Mobile Phone Captives and Their Self-Redemption †

Jing Jing 1 and Yaoguo Ma 2,*

1 Department of Philosophy, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi’an Jiaotong University, Xi’an 710049, China
2 Gong Yong Gong Cheng Center, Shaanxi Yanchang Zhongmei Yulin Energy and Chemical Co., Ltd. (YECC), Yulin 718500, China

* Correspondence: mayaoguo@stu.xjtu.edu.cn; Tel.: +86-18966997079
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Abstract: In modern society, people are becoming increasingly addicted to mobile phones, resulting in the alienation from objective real life and in people becoming captives of mobile phones. As the saying goes, since there is such a social phenomenon, there will inevitably be social reflection around it. Therefore, this article explores the reasons for the generation, maintenance forces, and coming difficulties of “mobile phone captives”, and explores some possible solutions and redemptions.

Keywords: mobile phone; alienation; captives; redemption

1. Introduction

Today, from silver-haired elderly people to teenagers, work and life scenes are connected to mobile phones. However, while smart phones can bring convenience to people’s lives, they can also confine most of human energy and time to mobile phones. In other words, smart phones have turned people into “captives” wearing electronic monitoring devices. Consequently, a series of internet buzzwords have emerged in the information age, including “low headed people”, “mobile phone control”, “mobile phone dependence”, and “network anxiety”.

This indicates that “mobile phone dependence” has become a significant social issue, and “mobile phone captives” are becoming a new type of people in the information age. Therefore, a rational understanding of the phenomenon of mobile phone captives and a deep reflection on the direction of self-redemption have become inevitable problems that must be solved.

2. The generation of Mobile Phone Captives

2.1. Reasons

The fundamental symptom of the emergence of mobile phone captives lies in the imbalance between human self-development and the development of “mobile phones”, which includes the development of modern technology and information.

From the perspective of technology, information and the speed of human development, modern society emphasizes investment in fields such as information technology, artificial intelligence, and digital algorithms. Of course, the development speed and effectiveness of these fields are also extremely significant, driving the increasingly updated social development. Compared to others, the development and improvement of the overall dimension of oneself are relatively slow, and even become lost in the trend of technology and information.

Finally, people place a great emphasis of their own development on “information acquisition” and “material improvement” to a large extent, interpreting science, technology and information as the leaders of self-development, and turn the “alienation” formed in
the industrial society into “sustainable differentiation” under the control of information and technology.

2.2. Maintenance

Information and technology are objective entities that are independent of human beings. Thus, what pushes people into the cell phone cage ultimately comes down to human themselves. Overall, the core logical path for people to enter the cell phone cage and its stable phenomenon maintenance lies in people’s dependence on mobile phones.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Social Survey Center of the China Youth Daily, 89.2% of people often watch their mobile phones involuntarily. At the same time, if their phone is not by their side, they will feel insecure. Considering this phenomenon from the perspective of age, the proportion of its incidence in people born in the 1980s and 1990s is relatively high. Among them, 92.2% of those born after the 1990s showed the most prominent direct manifestation [1].

Their dependence on mobile phones manifests as follows:

- Wherever they go, they carry their phones, even when they go to the bathroom, take a shower, or eat as a result of many tasks being arranged through their mobile phones;
- Maintaining relationships with colleagues, family, and friends (such as making phone calls, chatting on We-Chat, browsing social media) through mobile phones;
- The time spent on entertainment and leisure activities (such as watching the news, online shopping, watching TV dramas/programs, playing games, and browsing short videos) relies on being in a state of “holding your phone and playing”;

Due to the vast amount of information in mobile phones and the virtual world, they gather a large amount of “fragmented information”, which is simple and easy to understand, and can be enjoyed without too much patience and mental effort. Looking back at the reality of life, the emotions between people and things are complex and intricate. Compared to the fun they can experience in the virtual world, reality is more boring. Thus, people actively pursue and maintain the virtual world in mobile phones, voluntarily falling into the virtual domination of mobile phones and becoming captives of mobile phones.

3. Negative Experiences of Mobile Phone Captives

3.1. Personal Perspective

From a personal perspective, it manifests in time consumption, in addition to causing psychological and health problems. The findings from the survey are as follows:

- Only 23.4% of the total population use their mobile phones for less than 3 h per day; 45% use them for 3–5 h per day, and 31.6% use them for more than 5 h per day. Some people spend more than 8–10 h using their phones every day. A total of 80.6% of respondents stated that they will consciously control their phone usage time. If a person’s self-control is weak, they will waste a lot of unnecessary time on their phone every day, which will bring negative consequences to their life.
- A total of 88.3% of respondents stated that mobile phones have caused some physical health problems for a long time [2]. The first and foremost issue is eye problems, such as eye fatigue and dryness, decreased vision, and even a series of eye diseases. At the same time, decreased sleep quality, facial skin deterioration, cervical syndrome, and even constipation problems in gastrointestinal diseases were mentioned as well [3].
- In addition, long-term use of mobile phones will weaken people’s psychological resilience, strengthen the inward development of psychology, and cause a series of mental health problems. For example, the excessive use of mobile phones can lead people to avoid reality and negative attitudes, leading to feelings of loneliness and anxiety inside, as well as depression [4]. In addition, it can also trigger people’s sleep procrastination psychology, and even promote the formation of a Buddha-like social mentality among the general public, showing a more indifferent attitude towards life [5].
3.2. Connection Perspective

From a perspective of the connection between individuals and the outside world, this manifests in aspects such as information infringement, social problems and interpersonal relationship troubles.

- Being addicted to mobile phones reduces communication between people in real life, leading to numerous interpersonal problems, including in teacher–student relationships, peer relationships, and marital relationships, parent–child relationships, etc.
- Here, we take parent–child relationship as an example: when parents become addicted to mobile phones, and use mobile phones to raise their children, most of their words, deeds, and mutual communication are limited, and the parent–child relationships tend to be affected.
- In addition, information infringement is also a significant manifestation. Today, in the online and big data environment, there are frequent cases of information infringement disputes arising from the use of mobile phones, which are also stimulating the development of social judicial mechanisms through the use of legal experts.

4. Direction for Self-Redemption

4.1. Possible Direction against the Dilemma

The emergence of mobile phone captives originated from “people”; therefore, the direction of the solution to their difficulties also needs to revolve around people. The possible directions include the following three aspects:

- Reducing people’s psychological dependence on mobile phones, as well as their dependence on the internet, through psychological training;
- Enhancing mobile literacy and enabling people to handle the relationship between themselves and mobile phone use in a more civilized and rational way;
- Taking educational cultivation as a replacement to information bombardment. In the education system, a combination of management, education, restraint and reduction, and a combination of emotions and reality are used to guide people in the maintenance of distance from the virtual world of mobile phones and in their better integration into the reality of life, focusing on different age groups of learners.

4.2. A long and Arduous Journey of Self-Redemption

From a philosophical perspective, the direction of redemption lies in how people can develop their understanding, preservation, and promotion of their subjectivity in the environment of technology and information proliferation. The possible path of redemption is manifested in the following three aspects:

- Firstly, improve the spirit of human independence. Mental independence is a latent trait of human beings. The independent spirit mentioned here does not require people to isolate themselves from their phones and information, nor does it encourage blind confidence and narcissism, but rather the cultivation of an ability of saying no to their phones and maintaining a calm and reflective attitude towards their dependence on them. Spiritual independence and personality independence are essential for not following the trend and improving the habitual submission or dependence on mobile phones.
- Secondly, deepen the depth of social and humanistic care. Mobile phones, information, and technology are objective beings, but they also have the characteristics of being human, that is, they are aimed towards people, are engaged with by people, and serve people. In the social environment covered by mobile phones and information, the different humanistic care that people always hold in their hearts directly determines the level of alienation. Maslow ranked human survival needs from low to high as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, respect needs, and self-actualization needs. Under the domination of mobile phones, people seem to fulfill all needs...
through mobile phones; in reality, however, they place different levels of needs within the same level maintained by mobile phones. That is, mobile phones lower the level of high-level human needs and actively shift the level of high-level human needs such as self-realization and respect. The occurrence of this phenomenon causes people to lose their deep concern and care for their own life, value, dignity, happiness, freedom, etc., through the use of mobile phones. Thus, only by continuously deepening the depth of humanistic care at the general level of society and strengthening the intensity of thinking and caring about people can people gradually break free from the domination of mobile phones.

• Thirdly, elevate the height of philosophical thinking. Philosophy is essentially human, but it differs from the perspective and methods of human beings that general humanities focus on through the following aspects: (1) Philosophy cares about the universal people, rather than a specific individual or group of people. Thus, it naturally has an all-human perspective, exploring the development laws of all of humanity. (2) Philosophy’s concern for people is ultimate and otherworldly, providing people immersed in the mundane world with a reflection towards the other side. We do not require everyone to become philosophers; however, everyone should at least consider the dynamic and open perspective of philosophy and think about the correlation between themselves and mobile phones. (3) The intervention of mobile phones and their information in human self-development has similarities with philosophy at the level of ultimate influence or correlation. People should constantly reflect on the relationship between themselves and their phones, and enhance their rethinking of the sanctity, subjectivity, and freedom of life. That is, people should view the role of mobile phones and their information as a way to enhance or serve their overall development, rather than as the end goal. Therefore, people can only break through the current predicament by continuously elevating their philosophical concern, taking mobile phones and their information as a reality entry point, and maintaining a noble understanding of their ultimate meaning and ideal of life at all times.

In short, the initiators and maintainers of mobile phone captives are all human beings themselves, and their redemption must inevitably consider human beings themselves. Self-redemption is the core path for people to break through the dilemma, regain their faith in life, and then return to their focus on better personal development.

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