

## The Confusion and Traps of Internet Knowledge in Information Age

Enformasyon Çağında İnternet Bilgisinin Karmaşası ve Tuzakları

Ufuk ÖZCAN\*

### **Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the value of the internet as a source of knowledge and information in the so-called “information age” and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages, reliability and limitations of internet knowledge from a critical point of view. In recent years, relations between knowledge, hegemony and power have been the main issues in social sciences. Today, it is important to examine the hegemonic relations between the internet and information which is spread through the internet on “global network society.” In this respect, the main contradiction which has to be analyzed is the disinforming nature of the internet knowledge in the “information age.” Another problem which is related to this is the pollution of knowledge arising from the information overload through the internet. These fundamental problems (the hegemonic nature of informational knowledge, unreliability of information/disinformation, the confusion and the pollution of knowledge arising from the information overload) directly threaten the emancipation of modern people both morally and intellectually. The tendency of the internet media to spread has restrained humanity in a cage of informational, imaginative and psycho-political manipulation and has led to a more effective social control in the name of certain power groups. Another important problem is that today information/knowledge is very easily cloned and shared through the digital possibilities offered by the internet. This fact not only restricts the potentiality of thinking critically but also leads to the instrumentalization of the flow of information and knowledge. Digital knowledge and information, despite its numerous advantages, transforms into a field in which commoditization and marketization gain visibility. Inaccessibility to the information that has strategic value, the rareness of educative and instructive publications or their capitalization, the prominence of publications which are predominantly entertaining, the debasement of universal values, encouraging the worthlessness, cacophony, excessive encouraging and infusing aimed at consumption, banality, superficialization of values, sensational information, prejudice to the degree of fanaticism, information not providing freedom despite its presentation through various sources,

---

\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., İstanbul University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Sociology  
ufukozcan@hotmail.com

transformation of knowledge into a ready-to-consume information without being questioned or verified etc. are the problems arising from the current global system. All these problems potentially put intellectual, individual and social life into various risks and dangers.

**Keywords:** Information age, information technologies, the network society, internet knowledge, the pollution of information

### **Öz**

Bu makale, “enformasyon çağı” olarak da nitelenen çağımızda internetin bilgi ve enformasyon kaynağı olarak değerini, internet bilgisinin avantaj ve dezavantajlarını, güvenilirlik ve sınırlılıklarını eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmeyi amaçlıyor. Bilgi-hegemonya-iktidar ilişkileri son zamanlarda sosyal bilimlerde oldukça revaçta olan bir konu. “Küresel ağ toplumu” koşullarında internetin ve internet aracılığıyla küresel ölçekte yayılan enformasyonun ne tür iktidar, hegemonya ve egemenlik ilişkilerine dayandığını sorgulamak da büyük önem taşıyor. Bu açıdan çözümlenmesi gereken başlıca çelişki, “enformasyon çağı”nda internet bilgisinin dezenformatik yapısıdır. Ayrıca buna bağlı bir başka sorun, çağımızda internet aracılığıyla gerçekleşen bilgi bombardımanının olağanüstü bir bilgi kirlenmesine yol açmasıdır. Bu temel sorunlar (enformel bilginin hegemonik yapısı, enformasyonun güvensizliği/dezenformasyon, enformasyon bombardımanının yol açtığı karmaşa ve bilgi kirliliği) çağımız insanının entelektüel ve ahlaki yönden özgürleşimini doğrudan tehdit edecek niteliktedir. İnternet medyasının giderek yaygınlaşma eğilimi, insanlığı enformasyonel, imajinatif ve psiko-politik manipülasyon kaskacı içine alarak belirli iktidar zümreleri adına daha etkin bir toplumsal denetimin yolunu açmaktadır. Önemli bir başka sorun, internetin dijital olanakları vasıtasıyla enformasyon ve bilginin kolayca klonlanması ve paylaşımına sokulmasıdır. Böylece araştırmacı, sorgulayıcı düşünme olanağı kısıtlandığı gibi, enformasyon ve bilgi akışının araçsallaşmasının yolu da açılmaktadır. Dijital bilgi ve enformasyon, sağladığı onca yarara rağmen, pazar ekonomisi koşullarında piyasalaşma ve metalaşmanın görünürlük kazandığı bir alana dönüşmektedir. İnternet ortamında stratejik değer taşıyan bilgilere kolay ulaşılmazlık, eğitici-öğretici yayınların azlığı veya sermayeleşmesi, eğlence yönü ağır basan yayınların öne çıkması, evrensel değerlerin alaya alınması, değersizliğin özendirilmesi, kakofoni, tüketime yönelik aşırı teşvik ve telkin, avamilik, değerlerde yüzeyselleşme, skandal bilgiler, bilgi/haber/yorumda fanatizm boyutuna varan tarafgirlik, bilginin çoklu kaynaklardan sunulmasına rağmen eleştirelilik ve özgürleşim sağlamaması, bilginin anlık tüketime hazır hale dönüşmesi, doğrulanamaması ve sorgulanamaması vb. sorunlar egemen küresel sistemden kaynaklanan sorunlardır. Bütün bu sorunlar entelektüel, bireysel ve toplumsal yaşamı türlü risk ve tehditler altına sokacak niteliktedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Enformasyon çağı, enformasyon teknolojileri, ağ toplumu, internet bilgisi, bilgi kirlenmesi

### **Introduction**

In the film adaptation of the extremely popular black and white comic book which appeared with the same title *The Crow* has a line: “I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge, that myth is more potent than history. I believe that dreams are more powerful than facts -that hope always triumphs over experience- that laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death . . .” In a sense, these words express a tendency that has become dominant in our age. This expression which calls attention to the restrictive and distorting effect of pure knowledge, especially of science,

on man's perception of the external world, makes scientific knowledge disputable by displacing it from its privileged position. On the other hand, this expression which leads to extreme subjectivity, imagination and visuality, irony and entertainment may also be related to the collapse of the positivist paradigm. At the same time this trend is directly related to the discrediting of scientific knowledge as a result of uncontrolled spread of information that has become integrated with image/advertisement materials circulating on the internet and other media. In this world where we are surrounded by media, the field of information and values is bound to be an area of relativity. At the same time, the internet hinders getting information with respect to the abundant information it spreads, its multipartiteness, its easy shareability and its excessive instrumentalism. This is one aspect of the problem we are going to handle. The other problem is, how the internet develops information concerning society, universe and ourselves and to what extent it presents practical facilities helping the liberation of humanity.

The argument that knowledge is based on power/sovereignty/hegemony relations has not only been approved by producers of academic/non-academic knowledge, but it is a view that is also universally consented. If we consider the difference and correspondence between knowledge and information, the same conclusion is valid for the internet knowledge as well. In other words, the gained or imposed informational knowledge should be thought within addiction and subordination relations as well. The manifestation and results of the production, re-production and circulation processes of knowledge come into being and are effective not only in mental and intellectual contexts but also on biological, mental and physical planes. This argument that holds a primary place in Foucauldian power analysis does not have a particular sphere, covers the whole patterns of social relations. And this creates the effect of submerging the mental pursuits that aim at overcoming the limitations of authentic and liberating knowledge possibilities, or more correctly, it creates an ineffective and meaningless effect. On the other hand, in building a dissident awareness and attitude against power/sovereignty/hegemony positions, the search of relatively autonomous knowledge areas and means must not be given up. Of course, the problem of the convenience of virtual world for this purpose should also be discussed in detail.

### **Background of the “Information Age” Discourse**

Actually, in today's world it would be more proper to evaluate the proliferation of the internet, beyond the perspective of micro power relations, on the macro level associated with Western sovereignty. There may be many indications that allow us to handle the issue in this way. The development of technology and historical chronology overlap at certain points. At the end of the 1990s as a result of the USSR's collapse, the West came out of the Cold War polarization and became integrated, and this led Western sovereignty to become unified and have a stable structure two hundred years after the French Revolution. In the same period, following the Gulf War, “globalization” era is initiated in the USA. When regarded in connection with a series of politically oriented progress (integration of Europe with the participation of the dissolved Warsaw Pact countries, “collapse of ideologies” etc.), it is not difficult to understand the connection between the conjuncture growing in favor of the West and the spread of the internet technology on a global scale. In other words, although the internet technology was developed to have faster and more efficient

military communication after the years of World War II,<sup>1</sup> the USA developed it as an instrument to strengthen the world sovereignty of the West and globalised it, thus it entered our homes, even our pockets. The positive discourse of globalization will transform the internet into the miraculous symbol of the new global society (“network society”) and a new age (“information age”). Accordingly, the internet would dig through the strict limits that modernism put among various nations; it would enable the free circulation/sharing of values, beliefs and ideas, and by leading to hybridization among cultures, it would break the hard shell of the ideologies forcing people to retire into their shells and to have them adopt a particular attitude in a certain political block. This list can go on, but in brief, the internet would serve the purposes of globalization as a peaceful and liberating means. Globalization would allow the undermining of the sovereignty of nation-states and the authority of representing the national will in accordance with the principle of not interfering the internal affairs of independent countries to end the arbitrary regime and misuse they have applied within their own national borders. It would also allow the breakdown of the national customs walls, the liberalization of capital movement, the free circulation of the capital and labor force, transnational journeys. These progressions, sooner or later would crack the shell of authoritarian regimes, and deliver liberation. At the same time the information, knowledge and culture transfer through the internet would overflow beyond the national boundary and become remarkably faster and easier. The information/knowledge that will flow freely on the virtual platform would recognize none of the inhibitions that the sense of belonging to a nation, nation-state, class, ethnicity, religion brought, and would penetrate through all the walls. A more transparent and freer world was being promised. Is not there anything that we should be doubtful about these positive arguments? Are we going to be able to accept the view that all kinds of pressure on getting information about the world, society and one’s self was removed in such an easy way? Despite the remarkable increase in the number of internet users and the beginning of the computerized education at primary schools in the remotest parts of countries, can we say that people have reached a more developed education, culture, knowledge level? What are the breaking points of the “knowledge/information age” legend? These are probably the first questions that should be asked. The excessive importance given to “information revolution” has been in a position to compete against the importance ascribed to industrial revolution once. As the informational networks surround all the earth, with reference to the facts such as speed in information flow and growth in terms of content etc. it is claimed that informational technology and relations took a central part in the “new society” and transformed all the establishments and relation patterns of society. With the arguments confirming this exaggerated belief, Manuel Castell’s works indicate some risks that the “new society” has brought but they mostly present a positive view concerning the new possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

The symbolical unit of industrial society that was idealised and identified with modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was a factory. Industrialised society and modern nation-state needed a developed and widespread school system, mass media (press, radio-

<sup>1</sup> About the origins and developments of new information technologies that started to become prevalent in the 1970s see Castells, 2008: 49-68.

<sup>2</sup> As this affirmative and positive “new age” perception is seen in the whole three volume work of Castells, especially in the last part of third volume it attracts attention emphatically. See Castells, 2007: 485-516.

TV) and brain washing/propaganda activity in accordance with practical purposes. But today, in addition to this, computer and the internet seem to have replaced all as the cultural symbol of “post-industrial society.” Associated with this progress, production fetishism/culture has given way to consumption and entertainment fetishism/culture. But, in spite of all the emphasis, this “striking” change, today what in the essence of capitalism changed must be questioned. To what extent can the change of a method, environment, pioneer actors, culture and so on be an indication of a social change in a radical and positive way? Besides, though they caused all that stir at the beginning, the significations like “Space Age,” “Atomic Age,” “Gene Age” related to the new technological developments, lost their attraction after a while. These denotations are by no means neutral and innocent. It may not be that difficult to realize the connection between man’s first step on the moon (“one giant leap for mankind!”) and the competition of armament and sovereignty among the Western superpowers. Today, it is known by everybody that “Space Age” caused the USA-USSR polarization, “Atomic Age” led to two atom bombs exploded in Japan in 1945 and the nuclear horror equilibrium between two superpowers, the progresses in gene technology caused the change of plants’ genetics, created new medical risks and none of them has a positive meaning at all. In that case, we have to question what “the miracle of network society” means and what kind of a price the mankind will pay for it. Especially the concept of “knowledge/information age” creates a serious confusion in mind. Although we live in an age in which science which is regarded and pointed at as “the most genuine guide in life” by modernism, science-equipped man education, high values/culture are being discredited and although we live in an age dominated by superstition, ignorance, an age in which there is a demand for pornography, entertainment and consumption etc., comparable to the Middle Ages in the West, the 21th century is peculiarly called the “Knowledge/Information Age.” As university and science are being discredited, “to characterize the age as the “Science Age” has become meaningless. There is also a consensus on treading on the Scientific Revolution in the West and the Age of Enlightenment.

Recently, to emphasize “knowledge” and information has a meaning. As the process that has developed since the 1990s was regarded as the end of conflict theories and utopianism like Marxism, this empty space would be filled with the beginning of “the Age of Knowledge.” Although Marxism has been waning intellectually in the last thirty years, the view of coming to “the end of ideologies” actually involves a great disadvantage. As the world-view representing utopian/conflicting change fades from the scene, or weakens to a great extent, the sovereignty of submissive neo-liberal ideology came into power instead. In order to understand the chaos of the world we live in, we should not underestimate this condition.

### **Internet Media, Disinformation and the Pollution of Information**

It is not a coincidence that the internet is shown both as a derivative and a determining field of life of postmodern culture. Today, the West, as in many areas, is in a central and a transmitting position in the production of information/knowledge and communication technology as well. It tries to maintain its dominance over the world by creating a force of attraction. The West’s reigning world sovereignty in controlling the relations between societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by applying hegemonic instruments like media establishments

and mass-media means has gained a new dimension when the internet entered the scene. The West benefits from being the centre and transmitter of information/knowledge, it not only directs the intersocietal relations, but has also made progress in creating a new and quite profitable capitalist sector (media) with the new knowledge and communication technologies it presents to the world markets.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, the West applies new methods apart from the traditional methods (like constituting colonies, canalising to the capital export or exploiting raw material and labor force) that it used to control the world. The West has not given up the method of invasion directly; in addition to this, through media, it has been engaged in activities like psychological war, making targeting and discrediting primarily the military and political institution and also in activities like disinformation, canalizing, brain washing, and terrorizing the public. To the military, economic and political forces trio a new ring was added, that is, the limitless power of information bombardment that is directed and controlled by the internet media. This new power supply enables the West to apply its expansionist targets accompanied by a central policy across the world as it will not be able to fulfill these expansionist targets through direct physical violence methods (like deploying soldiers, invasion, mass destruction). While the West used to spend excessively on the means of stimulation and propaganda (mass media area), it has not only made its hegemony over the world at a low cost by the proliferation of media and the internet, but also it transformed this new environment into a means of making money. In this sense, it may not be surprising that globally the most profitable big companies have emerged in the field of media. Recently, it was claimed that media was functioning as the “fourth power” after army, politics and economy trio. But today, it is possible to observe the power of media to be compatible and coordinated with the institution of politics. It is said that today’s societies have gained the status of “informational society”. The pioneer is the West in “information revolution” as in “industrial revolution”. And by presenting and spreading its knowledge and the sources of knowledge to the world the West gives the impression that the world moves towards a stability having equal opportunities, globalization and sharing the possibilities on the earth. For the West, of course there is no harm in spreading its own directed and canalised knowledge. In other words, while it is absolutely out of question to share the superiority of the West, (the intercommunal power instability is gradually increasing), the value of the shared information arouses suspicion. For this reason, it will be far too optimistic to expect the West to share its own effective knowledge with the world societies in the internet garbage. In a social structure called informational society, as in the case of the industrial society, and which was built on the technological development in the West, we can not go beyond having minor roles. In the globalizing world, we can only contribute to the intended homogenising by losing our identity, personality and existence (Atasoy 2007: 170).

In our day that is characterized as “knowledge/information age”, there are advantages and facilities of using the internet as means of communication. On the other hand, it also causes several problems. The primary problem is, as the internet spreads, information is about to come out of the monopoly and control of nation-states to a great extent. Several unwanted power groups can easily reach any official and personal information that has a digital recording in any modern communication device. Information that circulates on the

<sup>3</sup> On the transformation of media into a sort of industrial sector, see Desmoulin, 1993.

internet which means interconnected networks can be gathered under the control of certain centers. These circulation and gathering system is the USA based, and in this system almost all kinds of information can be found by private persons or institutions. And by making these strictly confidential documents in which government correspondences take place, the world stability can turn upside down. As it is seen in the last Wikileaks case, forces that do not have an official role can leak into the secret information of governments and give way to political chaos. Lately, it is claimed that the crimes attributed during the en masse political trials are committed through the internet. These events indicate that the internet is an effective means of creating political agenda. On the other hand, the internet put the government information into several jeopardies. In all institutions from military to education, judiciary system to health, the use of the internet under the name of e-government has been made obligatory, therefore national information becomes available to the control and exploitation of the world's sovereign powers.

First of all, it is useful to handle the issue in terms of certain problems. These problems are information pollution on the internet, the credibility, control and marketization of information. The thing that causes obscurity, pollution in consciousness is not that the information flows from various channels, but above all, during this transfer many things like information, disinformation, knowledge, notice, intelligence, news, fake statistics, comment, image, advertisement, visuality, the factor of entertainment can mingle with each other. The purity of the knowledge of a book and its quality that sets the reader free before it is not available on the internet. In the colorful iconic world of the internet the human consciousness breaks down, all its sense of insight is castrated. Image overcomes consciousness. The possibility of man's free thinking through finding a relation between cause and effect is destroyed. So the individual becomes ineffective and passive in the presence of the data bombardment as he contributed little to its production. When it is studied in the context of the development of technology, Marcuse also expresses that technology is pacifying people and shaping them in accordance with the benefits of the dominant/sovereign class (Yalçın, 2003: 77-89). Another handicap of knowledge being produced in virtual environment and shared among virtual groups reflects the sense of daily consumption (share and forget). As the readily found, average and ordinary information is shared, there is no opportunity left to contribute to the production of knowledge. The ones who make intellectual declarations on the internet debate platforms avoid reading a book. Connecting the internet and doing homework directly from there saves the students who use simplistic methods and depend on memorizing in learning. This new technique is called "edutainment" (learning by entertainment). The synthesis of information and entertainment creates a weird hybrid concept that is called "enfortainment/infotainment."<sup>4</sup> As a result, there are all kinds of information on the internet and they are in front of us as a shapeless, enormous pile. Non-stop updating of this information means that the internet does not have a memory. As information does not become permanent as it is written on paper, it blurs consciousness. It is obvious that there are serious barriers against creating a worldview through the internet when it is compared with books. Because of this, we cannot say that the new generation is more conscious than the old generation in terms of world and social affairs as they try to compensate their gap of knowledge via the internet. Instead of being able to make progress more

<sup>4</sup> See Mora, 2008: 93-94. <http://www.altkitap.com/kitap.asp?kitapid=48>

seriously in such a period called “the information age,” we come across the statistics that we could not trace a comprehensive progress within this whole information pile (Yılmaz, 1998: 153). Although the internet gives the opportunity to reach digital books, it can not replace books entirely. An individual’s getting out of the position of being weak, passive and only a receiver before the data bombardment that the chaotic internet world spreads, may be possible his participation to the production of information with free and creative processes. The internet has not become a monopoly in the knowledge and communication area yet. Newspapers, television, cinema and so on continue their existence without the internet. But there are indications that in the near future the internet will become the most popular and privileged information/communication source, and in this area, globally and nationally the control will become more frequent. We can say that great problems will actually emerge then.

It is clear that these problems along with other similar ones require questioning the argument of the internet’s “liberation.” Man gets information as a consequence of his experiences that he encountered directly, that he could not find solutions or that he was in the process in searching solution. This is the oldest and the most reliable way of gaining information. At least, in the pre-internet ages the style of attaining knowledge was by this way. But the world that we live in, even if it rises upon its past experiences and values, is going towards the point of disregarding values. Postmodern age, which is based on the ultimate exploitation of the past, future and modernism, is transforming human relations negatively by means of new information technologies.

Although it has brought all these risks, new information technologies also present facilities. The claim is great: in the new world order that globalization created, frontiers have been removed, through information and communication technologies national frontiers have been exceeded and information has started circulating rapidly all over the world. From now on the world has been face to face with an information order where information reaches the whole world through a global network that is so fast. For this new world that is formed, Marshall McLuhan’s “global village” definition has been used. By this definition, it is told that as communication technologies developed in the globalizing world, in one sense frontiers were removed and the world has become a village that everybody learns everything at the same time. “Global village” and “global society” concepts that were developed in the 1960s were included in the area of permanent and dominant discourses popularizing the concept of the society after industry of communication utopias, and they also lost their critical dimensions.<sup>5</sup> It is not wrong to say that the internet is accepted as the most important factor that contributes to the globalization process in this age. The internet meets any kind of need like entertainment, shopping, communication, banking; it is also accepted to be a large scale and free communication, information sharing and having an interactive area that may not be limited with the concepts of language, religion, age, culture, time and space. Starting with the argument that it does not have a central informatics spreader and it allows a multi-centered participation that breaks the government monopoly in the spread of communication and knowledge, a flexible structure that is not hierarchical, and that allows the expressing/sharing of individual freedom; it is claimed that the internet is a universe of indetermination. In other words,

---

<sup>5</sup> See on this issue Cheviron, 2004: 45-69.

it is supposed that the internet is a democratic and a pluralist area, that the universe of meaning of the communicational activity occurs by itself (Berardi 2007: 64). The transfer of communication and information has become quite practical when the internet gained world wide popularity and entered the lives of societies in a very short time. The major characteristics of information circulating on the internet is the free circulation of any kind of information. Besides the revelation information, legend information, technical information and subjective information, pure academic information is on circulation as well. Personal messages, images and symbols, information aiming publicity on products, news and comments on public realm create a network. The access to the internet and the use of it has reached the position which is so instrumental that the problem of exposure to “digital division” of the ones who live in the geographical areas, where the percentage of the accessibility to information that the virtual environment presents is low, has become the most important issues of international summits (Aytun, 2005: 29). The internet has become an indispensable part of governments, companies, institutions increasingly. Above communication, it is an area that daily needs are met and solved. This means that the sovereignty of global power is felt in every step. Internet usage has become widespread in terms of the objectives like access to the e-government records, shopping, banking etc.; it also enabled the instruments like computer, mobile phone and similar things to enter all areas of our lives. Another dimension of the internet is that, it enabled the news of the wars that left their marks on our age, terror and uprisings, disasters like earthquakes, financial developments etc. to be spread all around the world right away. The information flow spreads with the excessively subjective and exaggerated comments of the individual users, so that is the reason why mostly official authorities do not confirm the character of this way of communication. Certainly, official statement/information is not necessarily true and reliable information. In some cases, for instance, the investigative statements that reflect the backstage of September 11 attacks have not been confirmed officially so far. As the news, knowledge, and information take on a legendary dimension, this situation makes any kind of information, at least the data of the new developments in the world that spread on the internet, unreliable.

Apart from the facilities that it provides in man’s life and in the field of entertainment, the internet is in a position of being the source, spreader and manipulator of knowledge that we gain in daily life. Besides, this technology presents an appropriate environment and means to be kept, saved, changed, reached again and shared. Compared with traditional media and other communication means, the popularity of internet technology that enables faster and more effective information sharing has many useful aspects in daily life and in sharing information; however, it is necessary to indicate that these fast changes have also some dimensions making human life difficult, even putting it in jeopardy.

### **Other Risks**

Because of easy access and developed communication networks, the knowledge that seriously increases each day has become a mass. The internet looks like a big garbage in which necessary-unnecessary, effective-ineffective knowledge comes together. It has also led to the problem of eliminating this knowledge and reaching genuinely necessary data. Nowadays, we are exposed to a kind of an information explosion. Besides books, magazines, newspapers, radio and televisions, by means of the internet, we are able to

reach more information than we want. Search engines, newspapers, blogs, forums, e-mail, the social networking sites like facebook, twitter, dictionaries lead us to be exposed to more information than we need and can digest. Fastly developing information is a condition that involves both a great facility and various risks because it brings along the serious problem of what we will do with this information and which information we will appreciate. It is crucial to reach the target and benefit from this information productively and efficiently without getting lost in all of this information bombardment and without going to wrong ways/misusing it. When we want to search for a subject by using the internet search engines, besides the reliability of the information we reach, the fragmentation (“demo” knowledge) and the indefiniteness of its source cause another problem. This situation reveals the problem of the value of information and its validity, and so it is necessary to review the information correctly, to eliminate the unnecessary/useless ones and to analyze it in accordance with the purpose.

Today, we have been living in a world in which modern science, philosophy, theology and ideologies are avoided and in which postmodernism shakes the confidence in the Enlightenment mind, and provokes irrationality. Parallel to this, the universal, plenary/whole, monist, objective, determined view of information has weakened. Particular, singular, pluralist, relative information has replaced it. The west seems to have lost its truths that it used to foster and believe in firmly. And there is no valid, logical solution that it offers to the world. This situation causes the appearance of remarkably different preferences, the increase in the risks of conflict, an indefiniteness and chaos. It will be meaningful to consider the spread of information/knowledge on the internet in this context, because each new technology is determined by the social system it developed within. In a sense, the internet and other information technologies reflect the functioning logic of the sovereign system. Inaccessibility to the information that has strategical value, the rareness of educative and instructive publications or their capitalization, the prominence of publications in which the factor of entertainment is predominant, making fun of universal values, encouraging the worthlessness, cacophony, excessive encouraging and infusing aimed at consumption, banality, superficialization of values, scandal information, prejudice that reaches to the degree of fanaticism, not providing freedom despite the presentation of knowledge from multiple sources, transforming into a ready-to-consume information, not being confirmed and questioned etc. are the problems arising from the sovereign global system.

Hundreds of years ago, the Enlightenment philosopher Francis Bacon identified the issue of the truth of knowledge. Bacon expressed the factors that obstruct the acquirement of true and objective information with the concept idol. “Theatre idol” that he classified and identified among the idols reflect the belief that the thoughts adopted as old and widespread are the ones that people tended to consider as true. A similar case is possible in the recognition of the information on the internet without questioning. The popular and the acceptable one is considered valid; in other words, “all flies cannot be wrong.” Rather than considering what a person thinks, how he lives, what values he has, a few lines he has written on twitter are taken seriously. This case is related to the discrediting of science and elite culture, and the provocation of popular and banal culture. Therefore, the widespread prestige that a piece of information, value or a word has in society results in overshadowing the true and reliable information. In this world, where truth becomes

blurred and vanishes, knowledge and values will also be exposed to be consumed and eroded in no time. Besides, many internet sites spread very inaccurate news with uncertain sources, so this causes various comments, fear and panic in the public. Even the news with apparent/certain sources shared without being filtered causes a similar manipulative effect. There are power groups trying to establish hegemony on the public by giving access to this kind of information systematically. Even though its source is uncertain, the shared information causes to distract people's perception to different directions by putting a question mark in their minds, and make changes in their agendas. In addition to this, there is also the possibility of a disruption of all-round information flow and disinformation. Presenting information that is different and inconsistent with each other about the same event/subject causes information chaos, and this leads to the disappearance of true information within this chaos. In order not to experience such chaos, it is essential that besides the use of the internet the traditional information sources should be kept alive. For instance, we can reach the reproduction of a text written many centuries ago. But as we turn back to the information we have "just" received from the internet, it may evaporate into thin air. Because of this "memorylessness" problem, there are difficulties concerning the permanence, storage and evaluation of information.

There is a close relation between the control of the internet information and marketization of information.<sup>6</sup> The proliferation of higher open education institutions that teach via the internet, the provocation of the demand for information and knowledge, and the supply developing frantically to meet the current demand will cause a process in which money constitutes the basis of the accessibility to knowledge in the near future. Therefore, in a world where knowledge can become marketed, sold and purchased, the motto of the style of relation with knowledge will also change; concern for having "a diploma/degree or certificate" in order to occupy a place in the system will replace the mottos such as "love of wisdom," "passion for learning." But it is not only limited to this problem; at the same time, the internet provides the opportunity for individual and social control to several forces. Besides, confidential government information, personal e-mails, messages can be monitored and exploited. As a result of this, the West can continue its superiority on the earth; on the other hand, it restricts personal freedom, and sullies personal honour. This issue needs to be tackled within the cyber risks awaiting individual freedom.

## **Conclusion**

In our age that is called "the information age," it is possible to reach almost all kinds of information easily and economically. By means of information technologies it is easy to reach the information you want without the limitation of time and space. However, these new communication facilities bring along their problems. When the importance of the results that the information of any field will cause in political, economic and social aspect is taken into consideration, in our age the power and importance of science has been realised better. But it is a great risk that today's people are faced with getting lost in the chaos and drowning in a heap of unnecessary information that internet information produced, or to

---

<sup>6</sup> For a useful text that enables a critical comprehension on the commodification and the marketing of information see Çalışkan, 2009: 23-46.

be misled by getting uncertain information that serves to the benefit of the power circles it belongs. The fact that sharing information in the internet environment –despite taking place on public, artificial sharing spaces– increases particularization, fragmentation, marginalization and individuals' isolation are pointed out by many social scientists. Apart from the source and reliability of information issues, the information pollution that people are exposed to and the chaos it caused, brings the idea that ever increasing information will not enrich the society but it will put it into new risks. In contrast to the “success” of industrial society in distributing knowledge by instrumentalizing and standardizing in the past, post-industrial/information society spreads excessive ignorance and information anarchy. This situation, is confirming the asymmetry between the greatness of “information age” claim and the miscommunication experienced among societies/individuals/cultures. The existing world sovereignty order is commonly accepted to have a vicious character. Contrary to what is believed, globalization has not decreased the distance between societies but made a gap instead. It has also tended to end the pursuit and hope of utopia. To what extent is the internet convenient for reviving utopias, and being applied as a means of expressing the demands of liberation effectively, can the negative features of the internet be removed? This issue could be a topic for another article.

## **References**

- Atasoy, F. (2007). Kùltürler üzerinde bilişim devriminin etkileri, *Modern Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4 (2), Haziran, 163-178.
- Aytun, C. (2005). *Dijital bölünme olgusu ve Türkiye üzerine bir uygulama*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İktisat Anabilim Dalı, Adana.
- Berardi, F. (2007). Technology & knowledge in a universe of indetermination, *SubStance*, 36 (1), 57-74.
- Castells, M. (2008). *Enformasyon çağı: Ekonomi, toplum ve kültür, Birinci cilt: Ağ toplumunun yükselişi*, (E. Kılıç Çev.), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Castells, M. (2007). *Enformasyon çağı: Ekonomi, toplum ve kültür, Üçüncü cilt: Binyılın sonu.*, (E. Kılıç Çev.), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Cheviron, N. T. (2004). Küreselleşme söylemleri ve iletişimin mitleştirilmesi, *Gazi Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, İletişim*, (19) Bahar-Kış, 45-69.
- Çalışkan, B. (2009). Enformasyonun metalaşması üzerine, *Marmara İletişim Dergisi*, (15), Temmuz, 23-46.
- Desmoulins, N. T. (1993). *Medya ekonomisi*, (G. Üstün Çev.), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Mora, N. (2008). Medya çalışmaları: Medya pedagojisi ve küresel iletişim, Elektronik kaynak. 27.10.2011 tarihinde <http://www.altkitap.com/kitap.asp?kitapid=48> adresinden erişilmiştir.
- Yalçın, C. (2003). Sosyolojik bir bakış açısıyla internet, *C.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 27 (1), Mayıs, 77-89.
- Yılmaz, B. (1998). Bilgi toplumu: Eleştirel bir yaklaşım, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 15 (1), 147-158.