

decisions for consumption against engagement, our average, everyday world is stamped more deeply with the pattern of the device. In other words, devices do not simply liberate people from some things and free them for other and better things. We are surrounded. The things enabling correlational coexistence have nearly disappeared. As the totality of our daily environment changes from an environment of things to an environment of devices, from an environment making demands on people to an environment that is more at their fingertips, this change necessarily entails heedlessness and evokes an attitude of cultural petty homocentrism. So it is important to consider not just the appropriateness of this or that device in a particular context, but to consider what the consequences are of the totality of these devices and people's *typical* use of them. We would expect the consumptive ways of life in such surroundings to be disburdened and disengaged.

So what are people finally freed up for? How do they attempt to use technological means to positively enrich their lives? Typically people use devices to procure entertainment commodities. Hence our culture treats tradition, culture, and nature as resources to be mined. Just as ubiquitously available warmth is not a substitute for the hearth, entertainment commodities are at best insubstantial aspects of the original things. Because they use devices here to procure the delights that matter, final things, these entertainment commodities can be thought of as final commodities. In this respect, to consume a final commodity is no different from consuming an instrumental one that disburdens us of a chore.

## THE IRONIC CONSEQUENCES OF FINAL CONSUMPTION

Television is a clear example of a final commodity. Its refinements from the first sets to those of today fit the same pattern as the refinements in central heating and the refinements of devices in accordance with Borgmann's device paradigm in general. So television is an instance of the vision of domination, liberation, and enrichment. It does not make demands on people and is a window

of the world, making all the goods of the Earth available, technologically available, to them in their living rooms.

Understandably, television has tremendous appeal to us as a culture. It's where technology comes home to people. The amount of time they spend watching it indicates its power.

The A.C. Nielsen Company (1989) currently estimates that people in the United States view upwards of 4 hours of television each day. Given the likelihood that such estimates are inflated, let us assume a more conservative estimate of 2 1/2 hours of television viewing per day over the period of a lifetime. Even at this more conservative rate, a typical American would spend more than 7 full years watching television out of the approximately 47 waking years each of us lives by age 70—this assuming an average of 8 hours of sleep per day. Such a figure is even more striking when we consider that Americans have about 5 1/2 hours a day of free time, or approximately 16 years available for leisure of the same 47-year span. From this point of view and based on a conservative estimate, Americans are spending nearly half of their available free time watching television.

Since it is the most popular way people enjoy final consumption, it is worthwhile to examine in detail the *experience* of this form of consumption as we develop the ironic consequences of final consumption. *Television and the Quality of Life* by Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi ... do just that, examining systematically the reported experience of television in contrast to the reported experience of other activities people spend time on in their daily life. So we need to look closely at their findings with a view to showing how technology in the form of TV does not fulfill its promise.

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi find that television is inexpensive and is easily and quickly available for those who have time for it. It helps people to relax and, at times, may help some to retreat before gathering themselves to face a difficulty. People can watch it for prolonged periods without wearing themselves out physically. It tends to bring families together and family members normally do talk with each other while watching. They also feel better than when watching alone.