Linguophilosophic Parameters of English Innovations in Technosphere

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By

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2139-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2139-1

Language is the armory of the human mind
and at once contains the trophies of its past
and the weapons of its future conquests.
—S.T. Coleridge

The human being is a convergence point
for all horizons of reality.
—S. Khoruzhy

How far can we plunge into cyberspace
to still remain human?
—M. Heim

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INTRODUCTION

The world surrounding a human being is endless in multiple varieties of its forms. In the course of centuries the mankind has been fulfilling the attempts to represent the objective (as well as subjective) reality through language to the utmost. However, at the dawn of the 21st century the human mind has progressed quality-wise in the ways and methods of reality perception.

Cyberspace stands an integral ontological entity, a unique environment demanding new cognition and perception ways via complex philosophic, cultural, social, linguistic approaches, providing unlimited opportunities for human intellect and language development and research.

The current study primary *objective* is the investigation of the innovative linguophilosophic aspects of the English vocabulary development processes in the sphere of new computer technologies. Over 3000 cyberspace and computer technology related lexical innovations of the English language served as *research material*.

Linguophilosophic approach to the study of English lexical innovations in the new computer technologies sphere allows to efficiently investigate lingual manifestation of cyberspace ontology (namely space and time dimensions), to closely study the generic categories and dimensions of cyberanthroposphere, to denote its existential anthropocentric character.

It ought to be pointed out that the research centres upon the synthetic definition of the '*philosophic*' notion which incorporates ontological, gnoseological and anthropological parametres.

Research *methodology* is based upon the supposition of the cyberspace-related word-stock terminological nature. The dual systematization character of terminology determined the analysis of both linguistic and external (ontological, anthropological, social) paradigmatic parameters of English cybervocabulary. due to its polydimensional nature the term acquires the unique, supralingual status (the entity of Being and Language respectively).

The cyber-term as a specific intralingual and extralingual phenomenon due to its complex nature turns out to be both the means of perception and comprehension to a degree as well as the metaphysic actualization and categorization source of the modern cyberspace and technosphere.

*"As the world is increasingly coming to appreciate, physical space and **cyberspace** operate according to different rules."*
—The New York Times, 2004

*The ability to reach out and touch customers both in and out of **cyberspace**, the theory goes, will make or break future retailers."*
—Washington Post, 2000

*"In a conceptual leap that goes even beyond the idea of **virtual worlds**, the Human Interface Technology Laboratory of the University of Washington will be showing Technology in Bloom. This is an example of augmented reality."*
—The Boston Globe, April 12, 2003

The introduced approach to defining the cyberterm might pose as a key to comprehending the hidden mechanisms of linguistic actualization of cyber-reality.

Modern cyberspace apparently presents a functional ontological model of Being, the linguo-semiotic presentation of which takes place currently and prospectively within cognition and research grasp, as opposed to non-cyber-reality, linguo-ontogenesis of which could be retrospectively constructed on mostly hypothetical principles.

The volume is intended to appeal to a broad spectrum of academicians in the humanities sphere (namely Linguistics, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Cyberstudies) as well as to a wider scope of readers, interested in various aspects of modern cyberspace and English development.

CHAPTER ONE

ENGLISH CYBERTERMINILOGY PARADIGMATICS

Notes on methodology

Research *methodology* is based upon the supposition of the cyberspace-related word-stock terminological nature.

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The introduced approach to defining the cyberterm might pose as a key to comprehending the hidden mechanisms of linguistic actualization of cyber-reality.

Word-building systematization within cyberterminology

Linguistically the development of English computer terminology acquires an ambivalent character.

Primarily, the sources of English computer vocabulary root in the conventional word-formation types, such as affixation, abbreviation and acronymy, telescopy, etc. and semantic derivation.

However, according to our research results, the enrichment process of the computer terminology of English incorporates the emergence of the word-formation ways and means, quite authentic to the given lexical sub-system, such as: *semantic-functional transorientation, motivationally heterogeneous reduplication of linguistic units, false morphemization.*

Semantic-functional transorientation

Semantic-functional transorientation – is a transformational process comprising of 2 stages. Throughout the *initial stage* a lexical unit semantics acquires a "technogenic component" (a seme rendered as "of or referred to modern computer technology").

The *ultimate transformational stage* involves the attribution of a new functional status to the semantically modified unit which proceeds through computer terminological paradigm as a structural component.

Up to date within the English cyberterminology the given pattern is rendered via such elements of unlimited productivity as *cyber-, web-, electronic-, virtual, techno-*, etc:

"Sony plans to roll out a national chain of high-tech ***cyberparks*** *in at least four cities across the United States: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, according to sources familiar with the project."*
—The San Francisco Examiner, October 10, 2003).

"The personalization features of the Internet provided by various filters and customization tools have the potential to lead to the ***cyberbalkanization*** *of the on-line public sphere into increasingly insulated groups..."*
—Newsweek, June 14, 2002

"If the ***technorealists****' ideas are so obvious, I wonder why we continue to hear so much breathy drivel about how the Internet is remaking reality?"*
—Washington Post, April 2000

*"…a transaction should be accounted for the same, whether it's an **e-business** or a brick-and-mortar business."*
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*"Georgia is implementing statewide **e-voting** at a time when voter confidence is still recovering from the 2000 presidential election disaster."*
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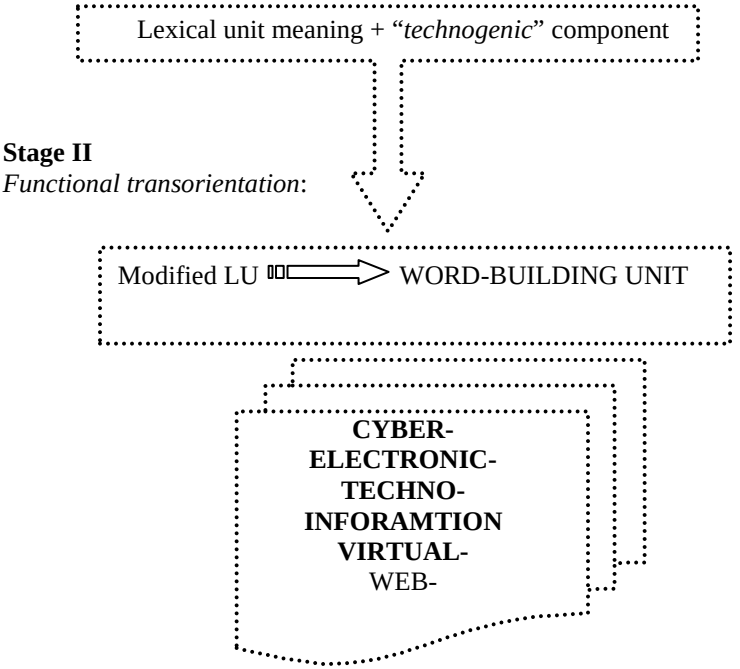
*"That was one day after BarnesandNoble.com chief executive Jonathan Bulkeley championed the clicks-and-mortar philosophy that has become the mantra of **electronic retailing**."*
—Washington Post, May, 1999

Table 1-1 Semantic – Functional Transorientation Scheme

Stage I
Semantic transorientation



"False morpheme" typology

Moreover, the progress of terminological system in cyberspace determines the new conceptual approach to the "word-formation element" notion. Our research results actualize the possibility to derive a unique element of word structure, designated as a *false morpheme*, the chief distinctive feature of the given unit being its freelance motivation.

False morpheme – is a part of an inherently monomorphemeic lexeme, arbitrarily singled out to productively function in further word-building, retaining the original meaning of the parent word.

The empirical linguistic material allows to position as false morphemes an array of:

1) monographemic abbreviations
2) polygraphemic abbreviations
3) verbalized form of an electronic address unit.

Table 1-2 False Morphemes Typology

TYPE	DESIGNATION	REPRESENTATION	EXAMPLES
I	"mono-graphemic" abbreviation	a) initial MGA *e-, i-, v-*	*e-money, e-wallet, i-dea, i-way, i-biolog, v-commerce*
		b) terminal MGA *-b*	*blog, blogger, blog-master*
II	"poly-graphemic" abbreviation	*-zine* *-jack*	*Webzine, cyberzine, zinester, page-jack, blue-jack*
III	secondary designation	*dot-com* *dot-*	*dot-commie, dot-com business, dot-snot*

Type 1) monographemic abbreviations

*"The **i-biology** approach represents the consolidation of the many diverse data in life science research into refined information."*
—Medical Industry Today, June 25, 2003

*"…the online journals known as **Web logs,** or **blogs,** have morphed from a cultish craze into a mainstream phenomenon…"*
—Aus. Am-St., Sept. 5, 2003

*"**Bloggers** add their own foraging notes to links discovered on other weblogs. As a result, some estimate, anything new on the Web will filter through the **blog-system** in some form in about 30 days."*
—Dallas Morning News, Apr. 15, 2000

Type 2) polygraphemic abbreviations

*"The Federal Trade Commission in Washington characterized the scheme as the **page-jacking** of as many as 25 million of the roughly 1 billion pages on the World Wide Web."*
—Reuters, September 22, 2001

*"In this jockeying for position, some sites prefer to **search-jack**."*
—Globe and Mail, Feb., 2004

*"The latest challenge to that guarantee is **Webjacking** - the nasty business of hackers".*
—InfoWorld, November 1, 2000

*"In addition to excerpts from dozens of **zines**, the authors offer how-tos for would-be **zinesters** on raising money, distribution, the pros and cons of collaboration and more."*
—The Los Angeles Times, November 3, 2002

*"…Until two years ago, I had no idea what a **zine** was."*
—Dallas Morning News, Oct. 28, 2004

*"In the US, **dot-coms** infiltrated every market sector from groceries to electronics even to cars".*
—Business Wire, Jan. 7, 2000

Type 3) verbalized form of an electronic address unit.

*"But if **dot-com rage** turns out to be a factor in last week's attacks or others, I believe it should be seen not as a Robin Hood strategy to undermine the wealth of the e-commerce barons, but as a political statement akin to the protests in December in Seattle."*
—The New York Times, Feb. 14, 2001

*"The results of that obsession are a lot of interesting ideas and a lot of excessively rich kids — referred to locally as **dot snots** — who wander around town as if they own the place."*
—PC Magazine, May 9, 2000

Word-building heterogeneous equivalents

Heterogeneous reduplication in its turn – is word-building model based upon parallel simultaneous functioning within cyberterminology of authentic and borrowed (semiotically heterogeneous), semantically equivalent or identical formants.

It should be noted that not only affixes are (super- / über- / arch-) "heterogeneously cloned" but conceptually relevant stem morphemes as well (way / Bahn, city / polis / stan, etc.).

This serves as an apparent manifestation of cyber lexical units terminological nature through the transparency of the ontological connection between the lingual sign and notion / concept.

Table 1-3 Heterogeneous equivalents

NOTION	WORD-BUILDING COMPONENT		EXAMPLES
	AUTHENTIC	BORROWED	
"virtual space with prominent dynamic component"	- *way* - *[highway]*	- *Bahn*	*I-way* *I- Bahn* *Information highway*
„ontological state of being wired to the Internet"	- *line*	- *kai*	*online* *onkai* *off-line* *off-kai*
"segment of space , techno-society locale"	- *city* - *garden*	- *polis* - *stan* - *ville*	*cybercity,* *cybergarden ,* *technopolis,* *nerdistan,* *cyberville*
"unsurpassed computer sphere professional"	- *super-*	- *über-* - *arch(a)*	*superhacker,* *supergeek,* *überhacker,* *archanerd*
"computer entrepreneur, representative of computer – industrial complex"	–	- *mogul* - *czar*	*cybermogul,* *technomogul,* *cyberczar*
"idiosyncrasy to technical innovations "	- *fear* - *terror*	- *angst* - *phobia*	*technofear,* *cyberterror,* *cyberphobia,* *technoangst*

*“South Orange County is a classic **nerdistan** - largely newly built, almost entirely upscale office parks, connected by a network of toll roads and superhighways to planned, often gated communities inhabited almost entirely by college educated professionals and technicians”*
—Los Angeles Business Journal, Aug. 20, 2001

*"Cities need a people climate more than they need a business climate," [John] Florida says. They need technology, but they also need talent and tolerance. In his book [The Rise of the Creative Class], he describes three kinds of high-tech communities: the **nerdistans** of the Silicon Valley; "latte towns" like Boulder, "with plentiful outdoor amenities"; and older urban areas whose rebirth is "fueled by a combination of creativity and lifestyle amenities."*
—Denver Westword, June 19, 2003

CHAPTER TWO

LINGUO-ONTOLOGICAL PARAMETRES OF CYBERSPHERE

Linguo-ontological aspects of cybersphere categorization

Paradigmatic parameters of English computer terminology are also featured from the following perspectives: perception of basic dimensions of cyber-reality ("space" and "time") and anthropologic categorization of cyber-reality, thus both the anthropocentric and the sociocentric paradigmatics of English cybervocabulary being reflected.

Cyber-reality emergence resulted in some significant alternations within perceptive sphere, that being, above all, the rethinking and reshaping of the corner-stone ontological and existential categories: Space, Time, Reality and Knowledge. The objective reality is exposed in the dialectical philosophic unity of real and virtual parameters, the latter being an indispensable implicit component of the lingual actualization of modern Being.

Moreover there could be identified the lexically fixed platonic binary division of the spacial dimension of the technosphere, namely the differentiation of cyberspace into ideal and material planes accordingly.

The leading conceptual and notional dominant of cyber temporal innovations lies within the plain of Past vs. Future opposition – that is periods of *before* and *after* cyberspace elaboration. Linguistic elements of computer related temporal paradigm incorporate the apocalyptic semantics, terminal chronological parameters which serves as apparent validation of cyberspace existential nature.

Linguo-existential issues of cybersphere structuring

The world surrounding a human being is endless in multiple varieties of its forms. In the course of centuries the mankind has been fulfilling the attempts to represent the objective (as well as subjective) reality in the language as fully as possible. Adding up to the lexicon the words denoting

newly appearing realia and concepts has always been one of the most optimal ways for such "self reflection".

This way two significant dominants can be observed in defining culture – the generalized reality representation in the form of *Knowledge* and its alternation methods on the one hand and the direct negotiation of the Man with the World, socially and historically determined reflection of such cooperation in the human inner world, beliefs, principles, tastes, behavior, habits – on the other.

However, in the late 20th – the early 21st centuries the human mind has progressed quality-wise in the ways and methods of reality perception. There is no doubt that one of the greatest achievements of the turn-of-the-century period is the so called *virtual reality* creation – the world parallel to the common one still intercepting with it in hundreds of thousand ways, driving the "material" reality more and more dependent on itself.

The thing is that ***virtual reality*** development determined the necessity of cultivating special ways of its phenomena treatment, which naturally drew to the new linguistic units emersion, since it's been specified that the language is the sphere of the most urgent reaction of the human mind to the outer world changes.

As the famous German philologist and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt put it the Language is not merely the communication and socialization means, but is original to the human nature and necessary for spiritual development as well as for viewpoint formation. To his mind the Language should be treated not in terms of a static substance but in terms of a creative process. Moreover, the main emphasis should be laid on the language and mental activity correlation.

As we can judge virtual reality progress is closely connected with the fundamental changes in the sphere of the human mind. The so-called *virtual boom* (the constant emersion of the new computer-related lexical units) observed through the last decades might be explained from the evolutionary viewpoint. The period between the "Big Boom" in the universe up to the point when languages were created on the Earth, which took by rough calculations over hundreds of billions years, in the case of virtual reality creation was reduced to some ten years.

> ... *Another* mixed reality *work on display will be New York artist Camille Utterback's Text Rain, where viewers catch falling* ***virtual letters*** *that appear in a mirror image of themselves."*
> —The Boston Globe, April 12, 2001

*"Writers, who can go for three or four days at a time without talking to people in **meatspace**, are particularly attracted to this form of friendship."*
—New Statesman, Dec. 4, 2001

*"Dyson ignores the sinister temptations of **virtual reality**, ..., temptations bound to grow as **real reality** gets ever scarier and more complex."*
—The New York Times, June 5, 2001

*"As the world is increasingly coming to appreciate, **physical space** and **cyberspace** operate according to different rules."*
—The New York Times, May 27, 2003

*"In a conceptual leap that goes even beyond the idea of **virtual worlds**, the Human Interface Technology Laboratory of the University of Washington will be showing Technology in Bloom. This is an example of **augment reality**."*
—The Boston Globe, April 12, 2001

*"…such information overlays are called **annotated reality**."*
—Wired News, October 19, 2003

Onto-semiotic aspect of cyber reality linguistic manifestation

So, as far as language is concerned, the "virtual mind" is still bouncing between the system of what is considered to be non-verbal sings on the one hand and the system of extended sings, commonly known as myths, on the other.

Some scientists consider "the sign" to be central to the language conception. This way B. Russell defines the essence of the language to be not just using some communication means but applying fixed associations. In these terms the tangible is the Sign and the idea is the Meaning .

Another scholar, V. V. Martynov considers the language to be a complex system of symbols each one of the denoting some definite outer reality phenomenon, while taken together they form the schematic picture of the environment, the given language speakers live in.

From the other perspective a linguistic sign is being interpreted as a myth. Roland Bart treats the myth as a secondary semiotic system, based on the preexistent sequence of signs. The myth structure according to Bart is of double character: the language system, which is the myth basis on the one hand and the Myth proper, which is the metalanguage.

The human language is the language of words along with being the language of signs. The Word overmatches all the other linguistic signs by

its functions volume and character. The Word is the thinking processes basis and words hierarchy is the human cognition results storage.

As it has been specified so far the word, precisely the terminological neologism, is the *VIRTUAL REALITY* exploration, description and which is more understanding corner-stone, that making us consider the *VIRTUAL REALITY* as a linguistic phenomenon in terms of the signs theory (semiotics).

Here at once we deal with a paradox. The sign is supposed to be an ideal substitute for an object or notion. However, nothing is concrete as far as the *VIRTUAL REALITY* goes.

Moreover, most of its phenomena are conventional (consider: *e-money*, *virtual love*, even the very *virtual reality*), thus abstract but still perceived in terms of the language.

This way, the *VIRTUAL REALITY* happens to be an ideal (in platonic sense) environment, in which concepts have been alienated from realia and embodied by means of symbolic representation:

> *"The site is run by Adam Hiltebeitel, Hossein Noshirvani, and Mare Jacobson, friends who — like most twentysomethings — yearned to join the* ***get-rich-click*** *set."*
> —Star Tribune, February 8, 2000

> *"That was one day after BarnesandNoble.com chief executive Jonathan Bulkeley championed the* ***clicks-and-mortar*** *philosophy that has become the mantra of electronic retailing."*
> —Washington Post, August, 2002

> *"…I see it somewhere between a digital sit-in and* ***cybotage****…"*
> —The New York Times, May 31, 2004

> *"Identity theft, possibly the most perfect* ***Internet-crime*** *has reached epidemic proportions …"*
> —Time, Sept. 15, 2003

> *"****Webucation*** *will be big, but will it be profitable? After all, the public has grown accustomed to getting information for free on the Web - it has on network TV.*
> —Forbes Magazine, May 2000

> *"In what they describe as a new science of* ***Webology*** *computer scientists at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center in Silicon Valley recently funneled a large portion of the Web, about 55 million pages (leaving out the pictures), onto 400 billion bytes of disk space."*
> —The New York Times, Jan. 11, 2003

*"If the **technorealists**' ideas are so obvious, I wonder why we continue to hear so much breathy drivel about how the Internet is remaking reality?"*
—Washington Post, April 2000

*"That was one day after BarnesandNoble.com chief executive Jonathan Bulkeley championed the clicks-and-mortar philosophy that has become the mantra of **electronic retailing**."*
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*"…a transaction should be accounted for the same, whether it's an **e-business** or a brick-and-mortar business."*
—The New York Times, March 29, 2000

*"Georgia is implementing statewide **e-voting** at a time when voter confidence is still recovering from the 2000 presidential election disaster."*
—Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Sept. 2002

Cyburban myth: the linguistic aspect

We may note that many of the newly appearing "virtual concepts" have undergone certain myhtologization, having been classed by collective "virtual" mind as *cyburban myths* (this word combination was formed by blending the preexistent notion "urban myth" with the productive "virtual" affix *cyber-*, which fact denotes the interdependence of the *VIRTUAL REALITY* existence and the urban, end-of-the-century civilization).

*"A quick ping out to the router and our Internet connection will be restored **automagically**"*
—The National Journal, June 23, 2001

*"Many Web designers aren't coders, so they enhance their pages with **voodoo programming**..."*
—The San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 24, 2003

*"Tim had no idea why the computer wouldn't boot, so he decided a **rain dance** would be in order."*
—The Washington Post, April 22, 2002

*"They are trying to generate **word-of-mouse**, but I am skeptical."*
—Los Angeles Times, Sept. 18, 2001

"*...It's enough to turn a diehard football fan into a **mouse potato**...."*

*"The site is run by Adam Hiltebeitel, Hossein Noshirvani, and Mare Jacobson, friends who — like most twentysomethings — yearned to join the **get-rich-click** set."*
—Star Tribune, February 8, 2000

*The ability to reach out and touch customers both in and out of cyberspace – the **clicks-and-mortar** concept – will make or break future retailers."*
—Inside Media, June, 2002

"They are trying to crash Web pages and servers. Cybotage is aggressive."
—Washington Post, Nov. 4, 2003

*"With **fritterware**, you can spend all day changing the color scheme, the fonts, the icons, the look and feel of your screen..."*
—The Los Angeles Times, October, 2000

*"A computer with an always-on connection has a permanent IP address, which makes it especially vulnerable to hackers, 'Trojan horses' or **spyware** attacks."*
—Business Wire, January 26, 2001

*"…This is a nicely featured program and is it **careware**."*
—Newsweek, April 7, 2003

*"…Jaffe found refuge and eventual salvation with On-Line Gamers Anonymous … one of several online self-help groups that have sprung up to deal with the fallout from electronic entertainment they call **heroinware**".*
—The Guardian, April 3, 2003

*"The only way to compete with **treeware** is with an electronic counterpart that provides many of paper's attributes."*
—Electronic Publishing, January 1, 2001

This way the *VIRTUAL REALITY* equivalence to the concept of the "real" universe is manifested in the neologism *deep Web*, acquiring in this context the features of a mythologeme.

The World Wide Web has become so big that search engines can't index all; in fact, they find only a small proportion. There's also lots of info out there - mostly in databases - that can't be accessed at all by the conventional search technologies in use since the Web began, the same as the far off galaxies earthly techniques are still unable to reach.

The firm Bright Planet has estimated that this *deep Web* (a term it seems to have invented) contains 7,500 terabytes of data, compared with

about 19 terabytes of data on what it calls the *surface Web*, numbers impossible to visualize in other than the vaguest way.

Even if these figures are overestimates, it still suggests that there is a lot of material out there that would be useful if only one could find it. The firm also points out that the deep data is usually of excellent quality, and that most of it is publicly accessible without charge.

> *"Bright Planet estimates that this so-called 'deep Web' could be 500 times larger than the surface Web that most search engines try to cover."*
> —NewsScan Daily, Jan. 2001

> *"The FAA database is part of the invisible Web, sometimes called the "deep Web" – a vast repository of information hidden in databases that general-purpose search engines don't reach."*
> —The Industry Standard, Sep. 2000

Moreover, the *VIRTUAL REALITY* cosmogonic character is proclaimed in denoting the so-to-say "primordial" processes, which take place in cyberspace independent from the human will.

They are presented in the following abbreviations: *PEBCAK* (*Problem Exists Between Chair and Keyboard*) or *JOOTT* (*Just One of Those Things* – an inexplicable Net collapse). Besides that a new notion *automagically* describes a process that occurs automatically and with a certain level of mystery so that it seems somewhat magical.

Information as a mythical premise of cyber-reality through vocabulary development

To add up to the mythological virtual world picture we shall have to consider Information as the generic, "chthonic" (in a way) force for the *Internet community* members, resembling the Earth in the ancient mythology. The statement acquires validity taking into account that the given phenomenon is the attraction center of a substantial number of new lexemes denoting the latest information realia.

For e.g. the *World Wide Web* has been referred to as *infostructure* (note the analogy with "infrastructure"). The "battle" for information ownership – and, as a result, *Information superiority* – usually leads to the so-called *information warfare*. Moreover, the necessity to deal with huge amounts of information on the daily basis turns us (the *cybergeneration* representatives) from ordinary species into *informavores.* This word is always applied to human beings.

*"Building the **infostructure**: Monumental investments are being made to develop and enhance the information superhighways."*
—The Futurist, Aug. 19, 2001

*"Col. Charles J. Dunlap, staff judge advocate at the U.S. Strategic Command, doubts whether **information superiority** is possible, given the proliferation of sources for all sides."*
—Milwaukee Journal, June 5, 2002

*"The **information rich** have good access to information—especially online, but also through more traditional media such as newspapers, radio, television, and books—and can plan their lives and react to changes in circumstances on the basis of what they know or can find out. The **information poor** don't have such access and are vulnerable to all kinds of pressures."*
—PC and Home, 2003

*"Although information has been a key component of waging war since humanity's earliest days, the modern military concept of **information warfare** is so new that it was classified until about five years ago."*
—Milwaukee Journal, June 5, 2003

By analogy with terms herbivore and carnivore, it seeks to suggest that we are a species that lives by processing and communicating information. It's not a particularly appropriate linguistic analogy as a matter of fact, as the only thing all these words have in common is the suffix -ivore. That's a close kin of "voracious", and comes from the Latin *vorare* "to devour". So it properly refers to consumption rather than manipulation.

Though it's sometimes said that we humans devour information, we actually process it, not consume it. Cognitive scientists usually take *informavore* to refer to our ability to manipulate representations of the outside world inside our heads and to transmit information to each other through language. These are regarded by many as the crucial abilities that distinguish modern humans from all other species.

The word is sometimes used in connection with the huge growth in information media in the developed countries in the latter part of this century. Its coinage is usually attributed to the psychologist George Miller in the 1980s, but it has achieved wider circulation in the 1990s through popular works by Daniel Dennett and Steven Pinker.

*"The user is an adaptive **informavore** who makes use of extensive resources, interleaving planned and opportunistic episodes and using both automatic and intentional processes.*
—People and Computers, 2000

"The user is an adaptive informavore who makes use of extensive resources, interleaving planned and opportunistic episodes and using both automatic and intentional processes."
—Lisa Tweedie, "Interactive Visualization Artifacts", in People and Computers X, Proceedings of the HCI'95 Conference (1996)

"*We would expect organisms, especially informavores such as humans, to have evolved acute intuitions about probability.*"
—Steven Pinker, How the Mind Works (1997)]

As we can see such way of info-reflection is also the Information personification means, which is achieved through language. This fact apparently testifies to the information mythological nature in terms of virtual reality discourse.

Myth to ideology through language in cyberspace

Taking into account the virtual reality strictly organized, digital nature, it turns out to be a rather eclectic phenomenon as far as its mental perception goes. The collective "virtual" mind has synthesized different perspectives in terms of the generally mythological overview.

This way originally chthonic virtual reality interpretation, common to the polytheistic outlook, has been amended by the Heaven and Hell concepts, peculiar to Christian world-picture.

Linguistically the mentioned phenomenon has been presented in two new notions: *Data Heaven* and *Grey-bar Land*. As for *Data Heaven*, this phrase has been around for at least 15 years, but only in a specific way.

One meaning is that of a place of safety and security electronic information, for example where encrypted copies of crucial data can be stored as a backup away from one's place of business.

But it can also mean a site in which data can be stored outside the jurisdiction of regulatory authorities. This sense has come to wider public notice recently as a result of Neal Stephenson's book Cryptonomicon, in which the establishment of such a haven in South East Asia is part of the plot (Word Spy).

"The Privacy Act doesn't protect information from being transferred from New Zealand to data heavens - countries that don't have adequate privacy protection."
—Computerworld, May 1999

“The government last night poured cold water on a plan by a group of entrepreneurs to establish a "data heaven" on a rusting iron fortress in the North Sea in an attempt to circumvent new anti-cryptography laws.”
—Guardian, June 2000

So, it becomes obvious that in such interpretation the heaven notion becomes close to that of Paradise or the Garden of Eden, where one can be happy while still alive.

The word combination *Grey-bar Land* in its turn serves as a turn-of-phrase definition of a special state a computer undergoes while hung up. This way the given notion correlates closely with the Christian oblivion and afterlife concept.

As far as we can assess, the “virtual” outlook emersion determined the necessity of the new, revolutionary cognition means, which would satisfy the newly established *VIRTUAL REALITY* circumstances, this leading to the peculiar *techgnosis* development.

This word was invented by Erik Davis in an article in 1994 and used as title of his 1998 book, subtitled Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information. His is not the easiest book to read or summarize – Publisher's Weekly called it a "deluge of information and theory" – because he ranges very widely over spirituality and its interaction with technology.

He argues that for many Net users there's a spiritual component to their links with it, and that valid comparisons can be made with earlier technological developments that also became metaphors for our view of the world. He cites the example of the Extropians - a Californian sect which believes it may one day be possible to download the essence of the human mind into a computer and so achieve immortality, and suggests this has elements in common with the Christian belief in the afterlife.

He argues this spiritual feeling is a high-tech update of gnosis, an early Christian belief, hence his title and the word *techgnosis* for its modern equivalent. The topic is *techgnostics* and someone who studies the subject is a *techgnostic*.

“The moment you have that notion that we are really information instead of bodies or souls, then you have that possibility of techgnosis.”
—Erik Davis, Techgnosis, 1998]

“D*avis suggests that 'techgnosis' is a kind of information age update of gnosticism, a Christian heresy in which believers rejected the world of matter and yearned for gnosis, a flash of transcendent illumination in which individuals cast off the body and ascended to the real world of the spirit.”*
—Guardian, Dec. 1998