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A New Evolution

Before the impact and influence of technology can be contemplated, a definition of must be established. What exactly is this abstract "technology" or "technique" that is referenced and simultaneously eluded to so much in our society today? For our purposes, we are going to say it is anything (object, idea, action, etc.) that makes the task of surviving easier or more efficient. Therefore, technologies have already been developed for millennia. Conceptually, one of the first was the bone that Stanley Kubrick's ape used to clobber a fellow chimp in 2001: A Space Odyssey*"* (Kubrick). That's as much as a development in technology as something more current such as voice recognition, 4G cellular networks, or the next big "iThing" released. When looking at the Earth subjectively, we are the only species that has completely embraced technology and used it to exponentially advance our civilization. The term is almost comically abstract at this point due to how ingrained all of our inventions have become in everyday life. Now we must consider, what consequences has this had on us as animals? Will technology continue to shape and divert us off the path that nature intended. or is the technological boom just the next step in human development? In my opinion, the exponential growth of technology is a man-powered push towards the next step in evolution.

In order to cope with the elaborate, fast paced, and unique lifestyles people live today, the mind has adapted into something more advanced than it was a couple centuries ago. Keeping up with new developments, experiencing infrastructure upgrade itself year after year, and globalization of information due to the Internet are all examples of how in recent history, humans are becoming progressive and innovative. People have just become more creative in general, and constantly perceptive. Also, creativity is also a broad term, we're not just talking about being

good in a high school art class. It is this intangible quality that makes you a more imaginative, versatile thinker. Just as creativity makes us unique as a whole species, the most creative individuals are viewed as more unique than others. In a futile attempt to give it a specific definition, we could say that creativity is an increased intellect that allows us to be more resourceful thinkers and innovative problem-solvers. The perplexing part is identifying what exactly about technology causes us to have increased creativity, compared humans in the past. Today there is unlimited access to knowledge and information. The fact that there exists an online encyclopedia (Wikipedia), that has virtually catalogued everything in existence, and is completely dependent on input from the common populous, is in itself a monumental feat and exemplifies how technology can be used. The phrase "expand your mind" is incredibly applicable here, and obviously not in the physical sense. The explosion of global information recently allows people to investigate whatever topic they can fathom. Thousands of online courses provide mastery in anything from computer programming, to learning a new language, and even creating artificial art. This was not the case a century ago. Before the invention of electronic technologies, most humans were simpletons by our terms. Basic survival was still a concern, your family and hometown were your entire life, and most people worked in agriculture or as a specialist in only a handful of fields. Today, you could think of an idea, create it, market it, sell it, and get rich, all from your office chair. Manual Castells refers to this as the new "flexable labor" that is much more available in today's network society. He states, "There is a decisive transformation of work & employment. Induced by globalization, and the network enterprise, and facilitated by information/communication technologies" (Castells 11). Life is so much more complex with all of the opportunities technology has made available. Society now has global themes, groups collaborate purely online, and there is an entire subculture that exists

on the Internet. Today's Internet memes require context from multiple sources to understand, a task just not possible before electronic technology. Online forums exist for every topic imaginable where enthusiasts can share ideas and collaborate. The options are infinite. McLuhan argues that technology is an extension of the self. For example, an axe is an extension of the hand just as steel-toed boots are an extension of the feet. In addition, every new innovation leaves a deep and enduring impact on the human race (McLuhan 82). All the extra work the brain does to comprehend our complex culture of the present, in my opinion, extends the mind just as McLuhan suggests. Using all of the new inventions requires us to recognize patterns, architecture, and other factors. For example, the color red is now consistent with error in our culture. Stop lights, error dialogue boxes on the computer, fire hydrants, and numerous other instances show how technology leaves a lasting impression on our mind. We are constantly looking for signs and symbolism such as this to guide us through life. Also, McLuhan refers to a numbing or auto-amputation of the sense that is extended. This is also true in today's culture. Mindless drones spend hours scrolling through Facebook or in front of the Playstation and it dulls their brain. Once people get an iPhone or smartphone, they cannot live without it and are bound to it 24/7. "Life mix", as Tiziana Terranova calls it, is this exact mix of your virtual and physical selves (Terranova). Our mind and consciousness is sophisticated enough to keep track of these multiple personas. At any given time, a person may have an idea of how people view them in real life, and how people view them online, and most of the time they are different. In addition, luxury time is much more abundant. Technology has aided existence to a point where we can pursue interest, hobbies, or other stimulating activities. It launches numerous industries and sub-cultures such as video games, movies, sporting, etc. It has redefined the goals people hope to achieve in life and the way people conduct themselves. Living has become more than

just surviving, it has become about prospering. The only negative product that comes with the advent of new entertainment devices, is that it keeps people indoors and sedentary. This is an unfortunate side-effect, but just as nature corrects itself, we have adopted a new "green" mentality as we progress into the future. Evolution continues to guide us in the right direction towards survival.

There are boundless examples of innovations we have developed that at their core make us a more advanced, evolved species. Two extremely relevant practices are production of electronic music and creating digital art. When listening to a "techno" song, the essence of it is lost to most people today. Every sound or noise used in the song was made artificially by a computer. If you played a popular song from the present to Mozart or Ray Charles, they would first be appalled, but then completely mind boggled as to what exactly were the sounds being used and how they were made. Tangible instruments are now a thing of the past. However, this gives us so much more freedom in creating music. Now we can conceptualize sounds nobody has ever heard, and have the tools to create them. Completely new genres are formed from thin air. Dubstep, trance, trap, and house music are all examples of genres that literally couldn't have existed in the world fifty years ago. For instance, Daft Punk is releasing a new album soon, their first since 2005. They have always been known for creating their own basslines, drum patterns, and melodies using real instruments. In the hype for their new album, they have been releasing videos to give insight into the album creation process. Most people believed that they would use all the new music technology available to intensify their sound. Almost all EDM (Electronic Dance Music) is created digitally. Ironically though, they use almost no samples and most of the instrumentation was done by real instruments in what is called analog. They combined new electronic sound with the production of old analog sound to create a new type of music entirely.

What they're doing is likened to restoring a vintage car with a new engine. Once again, another instance of technology allowing something to be created that otherwise would have never existed. I think they're also great example of how music has evolved itself over the last hundreds of years. The fact that there are literally different ways of producing music either electronically or physically is mindboggling (thedaftclub). Another case of technological "expansion of the mind" is one that comes from my own life. I was never skilled at drawing, painting, sketching, or other forms of physical art. However, one day I bought an electronic pen & tablet to control my laptop mouse. Eventually, I learned it could be used in applications such as Paint or Photoshop. Soon I started basic sketches and paintings of my favorite movies or videogames, and after a while I was creating beautiful tableaus using multiple virtual brushes, pencils, pens, markers, erasers, etc. We now have the ability, with a mathematical precision, to create and produce illustrations of any kind. We use the computer and its accessories as extensions of our bodies to improve our senses. In the *Journal of Evolution Technology*, James Ogilvy says, "Shoes enhance the soles of your feet; clothes enhance the ability of your skin and hair to insulate your body; glasses enhance vision" (Ogilvy). Every new innovation increases our perception. Another faction of living that has been completely revolutionized by technology is how we eat. Centuries ago it was find meat, and cook it over a campfire. Now there are more tools and utensils used in the kitchen than most people know. This has allowed for a range of cuisines available to everyone unlike anything seen in history. The worldwide spread of information has also produced incredible diversity in options of food. Flavors like Tex-Mex, American-Asian (No, General Tso chicken does not exist in Asia), Asian-fusion, or even pizza are all due to globalization, advances in kitchen technologies, and ability of the human mind to absorb all the variety in taste. For example, in addition to the tastes of sweet, salty, sour, and bitter, around one

hundred years ago we discovered a fifth, umami. It is Japanese for “delicious taste”, and was discovered by investigated the nucleotides in foods such as tomatoes, meat, or cheese. This is the unique ability humans have to taste something savory, usually found in foods high in amino acids. The complex understanding of our physiology was not available centuries ago. In this way, we have evolved the way we eat and maintain homeostasis. Most of the vegetables we eat today have been genetically modified to be the largest and best looking over countless generations. Processed food allows sustenance to remain unspoiled for up to years. Overall, nutrition has been revolutionized by technology, and our bodies have physically evolved to cope with it. The gall bladder, for instance, is a needless organ due to the refining of our diets over the generations. There are innumerable examples from today’s society where technology has seemed to almost evolve a part of our existence.

Humans have been evolving since life existed. In the grand scheme of time, the last few centuries have been extremely eventful. Since technical evolution takes entire too long for one individual to witness, I offer this alternative. With the unprecedented growth of technology of the recent past, humans have generated their own hyper-evolution. People live their lives in present day so drastically different from the millennia of humans that have come before us. Evolution is driven by what makes surviving easier, and everything we do is facilitated and made easier by technology. We travel in cars to save time and energy, take vitamins for holistic health and to eat less, or take the elevator to avoid stairs. More current examples would include saving your documents to a cloud to avoid physical copies, hardwiring your laptop to the internet to get that extra speed, or using the iPhones “Reminders” application to keep track of all of your to-do’s. If McLuhan is to be believed, and technology truly is an extension of the self, then how could all of these new features not be considered an evolution of the being? Next, we must consider how

intensified the relationship between people and technology will become in the future. Where do we go from here? We have stem cell research literally attempting to engineer cells for specific tasks, endless biotechnologies that blur the line between human and machine, and 3D printers that can produce anything you could imagine. The world marveled at the introduction of the smart phone. For the first time you could have a computer in your pocket. However, Google Glass puts all of the functions of a standard smart phone and puts them in front of your eye. Available with a its own frame, or attachable to glasses, this mini supercomputer is your phone, camera, agenda, GPS, encyclopedia, and translator all contained in a tiny glass panel that perfectly adjusts to your focal length. Just as your mind witnesses events and stores them as memories, these glasses can record and store pictures, audio, or video on a hard drive (Google). No longer demanding your divided attention, Google Glass is truly an evolution of the self and a heightening of the senses. In addition to external attachments, we have already made huge strides in internal technologies. Pacemakers imitate a heartbeat to keep people alive, we replace bones with titanium imitations, and use laser eye surgery to correct vision. These procedures have become routine in medicine, what will be the next body alteration that is “no big deal”? It could be one step above Google Glass and putting the computer in a contact lens, computers you control with thoughts, or a super vitamin that increases life expectancy. Humans have created and then adapted to so many monumental technological advances as of late. Will there be a plateau, or will this exponential growth lead to something even greater? Our destruction, planetary expansion, and the creation of artificial worlds are all fathomable outcomes. However, we are only privileged to experience one lifetime, and the larger scale of evolution almost impossible to conceive.

Technological advances, brought to fruition by human intellect, are a form of evolution that is currently advancing us at an exponential rate. Never before have peoples lives been so filled with communication, perception, and information. We are no longer the simpletons of centuries past. Mobile technologies, the Internet, and social media have revolutionized the way we interact with the world. People now have virtual persona that they maintain as an alternative image. Biotechnologies manipulate and aid the human body into something not entirely human. Everything from the water we drink to the media we view has been processed and fine-tuned by technology to make life easier, better, and more efficient. Although the majority is external, technology should definitely be looked at as the next stage of human existence. We are at the forefront of an exponential curve. Mountains are moved, rivers are harnessed, and people thrive all thanks to technology. Humans are advanced to a point that was unconceivable to our ancestors, and we only continue to develop. Just as apes used tools to become more sophisticated beings, we are using our technology now to evolve into the realm of the unknown.

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