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## Worksheet 5:4 Is Technology a Blessing or a Curse?

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To Mary Shelley, the Industrial Revolution sparked the nightmare of the Frankenstein monster. To Jules Verne, it inspired dreams of traveling to the moon or far beneath the sea. Today, these two visions still reflect people's hopes and fears about technology. Should we welcome all technological advances as signs of progress? Or do the dangers of technology far outweigh the benefits? To begin your investigation, examine these viewpoints:

### 1. Ireland, 1895

"The fact is, that civilization requires slaves...Unless there are slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralizing. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends." (Writer Oscar Wilde)

### 2. India, 1955

"There can be no real well-being or advance in material standards in India without the big factory. I shall venture to say that we cannot even maintain our freedom and independence as a nation without the big factory and all that it represents." (Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru)

### 3. France, 1964

"The machine tends not only to create a new human environment, but also to modify man's very own essence...He must adapt himself, as though the world were new, to a universe in which he was not created. He was made to go six kilometers an hour, and he goes a thousand. He was made to eat when he was hungry and to sleep when he was sleepy; instead, he obeys a clock. He was made to have contact with living things, and he lives in a world of stone." (Writer Jacques Ellul)

### 4. Iran, 1964

"Let them go all the way to Mars or beyond the Milky Way; they will still be deprived of true happiness...for the solution of social problems and the relief of human misery require foundations in faith and morals; merely acquiring material power and wealth, conquering nature and space, have no effect in the regard." (Muslim Reformer, Ruhollah Khomeini)

### 5. Japan, 1984

"The man who rides in a car all of the time loses the ability to walk long distances vigorously. Even when we employ mechanical devices, we must realize that it is we human beings who are at the controls and that whether the machine is a blessing or curse depends on what is inside us." (Buddhist Philosopher, Ikeda Daisaku)

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## Worksheet 5:5 Is Technology a Blessing or a Curse?

### Questions

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**Directions:** Answer the following questions based upon the quotes.

1. Which view represented here seems least critical of modern technology? Why?

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2. Both India and Iran sought to free themselves from western domination. How does Nehru's view of western technology differ from Khomeini's?

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3. How is Ellul's view of technology similar to Ikeda's?

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4. In what ways has technology changed the way you live your life in the 20th century? Are all of the changes you have listed beneficial?

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