

# Reading and writing in the age of new media: or – how I stopped worrying and learned to love the Internet

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# Overview\*

1. Good news
2. Bad news (maybe)
3. Good news (possibly)

\* for references, please see slides 13-14.

# 1. Good news

## **Communication theory: Innis-Eisenstein-McLuhan-Ong / Baron-Kondor / Luria, Foucault**

*A. media interact with our sense of self vis-à-vis community*

Luria (Ong, 1988), Foucault (1987, 1988)– sense of *individual* self emerges in conjunction with literacy-print  
(Bakardjieva & Gaden, 2009)

*B. literacy-print*  $\leftrightarrow$  *modern autonomous self*  $\rightarrow$  *liberal / democratic state + basic rights*, including rights to individual privacy, gender and other forms of equality  
(Ess, forthcoming)

*Communication theory: Innis-Ong / Baron-Kondor*

*what sort of self / selves emerges in correlation with “electric media” - secondary orality / literacy?*

<b>orality</b>	<i>relational selves</i> inextricably interwoven with community	(non-democratic)
<b>(orality)-literacy</b>	relational selves / <b>reflective / rational selfhood</b>	(authoritarian / hierarchical regimes)
<b>(orality/literacy)- print</b>	“atomic” individual – Cartesian mind vs. body / <b>Kantian autonomy</b>	<b>modern liberal state / democratic polity</b>
<b>secondary orality of electronic media / cyberspace?</b>	<b>networked individual / relational – “smeared out” self</b>	???

## 2. Bad news (maybe)

*A. Remember the 1990s?*

1990s' dualistic *misreadings* of secondary orality as *revolutionary replacement* of (orality) literacy-print

Hypertext, hypermedia - Bolter, Landow ... Negroponte (1995)

*Neuromancer* (Gibson, 1984) reinscribing a Cartesian dualism between disembodied cyberspace and “meatspace – Barlow (1996)

+

postmodern / poststructuralist emphases on identity as multiple, fluid, ephemeral – exemplified in Sherry Turkle's accounts of adolescents in MUDs, MOOs as early models of “virtual communities”

→ secondary orality → relational self as *replacing* modern individual

→ non-democratic / non-egalitarian consequences

## 2. Bad news (maybe)

*B. Be afraid ... be very afraid ...*

Multiple evidence of shift in Western countries  
from individual/individual sense of privacy  
to relational, “smeared-out” self, e.g.,

From web-cam girls, Big Brother “reality” shows,  
voluntary / participatory / lateral surveillance (Albrechtslund 2008)

“Exteriorized intimacy” (David, 2009) / McLuhan’s “publicity” → *Porte de  
Choisy* (1st prize winner of the 2007 PocketFilm Festival)

“violation” of *modern* sense of individual privacy in bathroom /  
bedroom

<[http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/article.php3?id\\_article=648](http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/article.php3?id_article=648)>

## 2. Bad news (maybe)

### *C. Worst-case*

A purely relational, post-modern self

→ Postman/Huxley: we fall in love with the technologies of our enslavement

– though perhaps more as these technologies are owned by corporations than by Big Brother governments (much recent CMC literature; cf.

Scenario 3: Commercial big brother – an authoritarian consumer and political world

Interrelation between Technological, Social and Economic Trends: Interim Report, European Commission DG INFSO Project SMART 2008/0049, February 2010)

# 3. Good news (possibly)

*A. New media → hybridization of identities*

“Western” trajectory from individual to individual-relational selves

+

“Eastern” trajectory from relational to relational-individual selves

individual  
autonomy /  
democratic  
polity /  
individual  
privacy

(U.S.) Philosophers	Germany	Hong Kong	China
<p>1. <i>Some</i> sense of privacy as an <b>intrinsic good</b> - i.e., a good in itself that needs no further justification .</p> <p>2. (Usually) privacy as an <b>instrumental good</b>: that is, privacy is a means needed to develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* a sense of self and personal autonomy</li> <li>* intimate relationships</li> <li>* other capacities and abilities</li> </ul> <p>as well as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* the grounds (personal autonomy/freedom and</li> </ul>	<p>Rights to data privacy interwoven with:</p> <p>1. (Deontological) rights of the autonomous person as a citizen of a democratic society:</p> <p><i>Schutz der Privatautonomie</i> [Protection of private autonomy]</p> <p><i>Meinungsäußerungsfreiheit</i> [Freedom to express one's opinion]</p> <p><i>Persönlichkeitsrecht</i> [Right to "personality"]</p> <p><i>Willenserklärungsfreiheit</i> [Freedom to express one's will]</p>	<p>Rights to data privacy interwoven with:</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Rights to privacy justified by:</p>
<p>then the capacity for dialogue, debate, etc.) for participating in democratic society. One distinction here is that between privacy as a personal good (e.g., as it may be needed to develop intimate relationships) and a social good (i.e., as it is required for functioning democracy) (Johnson 2001).</p>	<p>2. Privacy protection as a <i>means</i> necessary to the development of e-commerce. (Bizer 2003)</p>	<p>2. Privacy protection as a <i>means</i> necessary to the development of e-commerce. (Tang 2002)</p>	<p>2. commercial usage of personal information for business efficiency</p> <p>3. administrative usage of personal information for better governance (Chen 2005)</p>



(Ess, 2009, ch. 2)

individual  
privacy only  
as a *means*

...

can be  
overridden  
by state /  
collective  
needs

### 3. Good news (possibly)

B. “Post-post” modern recovery of human beings as embodied selves

i) **CMC research** – from (disembodied) liberation in cyberspace to “the Internet in everyday life” (Wellman & Haythornthwaite 2002, Bakardjieva 2005, Consalvo & Ess, 2010)

→ “secondary orality-literacy” as *supplement / complement* to (orality) literacy-print

e.g.,

Old media rarely die, and humans remain the reference point and prototype for technologically mediated communication” (Jensen, 2010, 44).

### 3. Good news (possibly)

*B. “Post-post” modern recovery of human beings as embodied selves*

#### **ii) Trust and Virtual Worlds –**

- a) most virtual environments depend upon “indexicality” – our ability to navigate them as we would a real-world, 3D space. (Søraker, 2010)
- b) in these spaces, we clearly bring our bodies with us – for good and for bad (Fragoso & Rosário, 2008 ) / even game avatars observe the proper proxemics (Consalvo, 2010)
- c) even in those virtual environments that most encourage post-modernist, post-structuralist identity play – we seem to have to bring our embodied sense of singular, continuous identity with us (Ess & Thorseth, 2010)

### 3. Good news (possibly)

B. “Post-post” modern recovery of human beings as embodied selves

iii) **The renaissance of virtue ethics for embodied human beings**

*cultivation of self* – including through skills of literacy/print (Foucault)

*human beings as “pivot point”* for new media (Jensen)

→ **grand conclusion**: it is *possible* to sustain the modern autonomous individual alongside a “post-post” modern relational self → democratic/liberal state + equalities

BUT: this will require conscious attention to fostering the skills of literacy and print – e.g., the Commonplace Book (N. Baron, 2008)

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