Wise Use of Technology

COTR Sunday school

Epiphany, 2020

From Another Angle

✣ What is Technology?: "Technology is a distinct cultural activity in which human beings exercise **freedom** and **responsibility** in response to God by forming and transforming the natural creation, with the aid of tools and procedures, for practical ends or purposes."
-Stephen Monsma

✣ Is this not culture? Is it only for practical ends or purposes?

✣ Creational structure *and* directions

What Requires Responsibility?

* There are obvious *directional* abuses but also subtle directional abuses/effects.

* "My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski." -Nicholas Carr

* We are turning into "pancake people—spread wide and thin as we connect with a vast network of information." —Carr

What are our devices doing to us?

✤ Our digital age has "plunged us into a continuous state of partial attention" and we "no longer have time to reflect, contemplate, or make thoughtful decisions." -Neuroscientist Gary Small

✤ Hebb's Rule: "Cells that fire together wire together."

✤ An example: relying on GPS can limit the size or use of our hippocampus.

So, how do we navigate this?

✤ Keeping in mind the freedom and responsibility that comes with each technological innovation, we need to exercise a disciplined and critical use.

✤ How? Is it common sense?

✤ Albert Borgmann's "Device Paradigm" and "Focal Practices"

Device Paradigms

✤ Fire Place vs. Central Heat

✤ Skills, Knowledge (tacit), tools, sustaining efforts, and social practices

✤ Another example: food (hunting, gardening, farming, cooking, and presentation)

Focal Practices

✤ Definition: The activity, skill, knowledge, or event that is a quality of good living.

✤ Some are absolute. Some are person or family or group specific.

✤ So, one of the ways to think critically about the subtle effects of technology is to reflect upon the effects of the device paradigms on our focal practices.

Applied to phones and screens

✤ What device paradigms are in play with respect to obtaining information, communicating with other people, and entertainment? How has this changed from the previous generation(s) of phones and TVs?

✤ What skills, tools, knowledge, and activities are lost or changed?

✤ What focal practices (or things) are jeopardized or influenced by the new device paradigm?