

An Irrelevant Warning

In the short story, "The Machine Stops", E.M. Forster issues a warning to mankind about our growing dependence on technology. However, this message is mostly misguided because the future he predicts is extreme and unlikely given the current conditions in the world. The setting Forster depicts, where people have lost important human characteristics, is unrealistic, and as a result, the problems that arise are irrelevant in today's society.

Ever since the dawn of our existence, humans have sought to better their condition. This started with the most primitive tools and eventually into the Internet. In Forster's world, this innovation leads to the creation of "the Machine" and the eventual decline of the race. There are several reasons why our civilization will not follow suit. First, humans love to challenge the established systems and improve upon them. Events, like the American Revolution, Civil War, and American Civil Rights Movement, are only a small fraction of instances where humans have questioned the status-quo. In "The Machine Stops", humans are the opposite. When conditions start to deteriorate in their homes, they make feeble complaints and eventually just accept them as the norm. Another aspect of humanity that is incongruent with Forster's depiction is the lack of curiosity of most of the characters. From birth, humans are inquisitive. We explore the environment and push the boundaries of our small bodies. In Forster's world, no one wants to leave their room, much less explore their surroundings. This lack of curiosity is almost non-human, and this makes the story's message less applicable to us because we can't relate to the characters. Some may argue that this is the world they grew up in, so it isn't accurate to compare these people to modern humans. However, these traits have been inherent from our beginning and are unlikely to ever vanish because they are what have allowed us to prosper. No human would willingly give up these characteristics, and if we were forced to, the message is no longer to be weary of technology but of subjugation. The final characteristics that make this world unlike ours is the lack of physical communication and emotional connection. Many would say that our society is moving towards a life where we no longer communicate face-to-face, but this is overstated. Humans crave in-person interaction. For example, would you rather talk to someone via video chat or in person? Many would say in person because there are certain aspects of interaction that are lost when we communicate through technology. Humans are also emotional creatures. We have feelings for one another, especially family. In Forster's world, this is virtually non-existent, and when it does happen, it is when everyone is dying in the end. These differences are important because they will keep technology in check. Our love to be with others will place limits on innovation, and if these limits are surpassed, we will challenge the new technology. Humanity's core traits will prevent our overdependence on technology and are why Forster's message is irrelevant.

[500 words]