



# The postmodern analyses of the internet : an examination of their ideological new clothes.

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Franck Rebillard. The postmodern analyses of the internet : an examination of their ideological new clothes.. 2007. sic\_00177507v1

**HAL Id: sic\_00177507**

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Preprint submitted on 8 Oct 2007 (v1), last revised 19 Feb 2009 (v3)

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<p>IAMCR 2007 (Paris, UNESCO) Communication Policy and Technology (CP&amp;T) Section</p>
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Title :

**The postmodern analyses of the internet : an examination of their ideological new clothes.**

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The irruption of a new technology always comes along with a bloom of many speeches and views, trying to predict the consequences on our ways of life. The history of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), even before their existence on digital support, has been strewn with these ideological views. Sometimes « *apocalyptic* », these views are more often « *hyper-integrated* »<sup>1</sup> and completely utopian. As an example of this, Mattelart (2000) reminds us the historical permanency of the idea of an equalitarian participation thanks to the ICTs :

- At the end of the XVIIIth century, during the French Revolution, the National Convention already saw in the optical telegraph « *a new link between nations and one of the most useful conquests of equality* » ;

- At the beginning of the XXth century, the novelist Jack London seemed upset by cinema when he wrote that « *animated images tear down the barriers of poverty and of the environment that barred the route to education, and distribute knowledge in a language that everyone can comprehend [...] By this magic means, the extremes of society take a step closer to each other in the inevitable readjustment of the human condition.* » ;

- More recently, in 1994, in a famous speech at the International Telecommunications Union Development Conference, the former Vice President of the US, Al Gore, presented his project of information superhighways « *to the great human family* » as « *a kind of global conversation, in which everyone who wants can have his or her say* ».

Thus, from time immemorial, the development of ICTs has been commented by journalists, politicians, essayists, who all try to describe its social impacts. The internet is not an exception to this rule, on the contrary. Since the middle of the 1990s, i.e. since Web and its multimedia interface let hope for a larger development than the restricted academic spheres, the existing society is "rethought". The only addition of a prefix – *cyber-* or *e-*, at choice – to social activities magically brings them into a new dimension, still unexplored: cyberculture, e-learning, ... As if the « new » technology would necessary fertilize a « new » organization of social relationships, working methods, or media and cultural practices.

The aim of this paper is to study the most recent version of these ideological views surrounding the internet. In the middle of the 2000s raised the formula of Web 2.0<sup>2</sup> in order to describe a new stage of expansion for the internet, based on social networks, and declined in data sharing, collaborative work, « collective intelligence », and democratization of the media (Tillinac, 2006). The bards of the Web 2.0 forecast a complete revolution : intranets and groupwares are expected to break down the pyramidal structure of firms, and to allow less hierarchical work relationships ; in politics, weblogging is considered as an opportunity for citizens to express themselves in more democratic debates ; opponents to the mass media, the internet ordinary users would also be required to become anonymous reporters and to threaten the established journalistic system....

To summarize, Web 2.0 is not only presented as a technological jump but also as the passage to a new model of society. Therefore, the analyses of the internet are based on couples of opposition, featuring a gap between a before- and an after- Web 2.0: horizontality / verticality

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco (1985) created this terminology when he discussed Mac Luhan's theories.

<sup>2</sup> Decimal figures like 2.0 are used in the computing sector to characterize the successive versions of a software. The formula Web 2.0 thus symbolizes the crossing of a new stage in the development of the internet. The paternity of this formula is collectively awarded to Tim O' Reilly, manager of a company (O' Reilly Media) specialized in professional conferences and book publishing. On his Web site, on September 30th, 2005, Tim O' Reilly had publicly launched the idea of Web 2.0, as a new start after the stock market crisis of the beginning of the 2000s.

; passivity / activity; control / freedom. Some of the roots of such analyses may be found in both ideological and scientific theories like Saint-Simonianism or the cybernetics. Which is not very surprising because these theories already surrounded the development of ICTs in the past : networks in the XIXth century and computers in the XXth century, respectively. But in this beginning of the XXIst century, another component is added, renewing the ideological clothes of ICTs analyses, and related to the postmodern theories.

Actually, postmodern theories are older, emerging in the 1970s, and do not form a perfectly harmonious intellectual whole. But, as Garnham (2005) argues, many theories of the « postmodern family », from post-industrialism to post-fordism, have been joined in the recent views surrounding the theme of « information society ».

Following this way, we will demonstrate that postmodern theories also influence the analyses perceiving the internet in terms of Web 2.0. In this paper, we will focus on the case of digital journalism, our predilected academic field where we regularly meet analyses predicting a revolution caused by the internet : mass media defeated by weblogs, professional journalism turning into *citizen journalism*, ... In order to identify the ideological elements of these analyses inspired by postmodern theories, we will mainly refer to the work of Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) on the *new spirit of capitalism*. Beyond its methodological help, this work simultaneously allows to understand the social success of the postmodern analyses of the internet.

## The ideological dimension of Web 2.0 analyses

As we previously mentioned it, the Web 2.0 analyses include three ideological origins :

- the old Saint-Simonian « cult of networks » feeds the contemporary desire for a verticality of social links ;
- the Norbert Wiener's view of society as a living body thanks to communication comes back in today's calls for a free expression on the web ;
- the neocapitalist promotion of flexibility and autonomy meet the features of an internet allowing individual activity.

Saint-Simonianism and cybernetics have been longly studied in the history of ideas related to communication<sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the intellectual influence of neocapitalist theories is far less known. This is one of the reasons why we will spend the following lines to its presentation. The other reason is that the neocapitalist ideology, as a component of postmodern theories, tends to renew and to merge the ancient views surrounding ICTs into internet analyses.

Referring to Max Weber's « The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism », Boltanski and Chiapello remark that the strength of neocapitalist ideology is to be hidden in previous anticapitalist critiques. Which makes its social acceptance easier. We think that a similar integration of anticapitalist values allows postmodern analyses of the internet to be warmly received.

For instance, the emphasis on an *empowerment* for internet ordinary users thanks to weblogs - compared to their usual submission in mass media and cultural industries - is close to a form of contesting of the consumptive society which knew its highlights in the 1960s and 1970s, in Western Europe and in North America.

Such a claim consists in a declension of the *artistic critique*, label given by Boltanski and Chiapello. These authors identify two types of critiques of capitalism : the *social critique* and the *artistic critique*.

The social critique has been embodied by socialist movements. These movements denounced the exploitation of the working class by capitalism (illnesses caused by arduous working conditions, scantiness of wages compared to financial incomes, ...) and have militated to obtain counterparts. From this point of view, social gains in rights for workers, collective health systems, or wage minimal levels, can be considered as conquests of the social critique. These acquirements are yet judged insufficient by the artistic critique which estimates that the aforementioned social gains do not remove nothing to the alienating character of the capitalistic system. This could even have a perverse effect in facilitating a more complete integration of workers into a consumptive society they would reinforce. The artistic critique then advocates to substitute for the situation of a passive consumer facing a standardized and imposed offer, a situation where the individual could himself involve in the elaboration of more "authentic" products.

This emancipation of consumptive society logics was central in the May 68 movement in France. On the Californian Campus, it developed in the hippie or New Age counterculture. The will to replace the individual to the centre of the social game, to give him back an autonomy in the process of production, has led - concerning culture and information - to this utopia of a dispossession of ICT's industrial owners in favour of their individual holding by ordinary people.

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<sup>3</sup> see (Musso, 2003) or (Breton, 2004) in France.

In this ideological context of the 1960s and 1970s, the technical progress in mini video cameras had been interpreted as a possibility for a democratization of the audiovisual creation, and its decentralization through cable networks. In the same period, the radio had provided another example of opposition to the mass media's information control.

Those experiences have turned sharply and, irony of the history, they even evolved to the inverse of the initially expected goal : many radio and cable networks were caught by the major companies of the cultural and media industries.

*« these « do-it yourself » media never offered a serious alternative to commercial systems. The regulatory and policing decisions governing UHF and Cable television, for example, marginalized local access content and granted priority to commercial broadcasters. Similarly, although the reduced cost of photocopying enabled the production of grassroots zines, there was no viable system for distributing such materials to a significant reading public. » (Jenkins, Thornburn, 2003, p. 11)*

However, this hope of an autonomy and individual activity in the creation of information - loop-hole to the omnipresence of industrial and then unauthentic production- came back with the development of the web in the 1990s. A mark among other reminiscences of this artistic critique : the idea of self-publication or self-media, meaning the ability for internet users to not only be readers or consumers but to simultaneously become authors or producers :

*« The interactive and digital nature of computer-mediated communication results in several new tensions in the author-text-audience relationship, predominantly through blurring the line between author and audience » (Cover, 2006, p. 140)*

More broadly, the apprehension of internet users as “authors-readers” in Web 2.0 analyses echoes to the perspective of an “active consumption” or “prosumption” through the prism of the artistic critique.

According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the artistic critique of the 1960s and 1970s is not entirely neither neutrally repeated in the 1990s. It reappears under new attires : its main arguments against the capitalistic system are transformed, through a paradoxical operation of intellectual recuperation, in a conceptual legitimization of capitalism new forms.

For their demonstration, as Weber had previously proceeded, Boltanski and Chiapello examine texts that furnish a moral support to business practices. In this end of the XXIst century, they chose texts from “professional” management reviews and identify the new value system of capitalism. Then, they discover a disguised version of the artistic critique that precisely provides a remarkable efficiency. The new spirit of capitalism answers - at least in its material appearance - to the demands for autonomy expressed a few decades ago. In opposition to the repetitive and alienating forms of Fordism, the network-based organisations of new capitalism are shown with words such as activity, mobility, or flexibility. The ideal workers of neocapitalism are therefore characterised by their ability to move from one project to another, to connect remote links between people.

This insistence on the productive autonomy and the egalitarian decentralisation thanks to networks in the “connexionnist” world of neocapitalism is really not very far from the views of the internet revolution's zealots.

Indeed, the analyses adopting the Web 2.0 perspective rely on those two themes, dealing with the autonomy of creation and the horizontal egalitarianism. More exactly, they constitute a triptych by adding the idea of liberty of communication.

This third element, relative to the notion of liberty, can also be considered as an essential part of the new spirit of capitalism. Even though Boltanski and Chiapello do not make it central in

their work, the economic neo-liberalism is, at a broader level, the ideological support of the new forms taken by capitalism, Gadrey argues (2001).

What is interesting to notice is that a semantic turn over this notion of liberty occurred during this last decade. And it directly concerns the theme of communication : economic liberalism (free trade) mixed up with libertarian ideology (freedom of expression, or more broadly free circulation of information as defended by the cybernetics), thanks to the development of the internet. Such a rhetorical combination can be found in several views surrounding the internet, and more particularly inside the speeches of the computing sector's main managers :

*"Norbert Wiener claims for the necessity to protect the free circulation of information everywhere, the transparency (...) He is the unrecognized inspirer of Californian communication philosophers of the 1960s, militants of the counterculture ("small is beautiful"), of those who stood out to military-industrial lobbies, but also of a whole branch of computing, those of Apple's incorporators and of a whole generation of computer scientists inserted, of course, in the US economic system – they will be successful managers – but in search of a deep cultural renewal". [our translation<sup>4</sup>] (Barbier, Bertho-Lavenir, 1996, p. 307)*

As Breton (1997) explains it, the end of major ideologies, illustrated by the breaking down of soviet regimes, offered a place to new values like liberty of communication. This one found, in the 1990s, a ground particularly favourable to its emergence with the stressed world-wide expansion of the economy, concretizing the view of a global exchange. The dominating neoliberalism seemed then quite fitted to the libertarian ideal of an unbridled communication supported by the early internet users. This provoked an overthrow of alliance between the three principal actors in presence on the internet : firms, users, and the State.

*" The birth of the micro-computer sustained by the libertarian current was done, in a first time, within an explicit reaction to the coalition of liberal and state ideologies (...) The incredible and anarchic all-out development of the internet, corresponded to a massive investment of this network by the libertarian current, responsible for an important part of technical innovations. The novelty, which has occurred under our eyes for a few months, consists in the alliance between the libertarian current and the liberal current to the injury of the State current." [our translation<sup>5</sup>] (Breton, 1997)*

We have here to understand that the triad users / firms / state covers a triple meaning for the notion of liberty : freedom of expression, free trade, and free circulation of the information. The liberal ideology of computing firms and the libertarian ideology of the early internet users join in a same dislike to the State, accused to fail to his mission of allowing the freedom of expression. Following this "libertarian-liberal" way, views of the Web 2.0 associate liberty, autonomy, and horizontality, until they form an ideological unity perfectly compatible with

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<sup>4</sup> « Norbert Wiener défend la nécessité de protéger partout la libre circulation de l'information, la transparence (...) Il est l'inspirateur méconnu des philosophes californiens de la communication des années 1960, des militants de la contre-culture (small is beautiful) de ceux qui s'opposèrent aux groupes de pression militaro-industriels mais aussi de toute une branche de l'informatique, celle des créateurs d'Apple et de toute une génération d'informaticiens, insérés, bien sûr, dans le système économique américain – ce seront de brillants chefs d'entreprise – mais à la recherche d'un profond renouvellement culturel ».

<sup>5</sup> « La naissance de la micro-informatique portée par le courant libertaire s'est faite dans un premier temps en réaction explicite à la coalition des idéologies libérales et étatiques (...). L'incroyable développement anarchique tout azimut d'internet a correspondu à un investissement massif de ce réseau par le courant libertaire auquel on doit d'ailleurs une partie importante des innovations techniques. La nouveauté actuelle, c'est à dire celle qui est en train de se nouer sous nos yeux depuis quelques mois, est l'alliance entre le courant libertaire et le courant libéral au détriment du courant étatique. »

the new spirit of the capitalism. So doing, the postmodern analyses of the internet melt with the dominant ideology and are much better socially accepted.



## An illustration : the postmodern analyses of digital journalism

The perception of the internet 2.0 through glasses of the new spirit of capitalism - creative autonomy, horizontal egalitarianism of the network, liberty of communication – clearly appears in many views. In order to illustrate this phenomenon and to demonstrate that ICT's ideological cover may impair their scientific apprehension, we will examine essays on digital journalism. The evolution of journalism has been frequently required in Web 2.0 analyses since US journalists used personal weblogs to offer discordant news about Irak ("warblogs" against TV channels), and since *citizen journalism* websites welcome millions of *amateur* reporters (in South Korea, *Ohmynews*' audience is larger than many traditional news media online).

We focus here on two texts - one in French, another in English - in order to study them in details. The first one is a book written by Joël De Rosnay (2006). He is a well known essayist in France, member of several prestigious academic institutions, who applied his theory of a transition *from mass media to media of the masses*, by creating *AgoraVox*, the French citizen journalism website. Mark Deuze, from the University of Indiana, is the author of the second text (2006). Social scientist specialized in digital journalism, he published several articles in academic reviews and explores a more prospective way in the essay we examine.

Digests – unconscious ones ? - of references to the Saint-simonian egalitarianism, to the cybernetics libertarian side, and to the individualism of the artistic critique, both texts<sup>6</sup> about on the new spirit of the capitalism to assert the advent of a digital revolution.

On that account, De Rosnay's book theoretical and ideological filiations are almost obvious. The essay begins, in the line of the artistic critique, by the denunciation of an archaic capitalism and the claim for people's individual autonomy in the information society :

*" The traditional industrial model gave power to elites or rich families owning productive and financial capital. Those classes of rich and powerful capitalists have thereafter searched to transpose this model to the information society. But the rules of the game have changed. The accumulation of 'informational capital' – and notably learning, knowledge, content, strategic information, accumulated in databases, libraries, archives – exponentially grows nowadays. Creative collaboration or person-to-person information distribution, contributing to this new form of capital growth, therefore confer new prerogatives to users, formerly relegated to the role of simple "consumers". New "professional" tools allow them to produce high added value digital contents in domain such as picture, video, sound, text, which were traditionally reserved to mass media producers and owners until this." [our translation<sup>7</sup>] (De Rosnay, 2006, pp. 9-10)*

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<sup>6</sup> We focus on these texts in this paper, but other texts announce a digital revolution for journalism in the same vein. For instance, the titles of books like *The end of television* (Missika, 2006) in France or *We The Media* (Gillmor, 2004) in the US, are rather explicit.

<sup>7</sup> « Le modèle industriel traditionnel a placé le pouvoir entre les mains d'élites ou de grandes familles propriétaires du capital financier et de production. Ces classes de capitalistes riches et puissantes ont par la suite cherché à transposer ce modèle à la société de l'information. Or les règles du jeu ont changé. L'accumulation du « capital informationnel » - représenté notamment par les savoirs, les connaissances, les contenus, les informations stratégiques accumulés dans des bases de données, des bibliothèques, des archives – se fait aujourd'hui de manière exponentielle. La création collaborative ou la distribution d'informations de personne à personne, contribuant à l'accroissement de cette nouvelle forme de capital, confèrent donc de nouvelles prérogatives aux utilisateurs, jadis relégués au rang de simples « consommateurs ». De nouveaux

This questioning of the traditional industrial and capitalist system is coupled, in De Rosnay's views as in the artistic critique, with a will to return to forms of self-management, free from state control (see below the references to "coregulation" and to the "technocrats"). And the Saint-simonian thought also crosses this text because the horizontality of networks, opposite to vertical powers, is mobilized to describe internet users fighting for their autonomy:

*« The regulation can not go from the top of the pyramid to its bottom any more. Indeed, nobody else will accept that technocrats decide alone or in a small committee. If "many-to-many" communications grew so quickly on the network, it is the sign that users refuse the diktat of a very few. Media of the masses' rise is going to gradually be transformed in a « citizen coregulation ». » [our translation]<sup>8</sup> (De Rosnay, 2006, p. 199)*

*« Collaborative, or intercreative, creation appeals to networks of collective intelligence and either to pyramidal human organizations » [our translation]<sup>9</sup> (De Rosnay, 2006, p. 11)*

The intellectual filiation with the cybernetics relies on a similar support on biology and physics to analyze society. The prospect is, like in Wiener's thought, alternately organicist, systemic, and interactionist :

*« Biology teaches us the following lesson : complexity emerges from the dynamics of the interactions between agents, whatever they are molecules, ants, or actors in a market. "*

*" The internet (...) is an "informational ecosystem". As far as networks' nodes and links are interdependent, as far as what benefits to the whole system benefits to each of its nodes and as far as the improvement of each node benefits to the entirety, the internet owns the characteristics of an ecosystem. An evolutionary ecosystem in which human beings permanently exchange, not only money as in the classic economic system, but mostly information ». [our translation]<sup>10</sup> (De Rosnay, 2006, p. 32).*

The text of Deuze is more measured than De Rosnay's one<sup>11</sup>. However, within this essay on the future of journalism, Deuze barter his usual academic rigour for an intellectual register closer to the ideological prediction.

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*outils « professionnels » leur permettent de produire des contenus numériques à haute valeur ajoutée dans les domaines de l'image, de la vidéo, du son, du texte, jusque-là traditionnellement réservés aux seuls producteurs de masse, détenteurs des mass media ».*

<sup>8</sup> *« La régulation ne pourra plus s'effectuer du haut de la pyramide vers le bas. Plus personne, en effet, n'acceptera que des technocrates décident seuls ou en petit comité. Si les communications « tous vers tous » se sont si rapidement développées sur le réseau, c'est bien le signe que les utilisateurs refusent le diktat de quelques-uns. La montée des média des masses va progressivement se traduire par une « corégulation citoyenne » ».*

<sup>9</sup> *« La création collaborative, ou intercréative, fait appel à des réseaux d'intelligence collective et non plus à des organisations humaines pyramidales »*

<sup>10</sup> *« le Net (...) est un « écosystème informationnel ». Dans la mesure où les nœuds et les liens du réseau sont interdépendants, où ce qui bénéficie à l'ensemble du système bénéficie à chacun de ses nœuds et où le progrès de chacun des nœuds profite à l'ensemble, Internet possède bien les caractéristiques d'un écosystème. Un écosystème évolutif dans lequel les êtres vivants s'échangent en permanence non seulement de la monnaie, comme dans l'économie classique, mais surtout de l'information. »*

<sup>11</sup> Contrary to De Rosnay, Deuze notably thinks that traditional and new forms of journalism will still exist side by side :

*« we will see a bewildering variety of top-down, hierarchical and extremely closed-off types of corporate enclosures of the commons existing next to peer-driven forms of collaborative ownership regarding the manufacture of news. In terms of media production processes, we will continue to witness a mix of "one-size-fits-all" content made for largely invisible mass audiences next to (and infused by) rich forms of transmedia storytelling including elements of user control and 'prosumer'-type agency. »*

In spite of some convenient but isolated remarks about possible « *power relationships and inequalities* » among internet users concerning their individual public expression abilities, Deuze analyzes the current development of digital journalism as a progress in modernity. On one hand, he explicitly refers to postmodern theories with a lot of quotations of Zygmunt Baumann, Ulrich Beck, or Pierre Lévy. And on the other hand, he uses organicist conceptualizations Saint-Simon or Wiener would not have denied.

Deuze entitles his text *Liquid journalism*, inspired by works of Baumann theorizations about *Liquid modernity* (2000) and *Liquid life* (2005). Quite as social institutions most solidly anchored (Nation state, nuclear family, ...) may tend to split, professional journalism may dilute in much more unstable forms of individual expression.

This preference for the liquidity of social relations, opposed to a previous social organization marked by rigid hierarchies, reminds us the Saint-Simonian theses. The opposition between solids and fluids constituted one of the first subjects of Saint Simon's works, and brought him to prefer the network as an optimal architecture. At the very beginning of the XIXth century, Saint-Simon tried to transcend the usual opposition in physics and natural science between solids and fluids. To summarize, he demonstrated that even solid bodies consisted of fluids, organized in networks which provided them this solidity.

And concerning living bodies, « *the action of fluids has the ascendancy on that of solids.* » [our translation<sup>12</sup>] (Saint Simon, 1966, t.6, p. 126). Fluidity, circulation, must be thus protected to maintain the body alive: « *The proof that the presence of fluids in the tubes of our brain is necessary for the maintenance of the phenomenon of life is that, if we bind the arteries which carry the blood to the brain, the death quickly follows this ligature* ». [our translation<sup>13</sup>] (Saint Simon, 1966, t.5, p. 99). And so, by analogy, networks of communication become vital elements for society.

It is striking to note that two centuries later, in the text of 2006 of Deuze, fluidity of communication is still presented as a societal optimum to be reached. In the same way, computerized networks would allow journalism to enter postmodernity :

« *The future of news will be determined by the extent of its liquidity, its ability to navigate the different and sometimes conflicting expectations of a world citizenry, and our willingness - as journalism scholars and educators - to teach students more than just the tools of a dead (or dying) trade. In its dominant, Western, and professional form, journalism is a zombie institution<sup>14</sup>, incapable of dealing with the unsettling complexity of the problems and challenges in contemporary liquid life.* » (Deuze, 2006)

As much as in the Saint-Simonianism, the text of Deuze draws - unintentionally - from the cybernetics. For Web 2.0 journalism also, a primacy seems to be given to the relations towards the contents:

« *For journalism, all of this means, in part, that value attributed to media content will be increasingly determined by the interactions between users and producers rather than the product (cf. news ) itself.* » (Deuze, 2006b)

Saint-Simonianism and the cybernetics are both organicist theories, which copy the model of living bodies to represent life in society. They join the new spirit of capitalism in which the

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<sup>12</sup> « *c'est l'action des fluides qui a la prépondérance sur celle des solides.* »

<sup>13</sup> « *La preuve que la présence des fluides dans les tubes dont notre cerveau se compose est nécessaire à l'entretien du phénomène de notre vie est que, si on lie les artères qui portent le sang au cerveau, la mort suit de près cette ligature* »

<sup>14</sup> In another passage of the text, this formula refers to the « *zombie sociology* », i.e. the non postmodern sociology criticized by Ulrich Beck (2002). What a paradox here : do « *zombie sociology* » denigrators know their own theorizations look like a light renewal of Saint-Simonian XIXth perspectives ?

world's natural form (*harmonious figure of natural order* in the terminology of Boltanski and Chiapello) is likely to a network where everyone can establish connection. Such an organicist conception can be found in Deuze's « *media ecology* » (« *A journalism that successfully embraces and engages this ecology will have to become fluid itself : a liquid journalism* ») and had been previously met in De Rosnay's « *informational ecosystem* ». In these theorizations which forget social determinants and disparities, people are supposed to be unanimously active, participating to the good functioning of a system of links supported by the internet.

« *Of such a complex new media ecology one can see Internet (and all what we do online) as a primary manifestation, where people empowered by increasingly cheaper and easier-to-use technologies participate actively in their own 'newsmaking'. What is particularly salient about these trends is a further blurring of the carefully cultivated dividing lines between professional and amateurs, and between producers and consumers of media.* » (Deuze, 2006)

## Elements of conclusion

The views of a digital revolution for journalism, whether they are excessive as De Rosnay's one or better-balanced as Deuze's one, mix organicist references and new spirit of the capitalism. More broadly, postmodern analyses of the internet afford with the contemporary prevailing system of values.

What raises a double problem. On one hand, the utopian dimension of postmodern analyses becomes harder to discern because it does not appear as being ideological. On the other hand, these analyses will be as well accepted as they « stick » to new spirit of capitalism and precisely hide negative aspects of neocapitalism. The contrary views will be thus considered as « old school » analyses or - which is worse - as unable to identify major societal changes. With others, we nevertheless believe that trying to undress postmodern analyses of their ideological veil does not necessarily lead to neglect essential changes. It rather helps to encircle them better.

*« Post-mediatism produces very general theoretical statements which crush empirical realities of the production of information and which frequently disregard concrete balance of power which structure the media field, the production of contents, and the reception of information ». [our translation<sup>15</sup>] (Grangeon, 2007, p. 44)*

*« Spreading in the shade of a liberal techno-utopia, advanced views are, paradoxically, on certain aspects, rather close to views surrounding the contemporary capitalism and the « information society » they nevertheless intend to fight » [our translation<sup>16</sup>] (Grangeon, 2007, p. 46)*

It is a paradox indeed that the postmodern analyses insistence on the ability of the internet to solve the former problems caused by capitalism tends to hide – or, at least, to minimize - the bad consequences of neocapitalism. Because of this ideological veil, postmodern analyses of the internet generally fail to identify the whole aspects of the social insertion of the internet. It is necessary to know the nature of this ideological veil in order to distinguish it from the real social practices. In the end, this is a condition to fairly analyze the evolutions of the internet.

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<sup>15</sup> « Le post-médiatisme produit des énoncés théoriques surplombants qui écrasent les réalités empiriques de la production d'information et font bien souvent abstraction des rapports de force concrets qui structurent le champ médiatique, la production de contenus, et la réception de l'information. »

<sup>16</sup> « Se déployant à l'ombre d'une techno-utopie social libéralo-opéraïste, les thèses avancées sont, paradoxalement, sur certains aspects, assez proches des discours d'accompagnement du capitalisme contemporain et de la « société de l'information » qu'elles entendent pourtant combattre ».

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