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EDITORIAL

Critique of digital rationality. New frontiers for ethics and philosophy

One of the myths of this unfinished Modernity through which the current techno- scientific civilization is passing is the idea that we openly find ourselves in an information society. Ours is an era of civilization characterized by the overwhelming emergence of interconnection systems, whereby, mediated by "digital devices", we have, in addition, the firm conviction of possessing the control of knowledge and with it the control of our own freedom, or of our sense of freedom. Thus, we link freedom of information and freedom of action, with that of the sense of mastery of our living space. However, all the detected signs of this informational society allow us to conclude that we are rather in a world in which we are dominated by means of a "digital rationality".

According to the above, the reason that prevails in the digital world is rather disdained, not to say clearly "hidden", in the light of the technological dazzle. Our era is the era of the digital society in which communicative reason is evidently overwhelmed by digital rationality. Let us see briefly how communicative rationality operates, as opposed to digital rationality, in this era of hyperinformation; in it we can clearly see that communicative reason and digital reason are opposed to each other.

Certainly, the characteristics shown by this New World made real by technology, makes us think about the reasons why our society is absorbed in a kind of reality that does not necessarily correspond to the real one. I think that the Hegelian expression found in this idea can now be seen more clearly, since not everything that we "see" as empirical evidence of our experience, corresponds to the real world of lived life. And this play on words is as disconcerting as is the very idea of "virtual reality". In this virtual world not everything real is rational, just as not everything rational is real. The Hegelian expression places us, in this century that is almost a quarter of an hour old, at the gates of a reality that overflows us because of the unrealness of its forms.

The relationship between the real and the unreal becomes insecure, through territories marked by blurred lines, in light of the strategies that the virtual context itself places as a path to be traversed. And it is precisely there where we find the problems and details of the advances of information and communication technologies. In the so-called "digital society", communicative reason loses substance in the face of the questions of commitment introduced by the digital agent. This, the agent, is the one who dominates in this indelible space; and it is the one who imposes a sense of life, by possessing, he himself, all the personal and social information of each of the subjects that make it up. What we are saying is that the communicative reason is diluted in these spaces of interaction of the digital world, from

three perspectives: in an ontological sense, in an ethical sense and, finally, but not exclusively, in a political sense.

In an ontological sense, the question of digital being is centered on the fluidity of information: being is an invisible flow that only materializes through the control of will and power by whoever controls the interstellar space into which the interconnected world has been transformed, precisely through technological intercommunication devices. Being is literally a "flowing substance," as Heraclitus would say; and, therefore, its materiality is only detectable if we can measure the flow of its existence through the algorithm. Being- with (Heidegger's mit-sein), is a being that is materialized by its existence through a bit; that is, by being a digital flow that can only be read, not felt; it can neither be understood nor much less "embraced".

Being in the digital society is an immaterial materiality, because its substance consists in non-being: this is what the digital network consists in, in stripping the digital citizen (illusory citizen), by stripping him of everything that belongs to him as a subjective being; the being is empty of identity. The more immaterial the subject is, the more subject properties it possesses in this digital world. The real presence gets in the way. The unreal has become real. This, of course, makes a new rationality emerge.

From this emerging rationality, the nature of being vanishes to reinsert itself as part of a total, vertiginous and incessant flow of life in the digital world. There is no pause of being; the digital being is tireless, because this digital society is an insatiable society of presence, demanding eternal presence through interconnection by means of the device: Byung Chul Han calls it "digital rationality", which he places in the framework of the "society of tiredness", which is the same as saying, "digital society". The ontos of digital society is its fluidity of existence: this ontos is a fluidity of information uncontrolled by the overwhelmingness of itself (it is not fluidity in Bauman's sense of liquidity; it is an impalpable but at the same time material liquidity). It is not controlled by the subject, although it is controlled by the agents of the neural network thus shaped as a digital world.

The digital society that justifies this form of rationality is characterized precisely by a structure designed in such a way that each digital citizen (we have called him "deluded citizen"), is absorbed by this context of digital neural networks in which his personal data, and everything that conforms it, flows through the channels of the network most of the time without his consent; although when he agrees to it, he almost never verifies its contents; it is the most subliminal way of operating that has found this world of uncontrolled manipulations with which the digital society is clad.

Thus, the subject of communicative reason, an ancient subject in the light of the demolishing digital devices that constitute it, is a fluid in this digital society, which is why its validity as reason, which in turn is much

more instrumental than the communicative reason itself that serves as a counter-argumen, is under discussion. The more invisible it is, the more legitimacy there will be in this digital world. The world of digital society demands a non-existent subject. It requires it for its domination. Being-there is diluted in being-with, and from there, in being-nothing; being is transformed into nothing in this digital world. Communicative reason is diluted in digital reason, which inaugurates a new way of mastery, not of communication, however contradictory this may seem. This is precisely a core issue to discuss.

On the other hand, it refers to the ethical sense in this context, which communicative rationality raises as its standard, but which digital rationality in itself ignores. And this is what leads current philosophy to think that communicative rationality, being empty of ethical referents, will no longer be such a "reason". This is explained precisely by the ontological questions raised in the previous paragraphs. The ontos in which the digital society consists has instability in its foundations, since it is impossible to speak of centers of information generation, as occurs in the "real society". The fluid in which this society consists, is constituted as the ocean in which there are islands interconnected by its aquiferous condition. They are islands of materiality that are only connected if they are able to navigate through the turbulent and fluid waters of hyperreality.

Therefore, the communicative processes that are traditionally constituted through evident truths, this time become evident through messages collected in the hyperconnected channels generated by each of these islands of reality: each Internet user is a node of the network, whose directionality is neither determined nor determinable, as an indisputable sign of the oxymoron that constitutes it; that is, its immaterial materiality. The subject is blurred, diluted, in this immaterial relation, like a bit of the neuronal network. The subject is message and messenger, creating conflicts in the fundamental questions of human rationality, that is, in the communicative perspective that founds all ethics, given the conflictive nature of this world with respect to truth, which is called into question as the north of all ethical relations.

In this way, ethics is blurred by communicative anti-values, given that the digital world, made up of neuronal networks, whose nodes are found in each Internet user, as the subjective fluids that make it up are called, is a world structured by a network of nodes and channels, each one acting as a generator and receiver of information, which is directed towards the center of power that is not one, but one in a multiplicity (Heraclitus dixit), returning such information in real time, contradictorily as information of interest (for the agents of the network, but also for the illusive citizen).

Ethics, which is defined as the good habit of the subject, since there is no subject in this digital world as we know it, as expressed in the previous lines, but rather a fluidity of subjects, is characterized in another dimension, whose ontic frameworks also remain to be defined. Some philosophers, such as the aforementioned Han (2022), prefer to say that it disappears: in the digital society there is no communicative reason. On the contrary, a digital rationality is imposed. Let us leave the political aspects for another opportunity.

These ideas serve to introduce us to the subject that concerns us in this editorial. The question of whether or not communicative rationality prevails in the digital world or whether it is bypassed by the so-called digital rationality, as Byung Cul Han calls it. To ask about this communicative rationality could be considered a meaningless question. It would not be possible to think that human beings, that species that prevails in the world precisely because it is endowed with speech, and thus with a communicative power through reason, do not possess precisely this power of communication derived from reason, since our sense of being is not only shaped by logos, which, in the words of Heraclitus, and which is later taken by Aristotle, makes being as such a rational being; that is, as a being endowed with communicative power through logos that makes us human.

Communicative rationality, precisely because of the ontic and ethical characteristics described above, is based on the idea of communication (Habermas, 1999). This principle of identity present in reason points to the idea of argumentation; that is, the question of convincing the participant in the communicative dialogue that is engaged in, that the reasons, put forward with good arguments, indeed, with the pretension that they are the best, can be accepted as valid in order, consequently, to make the decisions that derive from the statements that conform it. For this same reason, communicative rationality demands ethical rules during the very process of arguing, from which all communicative ethical theories (the aforementioned Habermas, 1999 and 1998; Cortina, 2010, etc.) are derived.

This is what Byung Chul Han (2022) points to. Communicative ethics loses strength as a normative entity in the context of digital rationality. The former demands arguments, while the latter imposes itself as a totality. And this is the crux of the matter, as my teacher of Theory of Legal Argumentation, the excellent professor José Ignacio Beltrán, would say, almost forty years ago; or that other great of philosophical dissertation, who was another great teacher and friend, Álvaro Márquez-Fernández. Digital rationality finds itself in an environment in which ethics can be conspicuous by its absence, if we lose the state of alertness that we must maintain in this context of dilution of the entity; or of disappearance, in the traditional sense of the term.

This is the conclusion reached by Byun Chul Han, since communicative reason is, in the present circumstances, blurred in the midst of the unbridled avalanche of information circulating through the neural networks of digital society. This is precisely the product of the transformation suffered due to the onslaught of information and communication technologies, which have raised their stakes to the maximum benefits, especially in terms of employability of their interaction spaces. Digital rationality operates in this environment overshadowing communicative rationality, since, in addition, it reigns with a totalitarian character. It is not based on arguments; it is based on the total knowledge of the digital world, thanks to its devices.

Digital rationality, which demands knowledge of reality in order to dilute it into unreality (the product of manipulated truth and converted into post-truth), is based on the capture of voluntary information from the deluded subject, who gives it voluntarily, precisely in the exercise of his "full freedom", as we argued at the beginning, which is then returned to his space of privacy as "merchandise" whose good price must be taken advantage of; as Shoshana Zuboff (2021) would say: "reality is sold at two for one". This infallible determination of the digital society makes rationality, which is properly digital, an instrument of the new totalitarianism in which the current capitalist society consists: it is an economic system that founds reason on the business of emotions captured for free through timelessly connected devices. Criticism of the totalitarian communist regime goes in another direction, since it also dominates with other control devices.

Thus, it can be said that digital rationality is framed in a new project of Modernity; or, better said, in a new device of social control, as was the disciplinary society, controlling the corporeality of the subject of industrial capitalism, which characterized the Third Modernity. The rationality of digital capitalism is that which controls as the disciplinary society of post-industrial capitalism, in which communicative rationality is its center. This, moreover, is the foundation of the democratic system of law, as has been affirmed on other occasions. However, the resemblance between one and the other is only apparent. The social control of the new economic order thus formed is open and interpreted by the deluded subject as an exercise of his freedom. While the other capitalist system controls by means of bodily control devices, constraining the subject. While the former leaves the subject with the sensation of freedom, the latter leaves him constricting his freedom. In the middle of both, digital rationality emerges, controlling emotions and founding a new market.

Paraphrasing Masters Ortega and Gasset, digital rationality "is the theme of our time".

Dr. José Vicente Villalobos Antúnez / Editor-in-Chief

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