Is Technology a Result of the Fall?

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In the beginning of *Technopoly*, Neil Postman recounts a legend by Plato, which was told by Socrates. In this story there is a king of a great city, called Thamus, who entertains a god named Theuth. Theuth was an inventor of many things including numbers, calculation, astronomy and writing. As Theuth displays his inventions to King Thamus, he describes the invention of writing as something that will "improve both the wisdom and the memory." Thamus replies:

> Theuth, my paragon of inventors . . . the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it. So it is in this case; you, who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your offspring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources. What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality: they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. And because they are filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom they will be a burden to society.

Postman goes on to discuss the notion that every new technology has good and bad effects. He warns against the "one-eyed prophets" who only see the benefits of new technologies without imagining their downsides.

Christians with gifts to understand computer technology have a responsibility to discern new developments and engage them. We need to be on guard against being "one-eyed prophets" and to discern the good as well as the potentially harmful aspects embedded in new technologies. The rapid growth and adoption of technology has had a tremendous impact on our culture, and Christians are not immune to its influence. The harmful side effects of some new technologies are not always obvious, even to Christians who work with technology. In fact, there is truth in Thamus's word to Theuth that "the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it." Generally, whenever we stray from God's intents, sooner or later there are consequences, and this is also the case with technology. For this reason, we need to remain vigilant to the reality of creational norms and steer a correcting course whenever necessary. We need to cultivate a sense of humility as we often muddle through the unexpected issues that arise with new digital technologies. In particular, people who are fluent with computer technology need to be on guard so that we are not "filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom."

— From Chapter 3, "Computer Technology and the Fall"