

# EXCERPT

Endless Empowerment and Existence: From Virtual Literacy to Online Permanence in Presence

Steven John Thompson, PhD

Visiting Assistant Professor

Towson University

Currently:

Steven John Thompson, PhD

Adjunct Associate Professor

University of Maryland University College

This paper was presented as a plenary speaker at:

First International Forum on Media and Information Literacy

Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University

Fez, Kingdom of Morocco

June 15-17, 2011

# EXCERPT

## BREAKDOWN OF THE ALL-KNOWING HUMAN (A-KH)

### 1. Aliteracy/Aliterate (Xliteracy/Xliterate)

*The person who can but chooses not to participate in cyberality.*

### 2. Eliteracy/Eliterate

*The person fully-fitted for participation in cyberality.*

### 3. Ill-literacy/Illiterate

*The person marginalized by issues of cyberality.*

Each human citizen prototype is positioned in society according to the following schema:

#### CONDITION OF THE XLITERATE

The person who can -- but chooses not to -- participate in the global exchange of information. This person exercises freedom of choice and expression while it exists to willfully resist the rise of digital alteration to the human condition. The *xliterate* is individually vulnerable.

#### RISE OF THE ELITERATE

This person chooses to participate in the global exchange of information at the highest level of connection. This person exercises freedom of choice and expression while it exists to willfully participate in the rise of digital alteration to the human condition. The person with *eliteracy* is fully-fitted -- corporately, economically, permissively -- with perpetual readiness to:

- **Access/Archive**
- **Code/Codify**
- **Collaborate/Commune**
- **Gain (Data/Prestige)**
- **Participate (-/0/+)**
- **Bond and Seal with the Network**

# EXCERPT

## EMERGENCE OF THE ILLITERATE

This person is handicapped in exercising freedom of choice and expression to willfully participate in the rise of digital alteration to the human condition. This is the emergence of the *illiterate* (ill-literate) and *illiteracy* diagnosed as disease. Possible consequences are deeper discrimination, wider marginalization, psychological questioning, extreme social ostracization.

## THE ALL-KNOWING NETWORK (A-KN)

The Internet harbors all the human knowledge we have in existence that we are capable of archiving in it, as well as all the current knowledge we perpetually add to it. Apart from content in our known universe, to which digitality should subscript, the volume of knowledge digitally encoded across the Internet and concentrated in the cyber network is perhaps voluminously larger than any conceivable force or structure known to mankind. Its ubiquitous presence makes its participants and their respective participation co-generators with the network for much of what is to come for humanity as a species, and potentially new adaptation to machine. Not since the Enlightenment has society been confronted with endless concepts of where the universal wind of change may ultimately take them for enjoyment of life and its next evolutionary exchange.

## PERPETUAL CONNECTIVITY AND PERPETUATION (PC+P)

Digital applications and chips in mobile phones attached to the hand and held to the ear are headed into the body along with a score of other materials attributable to human enhancement technologies and a determinism to transhumanism. The proliferation of cell or mobile phones provides access to the Internet for more people than standard ISP connections, resulting in more access. Brain implants and neuro-interfaces enhance Internet connections in new ways. Their affordability will make them worthwhile for the privileged.

# EXCERPT

With friends, colleagues, and professional contacts moving into the global hive, there will be much incentive to join the network with increasing finality or be stigmatized, left out, a psychosocial outcast. Benefits appear to far outweigh the consequences. Addiction is a non-issue in this scenario, dependency is required. Addiction is not a bad word anymore, it is the norm, result of our dependency, magnified to the level of twenty-first century human necessity and expectation.

## CONCLUSION

Much more research obviously needs to be done in some of these areas. Key, critical questions remain, such as who will be key players on issues of governance and policy, where are we headed in terms of corporate power vs. individual empowerment, who are the winners and losers there? We must also wonder where there may be room for resistance, or *detournement* encouraged by potential outside advantages. How will we cope with impending new dimensions to cyberwar, what opportunities are provided us for peace, if any? And we must protect that important space for the individual who chooses to stay simply human, whatever the chosen or prescribed level of media and information literacy: without repercussion, without prejudice, without discrimination, without requirement, without injury.