

Marcin Jewdokimow, Barbara Markowska

From Social Techno-utopias to Posthumanism. Selected Narrative Strategies of New Communication Technologies

The article presents an attempt at analyzing selected narratives concerning the new media, seen as new communication technologies. We look at the construction of statements popular in social research – including statistical and prognostic research – as well as those carried out in the interactionist paradigm. We indicate their limitations, in particular their utopian and conservative approach manifest in the concept of the information society, which has been dominant in the reflection on the new technologies¹. The conservative approach indicates the use of available dictionaries and concepts, which results in leaving significant elements influencing social life unnoticed, while considering only those secondary in relation to broader social processes (the new technologies are not the cause of these processes but their expression). On the other hand, we treat the utopian approach as one which unreflectively assumes a positive influence of these technologies on social life. In the second part of the article we refer to selected passages of the post-humanist narrative, treated as the basis for indicating other possibilities of problematizing the influence of the new communication technologies on social life. We put forward a cautious thesis that the modes of both thinking and writing about new technologies popular in the sociological narratives we have pointed out overlook the key transformations which have been taking place in the social field influenced by their developments. And these concern the change in the definitions of both the human and the social field.

Andrzej Górny, Agata Zygmunt

The Internet in Relation to Religious Traditions. Threat or Support?

The existence of contemporary societies is based on the presence of advanced technologies in nearly all social contexts. Our actions are increasingly dominated by advanced technological systems, above all by the global computer network, namely the internet. Humankind is approaching a new stage in the development of its civilization: the era of the information society. The ever more universal “computerization” both on the micro (home, family) and macro (global) scales, as well as the use of the internet at work and other places have begun to influence diverse aspects of our existence, including broadly understood traditions. The following question arises: is the internet a medium which supports tradition, or does it thwart it? The authors of the article focus on one of the many aspects of traditions cultivated in our society: on the religious dimension. They pose the question if and how the internet contributes to sustaining customs and the religious cult, or whether it is a destructive factor in this field. Selected examples of the internet’s influence on the formation of religious attitudes are analyzed in the article. The authors discuss whether the activity of individuals on the internet necessarily spells the departure from tradition, or does it form a different choice to conventional rites and rituals, or maybe it supports the culturally established religious behaviors.

¹ We use the term *information society* interchangeably with *knowledge society* and *network society* (see: Castells 2003).

Albert Hupa

Politics in the Polish World Wide Web

The article includes selected research results on Polish WWW domains dedicated to politics. The research has been carried out as part of a doctoral thesis titled "Political Discourse on Polish Websites". It is based on the social networks analysis methodology in which nodes represent domains, and their relations are represented by internet links. The aim of the research was to analyze the macrostructure of the network of domains dedicated to politics recreated using the algorithms which reconstruct communities. Moreover, a proposal for a new method of the selection of data – a semantic snowball, the basis for isolating the domains dedicated to politics – is also described in the article.

Ewa Grzeszczyk

Fan Culture on the Internet

Fan cultures, previously only peripheral in academic inquiry, in recent years have been the subject of serious consideration not only by scholars but also journalists, lawyers and mass culture producers. As Henry Jenkins claims, such increased attention is to a large extent the result of the movement of much fan activity into the Internet. The virtual realm has not only granted fans great possibilities of creation, self-expression, communication and activism but also considerably increased their visibility. In my essay I will focus on the changes fan communities have been experiencing since they started to make use of the potential the Internet offers. I will discuss the ways in which the Net has transformed fandom and analyze chosen forms of fan activity online, such as fan fiction, hackfiction, spoiling and fan activism against certain decisions of media corporations. I will discuss issues such as collective intelligence and subcultural capital and point at the hierarchies which exist within fan communities. The reactions of media producers towards the increasing significance of online fandom will be also examined. Having analyzed new forms of cultural production of fans active online I will pose a question whether the majority of media consumers can be described as an active audience.

Marcin Bartnicki

Internet Forum as a Form of Institutionalizing Religious Communities. The Institutionalization of Satanism in Poland

The article's topic concerns the new form, still not described in literature, of the institutionalization of a religious community. Contrary to the standard forms of institutionalization, it is based on indirect communication and remains mostly anonymous. Using the possibilities offered by the internet, people interested in an ideology treated by society as a religion opposing universally accepted values, and thus seen as unacceptable, create the institutional foundations for a new social group. The article presents the content analysis of the www.satan.pl website's internet forum. The author considers this forum the most important space of social interaction for Polish Satanists, as well as an institution around which a new social group gathering both Satanists and people interested in Satanism is created. Thanks to the internet the members of this group can share their opinions while remaining to a large extent anonymous. At the same time the forum is a space where direct meetings of the group's

members are initiated; moreover the forum could form the basis for the emergence of a new organization.

Aleksandra Nowakowska

Internet: The New Scene in the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. An Introduction to Cyberspace Analysis from Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Perspective

The article is an attempt to present the issue of the social functioning of people in the internet using Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. This new social space is treated as a new scene where the contemporary everyday life of many people takes place. Various complex social relations occur between them, and these – thanks to the nature of the Net – leave symbolic, linguistic, and other *interactionist traces* which can be both observed as well as examined in other ways. The participants in the game give meanings to the internet—a social object; they comprehend and interpret the social situations found and created there. The actors' actions often take on the character of a performance: you can observe diverse evidence of the existence of the presentation of self, the use of "virtual" décor and props, the conversation of gestures. They are similar to what occurs in "real" scenes of everyday life, which are treated here as the backstage for the drama that takes place on the internet. The aim of these efforts is to create adequate impressions, the creation of a performance. In accordance with Alfred Schütz's postulate, the research of social objects from this perspective is to provide help in answering the question **what is** the internet for its participants, and not for the so-called objective observers.

Krzysztof K. Karnkowski

Polish Political Blogosphere: An Introductory Description of the Phenomenon and Research Methods

The article discusses the results of the research on the Polish political blogosphere, which has been carried out as part of the author's doctoral dissertation. It includes the account of this phenomenon's history, and elaborates on the relations between the blogosphere and the traditional media. At the same time the article describes some of the possibilities and tools the internet has to offer to its researchers.

Łukasz Goryszewski

The Place of Massively Multiplayer Online Games in Social Reality: The Accuracy of the Definition of the Game in Relation to Massively Multiplayer Online Games

In the following article the author offers an attempt to provide a social-economic analysis and the legal consequences of the emergence of a new category of goods, that is the virtual objects. The author is mostly interested in the issue of developing adequate regulations concerning the described phenomenon. The article outlines the key facets of virtual goods and of the international market in virtual objects, both of which significantly influence the social reality, forcing changes in contemporary economic systems and in the sets of laws which have been employed until now. The author uses the

examples of particular legal-economic regulations applied in selected countries and reflects on the trends of future policies on ownership and trade in virtual objects. At the same time, presented are the issues standing in the way of the development of adequate solutions.