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Understanding the revolt: *Man the Technician* in global rhetoric

Abstract

We have used quotations that McLuhan cited from the works of Ortega y Gasset, never been commented, for comparing the concurrence between the analyses of the “revolt of the masses” and “return to the village” in the network. This review discerns how both descriptions converge in a framework that fosters the unlimited expansion of face-to-face relationships which, by encouraging remote adherence to virtual identities, fosters a plethora of communicative practices. Internet encourages persuasive stratagems that foster rhetorical turmoil, which makes it impossible to distinguish sound arguments from those that are fallacious, and credible from false information. “Populism,” “fake news,” and “post-truth” suddenly appeared in everyday language as a sign of this rhetorical transience that fosters the collision of identities in the regressive, technological anchor of “back to the tribes” in the “global village.” Having analysed the concomitance of McLuhan and Ortega from a phenomenological perspective, which has into account emotion in the argumentative process, the conclusions focus on proposals for restoring deliberative norms that have become diluted during modernity and whose meaning endures in normative practices akin to the rhetorical tradition.

Keywords

Rhetoric, primary groups, revolt of the masses, populism, global village, post-truth, digital tribes.

1. Introduction. Rhetoric in McLuhan’s works and his readings of Ortega y Gasset

The present study does not approach rhetoric as a method of semiological analysis, but rather as a repertoire of normative practices for the social quality control of exposition before the audience, or *ars bene dicendi* (the art of speaking well) (Lausberg, 1975a, 83, §§ 32 and 33). As part of the *trivium*, rhetoric had consisted of using refined rules for centuries. It was accepted with the same level of respect as grammar. This is McLuhan’s understanding of rhetoric in *The Gutenberg galaxy* and *Laws of Media*. His emphasis on the concept that communication media are in fact the message ties in with the themes discussed in *The Revolt of the Masses*, which distinguishes between stylistic and classic rhetoric (IV, 440 and 503). Like McLuhan, Ortega y Gasset (hereafter, Ortega, except when referenced) refers to the shaping of public opinion in the media. In the last chapter of *Man and People*, which McLuhan read attentively as demonstrated by his quotations of the philosopher from Madrid (McLuhan & Fiore, 1968, pp. 117 and 118), Ortega addresses “public opinion” (X, pp. 314-323). Having foreseen the networked environment, his written description states the following: “Our social environment is full of words, of sayings, it is, by the same token, full of opinion” (p. 318).

Although the relationship between McLuhan and Ortega has never been addressed by scholars of mass culture, there is no shortage of reasons. McLuhan quotes *The Revolt of the Masses*, which McLuhan includes in a list of influential works of the time (1973, p. 113). Two other relevant quotations in *War and Peace in the Global Village*: cites *Man and People* (Ortega y Gasset, 1957) as well as a published collection of essays entitled *History as a System: and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History* (Ortega y Gasset, 1941).

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan refers to the rhetorical tradition of rules compiled over two millennia of culture. For Ortega, “There is no culture where there are no rules to which our fellow man can resort [...] where there are no principles of civil legality to which to appeal” (IV, p. 417). The purpose of rhetoric is to adapt the exposition of the writer or speaker to the expectations of an audience that may be either specific or universal (Perelman, 1970, p. 40). We have adopted a hermeneutical approach in order to find links between today’s apparent rhetorical vacuum and the legacy of education and praxis that made elocution an art of expressing oneself in front of an audience for more than two millennia. This legacy has now become diluted due to its weakening within the barriers that once separated private and public exposition (Núñez-Ladevéze, Vázquez & Núñez-Canal, 2020). We accept McLuhan’s analogy that “the heart of rhetoric is decorum” (McLuhan, 2015, p. 992), which illustrates the meaning it has held since its origins in the texts of Aristotle and the Platonic dialogues.

In *The Revolt of the Masses*, as well as in essays such as “Man and the Measure of the Earth” (VI, p. 884^{*1}), Ortega uses the expression “communication media.” Later, McLuhan popularised the term (1995, p. 140; 1964, p. 139). In the biographical sketch of his father on the occasion of his centenary, Eric McLuhan specifies that the meaning of “media” in *Understanding Media* is not that of a “communicative medium,” but that of an environment (McLuhan, 2012), of which “galaxy” is a metaphor. Eric writes the following:

In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. [...] that the personal and social consequences of any medium –that is, of any extension of ourselves– result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology (1996, p. 7).

Here he alludes to the device, or the “medium,” as “the individual and social consequences [...]that] result from the new scale it introduces,” and to the alteration that the technical device produces in the “pragmatic field” (Ortega, X, p. 230; cf. Núñez-Ladevéze, Núñez-Canal & Álvarez de Mon, 2020, pp. 963–981) or environment of the user. The alteration it causes in the field of observation and experience that is open to social interaction is what constitutes its “message.” In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan refers to the “message of basic literacy,” or in other words, to the “message of the printing press” (McLuhan 1968, pp. 327, 355, 465). Ortega had already pointed out that “every individual –person, country, and epoch– is an irreplaceable instrument” (III, 614). An “epoch” is what McLuhan individualises in relation to the printing press.

2. The Medium is the Message and the citations of Ortega

The distinction between “technical medium” and environment makes it possible to make use of the expression “medium” without referring to a device. It refers to the modification that the device produces in the environment of the person who uses it, or in other words, in the essential “pragmatic field” of the user who places it in a “circumstance.” The distinction between medium (device) and environment (setting) clarifies the meaning of the much-discussed apothegm, “the medium is the message.” The expression “message” does not refer to a device, but to the pragmatic environment of modifications that the device generates in

¹ We mark with * the texts by Ortega of works not read by McLuhan.

man's surroundings when he uses it, or in other words, it refers to the environment, field, or milieu where man is placed by using a medium which, by extending the range of his senses, modifies the circumstance in which he finds himself. If he did not use the device, his field of observation, experimentation with the environment, and interaction with others would be more limited, and his experience of the world would be different.

This idea that technology places man in an environment is not original to McLuhan. He draws it on a variety of philosophical, anthropological, sociological and literary sources, but instead of using the expression "environment," which is only found twice in the text, he substitutes it with the metaphor "galaxy." In order to reinforce the metaphorical use of "galaxy" as environment, his quotations and comments demonstrate that he draws inspiration from Bergson (Gelabert, 2015), Teilhard de Chardin (Fernández & Hernández, 2004), Heidegger (Ralón & Vieta, 2012), Innis (McLuhan, 2015), Mumford (Carey, 1981), and Jung (Braga, 2016). From *The Medium is the Massage* (1967) onward, he dispenses with the metaphor "galaxy" and replaces it with synonyms for environment, such as "milieu," "setting," "the surrounding world," "surroundings," "circumstance," and others.

According to Ralón and Vieta (2012) this use of the term *environment* is based on Heidegger. These authors demonstrate McLuhan's familiarity with phenomenology, yet they fall short. From the work of Uexküll, both Heidegger and Ortega borrowed the explanation that man cannot be understood without a reference to his "surroundings." Moreover, Ortega prefaces such reflections in *Ideas for a Biological Conception of the World** (III, p. 415). From its reading, the idea emerges that "Man without technique –that is, without reaction upon his medium– is not man" (V, p. 559). Here the word "medium" does not refer to the device, but to the environment, and the word "technique" refers to devices. Thus, one might construe that through the alteration caused by its social use in the assigned human realm, the device is a medium that modifies the milieu².

Ralón and Vieta do not mention Ortega. Had they delved into *War and Peace in the Global Village*, they would have noticed that McLuhan's quotations borrowed from Ortega are even greater interest, than the allusions to Heidegger in *Laws of Media* (1988, p. 68), or to the witty reference to his ability to "water-ski" (1969, p. 510). McLuhan also comments on *Meditación de la técnica* (Meditation on Technology), in which Ortega presents man as a misfit so dissatisfied with his environment that he adapts it, only to have to adapt it again. He also cites *Man and People*, in which Ortega distinguishes between "the aspect that most enters through the senses," or in other words, that which "gives life a basic dimension, which is bodily," and what he truly encounters from birth, which are the "pragmatic regions or fields where things are distributed, that is, the matters that interest and occupy our life" (X, p. 230). It is "the social human environment in which we live [...] a setting prior to the physical one, an environment constituted by an emotional and cognitive spatiality –this is the truly original one" (X, p. 231), in the gestation of intimacy.

The present study initiates the pending task of addressing the comments McLuhan made regarding Ortega's works, although we have limited the examination herein to its instrumental value in addressing the restoration of the social use of rhetoric as an instrument of debate in the public sphere, which has now become permeated by the dissipation of "intimacy" in the contagious clamour of networks (Bauman, 2001). As there is no academic reference to the relationship between the two authors, this paper might also serve as an exordium for the specific study of McLuhan's quotations of Ortega that we are preparing. The only mention made of the two philosophers together can be found in the proceedings of the McLuhan Galaxy Conference held in Barcelona on the occasion of McLuhan's centenary. The simplified reference declares them to be signatories of antithetical attitudes. The brief

² On the influence of Uexküll on Heidegger, cf. Muñoz Pérez (2015) and Alsina (2018). For the difference between Ortega and Heidegger, cf. García_Madalena (2019, pp. 239 *et seq.*).

paragraph contrasts the idea of the revolt of the masses, presented as an exponent of Ortega's elitism, with the cultural egalitarianism usually attributed to the author of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, which is a contrast that we question:

Some, elitist and conservatives, look to the masses as if it were the embodiment of all degeneration of individuals and looked at the "mass man" with suspicion as the most dangerous destructive power against social order [Ortega y Gasset, 2004] (García-Arnau, 2011, p. 420).

3. The restoration of body language in the audio-visual medium

We have not examined McLuhan's hermeneutical arbitrariness, about which so much has been written (García-Landa, 2011). Without dwelling on details, we have tried to obtain a general overview of his concomitance with Ortega, whose panorama is accessed through quotations. The fact that the Canadian philosopher comments on Ortega's works is in itself a sign of affinity. A detailed study is beyond the scope of this article. Here we use the citations for the purpose of arguing for an exegesis of Ortega's thought in connection with McLuhan's "understanding" of the media as an "extension of the senses." From here the path leads to addressing the problem of rhetorical barrenness on the web. The quotations convey familiarity that is useful in clarifying the ambiguities brought about by the "division of society into masses and outstanding minorities." The concordance between the two philosophers illustrates that fractionation is not "a division into social classes, but into classes of men [...], and cannot coincide with hierarchism into higher and lower classes" (IV, p. 378). Without being original in this interpretative line, as clarified by Sánchez Cámara (1986), seconded by Haro (2009), and updated by García-Madalena (2019), this first immersion in the quotations allows us to renew the hermeneutical tendency and to tackle the problem of the rhetorical dispersion of the Internet using in-depth tools.

The "understanding" of the technological medium as an extension of the senses in a time saturated with the intellectual prestige of writing is often interpreted as a vindication of audio-visual images over text. In chapters VII and X of *Man and People*, which were read by McLuhan (1971, pp. 122-126), Ortega refers to the body as a means of courtship. The body is not a device, but instead is a medium (technical?). "I am infused and confined in a body" (X, p. 230). Whether it is an organic medium is a matter of debate. If we look at non-verbal communication, expressiveness is shown through gestures transmitted by the body, "a patent symbol of a latent reality" (II, p. 683). If "the medium is the message," according to McLuhan, then "the body is the message" as well, concludes Davis (1971, who astutely paraphrases the Canadian author (1971, pp. 52 *et seq.*)). Eric recalls how his father asserted, "the content of any medium is the user" (McLuhan, 2015, p. 984). Our first message is using the body we inhabit, in and around which the pragmatic field of life is structured in our circumstance.

Gesture expression has commonalities with language that grammarians link to intonation. The act of giving body language the lofty status of speech disrupts the intellectual discipline that underestimates the passivity of the spectator in the presence of an image and reduces intelligibility to discursive abstraction. In Cartesian terms, rationality is separated from emotionality, memory, and imagination. Contrarily, seen from a broad perspective, as was the case for Ortega, personal communication or the use of gestures has communicative value. Corporeality guides either affective or bellicose expression. This is revealed in "Reflections on the Salutation" (*Man and People*). McLuhan's interest in this aspect even led him to graphically cite the concept through illustrations (1968, pp. 115-116). Vindicating image over writing, he endorses Ortega and Heidegger in their criticism of phenomenological idealism that delves into the rectification of the Cartesian legacy (Damasio, 2011). In this atmosphere of intellectual revision of the Cartesian framework, Perelman makes the following observations in his *Traité de l'Argumentation*: "The limitation imposed on the idea of reason [...] a limitation that is improper and completely unjustified in the sphere of

competence of the faculty of reasoning and proving,” which only surrenders to “evidence” (1970, p. 49).

If the printing press disassociated the consciousness of the self from sensory experience, as proposed by McLuhan, then the technological stage has reintegrated intellection into emotion. The Internet individualises bodily presence by radio, text, and television in a pragmatic field that unifies the Cartesian dichotomy. Audio-visual image and text merge in face-to-face relations from a distance. As the technology capable of combining audio-visual with the written word does not subtract, but instead adds the advantages of one to those of the other (Cloutier, 1973), the Internet unites the “public” in a single environment, as McLuhan expressly warns in the preface to *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. This return to the interactive conditions of primitive audio-visual proximity offered by the Internet restores to the present the argumentative motivations that two millennia of rhetoric had instilled. The influence of Nietzsche on Ortega in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* is constant, as he proclaims in the transcript of his 1872 rhetoric classes that “there is no non-rhetorical naturalness in language to which one could appeal: language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts” (quoted by Valverde 1993, p. 30). Perelman’s proposal has become current (Valenzuela, 2009; Frydman & Meyer, 2012; Holzapfel, 2015). The new environment encourages rhetoric that appeals to emotional reason, or a type of discourse that is typical of a “sentimental democracy” (Arias Maldonado, 2016).

Therefore, the question to ask is under what conditions the technology of globalisation coexists with the rhetorical tradition that for centuries compiled and refined oratory rules, catalogued figures and tropes (Curtius, 1955), classified discursive models to adapt them to functions and audiences (Lausberg, 1975b, pp. 22-25, §§22-28), and established common places to exercise social control over the quality of the speaker (Perelman, pp. 112 *et seq.*).

4. From the neighbourhood of primary groups to the tribal village on the Internet

The notion of audience proceeds from Tarde (1986), who considered the term to indicate a dispersed crowd of recipients without face-to-face relationships. Cooley (2006) used the idea of audience to distinguish it from “primary groups.” He referred to the family and the neighbourhood as domains where “primary ideals” underlying democracy and Christianity are assigned, in order to distinguish them from the following:

Numerous and impersonal open classes [...] which absorb a vital part of individuals without moulding them [...] as people come into face-to-face contact, they feel the social emotion and reach higher levels of consciousness (2009, pp. 248 *et seq.* and 109).

Technology has put this opposition to the test. Cooley, who has been exhaustively studied by López Escobar (2020), could not read Ortega, yet McLuhan did in fact read in *Man the Technician* that the distinction between personal and impersonal relationships was bound to be diluted by the acceleration of communicative technology. In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, he warned that the media was making it possible to create a virtual neighbourhood destined to overcome the pragmatic field of communicative limitations of the physical neighbourhood. The distinction between “primary groups” of face-to-face proximity and “open classes” is blurred in “virtual proximity” and becomes an interweave of personal relationships from a distance using telephony and audio-visual technology. By looking at the discursive methods of popular culture, advertising and consumption, the Canadian philosopher McLuhan (1967) understood that electric technology and the airwaves opened the public sphere to the illiterate. Television made it possible for anyone, literate or not, to see images over long distances. A certain type of “audience” emerged in the public sphere, unforeseen by Tarde. Moreover, unlike the printing press, it did not discriminate against the illiterate, but put them on an equal footing with the literate. Interconnected by electromagnetic waves and electricity, the world was returning to the communicative situation of primitive villages, turning the

planet into a global village. Having foreseen networks, McLuhan warned of a scenario that had to be understood rather than criticised. If the printing press created a closed visual environment, television opened it by joining to the abstract visualisation of the printing press specific acoustic and visual images, hitherto limited to physical proximity. “His own electric technology now begins to translate the visual or eye man back into the tribal and oral pattern with its seamless web of kinship and interdependence” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 55).

The accelerated process of the third industrial revolution is leading to digitisation in order to bring about a sudden contraction of communicative space in the virtual world of face-to-face relationships from a distance. Short-lived and ephemeral, virtual friendships, associations, visits, and groups proliferate. The Internet does not prevent pre-established cohesion, but instead fosters the disjointed heterogeneity of dispersed groups that Bauman identifies as a “return to the tribes” in his posthumous work (2017, pp. 54 *et seq.*).

To paraphrase Ortega, the communal tribe is not chosen –you are simply in it. Virtual tribes, on the other hand, are chosen, sought, found, and evaded. They can be dissipated as fast as they are formed. Moreover, they can be as ephemeral or enduring as their users, or they can fade away or continue on a whim. Without belonging to the “social setting” of life (Ortega, X, pp. 317 *et seq.*), they are compatible with the acquired patterns of living in proximity. How they intervene in these environments to alter or preserve them is an empirical question. The internet can be an interactive instrument for establishing or withdrawing uses that either reaffirm or refute status. Tarde described these uses when he referred to the “audience” (2011). Ortega called them “*automatisms of use*” (X, pp. 269 *et seq.*). We could call them “dialectics of imitation and distinction” or “actions of establishment and withdrawal” in “founding and creating frames of reference,” which socialise the self by facilitating integration into the group through the emulation or differentiation of traits (cf. Goffman, 1981, pp. 254 *et seq.*). These impulses are presumed to be more idiosyncratic and longer lasting in family relationships, where they generate intense bonds of dependence.

According to Ortega, the enlightened, egalitarian aspiration dispensed with the realistic basis on which to sustain the relationship between the “I” and “Us.” If the relationship is nourished by an emotional bond, it cannot be treated as if it were the consequence of a thoughtful act. Mass individualism spreads the dilution of habits and bonds, either aesthetic or affective. In return, it offers the complacent rebelliousness of the individual when he realises that his right to be differentiated by vulgarity empowers him to scorn the norm that demands of him the effort not to be so: “characteristic of our age [... (is)] that the vulgar proclaim and impose the right of vulgarity, or vulgarity as a right” (IV, p. 416). Ortega does not dispute this right. Instead, he examines it and reveals its ambivalent effects. If the printing press “de-tribalises” (McLuhan, 1969, p. 328), then cultural egalitarianism and individual rebelliousness that flows in the global village consolidates self-affirmation in the tribal haven, whether it is virtual, ephemeral, specialised, nationalist, racial, sporting, or is expressed by following the influencer of the moment.

5. The pragmatic field of observation and the gaze

If a thousand words are not worth a picture, it is because a visual moment conveys more information than a thousand words can describe. The fact that media are linked (Cloutier, 1973; Jenkins, 2006) is not hypothetical. The aphorism that states, “the medium is the message,” explains that what is characteristic of all media implies the following:

the “content” of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, “What is the content of speech?” it is necessary to say, “It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9).

“is non-verbal in itself” because “thought is a structured activity of my life” (Ortega IV, p. 285). If the content of writing is speech, the content of language, as the “first externalisation of the central nervous sense” (McLuhan, 1971, p. 42), is the organism. By artificially extending the senses, “pragmatic regions or fields” are delimited, which coexist in the sensory exchange between organisms (Ortega, X, p. 231). The object not seen directly with the eyes is seen with the aid of lenses. What is seen through the microscope can be seen multitudinously on the web, or through print, television, or photography. Ortega challenges whether the social question depends on what the eye sees, and instead focuses the issue on what each person understands of what is seen. The astronomer or the biologist does not understand the same thing as the individual who has been mediated by television. The pragmatic field altered by observation through a device is not the same for all observers. “Perspective is one of the components of reality” (III, 613). What is observed is relative to the ability to interpret what the device adds to the “field of vision” of the naked eye. “Let us not confuse our field of vision with the figure of reality,” Ortega writes in *Sobre una nueva interpretación de la historia universal* (IX, p. 1210) (*On a New Interpretation of Universal History*). What the astronomer perceives by extending his eye, people do not perceive by extending theirs. To know how to look through instruments, one must learn to understand. Looking through a microscope is irrelevant if the observer does not know what he is looking at. As the revolt of the masses is a rebellion of the one who neither knows nor understands, it is an insurrection of the “vulgar soul.” Contrasting the distinction between minorities and the masses with McLuhan’s egalitarianism is a simplification incompatible with his quotations, for it overlooks the fact that where the two philosophers coincide is in the regression to the “global village,” to “a primitive man unexpectedly emerged in the midst of a very old civilisation” (Ortega, IV, pp. 403 and 424).

However, this does not detract from McLuhan’s emphasis on the sensory extension provided by the audio-visual medium. Measured in bites, the visual information is incomparable to the text that describes it, yet the text contains the links to understand the information that the eye supplies to the thinker. Conversely, the gaze does not guarantee that the viewer understands. McLuhan reaffirms the distinction between “minorities” and “the masses,” between the one who knows how to gaze and the one who does not know how to gaze. The egalitarian democratisation of the gaze does not correspond to the distribution of egalitarian knowledge. Understanding is not just looking. Even if everyone looked at everything, not everyone would understand everything. There will always be those who understand things that others are not capable of understanding when they look at them. However, as everyone is the master of his or her own experience, when they state their opinion, they decide about issues that affect others. If other people’s opinions shape our own, our lives are subject to the decisions that others make when they give their opinions about us, and vice versa. “In the electric age the “job of work ‘yields to dedication and commitment, as in the tribe” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 149). Hence, collective organisation requires the ability to distinguish between minorities and majorities, a distribution that presupposes trust in the understanding of others so that putting ourselves in the hands of another is a cooperative rather than a servile assignation. As Ortega writes in *Un capítulo sobre el Estado** (VI, p. 840), “This is faith when it is addressed to a personal being: trust.” If we are to abandon ourselves to the judgement that engages us, the audio-visual environment offers face-to-face information from a distance in order to discern where to place our trust. In listing the kinds of gazes described in *Man and People*, McLuhan read the following:

Each of these classes of looks tells us what is going on within the other man [...] is engendered by a particular intention [...] Looks, then, constitute a vocabulary (Ortega, 1956, 116; X, p. 215).

David's distrust of the phone is understood: because I can't be sure what the other person really means. If I can't see the person, how can I guess his or her feelings? (1973). "Guessing their feelings" to build trust. From the time that the phenomenological shift linked feeling to body language, the visual image has regained its value face of writing. It has become clear that communicative relations do not change whether they are carried out as an exchange or in a linear way. As the body is a channel for conveying intentions, "the salutation" serves as a symbol of feeling between interlocutors in either physical or virtual proximity. This is what McLuhan comments upon in his quotations. Hence, audio-visual technologies have opened the environment that was closed by the printing press by allowing the visualisation of body language from a distance.

If one accepts that "we are second-hand consumers of ideas originating from far away within some elite" (Zaller, 2014, p. 28), this does not imply a separation between first- and second-class citizens, nor does it prevent one from being a minority in a realm of experience, knowledge or skill in which another person places trust. Based on this cognitive dependence on minorities by majorities in the public sphere, Zaller proposed his Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) model (2014, p. 82) for the purpose of circumventing "the mythical fallacy of democracy" (Lippmann, 2007, pp. 44 and 45). By broadcasting radio and television voice and image, political actors can explain their programme in debates or on-camera interviews. The viewer will be less interested in knowing or not knowing the content of the programme in order to focus on choosing one of the candidates. The image viewed, combined with the words that have been heard, convey information that is not provided by reading alone. Moreover, if it can be preserved, reproduced, and elaborated, it can also be the object of reflection. It is therefore logical that those who have responsibilities as experts and strategic designers should study gestures, mimicry, and body language in order to gain the trust of the spectator. If the new technologies involve a return to tribal communication, they also impose a return to the argumentative conditions of face-to-face oratory, or in other words, to the arts and wiles employed to captivate others by exercising the rhetorical arts, or by bringing recruits on board for a cause among an audience of individuals who listen as they read and watch.

As Perelman had already stated, the important thing is "that building an audience must not be inadequate for the experience" (1970, pp. 25 *et seq.*). Under these conditions, there is nothing to prevent emotional expressiveness from participating in a deliberative debate, since it provides information about the intentions and incitements of the actor that is concealed by reasoning. However, as desirable as it may seem, Lippmann warns that the attempt to filter emotionality through argumentation is utopian, as the deliberative figure is inseparable from the emotional one.

The proposal by Green (2009) to enhance the audio-visual image as an instrument of democratic representation in the audio-visual society discredits the claim that direct participation is the message. There is no guarantee that deliberation among participants will balance their views, nor that rationality will prevail over sentiment among assembly members (Arias Maldonado, 2016). Moreover, assembly participants are socially segregated, as not all members are in a suitable position or have the same opportunities to participate (Zaller, 2014). As the time that can be dedicated depends on the distribution of social tasks, those who have more time because they are not committed to anything else have a higher degree of representativeness, which populism seeks to obtain (Laclau, 2005). As shown by double flow theories, if opinion formation is not predetermined by exposure to the environment, then relying on the leadership that emerges in the primary group is an ingredient that simplifies the voter's decision.

This pragmatic analysis, pioneered by Cooley in addressing the formation of the self in primary groups, and by Lippmann in stressing the importance of face-to-face relationships in the formation of political opinion (1964), is defined by Goffman "as the reciprocal influence of one individual on the actions of the other when both are in an immediate physical presence"

(1981, p. 27). According to the RAS model (Zaller, 2014, pp. 28 and 37), which is based on the analysis of questions answered in electoral surveys, citizens are distributed into sectors with diverse levels of interest in political issues. Hence, their opinion formation depends on trust in certain minorities who spend their time gathering accurate information on the issues at hand, as well as the socio-political and doctrinal implications of such matters (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1979).

Zaller showed that in civil society, which is professionally outside politics, the citizens surveyed do not have time to inform themselves –they feel no urgent need to have an opinion on the issues about which they are questioned. Studies on “agenda setting” and those related to frames of reference, a notion extrapolated from Goffman’s analysis of interaction in everyday life, have shown that the acquisition of political criteria takes a secondary position, yet postponement does not detract from the intellectual status of the person who postpones it. The rank of authority in some branches of professional, artisanal, commercial, and artistic activity does not concur with authority over public affairs. The work of Goffman is heir to the formation of the “self” offered by Mead (1991), exhaustively examined by Sánchez de la Yncera (1995), and is based on the study of the organisation of norms among people in face-to-face relations, which is a space now open to the expansion of relationships on the Internet regardless of distance.

Graham (1994) showed relationship between Ortega and the pragmatism. Since 1998, Nubiola has examined their similarity. We have recently referred to specific aspects of this relationship (Núñez-Ladevéze, Núñez-Canal & Álvarez, 2021). For more detail regarding their affinity, we refer to the doctoral theses of Armenteros (2004) and Gutiérrez Simón (2020). The relevant issue here is that Zaller’s proposal reproduces the underlying meaning of the distinction between majorities and minorities. Upon observing that diverse components of the social majority can be considered “minorities,” or authorities in a discipline, trade, commercial activity, artisanship, sport, or other field, substantive aspects of Ortega’s approach are not redressed. What the philosopher warned of when he spoke of the “revolt of the masses” was the opposite of what he is often accused of, which is that any reason to appreciate a merit is tainted by the aspiration of aesthetic, moral or professional autonomy of the ignorant in that field, or is irrelevant in all fields. The continuous delegation of trust to those who know, understand, work more effectively, or cultivate taste, disproves the value of disobedience to the principle of respect for merit. “There is no culture where aesthetic polemics do not recognise the need to justify artistic endeavour” (IV, p. 417).

Let us now return to Green. The various facets of everyday life would lose meaning without referring to the scrutinising gaze to which Ortega devoted so much attention. If we are participating spectators of the life flow of others, there is nothing unusual about the fact that the gaze might serve to foster participation as citizens in the public sphere as well. Generally speaking, most people have only enough time to observe how politicians act. Observation is a source of information determined by the pragmatic field as a focus of attention. The usual field of observation is the common denominator reserved for democracy. The detailed, critical interpretation and analysis of programmes and activities is an issue for specialists. Nevertheless, regardless of the discursive content, the observer can discern reasons to either trust or distrust the speaker according to the expressiveness of the image: the ethos of sincerity, knowledge, or deception. Reading a programme does not bring us any closer to understanding the intentions of the writer. Body language conveys information inaccessible to an abstract concept of rationality.

Green’s theory dismisses criticism of technological progress that linked image and spectacle to the passivity of the television audience. In his thesis, he disconnects intellectualist abstraction from conscious intelligence, and disassociates himself from the misgivings raised by the image as a means of communication as opposed to the written word. The masses are participants, and if they trust others in daily life when they share the pragmatic field of the

same events that have been opened to the senses by technology, they have no reason not to delegate their trust when it comes to the administration of public affairs. In general, we are complacent observers of those we trust, aware of our vulnerability when we put ourselves in their hands, whether it involves going to a hospital, shop, or seeking a professional service. Reading a programme does not bring us any closer to understanding the rhetoric that hides the intention of the writer. By watching and talking through screens, we reach a distant pathos. Intellectuals during the Age of Enlightenment read what was written by others from a distance and over time. They watched and listened in close proximity. Now we read, listen, and watch timelessly from a distance in ubiquitous proximity (Lipovetsky, 2016). “Today we acknowledge the most effective omnipresence at any point on the globe. This proximity of the distant, this presence of the absent, has increased in fabulous proportion the horizon of each life” (Ortega, IV, p. 394).

6. Debate: rhetorical craftsmanship on the networks

“Print, or mechanized writing, introduced a separation and extension of human functions [...] This amazing technique of spatial analysis duplicating itself at once” (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 110 and 126). It is not necessary to stimulate the imagination to understand along with McLuhan that this separation from the environment duplicated by the printing press reflects the Cartesian dichotomy between reflection and sensory experience that gives rise to the reductionist concept of man as a rational being. Reading makes it possible to review once again what has been read, to think about what has been thought, to reflect, to meditate, to grasp each word or paragraph without getting lost, and to examine the text in detail in order to rectify it. According to Plato, writing was an artificial, divine gift to remedy the fragility of memory (Phaedrus, 275 d-e. Cf. Núñez-Ladevéze, 2020, p. 225). The reader is protected from forgetting the line of reasoning through memory in exchange for inhibiting the sensory function to other effects. “This specifically human creation is technology. Thanks to it, man can become self-absorbed” (X, p. 145).

While the art of persuasion looked to the models of mathematics and calculus in order to construct a deductive system to replace the imperfect mother tongue, which had been handed down from generation to generation through use, people’s speech was necessarily unsuitable for rational elucidation. Audio-visual participation through the media and the web overcomes the reductionist logicism that Ortega censures in Lévy-Bruhl’s “pretended ‘logical thinking’,” which the Spanish philosopher explains in *Apuntes sobre el pensamiento** (VI, p. 13). The millenarian rhetorical tradition has been “the technique that uses language to persuade” (Perelman, 1970, p. 10), or an art to ensure persuasive correction. This tradition is comprised of mnemonic rules, ordinary places, previously indicated topics, the freeing of one’s efforts from expository improvisation, and the reduced risk of distorting what has been memorised through its exposition. The rules, either ethical or pathetic (Lausberg, 1975b, 34, §§43,2,b; 50, §§69-70), linked the ethos and pathos of the speaker to those of the audience. They modulated the quality of argumentative transparency. By restoring the unity of an organism that thinks and feels, McLuhan links rhetoric and anthropology in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*.

The issue today is not whether the decline of discursive logic has renewed the rhetorical tradition, but whether networks have created the conditions to allow for the delivery of trustworthy discourse to an audience by re-establishing this institution regulated by social rather than political control of the speaker’s suitability. These precautions survive in other ways as well. To preserve scientific knowledge, quality assurance rules have been drawn up to ensure the suitability of publications for academic purposes, accrediting intellectual contributions through reviews to allow for the discernment of what is publishable. These are guarantees beyond the rhetorical arts that follow the same type of motivation used to certify social trust in the provision of services. The conversion of the consumer into a user has fostered instruction manuals to guarantee the reliability of commercial exchanges on the web

and the regulation of transactions. Users learn to accept or reject services. This implies spontaneous guidelines that acquire social value precisely because chicanery flourishes in the flow of commerce. Corporate reputation is protected by corporate regulations (Núñez-Ladevéze *et al.*, 2015). The standards of writing and citation, stylebooks, and procedures for verifying journalistic sources have a trust-building pattern. The practical functionality of rhetoric has survived in a diluted form in other procedures, such as reviewing texts or rules of professional ethics to distinguish truthful information from subjective opinion (Núñez-Ladevéze *et al.*, 2015). Ortega does not reproach the fact that the media have created a balance in the communicative relationship, but that the rebelliousness of the mass individual erodes the established norms for the purpose of imposing arbitrary subjectivity. He foresaw “the precarious influence” of fact-checking, and that fake news, post-truth, and populism encourage “an intangible reality” (Blanco, 2020). Thus, the revolt of the masses displaces the deontological functions represented by the rhetorical tradition.

When traffic is uncontrolled, as on the web, subjectivism leads to confusion. As the distribution is organised to suit everyone’s tastes, the web entices populism and opens the door to a demagogic scenario of chicanery and rumours. Plato called them “sophistic tricks” in *Gorgias* (459 b. Cf. Núñez Ladevéze, 2020, p. 230). Hostile to rebuttal, adherence to the tribe takes precedence over comparison, and the tribal story prevails over verification. It is necessary to maintain subtlety in order to discern where to establish the line of demarcation in each case in the pragmatic field between fact and axiology (Nubiola, 2008) in order to distinguish information from opinion (Núñez Ladevéze, 2015).

The web foments transience. If it is possible to differentiate certainty from error, and truth from falsehood, the distinction must transcend identity or interest groups, yet entangled tribalism is insensitive to diversity. Proving or disproving is of little interest. In this digital fleetingness, all cats can be interchangeably brown-coloured. The entangled digital web slackens the rules that once institutionalised rhetoric. Its function of which survives where its practical application finds a realm of experience that regulates trust for the self-defence of professional, cognitive, or commercial behaviour. If the need to trust makes it necessary to mend ties, then the virtual circulatory torrent indiscriminately entangles the most reprehensible attitudes with the most sublime in the circumstance of the global village (Núñez-Ladevéze, 2020).

Emotional ignorance moves in unison with emotional intelligence. Ortega called this lack of distinction the *revolt of the masses*, whereas McLuhan labelled it the *global village*. If rhetoric accepted intelligent pathos as a binding relationship between sender and receiver, the link has been diluted in a muddled marketplace of interests nourished by exaltation, animosity, and arbitrariness.

It is the rebellion of tribal individualism (Bauman, 2017) on the worldwide web.

“Now all the world’s a sage,” writes McLuhan (1969, p. 14). He uses irony, as if he had read Ortega’s “barbarism of specialisation.” Pessimism surfaces among those who accepted the pretentious triviality of modernity which, confronted with its own dreams of eliminating enchantments, has declared itself dissatisfied with disenchantment (Bauman, 2001). Enlightenment became a strategy of domination by some over others. The worldwide web globalises the communicative conditions of a primitive stage reinstated by the technological implosion that vacillates in applying community rules of coexistence to the digital village during the regressive return. On the Internet, every knows what they want. Nevertheless, rhetorical practice continues to exist as rules aimed at establishing trust in a framework that has not discarded such norms, even if they have been dispersed or hidden. As Lausberg writes, “rhetoric became ‘journalism’ (taken very seriously)” (1975a, p. 10). By restoring rhetoric in the face of tribal rebellion, we have endeavoured to take seriously the *becoming* part of this conversion.

7. Conclusions

McLuhan shares with Ortega the atmosphere of post-Cartesian phenomenology. He focuses his attention on the rhetorical tradition. Ortega shares this environment and analyses it within the pragmatics of people's saying. Both called for the restoration of the elocutionary arts, worked by scholars such as Lausberg and Perelman.

Regarding the extension of the senses, which is the heart of McLuhan's philosophy, for both, the technical means artificially alters the pragmatic field of the observer. The media denaturalise attention by detaching it from bodily immediacy. Ortega broadly proclaims the contraction of the world by means of communication and transport. McLuhan makes the prophecy specific: the network expands the environment of common experience by reducing the dimensions of the world to the size of a village. On the condensed virtual stage, the pragmatic connection to the nearby incarnation of the physical scenario is amputated.

McLuhan provides a hermeneutical approach in order to clarify the interpretative ambiguities of the distinction between minorities and the masses. By linking them to the circumstance of the pragmatic field of observation, Ortega defends the masses/minorities differentiation against claims of elitism.

Their concurrence in attitudes regarding idealism inscribes both philosophers within the same prediction of a world (Ortega, IV, p. 405) reduced in size by the media in order to develop a global society through technology where "the sovereignty of the unqualified individual, of the generic human being as such, has evolved from the idea –or juridical ideal– that it was, to being a psychological state that constitutes the average man" (IV, p. 378).

The mutual affinity, which is confirmed by his quotations, illustrates how the backdrop of the announced revolt of the masses shares the technologically progressive sense of the global village as a tribal regression on the worldwide web. The oxymoron does not undo the paradoxical regression of technological progress foreseen by Ortega and announced by McLuhan.

From this perspective, the fundamental concept that technology expands the pragmatic field of personal experience, allows us to make a connection between the disruption of the logicism provided by the printing press and the rhetorical tradition viewed as a guarantee of quality public discourse, the hypothetical restoration of which might guide the revolt of both the mass and tribal individual in the network of audio, visual, and textual media (Cloutier, 1973).

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