# Snapchat AI: 'Efficiency' Devoid of a Meaningful End

Earlier this year, Snapchat released a new feature to all users of its popular social media platform. Called "My AI," this resource allows users to hold text conversations with a specialized chatbot. The technology works similarly to other popular AI bots like ChatGPT and uses typed or spoken input to answer questions, generate ideas, and create text for its users.

There's already been some controversy around the tool: Some users report it can track their location even in ghost mode, and some parents are concerned about the bad advice it may be giving their children. I'm concerned, too, but about a deeper problem. When it comes to Snapchat AI, my main question is "What's the point?"

## A Question for Technology

Author and cultural analyst Neil Postman poses the same question but in a slightly different way. Before embracing technology, he says, we should ask ourselves this: "What is the problem to which this technology is a solution?"

To illustrate his point, Postman recounts a congressional controversy around the subsidization of a new supersonic jet that would cut New York to Los Angeles travel time in half. The question was asked: "What is the problem to which the supersonic jet is the solution?"

Reportedly, the problem was spending six hours on a plane instead of three. And, as Congress decided, this wasn't a serious enough problem because people would probably just spend those three extra hours watching TV. So, instead of directing millions of dollars to the supersonic jet, Congress

opted to equip existing 747s with television sets.

# Enamored by Efficiency

Though amusing, Congress' solution was prudent. Why spend millions of dollars to solve a non-serious problem?

Unfortunately, this line of thinking seems to be less and less common. Contemporary America often seems to embrace a hazy sense of "efficiency," grasping at gadgets without stopping to ask what they are *for.*

In [*Walden*](), Henry David Thoreau references a problem of his own time: "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." After all, "our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. *They are but improved means to an unimproved end*" (emphasis added).

Efficiency—the implicit goal of much of our modern technology—is a way of doing things, not a thing getting done. We can clean a house efficiently, and we can efficiently commit murder. Everything that's efficient, then, is not necessarily good—we wouldn't applaud a murderer for a quick and orderly killing.

At the least, we need to beware the contemporary temptation to embrace any ostensibly "efficient" gadget. Like overexcited children, we're often enamored with the playthings of [technological advancement]() and efficiency, never pausing to analyze the intrigues we hold.

# So, What About Snapchat?

Here's the question for AI texting: "What is the problem to which Snapchat's AI texting is the solution?"

There might be good answers to this question, but—if there are—I haven't found any. In an age already awash in instant information, digital assistants, and smartphone mania, I have to wonder if AI texting fills any significant hole in our day-to-day lives. Is it a hollow replacement for the human connection so many of us are missing in the [loneliness epidemic](#)?

At the least, we should remember to look at new technology—from AI texting to standard [ChatGPT](#) to the next snazzy app on our phones—with scrutiny. Are these advancements truly contributing to our lives? Or are they merely flashy toys—"efficiency" devoid of a meaningful end?

Whatever the technology, America must confront itself with three words: "What's the point?"

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