

ON HUMAN IDENTITY IN CYBERSPACE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Human identity is not static but dynamic. It depends on somatic and cognitive development, culture and society. Human identity is now extending to cyberspace of digital media. According to Turkle, cyberspace acts as a mirror in which one can get to know one another. However, virtual identity is not entirely virtual because it is continually linked to real identity through cognitive functions and abilities. The author focuses on two risks of expanding identity in cyberspace of digital media, which are cybersex and narcissism. Narcissism and cybersex are two risks that currently endanger especially children and adolescents. Therefore society should pay particular attention to education. Media education, with special emphasis on critical thinking, is a necessity.

Key words: *real identity, virtual identity, cyberspace, digital media, cybersex, narcissism, media education*

INTRODUCTION

The topic of human identity has been an extensively discussed subject since the second half of 20th century, especially in humanisties. This is brought by a fundamental cultural change in Western civilisation – change from Modernism to Postmodernism¹ and its present development to Post-postmodernism, Hypermodernism or Late modernism. All of these eras share one feature –

¹ In sociology, this change is known as a shift from industrial to post-industrial or information society.

technological changes, especially in digital media such as the Internet and various platforms and applications that use it. The Internet, as a dominating type of media, has a great impact on our sensory perception, ideas, thinking and learning and consequently on collective mentality and social organisation. T. H. Eriksen [2009: 17] sees the Internet as an extraordinary medium that started the 21st century in the early 90s. Basing on this, we can assume that the Internet and new forms of media will significantly change human identity. This will include virtualisation of human and even further diversion from metaphysics, or more precisely from metaphysical identification of human, in which it was the spiritual substance that was understood to be the human's core, the spiritual "I." This concept is questioned in postmodern and modern philosophy, identity (or human nature), is seen as a temporary and variable construct that is established by convergence of individual mental and somatic dispositions such as language, customs, religion, social establishment and so on. In the context of new media, especially the Internet, human identity gets even more complicated as we can reflect our identity here by generating various statuses on social networks, sharing photos, texts or videos. In cyberspace of digital media, especially in videogames, we can create our own avatars and control their lives. Cyberspace of digital media, including videogames, is becoming our new existential space in which we live our alternative way of life. This is the reason why it is highly probable that life in cyberspace will somehow influence also our real life, or more precisely – our real identity.

The aim of this text is to find what real human identity is, learn about how it is constructed in cyberspace of digital media and consequently, determine how digital identity influences our real identity. In this work we will be using phenomenological and hermeneutic methodology. The first method will be used to find the nature of media which, in principle, influence shaping of identity. For example the Internet brings us an opportunity to quickly find, link, change and use information. Hermeneutic methodology will be used to compare real and virtual reality, find differences and learn about changes in real identity caused by virtual identity.

1. ON HUMAN IDENTITY

When we speak about human identity, we generally start with an assumption that identity is something lasting, despite permanent changes in our life. A human is still the same human being, regardless all those changes happening in life². Even though we can see some permanent changes, we can also see something that is immune to these changes and therefore remains the same. However, we should not see identity as a mathematical identity, but more as a specific, paradoxical identity that combines a permanent identity and dynamic change. Moreover, the term human identity is also connected with various structural levels, such as somatic, mental, social and cultural. We need to look for human identity somewhere at the point where all these levels intersect. However, also here various levels are dynamic and static at the same time, thus they define internal and external identity. By the term internal dimension we mean the very "I" of a person, something that is understood to be permanent and

² A. J. Lyon [1988 : 441] starts his analysis of personal identity by comparing himself to his photo from the past. He thinks about how much this photographs reflects him, as he has changed both physically and mentally. He speaks about the principal paradox in human identity, which on one hand relates to physical and mental change, but on the other hand it is also something that remains and links our past with our present.

time resistant. The external aspect then means the unstable human body. The internal aspect of identity relates to spiritual and cultural characteristics, while the external aspect is connected with somatic and social characteristics of human. Human identity is therefore a multi-aspect and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Ken Wilber's concept [2006: 30], quite integral and holistic, will serve us very well as the principal concept for our study. In his work Introduction to the integral approach Wilber came with a number of integral models of human. We chose one of them for our study – his concept of a four-quadrant grid. This grid represents human development, with individual interconnected and organised development lines. These lines go left to right and up and down. The upper left quadrant represents the interior, individual or intentional aspect in human, studied by psychology. The bottom left corner is meant for interior collective aspects of human mind. This field is studied by cultural science, cultural psychology and anthropology. The upper right quadrant describes exterior individual aspects that are subjects for medical science, for example neurology, and cognitive science. Finally, the bottom right quadrant describes exterior collective aspects that are studied by sociology.

Upper left quadrant Interior individual (intentional – awareness) “I“	Upper right quadrant Exterior individual (somatic – brain and body) “it“
Bottom left quadrant Interior collective (cultural – language, religion...) “we“	Bottom right quadrant Exterior collective (social and environmental) “their“

Wilber's identity concept is not only multidimensional, it is also dynamic, developing and integrative, in which it agrees with a number of different psychological approaches, for example Freud's, Jung's and other. These concepts all agree that identity is something we grow into, when awareness and unawareness, or when aspects of personality, integrate. In his concept of human individuation, Jung [Stevens 1996: 39] even speaks about integration of “me” (ego) with Self – the very core of human being. According to him, this integration is realised by a gradual rise of awareness – from unconsciousness to perception of Self. Nevertheless, Jung [Stevens 1996: 86] notices that “me-Self” integration is more an ideal state than real

possibility: “This goal is an important idea; however it is opus that leads to the desired state.”

Understanding this, we should distinguish between human identity and personality. Identity means the principal integration of mental, cultural and social components, while personality means complex integration of all components in human. Regardless of age, adult or child, with an exception for certain pathological cases, every human being are defined by his or her identity,³ but not everybody is a personality. In this respect, personality then means a more advanced and more complex level of identity.⁴ To sum up, we cannot see human identity as something permanent, but something that is dynamic and changeable, something that changes together with changes in body and mind, something that depends on awareness and unawareness, society and culture. Human identity is quite different from the Cartesian Cogito⁵, it is more similar to the so-called “Wittgenstein's Eye“ which becomes the object it sees.

2. ON VIRTUAL IDENTITY OF HUMAN

With introduction of computers and the Internet there came also new possibilities for development of human identity. It does not cover only human body, but spreads into a new technological dimension that we call virtual reality. This term also gives meaning to another one – virtual reality. Virtual reality and consequently also virtual identity have a variety of meanings. Most frequently they refer to something that differs from reality and covers a whole spectrum from partial reality (for example augmented reality) to mere fantasy. Even though all of these are rooted in technology and not human body, they are linked to human body through sensory perception (vision, audition or perhaps tactile sense) and therefore may bring some effects. This is the reason why also virtual identity means certain degree of reality. Ontologically, if we take human body as a reference point, we could see virtual identity as a lower level of reality. Some religions, for example Buddhism, see also our physical existence as relative, or conditional. The only unconditional reality is seen in nirvana, something that is beyond all sensory and abstract content. In our approach, we will simply rely on physical existence of a human as a fundamental and principal requirement to constitute virtual identity. Therefore, if virtual identity is a partial reality, then we must accept it as a part of our real identity. Or, as E. T. Olson [2009: 8] argues: “anything that contributes to identity, means identity.”

For this reason we need to expand Wilber's model of human identity and add virtual existence. Identity of a person then becomes even more multidimensional, less transparent and more complicated, but in return we see a greater chance for its integration.

There is one more problem – the generally accepted concepts that a person's identity, for example on social networks, is his or her real representation. The key feature of such representation is in the status image. Everybody originally thought that such a photograph described reality, so photographs were taken as a tool for scientific proof.

³ We should also distinguish identity and person. Every human is a person, but not everybody's identity can be integrated, as there are also cases of pathological disintegration.

⁴ In philosophical discourse we distinguish a person and personality; while psychological discourse defines that every human being is a personality.

⁵ In L. Wittgenstein's theory of knowledge [1993: 131] we learn that mind does not recognise itself (the eye cannot see itself) because it is not transparent. It is not a substance; it is a mere product of linguistic games. In this context, also human identity is a construct; we can use this argument also in the case of media communication and videogames.

Later this approach was abandoned. Presently photographs are generally mistrusted to represent reality faithfully, even by the wider public. People for example do not believe that photographs testify to the existence of UFO; even though we have some photographs that apparently record UFOs. In semiotic discussions we think about what a photograph is, is it an icon, or index? In his work *Semiotics of photography*, G. Sonesson [1989: 36] introduces several ideas that semiotics comes with. It is noteworthy that there is no consensus about what a photograph actually is. R. Barthes, for example, sees it as an icon, while Ch. S. Peirce a G. Sonesson believes it is an index and finally, U. Eco and N. Goodman take it as a symbol. There are some strengths and weaknesses in each of these interpretations. On one hand, a photograph is similar to reality, therefore we can take it as an icon, but on the other hand, recording a brief moment, it can also greatly distort the reflection of reality. A photograph is created by a flow of photons trapped in a photosensitive surface. However, a photograph is quite different from reality, because it only records two dimensions, placed in a photo-frame, taken from certain angle and influenced by lighting. Our eyes constantly move, while a photograph depicts a frozen moment [Goodman, 2007: 27] – this all declares it is more a symbol than index. Also, we need to learn how to “read” photographs and see them in context if we want to understand them. A photograph is therefore a strange phenomenon, because it may seem to be an icon or it may seem to be an index at the first sight, but when inspected more closely, it seems to be more a symbol. A photograph published on the web or social networks therefore constitutes a symbolic and therefore virtual representation of our identity.

3. ON PICTORIAL TURN IN MODERN CULTURE

Photographs are a very important, if not a decisive, component that represents our identity. This trend is strengthened also by Instagram, a social networking service, and a popular and global phenomenon - selfies. We can describe the phenomenon as frequent taking pictures of oneself in different places and on numerous occasions and publishing them on social networks. Besides selfies, we can also speak of experimenting with identity, for example in videogames such as *The Sims*, *Second Life*, or *World of War craft*. The first two videogames represent a life simulation type of games, where one can construct his or her own avatar and play its life according to his or her personal wishes and fantasy. In the third game players can play and identify themselves as fantasy of mythological creatures. These possibilities multiply and virtualise human identity even more than social networks. However, also these new identities emphasize picture, or visual representation of identity. Virtual expression and multiplication of identity is possible only through advanced digital technology that we have seen expanding in the last decades. Nevertheless, the decisive turning point came in the second half of the 20th century, when first computers and television started to appear. N. Postman spoke about television dominance over other kinds of media as early as in the 1980s – when television started to take over other forms of media, and everything was finally decided when the Internet came in the beginning of the 21st century. A picture does not require any abstraction or thinking, it is easily approachable and therefore it naturally steers towards entertainment. This is why the main function, or even ideology, of television as a visually based medium is, according to Postman [2010: 105], to entertain: “entertainment is the principal ideology of television communication.” In the late 90s

G. Sartori, understanding dominance of television in media, even argued that a new sort of man was being created – homo videns - whose perception and knowledge was greatly affected by media images. In his idea, the turn from conceptual language of texts to media images brings deprivation of abstract thinking. We do not need to think, seeing a picture is enough. Sartori [1997: 40] explains: “Television brings metamorphosis that affects the very nature of Homo sapiens. It is not a mere tool for communication, but also an anthropological instrument that constructs a new kind of human existence.”

Thus, in the second half of 20th century, we identify another shift (after Copernican shift, Kantian shift, linguistic shift) that W. J. T. Mitchell [Martinengo 2013: 309] called pictorial turn. According to him, it is not a simple comeback to the naïve mimésis, copy or correspondence theories of representation or rebirth of metaphysical pictorial presentation, but post-linguistic, post-semiotic re-appearance of picture as a complex that plays an important role among visual perception, tools, institutions, discourses and bodies. Similarly, Martin Solík [2014: 207], in reference to Gilbert Cohen-Séat, argues that we live in a universe of iconosphere.

In the broad sense we should use the term pictorial turn to all periods in human development, since vision and imagination have always been forms of cognitive abilities in human and thus have influenced the process of development of visual culture. Strictly speaking however, the real pictorial turn only began with digital media, as only these bring the possibility to fully develop cognitive abilities, for example the already mentioned imagination. Imagination can be taken as the first natural virtual reality in the form of dreaming, fantasising and imagination, but it was technological cyberspace that brought the possibility to turn these dreams into “reality” and even go beyond. For example, dreams of a new and better life can be materialised in videogames such as *Second life* or *The Sims*. Cyberspace thus becomes a “screen” where one can project their dream, desires, ideas and fantasies. Marshall McLuhan argued that media act as extensions for senses, so we can now say that cyberspace is becoming a technical extension of imagination.⁶

The process of creating virtual identity is thus influenced by today’s visual culture, which in other words means that “seeing someone’s identity” means more than knowing something about it. It is done through a large quantity of selfies, videos, but also experiments with avatars in digital videogames.

4. ON VIRTUAL REALITY IN CYBERSPACE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Sh. Turkle [2005: 279] notes that a computer is a new mirror that has a psychological influence; consequently we objectivise ourselves and build up our new nature in this mirror. Cyberspace of digital media offers almost limitless possibilities for us to shape our identity, which can further be changed, developed or even multiplied. Technological features of cyberspace even offer what normally would be impossible in our physical and social space, for example fast communication, constructing of

⁶ Michael Heim [1993: 6], building on an analysis of Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, even argues that ontology of cyberspace is, in Plato’s sense, erotic. Here Eros, through physical love, raises those who make love to a higher, spiritual truth – the Logos. Heim [1993: 3] refers also to the idea of combining the opposites, which can be found in numerous spiritual traditions. Specifically, it is the language of Carmelite mysticism (John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila) that speaks of spiritual unification through sexual ecstasy. According to Heim [1993: 5], a cyberspace walks through a beautiful dimension of cyberspace and finally reaches a higher form of knowledge – in this case information knowledge.

our avatar in digital videogames, or fast search for and communication with a partner. Communication on the Internet, including creating of virtual identity, definitely has lots of positive aspects; however, in our paper we will deal especially with those that are negative. The main cause of negative aspects, as E. Aboujaoude [2011: 60] points out, lies in the so-called “online disinhibiting effect.” It means, in other words, that in online communication we do not care so much about having scruples Aboujaoude [2011: 60], in reference to J. Suler, further argues that this includes anonymity, invisibility, loss of recognition lines between individuals and lack of real hierarchy in cyberspace.

In our quest for negative aspects of virtual reality, we concentrate on narcissism and cybersex.

1. Narcissism. G. Lipovetsky [2008: 18] says that the postmodern era is undergoing another phase of personalisation, in which restricted individualism turns into total individualism, also called narcissism: “By personalisation, individualism is turning into something that American sociologists call narcissism. Narcissism is a result and manifestation of the process of personalisation in a small scale, a symbol or turn from “limited” individualism to “total” individualism, a symbol of the second individualist revolution.” Lipovetsky [2008: 21] characterises narcissism as a hypertrophy of “I” that does not isolate people from the others but brings them together in various types of collectives: “Narcissism does not mean only hedonistic individualism, but also the need to meet people who are “the same.” Not feeling comfortable with “I” or one’s own cultural tradition, a narcissistic person needs others to admire and adore him or her. Such a person often uses power to make this happen. Similarly, Ch. Lasch [2016: 27] states that “a narcissistic person is dependent on the others to be reassured of his or her self-esteem. Such a person cannot live without applause from the audience.” Lasch [2016: 38] speaks of an empty and infantile me, heavily supported by mass media. Mass media both intensify narcissistic dreams of fame and propose collective identity with media stars.

In a psychological point of view, E. Aboujaoude [2011: 68] describes a narcissistic person as somebody who needs admiration but lacks empathy. Such attitudes then lead to arrogance and patronising behaviour. Aboujaoude [2011: 69] points out that research shows that as much as 1 % of population meets the criteria for narcissism. Moreover, this trend is fed, stabilised and projected by the Internet, as it nourishes and adores our “Me.” Aboujaoude [2011: 69] even speaks of a new term – “narcissurfing,” which describes the need to constantly search for and upload posts, photographs and comments about “me.” It may consist of posting photographs and videos about “me” on social networks; excessive self-sharing in communication on chatting services, but also search for new information about “me.” This trend is even stronger in videogames, where a player is free to do “almost anything” through his or her avatar within the limits of the game, and “play God.” For example, in The Sims videogame, players can create their avatar – man or woman, no matter what proportions. Through their avatar, they can climb the social ladder, earn money, build a house, live a sexual life, or die. This is what we can call the most extreme narcissism. Photoshopping pictures of oneself, over-estimating, improving statuses on social network and so on, and this all can be identified as a moderate form of narcissism.

2. Cybersex. Present visual culture with its dominance of pictures, beauty and ideal body shapes on one hand and almost limitless possibilities of the Internet with its influence and anonymity on the other create very good conditions for rise of the so-

called cybersex. R. Divínová [2005: 1] in reference to J. Schneider and R. Weiss, American scientists, states that in more than 60% of cases, going to the Internet is linked with sex: “people can find sexologists, specialised documentation, they can shop in virtual sex shops, find sexual partners for long-term or short-term relationships, watch and download erotic content, masturbate, study their sexual orientation and much more.” However, not all of these activities can be defined as cybersex. According to Schneider and Weiss, Divínová explains [2005 : 1], cybersex is “any and every form of sexual behaviour mediated by computer and the Internet.” It is therefore possible that the real percentage is lower, but it still is high enough for us to say that our identity in cyberspace is chiefly erotic. A. Cooper [Divínová 2005: 2] explains that cybersex is attractive because it is available, accessible and anonymous, while K. Young [Divínová 2005: 2] believes it is so because it is anonymous, comfortable and offers a kind of escape. Divínová states that the desire to get engaged in cybersex lies in promise to experience sexual satisfaction, experience something new, in desire for intimacy, abreaction, feeling of being attractive, in effort to find a partner for real sex, in excitement of anonymity and in interactivity. Even though cybersex is usually anonymous, virtual identity is created also here, when one searches for and communicates sexual content. Unlike in this, let’s say, mental identity, videogames offer a possibility to create one’s own avatar that could represent a player in his or her sexual activities. This is possible for example in videogames such as Second Life, or The Sims. Here, virtual identity is getting more “physical” than in anonymous and invisible cybersex.

Beside narcissism and cybersex, there are further risks for identity in cyberspace of digital media, for example cyber bullying. Cyber bullying can take various shapes – harassment, ridicule, sending offensive messages and similar, but behind this all is an important issue - narcissism and sexism, or combination of these.

5. INFLUENCE OF VIRTUAL IDENTITY ON REAL IDENTITY

Virtual reality and identity of man is on one hand physically separated in cyberspace of digital media, on the other hand it is physically and mentally attached to the user. This mental connection is not neutral, but vigorously active because our cognitive abilities need to be modified to fit both technological norm and media content. Consequently, such aggressive adaptation must bring some influence, especially on cognitive abilities of man. J. Lohisse [2003: 176] argues that this influence will not be limited only to actual usage of this medium, but will spread further and change the strategy and way we think. J. Bystrický [2008: 19] adds that “with further usage of technology, we also use a different concept of thinking, not by changing our dispositions, but by fundamental change in strategy of using them.” This applies even more in communication technology, which accompanies us each and every day. K. Leidlmair [1999: 19], referring to Heim, notices that by using computer technology, especially the hypertext structure of the Internet, our everyday thinking undergoes radical changes.⁷

⁷ See also papers on this issue: Influence of the internet on the cognitive abilities of man. Phenomenological and hermeneutical approach [Gálik, Gáliková Tolnaiová 2015: 4 – 15], Influence of cyberspace on changes in contemporary education [Gálik 2017: 30 – 38], Media and truth in the perspective of the practice and life form of the modern “homo medialis” [Gáliková Tolnaiová 2019: 4 – 19] and The personalistic aspect of truth and *dialogue in the context of Karol Wojtyła’s philosophy: John Paul II’s ethics of media* [Modrzejewski 2016: 4–16].

M. Spitzer studied the influence of digital media, especially the Internet, on various cognitive abilities of man, such as attention, memory, ability to learn, but also emotions and human body. He [Spitzer 2014: 200] came to the conclusion that extended usage of digital media causes degradation in education and rise of shallowness, with visible and more durable changes in the brain: “A person born in the middle of 1990s or later cannot quite understand what world looked like without computers and the Internet, without mobile phones and iPods, without gaming consoles and digital television. This generation was growing up in a different surrounding; their brains were formed also by neuroplastic changes. ... digital media cause deterioration in quality of education in young people ... Mental concentration needed for learning is exchanged for digital shallowness.” Spitzer, basing on neurobiological research, points out that our brain constantly develops as we use it. Perception, thinking, experiencing, feeling and wanting, this all leaves some traces in our memory. Modern neurobiology is able to study these changes triggered by cognitive processes, which are greatly influenced by media. Spitzer [2014: 16–17] claims that frequent and inadequate usage of computer and the Internet introduces mental and cognitive decline.

N. Carr, similarly to Spitzer, says that our brain is ductile and able to adapt to actual circumstances. Carr points out that we think together with technologies (media), which is somehow reflected in our brain. However, he [Carr 2011: 2–3] also believes that since we started using the Internet, our mental habits have greatly changed and our ability to concentrate and contemplate has been impaired. Basing on extensive neurological and psychological research, he again states that communication on the Internet, which combines various types of media, impairs chiefly our attention. Our brain then acts as a juggler in order to deal with new impulses that the Internet offers.

This study research complies with our insight into narcissism and cybersex. Also in these cases we can see that prolonged “narcissurfing” and cybersex will influence brain’s neuroplasticity and thus what once began as an entertainment activity will become strong addiction that will heavily influence real life. In narcissism, it can reveal as a constant urge to insure and strengthen one’s identity, even at the expense of others, while in the case of cybersex we may face a considerate shift or even loss of moral safeguards. This is most threatening in the case of children and adolescents as they are not yet mentally stable and their moral principles are still quite unstable.

“Narcissurfing“ and cybersex, as constant search for new information either about one’s own self or about sex, consequently weakens attention, memory, impairs thinking but also proper experiencing of the world. In regard to attention, Spitzer [2014: 212] warned that the so-called multitasking, which is now almost standard behaviour in our life, leads to shallowness and inefficiency. During experiments, those who were engaged in more than one activity at the same time were definitely slower than the others. It is similar with memory, Spitzer [2014: 70] continues, because constant browsing through varying content results in weaker memory and shallowness. The Internet communication not only changes thinking, memory and ability to keep one’s attention, but also social relationships. Spitzer [2014: 116] argues that “heavy usage of online networks not only reduces the number of real friends, but also limits social competence; parts of the brain that are responsible for such interactions deteriorate. This results in higher stress and increasing loss of self-control. We see a downward social spiral that makes it

impossible to live a fulfilling life in society.” This negative trend in social contacts on the Internet will then be even more visible in “narcissurfing” and cybersex.

CONCLUSION

Cyberspace of digital media resembles a silver screen onto which one projects his or her ideas, desires and dreams, but also his or her own self in various versions. This “projection” is not inert; it gets back to its originator and influences him or her. We could even say that modern people can learn a lot about themselves through the Internet. As Sh. Turkle expressed, communication on the Internet becomes a mirror. If we agree with K. Wilber that real identity of man has four components (intentional, somatic, social and cultural), then we need to add one more dimension that applies to digital media – a virtual dimension. Virtual dimension of our identity is not unreal though, it does influence our thinking, imagination or emotions. Its virtuality is the result of the fact that it resides outside human body. However, if it influences our mind, then it has some effects on the brain and even, as Spitzer points out, is able to trigger certain changes in its structure. In this respect therefore, virtual reality is, at least partially, linked to the physical body. P. J. Eakin [2015: 7] even claims that “identity in cyberspace is not different, but continual”. Physical identity may be privileged, but not absolutely. Sh. Turkle [1999: 643] also believes that thanks to cyberspace and especially videogames, we see more clearly that our real identity is constructed, changeable and multipliable.

In this contribution we spoke chiefly about two negative tendencies that come with identity creation in cyberspace of digital media – narcissism and cybersex. Thanks to its communication influence and visual interface, the Internet can considerably boost the potential for rise of narcissism and cybersex. Narcissism is promoted by general and fast influence of social networks on users, significant opportunities to share information about a person’s own self with other users, including photographs and videos. Cyberspace of videogames allows us experiment with our identity and become literally anybody – man, woman, a beauty or a beast and so on. Whatever the reality is, in many cases study research proves that people create ideal versions of themselves, versions that agree with given cultural or gender stereotypes [Jansz, Martis 2007: 144]. This means both men and women want to look attractive and have ideal body proportions. In cyberspace of videogames we can literally play “God – creator” in representations of our avatars and their deeds, or we can decide to destroy them, which could further enhance the tendency towards narcissism. Narcissism is so common now that Lipovetsky speaks of our culture as of a narcissistic one. However, we should then distinguish whether it is a tolerable form of narcissism, or pathological one. Though drawing a distinction line may be very delicate and problematic, a real pathological situation happens when a narcissistic person crosses lines of normality and becomes a disturbing individual.

Great popularity of cybersex, over 50%, is again the result of possibilities that the Internet brings - fast access to sites with erotic content, chatting service, meeting other people online and the already mentioned pictorial turn, or visual culture. These possibilities uncover and intensify libidinal fantasy that, when changed to reality, may lead to shift in norms of sexual behaviour and addiction to cybersex.

Narcissism and cybersex are two risks that currently endanger especially children and adolescents. Therefore society should pay particular attention to education. Media education, with special emphasis to critical thinking, is a necessity [Petranová

2011: 67]. This way children should learn how to use the Internet properly in order to get what is positive and what helps a healthy cognitive, emotional and social development in human [Petranová, Burianová 2014: 267].

The first step is always in realising risks and subsequent education, since - as Spitzer says [2014: 58] - “education frees – frees from temptations, because he, who is well-educated, is able to exercise a critical approach towards himself and towards the others. He is not exposed helpless, but is capable to deal with things immediately.”

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