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Technologisation, Multimodality, Performativity and Agency – Challenges for Contemporary Humanities Education

Review of *Technopaideia. Zaawansowane technologie w edukacji humanistycznej* ed. by Sebastian Borowicz and Joanna Hobot-Marcinek, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2024, pp. 412.

Abstract: This article is a review of *Technopaideia. Zaawansowane technologie w edukacji humanistycznej*, a volume edited by Sebastian Borowicz and Joanna Hobot-Marcinek (2024), which addresses the issue of technologisation of humanities education in a thoughtful and mature manner: it takes into account the interdisciplinarity of research within the humanities, exposes the combination of theory and practice, agency, proactivity and engagement, and draws attention to the improvement of new competence related to the technological challenges of the contemporary world and the broadly understood transformation in the process of reality perception (from linear narrative to – digital, hypertextual, practical, laboratory).

Keywords: education, technology, technologization of humanities

The book *Technopaideia. Zaawansowane technologie w edukacji humanistycznej* addresses the issue of technologization of humanities education in a thoughtful and mature manner: it takes into account the interdisciplinarity of research within the humanities, exposes the combination of theory and practice, agency, proactivity and engagement, and draws attention to the improvement of new competence related to the technological challenges of the contemporary world and the broadly understood transformation in the process of reality perception (from linear narrative to – digital, hypertextual, practical, laboratory). The edition, meticulously edited by Sebastian Borowicz and Joanna Hobot-Marcinek at the substantive level is logical and consistent, and has been developed very reliably and conscientiously, as it is the result of many years of already interdisciplinary research by the team of the Centre for Multimodal Educational and Cultural Research of the Faculty of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University

(which is a continuation of the activities and work already carried out since 2015 in the Laboratory of Multimodal Educational Strategies).

The book takes up the contemporary discourse on the philosophy of new media, refers to their axiological context, takes into account the positive and negative consequences of the technologization of the reality surrounding man, as well as considers the issue of the previously unrecognized influence of cyber media on culture, Polish language didactics, humanities, and artistic practice. The work is related to the conviction that in contemporary reality, including the educational space, "technological knowledge unsupported by humanistic and critical reflection may lead to dependence on the simulation character of new media" (*Technopaideia*… 396) and foster a lowering of axiological (including ethical) reflection.

On the other hand, the enormous educational potential of cybermedia, as Joanna Hobot-Marcinek rightly points out, and "their performative character not only generates dangers, but also opens up a range of possibilities, related to the transition from passive reception to a participatory culture, in which the recipient of literature or art becomes at the same time the creator" (*Technopaideia*…397).

In the opinion of the authors of the publication, an important role in contemporary educational space and in educational and artistic practice is played by not only multimodality, inherent in all human communication, but also by polysensoriality and intersemioticity determining the use of a variety of sign systems that allow for a "wider" view of the reality explored and can help overcome barriers between technology and literature, education and art.

In the very introduction, Sebastian Borowicz highlights such notions, phenomena, trends and proposals for educational activities as the scientization of school, the absolutization of accuracy, teaching technologies, the fundamental role of design and production, and states

> the solutions developed in the constructivist-connectivist model of teaching, such as media labs, model-based inquiry, game-based learning, exploration technologies, connected learning or bifocal modelling, among others, point at the same time to the need for a change in the empirically oriented operating model of so-called high-tech schools, especially with regard to the teaching of humanities subjects. (*Technopaideia*… 22)

The author also considers:

> We propose to move away from their scientization, i.e. from the STEAM model to HUM education. Multimodal polonics education, based on the @gor system, engagement, combining performativity and theoretical reflection would profile and shape technotopic learning processes in accordance with the cognitive apparatus proper to the humanities based on criticality and interpretation. (*Technopaideia* . 22)

School reality is changing very rapidly, and the key competence of a modern twenty-first-century school should also change as a result, with an emphasis on practical and problem-solving skills. Since a student is currently facing many civilizational, social and technological challenges, the editors already emphasize in the introduction that the school should promote a practical form of teaching and a student representing:

> The performative type of education is essentially an engaged young scientist and designer learning about the world by acting on objects, conducting their experiments in an automated laboratory-like technoscience environment, developing a cognitive model specific to the empirical and technical sciences, focused on operational knowledge ('how does something work?'). (*Technopaideia*…12)

The book is clearly divided into several parts with the following categories: multimodally, polonistically, instrumentally, and intermedially, and a dozen chapters that present the broad spectrum of the issues.

Anna Nacher in her chapter "To nie sztuczna inteligencja jest naszym największym zagrożeniem: rozległe performance technologii medialnych" convincingly reflects on the nature of cybermedia, referring to Marshall McLuhan's theory, and emphasizes the role of the discussion of media not only in the context of the technological revolution and the treatment of technologies as "tools." The author convincingly argues:

> The emergence of extensive media performances is, therefore, a necessary prelude to a proper assessment of what media-conscious educational practices would look like. For they are never separated from the media, and media technologies do not require any particular 'inclusion,' nor are we dealing with the 'technologisation' of the humanities; we are dealing with a very complex world on edge, after many ends of the world, which requires care, responsibility, and sensitivity. (*Technopaideia*…55)

Maciej Krzykawski, on the other hand, in his article "Przysposobienie technologiczne," takes into account the issue of manipulation and ideologization of new media and recommends introducing a subject that will help to familiarize teachers and students with the dangers of new technologies and will provide tools to consciously evaluate them in a broader context, e.g., in the context of the media:

> a way of realizing digital education that would take into account the complexity of the profound challenges that digital disorder (disruption) brings to us because it affects us on a biological, psychological, social, and existential level, and thus could lead to *technophilia*. (*Technopaideia*…58)

Sidey Myoo's article ("Po drugiej stronie interfejsu – *życie* awatarów") refers to reflections on the function, role and place of virtual reality (with particular

emphasis on avatar characters) in relation to the axiological dimension of human existence online, with the formation of moral and ethical attitudes and, more broadly, the discussion of the world of values.On the other hand, the text "Cyberświat jako przestrzeń edukacyjna–perspektywy nowych form reprezentacji, interpretacji i komunikacji" by Edyta Sadowska and Miłosz Horodyski consistently proves that users of cyberspace should be not only aware, but also cautious in their perception of the virtual world:

> The rapprochement between cyberspace and off-grid reality is one of the key phenomena of the modern era of cyberculture (…). For many, the boundary between the two worlds is becoming increasingly blurred (…) Cybermedia has undoubtedly opened up new areas of research into the psychology of reception. The essential catalyst for cybercultural phenomena is interactivity, understood as a dialogue between the viewer and the artifact in real-time with mutual interaction. At the same time, this should not be seen as a process of perception, but also as a process of communication. (*Technopaideia…* 85–86)

Joanna Hobot-Marcinek's article "'Czaty, maupy, bramy'. Tadeusz Różewicz jako teoretyk mediów," from a Polish philological point of view, deals exhaustively with the essence and mechanisms of the functioning of the media in Tadeusz Różewicz's poetry, which imitates media narratives by confronting his considerations with the philosophical thought of the French new media researcher Jeane 'Baudrillard. Hobot-Marcinek convincingly demonstrates that Jeane 'Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality is close to contemporary research into virtual reality and may be a process of replacing reality with its simulacra, leading to total control over human minds.

On the other hand, another author, Dariusz Szczukowski, poses questions about the meaning of teaching poetry in a culture dominated by algorithms. In his text "Nauczanie poezji w dobie cyfryzacji," referring to the "posthumanist" theory and the notion of the technologization of teaching, as well as to the philosophical works of Bernard Stiegler, the researcher, defending the sense of reading, tries to define school encounters with poetry as an experience of the intensification of existence, escaping "all economics and the power of countability," referring to the phenomenon of symbolic poverty and the rules of the digital world subordinated to the logic of profit

Sebastian Borowicz, taking into account the peculiar links between the ancient world and contemporary reality, relates his reflections undertaken in the article "Homerus in schola czyli o pożytku z (nie) czytania w epoce ponowoczesnych techno *środowisk*." Referring to the theory of immersive reading, using the phenomenon of gamification, Borowicz shows a new perspective on the presence of Homer's works in school, using, among other things, digital tools and *connected learning* principles, demonstrating how Homer's reading can be

considered in the context of new multimodal technologies and combined with a post-modern participatory culture.

Another article by Małgorzata Gajak-Toczek, reveals a pragmatic approach – the text "Przyszli poloniści w cyfrowym *świecie*. Wybrane aspekty zjawiska" refers to the preparation of future Polish language teachers to work with the use of various information technologies. The author's in-depth reflections on the network society and the characteristics of generation C (*computerized, connected,* always *clicking*) lead to conclusions concerning the necessity of applying actions compliant with the principles of connective pedagogy, which prioritizes thinking and acting over the passive acquisition of knowledge. The author also brings up issues characteristic of convergence culture in her text, writes about the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and the possibilities of its use in the process of Polish language education (e.g., through the *My Heritage* application, contextual reading, principles of creating Facebook pages of literary characters or digital comics).

Marta Rusek, in her article "Polonista patrzy w przyszłość," shows futuristic visions of Polish language education and redefines the contemporary role, function and place of Polish language education in the context of civilizational and technological changes. In her text, the author, writing about anxieties and fears related to adapting the tools of new technologies to everyday reality, evokes the figure of the old *Odysseus* from Lion Feuchtwanger's short story *Odysseus and the Hogs, or the Troubles with Culture,* and proves that this figure becomes a figure of contemporary man,

> whom the development of technology and the civilizational and cultural changes associated with it alienated, marginalized and enclosed in a shell of the past. This was in spite of the fact that all his life experience and heroic fame stemmed from an attitude of openness to the new, the different, the unknown. (*Technopaideia*…180)

Another article by Gościwit Malinowski, "'Gromadzić wszystko–inwentaryzować wszystko–przeszukiwać wszystko' – w pogoni za ideałem metodologicznym filologii klasycznej" (since its crystallization as an academic discipline whose aim is to preserve the legacy of antiquity and to pass on to posterity all the source material and the tradition of its interpretation) touches upon a consideration of the methodological ideal of classical philology. Whilst taking into account the involvement of classical philologists in the application of new technologies to their research, the author writes about the clear consequence of the underlying effort of classical philology to create research tools that make it possible to reach the sources, organize and value them, as well as their reliable interpretation resulting from such documentary and source work.

Kamila Kłudkiewicz, the author of the article entitles "Narzędzia cyfrowe w warsztacie współczesnego historyka sztuki. Kilka uwag o bazach reprodukcji

dzieł sztuki" refers to the context of art history and the use of digital tools to make teaching more attractive, while Katarzyna Możejko's reflections in the text "You Tube na lekcjach o literaturze–społeczne konteksty interpretacji. Wizerunek youtubera/ki a kreacje bohaterów Lalki**"** shows, among other things, Siegrfried J. Schmidt's project of empirical literary studies and unveils a reflection on the role of new media in Polish language teaching and the reception of literature at school. Furthermore, the article's author shows how websites as historically and aesthetically conditioned media shape how literary texts are received and force the audience to move towards a participatory culture.

The concept of the robot-exhibit and people's cultural perceptions of the robot are used in the article by Ilona Iłowiecka-Tańska and Katarzyna Potęga vel Żbik, authors of the text "Czy Księżyc zrobiony jest z sera? Rozmowy zwiedzających Centrum Nauki z humanoidalnym robotem Mikołaj Kopernik". The authors refer in their considerations to the research on the relations between a human and a humanoid robot, analyzing, among others, the transcription of the dialogues conducted between the audience of the Warsaw Copernicus Science Centre and the robot mentioned in the title of the article; they refer to the issues of social competence of the visitors, their value systems and, more broadly, visions of the visitors' world.

In the article "Technologia intermediów. Nowe media sztuki w Krakowie 1970–2020", Artur Tajber writes about crossing genre boundaries, combining various means of expression, the use of intermedia in various fields of art, the influence of intermedia on the creative process and the search for forms of expression, performance art and intermedia education practices Not only does the author refer to many new terms in this field, e.g. interactive art, contextual art, performative art, cyber art, new media art, but he also cites the material and results of research carried out as part of an experimental artistic project (conducted on the borderline between art and science): *Action-Rotation,* taking the form of a multimedia show.

Artistic practice and multi-level visual projects are also referred to by Ewa Bloom-Kwiatkowska in her article "EKRAN vs OBRAZ. Techniki cyfrowe i multimedialne jako element strategii artystycznej i manifestacji oporu w sztuce." Among other things, the author discusses the use of film, photographic, and computer techniques in her projects and draws attention to the processing of selected visual codes of the screen related to the themes of evil, violence, and trauma.

Anna Włodarczyk, on the other hand, in her article "Pokój Vincenta van Gogha–od obrazu malarskiego do metawersu. Multisensoryczne inspiracje" presents her thoughts on the polysensory perception of the world, referring to the relationship between the image and the visual arts. She draws attention primarily to the didactic dimension of multimedia painting exhibitions (on the example of the Vincent van Gogh Room project in Arles). The researcher

considers the issue of the perception of such multimedia exhibitions, discussing the attitude of the student-consumer who, in this case, benefits from the latest technological developments, so that the immersive immersion of the viewer in the painting, "participating (…) would become a multisensory experience, both visual and tactile, in order to be able to construct his own emotional experience of receiving the work" (*Technopaideia…*301).

At the end of these considerations, it is worth mentioning a summary of the work of the authors of the texts included in the volume *Techopaidea…*, considerations of the co-editor of the volume Joanna Hobot-Marcinek. The researcher writes convincingly about multimodal polonics in the age of technological overstimulation and draws attention to the need for a multifaceted and multilevel as well as interdisciplinary study of polonics education in progress, which is convincingly and consistently demonstrated by the authors of the individual articles included in this volume. Recalling the closing short story of the volume, "1967 – wytwarzanie czasu w kinie Kijów," Hobot-Marcinek states that:

> the protagonist of the experiment described (…) is the Wanderer, who is not so much a Benjaminian *flâneur* as an independent contemporary explorer and seeker who, donning VR goggles, enters a 1967 cinema and begins to explore it. As he wanders around, he not only gains knowledge of the place he is viewing, but also has the opportunity to experience its bygone atmosphere. (*Technopaideia…*390)

Experiencing the place while wandering and a color film from the future showing an image of the garden and cinema surroundings is realized through 30 selected images from the virtually reconstructed world of the cinema, its atmosphere, and sounds.

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The book *Technopaideia. Zaawansowane technologie w edukacji humanistycznej* edited by Sebastian Borowicz and Joanna Hobot-Marcinek demonstrates the excellent substantive preparation of the editors of the volume and the authors of the articles. The work refers to the interdisciplinary and international literature on the subject, and is embedded in the rich methodology of research conducted on humanities education in the broad sense, as it takes into account both literary and cultural education, as well as media and communication education in the perspective of the discourse currently taking place on the technologization of education.

The authors' reflections in the individual texts address the issue of the constructivist-connectivism model of teaching and the modern understanding of humanistic education, combining theory with practice, agency, proactivity, and involvement, and take into account the improvement of new competence related to the technological challenges of the modern world and the broadly understood

transformation in the process of reality perception ("transformation" of the viewer from linear narrative to – digital, hypertext, practical, laboratory).

As the co-editor of the Hobot-Marcinek volume rightly points out, and it is hard to disagree with the following statement:

> *Technopaideia. Zaawansowane technologie w edukacji humanistycznej* [presents] a multimodal model of school and university polonics, contrasts the mechanical use of new technologies with their creative, innovative, 'humanised' use, and replaces the viewer's uncontrolled immersion in the metaverse with a conscious exploration of virtual worlds. Thus, proficiency and familiarity with *techne* is part of the paideutic project of intellectual, cultural and ethical formation and self-formation of the human being. (*Technopaideia…*397)

According to the editors of the volume and the authors of the articles included in this edition, the humanistic education of a young person – a young scientist and constructor learning about the world, facing the challenges of contemporary reality – thus perfectly fits into the discussion on a new – performative – type of education, which assumes laboratory, creativity and innovation, as well as involvement and learning about the world by acting on objects. In spite of the issues of the technologization of society and media education that are addressed here with deep thought, the edition, which has been compiled with great care, also retains space for considerations of existential and ethical issues, discussions of axiology and humanist values in the broadest sense. And this aspect of consideration seems to be the most important.

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