

‘Technological progress should always be welcomed.’ How far do you agree?

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Albert Einstein once told an interviewer that “technological progress is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal”. Indeed, humanity has been making significant strides in technology, churning out invention after invention at an unprecedented rate. With this inexorable progress comes a multitude of benefits, as technology improves humanity’s satisfaction in life as well as solve some of the world’s most pressing issues. However, one must not forget its concomitant detriments to society. Inevitably, technology does bring up ample opportunity for misuse and a plethora of other unforeseen consequences. This is why I believe that we should be perpetually critical of technological progress and not be overly persistent in whole-heartedly integrating it into society.

In the pursuit of happiness, humans have turned to technology to fulfil their innermost desires, and technology has yet to disappoint. It cannot be repudiated that the innate desire of humans for convenience has brought about ingenious creations such as the automobile, the cell phone as well as the Internet. With improved transportation, communication and connectivity, we, as humans, are still able to carry on with our normal lives, while at the same time experiencing a prodigious increase in both efficiency and gratification. Apart from convenience, humans desire better quality of goods and services. For example, the juggernauts of mobile phone production have been relentless when it comes to improving the quality of their goods, be it implementing new features or opting for a sleeker design, all to temporarily satisfy their customers before the next model is unveiled. Moving on, our wants and needs as humans are what necessitates technological progress, and fulfilling them would tremendously improve our quality of life. This is why technology should be welcomed at times.

Secondly, our world faces an unbelievable number of problems. Sure, some of them are of our own making but a substantial proportion of them are acts of nature. Disease, natural disasters and extraplanetary threats have plagued life on Earth for millions of years, even during the time dinosaurs roamed the planet. It is only during the past few centuries that we are able to mitigate such destruction. To illustrate, polio and smallpox have been eradicated, shock absorbers and dampeners have minimised earthquake casualties and NASA even has a protocol for when an asteroid is expected to impact the Earth. Some of these are extinction-level events that may wipe humanity off the face of the planet. We must not hesitate when it comes to saving humankind. As such, any research pertaining to the survival of mankind should always be welcomed. Better still, it should be prioritised.

Despite the boons, the pursuit of technology has its pitfalls, such as its misuse and should not be embraced all the time. Although war has been around since prehistoric times, there has been an irrefutable trend that technology has empowered humans with the ability to kill people faster and with better efficiency. This is a shocking truth, easily verified with examples such as the nuclear bomb and the Kalashnikov AK-47 Assault Rifle. In that case, should not this problem be solved if we ban advancements in military technology? Actually even innocent inventions have been turned into ruthless weapons. Alfred Nobel, for instance, invented dynamite to aid mining expeditions but was later devastated when his creation was used to inflict harm upon humans. In recent years,

genetic engineering has greatly enhanced our capability to cure cancer and other chronic diseases, but it opens up Pandora's box. Since it is impractical to rule out technology completely, advancements have to continue as per normal. We would have to live with the ramifications of its misuse, even when we cannot foresee the effects. This is why governments have to set up the appropriate legal framework to stomp out possible threats to national security. Thus, owing to the irresponsibility of a select few humans, we must remain prudent when it comes to technology and be very careful when integrating a certain breakthrough into society.

The problems do not end there for technology, unfortunately, for there are still countless other social and environmental issues caused by it, even when it is used by the purest of hearts. Sometimes, even the sharpest minds on Earth cannot see the full list of consequences of a particular advancement. Assuming government control prohibits any misuse, flaws in the science and logic are simply unavoidable. To make my point clear, in the late 18th Century, the Industrial Revolution significantly improved the standard of living of the majority of people. Although such change was brought about without ill intention, it is indisputable that this had had myriad deleterious effects on our surroundings. This issue not only engenders environmental issues such as extinctions and disease, but also enters the realm of social problems. Technological change leads to rapid economic development but since the benefits are unevenly distributed, certain countries prosper more than others. This in turn induces migration which causes brain drain and incites xenophobic hostility. Ergo, in order to avoid these consequences, we would have to analyse advancements multifariously, internalising the spectrum of undesired effects before welcoming technology with open arms.

As innocent as the intentions of technologists may be, we have brought doom upon ourselves, opening ourselves up to new threats that may cause humanity to plunge into chaos. Our acceptance of technology in the past may have led to the easy life we have today. However, our short-sightedness has had such a profound impact on today's society and on generations in the centuries to come. Now, we have a choice, since we know our mistakes: to repeat history and create even more problems for ourselves, or to make a change and not be reckless when embracing technology. With this, I conclude that technology should be welcomed, but only after being rigorously scrutinised.

Comments:

This is a well-considered essay that shows a good grasp of the issue and has some examples of technological progress, though there were many that were dated. Good organisation of your thoughts and arguments, which were highly relevant to the issue at hand. Vocabulary is varied and intriguing, improving the quality of the essay. Essay starts with a bang and ends with a thought-provoking statement. Overall, a solid piece.