

Technological idealism on broader context essay sample

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The magazine article is focused on Karen Estrella's search for her biological father and finally meeting him through Facebook. Karen, now 29, grew up with her grandparents at a very infantile age. Being the innocent child she was way back, she thought that her grandparents were her biological parents that's why she used to call them Nanay and Tatay. Her biological mother left her when she was born, but took her back when she was four. But, her mother had already a family of her own that time, causing her to feel isolated from the family.

Karen was 16 or 17 then when she first knew the truth behind her real identity. She was trying to look for retro clothes for a school event so Karen rummaged through her mom's old luggage when she found some old photos of her Mom's past boyfriends. She browsed through them and stopped at a solo picture of a guy. She was somehow sure that the man in the picture was her real father. Karen also saw birthday cards written to her by her dad, which contains statements that he was her real father. As she continued looking through the luggage, she came across love letters of his dad to her mom. By that time, she already learned that her dad was already a family man when she was conceived in the womb of her mom.

This made Karen desperate to meet her father. Carrying the letter with her, she went with a cousin to find her dad. But then, she felt that it was not yet the time to meet him, fearing that she would only cause trouble to the present family of her father.

Years later, she gave birth to her second son, Christian. Christian didn't pass his preliminary hearing test, so the doctors asked Karen and her husband

about their families' medical history. This rattled Karen so much because she didn't know much about her father's side.

Karen struggled on finding someone related to her father's side, until her mom confirmed that she was related to Romnick Sarmenta, a famous actor during the 70s. Karen immediately messaged Romnick on his Multiply site. She received a reply from him months later, saying that his parents separated when he was three so he didn't grew up living with his dad, and with that he cannot give Karen a concrete answer if both of them are related to each other. By that time, Christian already passed the hearing tests which exhilarated Karen. Karen saw his son's hearing difficulty as a blessing in disguise for it connected her to Romnick.

Few months had passed when Karen came across a Jello Estrella's post on Romnick's Facebook wall. Jello's profile picture was a baby which resembled so much to Karen's son. Karen messaged Jello on Facebook asking if she knew someone named Jeorge Ramirez Estrella. Being suspicious at first, Jello confirmed that he knew someone named Jeorge, and Jello himself, was his eldest son.

Karen explained to Jello her reason why she messaged him at the very first place and that is to build connection with what she now considers as both their father now. Karen found out that Jello and her father currently resides in Japan. Karen expressed her deep apology to Jello, fearing that it might destroy their family at the moment. But Jello said that he was the one who should feel sorry because he grew up with their dad, and Karen did not.

Jello mentioned Karen to his dad a week later. His dad was surprised, and told him not to tell his mom. Days later, Karen's dad finally added her as a friend in Facebook and they immediately chatted. Karen asked for his cellphone number and called him. Karen's dad was in tears when she called him, and it is very evident that he longed so much to meet and talk to Karen for the first time.

Karen and his dad are consistently chatting with each other for a few years now. She also had the chance to see him live in webcam but they are both looking forward to meeting each other in person. For now, Karen is already contented that there is someone who calls her "anak" and there's finally someone she can call "Papa."

PART 2 | LITERARY REVIEW OF THE THEORY

TECHNOLOGICAL IDEALISM THEORY

An Overview

Technological Idealism is a theory under Communication, Culture, and Technology cluster which assumes that the idea of using technology will make our lives better. Being the contrary of Technological Determinism, which assumes that Technology will only create chaos, Idealism theorizes otherwise. Technology is defined as the process by which human beings fashion tools and machines to increase their understanding with the material environment. On the definition itself, we can draw the conclusion that Technology, indeed, brings convenience and efficiency to the public media.

Brief Background and Orientation

Assumptions of Technological Idealism can be associated to different philosophers from different eras. Their postulations vary, but they all arrive at the same conclusion that Technology brings only positive welfare to the people who make use of it.

Giambattista Vico, an Italian political philosopher, rhetorician and historian, is one of the early philosophers who pioneered the concept of Technological Idealism. Vico presumed that societies develop through a predictable sequence of stages and the period of maturity can only be attained through the use of technology. In a more concise statement, a nation cannot be considered as matured or developed if they do not possess advanced technologies.

On the other hand, Marquis de Condorcet, a French philosopher and mathematician, alleged that the world received enlightenment through Technology. Before Technology was crafted, humans lived in a state of primitive chaos. It is through culture and other institutions that the early people learned to control their nature. Condorcet added that before, people are dependent, ignorant and superstitious and it is through the intervention of Technology that people were transformed into empowered, knowledgeable and enlightened individuals.

It is Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher from Prussia, who delved further on the enlightenment concept of Technology which was first assumed by Condorcet. According to him, there's nothing wrong with using Technology

as long as we feel good about ourselves. Also, history played a big role in the gradual unfolding of circumstances that promote total human development.

Victor Hugo, another philosopher, stated that through Technology, distance is growing shorter and growing closer which makes way for the beginning of fraternity. In other words, Technology helps in building good relationship with people which eventually improve communication processes.

A Canadian political economy professor in the name of Harold Innis further discussed the prevailing modes of Technology. These modes are as follows: writing, speech, printing, electronic, and digital. According to him, in one way or another, one of these modes will dominate over the others once it is practiced or used by a certain individual.

One of the most important Technological Idealists is Marshall McLuhan, who is a Canadian philosopher of communication theory. McLuhan proposed the classification of media existing during his time. The first one is the tetrad, which is the struggle among which of the different kinds of technology will dominate. In this classification, McLuhan assumed that a previous media will be totally replaced by a better one but it will serve the same purpose. For instance, a jukebox from the past was replaced by the present iPod, but it served the same purpose which is to deliver music.

The next classification is the break boundary which is the opposite of tetrad. Here, a particular technology will change into something different from the previous existing technology, but the former will still be of valuable use to

the public. An example of this is an electric fan being replaced by an air-conditioner. Both are still relevant until today.

The next is the media hybrid, which is the interpretation of one media to another. An example of this is a cellular phone. It is a single form of technology but it serves us many purposes - it can be a camera, an internet service provider or an mp3 player.

Next classification is the global village, which is what we know now as the Internet. During McLuhan's time, the Internet is only a prediction not until the early 80's where his forecast came to life. Other classifications include the hot and cool media, which focuses on the use of single (hot) and interplay (cool) of our five senses and the electronic media, which is the technology we are using at present.

Although the conjectures of these philosophers seem different with each other, all of their assumptions have a common denominator - Technology is something to be thankful for because it makes our society free from chaos. Technology is something that unites the world through innovations.

Application of the Theory to Present Real Life Situations

Just a year ago, engineering students from Mapua Institute of Technology created a Braille mobile phone that can help the blind experience the conveniences of the innovative and modern mobile communication. Not only that it served as a mobile phone for the visually impaired, it also acts as a sensor that can detect objects within five meters. The machine was then named by the inventors as the " Wearable Obstacle Detection System and <https://assignbuster.com/technological-idealism-on-broader-context-essay-sample/>

Braille Cellphone for the Blind". The gadget made it to the Top 10 of the 8th SMART Wireless Engineering Educational Program (SWEET) Innovations and Awards. (GMA News Online)

This clearly shows that Technology does not exemplify anybody. As long as there is someone who has an innovative mind and a heart that cares, no one can be isolated from the society. Everyone deserves to experience such advancements in Technology so that the entire populace will progress submissively.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Theory

Every communication theory has its own strengths and weaknesses. No theory has ever been created without being evaluated and criticized by other theorists and philosophers. Listed below are the strengths and weaknesses of Technological Idealism when applied in all aspects of communication.

The strengths of Technological Idealism are as follows:

- a. It has explanatory power for it explains that when new systems of technology are developed, the culture is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the advanced technology.
 - b. It has predictive power because it predicts that with every new system of media technology, society will change and adapt to that technology.
 - c. It is parsimonious because there is a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feeling, acting, or believing.
 - d. It can be proven false if a new technology is invented and nothing changes.
- The weaknesses of Technological Idealism are as follows:

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a. It is successful in explaining how technologies advances, but fails in giving a broader context of the consequences of the technologies in the society. b. It studies social groups and interests that contribute to the construction of technology, but ignore the ones who have no voice in the process, yet are affected by it. This may result to the emergence of elitist and conservative sociology. c. It is oversimplified for it focuses on how the immediate needs, interests, problems and solutions of chosen social groups influence technological choice, but disregards any possible deeper culture and economic origins of social choices concerning technology. d. It actively avoids taking any kind of moral stance or passing judgment on the relative merits of the alternative interpretations of a technology. This indifference makes it unhelpful in addressing important debates about the place of technology in human affairs. (Winner, 1993)

PART 3 | ASSESSMENT OF THE THEORY AND ARTICLE

“ The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village.” -Marshall McLuhan

Guttenberg Galaxy, 1962

Several decades ago, the Internet was just a puzzling prophecy of Marshall McLuhan in his book Guttenberg Galaxy in 1962. He popularized this idea by coining the term global village in which he described as how the globe has been constricted into a village by electric technology and the process of instantaneous movement of information from every quarter to every point at the same time. Several people during that time think that McLuhan was simply exaggerating, especially when he also presumed that there's a

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possibility that the people will move out from the print culture. This seems very bizarre to the people for they are completely attached to that sort of medium. (Interview with McLuhan by CBC TV - "The World is a Global Village")

This global village McLuhan is talking about is what we currently know as the Internet or the World Wide Web. Just as what McLuhan predicted, the human populace is enclosed in a village where relay of information is fast and instantaneous. Therefore, physical distance becomes less of a problem to the real-time communication of people.

The Internet is composed not only of human populace but also of online social media which serves as a common ground where people share the same interests and beliefs. In these social media, people are linked through consuming and producing information about their knowledge, beliefs, and opinions regarding a certain topic or agenda.

Online social media are branched out further more - Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Multiply, Instagram... name it all. But, let us propel one of them into the limelight, and that would be the fastest growing social media which is Facebook. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and was launched in February 2004. As of the latest statistics in September 2012, Facebook had already earned one billion active users. Imagine how large that populace is, and how it is diversely inhabited by people with different culture.

Within that one billion active users, it is almost impossible to imagine how would someone find anyone if you only have the littlest information about

him/her. But through linkages and through mutual connections provided by Facebook, that impossible scenario can come to life. To put forth the message concisely, Karen Estrella found herself lucky for finding the only missing piece of her life, her biological father, through Facebook.

Let us imagine Karen's situation without the existence of the online social media and the Internet. She might be rushing herself to NSO (National Statistics Office) everyday to rummage on their master list of all people named Jeorge Ramirez Estrella. That would probably be a tough work, right? Maybe, until today, Karen is still in search of her father without the intervention of the Internet.

Through Facebook, Karen found her dad and was able to build a connection with him though her father resides in another country. Through Facebook, Karen was able to fill a part of her that is missing. Through Facebook, she can now continue on with her life without carrying a heavy load in her heart.

Technological Idealism is very much present in this situation. Technological advancements do not bring chaos into the world; in fact, they link the world as one. Technology creates a common ground where physical interaction isn't quite necessary. Through Technology, personal human development is very at much at its peak. Life is not much of a hindrance with the presence of Technology. Technology will not be harmful as long as people know where and how to set their boundaries.

To sum it all up, Karen consider the Internet, a product of advanced technology, as something beneficial to her. It helped her through various

ways, and the most important of that is finding a real, paternal love.

Anything beneficial inside the core of technology can be counted under Technological Idealism, as long as it is for the welfare of the society, then it is technologically ideal.

PART 4 | IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARTICLE TO READERS

There are four (4) possible effects of the magazine article to the readers based on the premises mentioned above in support to Technological Idealism theory.

First, people who have read the article will cling more to the idea that the Internet is a constricted social space where everyone is interconnected virtually. Through this virtual connection, communication can happen in just a snap of a finger without physical contact. This is apparent in the case of Karen - who unexpectedly finds her dad on Facebook although the latter and the former are physically distant to each other. This can be supported by Victor Hugo's assumption that through technology, distance is growing shorter and growing closer which makes way for the beginning of fraternity. Hence, communication processes are also improved.

Second, people, especially Internet users, will patronize the Internet more since they have read an optimistic view of it in the magazine article. People might have the possibility to move out from traditional media particularly newspapers and television since it is evident that majority of the information or news broadcasted on the mentioned media takes a pessimistic approach.

Third, on a broader context, people will acknowledge technology as something vital for the development of human welfare. People will delve on the idea that without the existence of technology, particularly the Internet, it would be impossible for Karen to find her father. Thus, the assumption of Giambattista Vico earlier on this paper is proven factual - a nation can only be considered a developed one if they possess advanced technologies.

Lastly, people will be encouraged to be active audiences of media. The Internet is made available to them for free, and as long as they do not violate any rule or individual while using it, they can continue patronizing it. It all falls down on responsible usage of technology which can be seen on Karen's online experience with Romnick Sarmenta - she used the Internet in building connections in pursuit of finding someone who might be the key for the cure of her son. Karen used the Internet responsibly without violating anyone. This scenario supported the assumption of Immanuel Kant who stated that there's nothing wrong with using technology as long as people feel good about themselves.

In a nutshell, the magazine article has positive effects on the readers with regards in viewing technology as something they feel is necessary in their everyday lives. And through Karen's story, people who also share the same fate as hers will be uplifted since they know that such scenarios can still be possible through the use of the Internet. Such postulations strengthened the validity of Technological Idealism - which clearly supports that technological advancements will promote unity and order, and perhaps, someday, will totally eliminate every single turmoil throughout the world.

PART 5 | RECOMMENDATIONS AND POINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The magazine article is highly recommendable, and there are just few areas of it which needs to elaborated or modified in order for it to jive more with some premises of technological idealism theory.

Firstly, the article should have elaborated further on what reactions were given by the entire family of Karen's father, especially his wife upon knowing the existence of another child from another woman. Although this may appear superficial, this will definitely create a different view on the effects of technology on some aspects of life. Let us assume that the wife will react negatively to the situation, this will give the readers a different perspective that at one point, the Internet might cause you trouble.

Trouble is something negative, which will certainly support some basic premises of technological determinism which assumes completely the opposite of what idealism claims. Since both can be applied on the article, this will give birth to another theory that can be relevant to the article which is the technological social interactionism theory. Such lack of specification might turn this whole study around thus arriving at completely different conclusions.

Secondly, the article should have delved further on what happened during the long-term virtual communication of Karen and his dad. Does it improve their relationship or does it only make it worse? Does it appear practical? Can this virtual communication be sustained as time goes by? If all of these questions are answered through elaborating more the context of the article,

this might make room for further support or study for the other premises mentioned in technological idealism theory.

All in all, the article perfectly reflected the assumptions of technological idealism theory. It clearly supports the postulation that technology is something that will be beneficial for people as long as it is used responsibly. Moreover, the article is very relevant to today's society - where people are so much involved in using the Internet for creating virtual connections to all types of people around the globe.

ANNEX A | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TECHNOLOGICAL IDEALISM THEORY

EMPOWERMENT

THE HUMAN SOCIETY

TECHNOLOGY

KNOWLEDGE

ENLIGHTENMENT

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Idealism Theory

Figure 1 shows a self-constructed theoretical framework of Technological Idealism. To explain in few words, Technology brings empowerment, knowledge and enlightenment to the human society which is symbolized by arrows directing to each other. The framework shows the optimistic aspect of

Idealism which has a positive role in determining and shaping human society.

ANNEX B | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF TECHNOLOGICAL IDEALISM THEORY

EMPOWERMENT

KNOWLEDGE

ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA

(Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

INTERNET USERS

OPINIONS

BELIEFS

ENLIGHTENMENT

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Idealism Theory

Figure 2 shows a conceptual framework of Technological Idealism Theory. In this diagram, the Internet users and online social media are enclosed inside a virtual community which we know as the Internet or World Wide Web. Both inhabits the virtual community, and performs a give and take relationship. Internet users produce or give knowledge, opinions, and beliefs through online social media. In return, online social media such as Facebook and Twitter give back empowerment and enlightenment to its users.