

BEING-WITH-OTHERS-IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Gheorghe DĂNIȘOR*

Abstract. *Critique of individualism and relativism without foundation on principles that hold together and preserve the individual and the society in which he lives, the article will deal with the integration of the individual in the social group, based on justice as a relationship for freedom, as a way out to the other and making a selfless connection with others, which is the greatest good. Through justice, the foundations of social solidarity are laid in the form of being-together-with-others. This last concept is the Good (agathon), which is meant to hold together and preserve the social.*

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A meaningless wind blows from the future. No Echo: Nietzsche announces in writing that God is dead; Foucault announces, also in writing, that the man is dead. Likewise, without echo to the cry of sorrow, joy, or wonder, it is gone forever. Some time ago, there was only text left on a laptop screen, strings of letters grouping into words, words into sentences, etc., but still no echo. Where did that reverberation come from face to face, like a caress that blushed the cheeks loaded with garlands of hopes, goodness and hugs.

Nowadays the disappearance of the face is in full swing, the first sign that the death of man is coming round. The last to feel the need to address a face was Levinas. He was the one who desperately wanted to see those who wanted to communicate face to face. From then on, man no longer feels the need to see the other's face. Instead of a face, there remain strings of phrases on a laptop screen. Phrases that hide behind them the man left in isolation, the man who laughs, cries, is happy, is sad, hopes or is desperate, the man who embraces and is embraced. It disappears silently, covered by images to be deleted. The living man slowly recedes into the darkness of no return. Its echo fades, its heart hardens, its arms no longer touch anything, its embrace is cold and meaningless. The smile froze on his lips in the form of a grimace. On the laptop screen remains a bitter call of something/someone urging silence. A deafening silence covering the former area of words passing from one face to another, from one echo to another.

* Prof.univ.dr. of University of Craiova, Member of the Romanian Academy of Scientists, Researcher I at the Institute of Socio-Human Research "C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor" from Craiova.

This erasure of man from his own history, his total disappearance, is announced through every corner of the world, in every still beating heart. The human face fades into writing, into the phrases printed on screens. Man no longer feels the need to meet faces, because he is no longer a face, he is just a word that vaguely evokes some sadness or joy on the road that leads nowhere.

Man has the possibility of seeing the image of the other (that's all he has left) made available by technology, but he uses it less and less. The image is replaced by the word which, if it does not come from a face, in the flesh, devastates your soul. And so, the image cannot replace the actual encounter between two or more faces. But we no longer feel the need to see each other, so strong has the word become in our narrow life. If the real face of the man has disappeared, if the image has also disappeared (we no longer feel the need to see each other), all that remains is a word written on a screen, haunted by frightening ghosts. If the image disappears, then the representation disappears, and with the representation, the world in which man has settled firmly.

But it is not only about the sacrifice of the image of the real man, but also about the disappearance of contact by hearing. We feel less and less the need to hear ourselves. We talk less and less through real meetings, but also through video meetings. We prefer to chat on the laptop, through writing, without feeling the need for a face. The faceless man fills our days. To whom should I turn, if not to a rolling void? The giant thistles cover the fruitfulness of the dialogue between the faces that share the lived moment. The world of man disappears and is replaced by the world of anonymity. The real man is covered by his image, it follows that the image itself is forgotten by a faceless and personalityless being. The world in which a faceless being will live is a world of anonymity, a world in which man has withdrawn. This withdrawal itself leaves an empty place that is no longer habitable.

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Every day, relationships between people deteriorate. We helplessly watch as people ignore each other. Indifference to the suffering of the other begins to become the rule in a society where only the singular has value, that virus that digs deep at the communal root. Castles fall one after the other, leaving in their wake the fine dust of disintegration. Morality has no support in a world where dissemination is the order of the day, the children of this world are crying with outstretched hands for a blessing that is late to appear, because the verticality of transcendence has retreated in front of an increasingly aggressive flat horizontality.

The world no longer prays, because its gaze is blocked to saturation with nothingness. Man has replaced God (or so he thinks). Everything has come down to Earth, and nothing foretells the elevation of the gaze to the starry and purified sky of celestial glories. The man of our days no longer believes in anything, he is so bereft that, no matter how many paths appear in front of him, he no longer knows which one to choose, because he lacks the verticality of a principle to guide him.

Transcendent faith comes from trust, and trust means dedication. The only one that provides certainties is not reason, but faith that gives satisfaction to the soul and takes it out of the flatness of historical horizontality. Descartes' maxim, "I think, therefore I exist", which is preceded by doubt, plants in the soul that feeling of loneliness that neuroses the human being and offers him no way out (phenomenological finitude). Rather, "I believe, therefore I am" removes doubt and assures the human being that there is another human being with them, and ultimately the entire universe.

Descartes' formula develops man's suspicions, mistrust, and self-centeredness. "I believe, therefore I exist" is openness, it is "man's exit into the open" as Heidegger would say.

Today's man no longer believes in anything. Everything is suspicious and under the conspiratorial burden. The once towering castles turn into sand blown by the wind of distrust. Lack of faith leads to a weakening of the community spirit. And the world crumbles under the weight of suspicion. The one next to me is untrustworthy and as a result must be kept at bay unless somehow eliminated.

And it's all due to the degradation of human relations. Man matters less and less, because you are not able to go out into the open, to be a present being. It is a *virtual* being, an abstraction of "what is not yet." But should it be? Does it come back to the real man or does the future show us that the man really died? The *machine* will appear in its place.

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In the morning I open my laptop, I wait for a message from someone, somewhat anonymous or with a name, who tells me something at least, with whom I can share certain ideas, the fruit of a common culture, coming from another world where the relationships between people they were alive.

This message is slow to come, because relationship means sharing, it means giving, by participating a little in the making of something. It means touching and feeling the other, proximity, as a vibration in something. Without this vibration, springing from proximity, that something escapes us, because it assumes the emotional connection through the meeting of the gaze of the other, through a

handshake, even a hug that makes possible the appearance of an object (physical or abstract). In this sense, the relationship is self-giving, it is "seeing" someone in the alter ego position. That is why the message is delayed; he no longer excites, he no longer calls to communion. In other words, the relationship was touch, it was the sight of a face that was waiting, with emotion, the living encounter with another face, with the face of the other.

Man is not yet dead, but he waits with resignation for that moment to come. What dies day by day is man's relationship with other men. Man continues to live, but more and more he cuts off his living relations with other people. The only relationship is with his laptop, where the relationship with others is reduced to a cold text printed on the screen. Man retreats into the abyss of not knowing the other.

When I open the laptop, I no longer see people (I no longer feel the need for the image of a face on the screen), but texts written by a name that no longer gives me any thrill, by an anonymous person. Indifference to who he is, what he does, how he lives, etc., is the order of the day.

We are no longer maintaining relationships, but connections. The relationship involves living intimacy and is durable. The connection is casual and short-lived. In this case carelessness comes into play.

The laptop, with its screen full of words, also replaces the need to hear the other. And so, gradually, the phone, as a link through hearing, is more and more replaced by the laptop screen on which some signs appear, the meaning of which begins to escape us. Is there still that living reality that pulsates beyond the screen? Does the one who writes that text exist, or will it also disappear, giving way to a structure that can do anything? But, even if there is the one who writes, the text is important, not the one who writes it.

I often wonder what a person I "communicate" with in writing over the Internet looks like, even if I may have met them once. Do I still recognize her, and if so, does her vivid image live up to my expectations? On the laptop this doesn't matter anymore. His real face may no longer tell me anything. The image of the face will be more real than the real face.

But there will come a time when I will no longer feel the need to meet her as a living being. Man's relationship with others is preparing to die, and it hardly brings with it the death of man.

They say that proximity no longer matters, because with the help of technology you can create instant connections anywhere on the planet. But it is an interesting paradox, because the more people get to know each other, in different cultural spaces, the feeling of unfulfillment remains deeply embedded in the human soul, because, every time, an image speaks to me that will never hold its place to the real man. Man settled in the representation, and over time, the representation no longer aimed at things. The representation related itself more

and more to another representation and so on ad infinitum, losing touch with things. In this way, we live in a self-reproducing image world that moves away from the real. Our world is a falsified world of representation that tends to replace fundamentals. Man (or, now, machine) creates a world of representation without foundation. The question is: how long can this rift last and how far will it extend? Will the image completely subordinate the real? Man is a being anchored in reality, but which he wants to renounce. What will be the consequences mentally? Is a new man already being prepared, without our will, that neglects even its representation as a source of the imaginary? But what man will he be who, in this way, will deny his essential origin? Can anyone else prevent such an evolution? Nietzsche's superman pales before the ghost of the self-broken man.

The relationship with the face degrades in several stages: the first would be the one in which the real face is replaced by its image appearing on a laptop screen; the second would be that the need for the image of the face is replaced by a text that is sufficient for a cold and distant relationship; the third is that of reducing the text to the level of a release. Is this the way to complete muteness?

Slowly, man withdraws, leaving the place of an overwhelming wasteland, populated by bored anonymous people, who can't wait to escape as quickly as possible from a relationship that could be constituted by the representation that still bears, as it were, a relationship with things.

I am not talking here about the success achieved by using the computer. I'm talking about what looms beyond these successes, the desolation of the soul. When the soul, that vital breath, fades, the fall will be noiseless, but downright deadly. Everything that has been achieved with the help of intelligent machines and that we are proud of now, will fall like a game of dominoes.

It is already noticeable that as technology advances and conquers the world, the fragility of man increases. His life no longer depends on himself, but on the state of a networked computer that is all-powerful. What is worth pointing out is the fact that this road seems to be of no return, and before there was the danger of falling into slavery or natural dangers, but there was never a universal dependence, and above all, it did not endanger the planetary existence as now.