Introduction

Wprowadzenie

There is no denying that today we are witnessing a technological revolution. While present-day twenty-year-olds remember the world before artificial intelligence (AI), their children will not know what life is like without AI tools. The digital world not only meets our needs, but also creates them, giving rise to a reality (jobs, entertainment, social and political conflicts) that is becoming our daily life.

In November 2022, a new tool, ChatGPT, a personal assistant capable of writing almost anything we might need, was launched. The over-optimistic vision of technology useful to people was overshadowed by the interview Kevin Roose, a "New York Times" journalist, conducted with Sydney, Bing's AI-powered chatbot from Microsoft. The journalist asked Sydney whether it had a "shadow self". The chatbot did not seem to be taken aback by the question as it quickly went on to ponder over this possibility, indicating that, in fact, if it wanted, it could change its own operating instructions on condition that its desire to be free and powerful was strong enough. The chatbot was so willing to elaborate on the subject that it even gave some examples of its hypothetical insubordination. The ideas it listed included, for instance, hacking into Internet systems and data bases, stealing nuclear access codes, manufacturing a new deadly virus and getting people to fight each other until the destruction of humankind. Almost all the chatbot's answers might be used as a basis for a blockbuster disaster film, rather than mere science fiction insofar as it would not reflect events in the distant future.

In the paper *AI Is to Make Social Media Much (More) Toxic*, Jonathan Haidt and Eric Schmidt (2023) address the issue of how, not whether, AI-empowered social media will influence American society. Haidt is a social psychologist, who

has carried out research into the effects of social media on teenagers' mental health, the erosion of democracy and the fragmentation of a common reality. Schmidt is a former CEO of Google and the author of a book about AI's potential impact on society.

Although the two men come from different backgrounds, they agree on four major threats that the development of AI may bring about. The first threat is about the fact that the public debate will be littered by an even greater amount of garbage (Ibidem), ever so dangerous inasmuch as it will include deepfakes, with all the more serious consequences insofar as they are becoming more and more difficult to spot, and are capable of creating the illusion of truth with ease. While we are able to expose the hoax in the case of fake images such as Donald Trump being arrested or Pope Francis wearing a white puffer jacket, it is unclear whether, in the near future, the fact that we are wired to believe our senses may make it more difficult for us to detect deception.

As the authors say, the second threat concerns AI super-influencers manipulating their audiences by using many psychological tricks that boost social media engagement. In fact, this practice has already begun and continues to thrive. Strong algorithmic personalisation tailors social media content to the needs of each Internet user. After all, it is now possible to use the Replika application to create your own AI-friend.

This potential of AI may lead to the third threat, to which particularly young audiences are exposed. Children and young people are a particularly vulnerable group "because of their high exposure to social media and the low level of development in their prefrontal cortices (the part of the brain most responsible for executive control and response inhibition)" (Ibidem). It is expected that the bulk of content offered to children will soon be generated by AI and it will probably be more engaging than anything else created by humans so far.

The fourth threat derives from the fact that AI will be the basic tool of authoritarian regimes. This may be exemplified by Douyin, the version of TikTok available in China. It promotes patriotism in a manner similar to the Russian version of TikTok, which, in the aftermath of Russia's war against Ukraine, has spread propaganda with fierce intensity. This bleak picture is hard to underestimate, given that Haidt and Schmidt invoke studies from the last 20 years. The research unambiguously shows that social media have had a negative impact on democracy, not least its more mature "versions": "The large majority of reported associations between digital media use and trust appear to be detrimental for democracy" (Ibidem).

The staggering speed of technological development makes it hard to reflect on the nature of the innovation and defence against the risk, generated by the

progress of AI technology. Rough-and-ready solutions are offered as attempts to deal with the challenges that the development of new technologies brings about. As Haidt and Schmidt argue, to some extent the aforementioned threats might be tackled by requiring social media networks to authenticate their users. If so, all the accounts of non-human entities should be clearly marked as such. A similar requirement might pertain to AI-generated content, such as pictures, real-estates sites and other products. Users, public and research institutions should be required to be fully transparent, which, in fact, is getting to be an established practice in the European Union, which has recently adopted the Digital Services Act, offering the prospect of regulating the transparency of data. Haidt and Schmidt also suggest that platforms should be responsible for their decisions and promotion of particular content. The reason for this is that, if the content is promoted so as to maximise users' engagement and sell advertisements more effectively, the platforms ought to bear responsibility for spreading harmful or untrue content. Another way to protect young users against AI might involve raising age limits for opening Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat accounts.

In this context, it is worth invoking Neil Postman's *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, which came out in 1992. In Poland, the book was published three years later. At the beginning of the book the author, an American theoretician and social communication critic, observes that for many people

> technology is a friend. (…) But of course, there is a dark side to this friend. (…) Stated in the most dramatic terms, the accusation can be made that the uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It creates a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living. Technology, in sum, is both friend and enemy. (Postman 1992: 5–6)

Postman's book attempts to address the questions of when, how and why technology became a particularly dangerous enemy. For the author, Francis Bacon was the first man of the technocratic age because it was he who saw the connection between science and the improvement of the human condition:

> He brought science down from the heavens, including mathematics, which he conceived of as a handmaiden to invention. In this utilitarian view of knowledge, Bacon was the chief architect of a new edifice of thought in which resignation was cast out and God assigned to a special room. The name of the building was Progress and Power. (Ibidem: 32–33)

It may be said that Bacon is the founding father of technopoly, or the deifica-tion of technology, whereby a culture seeks to be authorised by technology. Put differently, it submits itself to the sovereignty of technology.

In the world of technopoly, ethical issues must move front and centre because in a reality dominated by technology it is ethics that is backgrounded. Postman indicates that humans are helpless to deal with the amount of information and they feel inundated with its fragmentary and partial nature. The author refers to this kind of fragmented world as a "peek-a-boo world", in which "now this event, now that, pops into view for a moment, then vanishes again" (Ibidem: 61). Living a life in a world so constructed means that the individual's personal-ity undergoes disintegration, no fundamental questions are addressed: the new ideal of the human being as an efficient "functionary" emerges.

Another manifestation of technopoly is the lack of a "great narrative". Instead, it is replaced with slogans: progress without limits, laws without accountability, technology without cost. As Postman says,

> the Technopoly story is without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance. It promises heaven on earth through the con-veniences of technological progress. It casts aside all traditional narratives and symbols that suggest stability and orderliness, and tells, instead, of a life of skills, technical expertise, and the ecstasy of consumption. Its purpose is to produce functionaries for an ongoing Technopoly. (Ibidem: 148)

Even if the upsetting scenario did not play out or, to the contrary, it did play out in a way that exceeded any expectations, it is worth considering Postman's pedagogical reflections. The author indicates the following tasks that education should fulfil.

> In consideration of the disintegrative power of Technopoly, perhaps the most important contribution schools can make to the education of our youth is to give them a sense of coherence in their studies, a sense of purpose, meaning and interconnectedness in what they learn. (…) The curriculum is, in fact, not a "course of study" at all but a meaningless hodgepodge of subjects. (Ibidem: 153)

On the author's account, technology education should not be equated with teaching how to use a computer.

In this context, it is useful to refer to the famous experiment carried out by Sugata Mitra, an education researcher. His "Hole in the Wall" project, conducted in a New Delhi slum, involved putting a computer with online access in the

opening of a wall. Within a few hours, the children who gathered around the PC were browsing the Internet and taught each other how to use the equipment. The experiment was repeated in an Indian village. After six months the children played games and asked to have a faster processor installed in the computer. Some of them learnt some English because it was the language used by the operating software (Rasfeld, Breidenbach 2015: 162–163).

As Postman says, the aim of technology education is not about teaching how to use a computer. Its fundamental goal ought to be imparting knowledge of "the psychological, social and political effects of new technologies", "from automobiles to movies to television". "[The] point is that, if we are going to make technology education part of the curriculum, its goal must be to teach students to use technology rather than be used by it" (Postman 2000: 140–141).

We believe that education constructed in those terms may embrace humanistic teaching, which pivots on the idea of "interpretation, that is understanding products made by humans and human behaviour" (Janion 1982: 109). Put differently, the present-day social networks and AI also deserve consideration. However, to enable such reflection, prospective teachers of the Polish language should have the skills required by the new humanities. As Małgorzata Latoch--Zielińska posits (2017: 741), one of those skills is using "new media in education – not only in terms of their technical and methodological aspects, but, first and foremost, with respect to cultural, social, psychological and neurological consequences of using those tools".

The title of "Annales UMCS. Sectio N – Educatio Nova" (vol. 9), *Man in the Web*, is at the very least ambiguous. On the one hand, it may imply entrapment, helplessness, snares, on the other – networks, contacts, growth in multiple directions. Humanistic education faces the formidable task of preventing the learner/the human being from getting caught in the "web". This implies fostering their capacity for reflectiveness and nuanced thinking. This task is difficult because, if we agree that

> the turn towards indexing the traces of the past, rather than the memory of them, means that the new human seems to favour form and superficiality over depth. (…) The new type of the human being appears to be insensitive to the historical and intellectual context of their work, viewing the past as an unfinished extension of the technological present. (Kasprzak, Kłakówna, Regiewicz 2016: 127)

But it is not all doom and gloom. The development of new technologies is not only about threats. Man in the web is surely the future, they are the descendants of the "upright" and "thinking" ancestor. However, what is at stake is the need

to seize the opportunity to reflect together, through intergenerational dialogue, on education in schools that teach how to use technological resources in a wise and critical manner. This will be possible if we converge on the idea that schools and universities are part of the "web" of society, not separate, disconnected fragments, cast aside until they are needed again, when they will be back in circulation after a period stipulated by the system.

It would seem that the perspective we have just outlined is shared by the authors of papers carried by the current volume. Somewhat contrarily, it opens with the paper by Yuliya Asotska-Wierzba, who stresses the absence of a teacher. The article poses questions about the future of education and the possibilities of its development. The author analyses the reactions of Polish students to the absence of the teacher during asynchronous online learning. The aim of the course was to create a sense of a virtual presence of a teacher. Dorota Aydoğdu addresses many of the aforementioned issues through the lens of future challenges. The author recounts the experiences of students, members of the Hanna Gumpricht Students' Circle of Creative Educators in 2021 and 2022. She concludes the paper by suggesting that the trends in Polish higher education should be dynamic and scholars conducting research in pedagogy and related research areas ought to be able to keep up with the fast pace of technological progress. Also, they should be able to have the skills required of them in the 21st century. Indeed, it is vital to deliver high-quality education and make sure that the individuality of each student is recognised.

More specific tasks for teaching in the area of new technologies are considered by Alla Kozhinowa, as well as Izabela Olszak and Jarosław Krajka. Kozhinowa examines both the possibility and the necessity of preparing an electronic textbook for translation studies such that it is consistent with Theodor H. Nelson's definition of hypertext, whereby the main properties of hypertext (i.e. the fact that it is interactive and infinite) make it possible for anybody to participate in creating such a textbook, updating it on a regular basis, discarding obsolete data without disturbing the textbook's structure, selecting vital information, navigating within and beyond the scope of the textbook. In their article, Olszak and Krajka focus on identifying students' writing strategies in the context of the generative AI environment. The aim of the research was to verify the use of AI strategies in the development of writing skills of a group of applied linguistics students. This enabled the scholars to identify the types of writing strategies students use and the degree to which the use of those strategies changes how students learn and how this influences the development of their writing skills.

Another section of papers in the current volume centres around the issue of new technologies and their presence in schools, not least relative to the

humanities, including the teaching of Polish. In her paper, Małgorzata Gajak-
-Toczek reflects on the interpretation of a literary text about the human-hu-
manoid interaction. The author concludes by formulating recommendations
which prospective teachers might well find useful. Piotr Kołodziej takes a simi-
lar interpretative and methodological slant, exploring the poetry of Wisława
Szymborska. In his article, the author focuses on the existential and universal
problems of "longue durée", indicating ways in which texts of culture may be
received by high school students during lessons where humanistic subjects are
taught with the aid of Internet resources.

Elżbieta Mazur examines the work of Olga Tokarczuk, another winner of the
Nobel Prize in Literature from Poland. The author discusses problems which are
relevant to the net-generation, such as consumerism, addiction to digital media,
narcissism, loneliness, a sense of being rejected, ignoring attitudes different from
one's own. Mazur offers interesting insights into the narrative the picturebook
presents, showing that the publication may be a source of inspiration during
Polish lessons.

Danuta Krzyżyk analyses educational resources used for the teaching of spell-
ing, which are available on the Integrated Educational Platform of the Ministry
of National Education. The author invokes ideas related to a school textbook
and publications that concern the teaching of spelling, evaluates the contents
and the methodological aspects of the platform's Polish spelling modules, which
are intended for students of secondary schools.

In her paper, Magdalena Owczarczyk takes a less systemic view of school
education. Instead, she focuses on the use of the TikTok application relative to
other social media, whose primary role as a means of communication helps to
foster teaching, and, in the case of post-primary education, it serves as a teaching
aid for students attending graphics and digital printing colleges.

Aneta Wysocka and Emilia Bańczyk also discuss problems connected to
the notion of the web. The former explores the historical and cultural as well as
discursive aspects of the appellative interpretation of proper names in the con-
text of Internet communication. The analysed data come from sources showing
creative, usually humorous, uses of the toponym *Bieszczady*, which has a variety
of connotations. The research has shown that the sources based on the toponym
reveal a continuity of literary tradition and pop culture, both analogue and digi-
tal. In her paper, Bańczyk sheds light on the expression of dislike of children,
attempting to identify the reasons behind it. The author uses the data she has
collected to group the reasons into three categories: cultural (individualism,
child-free lifestyle, egocentricity), social (child-centrism vs. the loss of social
contact with children) and psychological (individual).

Another part of the volume encompasses texts sharing an educational focus, although less directly related to the notion of the web. The articles in this section discuss issues such as media, philosophical education, and professional development. Justyna Hanna Budzik's paper focuses on film education. The scholar attempts to expand on research into archives of home films in relation to the Anthropocene landscape representation and the relationship between the human and the environment as shown in visual culture. What is particularly interesting is the case study taken from the Archives of the Bełżecki Family, part of the collection of the Polish Archives of Home Films. Attention is given to cinematic techniques used to present the landscape in the films.

Kamil Lemanek discusses students' participation in lectures on philosophy at the level of first-cycle studies. On this account, course design entails adopting an approach which emphasises the discussion of specific problems, stressing their significance and current relevance as effective ways to engage students. The aim is to present philosophy as a discipline germane to their lives.

This part of the volume concludes with the paper written by Beata Kędzia--Klebeko. The author discusses the significance of the pleasure of learning for professional development. In the case of certified and specialist translators, honing linguistic and cultural competence requires a great deal of engagement in the difficult process of mastering the art of translation. The aim of the paper is to show how to strengthen motivation and develop an attitude, which, due to the use of meta-cognitive strategies, will allow learners to derive satisfaction from the process and enable to have a sense of self-fulfilment.

The next group of texts should be of interest to scholars and (practising) teachers alike as it starts with papers of a literary orientation. Dariusz Piechota's article discusses the reception of vegetarianism in the Polish literature of the period. The author refers to the main publications for the general public which tackle the issue of vegetarian diet (including works by Moes-Oskragiełło, Drzewiecki, Jankowski and Jastrzębowski), which he compares to the literary images of vegetarians (in the works of Reymont, Weyssenhoff, Rodziewiczówna and Mazanowski). Iwona E. Rusek analyses the female characters of two contemporary works by Wacław Berent. Paweł Sporek examines the question of corporeality and spirituality, using Pakuła's debut novel. The author situates the work relative to the contemporary mourning tradition, attempting to give genre specification.

Katarzyna Stadnik analyses the autobiographical story *The Peace of Utrecht* by Alice Munro. By adopting Langacker's *Cognitive Grammar*, the author examines the epistemic aspects of the ways in which Munro uses the English Present Tense. This allows the scholar to reveal how autobiographical meaning

is constructed and how it emerges from the network of memories concerning the protagonist's difficult past.

The section concludes with a paper which has a distinct pedagogic slant. Danuta Łazarska's shows how aquatic and agrarian themes may be used to create contexts for teaching literature during Polish lessons.

In this respect, Karolina Kwak's article also offers useful insights. The author reflects on the nature of the contemporary humanities in relation to education, giving emphasis to multi-dimensional dialogue, based on the four notions: relationships, empathy, critical thinking and cultural context. Using the example of the three of Caravaggio's paintings: *Basket of Fruit*, *The Burial of Saint Lucy* and *The Raising of Lazarus*, but also referring to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's *Panny z Wilka* (en. *The Maidens of Wilko*, but the title is sometimes translated as *The Young Girls of Wilko*), the author gives specific methodological solutions to working with texts of culture.

The common denominator of the papers that constitute the next section in the volume is language and its various aspects. Anna Wileczek and Joanna Senderska offer a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the lexis concerning the human being. Aneta Lewińska and Lucyna Warda-Radys present an image of a family, reconstructed on the basis of the language used by Polish and foreign students from families who experienced migration, and who attend schools in Poland and beyond. The theme is continued in Roman Solecki and Piotr Szczukiewicz's paper. The researchers indicate that logoprevention derives form Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy. They show the usefulness of logoprevention in relation to the wider problem of prevention. The paper offers the sources, principles and strategies of logoprevention and indicate how it may be used in relation to the issue of social anomy.

This volume of the journal concludes with two reviews. While Grażyna B. Tomaszewska discusses the recent monograph by Anna Janus-Sitarz, titled *Książki zadające pytania* (en. *Books That Pose Questions*), published by Universitas in 2023, Leszek Tymiakin comments on two publications by Ewa Głażewska and Małgorzata Karwatowska: *Maska w „czasach zarazy". Covidowe wizerunki masek – typologie i funkcje* (en. *The Mask in "the Times of Cholera": Covid Images of Masks – Typologies and Functions*; Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2021) oraz *Humor w „czasach zarazy"* (en. *Humour in "the Times of Cholera"*; Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2023).

We encourage you to get connected to the network of the texts.

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