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Novelty

The novelty of technology kills. Imagine a society where every single one of your actions is dictated by machines, a world where you were created solely for one purpose and stripped of all chances to rewrite your fate or maybe even a world where the lands where green fields used to be were now filled with scraps of metal and malfunctioning gadgets. The advancement of technology has brought about new, innovative and life-changing inventions. From new Apple smartphones to Google's self-driving car, almost everything is being revolutionized and reinvented every day. At the same time change does indeed fit to needs, as in this age of technology we want everything to be better, faster, improved and most importantly, new. However, is this fast paced development that modernizes every aspect of our lives really as good as it seems? Sure at first glance the novelty of technology may seem to enhance the pace and efficiency of how we get things done, yet it also instigates the wastefulness of humans and reduces the lifespan of newly developed technology, plaguing humanity with even more serious issues.

If we give this matter more thought, we will realize that sometimes we buy new products just because they are new, and there is no value added. Take the iconic Apple iPhone as an example. In 2013, the iPhone 5S was released and as we all know sold like wildfire. Its charm was such that people were willing to wait overnight before an Apple stores just to be in time to purchase the new product and indeed the iPhone 5S received all sorts of positive reviews for the next twelve months. Then the iPhone 6 was subsequently launched in the next year. What happened afterwards needs little explanation, since people did exactly the same thing and it was yet another bandwagon people were desperate to climb on. We, the consumers, can't help but own it, even if we only see the iPhone 6 as a replica of the previous generation. For some new owners still had perfectly functional old phones, it wouldn't be a misstatement to say people bought the iPhone 6 just because it was new and trendy. Is this not unnecessary waste? The novelty of the iPhone wears off literally as soon as another one is released, which in turn gives us a reason to justify our wastefulness. And this impulse to chase the new is so ingrained in our minds that we just do it subconsciously, as a matter of course. As Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* coined, "the things that you own end up owning you". This so-called novelty wears off at an alarming speed, so it wouldn't be wrong to say that resources are being devoted to technology just to appease consumer's wants of something new to toy with. The way we treat technology nowadays is hauntingly similar to how a four year old child may treat his new toy: we cling onto it for a short while, only to search for something original in the cycle of our insatiable desires.

Furthermore, the novelty of technology has truncated the lifespan of electronic products. This is fundamentally due to the fact that these multi-national corporations have been constantly releasing new products, claiming that each one will have more superior specifications and fewer errors compared to the previous modes. In reality, though, the improvements may just be very minor, likely negligible and never commensurate with the significance their companies bestow on them. These electronic companies advertise for the product in an exceptionally flamboyant style. Companies insert technical and jargonistic terms to convince people of the legitimacy of their products or maybe sometimes apply empty buzzwords such as “revolutionary”, and “groundbreaking” to emphasize on the novelty of their new commodity, thereby urging consumers to believe that the new product is more refined than the ones that they currently own. For example, the recently released iPhone 6S was claimed to be a lot better than its predecessor, the iPhone 6. While to be honest the most noticeable change was the camera. The only eye-catching transformation was simply the camera, yet it was still able to attract a massive number of people to purchase the product. While persuading consumers to discard their old products for more advanced models, the novelty of technology has also allowed companies to deliberately shorten the lifespan of products. As manufacturers and producers of companies are adept at manipulating the mentality of their consumers, they understand it is the irresistible temptation of “novelty” that captivates them. Therefore with this prior knowledge, companies will intentionally implement extremely well concealed flaws in their products. This leads to an array of problems regarding the consumer’s current product, which further provokes their urge to purchase a new product. In this case, we can say that the novelty of technology actually is just changing for the sake of changing. These new, insignificant and unnecessary changes create one bandwagon after another to satisfy consumers’ desire for the new. And if we continue to allow these companies to dictate what we should buy, how we should act, and who we would be, the result will be unfortunate.

Aside from its manipulative nature, novelty also has a rather destructive trait. Take *Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley as an example. *Brave New World* portrays a society in which technology has advanced to the point where humans no longer comprehend emotions such as sadness, since the advents in technology have practically solved almost all the problems that people used to face. At the same time people in this society are free to indulge themselves in all sorts of sensory satisfactions, one of the most notable being that the people in the story give in to the seduction of lust completely and not only is that not frowned upon, it's considered to be the custom. While this may initially seem like an ideal utopia, the story also reveals a rather sinister impact that the unprecedented technology has brought towards society and its values: women have become infertile and humans are artificially created, then conditioned from birth to fulfill their role in society. Aside from the conditioning of humans, the ruling party in *Brave New World* also retains control by making its citizens so happy that they do not care about their personal freedom. Yet this is only a superficial fulfillment, as the effect is induced by a drug called “soma”. This consequently

leads to the loss of dignity, morals, values, and emotions or in short, the loss of humanity. While in current social values, the acts in *Brave New World* would definitely be condemned. What the constructed society has violated, is our Free Will, as cited by Robert Hilary Kane, our desire to choose and to be liberal. We champion the right to make choices and we praise the creation of life and most importantly, freedom is what we love. John's eventual suicide in the novel, on the other hand, reflects technology's destruction of the human psyche. The constant surveillance and control that technology imposes on him are illustrative of the oppressive nature of technological novelty. What it destroys is not simply a human life. When individuality is denied to a man and he is mass-produced like a consumer product, it is the very notion of what it means to be human that is at stake. The more novelty triumphs, the more humanity dissipates. All identity is lost. As *Brave New World* is set in a very distant future with completely different scenarios compared to the present, everything it illustrates, from genetic engineering to a state of complete control, is nothing out of the ordinary. Most importantly we can see that it is because of the exceedingly fast paced development of technology that this phenomenon may come to materialize. To be more precise, it is humans' never-ending desire for new things, better things that fuel the continuous novelty of technology. At first the novelty of technology may seem like a way to improve people's lives. It may also seem to be a way to improve the traditions that we have been practicing. But with the unrivaled speed it is progressing nowadays, a society like that in *Brave New World* may not be as distant as it seems. Novelty is increasingly becoming an aggressive and domineering force, seeking to eliminate and obliterate traditions.

Similarly, movies such as *Ex Machina*, *Matrix* and *Blade Runner* have also warned us of consequences of the novelty of technology and humans' unlimited wants for something new. In these movies, robots or Artificial Intelligence obtain a human physique and consciousness, and start to rebel. While this may seem like a typical doomsday in science fiction, it also foreshadows humanity's future. It is the greed of having something new that drives the characters in the movies to develop the machines that rebel. While some may argue that what happens in the movies is mere fiction intended to satisfy viewers' expectations, we cannot deny the fact that some companies such as world renowned technology corporation Google is actually in the process of developing Artificial Intelligence. Indeed, the Artificial Intelligence that cause the world calamity and murder their own creators in the movies are not far from being realized. This is only the tip of the iceberg. The menace of technology looms large.

The novelty of technology wears off faster and faster as humans' yearnings for new technology and creations never seem to end. The novelty may have had its promising and positive potential. However, as time has proved it to be a consuming force, the novelty of technology may reach a tipping point that will alter civilization, forever. Maybe this essay would be considered as hearsay, or maybe it will act as a beacon prompting people to reconsider the decisions that they make.