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Finalist in the 14 to 18 age category

Are engineering and technology essential for future development?

I remember first learning to ride my bike with no handlebars. It was fantastic. A mammoth achievement when you ten years old, but not a matter of global significance. I had discovered a new ability, what else could I do? I fell off my bike and ran home crying.

When Albert Einstein developed the basis of the theory of relativity in 1905, he built the foundations of knowledge for the atomic bomb. Over 200'000 people died due to this 40 years later. When Einstein made his discovery, it was predictable that the face of science would change, but it's extraordinary potential to devastate was never envisaged. From 1951 to present, the world has allegedly seen the production of 67'500 nuclear missiles.

The curiosity of space led to the successful launch of sputnik, the first artificial satellite, instigating the space age. 53 years later there are approximately 560 satellites operating in Earth orbit, out of 8,000 man-made objects in total. At the push of a button, a satellite can guide a warhead to wiping out a civilisation.

Human nature dictates that we will always be too curious to just stop searching. Engineers and scientists are constantly creating and discovering. Searching and digging deeper into the origins we are built on, with the believed intention of improving and understanding our world. Can we push too far? In my opinion, we already have. We are approaching a nuclear age. With so many countries striving to possess nuclear weapons for global recognition and control, believe nuclear war is inevitable. The war that will end all wars, will end the world we know. The world we have built.

Is engineering and technology absolutely essential for future development? Well, it will indeed create a more "advanced" future. We could cure hereditary diseases, alter the genetics of crops to stop world hunger, develop fuel alternatives and stop water crisis. I admire the work of the brilliant minds that built our society, and their success in developing the outstanding technology which we rely on. I for one, know i wouldn't enjoy walking 100 miles home every school holiday, but my point is, i believe we will never learn to stop probing into improvement, and just accept today. We will always want to engineer a different future. It amazes me, how far we have come. From shaping tools from rock, to super computers. Now we rely on technology, without it, our earth would crumble; but in the end, i believe our earth will crumble because of it.

I'm scared to think of the future. Not because of whether i will get into university, or if i can live on my own in the world. I'm afraid that there will be no world fit to live in. Technology has formed the present, will it steal back our future?

We are pedalling hard, and we will fall off eventually.

"The release of atom power has changed everything... If only I had known, I would have become a watchmaker." – Albert Einstein.