Abstract
As many claim nowadays we are all part of information society under which communication does matter even more than ever before. Above all such a claim presumes a profound change in the way the society is structured and reproduced. That is why before we start to explore the role of media communication in its relation to processes of domination and resistance which take place in this “new” kind of society, we should make sure that tools and techniques we use are still suitable. In this paper I would like to suggest how insights from contemporary critical theory can inform media studies. Because of space limitations I will work exclusively with Scott Lash’s Critique of Information.

Key words: information, critical theory

New Forms of Meaning and Question of Power
The first sentence of academic writing can be suspected of being somehow insincere or devaluated even before it comes into existence. Why? The first sentence sounds like a promise of knowledge and wisdom, like being brought here to reveal the truth, while in fact, at least for some of us, it is just another small brick in their academic career rather than a blessing of Reason. That is why it can be also considered as kind of performative contradiction. Of course this unpalatable insight can be understood as act of intellectual defiance or blasphemy, but as well it can be understood as unintended consequence of reflection process or as inevitable consequence of alienation. However no matter how we conceive it, what is maybe even more important is that if the language is recognized as sold and devaluated, it seems that a narrative sentence is not the best notion of knowledge or wisdom anymore. It seems that knowledge that works through such a language can be nothing more than just another ideology or deception.

This mistrustful approach to language conceived as medium of knowledge is present as early as in writings of Frankfurt School. For Horkheimer language of contemporary knowledge is exclusively undermined by instrumental rationality. It means that language can serve as mean for any end. It has not capacity to evaluate any proposition as better than other (Horkheimer 2007:37-80). In Dialectics of Enlightenment Horkheimer with Adorno conduct their critique of Enlightenment through recognition of particular subject and object of knowledge and oppressive character of peculiar relationship between these two. They plead to Bacon who notices that power and cognition are synonymous (Adorno, Horkheimer 2010). At the same time Horkheimer and Adorno are conscious that domination is secured by language, which again express nothing more but instrumental rationality. The mistrustful attitude towards language is elaborated in other concern and even more explicitly in One Dimensional Man (Marcuse 1991). According to Herbert Marcuse what makes language inappropriate medium of knowledge is fact that negation is no longer possible through type of language, which seems to be prevailing medium of communication in industrial societies. In similar vain in his Eclipse of Reason Horkheimer speaks of incapacity of contemporary language to express ideas (Horkheimer 2007:50-51).

Poststructuralist critique of language as medium of knowledge seems to be oriented towards peculiar relationship between knowledge, power and the former. Maybe that is why post-structural thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (but also Foucault in particular period), seems to assign even much bigger importance to language than classical critical thinkers. For Derrida whole western metaphysics understood as a system of thought is constituted and reproduced on the basis of language and linguistic sign (Derrida 2000:241-248). Of course all of these kinds of concerns can be understood as a part of wider postmodern enterprise and its critique of knowledge. Nevertheless what is important for my argument is fact that if one consider attitude of contemporary critical thought (of whatever provenance) towards question of language conceived as a medium of thought, it turns out that as soon as ‘hermeneutics of suspicious’ had been aimed on itself, dejection became most frequented result of theoretical practice. At this particular moment for critique to be still possible, not to loose its justification and critical edge, there must be way out of this corrupted medium.

However it seems that language understood as a medium of knowledge not only looses its credibility. Armed with narrative sentences and closures of discourse one can refer to, judge and evaluate other narrative sentence, but do they still matter? Does social life can still be understood as an outcome of agreement achieved through the process (less or more equal or rational) within which interests, values and meanings of particular groups and individuals are negotiated? Even if the former proposition is not valid and language still matters, then we still need to consider how does its meaning change when incorporated into so called information flows? These questions imply that narrative closures could have loose not only credibility but their relevancy too. Scott Lash has already drawn on this phenomenon in his Critique of Information (2002). Lash recognizes that introduction of communication technologies to our daily lives and their ubiquity have led to
development of new forms of social reproduction as well as new technologies of power. In order to recognize and examine them one has to abandon realm of language and jump into so called *information* flows. In other words according to Scott Lash due to changes in the realm of communication it seems that it is high time to critically consider development of new forms of communication which are not necessarily language derived, which thus work on very different basis. Apart from question of meaning it seems that, at least for Scott Lash, this, let us call it, *semantic* sensitivity is what make us sensitive enough to notice the on going social change.

Even though remarks presented above seems to be investigation in *critical theory* or *philosophy of knowledge* rather than in *media theory*, I believe that contemporary critical thought can serve as a good and important source of inspiration and background for understanding contemporary media, especially in their relation to question of power. That is why these remarks can be highly relevant for those who tries to comprehend how contemporary media works and how are they involved in power relations.

**Information**

Scott Lash recent book, *Critique of Information* (2002), presents highly elaborated and complex argument in critical theory. According to Lash critical theory, as we know it from Frankfurt School and its followers, is not longer possible. What makes it out of date is the social change that we witness as contemporary society transform into information order. In his argument Lash points out that tools for critical evaluation of society, useful when applied to industrial society (mainly these inspired by so called linguistic turn, but Lash seems to refer to much more wider technologies of knowledge), are not necessarily sufficient when one tries to comprehend the information order. Actually in the light of *Critique of Information* previously prevailing ways of inquiry could be even misleading. Basically they can conceal phenomena, which elude sensitivity of old toolkit. The reason is that nowadays we deal mainly with phenomena, which are not discursive at all. Indeed it seems that it is the case if one considers not only media communication, but our living environment as well as communication technologies are more and more ubiquitous in our daily life.

At this point one can ask, what is so specific for ‘information order’ that makes it intangible for well-established methods and approaches? When Lash claims that information order is primarily made of *information*, he means nothing more than that. However he is one of the first thinkers who try to give some meaning to that frequently repeated sentence and consider its implications. To presents his idea what *information* really is, Scott Lash confronts it with cultural, sociological and economical forms of previously dominating social order. In other words he considers *information* with reference to its antithesis, notion of linguistic *sign* and notion of *discourse*. What is very unusual on Lash account on *information* is the fact that even though he derives many characteristics of ‘information’ from its technological origin, he does not understand information in terms of binary code. For him *information* is foremost notion of meaning and it still belongs to the realm of thought (otherwise *critique of information* could not be possible). If one consider critical dimension of Lash’s argument it can seem that for him notion of information is a kind of remedy for declining credibility and relevancy of previously dominating forms of culture, social order or strategies of capital accumulation. The space of information flows is a space within which critique (however differently shaped) is again possible.

How does then the information, which constitutes forms of contemporary culture and social order, differ from these earlier cultural forms? According to Lash main qualities of *information* are: *flow, disembeddedness, spatial and temporal compression and real time relations* (Lash 2002:2). It means that in informational culture one deals with immediacy of communication, lack of time for reflection and appeal to stimulus rather than to intellect. Surely it does not sound new, but what Scott Lash seems to do in his argument is trying to consider implications of that fact for realms of epistemology, ontology and ethics (politics). All these implications share common assumption: with respect to profound changes in communication media, one should expect profound change in other realms of social life, especially these that deal with processes of meaning creation and transmission. As Scott Lash notices in the information age this issue becomes almost universal issue (Lash 2002:65-78).

**Media power**

If one puts into question the notion of *discourse* and its relevancy, he must necessarily put into question theoretical background and methodologies of these schools of media studies which work with notion of so called symbolic (discursive) power of media. The central assumption for these schools of media studies is belief that the content of media communication are texts, eventually belief that media content has primarily textual character (Gripsrud 2002:97-224, Thwaites, David, Mules 2002). As it has been already mentioned Lash doubts in relevancy of discourse and texts under condition of information order. While discursive texts are “(...) compromized of conceptual frameworks, of serious speech acts, of propositional logic, of speech acts backed up by legitimating
arguments”, content of contemporary media is far from that (Lash 2002:2, 65-77). However it is crucial to remember that for author of Critique of Information it does not mean that meaning disappeared along with earlier cultural forms. To resolve this contradiction Lash draws on McLuhan’s understanding of media and his famous dictum that medium is a message. As informational media rather create experience of presence and immediate participation rather than represent some outside word they work not only with the sense of vision. They surround us, thus they become tactile.

For McLuhan the medium is a message meant that it was the technology of writing that was a cognitive basis for western civilization (McLuhan 2001:136-208). Lash uses McLuhanian (also that of Innis) type of argumentation, however he at the same time claims that contemporary culture has a different basis (technologies of information processing) and shapes our cognition in a radically different way. That is why it is important to reconsider the linkage between power and cognition recognized so aptly by Bacon. In the age of information processing we can expect that media and communication technologies are even more relevant issue in this respect. That is why it is so important to deal with them with respect and attention rather than to rely on already developed methods and insights. I do believe that work of Scot Lash (2002, 2007) but also other scholars and critical thinkers such as Katherine Hayles (2005), Couze Venn (2007), David Beer (2009), Nicholas Thoburn (2007), Alexander Galloway (2004) and others can be very inspiring insight for understanding of contemporary media, especially with respect to question of power.

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Information about contributor
Michal Tkaczyk, doctoral student at Faculty of Social Studies, Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Masaryk University

i Habermas distinguishes between logical and performative contradiction, which both can occur in an argument. While former refers to impossibility of both propositions to occur at the same time, the latter has to do with inconsistency between intentions and performance (How 2003:44-45)

ii philosophical concepts

iii see f. e. Foucault (2002)