

# [Title] [Virtual Heritage]

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# Preface

In the last years, social media services have radically changed our everyday life (Chapter 1). Furthermore, social media services have influenced our way of grieving (Chapter 2). People die every day. They left a *virtual heritage*: not just a few data but complex profiles with hundreds of followers, pictures and shared thoughts. How familiars and friends relate with these profiles? Which decisions do they make about the virtual heritage? Are they legitimate? A *rituality* is a *socialmedia-real* ritual (Chapter 3) developed considering the characteristics of social media profiles of deceased. Rituallities are new rituals that are not mimic existed and well-accepted ones. Furthermore, ritualities are supposed to mitigate the sorrow impact caused by a wrong interaction with the digital persona of the deceased.

**#socialmedia**

**#technoidentity**

**#superself**

**#RIPprivacy**

**#status**

**#selfie**

**#image**

**#sharing**

**#SocialMediaThoughts**

**#VirtualTestament**

**#InactiveAccountManager**

**#WallOfCondolences**

**#SelfTracking**

**#elysway**

**#liveson**

**#bureaucracy**

**#MemorialProfiles**

**#DigitalHomicide**

**#IdentityFraud**

**#VirtualCandels**

**#VirtualCemetery**

**#deceased**

**#PopsUp**

**#BirthdayDilemma**

**#Rituality**

**#SelfieTherapy**

**#PixelsDeterioration**

**#CollectivePrintingSession**

**#DestroyingSessions**

# Chapter 1

# Social media everyday life

## #1.1

#socialmedia

#technoidentity

#superself

#RIPprivacy

Social media are web-based and web-mediated tools that allow people to share ideas, pictures and videos in communities and networks. Thanks to the last development in the field of mobile technologies, social media had a boom multiplying their use and changing the way of interaction with the web. The communication between individuals, communities, businesses and organization changed. A new *technoself/technoidentity* emerges, where there are no boundaries between the human and the technology, they influence themselves mutually and co-evolve rapidly. Since the technoidentity does not make a distinction between the *self* and the *virtual manifestation of the self*, anonymity and privacy lose their importance. Playing with *other* identities and *being no-one* in the virtual world and in social media offers less complicated possibility to create and change identity. The anonymity and the not revealed real identity creates a *superself*, a fictional character that explores fictional dimension aspects. Through invented and unknown personae individuals were engaged in transvestism and fantasies. In those cases, the effort is more in the dimension of *telling stories*, creating a clear distance between what *I am* and the *virtual mask*, rather than *co-living*, *co-growing* and *co-existing* in the web. On the other hand, technoidentity has no concern about privacy issues. If third part use or misuse the information of the networked identity is accepted unconsciously and partially. That third part accesses and controls personal information and the visible risk that personal data (of

billions of humans) can be sold to government is part of technoidentity. However, clearly it is continuously discussed the role and the legitimation of such a new interaction between humans, companies, organizations and governments through web-interfaces.

Technoidentities reject the naïfs explanation that privacy has lost its importance in the name of a human enhancement that would better and improve a human being's way of life. Furthermore, technoidentities are conscious to be in the co-called *post-privacy era* where the identity consist both of your "real life" and of a constellation of personal data in the web generated intentionally or not. [Fig. 1-4]



Fig 1, Screenshot social media, on Google



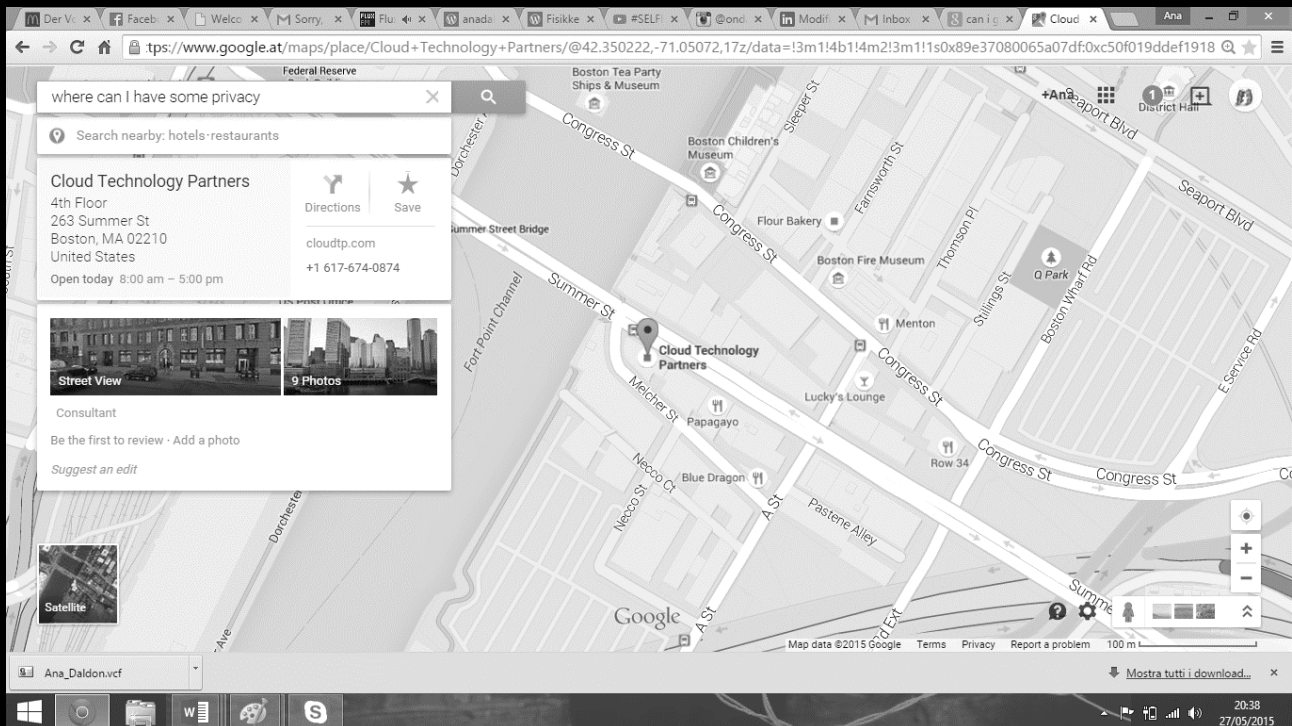


Fig 4 Screenshot *Where can I have some privacy*, on Google

## #1.2

#status

#selfie

#image

#sharing

Status message is a function of some social media services whereby a user may post a message that appears automatically to other users. The subjects of the status differs a lot. Different social media services requests different status messages and of course, different *technopeople* write differently in terms of syntax, subjects, lengths, etc. For example, the status messages are about personal opinions, achievements, romantic relationships, etc. Status can reflect people personality, wishes and afraid. Usually status messages are written with the goal to obtain visibility and comments. People who receive more comments tent to experience the benefits of social inclusion, those who receive none feel excluded. Comments are influenced not only by the content of the status but also by the friendship und politeness rules in the real and social media world. Even without comments,







Fig. 5 *First Selfie*, on Wikipedia



Fig. 6 First selfie, on Web

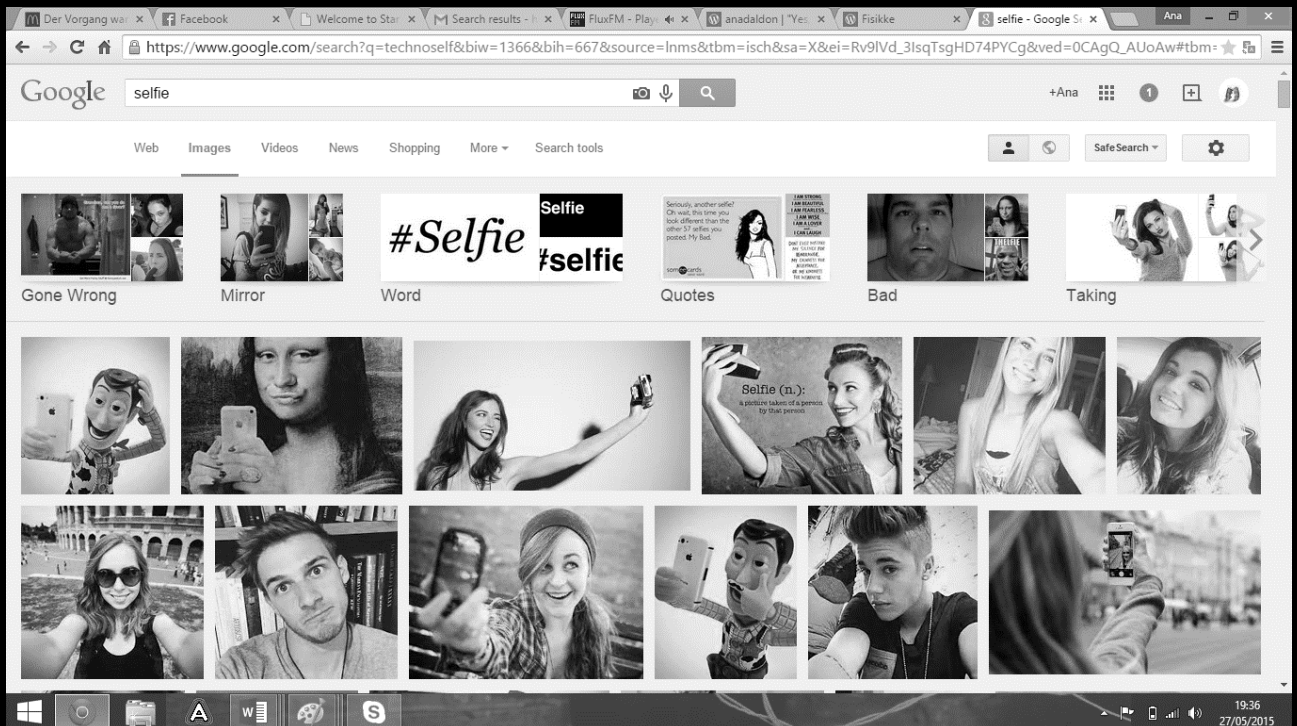


Fig. 7 Screenshot Selfie, on Google

**#1.3**  
**#extracts of**  
**#SocialMediaThoughts in**  
**#HumanHeads**

“I wonder if my popularity in Facebook is decreasing. After the gym I found just two notifications in Facebook and I was disappointed to see that they are only two. The cartoon I published got just one new like. Just two likes of the four total ones were from people I met in the last month. Facebook let me know that the cartoon was shared by a friend of mine. That means that she saw my post and decided to publish it on her wall. I don't know her, we met once at a French class and we do not communicate per Facebook.”

“Probably I published a wrong post. My friends would think I lost my style. Maybe the cartoon was too old, too unfunny, too intellectual. Why I published it?”

“I feel very comfortable with pictures. I choose to publish one picture that I took today at 9.00 am. On the picture there is a tourist, which is taking a picture of a cat close to a window with yellow and pink flowers. I don't know if the idea of publishing the pictures on my wall came before the idea of taking the picture.”

“Today, thanks God, the pictures I took several months ago in Rome got fifteen likes. The light was perfect and with my smartphone I obtained a great result. For today my reputation is saved. I can look what are posting the others.”



# Chapter 2

## Death in social media

### #2.1

#### #before

#### #testament

#### #InactiveAccountManager

#### #SecureSefe

#### #PersonallInstruction

When a person dies what will happen to all profiles, files and passwords? In social media, the death signalized a moment of radical transformation. Before the death, the owner of the profile was able to control/manage/create any content of the profile, after dying the profile is filled by posts of others or managed by someone else. Whether a physical or digital one, a testament is always valid but about profiles is not necessary the most convenient solution. For example, Google is offering a new feature called Inactive Account Manager to manage the last will, which allows account holders to donate their digital assets to a nominated beneficiary, with implications for anyone writing their will. Inactive Account Manager allow users to determine when their accounts expire (after, for example 6 or 12 months of inactivity). After that period, the nominated beneficiary will be provided to access to and extract the data. Facebook instead provides a similar feature, which allows family member to create memorial page for the dead loved one. These features are still unknown and need improvement. The new EU Data Protection Regulation, currently in draft, provides individuals with a “right to be forgotten”, i.e. the right for people to require the delate of their digital persona and without request the idea of a legitimate introduction of digital deaths or digital homicides. Web companies argue that it is too complicated and costly (and they cannot profit a lot with it). Nevertheless, whenever it is practicable and



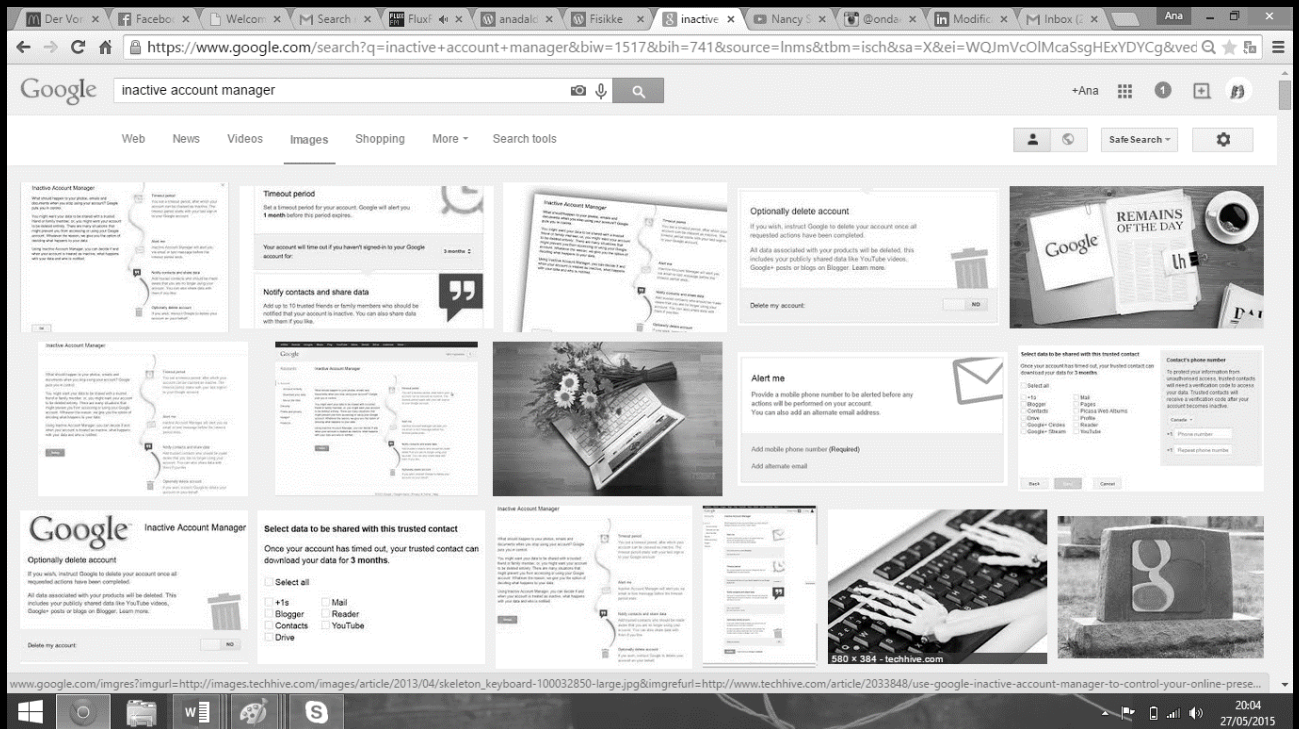


Fig. 8 Screenshot *Inactive account manager*, on Google

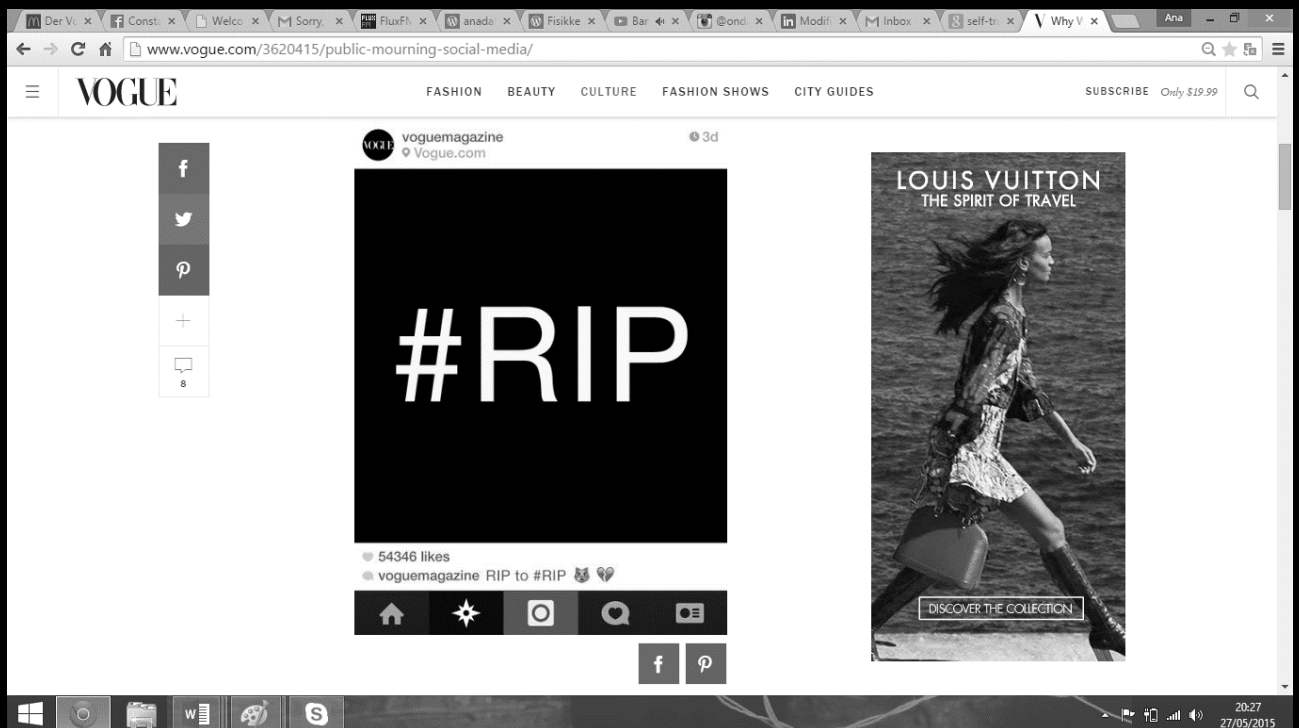


Fig. 9 #RIP, from Google to Vogue

## **#2.2**

### **#after**

#### **#WallOfCondolences**

#### **#SelfTracking**

#### **#elysway**

#### **#liveson**

Social media seems an inconvenient way to find out about a person's death and share the condolences, but due to the quickness and efficiency of the interaction, that is one of the principal way how the information is transmitted. The tendency to use self tracking tools and to share it in real time on social media services permits, in case of death, to let the web know about your death or alive status. Social media networks are not always optimized for the deceased, but if not delated there are used to remember and share. Elysway allows users to make a profile for the deceased, and then allows others to look at and share memories, photos and videos. Liveson keeps tweeting after the individual is passed away. This aftermath social media analysis the original Tweeter feed learning about the likes, tastes and syntax. Beneficiaries of the profile can be nominated and they will decide whether to keep the account *live* under the motto "When your heart stops beating, you'll keep tweeting". Is it a lovable eternity? Aftermath selfies and pictures haven't developed enough yet. When the body is resting in peace literally, the digital persona starts a new phase: when the profiles are not deactivated very quickly, they became a virtual arena for condolences, sharing ideas and creating communities that can last years.

## **#2.3**

### **#after**

#### **#bureaucracy**

**#MemorialProfiles**

**#DigitalHomicide**

**#IdentityFraud**

If there are no last will about the profile their future can go in one of those four ways.

- The profile can remain untouched, unaccessed, unreported and therefore open to status mentions, photo tags and wall post. A kind of business as usual, just there will be no *active* presence or answer by the right real owner. The eternity of the digital persona is accepted.
- A family member or a friend may choose to report a death to the social media service companies. They should sent a death certificate and ask for a aftermath profile page, more passive than the business as usual one. Digital persona is transformed into a memorial profile. [Fig. 10]
- A family member can contact the company directly per e-mail or phone and request the deactivation of the account. Some companies offer the possibility to fill out a predesigned form to ask the deactivation of a dead user's account. A homicide of the digital persona, through bureaucratic steps, is staged.
- User may gain access to a dead user's profile through knowledge of a password. That is a widely used option, even if this practice usually is against social media terms of services. It is a –legitimate or not, helpful or not- identity fraud.

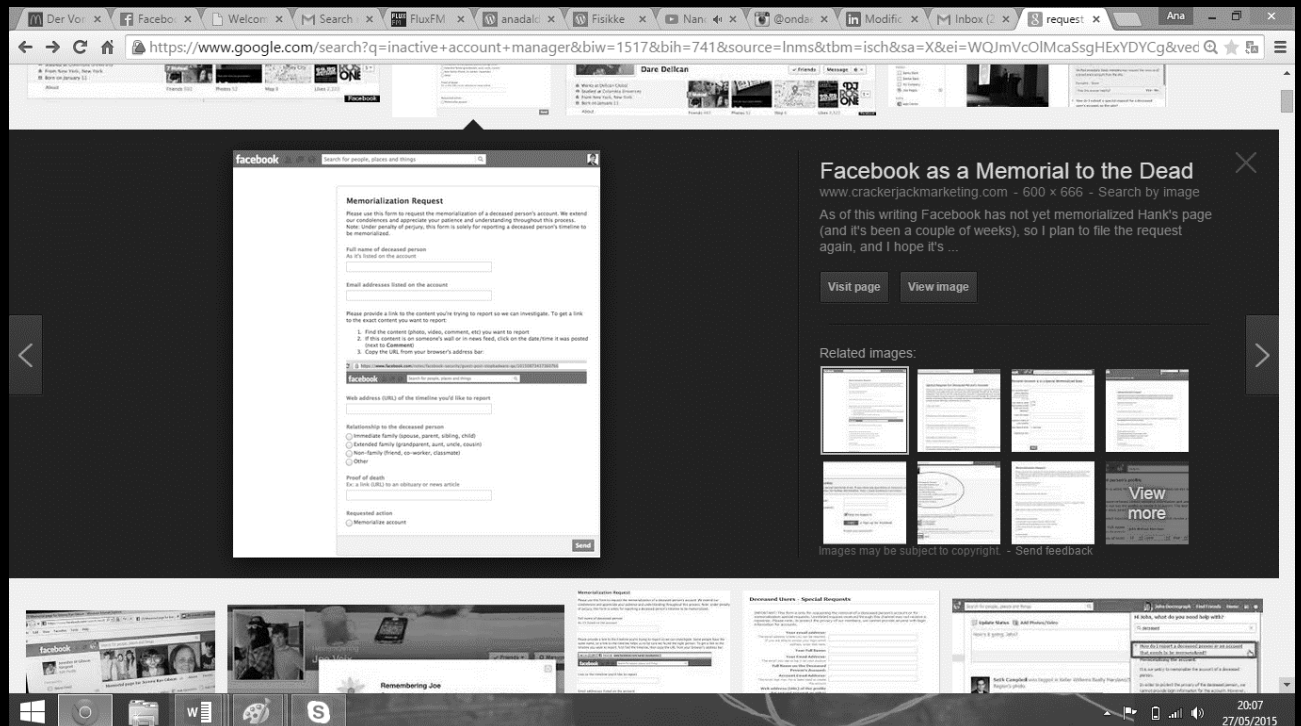


Fig. 10 Facebook as a memorial to the dead, on Google

#2.4

#after

#mimic

#real

#VirtualCandels

#VirtualCemetery

To light a candle is a holy tradition in many different cultures. It expresses more than words can express. For years, people have lit candles in different sacred places and now there are sacred virtual spaces. Some of them offers the possibility also to enter a prayer. For sure, any gods has a cyber-education too. Funerals and cemetery of different cultures have offered for years. Online funeral offers a real time internet viewing and the podcasted video or pictures of the funeral ceremony. Online cemetery offers the opportunity to create a memorial, visit other memorials, leave messages, flower and candle photo (sometimes to leave them you pay). [Fig 11-12]

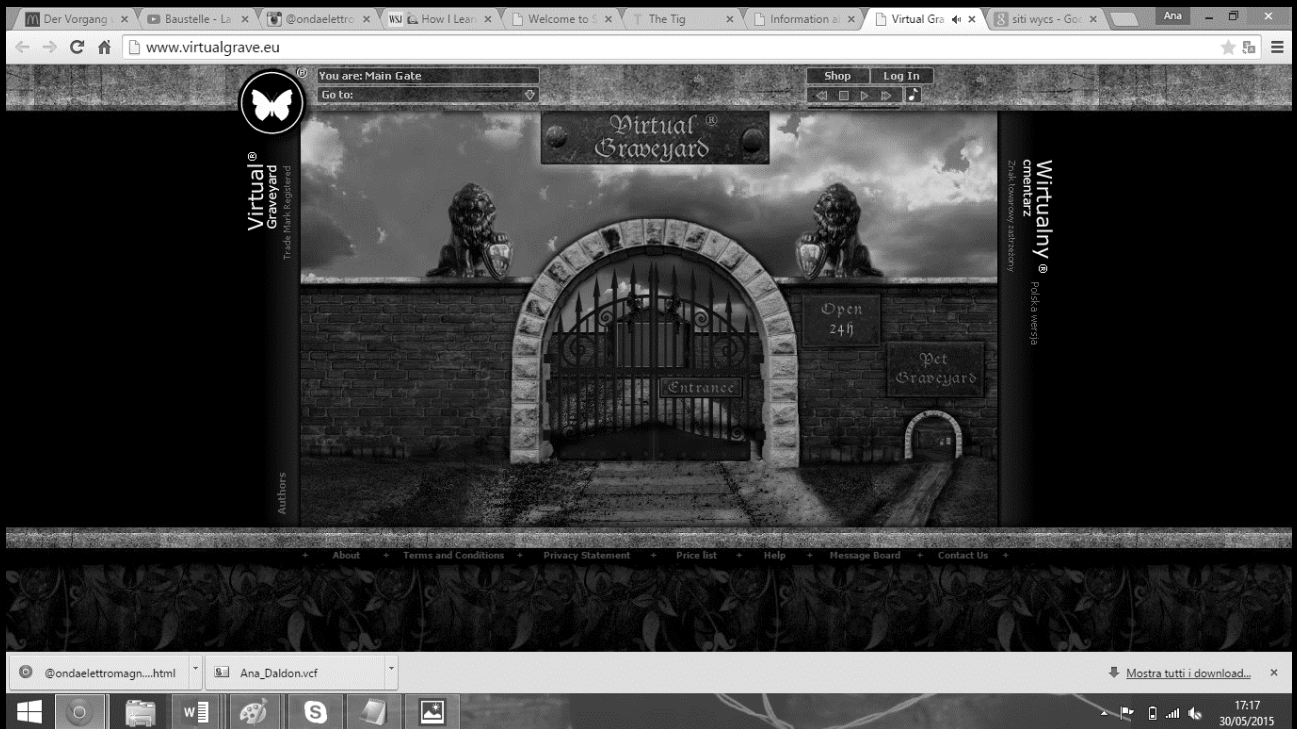


Fig. 11 *virtualgrave.eu*

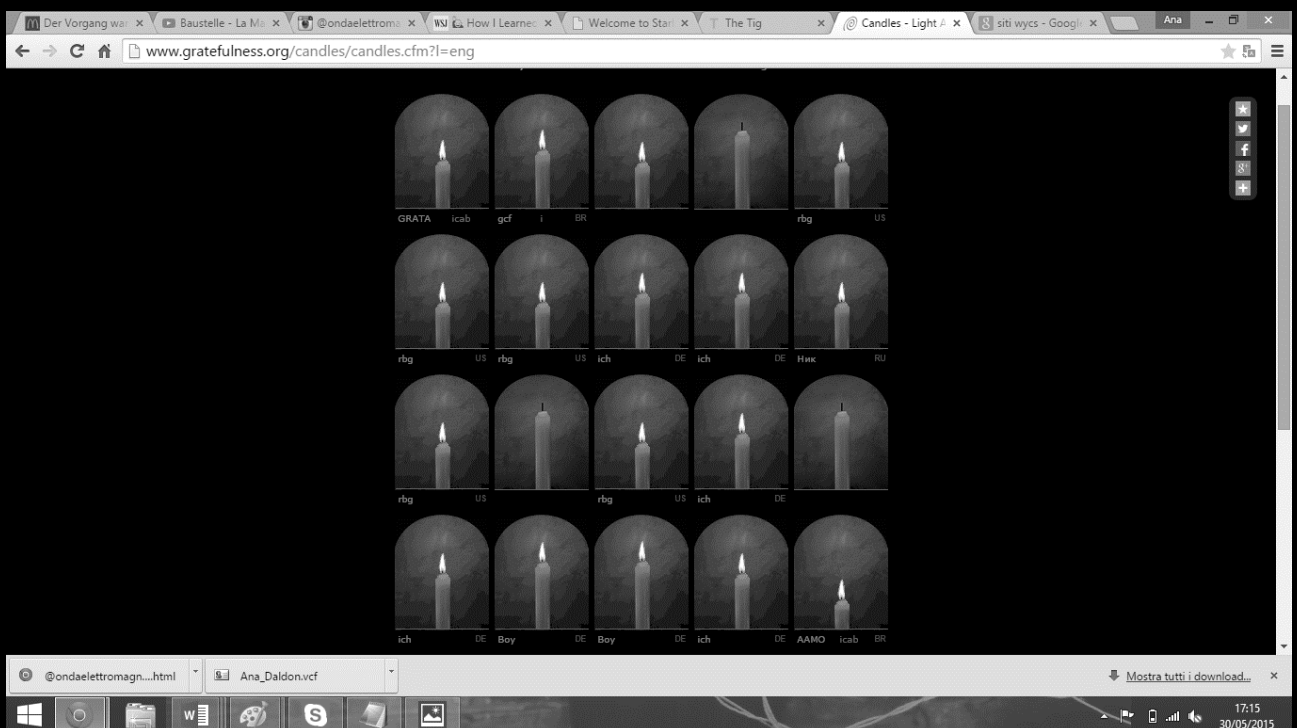


Fig. 12 *gratefulness.org/candles*

# Chapter 3

## Oh Eternity, what should I do with you?

**#3.1**

**#deceased**

**#PopsUp**

**#BirthdayDilemma**

**#extracts of**

**#SocialMediaThoughts in**

**#HumanHeads**

“I didn’t look for grief this afternoon, but it found me anyway, and I have designers and programmers to thank for it. In this case, the designers and programmers are somewhere at Facebook. I know they are probably pretty proud of the work that went into the “Year in Review” app they designed and developed, and deservedly- a lot of people have used it to share the highlights of their years. Knowing what kind of year I would had, I avoided making one of my own. I kept seeing them pop up in my feed, created by others, almost all of them with the default caption, - It has been a great year! Thanks for being part of it.”

Which was, by itself, jarring enough, the idea that any year I was part of could be described as great. Still, they were easy enough to pass over, and I did. Until today, when I got this in my feed, exhorting me to create one of my own. - Emil, here is what your year looked like! – A picture of my daughter, who is dead. Yes, my year looked like that. True enough. My year looked like the now-absent face of my little girl. It was still unkind to remind me so forcefully. “

“My job now is to dismantle and disperse what was remaining from Natalie’s life. Cancelling her phone services, credit cards, trash service and e-mail account were logical conclusions and decisions... The one thing I struggled what to do is her Facebook page. I

think Natalie's Facebook page is a virtual cemetery of sorts for me, as well as for her friends and family. Only we do not have to navigate winding roads and marble headstones to get there. Instead, we just click from any device and see her, remember her, leave messages, and smile or cry at what was and what has become."

"Facebook very much helped in my time of grieving by making it so easy to connect with Daniel's family and other friends. We bonded and shared our grief...It helped my kids grieve, as well."

"People wrote birthday wishes that made it clear that they had no idea she was dead. Stupid stuff like – Have a good time on your birthday, Clear. You only live once. – I started responding to all these posts with just: - She is dead. – but since Clear had over a thousand friends, this was not really a very good use of time. I also probably hurt some people's feelings."

"At some point I feel her page should be delated permanently. She is gone and it should be too."

"I wasn't able to sleep: Are Internet calls recorded? Somewhere? Can I get them? I need to see her."

### **#3.2**

**#NewRitualsPotential**

**#SocialNecrofilia**

**#Netiquette**

Whether publicly or via private messages, people's social media interactions with the dead mimic the grieving rituals we have held throughout time and shows the *digital Kueberl-Ross stages of loss and grief*. For Western society, that especially presumes that





Fig. 13 Screenshot *Tana Toraja in Indonesia*, from Google to TED talks

### #3.3

#### #Rituality

#### #SelfieTherapy

#### #PixelsDeterioration

#### #CollectivePrintingSession

#### #DestroyingSessions

A rituality is a socialmedia-real ritual developed considering and calculating the parameters related to social media profiles of deceased and the relationship to the person or the community who has to understand what and how to deal with the digital profile. Ritalities are fresh rituals that are not mimic clear existed and well-accepted rituals. Furthermore, ritalities supposed to mitigate the sorrow impact caused by a wrong interaction with the digital persona of a dead loved one. The sequences of activities such gestures, words, and object used by the rituality can vary. Usually ritalities are longer





# References

[1] I

[2] the world wide web