"How Should We Then Live…" in the Information Age?

The general development of technologies in the last half-century, especially digital media, surpassed anything that anyone has ever envisioned. The effects are unfolding and there is not enough time to research and process the impact. We are raising a generation of children who are "citizens" of this Information Age, while we are merely the immigrant parents who strive to adapt to this new culture. Marshall McLuhan was the first one who heralded, since the middle of the twentieth Century, the emergence of "the global village." He said, "We become what we behold".

Starting from some of McLuhan's models, we will try to answer the question that Francis Schaffer asked many years ago, after looking at the culture of Western Civilization: "How should we then live..." in this new, Information Age? How should we assist our children so that they may live a full and integrated life and be able to preserve and pass on to the next generation the values of the Gospel? Bring on your [mobile] technologies and your questions so that together we may address some of the challenges that we face as Christians living in an advanced digital world.

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I. **Understanding media. Technology as extension**. Marshall McLuhan was among the first who considered the development of technologies as an extension of the human body. This approach, while not without flaws, as some argue, has a number of advantages, one being that it helps to understand the effects of the development of technologies on humans and everyday life. The other advantage is that it helps to think about what to develop as an answer to a specific personal need. The theories he developed are known as the tetrad.

    A. Every technology is an extension of the human body. What does the medium enhance?

      1. Examples of technologies that extend the human body

      2. Extensions of the body, extensions of the mind, extension of consciousness.

"During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man - the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media" (McLuhan, 1966, p. 19).

    B. Every extension induces an amputation. What does the medium make obsolete?

        1.   Describe an amputation as a result of an extension

    C. What will technology turn into if it's over extended? What does the medium retrieve that has been obsolesced earlier?

    D. What does the medium flip into when pushed to extremes?

II. Digital invasion. Living with technology in the information age.

    A.   Why/how are we using the technologies we are using?

        1.   to blend in

        2.   to be different

        3.   to display a social status

        4.   to fulfill a social/professional/personal need

5. for entertainment

6. ....

B. In what way the technologies we are using are affecting our lives?

1. spend money (are we in debt over a gadget, new phone, digital TV, phone or digital media plan?)

2. spend time (how much time we spend daily in operating technologies rather than with families or friends)

3. isolate us (do I prefer to spend time online rather than face to face?)

4. develop our narcissism (post about everything in your life, be present at all times, get likes)

5. empower us (how do I use the information I access)

6. keep us connected (how available I have to be for my business, how do I set boundaries between work and family, or how do I keep a balance between office and home when I bring work technology at home

C. What dependencies do I have to fight with?

1. what am I wasting (time, energy, creativity, relationships)

2. what is my "poison" (games, news, movies, series, facebook, gossip/tabloids, porn, blogging, tweeting)

3. what kind of model do I provide for my children/spouse/friends?

        4.   how do I keep the balance between physical and digital presence (tweeting, texting, facebook, browsing while socially engaged)

III. How should we then live... in the information age? TECHNOLOGY IS NEUTRAL. CONTENT IS NOT.

      A.   Be an advised user (know your technology and find what best suits your needs)

      B.   Switch off/disconnect whenever possible (exercise your willpower, protect your time). SET DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

      C.   Use technology and do not allow it to use you (beware of malware, hoaxes, privacy). BE ACCOUNTABLE.

      D.   Educate yourself and educate other (use technology to learn, be an adapted netizen). LIFELONG LEARNING.

      E.   Keep yourself ahead of your children. (make sure you understand the digital world so that you may assist your child.

Suggested Readings:

Mcluhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media The extensions of man*. London and New York. Retrieved from http://beforebefore.net/80f/s11/media/mcluhan.pdf

Frejd, S. H., & Hart, A. D. (2013). *Digital Invasion, The: How Technology is Shaping You and Your Relationships [Kindle Edition]*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00B85M43C/ref=wl_it_dp_o_pC_nS_ddp?_encoding=UTF8&colid=M4T90OALCHQP&coliid=I3UATR25ITCUV6

Brey, P. (2000). Technology as Extension of Human Faculties. *Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Technology. Research in Philosophy and Technology*, *19*. Retrieved from http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Media-1-1.html