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Accessible Information in the Knowledge Society

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Global access to the Internet has not resulted in totally democratic access to all of the information that appears in information networks.

- On the contrary, this access has facilitated and even accentuated the differences in people's opportunities to **access information** even more

The new way of accessing information has the prerequisite of owning a **computer** and having an **available telephone** line, which already eliminates an enormous percentage of the world population that lacks both of these tools.   Observing geographical areas, one also clearly sees that there is a lack of access to information.

Because of this, the information on the Internet is obtained with difficulty by almost an **entire continent,** Africa, although Asia and Latin America also have a hard time gaining access.

Similarly, if a systematic analysis is performed by social group, it can be seen that the most economically and culturally unfavored social groups will **also be pushed aside**

The Net, it is obvious that digital society can be a fabulous **tool for egalitarianism** without the need to annihilate the plurality of opinions and proposals

In order to do this, it will also be necessary to use huge amounts of money, both public and private, which keep the **implantation of the digital information** society from falling further into the abyss between cultures and systems

Present-day difficulties in accessing information are caused by **difficulties in accessing information technologies** and by the very organisation and functions of electronic information, which have not been determined by peoples and cultures but by economic and political structures.

To sum up, the framework of the post-modern world is determined by the extensive implementation of the information society, a society which has been marked by electronic access to it shaping an overall conception of reality, with a predominantly technological nature, which will be almost the entire medium for information.

Furthermore, it also means the **globalisation of information and knowledge** and the determination of languages which, in turn, have most predominance in all aspects whether in the dissemination of ideas or of propaganda.

The above is having an impact, on the one hand, on wider access to information and, consequently, on greater information democratisation and, on the other, on the abandonment of rights, as regards the conservation and transfer of cultures over thousands of years, leading to the possible danger of greater entrenchment in educational systems with a more humanistic and democratic dimension, **affording predominance to technological contents over values.**

This path of unifying electronic contents **may be directed at not pursuing a more democratic and egalitarian society**, which is why information in this manner may not seek an attempt at democratisation, but greater exclusion

In this way, access to information may be at the mercy of certain interests with greater expansion capacity and may generate particular, specific development in different countries

Industrial and post-industrial societies have become more interventionist, inevitably producing numerous inequalities, which are also captured **in information access**

In this millennium, the populations of countries with a lower economic level will not attain total access to the information which resides in **electronic information networks**. New users, therefore, are not going to be found there.

Information technologies will be influenced by the gestation of the economic, semiotic man who is socialised in cyberspace. We can now talk about **tertiary socialisation**, caused by unstoppable, ongoing, cybernetic socialisation in the face of the implementation of virtual reality. In this way, the human subject will turn into a being immersed in digital reality

There is a large sector of the world population which lives in ignorance, a population mass with fewer economic resources and no rights and, therefore, **which will not be entitled to information**.

- This new socialisation of the subject turns the latter into a machine. Education will also be immersed in this process.

- This socialisation, which is known as tertiary or as pertaining to the cybernetic environment (this environment combines the **television, computer, telephone** and the instantaneous transfer of images, voices and data), is gestating the first universal culture

This Internet universal culture is called the access culture but does not involve the democratisation of this access when half of humanity still has no access to the telephone. Virtual reality not only emulates society's real relations but they can be translated into the electronic context.

Electronic information and global electronic communication increases while different minorities continue to be anchored in functional and real illiteracy. As regards Internet access within industrialised countries, this access is also greatly localised with a predominance of certain social groups with a higher economic and cultural level, although numerous attempts have been made to extend this multimedia information more.

Therefore, it is necessary to take this reality into consideration, as the digital society may be a fabulous instrument for egalitarianism without the need to destroy the plurality of opinions and proposals. But it can also turn into an additional form of segregation.

Today, man the inventor, the owner of technology, contemplates the prolongation into the digital environment of a more marked segregation. So that this does not occur, it is necessary to continuously demand his central role in the future of the universe.

The mere fact that we have to repeat these certainties highlights the need to delve deeply into the debate raised. For the latter, enormous sums of private and public money will have to be allocated which ensure that the implementation of the digital information society does not deepen the abyss between cultures, countries and systems.

The **librarians and document specialists** who also design and articulate the architecture of global information must, therefore, also pursue broader, more complete access to information as a priority objective.

Let us not be instruments that fence off knowledge, but instead increase its availability.