Influence of Digital Technologies on Identity of Generations

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Abstract. The article consists of theoretical attempt to interpret different approaches for the digital
technologies and their influence on social groups. Theory of Generations chooses as the
methodological tool of explication of different dimensions of fundamental shift in self consciousness
and self interpretation of young generations.

1. Introduction

In today's world, a person's digital identity has become familiar and even very convenient. Numerical identity as a set of parameters forms an infinite variability of a person. A complex question arises: is there something in a person that cannot be reduced to a number and subjected to calculability and numerical control?

Other side of the problem is the necessity of explication of the connection of individual and social aspects of identity. In the context of late modern culture and society question of digitalization of communication and social identification becomes more and more important. Social and psychological impact of raising digital technologies becomes one of the most intensive developed fields of study. Digital sociology is a relatively new discipline which have a goal do detect and describe impact of technologies on society in various aspects and modes.¹ We will study specific issue of relation of digital technologies on generations as a social phenomena. There are many theories and methodologies of defining generations which depends on theoretical point of view.² Most of actual sociological and social philosophical theories are descriptive regarding generations as a functional issue which is indifferent for the ontological question of real existence of difference between generations. Our approach is totally different—we are agree that social relations and phenomena including generations are connected with nature of being of human society and can be interpreted on its own basis.

2. Defining of the Problem

In our analysis, we will adhere to the following social philosophical postulate: any serious approach of social reality asserts the hierarchy of different levels of being in its significance and thoroughness. There are objects of ontological minimum, there is a point of necrosis of freedom and there is an ontological maximum. Obviously, we are live in an epoch of diminishing of being towards ontological minimum and, first of all, it concerns human being. A human being breaks up as a person. The tense unity of body and spirit, which is characteristic for it, degrades first to "diet" and then to "negativity". Moreover, it begins to disintegrate as a specific integrity, a unique representative of the living. An individual's consciousness captured by the technologist is detached from the time and place of his body's life. The question of a person's identity in general arises.³ Besides, it is necessary to take into account that in society there are different technological formations and ways of life with different ontological content. These modes of life represent special phases, the hierarchy between which is established on the basis of the leading mainstream of the given epoch. Now such general direction is totality of natural development of techno sphere with inclusions of human factor into it. It becomes obvious that progress in the technical sphere is accompanied by regression in other spheres of life. As
far as education is concerned, this position is as follows: the development of virtualization and
digitalization can lead to undesirable damage to the anthropological core of the individual.

Thus the main goal of social philosophical study of relations of digital technologies on generations is
a detecting of «potential role of media and technology in construction and self-construction of
generations» [8]. We are interested in the question how the digital age affects the social strategies of
different generations and which of them are most at risk through the liquefaction of social qualities and
diminution of vital being. First of all it is obvious to realize that technologies are not innovation for
younger generations especially for children. Young generations haven’t experience of life in the world
without data technologies and cannot defend themselves from some of destructive influence of such
technologies. [4]

3. The Theory of Generations

Particular application of influence of digital technologies on groups of different age expressed in the
theory of digital generations which is in complex relation with classical sociological theories of
generations. It is useful to reflect on how global digitalization trends are increasing over time and affect
the social imagination and common behavior of different generations. The theory of generations was
created in 1991 by scientists Neil Houve and William Strauss and adapted to the conditions of Russia
by Elena Shamis [8]. This theory is based on the fact that the value systems of people who grew up in
different historical periods differ, as they are formed under the influence of social events of the entire
context in which a person is growing up. Everything matters: economic, social, technological and
political factors. This theory includes observation of many different factors and technologies which are
developed in different periods of the last century.

People of the "greatest generation" (1900-1923) were formed during the ontological maximum (three
revolutions, civil war, famine). Having survived the real events, not the "movie" events that shook the
whole world, they became so deeply entrenched ontologically that the digital era touched them only
with the possession of a push-button cell phone, needed to communicate with relatives or with the
"ambulance" (in the case of an emergency). It's a generation that's almost gone and is only remembered
on the "day of the elderly".

The next Russian generation (1923-1947) was brought up during the periods of Stalin's repressions,
the Great Patriotic War and post-war difficulties. It is also ontologically saturated, as there is nothing
more inexorable than the constant threat of death. This generation, which is said to be "strong bone", is
represented by hardworking people and patriots. The severity of social determination is natural and
even necessary for them. There are many engineers and builders in this generation who have given
strength to technical progress in serious areas of the economy, medicine, culture, etc. Today they work
at their dachas, love the land, have libraries with Russian classical literature, go to symphonic concerts,
and prefer a table with an intimate song. Their elderly life is saturated with the preservation of family
and labor traditions. In the world of computer technology, they have to exist, mainly, to use various
services to pay bills, buy tickets, see doctors, etc. However, many of them are already beginning to
communicate in "contacts" and "classmates", gradually "deserting" from real communication with
children and grandchildren.

The generation of "baby boomers" (1947-1963) was named after the post-war birthday boom.
Negative ontological mobilization of fathers, connected with the struggle with various enemies, for
them has passed into the existential positive of the recovery period and a confident march of the
builders of real socialism. The top of the technological breakthrough was the exploration of space.
Representatives of the generation imitated Yuri Gagarin, mourned the real death of the astronauts,
which gave tragedy, and from this even greater significance to the era in which they lived and lived.
All this gave them a firm will and a reserve of vital energy. The arrival of computer technology took
this generation, if not enthusiastically, then quite positive. They have quickly mastered the technology
within the limits necessary for work and to ensure the convenience of everyday life. Communication in virtual and real social life is more or less balanced. This is facilitated by a conscious need to transform the world. A strong motive for using increasingly advanced gadgets is the desire to look up to new generations at the level of global trends.

Generation X (1963-1984) was formed under the pressure of the imperative of novelty. Their values are readiness for change, availability of a wide choice of life strategies, global awareness, technical literacy. Individualism, informality, sexual freedom, self-reliance, and gender equality prevail. The decline of ontological rootedness in this generation is connected with the fact that freedom is understood by them as independence, turning into willfulness. Therefore, they are characterized by a desire for constant innovation in all spheres of public and private life without understanding the purpose, meaning and their real need. This gave rise to a feeling of "unbearable ease of being" in generation X, which is neither territorially nor socially nor anthropologically rooted. The emergence of virtual sociality, where everyday game practices are present and a certain "played chorus" emerges, has organically blended into the practice of their lives, dramatically weakened the ontological rootedness of this generation. However, they are returned to their real beingness by their families, children (as a rule, from different marriages), and elderly parents with real rather than virtual diseases and deaths. However, this generation, being half virtualized, is still very concerned that the younger generations Y and Z following them, go much further into the virtual world.

Generation Y (1984-2000) grew up against the background of the rapid development of consumer society and information technologies. Fromm's dilemma of "to be or to have" does not exist for them. "To be" means to have. This generation has become "alive" with skin, surface of things, simulacres, gloss and glamour. By the way, one of the nicknames that sociologists called people Y: the "thumb generation" is from the habit of texting with one thumb. The division into real and virtual is conditional for them in general. They live perfectly in blogs and artificial worlds. Here, the deontologization of being is already threatening.

Some philosophers interpret the hypertrophy of the virtualist worldview as "an extinction. The human being's being as a body-spiritual being crowds into the direction of Nothing. Man as a pure consciousness loses his individuality, dissolves in the ocean of information. He becomes a superfluous and without properties, a simple communication point of intersection of relations [6]. The new generation experiences new forms of alienation from the vital in man. Experiencing a tornado across the entire spectrum of the life world, a person either experiences it as a disintegration of the social hypostasis, or acquires a negative identity, adjoining one of the networked minorities. This process is based on interest, the need to develop a more or less holistic image of the world. The increase in the dynamic complexity of being, the emergence of intersecting social circles of virtual and real creates various forms of alienation of a person - first from being, then from him.

Generation Z is a generation of people born after 2000 who are still born today. This generation grows not just in the heyday of the era of numbers, but in the atmosphere of its domination. The real "full" life for them is already concentrated only in the virtuoso. The improvement of gadgets has made this world a bright one filled with network events, network humor, network aggression, fake news. Self-presentation is expressed through endless "selfies" and even network "creativity", where you can compose music without knowing neither music nor musical literacy. Writing "literary works", not knowing how to competently build sentences. The real society with its demands of social determination in labor, the tension of mental and physical forces is hard for them, incomprehensible and alien. Moreover, the world of virtuality imperceptibly amputates the temporal heart and vitality of this generation.

The problem of the identity of the digital generation is becoming especially urgent due to the fear of excessive influence of theological technologies on the generation Z. There is a wide variety of descriptions of this generation, indicating a deep connection with the technologies of gamification and Internet communications. There are different attempts to express deep shift which was induced by
explosive growth of digital technologies in the last decades. The result of such complex and uncontrollable process is dramatic - new generation think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors [9]

Generation Z or Millenials is the important case of studies because of this generation is the first which was born in the digital air and it is possible do detect fundamental differences from previous generations. Moreover it is a generation which opens the process of expected long process of living of humankind in totally new information cultural and social atmosphere which is totally shaped by technologies and elements of artificial intelligence. Most common and obvious practical problems starts to disturb society in those situation where different generations held together same conditions of interaction with new digital technologies and styles of life induced by them. For example older generations normally get information and news from newspapers and other printed forms of communications, generations X and Y are engaged in TV-channels watching when generation Z and next generations are in the web and online shaped style of getting information and communicating. In any case conceptual approach of studying generations as the main social subject in the process of digital era transformation can be theoretically relevant and practically promising. Nevertheless any of concrete sociological and psychological methodologies of research has own strong and weak sides which are need to realize and needs of philosophically critical reinterpretation.

4. Conclusion

All of described researchers are agreed that we live in a specific social and technological epoch - digital age, which has changed the face of civilization as a whole and habits of life of any of living people on Earth, has given rise to daunting social and anthropological challenges for humanity. Thus, such technologies as personal computers have almost infinitely expanded the computational capabilities of man provided prompt processing of large amounts of information and effective management of complex technological systems. However, it is necessary to clearly understand that various digital and communicational technologies by their very nature are only the mechanism of thought, not the thought itself. A man begins to resemble a monkey, who puts together ready-made cubes of information, to pass it off as a new knowledge and almost as a creative process. She does not notice that the dehumanization of work and education takes place. A person's alienation from himself and other people is growing. Proclaimed motives for the total introduction of digital technologies in education are accelerated mastery of information and saving teachers' labor. But the actual consequence is the dehumanization of the process, its transformation into a technological formation of practical competences, and the student - into a software product.

Many people assume that the problem of suppression of a person by technology is far-fetched. Others recognize that the self-development of technology poses a threat to humanity; but evil is inevitable and better considered a good thing. However, we argue that there is hope of a return to the lost. Real being, behind which centuries of cultural tradition stand, is irreplaceable. Classics in education is a careful attitude to the spiritual and bodily organization of a person, where it is not the speed of obtaining information that determines the quality of education, but the thoughtful and slow acquisition of knowledge with difficulty and perseverance, which is the basis of any creativity. The main and most important thing is the preservation and multiplication of the forms of living beingness of the whole person in the real natural and social world, which is the devirtualization of life.

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