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How Technology Shaped My Life And The World

(Abstract)

The relationship between orality, literacy, and technology is one that is intertwined with one another. The change from having strong oral traditions to transitioning towards literacy and eventually moving towards the rise of digital technology has had a massive impact on both me and my family. Throughout these transitions there were social changes that not only affected me, but the world as a whole due to the effects of technological change.

Technologies have always played a massive role in shaping society. Technology has made a massive impact on modern society so much so that now it is almost impossible to imagine a world in which we didn’t have technology. Technology, especially digital technology, has played a big role in shaping my own life and has fundamentally changed the way that I view and interact with the world around me.

Humans were once a people who only practiced oral traditions, who only communicated using their voices and were illiterate. People would memorize stories told to them and would use pictures and other artwork to tell a story or preserve history. Within my family, oral tradition was and perhaps still is important. My great grandfather and all of my forefathers in the past were illiterate pastoralists from Albania and through memorization kept in mind who their ancestors were and certain events dating back to the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. Anything before that is hazy with only rumors and myths of who our ancestors were. There is some merit, but it is largely unproven. There is a certain sense of community and belonging when learning about my family's history and oral traditions and directly participating, including songs both with instruments and without them. However, there are disadvantages to sticking strictly to oral traditions. One such disadvantage is that information given depends on the memory of the person giving it. Another is that oral traditions can’t give information that happened in the very distant past. The further one goes back in history using oral traditions the more complex it is to gain a strong understanding as to what happened. All of this is due to one's ability to retain information using oral traditions.

Writing in comparison to oral tradition is different, the reason being with writing there are solidified testaments as to what is true and what isn’t. Writing is more reliable in understanding the past. Written records preserving dates and events is one effect of literacy. My grandfather and grandmother learned to read and write due to education becoming mandatory in Albania, as did my parents and also me. It is interesting to note how becoming literate also changed the way people interacted with people and even changed their way of thinking. Due to being able to read and write, my grandfather decided to leave his village to pursue work in another city with the government, specifically in the army. Due to a lack of employment opportunities, there was no need to stay in a closely knit community when one can make a living elsewhere. Becoming literate opened many opportunities and many more people from my grandfather's town also decided to leave for the city. Oral traditions started to become less important. People became more interested in themselves, and people didn’t need other people to tell them things like what certain documents were about. People could now read and educate themselves. Although oral tradition still exists within many families like mine, its importance is not as stressed and the culture of it not as popular as it once was. Like writing, digital technology and further technological progress also changed the way people interacted with one another, as well as shaping my own life.

Some of my earliest memories I have are of me tinkering around with TVs, computers, and phones. Most of the technologies I used in my childhood were analog technologies such as landline phones, VCRs, and radios. Television was especially prevalent in my life due to it being more or less the main source of entertainment within my household. The relationship between me and technology growing up was a unique one. It was me tinkering with these technologies yet also being separate from them. There was a time to use these machines and a time to go outside and play. When I was outside or physically away from technology is when I built proper relationships with other people and evolved as a person. One didn’t need a digital device on them all the time as we see in the present day.

Just as the transition from oral traditions to literacy changed people's attitudes and interactions with others, so did the increase and availability of digital technology like smartphones and computers. This separation between doing things “without” technology and using technology started to fade as I entered my teenage years. Digital phones like the iphone and android phones became very prevalent in not just my life, but within the lives of almost all humans. As previously mentioned, growing up there was no need to have phones on you all the time when hanging out with friends. My friends and I had a plethora of different things to do without technology and came up with different ideas of what to do when we were together. In a way, with the advancement of digital technology, it allowed people to always carry their iphones with them. The digital smartphone became the centerpiece of our relationships and changed the dynamic between us as people. If we wanted to hang out, smartphones were needed. If we wanted to see what we were doing, we would use smartphones to log into online social media. It seemed that everything that we did either directly or indirectly used a smartphone. Both work and school started to use digital technologies to get things done.

As I grew up my positions and dispositions on technology evolved over time. I grew up in a position within a family that held oral traditions in high regard. I very much appreciated the tradition and the sense of community that came along with it. However, I also recognized the failings of keeping strictly to oral traditions. As education became mandatory in Albania there was a transition to literacy and the culture of the close-knit community that had existed began to fade for a new culture of individualism. It was when I was in my late teenage years I realized that how things were during my grandfather's time is different to mine, although the appreciation of the culture never faded. It was perhaps for the best due to me being able to live a more comfortable life with a lot more opportunity. It was at that moment realization, I realized my disposition towards technology had changed. It was an idea I never had before until I gave it proper thought. My attitude towards technology has been mainly positive and technological change being one that should be welcomed, even if things in our daily lives change because of it.

The rampant rise of digital technology in the form of smartphones and computers has shaped my life and the way I interact with others. The devices had become central to my life due to my ability to now do things however I want, whenever I want. This change changed society and this new society of having digital technology being central to my life is one that is fundamentally different from when I was growing up. Technology was practical, a tool to be used to help people in daily life and act as a hobby. After the digital revolution, technology was the centerpiece of my life enhancing the concept of individualism to a level beyond. Overall, my positions and dispositions are dynamic. Influenced by my cultural upbringing and evolving technological landscape.

From the humble beginnings of oral traditions to the information age of electracy, we see how changes in technology and language can change the way people think and act and the consequences of transitioning from oral traditions to literacy. The relationship between orality, literacy, and technology is ever changing and evolving due to peoples' cultural archetypes and unique experiences, and will keep evolving so long as humans exist.