MASSIFICATION AND INTERNETILIZATION: two sides of the same coin in the process of alienation by the media

MASSIFICAÇÃO E INTERNETILIZAÇÃO: duas faces da mesma moeda no processo de alienação pelos meios de comunicação
MASIFICACIÓN Y USO DE INTERNETILIZACIÓN: dos caras de una misma moneda en el proceso de alienación mediática

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ABSTRACT
It is intended to observe how technological changes have promoted changes in society, however it seems that one thing remains the same: the use of the media as a technology of alienation. This observation will be carried out methodologically through a theoretical and exploratory research, seeking a review of concepts that refer to the uses and effects of the media. In this sense, the hypothesis is that the idea that in the sense of alienating use of means there have been no major changes. The means, by extending human perception, seem not to have produced an effect of liberating consciousness, but rather, it has expanded the process of mystification and alienation, through the massification of information, creating an internetilization, a massification through digital media.

KEYWORDS: Media; Alienation; Extension.

Introduction

The book O Leopardo (1958), by Tomasi di Lampedusa, portrays the decadence of the Italian aristocracy, mainly through the eyes of Dom Fabrício de Salina. However, a phrase from his nephew Tancredi, in a way, synthesizes the debate in this article: "For everything to remain as it is, everything must change" (DE PAULA, 2016, p. 1).

This nihilist view, as observed by Márcio Gimenez de Paula (2016), in addition to representing a historical period at the beginning of the 20th century, also portrays our human condition at the beginning of the 21st century in relation to the use of the media.

Although there are several heralds of trumpets that resound towards a view that we live in a period of radical change in society, as cited by Pierre Levy (2010), I actually think in a partially opposite way, as almost nothing has changed, at least in regarding the effects of communication on society. Only your processes have accelerated. The effect of change is more partial than is believed, since, in this acceleration, there is an intensification in the amount of information and a fragmentation of large emitters, into

thousands of small emitters. In other words, the exchange of the hegemony of the mass media for digital media, based on large social networks and the internet (DUGNANI, 2020).

In view of this statement, I can be asked that anything has changed. And I can answer: yes, a lot has changed, but I agree with Tancredi, to remain the same regarding the alienation processes. This vision that I intend to defend in this article will be based on the most apocalyptic reflection (ECO, 1993) of the Frankfurt School, in the figures of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Because, technically, a lot has changed in relation to the uses of the media, however, especially in recent years, it seems that one thing, unfortunately, does not change: the use of the media to generate alienation. That is why I will resort to the more radical wing of the Frankfurt School, since the sentence of its theorists in relation to the alienation of the masses through the use of the media has never seemed more current, I would say almost prophetic, if not, at least, classic. Media technology has changed, its uses have also changed, yet the alienation effect seems to remain the same, or perhaps more intense. Things change totally to stay the same. Sage Lampedusa, sage Don Fabrício de Salina, in short, sage Tancredi.

From this first reflection, it is intended to observe how technological changes have promoted changes in society, as stated by Marshall Mcluhan's (2016) and Henry Jenckins' (2015) theory of media. However, as we move from the 20th to the 21st century, one characteristic seems to remain the same: the use of the media as a technology of human alienation. Therefore, the reaffirmation of the failure of the Enlightenment promise, made by Adorno and Horkheimer - in their classic article cultural industry: the Enlightenment as mystification of the masses - never seemed more current (2019, 2000).

This observation will be carried out methodologically through a theoretical and exploratory research, seeking a review of concepts that refer to the uses and effects of the media by and in society. In order to develop the argument, I intend to contrast - according to the classification developed by Umberto Eco (1993) - the more integrated (and why not say Enlightenment) view of the media theory of Mcluhan (2016), to the more apocalyptic view of Adorno and Horkheimer (2019 and 2000).

In this sense, I see as the main hypothesis the idea that, in the sense of the alienating effect of the media, little or nothing has changed. The main problem seems to me that, although media technology seems to have totally changed, its effects in relation to the production of alienation in its users have remained the same, if not more intense. By extending human perception, denying Mcluhan (2016), the means do not seem to have produced an approximation effect, or even liberation of human consciousness, but rather have expanded the process of mystification and alienation, as observed by Adorno

and Horkheimer (2000) in relation to the mass media (DUGNANI, 2019). The clarification that would set man free through technological development only seems to chain him to the development of the obscurantism of ideas that we can see today with a quick search on the internet. I would say that the Enlightenment promise, criticized by the Frankfurt School, still seems to fail resoundingly today. Technology seems to be, once again, in yet another revolution in the means of communication, amplifying the feeling of fear, amplifying the processes of alienation, instead of clarifying and freeing the human being. The examples to corroborate this assertion are diverse, from the most absurd speeches, generated by fake news, about the belief that the earth is flat, to the fear of vaccines. Or even the hallucinated speeches of some elected politicians, and others not re-elected, producing convenient truths, the post-truth, are more than enough examples to verify how the use of the media has produced alienation instead of liberation (D'ANCONA, 2018 and PRIOR, 2019).

In this sense, it is believed that in terms of the use of the means of communication to produce alienation, technologically almost everything has changed, but its effects have remained the same, they have only been accelerated. Therefore, in agreement with Hartmut Rosa (2019), it is observed that there was an acceleration in some organizing elements of our society, including the use of the media, which are causing a profound intensification in processes inaugurated in modernity, and which are gaining more volume in contemporary times. Therefore, this article intends to use the concept of Hypermodernity to identify the social structures that organize the present. This term will be used in detriment of the more crystallized concept to identify our society called: Post-modernity. This choice is made, in agreement with the ideas that will be defended in this article, as it is based on the principle that a new society, so called postmodern, is not lived, but that, according to Rosa (2019), an acceleration is experienced. of modern social structures, that is, a Hypermodernity.

Thus, what is sought in this argument is to observe that the process of alienation, consisting of a uniformity of contents, based on the uses of the means of communication, is unfortunately still current. That is, this standardization of contents, called by the Frankfurt School as massification, as it is carried out through the use of mass media, is now supported by digital media, social networks and the internet. Therefore, instead of calling the standardization of information, produced by digital media, massification, it is intended to be called internetization. This concept, although it may seem new, is just an adaptation of previous concepts. In this way, technologies have completely changed, but the process of standardizing content and alienation remains the same. Sage Lampedusa, Sage Tancredi.

Mass media x digital media

Digital media emerged under a brand of hope. The hope of being means that would create a communicational environment that could bring about great positive transformations, such as a culture of cooperation (LEVY, 2010). In this sense, there was an imaginary being built, that these new media would bring more freedom, therefore, more information to society. These questions are not entirely false, but the time has come to reflect, too, on another aspect of digital media: the process of alienation.

To begin this question, dialectically, before observing whether alienation occurs in digital media in a similar way to mass media, it is important to compare, in a comparative way, the differences between two media, which were chosen for this article, due to the proximity of its creation, as well as the intensity of its use in different recent historical moments: electric media, focusing on mass media, and digital media.

First, then, let's emphasize that the use and functioning of each means of communication created by human beings presents differences and produces transformations, in line with the view of Mcluhan (2016).

The mass media are those that developed mainly in the 20th century, after the introduction of electricity in this system, which becomes faster in the dissemination of messages, expands its spatial reach, and increases the number of people who are reached by the same information. Due to this last feature, it even gives its name: mass media.

These means have an increase in the number of receivers, in the number of messages, but a reduction in the number of senders. The senders decrease, as the transmission of information through the mass media requires a lot of investment of resources, which limits the access of a large part of the population to assume the role of sender, leaving them, only, to be content with more receivers. "liabilities" (JENKINS, 2015). In the mass media, reception is more democratic than broadcast, there are few who can assume this position, usually financed by political or economic interests.

With this process, the receiver is no longer an individual, becoming a mass, that is, a large number of people. Thus, the messages transmitted by these means have to adapt to this new reality: communicating with the mass. Therefore, these messages are no longer produced individually, but gain more general outlines, they are contents that seek to become interesting for an increasing number of people. Because of this characteristic, information in the mass media undergoes, over time, a standardization. As these contents need to please and interest a very large number of receivers, broadcasters start to do research to find the most common information in certain groups, and produce

information in an increasingly targeted way. This direction of information occurs in an artificial way, through strategies linked to market and/or political interests. This process was called cultural industry by the theorists of the Frankfurt School (ADORNO AND HORKHEIMER, 2000).

The cultural industry is the production, the artificial fabrication of information in a serial way, which produces this uniformity of messages. As messages have to generate an audience, these mass media end up being influenced by market rules. Thus, information is seen as a product, a commodity. Therefore, messages no longer serve to inform, but to be consumed, mainly, for entertainment, after all, precisely, as observed by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton (MATTELART and MATTELART, 1999), entertainment is the fourth social function of communication. However, for this article, entertainment also has two characteristics that interest the market: generating an increase in the audience, and producing a narcotic effect on the receiver.

As information needs to generate an audience and need to entertain, at the same time, it has to reach an increasing number of recipients, this content ends up suffering a standardization, as it seeks to reach the taste of the masses.

But what does pasta taste like?

The taste of pasta cannot be achieved individually, but in a general way.

How to achieve this taste?

Through research, it is possible to find numerically, statistically, the taste of the pasta, that is, the average taste. Knowing this, the big stations start to produce an average information, for an average taste, of an average human being. With this it ends up artificially producing a medium culture, which was named, based on the studies by Adorno and Horkheimer (2000), of mass culture. This is why the standardization of information produced by the cultural industry process, which ends up creating a mass culture, is called massification. Massification is mainly characterized by the standardization of information.

Thus, in the mass media, the individual becomes mass, and his taste ends up being identified by statistics. Information is considered a commodity to be consumed and to generate an audience. Information undergoes a massification to reach the taste of the mass, the average taste. In this way, information that generates an audience, generates interests for the mass, and gains greater prominence, while other information does not receive the same space in this media. Therefore, for the Frankfurt School, for Adorno and Horkheimer (2000), the mass media generate alienation, as they artificially exclude certain information, while valuing others, through repetition and industrial manufacturing of information. Thus, the mass receives information in a restricted way,

where those that generate an audience gain greater prominence. This process ends up generating the alienation of the receiver, or better said, of the mass.

With the digital means of communication, there are some differences, although it is reaffirmed here that in the sense of alienation processes, it seems that there have not been many transformations.

Digital media, unlike mass media, transmit their information in a more branched way, over a network. This difference presents itself because the mass media work in a more unidirectional format of information transmission: from a few emitters (large emitters) to many receivers (the mass). Furthermore, in digital media there is a greater balance between emission and reception, as the investment to assume the role of an efficient emitter (I would say even with global reach) is much smaller than what would be necessary to carry out the same action with the mass media. Having access to the internet, the user can make information available to the entire world in a few seconds.

In digital media, due to this greater balance between senders and receivers, users are more "active" (JENKINS, 2015), as they want to produce information all the time to post on the networks. By providing their information, they somehow end up working for large corporations, such as Google and social networks in general, for free.

This interest in taking over this communication space has a lot to do with the users' desire to appear and stand out in the media. In a way, appearing on the networks, becoming an interesting figure on the internet can generate profits. Therefore, as Zygmunt Bauman (2008) observes, because of this search, we end up wanting to become interesting goods, so that our lives and experiences shared on social networks can be consumed by all users of digital media.

In these media, the former audience of the mass media is disguised by the concept of relevance, because due to its interaction characteristic and its low cost of use, a huge number of people want to actively participate in the exchange of information, providing their data and their experiences through images, posts, stories, shares, and other nomenclatures to designate messages or actions to share information transmitted by digital media and the internet. In other words, a huge number of people want to become visible, so that their lives can be consumed, that is, that their information can become relevant. Relevance is disguised while feeding the new audience.

Therefore, digital media present network communication, a greater balance between sender and receiver, a lower cost without losing the scope for transmitting messages, a greater possibility of participation and interaction between individuals.

It was observed, then, some differences in the use and functioning between digital media and mass media. From now on, it is intended to observe a similarity, which arises

from the relationship between the relevance of digital media and the audience of the mass media, and which ends up generating in both media the standardization of information and its worst effect: the alienation.

Massification and Internetization

At this point, it is interesting to observe the technical use of mass media, and digital media, through media theory, based on the ideas of Mcluhan (2016), Jenkins (2015), contrasting with the critical view of the School of Frankfurt (ADORNO and HORHHEIMER, 2019). This contrast aims to verify how, although there have been changes in society due to the introduction of new means of communication, one issue has not changed that much, the tendency to produce alienation, due to the standardization of information produced by marketing interests.

For Mcluhan (2016) the means of communication are extensions of the human, that is, they are able to expand the access of perception and senses to information. That is, the media extends human perception.

By extending the senses, human beings can, for example, see much further than they could with just their eyes, or hear sounds much further away than their ears could reach. All this thanks to the media. Because of this, the human being, with each revolution in the media, is able to access an increasing number of phenomena that occur in the world. Finally, it is able to access more and more information in less time. Considering that information produces changes in behavior and consciousness (COELHO, 2012), with the acceleration of access to information, produced from electrical means and complemented by digital means, there will also be, consequently, an acceleration in the transformations of society. This acceleration phenomenon is perceived by human beings and has been extensively studied by Rosa (2019).

Thinking about this issue, as the human being would have more access to information, we could believe that this greater amount of information should produce an enlightening effect on the human being, in agreement with the Enlightenment proposition. However, this acceleration seems to be producing an opposite effect: that of alienation.

Adorno and Horkheimer have already denounced this paradoxical development in their book Dialectics of Enlightenment (2019). The Frankfurt School authors stated that the primary purpose of enlightenment, according to the Enlightenment vision, would be to free the human from myths, replacing it with reason.

> In the broadest sense of the progress of thought, enlightenment has always pursued the object of freeing men from fear and of investing them in the position of masters. But the fully enlightened earth shines under the sign of a triumphal calamity. The enlightenment program was the disenchantment of the world. His goal was to dissolve myths and replace imagination with knowledge. (ADORNO and HORHHEIMER, 2019, p. 16)

However, for Adorno and Horkheimer, this effect was not liberation but mystification in twentieth-century industrial society, and myth replaces reason, producing alienation.

> Myth becomes enlightenment, and nature becomes mere objectivity. The price men pay for increasing their power is alienation from what they exercise power over. Enlightenment behaves with things as the dictator behaves with men. (ADORNO and HORHHEIMER, 2019, p. 20)

Thus, the extension of the means of communication, described by Mcluhan (2016), instead of producing liberation through greater contact with information, ends up producing alienation (DUGNANI, 2019). As an example, one can cite one of the denial theories that the earth is not round. It doesn't matter if we have satellites, which extend our vision into space and photograph the earth and prove the fact; it does not matter the studies and proofs of science that, since antiquity, affirm that the earth is round; just a belief, an opinion, is enough to displace centuries of studies. This example is good for explaining the concept of post-truth.

> However, the word "post-truth" may have entered the lexicon only recently, having even been considered the word of the year 2016 for the Oxford Dictionaries, but it should not be forgotten that the last few decades have also brought us some examples of false news or of "alternative facts" that have imposed themselves on the truth. (PRIOR, 2019, p. 89)

Post-truth, according to Helder Prior (2019), is a statement that is not based on objective or scientific observations, but on the opinion of a group, on the belief of that group, and although it is not a new process, the use of means of digital communication, social networks and the internet (DUGNANI, 2019), boosted its dissemination. Again, enlightenment is enmeshed in myth, as Adorno and Horkheimer (2019, p. 22) noted: "Just as myths carry out enlightenment, so enlightenment becomes more and more entangled with each step that gives, in mythology". Roland Barthes (2002) states that myth is a speech, an ideology, and as a myth, it ends up naturalizing history. Thus, we can conclude

that with this naturalization of history, these myths produce convenient truths, beliefs, that is, post-truths. Post-truths powered by fakenews.

This process of post-truth production, fueled by fakenews, is spread globally by the media in general. In this sense, it cannot be said, agreeing with Prior (2019), that both the post-truth and the fakenews would be a creation of digital media, the internet, or social networks.

> Therefore, it would be a mistake to consider that the era of "post-truth" and fake news is an exclusive product of the Internet or digital social networks. Perhaps, even, it was the digital social networks themselves that ended up removing the exclusivity of the production of lies and disinformation from the political establishment and the hegemonic media. (PRIOR, 2019, p. 89)

However, taking into account Mcluhan's (2016) concept of extension and Rosa's (2019) acceleration, in relation to Prior's (2019) vision, these phenomena have already existed for a long time, but technical development, and the use of digital media, mainly through social networks and the internet, accelerated its dissemination, producing in the 21st century a proliferation of these truths based on convenience and beliefs (DUGNANI, 2019). That is, producing an alienation effect. "What is new is the extent to which, in the new scenario of digitization and global interconnection, emotion is regaining its primacy and truth, retreating" (D'ANCONA, 2018, p. 38).

This alienation has taken place with force in digital media, in the context of the internet and social networks, also due to the production of closed virtual communities and the information isolation bubbles that are produced around them. This is another paradoxical issue that the use of digital media and their algorithms promote: at the same time they produce the extension of perception and the increase in the possibility of accessing information, they end up isolating the human being in communities that end up repeating the same information that is convenient for that group, making it difficult for the individual to access other information that contradicts his own. This is a perfect example of alienation, understanding it as a way of isolating the individual from a very wide range of information that might contradict their beliefs. In this sense, the means of communication, today the digital ones, instead of producing the Global Village (global approximation of different groups for increasingly common interests), as stated by Mcluhan (2016), they produce information bubbles. They produce alienation.

The information bubbles produced by the algorithms through the use of digital media, and having the internet and, mainly, social networks as support, are a favorable environment for the dissemination of the post-truth, and the development of alienation.

Algorithms, which are, according to Fanjul (2018), "a series of simple instructions that are carried out to solve a problem", but which in communication end up directing information to different people according to their relevance and interest. It is because of this functioning that the algorithms used on the internet have created information bubbles, and, consequently, alienation. This happens because with the algorithms used in digital media, the information ends up repeating itself, as they always end up sending the same contents, as mentioned above, according to the interest and said relevance. This process ends up limiting the variety of information, creating, to paraphrase Adorno and Horkheimer (2000), average information for an average human, developing what the Frankfurt school theorists call average culture, or better known as mass culture.

Therefore, at this point, both the mass media, as seen above, and the digital media, through social networks, are working, in the sense of strengthening the constitution of a medium culture - mass culture. In a way, relevance becomes and disguises itself as the new audience that was the main target of the mass media.

In this way, if through the process of the cultural industry, revealed by Adorno and Horkheimer (2000), there was a massification (a standardization of information) in the search for an audience, to guarantee the transmission of large stations; Currently, or rather, in Hypermodernity, digital media through the use of the internet and social networks have produced a similar effect of standardizing information, seeking to make it more relevant.

This process of standardizing information, which causes alienation through digital media, is intended to be called in this article internetization. The internetization of content in digital media is what confirms the initial hypothesis that, although there are differences and transformations that have occurred because of the advent of digital media, a process seems to have undergone little change, it was the standardization of content in the media and the production of alienation by limiting the variety of information that society has access to. Before because of the search for an audience, today for the search for relevance, the two issues still seem to be guided by a single framework: market interests.

Final considerations

Sage Tomasi di Lampedussa who states, through the speech of his character Tancredi, that: "For everything to remain as it is, everything must change" (DE PAULA, 2016, p. 1). This phrase precisely reflects what happened with the advent of digital media, in relation to mass media. Technically, the functioning changed radically, but in the sense

of producing information for clarification, for the liberation of human consciousness, it ended up generating the same effect: alienation.

The digital media, as well as the mass media, instead of freeing the human being and confirming the Enlightenment hypothesis, ended up generating, in a very similar way, a process of standardization of information, which ended up giving privileges to those who generate greater audience for mass media, or more relevance for digital media. This relevance in digital media is often given beyond the interest of individuals, but through strategic tricks of digital systems, such as the use of algorithms, which limit entire communities to bubbles of information that are repeated. This bubble, as said before, generates alienation, in the dialectical sense, as an idea is not opposed to its contradiction, that is, the same theses are presented, without the opposition of an antithesis, making impossible the critical and historical synthesis so necessary to form a conscious and inquisitive subject. In this way, the digital media end up giving continuity to the production of alienation through the massification of content, the standardization of information, so we sought to create a term that could represent and alert to the massification that is taking place in digital media: internetization.

Finally, it is hoped that this article can become a point of reflection on the use of digital media, so that they, perhaps in the future, can actually fulfill the Enlightenment promise of human freedom through clarification, with the help of technical development.

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RESUMO:
Pretende-se observar como as mudanças tecnológicas promoveram transformações na sociedade, contudo parece que uma coisa permanece a mesma: o uso dos meios de comunicação como uma tecnologia de alienação. Essa observação será realizada metodologicamente através de uma pesquisa teórica e exploratória, buscando uma revisão de conceitos que se referem aos usos e efeitos dos meios de comunicação. Nesse sentido, observa-se como hipótese a ideia de que no sentido do uso alienatório dos meios não ocorreram grandes mudanças. Os meios ao estenderem a percepção humana, parecem não terem produzido um efeito de libertação da consciência, mas sim, tem ampliado o processo de mistificação e alienação, através da massificação da informação, criando uma internetilização, uma massificação através dos meios digitais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Meios de Comunicação; Alienação; Extensão.

RESUMEN:
Se pretende observar cómo los cambios tecnológicos han propiciado cambios en la sociedad, sin embargo parece que una cosa permanece igual: el uso de los medios de comunicación como tecnología de alienación. Esta observación se realizará metodológicamente a través de una investigación teórica y exploratoria, buscando una revisión de conceptos que se refieren a los usos y efectos de los medios. En este sentido, la hipótesis es que la idea de que en el sentido de uso alienante de los medios no ha habido grandes cambios. El medio, al extender la percepción humana, no parece haber producido un efecto de liberación de la conciencia, sino que ha expandido el proceso de mistificación y alienación, a través de la masificación de la información, creando una internetilización, una masificación a través de los medios digitales.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Medios de comunicación, Alienación, Extensión.