IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

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Abstract. The present article deals with the problem of social media communication and its impact on the everyday communicative behavior; namely, on the ways we speak and write. In order to accomplish this task at first we turn to philosophical background of communication, paying a special attention Søren Kierkegaard's media criticism. The second chapter of the article is devoted to the explication of the basic notions of social media studies, emphasizing such concepts as new media, new new media, and network society. The third part of the article presents the results of students' survey regarding their attitudes towards contemporary communication practices, the main conclusion being that although students recognize the impact of social media on their everyday communication patterns, including the situation and perceive it as a new natural environment of communication.

Keywords: philosophy of communication, media criticism, Søren Kierkegaard, new media, new new media, network society, text speak

Introduction

"Anonymity in our age has a far more pregnant significance than is perhaps realized; it has an almost epigrammatic significance. Not only do people write anonymously, but they write anonymously over their signature, yes, even speak anonymously"[1], thus wrote the 19th century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in his literary review "Two Ages". Paradoxically, these lines accord precisely to the contemporary communicative situation, predominantly characterized by the wide use social media (Facebook, twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) and fundamental changes in communication styles and content transmission. Thus, the main task of the present article is to track some of these changes and to delineate the new modes of communication, especially among university students. The emphasis on young educated people is related to the origin of this particular research theme, more precisely, to classroom discussions with business administration, culture management and communication management students. In addition, an important role is played by the author's personal academic interests in the fields of communication philosophy (especially in the thoughts of Søren Kierkegaard), communication sciences and culture studies (different aspects, such as globalization, digital communication, network society, consumer society, philosophical aspects of Facebook communication, etc.). This accounts for the structure of the article. The first part is devoted to philosophies of communication; the second part deals with basic conceptions of communication studies (the concepts of new new media, the network society, the digital society, etc.); while the third part depicts results of the empirical research – the students survey and result discussions in the seminars (altogether 240 students were involved in the survey, they represented three educational institutions – the University of Latvia, the University College of Economics and Culture, the Turiba University); and, finally there follows conclusions.

1. Philosophies of Communication

During the whole history of western philosophy the problem of communication has played the prominent role, starting with Aristotle's seminal work "Rhetoric", where attention is paid not only to the form of communication, but also to the content, i.e., what is to be communicated; besides that here we can mention Cicero's "Orator" with the description of types of speakers. Still, communication as philosophical problem as such emerges in the 19th and 20th centuries with such thinkers as Søren Kierkegaard (the concepts existence-communication as Communication of ability versus objective communication of knowledge), Edmund Husserl (the problem of intersubjectivity in the 5th Cartesian Meditation), Paul Ricoeur (the problem of understanding, time and narrative), Max Scheler (communication of values), Martin Heidegger (being-in-the-world and being-with), Alfred Schutz (the theory

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1   Kierkegaard, S. *Two Ages.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 103.

of intersubjective understanding), Karl Jaspers (communication in existence), Martin Buber (communication as dialogue), Emanuel Levinas (communicating in the face of the Other), Jürgen Habermas (communicative rationality), Jacques Derrida (*linqua* and *parole*, deconstruction and *differance*), Marshall McLuhan (medium is the message), Ludwig Wittgenstein (language games), Roland Barthes (culture semiotics), Jean Baudrillard (new systems of signs), Charles Sanders Pierce (pragmatics of communication), and so on and so forth. All these different approaches mentioned have in common the concern with relying information in one or another way. In the view of our present project concerning the impact of social media on the patterns of communication we propose to employ Søren Kierkegaard's theory of communication and practice of media criticism as the philosophical background.

Although we can easily see the life course of Søren Kierkegaard as periodical, nevertheless consistent reacting against particular negative features of his age, still it is true that he diagnoses the sickness of the age itself. This "sickness unto death" is not only a crisis of faith (though that being the most vivid symptom), but the whole complex of relations including science, technology, politics, social actions, philosophy and, last but not the least, the religious life. In other words, his attention is turned towards that we today call the 'modernity', the danger of which lies precisely in the levelling of individuality and sinking into the abstract intellectualism contrary to the individualism's concreteness and particularity. It has been regarded as self-evident that reflection is of the highest value; science more and more swerves away from the primitivism of existence; there is nothing to feel, to experience, everything is being put into system and put in order into different classes of abstract thinking. A human being is not capable of love and action anymore, save the emptying rational thinking fostered by emerging mass media.

Kierkegaard's relations with mass media are quite complicated bearing the very personal imprints, especially if we remember the "Corsair affair" of the year 1846 centering on his personality. Kierkegaard was under heavy media attack, paparazzo-style publicity like some of the modern day celebrities. As much as for some of them, there is a hint that this scandal could be self-induced. Roger Poole has put this view forward in his monograph "Kierkegaard: the indirect communication."[2] To be reminded in short, for several months none of the issues of the Copenhagen satirical magazine the "Corsair" would come out with pamphlets or cartoons sarcastically depicting Kierkegaard's outward appearance oddities (for instance, his slightly hunched back or different length of trouser legs), directly and indirectly ridiculing his lines. It seems that aversion to the daily press could be result of these bad, painful and deeply personal experiences. Still, on the other hand, Kierkegaard himself in the autobiography "The point of view for my work as an author" asserts that he has modelled his daily actions and reactions to everything happening around

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2   Poole, R. Kierkegaard: the indirect communication. Charlottesville: the University Press of
      Virginia, 1993.

him according to the tasks of authorship at hand. "By means of my personal existing, I attempted to support the pseudonymous writers, all the aesthetic writing."[3] In other words, while being depressed Kierkegaard took his time every day to appear in public events for a few minutes at most to demonstrate his bohemian careless side, although it was a pure deception. Meanwhile working on religious writings, he, according to the autobiography, places himself as a target of common people's scrutinizing and unkind gaze. "That my personal existing had to be conformed to this, or that I had to try to give my contemporaries another impression of my personal existing, 1 perceived at once."[4] Above mentioned admissions by the philosopher, in our opinion, allow us to look upon the Kierkegaard and press relation stressing such aspects as public and construction of social reality, levelling and loss of individuality, anonymity and, finally, noise. These aspects, in their turn, allow putting Kierkegaard in the context of contemporary media criticism and social media research.

Kierkegaard first public talk on the role and impact of media in the society was given already in 1935 as a lecture in front of students' association, the title of the lecture was "Our journalistic literature." Here he discusses four main arguments: 1) among journalists it is possible to find the talented individuals, but *en masse* all are incompetent; 2) free press has not played a prominent role in the liberalization of Denmark, here the greatest thanks should be expressed to the King Frederic IV; 3) the import of foreign ideas foster too hasty development; 4) the newspaper article authors' anonymity may turn people into irresponsible individuals, and information can lack precision.[5] It seems that the latter aspect is of a special importance to our project, since the anonymity or pseudo-anonymity of communication, the speed and fast dissemination of information change the way we communicate essentially. This is exactly what the contemporary media philosophers point out. Let's mention here the famous expression, by Marshall McLuhan "The medium the message" and his distinction between hot and cool media. "In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves – result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology."[6] In other words, the mode of communication affects the content of communication and communicators themselves. The cool media, according to McLuhan, requires participation and involvement as opposed to one directionalism of the hot media.

3   Kierkegaard, S. The Point of View. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 62.

4   *Ibid*, p. 63.

5   Kierkegaard, S. Early Polemical Writings. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 35-52.

6   McLuhan, M. Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man. Cambridge, Mass., London: the MIT Press, 1994, p. 7.

We have to remember that this was said already in the year of 1964, but as we will see later, the concept of cool media strongly resonates with Paul Levin's conception of new new media.

The "Two ages" is a critical essay written by Kierkegaard in 1846 devoted to the analysis of Thomasine Gyllembourg's novel "Two ages"; he uses this novel as a pretext to develop his personal thoughts regarding the so-called phantom of public. To characterize the present age from the angle of communicative activities Kierkegaard writes: "…the present age is the age of advertisement, the age of miscellaneous announcements: nothing happens, but what does happen is instant notification."[7] It means that the dividing line between the private and the public ceases to exist, the private matters become public, and individuality is being subjected to the process of reduction. A great role in the process is being played by the press – it can make a person into a one-day hero, or the target of public ridicule, and the reasons for that are difficult to detect because there is no an individual responsibility whatsoever. To illustrate the aforementioned statement Kierkegaard gives an example of the Roman Emperor who unleashes his dogs to tear to pieces innocent men; the blame eventually is being placed upon the dogs. In the same way the general public tears into pieces those who are brave enough to be different, to stand out in the crowd. "The abstraction of the press (for a newspaper, a journal there is no political concretion and only in an abstract sense an individual), combined with the passionlessness and reflectiveness of the age, gives birth to that abstraction's phantom, the public which is the real leveler."[8] Kierkegaard's political conservatism makes him to view the developing rise of social egalitarianism with some suspicion since "more and more individuals will aspire to be nothing – in order to be the public, this abstract whole formed, laughably, by the participant becoming a third party."[9] The result is some kind of negative sociality, where relationships among individuals are rooted in the abstract principles alone. In sum, we can say that, in Kierkegaard's opinion the maladies of the age are such: the rise of the egalitarian society; the levelling accomplished by the public opinion created by the mass media; the growing reflectiveness and passionlessness; the decline of individualism; and true interpersonal communication that is possible only between concrete individuals.

Leveling and loss of individuality. Kierkegaard criticizes day press that plays a prominent role in the formation of crowd consciousness, since the journalist can speak what he likes; the semblance of the truth is reached by the publicity itself. Therefore, if there is any dialogue whatsoever, it is a dialogue between anonymous actors. Non-individual is a representative of the crowd, one among many others, subjected to the process of leveling. "…leveling is an abstract power and is abstraction's

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7   Kierkegaard, S. *Two Ages.* P. 70.

8   *Ibid.*, p. 93.

9   *Ibid.*, p. 94.

victory over individuals."[10] The individual, on the other hand, is the one who can stand against the public, but being perhaps too much concerned about his outward appearances he strives to stand out and tends to neglect his essential inwardness (still he has to potential for it). The public is an artificial construct created by media; its abstractedness makes any true communication act impossible.

Anonymity. Ties between the existential position of the narrator and the narration itself are severed, thus the narration is being objectivized, depersonalized. Anonymity is evasion from the ethical responsibility to the others and to oneself. Doesn't this remind the anonymous comments on the internet today? Kierkegaard writes: "The press is often guilty of a *petition principii* [begging of the question] in its tactics; it pretends to be reporting a factual situation and aims to produce it. There is something that the journalist wants to promote, and perhaps there is no one at all who thinks about it or cares about it; what does the journalist do then? In lofty tones he writes an article its being a need deeply felt by everyone, etc. His newspaper has a wide circulation, and now we have a game under way. That is, the article is read, discussed; another paper perhaps proceed to write against it; there are polemics and sensation is created…"[11]

Noise and publicity. The press, according to Kierkegaard creates the continuous background noise. The speed of information dissemination (and that is in the Kierkegaard's times!) creates the surface effect where everything is shallow and unimportant. The content of the printed pieces suit the taste levels of the average person (the common man), since this is the only way how to raise the sales. "Ah, everything is noisy; and just as a strong drink is said to stir the blood, so everything in our day, even the most insignificant project, even the most empty communication, is designed merely to jolt the senses or to stir up the masses, the crowd, the public, noise! And man, this clever fellow, seems to have become sleepless in order to invent ever new instruments to increase noise, to spread noise and insignificance with the greatest possible haste and on the greatest possible scale. Yes, everything is soon turned upside down: communication is indeed soon brought to its lowest point with regard to meaning, and simultaneously the means of communication are indeed brought to their highest with regard to speedy and overall circulation; for what is publicized with such hot haste and, on the other hand, what has greater circulation than-rubbish! 'Oh, create silence!'"[12]

Kierkegaard believes that the only counterweight to these annihilating factors is the self-recognition of the individual, as there is no equality possible among the identically produced personae. The true co-communication is possible only among

10   *Ibid.*, p. 84.

11   Kierkegaard, S. Book on Adler. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 204.

12   Kierkegaard, S. For Self-Examination. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 47–
      48.

the particular, historical and contemporaneous individuals. Thus, we can conclude that Kierkegaard's philosophy of communication

2. Social media and communication studies

The present chapter is devoted to the explication of a few fundamental notions in the field of contemporary communication studies, such as new new media (the doubling of the term is not a typing mistake here) by Paul Levinson, the network society (Manuel Castells and Jan van Dijk), the Facebook philosophy.

The new media. New media enjoys five distinctive characteristics: digitality – dematerialization of media text; convergency – new media converges the forms and, functions of information, media, electronic communication, and electronic computing; interactivity - freedom in producing and reproducing the content and form of the information during the interaction; hypertextuality - new life experience for human beings, which in turn will lead the transformation of economic activities, cultural patterns, interactional styles, and other aspects of human society; virtuality – formation of virtual community that crosses all the boundaries of human society definitely will challenge the way we perceive reality and have traditionally defined identity. [13]

The new new media. The concept, proposed by Paul Levinson in his book "New new media" at the first sight may seem a little confusing, still the author emphasizes that tit bears a special significance, that is, designates the new mediums and tools of communication that involve interactivity and reciprocity (in this sense it can be compared to McLuhan's conception of cool media), they have appeared within the last five years and they are newer than classical new media in the form of email and Web sites. What are the basic underlying principles of the new new media? Let us mention some of them. (1) *Every consumer is a producer* – the total control of the person who produces the content (the readers become writers, while producers become producers); here we can mention such an example as Wikipedia, that can be developed by each and every one; in a sense it embodies the very spirit of the new new media, namely, we can find the primary information and links in there, but at the same time for academic purspoposes this source is regarded as untrustworthy. (2) *Non-professionalism.* Although the new new media can be used for earning profits, still it is not the main purpose; they gain authenticity precisely because the writers are not working for some newspaper of organization. (3) *The free choice of medium.* The new new media allow to choose one or another way of expression, or even different combinations of tools, for instance, Twitter and Instagram, YouTube and Facebook, etc. (4) *Free of charge.* As a rule the new new media are free for their producers and users. (5) *Competition and compatibility.* The use of the common platform for

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13   Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I. Kelly, K. New Media: A Critical Introduction. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

communication, for example, google users as rule use the common account for Gmail, YouTube, Facebook, etc. (6) *The social character.* The new new media are intrinsically social; they foster the development of new communities, specific subcultures with their particular modes of communication.[14]

The network society. Manuel Castells begins his book "The rise of the network society" with a description of how the Information Technology Revolution is distinct from the Industrial Revolution. The distinguishing characteristic of the new IT paradigm that particularly affects social and economic transformations is its "networking logic". The new information technologies are facilitating more complex interactions that are organized by networks. "The shift from traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organized around the Internet and wireless communication has introduced a multiplicity of communication patterns at the source of a fundamental cultural transformation, as virtuality becomes an essential dimension of our reality." [15] Castells describes changes that have taken place within lad two decades, the most significant of them being the merger of Internet and wireless technologies (the mobile Internet, the Wi-Fi connections are broadly used today, wherever we are, wherever we go people sit with their cellphones or tablets and browse the net). "New technologies are also fostering the development of social spaces of virtual reality that combine sociability and experimentation with role-playing games."[16]

A slightly different approach is presented by Jan van Dijk in his opus "The network society. The social aspects of new media." The Network Society, as Van Dijk sees it, is a new type of society where social relations are organized within mediative technologies that form a communication network rather than networks typified by face-to-face social relations. He differentiates the network society from the information society by highlighting what they focus on, the information society concept concentrates on the changing substance of social processes while the network society concept examines the organizational forms of social processes. "With little exaggeration, we may call the 21st century the age of networks. Networks are becoming the nervous system of our society, and we can expect this infrastructure to have more influence on our entire social and personal lives than did the construction of roads for the transportation of goods and people in the past. In this sense 'information highway' is an appropriate term. The design of such basic infrastructures is crucial for the opportunities and risks to follow."[17] In the author's opinion, the combination of social and media networks will create a very strong new infrastructure of our society; this accounts for his rather optimistic vision of the fragmentation of the public sphere: "Therefore,

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14 Levinson, P. New New media. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2009, pp. 1-4.

15 Castells, M. The rise of network society. Chicester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p. xviii.

16 *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

17 Dijk van, J. The network society. The social aspects of new media. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006, p. 2.

I am less afraid than most observers of a fragmentation of its public sphere by an increasing number of subcultures that communicate completely separately from each other in using the new media."[18] One of the interesting arguments developed by Van Dijk is his explanation for apparent increasing individualization evident in modern high-tech societies. In this context, he sees the rise of individualism as the counterpoint to the increasing pervasiveness of the network, namely, everyone can access the network and form the particular community.

The Facebook philosophy. The article collection entitled "Facebook and philosophy" pinpoints the philosophical aspects of this social network that has become much more than simple communication tools and environment; namely, it has become a community, with its particular rules of behavior, written and unwritten codes of ethics, and with a special mastery of language and symbols (that could be hardly understandable to those from the pre-Facebook/pre-Zukerberg era). Let's mention a few philosophical issues of the Facebook: the privacy matters (although Facebook itself is a public domain, the profile is the private sphere that has to be protected), personal profiles and pictures (information we put on the net can be accessible to the potential employers; the poses, the setting in photos speak louder than words), friending (a special concept employed by the authors of the book in order to describe the phenomenon of being friends on the Facebook; are they real friends? – rather not), excess of seeing, playing around with identities. "Facebook turns out to be a very effective tool not just for creating new social contexts, but for violating them, as well. The same Facebook servers that make it easy to share an announcement with your whole network of college friends also make it easy for them to copy and paste your words into an email."[19] This can easily lead to unintentional oversharing and the loss of privacy again. The patterns of communication have changed drastically, and the question is: do these changes entail the modifications of the everyday language use, keeping in mind though that the *lingua franca* of Facebook is English.

3. Attitudes towards the new forms of communication among the Latvian

As the use of text messages became increasingly widespread over the last decade, a new written vocabulary, "text speak," emerged. Text speak bears resemblance to standard English, and they can both be considered written languages;[20] however, there are notable structural differences between them. More specifically, text speak is characterized by acronyms, emoticons (symbols representing emotions,

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18   *Ibid.*, p. 39.

19   Wittkower, D. E., ed. Facebook and philosophy. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open court, 2010, p. 11.

20   Crystal, D. Language and the Internet (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

e. g. for happy), and the deletion of unnecessary words, vowels, punctuation, and capitalization; words are frequently coded in simple phonetic form; for example, thanks becomes thx and you becomes u. For example, text speak users often utilize acronyms for popular phrases, such as gtg for got to go, ttyl for talk to you later, and lol for laugh out loud. Moreover, capitalization and punctuation are often left out so that I've got to run becomes ive gotta run. Even the special term has been devised for description of these new forms of verbal and/or pictorial representations, this term is "textism". Nowadays we can speak about the grammar of Facebook, specific punctuation, orthography, etc. Texting refers to the use of abbreviations and other techniques to craft SMS and instant messages. Texting does not always follow the standard rules of English grammar, nor usual word spellings. It is so pervasive that some regard it as an emergent language register in it's own right.

There has been conducted a number of surveys related to the use of Facebook and its effects on thinking and communication modes. We will mention five examples here. (1), "Impact of Social Networks on Interpersonal Communication of the Students University College Irbid Girls: Facebook as a Model."[21] Conclusions: There are statistically significant relationships between the use of Facebook and interpersonal contact with the family and others and the number of hours of using Facebook and interpersonal contact with the family members and others; the results of the statistical analysis showed that the use of Facebook makes it easier for the subjects to communicate with others. However, Facebook affects the interpersonal contact with the family in that it helps to reduce the interaction of the sample families. (2) "Use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept." The current study found that most college students have about 300 to 600 friends. Changing content of the concept «friend» due to the social media use.[22] (3) "Effectiveness of Social Media as a tool of communication and its potential for technology enabled connections: A micro-level study." Conclusions: The research exhibited both the positive and negative effects of social media on communication. Positive effects: sharing of ideas, tool of communication, bridges communication gap, acts as the source of information, marketing tool, time management instrument. Negative effects: intrusion into privacy, loosening of the family ties.[23]

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21   Al-Khaddam, H. K. Impact of Social Networks on Interpersonal Communication of the Students University College Irbid Girls: Facebook as a Model, In *Cross-Cultural Communication*, Vol. 9 (5), 2013, pp. 17-22.

22   Sponcil, M., Gitimu, P. Use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept. In *Journal of Technology Research* [interactive]. 2013, 4 [accessed 24.05.2015] <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/121214.pdf>

23   Dowerah Baruah. T. Effectiveness of Social Media as a tool of communication and its potential for technology enabled connections: A micro-level study. In *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* [interactive] 2 (5) [accesed 24.06.2015] 2012, <http://www.ijsrp.org/research_paper_may2012/rp24.html>

To research the Latvian young people's attitudes towards the textisms and other forms of expressions on the Internet (particularly on Facebook, Twitter and email) we conducted the survey of 240 Latvian students. The choice of the sample was substantiated by the statistical information, i. e., in 2014 among the internet users two age groups were clearly dominating – age groups of 16-24 and of 25-34 (96,8 % and 95,8 % respectively).[24] To narrow down the group we chose to survey students (they fit within the age range of the maximum users), n=240, enrolled in philosophy, communication ethics, communication management, intercultural communication classes within the year of 2014/2105. The students represented three Latvia's higher educational establishments: The University College of Economics and Culture; the Turiba University; The University of Latvia (students of Commerce diplomacy), aged between 18 and 25

Although it may be concluded that the results obtained are not highly representative since the total number of students in Latvia in the study year of 2014/2015 comprises altogether 85881 individuals[25], still we believe that the results could demonstrate the overall tendency in attitude towards communication patterns.

The questionnaire consists of 5 close-ended questions. When the survey was completed, the results were discussed with the parties involved, i.e. students, during seminars and colloquiums. Overall, the students admitted that the results accord to their perception of the modern day communication modes.

Question No. 1. *Do you think that social media influences way we speak and write in our everyday lives?*

Yes	No
176	64

Figure 1. Students' answers to the question about the influence of social media on the modes of everyday communication

As we can see the majority of the students surveyed admit that their online behavior affects their everyday communication and that they more and more extensively use the abbreviation, contractions, specific symbols (for example, *tnx* instead of thanks, *omg* – Oh My God!) Perhaps this could be a feature that marks the difference between pre- and post-Facebook generations.

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24   Number of inhabitants regularly using computer/Internet, % of the total number of individuals within the corresponding group [interactive] [accessed 24.06.2015] <http://www.csb.gov.lv>

25   *Pārskats par Latvijas augstāko izglītību 2014.gadā* [interactive] [accessed 24.06.2015] 2014 <http://izm.gov.lv/images/statistika/augst_izgl/12.pdf>

Question No. 2. *Do you use smileys or other inserts when writing e-mails, SMS, twitter messages?*

Yes	No
201	39

Figure 2. Students' answers to the question about the use of additional symbols
in their text messages

The pervasive positive answers to this question illustrates the writing practices of students. Of course, the use of inserts and different symbols, such as smileys ☺, hugs and kisses XO, likes or dislikes presupposes some understanding at the receiving end of the message, i.e. the social media literacy.

Question No. 3. *When text messaging do you think of the grammar rules and punctuation?*

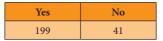| Yes	No
199	41

Figure 3. Students' answers to the question about the use of grammar rules
and punctuation in their text messages

Such dissymmetry of answers with prevailing "yes" could demonstrate students' caring about their form of expression, but we have some doubts regarding the truthfulness of the answers since rather often SMS contain just the basic information. One of the reasons for it could be related to the situation of the survey – in the university setting. Although, we can't state this with full assurance.

Question No. 4. *Do you post personal information on social media?*

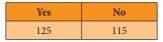| Yes	No
125	115

Figure 4. Students' answers to the question about posting the personal information
on the social media

As we see here, the division between positive and negative answers is almost even. It may suggest that the students are rather careless with sharing their personal information on the Internet. Although when discussing this particular answer in the seminar groups, the students explained their position by the possibility to keep the profile personal and closed to any uninvited viewer. Perhaps, the reason for this division of answers could also be the imprecisely posed question. It should have been reformulated in such a way: *Do you post the personal information publicly?*

Question No. 5. *Do you agree with a statement that social media minimize or nullifies social distance?*

Yes	No
161	79

Figure 5. Students' answers to the question about the social media impact
on the social distance

The answer is of no surprise, since one of the social media *per se*, especially the so-called new new media presuppose the egalitarian, horizontal structure of relations. There is no hierarchy, no authority. At the same time, this shows also a tendency to lose the more formal way of addressing the university professors. In other words, speaking from the personal experience, while texting students can refer my y the first name, although they never act like this in face-to-face communication.

Question No. 6. *Do message exchange (SMS, twitter, Skype, whatsup, hangout, etc.)*:

Foster communication?	Hinder communications?
157	88

Figure 6. Students' answers to the question about the effects
of messaging onto communication

It is clear that students are optimistic regarding the future of social media communication. Still, during the seminar discussions some negative aspects also came up, namely, that the communication has become shallower, that the large number of "friends" or "followers" does not mean that we have more friendships that are real. Sometimes, quite confusing seems the fact that among friends there are people you never met and never communicated in the real life. You just can keep wondering where and how have you met these strangers whose personal life stories now unfold in front of your eyes.

Conclusions

1. The theme of communication in philosophy acquires a special importance during the 20th and 21st centuries due to the development of new technologies and advance of social networking. This changes the whole dynamics of situation, since social media presupposes interactivity, reciprocity, involvement. At the same time, the negative factors also come forth – the loss of privacy, the over communicativeness, social alienation, dependency issues.

2. In the history of philosophy the author who already in the 19th century predicted the positive and negative aspects of media dominated culture and communication, was Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard. He pointed out such philosophical themes as the loss of individuality and leveling, the crowd as untruth, the noise and construction of parallel social reality, and the anonymity. The public sphere and the press, according to Kierkegaard, promote ubiquitous commentators who detach themselves from the real circumstances. Especially the latter aspect parallel the modern day's anonymous internet commentators with their sneers, arrogance, and naked rudeness.

3. Manuel Castell's and Jan van Dijk's conceptions of the network society characterize the changes of the social structure and formation of new mosaic-like clusters of communication.

4. If the paradigm of new media exhibits five distinctive features such as, digitality, convergency, hyperactivity, interactivity, virtuality, the concept of the new new media refers to the social character, free choice of media, authorship, and free of charge use.

5. The Facebook philosophy states the following: social media affects how we use the word "friend"; social media affects how we think about our offline social networks; social media affects how we present ourselves; social media affects how others perceive us; social media affects our identity; social media affects relationship maintenance behaviors; social media affects our privacy.

6. The survey of 240 Latvian students demonstrates that although students recognize the impact of social media on their everyday communication patterns, including the situation and perceive it as a new natural environment of communication.

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