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The Double-Edged Sword of Technology in Communication

Technology plays an integral role in how our world functions. Today's technology has undoubtedly influenced our lives and the world around us. It is a vital tool that facilitates communication and interaction with those around us. Francis Fukuyama's article *Human Dignity* gives the idea that we are who we are and that the most basic things make us human. Technology has allowed us to experience new things that we normally wouldn't be exposed to. While also helping keep individuals connected with friends and family, allowing for new acquaintances to be made across the globe. Kwame Anthony Appiah and his article *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers (2006)* touch on how conversations with one another allow us to be immersed in different cultures through processes of understanding and communication. When one person says something, it doesn't mean you have to agree with what they are saying, but being able to see from their perspective is important. While these two authors' work complement each other, Sherry Turkle's, *The Empathy Diaries* threatens what Fukuyama and Appiah say. Turkle brings in the belief that technology is harming our world more than helping. Although Turkle does have a point that technology has its flaws, Fukuyama and Appiah understand that day-to-day conversations and communication in today's world are highly susceptible, impacted, and intertwined with technology.

Technology is a tool that we can use to share beliefs and ideas. It exposes new experiences and allows us to hear other people's opinions on a topic. Just because someone says their opinion on something doesn't mean that you have to agree with what that individual is saying but being able to have a conversation with a stranger that you never would have heard or known of if technology weren't there. We are always exposed to new experiences every day, and technology allows for a lot of those interactions to happen. Fukuyama's article talks about communication and how we communicate with one another and why we communicate in the way we do, "We are social and political animals not merely because we are capable of game-theoretic reason, but because we are endowed with certain social emotions" (118). We as humans are very social creatures, we thrive off being able to talk and communicate with one another. With technology, we can see people's lives, little snippets of who an individual is that you don't know personally. Being able to have a conversation, even just looking at things through technology, gives people the opportunity to have an open mind on new ideas that they think they are set and stone on. Fukuyama states, "many other species communicate with sounds, and that chimpanzees and other animals can learn human language to a limited extent. But no other species has human language" (113). The communication skills that we are taught all our lives are human nature. We are curious beings that want to be the best at that thing and being able to communicate clearly with one another is one of those things. No other animals talk and communicate like we do. Technology gives us an enhancement to be able to communicate with one another. Technology does not change the importance of conversation skills, meaning the ability to effectively communicate needs and ideas, as well as the ability to actively listen to and interpret information received. Appiah talks about the importance of being able to have a constructive, meaningful conversation with the individuals around us, while the idea of

respecting others' perspectives and the importance of acknowledging different viewpoints in a conversation, creating a space where genuine communication can happen. Interaction with technology occurs daily and attempts to refrain from using technology are difficult; from buying gas to groceries, technology is intertwined in almost every interaction for many people daily. "A large part of what we do we do because it is just what we do" (48). Humans connect with others and remain connected through conversations where ideas are shared, creativity blossoms, likes and dislikes are expressed, making conversations an important part of human existence. It can be noted that the most impactful way technology impacts day-to-day life is by allowing us to stay connected with people we know and care about as well as new people through fostering conversation, "So I'm using the word conversation not only for literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others" (55). The use of technology does not change the importance of being able to have a conversation with one another. It has considerably increased the speed at which conversations and the sharing of information and viewpoints occur.

In contrast, Sherry Turkle in the article "*The Empathy Diaries*" talks about the importance of having a face-to-face conversation with another person; she describes it as one of the most humanizing things that we can do as humans. Turkle continues to explain that technology is engulfing society and our world as a whole and significantly impacts individuals' abilities to have meaningful conversations and interactions with others, "Students don't seem to be making friendships as before. They make acquaintances, but their connections seem superficial" (345). While technology has certainly affected and changed the way that we as a society interact with each other it certainly has not forced relationships and acquaintances to be superficial or fake, she likes to focus on this idea, "But these days we find ways around conversation. We hide from each other even as we're constantly connected to each other" (344).

Technology has certainly affected and changed the way that we as a society interact with each other, it certainly has not forced relationships and acquaintances to be superficial or fake. Turkle continues to talk about spontaneous conversations in public or even face-to-face conversations at home are less and less common and awkward or forced at times. It is not that common to have a conversation with someone through a pen and paper or spontaneously break out into a conversation in the grocery store anymore. When reflecting on my personal experiences, I find that it can be very awkward to start a random conversation with unknown individuals, even in classes at times. Conversation skills are something that my generation at times lacks, and at times, trying to start a conversation can absolutely feel forced.

I grew up with technology. Everything was evolving as I was going through school, and it became normal to talk with our friends through technology, the older we became. While schoolwork was beginning to become more technological, yes, there was still paper and pen work that teachers assigned, but technology was becoming more common. Projectors were installed in every classroom. Students were given small laptops from the school to use while they went through the school district. Turning work in through technology, even if it was assigned on paper, started as well. Reaching our teachers to ask questions about work or communicating with them that you won't be in class for a certain number of days to see what you're going to miss is possible through technology. Now in college, I use technology to stay in touch with family members and friends at home, while also being able to meet new people and have conversations with them in a new, unfamiliar place. While also being able to complete my college assignments, which are all handed in online. We are social individuals. We were genetically made to have face-to-face interactions with one another, we thrive off being able to communicate and have conversations, and technology improves the amount of communication.

Technology has advanced conversations forward and has made positive impacts and increasing the amount and quality of interactions that individuals have with one another. No one can deny that conversations are the center of communication between individuals. Appiah, Fukuyama, and Turkle's ideas of being able to have constructive conversations with other individuals. We can't ignore the fact that technology has helped and hurt our world, but it has allowed us to be able to have a deeper connection with others and make connections with people no matter where we are in the world. It has opened doors for everyone in many different aspects, from personal to global and political. The doors that were made because of technology would certainly not be here today if technology had not advanced in the way that it did.

Works Cited

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