Old Chinese Curse

“May you live in interesting times!”

The Future of Society

“We are engaged in a revolution; a technological revolution. We have commenced an era where computers, databases, and the internet handle tasks formally completed by the human hand and mind. We live in and at our computers. We do not have to leave the comfort of our own computer station any longer. Everything imaginable can be found on the internet; from research, to shopping, to business transactions, to love. It is not us that makes technology obsolete, it is our technology which is making us obsolete. We are the computers, the computers are us.”

Negroponte’s View

➢ The change from atoms to bits is irrevocable and unstoppable. P4
➢ Computing is not about computers any more it is about living. P6
➢ Early in the next millennium your right and left cuff links or earrings may communicate with each other by low orbiting earth satellites and have more computing power than your present PC. Your telephone won’t ring indiscriminately; it will receive, sort, and perhaps respond to your incoming calls like a well-trained English butler. P6
➢ On-demand information will dominate digital life. We will ask explicitly and implicitly for what we want, when we want it. P169
➢ The information superhighway is more than a short cut to every book in the Library of Congress. It is creating a totally new, global social fabric. P183.

➢ [Being Digital. N. Negroponte, 1995.]
A QUESTION?

Guess what?

One of these

Our view of the world is filtered through ideas and mental models

Other Examples

Ideas

“Our unexamined life is not worth living.”

Socrates

"An unexamined life is not worth living.”

Socrates

http://www.socratesoneducation.com/images/socrates.jpg
**Oscar Wilde**

The purpose of education is to “become one who plays gracefully with ideas and does not arrive at a conclusion by the force of opinion merely.”

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**The expression of ideas**

“I am sorry for writing such a long letter but I did not have time to write a short one.”
George Bernard Shaw

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**Educational Objectives of a BA(mod)**

- All moderatorship degree programmes seek to impart the following:
  - A strong broad base of knowledge that introduces the student to all the main aspects of the discipline or disciplines concerned, and to relevant aspects of closely related disciplines.
  - An informed capacity to the major subject that provides the student with an understanding of the basic principles and methodology of the discipline and of the means by which the frontiers of the discipline can be expanded and new knowledge discovered.
  - A range of intellectual skills that develop as fully as possible the complete range of mental abilities, of the enhancement and proficieny of skill that has long been a fundamental goal of university education.
  - These skills may be divided into two categories:
  - (i) Thinking skills
  - (ii) Communication skills

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**Who controls who?**

“We shape our buildings and afterwards they shape us.”
Winston Churchill.

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**What was the role of (information) technology in Sept 11th?**

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**Electronic Voting!!**
Explain what a computer is to...
A Variety of Views

Dawn of a new age….  
- “Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself - its worldview, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions. Fifty years later there is a new world. And the people born then cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born.” 

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Cybernetics
- “I was born human. But it was an accident of fate – a condition merely of time and place. I believe it’s something we have the power to change…..”
- www.kevinwarwick.com

Ireland in the Info Age
Ireland in the information age will be “a unique community, rich in culture, learning and creativity where the Information Society is embraced: to support the talents of our people; to create employment, wealth and vibrant, inclusive communities; and where citizens participate more actively in government.”


Chris Evans’ View (1980)
In the home in the short term future (early 1980s) there will be
- “speaking bathroom scales, freezers which remind you to restock them, clocks which tell how the meat is cooking along, telephones that tell you how many people have rung in your absence…..thermometers which advise you what to wear before you get up.” (p79)
- “The first practical shift will be reflected in a cut in the working week to an average of 30 hours, a retirement option at fifty five or even fifty, and annual vacations of at least six weeks”. (p95)
- [Evans C., The Mighty Micro, Corzet, 1979]
The technical opportunity to become friendlier, in other words, is also an opportunity to become unfriendly at a more decisive level. This is the prevailing law of technological development, underlying nearly every claim of progress.

"I recently heard an industry pundit say, "As voice recognition technology gets more sophisticated, we can expect to see applications where a voice recognition system will replace an operator," I thought. "That's a great idea! Why not replace all the operators with these systems?"

But this is to ignore an obvious fact about conversation with you. When you talk to a live person, you can communicate the heart of your business to a computer with erratic hearing, a doubtful vocabulary of 400 words, and the compassion of a granite monolith! But with a software agent, the "friendlier" version will replace the operator with a software agent who will attempt to conduct a crude conversation with you.

Steve Talbott

The Punchline(s)

➢ Computers operate only as part of a larger technical and societal context.
➢ The relationship between computers and society is very complex.
➢ An understanding of the complexity of that relationship is necessary to develop technological solutions/artefacts.
➢ We view the world through a set of (unquestioned) assumptions or filters.
➢ One of the purposes of education is to critically examine that set of assumptions.

“Walden” by Henry Thoreau 1818-1862

Nowadays this kind of adolescent silliness is commonly given the halo of a rationale that has become respectable dogma.

Dr. Andrew Lippman, associate director of the Media Lab, says that “my dream tablecloth would actually move the things on the table. You throw the silver down on it, and it sets the table.”

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Thoreau (1850)

➢ Technology for Technology’s Sake?

“…so with a hundred other ‘modern improvements’….. our inventions are wont to be pretty toys which distract our attention from serious things.

They are but an improved means to an unimproved end…..”

“Walden” by Henry Thoreau 1818-1862

Kling’s View

➢ The Seductive Equation of Technological Progress with Social Progress.

“Social Revolutions are based on changes in ways of life, not just changes in equipment…..”

Steve Talbott

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