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Humanity in a World of Machines

Bryanna Walker

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Bryanna Walker

Second-Place Winner

Short Essay Category

2019 Emerging Writers Contest

Humanity in a world of machines

Being a philosopher of technology, Tom Chatfield invites us into his perspective of the world's technology. In his career, he aims to broaden our views on it to reach new levels so that we can hope to improve it to become an equal set of "entwined anxieties". His article "What does it mean to be human in the age of technology?" discusses the relationship between humans and machines and how people must resist the urge to let machines take their humanity from them. With technology evolving, it has begun gaining aspects previously thought of as "uniquely human" such as logic, reason and even adaptation. Chatfield's writing requires a lot of critical thinking to fully understand his point and he uses intense and repetitive wording to provide the readers an insight to his beliefs on how humans are relying more and more on the use and efficiency of today's technology solely for the purpose of tomorrow's benefits. Throughout his article, Chatfield mentions how we are using technology to communicate with the entire world, but we also are losing our own humanity due to the extensive amount of reliance we have towards machines.

Chatfield explains what technology has done to advance and even detain humanity. Using our devices we can connect all around the world to join unknowingly into a vast community unlike any before, spreading ideas, our views, anything and everything to any other technological use. Although this is a marvelous moment in history, machines are beginning to climb to the top of the ladder so to speak. Chatfield switches gears on how amazing technology is it to how it

may bring unpredictable consequences that push the need of human features completely out of the picture. Our minds created technology, but Chatfield explains that we become reliant on these machines and end up turning against them to blame our creations for the problems we have given ourselves. Chatfield switches gears again but this time to discuss his views on how we, both humans and machines, can live in harmony with each other. He explains that technology cannot thrive, cannot grow without humans and vice versa. Eliminating people from the picture to gain speed and efficiency is not the greatest idea for the future of machines or people because we need to have a relationship with one another. Chatfield explains that in order to build better, more advanced machines, we need to first gain these better relationships and learn how we can possibly do that. Humans need to learn what our end goals are, then we can begin to develop new technology that can be equal and not superior to us so both us and the machines growing can reach new capabilities.

Chatfield repeats many crucial words to emphasize his point and through those repetitions, he gets his readers to generate different emotions during their journey of reading his article. One set of words Chatfield uses often is “human” and “machine”. Whenever he says the word “human”, the readers should feel their own humanity, they should truly realize what it means to be human. Instead of using the word person or man, which would not really resonate a strong feeling, the word human makes someone stop for a moment and realize that being a human is something more. Chatfield says “human” quite a lot yet, it never loses its touch to make his audience feel in touch with their own humanity. He talks about us being part of the “crowd in the cloud” because of the technology we now possess. We are not just part of some flow but, of a “human flow”, giving us a sense of connection to others in this same web. He

includes himself within this flow as well because throughout his entire article, he uses the words we, us and, our giving anyone reading the article to feel like they are one with the author.

Another word that he repeats is “machine” which rings a different bell. Thinking of a machine, one may think of a coffee maker which does not seem like much however, the way Chatfield uses it within his text creates a different thought of what a machine could possibly be. This word brings a sense of self-awareness to the readers about how much they rely on machines every day. The word machine is normally used to portray something that people use for the benefit of themselves and the way Chatfield talks about how machines are advancing far beyond human capabilities, machines could soon be taking over for humans. He makes sure that we know “humans aren’t slow” or “dumb” and even though he clarifies we are not simple-minded creatures, just using the word “dumb” makes the readers feel slightly under the power of the machines we use for ourselves. With technology evolving just as nature evolves, it would be unethical not to use said technology instead of a human who may make a single mistake compared to this new technology that would provide flawless data and information with no mistakes. Machines are slowly starting to replace people in many fields of work because we, the people, want more done at a faster pace. They begin to think about how we have either been using machines in a manner that end up dumbing us down and replacing us, or we think of our creations, those machines, as nothing more than a stepping stone to get us and only us, above technology. He talks about having “relationships” with technology which, in relation to a machine, seems illogical or incorrect. In his argument, he discusses how machines are beginning to take over our humanity which would make us more aware of our problems with over using machines and how they’re running more aspects of our life.

Chatfield's writing requires so much critical thinking to fully grasp what he is trying to say in his argument. Towards the end of his article, he asks what "a successful collaboration between humans and machines" could be and since he makes this a question and not just a statement, he invites the reader to think about this on more than just one level. Not only is he asking this question to simply pose the question to later guide the readers to an answer at the end of his article, he asks this question hoping the readers will walk away thinking about the possible solutions to the problem that created the question in the first place. Chatfield's goal, not just in this article but in his life, is to create a balance between both humans and machines and to do so, he must first introduce us to the problems that need answers. This way of writing was perfect for the time the article was written. Giving that many people viewing his work are "users" of technology, he knows that the questions he poses will get answers and those answers will grow through the vast web we have become intertwined in.

Chatfield's effective use of rhetorical strategies and well thought out writing techniques keep the readers engaged through his entire article. While he discusses his perspective on humans and machines, he keeps the audience feeling what he needs them to feel to push them to agree with his views on the argument. Without the effective use of rhetorical devices, Chatfield's argument would be bland and unenthusiastic. Being able to appeal towards an audience helps them get engaged, understand the author's point, and maintain an interest in the argument being presented in front of them.

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