

## The Technological advancements of the Twentieth Century have hindered mankind's physical, moral and spiritual growth.

The last hundred years has seen many technological breakthroughs. The invention of the telephone has improved communication; medical equipment, saved lives, equally however technology has its evil. The atom bomb has a capacity to destroy; the Internet may be used as a vehicle for fraud or pornography. Perhaps it is not technological advancement in itself that is so destructive, rather mans employment of technology to harm.

Throughout the years war and conflict have always existed. Therefore it is not possible to assert technological advancements are the cause of war. However it is possible to question whether advancements have increased death and destruction consequent to war. This is a different issue entirely.

In 1916 during WW1, the Battle Of The Somme took place. By Christmas, and the battle's end, 800,000 lives had been claimed. In contrast the Vietnam War during the 1970's 58,000 Americans died. The number of fatalities of war seems to have been dramatically reduced. Perhaps this indicates in fact that technology has helped reduce the number of deaths in war, with an ability to decipher targets more clearly and the move away from trench warfare. On the other hand, it has been asserted that the advancements in weaponry in WW1 created the stalemate conditions that contributed to the cause of so many deaths.

Such an assertion seems preposterous when considering if advancements in weaponry created the stalemate during WW1 and consequently the high fatalities at the Somme why subsequently a repeat scenario did not ensue in Vietnam? It appears thus that the fewer deaths in the Vietnam War may actually have been achieved by improvements in technology. While perhaps an over simplified view, considering the different nature of these wars, there does appear to be evidence to support the case stated.

The movement of people has been possible for many centuries, in many different modes, on foot, on horseback, by sea and by rail. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw great improvements in transportation, making journeys quicker, easier, more accessible and

more efficient. Can it be determined if improvements in transportation and infrastructure have had a detrimental effect on mankind?

Henry Ford worked on the design of the automobile from 1896. In the early 1900's the first car was completed. Greater speed and mobility followed. An invention of great utility indeed! with the ability of man to pursue more projects in less time. A visit to town was no longer a daylong excursion, the journey to see relatives no longer so taxing. Surely then such an expedient invention could not have caused harm to humanity. However with such ingenuity comes inadequacy namely man's failure or recklessness to control machine. Or the impossibility of such invention to overcome the difficulties presented in every scenario. Pursuant to this road accidents have claimed human lives. Some argue that the invention of the automobile has curbed the human population. However this argument could be defeated by the contrary assertion that owing to transportation by car those who are injured or unwell have greater speed of access to medical facilities and thus cars have saved lives.

The Irish Famine claimed many lives in the 1800's however it is undoubtedly the case that without improvements in sea transport, which made travel across the Atlantic and even as far as Australia possible, many more would have died in these enduring times.

While Henry Ford was working on his automobile the Wright Brothers in France were reaching the final stages in their design of the aeroplane. On December 19<sup>th</sup> 1903, success was finally realised. The invention of the aeroplane and commercial flight has ultimately changed the way we look at life. We now have the ability to reach any destination by air. 100 years ago Muslims living in Ireland would not have been able to make the compulsory sacred pilgrimage to Mecca with ease. Air transport has made this possible and has improved the spiritual lives of many people as a consequence.

However on the contrary the tragedy of the Twin Towers Attack has seen air travel being used as a vehicle for terrorism. Yet equally technology has curbed terrorist activities in other areas.

It seems that advancements in transport have allowed mankind to be educated, to grow, to see different cultures, traditions and experience the world in a whole new light rather than have hindered man's spiritual, physical and moral growth.

Television was not developed until the 1920's; it had little importance in communication until the late 1940's. Many scientists contributed to the development of the television and no one person can be called its inventor.

Two types of television exist, Open circuit television and Closed circuit television (C.C.T.V.). Open circuit television creates signals, which can be received by all televisions within the range of those signals. This allows for the operation of worldwide communication. Information and entertainment issues are played out to the world at the touch of a button, educating the public. Weather, traffic and news reports make planning possible for individuals. People can make informed choices about situations. The television is an aid to education about other cultures and heritages. It promotes the arts through comedy, drama and language and provides a tool for education of the general public. Political, environmental and social issues are brought to public attention. Such benefits are undisputed. Television also provides a launch pad for violent, sexual and undesirable material to be transmitted, which may be detrimental to public morality – particularly in the case of children. Arguments over this issue are rife with others arguing that mere exposure to such influences by way of television cannot affect an individual. Recently in the case of V+T the children involved in the murder of Jamie Bulger violent images on TV and in video games were blamed for developing a warped state of mind. Such evidence is inconclusive, as equally studies have borne out the fact that such influences have little or no effect on behaviour.

Closed Circuit television operates with signals being sent by way of wires to certain television sets. This allows for security monitoring of certain places. People can thus feel comforted that their precious or expensive materials and property are safe. Superstores also use CCTV to prevent theft. There is the case of invasion of privacy to be made; the incapacity of such TV monitors when tampered with has been seen time and time again. Take for example Danny Ocean in the film Oceans Eleven and his ability to hack into a casino CCTV system.

Television undoubtedly promotes communication, education and security. The benefits seem to outweigh the drawbacks. TV fanatics may idolise celebrities and stars so that people no longer pursue personal goals but desire fame, wealth and material goals of others. Anorexia has been partially attributed to a celebrity culture of slimness. Television watching is a rather antisocial activity preventing

communication with others. Yet undoubtedly it is those who do not watch TV who become the outcasts when conversation turns to, “did you see ..... Last night?”

Overall it seems that TV has helped mankind. Without it many people would not get the chance to hear news. However this means of communication needs to be strictly monitored, as in the wrong hand can be a dangerous propaganda tool or may transmit unsavoury material.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw great advancement in the medical field. The discovery of penicillin in London, 1928 by Alexander Fleming was probably the most influential advancement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a powerful antibiotic that prevents the bacteria growing. This has saved people dying from the common cold or flu. Vaccinations have reduced the hold of many diseases and eradicated small pox. Vaccinations have also increased human life expectancy. Elderly people often get flu shots that help their immune system against the flu germs in the winter. Children in school get polio and tetanus shots. Young babies and toddlers receive the MMR (mumps, measles & rubella) vaccine. However recently controversy has surrounded this vaccination. The shot is a three in one, aimed to combat mumps measles and rubella; studies have recently shown that certain health risks may attach to this type of vaccination. The technology to give the three vaccinations in separate shots is available; this issue is therefore a political one and not the focus of our argument here. Scientists have proved that the germs are evolving and developing new strains, which are immune to our vaccinations. Diseases like TB are coming back and are a threat. The overuse of antibiotics has aided such evolution. It is therefore not a technological problem but a social and political problem that exists and campaigns are currently in the offing to encourage the correct and proper use of antibiotics. However vaccinations are still helping us live a longer and healthier life. In the case of diabetics for example daily injections allow them to live a normal and healthy life. In the third world where this fairly basic technology is not available, people die of the disease.

In recent years genetic engineering and cloning has instigated great advances in medicine. There is now a prospect of using such technology to develop transplant organs, giving humans the chance to live much longer lives. There is however a moral argument against such intervention and this is indeed quite sound when ethics are called into question. Is it right to develop a human life to be used as a medical transplant source? Surely this questions human dignity. Many religions are against

the idea of cloning, as the clones are not unique and were not created by man and woman through sexual intercourse.

Fertilisation drugs and infertility treatments have seen many families blessed with a child; it is however debated in different areas whether such intervention is morally repugnant.

So, is it right to say that the advances in technology throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century have hindered mankind's moral, spiritual and physical growth. The evidence in the text clearly shows us that it hasn't. Yet perhaps it is humanities incapability to control such machinery and be the threat.

### Bibliography

This information was attained by the many sources listed below:

1. The World Encyclopaedias
2. Encarta '98
3. Hutchinson's Encyclopaedia