



On freedom and slavery when using a smart device

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Various technologies change our life drastically. We rely on the fruits of the technological progress as if they were always available. We often use the Internet, smartphones, electricity and computers automatically and unconsciously as we use, for example, the ground for stepping on while walking. Nobody wonders what it would be if the ground failed. Similarly, we ponder over living without electricity or the Internet only in the rare cases when they fail us.

But, can we live without contemporary technologies and smart devices which embody them? Or, maybe, they are so reliable that there is no sense in asking such questions for the common man? Here, we can notice an interesting and at the same time dangerous feature. The described situation is relatively new. While at the dawn of the technological progress people used different tools and instruments deliberately to increase labor productivity, today's technological convergence of multiple devices is forming a new reality, where people have unique tools appropriate for a particular task. Person-device interfaces become increasingly simpler. Push the button and solve your problem. The technological progress forbids ad hoc approaches de facto, as against de jure. There is no need for such approaches because a specific instrument is always available. Thus, technologies create an artificial environment for human life, which we usually accept as is—without questioning their appropriateness or potential consequences of their use.

We run a risk of getting hooked on these devices because often we do not consider any alternative solution to our tasks—only a technological device.

The situation raises many questions like:

- Does a person have a choice to use or not to use the new technologies, or there is no choice and everybody is forced to delegate all tasks to some smart devices?
- Does a person unconsciously fall into a technological trap, from which one cannot get out without losing oneself?
- Does a person's essence change during interaction?

We can highlight two opposite opinions about the technological progress and about its influence on people and society. The first opinion is declared by transhumanists and other techno-preachers, who consider the technological progress as an absolute good and urge to use convergent technologies as a mean to improve human beings up to replacement of their biological essence. The ultimate goal of techno-preaches is to create a posthuman cyborg instead of the ordinary human being who is vulnerable in many ways.

Radical opponents of techno-preaching (let's call them neo-conservators or anthropo-conservators) characterize technology as evil which leads to erosion of moral, spiritual and ideological guidelines turning a person into a being with the lowest instincts and a lack of self-awareness. Such arguments can even mutate into some kind of new patriarchy and prompt the desire to return a traditional way of life.

Both trends are somehow fatalistic. The first claims that technologies are good, and the second characterizes them as evil. The choice is not comprehensive. Only black and white. Only pro et contra. In reality, people simply make use of technologies. Probably, in our modern world one can hardly imagine that somebody does not use smart devices at all. Eventually, every person gets some smart device. The issue lies in the moment when this person starts using it. People (say, parents) or circumstances can change this moment. Thus, despite a certain determinism implying that it will be impossible to get away from smart devices, the opportunity of choosing the starting moment is still preserved.

Moreover, there are many possible device-use scenarios, and those around you can (at least at the initial stage) exert an influence. Also, there are numerous ways to regulate the use of smart devices: starting from simple bans (for example,

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by parents or teachers) and ending with some non-trivial rules or, even, laws.

In addition, there are lots of possible behavioral models for smart devices. Hardware and software properties can be selected. It depends on the people who create devices and fill them with software.

Thus, we can ask three questions which leave us a choice:

1. When should a person first interact with a smart device?
2. Who and how should regulate this process?
3. Who should be responsible for the content of a smart device and for loading scripts into it?

Answers to these questions may define a human development trajectory when interacting with smart devices. It is important that these questions demonstrate that the effect depends on people who develop devices and regulate their use rather than technologies in themselves. In this context, two scenarios may be considered.

Scenario 1. Freedom. The goal of this scenario is to guide a person. A smart device should play the role of a teacher or a master who leads a person from total dependence (at the early age) to independent decision-making. The strategy is to lessen gradually the device influence on the person step-by-step. A device may test the child qualities to lead in a more ecological manner.

Scenario 2. Slavery. It is quite possible that smart devices would enslave a person. This scenario may be implemented if, for example, starting from the childhood a person would always interact with a device without realizing that the device is a secondary rather than the primary controller. In such scenario the person runs the risk of falling down

into the deep dependence on technologies without any easy way of getting out until the device behavior is transformed by changing software or until the access to the device is stopped.

The above discussion explains that a potential danger related to the technological progress comes out not from technologies themselves but from people who create scenarios on the use of smart devices and who write programs determining their behavior. Thus, people (not technologies) are responsible for all positive or negative consequences, which may occur due to use of smart devices in our life. The result may vary from total slavery to total freedom.

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