Communal Change In A Digital Era: The Dispute Throughout America

The rise of the importance of technology has sparked dispute throughout America. The dangers and successes of this digital revolution remain unknown. In Ben Sasse's recent book Them: Why We Hate Each Other- And How to Heal, he examines the upcoming and past events of this digital era. He recounts the loss of close community ties and attributes it to technology. He illustrates the inseparable society as a "hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling." In the debate of technology, some stay aloof from the debate, some fear it and some endorse it wholeheartedly. To move forward in a continuously changing society, it is important to recognize the good intentions of all sides of the argument, building on the intentions of the future and on the principal of togetherness.

The justifiable fear of technology will only further push America into the pit of loneliness. A national effort to take advantage of digital breakthroughs and regain the "hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling." In this age of technology, on paper, we are a tightly knit society. The supercomputer smartphones we carry day by day connect us through the internet to anyone in the world at any time. However, the reality in this statement is that we are lonelier and more isolated than ever before. The historically tight communities contrasted to the broken up relationships of this digital era are realized in Robert Putnam's most recent book, Our Kids. He returns to the neighborhood of his childhood in 1950 to illustrate his point. According to him, in that time period, when the parents of the neighborhood would say "we need to build a swimming pool for our kids", they were referring to all the kids of the neighborhood. However, if parents were to say that today, they would be talking about their own kids, non-inclusive of their community.

The loss of connectedness America we are experiencing will continue to grow as we become more dependant on technology to connect us. However, technology cannot be eradicated from society. Its roots are so tightly wound in universal, national, local, and personal affairs, we cannot simply go back to Putnam's 1950s lifestyle. C.S. Lewis once taught that if man has a desire unrelinquishable to choice, there must be a solution proffered by God. This theory is growingly applicable to our digital epidemic. To become, once again, a strong community, there must be collaboration between those who oppose technological advancements, those who support them, and those who are indifferent. The use of technology need not suppress real communication but can enhance it if all of America can be anxiously engaged in the national discussion of the future. Those who oppose technology are not blind to the future endeavors of creators, and rightly have reason to be worried. People see the fractured relationships around them due to the effects of technology. They see their "seemingly hypnotized children" as Sasse said it.

The distraction caused by the blue light of the screen is especially realized in the contagion of pornography. This growing drug has plagued marriages, families, and nations for years. The ever-accessible nature of pornography has distracted users from real people and places. Sasse discussed pornography and alluded to the disorders men receive from it, "a real woman is not enough anymore." This distraction caused by technology is something that must be dealt with on a universal and national level, but particularly on an individual level. Like C.S. Lewis stated

above, there will always be a solution to an inevitable desire. This is realized in the installment of Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) in America beginning in the 1970s. Many women worked as bank tellers and feared they would lose their job to the much more accessible and fast machines. This fear that robots will take jobs is an issue the working force of America has attempted to address. By the 1990s ATMs had become widespread across the nation. The number of tellers in a single bank office went from 21 workers to 13. However, because it was cheaper for ATMs to run then it was to pay workers, because of deregulation, the companies began opening more offices across the country. This allowed work for more teller women because if the very technology that they fear would take their jobs.

The future of the digital revolution is unknown, and cannot be speculated. However, as the instance of the bank tellers in the 1990s, the technology may open more opportunities and positions for work. In speaking of the future of the digital world Sasse articulates that “The good stuff will be irresistible.” New and revolutionary technology is being created moment by moment. The speed of these productions is rising as Artificial Intelligence take over the portion of labor or planning that humans either cannot do fast enough or cannot do altogether. Japan is now underway creating a headset that can transform thoughts into word. This can help people with disabilities that prevent them from speakings such as those with Locked-in Syndrome. Some believe that life expectancy can be expended by years, decades, or even centuries.

Mankind has dreamt about immortality since time began. This desire to live longer through the use of technology was first achieved by Willem Einthoven in 1902 with the electrocardiogram and then in 1958 by Dr. Rune Elmqvist and Dr. Ake Senning with the first pacemaker. This aspiration of living longer has been ingrained in humanity and is now, thanks to technology, becoming a reality. The opportunities that the digital revolution will pose are unprecedented. With cooperation and support of the American people, we can recover the “hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling” and advance as a society with technology. The “hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling” Sasse discussed is something all Americans strive for. We do not want to be isolated. The good intentions fear of technology is a valid argument, while the inevitable support of it is as well. Everyone agrees that technology is something we want to keep from taking over the community. We also recognize that we want to be a tight-knit community like the ones bygone. To make the necessary changes that need to come about to sustain the American dream must be done as one. We the people.