

Man's Best Friend


The Evolution of Technology is a Double-Edged Sword



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How many times a day do you scroll through your Instagram feed? Add photos to your Snapchat story? Tweet? Let your Facebook friends know what you are up to? Does most of your day-to-day interpersonal communication take place on your phone or a social media platform? If so, does it make you feel more or less connected to the rest of the world? Do you think about that? Or just interact with the people you are talking to?

On the one hand, when we use our phones and social media platforms to communicate, we become extremely connected to the rest of the world. Most of our friends use social media to communicate, so if we neglect to use it in the same way, we miss out on conversations, which we never want to happen; we want to be included all the time. On the other hand, when we use our devices to communicate, we become extremely disconnected from the physical world. Now that we are communicating in an entirely non-personable way, we miss out on the emotions, the empathy, the humanness that other people display, which is something we look forward to in engaging with other people. Being connected to the physical world, and deeply engaging with the people we communicate with in person, is crucial to our development through the lifespan. If you have ever taken a psychology class, one thing you should have taken away from that class is that humans are inherently social animals. We need and look forward to communicating all the time.

Ultimately, we choose to communicate with the technological devices that allow us to do so because they make our lives extremely efficient and easy. When we connect with others via our technological devices, we do not have to work as hard. We often take it for granted how easily we can interact with other people; nowadays, if we want to talk to someone, all we have to do is pull out our phones and send them a text, or a Snapchat, or a direct message. We can even convey meaning without opening our mouths or being in the same place as another person without the slightest movement. So why wouldn't we make use of the technology that allows for such easy communication?

We need very desperately to understand that every time we communicate through technology, slowly, deliberately, our individual cognition adjusts accordingly. And, as it follows, our customs and cultures adjust as a collective - our communicative methods change as a society. Then, nationally and globally, our distinctly human culture changes as we participate in this sort of engagement. For me, the profoundness in trying to understand such a dilemma is that this cognitive and cultural adjustment to the tools that we have made for ourselves is a natural phenomenon. When humans make a tool for themselves, they no longer need to have an understanding of how to participate in the activity that they made the tool for in the first place. Therein lies the very purpose of making a tool. A simple example of this phenomenon is the existence of a calculator. The development of the calculator brought about man's unnecessary understanding of how to manually compute basic mathematical procedures; it was no longer necessary for man to understand how to carry out this cognitive skill because his machine could take care of this problem for him. As a result of this newly-created technology, humans could rely on his tool to do the hard work for them, so they no longer needed to understand quite as deeply how to execute the task that the calculator

replaced. So, it made their lives easier and simultaneously ate away at their cognitive abilities. This phenomenon follows for every invention. With innovation comes more ease, more comfort, more accessibility, and, depending on which psychologists' opinions you regard as being more accurate in defining the ways that humans learn, relatively less cognition or intelligence.

And that is not to say that humans become less intellectual, or, to put it crudely, more stupid, with the inventions of new things. Their thinking only adapts according to the tools they make for themselves. As a result, when we communicate via technology, our communication styles

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change. Our cognition adjusts because we create tools that make it easier for us to communicate. We do not become less able or intelligent, but our abilities take a different form, and adjust to the tools that are before us. In principle, this is not necessarily a bad thing. It is worth warning people about, though, in my opinion, because it is a natural occurrence. The question then becomes whether we can recognize how significant of a role technology plays in our communicative lives and whether we are too dependent on technology for our interpersonal communication. Will we ever be able to acknowledge how collectively addicted we are to our devices? Will we realize that our lives are not actually that difficult, and that we do not need to make our lives as easy as possible just because we know how to? Can we not see how reliant we have become on our technological advancements?

The evolution of technology is inevitable and is a part of human nature, so it will never slow down, or work in the opposite direction. It can only speed up and move forward. Humans have always made tools for themselves, and it has always been a priority for humans to make their lives easier through the use of their own knowledge - their own ability to manipulate their environment and produce tools. But we do not need to let the devices we have created for ourselves take over our lives. We can be active participants in our own lives. We can refuse to obey social and technological norms. All it requires is conscious attention to exactly what we are doing when we are checking our Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or Facebook, several times a day. By asking ourselves what else we can be thinking about, what else we can devote time and energy to, we can root out our own laziness and become the best versions of ourselves. We can be productive, we can increase our humanness - we can tap into what lies beneath the surface. We can enrich our experience tenfold.

Ultimately, it is important for us to think about these things because they can be taken to dangerous extremes. If we let technology communicate for us - if we let technology creep its way too deeply into our everyday lives, the most human element of our human lives can be replaced by technology. To some extent, technology already plays too significant of a role in our everyday lives. I think it is our responsibility, our obligation to ourselves, to acknowledge which ways we want to use technology, and which ways we need to use technology, and to be able to differentiate our necessities and our desires.

Let's make an effort to remain human. Let's start catching ourselves in the act of resorting to technology for communication when we don't need to. We can always make our lives more significant and meaningful to ourselves. Let's be original. Let's be human. ●