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## Human Achievements and Losses in Continuum of Information Society

**Słowa kluczowe:** człowiek, społeczeństwo informacyjne, rzeczywistość wirtualna, komunikacja, transformacja osoby, samorealizacja.

**Keywords:** person, information society, virtual reality, communication, personal transformation, self-actualization.

Rapid development of information, computer and communication technologies, priority of brainfacturing (Yoneji Masuda) over material production, an information product over material one, total power of mass culture products, leveling boundaries between elite and mass cultures determine interdependence and complexity of relations between an individual and the society since they are formed and operate in conditions that differ from a usual framework of the Modern, industrial world. The essential factor that influences development and even the very existence of the mankind is achievements in the field of robotics, which can be evaluated both as a positive and as a threat to human existence. What determines the character of our society and economy is the way we design more and more autonomous machines and interact with them. It increasingly influences all aspects of the modern world, beginning with whether we will live in a more or less stratified society and ending with what we will define as a “human being” (Markoff J., 2015, p. 11). Continuous increase in information and constant modernization of communication tools that captivate a human being, open up significant prospects and, at the same time, make a death threat at the epicenter of the information explosion are important in the context of social and personal transformations.

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In the global intellectual community, the concept of information society has been actively discussed and developed since the second half of the last century. Its adherents are Daniel Bell, Anthony Giddens, Peter Drucker, Manuel Castells, Marshall McLuhan, Yoneji Masuda, Fritz Machlup, Tadao Umesao and others, therefore the term «information society» has been transformed into a variety of concepts, depending on understanding strategies of social transformations – «network», «digital», «electronic», «technetronic», «programmed» society etc.

In regard of the world outlook, the change of centuries is marked with a change in social reality, since the Gutenberg Galaxy (M. McLuhan) gives way to the Galaxy of the Internet (M. Castells), the printing press, radio and television have retreated under the pressure of social networks, the man of labour ceases to be a direct agent (factor) of production. At the moment, we are witnessing the birth of the Internet of things (Markoff J., 2015, p. 11), computers have transformed the economy and society in the same way that the industrial revolution did (Markoff J., 2015, p. 11), and Internet communication becomes the main communication intermediary instead of printed products. The habitual and predictable reality of the modern type, in which the Reason prevails, yields to the virtual reality where we do not have to find out what is happening between two points or moments because this reality does not fit into the limits of any possible functions (Deleuze G. and Guattari F., 1991, p. 201). On the wide web, “any event is at risk of losing its ontological status; what is even more important than an event itself is a variety of comments on it where, in the frenzied hermeneutic shamanistic ritual, their authors lose not only the meaning of the event, but often even abandon it, considering their version of its interpretation to be the only true” (Kutsepal S., 2015, pp. 141–149). A real danger of the Internet is rapid spread of rhetoric of racial and religious hatred, terrorist appeals, fostering an enemy’s image, an avalanche-like series of fibs which may result in quite real unrest and events.

In terms of resources, heuristic and communicative potential, production and retransmission of diverse information, the Internet is becoming the most advanced tool for cognition, communication and production, but there is a delicate line between positive and negative effects of the world wide web. Temptation to give hypertrophic weight to a virtual image is dangerous both for the society and an individual, as it may result in considerable conflicts and collisions, intellectual, emotional and existential alienation, domination of objects of computer-mediated reality over objects of the natural world. By means of «ubiquitous computing», we entered the age of intelligent machines. In the coming

years, artificial intelligence and robotics will change the world even more than personal computers and the Internet over the past three decades (Markoff J., 2015, p. 12).

Virtual reality is not subject either to the laws of nature or the laws of science, it depends only on the quality and technical perfection of machinery because «a determining factor for the virtual is, on the one hand, a volume of a server, and, on the other hand, a volume of a user's perception. Volumes of transmitted and consumed data are correlated, and a decoder in this system is a virtual providing communication connection both in the horizontal and vertical projections of the system» (Ivanenko E., Koretskaya M. and Savenkova E., 2012, p. 32). Even the status of knowledge is changing because «at the individual level, the process of generating new reflexive knowledge, which actualizes a need to pause (in an infinite flow of new intellectual stimuli), is hampered to focus intellectual efforts on what has already been achieved» (Karpenko V., 2015, p. 111).

Every person who positions oneself as a socially active creature is aware of a need for education and re-education throughout their life as it is a guarantee of qualitative positive changes in their life. A Ukrainian scholar S. Terepyschchy, for instance, points out: "Knowledge is the result of systematic knowledge, creating a subjective image of reality in the form of concepts and ideas. Information is a way of life and knowledge of its elements, characterized by accessibility to the pragmatic application of targeted individual or machine" (Terepyszczyc S., 2016, p. 80).

"A *society* built around *information* tends to produce *more* of the *two things people value most* in a *modern democracy* – *freedom* and *equality*" (Fukuyama F., 1999, p. 4). By turning on a computer, an ordinary average person has a way and is permitted to transforming into a Superhuman (Übermensch). What is the most interesting thing is that this transformation is much simpler than the one described by F. Nietzsche. There is no need for titanic efforts to form and improve one's identity, it is enough just to press a computer button and the objective world no longer dominates the Self (moreover, there are real means of changing one's body image, transforming into a perfect being by means of achievements of cryonics, nanotechnology and genetic engineering).

The Internet has expanded the use of computer technology and began transforming our culture (Markoff J., 2015, p. 13). A network user receives a cherished freedom, gets rid of any social duties and restrictions, forgets about problems and is plunged in the world of virtual communication. There are enormous possibilities of personal transformation in the web,

you can alter everything with one movement, change an image of one's own Self – a name, gender, age, nationality, social and marital status, etc. In consequence of this, a person changes attitude towards oneself, increases own self-esteem. “Nowadays, the virtual world is a plane where a person transforms oneself in every way: from imaginary pseudonyms (having a meaning and able to affect a user's status in the community withal), a style of speech, social status on down to changing a gender” (Lazareva M., 2015, p. 71).

A person is charged for a boundless freedom and desirable bodily-personal transformations with a loss of time parameters, as a user enthused by possibilities of the web is more concerned with a number of likes and reposts of their posts, activities of their interlocutors in chats or their own success in interactive games, than such a bagatelle as their time. “A person ceases to feel “real” both physically and existentially. One is transferred with their “soul and body” into the virtuality, the world remaining a structure of consciousness and high technologies, but gradually devaluing values of physical real being. There is a breakdown of social ties and loss of common values, in consequence of which a person is absent from the world of objects (in axiological terms) and transferred to the world of virtual images. All this “changes the nature of a person: one is much less connected with social responsibilities, care of the Other, moral requirements, etc. Real relationships (social, everyday) become less important, minor, they play a secondary role” (Baeva L., 2013, p. 75–83).

It can be argued that the information age determines a new type of socialization, «a new type of human symbolic existence» (Shtanko V., 2011, p. 6–15) and, accordingly, a new image of a person – Homo virtualis, «a person who is diversified, capable of differentiation, constantly «playing with identities», gaining a foothold in the society by means of a succession of transformations, running through a great number of modes, masks of the Self, while retaining a unity in a whirligig of faces» (Kutsepal S., 2009, p. 195–201). It is such a person that receives new means and ways for self-actualization in the continuum of information society.

However, along with benefits and incredible opportunities opened for a Homo virtualis in captivating spaces of the computer «paradise», there is a real threat of losing personal uniqueness in the «information and Internet pressure of modern civilization» (Andreev I. and Nazarova L., 2014, p.132), in quirky and attractive computer game meshes, leveling out differences between the real and virtual spheres of human existence, loss of taste to real life. “Virtuality is transformed into the world of everyday existence, while physical reality – in its infirm trial version. At

the same time, there is a loss of a person's ability to identify oneself in different planes of their existence and dissolution of a separate Self in the vortex of potential images" (Lazareva M., 2015, p. 72).

There is one more danger since unreliability of those arrays of information obtained through the Internet generates hypercritics, contributes to gradual formation of value orientation of almost total distrust to any source of information (Karpenko V., 2015, p. 111).

Significant changes relate to the sphere of communication, importance of the latter is not in doubt because "without communication, the mind cannot acquire a truly human nature, and the society cannot exist and develop, since only through communication, there is accumulation and further development of knowledge, skills and abilities" (Bykov I., 2013, p. 10). Transformations in the field of communication determine changes of the language, which from one of the «main articulatory means, depositary of generated meanings and values inherent in the world» (Houellebecq M., 1998, p. 117) is converted into an auxiliary tool in the information technology system. There is a peculiar schizophrenic splitting of the language which leads to reorientation of a subject to literal perception of words (Jameson F., 2000, p. 73). This is a specific payment of the humanity for the progress of information and communication technologies. There is a danger of losing one's own personality and depriving enjoyment of direct human communication.

Development of information technologies and emergence of the Internet was initially regarded as an extraordinary civilizational shift like the industrial revolution, and the mankind was cultivating sanguine hopes and optimistic expectations of unlimited heuristic and communication opportunities. Adherents of the Internet paradise argued that the Internet is a magical mechanism of self-enhancement which is endlessly strengthening a positive feedback to mutual – economic and cultural – benefits of billions of users (Keen A., 2015, p. 10). However, not everything happened as it was expected by optimists – virtual networks captured the Man, the Internet became an analogue of the «offline» world, a person faces a threat of losing one's own Self, dispersal of identity, the Internet information resources are full of fake traps, Internet resources are often used for manipulation or gain. As A. Keen observes, «rather than creating transparency and openness, the Internet is creating a *panopticon* of *information-gathering* and *surveillance services*» (Keen A., 2015, p. 10). The problem of cyber security and development of cyber protection systems against massive hacker attacks becomes relevant as well as the problem of using social networks as a means of influencing electoral processes of states, since rules of

transparency and accountability that the traditional media follow do not work in the space of social networks.

Given the above arguments, it can be argued that in the context of the rapid development of information technology, a person risks becoming an “information being” – Homo virtualis, in order to avoid this and not fall into a trap of ideological disorientation, it is necessary to develop critical thinking, analyze consequences and prospects for further development of the informational sphere.

## ZYSKI I STRATY W PORZĄDKU SPOŁECZEŃSTWA INFORMACYJNEGO

(STRESZCZENIE)

W artykule zwrócono uwagę na fakt, że ludzkość wchodzi obecnie w nową fazę dziejowego rozwoju. Miejsce słowa drukowanego (papierowych książek, czasopism itp.) w komunikacji międzyludzkiej coraz częściej zajmuje Internet. Autorzy zauważają, że zamiana ta skutkuje nowym, nieistniejącym wcześniej, poziomem socjalizacji człowieka, a ludzie otrzymują dzięki Internetowi nowe możliwości samorealizacji. Ponadto, dzięki globalnej sieci stale poszerza się wspólnota informacyjna, tzn. cała ludzkość staje się coraz bardziej społeczeństwem, którego członkowie bez trudu mogą znaleźć informacje o dowolnym wydarzeniu czy innym człowieku. Autorzy zwracają jednak uwagę, że rozwój technologii informacyjnych, w tym zwłaszcza Internetu, generuje także negatywne skutki. W porządku społeczeństwa informacyjnego każdy człowiek jest zagrożony niebezpieczeństwem utraty własnej tożsamości kulturowej, tzn. związku z rodziną (regionalną, narodową itd.) wspólnotą.

## HUMAN ACHIEVEMENTS AND LOSSES IN CONTINUUM OF INFORMATION SOCIETY

(SUMMARY)

The article draws attention to the fact that humanity is now entering a new phase of historical development. The place of the printed word (paper books, magazines, etc.) in the interpersonal communication is increasingly taken up by the Internet. The authors note that this change results in a new, previously non-existent level of socialization of people, and people receive new opportunities for self-realization thanks to the Internet. In addition, thanks to the global network, the information community is constantly expanding, ie all humanity is becoming a society more and more, whose members can easily find information about any event or other human being. However, the authors point out that the development of information technologies, especially the Internet, also generates negative effects. In the order of the information society, every man is threatened by the danger of losing his own cultural identity, i.e. a relationship with his native (regional, national, etc.) community.



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