Prompt: Read the brief article by Raymond Gozzi Jr., titled, "What If Media Are Not 'Extensions' of Our Senses, But 'Intrusions' on Our Senses." In this article, Gozzi says that, today, we do not feel that media extend our senses; rather, people now feel overwhelmed and intruded upon by the vastness of electronic media. For this discussion prompt, tell us which metaphor rings most true for you—the metaphor of "extension" or "intrusion"—in your experience of electronic media. Give an example from your experience. (One paragraph minimum.)

Note: This article is an example of what students might find in their own research for the last essay assignment.

The Boundaries of Media

The question of media being "extensional" or "intrusive" is fascinating to me as I have worked closely with computers for most of my life and I frequently wonder about how technology affects people. Having paid close attention to the evolution of the personal computer, I have come to understand that there is a fine line between computers as "productivity tools" and computers as "entertainment devices." Many people are not familiar with the notion of a computer as a kind of tool and have to be reminded to look at it in such a way. A computer is like a hammer in that it performs a very specific task that other tools cannot do: if a hammer is supposed to drive nails into wood then a computer is supposed to perform error-free calculations rapidly. However, unlike a hammer a computer is highly adaptable and can be used for all kinds of different tasks, such as delivering a more compelling experience for TV programming, movies, music, video games and other forms of entertainment. Society increasingly emphasizes this particular ability of a computer over its other uses.

That said, I think if a person has a complete understanding of the form of media he is experiencing then it becomes extensional. For example, a book can be read to retrieve information or for enjoyment, but whenever somebody picks one up it is an entirely deliberate act. Television on the other hand is a more passive experience and usually "happens" on its own. Computers and technology also tend to provide passive experiences and I believe the "intrusive" component becomes apparent when one considers how addicted the world is to cell phones and high definition experiences and playstations game consoles. There is a blending of passivity with the inescapable presence of these technology-based media outlets which I believe causes an important change in the experience from "extensional" to "intrusive."

Re: media reading (by Misty Jenkins)

I think what he was trying to convey is that there is a media world much more elaborate and intelligent than the average person can comprehend with their senses.

I don't know if I would say that it's more than the average person can comprehend, but the sheer amount of media bombarding a single person in any given day is more than can be handled. We are experiencing information overload combined with over stimulation and it's making us confused and bewildered. As it said in the article, we need to be able to shut those things off when we want to, but either we can't or we don't know how.

Re:

Quote

Response