

Technology Dictates Morality

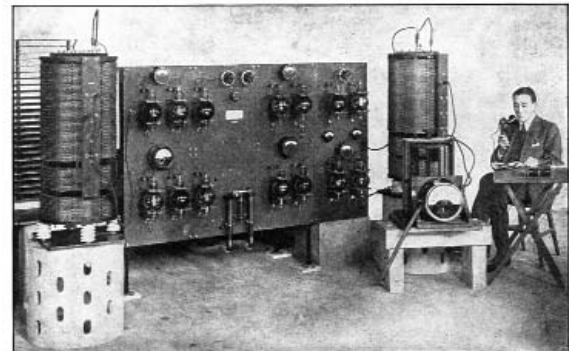
by Chester Weaver



Technology dictates morality—really? Isn't technology morally neutral? How can it dictate morality? Is not the reverse the truth: morality dictates technology? What is the truth here? Western society has been trained to worship technology. Technology has proven humanly beneficial in so many ways. It has relieved suffering in incredible ways. Technological advances in medicine save lives and speed recovery for those afflicted. Moving from point A to point B is so much faster and easier today than it was just one hundred years ago. Cars, trucks, and airplanes have made so much difference. Computers have made recordkeeping a cinch and thus have freed manpower to be creative in the workplace. Children no longer even need a typing teacher; a computer program does the teaching.

In fact, if we have a problem one of the first things we think about is how a computer could solve this problem for us. Why suffer if it's not necessary? We have learned to think in terms of technology. This kind of thinking is not all bad but it is not all good either. What do I mean? Recently when the iPhone was released, people stood in long lines for the privilege to get one immediately upon release. The iPhone had packed a cell phone, an iPod, and a PDA into one fun-to-use unit. The cell phone had solved a communication problem earlier, the iPod had solved an entertainment problem, and the PDA had solved an organizational and memory problem. Now, wonder of wonders, the iPhone

put all three together



into one fun-to-use unit. Suddenly the previous cell phone, the iPod, and the PDA were outdated—one unit is better than three separate units. Any thinking person can see the instant advantage.

And so it goes. Technology proceeds with one improvement after another. And there is no end in sight. Mankind steps back in awe and says, "What hath man wrought? I must have one!" The technology worshipers prepare themselves for the next line to stand in. Where is God in all this? Is God in the iPhone? Is God in the computer? Is God in the automobile? Is technology a gift from God? Maybe. Maybe not. With all its problem solving has technology improved marriages? What is the evidence? Has a sense of community, of needing and being needed, deepened? Has relationship with God deepened and broadened? Are families of better quality? Has character development kept pace with technology?

Are people in general becoming wiser about the issues of life because of Internet access? With all the fun



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generated with computer games are children more satisfied and content today than they were before the advent of computer games? As suffering decreases does morality increase? In other words, has technology moved man closer to God and others than he was previously? When each new gadget appears, the older folks stand back a bit while the younger generation rushes in. The older folks marvel while the younger “catch on” and run with it. The older folks marvel again. They plead with the young to teach them how to use it. Delighted with the request, the young gladly teach.

And so it goes. Eventually the older folks acquiesce in a quiet acceptance. “Everyone” is immersed in technology. “Everyone” is buying it. Nobody suffers. Keeping pace with all the technological advancements is the steady pace of consumerism. “Everybody” needs the technology. Who does not have a car today? Who lacks a computer? Who does not have a cell phone? And when the new version appears, we need to upgrade. And when we have all these, we look around for whatever else we might need. No lack there because the advertisements continually remind us of what we need. And so we spend our money on good food (thank God for good food!) while our middles increase in size. We buy more “toys” so that we can have more fun (God wants us to enjoy ourselves!) and our Bibles get used less and less. We need so much stuff that soon we need a storage barn to keep it dry. (Good stewardship!) And the landfills! They increase in size every day.

And so where has the money gone? Into souls? Into service? Into sacrifice? Or into technology? Where have our lives gone? Into mammon (wealth) or into people? Into materialism or into Jesus? Into myself or into you? Each little idol snatches a bit from its owner. A bit of time, a bit of money, a bit of attention, a bit of worship. And when all those bits are lumped together, what is left to the owner? A starved and puny soul. If a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul, what does he really have when it is all said and done?

Here is a test. If I had adequate food, clothing, and shelter for a year and during that year I spent no money on myself (no consumerism and no technology) but instead I poured my energies into people, how would I fare? I would be miserable by the end of the year if I was a consumer. I would be bored stiff if unfolding technology was my life. But if I was into enduring values, I would be happier at the end of the year than at the beginning. Things do not satisfy. Technology does not satisfy. Consumerism does not satisfy. God does satisfy the inner longings of the heart. Our lives are fulfilled when they are engaged with God and with people.

Another test: If Jesus Christ was literally at location A, would I get in line to visit with Him? That would depend on the worship object of my heart. And if I did see Him, what would He say to me? “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Am I in line now waiting to serve Jesus in the form of “the needy?” (I am exposing the worship object of my heart today.)

A few remaining questions to ponder: Where would we be in national morality today if our suffering had kept pace with our technology? What happens to moral character that is yielded to suffering? What does suffering teach that technology cannot teach? What would happen to me if I refused some “legitimate” technology in the interest of my own moral well-being? What informed Jesus when He was here, suffering or technology? What informs us? Does technology dictate morality? You bet it does!

The unconscious choices people make as they pursue technology are evidence of the subtle but strong enticement technology has upon the innate lusts of people. □

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