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Technology: How Human Innovation Can Benefit and Negatively Impact Society

Humans have been developing technology for over three million years, but only recently has it begun to progress at an exponential rate (Gregersen). Early humans started with the invention of stone tools 3.3 million years ago. Fire was the next human technology, and it took 2.3 million years for humans to develop the skills to make it. About 980,000 years later, the Neolithic Revolution took place, in which humans developed the technology to begin farming. From that point on, there were decreasing amounts of time between each new technological invention. Now, there are new technologies being developed that have a significant impact on society about every five years, with minor technological advances taking place yearly. While it took humans millions of years to go from stone tools to fire, it took just seventy-eight years to go from electric light to space flight. However, this is not to say that new technology does not come without drawbacks; technology has greatly improved society, but it has also brought with it several cons.

Modern technology has created a global society that can stay connected no matter where anyone is on the planet. With the invention of the internet and cell phones, everyone has access to all the information they want at their fingertips. Technology has also improved in the healthcare industry, which has prolonged life expectancy from 46 years for males and 48 years for females in the 1900s, to 76 years for males and 81 years for females. Every year, technology continues to get better, constantly improving people's lives and making everyday life much

easier. A prime example of this is the research being done to allow people with prosthetic limbs to begin having feeling in them again, as though they were their real arms or legs. The same technology is being developed for quadriplegic people, allowing them to regain some function of their limbs or be able to control prosthetic limbs near them through the signals in their brain. The next technological advancement that is knocking on the door of becoming an integral part of society is AI. With the invention of ChatGPT, it is coming closer than ever before, and is already showing the benefits it can provide to users.

Not every invention that has improved modern day society has come without drawbacks. Analyzing what technology has done, from a personal perspective, I believe that much of society has become too absorbed in the appearance of how their lives are versus the true quality of them. My generation in particular, for the most part, is more absorbed in making a post on Instagram and what people think of it, instead of focusing on their relationships with one another and improving themselves. People in the U.S. spend an average of three hours a day on their phones, and looking at teenagers, they spend over seven hours a day on their phones (Susic). The art of conversation appears to be going away. It is all too common now to look at a group of teenagers in a room together, and see them all looking at their phones, instead of talking to one another. The ability to instantly communicate with one another has also significantly devalued the time people physically spend with each other.

Advancements in technology present a danger to society as well. While AI has the capability to greatly improve the way society functions, if it is left unmanaged, it could quickly get out of control. According to Elon Musk, "One of the biggest risks to the future of civilization is AI." Musk said this while talking about ChatGPT because, as he pointed out, it is

showing people how advanced AI has become (Browne). Another reason for his concern is that there is no regulation on the development of AI, as there is with a commodity such as cars.

A lack of regulations on artificial intelligence is not the only concern that comes with it. As it continues to develop, humans are increasingly likely to become dependent on it. This would take away from learning in schools, as many students are already using ChatGPT and other apps similar to write papers for them, even in this unrefined stage. As it continues to become more intelligent and learns from humans' input, its usage will only become more prominent in the school system.

Looking at the future of technology from a dystopian perspective, I believe that there are two potential negative outcomes. AI could become too intelligent for humans to control it any longer, and eventually learn how to take over everything. The second consists of humans becoming so reliant on AI, that there is nearly nothing they do anymore. It could lead to a lazy population that has no drive to improve on anything. As AI takes over, it will require humans to learn less and less information, which could eventually lead to a point where no one knows how to do anything for themselves, as AI has always done it for them. However, if the lens is flipped to a utopian perspective, there is a lot of good that could come out of the development of AI. If managed properly, AI could be a tool used to expedite tedious tasks, provide information on how to solve some of the world's biggest problems, such as food and water shortages, and it could lead to a faster route to interplanetary travel.

Another danger of advancing technology are the weapons that will be created. Nuclear bombs are already extremely devastating, and with time, there will only be deadlier weapons that emerge. However, this may not be a bad thing because of mutually assured destruction, assuming both countries would have weapons capable of wiping each other out, which has been the

deterrent of the usage of nuclear bombs. This could end up leading to a more peaceful society, in which everyone agrees that the costs of war are too great to pursue it.

It seems as though society is right at the tipping point of whether or not new technology is going to take the human race downhill or allow it to progress at a faster rate. Only time will tell which direction society is going in. In the meantime, with the current technology available, I believe that more emphasis should be placed on face-to-face interactions, as the newer generations are slowly losing the ability to communicate with each other. Many people are becoming so comfortable being behind a screen all day and communicating that way, that it is starting to become the norm.

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