

THE DIGITAL MASK ON SOCIAL MEDIA: THE TYRANNY OF BEAUTY FILTERS AMONG DIGITAL NATIVES

ABSTRACT:

The global lockdown (due to the COVID 19 pandemic) favoured a massive and exponential growth of virtual communication spaces. Unlike face-to-face social spaces, social media are aseptic spaces that do not require surgical masks, but which (paradoxically) encourage the use of other types of masks among young people: those digital beauty masks with which young people launch a disturbing digital alterity of themselves into the virtual world.

The generalisation of these beautifying filters in the social media generates two unprecedented and convergent socio-communicative problems: on the one hand, the unappealable imperative of the public biography; on the other hand, the delirious aspiration to patterns of beauty radically removed from reality.

We must look for the antecedents of this disturbing social phenomenon in a fascinating media evolution that begins with the transition from Paleo-television to Neo-television and, later, from Hyper-television to Social Media. Indeed, if Paleo-television brought the most hidden corners of the world closer to the intimacy of viewers' homes, Neo-television opened those same homes to the scopic consumption of the world ("Reality Show"). And finally, hyper-television and social media, allied with the mobile ecosystem, consummated this tyranny of absolute visibility anytime, anywhere.

It is precisely this omnipresence of mobile ubiquity, together with the restrictions imposed by confinement, that has caused an acceleration in the pre-existing process of digitalisation of human relations between users of all ages. As a consequence, the intimacy of homes and the people who live in them has become public, as already started to happen with the "Reality Show" television format.

In the new virtual contexts, props and make-up (used in traditional television) are replaced by AI algorithms that transform the appearance of the user and their surroundings, functioning as digital masks that construct an unreal public image, which is projected and perceived by young people, affecting their perception of themselves and others.

Through the masking of any pattern of verisimilitude (eclipsed by the hybridisation of all those facial, bodily and objectual characteristics), the delusional longing for a full, self-sufficient and lacking gestalt is fostered.

Finally, the "Sociology of the Mask" allows us to identify a practice of radical evasion, a true transubstantiation of one's own physical and psychic personality and of Habermas' paradigm between the public and the private.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES:

1. Ph.D. Enrique Castelló-Mayo is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Santiago de Compostela, member of the Audiovisual Studies Group (GI-1786) and Coordinator of “COMVIRTINDO” (Virtual Communication for Teaching Innovation, GID 92 - USC). His research focuses on the media production of reality, both in its discursive and narratological aspects, as well as technological innovation applied to virtual reality, being co-author of two patents: 03/2019/202 & 03/2018/1113
2. Ph.D. Antía López-Gómez is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Vice Dean of Quality at the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University of Santiago de Compostela. She is the author of several books, among them, "Communication policies and cultural identity: government strategies on social communication" or "The dimension of the axiological in advertising discourse". She focuses her research on textual theory and analysis and the study of European audiovisual politics.

It is a known fact that the current omnipresence of electronic devices has generated an acceleration in the pre-existing processes of mediation in human relations. It is a digital mediation that is appreciated both in the visual submission of any information, whether simple or complex, as an inexcusable requirement of acceptance and understanding of it in a digitised environment (Nathan et al. 2016).

In a more general way and with a greater sociocultural repercussion, this digital mediation also translates into a weakening of all symbolic exchange, understood as that formula that supports the different forms of human relationship that, until now, had been characterised by the circulation of those meanings that could establish a field of common sense for two or more individuals, according to the theory of Lévi-Strauss (1963) inspired by Marcel Mauss (Benedini et al. 2016), (Collège de France 2008, 54-55).

More specifically, Lévi-Strauss (1963, 194) is referring to those operative and effective discourses or stories that allow two or more individuals to share certain words integrated into a credible and reliable discourse, certain metaphors that allow them to build a symbolic reality, alternative to material reality, but which, at the same time, produces specific effects on the material reality that both share.

Well, this shared space (based on those dense words that produce concrete effects on material reality) has been radically replaced, in the digital age, by an iconic exchange space (Imbert 2010, 17): a labile, disengaged space that (packed with visualised images and forms) entails an integral iconization of the process of human relationship. An iconic exchange space that displaces the different meanings about reality, substituting the essential intelligibility of the facts for their simple and immediate exhibition.

The next necessary step in our argumentation will be to extrapolate this interpretation of the process of "symbolic exchange and effectiveness" to a communicative context: for this, we will resort to the thought of Antonio Pasquali, who was the introducer of critical communication studies in Latin America.

Through his "law of bivalence, reciprocity or bidirectionality", Pasquali (2007, 60-63) tries to determine the germinal contract of every human communicative fact. In this germinal communicative contract, the sender of the communicative process assumes an ambivalent status, since while he is the sender of the communication he waits to be its receiver, and vice versa. Thus, the possibility of communicative return is an expectation that is created from the very beginning of the communicative situation.

For this reason, the bivalent nature of Pascual's Law (2007, 60-63) must be attributed both to the creation of the communicative expectation and to the communicative situation that develops between two or more individuals. As is known, in the disciplinary field of chemistry, the valence linked to a chemical element identifies its combinatorial possibilities.

In the same way, Pascual (2007, 60-63) states that, according to this interchangeability of the poles that make up a communicative process, the sender and the receiver would act as interchangeable elements (and, therefore, ambivalent), since the dialogic condition (which, in turn, guarantees any communicative situation) will only be

possible if there is a reciprocal interaction between the poles that make up the relational structure according to the bivalent law. In turn, the bivalent law should ensure both the return or feedback between the poles of the communicative situation, as well as the maximum and equal coefficient of communicability in both poles.

For the rest, Pascuali (2007, 60-63) warns that all this responds to a purely human materialisation of the communicative, since there is no analogous dialectical communication with nature and/or raw material, but only a monovalent or information relationship, that is, a merely informative relationship in which the messages sent do not await any return. On the other hand, it is necessary to analyse in the author two more concepts, intrinsically related and extraordinarily suggestive for the study of those online communicative contexts that are the object of study of this manuscript: it is the "with-knowing" of the "co-presence" of both communicative poles, sender and receiver of the message. The fact that both poles of the message are aware of their mutual presence gives the communicative act a markedly experiential aspect. A communicative event in which it is possible to create, sustain and fulfil expectations as the leading event around which the communicative situation is articulated.

On the contrary, the participants who concur in a virtual communicative process are immediately aware of their precarious anchorage, being dominated by instantaneity, the absence of the limits of physical proximity and, above all, the delirium of an identity changing, liquid, limitless... (Bauman 2013) That delirium of an limitless identity is one of the defining features of remote virtual communicative exchange: sender(s) and receiver(s) accept(s) that the communicative situation propitiated through social networks is necessarily intertwined in the masquerade, that is, in the farce of two of the functions of language stipulated by Roman Jakobson (1963): the expressive function, relative to the sender, and the appellative function, relative to the receiver. Both functions are irrelevant (whether a nickname or a real name is used, since the suspension of the nominal identity is a fact) in a communicative process that is reduced, finally, to the propitiation of contact, or constant updating of the conative function.

Thus, the germinal communicative contract of Pasquali (2007, 60-63) would be inapplicable on the Internet, by depriving its protagonists, sender(s) and receiver(s) of the message, of equivalent communicative capacities that allow them to act in co-presence, symmetrical interaction and equitable dialogical capacity for the successful achievement of their implicit desire for mutual understanding.

However, it is undeniable that, in current online communication systems, we find senders and receivers of messages with ambivalent communicative roles, as they develop and feed expectations of mutual return. The fundamental change in these communicative roles is the radical alteration of the ethical model of balanced communication, based on the recognition of a reliable identity: a (re)known identity, it must not be forgotten, with respect to which we modulate the levels of intimacy of our confidences (Bohm 2018, 157-190).

The question is simple: in this context, what comes to replace our confidence based on recognition (and, therefore, on the predictability of the behaviour of the personality that we "know")? Well, neither more nor less than the masquerade, farce, identity theft, the construction of personal alterities not subject to verification, which fully immerses us in the

experience of delirium in the absence of certainties regarding a question as simple as: "Who is who?" in the context of the Internet, digital media and technosocial life, which create their own reality, emotion and intimacy of the digital experience to feel the fullness of always being "superconnected"? (Chayco 2019, 515).

And there would still be a second (predictable) question to ask: what would be the limit of these identity mutations at the service of our virtual reputation? The answer could be "there are no limits", not even personal humiliation. Sara Cefai (2020, 1288) even speaks of "media cultures of humiliation", since, in the same way that data is the basis of the economic language of digital culture, reputation is essential for the cultural currency of exchange in networks and social networks.

It is, in short, about sharing an identity fantasy that consists of the creation of multiple profiles that, known as "clones", generate a delusional split (Escandell 2015) with two important consequences:

1. The first is the weakening of the marks of the expressive and appellative functions, since the communicative contract is based on the tacit acceptance of the fraud due to unfolding by all those involved in the communicative situation.
2. As a consequence of the foregoing, the diversity and intensity of the communicative process will be limited, at least structurally, to a mere updating of the contact: a contact that is integrated into a structure explicitly rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 13).

For the researcher Gérard Imbert (2010, 71), we are in the role-playing game universe, where there are no stable limits between identities, which are relativized as such, are negotiated, exchanged and reversible. This instability of the rules corresponds to the instability of identities, which causes the communicative contract to become an excuse to place oneself in the enjoyment of reversibility, inversion and, why not, relational mannerism: nothing is what it seems

Consequently, the author insists on it (Imbert 2008, 71), we find ego relational structures, favouring the appearance of a neo-individualism, the endless dispersion of points of view, the de-multiplication of opinions, the contradictory debate, the excessive exposure to all kinds of speeches... And all of this leads to a permanent (contra)contradiction of versions and contraversions (Imbert 2019, 439).

On the other hand, in his "Introduction to a theory of the spectacle", Jesús González-Requena (1985, 35-44) considers to what extent it is feasible to formulate a conciliation or imbrication between the communicative and the spectacular in the field of networks social. Especially, if we take into account the antecedents noted in other media fields such as contemporary television.

The semiotic and cultural analyses in reference to contemporary television, which was called "Paleotelevision" in its early evolutionary phases, are well known (Casetti et al. 1990). As the medium of television introduced distant worlds into viewers' living rooms, it acquired the status of "Neotelevision" (Eco 1983, 163-179). The main consequence of this transition from "Paleo-television" to "Neo-television" was a growing violation of the privacy of domestic

environments, increasingly exposed to the world's scopical consumption, as an explicit antecedent of the "Reality-Show".

The next step in this television evolution is already hyper-television (Scolari 2008, 2), which shares some characteristics with social networks, such as the "tyranny of visibility". However, we must not forget a fundamental difference: as opposed to the hierarchical unilateralism of the television model, in the context of social networks every individual is, in himself, an emitting focus. That massive emitting focus deploys its virtual profiles, photo galleries, opinions, video channels, blogs, etc., thus becoming part of this digital mob of undefined limits.

This sharing of virtual passions, which is not subject to any limits, not even ethical ones (insofar as there is no commitment to truth), opens the door to an imaginary world where anything is possible. At this point, we are led to the following question: Is the existence of private passions currently possible, or only those passions worthy of being published, shared and, in the extreme, spectacularized?

In his book "La contagion des passions" (1989), Marc Guillaume argues that passions are increasingly imaginary, avoid face-to-face encounters, find their fulfilment only in media staging and avoid "body to body" (Imbert 2010, 59). Well, it is precisely here, in the media staging of passion or, in other words, in the media construction of passion, that we find the reconciliation and usefulness of the theory of the television spectacle, which could well be incorporated into the analysis of the masked appearance of the individual in the framework of social networks.

As with social media, the television spectacle is transmitted through the viewers' senses, excluding smell, touch and taste from this experience (precisely the senses most closely related to intimacy). As Jesús González Requena (1985, 35) warns, the spectacular relationship is constructed at a distance, excluding intimacy in favour of an unavoidable estrangement. However, although in the television spectacle (and in the social media), the sense of hearing is massively summoned, it remains in the background due to the excessive distance it introduces as a spectacular operator.

In any case, sight is the omnipotent sense in the spectacular relationship, since it grants the subject the status of spectator, since there is nothing better than the gaze to sustain a relationship with another body that is lacking (González Requena 1985, 36):

- That body exhibited in the distance, insofar as it is denied to the spectator except on a scopical level, manifests itself as fascinating.
- In turn, this fascination guarantees the prolongation of this spectacular relationship, articulated for a visual organ, the eye, which never fulfils its desire to look.

Thus, it would seem that the success of the traditional television and social media devices could be based on the same original virtual relationship: that of watching and being watched (González Requena 1985, 37). However, it cannot be ignored that the virtual relations that develop in the field of social media introduce a differential bias with respect to the

television spectacle: it is not only a matter of showing the exhibited body, but of its substitution by a masked body in which it is possible to differentiate the concurrence of three factors:

1. A beautifying mask that is activated to obsessively erase any imperfection, defect, flaw, mistake or wrinkle that could hinder the fullness of that visual relationship between two specular and spectacular figures.
2. An intense and lasting exchange between a face or a body that is exhibited and that receives in return an unfading gaze from a certain person who may occupy, in turn, the position of exhibitor.
3. An ultimately mercantile relationship (although there is no explicit payment in it), around a masked body-face, since it is instituted as a decoy and merchandise.

We will assume, therefore, that the framework of online communication takes the empire of the gaze to its ultimate consequences, since (discarding any contract of privacy) it massively employs beautifying filters for the placement of the (masked) person in the agora of public display. It is a trend that fits perfectly into the architecture that sustains the acts of digital socialisation (Escandell 2015), made up of confused, multiple, labile and polyhedral subjectivities. On the other hand, the limitless possession of various profiles on social networks, the hoarding of galleries of photographic images, the feeding of video channels, blogs, etc., gives the participants numerous places that are always unstable in the context of a ubiquitous ecosystem that does not guarantee their permanence, their constancy, their maintenance...

The main consequence of the establishment of this "reality of the simulacrum" (Imbert 2008, 102) implies the precariousness of the order of reality, at least in terms of identity, since the individual is camouflaged behind the mask. In turn, according to the interpretation of Joaquín García (2020), based on the theories of Jacques Lacan, it is only the order of words, the order of discourse, which "creates the world of things" (García 2020). The problem is when we find ourselves in a sphere such as social media, where it is the fringes of language (that is, the filter, the mask, the most fallacious iconic) that found and maintain an ambiguous, slippery world, fed by its own logic and dynamics, and crowded with echoes of images that may no longer be, since the material support for the impostor discourse that is exchanged on social networks may no longer exist.

But (it is necessary to pay attention to this) this exercise of persistent and massive seduction is, at the same time, an exercise of power (which is no less forceful for being volatile, evanescent and labile): it is a power that is exercised (or is intended to be exercised) over the desire of the other, and which is entrenched in the force of a fleeting and perishable identity, from which (strictly speaking) no ethical or behavioural responsibility can be demanded. Thus, if any power (political, economic, cultural, interpersonal...) is aware that it will only impose and perpetuate itself if it is capable of making itself desired, spectacularization and desirability acquire their true magnitude as tools for the support and maintenance of power.

We could even say that the empire of the mask in social networks could be the other side of television transformism, characterised by the propensity for disguise (even transvestism, within a carnivalesque game) and by the ease of playing with roles and

identities, which is corrected and increased in social media: being one and the other at the same time annihilates the communicative act itself (Imbert 2010, 164), which is structured and guaranteed (as has been explained above) by clearly differential positions.

In this regard, BBCNews reported on September 9, 2020 about the #FilterDrop campaign, spearheaded by makeup artist and model Sasha Pallari <@sashapallari>, with the aim of raising awareness and discouraging the excessive abuse of beautifying filters in social media photos (Hallet 2020): "Let more real skin be seen on Instagram" was the subtitle of the slogan. In its report, the British channel noted that the massive and intensive use of beauty filters had become the dominant way of presenting photos on social media, motivated by the obsession among its users to conform to increasingly demanding and, in the extreme, literally anti-human beauty standards. Note that this is not, in fact, an exaggerated statement, but a literal one: how else could we define the demand to erase from the face and the body all traces of the human matter that integrates them, the most material and real skin...?

It is a power that could be limited to the borders of the imaginary (when users are able to adapt their image to the established canons) or that can precipitate towards the sinister, when this fit does not satisfy these users or their usual virtual environment. In such a context, FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) emerges as the "dark reverse" of this subjection (apparently harmless and voluntary) that can become traumatic and anxiogenic, with a series of worrying symptoms derived from dependence on the incessant gratification of social media. It is worth mentioning, in this regard, the recent work by Li, Niu, Mei and Griffiths (2022) analysing the relationship between FoMO, SNS (Social Network Site) use and smartphone addiction: the results of their extensive experiment placed feelings of anxiety and loss as dominant, proposing new strategies for the prevention of smartphone and SNS addiction.

Likewise, coinciding with the launch and "viralization" of the #FilterDrop campaign, the British organisation "Girlguiding" <<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/>>, the UK's largest female children and youth organisation founded in 1910, published the results of a survey <<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about-us/press-releases/girls--fear-criticism-for-being-themselves/>>: 69% of British girls, aged 11 to 16, regularly use beautifying apps or filters in their social media posts. Also, a third of the girls and young women interviewed said they would not post selfies without using a beauty filter, and 39% of the 1,473 respondents (aged 11-21) confessed their frustration at not looking as good in real life as they did online.

In addition to the early age at which British girls start using beauty filters, the symptomatic nature of this practice thus manifests itself, in a threefold way:

1. The imperious need to reconfigure one's own infant-juvenile Gestalt according to the omnipresent beauty patterns in social media.
2. The deep chasm existing between the reality of a body in full metamorphosis (hence the relevance of the age range surveyed) and the types of filter chosen and their results, which project a delirious, narcissistic, imaginary semblance and, in short, totally distant from its original referent.
3. The survey also revealed that 43% of the girls consumed online ads that, in one way or another, had an impact on the assumption of beauty standards that, because they

are unattainable, unfailingly lead to an experience of anguish, with no possible management, since one's own body does not withstand any comparison with the fascinating body: it is a real body that weighs, accumulates imperfections, gives off odour and lacks glamour.

For our part, through an end-of-degree project developed at the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University of Santiago de Compostela, we conducted in 2021 a study focused on the massive use of "beautification filters" among young Instagram consumers (Fernández-Ochoa 2021). A total of 451 people were surveyed, ranging in age from 16 to 32 years, with an average age of 22 years (35.9%). The prevalent gender among respondents was female (80.5%), compared to male (18.2%), while two people identified themselves as "non-binary" and one as "bigender". Regarding the habitat of the respondents, most of them resided in the big cities of Galicia (A Coruña, Spain), distributed in Santiago de Compostela (30.2%), as well as in Lugo (18.2%), A Coruña (10%) and Vigo (9.5%), while the rest of the respondents (32%) resided in other galician localities.

Among the most outstanding results of the survey, it is worth highlighting the intensive use of Instagram detected in 88.1% of the respondents: 22.8% frequently and 65.3% very frequently. Furthermore, 71.1% of women confessed to using Instagram "very frequently", compared to 42.4% of men.

Another revealing fact is that 55% of those surveyed admit to uploading their selfies to Instagram with beauty filters, compared to 45% who do so without filters. Introducing the gender variable, 59.5% of women always share their selfies on Instagram Stories with filters, compared to 36.5% of men. Similarly, to the question "Have you ever wished your face looked like the one simulated by Instagram filters?", the percentage of affirmative answers among women (66.7%) is double that of men (33.3%).

When asked whether beauty filters had had a negative impact on respondents' self-esteem, only 10.7% of men answered in the affirmative, compared to 35.9% of women (three times the percentage of men). Also, 70.4% of the women surveyed reported feeling pressure to look perfect on Instagram at some point, compared to 51.2% of men. Paradoxically, 92.9% of both sexes agreed that Instagram filters project an unrealistic stereotype of beauty.

Finally, an open-ended question was included about which traits respondents thought best defines the ideal of female beauty. The open-ended responses were grouped by means of a series of qualifying adjectives, which alluded to certain body areas, and which were ordered in decreasing order of citation:

- Lips: big, thick, fat, plump, plump, fleshy, voluminous, marked, wide...
- Nose: thin, pointed, small, small, sharp, upturned, narrow, straight....
- Eyes: large, slanting, almond-shaped, foxy-eye, light, green, blue...
- Skin: smooth, pimple-free, blemish-free, scar-free, smooth, perfect, even, tanned, bronzed, tanned...

Firstly, it is very revealing that (despite the fact that the questionnaire did not isolate any particular area of the body), most of the adjectives were concentrated on the face and only occasionally on the body: slim, curvy, curvy, curvy, tall...

Secondly, and no less important, there is a very close correlation between the aesthetic aspirations of Instagram users and the pattern of beauty that underlies the most commonly used filters on the app and social network owned by Meta. In fact, through the analysis of a sample of 15 facial beauty filters used on Instagram Stories (with very significant denominations, as can be seen in the attached table), a clear iterative pattern became evident: a sharp face, with pronounced cheekbones, flawless skin, a thin nose, prominent lips, slanted eyes ("foxy-eye") and changes in the colour tone of the eyes, predominantly blue or green:

N.	NAME	CREATED BY	MAIN FEATURES
1	Beautiful Face	@yana_leventseva	Smooth, flawless and shiny skin, fine nose, enlarged lips, slanted eyes with strong make-up.
2	Beautiful Freckles	@_zaraosinov_	Smooth, luminous and flawless skin, flushed cheeks, light eyes and make-up, possibility of enhancing the lips and adding freckles all over the face.
3	Beautiful Face	@yulya.kors	Smooth, even skin, shiny nose, light eyes with false eyelash effect and voluminous lips.
4	Muse	@nadine.nassib.njeim	Slightly tanned, smooth skin, flushed cheeks, fine, contoured nose, full lips, light eyes with false eyelashes effect and make-up marked with a mole.
5	Beautiful	@jbpreset	Smooth, even and flawless skin, slightly tanned, flushed and freckled cheeks, narrow nose and make-up, light eyes and false eyelashes effect, with the option of adding a line of eye make-up.
6	Pretty Face	@victoriawaldau	Smooth, luminous, even and flawless skin, slightly tanned with discreet freckles, pronounced cheekbones, full lips and light eyes.
7	Pretty Face 2	@melissasantachiara	Smooth, luminous and even skin, slightly tanned, sharp face, light and slanted eyes, fine nose, full lips and very pronounced make-up.
8	Pretty Face	@itscarolineclrn	Make-up effect with smooth skin, flushed cheeks, light eyes with lengthened eyelashes, option of gradual nose contouring and lip enhancement.
9	Pretty Faced	@sophie	Smooth and even skin, slightly tanned face with flushed cheeks, full lips, light and slanted eyes with long eyelashes.
10	Pretty Girl	@iva_grguric_official	Smooth shiny, slightly and tanned skin, luminous and fine nose, light eyes and long eyelashes with a light make-up line, voluminous lips and sharp facial contours.
11	Perfect	@gigii_	Grainy and blurred effect, fine nose with shiny tip, false

	Face		eyelashes effect, smooth and shiny skin, slightly tanned, rosy cheeks, voluminous lips and light eyes.
12	Perfect Face	@anastasy_d	Smooth skin with flushed cheeks, noticeably thin and elongated nose, voluminous lips, sharp face and voluminous lips.
13	Babygirl	@doralysbritto	Smooth, even and luminous skin, slightly tanned, light eyes, moles added, small mouth with full and glossy lips.
14	Perfect Lips / Face	@emiliamantadakis	Sparkling effect, smooth and even skin, with flushed cheeks and abundant freckles, voluminous, outlined, reddish lips.
15	Perfect Face	@_ti_11	Smooth and fair skin, high cheekbones, sharp features, fine nose, light and slanted eyes with make-up effect and long eyelashes, small mouth and full lips.

Table 1: Beauty filters tested (source: Fernández-Ochoa 2021, 47-52)

Consequently, we can argue that the beautifying filter is, therefore, the imaginary alternative for the evasion of everyday reality, a passport that facilitates the immersion of users (especially women) in the game of mirages of online, virtual and distance relationships.

And so, the new practises of communication in social media, traversed (intervened, mediatised, conditioned, altered, falsified, hidden...) by the unquestionable axiom of the beautifying filter, materialise in themselves the desire for the emancipation of privacy itself, given that in the society of the spectacle, if something is not seen by anyone, most probably, that something will not exist (Sibilia 2008, 30).

Psychoanalytic theory also provides an interesting approach to this evasion of the intimate, perceiving in it a clear symptom of denial and conflict. In this sense, Bevir (2004) analyses the stubborn postponement of the unconscious (as the psychic instance depositary of the most intimate and inconfessable) by the conscious psychic instance, as the most operative and functional part of the human mind.

However, that exclusion of the most random and painful that inhabits the human being would not be the most worrying thing, but the implementation of countless socio-technological resources aimed at affirming, thinking and undertaking the human being as a mechanical entity: a machine perfectly designed and geared for happiness (Gobantes 2014, 38). Thus, this symptomatic displacement from the core of the intimate of the unconscious to the fantasy periphery of the conscious, would be affirmed on a certain narcissistic, concealing and fallacious ideal that would act as a mediating element in the virtual relationship with the other: the universal harmony in the mirror? The condition for this relationship not to volatilize is, undoubtedly, not to cross the threshold of virtuality, given that, otherwise, the mirror would shatter.

As a corollary of this process, a neologism emerges linked to social networks: "extimacy", that is, the externalisation of intimacy (Grosso 2019, 36). Although apparently this

is a "contradictio in terminis" (since it is difficult to merge in the same term two concepts as antagonistic as intimacy and its externalisation), it is also true that, increasingly, we need neologisms for the naming of unusual realities.

Thus, "extimacy" (which names the recording, publication and sharing of every moment of everyday life, at the very moment it is happening, and always through images), defines the characteristics of being-in-the-world, now reduced to the world of the visible. As Sibilia (2008, 18) argues, contemporaneity favours the creation of modes of being oriented towards the 'outside', that is, towards that which is seen. Parallel to the growth of media culture, the need to be seen has increased as an essential condition for possessing a public entity. In the sphere of social networks, being connected implies being visible, and thus the very existence of the user depends on his or her ability to be always connected and always visible.

But what about the two canonical operators of social semantics: the public and the private? The German philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas (1982, 43), places the first distinction between the public and the private in classical Greece in the configuration of the city-states, in which the public space was erected as the manifest expression of the common interest. In the Agora there was no mediation, but rather the discursive exchange between citizens took place face to face in a space conceived as a place for meeting and common decision-making on matters of collective interest.

The profound socio-political transformations that took place from classical antiquity to modernity did not dissipate the differential barrier between the public and the private:

1. The appropriation of public space would have been transformed into a right, that of demonstration and expression, entrenched in a place of debate between different social actors who deserve to be heard (Guzmán 2017). It is in this modern location of the public space where the communicative mediation between the sphere of publicity and that of privacy has emerged, as Habermas (1990, 225-293), through one of his nuclear theses, pointed out throughout "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit".
2. With respect to the other sphere, that of privacy (with different characteristics, practises and uses), it is identified with those places in which the individual carries out activities that are not considered transcendental for the collectivity, but which are made up of experiential events that configure intimacy.

The television medium led to a transcendental anthropological transformation of the public and private spheres (González Requena online texts), by its introduction of the public sphere (spectacularized) into the most intimate areas of our homes, in a continuous, uninterrupted way. And this is how social topology warns that the hybridisation of public and private spaces, hitherto antagonistic, has led to an advance in the dehumanisation of the individual: the crisis of intimacy and the incessant masking of one's own image have come to replace the intimate and symbolic configuration of identity, which now seems impossible.

The economic success of this hybridisation is evident, day by day, in the largest leisure industry ever created by human beings: and we insist, "day by day", since this industry has

established the spectacular model in everyday life, eradicating its once extraordinary status. At the extreme end of the process, and following in the wake of television, the social media have become imbricated in the intimacy of the domestic space, from which the individual has become the transmitter and receiver (as if it were a mirror) of his own intimacy converted into a public spectacle, and therefore annihilated by means of obscenity, or masking, or farce.

In short, the debate about what should be the boundaries between the right to information and the right to privacy of citizens is now outdated and outmoded: on the contrary, it has been assumed that it is impossible to consider privacy in social media as the selective control exercised by the user in his or her exchanges of information (Trepte 2020, 550-551). The massive renunciation of users' right to privacy (since, having renounced one of their inalienable rights, they cannot be considered as "citizens"), or, if one prefers, their submission to the demand for transparency, is now a fact.

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