



José Manuel Domínguez de la Fuente
University of Salamanca

@ jm_doming@hotmail.com

ID 0000-0002-1725-2664

■ Received / Recibido
June 2, 2020

■ Accepted / Aceptado
June 15, 2020

■ Pages / Páginas
From 23 to 37

■ ISSN: 1885-365X

Infoxication as a probable cause of the loss of self-knowledge and the eclipse of the «Self»

La infoxicación como causa probable de la pérdida del autoconocimiento y del eclipse del «yo»

ABSTRACT:

In this article we will investigate infoxication (the effect of exposure to excess of images and to the constant connectivity of the individual in social networks) as the primary cause of the loss of interiority, introspection and the consequent mutation of oneself towards its spiritual dilution and dispersion in the social, political and cultural exteriority. Based on the anthropological model of Zubiri, we will try to specify what these effects may consist of. Finally, we will present silence and disconnection as a possible way of resistance and antidote to the loss of self-knowledge and reflection.

KEY WORDS:

infoxication; Self; Self knowledge; Culture; Silence.

RESUMEN:

En el presente estudio partimos de la pregunta por los efectos, en la vida personal, de la utilización generalizada de las nuevas tecnologías, de la exposición permanente a la conexión en red y de la recepción masiva de información. Fundamentados en el modelo antropológico de Zubiri, tratamos de precisar en qué pueden consistir estos efectos. A continuación, trataremos de mostrar si la infoxicación (consistente en aturdimiento interior por sobreexposición a información y mensajes virtuales, efecto de la exposición al exceso de imágenes y de la conectividad constante del individuo en redes sociales) puede ser una de las principales causas del eclipse del yo y de la interioridad, de la mutación del yo hacia su disolución espiritual y su dispersión en la exterioridad social, política y cultural. Finalmente, trataremos de esbozar una posible vía de resistencia y de antidoto ante tal situación en la experiencia del silencio.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Infoxicación; Yo; Autoconocimiento; Cultura; Silencio.

1. Introduction

In our daily cultural life, experiences of introspection and internal revision of the soul, similar to those that Augustine of Hippo shows us as necessary for the path to the higher, seem remote: «Noli foras ire. In teipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas» (Augustine of Hippo, 1975: 141).

The Socratic motto «know yourself», through which the Athenian philosopher intended that all people seek the truth, starting from the study of their interior and in dialogue with others, seems definitely over.

Today, on the contrary, the exaltation of the self takes place, but not an intimate self and in continuous openness and search for truth, but rather a narcissistic self, reified, spectacularized and masked, disguised through a «profile» that is exhibited publicly and shamelessly. Thus, Perniola (2008) affirms,

our own image has ceased to belong to us entirely, but we also feel it in a way that seems strange to us or, as it were, fixed. If for the narcissist the world is a mirror in which he looks at himself, the experience of what is already felt is like becoming the mirror where he looks at the world (Perniola, 2008: 36).

In this article we will try to unravel whether it is reasonable to maintain this hypothesis of the loss of sense and experience of interiority and the consequent mutation of the self.

To do this, with the contribution of neuroscience we will show, first, the effects of the massive exposure of the «self» to new technologies and the virtual world. Second, we will try to establish what we understand by «self» and what may be, from this anthropological perspective, the reason for the effects of what these neuroscientists have said.

Thirdly, we will try to test whether infoxication (effect of exposure to excess of images and constant connectivity of the individual in social networks, consisting of internal daze due to overexposure to information and virtual messages) could be the first cause of said mutation of the self and the impossibility of self-knowledge and introspection.

Fourth, we will try to show how infoxication goes hand in hand with and catalyzes the monoform (generalized narrative procedure —on TV, cinema, internet...— consisting of a vertiginous, compressed and accelerated flow of fragmented content, called to cause constant surprise and saturation). The monoform that prevents the plurality of thoughts and the depth of personal reflection, as well as gives rise to the imposition of a monoculture (unique cultural model that is imposed as the dominant mentality), brings the eclipse of the cultural subject. This monoculture is followed, in turn, by the loss of the ability of individuals to exercise freedom, as well as the corruption of the very meaning of the word freedom, all as a result of this bewilderment of the spiritual.

Finally, we will try to outline some ways of resistance to monoform, monoculture, and infoxication. We will propose it through words but, paradoxically, especially through the experience of silence and the return to inner sources.

To carry out the proposed research, we will take into account the psychological, neurological, sociological and philosophical contributions of various authors (Turtle, Spitzer, Baudrillard, Wolf, Small, Vorgan, Perniola, Weber, Sunstein, Groys, Watkins, Sartori, Carr, among others) who have worked and carried out studies on infoxication, and we will try to understand and relate their contributions from philosophical anthropology, with and from the



Zubirian model. Finally, we will open as a hypothesis a path that seems to allow the resistance and liberation of the diluted self in this infoxicating context.

2. Eclipse of the self in the age of digital communication?

Because of the constant presence in our lives of massive information, permanent digital connectivity and continuous exposure to the Internet, it seems reasonable to ask whether these events and others like them have any influence on the person, on their subjectivity and, more specifically, on the relationship of the person with himself and in the access to his interiority. To try to unravel whether it has any personal effects, it is useful to take note of what some of the most prominent researchers in the field of neuroscience have told us in the last ten years.

It is striking the contribution of Maryanne Wolf, a cognitive neuroscientist from Tufts University (Massachusetts), who states in her recent *Reader, come home* (Wolf, 2020) that so much information and offered so quickly prevents the understanding of the content and, above all, slow reasoning, since it does not allow short-term memory to sediment its memories. For this reason, neural circuits, which we know are fine-tuned by reading books and thinking about their content, tend to become impoverished as people increasingly use computers, tablets and cell phones, making difficult the understanding and the self-understanding, stimulated by traditional linear reading.

In fact, every day more studies show that neuronal and psychological changes are related to reading, the acquisition of information and the use of working (or short-term) memory. The most notable ones are collected by Manfred Spitzer, director of the Knowledge Transfer Center for Neurosciences and Learning in Germany, in his book *Digital dementia* (Spitzer, 2013), justifying and rigorously demonstrating that the permanent use of computers does not promote the training of children and adolescents, but rather they can make it difficult. The use of social networks leads young people to social isolation and superficial contacts, making them lonely and unhappy (Spitzer, 2013: 24-25, 109ff.). Based on the PISA report and others, it links computer use to school failure. Likewise, states that new technologies allow and favor multitasking (Spitzer, 2013: 223ff.), which affects a decrease in serotonin and GABA, which translates into lower performance, low attention and greater stress. Studying, answering WhatsApp, checking email, playing online games, and answering the phone and listening to music simultaneously is stressful. And, above all, it poses a serious obstacle to self-perception and self-awareness.

In the well-known essay *iBrain: Surviving the technological alteration of the modern Mind* (Small y Vorgan, 2009), American neurologists G. Small. and G. Vorgan state and argue that new technologies are bringing radical changes in brain functions, which may bring some advantages, such as new ways of interpreting information, but they have also led to some new problems: increase from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (because they do not favor the fixation of attention on any content for a long time), social isolation (increases the difficulty of direct interpersonal communication) and even addiction (which is developed in the brain in the same way than drug addictions). All these effects are incompatible with a person's access to his interiority.



Even more forceful, Sherry Turkle, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and researcher on the effect of new technologies on the mind, shows in her work *Reclaiming conversation* (Turkle, 2017) that new technologies lead to hyperconnectivity and prevent boredom, silence and loneliness, that are the basis for the development of imagination and virtues such as patience and, in general, spiritual development. The massive use of new technologies and hyperconnectivity have an effect on the atrophy of the activity of the thalamus and hypothalamus and, above all, of the limbic system, which brings with it a decrease in empathy, for not having in front the person with whom it is communicated and, therefore, it ends up being an impoverishment of self-knowledge and the conditions for it.

In this same way, the science journalist Nicholas Carr in *The shallows: What the Internet is doing to our brains* (Carr, 2011), analyzes how the changes in habits of the digital society have brought with them a decrease in patience, the capacity for reflection and contemplation. For Carr, the cacophony of stimuli emanating from the Internet has increased insubstantial reading, quick and distracted thinking, and superficial learning, in contrast to the book era in which people were encouraged to be contemplative and imaginative.

These references are enough to verify what we thought: it is taking place, caused by the indiscriminate use of new technologies and by a massive and multi-channel reception of information, an authentic cognitive daze and a situation of blockage, due to media and computer noise, of the self-perception of the subject, of the person, reduced in part to being the terminal, always open and ready, of an endless network of connectivity. It does not seem absurd to propose the hypothesis of an eclipse of the «Self» due to bewilderment and the difficulty in the exercise of introspection. However, to justify this rigorously it is necessary to specify what we mean by «Self». We will do it from the philosophical anthropology of Xavier Zubiri.



3. What is the «Self» and what is its condition for digital reasons

Xavier Zubiri, like most of the personalist and dialogical philosophers of Judeo-Christian roots, shows that, faced with things, whose essences are closed in themselves, the person realizes that reality exists and realizes itself as reality. That is why we say that the person is open: he realizes himself as reality and also realizes reality. Its ontological characteristics allows him to be his,

determine man's radical confrontation with things as real, because they constitute a radically new type of substantivity: open substantivity. Human reality is an organized, solidary and corporeal psycho-organic construct, which in its very organization, solidarity and corporeity is an open construct (Zubiri, 1986: 65).

And not only does he realize himself and all of this, but he is turned and poured into reality. But the radical datum «is not openness to another reality, but openness to human reality itself as reality» (Zubiri, 1986: 69). Man is aware of himself. This is precisely what allows him to realize his life, his moral being, to do projects (Zubiri, 1986: 607ff.).

Being open consists, therefore, in that it behaves in view of its own character of reality: The fact that the person has an open essence refers, therefore, to the fact that it is «intelligent

and volitional essences» (Zubiri, 1985: 500) This offers us a key aspect in our research: this opening is carried out intellectually, that is, by apprehending reality and itself as reality. It is an intellectual act.

All his psycho-organic activity is based on this condition and his actions, he reaffirms himself in front of himself and in front of others, he affirms himself as «me». The «Self», therefore, is the way of being own of each person acting from the consciousness of himself and the reality (Zubiri, 1986: 159), it is what each one does when shaping his personality when acting. That is why «the self is the actuality of my personal form in the world» (Zubiri, 1986: 160).

In conclusion, because it is intellectual, this self-affirmation of the self is made, empirically speaking, from its consciousness of itself. Anything that empirically makes it difficult to exercise your intellection, the apprehension of reality and your own reality, implies an eclipse of the self and, therefore, a spoiling of its realization as a person. If the indiscriminate use of new technologies and the uncritical flood of information produce cognitive daze, it seems that they can suppose an eclipse of the «Self», a certain alienation, whose effects would be, among others, a *personal infirmation* (Domínguez Prieto, 2011: 271ff.).

However, understanding this requires, even succinctly, taking into account the three modes of intellection proposed by Zubiri. In every process of knowledge these three levels occur: through the first, I realize that something real is in front of me. It is the characteristic of sentient intelligence (Zubiri, 1981). Secondly, I realize what it is regarding to other things: it is the knowledge that Zubiri calls «logos» (Zubiri, 1982). Thirdly, I go to the bottom of reality to know what that thing is beyond what my senses capture: it is the «reason» (Zubiri, 1983). It is in human reason that thinking beyond what is given starts, a thinking activated by the thing itself that is present to try to find what is deep down, what is its foundation. And this search of the foundation seems to be what is disabled by cognitive daze, by the excess of uncritical information, because –as we saw– this flood of images, sounds and data leaves the intelligence anchored in the immediate. What remains disabled, then, is knowing and knowing oneself. Because having information (typical of sentient intelligence and logos) does not imply having knowledge. Confusing one with another is a big mistake.



4. The eclipse of self's access to its intimacy and its mutation in the era of digital communication

Let's see the eclipse of the self from another complementary perspective. Blocked or hindered the access of the self due to the dispersion of attention in a multitude of information and connections, it seems that it ends up identifying itself with its self-representation in social networks, in images and in the cybernetic consciousness of others. It seems socially overshadowed –and even incomprehensible for most– to understand one's own identity as an reality in the process of being done from a vocation captured inside to be replaced by a –profile– on the networks. The false self, a mere construct based on its use as a network terminal, masks and eclipses the authentic being, takes control of oneself until life itself becomes a pure media spectacle that ends up nullifying the authenticity of the person, in a terminal of endless networks (Baudrillard, 1997: 9-23). The appearance that shapes

the person in the era of social networks and the excess of images, «does not derive from internalization, but from the reflection of external entities» (Perniola, 2008: 36).

For this reason, it is socially verified that the presentation of the self to others, and even oneself, is being transformed by the digitization of life to such an extent that exteriority becomes for some people (youtubers, instagramers, etc.), its only recognized interiority. Pope Francis warns, in this way, that communication is being confused with virtual contact:

The web and social networks have created a new way of communicating and connecting [...] But it is not healthy to confuse communication with mere virtual contact. In fact, the digital environment is also a territory of loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence, up to the extreme of the dark web. Digital media can expose the risk of dependence, isolation and progressive loss of contact with concrete reality, hindering the development of authentic interpersonal relationships (Francisco, 2019: 49).

Through social networks, the self becomes a show, a mere show that is formed through the requests, demands and comments of others. The new message of communication in networks is oneself (Perniola, 2011). That is, the transmitter becomes a message. The separation between the public and the private is dissipated, turning the private into a mere digital public space (Whatsapp status, Instagram stories, Snapchat images, hauls and unboxing on YouTube, etc.).

In a paradigmatic way we can verify this in the political sphere, in which we verify the constant retransmission of the politician's life as spectacle and news, with the risk that he becomes a mere comedian and that he is «only concerned with the impression that his image makes» (Weber, 1981: 156). We no longer find the great political speeches with intense content, but now we find the media spectacle around the life of the political representative: «Current political life is a spectacle of mere images that, with being nothing more than that, they attract, fascinate and generate a cult of the personality that, in reality, is a cult of the image of the personality» (López Aranguren, 1988: 94).

But we see it, which is given by eminence in the political sphere, in the chronicles of society and in reality shows, reproduced in everyday life. It is about the constant retransmission of one's own life and one's own privacy and everyday life turned into a spectacle (Sunstein, 2007). This supposes the loss of the self as that own and intimate space as a realm of the interior, allowing the appearance of a false «Self» subject to instantaneity and immediacy. Everyone has to know where I am, what I am doing, who I am with... at all the time and live.

Privacy is something that is no longer saved, but is exposed with the pretense of spectacularity. It is a mutation of the self that no longer lives in reality itself, but in a world generated from the instantaneous subjective image, from the cult of the «profile». Also, we are in a time of crisis in fiction (Perniola, 2011), since «real selves» are more interesting than fictional characters. This is how an empire is forged, not only on social networks, but also on television, which revolves around the spectacular life of certain people who are subjected to pressures and moments that are chosen by the audience and not from their own freedom.

Therefore, the new «digital subject» conforms its own identity as a mere message that is transmitted to an audience that is shaping said image. It is no longer the presence of the person before the world that Zubiri affirmed, but a construct that is shamelessly shown as a public spectacle. The self is not who it is, but what others request of it:



The contemporary Narcissus cannot be so sure of his own taste. Today we are incapable of liking ourselves if we are not to the liking of the society in which we live; and in our society we have to be active if we want to be the object of admiration of others (Groys, 2017).

Consequently, the problems that are offered to homo videns, the transformation of homo sapiens towards a homo for which «the word is dethroned by the image and everything ends up being visualized» (Sartori, 1998: 11), are no longer the great philosophical problems personal and historical (life, death, knowledge, etc.), but they are the uncritical thematization of all those impulses that surround the cult of personality: how to get more followers, how to achieve more views of my images, how to reach a greater number of «likes», etc. This facet develops to such an extent that it becomes a new slavery, that of the cult of one's own image (which now replaces the personality and the self). It becomes a real addiction that the social networks themselves exploit and promote for its business profit (Chóliz Montañés, 2016).

Another characteristic of the formation of this new virtual identity, far from the real self to which the person aspires and must build from within, is the fear and panic of loneliness (hence new psychopathologies such as «nomophobia»: no- mobil-phone-phobia). The loneliness sought and the silence practiced daily imply thought, prayer, introspection, self-knowledge, personal growth... However, all these characteristics cannot flourish since they are not put into practice due to the panic of loneliness and the constant need for connection. The self that is built solely on the media reflection of others cannot cease to be permanently in virtual contact with the viewers who make up it (Groys, 2017). The panic of loneliness becomes constant and prevents self-discovery.

Let us remember that Zubiri's philosophical anthropology shows how each man is the author of his life because his life is his, his reality is his own and he has to realize it (Zubiri, 1988: 48). However, empirically we verify that in the current circumstances the «Self» blurs its self-belonging and ends up becoming a spectator of its own personal brand, of its own media history, of its fable that has to be sold by being recorded, photographed and exhibited permanently. An exhibition that does not start from dialogue and conversation (Turkle, 2017), but from mere virtual impressions.

We must clarify that when we talk about the formation of a new self that no longer belongs to or is no longer more than pure exteriority, we do not mean that it ceases to be a person or that it can no longer, if it seeks and changes, discover itself. We are talking about the personality, the ethos, the social makeup of the individual.

5. The infoxicación, the immediacy and excess of images in social networks as one of the possible causes of the loss of experience and self-knowledge

The digital world, as we have justified in the previous sections, encourages the person to be embedded in the immediacy, in the constant reception of images and information through social networks, the incessant reception of data through short messages, the multitasking... This is the phenomenon that today is called infoxicación:



The issue of information overload has been extensively addressed for years, since it is one of the most obvious processes of our time, especially since the incorporation of the Internet into everyday life. This exponential growth of information that intoxicates citizens, Alfons Cornellá called it, in 1996, «infoxication» and, since then, various authors from different disciplines have used it to explain its effects on the population, both at the individual level, as socially (Casas-Mas, 2014: 3).

Through the mass media and, more recently, social networks, there has been a loss of experience, of feeling (Perniola, 2008), to such an extent that what is being seen is no longer observed if it is not through the lens of the mobile with which you are photographing it. There is no longer any experience of reality, nor are the scenes starring, they are only shown before the camera to record it in front of an audience of followers (Sosa Plata, 2009). To this is added, as we justify when exposing Zubirian anthropology, that not only is there no experience of the reality and of oneself as reality, but also that there is no knowledge of self-knowledge.

In a special way, the internet, through the various digital media that we use, demands our attention in an absorbing way, incites compulsive behaviors in the continuous sending of messages and consultation of news, attracting our attention to disperse it and, finally, to the cacophony stimuli, short-circuit reflective thinking (Carr, 2011). On the other hand, the enormous amount of information that is permanently received, and the speed with which the source, screen, link is changed, prevents long-term memory from sedimenting any concept or conceptual scheme, giving rise to a «cognitive overload» (Carr, 2011: 155).

All this, definitely, implies the loss of the experience of loneliness, intimacy, of oneself, of self-knowledge... We are so concerned with sharing that we put aside feeling (Perniola, 2008), reflection and reality. The greatest loss that occurs due to excess images and infoxication is the loss of self-knowledge and introspection, but also the inability to formulate the ultimate questions and access to the ultimate in reality.

Self-knowledge and introspection require rest, distance from oneself and from sensible reality, rethinking one's own experience, reflection on oneself and on what is presented to us as important:

Experience is not enough: you have to reflect on it. Proof of this is that people with more experiences do not usually coincide with people with more maturity. Only by reflecting on my own life can I get to know myself and mature (Domínguez Prieto, 2002: 33).

For self-knowledge and the preservation of intimacy, a depth of awareness is required. Precisely, this can only be reached through reflection, reading, meditation and inner pause; elements that today are eliminated and changed due to immediacy, speed, permanent connectivity, constant images, false consumer needs, etc. Prayer, reading, meditation or reflection, on the other hand, require silence, pause, concentration... everything that is to be avoided through the abuse of digital devices, social networks and the social uses linked to them (Hilt, 2019).

The attention of homo videns is redirected so that it does not fit extensive reasoning, but is constantly directed to small empty messages that do not require deep reflection or internalization. «There is a significant relationship between dependence on mobile phones, habits and attitudes towards reading and the academic performance of students» (Hilt, 2019: 108).



In this context, concentration and the possibility of accessing oneself are increasingly difficult. Without the habit of silence, deep reflection and internalization, it is difficult that in today's world there were no mutation of the self towards its mere externalization.

Finally, let's say that the whole person is affected: the intellect is stunned by the uncritical excess of information. Affectivity loses the capacity to react to the constant display of images that gradually blind it, through the spectacularization of the human realities that affect us the most (Gómez Granados, 2007).

Intellect and affectivity are reduced in their capacity to understand and react to the bombardment of images and information that reaches the person without pause, since «affectivity is the personal capacity to be internally modified by a present reality» (Domínguez Prieto, 2002: 61).

Finally, in the absence of ends in the intellect and the «sentimentalization» of affect, the will itself is weakened.

And, above all, the person is expelled from his deepest interiority, from his spiritual dimension, from the field of beliefs, hopes and loves.

6. Social and political impact of infoxication: imposition of the single paradigm

Infoxication, which leads to the mutation and eclipse of the self, has its transcript in the social and political sphere. We can account for this if we discover that infoxication has been a catalyst for monoform, that is, for a single communication format (and cultural) that restricts the plurality of formats, expressions and cultures. The monoform supposes the imposition of a reduced communication paradigm that ends up penetrating the form of self-representation of individuals. For this reason, the cultural, social and political monoform has been strengthened with the increase of means of transmission of information by network.

Professor Watkins (2017) relates the discovery that he made, with his students, of the monoform in the media in the following way:

It was thus, thanks to the analysis of the narrative form used by television (television news and fiction series, such as *Raíces* or *Holocaust*), that those students and I discovered the standardized use of the Monoform (which is how we came to call it). We not only counted the number of cuts (of montage) that there were in each news and how many times the perspective camera changed within the same plane (zooms, panoramas, tilts, etc.), but we also examined the broadcast time granted to the opinions of the public compared to that granted to the presenters, as well as the moments of silence. We were surprised by the incredible speed, but also the repetition and uniformity in the succession of images (montage) (p. 20).

Thus, the monoform tries to legitimize the exploitation of entertainment, prevents critical debates and tries to standardize the narrative form (Watkins, 2017). By using great speed when presenting the images in a very short time, the viewer is not capable of reflecting or rethinking the form of what he has seen. It fully converges with all the means in which the brutalizing avalanche of images and data, of information and sounds, of promptings and slogans, is promoted, which ends up expelling the self from its personal relief, its personality and its own identity. The monforma is «infoxicating» by nature.



Proof of this is the facility with which, through the unique way, viewers-Internet users are led to easy sentimentality with issues that should be deep and dense reflect. Do not the endless political campaigns and, in general, the messages of politicians seem to be based, more and more, on simple slogans that serve as a new worldview? The effect of this is that not many no longer vote taking into account the electoral program of a party, but rather impulsively based on the slogan or the candidate who has had the most communication success during the campaign. Therefore, «current politics seeks to conquer through alienating persuasion» (López Aranguren, 1988: 93) and results in most political parties spending a greater amount of money on electoral digital marketing (Lucas Postigo, 2012).

And doesn't it end up presenting as normal —through film platforms, series, televised newspapers, etc.— a single axiological form that prevents any critical exchange of thought? It prevents it because of the sentimental way in which it is presented but also because of its infoxicating launch. Ultimately, it is about «attacking and trapping the public through a uniform programming, in which there is no possibility of choice; programming based on the most superficial, clumsy and commercial formats» (Watkins, 2017: 42).

This way of informing badly and in a distorted way (Sartori, 2012), which is presented as unique, also prevents the formation of the self through reflection and the intimate encounter with oneself, to the same extent that it predisposes the individual for spectacularization of the self and the immediacy of the image (of oneself) shared on social networks.

In an analogous way —and in connection with this informational and entertainment imposition— the infoxicating monoform has its projection in culture, giving rise to monoculture or a monodimensional culture. By this we mean a cultural form that annuls plurality and seeks the «homogenization» of people. And this happens, necessarily, to prevent personal reflection, taking a personal position. And this is a phenomenon that can be extended to the entire West: it is about imposing a culture that is not recognized as limited, a unique culture for the entire globe that is neither critical nor encourages free thought. In full globalization, we find a cultural, political and economic imposition of the Western paradigm on all the people of the world (Mayorga, 2016).

If you want to get out of this paradigm, you have to recover that culture is critical culture, that is, analytical. If not, it becomes a «preparatory culture for barbarism» (Mayorga, 2016: 25). Indeed, culture and barbarism are compatible if the former is not critical and does not encourage reflection. Take the example in Nazi Germany, where soldiers were able to go to the theater in the morning, listen to Bach music at noon, and put people in gas chambers at night.

The new cultural paradigm (monoculture) seems to promote an anesthetized society, for which it has found a privileged instrument in the new technologies used in a massive and uncritical way. As Baudrillard said, first it was God who died, then man died and, finally, reality has died at the hands of the virtuality. For this reason, the virtuality becomes «the last predator and predator of reality, segregated by itself as a kind of viral and self-destructive agent» (Baudrillard, 2008: 21).

Where can we find a space for resistance to this infoxicating monoform and monoculture? Where can we find spaces for self-knowledge and reflection? Undoubtedly, this can happen through the written word, through cultural forms such as the theater or the novel that allow to recover experiences of loneliness, intimacy, otherness...



Through theater (and putting this as an example of the culture of resistance that has the possibility of getting out of the monoform and infoxicación), Mayorga (2016) proposes to recover a space for the dense word and the depth of it. «There are words that condemn, others that save, others that make us fall in love and others that make us cry... What do we have to examine the words more than the words themselves?» (Mayorga, 2016: 53).

This critical culture will be the one that encourages not speed and immediacy, but the dense word that invites reflection, the introspection of the viewer or the reader, to place it in different contexts and situations. It can be the written word, as we saw in the first section, the spoken word in the encounter with another, or personal experiences of silence, reflection, introspection. In all of them, it is about recovering spaces of freedom to be able to return to interiority.

7. The loss of the sense of freedom in the single imposed paradigm

The monoform, monoculture and one-dimensional thought, bring with them a decrease in the exercise of freedom. «To exercise their freedom, each person rearranges tendencies and motives so that these will be «their» motives and «their» preferences. Freedom happens in self-control» (Domínguez Prieto, 2002). In this way, the reduction in the possibility of exercising freedom necessarily arises from the imposition, by the followers and viewers, of the motives and preferences about what should happen in the media story of one's life, immersed in social networks. The nullification of self-control due to the fictional self generated merely by the impressions of others, makes the practice of freedom impossible.

On the other hand, it is clear that the monoform, multitasking, the continuous flow of messages, the mass of inassimilable information and the continuous stimulation incitement affect the progressive incapacitation for reflection, freedom and self-knowledge of people. The word «freedom» is beaten in all programs of the mass media and, therefore, emptied of content, to be filled in, at will, by whatever suits the speaker or politician and fits within their «image prefabricated that replaces the real person in order to persuade or manipulate the listeners» (López Aranguren, 1988: 93). Allusions are continuously heard on all communication channels to «true freedom». But, what image do they present of it? The word «freedom» is used as a talisman, empty of content.

The word liberty is often used in reference —wrong— to debauchery. Of course, it is a question of «freedom» (from the Latin *liber*: liberation) that does not promote much that liberation of people from the burdens they suffer to which the etymology of the term refers. Nor does it promote solidarity in search of just living conditions that allow everyone to live with dignity (Constant, 1989).

In short, an idea of freedom is presented that is not linked to justice. That is, neither positive nor negative freedom (Berlin, 2005) is defended in the last resort, but political and economic debauchery. It is about making it appear as a unique paradigm of today to impose on others —through communication channels— a unique way of thinking, feeling, acting, teaching and even dressing, which does not give rise to plurality of opinions and respect for diversity of thoughts.



8. Silence as a space of resistance that enables self-knowledge and personal authenticity

Faced with the eclipse of interiority, which we have analyzed throughout the text and whose main focus is on infoxication, monoform, and the mutation or eclipse of personal identity amid images, information and overexposure to social networks, we ask if there is a field of resistance that enables self-knowledge, introspection, and personal authenticity.

Possibly this space of resistance could be, as the great mystics and the most daily spiritual experience teach, the practice of silence and listening, as the access to interior sources (meditation, prayer, reflection, spiritual reading, contemplation...). The invitations of the desert fathers and, above all, of the great mystics of the Golden Age are eloquent when retiring, to silence, to the long prayer spaces. Saint Teresa of Jesus on her path of perfection insists on ways to collect thought (Santa Teresa de Jesús, 1986: 340ff.).

Also today Pope Francis (2019) recalls how in the midst of so much noise, of so much coming and going of data, only silence allows us to encounter ourselves and the possibility of discerning our vocation and life project:

Everyone, but especially young people, is exposed to a constant zapping. It is possible to navigate on two or three screens simultaneously and interact at the same time in different virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment we can easily become puppets at the mercy of the trends of the moment. (p.169) [...] An expression of discernment is the effort to recognize one's vocation. It is a task that requires spaces of solitude and silence, because it is a very personal decision that others cannot make for you (p. 171).



The greatest form of resistance is in silence (d'Ors, 2014), in overcoming the weakening of the self, in self-reflection and listening to the call and the life project. Only through silence and self-reflection does one «fall off the horse» of narcissism and recognize himself as limited, vulnerable and fallible. From there, from the humble recognition of one's own vulnerability, self-knowledge and the search for truth begins.

9. Conclusions

Loss of experience and excess information lead to loss of listening. Only through silence we can put listening into practice. Focused on receiving messages, we forget to make time for the message, to listen to the call and search for the project:

In general, absorbed by work, entertainment, outings, noises, it is difficult for us to listen, to realize what is before us. We only see what we hope to see. But we see and hear little, because we are saturated with images and noise. That is why we urgently need a silent therapy to heal the ear, to listen again (Domínguez Prieto, 2016: 33).

Thus, silence is making space inside so as not to get lost in the bustle outside. Silence is to silence the external noise to tune the ear towards the interior, breaking with the alienating lifestyle and constant infoxication. A good way to start the silence and listening is by turning off the mobile and, with it, disconnecting the virtual self that intends to replace my real self.

Inserted in a socioeconomic system that insists on consuming, buying and producing without restraint, silence is that space of non-production, of the useless, of what allows me to arrive at the vital center of my being (Domínguez Prieto, 2016). Only by making space for being we will be able to put a stop to the imposition of having.

I can only know myself and find my reality and my life project if I keep silent and pause the overwhelming rhythm of digital and vital swings that sever my connection with myself and my most intimate reality. Only through silence I am able to reverse the mutation of the self towards the mere media character and regain my own light.

If we said at the beginning that infoxication leads us to a mutation of the self that ceases to be me and becomes a mere creation of the wishes of the followers and viewers; through silence I book myself, «I realize that I no longer have to prove anything to anyone. I no longer feel obliged to astonish anyone, or to explain what I suppose my failures are, or to excuse myself for not being who others wanted me to be» (Domínguez Prieto, 2016: 37).

Silence allows «the return home», the return to the inhabited interiority, to the interior sources. In short, silence allows listening to oneself and not to the incessant external noises; It allows you to break with the outside and place yourself in front of yourself (Domínguez Prieto, 2016) to rediscover yourself. Silence creates a space for active listening to one's own self, for self-knowledge and introspection. Only by listening to oneself we can recover the authenticity of our own being and listen to our real needs.

Faced with a world in constant motion that leads us to the mutation and degeneration of the self, silence enables us to pause, listen to ourselves and access the knowledge of the world, the other and the Other. From this new and comforting starting point, we can enlighten ourselves and others, as well as communicate through authenticity and deep, enriching and fulfilling dialogue.



10. Bibliography

- BAUDRILLARD, Jean (1997). *El otro por sí mismo*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- BAUDRILLARD, Jean (2008). *El pacto de lucidez o la inteligencia del Mal*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.
- BERLIN, Isaiah (2005). *Dos conceptos de libertad y otros escritos*. Madrid: Alianza.
- CARR, Nicholas (2011). *Superficiales*. Madrid: Taurus.
- CASAS-MAS, Belén (2014). «Infoxicación a través de los medios de comunicación». *Revista Internacional de Comunicación*, (24), 1-11.
- CHÓLIZ MONTAÑÉS, Mariano (2016). «Adicción a redes sociales: conceptualización del problema, evaluación y prevención». En Odriozola, Enrique Echeburúa (Ed.). *Abuso de Internet, ¿antesala para la adicción al juego de azar online?* Madrid, España: Pirámide, pages. 105-130.
- CONSTANT, Benjamin (1989). *Escritos políticos*. Madrid: CEC.
- DE HIPONA, Agustín (1975). *De Vera Religione*. Trad. Victorino Capánaga, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.
- DE JESÚS, Teresa (1986). «Camino de perfección». En Efrén de la Madre de Dios y Otger Steggink (Eds.). *Santa Teresa de Jesús: Obras Completas*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.
- DOMÍNGUEZ PRIETO, Xosé Manuel (2002). *Para ser persona*. Madrid: Fundación Emmanuel Mounier.
- DOMÍNGUEZ PRIETO, Xosé Manuel (2011). *Psicología de la persona*. Madrid: Palabra.
- DOMÍNGUEZ PRIETO, Xosé Manuel (2016). *Despierta y alégrate*. Madrid: PPC.
- D'ORS, Pablo (2014). *Biografía del silencio*. Madrid: Siruela.

- FRANCISCO, Papa (2019). *Exhortación Apostólica Postsinodal Christus Vivit*. Salamanca: Edibesa.
- GÓMEZ GRANADOS, Manuel (2007). «La violencia en los medios de comunicación: ¿realidad, espectáculo o espectáculo de la realidad?». *La Cuestión Social: documentos, ensayos, comentarios y reseñas de libros acerca de lo social*, 15(4), 327-339.
- GROYS, Boris (2017). «Autodiseño o narcisismo productivo». *Revista ARQ*, (95), 140-145.
- HILT, Jorge (2019). «Dependencia del celular, hábitos y actitudes hacia la lectura y su relación con el rendimiento académico». *Revista de Investigación Apuntes Universitarios*, 9(3), 103-116.
- LÓPEZ ARANGUREN, José Luis (1988). *Ética de la felicidad y otros lenguajes*. Madrid: Tecnos.
- LÓPEZ QUINTÁS, Alfonso (2008). *La tolerancia y la manipulación*. Madrid: Rialp.
- LUCAS POSTIGO, Miguel Ángel (2012). «Campaña en la red: estrategias de marketing electoral en Internet». *Redmarka: Revista Académica de Marketing Aplicado*, 8(1), 177-199.
- MAYORGA, Juan (2016). *Elipses*. Segovia: Ediciones La uña RoTa.
- PERNIOLA, Mario (2008). *Del sentir*. Valencia: Pre-textos.
- PERNIOLA, Mario (2011). *La sociedad de los simulacros*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.
- SARTORI, Giovanni (2012). *Homo videns: la sociedad teledirigida*. Barcelona: Taurus.
- SMALL, Gary y VORGAN Gigi (2009). *El cerebro digital. Cómo las nuevas tecnologías están cambiando nuestra mente*. Barcelona, España: Urano
- SOSA PLATA, Gabriel (2009). «¿Avance o dependencia?». *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación*, 22(118), 16-21.
- SPITZER, Manfred (2013). *Demencia digital*. Barcelona: Ediciones B.
- SUNSTEIN, Cass (2007). *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- TURKLE, Sherry (2017). *En defensa de la conversación*. Barcelona: Ático de los libros.
- WATKINS, Peter (2017). *La crisis de los medios*. Logroño: Pepitas de calabaza.
- WEBER, Max (1981). *El político y el científico*. Madrid: Alianza.
- WOLF, Maryanne (2020). *Lector, vuelve a casa. Como afecta a nuestro cerebro la lectura en pantallas*. Bilbao: Deusto.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1981). *Inteligencia sentiente. Inteligencia y realidad*. Madrid: Alianza.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1982). *Inteligencia y logos*. Madrid: Alianza.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1983). *Inteligencia y razón*. Madrid: Alianza.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1985). *Sobre la esencia*. Madrid: Alianza.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1986). *Sobre el hombre*. Madrid: Alianza.
- ZUBIRI, Xavier (1988). *El hombre y Dios*. Madrid: Alianza.

