ANTINOMIES OF THE DIGITAL AGE

I. D. Tuzovsky

Chelyabinsk State Institute of Culture, Chelyabinsk

The article is devoted to identifying social and cultural antinomies (actually existing paradoxes) caused by processes of informatization that are usually related to the formation of the information society. Arising positive feedbacks between processes of informatization and dehumanization of the contemporary society of the Digital Age are claimed to serve as the reason for deformation of the initial project of humanistic information society and for shaping a special kind of sociality, which can be characterized as a sacral information society or quasi-information society.

Introduction

Views on the nature of the contemporary society seldom have a high degree of consensus. But in the late 1960s and 1970s, a conceptual supersystem, which united less different approaches, was organized. There were 2 concepts which were laid in the basis of the new social paradigm. As a result of the competition among many social concepts that were originated at that time, most the essential terms were forgotten. However social attributes, which were found by social researchers, were included in the common semantic space of post-industrial and information concept.

Theoretical framework

Of course, such concepts as the post-industrial society and an economic role of the knowledge had been already in the center of research attention in the first half of the XX century long before proff. D. Bell [1] and proff. J. Masuda [7] published their fundamental works. Also, I must notice that such contemporary researchers as A. Giddens [6] and a Russian historian P. B. Uvarov [9] have noted obvious continuity between our present time and historical period since the early Modern History. In particular, the Russian historian noted that the formation of the Information society is not an unexpected zigzag of the historical process, but these processes had been just hidden before and now they became obvious. The society's interest in expert's opinions, the spread of information and knowledge have been the fundamental characteristics of The Western Society since the Renaissance, the Reformation and then the Enlightenment.

So, most of scientists have been using a term "The Information society" for the last 15-20 years to characterize contemporary social changes. Also, there are two other terms – The Post-industrial society and The Knowledge-Based society. These three terms attempt to reflect social reality through one linguistic concept.

When a scientist uses one of these terms, he or she de-facto declares about his adherence to some principals:

1. Technological progress and innovation have social value without any objections and restrictions.

2. The information is the main resource of the contemporary civilization.

Also, a researcher manifests (but maybe not obviously) some other assumptions:

3. The contemporary society is not a technogenic society. It changes itself to techno generating one. We need in technique of reproduction and spreading all our social institutions. The highest point of the technological addiction of the contemporary society is Global information

space. Global information space or cyber-space is the only 100-% sign of the beginning of The Information age.

4.   Our civilization is still capitalistic (it also means such variant like statism). We have some other forms of social exchange but capitalistic forms are main and they dominate in the world.

5.   Only technocracy has a real right to participate in making decisions. It does not mean that all experts have a technical education. It means that most of them manage our society on the basis of primitive set of tools to the social engineering, they only believe in the quantitative estimation of most social processes.

The first two ideas demonstrate scientific optimism about our future and transitive essence of the contemporary society. We evaluate the information project like a positive shift of social reality. We think The Information society has been already built or it will be built in the near future. Would we be pleased about it? I am not sure because three last ideas force us to be careful in our hopes and expectations.

Discussion

Firstly we must pay our attention to a long list of antinomies which characterize the contemporary global civilization. Most of them, unfortunately, are caused by spreading and achievements of information technologies. Maybe, we can't wait when The Information society will be built because this time will never come? Let's try to find out antinomies of informatization which are evidence of problems connected with the formation of the Information society.

The complex of the social-political antinomies includes the following contradictions and problems which are connected with the development of political institutions under the pressure of the Global Information space.

The antinomy of the disinformation. We have to admit the technologies of disinformation, propaganda and social manipulations are developing faster than the technology of rational information usage. Unfortunately, we have no efficient social technologies for recognizing and fighting with these three dark faces of The Information society. The thesis about the role of disinformation technologies in the contemporary society doesn't need any special evidence. Many of the most powerful and technologicaly advanced states have already created not only cyber espionage services but also cyber-propaganda. Probably the discovery of every new revolutionary information technology set the situation to zero and restarts this process. Every time when communicative revolution changes our society we have to create new tools and adapt old tools for spreading the reliable information. Unlikely, the worst part of communication technologies made this change faster. Also we always face the problem of the circulation of information fakes and maybe malicious information in our society, but it is the central problem for "The Information society". Contemporary society is not The Information society because it's The Disinformation society!

The antinomy of the expertocracy. The role of information mediators has been increasing since the times when the scientific and social statistic information became essential for political and social decision-making. At the same time the role of a simple person who is not included into the technocracy class, is decreasing. This brings us back to the problem of dichotomy between the total state power and the total participation in the political process. The ideas of total participation were declared by a few philosophers who were true humanists and whose ideas are considered as utopian today. I mean P. Feyerabend and E. Fromm [3; 4; 5]. We can rephrase and integrate their views into only principle: Each person is an expert! It should be in The Information society but it is not.

Unfortunately, Uvarov [9] seems to be more right. He considers that the highest role of the information mediators allows them to produce and reproduce a situation of information chaos and uncertainty… what keeps our need in the information mediators.

There are many possibilities to actualize the ideas of Feyerabend and Fromm about open discussions and total participation in the political process in the contemporary society: electronic democracy, internet forums about all social problems and many others. Unlike, we don't have electronic democracy, we have only internet bureaucracy.

The antinomy of the unequal mutual control. Possibilities of state power control by citizens are less than possibilities of the state control of citizens. Anti-totalitarian activism has a single and non-systematic character. At the same time potential of the state shadowing is huge and it has systemic and overall nature. It means that political institutions are playing a lesser and lesser role in the evaluation of the political regime. Institutionally democracy is weak in front of temptation of the easily accessible shadowing (a justification of it is in the issue of the state's and citizen's security) and also in front of trespass from security services. It became clear after many scandals which had been connected with disclosure of internal and foreign espionage by China and Russia, Great Britain and the USA. It is also connected with the openness of internet users who do not care about their own security and privacy. The question "Who watches the watchmen?" was asked in the ancient Rome, but for The Information society it has changed into other one: "Is it ever possible to watch the watchmen?". Before the state had never been so powerful and at the same time so defenseless in front of the attempts to misuse its power. Before the state had never had so many possibilities to control the society in general and thoughts and actions of every person and at the same time state has become defenseless against the hactivism, terror and... responsible social control. There is no balance but it may exist in the future.

The complex of social-economic antinomies.

The antinomy of resources. Of course, the role of information as a resource of the humanity's development is increasing. But it doesn't mean that the volume of other resources, which are necessary for our surviving, is decreasing. On the contrary, the information doesn't replace itself other resources, it only complements them. Our community still needs food, housing, security... and concurrently we started to need more complex knowledge about producing these goods, as well as the technical system of getting, keeping and spreading such knowledge. Compared with the previous types of the society costs for amortization of the aging knowledge become huge. Thereby the highest role of information as a resource can not only speed but also can slow down the development of humankind. To avoid this problem we need to plan and create a new system of the Global information space management.

The antinomy of luxury.

Information products (from technical inventions to digital cultural artifacts) principally are products of intellectual labor and creativity, therefore the price formation for them can't comply with the trivial economic logic. There is a conflict between our views about social justice and the pricing policy in the IT sphere. It's one of the many reasons why the information technologies are a source of the digital divide origin.

The antinomy of barriers.

With the development of the information technologies the accessibility of the information must grow up, but we observe only increasing numbers of barriers: prices for devices and software, special knowledge and education, language requirements and many others. Also, we are faced with strengthening of the copyright policy instead of attempting to resolve the conflict between creators and consumers of the IT products and the digital culture. I do not mean that we must provide freedom of the internet piracy, but we have to admit that the approach to monetization of the creative products must be changed in the Information society.

We see a low protection of the creators of the information goods and a really zero protection of the honest consumers. I'm not sure, if I can get my money back after I had watched a disgusting movie that was well advertise. The searching of pertinent information in the Internet is hampered by SEO and SMM specialists, copywriters who copy one post or article many times with minimum stylistic and lexical changes. Eventually, an original sense can be finally lost and

in the end time we can't find the original text. There is a paradox in the laws concerning the Internet and copyright policy as dissemination of the creative and unique information has many obstacles and a plagiarism essentially doesn't have any restrictions. Our system of commercial mass-media, the stock exchange of advertisement and many other social-economic phenomena are provoking a crisis in the near future. Without many little changes in our laws, in our cultural and social policy we will fight with "windmills" instead of human's development.

The antinomy of information trash.

Due to the nature of the Global information space (I mean web 2.0 technologies) there is the highest possibility of spreading zero value information. The information that has only a short-term and sentimental value spreads quickly (scandalous news, pop-science, fakes). The system which was built by our society in the last two or three decades, needs SEO and SMM, marketers, PR people, advertisers. However, their work in the GIS causes huge amount of the semantic garbage even if they had worked in an honest way. Metaphorically black SEO is a true nuclear bomb: totally destructive and unclean. Should we wait for the situation to improve itself? I don't think so. After all, the Internet is just an environment or a space, which content we create ourselves. Consequently without any changes in the cultural matrix all attempts to create responsible wiki-communities are doomed to fail. Unfortunately, the GIS is becoming a global information dump instead of the Global Library.

The complex of communicative antinomies.

The antinomy of information overload.

In the contemporary society we have the access to heterogeneous and contradictory information and it's a great possibility and a great problem. The objective evaluation of different views isn't just possible and a choice between them also loses rational character. We see fights between supporters of veganism or Paleolithic diet, liberalism and conservatism, multiculturalism and nationalism, religious fundamentalism and atheism. And in all of these controversies we observe how people lose their common sense and become aggressive, not listening to opponents and just ignoring their points of view. In all of these controversies we observe how people become supporters of extreme views. Maybe there is a reason in the abundance of information, which we produce?

On the other hand, the work in the GIS requires good qualities from us in various types of activity. For example, we need both a high-speed reading and a deep reading, but the contemporary culture stimulates only the first one. We need not only a high-speed reading, but also we must be able to analyze, criticize and understand the input information.

The problem in this complex of antinomies really exists. The first sign of it is an Internet surfing, when a person starts to read about one theme and after many and many random links finishes in theme which isn't connected with the first one at all. Another sign is a reading of news lines, when a person pays the main attention only to titles and doesn't read content. It forms a unique picture of the world which doesn't have the depth but perhaps has a broad panorama of superficial knowledge. There are short messages in the Twitter, short and bright, almost advertising news titles on the web sites and the photo captions in the Instagram. It's the third sign of this antinomy.

Apparently, the overload of information is not only communicative antinomy, but this moment I can't name another one.

Complex of the social and cultural antinomies

The antinomy of linguistic and cultural elitism.

The formation of the GIS causes the global inequality. It's manifest itself primarily like linguistic elitism (English dominates in the communication world). Of course, this situation has a good consequence - we need a universal language and we have got it. And of course English for the contemporary society isn't as Latin for the Medieval society, because it's a living language for billions of people. The existing inequality supports the integrity of the GIS

(as Latin supported the integrity of the catholic world). But it isn't a "happy end", because at the same time the domination of the English language leads to dominating of the Western culture. Due to it, the GIS is getting a specific topology. Both the most and least important information moves toward a linguistic epicenter – the English segment of the Internet. Probably, we'll be able to resolve this problem by automatic translators, but now we can't guarantee this. How good can be AI-translator? Will it be a real salvation in the multilingual world?

The antinomy of the digital literacy.

The higher simplicity and usability of the information technologies are, the less digital literacy of its typical representative and the less security of the digital community on the whole are. The user, who doesn't care about his or her own security, potentially is becoming a threat for all GIS. His\her computer probably is a part of bot-net and participates in DDoS-attacks. Instead of participating in SETI it participates in breaking and unauthorized access to other people's devices.

Also, we can't evaluate digital literacy in different devices. For example, people who can solve such simple task like e-mailing with attachments on the desk computer, can't do the same thing on the other types of devices like smartphones or iPad.

Maybe second part isn't a threat for community of The Information society, but the first one surely is. How can the contemporary society can be The Information society if its members don't have the real digital literacy?

The antinomy of the risk underestimation.

The higher the destructive potential of the humanity is, the less we pay attention to preemptive and long-term estimate of these risks. Of course we have many forecasting institutions but in the situation of the information uncertainty of our future goals and in the situation of growing disinformation we can't be sure in predictions which were made by these institutions.

At the same time we can say the risk culture has been formed in the contemporary society. This culture is based on the classic survivorship bias. If our society is still alive we can continue to do what we were doing before. None of the technology for the last few decades weren't passing through social and cultural examination but through some popular futurological books. Can we call it "expertise"? I don't think so.

Moreover we have no plan for consequences of technological transition in traditional and conservative societies. I guess not only Islamic communities in the whole world are under the pressure of rapid changes which were created with the advent of the Digital Age, but also Russia, Belarus in Eastern Europe, some Asia countries and others are not enthusiastic about it. It produces many new geopolitical and cultural risks, which are only estimated in the logic of The Cold War or The Third World War.

All of these antinomies aren't equal. Some of them are more critical, some of them are more connected with processes of the informatization, some of them have such a long story that we can ask: Can we really name only the contemporary society as the Information society? As it seems to me, three antinomies are the most important for the definition of the contemporary society: the antinomies of disinformation, of resources and overload.

Conclusion

The question is if we could call the contemporary society the true information society. Or is it another social type? I think more objective and circumspect answer would be The Digital age.

In such circumstances we may suspect the universal triumph of the postindustrial-informational paradigm not to be more than an honest mistake, which was the consequence of the enthusiasm in the beginning of The Digital age. The Information society has been the greatest dream and the greatest science delusion of sociology and philosophy for the last few decades. We are preparing to its advent as if it is The Apocalypse or The Second Coming. We are projecting its institutions as if it is a corporate development plan.

In fact, M. Castels wrote that the "technology *is* society" [2. P. 5]. This is the same courageous statement as M. McLuhan's phrase: "The medium is the message", but the society isn't only its technologies. Two parts of Castels' equation aren't identical to each other. Society isn't only its technology. The technological dimension of the social development is very insidious. For example, the formation of The Industrial (in technological dimension) society has led to the emergence of capitalistic and statist societies (in economical dimension). If we talk about digital technologies (we don't have any doubts in the beginning of The Digital Age), we must talk about another, non-economic typology of societies. We can use criteria of knowledge producing system and social attitude to knowledge.

There is a logical way to determine 2 oppositional extreme variants of social attitude to knowledge and all social institutions, which prepare scientific workers.

1. The society of sacral knowledge. We can characterize them so: all people, who will analyze, spread and produce knowledge, should be tested on the loyalty to the dominant social tradition. This tradition usually announces generally accepted methods of acquiring knowledge as sacral. The social group of loyal experts has unlimited credit in this situation, their authority can't be doubted and their opinion is becoming a dogma, which is unquestionable.

2. The society of rational knowledge. Access to knowledge and its critique is maximum open. Experts are under criticism and publicity discussion every time when they express their opinions. Their points of view are verified and confirm their authority while their authority does not confirm their opinions. The new social knowledge isn't a matter of faith; it is a consequence of the critical evaluation of experts' opinions by the society itself, not only their colleagues.

This picture is very similar to opposition between Open and Closed societies by K. Popper [8]. Of course, we must recognize that societies of the rational knowledge will demand reinterpretation of the project The Open Society. The highest point of this idea is a concept of the "Free society" by P. Feyerabend [3]. The Rational Knowledge Society is more The Free Society by Feyerabend than The Open Society by K. Popper. Otherwise it will be a half-rational knowledge-based society, because it will limit the freedom of the critique by a new idol – the scientific ideology.

There is one key problem in the interpretation of the contemporary society of The Digital Age as information or knowledge-based society. Is it a sacral knowledge society or a rational knowledge society?

As we see, in the end of the XX century and especially at the beginning of the XXI century the world is becoming The Sacral Knowledge Society. We deal with The Digital Middle Ages, not with The Digital Enlightenment. We have to use a term a *quasi information society.* The contemporary society isn't a quasi-information or quasi-society. The information in it is real as well the society itself. But it is only a ghost of the "information society".

Finally, I must notice some problems which we have but refuse to find them out and research.

If we have two and more types of the quasi information society, is it the real hardest opposition between democracy and authoritarian political regime? Maybe the difference between the sacral-knowledge society and the rational knowledge society is more important? Unfortunately, nowadays the Western society does not look like the rational knowledge society as well. Its institutions are based on the expertocracy and some untouchable ideas. The freedom, the equality and the tolerance are great humanistic ideas but how they are working... It should not be untouchable.

Do we really have a program to support the internet community and its institutions? Maybe we need program of reforms like an economic shock for fighters for the copyright and for the creative industry? Survivors will start the new era in the digital cultural industry. We have been trying to keep these out-of-date institutions for some last decades. Time is over and it's time to design new institutions.

Do we have any plan for traditional societies in the Digital age? Should we keep them and support? Maybe we should create the separate segment of the Internet for them. At least, we should try to solve a problem of the global chaos in the global information space.

The information society won't be exactly as we have imagined this before. And it will never begin at all if we continue to ignore many differences in the quasi information societies.

References

1.　Bell, D. (1976) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books, 616 p.

2.　Castells, M. (2009) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Vol. 1 2nd edition with a new preface. Blackwell: Wiley, 656 p.

3.　Feyerabend, P. K. (1982) *Science in a Free Society*. London: Verso, 222 p.

4.　Fromm, E. (2010) *The Revolution of Hope. Toward a Humanized Technology*. Herndon: Lantern Books, 160 p.

5.　Fromm, E. (2017) *The Sane Society*. Available at: https://ru.scribd.com/read/171107768/The-Sane-Society, accessed 09.11.2017.

6.　Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 188 p.

7.　Masuda, Y. (1981) *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society*. Washington: World Future Society, 171 p.

8.　Popper, K. R. (1971) *The Open Society and its Enemies*. 2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

9.　Uvarov, P. B. (2005) *Deti Khaosa: istoricheskii fenomen intelligentsii* [The Children of Chaos: the historical phenomena of intellectuals]. Moscow, AIRO-XXI, 200 p.

АНТИНОМИИ ЦИФРОВОГО ВЕКА

И. Д. Тузовский

Челябинский государственный институт культуры, Челябинск

Статья посвящена выявлению и систематизации парадоксов (обозначенных в статье как антиномии информационного общества или цифрового века), вызванных процессами информатизации. Данные антиномии рассматриваются как системные деформации первоначального проекта гуманистического информационного общества и трансформируют данный проект в тип «квазиинформационного общества».

Ключевые слова: антиномии, цифровой век, информационное общество, информационная перегрузка, «цифровой разрыв», цифровая грамотность.

Тузовский Иван Дмитриевич – кандидат культурологии, доцент, доцент кафедры культурологи и социологии культурологического факультета Челябинского государственного института культуры.

idtuzovsky@gmail.com