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WHAT DOES IT MEAN "TO LEARN" IN THE INTERNET AGE?

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Abstract

Nowadays, communication represents the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes contemporary society and influences all its aspects and dimensions. The impact of communication on society has been amplified today by the advent of the Web. The Internet has become de facto, globally, and even in non-Western societies, thanks to the spread of PCs and smartphones, the primary tool for interaction and information sharing among people. The Internet has determined the end of the more traditional interpersonal and media communication. It has allowed the development of a human communication model marked by three central characteristics: continuous interaction, contingency, and instantaneousness. The Internet has effectively brought about new production and fruition of culture and new processes of reception, production circulation, and even socialization of communicative content. This article aims to identify and analyse the new communication scenarios in the Internet age and show their impact on contemporary education by considering these premises. To do so, hermeneutic, and historical-comparative methods will be mainly used. The study will conclude by showing an educational model useful to provide the guidelines for developing critical learning in the age of the Internet communication and social networks.

Keywords: Communication, education, internet, learning, social networks

1. Characteristics of Contemporary Society and the Consequences for Education

Communication through the Internet is a feature of today's society, and it is the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes contemporary society and influences its aspects and dimensions (Vattimo, 1999). The impact of communication on society has been amplified today by the advent of the Net. The Internet has become de facto, globally, and even in non-Western societies, thanks to the spread of PCs and smartphones, the primary tool for interaction and information sharing among people (Caudill, 2007). The Internet has determined the end of the more traditional interpersonal and media communication. It has allowed the development of a human communication model marked by three central characteristics: continuous interaction, contingency, and instantaneousness. The Internet has effectively brought about new production and fruition of culture and processes of reception, production circulation, and even socialization of communicative content.

According to Gianni Vattimo (2000), the Internet has opened the scenario of a society in which appearance, emptiness, and speed dominate, to which instantaneity is associated; all this prevents people from pausing to think, even for a short time, sometimes causing pathological forms of interaction with reality (Lovink, 2012). Television, zapping, the Internet, and all electronic devices with integrated screen videos have accelerated reality and perception. In this context, the case of the YouTube platform seems exemplary: it was founded in 2005 and, in a few years, has become the most visited site in the world after Google and Facebook. YouTube synthesizes the basic features of the new entertainment and communication culture in the Internet age, presenting two fundamental characteristics: self-production and mixing improperly defined high and low cultures, which converge into the so-called mass culture.

Guy Debord (1931-1994), with his book The Society of the Spectacle (1967), had already prophesied these characteristics or trends. We live in the digital age characterized by the transition from industrial to information-based production. This transition has changed the way people interact and communicate. Today, information is available immediately and is free (Eynon, 2013). The democratization of information, though not always an expression of the quality of the information itself being delivered, has led to a revolution that we are going to explore in the following paragraphs.

2. Learning in The Digital Age and the Impact on Society

In contemporary society, people must also adapt their skills to the labour market (Farmer & Ramsdale, 2016). The digital age needs for people to learn throughout their lives by emphasizing the importance of problem solving and the ability to develop connections.

In the digital age, people are required to be able to find and "surfing" information and interpret it critically (Chambliss, 2009). People have to possess digital skills to enhance communication and collaboration. Sometimes this need makes, for example, students in the digital age overwhelmed by technology, distracted and frantic concerning the acquisition of possible information. All information must be available immediately, negatively affecting contemporary education/training and learning (Collis & Moonen, 2008).

The obsession for people to interact and be "social" has brought about a remarkable and substantial change in education and how people learn and train today. The consequences of the advent of the Internet

on contemporary education and how people learn the content of human knowledge and values related to society can be identified at multiple levels (Ess, 2012).

The Web revolutionized the learning theory that guides contemporary education (Sandbothe & Inkpin, 2000). The science of education is evolving. The dominant learning model is increasingly taking on socio-cultural characteristics in the digital age. This model is now called "connectivism." The principle of connectivism is that learners develop skills from learning based on the exercise of connecting/interconnecting things. From this perspective, education and learning aim to develop skills to enhance the ability to make these connections from a systemic, network-like structure perspective (Siemens, 2005). The fundamental purpose of teaching and learning is not to make trainees memorize information but to become active and motivated subjects stimulated to discover things by interconnecting, comparing, connecting, and evaluating them by relating them (Seifert, 2016).

What does "learning" in the Internet age mean, and what characteristics should shape and foster this learning? Learning in the digital age presents/should present at least six characteristics (Sanger, 2010; Seery, 2010; Wegerif, 2015).

1) It always comes in a playful dimension and must be achieved through stimulating and relevant learning experiences. A stimulating learning experience in the learner generates gratification, motivation, and active engagement in learning. In order to sustain this engagement, the learning activities must be attractive and meaningful, learner-centered, rather than generic or abstract.

2) It is characterized by personalized and self-directed empowerment. The development in digital technology allows people to choose what, how, and when to learn. They constantly seek personalized learning experiences that meet their individual preferences and needs. The Net is creating a culture of self-directed learning that people are increasingly adopting. It allows the maximum freedom in learning, enabling them to tailor the timing and content of learning to their individual needs and pace.

3) It is characterized by the omnipresence of training, which is always presented as just-in-time and on-demand. Learners in the digital world want to learn everything, and right away, the moment a training needs related to the development of skill is found. Training reveals this need. The Internet points out that training today needs to proceed from and at the same time directly support the activities that trainees perform in the real world, in the workplace in the case of workers, rather than focusing only on teaching knowledge and theories. People should access such training in their life and work contexts when needed. Training should always start from the training needs of the context in which the trainee lives and works concerning specific activities and problems, allowing access to training resources anytime and anywhere.

4) Learning must balance the experiential, social, informal, and formal dimensions. The Web enables training content in various contexts and modalities that allow any trainee to access both internal and external information and interact with experts. Therefore, the right balance of the elements indicated in the paragraph allow for more effective, engaging, and authentic (i.e., focused on a more human perspective) training, loading it with meanings related to the development of critical-reflective thinking, transformation, and social change

5) It presents a character of hyper-conceptuality. In the digital age, trainees can enjoy training using Networked learning resources, information, and expert teaching that share in an interactive

structure. The Net represents a complete learning environment where everything is interconnected to the nth degree. Providing simple tools that foster these connections is critical today. However, it is essential to monitor, through continuous analysis, trainees' learning needs by identifying resources capable of matching their needs and verifying the effectiveness of their training.

6) Finally, learning is linked to lifelong learning. That means that learning on the Net is interconnected with lifelong learning, and continuing education is nurtured through exploration, demand, and dialogue and is based on "doing." People must be oriented toward lifelong learning and self-education in the Net era. Formal, nonformal, or informal education must transform into places where opportunities for continuous learning enable people to research, question the why and meaning of things, explore them and make sure that they seek solutions to specific questions. That must be based upon a collective experience and existing knowledge (Ferster, 2016).

By promoting research, understanding, interpreting, and doing, cultivating curiosity, and creating a learning culture, the principles of the new "philosophy" of training in the age of the Net are actually promoted and put into practice (Erneling, 2010). Organizations deputed to training must recognize that the learning is evolving toward a digital one, as described in the preceding paragraphs, and must take advantage of the opportunities the Net offers them and the trainees as human beings. This philosophy is "transforming" the entire world of training, its content, and even the characteristics and purposes of most learning organizations. In the digital age, everything moves faster. Therefore, all training organizations must ensure that learning is continually developed and enjoyed through digital communication technologies. Social learning, content management, and analytical skills are just the beginning (Luckin, 2010).

The development of technology and its influence on every aspect of society has led to unprecedented access to free information. Accessibility (and gratuitousness) is, as noted above, a critical factor in the democratization of information. The information represents a developed society's power; people cannot interact with the people around them without information availability. The democratization of information has undoubtedly led to a change in the distribution of power relations between governments and citizens (as evidenced by the advent of so-called e-democracy) (Roquet, 2019).

As the availability of information has increased, however, the ability to process and retain that information has decreased. This has resulted in a paradoxical situation: although much information is available, it is often difficult to get valuable and primary information.

Another cultural and philosophical problem of the Net society is the obsolescence of information and its "life." Obsolescence of information and knowledge is now a problem for educational organizations required to develop new methods of knowledge dissemination. Methods require teachers and trainers to keep up to date and undergo continuous training. People living in this era face significant changes happening around them. In dealing with this condition, training, and the assumption of a lifelong philosophy of education are crucial to meeting this momentous change's challenges.

The digital age has disrupted society and how people communicate, train, and work. People in the digital age are continually called upon to "assess" the relevance of their skills and identify ways for implementing them. Therefore, the assumption of the philosophy of continuing education based on so-called "learning to learn" is crucial for "survival" in the labour market.

However, learning to learn continuously may not be enough. Indeed, as Resnick (2002) pointed out, the proliferation of technologies has increased the importance of "creative" problem-solving in our lives. The first skills that digital age learners should possess are digital literacy (Brown, 2001) and digital "fluency" (Resnick, 2002). Brown (2001) highlighted the changes happened in the last century, when literacy was mainly text-based, into a new literacy based on images and sounds (Freisen, 2017).

The "surfing" of information and knowledge is perhaps the critical component of literacy in the digital age. Today, learners use the Internet and other media as a "triangulation" system to verify the accuracy or truthfulness of a fact or information. The literacy skills are necessary for the learner to become autonomous and equip themselves with "power" (i.e., the ability to critique a piece of information and be able to use it for their ends) in our era.

Resnick (2002) refers to digital fluency (fluency) by understanding it as the aptitude to interpret information effectively by discovering and communicating in a digitally connected world. Digital fluency occurs when the trainee can use new tools or concepts and when he or she can create new "things" with what they haave learned (Decoster, 2016).

Brown also says that learning in the digital age evolves from an authority-based model based on discovery and experience. Young people in the digital age discover new things daily as they surf the Web and explore new resources. Therefore, they decide whether they want to learn more about a topic based on their experience. For Brown, young learners using digital media today tend to focus more on the concrete and tangible, effectively using a "bricolage" approach to learning.

This learning is based on finding something used or transformed into something new. Digital learners tend to lean toward immediate action, experimentation, and testing. All this makes them put aside, in the case of using devices, media, or tools, the use of manuals for instructions and consider it unnecessary to attend courses for the use of that tool or device, deeming peer-to-peer communication more essential and effective. All this makes it clear that the digital age learning model is based on an experiential approach based on communication and discovery.

In the digital age, learning has become "situated" and "in action"; it is more social than cognitive. It is more concrete than abstract and is interconnected with reflection and exploration.

By picking up on some previous statements, it is possible to say that the philosophy of education that guides the sciences of the Internet is also evolving by promoting a model of education that has moved beyond behaviourism and is moving toward connectivism.

Connectivism is a learning theory developed by George Siemens (2005). It is the primary digital age's learning theory. It seeks to explain learning in a rapidly changing digital world dominated by the Net and technology. Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism were the theories generally recognized as dominant in educational science (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Socio-cultural models of learning are more accepted today. Constructivism and connectivism belong to this category. According to constructivism, people construct their knowledge through experiencing real-life situations in social environments by reflecting on them (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

However,these learning theories were developed before the advent of modern digital technologies. Connectivism approaches learning in a world where communication and socialization are paramount, and communication is abundant in a context of hyperconnectivity. The fundamental principle of connectivism

is that competences are from the capacity of structuring connections. Karen Stephenson (2004) states that experience has been always seen as the best teacher for knowledge. Actually, others' experiences can serve as the surrogate for knowledge for us. Siemens (2005) has summed up the main principles of connectivism as follows:

i.   Learning and knowledge are based on diversity of opinion.

ii.   Learning is the result of a connecting process dealing with nodes and several sources of information.

iii. Learning can be derived from nonhuman devices.

iv.   It is necessary to nurture and maintain connections to facilitate continuous learning.

v.   Discovering connections between domains, ideas, and concepts is a primary skill.

vi.   Assessing knowledge is the aim of all activities based on the connectionist learning model.

vii. Decision-making is in itself a primary learning process that has to be carried out in a flexible way.

For connectivism, the fundamental purpose of education and training is not to have students memorize information but rather to become motivated learners who adopt the philosophy of self-education and continuing education. Connectivism could not be an effective theory for all types of learning at all ages. However, it is an approach that points to a philosophy of human education and training in the Internet age that appears dominant and full of implications and possible challenges.

In the case of training organizations and schools, for example, this meaningful and relevant learning must be fostered by an organization that makes students and trainees perceive the learning activities they participate in or develop as meaningful to themselves and their organization. These learning activities have to be simple and uncomplicated at first in a way that they can positively impact later engagement (Oblinger, 2012).

3.   Education and Communication Scenarios in the Web 2.0 Age

So far, we have highlighted the characteristics of the Network Society and the theories of learning that most influence the philosophy of education that inspires the vision of contemporary educational sciences and pedagogy precisely in the context of that society. Knowing the characteristics of the Net society and the theoretical models of learning by which people living in this society learn are fundamental to understanding this same society, the conception of education that is "breathed" in it, and the values that inspire it.

The fundamental characteristic of today's society is represented by communication centred on specific values advocated, such as visibility and interconnectivity, which have been brought to an extreme degree. This mode in which the present society mainly presents itself and summarizes its characteristics is the "spectacularized" mode.

The philosopher Debord used the concept of "spectacle as a metaphor-synthesis of contemporary society. He identified three possible modes of spectacle (concentrated, diffuse, and integrated) (Debord, 2012) and linked each to a particular conception of the relationship between government and society: respectively, dictatorship, democracy, and, finally, a mixture of these two by which form of current government society seems to be characterized.

The Net society is a spectacularized and appearance society. Content enjoyment occurs superficially and with an ethical consciousness often overlooked or side-lined (Glendinning, 2018). This process that we can call the "superficializing" of ethics and morality began in the late 19th century when products had begun to be produced that had value not for the labour it took to complete them but for the form used precisely to make them worthwhile. Such products simply had to satisfy the desires and wills of individuals who wanted such products to make a spectacle and manifest a social status of the new economic environment.

The Net society is one in which the shift from being to having and from appearing has been fully realized. This appearance is identified with "not being," which identifies the permanent condition of Western man even with the new media, often used precisely to escape, through the desire for an ephemeral "presence," the sense of nothingness and emptiness of human existence. This dimension of appearance has become one with human life in all its forms, from culture to education, science to economics, politics to art, ethics to aesthetics to sports. In this context, fiction appears to win over reality, and copying wins out over the original and forms over content where authenticity is lacking (Rospigliosi, 2019); or rather, a perspective in which the dominant interpretative angle is only the economic and capitalist one.

Communication in the Net society appears as spectacular and superficial; it suppresses any instance of authentic spirituality or interiority. The outside (the form) appears more critical than the inside (the content). Moreover, everything is conceived and managed as merchandise in a permanently global and visible showcase. Thus, there is no place for spiritual values in such a society, and traditional morality is reworked according to value relativism. In addition, that dividing line that marks the boundary between private and public is almost missing. Contemporary man is reified and turned into a commodity; he has chosen to become an object like many others, which is worth not what he is but how he appears. The system of permanent and lasting values seems to be swallowed up by the quicksand of spectacularity that puts man and woman in a state of an ongoing identity crisis, consisting of the inability to live an authentic and profound life from a spiritual point of view because it is trivialized by the so-called deity of appearance (Menduni et al., 2011).

Undoubtedly, this new way of living in the appearance dimension has implications in pedagogy, envisaging specific implications for education. However, our philosophical-educational reflections intend to go beyond the pessimistic judgment of easy condemnation of the whole of contemporary society.

However, some trends portend the curvature of contemporary society and its ethics of selfish and narcissistic positions of no return. One thinks, for example, of the individualism and self-centeredness that the selfie culture, brought into vogue by social networks such as Instagram or Facebook, is foreshadowing for the future (Bagci & Peksen, 2018; Vendemia & DeAndrea, 2018). Pedagogy cannot remain neutral to these trends because the object of its reflection, specific education, is an integral part of the culture and a means of transmitting its contents (Manca & Ranieri, 2017).

The scenario of "spectacularized" education, which has its synthesis in behaviours and actions dictated by appearance, stresses the commodification of education/training and its values. The main goal of contemporary education is framed within a culture of profit and a "market," and within the dominance of electronic communication technologies of a virtual and audio-visual type, presents itself today with

specific characteristics and trends. These characteristics and trends are also characteristic of contemporary culture, where "spectacularized" education is located. We list the main ones below, obtaining them from scholars Curtis and Pettigrew (2009).

1) Individualism. This trend, which turns out to be paradoxical, in the Net and communication society, the main feature of contemporary society, started in the 1980s when Western societies, to increase consumption, hedonism and the interests of the individual. In the Net society, individualism leads to forms of hyposocialization that sometimes result in psychopathologies that reduce social cohesion, group spirit, and community ties, reducing them to the virtual form only.

2) Consumerism. The spectacularized society, transformed into the Net society, is a consequence of the consumer society. The Net is now mainly used to sell goods on a planetary scale by conditioning their purchase by acting on consumers' opinions and behaviour. The disguised purpose of the Net is to buy not out of necessity but driven by false needs covered by illusory free choices. This de facto trend can lead to distorted consumerism that affects all social contexts and relationships. It can lead people to obsessive-compulsive pathological disorders where people buy what they do not need. In a consumerist culture, the value of things and people is given by their ability to generate profit (always economic) in return or performance (Ritzer, 1993).

3) Globalization. The Network society has become a de facto planetary and global society pursuing profit-related ends. Planetary economic institutions such as the World Bank, for example, multinational corporations that need to find cultural-or rather than mental-consensus-building spaces, or planetary trade institutions have been created to circulate goods and maximize profits. Globalization has touched all cultural spheres: fashion, music, film, television, food, and education, and it has initiated constant migration phenomena that create multicultural societies.

4) Technophilia. The use of technology from tablet smartphones or iPods has influenced and conditioned intra- and interpersonal behaviours and modes of communication. The Web has now become a fundamental and vital tool. The Internet has risen to a veritable way of life (think of so-called influencers who can influence the choices of millions of consumers with their behaviours and opinions spread through the Net).

5) The hegemony of the Internet. It is no longer possible to think about communication and education without the World Wide Web, Google, Instagram, Wikipedia, Facebook, or YouTube, all tools created and popularized just ten years ago.

6) The democracy of fame. Spectacular communication through the Net allows everyone to be known and have fame by emerging from anonymity. That is indicative of another emerging need in society. Television and the Internet give everyone the chance to become famous and well-known. In this light, talent and reality shows in which people become stars have their most significant expression on sites like YouTube and Instagram or blogs and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. The Web allows everyone to create a public image for themselves and spread it globally (Dean, 2013).

7) The focus on young people. Another trend in the Net society is always to put young people at the center. However, this centrality is implemented for ends and purposes. Young people, also children and adolescents, are the best consumers and are more easily influenced through appropriate communication strategies. They are, however, increasingly having the opportunity to be heard and a more

significant influence on society. That is evidenced by the fact that stars in television, film, music, or sports are almost always young or very young. Young people have the opportunity to have their voices heard more today (as consumers). Their strength and dynamism set the pace for the Net society and its communication. However, such a society if on the one hand, proposes the myth of youth as the role model of mass culture; On the other hand, it attacks youth culture to deprive it of any capacity for judgment. The goal is to turn young people into passive users and consumers of goods and services that commercial enterprises provide for purely economic gain.

Humankind can no longer do without the media, which are now ubiquitous in every area of life. The world is now increasingly viewed through the lens of the media. Almost all human knowledge is no longer derived from the individual's direct experience but collective experience. New Net technologies manifest trends that The Frankfurt School prophesied through a non-pessimistic evaluative interpretation as an essential feature of future society.

The Net society is thus a society of spectacular communication in which ethical reflection sometimes appears dormant (Martin & Noakes, 2012). Contemporary society is thus presented as immersed in a continuous "crisis" originating from a dialectic between "commercialization" and "humanization."

4. The Ethics of Media in the Internet Society

There is no doubt today about the primary role and function of media in shaping people's minds and transmitting information and knowledge. This role seems to have contributed to "degrading" the cultural values and expectations that characterized, for example, previous societies and placing appearance and superficiality as the dominant aesthetic category to persuade the masses and better induce them to consume (Geddes, 2011).

An intellectual involution within Western culture has made form and style prevail over substance. Levity prevails over seriousness, self-centeredness over-familiar feeling and solidarity, and immediate gratification over deferred gratification (Wood, 1996). The values of education and learning are increasingly seen as less important than fame, success, and popularity because they bring economic profit and social recognition.

Examples of this are YouTube and Instagram. It is no coincidence that YouTube's slogan is "broadcast yourself." Founded in February 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim and acquired by Google in November 2006, YouTube represents a platform for sharing online videos. It has several commercial agreements with companies such as CBS, BBC, and Warner Music. Through YouTube, everyone can view and share original videos worldwide through the Internet, Websites, mobile devices, e-mail, and blogs.

The purpose of YouTube is to offer people a platform to view videos about anything, fact, or event globally. Such a platform allows people to become their filmmakers of reality and themselves by air, as they do on television videos. The above slogan represents a metaphorical expression with many meanings: it points to the personal self, capable of broadcasting and disseminating audio or video content to a planetary audience. In English, the verb to broadcast means "to transmit" and refers to audio-visual communication related to advertising, weather forecasts, news, television, and radio events. This verb is

associated with the concept of the show, entertainment through media. Therefore, already in its name YouTube incorporates the concept of self-produced and self-distributed "spectacular communication." In this platform, the "I" is simultaneously the sender, the receiver, the director, and the viewer of the content disseminated for entertainment turned into a spectacle. The platform allows the recording of deferred broadcasts and their live use through live streaming, which is also made possible by integrating other platforms into the system.

YouTube also allows registered people to use a chat to leave comments by sharing them through the social networks it is integrated with, thus leaving traces of their passage. Such a platform shows the typical trends of Web 2.0 tending toward 3.0, representing the so-called "symbiotic Web" in which both the individual and commercial enterprises join to take advantage of the communication services integrated with social networks.

All this leads us to reflect ethically on the essence of communication and education in the Net society and the logic of power in the capitalist system, which merges the private sphere in life and culture.

The logic of power is banality, commercialization, commodification, instantaneity, fleeting and casual fame, and voyeurism. All are centred on emotion, ridicule, violence, self-centred communication, and narcissistic gratification (Bauman, 2001). In short, YouTube encapsulates the cultural matrix of entertainment by allowing an uninterrupted flow of information and offering a short eternity within cyberspace and virtual socialization. The other is considered a spectator capable of accessing shared images and videos.

YouTube often uses the real presence of the fake to ensure the organization of appearances. It uses trickery, artifice, and even deception to ensure the truth and credibility of appearances. The distinction between true and false has disappeared through the disintegration of the self and its presence-absence. Any truth is repressed for the total benefit of the real presence of falsehood. That guarantees the "truthfulness" of appearances for the viewer.

Instagram is also a social network with the same features as YouTube. Instagram is a social network that allows users to take photos, apply filters, and share them on the Web. Since 2012, the company has belonged to Facebook Inc. Sites like Instagram are "dead ends" of the Net, autonomous and monopolistic artificial worlds. In Instagram, the Internet seems to become a series of "apps" and turn into a Network of islands. That is precisely the opposite of the idea of the Net, which is intended to be a technology that aims to connect people's minds and generate knowledge through hypertext linking, connection, the horizontality of relationships and rapport, collaboration, and peer review/mutual aid.

Instagram highlights how the Internet is becoming more and more like television. The most significant importance is given to the image and its fruition (if fruition can be considered the possibility of affixing a "like" or adding a very brief comment) with low textual content. That is evident in the "viralization" of so-called "memes" and the dominance of videos in the news feed of Facebook, a platform whose algorithm prefers image to text. Like Facebook and television, Instagram envisions itself as linear and passive media, based on the image having the most decisive emotional impact on the viewer, as in a reality show (Cohen et al., 2017).

No media today seems more like a reality show than Instagram, the social network capable of proving that we only must appear, where anyone (if attractive) can become famous. With its "likes" (and

habituation), Instagram suggests that we can all be actors or actresses, famous people, the artist we want, etc. We are not and could never be in daily life. While Facebook and especially Twitter require text-based skills (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018), on Instagram, a person skilled solely in image manipulation can win the admiration of the masses (Salomon & Brown, 2019).

The case of Instagram highlights how communication is structured according to the principles of grasping people that verge on obnubilation and narcosis of consciousness. This communication is governed by commercial interests that want the viewer/recipient of information to be as passive a subject as possible (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005). Such information, constrained by this type of communication, is given in the form of simplified "emotional states" that aim for the surprise effect. The purpose is to gratify information and not give the viewer-viewer a way to critically reflect and analyse the contents of those messages and the reality to which they refer.

All communication that the Net offers is converted into pleasurable gratifying content (de-empowering and de-empowering) by taking the forms of advertising and political propaganda. That is used to gain consent and establish conformity and submission in order to instil the patterns of consumerist values.

In this communicative context, the only truth becomes that of the falsity of commercial logic in which the viewer-spectator is not supposed to be able to distinguish the real from the fake while watching and listening. Whether fake or real, violence, mournful or sad events, misfortunes are often used to affect viewers and appeal to their emotions.

The Web society has transformed the tragic, suffering, violence, pain, and death into a spectacle that is now routine and commonplace for the masses (Giroux, 2013). Such spectacle becomes profit utilizing advertising, linked to the number of page visitors who access the various video-sharing platforms. The Internet seems to obnubilate and narcotize human beings' conscience.

In this context of apparent lack of responsibilization, which seems to be that of the Net society, can social networks play an educational and formative function? Certainly yes, if they amplify in human beings their ability to dialogue and use language as a tool of social construction to establish a "truth." This "truth" is achieved only by people who dialogue with each other and relate to history and collective civilization.

Social networks currently do not seem to be fundamental tools for dialogue because they are controlled by corporations and exert control over content by piloting and manipulating the users involved. They are passive and devoid of the critical spirit.

Social networks' freedom and gratuitousness (only apparent) always respond to a market-ready market to turn the contents of its communication into profit. Even the censorship of violence or the defence of copyright or netiquette in Net communication should be seen from the perspective of a political and commercial strategy that fully corresponds to capitalist moral logic. According to this logic, everything must be morally and politically correct to not upset users and make a profit through the sale of advertising.

For example, through a process of trivialization put in place by the commercial industry, social networks such as Facebook or Instagram act according to a capitalist logic by making any content usable and understandable to as broad an audience as possible to make a profit.

Therefore, social networks and their ethics reflect the logic and ethics proper to contemporary capitalist culture, which is transformed into the politics of commercialization and commodification of people and the world, using specific rhetorical-textual strategies. Hence arises the problem of finding a solution - or at least a pedagogical strategy - capable of developing a critical reflection and understanding of educational problems in the Net age (Postman, 1983).

In the age of the Net, the critical ability to "counter" the power of the media becomes essential for learning. Only by understanding this power one can develop critical thinking. The Net, now, represents, in fact, the educational but also "non-educational" scenario of the new society by conditioning people's growth and development.

5.   Conclusions

At this point, the question we can ask ourselves is: does there exist still room for authentic learning (understood as the transmission of Values and development of critical thinking) in the society that has made the spectacle a more or less softened and tacit form of violence capable of injecting conformity, inactivity, and passivity into people, repressing their critical engagement and marginalizing and criminalizing instances coming from an emancipatory and liberating education?

Our conviction is that only an education supported by a "strong" philosophy and critical media ethics implemented from the earliest years of the school curriculum and within the family can answer such questions and allow us to learn in a critical and emancipative way. Only this philosophy allows us to "resist" and escape the conditioning operated daily on our minds by the media, which have now found in social networks a very effective tool to increase their masses of docile and passive consumers (Bernstein, 2000; Davidovitch & Belichenko, 2018).

Only through such a philosophy of education can the Net be transformed into an extraordinary instrument of resistance and emancipation. This philosophy can enable us to understand the mechanism by which the Net operates and is manipulated by those who control it for ends beyond collective interests. The media and the Net, after all, can cause the problems but also serve as tools to solve them if one knows how to use them and has a critical awareness of the mechanisms by which it operates (Hortigüela-Alcalá et al., 2019).

The philosophy behind the Internet is that before taking one's information is necessary to share and donate to another so as not to remain isolated in such a way as to increase the knowledge base of the Internet itself, growing together with others. The Internet is a constantly developing and evolving service in which there are no absolute certainties, but only relativities that necessarily need to be perfected over time.

It is in this scenario that the philosophy of critical Net education moves. A scenario in which it is committed to ensuring that the Internet does not become a destructive tool in people's social lives by preventing them from developing critical thinking (Buch-Hansen, 2014).

After all, the Net can create extraordinary collective intelligence by sharing individuals' experiences and ideas for learning (Niu, 2019). Therefore, the educational philosophy that will be able to teach how to use the media and the Net from a critical-reflexive and critical-emancipatory perspective will save people both from the ethical and moral obnubilation of consciences and from the possibility of

the failure of reason in the contradictions and paradoxes of today's society (McLaren, 1995; Murphy, 2012).

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