



THE EVOLUTION OF INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PROCESS OF DIGITALIZATION: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the impact of digital technologies on changes in individual consciousness on the basis of the theory of technological determinism. The article examines how artificial intelligence, social networks, algorithmic governance, and virtual environments affect an individual's self-awareness, decision-making mechanisms, moral relations, and memory transformation.

KEYWORDS: Technological determinism, individual consciousness, transformation, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, self-awareness, cognitive changes, digital environment, human agency.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, technological development has deeply penetrated all spheres of human life — work, communication, education, leisure, and even personal identification. Artificial intelligence systems, big data, social networks, and mobile devices have become not only tools, but also forces shaping ways of thinking, values, and worldview. From this point of view, technological determinism — the idea that technologies independently determine the vector of development of society and individual consciousness — is gaining new relevance. The concept of technological determinism is interpreted differently by scholars. For example, Marshall McLuhan viewed technology as an “extension of man” and analyzed the influence of communication tools on the formation of thinking and consciousness. At the same time, E. Clark and D. Chalmers's theory of “The Extended Mind” emphasizes that individual consciousness is not limited only to the mind, but is closely connected with external tools, technologies, and the environment. This approach serves as an important methodological basis for understanding how the consciousness and identity of the individual are transformed under conditions of the digital environment. Modern studies show that the use of digital technologies changes the mechanisms of individual perception, reshapes attention and memory processes, and expands social experience through virtual space. At the same time, technologies may influence the individual not only as a means of creative and cognitive development, but also as a factor associated with the risk of psychological and social isolation. Literature Review and Methodology: Among the founders of the theory of technological determinism are thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan (“The Medium is the Message,” 1964) and Neil Postman (“Technopoly,” 1992). According to McLuhan, rather than the content of technologies, their form — for example, the printing press, television, the Internet — determines human perception and the structure of society. Postman, in turn, emphasized that



technologies gradually transform culture and the system of values and lead to “technopoly” — an era of technological domination.

Modern researchers such as K. Hayles, N. Carr, and Sh. Turkle have developed this theory and empirically substantiated the impact of digital tools on human cognitive processes, particularly attention, memory, thinking, and self-awareness. For example, Nicholas Carr (“The Shallows,” 2010) showed that Internet use reduces the ability for deep reading and concentrated thinking. Sherry Turkle (“Alone Together,” 2011), in turn, emphasized that social networks may replace real communication and that a person’s online identity may come into conflict with the real “self.”

In matters of algorithmic governance and decision-making, another direction — “algorithmic determinism” (K. Yeung, L. Introna) — is also emerging. According to it, recommendation systems such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, as well as rating algorithms, control users’ behavior, tastes, and even worldview to an unexpectedly strong degree.

Empirical studies show that long-term and active use of digital technologies reshapes individual perception and changes the mechanisms of receiving social experience. For example, in a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2022), 67% of respondents noted that active communication on social networks has a significant impact on consciousness and memory processes compared to real communication [5].

Technological determinism carries out the transformation of individual consciousness in two opposing directions. On the one hand, technology expands human epistemic and cognitive capabilities. For example, online education platforms, interactive resources created with the help of artificial intelligence, and scientific databases allow an individual to acquire knowledge on a global scale quickly and effectively. In this way, technology expands consciousness, stimulates creative thinking, and increases the individual’s potential for self-development. From a philosophical point of view, this situation strengthens epistemological freedom, that is, a person becomes capable of forming their own opinion independently. On the other hand, technological tools may make individual consciousness dependent on external stimuli. The constant flow of information, wasting time on social networks, and algorithmic personalization shorten human attention and limit deep reflection and thinking. At the same time, algorithmic systems begin to shape human desires and leave them under external control. As a result, the individual’s freedom of choice and ability for critical thinking weaken. This situation is assessed as the passivizing effect of technological determinism, that is, human consciousness is partially “programmed” by technology.

From a philosophical point of view, technological determinism discusses the issue of the activity and passivity of individual consciousness. If a person accepts technology only as a consumer, they begin to subordinate their consciousness to external influences. At the same time, through conscious management of technology, a person can expand their thinking and the process of acquiring knowledge. For example, selective use of digital tools, critical evaluation of information, and creative use of online resources help the individual develop their consciousness independently. Technological determinism can also be analyzed from anthropological and ethical perspectives. From an anthropological point of view, technology shapes the individual’s social identity, ensures the acceptance of cultural values, and adaptation to the new information environment. From an ethical point of view, a person’s dependence on technology and remaining under algorithmic governance make the issues of individual

responsibility and conscious choice urgent. Thus, while technological determinism is a force that changes individual consciousness, it can also be directed toward positive results through conscious human activity.

Conclusion

Technological determinism plays an important role in the formation of individual consciousness. This process is two-sided: on the one hand, technology expands human opportunities for acquiring knowledge, creative thinking, and self-development; on the other hand, it may make human attention dependent on external stimuli and limit freedom of choice through algorithmic governance. From a philosophical point of view, the change in individual consciousness depends not only on the existence of technological tools, but also on the person's ability and choice to use them consciously. Therefore, technological determinism may appear both as a force that passivizes individual consciousness and as a means of expanding consciousness. As a result, by managing technology consciously and purposefully, a person can direct its influence toward positive results and maximize the opportunity for personal development and independent thinking.

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