This is the code word for the research that I have been doing over the past months, while based in Berlin at the Wissenschaftskolleg, [the Institute of Advanced Study](). Next week I will give an internal presentation on this topic for the 40 Wiko fellows and staff. Every fellow has to do such a presentation once. Catherine David will do the introduction and lead the debate. The lecture is around 50-55 minutes and then one hour q&a session, followed by a heavy German lunch in the Wiko restaurant. I wrote the following announcement/summary:

Blogging, the Nihilist Impulse is the opening essay that I have written for my upcoming book (Routledge New York, 2007). It aims to formulate a theory of blogs beyond the 'citizen journalism' rethoric. This book that I hope to finish during my stay at Wiko, will be volume III of a series on critical Internet culture. Earlier titles were Dark Fiber (MIT Press, 2002) and My First Recession (V2-NAi, 2003). In my talk I will outline where we are in terms of the uptake and use of the Internet, worldwide. I distinguish three phases: 1. The academic, pre-commercial, text-only period before the World Wide Web. 2. The euphoric, speculative period in which the Internet opened up for the general audience, culminating in the late nineties dotcommania. 3. Post-dotcom crash/post 9-11 period, which is now coming to a close with the current so-called 'Web 2.0' hype.

Blogs are successors of the 90s "homepage" and create mix of the private (online dairy) and the public (PR-management of the self). As there are tens of millions of blogs it is next to impossible to make general statements about their 'nature'. I will nonetheless do this. It is of strategic importance to develop critical categories of a theory of blogging that takes the specific mixture of technology, interface design, software architecture and social networking into account.

Instead of merely looking into the emancipatory potential of blogs, or emphasize its counter-cultural folklore, I see blogs as part of a unfolding process of 'massification' of this, still, new medium. What the Internet after 2000 lost is the "illusion of change". The created void made way for large-scale, interlinked conversations through automated software, named weblogs, or blogs.

After a general introduction into net culture I will present my specific work that centres around the often voiced criticism that blogs are cynical and nihilist, because they merely comment and dump on the establishment (be it leftist, liberal or conservative). Instead of trying to prove that blogs are, in

essence, good, I have taken up the challenge to interprete blogs as nihilist vehicles. Nihilism is not a lifestyle or opinion but a condition in which (Western) societies find themselves. In the Internet context it is not evil, as Rüdiger Safranski suggested, but triviality that forms the drama of media freedom.

Blogs bring on decay. Each new blog adds to the fall of the media system that once dominated the twentieth century. What's declining is the Belief in the Message. That's the nihilist moment and blogs facilitate this culture like no platform has done before. Blog software assists users in their crossing from Truth to Nothingness. The printed and broadcasted message has lost its aura. News is consumed as a commodity with entertainment value. Instead of presenting blog entries as mere self promotion, we should interpret them as decadent artifacts that remotely dismantle the broadcast model.