

Perspective, distractions, and the Prevention of Falling to the Vices

In our lives there are two major distractions that lead to a loss of perspective thinking. These two distractions are known as technology, and other people. These distractions are the majority of what is involved in our lives. Yet, since the start of humanity, they have also tied closely to the foundation of greed, corruption, and power; the traits that are inherently self-destructive to our race. These are known as the vices. It is very hard to understand how these distractions can have such a negative impact on our lives. These distractions may allow the human race to do incredible things, but they may also prevent humans from achieving self-actualization at the top of Maslow's hierarchy. In order to live a full life we do not need to live without the distractions, but yet we need to be aware of how they can prevent us from reaching our full potential.

Everyday life is filled with distractions and stimulants, millions and millions of sounds, sights, and ideas pouring through our brains, influencing our perspective and everyday decision-making skills.

Perspective is defined as "a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view." It eludes the human race about how important it is to understand how having a different point of view can change the way we live. At times it seems that the majority of the people in the world live wearing blinders that a horse may wear, only focused on their task at hand. Yet to fully understand how to live one's life to its fullest, we must look beyond our small task at hand, past the distractions, and pave the way for additional points of view. To understand the amount of distractions in our everyday lives, think about this situation. Imagine yourself standing on the corner of a street in New York City. In just five minutes hundreds and hundreds of people have come by, taxi cabs, people walking, biking. Now think of that, but times 100,000, every minute of the day, try to process everything that's going on around you, and think about attempting to make some sense out of it all of it.

It's so hard to focus on the small things, out of the millions of bits of information you receive everyday. But when you do, you notice certain perspectives you would not have seen before. Life is all about perspective.

There are so many unknown factors about life, starting with the basic question, which is quite frankly: what is life? Just living, breathing organisms, focused on survival? This is a more complex question with thousands of different answers, but to understand the many complex parts to those questions, and what the other answers may be, one must understand the importance of perspective.

____ However, to understand why we have a loss of perspective thinking, we first need to understand what prevents us from living a full life and being so closed minded.

The first major distraction is technology. This does not just include the computer from which I am typing from now, but includes every piece of technology since the start of time that has not been necessary for survival. I will not deny the fact of how incredible it is, of how far technology has taken us. From monumental feats of architecture, to travel, to the influx of culture, technology has greatly impacted humankind, and for the most part positively.

However, this does not ignore the fact that technology can be a major distraction to mankind. The explanation of the distraction of technology is most evident in the last 150 years, the rise of the age of consumerism. Before there were factories and before the age of interchangeable parts, society took pride in their craftsmanship and the personability of creating technology and buying/selling goods. The declining role of craftsmanship in society has led to a more impersonal society. From ordering goods online instead of in the store, or to being on one's phone constantly and being unaware of those around them, impersonality is extremely obvious in the 21st century. Even if our society continues to improve technology at an unprecedented rate, we will only be able to go so far if we grow increasingly impersonal. Focus on materialization very quickly alludes humanity from what is still important. It takes one's focus away from intangible values, those such as friendship and love. As we advance in society we can not forget how civilizations began, the values of human interaction must be remembered.

Technology has not only led our society into an age of impersonality, but it has also led to a substantial amount of greed. As Charlie Chaplin stated in his 1940 film *The Great Dictator*, the "machinery that gives abundance has left us in want." The truth behind this quote is substantial. While the industrial revolution gave society a massive amounts of goods to choose from, the simple fact of there being more to offer has led people to want more and more. Greed is no new quality that humans exhibit, however increased materialization has reinforced this vice.

There is an irony in how the generation before us gets so irritated at how increasingly materialistic and impersonal we have become. Older generations have become blinded by the fact that they were the ones to continually push for new technology. A piece of literature that expresses this irony is a short story called *The Veldt* by Ray Bradbury. Written shortly after the Second World War, the story tells of a family with a modern home that does everything for them, from washing dishes, to bathing the kids. The parents had been incredibly excited to purchase this home of the future.

One of the main features of the futuristic home is called the "Nursery." Purchased to spoil their children, the nursery serves as a virtual playground for the children. The nursery creates a virtual background for the children, and they play as if they are living there. However, the children begin to worry the parents, as they spend increasingly more time in the nursery, with a background of an African desert with lions viciously eating something in the far distance. Finally the parents go to a psychiatrist in order to try and help their technologically addicted kids. The psychiatrist informs them the best way to try and help their children is to get away from their home to a cabin with absolutely no technology, far from their futuristic home. A few days later the day comes to go on the family vacation. The parents keep telling the children it is time to go, but they insist on spending a few more minutes in the nursery. The parents decide they will wait outside for the children. Yet as soon as the parents walk outside they realize the setting their children had created was directly outside their home, and they were what was being eaten by the lions. The parents are mauled by the lions and the children have little idea of what is now virtual or what is real.

This was written more than 65 years ago, yet it actively shows our dependence and constant impulse to want to improve technology. The current generation is clearly glued and attached to their iPhones. However it is apparent that this is because the generation before us

has pushed for it, as we are always looking to improve on technology. Yet the further we go, the closer we are to losing the sense of what really is reality. But regardless we sympathize with this because we only eat when our iPhones are charging or we just keep on scrolling.

Humanity itself always seems to find itself in very ironic situations. The most important history lesson ever is that humanity does not seem to learn from history. History always seems to repeat itself.

A very drastic and rather horrid historical example of the issue of excess materialization is the tragedy on Easter Island. This historical catastrophe ties in very well with the next major distraction; other people.

We know that the inhabitants over exploited their resources on the island. The overexploitation of their trees to create these large stone structures is an early version of distraction by materialization. The Rapa Nui's people mistake in overexploiting their resources in order to create these large stone heads, possibly to impress one another, led to their civilization's demise.

As for the example of the people on Easter Island, this clearly exemplifies the perils of materialization, and the negative consequences of trying to gain the respect of other individuals. Known only for the excessive stone heads littering the island, the natives of Easter Island are a relatively unknown people.

While this is radical consequence of distraction, many believe this could be a microcosm for humanity's fall, overexploitation of resources in search of materialization, losing sight of what really matters in society, and ultimately collapsing.

There is an issue however in claiming that people are the next distraction. This is because of a constant philosophical debate, and is rather the core of this paper. Are the vices that humans exhibit innate, or are they learned and exhibited as a result of a certain situation with one of the distractions?

In continuing with the theme of humans as a distraction, we revisit the long-standing debate. Innate or prompted? Nature or nurture? While this debate will continue, there are still situations in past history that we can examine in order to have a better understanding of human nature and the fall to the vices.

The book *Animal Farm* by George Orwell sets up a scenario that accurately exploits a few of the vices of humanity. Loosely based after the 1917 Russian Revolution, this book allegorically represents the perils of humanistic traits in respect to the philosophy of government, specifically communism. Greed, power, and corruption is heavily exhibited as the animals attempt to self govern. But was Napoleon's drive to govern all of the Animals and establish a totalitarian state because of the situation, basic drives (Maslow's Hierarchy), or a bit of both? As Thomas Jefferson once said "if men were angels, no government would be necessary."

Concluding the discussion on humans as a distraction we can look at our current governments in the 21st century. More than hundred years later, Thomas Jefferson is still correct in his generalized statement on humanity. People aren't always angels; they can be twisted, egotistic, self-centered, and corrupt. Just notice how much money has played a role in

politics. While the philosophy of government is something else in its entirety, the general overview is that in any form of government humans will exercise vices at some point or another, but did that happen because we were all born wanting to have power as part of self-actualization, or did the distractions prompt this?

While we may never be able to pinpoint if innate human nature or situations of distraction can prevent humans from reaching a point of self-actualization, it is important to be aware of how to put it into perspective and notice how we may be able to act differently. While this paper is more exploratory than resolving these issues, it is important for humans to be self-aware.