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# Normalization of Digital Violence: A Critical Approach

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## Abstract

The article discusses the current situation of the aestheticization of violence in the digital space, which has become the natural result of interaction crises between human beings and the new media. The methodological basis of this study consists of modern philosophical concepts of postmodernism and digital society. As a result, the rational-reflexive attitude to the existing state of affairs is clearly giving way to the elemental aesthetic processes in the digital environment that justify violence. In conclusion, users with a certain set of values generate a unique overall content of the network.

**Keywords:** Integration, Crisis, Hierarchy, Personalization, Aestheticization.

## Normalización de la violencia digital: un enfoque crítico

### Resumen

El artículo analiza la situación actual de la estetización de la violencia en el espacio digital, que se ha convertido en el resultado natural de las crisis de interacción entre los seres humanos y los

nuevos medios. La base metodológica de este estudio consiste en conceptos filosóficos modernos de posmodernismo y sociedad digital. Como resultado, la actitud racional-reflexiva hacia el estado actual de las cosas está dando paso claramente a los procesos estéticos elementales en el entorno digital que justifican la violencia. En conclusión, los usuarios con un cierto conjunto de valores generan un contenido general único de la red.

**Palabras clave:** Integración, Crisis, Jerarquía, Personalización, Estética.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is getting more and more obvious today, that the network space includes a wide range of social discourses, for example, the actual problem of modern university transformation under the influence of the network (FRATIGLIONI, WANG, ERICSSON, MAYTAN & WINBLAD, 2000). The Internet is often understood as a heterogeneous and fragmented space of social interaction, where the positions that happen to be not obvious in the so-called real reality are sometimes unified. We believe that the recognition of the digital environment as a certain active force, which is able to determine the processes carried out beyond the digital realm, indicates the emergence in the society of a new paradoxical assessment, which covers such a phenomenon as violence as well.

No one doubts that the new media space is radically deterritorial. As a result, there are attempts being made to explain modern media as an environment that needs transparency, and

therefore requires a green attitude towards itself to be provided by the user.

The German philosopher KHAZIEVA, KHAZIEV & KLYUSHINA (2018) in *Im Zug der Zeit. Verkürzter Aufenthalt in der Gegenwart* reflects on the change in attitude towards the cemetery. He notes that the reformation of the cemetery falls on the Enlightenment, and if in the Middle Ages it was located near the houses, what, on the one hand, caused a number of problems at the level of everyday life, but, on the other hand, at the cultural level meant a constant reference to memory.

The author notes that the process of crowding out the death and dying from the life of citizens begins, but still, this reform does not mean the abolition of the cultural memory of generations. He emphasizes that the modern cemetery, which is no longer ecclesiastical and resides outside the brackets of the urban landscape, signifies an iconic desire to make the cemetery a model of a garden design, which Lübke believes is a peculiar expression of aesthetic triumph (LÜBBE, 2013). Thus, we can assume that in the modern culture there is no point in the last fixation because it is not only the set of individual axiological bases that undergoes reassembly over the life of one generation but the ultimate understanding of value as such transforms as well.

As the American Researcher Meier notes, the information revolution is only gathering pace. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly obvious that in addition to expanding access to information channels and methods of communication, a number of

crises arise (MEIER, 2011). We propose to fix three interrelated crises of network space that influenced the perception of violence as a conceptual outline.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The methodological basis of this study consists of modern philosophical concepts of postmodernism and digital society (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 1988; MANYIKA, CHUI, BUGHIN, DOBBS, BISSON, & MARRS, 2013; NOVIKASARI, 2017; KOPACKOVA & LIBALOVA, 2019). The methodological basis of the study is a combination of different methods, including the hermeneutic method in the analysis of works on the study of media space, the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete in the description of changes in the field of ethics. The dialectical method was used in the course of considering the contradictions inherent to the new-media culture.

## **3. RESULTS**

As the first crisis, one may designate an integration crisis, which, in the context of this article, means the degree of the mediatization of various spheres of everyday life. This concept hides a dyad of meanings. On the one hand, it can literally be perceived as

how much a person's life is incorporated into the internet of things: when coming home, a person discovers that dinner is already prepared, the lights are on and the robot vacuum cleaner has done the cleaning; and on the other hand, as the interrelation of elements of everyday life with each other, when the network space not only has a positive impact on the quality of a person's life (an increase in leisure time) but also determines a person's freedom (a dramatic increase in leisure time leads to deeper immersion into the digital realm; for instance, the time is being wasted on computer games). If the philosophers of the Enlightenment developed an understanding of the mechanicalness of the construction of a human being as a biological organism, today we can affirm the idea of humanization of a global gadget, which not only knows what the user wants but also determines what he will want in the next moment.

The crisis of hierarchy appears to be the second crisis. The phenomenon of the availability of virtually any visual product at any time transforms (and even cancels) the experience of catharsis when it becomes almost impossible for a person to survive the deep shock of a static (slow) image (long cinematic plan, the artistic canvas of the picture). If one uses the terminology of the theorist of culture V. Benjamin, the aura is impossible for a piece of art in the network. A person is faced with a modified artifact. It proves to be modified in the sense that it is torn out from the joint experience of perception and is given as a replicated, memeified product that is not capable of providing a person with the possibility of an exclusive existential experience.

In a digital society, where the sphere of a person's sexual life ceases to be determined by another person (LAHLOU, 2008; PAKDEL & ASHRAFI, 2019), it is mainly based on fantasies, that is, the need for pornography is actualized not only as a screen version of private fantasies but in its symbolic meaning. Cultural bans in pornographic films turn out to be overcome, which allows consumers of such content to realize their desire for sexual objectification and thereby assert their subjectivity. That is, there appears such a phenomenon as sexual solipsism (LANGTON, 2009) when only an actor who gets sexual pleasure is possible, and everything else is a projection of his desire. Accordingly, the user loses the ability to empathize with another person. Contemplated violence becomes inseparable from enjoyment and the viewer ceases to be interested in what it is by origin: elaborate acting or the actual situation of rape.

The third crisis is a change in the perception of personalization (BENNETT & SEGERBERG, 2011). You can talk about the fusion of two important characteristics of modern society – its consumerist temper and the format of social interactions. That is, in a situation when a particular person becomes uninteresting, the user has the opportunity to interrupt communication with him by blocking him in all social networks where he has accounts. In a knowledge society, a communication society, a person is protected from spontaneous, unforeseen communications.

DELEUZE & GUATTARI (1988) come up with the following characteristic of postmodern: according to their opinion, the world loses its foundation and becomes chaotic, and the subject is no longer



able to be a producer of the dichotomy (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 1988). Chaos is revealed by postmodernists through the concept of rhizome. A rhizome is a certain deterritorialized network, where there are no logical causes and consequences. This comprehension of space is predetermined by a radical turn in the human understanding of its locality. Locality in this context implies any limitation: the fear of death, the lack of cognitive search potential, the loss of human-sidedness of objects in the surrounding reality. The researchers note that reality is the social reality of people who are involved in social relations and are engaged in production processes. At the same time, reality itself is the inexorable abstract and ghostly logic of capital, which determines the events of social reality (SEARLE & WILLIS, 1995). In other words, in a postmodern society, a person is limited to an individual, private locus, locked in it.

At the same time, there is no possibility to exhaustively describe the postmodernist subject through the reflection of his active conjuncture — every moment of time he is in the denial stage. If Sisyphus of A. Camus is absurd in his activity, then the mass of individuals is paralyzed by the lack of action. The idea of a new type of culture, which is already contained in the very naming of the epoch - postmodernism, is a non-reflective something that emerges after modernity and is revealed through opposition to modernity.

Of course, the postmodern is a whole corpus of ideas; however, as a key issue that determines all sorts of interpretations, it is customary to denote a measurement crisis in which a person can fulfill oneself. In our opinion, the state of postmodern might be overcome not

through the reflection of the concept of the lost generation, but through the revision of social space instead. A Russian media-theoretician, everything from Dasein to a logical language turns out to be incapable of describing reality and it is at this moment that the medial turn takes place (PISTRICK, 2016). Isolation of the subject is overcome, and the media is becoming a new medium of its existence.

The process of changing postmodern discourse to media is mediated by the state of technical development and the level of media culture. Over the past decades, there has been considerable interest observed among researchers towards the ethical issues of media in connection with the creation of new channels of digital interaction. There is a transformation of the concept of ethical itself - from meeting certain requirements of behavior to self-production of ethical laws. In the conditions when traditional media are no longer understood to be tools, it becomes necessary to revise the aesthetic understanding of phenomena and, in general, their place in the structure of the values of a modern man. The meanings that make up the historically problematic field of media differ not only by the degree of usefulness for people and society, by their ability to institutionalize digital relationships, but, above all, by their own genesis. Thus, the political engagement of the media discourse as a whole seems to be obvious. This is due to the historically established role of the media as a full participant in political events and processes. At first glance, the content of a particular media product does not represent any value for media researchers. However, in our opinion, there is a direct relation between the dominant content of the media and the understanding of the role of

media in a person's life and, as a result, the corresponding interpretation of ethics.

The designated crises as symbols of the digital age, in our opinion, determine every day (at the level of mass consciousness) view of violence. As Russian media-philosopher Savchuk notes, that referring to the positive elements of the new media environment, one implies pragmatic categories, and when talking about the negative ones, one implies ethical, psychological, pedagogical, legal aspects of the discourse. However, according to Savchuk, these two types of assessments are the two sides of the same phenomenon, and, therefore, they cannot be opposed.

Thus, speaking of violence today, we must relate it to the process of mediatization, to the situation when the very way of speaking about violence and accents in media discussion changes. As the line between aesthetically beautiful and aesthetically ugly phenomena disappears, only one thing remains – just aesthetic. In order to present the axiological transformation more extensively, we turn to the consideration of violence on the horizon of the mediacy.

The presence of the topic of violence in a modern media text sets a certain framework for its understanding. That is, if the media are neutral agents, then what is the cause of the mythologization of violence in public discourse, primarily as an aesthetic norm. Can we say that violence should be a necessary component of modern media content? The digital environment imposes a certain matrix of violence perception. Nowadays, violence as digital content is introduced in two ways: aestheticized (visually appealing, which causes a desire to

emulate) and as a criticism of violence, which is contained in documentaries or news releases.

At the same time, it is the first method that mainly determines how a serious existential problem is being transformed in the mass consciousness into a kind of game that breaks ethical limits, diffuses the fundamental value bases of human nature. The rational-reflexive attitude to the existing state of affairs, which is capable of giving a serious ethical assessment, is clearly giving way to the elemental aesthetic processes in the digital environment that justify violence.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The emergence and development of social networks have changed the scale of the media space. Social media define the context of modern life. M. McLuhan focuses on such an important aspect of media perception as a joint experience, for example, of such a phenomenon as cinematography. The entertainment orientation implied by any mass does not reflect the true essence of media since any language is media, but the mass character of use does not mean that it has an entertaining character. New languages and information transfer tools are emerging, hence driving the cultural change.

In his work *Lonely Crowd* Sociologist Reisman reflects the negative view of the technologized society, where the whole society can be characterized as neurotic due to the fact that the tendency of mediation of man's relationship with the world is intensifying.

According to the author, this indicates a state of social exclusion of a person. However, modern researchers believe that new media appeared and entered the culture according to civilizational logic when certain tools began to be used by a man (stone, agricultural tools, vehicles) and thereby changed the set of the demanded skills and the degree of environmental dependence.

The emergence of culture as an artificially created environment in which a man can only live contains the idea that the more a person separates from the natural one, the higher the culture and, accordingly, the organization of social interaction is considered. Modern media reality is characterized by the fact that users with a certain set of values generate a unique overall content of the network. The world, funded by the media, is able to collect the postmodern fragmentation of the subjects. New media in everyday life cease to function as tools of consciousness manipulation and acquire the ontological status of a space of freedom.

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