

SIMON LIVERANI

# Internet could lead to isolation



The Internet is transforming the world of personal communications in the same way television revolutionized entertainment in the 1950s — by pulling people away from the movie theater and keeping them in their homes, isolated from the rest of the world.

With Internet, personal contact is shunned in favor of a tendency to segregate oneself from an unfiltered society. The protection of the computer screen allows people to free themselves from shyness and insecurity by concealing their appearance, tone of voice and mannerisms.

This gives the feeling of having conquered one's fears, but it's only a delusion.

Freed of all his or her complexes, the Internet user can be as charming as the screen allows him or her to be. However, we should ask ourselves what's left in human communication if we reduce it to a mere exchange of electronic sentences. It's all right if Internet is used as a tool to cross continents and expand one's horizons, but it is sad if it becomes the sole means of socializing.

There are people who use the computer to communicate with people in the same building, sometimes on the same floor. This is not only sad but unhealthy. We are witnessing the birth of a vast group of people who prefer virtual contact to real contact.

People who are, or feel, unable to interact with other human beings on a personal level hide themselves behind powerful hard drives, which are seen as computer-age symbols of masculinity. Inside the room, the Internet gigolo can feel confident and become another person. It's a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde transformation, in which a "mouse" becomes a lion.

The Internet is used widely

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among college students to get dates — or at least to flirt with users of the opposite sex. Usually it's men who lurk the net, looking for opportunities to show off the tons of megabytes in their hard drives, considering the Internet users' testosterone-heavy demographics.

The problem, however, is that using the net for extended periods of time cripples the ability to communicate in person. In the computer world, all that matters is what is said; in the real world, how it's said is more important.

The most brilliant computer converser might end up being the dullest date ever — and vice versa. To have a relationship through the computer, a person doesn't need to care about appearance. A dirty T-shirt, old underwear and slippers are a perfectly good outfit for the Internet stud.

The net, however, also is about serious issues — and serious users. The free flow of information makes it a treasure trove for people who know how to use its vast resources. Any subject can be discussed in the countless news groups — from astrophysics to tasteless jokes. This freedom presents a wide array of ethical and legal issues.

But the interesting aspect is that the Internet represents the closest thing we have to the communication superhighway. That is, when we'll be able to conduct our lives

without moving from the couch.

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Virtual reality is today's turn-on phrase for most computer freaks. But if we really think about it, it's a scam. Virtually, all humanity could be eating steak every day; virtually, Tampa Bay could win the Super Bowl. This is not "virtual reality" but "actual illusion."

Why would we need to deceive our senses? Have we lost the ability to go out and do things ourselves? The ideal of a society in which each home will be an independent self-sustaining unit is dictated by the fear that exists in our society. This fear tells us that the fewer people we meet, the safer we feel.

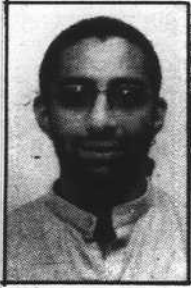
A thousand years ago, a human being would come across only a few hundred people in his or her lifetime, but those people would know everything about one another. Today, we are able to contact thousands of people daily, but nobody knows anything about anyone.

If this is progress, maybe we'll come to a time so developed that we won't know ourselves.

Liverani is a junior advertising major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

YOUSUF BASHIR

# Faith separates men, animals



The difference between animals and humans is contributed mainly to intellect or reason. Nature has endowed us with sensory organs, which are the greatest source of acquiring certain and specific knowledge.

We cannot be sure of anything except that which is perceived through our sensorial reactions. We have, indeed, discovered this world through them. Through our sensory organs, we have gathered a vast treasure of observations, experiences and perceptions.

A number of philosophers regard the senses as weak, doubtful and unreliable mediums for acquiring knowledge. The knowledge of man is extremely imperfect, and his senses are uncertain and erring.

We can never be sure that what the senses impart to us is true. They merely show us the world as external objects. Even the condition of the sense organs appears to us in sensuous perception. In order to possess them, an instrument is needed that can control them, and then a means of controlling this instrument, and so on.

Where did we come from, and where have we to go? In other words, what is the beginning and end of the cosmic order? Can our eyes, ears, hands and tongue guide us to find an answer to this question?

We can find out where we presently are only through our sensory impressions. These faculties lead us only up to a certain limit; they stop before an impregnable wall.

We cannot see or hear beyond a certain distance, while other sensory organs suffer from even greater limitations. Whether there is a life after death can neither be affirmed nor denied by sensorial observations. In fact, our sensory organs are to subserve life, and they

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confine themselves to the limitations inherent in life itself.

They cannot provide an answer to or affirm or deny anything outside the field of their powers. At the most, they can deny having perceived something but cannot deny its existence. But, is perception and existence one and the same? Is anything not discernible through the agency of sensory organs nonexistent?

Do we act on this premise in our daily life and refuse to accept everything not actually perceived by our senses?

No. We do not, for such an attitude would totally demolish the distinctions between a man and an animal, and all the treasures of knowledge and culture would be rendered meaningless.

Since we cannot perceive life by means of our sensory organs, how can we obtain further details of it through them?

Sensory perceptions are likewise ill-suited to furnish a reply to the question about the reality of cosmos. Sensorial observations can only comprehend different objects. The senses perceive parts of the world or conceive the reality in fragments.

They have undoubtedly perceived and discovered a large number of fragments of the world, but we can grasp the inner harmony

between them that integrates these various pieces into a composite entity — into a world in its totality.

Do they lead to the underlying cause of essential unity in diversity, the spirit of unity running through apparently conflicting phenomena?

The essence and power behind the well-balanced cosmic order is even harder to understand through the methodical equipment of human senses.

We can comprehend a part of physical laws governing this universe, because we perceive and experience their effects. Some of these are quite obvious. For example, we know that the fire burns, water quenches thirst, and poison kills.

But the experience about moral behavior is of an entirely different nature. We can find out the heat and its effect by the tactile sense, but we cannot through our senses discover the harm inflicted by cruelty, falsehood or misappropriation.

We need an ethical intuition, religious faith and a deep feeling of spiritual security for realizing the effects of moral behavior. These are quite distinct and different from the feeling experienced by touching fire.

Bashir is a senior food science major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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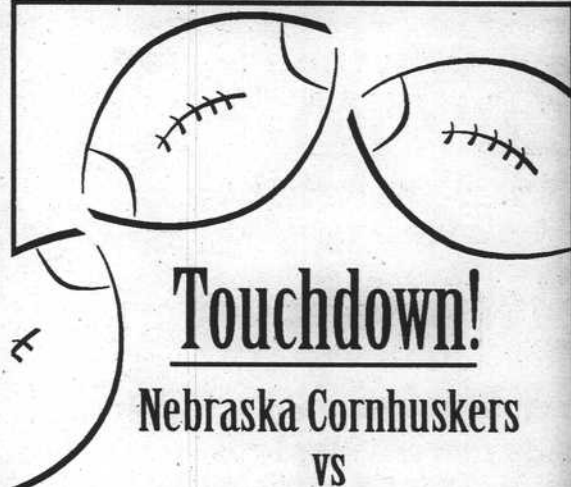
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