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**Tadeusz MICZKA**

## **TO PHILOSOPHIZE - TO ACT - TO CLICK. QUESTION CONCERNING THE SENSE OF EXISTENCE OF MEDIA PHILOSOPHY**

### **ABSTRACT**

I am mainly interested in this kind of useful philosophizing which concerns technological everyday routine or, in other words, omnipresence of new media. I assume, just like W. Barnett Pearce - a co-author of CMM theory (Coordinated Management of Meaning) did, that the processes of contemporary communication can be treated as the way of being man. Taking into account the latest phenomena from the field of "the Internet Galaxy" such as infoactivism, infofreedom, multitasking and disintegration of a person, I update and continue some threads of this Action Theory. At the same time I emphasize basic content and problems of practical philosophy, which is more and more often referred to as media philosophy. In my dissertation both content and problems connected with the phenomenon are mainly considered in the perspective of anthropology of communication and social epistemology but other scientific margins of contemporary media philosophy are also taken into account.

**Key words:** techno everyday routine, multimedia, CMM theory, media philosophy

### **INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary culture develops in an increasing tension between identity models (e.g. tribalism, nationality, statehood) and non-identity models (e.g. globality, networking), and this development is dominated by two intertwining trends related to the three types of human activity mentioned in the title of this article. In my opinion, today the following activities are of the most culture-creating character: philosophizing, understood as in-depth thinking, and more narrowly as the academic "love of wisdom" (a term that has long been found in the works of scholars) and action, understood as a set of various human acts, both automatic and fully

aware. However, for several decades, one of the most common forms of action is clicking, which is a sign of civilization progress and a modern attitude, which is a necessity in life, because - regardless of our attitude towards technology (regardless of whether we are technophiles, technophobes or technical neutrals) - simply everyone must click. We click more and more, which we experience overwhelmingly in the times of the covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, monstrously intensifying remote work, education and entertainment, but it can be assumed with high probability that clicking would also have a great future without it.

Since the ("open") network culture displaces traditional models of ("closed") culture, man, by co-creating reality and adapting to the environment, of course tries, but under the pressure of many circumstances, he most often has to tame the so-called soft technology (easily accessible and easy to use, more and more personal, mobile and cheaper), because it becomes its "most important window" to the world and "useful key" to it. The basic method of this taming is clicking, most often pressing a computer mouse, a key or a thin screen, recently also flexible, and even foldable. Soon, the touch associated with clicking will probably be partially or completely redundant, but for now clicking through the body's sensory organs is one of the most important human behavior. After all, we live in a technopoly that followed the industrial era, in an era in which technology will take many different human competences, which makes us happy and terrified at the same time, because we are unable to assess whether the ongoing interactions between humans and machines raise or lower the quality of life.

I propose to replace *technopoly*, as a pejorative term, mainly due to the quite commonly shared argumentation of Neil Postman, who treated the protechnological attitude of man as a dangerous "contagious disease" ("Technopoly - he wrote - is a form of cultural AIDS - here the abbreviation stands for: *Anti-Information Deficiency Syndrome* - the syndrome of lack of resistance to information"; 1995, 78) with a term that is less evaluative, and more precisely characterizes this cultural phenomenon. Piotr Żabicki indicates such a term. The term in question is the conclusion of his book on this issue: "whether - he writes - in the mass dimension, instead of talking about the technology of everyday life, shouldn't we rather talk about everyday technological life or even with everyday life in mind, define it - almost automatically - as combined with technologies?" (2007, 214). The worldwide research on the technological algorithmization of human life definitely agrees with the quoted author.

## **INFOACTIVISM OR CLICKTIVISM**

In everyday technological life, clicks occur in a very large and increasing intensity and have a specific character. The wide range of clicking is variously defined, I call this behavior infoactivism, pointing to the feature of the information society that transforms it into a "participatory society". It should be emphasized, however, that members of the information society not only have the possibility of individualized, more and more personalized participation in social life, but also that this participation itself becomes a necessity, or rather an obligation. After all, *homo interneticus* lives in a state of permanent connection, surfing intensively, recording, copying, modifying, pasting, tweeting on Twitter, sharing, blogging, emailing, texting, playing, "updating status, performing various roles, e.g. network flaneur, player, newbie, lurker, lamer, loser, ladmin, often troll and hater. The Internet user lives in an augmented reality, often almost virtual, eagerly depriving himself of privacy and deepening his already morbid narcissism. He also does not think too much about his hyperactivity and sick constant working (not overworking, because it would be useful), and about excessive divisibility of attention and the art of exploring matters, which he replaces with the art of computer navigation. The Internet user skyrocketed the learning process, but focusing on speed and mobility actually makes it superficial and ineffective.

For example, the myth of multitasking (multitasking, using different media simultaneously) exposes the weaknesses of activism of many clickers. It is illustrated in detail by Krishnan Guru-Murthy, Channel 4 news presenter, who at the end of the previous decade spoke of his daily schedule as follows: "I spend most of my everyday day accompanied some multimedia device, and I understand very well why people can each day squeeze more 'time out of 'media' rather than 'real time'". From 6:30 a.m. Guru-Murthy gets ready for work, listening to Radio 4, watching breakfast TV and browsing news portals on his computer, simultaneously playing with his iPhone or Blackberry, where he browses his Twitter. Later, he takes his headphones to the gym and watches "some TV" on the treadmill. In the office, on his desk, he has two computers that are constantly on. One is for his work, the other is for following Twitter and TV news. On the way home, he checks his iPhone for the latest tweets about his programs. It is only at 8:45 p.m. that he spends (but still not every day) "an hour without media", stating "if my 5-year-old child did not take the iPad, I would reach for it before going to bed to check the headlines" (Krishnan, 2009). Of course, not everyone behaves like Krishnan, but many multimedia users achieve very high efficiency in multitasking, especially since 2009 when this statement was recorded, so since multifunctional smartphones are replacing mobile phones and hard drives are replaced by private "information clouds". However, multitasking for many

employers is increasingly associated with greater profits, and its dissemination is also fostered by living conditions during the pandemic.

I am far from unequivocally negative assessment of infoactivism and the statement that every *homo interneticus* practices mostly the so-called clicktivism, often referred to in colloquial terms as couch activism. However, it is hard not to notice that all too often infoactivism is simply slacktivism (slacker – lazy person + activism). As Marta du Vall claims: "the phenomenon of slacktivism should be regarded as a natural reflection of trends in the real world, where alongside actual activists and supporters, there are 'stowaways' who sympathize with particular movement or organization at the 'distance'. Both in the real and the virtual world, activity in the field of social / civic affairs is observed among a similar social group, and commitment oscillating at the level of 30% is comparable for both the real and virtual world. Just as actions in real life will not mobilize a wide group of supporters, digital events can mainly be used to generate a virtual scale effect, expressed in the number of likes or shares. Thanks to such promotion of the content published on the web, the possibilities of reaching those who are actually interested in the issues raised by us, who are looking for community and opportunities for action are widened. We observe the snowball effect" (Du Vall, 2014, 201).

### **“USEFUL PHILOSOPHIZING”**

In such a communication situation - new in the history of mankind - the role of the human activity called philosophizing, and of philosophy itself, which has been exposed at the beginning of these considerations, is also special. Taking into account the changes taking place in reality, this field of study must update and redefine its assumptions, goals and methods, also in order to enable multimedia users to learn and understand the cognitive and social processes taking place. Therefore, the practical nature of philosophy, for which phenomenologists have already called, is particularly important today. In 1936, Edmund Husserl argued that: "The philosopher has a sense of responsibility for the authentic being of humanity, the essence of which is existence towards the goal, and which can only be realized through philosophy, therefore thanks to us, if we are seriously philosophers" (Husserl, 1999, 22). This thought was continued by Enzo Paci, adding: "What teaches us to live is life, not philosophy, and moreover, it is life that teaches us to think" (after: Kasprzysiak, 1980, 11) and perceived the philosopher as someone: "who not only thinks about the world anew, but who experiences it, who experiences it over and over again with all senses as a problem awaiting him" (Paci, 1980, 39).

Undoubtedly, a philosopher in the information society, using (more or less, but inevitably) new media, more than his predecessors should meet the expectations of Husserl and Paci and cultivate the so-called "Useful philosophizing" (compare: Szmyd, 2003, *passim*).

Due to the internet, people have access to more information than they have ever had, but the information is of varying quality. Therefore, it is difficult to assess its credibility, distinguish between facts and opinions, information from gossip, truth from falsehood, and to deal with infofreedom, which turns out to be another illusion and consumption choice (Miczka, 2014, 335-346). It is also difficult to come to terms with the feeling of "fragmentation" of oneself and the environment (Miczka-Pajestka, 2006, 145-155). Therefore, the position taken by the aforementioned Piotr Żabicki seems to be right, based on the conviction that "demands should be made to pay special attention (by users, broadcasters, decision makers) to the use of technology, communication education, accessibility and help in getting to know, so to everything that will help us understand today's, but most of all, tomorrow's ourselves" (Żabicki 2007, 2014). This is one of the fundamental tasks of the philosophy of the 21st century, at the beginning of which the technical man is ahead of the ethical man.

Regardless of the political, economic and economic systems, the importance of multimedia is constantly growing in the everyday life of contemporary people, and therefore a philosophy that deals with fundamental issues concerning people and their lives should devote more space to interpersonal communication. This obligation is also signaled by the change in the research profile that has taken place within the theory of communication. Until the 1980s, communicologists treated the act of communication as an effective exchange of information between individuals and communities, but since the digital breakthrough they have emphasized its openness, inclusiveness, multidirectional and multi-channel nature, in line with the belief that *homo interneticus* often communicates for the sake of communicating, reducing the importance of desired efficiency and useful exchange.

## **CONCEPTION OF COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING**

The foundation of the new communication theory, which emphasizes close ties with philosophy and lays the foundations for the philosophy of the media, is the theory of *Coordinated Management of Meaning* (CMM) by W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon E. Cronen (Cronen, Pearce, Harris, 1982, 61-89), based on the assumption that communication processes can be treated as

ways of being human (Pearce 1989, XVI). It combines knowledge and tools in the field of communication anthropology, social epistemology, social psychology, pedagogy, sociology, logical pragmatics and cognitive linguistics. Trying to answer the question about the meaning of the existence of the philosophy of media, it acknowledges that it is important that this theory treats people as beings making choices, and their individual meanings and interpretations as keys to understanding their communication behavior (Infante, Rancer, Womack, 1990, 85). ).

CMM contributed greatly to the emergence of an autonomous scientific discipline dealing with communication processes, but also rooted its subject of research in philosophical reflection. From the 1980s onwards, many philosophers have adhered to the position that communication is one of the most important factors / behaviors determining the human condition. Despite sharp disputes about the transactional nature of communication and its intentionality, and especially about the rules according to which people act and interpret meanings, CMM is the so-called a basic theory, that is, one that examines the "very essence of communication between people" (Zuber, 2012, 216).

According to Pearce, who has been developing the concept of CMM for a long time, people live in communication and through it, i.e. communication processes fulfill primary and basic functions in their lives. In everyday technological life, his following words are taken with particular attention: "I propose to perceive all forms of human activity in the 'communicative perspective' (as we could perceive them in a political or religious perspective" (Pearce, 1989, 23) and his hypothesis that human action is impossible without meaning, and communication is "grounded in three universal aspects of the human condition: coherence, coordination and mystery. People interpret their surroundings and experience, thereby achieving coherence; they interact with other people, achieving coordination and remembering that life is more than a moment, feeling a mystery "(Zuber, 2012, 219).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In a mosaic reality, largely created and mediated by multimedia, coherence, coordination and mystery are loosening and disseminating at the same time, because the human being loses the existing integrity in the network. The contemporary philosopher has no doubts that the multimedia user easily develops his technical skills, but with great difficulty evaluates them, and thus becomes a disintegrated person. And that is why the philosophy of media, based on Action Theory, - in my opinion – the theory of communication the most adequate to the practice of communication, should focus more attention on this disturbing phenomenon and encourage

*homo interneticus* to more critically participate in - according to Jean Baudrillard - "communicative ecstasy" (1988).

I find the term "spasmodic communication" more accurate than ecstasy, that is, one that distorts traditional systems of thinking and acting, enhances unlimited faith in technology and causes unprecedented information disruptions and cultural shocks (Miczka, 2000, 35). Defining it more than a quarter of a century ago, I wrote: "Strategies of rapid communication changes take the form of aggression and conquest and violate the principle of internal balance in life and culture, but they also give people the feeling that they can choose among their possibilities in such a way, which they consider to be the best for themselves and they can change their own lives more and more effectively, influencing the world around them.

Communication spasm can be considered a symptom of abnormality and confusion, but now it is rather a symptom of [...] living in conditions of increasing indeterminacy" (Ibid.). The philosophy of the media, taking into account the numerous and profound consequences of the so-called digital breakthrough, therefore, not only borders on the philosophy of man, but even merges deeply with it, always, also - and maybe even above all - in times that intensify the feeling of non-obviousness, such as, for example, the time of a pandemic.

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