

Is the Human Mind Able to Maintain its Independence in the Contemporary World?

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The “Theological-political treatise” by Spinoza has become an impact for this article. In the XX chapter of the given treatise, the author says that another one cannot influence the mind of one person or many people for an indefinite period. But taking into account those traditions, which now prevail in the contemporary world, this thought raises more doubt. The modern world is becoming extremely complicated. Advertising and computer technologies are being improved at a frantic pace every day. A human thought just has to be steered on the right course, and a person will buy what an advertiser needs. Advertising on TV, outdoor advertising, advertisements on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, newspapers, various presentations — all these are becoming a powerful source of influence on human consciousness. Day and night, there is a struggle for people’s minds. It turns out that every day a person is under a destructive information attack. The question therefore arises: is the human mind able to maintain its independence in thoughts and actions? Are there any means that would help a person avoid outside influence on their own thoughts? Or, perhaps in the modern world, there is no guarantee of freedom, security, and independence of human consciousness? In this article, I will try to find the answer to the questions raised.

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In the “Theological-political treatise,” Baruch Spinoza writes: “No man’s mind can possibly lie wholly at the disposition of another, for no one can willingly transfer his natural right of free reason and judgment, or be compelled so to do” (Spinoza, 2018). And that was exactly this thought of the famous philosopher that had an impact on writing this article. The modern world is becoming extremely complicated. Advertising and computer technologies are being improved at a frantic pace every day. Every minute, every second, there is a struggle,

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first of all, for people's minds. A human thought just has to be steered on the right course, and a person will buy what an advertiser needs.

Political parties also use manipulative practices and various means in the best way possible. Advertising on TV, outdoor advertising, advertisements on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, newspapers, various presentations — all these are becoming a powerful source of influence on human consciousness.

It turns out that every day a person is under a destructive information attack. The question therefore arises: is the human mind able to maintain its independence in thoughts and actions? Are there any means that would help a person avoid outside influence on their own thoughts? Or, perhaps in the modern world, there is no guarantee of freedom, security, and independence of human consciousness? Or is Benedict Spinoza right?

Spinoza says: "no one can abdicate his freedom of judgment and feeling; since every man is by indefeasible natural right the master of his own thoughts" (Spinoza, 2018). Well, what does the contemporary world tell and dictate us? Can a hundred percent convince the modern human being that what they think is their personal thoughts? To be sure that just their free thoughts have led them to their own independent actions? Let us try to find an answer and have a look at the modern world of advertising technologies.

For instance, take the largest social networking in the world — Facebook, which was created in 2004. The number of users of this networking has exceeded 1,4 billion people. This world social platform offers incredible advertising opportunities. If you want to sell goods or services, convince people of political preferences, and promise a solution to their problems, you have an unprecedented set of advertising decisions. This is a certain series of tools that effectively allows interacting with the right audience. In other words, Facebook suggests advertising oriented towards the so-called target audience. Such an advertisement is called a target. The latter allows directing its advertisements at the target audience as accurately as possible. For instance, You got interested in some goods, services, or political parties. Your wishes, preferences (likes), article views, analytical sources are recorded and stored with a special code. And then Facebook offers You an advertisement, information, goods with similar content. It is often the case that You have already bought what you wanted, but the advertisement is appearing in an intrusive way in Your information space for a while. Is it unintentional? Of course not! Your wishes, actions, thoughts are being watched with a specific program code day and night. Whether You like it or not — You remain inseparable from the external information influence. And it does not matter how a person feels in this environment.

Advertising on Facebook looks quite natural. Because these adverts are shown along with messages from friends and a family. In its turn, Facebook knows nearly everything about its users. Advertising is set up with sophisticated software tools. Marital status, a city, hobbies, interests, problems and etc. are taken into consideration. A cost of an advertisement is not high, but there are a lot of opportunities. For instance: you became interested in a product, but you have not bought it yet. The advertisement for this product will constantly appear in front of your eyes unless you decide to buy it. A question arises: is it Your own thought to buy this thing? Or if there weren't this continually appearing advertisement, would you buy it? Thus, the question is: is not Your thinking, this way, under the constant influence of somebody else's thought?

Every advertisement on Facebook pursues its purpose, which an advertiser specifies at the stage of setting. Now, let's take another example. Let us assume, elections to the Senate are being held in the country. The parties are launching advertising. Set up the purpose of their advertisement as the following: to boost a post, or to promote a page, or direct people

to a website, or to stimulate an interest in Your offer. All varieties can be used at once. There are a lot of options, as well as combinations of these options. Every advertisement promises something, but just what You need because there are data about You. Every advertisement stimulates, criticizes, or promotes something. And now a voter finds themselves in a situation when it is hard for them to distinguish what they want by themselves from the imposed one. All this is directed at one main purpose: to win a voter's voice. But a question arises: is it a free choice of a voter? Is it not an imposed idea, which a voter has gradually accepted as their own one? Considering the given situation, a problem of maintaining freedom of his or her own opinion is arising. It turns out that human thought can be manipulated easily. At the same time, a person may not even guess that their thought is managed. And people like those are the majority. But there are those ones who understand that there is a vast number of such means to manage a person's thought and a choice. Facebook is just one of many ways, which can influence one person's thoughts.

Does it not mean that a person, to some extent, should restrict themselves to using Facebook and other social networking? It may be so. Or may not. An individual must realize a precise algorithm: the less information about ourselves we make public, the fewer factors will influence us. The more we question what we see, feel, hear, the less impact from outside we will have. If to be afraid of everything, why to breathe then? I am convinced that an individual is able to assess information influence adequately. And so, to play his own independent role in the external world.

Thanks to information technologies, any democratic society can easily get transformed into a totalitarian one. And it is another danger to a human person. Totalitarian domination seeks absolute management of subordinates. Total control is in all spheres of human existence. It wants entire subordination to political goals from upstairs. It forbids and eliminates free thought.

Spinoza writes, "however unlimited, therefore, the power of a sovereign may be, however implicitly it is trusted as the exponent of law and religion, it can never prevent men from forming judgments according to their intellect, or being influenced by any given emotion" (Spinoza, 2018). Indeed, having critical thinking, a person will ask themselves questions and find answers to them. But, are all people capable of critical thinking?

Potentially, everybody has this capacity, although not everybody wants to use it. It is important to pay special attention to education. In this case, I do not mean just a standard set of school, gymnasium, university. However, it is of significant importance, of course. I want to emphasize constant self-education. We need to broaden our horizon of awareness in various directions. Such awareness will give us the possibility to have our own point of view on various issues. It will be hard to manipulate such a person. And it is this individual who will always have their own point of view.

The role of the State should not be excluded. Because the purpose of a state "is not to act as a despot, holding men down by fear and making them subject to someone else's control but rather, it is to free each person from fear so that he can live as securely as possible, retaining to the utmost his natural right to exist and act without hurting himself or anyone else" (Spinoza, 2018). And it is not worth disputing here with Spinoza. If the leadership of the State aims to build a developed country, its purpose will be the benefit of citizens. Then the State's purpose will not be "to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata, but rather to bring it about that they don't risk anything by fully using their mental and physical powers, they use their reason freely... And so the purpose of the State is really freedom" (Spinoza, 2018).

In other words, the best State gives everybody freedom of self-creating, freedom of self-actualization, freedom of thinking. Only such freedom is necessary for the progress of the sciences and the arts for the State's development. People who have a free and unbiased opinion are needed for progressive development.

Thoughts and decisions of a person quite often influence the subconsciousness via their emotions and experiences. We can't but agree that emotions play an important role in a person's life and behavior. Influence on a person through emotions is a psychological impact on a person. And a person often does not perceive such influence. It is a hidden control over a person against their will. The thing is that a man is a social being, and he cannot develop to a level of an individual beyond human society. One of the purposes of manipulation is the very social in a human being, that is, their social needs. A person is created in such a way that a movement forward, to more spiritual is potentially present inside them. If to deprive a person of all this, they won't be human beings. Then an individual will gradually return to the animal (pre-human) State.

Some people have three types of personal orientation in society:

- a) consumption orientation;
- b) prestige orientation;
- c) self-development orientation.

The hardest thing is to control the thoughts of those people who are oriented toward self-development. As such, people organize their own space in the sphere of an individual's development. They consciously ignore imposed conditions of existence in most cases.

The ideologists of globalization use the first two types of people (consumption type and prestige type) very well. They call people, "homo economicus." "Economic man" ("homo economicus") is first of all a consumer. Thoughts of consumption type and prestige type individuals go around consumer goods, entertainment, finances. Such kind of people is not interested in art events, literature, world politics, and economy. That is why it is easy to control the thoughts of such people. The first two types like low-quality series and TV shows, including political shows. The later ones, in fact, with the very name, are incredible rubbish.

The third type of people, who are oriented to self-development attempt to be independent of a model of thoughts, which are determined by other people. Friedrich Schiller thinks that intellect, freedom, and moral make an individual independent of everyone else's thoughts. Because, in the philosopher's opinion, an intelligent person gets free of any dependency to be able to act in a moral way (Schiller, 1970). A human being is born (created) to be free and to think freely. Therefore, Schiller and Spinoza are absolutely right, thinking that a man can make themselves free and strong. Inner freedom, freedom of thought can be obtained through culture, art, aesthetics.

The pace of life and lifestyle imposed on us is so intensive that they do not allow a person to have time to think about something but the daily routine connected with work and existence. Such pace does not lead to improved results of work. This is a rhythm to survive in this crazy world. A man does not have time to rest and to conceive their existence. Therefore, directing a human thought to the daily routine is one of the ways to impose people's other thoughts.

How can an individual be tied to their daily routine? With the help of emotions. The two "passions — emotions" that Spinoza was most interested in were fear and hope. These emotions are widely manipulated in the contemporary world. Think, for instance: people have imposed fear of pandemic or a natural disaster. It leads to temporary suppression of all other

instincts and turning to a self-preservation instinct. A person stops thinking critically under the influence of fear. In this way, it is easy to control human thoughts, as they cannot think straight. With various kinds of fear, it is possible to regulate a person's life and society radically. For instance, to provoke panic buying on a specific product. Here is a current example with a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) in Ukraine, the European Union countries, and worldwide. The demand for protective masks, sanitizers, and other means of protection has risen dramatically. Then the market got saturated, but the prices did not go down to the previous level. Thus, human opinion is influenced by fears, demands, human values.

Let us take the sphere of politics. Ukrainian scientists have suggested their own set of main means of politicians' influence on a person's thought on the basis of the analysis of foreign and domestic experience. One of them is an information kaleidoscope. Modern TV broadcasting is built in such a way that short news stories quickly change each other. All this intersects with a promotional video of goods, TV shows, or political advertisements. News, gossips, emergencies, misinformation prevent a viewer from concentrating on a certain thing. The result is that a person does not have time to comprehend and analyze the received information. Their attention distracts, and in the end, they become dependent on emotions rather than their own critical thinking. The information kaleidoscope uses such an instrument as mosaicism. Information is divided into parts via "controlled" or motivated politicians, experts, journalists, activists. Such an information kaleidoscope can be called an information mosaic. For a consumer, it is hard, almost impossible to reduce to a common denominator divided, not entirely true information.

Information mosaic uses a "post-truth" technology, that is, global or "cloud" fakes. Even in the middle of the last century, scientists foresaw the danger of quickly spread information. Multiple manipulations began to appear on this basis. Warnings against further development of the society on the ground of misinformation also appeared. Nowadays, avoiding truth and a tendency to deceit have become common social behavior. The leading role is now played not by objective, true facts, and events, but by emotions (these are just they, which we will talk about later) and the consequences of the truth, which is not true. This allows political actors to manipulate citizens' minds in the necessary direction for quite a long time.

Sensation technology is mounted in the means of information mosaic. Sensationalism, urgency, extreme attract, intrigue society a lot. Sensations distract from important problems, switch attention to minor and noticeable problems. Thus, the accent is on the secondary and distracts from the problems that have to be solved right now. Nervous tension decreases the ability of critical thinking to see a problem as a whole. It activates people's emotions, not thinking: joy, sympathy, excitement, stress, envy. Influence and increase of emotional State and suppression of critical thinking occur via artificially created authorities. It is the technology of substituting logical thinking for emotion. It develops emotional grayness in a society. Human fear, low level of education, aggression, envy, resentment, dissatisfaction with life, a wish to get something for nothing are used. Nowadays, emotions are more important than ever before. Media play the role of a booster and a spreader of emotions.

Thus, the ability to control emotions is becoming important in the modern world. So, let us talk about the biopolitics of emotions. Michel Foucault devoted a course of lectures to biopolitics, which he called "a new technology of power that exists on a different level, on a different scale and has a different plane of support and gives a possibility to use various tools. Biopolitics acts like a structure of management, which is exercised over the population as a global mass" (Foucault, 2004).

Biopolitics is an interdisciplinary field of knowledge. It combines numerous areas of research: the origin and evolution of human political behavior, psychophysiological aspects of political behavior, the role of education and social norms in changing social and political behavior, the impact of this behavior on a political process, and others. So, biopolitics arises as a related discipline that studies the “political human being” as a biological species with the focus on the psychophysiological mechanisms of political behavior and their impact on the political process. The biopolitics of emotions is one of the tools of biopolitical control over a society. Emotions are mental states and processes in a human being. These are corresponding reactions to external and internal stimuli, which are evinced in the form of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, joy, fear, anger, etc. Emotions reveal a positive or negative attitude of a person to the surrounding world. There are collective emotions, which eclipse by their mass any attempts of critical thinking. That is, emotions prevail over critical thinking and act as a tool that controls the thinking of a large number of people.

For instance, during the 19th — 20th centuries, emotions were at the forefront of politics. Even the philosopher Kant, who is known for his unique self-discipline, violated it twice in his life via emotions. He stopped working during The Battle of Valmy in 1792 when the French Revolution army defeated the troops of the anti-French coalition, which defended the old order. This was the first case. And the second case is the publication of a book by Rousseau, “The Social Contract.” As we can see, emotions control us more than we control them. In the modern world, everybody has access not only to the continuous flow of information but also to the development of emotions. Especially with the help of media. It is the media itself that can cover events and conflicts from different angles. Let us take, for example, the invasion of Israel to Lebanon in 2006. With the media, these were two different wars. If to watch Al Jazeera it is one point of view, and if to watch CBS News — it was a totally different war.

An example of management via emotions, for the time being, is the global virus of fear of the 2019 pandemic, which has been mentioned above. Panic and fear have seized the world, and most people have isolated themselves voluntarily. Panic is created, and critical thinking is substituted for emotions with global media, social networking, and emotions of fear. In his works, Foucault shows how the system of health care has become a tool of state power. Medicine serves political power by organizing control over the body. Even many decades ago, Foucault wondered if control could become total. With modern technologies and means, it is incredibly easy! That is why people need to turn on critical thinking and not to allow emotions to prevail. People have to learn with the determination to resist emotions to preserve their own freedom. If we learn to control our emotions, we will learn to defend our own individuality and freedom.

An ability of a person to understand and control emotions, which they feel is called emotional intelligence. The concept of emotional intelligence was first described at the end of the 20th century by John Mayer and Peter Salovey (Goleman, 1996). They were the ones who defined four directions of emotional intelligence. Namely: how we evaluate and express emotions; what we know about them; how we manage them; how we make decisions on their basis.

Of course, a question arises: how to control your own emotions? It is hard to do, but to some extent, it is possible. An emotion is a short-term reaction to our brain. Therefore, when we received an emotion, it is, first of all, necessary to wait, make a pause. It is not worth making hasty decisions. After all, the only way to make the sea calm is to wait. The same thing is with emotions.

The great Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza inseparably links his doctrine about soul and knowledge with a doctrine about the affect. Spinoza calls the affect (in modern language we will say “emotion”) “states of body, which increase or decrease a property of the body to action, contribute it or restrict it, and at the same time are the ideas of these states” (Spinoza, 2015). Thus, a person who is under the influence of affects is not free. Affects do not contribute to getting to know the truth. Therefore, the cause of human actions is not their will but external factors. Such a life cannot be called charitable. To act in accordance with charity for us is nothing more than to act, live and preserve our existence... according to the guidance of mind based on the pursuit for our own good, — states Spinoza. In the philosopher’s opinion, there are three affects that are experienced by a person: pleasure or joy, dissatisfaction or sadness, and wish. In fact, there are lots of affects, but they all, according to Spinoza’s doctrine, belong to these three kinds.

Considering affects as a cause of intellectual and moral narrow-mindedness of a man, he directed a point of his ethical concept at their curbing. If an individual is weak to fight with their affects, then he is a slave. If a person was able to get control over their affects, they gained freedom. The latter is achieved by getting to know oneself and one’s own affects. So, according to Spinoza, a way to freedom lies via knowing oneself. It is impossible to get rid of affects (emotions) completely.

Through knowledge, a person gets affects in accordance with the laws of our mind. Thus, they reduce the influence of affects on themselves. A person achieves freedom via intellectual activity. Curbing emotions, a person achieves freedom of the soul — the domination of mind over them. And that is when they get control over their emotions.

Therefore, it is worth understanding and becoming aware of the causes of the origin of emotions. Then we will be able to react to them in the right way. If it is not possible to get rid of emotions, then it is not worth it. Because with critical thinking, we can learn to control our emotions. Then emotions will not lead us, and we will direct them in the right direction.

Conclusions

The question therefore arises: is it possible for a person to preserve freedom in the modern world. Or is there any universal advice?

This question is extremely complicated. Because the number of means and methods to manipulate a human thought will be increasing. They will be more sophisticated. Unfortunately, I cannot see any tendencies of their decrease. But let us try to set up some certain steps to preserve a person’s free space.

Firstly, the human being is endowed with a unique quality — he has critical thinking. Critical thinking must become that torch for a human person, which will shine through the darkness. Critical thinking can help a person to avoid information violence and ensure his space of freedom. That is why I agree with Spinoza that “there won’t ever be that people did not even think anything that the supreme powers did not want them to think” (Spinoza, 2018). Because people can think one thing but say another, the more the State tries to deprive people of freedom, the more stubbornly they will hold to it. Therefore, all information must be called into question, checked, analyzed, and only then you can draw your conclusions. In other words, common sense is a watchdog from offenses against our freedom. Therefore any laws, which will attempt to restrict a person’s freedom of thought, will be in vain (Melamed, 2010). Such laws will be the greatest evil for the State itself. In work “In defense of philosophy,”

Maurice Cornforth writes, “a person must always be able to determine with what kind of experience they can check whether this judgment is right or wrong; they must be able to offer the method which gives a possibility to, at least, theoretically, check by experience truth or falsity of somebody’s thoughts” (Cornforth, 1950).

Secondly, education, self-education, the upbringing of a thinking individual in a family, philosophy. It is stated perfectly in the Law of Ukraine “On education.” Education is a fundament of the intellectual, moral, physical and cultural development of an individual, their successful socialization, economic well-being, a guarantee of development of the society united by shared values and culture, and of the State. A goal of the education is the comprehensive development of the human being as a personality and as the supreme value of the society, development of its talents, intellectual, creative and physical abilities, the formation of values and competencies necessary for successful self-realization, raising responsible citizens capable of making a conscious choice and channeling their activities for the good of other people and the society, and enriching the intellectual, economic, creative, cultural potential of the Ukrainian people, improving an educational level of the people in order to ensure Ukraine’s sustainable development and its European choice” (Law, 2017).

In every family, parents should be involved in education. Parents must inculcate their children a wish to educate themselves throughout their lives. And teach a child to use this knowledge on their own, and not just to keep it (Cornforth, 1950). And of course, a person must be aware of philosophers’ thoughts. Unfortunately nowadays “even for thinking people philosophy is just an empty word, which, in fact, means nothing; it is out of use, has no value neither in somebody’s eyes nor in practice...And those who describe it as inaccessible for children are quite mistaken” (Cornforth, 1950). Because a soul, which has become a depository of philosophy, will definitely become better, free, confident, individually thinking.

Thirdly, virtues and moral principles. Upbringing and education are certainly linked to moral principles. Because a person is “an individual, who constantly create themselves, realizes their mission in life, regulating the limits of their subjective will” (Wilber, 2007). The modern human being loudly reasserts themselves. It is important to hear them. For a long time, a person feels like a puppet, which is made of the samples of political and economic forces. But whatever the case, a person strives for independence. No matter how comfortable unfreedom is, a person will try to reject it. In this complex world, a person wants to remain an individual (Trush, 2004). An individual will always protest against being a puppet, machinery, or a slave in the State’s hands or another person. I think it is necessary to direct the human mind towards creating new methods of struggle against the human mind’s enslavement.

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