

Colombo, “Technology will help us live better”

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Experience of the CES has produced many reflections. Here, we share some of them with Mauro Colombo.

“Improving and simplifying the human experience is what digital technology can achieve. It is with this new perspective that products simply become the ‘packaging’ that allows us to have experiences that are enhanced, and sometimes new, with respect to reality.

Raymond Kurzweil seems to be right when he says that the technologies that fully connect data and information available on the net will allow humans to improve their intellectual powers, but not only.

Of course, today a great deal of everyday knowledge and technical abilities (cooking, doing sports, dealing with the dangers inside and outside the workplace, travelling the world understanding all languages, creating environments that are increasingly comfortable and adaptable to our needs, ...) tend to be available to everyone, irrespective of ability, often without the need to learn them slowly, or to ‘study’ them.

What people want of new technologies is to be able to acquire immediate familiarity and ability with any experience. Everything seems possible and knowable.”

In view of certain ethical issues, Mauro Colombo reflects on the implications that technology might also have in that sense.

“I understand, but don’t justify, the concerns that many people have about the possible effects these technologies will have on relationships, knowledge and, as some also claim, ethics. Certainly, some rules have to be re-written, also from the point of view of values and laws, but in fact, this has already happened in the past, whenever there was a technological or cognitive ‘leap’ forward. And, overall, it seems to me that we’ve never ‘lost’ or ‘worsened’ anything.

“It is inevitable that some aspects of human nature will also change, but we would acquire new skills that would allow us to get better or to live in a better world.

“Drones and robotics make everyday tasks easier and easier. The virtual dimension will not make us ‘stupid’, as some claim, but more qualified and ready. Our everyday lives, which are invaded by social media, do not reduce the number of ‘physical’ friends, but increase the quality of the relationships between people, creating more opportunities to establish new ones.

“Many technologies, which apparently seem to have only a ‘gaming’ dimension, may instead improve our skills to manage risks and dangers. The use of infinite data, the so-called Big Data, will allow us to develop skills to produce future events, avoiding those that are not effective, negative and catastrophic.

“Of course, not everything is immune from mistakes and negative effects, but instead of rejecting this potential, it is necessary to learn and analyse it, precisely in order to optimise it and reduce anything that might be unwanted.

“This is why I think it is correct to develop ‘new’ ethics, new rules of behaviour, according to which integration between people can be ‘mediated’ by a machine. We will have to make people aware, and above all ‘educate’ them on the correct use of new technologies, instead of focusing only on some of the distortions they will bring.

“If we had had this attitude to every technological or cultural ‘revolution’, today, we would probably not be very different from those who lived before us, who had a life expectancy of only 40 years, spent working very hard, and knowledge and relationships that were extremely limited, from a material and spatial point of view.”

di Translated by Carcano & Villa (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)