

## Iconic Experience of Meeting with the Other in the Internet Communication

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**Abstract:** Current socio-cultural situation determines the relevance of the topic given as the title of this study. Being the fact of the cultural reality of modern human, the internet can be described as a total loss of human-sizedness. It serves as a model of leisure pursuits, in addition to television and films. However, according to the researchers, the potential of “sacralization” of time spent in the network is much higher as compared to other phenomena of the entertainment industry. This is primarily due to the fact that the virtual space of the internet is a place of interpassivity triumph. Therefore, the perspective of human being development becomes at risk. Minimization of the emotional expenditure, aimed at others, turns into formation of narcissistic type of an individual for whom only he/she always acts as someone other in case of dialogue “Me-You” Me like someone other. The researchers show that an appeal to the iconic experience as a special form of material transformation of the object when it is perceived as its marginal phenomenon is able to create the modality of personal presence at the internet and, therefore, an open, genuine communication.

**Key words:** Internet, network communication, the other, the openness, iconic turn, iconic experience

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of XX-XXI century, an ordinary human begins to live in a situation of comfort. All his needs turn to be completely “real”, i.e., available to meet. One does not even need to make little effort to obtain information on topics of his/her interest, in other words-information services. From now, on each person takes with a device that potentially contains virtually all information the mankind has ever made. However, in addition to the function of giving actual information, the modern mobile devices are also a necessary condition for the implementation of different social practices, virtually to the full extent. At the same time, as noted by Lipovetsky (2001) our era is characterized by the fact that we are doomed to consume.

Television broadcasts through the upgrading formats of talk show a set of intimate experiences, understandable to each viewer: adultery, the pain of loss, unanswered love and others. Public space of television serves for an individual as a refuge where he/she can meet his/her narcissistic need for self-admiration. Even the scenes of violence in the talk shows and movies are a part of the standard video sequence to be consumed. A modern viewer is absolutely civilly disciplined and perceives physical abuse as such only as a part of a virtual space where the murder can be followed by the resurrection.

A modern human has the ability at any time and almost anywhere to watch pornography, serials and all kinds of shows. This, in some ways, contributed to the

growth of addiction to “peep” someone else's life. Zizek (2005) describes this phenomenon by introducing the concept of “interpassivity”. The interpassivity modus is a situation where the performance of a certain action is transferred to the other's responsibility and the other acts as a source of pleasure. S. Zizek illustrates this modus by giving some mourners at the funeral, television serials, prayer wheels, etc. as an example. It means when we watch a serial and hear the laugh track, not even joining it, we still feel rested. Such imposition of an intimate experience or act outwards gives the modern individual a way to rid himself of the feeling of constant fear. Thereby, the television content becomes sacral. The viewer gets pleasure by taking the action of TV characters for his/her own. At the same time, along with the sacralization of TV programs and films, there is a profanation of the phenomena such as love, friendship, dialogue, etc. Watching TV accompanies all daily rituals: someone's pain and joy are the backdrop for our meal, conversations, and house routine. Thus, this other from TV is sacrificed for my pleasure and calm.

With the advent and development of social networks, a human stepped into a new form of relationship arrangement: now he/she all is the essence of his profile in the network. Therefore, today, this internet user turns to be the subject: completely free to express him/herself and open for communication with other people. But, what is the nature of the possible meeting with other in the network? Our reality can be labeled as the era of the

utilitarian morality when the attitude to the stranger turns out to be so indifferent that can even not be somehow fixed in the memory of an ordinary human. The main value today is the well-being of self; thus, any other person may arouse our interest firstly only by his/her usefulness to us. Virtual space, represented by the social network as never better expresses this new painless moral: anyone who seems needless and useless can be quite easily excluded from your personal space by adding to a "black list".

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methodological basis of this study is represented by the researchers appeals to the concept of individualized society by Bauman (2001) to the interpretation of the concept of "interpassivity" by Zizek (2005) and the understanding by Lipovetsky (2001) of the image of modern society subject to characterize the phenomenon of a meeting in the internet-space.

In addition, we should note methodological significance of the concept of "iconic turn" by Boehm (2006) that appears in "Die Wiederkehr der Bilder" in contrast to the paradigm of logocentrism. According to the Boehm's view, the dichotomy between text and image, which occurs even in the renaissance, is still relevant today. However, according to Boehm, the value of the image increases significantly for modern communications which can be described as a visual.

Using the concept of the Russian Philosopher P. Florensky allowed the researchers to expose the experience of meeting with avatar in the network as a spiritual experience. Along with the above principles of work, the authors adhered to the systemic vision which is implemented in this study by harmonizing the discourses of Russian and Western philosophies.

## **RESULTS**

A modern human experiences, an acute need to fix in any way his/her own identity in order to gain clarity about his/her self but these efforts do not bring the desired result. In reality, an identity becomes something constantly elusive, fickle. Bauman (2001) characterizes this trend by the following metaphor: "(identity) is something that can be got on and off like a suit". In this regard, Lipovetsky (2001) has the statement that the present phase of a Western individual is characterized by an unprecedented mania for self-knowledge, including due to the transformation of the highest ideals into a parody.

With the advent and development of the internet a human got the opportunity of virtually limitless creative implementation and with the emergence of social networks, he stepped into a new form of relationship arrangement. Stay in front of the monitor begins to absorb an individual much stronger than the TV screen. While watching television is a passive perception of other's actions on the screen as my own, the manifestation of interpassivity in social networks is different when the action in the network replaces an act of a human in reality, so the potential of subject's decentering in social networks is much higher than that of television.

Social networks have a countless number of groups and "publics" completely different in subjects of interest by subscribing which the user simultaneously, fills his/her news stream with certain content and gets a new identity, his/her page profile displays information on his/her membership in a given community. The user has the opportunity at any time to respond to a "challenge to disorder", to be flexible, that is, to unsubscribe from his/her subscriptions and choose new ones. In addition, I am able by means of the other to show outwards the same love, different emotional experiences but it occurs in so-called presence of the third, who is the witness of my act of "activity" transferring. Moreover, I find myself always very active participant in all events I face in the social network. By subscribing to the "meeting", I can declare my exact or possible presence on it but it is a virtual declaration of choice, in the end, turns out to be insolvent, due to the fact that my activity comes to an end at the moment when I click on the icon which guarantees my presence.

Any new desire of the user can be already found implemented and presented in the internet. Mass production creates a machine of desires and therefore, a set of experiences that an individual will experience by means of the other. Therefore, the relations are characterized by an interface between the conditional personally created, rather than the personal actualizations where the definition as a unique agent happens due to the image, for example, social network profile.

False activity in social networks is represented by voting, expression of sympathy and support ("likes"), comments, reposts, etc. For example, the phenomenon of infinite reposting of the ads on the need to raise funds for the treatment of a sick person, animal rescue, etc. I become a "benefactor through the other" by means of the other, who finds out the need to transfer money and donate. Of course, we should note the antinomic character of Internet activity shown in the example: in addition to that it can be interpreted by some authors as a certain ritual, in which the user is interpassive, it is at the same time, a point of manifestation of his/her proactiveness as a subject. However, this proactiveness is of certain redistributed character.

## DISCUSSION

Internet is that area of modern life of an individual, where he/she is fearless in the face of “samsara” of identity. This is the only place where a person can show his/her independence by choosing more and more identities and more and more increasing their change rate. The internet space is a place where a person gets satisfaction from the endless process of reorientation that is why, he/she tends to use it as a refuge.

However, the attitude and reciprocity are only possible with the personal presence, when the authenticity can be discovered. Is it possible to realize personal presence in the internet space in terms of communication building?

How can we identify a person? In our opinion, Mamardashvili (1994) formulated the essence of identity in the most concise way: “Personality is always a transcending phenomenon”. Therefore, only that who can follow the being is an individual. Thus, an ability of being open is an evidence of personality. The internet formally is the embodiment of the idea of total openness. However, this is another kind of openness: a person here throws off all his/her social roles, values, desires, etc., still remaining in the logic of a “short-term” mentality society, i.e., unable to trust; a person is still inscribed in certain schemes of relationships that dehumanize any presence of the other and dictate the primacy of online anonymity. The internet deprives a person of that sole situation where he/she may remain non-mediated as a member of the real society, the experience of death. The Internet includes some immortal existences as its components, in other words, the internet user is always coincident with him/herself; getting inner experience is impossible for him, since, according to Blansho (2001), “If, I want my life made sense to me, it must make sense to others too”. The other, thus, acts the only guarantee for my existence meeting him is a prerequisite for meeting with myself. However, without understanding the characteristics of the internet as a structure that mediates this meeting, the own essential insufficiency is not possible for personal acceptance.

Studying the problems of the modern type of communication, we interpret the concept of “openness” as our own “disidentification” and escape from routine pragmatism. To avoid misunderstanding of ourselves, it is necessary to perform the procedure of distraction. Distracted stare is an objective vision of a being. To achieve this detachment one shall make disidentification with him/herself. As a result of disidentification, an individual seems to go beyond him/herself, and thus, gets an ability to look at him/herself from the outside. Having disidentified with oneself, I can look at myself from the outside and thus to grasp the real me. This is openness that means the willingness to accept to consciousness the content of the other. However, the

social networking space turns to be paradoxically narrowed. Until the user joins to him (his profile) some involvement in the new community, he is in no way able to meet the other.

The figurative representation of another person in the network is fixed in the form of an avatar, a three-dimensional and commonly two-dimensional image (i.e., icon). An icon from Greek means “image”. Traditionally, the term “icon” is reserved for the name of a sacred image, an object of worship, making it impossible to understand the icons only as artistic value or consider only its aesthetic aspect.

The researchers find reasonable the appeal to the understanding of the icon in the philosophy of P. Florensky. Interpretation of an icon by Florensky is very symbolic: the icon is a reminder of the “Empyrean foretype”, the materially confirmed images. Florensky wrote that only an icon is radically different from any other arts by its status of being nothing more than a symbol of something transcendent, holy. The icon as an ontological entity can be designated also as a “metaphysical window, through which, we can see the original itself” (Usikova, 2014). According to Florensky, the icon can bring the person to a different reality, distract him/her from the perception of a color-painted surface and present him/her the true meaning. “The spiritual content” of the icon is unchangeable but its “otherness” is unique with respect to the phenomenological experience of each individual. A person gets here the opportunity to become responsible, find his/her ultimate reality. Icon representation appeals to a person, challenges him/her. It makes a person go out of his/her simulacrum, illusiveness. The presence of the icon attaches to my “I” and further the “I” can never get rid of the responsibility for it.

Podoroga (1995) notes that the iconic face acts as a “mirror of the soul” but this mirror at the same time has no spectacular surface, being only a “window-glass-icon”, through which the visible suddenly becomes invisible: “The vision of the iconic image is the one that needs no sight”.

In terms of referring to the icon as a fact of material reality that can bring a person out of any substantiality, the researchers have reviewed the research by Boehm (2006) where the concept of “iconic turn” was introduced. The term “iconic turn” means a line of thought and considers all diversity of issues related to the understanding of the structure of the image, its relationship with the material medium, the potential of the image as an object of knowledge and its ontological content.

Two main differences between an iconic experience and the experience of perceiving the real world objects are, firstly, the simultaneous presence of two modi of visioning the image (“a vision of something “like”

something and a vision of something “in” something”); secondly, the inability to obtain an iconic experience as a certain “seizure” but always as “the experience of a continuing presence”. Iconic experience is a combination of intellectual and sensory experiences. Its meaning is revealed here by the “spontaneous body and emotional self-awareness of the recipient”.

The researchers suggest that the urgency of the imagery problematics in socio-theoretical context can be also expressed in the exposure of the Internet-icon within the social interaction as a form of iconic experience. Avatar as well as a presentative plane of the icon, can not be perceived only as a certain boundary, on which our sight stops. There shall be a modification of the method of visioning which makes it possible to continue moving into intraimage space.

Iconic plane is something that goes beyond the physical object, which is a mere fact of the material world, unable to affect the meaning of the image. Iconic experience, first, is aimed at blurring the boundaries of physical conditionality of the perception, when it turns to be possible to move deeper into the surface. The everyday experience of meeting with avatar in the network is identical to the “isolated” perception which is common to the perception of physical things as a part of “extraimage” world.

The researchers suggest that the experience of meeting with the icon can be described as a true methodology for the perception of figurative representation of a person in the network. Each of these meetings with an icon or avatar must be a living experience of acceptance, as opposed to everyday visual approach and thus, allow a person to become present. Thus, perceiving the other in the network as an iconic experience of spiritual feeling is the implementation of the phenomenological experience that allows establishing personal relation with the meaning, making possible one’s self-actualization.

### **CONCLUSION**

A person needs the experience of meeting with the other to realize him/herself as an individual. We have to recognize that the internet is not a neutral space for open communication. It is an extension of the real world where the meeting with the other is strictly minimized, since neither the anonymous communication, nor modus of interpassivity or short-term mentality allow the network user to distract from him/herself and reveal his/her own insolvency without the other. Gaining, the iconic experience allows a person to transfer the internet communication from the superficial level to a deeper one, fill it with content where both the “self” opens to the other and the self is revealed by virtue of this discovery.

The researchers of this study have confined themselves to analysis of the nature of communication in social networks as a certain type of online-cooperation which potentially contains the possibility of gaining an iconic experience from the meeting with the other. Problems such as the authenticity of the exchanged information, the methods and features of managing the communicative interactions in the internet and the non-linear nature of chaotic nature of the network communication are of great interest for further understanding. In this regard, the researchers plan to appeal to the theoretical and methodological arsenal of social synergy which in combination with philosophical self-reflection, ensures a deep analysis of the identified problems.

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