

Banality in the digital environment between vulgarity and stereotyping of public taste

التفاهة في البيئة الرقمية بين الابتذال وتسميط الذوق العام

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Abstract

ملخص

The modern world is witnessing a radical transformation of communication modes and knowledge due to the digital revolution that has changed the form of social and cultural relations. These transformations have led to the emergence of a new phenomenon known as the "system of triviality", as defined by the Canadian philosopher Alain dunot, which is embodied in the supremacy of superficiality and vulgarity instead of depth and knowledge. This study seeks to analyze the manifestations of banality in the modern digital environment, tracing its technical and social mechanisms, such as the logic of algorithms, the economy of attention and the culture of trends, while monitoring their implications on public taste and symbolic power. The study also suggests ways to combat this phenomenon through digital education, media criticism and reconsideration of knowledge and symbolic cultural capital.

Keywords: triviality, digital environment, symbolic capital, New media, Trend culture, Alan Duno.

يشهد العالم المعاصر تحوُّلاً جذرياً في أنماط التواصل والمعرفة بفعل الثورة الرقمية التي غيّرت شكل العلاقات الاجتماعية والثقافية. وقد أدّت هذه التحولات إلى بروز ظاهرة جديدة تُعرف بـ "نظام التفاهة"، كما حدّدها الفيلسوف الكندي آلان دونو، والتي تتجسّد في سيادة السطحية والابتذال محلّ العمق والمعرفة. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل مظاهر التفاهة في البيئة الرقمية الحديثة، من خلال تتبع آلياتها التقنية والاجتماعية، مثل منطق الخوارزميات، واقتصاد الانتباه، وثقافة الترنّد، مع رصد انعكاساتها على الذوق العام والسلطة الرمزية. كما تقترح الدراسة سبل مقاومة هذه الظاهرة عبر التربية الرقمية والنقد الإعلامي وإعادة الاعتبار للمعرفة ورأس المال الرمزي الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفاهة، البيئة الرقمية، رأس المال الرمزي، الإعلام الجديد، ثقافة الترنّد، آلان دونو.

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1-INTRODUCTION

With the beginning of the Twenty-First Century, the digital revolution has created a new reality in human communication, which has made social networks an alternative space for social, political and cultural reality. These platforms have allowed freedom of expression and interaction, but in return they have contributed to the emergence of a new culture based on speed, repetition, and visual consumption of content. This phenomenon, which on the surface seems liberating, hides in its depth the manifestations of a cultural decline that the Canadian philosopher Alain dunot called the "system of insignificance" (La Médiocratie), a system that has come to rule the modern world by glorifying superficiality and excluding critical thought and deep knowledge. This study aims to approach the relationship between triviality and the digital environment, by analyzing the mechanisms of operation of this system within the virtual space, exploring its impact on reshaping public taste and symbolic capital, and then proposing intellectual and educational horizons to resist it.

2. What is triviality

The Canadian philosopher Alain Deneault (Alain Deneault) presented an accurate and complex definition of the concept of triviality (La médiocrité) in his famous book "the system of triviality" (La médiocratie) published in 2015.

In it, banality is not meant in its simple moral sense, but as a social, economic and cultural system governing the modern world. Triviality is a system that investigates competence and deep knowledge, rewards compliance, obedience and opportunism, so that success depends on the ability to adapt to the prevailing rules, not on creativity, integrity or depth. In other words:

For dunno, frivolity is the dominance of intellectual and moral mediocrity at the expense of excellence, that is, when the highest value

becomes staying within the mold, adhering to the familiar, moving away from everything that bothers or provokes critical thinking. The absurdities are manifested in the proliferation of people occupying decision-making positions without real competence., Marginalizing intellectuals and creators in favor of superficial bureaucrats and media people. Turning education and culture into tools to numb minds instead of stimulating them. And the tyranny of the language of the market and advertising on Thought and knowledge. The Petty are not on the sidelines, but have become the very system by which the world is run, where pettiness is rewarded and efficiency is maximized .

3. Digital environment

The digital environment is defined as the interactive space produced by information and communication technologies, which allows the exchange of knowledge, symbols and representations through various electronic media (such as the internet, social networks, smart applications).

It is a new communicative system that reshapes social, economic and cultural relations, creates different forms of social existence, identity and symbolic influence.

Academically, it can be said that the digital environment represents an extension of the public sphere in its virtual form, where power, influence, recognition are exercised, but by digital means subject to the logic of speed, diffusion, instant interaction.

In the digital context, symbolic capital has transformed into symbolic Digital Capital; digital platforms have become a new field for the production of symbols and social recognition.

Influence today is measured by the number of followers, likes, shares, interaction, which are all digital indicators of symbolic capital.

In other words, the digital environment has become a space for the redistribution of symbolic capital, where social recognition and symbolic power are produced through virtual interactions, not just through traditional status in reality.

The new media has contributed to the reshaping of public taste within

the logic of digitization and diffusion, as the criteria of Fame and interaction have replaced aesthetic and cognitive criteria, leading to the vulgarity of content and the stereotyping of collective taste. Thus, it can be said that the digital space has reproduced cultural hegemony in a new form based on algorithms instead of traditional ideological power.

The new media is a key actor in perpetuating vulgarity and stereotyping of taste through the following:

1. The logic of the digital market: the most popular content is the one that makes a profit, not necessarily the most high-quality.
2. Diffusion algorithms: highlight what is fast and easy to digest, eliminating serious intellectual and artistic discourses.
3. Image culture and momentary interaction: devalues introspection and criticism and fuels consumerism in receiving.
4. Commodification of taste: taste is no longer a cultural choice but has become part of the attention economy controlled by big digital companies.

4. Mechanisms of triviality in the digital environment

1. The logic of Algorithmic Logic algorithms

Algorithms that manage digital platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok...) It is based on maximizing interaction and profit, not on quality or depth.

Thus, the most controversial and exciting contents stand out at the expense of intellectual or critical ones, producing a mechanism of systematic cognitive flattening.

That is, the triviality becomes the result of algorithmically programming the user's choices.

2. Attention economy Attention Economy

This economy turns human attention into a commodity, and content creators seek to attract the maximum number of views by any means — through sensationalism, exaggeration, or ridicule — leading to the vulgarity of public

discourse and the dominance of superficial content.

"He who draws attention " becomes more valuable than "he who provides knowledge".

3. Trend culture and viral culture spread

The trend dictates to users what is in vogue, creating a digital herd dynamic that pushes everyone to reproduce the same speech and image.

This mechanism perpetuates the stereotyping of taste and behavior, the investigation of difference and creativity, so fame becomes an end in itself, not a means of communicating an idea or value.

4. Reshaping social symbolism

In the digital space, symbolic capital is no longer acquired by science or credibility, but by the number of followers and interaction, which Bourdieu called "the transformation of symbolic capital into numerical capital".

Thus, cultural prestige is replaced by virtual fame, and social recognition turns into a numbers game.

5. Self-commodification self-commodification

Platforms push individuals to present themselves, their images and everyday experiences as consumable digital products, which leads to the trivialization of personal existence and the transformation of identity into a tool for promotion instead of self-expression.

3. The effects of the phenomenon of banality in the digital environment

1. Disintegration of value and cognitive norms

The dominance of triviality has blurred the boundaries between truth and falsehood, between value and consumption, so the only criterion is "diffusion".

This results in a breakdown in the ladder of cultural values, where depth is replaced by superficiality, and rationality by vulgarity.

2. Deterioration of public taste and its stereotyping

Digital platforms direct public taste towards standardized patterns of entertainment and excitement, which excludes individual creativity and weakens the critical sense of the recipients.

Thus, taste turns into a collective product, devoid of cultural specificity.

3. The decline of critical and intellectual culture

Due to the speed of digital consumption, there is no longer room for in-depth reflection or discussion, the “snapshot culture” has replaced the analysis.

This weakens the ability of individuals to distinguish information from analysis, and produces an audience that succumbs to superficiality.

4. Reconstituting symbolic power

The digital environment gives the power of influence to those who possess communicative tools, not to those who possess knowledge, which leads to the transformation of cultural power from the intellectual to the influencer, that is, from the logic of “knowledgeable saying” to the logic of “exciting saying”.

5. Human commodification and identity

In a climate that markets the self and the image as digital products, the individual becomes a captive of the public gaze, living inside a permanent loop of representation and the search for virtual recognition.

It is a case of digital alienation and loss of authenticity.

Second: the prospects of resisting triviality

1. Promoting digital education and media criticism

It is not possible to confront triviality without developing critical awareness among users, especially young people, through education on conscious reading of content, distinguishing information from manipulation.

The school and the University are invited to include “digital critical thinking” as an essential component of pedagogy.

2. Support serious cultural production

It requires encouraging creators of meaningful content, providing alternative digital spaces that reward quality and knowledge instead of excitement, while building local knowledge platforms that balance attractiveness and content.

3. Activating digital media ethics

Establish legal and ethical frameworks to reduce misinformation, hate speech, and misleading superficial content, while promoting a culture of digital responsibility among individuals and institutions.

4. Rethinking the critical intellectual

Resistance to triviality goes through restoring the role of the intellectual as a communicative actor in the digital space, not as a spectator, by using the same digital tools to disseminate critical thought in a language close to the audience.

5. Reconstruction of symbolic capital

It is necessary to redefine the criteria of social recognition in the digital space, so that creativity and knowledge are rewarded instead of popularity, through academic, cultural and media initiatives that encourage thinking and knowledge production.

4. CONCLUSION

The study of the banality system in the digital environment shows that technological transformation, despite its enormous potential, has contributed to the dismantling of cultural and moral norms, and has produced a symbolic reality based on image and fame instead of meaning and knowledge. Algorithms have come to frame taste, economics determines values, and the influencer replaces the intellectual. However, this reality is not inevitable, as it can be resisted through critical awareness, media education, and rebuilding the symbolic value system based on Thought and creativity. The battle against insignificance is a cultural and moral battle par excellence, whose goal is to

restore man to consciousness and meaning within a world invaded by superficiality and rapidity.

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