

God, Life, and Everything **Tech Love**

Here's a depressing note for you. If you follow online discussion boards, which do you think generates more comment and more partisanship: a possible attack on Syria, or the war between Samsung Galaxy S4 and the iPhone 5?

Here's a hint: in one national publication, geared toward its topic and discussing the latest breaking news, there were 1009 comments, many referring to the other side as "embarrassing" and worse. Meanwhile, in a different publication, also geared toward its topic, also discussing breaking news, there were 1621 comments, many referring to the other side as "idiots" and worse.

Yup, the first publication was the Washington Post while the second was CNET, a technology magazine. While these aren't perfectly analogous, the point remains: more people get riled up over Android vs iOS than Syria vs US.

This is not a political issue. This is not to say what you should believe about our response to use of chemical weapons in Syrian. This is merely an observation that we have more passion for our devices than for our people.

That's not fair, I know.

Yet, there is something to it. We love the things of this life, and we love to discuss them. From earliest days when cavemen compared the relative attributes of their rocks, we have been gaga over technology. Whether it's weapons, tools, vehicles, or entertainment, we love it. You might throw sports in there, too, because the technical details make it seem like a machine sometimes.

Why?

I have a theory. Technology in all its forms requires tremendous skill and knowledge. You can admire the brilliance behind the new Touch ID (fingerprint identification) or the clarity of a super sharp camera. You can admire the control of the well-executed fastball. You can marvel at the power and speed of the F-22 Raptor fighter jet.

In short, you can see technology. You can compare technology. Is the Lamborghini really better than Maserati? Android or Apple? Yankees or Red Sox? There's nothing so fun as showing off your own knowledge by trashing the guy who loves the other format. Makes you feel good even if you can get hot under the collar when the other jerk trashes your team/phone/weapon/tool/car....

I think there's another reason why we love the things and skills so much. You can go into great depth discussing them without ever getting to a deeper level. That is, you don't have to think about what it means, about what your role in the world is, about what you ought to do with what you have...

This is one reason people can so readily create such elegant, effective and powerful machines designed with the singularly ugly purpose of killing other people. You don't see the shattered lives; you see the beauty of the release mechanism.

I get it. And in a way, I've always loved that stuff. As a child, I was into fighter planes of every era. I could tell you all the technical details of the P-51 Mustang or the British Spitfire or the German ME-109. Going back to World War I, I'd get all annoyed if somebody dared suggest that the Fokker D-VII was better than the SPAD XIII. And was I ever excited when my uncle told me he'd flown in a Phantom jet that landed on the USS Enterprise.

Today, I discuss the relative merits of *CM Almy* vestments vs *Whipple*, but it's hardly different. You get into minutia because it's easier. I'm convinced this is an existential issue - if I don't dig myself out of the technical fascination trap, I lose part of the reason I'm on this earth in the first place.

How will I deal with it? Day by day, step by step. Every time I find myself absorbed with the tech of life rather than the purpose, I'm just going to mentally take a step back, look at what it means in the big picture. The value of tech will always be there, but I'm going to work very hard to make sure it's not the primary thing in my life.