

Blogging: A Virtue or a Vice of Contemporary Society

Robbi Gunter, an Internet writer with 15-year experience, has aptly noted, “A blog is merely a tool that lets you do anything from change the world to share your shopping list” (para. 14). Indeed, this all-embracing phenomenon covering an array of topics and interests has flooded the space of the World Wide Web. It is hard even to tell how many blogs are there in the international network whereas their number increases with an immense pace daily. In any case, there are more than 180 million blogs globally in accordance with the online search statistics. With about 12 million reporters (Goldman, 2008, p. 4), the number of readers is much larger and potentially involves hundreds of millions people. Since blogosphere becomes more and more important in terms of providing knowledge for various audiences on different topics, especially in political issues, this field cannot be disregarded by scholars. However, there is no single either positive or negative academic opinion concerning blog as an epistemology source. What is more, this item and the environment it creates due to being multi-sided is a subject of constant debates in the scientific area. For instance, Alvin Goldman (2008) and David Coady (2011) represent two opposing perspectives with respect to the issue considered. Both scholars provide well-reasoned arguments regarding their positions, though their criticisms do not suffice to provide a clear understanding whether blogging is good for society or not. Therefore, this essay attempts to analyze the contrasted rationales introduced by Goldman and Coady and clarify the answer to the topical question whose position, if either, is right and whose is wrong.

First and foremost, Goldman (2008) asserts that blogging undermines professional journalism, while Coady (2011) doubts this claim, though both authors are right to a certain degree. On the one hand, it has been a generally accepted tradition for ages that journalists are individuals whose occupation is reporting the news. Today, the Internet has modified the situation and frequently bloggers rather than professional journalists are timely presenters of

events: they are faster in this case. Nevertheless, the content of blogs oftentimes is solely opinion- or rumor-based, and thus undermines news-reporting function and journalism in this way. In particular, although blogging is a phenomenon that is distinct from an actual journalism, public, being not aware of such details, equates these two informational dimensions. As a result, what is shaped in their minds by blogs is hard to debunk by traditional media. If information obtained from blogs occurs to be a falsehood, stereotypes emphasizing that all media and people writing their content are telling lies appear. On the other hand, Coady (2011) rejects objectivity of journalists, underlining that these professionals are the paid staff, and direction of objectivity of their articles are dependent on their media owners or other powers that substantially influence their professionalism. Consequently, these are journalists themselves who undermine professional journalism, but not bloggers. Moreover, media tend to highlight events in such a way that would ensure that people believe it, which is an additional evidence to support this assumption. Hence, both researchers present significant points on the issue in spite of the fact that their argumentation and criticisms may not be an ample proof to disregard one of them or support another side.

Apart from that, Goldman (2008) accents that blogging “lacks balance” (Coady, 2011, p. 276), whereas conventional media also cannot be called holistic and well-balanced as his opponent suggests. Undoubtedly, manifestations of filtering exemplified by the former, such as peer-reviewing or a common-law system approach, are good ways to offer the target audience quality content. Conversely, this cannot be listed as a distinct feature of blog posts. Furthermore, often political blogs are deliberately used to promote one political actor while blackening the image of others. Nonetheless, Coady (2011) finds an apt response to this accusation. First, not all issues covered in media require objectivity (i.e. depicting several opinions) and this factor is determined by the topic. Second, not all opponents of blogging in journalism check the information they provide. Specifically, it is scientifically proved that

only 12% of these data are verified (Coady, 2011, p. 284). In any case, the above points only add more controversies and facets to the issue in question rather than show supremacy of one informational means over the other one.

Not less important is Goldman's (2008) argument stressing that blogging is "a parasite on the conventional media" (Coady, 2011, p. 276), notwithstanding that this statement is blur as well. Of course, the majority of blog posts incorporate appropriate information and provide links to different media resources. However, it would be more precise to note that currently media created by journalists and blogs written by free bloggers are intertwined, and they seek balance from one another. To illustrate this, one can take the most credible newspapers or other authoritative media, including *The New York Times* or BBC, which have their own blogs. This means that they do not disregard this medium but attempt to master this paradigm of presentation the information. Thus, this aspect is also not really clarified with respect to a particular role of blogging in society.

Taking into consideration the above discussion, it is hard to give a firm reply concerning who of the two scholars is right and who is wrong. Both researchers indicate and explain salient points regarding the issue under consideration, but at the same time provoke new debates and show background for additional and thorough exploration on the topic rather than suffice it. Nonetheless, several factors with respect to the analyzed question are clear from the findings of the essay. First, blogging is a too popular and overwhelming phenomenon nowadays. Hence, it is better to master and properly use this powerful tool as it cannot be simply abandoned. Second, there is an urgent need to comprehensively research and theorize this field in order to improve its structure and content provision, as well as ensure a well-organized cooperation between the two conflicting informational dimensions. Moreover, blogging is a comparatively new issue, and all news is at first perceived with fear, then criticized, and only afterward used accordingly. Therefore, it is time for scholars and

practitioners to transit blogging from criticisms to proper application for common good in society.