The Positive Psychological Vectors of Internet Culture

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April 2022

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Introductory words

Since the early stages of growing internet access, the dangers of internet communication and the lack of quality control of information have been a topic within and without the scientific community. Many explorations of cyberbullying, general internet addiction, the age-unrestricted access to sexual or inappropriate content, the questionable validity of all sorts of information and its impact on people of all ages and other troubling aspects of internet culture lead to all manners of alarmist opinions of a general and specific nature in academic and non-academic society. Conversely, there are also many researchers and theorists who have turned their attention to the positives of an internet based society. However, in a broader cultural context, the internet and digital technologies as a whole, like many great changes to culture, have been met with a general air of determinism, despite their many positive qualities and potential. There is a preponderance of articles and opinions focusing on the problematic sides or dehumanizing aspects of the digital age – a tradition inherited by some of the most well-known post-structuralists. From the more balanced approach of Lyotard, who foresaw the computerization of knowledge sharing, but also painted a grim eventuality of excessive control, to the decidedly apocalyptic visions of Baudrillard, who decried the loss of humanity and reality in a digital age. Of course, it is easy to see how these theorists were diagnosing a society on the precipice of a fundamental change, and this notion of the death of an era tinged their reading of culture in a pessimistic fashion. I believe that to this day, the very phenomenon of witnessing a giant shift in culture and the uncertainty it brings is the driving force behind deterministic notions concerning the development of new technologies, digital environment and internet culture.

Certainly, these fast-paced changes in informational flow and its unregulated nature have their inherent dangers, which deserve exploration. However, a more balanced approach with a focus on the potential of this new age could be much more beneficial. Barring global catastrophe, the digital age is here to stay, and it will be utilized for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’, as all other aspects of human progress have been. In that light, I will try to explore several beneficial vectors of psychological importance

inherent to digital technologies and the internet. I am wary of being too optimistic, of course – this article is not meant to extoll virtues, but rather, examine and offer possibilities, as well as guide the attention of researchers towards these topics. The following notes comprise the first of two articles, and is meant as a general examination of culture and a framework upon which I will base my review of the psychological dimensions of some online-based or oriented creative processes. Neither of the two articles has a pretence of being a psychological study, and should be viewed only as an attempt at contextualizing current cultural phenomena.

1. Psychological literacy

As evidenced by a systematic review of research papers the concept of psychological literacy still lacks concrete definitions and objectively applicable empirical criteria within the world of professional psychological study (Newell et al., 2020). However, within the framework of culture studies and art theory (including the psychological approaches to art theory) such a concept could be subject to exploration from a number of different angles. As it stands, the term is understood to represent "the ability to apply psychological knowledge to personal, family, occupational, community and societal challenges" and it "is promoted as the primary outcome of an undergraduate education in psychology" (Roberts et al., 2015). In this article, I will examine psychological literacy gained through the usage of internet and digital media, instead of psychological literacy obtained through higher, or any other formal education. Such deliberation, of course, does not carry any concretely quantifiable data, but rather will focus on outlining a palpable shift in cultural perceptions and direction. It is important to mention, that this process is akin to the public absorption of any idea stemming from the development of human knowledge. In the same way that the public became acquainted with the ideas of psychology throughout the late 19th and most of the 20th century – this spread of knowledge is neither evenly distributed, nor guaranteed to be understood by or be immediately beneficial to all people. However, the fact remains that information in the digital age is spreading in a quantitatively and qualitatively

new way. What the printing press meant for the spread of knowledge and the drive towards the humane in modernity, the internet is doing anew in the digital age. It would follow that the new informational background that humanity has found itself in will, in time, fundamentally enrich general understanding of human nature.

The internet is having a beneficial effect on general psychological literacy – not so much as a learning and mastering of scientific knowledge (although it certainly has been undoubtedly useful in this regard), but as an introductory framework of concepts and notions, and most importantly a new tool for experiential learning[1]. Even the dangers of internet usage could be looked at from an educational standpoint – differentiating between ethical and non-ethical content, learning how to interact with or keep distance from harmful internet conduct and sustaining a productive online experience are important formative strategies that undoubtedly have an effect on human psychological learning and response, but remain largely unexplored. Existing online has opened up a completely new informational, experiential and psychological horizon for its active users. On the one hand, online experience can be overwhelming, and is connected to many health and psychological risks, but on the other, it is conducive to a more expansive understanding of culture and learning through a digital reality, which provides a much wider window into global culture, human activities and psychological response.

Firstly, the internet has brought on opportunities for exposure to psychological terms. In a broad context, people have unparalleled access to sources that can be helpful in understanding basic psychological and psychiatric terminology. From online suppositories of information, of institutional or informal variety (and even scientific piracy[2]), to social platforms even, the opportunities for examining different concepts are ubiquitous. On the official level, all manner of institutional sites offer

[1] *Experiential learning* is learning through experience and reflection, rather than, for example, memorizing through repetition or didactic teaching.

[2] While platforms like Sci-Hub and Libgen (a site for unlocking scientific publications and a site for downloading literature) are technically operating through intellectual property theft, they offer unparalleled free access to scientific publications and books that are otherwise inaccessible to people lacking institutional connection or financial means to pay for access to research.

professional and officially sanctioned information on topics of psychological well-being and psychiatric care. On the academic level, the community strives to consolidate informational output, and because of that, many data repositories carry vast amount of publicly accessible research information. On the public level, through the decentralized nature of public knowledge platforms, the content that they provide is steadily diversifying and quality regulated. The information provided by Wikipedia, for example, has become very reliable - the content is being fact-checked, redacted and linked to a vast quantity of research and connected literature. Such a platform allows for a unique environment of international cooperation and moderation of content that seems to review and self-regulate its content exceptionally well, surpassing official channels of information and even academic efforts in some areas.

This shift in information access and information gathering has fundamentally changed the opportunities for learning. Information, previously only available through professional literature and frequently incomprehensible to people unaccustomed to academic language or having little basic knowledge of terminology, has become widely accessible, easily understandable and reliable (given that the sources are trusted, of course). Apart from its significance for academia and theory, this development trickles down to the everyday internet user, who can greatly benefit from all these sources. Of course, here we should note that hygiene of information is of paramount importance when using online content for learning. However, this has always been true, which seems to be a largely ignored point. The selection of appropriate literature and media is a problem with a long history and is by no means born out of the digital age. The wide variety of books, magazines, papers and other media have always demanded discretion out of the public as to the quality of information. We can even reduce this problem even further – whom people listened to or believed, before printed word and reading skills were ubiquitous, did present much the same challenges. Of course, the exponential diversification of information brings with itself greater opportunities for both dependable and unreliable information, but that does not fundamentally change the principles of source selection, nor, most likely, the proportion of trustworthy to untrustworthy sources in any meaningful way.

What has changed, however, is that these informational opportunities make accessing reliable information incredibly easier by comparison with previous modes of dissemination. In the context of mental health, that presents a vast array of opportunities for learning to look for and recognize clinically significant signs in real life – prompting screening, prevention and treatment. Moreover, the demystifying of human psychological response inevitably leads to better understanding of one's own life experiences and problems. This can lead to better management of personal and work-related relationships, avoiding harmful behaviours and situations, and general attention towards psychological wellbeing.

An equally, if not more, important aspect of internet is connectivity on a personal level. The possibilities for communication and interaction (even financial transactions) in an online environment provide for better understanding and management of mental health. Blogging and vlogging give unique opportunities for insights into the lives of people, and in particular, for learning about and connecting on a human level with the experiences of people affected by mental health problems or those struggling with psychological difficulties. Through reading or watching personal accounts of people from different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and demographics, the public has a chance to empathize with real people, as opposed to trying to understand abstract concepts for various problems. This principle has proven to be greatly beneficial for broadening the scope of issues a person can comprehend in every aspect of human experience. From understanding cultural and generational differences, to insights into specific topics such as mental health issues. This has already had a palpable effect in aiding the destigmatization of mental health issues, and will inevitably continue to humanize people affected by psychological and psychiatric conditions, as well as contextualize human psychological response in a broader sense.

On the other hand, there are many studies showing the positive impact of support networks (or even group therapy) when dealing with different physical and mental illnesses. For individuals unable to seek support in real life, internet interaction becomes the primary source for finding support. Vlogs, in

particular, have a strong positive social impact for chronic illness management (Huh et al., 2014) and form an even better support network than ones containing only writing. Of course, people who do not wish to publicly speak of their problems on camera could explore these options in private video, or can moderate the access to their online content. This venue should be of interest to professionals in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, as well as other medical specialties, because vlogging should be considered as a viable option for therapeutic journaling and group support. Moreover, an analysis of vlogs of individuals with severe mental health illnesses found that they had the potential to minimize isolation and to function as therapy, while simultaneously fighting stigma (Sangeorzan et al., 2018). Anecdotally, if we examine the comment sections, to a large degree, in these situations the environment of support and the empathetic response of the majority of viewers, polices negative comments. The online community in these cases has a tendency to self-regulate much in the same way that any public space does in "real" life. This seriously mitigates some of the risks around public exposure that could potentially be problematic, such as online bullying or general insensitive comments.

Moreover, from a professional standpoint, internet connectivity allows therapy from a distance and searching for therapy through online recommendations and reviews. There has also been a surge of online platforms for facilitating the process between client and mental health practitioners like Talkspace and BetterHelp. People seeking particular credentials or inclusive practitioners can use the services of platforms like Pride Counseling, for instance, who are marketed as LGBTQI+ friendly and prepared to deal with themes around sexuality and gender. In connection, an interesting mutually beneficial business model has been cropping up in YouTube and Instagram content creators' videos and posts – many creators are sponsored by such platforms in exchange for promotion. This has the potential of being a very efficient marketing tool, but most importantly in this way, services vetted by and working for a particular community might reach a bigger portion of people who need them.

These are some of the more obvious ways in which internet has had a beneficial impact on the development of psychological literacy, and the rise in accessibility of psychological help. Additionally, the expansion of discursivity concerning mental health is a function of contemporary internet culture and its tools. On the other hand, the impact of internet culture goes far beyond themes that explicitly deal with psychological categories. Because every instance of information going beyond our personal existence broadens not only intellectual knowledge, but also has emotional context, it could be said that most content informs people psychologically. An obvious example might be a video, showing the reality of a marginalized group, a story about animal rescue, and even the comment sections on such content, which offer opportunities for absorbing psychological information, and are paramount for the construction of empathetic response. A somewhat overlooked side to online information is that almost every story, be it mundane, or extraordinary, offers psychological context. These psychological situations could have negative impact when the majority of content brings about negative emotional reactions, but the opposite effect can also be present for content evoking positive emotions.

More often than not, the current informational background is discussed in light of its role in the rising anxiety levels and depression incidence, as well as its habit-forming nature. Less attention is given to the humanizing factors of internet usage viewed from a cultural standpoint – this international, intergenerational, intercultural (on however large or small a scale we take the notion of culture) connectivity has shone light onto everyday issues, their differences and similarities in separate groups and the way we experience life as a whole on a psychological level. Another very important point to be made is that technologies do not seem to be dehumanizing, contrary to popular concerns – they have absorbed the need for emotional context, creating completely new modes of communication. This new vector for information has a unique potential for observing both psychological cues and psychological needs – from simple text messaging and emoticon use, through GIF, audio and video, internet connectivity has proven that emotional context is paramount to communication and platforms evolve in order to deliver the tools for psychological expression. The amount of context a person can gain through using the capabilities of contemporary communicators (even excluding video

and audio connections) is far bigger than ever before. In a few text messages in combination with emoticons and GIFs, a person receives varied information at the same time, which would otherwise take a far bigger volume of words in order to be articulated sufficiently. Of course, these relatively new methods of communication are also a new mechanism for the coding of meaning, which necessitates a corresponding competence – not only understanding of technology, but also understanding of the new "language".

On the other hand, the possibility of constant connection, which, as has been frequently remarked, could lead to excessive stress and lack of personal space, is also establishing itself as an irreplaceable instrument for supporting relations, and not only on a personal level. At the moment, the war in Ukraine (as well as the war in Syria before that and other conflicts around the world) reveals its sinister nature mainly through new technologies[3]. The levels of unprecedented public international engagement is specifically due to the capabilities of internet and digital technology, without which the informational flow is far slower and goes through much fewer channels that are potentially far easier to control. Despite offering the latest environment for manipulatory and subversive strategies in the form of fake news, propaganda, content farms, cyber attacks and others, the internet also offers the other side of the coin – fact-checking, cross-references, meta-analysis and cyber protection. For example, the photos and news of the atrocities in Bucha, for which conspiracy theories of all kinds are permeating the online spaces and even television (particularly in Bulgaria), are in fact checked through satellite imagery and meta-analysis of various visual materials. In comparison with any other time period, the verification of truth through a decentralized system today leads to a far bigger certainty in the quality of information. As long as a person is willing, they could find out that the atrocities in Bucha

[3] Conversely, the lack of access to technology and a free and dependable internet connection contributes to the silencing of information. An extreme example is the isolation of North Korea, supported by a highly restricted online environment, or many local (and not only) conflicts in Africa or Asia, which frequently do not get covered by media. In recent years, as underprivileged populations or individuals gain access to internet, more and more news of previously isolated from the public view issues come to the surface.

are a fact. Yes, contemporary machines for disinformation certainly are more powerful than the ones before them, but they are also facing a far more powerful opponent than before.

The advantage of future generations (including the ones growing up presently) compared to now, is that they will be more digitally literate as well as better accustomed to the capabilities of internet. It might be a bold hypothesis, but a society faced with this polarizing reality which it has a better understanding of, at least on a technological level, inevitably will strive indirectly towards the truth. A comparable example is the development of Wikipedia in recent years – not just the progress of the project itself, because it depends on few people (a negligible amount of all the people using the internet), but rather its influence. From an untrustworthy dilettante project, Wikipedia turned into a source of accessible and (ever more so) reliable information. It does not matter whether the majority of people who use it are capable of source hygiene, what is important is that the project self-regulates in regards to the quality of information, and its accessibility decidedly makes it influential.

Empathizing with the war in Ukraine will inevitably rise stress levels, as well as exacerbate the mental health problems of many people, who are not directly impacted by the conflict (to say nothing of the ones who are). However, what we should also pay attention to is that it will inform emotionally and psychologically a considerable amount of people as well. This type of information, although it is in no way connected to what we are accustomed to perceive as psychological literacy, is connected to emotional intelligence and ethical categories to such an extent that it inevitably will lead to some results in psychological literacy – as a reason for empathy and expanding the meaning behind it, an occasion to search for information and even a desire for conflict resolution. Much like nowadays the memory of both World Wars affects people who have not lived through them, because it exists in the public consciousness and is the primary psychological and intellectual motivator behind the world's response to the war in Ukraine.

Beyond that, internet culture creates preconditions for the formation of new international and intercultural metanarratives that facilitate developing a sense of closeness with the "other" cultures

and individuals to a high degree. And because prosocial conformism is one of the driving traits of human behaviour – group empathy makes people more willing to be empathetic in turn (Nook et al., 2016) – the development of a new social environment, such as internet, has the potential to fundamentally change views beyond the narrative of the offline social context.

The internet has also given an opportunity for psychological learning through normalizing everyday psychological responses to life, the news, and most importantly by showing different perspectives and the similar psychological needs behind them. The drive towards more humane behaviour, an example for which is 'politically correct' culture, is based on the idea of an overall ethical approach towards people. In order for such a paradigm to function, there should be an established understanding of the need for careful treatment of sensitive topics. This notion can be effective only if people are aware of basic psychological concepts and ethical positions. For example, the notion that certain language or situations can be triggering to a person (or group of people) necessitates an understanding of the basic concept of trauma. I do not mean to imply professional understanding of the mechanism behind human psychological trauma, rather a rudimentary grasp of the idea of trauma. Many subjects that imply ethical considerations, depend first, on psychological considerations and second, on their legitimization within broad culture. The presence of a tendency towards more ethical behaviour is certainly a symptom of the development of psychological literacy, even if it is not the only reason for this tendency.

Another culturally significant development, that could potentially affect psychological literacy (as well as all other aspects of learning), is the acquisition of foreign language skills and the universality of the particular language. In a broader context, the English language has reached a level of relative universality (understood not as a native language, but rather as a lingua franca) and younger generations, who exist within the digital and online sphere from an early age, are exposed to a diverse array of English usage. Of course, English learning through internet is very hard to quantify, but undoubtedly, the language skills of internet users are positively impacted by overall digital usage. It is

a reasonable supposition that this impact is felt predominantly in younger people, who are both more digitally literate and have a higher learning potential. This development alongside the evolvement of machine-translating software, which is steadily becoming more reliable, and the opportunity for online community-reliant translation, present a completely new and highly accessible informational environment that greatly increases opportunity for learning.

Google Trends can be used to illustrate the importance of language skills, as well as the rise in psychological literacy by itself, by examining the popularity of search terms. This is, of course, merely an observation of trends in online behaviour, but while these trends might be subject to wide interpretation, the showcased results are the only consistent data of internet behaviour that can be reliably accessed and they fit the needs of basic cultural observations. Additionally, I base my selection of terms on the prevalence of anxiety and depression (taken as umbrella terms) – respectively 284 and 264 million people worldwide are suffering from these conditions by recent estimates (Dattani et al., 2021). At the same time, anxiety is markedly less understood than depression in a broad cultural sense. For example, in a study of older Peruvian adults, the researchers found that depression is more readily recognized by people than anxiety, both as a term, and as a rudimentary understanding of symptoms (Flores-Flores et al., 2020). Signs that point to this changing overtime can be found in the worldwide trends for the period between 01.01.2010 and 01.01.2020 – *depression* scores consistently between 50 and 80 points compared to *anxiety*, which climbs steadily upward from below 40 points in 2010 to above sixty in June 2016 (intersecting with *depression*), to above 80 points after 2018. The overall average for this period is 76 for *depression* and 61 for *anxiety*. For the last five years from April 2017 to April 2022 *anxiety* surpasses *depression*, with respective average scores of 77 and 71 points[4].

For bilingual context, the term *депресия* has an overall steady popularity (scoring between 50 and 70 points) in Bulgaria for the period of 1.01.2010 through 1.01.2020. For the same time period the term

[4] "Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means that there was not enough data for this term." – a note from Google Trends interface contextualising the points system.

depression has a marginal grow in popularity (consistently jumping above 25 points only after June 17 of 2016), but remains comparatively low to its Bulgarian translation. This could potentially be explained by two factors. Firstly, the term *депресия* has been a part of the active vocabulary of most Bulgarians for a long period of time, while its English counterpart has not – it follows that the statistics for Bulgaria will mostly show interest in the Bulgarian word. Secondly, the English equivalent is slowly gaining ground, because English literacy is increasing. It is unwise to suggest any meaningful developments beyond that through this data alone, but if we compare it with other words, we could propose a few theories. If we add another couple of English and Bulgarian words, namely *тревожност* and *anxiety* the results are far more telling. *Тревожност* scores very low compared to *депресия*, and also lower than the English *depression* in Bulgaria for the same time period with popularity slightly growing, but below 25 points. The interesting change comes with the English equivalent – *anxiety* starts surpassing the Bulgarian word around June 2012, and surpasses 25 points several times since May 2015, while incrementally gaining more traction.

The average popularity rating for a period of ten years from 01.01.2010 to 01.01.2020 and for a period of five years from roughly April 2017 to April 2022 is as follows:

	01.01.2010 – 01.01.2020	~01.04.2017 – 01.04.2022
депресия	63	24
depression	18	10
тревожност	11	6
anxiety	15	10

The two columns should not be compared to each other based on number of points, because the point distribution is relative to the highest popularity of the term for the period, and averages are also calculated with this in mind. The two periods do not use the same number to afford points, but rather are in relation to the highest scoring in popularity. For instance, the highest scoring for *депресия*, or in other words – the period that it scores 100 points (21, 9, 21 for *depression, тревожност* и *anxiety* respectively) is between 27.02 and 05.03 of 2022, perhaps in relation to the war in Ukraine. That is why the whole scale shifts in numerical representation relative to the spike in popularity and the

numbers are lower in the second examined period. What is of interest in this comparison is the relationship between the four categories within both periods. While overtime *тревожност* and *anxiety*, a comparably more recent additions to popular vocabulary than *депресия* and *depression* (internationally), are slowly gaining traction, the English words for both depression and anxiety are scoring higher than the Bulgarian word *тревожност*. Although there are many factors possibly contributing to this result, such as the more comprehensive information in English, as well as the increased number of people proficient in English, they also imply the reverse correlation – people are finding more information about newer terms and learning more through English language based online information. Because Bulgarian culture functions almost exclusively in Bulgarian outside of internet usage, another conclusion that could potentially be drawn from this data is that overall people learn of these terms and their meaning through the internet. The popularity of the English variant of words in Bulgarian online trends shows that the online environment itself is having a significant impact on popularizing mental health terminology.

Additionally, the fact that the English words have reached equal popularity is significant. The disparity within their popularity in Bulgarian shows that knowledge of depression far surpasses knowledge of anxiety within the wide Bulgarian culture, while Bulgarians who use English, have an equal interest in both topics, and consequently would have better understanding of the concept of anxiety than the general population. Of course, there are many contributing factors – such as the correlation between educational degree and English proficiency, but it is highly probable that these results point to the educational value of the wider internet, and its effects on psychological literacy.

A factor that should be considered when diagnosing shifts in culture, is how generational difference correlates to different aspects of culture. Yet, there is no objective way to measure generational involvement in internet culture, because there are too many variables that cannot be controlled for. On the other hand, and more importantly, stands the question – which facet of culture should be examined and in what way? A paper from 2018 examined the relationship between personality types

and internet usage, including both overall internet usage and different categories of internet usage across four generation cohorts. The results empirically proved the concept that internet usage and demographics, as well as internet usage and personality have a very complicated relationship – "findings suggest that overall Internet usage is a blunt and insensitive measure as a more nuanced pattern of relationships emerged when categories of Internet usage was employed as the outcome variable" (Roos & Kazemi, 2021). This study illuminates a far larger problem – our understanding of internet as an auxiliary tool to real life, that has concrete bounds, is not applicable when it comes to younger generations. To try and quantify or qualify internet usage is akin to trying to measure life and culture en masse. The ideas behind this study is that certain personality types are more likely to engage with certain aspects of internet culture – information gathering and work, leisure and entertainment and so on. Their findings support those suppositions, but neglect extrapolating on a pertinent detail – "Furthermore, it was shown that overall Internet usage was only related to personality factors among Baby Boomers and Dutifuls. There were no significant relationships between the personality factors and overall Internet usage among DotNets and GenXers[5]. Apparently, understanding the relationship between personality and Internet usage is not possible without considering the modifying roles of categories of Internet usage and generation cohort." (ibid.). Younger generations exist in an internet culture, for them the engagement with it is not optional, the only difference is the amount of attention they allot to a certain type of content (which is always determined by personality type, outside of work conditions, of course). It follows that the next generations will be even more involved with internet culture, because they are raised in it, they will learn, work, communicate, shop and spend their free time within it, they will consume and create its content. This process is already firmly underway and it results in people creating reality online – one as varied as the one offline. All manifestations of human behaviour that are inherent to offline existence will be translated online, as long as it is possible. The internet should not be understood as an alternative to reality, or even a parallel to it, rather as an

[5] The authors define the generational limits as follows: Dutifuls (1910–1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), GenXers (1965–1976) and DotNets (1977–1999).

extension of it. This might seem like an obvious fact, but it bears reiterating. While all manner of research into the specifics of internet and people's engagement with it will always be beneficial, it is equally useful to think of the internet from a more generalizing and broad perspective. Each of the different vectors of internet culture discussed in this text and their relationship to psychological literacy could be subject to research in their own right, but only in combining them, can we conceive of a direction of development. The growing psychological literacy might not be immediately visible or, indeed, quantifiable on a bigger scale, but its direction can be intuited from different manifestations of culture. The spread of ideas of scientific, philosophical or political variety inevitably change the structure of society and culture. To simplify a complicated process – akin to the spread of philosophical, political and scientific knowledge throughout the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and The Scientific Revolution (or even the whole of modernity as a phenomenon), the advancement of all sorts of ideas inevitably always infiltrates day to day life. Psychological literacy, in particular, will change people's understanding of their own psychological wellbeing and their psychological needs, as well as those of others. Of course, this process has been underway since the conception of psychology (and ethics before that), but the internet speeds up the dissemination of information exponentially and its ubiquitous presence forms a new and unique all-encompassing environment. Even if people do not go searching for this information, it will affect them, because they increasingly exist primarily within the information itself and its effects online and offline.

In order to arrive at any plausible theory, there are two main categories that should be observed logically, however broad they might sound – the people creating and using the culture currently, and the people that will do so in the near future. For the most part in developed and developing countries the median age is increasing because of low birth rates and better healthcare, meaning that more generations live at the same time. Especially within the context of contemporary culture, this reinforces a palpable rift within culture between those that had to contend with the emergence of new technology on one hand, and those who grew up parallel to its rise or after it. Moreover, the biggest percentage of population in those countries is in the working stage of life – between 25 and 64

years old (Ritchie & Roser, 2019)[6]. In this group, which is most active from a creative, social and economic standpoint and therefore will contribute most to overall culture, there are both people born before the rise of the digital age and ones born within and after it – these people inevitably have a differing relationship to technology and internet. Additionally the percentage of people worldwide using the internet has jumped from 0.049% in 1990 to 56.727% in 2019 according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database[7]. Estimates point out that "It was only in 2017 that half of the world population was online" (Roser et al., 2015) and around 27 000 new users joined every hour at that time. We are still in the midst of a globally changing informational background with huge disparity in digital and online literacy, and within developing and developed countries – generationally. These differences make for a largely fragmented online experience. However, this discrepancy is rapidly decreasing with time. The people who will create and use culture in the near future will represent a much more experientially uniform society from a digital standpoint than the one we are living in right now. This will globally change the informational background even more, levelling the field of accessibility and inevitably leading to a form of unprecedentedly shared culture in many aspects.

The importance of psychological literacy goes far beyond simple psychological concepts and the use of pop-psychology. Questions that were historically in the purview of classical philosophy, and specifically, ethics, are also questions of psychology, despite the severance between those fields. Moreover, recently, interdisciplinary approaches combining ethics and aesthetics with neuroscience and psychology have started the process of consolidating different venues of research into a cohesive effort for understanding issues of human identity, experience and their relation to reality. The fields of neuropsychology, neuroethics and neuroaesthetics are all connected, despite their different areas of

[6] The "working age" is generally defined between 15 and 64 years old, but the demographic charts consider 15 to 24 year olds to be a separate group. Considering the rise in educational levels in developed and developing countries, 25 to 64 covers working adults and excludes studying while working older adolescents and young adults. Older adolescent (15 to 19 years) and young adult (20 to 24 years) definitions were taken from statistics of the World Health Organization – https://www.who.int.

[7] Individuals Using the Internet (% of Population) | Data, n.d

study, and also owe their conception to philosophy, psychology and science in equal measure. In much the same way, the concept of psychological literacy is a concept of understanding (on least at a rudimentary level) the core questions that those fields explore. In a way, what we are accustomed to recognizing as psychology is not so much the field of psychology itself (or any other scientific or philosophical field), but the social and ethical implications of the things we understand about human behaviour as a whole. That is why specifically psychological literacy should be understood as one of the useful predictors of the direction of societal growth. On the other hand, in the age of the internet, we should pay attention to the processes that digital culture facilitates, because it has great transformative power. Perhaps its effects will not be universally felt for a long time, but we are indeed witnessing something far greater than technologies themselves, but which is, to a great extent, facilitated through them. It might seem like a hasty conclusion, but based on the ethical development of society in modernity and the new upheaval after the end of modernity, which brought on new values of equality and ethics, we could theorize that this direction of development will continue. If the suppositions that internet culture is positively influencing psychological literacy are true, coupled with the new values that seem to be on rise, then not only are we not headed towards dehumanization, but we are instead truly at the precipice of a new age of the humane.

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