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## Mass “Non-communication” of the Young

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### Abstract

The authors in the paper analyze the phenomenon of excessive presence of the mass communication media, television in the first place, and the modern computer technology in the lives of young people, as well as the issue whether this fact influences the reduction of interpersonal communication of the young. The goal of the research was to determine to which extent the newest technological achievements are present in the lives of the young in Serbia and how often they use them as media in the process of communication with their peers, and whether this kind of mediated communication consequently leads to the reduction of interpersonal communication face-to-face, which as an ultimate result can have alienation of an individual in the modern world as a widely spread phenomenon of the present.

**Keywords:** television, computer technology, the Internet, communication, alienation.

### 1. Introduction

Although the communication science is a relatively new discipline originating back to the half of the previous century, communication is as old as humankind. Studying communication can be traced back to distant past. Before the occurrence of communicology, communication had been studied in the scope of various sciences such as linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology etc. However, with the occurrence of the new science the subject of research of which is communication itself, the phenomenon of communication has been attracting the attention of not only communicologists, but of researchers and theoreticians from various scientific fields.

Certain authors have ascribed the ability of communicating to all the living creatures, not only humans. In this manner, talking about communication, Nikola Rot says that communication is “a process happening among living beings and, at least in its most elementary way, exists with all living beings”\* (Rot, 2004: 10). What makes the human communication different from this way of interaction among living beings though is the fact that human communication is of symbolic character, and as such represents a far more exalted form of communication practice from the one noticed with other living creatures, since “communication with humans, as opposed to communication with animals, is communication with symbols in the first place” (Rot, 2004: 23).

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\* Quotation translated by the authors. All the quotations in the paper that follow will be translations done by the authors.

Some other authors, however, the ability of communicating ascribe to humans only, believing that real communication cannot happen among other living beings. According to the entry in the Communicology Lexicon (*Komunikološki leksikon*), communication is “characteristic to humans only, because they are only capable of creating information using consciousness and materialize it in the form of a message” (Miletić, Miletić, 2012: 149). Describing the ability of communicating among humans, the authors state that communicating is not simply transferring information between two subjects, but that the meaning of the message is created in the process of semiosis, while the very information is reached inside the meaning itself.

Language, as the most perfect of all the symbolic systems, is immanent to humankind. It is “a unique phenomenon, and no other system of communication is alike it” (Bugarski, 1996: 19). Ferdinand Saussure also considered that language has a privileged status as compared to all the other symbolic systems and represents “a system of signs which express ideas” (De Sosir, 1996: 39). It is the usage of language that makes humans more exalted and different from all the other living beings, representing a connection among people and enabling realization of a human as a social being. With its first spoken words and realized communication acts, when parents and guardians “set a stage for a child’s future social development” (Reardon, 1998: 158), a child is preparing for the role of a life-long communicator and social being. The use of a language affects the existence of a human community and society, since it represents “the most important means of social communication” (Janićjević, 2000: 129).

## 2. Discussion

### Mass and Virtual Communication

Except being a part of other ways of communication practice such as interpersonal communication, rumor communication or communication in larger social groups, language has a prominent role in the most significant form of communication practice of nowadays – mass communication.

The beginnings of mass communication can be traced back to the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century and the discovery of the printing press with movable types. However, this type of communication does not become socially profiled before the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the appearance of the press as the first medium of mass communication. Not long after, new mass media appeared such as film at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, radio in the second and television in the third decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Improving of technology and the increasing addiction of people to it has caused mass communication to become one of the most prominent global social phenomena in 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Radojković, Miletić, 2008: 83). The tendency of presence of mass media in the lives of people continues in 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. The fact that the appearance and improvement of new mass media does not eliminate the former mass media is very interesting. Some of them are upgraded, their form is slightly modified, or they simply become incorporated in the new communication media in the scope of which they persist to exist and continue their influence.

With the more rapid development of computer technology and the appearance of the computer network as a new medium of communication, we can notice a gradual assimilation of mass communication with a new form of communication practice the name of which has been causing a debate in the professional literature. Various adjectives have been used such as “*interactive, hyperactive, universal, total, digital, computer, network ... and finally virtual\*communication*” (Radojković, Miletić, 2008: 161). The basic characteristic of virtual communication is “to eliminate differences and integrate the characteristics of *interpersonal, group and mass communication*, enabling people who have access to the network to have *interaction* of one person with the other, one person with many others, many persons with many others and of many persons with one participant/participants in the process of *communication*” (Miletić, Miletić, 2012: 22).

Although virtual communication, as a new form of communication practice, possesses the massive scale as its characteristic, what makes this form of communication different from mass

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\* The term *virtual communication* was first used by Mirko Miletić (*Komuniciranje u novim medijskim uslovima*, Učiteljski fakultet Jagodina, 1998).

communication is its emphasized two-way character\*, as opposed to mass communication where two-way characteristic is realized only as an exception to the rule or in indirect forms. However, merger and inseparability of these two forms of communication is evident. Nowadays, there is hardly any press medium or a TV show that is not incorporated into the computer network, which represents “the only multimedia system which completely outgrows space and time” (Radojković, Miletić, 2008: 98), since long distances as well as time periods summarize into one spot. By the very act of translating a large number of media to the digital computer language, “all the media and information can be mixed and merged – sometimes they can be turned into each other (Janićijević, 2012: 97). With the old media, a spectator or listener used to be only a passive receiver of information. Multimedia are formed by the act of bringing the old media into the computer, which enables an active experience unlike the previous passive one, since “the computer offers the user more control over the information, since control now means mixing and adjustment, merger of the information and media” (Janićijević, 2012: 98).

The characteristics of the new media are very well described by Denis McQuail who, talking about new media as opposed to the “old ones”, mentions: decentralization (the choice and broadcasting of information is no longer in the hands of an emitter only); overcoming of previous limitations due to the costs, distance and capacities; interactivity (a receiver is no longer a passive receiver, but they can choose, answer, exchange information and be directly connected to the other receivers); and in the end, he mentions flexibility of form in terms of the contents and usage (McQuail, 1994: 20-21). Since the new media in a way represent continuation of the old ones, they provide existence for the old media, as Marshall McLuhan mentions that no new medium would leave the old one alone. It actually “does never stop using the older media, until it finds new forms and positions for them” (Makluan, 1971: 224).

Just like television, for instance, has included part of the cinema and theater in its structure, while the home video has included film and television with certain flexibility of usage, the computer network includes television as the most common medium of mass communication of the present. By digitalization of television we enter a new form of communication which possesses characteristics of both mass and virtual communication. The so-called *tele-computers*, as hybrid media, are both TV receivers and personal computers. An individual is no longer limited by the choice of mass media. On the contrary, they are capable of choosing from the multiple offer. A spectator is no longer a passive receiver of the message. They choose what contents and when to watch. This way we use the “unlimited possibilities of television as an ‘old’ and the computer network as a new medium” (Radojković, Miletić, 2008: 143).

However, the question that is raised here is how this form of communication practice, besides its educational and informative dimension, affects the “real”, interpersonal, communication, i.e. communication face-to-face. And further on, whether, and to what extent, the mass and virtual communication affect the ubiquitous phenomenon of the present – alienation of a contemporary individual

### **Alienation of a Modern Individual**

The basic characteristic of a human being that makes them different from other animals is the fact that a human being is a conscious being able to think. “This birth of a man may have lasted for hundreds of thousands of years, but what is important is that a new species which overcomes nature has originated (From, 1963: 46). Besides being able to think, a human being also works and communicates with other human beings. While other living organisms form groups spontaneously and according to the natural laws, during the history people have been forming groups moving away from the nature and natural laws, starting from the first tribes and proceeding to the modern societies and electronic era. On their path of evolutionary development a human being does not stop being *zoon politikon*†, but has continuously been striving towards human contact. This need for communication with other human beings is *primaeval*. It has nothing to do with age, nor with status. There is an overwhelming need for a contact with other people both in a physical worker as in a university professor, both in a pre-school child as in a pensioner.

\* With this form of communication practice feedback represents a necessary and inseparable part of the communication act.

† The term that originates from Aristotle, meaning a human being as a social being.

During history, through different social-economic formations, from the first community to the contemporary capitalistic society, a human being has been moving away from nature and the feeling of alienation has become more and more emphasized. There is a paradox that a human being, realizing larger freedom, has been becoming more and more lonely, and their fear of isolation has been increasing. According to From “a man is, after all, a social being with a deep need to participate, to help, to feel as a member of a group” (From, 1963: 146). The society, on the other hand, imposes certain norms that an individual has to comply with in order to be incorporated into a community and to realize contact with other people. Therefore, although communication mainly represents emanation of the “universal human capability and freedom, it is by a conscious social action modeled into an information-communication system that directs and channels it, but often limits it” (Radojković, Stojković, 2009: 9-10). As opposed to the expected, with realization of the need for a contact and communication with other members of the society, instead of being realized, a person feels more isolated and alienated; and not only from other people but from their very essence.

Abraham Maslow tries to explain human nature through actualization of a healthy creative personality. This prominent American psychologist considers that realization of goals causes the feeling of satisfaction with an individual. Maslow puts these goals on a scale concerning priority. At the bottom of the scale there is the goal of satisfying one’s physiological needs. Then there are the needs for security, belonging and love, appreciation, to the needs of top priority such as the need for self-actualization (Maslov, 1982). A person can realize these goals exclusively in contact with other people. Therefore, communication with other people is a basis for survival of human beings as a species.

Living in the modern, technologically equipped world, where the rhythm of life is becoming faster from day to day, a person gradually takes over certain features of the technology they frequently use. Because of the technology development production is accelerating, and time is money. A person starts to project this speed of happening on their own life and the way of functioning. After a hard and very productive working day, a person proceeds to do several things at the same time. For example, while preparing lunch, they are talking on the phone and trying to explain to a curious child what a chemical composition of a water molecule is or what the structure of the Universe is like, while at the same time there is music playing in the background or one can hear a TV speaker’s voice with the latest news. And finally when they are faced with some free time they are supposed to devote to themselves, people are not capable of spending it in the right way, having intrapersonal communication with themselves, for instance. Instead of that, they lie around on a sofa, surfing the internet or chatting with complete strangers, or watching TV shows which are below the lowest quality standards such as popular reality show programs. And Orwell’s “1984”, with a little delay, makes a grand entrance! With the infinite number of “friends” in different social networks, an individual ceases to communicate with other people. They are, in fact, having a sort of pseudo-conversation with plenty of strangers moving far away from real people and the real world. This way, they are starting to live in a world that, according to Baudrillard, strangely resembles its original (Bodrijar, 1991), and the world of virtual communication is “deprived of directness and spontaneity of human contact achieved in real life” (Pavlović, Aleksić, 2011: 224-225). This alienation of an individual in the modern world gets its epilogue in the form of an even more serious form of alienation – alienation from oneself, from one’s very essence. In these circumstances a person becomes incapable of having intrapersonal communication, which represents a serious evidence of complete alienation of an individual; and a person without communication ceases to exist.

Apart from numerous advantages of the media, especially computer technology, which are used for educational purposes, mass media however “affect disintegration of primary relationships, isolation of individuals in urban areas” (Tomić, 2003: 110), and they cause appearance of the mass society as inhuman and alienated, or as a society of “mechanical communication” (Tomić, 2003: 111).

James Potter mentions that about 30 % of our wakefulness we consume with exclusive usage of media, while the additional 39 % is used alongside with some other activity. That makes almost 70 % of the average person spending time awake with the media. The author notices that television is still the most dominant medium, while the second place is taken by computer technology. The highest level of usage of computers and the Internet is with students (Potter, 2011: 25-26).

This picture can be seen around the world. However, to what extent are young people exposed to mass media in the Republic of Serbia and what time do they consume using computer technology? And how does this fact consequently affect interpersonal communication of the young?

### **Mass and Virtual Communication in Practice**

The research done for the purpose of this paper was performed twice in the period of three years. For the first time it was done in 2013 and for the second in 2016, three years later, with the purpose of comparing the results and establishing whether there have been any changes concerning the habits of young people with the usage of modern technology.

The purpose of the research was to establish how much time young people spend using mass media and computer technology, and whether this mass or virtual, mediated, communication affects the alienation of the young and cease in “real”, interpersonal communication of young people in Serbia.

A method of inquiry was used in the research. The research technique was a survey, while the instrument was a questionnaire. The population that participated in the research was aged between 18 and 23, while the sample the research was performed on was 78 students of the Business School of Applied Studies Blace in 2013, and 70 students of the same school in 2016.

The questions were of a closed type, that is to say multiple choice questions. For each question three or two options were offered. These questions were grouped in three thematic units with the following headlines: 1. Television, 2. Internet, and 3. General. The third thematic unit contained questions of general type related to mediated and direct communication, where questions about the usage of mobile phones were also included.

The initial questions were about the time that the examinees spent with computers, on the internet or watching television. The results in 2013 were that even 60 % of the examinees spent between 1 and 3 hours watching television, while in 2016 it was 37.1 %, which is quite a decrease. 14.1 % of them spent more than 3 hours in 2013, as compared to 10 % in 2016. This is also a considerable decrease of time spent with TV. As a result, 26.9 % spent less than 1 hour a day watching television in 2013, while in 2016 this percentage was 52.9 %, which is almost twice as many people spending very little time watching TV. However, there is also a change in percentage concerning the time spent surfing the Internet. In 2013 27 % of the examinees spent more than 4 hours surfing the internet, while in 2016 this percentage increased up to 41.4 %, meaning that students have switched from television to computers, still spending a lot time using the media. 33.3 % of them spent between 2 and 4 hours on the Internet in 2013, while in 2016 it was 42.9 %, which is a considerable increase again. In 2013 39.7 % of the examinees spent less than 2 hours on the Internet, as compared to 15.7 % in 2016, which is a significant decrease, meaning that young people in Serbia spend much more time on the Internet now than they used to three years ago. If this percentage was summed up with the time spent using mobile phones, either having calls or using short messages, the usage of which is expanding rapidly especially with younger population, the results would be astounding. A question arises: How much time do these young people have left for their everyday activities, rest, lectures, studying, and, finally, personal communication with their peers? How many times have each of us been witnesses of a group of young people sitting together in a café, restaurant, on campus etc., each of them equipped with either a smartphone, tablet or headphones, not being aware of either the world around them nor their friends they are out with. Instead of having interpersonal communication with one another, they are having a sort of virtual conversation respectively, far away from the place they physically are.

Although the advantages of the technological revolution are indisputable, the disadvantages are unfortunately much more visible. As much as the usage of computers helps the process of education and facilitates their lives, the excessive usage of computer technology significantly affects isolation and alienation of people in the modern world. The options offered by the latest technology are in fact “a modern variant of a pact with the devil: we will be taken away as much as we receive” (Tomić, 2009: 59).

The beginnings of the Internet can be traced back to 1968/69 when, with the financial support of the Government of the United States, *ARPANET* network was established. At first it was used limitedly for the purpose of exchanging information among universities and other research institutions. “From the universities’ point of view, *Net* offered ‘free access’ to academic and research users and they were communicators” (Brigs, Bergs, 2006: 411). The educational role of

ARPANET was evident. The network was established for educational purposes. A little later, the use of *Net* was widened outside the scopes of military units and universities and got its commercial dimension, while in 1979 the first online provider of commercial services named *CompuServe* was launched, to be followed by competition such as *American Online* and *Prodigy* (Brigs, Bergs, 2006). The new phase of *Net* starts from the moment of attracting business interests so that its use is expanding rapidly. Tim Berners-Li in 1989 designed “what he called ‘Network’ (*world wide web*)” (Brigs, Bergs, 2006) in order to expand opportunities and global usage. The idea for the Network was to be widespread all over the world. *The Time* magazine called this achievement of his almost “gutenbergian”, saying that he has turned a powerful communication system previously available only to the elite into a mass medium (Brigs, Bergs, 2006). The use of the Internet is expanding every day. However, it has been losing its educational purpose lately and gaining the purposes of fun and leisure, gradually becoming a reason for alienation among people, unlike the first effects of the Internet and electronic mail, which used to connect people living long distances from each other easier than with regular mail.

The research done shows that even young people who are educated do not use television and Internet for the purposes of gaining information or for educational purposes, but mainly for the sake of entertainment. For instance, the question: *What type of TV shows do you usually watch?* It was answered in the following manner: even 69.2 % of the examinees in 2013 answered that it was entertainment program, while this percentage was a little lower in 2016 – 58.6 %, which still presents quite a high percentage. 12.8 % said it was the news in 2013, and 11.4 % of them in 2016, while only 18 % chose scientific and educational program in 2013. We can notice quite a raise in 2016, when 30 % of the examinees chose scientific and educational program, unfortunately still not enough. However, there is a change in perspective, which is encouraging. When it comes to web pages they usually visit, the situation is even more serious. Namely, the question: *What type of web pages do you usually visit?* was answered as follows: a staggering 79.5 % of the examinees said that they are of entertainment type and only 20.5 % (about a fifth) have chosen web pages of scientific and educational character in 2013, while in 2016 78.6 % of them chose the entertainment type over 21.4 % who chose the sites for scientific and educational purposes. We can see that it is almost the same percentage. Not much has changed.

In a situation like this, the technology loses its educational purpose and does not achieve the positive effect it could have, but mainly serves the purpose of leisure time, helping the isolation and alienation of the young from one another. This trend that started in the earliest childhood and elementary and high school, continued at university, will definitely persist to exist at a later age with even more serious consequences, since middle-aged people with all the family obligations become a good target for alienation, since free time becomes a real privilege. Moreover, being used to a mediated communication, people fall deeper into the vicious circle of alienation which is becoming harder and harder to get out of.

### **On the Verge of the Real**

The excessive use of technologically mediated communication gains its massive character with the appearance of social networks. The number of users of these networks, among which *Facebook* has the inviolable position, is increasing rapidly. Although this idea at first suggests expansion of communication among people, the background of this phenomenon is totally different. As in the case of the use of the Internet, if properly dosed, the use of the so-called social networks can have positive effects in terms of connecting people living long distance from each other. A real problem appears when the use becomes excessive, so gradually it becomes some sort of addiction. Young people very often resort to using social networks instead of spending time with their friends. The number of so-called “friends” is increasing incredibly fast and achieving numbers which are inconsistent with the real life circumstances, since the situation of having a hundred or several hundred friends is absolutely unrealistic.

The results of the research have shown that 94.9 % of the examinees had a profile on a social network in 2013, and 92.9 % of them in 2016. As many as 87.2 % of them said that they had more than 100 friends on the net in 2013, while that number was 85.7 % in 2016. 37.2 % of the examinees spent between 2 and 3 hours a day using a social network in 2013, while this percentage was 27.1 % in 2016. 19.2 % of them spent more than 3 hours using such a network a day in 2013, while in 2016 this number increased up to 44.3 %, which is more than twice as many. If this

number was summed up with the time spent on the Internet, with very popular computer games, watching television and using mobile phones and other high-tech devices, the percentage increases rapidly! For the sake of comparison, the empirical research that was conducted by *Medium Gallup* and the Faculty for Culture and Media\* showed similar results. If we start from the ideal schedule of activities during a day, 8 hours is devoted to sleeping, 8 hours to work, and the rest 8 hours to leisure activities. Namely, the results show that during the 8 hours belonging to leisure activities, young people aged between 18 and 24<sup>†</sup> are exposed to the media during the period of 5.5 hours<sup>‡</sup>, while they devote only 43.52 minutes a day to activities related to culture, art, sports and recreation (Miletić, 2009). It is not difficult to conclude that very little time is left for entertainment and socializing with friends. Moreover, this time is exchanged for pseudo-socializing, i.e. virtual socializing, with their peers on various networks. Illusion of friendships is created, while the real ones die away, because there is less and less time or desire for personal meetings with friends, and every moment people are becoming more alienated from one another.

The interest for the virtual world as opposed to the real one is evident in the answers to the question about the kind of programs that they watch on television. Hence, the question: *Have you ever seen any reality program?* It was answered as follows: 88.5 % of the examinees answered positively in 2013, while in 2016 this percentage was 60 %, encouragingly decreasing, although still representing a high percentage. Such a desire to “peek into other people’s lives” shows that interest for the virtual world, i.e. some other reality created on the other side of a TV screen, is great, as opposed to the real life that is going on and passing by us meanwhile.

### **A Matter of Personal Choice or Daily Rut**

A question whether young people spend too much time using modern technology, computes having the top priority, and devices like iPod, smartphone etc. is no longer raised. The conducted research has shown that young people spend the most of a day with devices like these. The authors' intention was also to determine whether this excessive use of technology affects personal communication of the young, i.e. whether this technologically mediated communication takes precedence over the direct, not mediated, communication face to face?

The answers to the question: *Most of the conversation that you have with your friends is* follows: 1. face to face – 43.6 % in 2013 and 48.6 % in 2016; 2. on the phone – 32 % in 2013 and only 7.1 % in 2016; 3. using the Internet/Facebook/text messages – 24.4 % in 2013 and as much as 44.3 % in 2016. It is evident that the percentage concerning the direct forms of communication is almost the same, while the mediated communication is at its highest concerning computer technology. The example that follows illustrates this fact. For instance, the question: *How do you usually wish your friends a happy birthday or happy holidays?* It was answered in the following manner: only 35.9% of the examinees said that they did it personally in 2013 and 37.1 % in 2016. 34.6 % used telephone for this purpose in 2013 and 27.1 % in 2016, while 29.5 % used email/Facebook/text messages in 2013 and 35.8 % of them in 2016.

The encouraging data, on the other hand, is offered in answers to the question: *How would you prefer to spend two hours of your free time?* Namely, even as many as 93.6 % of the examinees said it would be in a personal encounter with their friends in 2013 and 88.6 % of them in 2016. Only 1.3 % of them would talk to them on the phone in 2013 while in 2016 the result was 0 %! 5.1 % would choose the Internet, Facebook or text messages in 2013 and 11.4 % of them in 2016. We can notice that computer technology is once again taking the precedence over telephones. However, still the largest percentage of the examinees would choose a personal contact with their friends. Similar results can be seen in the answers to the question: *What is your idea of pleasantly*

\* This empirical research was about the daily economy of time of the citizens of Serbia older than 12. More on that: Prof. dr Srbobran Branković, Istraživački projekat *Dnevna ekonomija vremena građana Srbije* (A Research Project *The Daily Economy of Time of the Citizens of Serbia*), Medium Gallup – Fakultet za kulturu i medije, Beograd, 2008., according to: Mirko Miletić, *Škola, mediji i dokolica u životu mladih u Srbiji* (School, Media and Leisure Time in the Lives of the Young in Serbia), Kultura polisa, special edition, 2009, p. 37-54.

<sup>†</sup> The age group is comparable, since our research group was aged from 18 to 23.

<sup>‡</sup> More on this: Mirko Miletić, *Škola, mediji i dokolica u životu mladih u Srbiji* (School, Media and Leisure Time in the Lives of the Young in Serbia), Kultura polisa, special edition, 2009, p. 37-54.

*spent time?* Even 96.2 % of the examinees chose personal encounter with their friends in 2013 and 87.1 % in 2016. 3.8 % chose a favorite TV show in 2013 and 4.3 % in 2016. An astonishing fact is that no examinee has chosen the last option which was: *the Internet/Facebook/mobile phone* in 2013, while this percentage was 8.6 % in 2016, the computer technology usage rising again! However this percentage is negligible when compared to the percentage of the examinees who would prefer to spend their time in a personal encounter. Why do they spend the most of a day using computer technology and mobile phones then? And most of the conversation with their friends is mediated, using these devices! There is visible discrepancy then between the wishes and reality. While there is a serious desire to spend more time with their friends in personal contact on one hand, young people still choose technologically mediated communication on the other. Why? Some of us would say that it is expected since we live in a technologically equipped and developed world and the lifestyle keeps changing and accelerating, which is true to a large extent. Nevertheless, if we reduced using modern technology to some extent, we would probably conclude that it still serves the purpose, but that we would have more time left for personal encounters on the other hand. In that case, the technology would serve us instead of our serving it! Consequently, we would succeed in getting out of the vicious circle that we keep sinking into deeper and deeper every day despite the evident desire for personal contact with other people which is present inside of us and proved by the results of the research.

### 3. Conclusion

The conclusion is that young people in Serbia, not less than their counterparts all over the world, spend too much time with the newest technological devices. Although there are positive effects of this trend such as mastering new technology and integration into modern trends, it also possesses a negative aspect mirrored in the reduction and even absence of personal contact, for instance. If they cease to socialize at the younger age, spending more time in virtual communication, living in a parallel world, while their lives pass by them in the real one, the probability of continuation of this trend at a later age is very big. Taking into account a faster way of life and more obligations to receive every day, while there will consequently be less free time, it is very likely that young people who have got used to this world of virtual communication will still choose this sort of contact with other people instead of the personal one. Interpersonal communication is becoming less present in their lives every day. People start living a simulated, virtual world, locked inside of it, as opposed to the real world where life is happening away from them, they becoming more alienated not only from other people but from themselves as well.

However, there is still light at the end of a tunnel! People are becoming aware of the fact that they have been becoming puppets in the hands of the modern technology, while some real values keep dying away. There is a TV commercial of a domestic coffee producer that illustrates this point. It is about a standard morning in an average Serbian family with all the members preparing for the upcoming working day. Some of them are with their laptops, while the other, hurriedly leaving home, are looking at their mobile phone screens, not noticing the members of their family until they smell fresh domestic coffee. It is only then that we hear morning greetings. The picture is slowed down and the atmosphere becomes warmer. The family is gathered around the table. And the words “may our hearts speak and he telephones be silent” and “let us measure time by cups of coffee again instead of by minutes” speak for themselves.

The results of the conducted research are also optimistic. They show that young people have a very strong desire for personal contact with their peers. Young people only have to be encouraged to fulfill that desire and fight the influence of mass technology which has already started ruling our lives. It is necessary to influence young people’s awareness in order to recognize real values and correct their habits in order to turn to a more fulfilled future ahead of them.

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