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Shout out for the Humanities Scholarship Essay

Spoons for Our Soup

It seems like schools these days are really pushing the STEM-type curriculum while skimping on the humanities. We all understand that educators want to ensure children are prepared to thrive in our rapidly progressing society. Technology is the future and no one discounts that. We embrace it. But skimping on humanities is an absolute abortion of education itself.

Let me explain. If I owned a soup kitchen, I would include bowls and silverware with the food rather than dumping scalding hot soup into my patron's cupped hands. Obvious, right? Silverware and bowls aren't strictly necessary for eating, but I can't imagine the task would go well without them. The humanities do for technology what spoons do for soup.

Now when I say technology, I want you to think about a computer. Not the clunky 8-bit you might remember from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. I'm talking one of those shiny doo-dads that fits in your purse and runs at lightning speed even with eight Netflix tabs open. There is a need to differentiate because technology has progressed so much that the word 'computer' will elicit a slightly different mental image for every person reading this, depending on a number of things—age, tech savvy, social class. From this we could say that technology is a cultural phenomenon.

But, then, can it be argued that technology itself is a humanity? It *is* a product of human invention that is constantly growing and changing. Computers *are* modeled after the human brain and have thus become an extension of humanity. Sure, it's a little more quantifiable than literature but there is a certain art to it.

I have a graphic designer friend who uses a software called Adobe Illustrator to create logos for companies. The program uses vectors and lines to manufacture an image that can be blow up or shrunk down to any size without pixelating. Because the program translates her artwork into a series of equations, she has the pleasure of seeing it on both websites and billboards. Technology is a medium of art but the vice versa is also true; Art is a medium of technology. One needs to be creative in order to produce technology.

Let's talk about the creative process. Bear with me, technophiles. Austin Kleon wrote a book entitled *Steal like an Artist*. While the phrase 'starving artist' does come to mind, the book has more to do with intellectual property. Kleon says that if a writer really likes a certain attribute of a piece of writing then it should be added to that writer's arsenal of literary technique. While still steering clear of downright plagiarism, the writer is able to make it his or her own. Basically Kleon argues for the idea of intertextuality to the extreme. Intertextuality is the presence of a word, phrase, or idea that is derived from other words, phrases, or ideas. Language itself is an amalgamation of previous language. Likewise, technology is an amalgamation of previous technology. We are able to witness feats of both language and technology because it is distinctly human to build upon the backs of our predecessors.

There is a second part to the creative process, though. It's looking at the world for what *isn't* there, rather than what is. It's the splendid what-if. Certainly J.R.R. Tolkien wouldn't be remembered (even contentiously) as the father of the fantasy genre if he had not gifted mankind with *The Lord of the*

Rings. It was groundbreaking. In the same vein, there is a requisite discussion section at the end of every scientific paper or research article in which researchers work through the results of their study and then, based on those results, break ground on further topics to explore. These topics branch outward endlessly in every direction.

All knowledge stems from the sapling of curiosity. What is unique to the humanities is that by learning about one branch of it, you can learn about another. You can learn about black history by studying literature like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. You can learn about youth culture by studying slang language. Culture, history, philosophy, language, art history, and literature are just six branches of the humanity oak.

To do a justice to education is to proffer that all knowledge is interconnected. The humanities show students the way to access creativity and encourage critical thinking. It gives students a healthy respect for one who challenges banality. Educators should not throw the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to the humanities. This is more important now than ever before. Much like soup without a spoon, learning about technology is useless if we do not understand how or why it has come to be. To know where we are going, we must know where we have been.