Review Of Nicolas Carr’s Is Google Making Us Stupid

Nicolas Carr’s Is Google Making Us Stupid (2008), discusses the effects technology has on cognitive exercises, such as attention span, critical thinking, and the acquiring of knowledge; Along with the use of technology and the internet fundamentally changing the way we process and understand knowledge.

The article begins with Carr narrating a scene from Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey, where the dismantling of Hal the supercomputer is enacted, claiming to feel his mind fade away. The insinuation of such a scene illustrates the parallel Carr draws between Hal’s mind and human’s; quoting after his article, “…people have become so machinelike that the most human character turns out to be a machine…it is our own intelligence that flattens into artificial intelligence.” (Carr 12).

The internet allows entry to an assembly of resources and information, however, the more time spent on the net, the harder it is to concentrate on the lengthier text. Feeling as if someone has reprogrammed his brain, Carr finds himself with symptoms of diminishing critical thinking and reduced attention spans. Our transaction of gained intelligence for the superficiality of the internet as “reading promoted by the Net…puts ‘efficiency’ and ‘immediacy’ above all else,” (Carr 4) leads us to believe Google has the capability to answer all our questions, there is no effort or need to research ourselves “weakening our capacity for the kind of deep reading,” (Carr 4) critical thinking supports.

Carr analyzes the work of Maryanne Wolf, who explores theories regarding the role of technology on learning how to script new languages; he supports the innate ability of speech stemming from the brain, but disputes reading to be taught and conscious. In Wolf’s work, it informs that the neurons of the brain begin to adapt to the environment, demanding to develop in new unknown surroundings. Carr also refers to the alleged style transformation of Nietzsche’s writing from his typewriter, introducing the idea of how the human brain conforms to the very quality it is exposed to, mirroring patterns and functions, like that of Nietzsche, “our writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts,” he concludes “…we inevitably begin to take on the qualities of those technologies.” (Carr 5) Carr interprets the internet as a distinct environment that the brain will adapt to eventually.

Because the internet is one of the greatest omnipresent and life-changing technologies in our world, changes in the mind are obvious, but Carr also brings to light changes in human behavior. The net supports cognitive distractions with a multitude of popups and ads, along with easily accessed hyperlinks and intriguing headlines. However, the hyperlinks aren’t the only culprit, we crave knowledge and the net is there to present our weaknesses. Our malleable brains are an upside, yet Carr opens the door to the negatives. The internet’s quick accessibility allows us to jump from site to site without fully comprehending the information. The experiences we live through shapes our brains and affect them one way or another.

The conclusion of the article introduces the skeptical ideas people hold throughout history, like that of Socrates who feared the shift from written to printed works. The inevitable development of technology changes human cognition, however, it also leads to innovations that still thrive in

our modern world. Socrates “couldn’t foresee the many ways that writing and reading would serve to spread information, spur fresh ideas, and expand human knowledge.” (Carr 9). Human computational processes are quickened using Google and other knowledge search engines and have the potential of taking possession of the human ability to generate knowledge.

Technology has made an abundance of promises, with its ultimate promise to save and give us time; yet people in our modern world are still struggling to find time to make an appointment, finish homework, spend time with family, or even just have some alone time. Carr analyzes a critical issue when he observes the continuous decline of lengthened text we read, along with our crippled skill to discern for ourselves, and the need for us to introduce ourselves to more of the classics, because of our constant use of technology.

However, the arraignment of Google being the only culprit is erroneous, as the use of the net and technology is rather supported by our constant need for information. It’s not the fact that “there aren’t enough hours in the day,” in fact people of our modern world have a bounty amount of time in comparison to those of our ancestors. It’s in fact, as Carr states, that our minds are influenced greatly by external factors, and with our “Go! Go!” lifestyle and mentality, we grow accustomed to not just wanting more but needing more time. Our rapacious need for knowledge is manifested through potent media and quick connections. The negative stigma of technology’s oversaturation in our society is logical, yet we continue to join premium cable, fast internet, unlimited data, and more. Even when we know there is no more time in our schedules, we still make more plans.

There is the fault of the net that makes us need information, as it has eliminated isolation between people. Being more arduous is one of the characteristics our Earth has developed into, with more things becoming pertinent and important. Connections are only increasing and becoming more convoluted, so the demand to educate ourselves to a further extent is triggered. Someone can administer their life beyond being entirely aware of Donald Trump, but they cannot completely engage in society without being aware of something about him. Every social group has its own famous public figure, as I am expected to know Albert Einstein’s famous equation, $E=mc^2$, for class but I don’t have to know his whole biography.

Adapting to our environment for survival is dependent on the affirm education of our environment. With our minds built to understand the functions of a small town, we must assimilate the new global community our environment is developing into. We are not getting stupider, instead, the development of technology is exacting us to get smarter. By working “smarter not harder,” ceding depth for broadness, causing us to summarize, graze over, and altogether look over the fine print, remaining aloof to the fine points. I believe that presenting technology as the collective reason for our growing stupidity is flawed. If we no longer read books to their end, it is not solely the fault of the internet. It is us we must blame as well. To ridicule something self-made is stupidity. To value a way of thinking is logical as we will forget some cherished forms of thinking, because of the internet; however, the next generation will exchange it with contemporary and alternative forms of thinking. We know our schedules are full, but we do what we can to get things done.