HS-5: A Technoaddict Species

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A small percent of people inject certain substances in their veins, gaining some satisfaction, which is continuously diminishing, and injuring their organisms, worsening with time.

This behaviour is frowned upon, completely antisocial, hard to escape, and this whole affair is very sad. Harm is enormous. We're left to wonder why would people do this to themselves.

A bigger percent of people consume alcohol. Some do from time to time, but there is a tendency to get involved. It comes without saying what danger alcohol poses. It's, in fact, narcotic, but strangely it's socially accepted. Harm is considered less. It's just less intense.

Smoking. Fast food. Masturbation. There are a lot of things in our lives to which we become addict. Addictions share similar traits: they pose harm, they, at the same time, bring satisfaction. Nature of addiction is such: we stimulate our satisfactory system, it becomes less sensitive, and we need more to stimulate it and get what we want. We increase the dose - with it we increase the harm. But it's hard to escape: trying to escape is scary and, well, harmful too. Because you're addicted. You just go along.

A good illustration is a mouse experiment. A mouse had an electrode connected to her, stimulating her brain and making it continuously produce hormones of joy. A button was connected to this electrode. The mouse pushes the button - WOW! - it feels good. She pushes the button again - she likes it. She doesn't realise it when she starts endlessly pushing the button, continuously stimulating her brain, satisfying herself to death.

In a continuum between heroin and smoking there's a tendency: harm gets less intense (but not less dangerous), addiction becomes more socially

accepted (sometimes encouraged). Still, nicotine is narcotic. It posesses all the qualities of narcotic.

So does technology. I argue techonology is a species-wide narcotic. It feels good. It enhances your abilities: today you can do more than you could do yesterday. And humankind always needs a bigger dose.

With time, the dose gets bigger, and satisfaction decreases. Same amount of techy gimmicks we've had yesterday doesn't satisfy us anymore today. Yesterday our iPhone 5 was a wonder, today it's a mundane thing. We need iPhone 6. What's worse, marginal satisfaction decreases too. A leap from iPhone 4 to iPhone 5 is bigger than the one between iPhone 5 and iPhone 6. (I use iPhones as an example because it's pretty illustrative: it applies to everything). We're addicted to it because it satisfies us, helps us do less and get more, entertain, solve problems we couldn't solve yesterday, satisfy our curiosity.

The more you get, the more you need, and the less it satisfies you. But we can't stop. We're pushing the button. And while satisfaction decreases, the danger rises. We are addict to it, we are anxious if we're deprived from it. There are numerous dangers posed by technology, which were discussed in another thread, but in general they sum up in our deprivation from human nature and thus ever increasing neurosis. Intertwined world, which is a logical consequence of tech-overdose, poses a threat to our existence. We're killing our planet, thus killing ourselves. We're becoming dumb as humans, though more sophisticated as humans+technology. Our societies are so complex that we can't handle them. Price of a human error rises enormously: today one human error can destroy humankind. To keep running we need so many resources and we need so much social unfairness that it becomes nearly impossible to continue. With time all these factors will lead to improbability of climbing higher, while it's all we need - to climb higher. Deprived from out tech-cotic, we're going to suffer. But we can't stop.

Why we can't stop? Because this addiction is subtler than smoking. Harm

is not obvious. We tend to deny it. No one denies we're addicted but everyone says it's for good. It's a narcotic of a species, rather than of one human, and that's why we share it and don't see it's direct harm. Most of us.

We are continuously reassuring ourselves all is well and all will be well, and we'll get a bigger dose, and then a bigger, and it will last forever, eternal satisfaction. We can't believe our button can be taken away. We can't handle thinking we're nothing without the button. We feel something is wrong, we're anxious, but we never confess and never look our fears in the eye. We rather asks ourselves: "All is ok?" "Yes, all is ok." "We will continue?" "Of course we will. How can we not?" Keep calm and believe in continuous satisfaction.

Alas, to err is human, and to get addicted is human as well. It's escapism. Alcohol helps one escape from his daily problems. Technology helps us escape into an imaginary world of total well-being, where no one needs to dig dirt and raise food and work hard and all we have to do is stare at screens and have fun. And it might be this addiction is mother of all addictions, because it creates anxiety we then try to escape, in turn. This addition seems subtle, but is global.

And when harm is subtle (but accumulating), satisfaction is high (though constantly diminishing) and addiction is socially accepted, encouraged, and questioning our ability to continue becomes a social crime, a delinquency... How on Earth can we try to stop? How can we even start to think it would be a wise thing to stop? To be completely honest, the core problem is not technology itself. It's us.

Continuing will kill us. Stopping will shock us. We're all addicted. And since I realised it, it doesn't feel morally right to continue this mutual reassurement. That's why I keep on saying and writing these things, which feel so inconvenient even for me, because I'm addicted too. But awareness is the first step for cure. It's a difficult path.