

The human experience with technology



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The world is full technology, almost everything you see is the result of technology. Our houses, cars, buildings, streets, lights, even simple things like spoons, pencils, and nail clippers are all examples of technology. We use it everyday without even think about how it affects us. We dont think about how much a part of our society it has become, or what life would be like without it. We dont question our technology once we become accustomed to it but maybe we should. We should think about what technology has brought us, and what it enables us to do.

Is there anything dangerous about our dependence on technology Of course there is. Being dependant on anything can be dangerous. The good and bad consequences of our dependence have to be measured constantly. If the lights go out, if the car wont start, if my computer crashes, these illustrate the weaknesses in technology that result in dangerous consequences. Yet those possibilities and realities do not deter us from using technology, or from designing new technologies. A technological failure can be a threat but, the worse threat to us is ourselves.

In a recent interview with Simonetta Rodriguez, (an engineer and recent graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the field of civil and environmental engineering) I asked if she felt that there were any dangers about humans dependence on technology. She said, If the computers go down no work gets done. But before computers we got a lot less work done all the time. The greater danger is how we use technology. We must use care when making decisions regarding technology. If we do not pay close attention to the later consequences of decisions, we could find ourselves facing much greater threats that that of the lights going out.

Consider the possibility in the near future of human cloning. What rights will a human clone have Whose responsibility will they be We face questions and fears such as this when we use technology. These fears will, no doubt, not stop our efforts to make our lives easier and more comfortable because, technology brings us added comfort. Whether it is comfort in our homes or the comfort of knowing that we will not die if we get break a bone, we design most things with comfort as our ultimate goal. Regarding this issue Ms. Rodriguez noted, Why would we develop something that make our lives harder..

She is right, why would we, were is the survival advantage Human nature drives us to find ways to make our lives easier, that is part of what makes us human. However, some argue that the technology we design has a serious down side: stress. Has technology really added stress to our lives I believe that it changed the nature of the stress. Instead of worrying about cave lions and wolves, we worry about traffic on the beltway and, how much money we have. For the most part, life threatening situations do not cause most of our stress.

Instead we have lower level stresses that last longer. Stress in both forms leads to serious health problems. Lets say that you are walking in the woods. Suddenly you spot a very large bear. Your pulse quickens, pupils dilate, you start to sweat, your body releases adrenaline, and your digestion stops: this is stress. Your body prepares you to fight or to run. Then you see that the bear is walking away from you. You relax a little, but your body remains active, your immune system is suppressed, fat is converted to fuel, and cortisol is released.

Cortisol regulates your metabolism and immunity but it is toxic over time. All this is the normal bodily response to something stressful. Now let's say that you are driving to work and you get stuck in a traffic jam. This is another stressful situation and your body reacts much the same way as if you had just seen a bear. Today, traffic jams occur more often than bears in the woods, traffic results in ongoing stress. But is this to say that we should stop using technology? Absolutely not. We must balance the stress technology causes, with the good things that it offers us.

I think that most people balance the stresses or they would not continue using technology. People will not use something that adds too much stress to their lives. Everything that we build, everything that we invent is only successful if the advantages are greater than the disadvantages. If we developed any technology that put more stress on us than it was worth, we would discard the technology and develop something else. Some people feel that technology is controlling their lives and the world.

I say that technology only controls the lives of people who allow it to control their lives. Something can only control your life if you let it. Technology itself cannot control anything except what it was made to control. It is human beings who decide what the technology should and will control. We are the masters and makers of technology. If we did not invent it there would not be any. Technology is and does what we want it to do. It has no mind of its own, it cannot force anyone to use it, only humans can do that.

If a person feels he or she depends on their computer too much, he or she should cut down on its use, or stop using it altogether. Humans survived

without computers and we could do it again should we choose to do so. Few would choose to do this. Technology does not have a mind of its own. It cannot decide for itself to launch nuclear missiles at the U. S. , humans must decide that. We built this destructive technology, we must control it. Technology is not dangerous to humans, humans are dangerous to humans.