

Project #2 Drafts:

400 Word Draft:

“Simple recipe for chocolate chip cookies.” “What is the first law of thermodynamics?” “Restaurants near me.” All of these phrases are in my recent internet search history. With the click of a button, I have access to an unlimited amount of information. The presence of the internet is an integral piece of the daily lives of most. Yet, there is longstanding controversy whether the existence and use of the internet is enhancing or harming human behavior. On one hand, many people view the internet as a tool. For example, Kevin Kelly, co-founded of *Wired* magazine, claims that the internet is a “wilderness” (5) that should be explored for all its beauty and practical uses in his article “Technophilia.” On the other hand, skeptics are cautious of technology and the internet as they take a look into how it is affecting human behavior outside the online realm. Sherry Turkle, PhD in sociology from Harvard University highlights an opposing perspective in her essay “The Empathy Diaries” when explaining a recent issue in the current generation that she claims as the “flight from conversation” (344). Turkle argues that the newfound devotion to the internet seen in the current generation has led to the degradation of genuine conversation. I agree that internet is beneficial in the sense that the boundless knowledge it holds has increased human efficiency, however a reliance and devotion to the internet causes us to lose characteristics that make us uniquely human.

Before diving deeply into the exploration of the internet’s beneficial nature in conversation with how it is physically changing human behavior, it is first crucial to analyze the properties of technology that make it so compelling and attractive to the human gaze. The internet is constantly evolving to get more human-like and its this anthropomorphism that we as humans love and crave. Apple is constantly updating Siri to have smoother voice modulation and you can even change its accent within your settings. ChatGPT uses algorithms to mimic human conversation and appropriate responses to questions and statements. We feel emotional connections toward the internet when it exhibits these human-esque qualities, and we have such a deep affinity for it as it lacks all the effort required in connecting with another human being. Kelly highlights this theme by describing his own personal love for the internet. Kelly writes, “[The internet] is a steadfast benefactor, always there. I caress it with my figety fingers; it yields up my desires, like a lover. Secret knowledge? Here. Predictions of what is to come? Here. Maps to hidden places? Here. Rarely does it fail to please...” (5).

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a digital native, Turkle writes, “On computers, if things are unpredictable, it’s in a predictable way” (346). Turkle continues by stating:

“...computers offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship and then, as the programs got really good, the illusion of friendship without the demands of intimacy” (346).

Although Turkle complicates Kelly by deeming this companionship as illusory, both authors acknowledge this intimate companionship that exist between man and the internet. Through a personal anecdote, Kelly describes himself as immersed in this companionship with the web, whereas Shelly explains that this one sided “perfect” relationship is why the internet is so compelling to the human eye. The internet is the ultimate giver. It readily satisfies our immediate needs whether it be the answer to a question, a laugh, or just some stimulation, yet requires no emotional effort from its user, making its existence so enthralling.

An intimate connection with the internet has provided humans with various benefits, especially regarding efficiency and connectivity. The vast nature of the internet allows us to have access to a practically unlimited amount of knowledge in the palm of our hands and the ability to connect with others anytime, anywhere. Research has become exponentially faster as we can now bypass tedious tasks such as using the Dewey Decimal system to find and read a library book or doing all calculations out by hand. In addition, distance no longer plays such a serious role in communication. Everyone is a text, call, facetime, or Zoom meeting away from one another. Kelly expands on this idea of the internet being a boundless storehouse of information by claiming that having access to such a tool gives himself, the user, a sense of power. Kelly writes, “It knows so much. It has insulated its tendrils of connection into everything, everywhere. The net is now vastly wider than me, wider than I can imagine, so in this way, while I am in it, it makes me bigger too” (5).