Limit Technology Displacement- It's Been Tried!

People's first reaction to obsolescent and technology displacement is to limit those technologies and save the jobs. But it's already been tried!

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In the early 1800's, German Christians emigrated to America seeking religious freedom and prosperity, like so many other emigrants. This was when the industrialization of America was starting, which made the problem of technology displacement of people clearly apparent. One group of these emigrants became know as the Amish, who resolved that any machine (technology) which diminished the value of a man, by doing the work he did and therefore replacing him, was bad and should be avoided. And so, for about 200 years, this quaint religious sect has lived a philosophy aimed at avoiding the problems of obsolete people by scrupulously rejecting any and all technologies they deem harmful to the value of a man. They would pick and choose good technologies verses those they decided were bad. They did what more and more people in our technologically advanced society of today are advocating.

Today, we are going head long into the problem of technology displacement to the point that now 32% of America's young people still live with their parents, unable to support themselves. A college degree is no longer adequate for many, with 20 to 25% college graduates unemployed or underemployed, as technology provides the machines and technologies to do the jobs once held by them. With technology expanding exponentially, this displacement is happening at an increasingly faster pace leaving a growing number of young Americans with little to nothing for a future. As expected, many people advocate limiting new technologies when they threaten the jobs of people.

They advocate the same strategy for taming technology as the Amish did.

But the trouble is, the Amish themselves also continue to be displaced by technology, only at a much slower rate. Where once they farmed as was done in the early nineteenth century, using draft animals and hand implements thereby maintaining the dignity and value of the individual, they've had to slowly adopt modern machinery in order to maintain their economic stability. This is at a time when small farms are being press out of the system because their productivity is too low to be self sustaining. This has resulted in such weird concoctions such as a modern hay bailing machine having a gasoline engine attached

powering it while being pulled by a team of horses.

The Ordnung or order is the governing body of each Amish community, which determines what is and isn't acceptable in the community including which technologies are permitted and which are not. Therefore, one community might use tractors (while still using horse drawn allowed or not allowed in Ordnungs is a graphic illustration of the difficulties trying to choose which technologies are good and which are not.

The PBS series American Experience had an excellent two hour documentary about the Amish[1], and brought out one interesting fact, that since their arrival in America, when a boy reached manhood and married, he'd buy a farm and continue with the Amish way of life. Trouble is, an Amish young man now needs about a million dollars to start his own farm, something well beyond the reach of most young people today, regardless of their religious convictions. Therefore, the Amish young have had to seek employment other than the farms of old, and this has lead them to those industrial factories, which their forefathers shunned as being degrading to men. Others have gone west to seek out ranching, but the distances are much too great to use horse drawn wagons, so they've been forced to adopt automobiles and trucks into their lives.

Good and noble as their intentions are, the Amish are nevertheless trying to maintain an artificial world within the real world, but without design, each day their world is being encroached upon.

People like to think of technology as these little discrete blocks neatly setting side by side, each independent of the other. A mass of blocks where one can decide if a block is good technology or bad, and if bad simply lift it out of the array of blocks thus ridding it from society. In actuality, various technologies merge and spread into one and another. Much like colored blocks of soft clay or wax, over time they spread into each other, merging into a rainbow of diffused blocks. Deciding to extricate a block that is perceived as bad means trying to follow filaments of that block into other blocks for removal without destroying adjacent blocks. This was the central theme in James Burks series 'Connections'[2]. Not only are you unable to isolate one technology from all the others, but you cannot forecast which technologies are now good but will become bad, or which technologies that you now consider bad will evolve into good.

Technology doesn't mean that which baffles, befuddles, perplexes and confuses you . . . it's the sum of all the methods and means used to bring comfort and sustenance to humanity. It covers everything from taking a stone of flint and flaking it into an arrowhead up to and including the latest gene, computer and medical technologies . . . and everything in between.

<div align="center">Technology isn't something you can successfully control.</div>

So as new technologies continue to press millennials and generation-Z out of old jobs, suggestions of limiting certain technologies to preserve jobs is a fantasy dream of those who have no real understanding of the world that they live in. A prime example is the new artificial intelligence technology Watson, shown in the above picture, that was developed by IBM, which beat the two top winning champions on the TV game show Jeopardy. IBM's declared target markets are medicine and the law, leaving many people wondering if this technology shouldn't be suppressed. This technology is already commercially available, television commercials touting its use by companies such as H & R Block for doing people's income tax. So Americans are left to ask the question, 'Could I even qualify to be a contestant on Jeopardy, and if not . . . then why couldn't this technology do my job?'

And this is just the start, not the finish of AI (**A**rtificial **I**ntelligence).

China has already declared their intention to dominate the artificial intelligence field and market, intending to capture 90% of the market by 2025. Two other technologies just over the horizon is ATS (**A**utomated **T**eaching **S**ystems) and automatic driving vehicles. Both the truck drivers and school teachers are already on the way out, and trying to stop that will only pass the initiative over to others such as the Chinese, with technology being the real bases for a nation's power and position in the world order.

Suppressing new technologies will only leave you behind and at the mercy of others.

1 - "Amish', American Experience Season 24 Episode 5, David Belton, director and writer, Callie T. Wiser producer and writer, WGBH PBS station, 2012.

2 - "Connections", James Burk executive producer and writer, Mick Jackson director, BBC and PBS, 1978.

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