

VI. Technique (technology), informatics (information technology) and culture

1. Paths to (in) helplessness (cluelessness, perplexity, bewilderment)ⁱ

Politicians from all of the continent of Europe, who presumably would not entrust any computer whatsoever with many a secret of their vocation and profession and of their career, increasingly make (*or*: recently have made) concerted efforts regarding a worldwide interweaving of information channels (channels or conduits of information), for the free flow of, and free access to, various kinds of information beyond all boundaries and borders. The information society constitutes in their eyes the crowning moment, but also a Western driving force of the society of the economy (economic society) (*or*: the bright or shining capstone, but also an essential motive force of that society in which the dominant element is the economy). Consequently, their efforts seem to realise the perceptions and representations of social theoreticians geared to, or positioned towards, economism and systems theory. According to those perceptions and representations, social complexity is supposed to determine or cause a higher level of reflection, as well as the growing importance of knowledge in society (*or*: the more complex a society becomes, the more does its reflexivity with reference to its own functions intensify, and the more does

the significance of knowledge for these functions' processing grow).

Knowledge, however, means information, and information becomes (or turns into) society's brain (mind) and heart – just as “communication” becomes (or turns into) the central concept of mass-democratic social theory.

This view has an (unspoken (unexpressed)) background pertaining to the (*or*: Such views take root, whether they know it or not, in a certain) philosophy of history, they expect, that is to say, a happy end to history, which shows through in the (declared) belief that the “knowledgeable society” will overcome pre-modern political-ideological “primitivisms” by distinguishing itself through the preponderance and predominance of the cognitive element, and will be able to be guided with the help of, or based on, scientific knowledge. Certainly, in no previous or earlier society was the amount of various kinds and pieces of information, and the rapidity (quickness, swiftness) of their transmission, so great. Such phenomena often serve as the starting point(s) of (recti)linear projections into the future; they are interpreted as milestones of radical, groundbreaking (pathbreaking, pioneering) ruptures (breaks) or radical turns, and it is assumed and believed that their appearance will cancel out and neutralise the effect and impact of hitherto determinative and decisive factors, and will necessarily make, i.e. produce, a regular or downright rewriting of social ontology (*or*: and imposes that the ontology of society be rewritten from the beginning). Were things so, then one would have to have been able to prove that fundamental human behaviour would have – with every revolutionary turn in the density of information and in the transmission of information – been modified accordingly, thus for instance as a result of the invention and introduction of writing, or as a result of the discovery of typography (the art of printing). There can be no talk of that (*or*: However, such a thing did not occur at all). The changes taking place were historical and secondary, they hardly touched upon the primary anthropological and social-ontological sector or area

(realm). The logic of information was always subjected, for the most part or in general, to the logic of the dominant relations between humans (*or*: ruling intra-human relations) and related ideological positionings.

The cybernetic vocabulary blocks or conceals insight into this decisive banality by using – everywhere and without exception – the term “information”, which actually and essentially points to a new cognitive content, instead of the general term “announcement (or notification)”, which can refer to the known, i.e. what is already known, and non-cognitive, i.e. something without cognitive significanceⁱⁱ. The growing, greater quantity of announcements (notifications) does not necessarily mean the increasing quality of the various kinds and pieces of information in the sense of a society centred on knowledge (*or*: in the way a society based on knowledge needs such information). Because the worldwide, universal networks do not under any circumstances whatsoever, or exclusively, serve the transmission of information with, in practice, feasible and u(tili)sable knowledge (i.e. cognitive) value. Very soon, they will be transformed into the mirrors and inventories of the spectrum of public opinion; in them, one will again find that same world which was supposed to be overcome through their cognitive help. In the source of the “information flow”, one will encounter specific humans, for example the American neo-Nazisⁱⁱⁱ, who are – according to journalistic information – are excellently “networked”. It is not coincidental or by chance that the quarrel or strife has long been under way (afoot) over what may be transmitted and what not. Information and manipulation will remain also in the future Gemini, i.e. twins (*or*: Information, deceit (conjuring tricks, sleights of hand, guile, craftiness, etc.) and the attempt at influence will remain also in the future inseparably connected as between themselves).

The expectation that through the growing and quicker flow of information, the cognitive-rational element will be pushed through, imposed and will prevail in society, must, however, also be frustrated and not realised for other reasons (*or*:

But for other reasons, whoever expects that with the greater and faster flow of information, the cognitive-rational element inside society will predominate, will be disappointed and lose heart). The conviction underlies this expectation that whoever finds himself in the possession of more kinds and pieces of information, also thinks and acts more rationally, whereas “archaic” modes of behaviour flourish mainly in intellectual(-spiritual) derangement, or in the night of the lack of information. The short circuit, i.e. the leap in logic, is obvious: not the mere use/usage of information in itself, but only the kind and the quality of the use/usage turn information into the cognitive foundation of rational action; the rationality of the person acting must, therefore, be presupposed as a predisposition (installation, investment, payment) and as a self-sufficient (autonomous, independent) magnitude^{iv}. To that leap in logic, a pragmatic mistake as to the evaluation of things (matters) is added. The manufacturing (making) of a connection between a greater amount of information, and a stronger cognitive-rational potential, implies the assumption that one actually makes use of that amount of information, that is, one takes no practical decision before one goes through all existing kinds and pieces of information (*or*: Whoever connects the increase of the amount of information with the reinforcement of the cognitive-rational potential of society, of course presupposes that the amount of information is used in actual fact, that is to say, no practical decision is taken without all the available information being thoroughly scrutinised or sifted). However, the use of information takes place in concrete situations, that is, under the pressure of time and of the decision, which increases to the extent that the “information society (society of information) (*or*: society of informatics and information technology)” is, or simultaneously constitutes, an “economic and competitive society (society of the economy and of competition) (*or*: a society of intense economic competition)”. The faster the transference of information (information transfer) (*or*: the transmittal and conveyance of the information), so much the greater is the temporal pressure of

the decision (*or*: the greater the pressure of the time factor on the taking of decisions). Accordingly, the main concern of the person acting is not always and not necessarily the amount of available kinds and pieces of information, but the available timespan (period of time) (*or*: the finding of time) for their perusal, sighting (looking through, sifting), for familiarisation with them, and their evaluation. During scarcely allocated time (*or*: When time is short), the fullness of the theoretically available kinds and pieces of information offers rather (more likely) random, chance or coincidental advantages as to selection (selection advantages). That is why that supply of information saved and stored in/on the computer (*or*: For that reason, as much information as is accumulated in computers) benefits the person acting just as much or just as little as that which stands by, i.e. has been shelved, in the libraries and archives of hoarded knowledge. That applies equally for the politician as well as for the stockbroker^v. In the ever increasingly higher swelling surging waves of information, one can drown. And here on the other hand, nothing in the end but only the conscious or unconscious effect and impact of the anthropologically determined and conditioned, stable and stabilising, mechanisms of relief and release, help, regardless of at which level of complexity they unfold and develop (*or*: mechanisms which our intellect summons or recruits in order to simplify – albeit arbitrarily – a complicated situation (of many compositional layers or strata) and to render in that way possible our practical orientation).

The cognitive element in a highly and exceptionally complex society could – despite the increasing flow of information – in fact be weakened in a certain, but perhaps decisive, respect. We mean here knowledge regarding the long-term overall outcome of the precisely short-term and medium-term part-processes or partial processes being acted out, that is, not so much (the) knowledge regarding the – likewise sometimes opaque (obscure, non-transparent) – present, but above all, knowledge surrounding the future. The general direction of the

overall events (becoming, happenings) can and possibly must move all the more out of sight and become more uncertain, unstated, unknowable, to the extent in part knowledge about individual interrelations becomes deeper (deepens), and this again begets and has as a consequence, considerable content-related differentiation, or the merely occasional crossing and intersection of subjective perspectives (*or*: that the subjective perspectives obtain different content and intersect only symptomatically). The complexity of the social, or the complicated character – with many compositional strata – of society, makes the unintentional, involuntary and unsuspected, unforeseeable overall consequences of collective action more probable; to wit, it intensifies the effect of the heterogony of ends. This effect was traditionally (*or*: in the tradition of liberalism) considered from the standpoint of the “invisible hand”, according to which individual irrationalisms (too) bring about through their interweaving a rational collective outcome (*or*: which supposedly ensures that even (individual) irrationalisms, through their intertwining, would give a rational collective result). But also the opposite can happen or prove true: the sum of the partial rationalities can lead or give rise to an irrational overall result^{vi}, whereby the speeding up and acceleration of action through the rapid flow of information might speed up and accelerate the occurrence and appearance of undesired outcomes and results.

The “knowledgeable society” can solely then be constantly and continually reproduced only if the subjective expectations for the most part, or generally, are satisfied not only in respect of the (mode of) behaviour of each and every respective partner of interaction (*or*: all respective social partners), but also in respect of the overall performance (achievement/return) of the “system”. If it comes to a situation in which indeed reciprocal expectations are fulfilled and satisfied, yet the expected overall or general result of the collective action fails to materialise, then this means (or would signify) for a highly complex society

(with many compositional strata) as much as a state of absolute helplessness (cluelessness, perplexity, bewilderment). Because the Archimedean point, at which one could start (place oneself into position) in order to reverse the trend, will have someday been buried somewhere in the thicket of complexity (*or*: upon which one could step in order to reverse the current, will have itself also been lost sometime, somewhere inside the infinite aspects of complex society (with its many compositional strata)). At the decisive moment, the decisive information will be lacking – or else it will have been in the meanwhile converted into a point of contention. The doggedness, obstinacy and stubbornness with which intellects(-spirits) separate and are divided when it is a matter of the evaluation of information which touch upon massive interests, and, ways, habits and customs of life – for instance regarding information on the ecosystem^{vii} –, should get us thinking, and make us very sceptical.

ENDNOTES

All endnotes are by the translator, and **have nothing whatsoever to do with P.K.. Readers can and in fact probably must simply ignore them and draw their own conclusions from P.K.'s texts only, though some of the endnotes might be useful to some readers, and other endnotes are really only for the very few people who can look at themselves in the mirror and say “Oh my God, I’m really ugly, and retarded”. I do it every day, and it’s the only way to prepare yourself to be a truly profound thinker, and not a propaganda-spewing mouthpiece.**

ⁱ The Greek title: “The society of informatics/information technology: progress of rationality?”

ⁱⁱ Presumably, P.K. means by the “non-cognitive” here that language and or text and or image and or sound which (most or (nearly) all) people just accept as is, without intellectually deliberating over, or – so to speak – processing, it, since it is a generally accepted part of the social, or is simply nonsense.

