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Influencing the next generation

Introduction

Adam Gopnik's essay "*Bumping into Mr. Charles Ravioli*" introduces us into the world of children under the age of seven. The most predominant trait in these children is their ability to create imaginary figures to mirror their social development. Olivia is a three-year-old girl, and she already has her own friend, called Mr. Ravioli; who is about seven years old. At this tender age, Olivia is already having a strained relationship with her human avatar friend. This shows why Sherry Turkle in her book "*Alone Together*" should not be shocked when Anne, a college student asks whether she can get a robot friend as a substitute for her boyfriend (Turkle 18). This is because from a tender age, children are learning that technology is more reliable than what is real and living. Olivia's imaginary is a good stands to show just how children have become conscious of this fact. Olivia seems to have the time to meet her imaginary friend Charlie Ravioli, but up to today, she has only managed to bump into her friend. Even to a three-year-old life is already too busy to have time to go the park with a friend. She is in need of a substitute. This shows why Sherry Turkle's has been forced to concede that we are all together but each of seems to be alone. Real people are too busy to offer solutions for the loneliness that has been created by busyness (Turkle 10). This is something that Sherry Turkle observed when she took her daughter to the Darwin exhibition. At age fourteen, Turkle's daughter preferred inanimate tortoises than the real ones, which were at the exhibition.

Too busy to be together

The young generation is therefore finding out that human friends are less reliable than the robotic simulations of friendship. They have therefore become less conscious about the sentimental aspects of life, and all they are concerned about is reliability. Olivia may not have experienced Mr. Ravioli in real life, but she is well aware that there are many Mr. Ravioli's out there. By looking at her parent's life, she is already preparing herself to the life of bumping into friends and grabbing lunch. This is because Olivia's parents have found themselves in a situation where they have over time put off friends and even neighbors because of their busyness. This is more of having an artificial connection with people. In this, someone does not have to confide in the friends they have or be vulnerable because everyone is supposed to be busy. Olivia is very much alone though she actually has a friend who she talks about almost every time (Gupnik 3). This kind of friendship fits into Turkel's description of the kind of authenticity, when she compares the current view on authenticity to the Victorian's view of sex. In this, a friend is depicted as someone you have accidental meetings, and one who cannot make time to develop deeper relationships. It therefore follows that as the child grows, he/she finds it hard to draw lines between what is real and what is fictional. Olivia's experience is that friends are people you bump into, not people you sit to have intimate chats. On the other hand, texts and e-mails are a lot of work, and need immediate attention. Technology offers opportunities for people to avoid social responsibility, and Turkle sees this as the reason why people spend time fidgeting with their phones.

The relationship between Olivia and Ravioli is unauthentic and fits Turkle's critique on the book "*Love and Sex*". Olivia's story seems to affirm Turkle's view that love is just not about bumping into each other. It is more than hopping into a taxi together or sharing a meal. It takes the approach that Adam Gopnik and his wife took when they heard about this strange friend that their daughter was attracted to. Turkle ascertains that relationships are complex, but very desirable. He compares good relationships to a candy store. And looking at Olivia's imaginary friendships, it is clear that Olivia wishes that her friend would have more time to spend with her, and a less complicated schedule. Everyone is interested in having fruitful friendships, but most are scared of the time they have to spend to make this friendships work, and therefore they keep running away (David 17). The fact is this does not mean that they are emotionally satisfied or content with their friendships. Gopnik's essay shows just how risky it can be having human friends. Looking at their daughter, Gopnik is concerned because the avatar friend that Olivia has does not meet the expectations their expectations of what a friend should be.

Gopnik takes a look at the eighteenth and nineteenth century and clearly discovers that even when people were pre-occupied with numerous constructions and the consuming tasks of the industrial revolution age; they still had time to meet, they had time to get bored. In this period, even the most hardworking individuals never complained of being busy, and they never avoided opportunities to meet with friends. The sharp turn of events came with the twentieth Century. In this age, being busy is more of a trend than a fact, and that is why a three year old like Olivia can easily pick it up, and expect that everyone older is always busy. This is because she has seen it in her family. Her parents' talk about bumping into friends, and her brother is equally too busy to spend time with her. This is in agreement with Turkle's view that we have all abandoned each other. When Turkle visits Miriam, who is a retired interior designer, she learns

that her son had abandoned her. The reason was because Miriam's son felt that Miriam was too demanding (Turkle 14). The same is true of Gopnik's findings about the busyness of people in New York. They do not have time to build friendships, and as a result, when they grow old, they end up like Miriam. It finally dawns on them that they have been alone all this time. The only difference was that they were bumping into people, but they were not actually attached to these friends to get to know them better. Gopnik finds that people are too busy, and this is in line with Turkle's findings that today people would rather have robot friends than real human friends. Gopnik's essay shows how people got too busy to start avoiding intimacy. Technological inventions such as messages, e-mails and telegraphs have given people the freedom to postpone meetings (Gopnik 4). This includes meetings with friends, acquaintances and even their families. The result has been that everyone is always living in a rush because they keep forgetting what they postponed. This has led people to develop poor habits of managing relationships. As person-to-person relationships grow poor, the person-to-avatar relationships increase. These avatars are not imaginary people as is the case of Olivia, but technological things like phones, games and so on. Turkle points out that any time spent with an avatar is time that would have been spent with real people, performing sociable activities like chatting and taking walks. It therefore follows that Gopnik and Turkle are all talking about the same thing. They are all concerned by how technology has robbed people of that personal friendship. They are also concerned of the effects this has on the coming generations.

Conclusion

Technology has always been developed to make-work easier, but as it turns out it has also made life harder and more complicated. People know little about their families let alone their friends. This is because technology has taught everyone to hide his or her vulnerabilities. With

technology, time more time is spent with avatars than with real people. The problem is that we are passing this to the young generations at such an early age that it is very hard for this upcoming generation to draw clear lines between what ought to be and what is currently happening. There is therefore need to address the busyness that has come with technology and set up time to spend with friends and family. In addition, the habit of postponing issues with statements such as “I will call you” is direct impact of technology. It is therefore important that people learn to complete things so as to avoid being busy responding to imaginary emergencies.

The busyness of everyone in New York is not because these people have jobs that take too much time out of their schedule. It is because they have over time accumulated appointments by postponing things. No one has the attitude of doing a task to completion, unless they are rushed by a deadline. The same is true about the lives of the people that Olivia interviewed. The people they value most are trapped in the web of busyness that with time, they have seized to exist. People trapped in the cycle of making and breaking appointments. Families are ignored, friends brushed aside. The technological inventions that have been made have taken the focus of people from what their families and friends need, to what their machines need. As a result people age, and find themselves strangers to their friends and families.

Works cited

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