BOTONISM

THE LAW OF BOTON

A proposed conceptual framework on technological progress, human expectations and mental load

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“More technological possibilities do not automatically create more peace of mind. They can create more expectations.”

Concept paper prepared for public archiving and discussion.

Abstract

Botonism is a proposed concept describing a possible paradox of technological progress: as the range of available technological capabilities expands, human expectations, choices and perceived obligations may expand as well. The Law of Boton expresses the central proposition that increases in technological possibilities can be accompanied by increases in human expectations and mental load. The concept is offered as a framework for discussion and future empirical investigation, not as an established scientific law.

1. Definition

Botonism is the proposed phenomenon in which expanding technological capabilities contribute to rising human expectations and increased mental load. The concept focuses on the possibility that efficiency gains are partly or wholly offset by additional tasks, choices, ambitions and standards that become feasible or socially expected.

2. The Law of Boton

The Law of Boton is stated as follows:

> **“Every doubling of technological possibilities leads to a proportional increase in human expectations and mental load.”**

This sentence is the founding proposition of the concept. It should be understood as a hypothesis or conceptual claim that requires operational definitions and empirical testing before any proportional relationship can be treated as established.

3. Conceptual model

In simplified notation, the proposed relationship can be represented as:

$$M \propto T$$

Where **M** represents mental load and **T** represents the level or range of technological possibilities. The symbol $\propto$ means “is proportional to”. This notation summarizes the proposed direction of the relationship; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that the relationship is linear, universal or causal.

A fuller model may need to distinguish between technological capability, actual use, perceived expectations, task volume, decision complexity, interruptions and individual differences.

4. Proposed mechanism

4.1 Expansion of capabilities

New technologies make activities possible that were previously difficult, expensive or unavailable. They may reduce the time or effort required for existing tasks.

4.2 Growth of expectations

Once new capabilities become accessible, people may begin to regard them as normal or expected. Personal ambitions, workplace standards and social comparisons may adjust accordingly.

4.3 Increase in mental load

The expanded range of possibilities may introduce additional decisions, monitoring, learning, coordination and self-imposed obligations. As a result, the time saved on one activity may be used for further activity rather than recovery.

5. Illustrative examples

Website development

A basic website may once have been considered sufficient. As website builders, analytics, search optimisation, automation and artificial intelligence become available, expectations can expand to include more features, frequent updates, personalisation and continuous optimisation.

Artificial intelligence

AI tools can accelerate writing, image creation, analysis and automation. Their availability may also raise expectations about speed, output volume, experimentation and the number of tasks one person should be able to complete.

These examples illustrate the proposed mechanism; they are not, on their own, evidence that mental load necessarily increases for every person or in every context.

6. The productivity paradox

Botonism draws attention to a possible paradox: technologies designed to save time and reduce effort may also generate new work and new standards. Efficiency gains do not guarantee that people will experience more free time or lower cognitive demands. The outcome may depend on how individuals, organisations and societies use the additional capacity.

7. Scope and limitations

The Law of Boton is a newly proposed conceptual framework. The proportional formulation is a hypothesis, not a verified quantitative law. “Technological possibilities” and “mental load” require precise measurement. The relationship may vary by technology, task, organisation, culture and individual. Technology can also reduce mental load in many circumstances; Botonism concerns the possibility that expanding expectations can counteract or exceed those benefits.

Future research could examine whether increases in available tools and functions are associated with changes in workload, perceived pressure, decision fatigue, interruptions, work intensity and recovery time. Longitudinal and comparative studies would be needed to evaluate the proposed relationship.

8. Relation to existing concepts

Botonism may be discussed alongside research areas such as technostress, information overload, work intensification, the productivity paradox and the psychological effects of digital technology. These areas provide relevant context, but they should not be treated as proof of the specific Law of Boton. Any future scholarly version should include a carefully reviewed bibliography and evidence directly relevant to the proposed claims.

9. Conclusion

The central insight of Botonism is that technological progress does not necessarily reduce the demands placed on people. As more becomes possible, more may be expected. The additional choices and

expectations can increase mental load, even when individual tasks become easier or faster.

More technology can mean more capability — and also more expectation.

Author and attribution

This initial conceptual formulation is attributed to **Carel Sarton**, identified here as the originator of the Botonism concept and the Law of Boton. This attribution records authorship of this document and its formulation; it does not imply independent scientific validation or institutional endorsement.

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Botonism; Law of Boton; technological progress; mental load; human expectations; technostress; information overload; artificial intelligence; productivity.

Publication note

This document is an initial public statement of a proposed concept. It has not undergone peer review. The author welcomes critical discussion, refinement of definitions and empirical testing.