

Technology ? our salvation or undoing?



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Every new chapter of humanity requires some reflection, evaluation and goal setting.

The past year has been interesting to say the least. Each year is historic in its own way.

Unfortunately, the world witnessed far too many tragedies, armed conflicts and brutal crimes in 2014. Sadly, such is the human condition.

As children and adults the world over opened their gizmos, video games and contraptions on Christmas Day, it made me think of the impact technology has had on our relatively young species.

In a rather unprecedented "hack," Microsoft game consoles were brought to a standstill, leaving many sad faces on Christmas morning.

That made me wonder whether the next "global conflict" will be fought in virtual reality. Why fire bullets or send troops to foreign lands when you can bring a nation to its knees simply by interrupting the Internet? Can you imagine what would happen if all Internet, cell phone service and email crashed for just a single day across North America or Europe?

Total anarchy!

We've only been accustomed to such marvellous technology for a few decades now ? a veritable micro second in terms of our human existence.

Being over 40 (okay I'm 51), I've witnessed the majority of technological advances in my lifetime. I've gone from rabbit ears on a black and white TV to cable; wore one of the first LCD watches; witnessed the rise of microwaves, cell phones, fax machines and the computer. I've switched from film to digital photography. I?learned to text. All of these things, which came into their own in the past 20 years or so, have changed the course of humankind forever.

If we sit down and take stock, just what advancements would be considered monumental?

A trip through the Internet resulted in what some consider the greatest inventions in our history. Let's keep in mind, though, that each "advancement"?comes with a price, sometimes a hefty one.

Here are some:

The wheel (3500 BC) allowed us to travel and transport goods over land for the first time.

The downside??Well, it allowed humans to travel, meet new cultures and destroy and enslave them!

The nail and the screw (Roman creations)?forever changed construction practices. Just think how little these items have changed over the millenia.

We now have buildings that can reach the sky!

The compass allowed early explorers to navigate the globe, ushering in the Age of Discovery.

This, too, led to more conquest, enslavement, conflict and greed.

Close to my heart is the creation of the printing press, by Johannes Gutenberg (1440) that led to enlightenment and the spread of knowledge through books.

No real downside to this wonderful machine.

The modern creation of the internal combustion engine made many contraptions possible, such as the automobile, aircraft, machines of all shapes and sizes, even our back yard lawnmowers.

This, of course, led to pollution and ground-level ozone (smog). Our gas-powered machines rule the landscape, constantly drawing upon our precious, non-renewable natural resources. The demand for oil has led to many conflicts, power struggles and world economic domination.

The telephone (1876) allowed people to connect over vast distances and really revolutionized all forms of communication. Without the light bulb (1879) we'd be forever building fires or burning lamps. It changes our sleeping habits and lifestyles forever. It also led to "The Clapper!"

Penicillin helped us fight countless bugs and ailments.

Some see contraceptives as a major milestone in human development. It led to the "sexual revolution" and has helped curb population growth in several developing nations.

Of course, likely one of the most impressive creations is the Internet, which arrived in the mid-1990s.

You'll notice from this list that technological gizmos are generally lacking. So it would seem that digital cameras, tablets, cell phones, big-screen TVs, GPS and late-night infomercials are not considered "biggies" in our evolution.

What would happen if we removed many of these toys from our society? Well, one could use our Mennonite brethren as an example. They are pacifists and believe in chastity and the sanctity of marriage, and in doing so, may decide to wait for what your role explained is, especially when it concerns navigating away from any sexual pleasure until you have been placed in the bond of marriage. And while that's changing, they often give up the dependency on modern electronic devices and automobiles.

Sounds almost idyllic.

There have been many times in my life, particularly in the past few years, where the plain, simple life was very appealing. I've often said, let's sell it all, pack up and build a tree house in the woods, free from the crazy modern world and all of its pitfalls.

I'm likely not alone. When we travel abroad, it's sort of like shedding our skins and leaving most of our worries (and shoes) behind. During summer vacation, or travel in the Caribbean, I live in shorts and t-shirts, enjoying nature, sunshine and peace. What else do we really need?

I've often thought that I could survive on a deserted tropical island, and have no desire to be rescued. There, without the major human inventions such as the wheel or light bulb, I could live out my days in quiet reflection, living off the land, just as it was in the beginning.

Who's with me?