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Are We Controlling Technology or Is it Controlling Us?

Brain rot. A term that has gained mass amounts of popularity in recent years with the advancement of modern technology and the internet. Today, the term is thrown around so loosely it could be describing any stupid or worthless content that surfaces from the internet. However, originally, it was used to describe the way people sat behind their computer screens or on their phones, mindlessly searching for something to entertain them, seemingly rotting their brains, becoming more and more stupid, and even affecting how they behave. This impact on human behavior and potential is discussed by Kevin Kelly, the co-founder of Wired magazine, in his article *Technophilia*, and by American Journalist and Author Nicholas Carr in his writing *Is Google Making Us Stupid?* Both Kelly and Carr express very different views on the topic; while Kelly believes the internet and technology's impact on humans is natural and not bad for us, Carr takes a stand against these impacts that technology has and will continue to cause, saying they are negative and, in a way, harmful. I believe that modern technology has become such a major part of our lives that a lot of negative impacts on our behavior and our potential come from it like shortened attention spans and an inability to take in information.

When you lose your phone (assuming you're just as attached to it as the average person), there's usually a frenzied search that ensues shortly after realizing you lost it. Probably because

suddenly a feeling of emptiness emerges inside you, almost as though a part of you was amputated. But what if our phones are not just an “amputated part” of us, but also the surgeon performing the amputation? Kelly talks about this feeling of amputation when describing a girl who got her phone taken by her parents for disobeying them when he states,

And to reinforce the seriousness of her misconduct, they took away her mobile phone.

Immediately the girl became physically sick. Faint, nauseous, and so ill she couldn't get out of bed. It was as if her parents had amputated a limb. And in a way they had. Our creations are now inseparable from us. Our identity with technology runs deep to our core. (1)

The girl being talked about in this quote is so deeply connected with her phone that when it was taken away, her behavior was very negatively impacted, behaving as though there was something terribly wrong with her as if she was sick. This behavioral change was caused by a feeling of emptiness formed when the girl's phone was taken away, or as Kelly described it, a limb amputated. Earlier, I proposed the thought that our phones could be more than the “amputated limb” but also the surgeon doing the amputation. By this I mean, the deep connection we have with technology caused us to become inseparable from it. I believe the reason why we have become so inseparable from our devices is because we have begun to rely on them so heavily, that we pour out parts of ourselves into it, caring for it like it's a part of us. However, it isn't a part of us, it was designed to give us exactly what we want, so we feel inclined to make it a part of our identity, a part of who we are. When that part of who we are gets taken from us it takes everything we desire with it, leaving us feeling empty like there is nothing else in the world that can replace those feelings, and just like that our phones have in a way, taken or “amputated” those feelings. However, it's not just feelings that are being taken from us by technology, it also

shortened our attention spans and took away our ability to take in information. Carr noticed this loss of attention span and ability to gather information when he found about a man named Bruce Friedman who claims the internet has changed his mental habits, saying: “I now have almost totally lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article on the web or in print,”(2). Friedman’s shortened attention span and lack of the ability to absorb information were caused by Internet use. The internet gives us information quickly and in small simple amounts, which has conditioned us to continuously come back because it's the only place we can feasibly obtain information anymore because it takes time, work, and patience to get information from anywhere else like a textbook for example and it comes in large amounts, so we have no desire to read or understand it.

Our blind love for modern technology is causing us to behave in ways we shouldn’t, like driving us to create more and more without a second thought about the consequences. Instead of having conflicting opinions on this matter, both Kelly and Carr worry about our careless advancements. Kelly states:

The merest suggestion of human-like eye movement, the tiniest hint of active eyebrows, and the roughest ready smile on an otherwise obviously metal machine can make a person melt before it. Even feel bad about turning it off. Humans will treat any minimally anthropomorphized droid like it not only deserves our affections, but in some strange way is returning our love. (9)

Our instant love for things that are created by us is what causes us to so easily surrender love for machines. We keep creating more and more advanced technology and blindly falling in love with it causing us to continue making more without thinking about how it may impact our lives. Carr takes a look at it from a different angle when large tech companies like Google talk about

connecting our brains directly to the internet or even replacing parts of it with an artificial brain. Carr writes, “Still, their easy assumption that we’d all “be better off” if our brains were supplemented, or even replaced, by artificial intelligence is unsettling.”(6). These Google developers are spitting out these disturbing ideas of replacing our brains like they are the best ideas anyone has ever come up with. They are so blinded by the love for their creations and in the thought and idea that they can do something, that they don’t stop and think if they should do it. Maybe they would realize “Oh, perhaps surrendering our brains to artificial intelligence isn't the smartest thing to do.” If we don’t stop to think about our attachment to modern technology, we will most likely end up as vegetables being completely captivated and almost controlled by technology having wasted all our potential trying to enhance ourselves that we ended up doing just the opposite.

All in all, our allowance of modern technology to become such an integral part of our lives has and will continue to negatively impact us with the loss of certain feelings, attention span, and overall ability to learn has created a negative impact on not just our behavior but also our potential. Without our phones, we feel empty and a bit lost causing us to act differently like sluggish and mopey. The loss of attention span and inability to absorb information could cause us to fall behind in work or school because we lost interest early on and threw away our potential. When we are without our devices, we feel like a husk with no motivation to do anything other than wallow and frantically search for them, not only that but it seems as though we can achieve nothing without the use of technology.

Works Cited

Kelly, Kevin. "Technophilia." The Technium, 2023, kk.org/thetechnium/technophilia/. Accessed 28 Mar. 2025.

Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" The Atlantic, July 2008