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Is Technology a Toxic Boyfriend or a Parasite?

Technology has integrated into our lives so much we have begun to love it. We treat our phones with care, making sure they are protected, updating our computers to the newest model so they run smoothly. This leads to the idea of technology and the internet being a parasitic relationship at times. And as weird and strange as it sounds, we all have a relationship with our technology. And I question on which side leaches and takes more from the other, or does it boil down to a toxic relationship on both sides. To analyze this idea, I want to bring in Kevin Kelley's *Technophilia*, Franco Leehive's essay, *Technology: The World's Greatest Resource*, and Noah Kesler's essay, into conversation. Through analysis of our relationship with technology I intend to dig deep into the trials and tribulations of this love. While there are pros to technology being deeply ingrained in our lives, does it require or deserve the relationship we have built with it? I say no, we have become too reliant on technology to the point where it dictates our lives. However, I am not saying that technology isn't necessary in our day-to-day lives but I don't believe that there is a need to covet it the way we do.

The debate about how technology and if it runs our lives is on going. And I want to talk about how not only have we become extremely distracted with the internet and technology, but some have even begun to love and admire it. Author Kevin Kelley wrote, *Technophilia*, as almost a love letter to technology. He claims that technology only wants to become useless and beautiful and that its beauty will one day rival that of the natural world. Kelley claims, "that in

the not-too-distant future the magnificence of certain patches of the technium will rival the splendor of the natural world.” (Kelley). The idea that Kelley is putting out there is that when we compare technology to that of natural beauties like waterfalls, beaches, or grand forests, there may be a struggle in claiming which holds more beauty. In itself this idea is very subjective with the saying, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” you can’t exactly claim that one thing will be more beautiful than another and put it out into the world as though it is a collective thought. But digging further into this it leans into the idea of a lovestruck girlfriend (Kelley) who sees beauty and only good in their boyfriend (technology). Kelley even alludes to this idea of a relationship, “I find caress [the net] with my fidgety fingers; it yields up to my desires, like a lover.” (Kelley). He writes about technology with such love and admiration that it makes me question whether or not we have formed a relationship to technology similar to that of a toxic boyfriend who we fail to see the flaws in or is it more similar to a parasitic relationship. Where technology has formed a bond with us making us believe that what we gain for it is necessary for us to live but in turn most of us are blind to what it is taking from us.

Franco Leehive, an ENG 110 student, agrees with Kelley on the basis that technology can be a good and beautiful thing benefitting the many. However, he sees that technology also has the ability to destroy, “The world’s greatest tool to mankind is technology this tool can be used for immense greatness or it can be used to destroy the world” (Leehive). What Leehive is trying to get across is that technology has the ability to save lives like the little nanobots that researchers have developed to unclog arteries, but there are also technologies like guns and bombs that kill and destroy life. And to my point we have created such a relationship with technology that we have given it the power over us to destroy us one day. This idea is a scary one and not one to be taken lightly. *Kelley quote and analysis – linking to Leehive*

Noah Kesler, ENG 110 student, brings in the idea that when technology is not near is we feel disconnected and compares the connection we have to our phone to similar to the one we share with family, “Some of us have the same connection to our phones that we do with our closest friends or maybe even family.” (Kesler). We have come to a point where when we are not in arms reach of our phone we miss it like a long distance boyfriend. And this can be dangerous, relying so heavily on technology that we have allowed it to creep into our minds and give us a comforting feeling when it is around. Kelley furthers the idea of being attached to technology, “[the] net is now vastly wider than me, wider than I can imagine, so in a way, while I am in it, it makes me bigger too. I feel amputated when I am away from it.” (Kelley). Kelley feels so connected to technology and the internet that he believes it has become an extension of himself. And when he is away from technology he feels like one of his limbs have been cut off and only the feeling of its ghost lingers. This makes technology seem more parasitic, leading away from a toxic relationship but more into parasitism. Technology takes our identity with it when we part and we end up similar to lost souls wandering aimlessly until recommenced with our bodies.

Leehive and Kesler have an interesting viewpoint on how they see technology. Their comparisons are direct opposites of each other. While Leehive likes, “to think of technology as a wilderness more than a strait jacket like the wilderness technology is the same where you need to have the skills to navigate it so that way if you get lost you can find your way back to where you started” (Leehive). He views it as a large expansive place where you can get lost in, however it also implies a type of freedom. The wilderness can be seen as a scary place to lose yourself but also a freeing and liberating place where you can find yourself. This puts a positive spin on the relationship between people and technology. Although Kesler seems to be in a direct juxtaposition with Leehive, “Knowing exactly where our phones are at all times gives us a feeling of security and comfort and sometimes it feels like you are going to go crazy without it

near you. Just like a strait jacket keeping someone contained and secure so they don't go crazy." (Kesler). To Kesler the internet is restraining him, he feels as though he has lost his freedom while being chained to technology and the internet. This shows the restricting aspects of a toxic relationship, unable to distance ones self from their partner. Unfortunately, I can see both sides to this argument. The freedom and restriction seem to go hand in hand with technology.

I don't like the idea that technology has become to imbedded into our lives and minds that we struggle to go without it for even a day. And yet I struggle to see a world where a significant distance put between us and technology would be able to work. We rely so heavily on technology live our phone to aid in completing tasks that we struggle to preform well without them. They have become a crutch that we stand on and are refusing to heal from. I cannot pretend that I am better than other because it do not hold my phone and other technologies in a high regard because that would be false. I find myself coveting my technologies and when I come to the realization that I was I feel the need to take a step back. Some days I want to put a large barrier between me and my phone, even feel like I should leave it in my room, but then I realize that I need it for things like logging into my school account, keeping track of time, connecting with my friends for lunch. Took much of me relays on technology that doing away with it would be hurtful. So while I am not as awestruck and lost to technology as Kelley I still feel a sense of lose when it is not around or even heartbreak when my one technology is broken like my boyfriend had just broken up with me. And the thought that I can compare a breakup with a damaged computer is worrying and scary.