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I. V. TOLSTOV^{1*}, V. M. SHAPOVAL^{3*}^{1*}Ukrainian State University of Railway Transport (Kharkiv, Ukraine),^{2*}V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Kharkiv, Ukraine), e-mail tollivan12@gmail.com, ORCID 0000-0001-5511-1670^{3*}Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs (Kharkiv, Ukraine), e-mail shapovalw@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0003-4826-8463**Person of Mass Information Consumption as a Phenomenon of Post-Information Society**

The purpose of the article is to provide a philosophical and anthropological understanding of the phenomenon of the person of mass information consumption. The study analyzes the main problems faced by modern individuals in a total information environment: erosion of intellectual potential, weakening of critical thinking, and reduction of innovation capacity. The article aims to outline strategies for overcoming these challenges and assess their potential consequences for the future of humanity. **The theoretical basis** of the article lies in the methodology of philosophical anthropology and social philosophy, applying systematic principles, dialectical ascent from the abstract to the concrete, as well as hypothetical-deductive and phenomenological methods. **Originality.** The article introduces and substantiates a new philosophical concept – *a person of mass information consumption*, which, in the authors' opinion, adequately reflects the essence of the modern stage of personality development. This concept makes it possible to outline the key features of the newest type of person and highlights the reasons for his or her transformations in the new socio-cultural conditions. **Conclusions.** The contemporary civilization is experiencing profound shifts in the nature of information and its subjects. With the expansion of information and communication technologies, millions are engaged in creating and consuming information, leading to the rise of virtual reality as a substitute for natural environments. This dynamic fosters a divide between an intellectual elite and a mass of superficial content consumers, resulting in a decline in critical thinking and creative potential. To counter these risks, it is crucial to (1) conduct in-depth research into digital media addiction and develop programs to foster critical thinking, (2) protect society from harmful content while promoting access to quality, life-affirming information, and (3) study the effects of virtualization on social structures and cultural identity to anticipate and prevent negative transformations of human consciousness.

Keywords: human; consciousness; knowledge; information; person of mass information consumption; post-information society

Introduction

Human society is a highly complex system in which economic, socio-political and spiritual components are closely intertwined. The civilised life of people in society has significant advantages compared to life in the wild, where each individual is constantly exposed to deadly dangers and risks. However, civilisation has its own contradictions, which escalate over time, to the point where it leads to the destruction of entire countries and peoples. Philosophers and political thinkers have long wondered what the essence of human existence is, what the reasons for the current changes are, what the main life driving springs are, and how to create an ideal society where, if not all, then at least most people would be happy. The debate on this issue has been going on for as long as philosophy has existed, and one can observe an infinite number of different positions, from advocating mainly material causes of social and anthropological transformations (Bell, 2018; Schwab, 2019; Williams III, 2021), to the opposite point of view, which gives priority to ideal moments (Castells, 2009; Lloyd, 2012).

The peculiarity of our time is that, firstly, a huge amount of knowledge has been accumulated about society and human beings, and this knowledge is specific and quite accurate, and secondly, people's ability to solve urgent problems has increased immeasurably, and today we can do many things that our ancestors could not even dream of. Civilisation has a lot to be proud of, but

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it also has many problems. The life of people in society is becoming increasingly complex, and theorists do not agree on what the main content of the current stage of our development is and where its vector is directed.

Some researchers suggest that at the end of the twentieth century, humanity is moving towards a post-information society, which

... can be understood as a set of ideas and research experience, attempts to (re)interpret meanings and it has its own scientific value, thus the postinformation society does not necessarily have to denote a new era. The concept of "post-information society" has its heuristic potential because it enables researches to integrate the ideas and experience of (re)interpretation of transformational processes associated with changes in the role and meaning of information in society, and if it is conceptualized correctly for the needs of applied research... (Yakovlyev & Kupka, 2023, p. 185)

It is emphasized with good reason that we are moving towards a "knowledge society", that knowledge and information are becoming the main driving force that determines the speed, scale and direction of economic and social change:

Commentators increasingly began to talk about 'information' as a distinguishing feature of the modern world thirty years or so ago. This prioritization of information has maintained its hold now for several decades and there is little sign of it losing its grip on the imagination. We are told that we are entering an information age, that a new 'mode of information' predominates, that ours is now an 'e-society', that we must come to terms with a 'weightless economy' driven by information, that we have moved into a 'global information economy'... Just what sense to make of this has been a source of controversy. To some it constitutes the beginning of a

truly professionalized and caring society while to others it represents a tightening of control over the citizenry; to some it heralds the emergence of a highly educated public which has ready access to knowledge while to others it means a deluge of trivia, sensationalism and misleading propaganda. (Webster, 2014, p. 2)

Researchers do not share a single view on the nature of modern society and the prospects for overcoming the crisis phenomena associated with the development of the information environment. For example, Manuel Castells (2009) speaks of "information capitalism", emphasising the crucial role of information flows in the structure of power and economy. At the end of the twentieth century, Daniel Bell (1988) reflected on the transition from industrial to post-industrial society, identifying the latter with the information society. Jean Baudrillard (1998) pointed to the profound changes in culture, which has become a culture of mass communication, associated with signs and simulacra, which cannot but have an impact on people. Anthony Giddens (2023) drew attention to the new risks posed by the information society, in particular the threat to privacy and the ethical challenges of information wars, while Jürgen Habermas (2023) analysed the impact of manipulative information practices on public consciousness and democratic processes.

Today, it is becoming increasingly evident that humanity is entering a new phase of development – the post-information society, which is characterised not only by the availability and volume of information, but also by a radical change in the nature of its perception and use. Unlike the information society, which emphasised the importance of human knowledge and competences, the post-information society is characterised by an oversaturation of information flows, dominance of virtual realities and simulations, which gives rise to a number of serious problems, namely: erosion of intellectual abilities, weakening of critical thinking, and reduction of the innovative potential of the individual.

These processes inevitably affect the individual: his or her worldview, type of consciousness, lifestyle and identity. The information environment created by mankind is gradually becoming the main form of its existence, replacing the experience of direct relations with nature. As a result, a new anthropological type is being formed – a person of mass information consumption, who is both a product and an active participant in the post-information society.

Purpose

The purpose of the article is to provide a philosophical and anthropological understanding of the phenomenon of the person of mass information consumption. The study focuses on the analysis of the main problems faced by modern individuals in a total information environment: erosion of intellectual potential, weakening of critical thinking, and reduction of innovation capacity. Achieving this purpose requires outlining possible measures to overcome these problems and assessing their consequences for the further development of humanity.

Statement of basic materials

Any living being needs information to adapt to the conditions of its immediate environment, survive and procreate. Humans are no exception, but their relationship with information has a number of significant features that are fundamentally different from the way other animals perceive the world. Being, firstly, a rational and, secondly, a social being, man has created tools and then technologies that eventually helped them to extend the influence over the entire surrounding world, to subjugate it to human will. All this became possible to a large extent due to the fact that man learned to receive, process and use information in a new way.

The expansion of man to all corners of the planet and beyond has given rise to many problems related to both the knowledge of new, previously unknown phenomena of the world around us and adaptation to the artificial conditions created by man, where information plays an important role. Improvements in technology and engineering are steadily leading human civilisation towards greater complexity, the pace of scientific and technological progress is accelerating, and the fourth industrial revolution is unfolding before our eyes, directly linked to the development of information and communication (Schwab, 2019). However, technological progress is not always accompanied by an equally undeniable progress in the mental and spiritual component of the human personality. It is obvious that humanity is moving forward, moving very fast, but where it is going is not completely clear (Shapoval & Tolstov, 2021).

Thanks to widespread access to modern information and communication technologies, hundreds of millions of people are involved in the processes of generating, transmitting and consuming information. If in the recent past the process of information transfer was mainly from one person to another through direct communication and speech, then with the advent of printing, periodicals, radio, television, and the Internet, this process has become much more complicated and accelerated. Today, most people prefer to deal with artificially created information, which is increasing in quantity and becoming more accessible, both in terms of receiving it and retransmitting it.

For many centuries of human history, the producers of new knowledge were mainly developed, highly intellectual individuals – philosophers, scientists, writers, theologians. In the information space there was a constant struggle for existence among ideas, where mainly significant ideas (with a plus or minus sign) survived and spread, while others disappeared without a trace in the vortex of history. Today, a new information product can be created and disseminated around the world by virtually any individual, regardless of development, who has access to the appropriate information and communication tools. As a result, the information sphere is largely filled with information of dubious quality, often with unverified, false and openly hateful content. High-quality information makes up a rather small share in the oceans of insignificant, one-day materials, or even outright information garbage.

We can agree that in the first half of the 21st century, humanity is gradually moving to a new stage – the stage of the post-information society – a new type of social reality, which in some respects differs significantly from the previous one.

Today, a significant part of the world's population spends their work and leisure time in virtual reality. The satisfaction of basic material and spiritual needs is also carried out with the help of information and communication technologies. Along with the positive aspects of this situation, there are also growing risks. Individuals who are unable to distinguish between high-quality and low-quality information, do not know the limits of its consumption, try to escape from the world into an illusory reality, radically change their lifestyles and, at the same time, their worldview.

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A significant feature of the modern period is that many people prefer to receive information not directly from the world around them, as it was the case throughout previous history, but indirectly, through various information and communication devices. This has important consequences, because depending on the source of information and the technical capabilities of the consumer, the information will be different, and it ultimately shapes the thoughts and actions of the individual.

The human mind is designed in such a way that it is ready to absorb as much information as possible from the outside. By its very nature, consciousness is programmed to continuously receive more information from the outside, as this helps to develop a more appropriate line of behaviour that will ensure the self-preservation of a person as a physical being and will contribute to the satisfaction of the entire range of his or her material and spiritual needs.

Every individual strives for new knowledge, but not everything offered by modern society really helps to navigate the world, set and achieve meaningful and worthy goals. A person falls into a kind of trap: on the one hand, he or she seeks to obtain the maximum amount of information available, believing that this paves the way for effective activity; on the other hand, those who manage information flows have other goals and produce materials that are not always for the benefit of the individual. There is often an explicit or implicit desire to disorient those who enter virtual reality, to narrow their intellectual horizons, to turn a person into a puppet, in the ultimate sense, to make them a completely controllable being. Those in power assume that it is much easier to manipulate crowds of millions than to manage them intelligently in their own interests. As Emanuel Castells notes,

Power is primarily exercised by the construction of meaning in the human mind through processes of communication enacted in global/local multimedia networks of mass communication, including mass self-communication. Although theories of power and historical observation point to the decisive importance of the state's monopoly of violence as a source of social power... ability to successfully engage in violence or intimidation requires the framing of individual and collective minds. (Castells, 2009, p. 416)

The information produced in society, which is supposed to be the basis of "enlightenment", often becomes a tool for "darkening" consciousness, turning a person into a thoughtless, rationally unthinking creature, a cog in a giant social machine, and it takes a lot of effort to avoid this fate (Habermas, 2023). To avoid this, one must become a holistic thinker, develop a flexible, keen intelligence, have real knowledge, and deep humanistic beliefs. Such people can manage large-scale social projects, guide political and economic development in a constructive direction, and ensure the progress of humanity.

People want to know what is happening around them, especially when the world around them is in a state of rapid transformation. We need accurate and truthful information about the natural world and society. However, such information is, firstly, a rather expensive product, and second-

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ly, it cannot be accessible to everyone because it is quite complex in content, and not everyone can use it for positive purposes. First of all, such information is needed by those who make responsible government decisions. Senior executives, more than anyone else, are interested in complete and truthful information. But they are also heavily dependent on those who supply them with information, and thus are not immune to manipulation.

Speaking about the origins and reasons for the transition to the stage of a mass information consumption society, the following should be noted. Capitalism in its modern forms cannot develop otherwise than through the improvement of forms of production and consumption. It is quite natural that the consumption of material values at some stage reaches the limits of saturation, and new approaches and considerable ingenuity are needed to persuade people to consume things they do not need or even do not want.

The human sensory sphere is such that people are constantly in need of new information and new experiences. The spiritual needs of a person are virtually unquenchable. However, even art, which is designed to satisfy the high spiritual needs of a person, has become part of mass commercial culture. The development of digital technologies, globalisation, and active market mechanisms are transforming both artistic production and consumption, turning art into one of the driving mechanisms of the mass consumer society. This process, which affects both artists and audiences, has both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, art is becoming more accessible to a wider audience, overcoming national, social and geographical barriers; the development of digital technologies allows artists to find their target audience and diversify their work. On the other hand, according to Y. S. Semko,

Replacing the thing with a simulacrum, a sign, the ideology of consumption leads to large-scale commercialization of culture, the erosion of ethical norms, contributes to social inequality. Demonstrative and spectacular consumption puts people in front of the need to believe in life as a holiday, in the happiness of shopping, in the joy of possession, bringing to the social system a completely new ethic – the ethics of consumerism.

(Semko, 2022, p. 93)

The current phase of capitalism's development makes it necessary to pursue a sophisticated economic and information policy: to satiate human feelings not only by buying material things, which, despite everything, remains relevant, but also to actively shape the sphere of motivation with the help of information and communication technologies, which can be easily controlled and guided in the right direction. When the satisfaction of spiritual needs is largely transferred to the virtual sphere, all that remains is to get the consumer hooked on the right information product, and you can manipulate his or her consciousness in any way, while forcing them to pay for the services provided. The ultimate goal of capitalist society is still the monetisation of consumer processes.

As for the consequences of this transition, for most unprepared people, they are quite sad. Humanity is rapidly differentiating into a rational, systematic and deeply thinking minority that

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creates and uses high-quality information products, and a majority that superficially and uncritically perceives any information that comes into its field of vision. It is not easy to entertain and satisfy a large mass of people who are satiated with everything in material and spiritual terms. However, since a person perceives the world only through his or her own consciousness, there are ample opportunities to manipulate this consciousness, both globally, influencing a multi-million audience, and individually, taking into account the interests and tastes of each individual.

Today, for the sake of profit, any notions of morality, artistic taste and common sense can be thrown aside, the boundaries between the permissible and the unacceptable, the norm and the pathology can be removed, and madness itself can be declared the norm and incessantly introduced into the minds of the average consumer. But, having created such a "consumer" in hundreds of millions of copies, it is very difficult to keep them within certain limits. It is no coincidence that crime in general and cybercrime in particular is on the rise in the world. Marc Goodman, emphasises,

Before we know it, our global society will have trillions of new devices connected to the Internet, devices that will saturate every aspect of our daily lives. These constant communications will connect people and machines across the planet, for good and ill, and they will be woven into our exponentially expanding consciousness. As a result, technology will no longer be the story of machines – it will become the story of humanity, and those who know how the underlying technologies work will increasingly take an advantageous position and use it for their benefit, often to the detriment of the average person. (Goodman, 2019, p. 29)

A person needs a measure of resources for physical existence and intellectual health. An excess of information that flows into an individual's mind in a continuous stream is more dangerous than a lack of it. A creative person, experiencing a certain "spiritual hunger", receives an impetus to generate his or her own thoughts, resulting in new ideas, inventions and discoveries. An individual in a state of information overload may lose the ability not only to engage in creative but also in any activity, seeking only to mindlessly absorb a kaleidoscope of new external impressions.

In order for people to preserve themselves as rational beings and ensure a favourable prospect for the development of society, the task of proper, i.e., intelligent and far-sighted handling of artificial information resources produced by modern civilisation, as well as information hygiene, should be prioritised. Of particular importance is education, which should shift the emphasis from quantitative to qualitative parameters of information provision, form not only narrow specialists with a limited set of functions, but also well-rounded individuals with the ability to systematically handle information resources and to see the world in a forward-looking manner.

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Freedom of information, the freedom to receive and disseminate it, which is one of the main values of modern society, should be clarified to mean *freedom of quality information*, i.e. information that meets the criteria of truth, goodness and justice. The urgent requirement of our time should be to ensure the freedom to receive and disseminate positive, moral, life-affirming information and to warn against dark, harmful, hateful content. Ultimately, we are talking about the consciousness of people, and it is the state of consciousness of each individual and all people in general that decisively determines our future.

Originality

The article introduces and substantiates a new philosophical concept – *a person of mass information consumption*, which, in the authors' opinion, adequately reflects the essence of the modern stage of personality development. This concept makes it possible to outline the key features of the newest type of person, highlights the reasons for their transformations in the new socio-cultural conditions, and indicates the possible consequences of these changes in the short and long term.

Conclusions

The main features of the new stage of society development are that both the subject that creates and disseminates information and the object – that is, the information itself – have changed. Thanks to information and communication technologies, hundreds of millions of people are involved in the creation, distribution and consumption of information, and in the near future, perhaps, the entire humanity. If earlier people used to receive information mainly from the natural world, now they have created a new, artificial information environment in which they spend a significant part of their time and which, in fact, becomes their life world. This is dividing humanity into an intellectual elite that creates and uses high-quality information, and those who are in the realm of low-quality and openly harmful content. The consciousness of a significant number of people is undergoing significant changes, and they are turning from creative beings with potentially endless opportunities for development into indiscriminate consumers of mass surrogate information services. A person of mass consumption of information who spends a significant part of his or her life in virtual reality, where not positive activities prevail, but rather haphazard and meaningless consumption of endless streams of information and doomscrolling, significantly distorts his or her consciousness. If these processes become widespread, it can lead human civilisation into a deadlock, put an end to human biological and intellectual evolution, and make us face a real prospect of self-destruction.

To prevent this development, humanity should take a number of measures today. Firstly, we should focus on a deeper study of the psychological mechanisms of human dependence on digital media, which will allow us to develop effective prevention programmes and stimulate critical thinking. Education plays a key role in this process. It should move from quantitative indicators to qualitative transformations, forming not just narrow specialists, but well-rounded individuals capable of systematic analysis, strategic thinking and responsible handling of information resources. Secondly, in the context of information overload, it is necessary to protect society from harmful content, while maintaining access to high-quality, life-affirming information that meets the criteria of truth, goodness and justice. Thirdly, special attention should be paid to the impact of virtualisation on social structures and cultural identity. The study of these processes will help to predict changes in the consciousness of individuals and society, and prevent its deformation in time.

Thus, in order to ensure sustainable development and preserve the intellectual and socio-cultural achievements of mankind, it is necessary to maintain a balance between information

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flows and critical consciousness. Only a conscious approach to information consumption, supported by quality education and ethical standards, will help to avoid the threats of the post-information society and ensure the progressive development of humanity.

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Людина масового споживання інформації як феномен постінформаційного суспільства

Мета. Стаття спрямована на філософсько-антропологічне осмислення феномену людини масового споживання інформації. У фокусі дослідження перебуває аналіз основних проблем, із якими стикається сучасна людина в умовах тотального інформаційного середовища, а саме: ерозія інтелектуального потенціалу, послаблення критичного мислення, зниження інноваційної спроможності. Означена мета потребує окреслення можливих заходів для подолання цих проблем та оцінки їхніх наслідків для подальшого розвитку людства. **Теоретичний базис.** Підґрунтям дослідження слугує методологія філософської антропології та соціальної філософії із застосуванням принципів системності, сходження від абстрактного до конкретного. Для розв'язання прикладних завдань використано гіпотетико-дедуктивний та феноменологічний методи. **Наукова новизна.** У статті введено та обґрунтовано новий філософський концепт – людина масового споживання інформації, який, на думку авторів, адекватно відображає сутність сучасного етапу розвитку особистості. Цей концепт дозволяє окреслити ключові особливості новітнього типу людини, висвітлює причини її трансформацій у нових соціокультурних умовах. **Висновки.** Сучасний етап розвитку людської цивілізації відзначається зміною як суб'єкта інформаційної діяльності, так і самої природи інформації. Завдяки розвитку інформаційно-комунікативних технологій до процесу створення, поширення та споживання інформації долучаються мільйони людей, поступово формується особлива віртуальна реальність, яка стає життєвим світом людини, замінюючи собою природне середовище. Як наслідок, людство дедалі більше поділяється на інтелектуальну еліту, яка оперує якісним знанням, та масу споживачів поверхового, часто сурогатного контенту. Така тенденція спричиняє глибокі зміни у свідомості більшості людей: із потенційно творчих істот вони щодаля перетворюються на пасивних споживачів інформації, що може поставити під загрозу подальшу біологічну та інтелектуальну еволюцію людства. Щоб запобігти такому сценарію, необхідно вжити низку заходів: по-перше, зосередити увагу на докладному вивченні психологічних механізмів залежності людини від цифрових медіа, що дозволить розробити ефективні програми профілактики та стимулювання критичного мислення; по-друге, захистити суспільство від шкідливого контенту, зберігаючи при цьому доступ до якісної інформації; по-третє, окрему увагу слід приділити впливу віртуалізації на соціальні структури та культурну ідентичність. Застосування цих заходів допоможе передбачити зміни у свідомості людини та вчасно запобігти її деформації.

Ключові слова: людина; свідомість; знання; інформація; людина масового споживання інформації; постінформаційне суспільство

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