October 5, 2014

7A: Weinberg on Social Engineering / Word Count: 469

1.	Claim	claim is appropriate to the assignment, is clear and precise, and guides the entire text.
2.	Analysis	details mentioned apply to the claim.
3.	Information	information is correct and relevant; quotes advance argument and are "well framed."
4.	Frames	first sentences clearly and precisely summarize claim; final sentence reprises claim.
5.	Development	second paragraph uses information from the first paragraph; key terms are reused
6.	Signposts	use of explicit comparatives ("in contrast"; "similarly"; "however"; etc.); avoid "also."
7.	Paragraphs	sentences flow logically; no digressions or repetitions; transitions link paragraphs clearly.
8.	Sentences	meaning is clear and comprehensible; vocabulary is precise; sentences have varied structure.
9.	Mechanics	document has been proofread for grammar, spelling, and reader's "pet peeves."
10.	Format	document follows the required format (font, spacing, length, identifying information, etc.).
11.	Extras	novel claim; unexpected evidence; surprising analysis; adept turn-of-phrase.

Weinberg insists that social engineering, if left without aid, will only succeed after many years of struggle. Conversely, technology can be applied to social problems faster and easier. Weinberg's main reasoning for this mindset is that social engineering on its' own is unreliable. Where social engineering alone is often complex to implement, technological approaches are often more direct. He illustrates this thought by saying, "The resolution of social problems by the traditional methods — by motivating or forcing people to behave more rationally— is a [long, hard] business" (Weinberg, 37). Weinberg leans away from the idea of social engineering because of its uncertainty and difficult application. As a result, he turns towards technological fixes. He thinks of technological fixes as simple, and therefore easy to apply on a wide scale. It is so easily applied because it doesn't require the re-wiring of peoples behavioral habits. Instead, it just provides a quick surface fix. However, these fixes don't get to the root of the problem. In addition to seldom solving the actual social problem, technological fixes can create more problems down the line.

What is being somewhat overlooked is the fact that problems don't need to be approached in an "either or" manner. A method that would work better is one where social engineers and technologists work together. Social engineering alone doesn't work very well because it can be seen in a negative light by its' targets. For example, the D.A.R.E. campaign, an effort to raise awareness against drugs, was seen as a mundane, mandatory experience that people hardly paid any attention to. Social engineers would make their projects much more effective if they were to incorporate technology into their approach. In the last decade or so, this incorporation of technology can be seen more prevalently, as a result of technology becoming increasingly accessible. Currently, there is a big push towards health and fitness applications for smartphones. These are wildly popular apps that provide incentive for people to eat healthy and exercise. Without technology, social engineers may have tried to force good health by cutting off junk food or another "negative" technique. However, with the help of technology in the form of an app for omnipresent smartphones, they have created a way to change the behavior of humans in a "positive" way. People get this app and are immediately inspired to be healthier. Because it is so accessible and popular, this idea of good fitness becomes trendy and desirable, in turn changing peoples habits on a wide scale. This accomplishes the goal social engineers were trying to accomplish originally, made easier by the help of technology. As such, social engineers should be inspired to use technology to their advantage, working together with technologists to find success. Weinberg suggests this idea of cooperation as well during the final paragraph of his essay.