

## **DOMINATING SYSTEM WORLD AND DIMINISHING COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Technology has permeated every layer of human society and is fast evolving into an aspect of human culture, a modern shibboleth which gives a cultural identity to people. Technology has been invented, mass-produced, and distributed with the ulterior motive of increasing consumerism and boosting inventors' profits. While it is connecting people, it is simultaneously leading to alienation, striking at the roots of what Émile Durkheim calls 'collective consciousness' which is a "set of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society" (Durkheim, 1893). The aim of this study is to understand the subjugation of 'collective consciousness' by technical control. In this sort of colonization by a new power, as Habermas says, the life-world, "characterized by value-rationality begins to be eclipsed and absorbed in instrumental rationality,"(Habermas, 1987) turning people into only means to an economic end in which they are not interested, and over which they have no control. The engagement of this paper is to analyse the processes of establishing domination by the system world in the society and consequent decline of collective consciousness.

**Keywords:** System world, Collective consciousness, life world, Technology

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The 'system', according to Habermas, is the organizational or professional sphere of life where people work and interact with each other under the control of an institutional authority. The actions that people undertake in this sphere are focused towards a particular end, irrespective of whether there is any collective understanding among the participants about this end or the methods by which it is to be achieved. These are strategic actions that safeguard the interests of the institutions which are in power. 'Collective consciousness', as defined by Émile Durkheim, are the credos and sentiments shared by the individuals of a society and which bind them together in such a way that they are able to work productively and harmoniously.

Though ‘system’ and ‘collective consciousness’ can probably co-exist to a certain extent, the rise of technology has resulted in significant strengthening of the system world. This has led to a diminishing of ‘collective consciousness’ because the developing ‘systems’ sustain themselves by controlling people’s ‘collective consciousness’. The rational communication which was the mainstay of earlier societies and which creates the ‘collective consciousness’ has thus become weakened.

Technologically advanced societies become too technology-dependent. This is clearly seen in the main technology used for social interaction, namely the internet, which is lulling people into the acceptance of a virtual reality that is actually causing divisiveness and disintegration. This could eventually lead to human isolation, environmental damage, privation, and increased class conflicts (<http://www.scholarclarity.com>).

Technology has, from the dawn of civilization, played a crucial role in the survival, moulding, and growth of human societies. In fact, culture and technology have been co-dependent from the very beginning. From the invention of early stone-age tools, to the mass production of today’s powerful computers and satellites and missiles, it has been a continuous give-and-take between human societies and technologies. Technology has helped in integrating societies, increasing social connections, producing goods in bulk, opening a global market for many products and services, and improving standards of education. It has made enormous developments in the field of medicine, transportation, space research, access to information, human interaction, and even social support.

However, this is only one aspect of fast-growing technology. In certain aspects, it is regressing societies. It is a Frankenstein’s monster that we have unleashed into our midst that we are unable to chain in. It is not now possible to completely turn the clock back and stop the development of technology because certain aspects of it have inseparably fused into our lifestyle. For example, despite our knowledge of the fact that vehicle exhausts pollute the atmosphere, we cannot now stop using motor vehicles completely, and walk to all places or ride on horseback. All we can do is use public transport more and thereby reduce the number of vehicles on the road. Another option is production of vehicles with low emission standards. Here we see another aspect of technology in play – competing to invent new technology to do away with the evils of existing technology.

In the beginning, technology arose out of a need for human beings to survive in this world. Buffeted with the difficulties of sheer sustenance, challenges of nature, and challenges of wild animals, man was forced to experiment with technology to overcome those difficulties. Technical development made work easy and more productive for man, gave him an edge over animals, and helped him to cope better with the challenges of nature. Because of this, the advent

of science was seen only as a positive development by many statesmen and scholars. Jawaharlal Nehru said that “The impact of science and the modern world have brought a greater appreciation of facts, a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence...” (Nehru: 1946).

But as societies progressed, sheer survival evolved into something else. Societies’ need became a mixture of increased work efficiency, better life expectancy, access to knowledge, understanding of history, and varied entertainment options, all this capped by an intense competition aimed at higher profitmaking. The new innovations also, as a result, became a combination of so many things, “the potential springboard for the growth of new markets, and for the surges of new investment associated with booms.” (Geels, 2005) As such, agents of mass media today concentrate more on selling what the public wants to hear, than what the public ought to know. All they want is to entice more viewers and thus get better ratings and thereby increase the margin of profit. They sell what brings them profit and not what customers deserve to get. Technology in this way helps to produce things on which people become dependent, whether it is for knowledge enhancement and entertainment or not. This sort of addiction ultimately leads to alienation and a sort of withdrawal from the real society which by then gets replaced by a virtual society. This is obviously wrong use of technology. Technology in the hands of underserving people becomes counterproductive and will cause only damage to the society at large and to individuals.

Before industrial revolution, societies were small agricultural units. Whatever it was that they needed, people produced it themselves. The only help they took was from animals to plough the land or carry the produce to the market and these animals were also often treated with affection as valued members of the family. In such a society, people had to interact with each other on an everyday basis for readying the field, planting the seeds, harvesting, selling the produce, purchasing items of daily requirements, and celebrating festivals. Over the time, these interactions became regulated by certain rules that members of the society set for themselves. These values that people shared came to be known as “collective consciousness” (Durkheim,1893).

With the onset of industrial revolution, machines took the place of men and the animals they used. Alienation started at this stage and continues expanding even today. In the 1840s itself, Karl Marx described how the Industrial Revolution driven people into unfulfilling factory jobs that alienated them. It reduced their social interaction because lifeless machines could never give the companionship that friends gave at workplaces. Further, working on the field gave a man a sense of purpose because what he cultivated was food which was a necessity for himself. But working in factories was rather meaningless because he had no control over what he produced

and he had no idea about the purpose for which it was produced. This resulted in disgruntlement and mental isolation.

In the early stages, this effect was mainly on the working class but as technology advanced the method started affecting all social classes. Workers of all types were forced to do what they were asked to do, despite the innate dislike for the job by many. If they refused to do a job at the price they were offered, they would be rendered jobless because there were many others to fill the vacancies thus created. Profit-mongering and promotion of consumerism being the ultimate aim under the new economic system, human values and human interaction took a backseat in all types of dealings. As the interests of the elite, and to a certain extent that of the upper middle class, continued to be served under this system, more and more of the resultant profits were diverted to improve technology in such a way that it further increased profits. Those who benefit from the system have also succeeded in projecting improved technology in the garb of nationalism, in order to cover up its deep-seated malaises.

Politicians like Keith Joseph (Tory leader – The UK) who supported eugenics or selective breeding, German eugenicists who referred to those born with defects as ‘lebensunwertigen leben’ or ‘life unworthy of life’, proved Marx’s claim that the state is instrumental in preserving the privileges of the ruling class and oppressing the working class. It is this elite class that encourages the development of technology in many countries by funding the research for new technology. Every nation today is proud of the technological innovations of their scientists and specialists and these are considered a symbol of the countrymen’s competency. The entire cold war era was marked by intense competition between the communist and capitalist camps to conquer the space. This competition goes in other forms even today.

Improved technology is improved weaponry as well. Nations are proud of their missiles and drones and nuclear plants which are actually symbols of destruction. But these are also seen as symbols of peace, by those who wish to describe them so, because these things help to bring about peace by defending the country. Wealthier countries send arms and ammunition to smaller countries fighting among themselves, or countries where a civil war is going on between a ruling party and rebels. This support is selective and may be given in order to exert hegemony over certain world markets, or given to factions whose ideology the help-giving country supports.

The production of new technology produces a variety of harmful wastes like chemical wastes, electronic waste, and nuclear waste. Disposing these is a major problem in today’s world. A “global commitment with respect to waste disposal from vessels, however, has not been reached in spite of the existence of several precise norms under the London convention and associated regional treaties” (Boehmer, 1983). These modern technology wastes are destroying marine life and threatening human life, not to speak of the threat of global warming that hangs like the

sword of Damocles over mankind's head. Vehicle exhaust fumes which are a major pollutant that adds to the growth of greenhouse gases are another by-product of modern technology. We can now at the best try to slow down the process of warming. The technologies that contribute to the heating up of the planet are too inseparably woven into today's social structure and economic system for us to reverse the process.

## **2. DOMINATION OF THE SYSTEM WORLD**

A compact definition of technology is difficult to come by. Simply put, it is the use of scientific knowledge for everyday use, in a way that makes things easy for man. Machines and applications created on the basis of scientific principles are often collectively referred to as technology. Technology can also be referred to as a branch of knowledge where science is married to creative design to entertain people or to organize actions. It is also the method by which scientific principles are put into application to achieve a specific objective. It is a multi-faceted discipline which each person may define differently.

Social technology is slightly different from the above definitions of technology. It "provides sociological expertise to manage societal problems. It also subsumes that it can help to give guidance to political authorities via social theories. Those theories provide knowledge for the government" (Leibetseder, 2011). It is a form of practical arts, which unlike the original creative arts, rely a lot on scientific principles and scientific inventions to find fruition.

Technology originated in man's attempts to make life easier and more secure for himself. These objective needs were the ends, for the achievement of which man searched for proper means. Initially these needs were basically food, shelter, and clothing, and related infrastructure. But human requirements grew and diversified to accommodate subjective needs as well. Such needs are not dire necessities for survival but things which nevertheless give a lot of physical and mental satisfaction to human beings. Further, satisfaction of one kind of need gives rise to a new set of needs. For example, initially technology was necessary to increase food production. But the need of technology did not end once that was achieved. It continued to expand in various directions to lead to genetic engineering to improve the quality of crops.

With the digital revolution that started in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, technological development took an entirely new turn. It took communication technology to heights that were inconceivable at one time, but simultaneously started sowing the seeds of a new kind of destruction. Laptops, smartphones, iPods, various apps, video games, the internet, and the social media are the agents of digital technology. They created a virtual world in which any interested individual can create a space for himself.

The negative fallouts of this digital revolution has turned out to be more varied and damaging than those of the industrial revolution. Many people immerse themselves in social media networks and computer games and alienate themselves completely from their physical surroundings. Those who dislike digital technology are finding themselves alienated from the rest because they become outcasts in a world where digital technology has become the new-age mantra. Hackers steal personal data through phishing and spamming. Smartphones and mobile tower radiations damage the health of many. The continuing development of digital technology is to a large extent like Joseph Schumpeter's concept of 'creative destruction' wherein new creations are continuously destroyed and replaced by fresh creations.

Once it originated, technology could never stop growing because of man's increasing need for perfection in every walk of life. These requirements have made development of technology a part of national agenda in all countries. Technology, for the purpose of this paper, refers to the various instruments and appliances which are used every day in construction, business, communication, recreation, medicine, and education. These include a wide range of machines like motor vehicles, aircrafts, radio, television, computers and accessories, cameras of all types, iPods, smartphones, and the ubiquitous internet.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Social and individual alienation, which is the main framework of this paper, can be explained by any one of the many sociological perspectives. For example, the conflict theory about education claims that standardization of tests and tracking methods that the current educational systems use, are leading to social inequalities. However, the best theory that explains the social alienation that technology brings about is the Marxian social conflict theory. It states that human societies remain in conflict and not in consensus because of the inevitable competition for the available resources. Though there is a semblance of order in societies, this is maintained by the suppression and exploitation of the less powerful by the more powerful elements in the society.

Dialectical materialism, the powerful political philosophy propounded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, states that historical and political happenings have their root in the conflict created by the competition for resources. This struggle in which one class often overpowers the other, results in unequal distribution of wealth, power, income, resources, and political control. It is seen as a struggle between those who hold the reins of production and those who are forced to do physical labour for that production. In other words, it is the relationship to production that is the key to power.

Power is the ability to control the actions of others. It is the ability to impose one's will on another even if that other person is trying to resist it. It "results primarily from position in a

social structure. Influence—defined as compelling behavior change without threat of punishment or promise of reward—results largely from the respect and esteem in which one is held by others” (Lucas and Baxter, 2012). Power remains with those who control big business, run organizations, and the army or government whichever is in power in a country. While the possession of power is imperative for creating new things, power in the wrong hands may destroy the creativity of others by manipulation and domination.

Those who control production hold the reins of power. This power is used by them for their own monetary advantage with scant regard to those who toil for producing it. Power-holders are equally indifferent to the welfare of those who purchase their goods or services. When the majority of the population have only the power to give their labour under duress or remain the consumers of the product, then power would obviously remain in the hands of those who control production and thereby restrain and contain the rest. This concentration of power in the hands of a few causes the division of the society into haves and have-nots because those who have the resources to production only produces what is advantageous to them and not what the public requires. Production thus becomes the manifestations of their avarice.

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (Acton, 1907). Those in power create technology to aggrandize their returns, and reinvest this profit in the development of more innovative technology to further boost their returns. Capitalists often try to project their self-interest in shades of altruism, making rather insipid arguments on how their work is helping the needy. “Free-market capitalism says that the naked pursuit of self-interest is actually altruistic because it leads to better outcomes than anything else (allegedly) and raises general prosperity more than anything else (allegedly). Many people may be victims of capitalism, it is admitted, but it is also asserted that they would be even worse off without capitalism. So, someone getting fifty cents a day for working 12-hour days in a Bangladesh sweatshop has an “enviable” job as far as a homeless beggar is concerned!” (Hockney, 2014).

When an economy serves only the selfish interests of a few, it naturally ruptures the smooth fabric of sharing and caring which once united small agrarian communities. Capitalists focus on improving technology and funding scientific research mainly to tighten their stronghold on production and protect their privileged status. They turn a blind eye to the social problems like eradication of poverty because removal of poverty does not benefit them in any manner. Without poverty, the present system of cheap labour would vanish and this would be detrimental to their interest. Many of the present-day diseases are by-products of modern-day lifestyle resulting from the impact of technology on everyday life, like the harmful effects of fast foods, insecticides, greenhouse gases, and mobile-tower radiation. But instead of trying to remove the root cause, the controlling elite are investing in newer and newer technology to fight these illnesses resulting

from the wrong use of technology. These researches give jobs to the already highly-educated while the victims of technology find themselves in deeper morass. New inventions only help to strengthen the already bulging coffers of the rich.

While science is definitely more provable and fact-based than belief systems, in industrialized, capitalist societies, “Humanity is every day more condemned to alienation, more drowned in this mad maelstrom of compulsive speed. Not only is there no longer leisure for growth in human values, moral greatness, and spiritual aptitudes, but this being plunged headlong in working to consume, consuming to work, this diving into lunatic competition for luxuries and diversions, has caused traditional moral values to decline and disappear as well...” (Shariati, 2002).

At some stage of the evolution of societies, focus of science shifted from truth to control. This gradual change can be seen during the periods of Fordism and post-Fordism. Though Fordism is the period characterized by large-scale mechanized production of objects, the period is also marked by the existence of KWS or Keynesian Welfare State which “aims to secure full employment in a relatively closed national economy and to do so primarily through demand-side management. In this way it tries to adjust demand to the supply-driven needs of Fordist mass production with its dependence on economies of scale and full utilization of relatively inflexible means of production” (Jessop, 1996). Though production control remained in the hands of a few, consumers and labour-givers were, by and large, happy and interactive during this stage.

As Fordism gave way to post-Fordism, in a more or less seamless form of transition, the negative aspects of technology became more visible. “As a stable mode of macro-economic growth, post-Fordism would be based on the dominance of a flexible and permanently innovative pattern of accumulation.” (Bob Jessop 1996). Production became more oriented towards global needs and became better-designed to tackle wide-reaching competition rather than remain focused on satisfying domestic demand or workers’ welfare. A marked characteristic of the time is the rise of commodity fetishism in which the relationships included in production is not seen as interpersonal relationships but as commercial bonds engendered by commodities and money that are transacted during a business. The private spaces that people occupied in a society became redefined as a result.

Many post-Fordism policies became the death knell of flexibility, sovereignty of the labour force, specialization, and job security. Continuous exchange of information and knowledge gained importance, and consumers became targeted by their lifestyles and not by their social classes. White collar workers and service-oriented jobs increased in number and gained importance. More flexible production options became a necessity of the era and the rise of information technology played a major role in bringing about these changes. Technology ceased being a mere tool for production and became something that controlled the mobility of workers



and ensured their skills. The creators of these technologies and their creations became instrumental in tearing the conventional fabrics that held together human societies.

If emerging technologies have given jobs for some and made them financially secure, it has taken away jobs from many and reduced their income. It denies equal participation for all and pushes some people to the periphery, retaining only a few as the core players, and these core players often become instant successes. “The rapid growth of the mobile phone industry has created billionaires by the bucketload, particularly in developing countries where well-connected business families have been able to gain control of the telecommunications market” The Guardian ( 2009, March 3). Of course, business acumen is an individual skill that everyone will not have, but successes like this have their foundation in new technology. Such successes cause social disparity and social conflict. Marx always saw a conflict between the massive products of capitalism and the needs of the proletariat. As the hold of capitalism widens, the workers are bound to react at some stage, and this will lead to direct confrontation which will pass through many phases.

The conflict created by technology passes through many stages. In the initial stages of production, which is essentially that of planning, conflicts arise over rules and regulations, methods of production, and ways of control. These conflicts reach gargantuan proportions when special technology is used for production since decision-making process becomes elaborate due to the involvement of major and minor technologies and technical skills. Violating international law or infringing on human rights for production becomes a serious issue of contention in these cases. Conflict also arises because of the fact that some countries own superior technology.

Most countries strive to be owners of the highest forms of technology because it essentially gives them power over weaker countries that do not have access to that sort of expertise. Access to better technology can help countries to defend themselves better and to reduce outside threats, even though this is not always the rule. We see many cases of guerrillas with limited access to technology fighting against armies with so much more power and still not giving up. A classic case is that of Vietcong guerrillas pitted against the much better-equipped army of the United States till Americans lost the war due to many reasons one of which was the opposition of many Americans themselves to the war. There are also rebel armies and terrorist organizations with access to lesser technology fighting against countries with superior control over land, water, and skies, and managing significant advances.

All these types of inequalities tear at the fabrics that bind societies together. When unjust economic systems thrive, the first casualty is the people who make up that system. In such societies, human beings survive without any contact to others and still gather through the internet all the positive or negative information that they require. While alienation in itself may not

destroy a human being totally, such alienated people can easily lose basic human values as we see in the case of many mass shooters of students in North America's educational institutions.

#### **4. DIMINISHING COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS**

The idea of alienation originated with Marx. For him, "to be alienated is to be in an objective condition... and to change it we need to actually change the way society is organised rather than changing our perception of it" (<http://revisesociology.com>). This basic Marxian concept has undergone a lot of change over the years and after the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union which had championed the philosophy of Marx, it is difficult to accept this basic concept in its entirety. However, alienation as a result of improved technology still exists.

Alienation is a cessation of connection from one's social surroundings when an individual finds it difficult to sustain those connections the way he had understood and experienced it. This leads to a feeling of powerlessness and deep dissatisfaction for the individual. What Marx felt was that advanced technology increased this disconnection even if machines made the work less physically exacting, because workers then lost control over their work. It reduced workplace interaction and gave absolute control of the work to employers. Workers in this case are alienated from what they are producing and they are alienated from other workers because they are forced to compete with them.

This alienation due to competition still exists and it has intensified because of advanced technology. It has created a survival-of-the-fittest scenario at the workplace and this makes workers increasingly alienated from each other. Our daily interaction with each other has also reduced substantially because tellers at the bank counters have been replaced by robotic ATMs, postmen have been replaced by email inboxes, salesmen have been replaced by online websites, and in many grocery shops we do not have to interact with any human beings because there are self-checkout counters. CCTV cameras record our activities instead of human beings and we play scrabbles online with robots with the option to choose robots of different levels of intelligence. Nowadays people need not stop at a wayside teashop and ask the shopkeeper the way to the place they are headed because a GPS will do that job even though sometimes you may end up at the wrong place if the GPS speaker's accent is unfamiliar to you. The list of vanishing human interactions is endless. Of course, we share a lot through social networking sites but this sharing is very different from the natural camaraderie that people once shared with each other. Many of the modern day health issues have been traced of this sense of alienation (Calabrese and Selden, 1987).

Much of the time that people spent with their family and friends earlier, is now spent on unlocking and consuming technology. Even if a person is not very keen on accepting WhatsApp

messages or sending emails, he cannot free himself from it because it may affect his productivity in the altered work culture. If his boss or colleagues convey relevant work information through any of these mediums, and he refuses to respond to it, it will be at his own peril.

No one can downplay the positive aspects of the internet. It has made life tremendously easy for people by speeding up communication, providing easy access to information, and helping people to get social support. While the communication speed of the internet is amazing, it has mutilated language by using 'u' for 'you' and 'r' for 'are'. And while it opens up vast information portals, this information may not always be positive and could easily include bomb-making, which the user can possibly learn without his family getting an inkling of what he is learning. Internet has already sounded the death knell of face-to-face conversation, even though it helps a person to have more friends than he could earlier have imagined; and if internet can help in garnering social support, it can help in getting trolled also. And finally, on the other end of the spectrum is the addiction to online games like 'Blue Whale' and the resultant suicides that show us how alienated an individual, especially growing children, can mentally be even while he is physically surrounded by his family (The Hindu, August 1, 2017).

Innovative technology, even if it is for making destructive things like arms and ammunition, benefits its manufacturers immensely. Since it helps its consumers to defend themselves, they also tend to see it in a positive light without understanding that these things are only increasing the tension and competition between individuals and countries. Advanced technology, because of which people can make online money transactions, lightens the work for the individual but it also makes him vulnerable to online hacking and other unexpected ways of data theft. Data conveyed via the internet cannot be completely secure however much the service providers try to make it secure through the use of encryption, firewalls, antivirus software, password managers, internet protocol security (IPsec) and many other methods. With every new security invention, hackers and data-thieves put technology to more destructive use which forces the rest of the world to seek better remedies, thus leading to ever-widening circles of competition and wealth aggrandizement.

Conventional classrooms where students and teachers interact with each other in a healthy way have been replaced by online classes. Such computer-mediated communication (CMC) and asynchronous learning networks (ALNs) (Hiltz and Wellman, 1997) will dilute people's attachment to communities to which they belong by reason of their physical location, their subject of study etc. while their ties to global communities with which they share interests will increase. Such virtual communities, however enriching they are, can never take the place of real communities (Slouka, 1996). "Psychological feelings of isolation may arise from the geographical separation and lack of contact with fellow students... Therefore, addressing

negative feelings associated with isolation is a challenge, particularly as students have different needs and experiences” (Dalton and Grant, 2010).

Whatever these problems of isolation may be, their seriousness is not understood by educational institutions which continue to conduct online classes and award degrees. Many students join these courses because those who could not access some courses due to their geographical location can access the online course without having to spend money on accommodation or long distance commuting. The problem of time constraint is solved here through flexible delivery of material, and those who have family or social issues can find comfort in online education because of the anonymity that these portals provide.

Television is also an agent of isolation by dragging people to a world of serials and star wars totally detached from the real world they are living in. On an average, half of an individual’s leisure time is spent in front of a TV. Even toddlers watch TV with their parents and as they grow children get exposed to various things that they actually do not need (promoting consumerism) and they get an unnatural view of the world because many of the things like fantasy fiction and science fiction portray on TV are gross exaggerations. It affects their social life and influences their values (Gongala, 2017).

A study on the workers of well-mechanized factories of the 1930s showed that mechanization had increased visual damage, headaches, problems resulting from posture, and mental stress. More or less the same problems were observed in the post-1970s workers handling cutting-edge technology, however user-friendly those latest technologies were. “One can assume that stress is a dominant factor in a high-tech environment, which affects all employees despite the differences in value congruency”(Pines and Ozbilgin, 2010).

All these spiralling problems of alienation and depression, which people experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of development of technology, have been further aggravated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century on account of increasing deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, food contamination through pesticides, and lifestyle changes. If science has eradicated some diseases and controlled many others, many new diseases have jumped into the fray to further challenge man. And globalization is transporting not just new technology but harmful microbes and viruses as well. Our ancestors who lived untouched by modern technology and modern medicines were apparently healthier than us. “While we don’t have data to really say for sure, it’s generally believed that the paleolithic man was healthy and fit and virtually free from diseases that are running rampant in the modern world”(Eric, 2014). Though life expectancy is much higher today, the shorter average lifespan of our ancestors is attributed to accidents, wars, ravages of nature, infant mortality, and epidemics, instead of problems related to pollution, alienation, stress, and lifestyle.

“Information Society is a term for a society in which the creation, distribution, and manipulation of information has become the most significant economic and cultural activity”(http://whatis.techtarget.com). This society, in which the main fabric of interconnection is information technology, is in marked contrast with agrarian societies based on agriculture and industrial societies based on machinery. The rise of information society is not just changing the way we work or interact, but is also transforming educational methods, entertainment styles, research rules and core values. The mixing of culture and ideologies and arts that it engenders has its positive sides but the global exchange of information and goods also leads to lopsided development, estrangement between classes and nations, and social imbalances. In the techno-industrial culture that globalization creates, those without sufficient information technology skills lose heavily even if they are otherwise talented. This results in intense alienation of such people (Petrnko and McArthur, 2010 ).

Individualistic societies and nuclear families of the present day are vastly different from the structured, joint societies of yesteryears. Present-day societies encourage consumption by using new-fangled yardsticks and misleading propaganda. Upshots of this are ideological control of many by those who have power, and the resultant political alienation of many. This political alienation is a severance from the inherent human potential in order to conform to the majority trait and this obviously leads to subjugation and disparity. According to German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse, the fate of the individual is extremely important. Technology strips the individual of his innate dignity by channelling him to a crowd and “this crowd reduces the individual to a “standardized subject of brute self-preservation”... The specialization of professions does not contradict this standardization, because a man merely becomes one of several replaceable tools in the toolbox” (Marcuse, 1982).

The information overload that the internet provides is not welcome for everyone. Too much of everything cloy and when there is too much of something it is difficult to choose the right thing from the huge tangle. In the case of those for whom information overload is not a problem, the negative use of technology may be in another way. When employees have easy access to company technology, many indulge in what is known as cyberloafing which involves repeated checking of email, over-activity on social networking sites, unnecessary online window shopping, and too much browsing. Most employees have access to shared company sites and disgruntled employees who leave the company often misuse the data obtained from those sites. Illegal downloading of matter and identity theft is known by the new term cyber deviancy (Weatherbee, 2010).

The idea of alienation originated with Karl Marx. However, the world has changed a lot from the time of Marx and in some ways it has evolved in a way different from Marx had envisioned.

Still, over the years, many scientists and philosophers have warned about the personal degradation and alienation that science and technology can cause. Marx Weber's opinion about the increasing rationalization of capitalist societies, especially in western countries, is an example of this. He said that the 'iron cage' entraps individuals in arrangements based only on "teleological efficiency, rational calculation and control." Developing technology has continued this process in one form or other. Marx's original quote in the introduction of his work 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' was this: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." The time has come to replace the word 'religion' with the word 'technology'.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Man's attraction to technology has been continuing throughout human evolution, accelerating since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Every aspect of human life has been influenced by technology and the primary aim of technology is to increase profits. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, permeation of digital technology into human life has ruptured the basic fabric which had held people together in agrarian societies. The penetration of digital tools is so deep in the current society that the already thinning 'collective consciousness' may soon completely vanish and leave individuals alienated from their physical surroundings and cultural moorings. But those who want to make the maximum profit out of technology tries to counter these problems with more new technology which once again only enriches the few who are involved in its production. Development of technology today has become a typical example of 'creative destruction' propounded by the Austrian-American economist Joseph Schumpeter.

As Habermas says, the 'system', or strategic actions that secure the wellbeing of controlling powers, enriches itself at the cost of the 'lifeworld' or the personal, day-to-day world that individuals share with each other. Because of the role that wealth and power plays in this 'colonisation' process of the lifeworld, people become amenable to getting colonised. The devalued lifeworld thus becomes increasingly insignificant in ordinary people's lives. To fight this, powerful conglomerates which control production should be denuded of their powers and ordinary people should have more control over production. "We can't allow ourselves to be deceived by tech CEOs that put their own transportation desires and thirst for profit before the needs of the many" (<https://thewire.in>).

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