing but if you look at medicine as an example painkillers began as a treatment for people with severe illness and are now being used as a recreational drug with many negative effects. It seems that you can look at most technologies and see where they are being exploited due to their flaws, should this be blamed on the technologies or us as the users and inventors of them. E. M.

Forster asks his readers to imagine a life in which they are completely surrounded and enclosed in technology; enclosed in a small space such as a cell of a bee hive (Gunton and Stine 129). The short story is trying to illustrate what could possibly come from a "society 'perfected' by technology (Bryfonski 179). Although technologies do make our lives simpler

in many ways we cannot let them take over our lives, and we should not solely rely on technology to do everything. Early on in *The Machine Stops* it is made clear that the machine creates its own politics, sociology, its own rationality and its own religion (Bryfonski 179).

It is almost as though Forster's creation of the machine was an outlook to what he thought technology could easily become. The characters in the short story have allowed the machine to "deaden their senses and to dehumanize their emotions" (Gunton and Stine 129). The characters do not know how to function by themselves anymore because the Machine allows them to not have to think or care, it 'takes care' of that for the humans. If we let technology do everything for us we will lose our own ability to think for ourselves.

Although technology is a significant part of everyday life for the average person and it is used to simplify life, it can become overwhelming.

Technology, if used wisely can have enormous benefits: staying in contact with old friends and family, saving someone's life, helping you travel around the world the possibilities are truly endless. Some organizations and people in society possibly need to realize that there are always two sides to everything and, that yes technologies are created to help us but if we use the technologies improperly the same technological world could destroy us that is trying to help us.

The idea of E. M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* illustrates very well the destruction that could be created if humans begin to rely solely on technology in a maybe not so dramatic way after all. Works Cited E. M.

Forster (1879-1970). " Contemporary Literary Criticism. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Vol. 10. Detroit: Gale Research, 1979. 178-183. Literature Criticism Online. Web. 19 March 2010. E. M. Forster (1879-1970). " Contemporary Literary Criticism. Ed. Sharon R. Gunton and Jean C. Stine. Vol. 22. Detroit: Gale Research, 1982. 129-138. Literature Criticism Online. Web. 19 March 2010.