

Newsletter

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Editorial:

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New this month!

Who benefits from technology?

Last month, my computer broke down. I had it for 8 years, and considering the growing number of messages telling "your system is not optimized for this site", I took the plunge and changed my machine. What a trap!!

"Programmed obsolescence", they say: after 8 years, all appliances must fail so that we replace them... No matter if all other components are still working (quality experts would call this a defect: ideally everything should collapse at the same time) regardless of whether valuable raw materials are lost.

Thus, a component which was probably repairable, and a lot of still good others, went in the trash. And worse, while putting the machine in service, I observed that the mouse, the webcam and the



wifi board were no longer "compatible", and that the scanner was not "maintained" any more.

With the software, it was not even better: many functions had been suppressed, and my old (free) email program had been replaced by a new (paying) one, a much less efficient version. So I moved to another one.



Here comes the icing on the cake: this solved a mystery I had worried about for weeks. For some time, I didn't receive any more the mails sent by my favourite company. Explanation: my server had decided they were spams and the mail program destroyed without any notice.

What is that kind of progress that destroys well working devices, polluting the planet, offering useless functions, removing useful ones, deciding for you what you must buy or discard, what interests you or not? Whatever you think about progress, it's time to consider its limits. This is the scope of our today's paper.

René Kauffmann



I-pad from the sixties.

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Progress is tacky, knowledge is top!

First question: what progress? Mankind did not change during the last 3000 years. Men have still the same passions, the same intellectual capacity. They always admire the same things, and ancient art has nothing to envy to contemporary creations.

The only thing that progressed is the knowledge which, transmitted from generation to generation, has expanded until today. And what about technological progress? Well, it just took advantage of the advances in knowledge and put them into practice - and, we admit it, by creating new tools, it helped in return a new extension of knowledge. Long live electricity, computers, medicine and many wonderful devices. "Much less long live" new weapons, pollution and the thirst of the latest model of things. Like smartphones.



1983-2013: Do smartphones really bring people closer?

Every progress should bring an improvement for our life. Is this still the case? The poorest farmers are forced to buy seed every year, since new high productivity varieties are unable to reproduce - which fits quite well the purpose of their producers. "Old people" are rubbish: they don't even know how to use a GPS. Is that worse than not knowing how to use a map when the GPS is out of order?

What does it have to do with antiquity?

Isn't it urgent to explain to all young people that everything we think, other men already thought about it millennia ago, that they already enjoyed the beauty of works and mastered it as well (if not better) than we do; that we are today neither smarter nor more virtuous and that they created wonders that we would be now unable to reproduce?

In short, the time has come to show that contributing to progress should not mean to be subjected to a fashion. If knowledge was immensely enriched since antiquity, we must now pay more attention to knowledge than to manufactured goods that, using knowledge, a small minority of people impose to all others. Let's be proud of our knowledge, not about the things that money can buy (who gets richer?). Enjoying an evolution that is chosen by others is not a progress for ourselves.

It is essential that every man from every generation understands how well he must take care of his knowledge and values. Otherwise, what will he pass down to the next ones?



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