

Aryan Keluskar

Dr. Christiane Alcantara

HON 272

5 February 2024

Are Society & Innovation Worth their Cost?

In this present world, it is impossible to think of our lives without the crucial reforms or the critical technologies developed by the previous iterations of human society. The societal structure and the wave of innovation have undeniably transformed the way we live, work, learn, aspire, and interact. However, the outcomes of these transformations are showing up, and not every one of them is harmless. Therefore, it is justified to raise the question: are these changes truly beneficial? While some argue that societal progress and technological advancements have led to increased prosperity and innovation, others contend that these changes have distanced us from our inherent human nature, reducing us to mere numbers in a system rather than moral beings. Although the latter is not entirely false, I say that this novel societal structure and the innovations are empowered our species to combat the very problems it may have created. This essay will use the words of Kant, who celebrates the progress and innovation fostered by the Enlightenment in his work "What is Enlightenment?", viewing it as a path towards cultural, technological, and moral benefits. Furthermore, Descartes, in his "Discourse on the Method," laid the groundwork for this new approach to knowledge and understanding which led to personal development but also societal progress.

In essence, innovation and societal structure brought uniformity and stability in human lives. A key factor that was historically missing in the nomadic human lives was stability, but

after gaining it through societal structures, humans had the ability to think beyond their own needs and solve societal problems. Kant's emphasized on the use of reason and critical thinking for self in his essay "What is Enlightenment?". Kant's first maxim of reason is to think for oneself, which he equates with "liberation from superstition" and "thinking into the place of others" through communication. This demonstrates how the cultivation of reason within the societal structure allows for the potential of societal progress. He underscores the role of societal structure in fostering the intellectual tools necessary to address societal issues, and believes that this public use of reason is critically dependent on communication between individuals. By promoting this public use of reason, the societal structure provides the intellectual framework necessary for individuals to engage in critical discourse and address societal challenges through reasoned deliberation and collaboration. By encouraging individuals to question and critically evaluate their beliefs, Descartes lays the groundwork for a method of inquiry that prioritizes individual reasoning over baseless beliefs. This specific emphasis on individual reasoning serves as a catalyst for innovation in the time period. Only with such a approach to life can humans develop new ideas and solutions. While previous solutions may have relied on else's preachings, these novel ideas would be based on individual judgment. The importance of such innovative thinking in society is shown by its role in scientific and technological progress, which has led to improvements in modern medicine, extended life spans and enhanced environmental sustainability. Therefore, the ability to think and reason not only fosters innovation at the individual level but also contributes to the advancement of society as a whole.

In conclusion, the works of Kant and Descartes provide valuable insights into the role of societal structure and individual reasoning in fostering innovation and stability. Their works and

perspectives show that the cost is worth it since it allows our species to prosper on a global level.

However, our present society is not free from plagues either, but we know that evidential reasoning and innovative thinking will be our path to solving them. Such ideas have enduring relevance in our society's understanding of progress, innovation, and the importance of individual thought in addressing complex issues.