

Antinomicity of the Good-Truth-Beauty Triad on the Internet

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Abstract: The presented article outlines vectors of transformation of basic values of Good-Truth-Beauty in the network. The epistemological, moral-ethical, and aesthetic aspects are offered, which allows revealing the forms of representation of initial values in the Internet culture. In particular, the planes of the intersection of the axes “good/evil”, “truth/lie”, and “beautiful/ugly” in social media are presented. The authors are concerned about the assertion of equivalence and blurring of the boundaries between good and evil, which can lead to permissiveness that is covered by anonymity, symbolism, and nominalisation provided by social networks. The article explores the articulation of the problem of evil in the Internet through the use of the heuristic potential of aesthetic experience. An analysis of modern aesthetic forms of the representation of evil in network culture through the prism of such basic values as Goodness-Truth-Beauty is carried out. It is shown how these values are deformed and sometimes turn into their opposite with the help of aesthetic means. It is shown that modern propaganda, which is carried out in social networks, actively uses existential features of perception and experience of truth. In the course of the study, the opinion is substantiated that reflexive judgment allows to attract aesthetic means to the moral understanding of manifestations of evil in the absence of stable standards and moral guidelines in social networks.

Keywords: *good; evil; truth; lie; beautiful; social media; social network.*

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Introduction

Today, the Internet space appears to be a unique platform for creating a completely new reality, in which the basic concepts and characteristics of real life are transformed beyond recognition. Moreover, the spread of social media in this space is beginning to form new standards and trends, which are a model and criterion of modern human life. As Jean Baudrillard aptly noted in his time, today it is not reality that rules, but virtuality (Baudrillard 1994), since total virtualisation has filled almost everything, even the metaphysical foundations of our being. The substitution has also affected the axiological discourse, namely the original values of Truth-Good-Beauty, which even in the time of Socrates acted as the highest and most reliable guidelines for human existence. It is through the original aspects of this triad (epistemological, moral-ethical, and aesthetic) that we will try to trace their deformation and transformation on the web and discover when good, separated from beauty, turns into a powerless impulse of uncertain feeling, truth without good – into an idle talk (play of empty words), and beauty without good and truth becomes an ephemeral idol.

Good

Speaking of good, we proceed from its interpretation as “a category of ethics, which fixes the fact that a person can make a choice and direct his actions towards a positive life affirmation; something that contributes to human self-improvement; something that is endowed with existential self-sufficiency” (Petrushenko, 2009:51-52). Evil, in return, ‘presupposes negation, wrecking, destruction of existing forms of existence’ (Petrushenko, 2009, 70), “hinders the realisation of the potentials of existence through the destruction of conditions and means of survival, physical and spiritual development of man” (FED 2002: 227).

Particular attention is focused on moral evil in its primary forms of depravity and hostility. Hostility is manifested in cruelty and aggression to the world around, and depravity – in the fall of man under the influence of circumstances and suggestions. Plato wrote that there are relatively few ways to do good, yet countless ways to do evil (Cherniss, 1954: 23-30). Moreover, ‘evil has got distinctly worse over the millennia’ (Ayto, 2005: 557). From now on, thanks to social media, it gets more and more opportunities for its modification.

The first step in spreading evil is to turn it into an attractive “good”. This was also said by Schopenhauer, who brought the aesthetic aspect to the

fore in the question of the attributes of evil. Philip Zimbardo suggested, in 2007, that people may act in evil ways as a result of collective identity (Zimbardo, 2017). If we combine these two points, we get the aestheticisation of evil, which is observed today in social networks that seek to avoid any moralising, thereby blurring the line between good and evil, where collective identity is based on bringing people together in interest groups, where communication and conflict are based rather on emotions, than rational arguments.

The origins of this issue should be sought not only in social networks. Present-day culture is permeated with a tendency to aestheticise evil, and such frequent curtsies to ethical relativism, as, for instance, “every culture has values of its own”, make room for it in every possible way and form an uncertain status in the minds of modern man – the very definition of what is evil (apart from socially recurring terrorism, diseases, etc.) is a certain difficulty. The latter is because moral values become relative, ‘fluid’ in nature, transforming under the pressure of increasingly rigid and active historical factors. The dominant categories of morality are not goodness and responsibility, but choice and pleasure, even if it is pleasure in choosing certain moral codes. This tendency has resulted in what P. Sorokin calls sensitive culture. The disappearance of moral values of a general nature dominating has led to the emergence of sectoral and even individual moral precepts, which makes us conclude that general morality as a special social institution is dying out.

Turning to the trends prevalent in modern society, one can note that communication has supplanted the act, presentation – real life, in which the sphere of services rather than the sphere of labour has begun to declare itself as a privileged area. The aesthetic factor dominates in the presentation, as modern man increasingly chooses in favour of the “aesthetic ethos” rather than the ethical one. The aesthetic aspect is determined by admiration (infatuation) or pleasure, which is one’s internal attitude. As a result, moral norms are being replaced by aesthetic norms that begin to play a decisive role in the field of communications, services and presentations.

On the Internet, the spread of evil occurs through two main tools: 1) demonstrating evil as something complex, deep, multifaceted, which requires detailed “immersion” and careful study; 2) opposing it to another evil, which is presented as something even worse and more unreasonable and primitive. According to the first method, evil forces us to sympathise with it and admire it. It “wraps” itself in a luxurious intellectual wrapper, making us forget that no matter how good evil is, it is still evil. Therefore, in this case, evil can be described as something beautiful, perfect or exquisite. This

“dark” appeal of evil on social media is often portrayed through social success, beauty, intelligence, and irony, which become the objects of envy and admiration. The second way gives rise to anti-heroism. The “heroes” of social networks look amazingly attractive winning our approval and respect. Sometimes it takes on absurd features: the demonstration of one’s cruelty and strength, even through violence, becomes a new social networks trend.

Ever since ancient times, it has been widely believed that good is beautiful and evil is ugly (Antisphen). As we can see, this idea is significantly transformed nowadays. It is easier to present evil as good by making it attractive. What makes evil attractive? First of all, absolute permissiveness. Evil abolishes morality, commandments, duties, self-restraint and self-discipline. It allows a person everything that is forbidden to him in real life. An individual gets a deceptive sense of freedom that leads him to death. Evil in a beautiful wrapper, artistic images of evil, created by talented people, can evoke aesthetic feelings. And the farther a person moves away from good, the more evil seems beautiful to him.

Etymologically, evil is defined as something that goes beyond the proper measure, something that exceeds its limits, indicates a violation of norms, i.e. has to do with excess, going beyond, and unregulated activity. Hence, evil is associated with disruption, chaos and disorder, and the latter has its roots in the unjustified aspirations and hopes of man. One can imagine evil as the result of the accumulation of oppressed and repressed desires, reflecting the so-called dark side of man. Observing the manifestations of vices, negativity, deviations on the Internet, people see their dark side. Social networks become the window through which we see ourselves – not only virtuous, moral, but other kinds of us as well, whose existence we do not admit. The personified evil in the network is the subject of transference. The images we see on the Internet become for us our ideal “I”, the figures of our imaginary identification.

Today, in social networks, evil takes the form of outrage, creativity, extravagance and eccentricity. Therefore, modernity aims to extract beauty from evil. The aesthetic image of evil appears to have commercial value. Trends in present-day culture and ethics of the postmodern era prove that Evil has become one of the most popular and economically successful brands. The interview of the scandalous Russian journalist Ksenia Sobchak *‘Skopin Maniac: Conversation after Prison’* has recently caused quite a stir on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDFCtXuRt00>). The maniac from Skopin (Viktor Mokhov) was serving a sentence for having held and abused two underage girls for more than three years. The aestheticisation and embellishment used in the film were what outraged the

audience. Dialogues on ethics were also shocking to many viewers. Moreover, the maniac was presented in the interview as an ordinary “decent” man who just “stumbled”. ‘Who doesn’t happen to?’, as Mokhov himself remarks calmly and coolly. Hot debates on social media revolved around whether it was ethical to tell the story of the “hero” in this format and even pay him a considerable fee for it. Discussions have not ceased up till now. In just a day, the video received more than 2 million views and 86 thousand reactions – 54 thousand “likes” and 32 thousand “dislikes”. And Sobchak herself boasted to her fans that the number of her followers on Instagram reached 2 million. Any celebrity would envy this. Isn’t that a paradox? Evil is condemned, yet it is still well “sold”.

An important component of the representation of evil in the network is a symbolic form as a set of spontaneous and controlled operations that are carried out with the help and means of aesthetic forms (images, music, symbols). The symbolisation is related to the phenomenon of the collective unconscious, the content of which is a set of archetypes that embody evil. On social media, these archetypes are embodied in the images of a “hero” (anti-hero who inspires admiration and the desire to imitate him). An important element of the aestheticisation of evil is its nominalisation. For this purpose, a specific language is selected, which consists of metaphorical forms, filled with meaning and fixed in certain images and symbols.

The aim of aestheticising evil in social networks is to change the values and behaviour of a person by influencing his or her emotions. Imitating the behaviour of fashion bloggers and other “heroes” of social networks, people seek to perform similar feats to gain their share of dubious fame, where a person’s success is expressed by the number of followers on Instagram.

Since social networks usually have a dual, rational-irrational nature, a person in the process of adapting to the conditions of Internet reality must have in his or her tools both the means of rational reflection and the ability to interpret the irrational components of this reality. The behaviour of social media users is determined consequently by their understanding of the meaning of their behaviour, the values that a person considers to be priorities. Moreover, the assessment process takes place within the existing binary oppositions arising from the opposition of good and evil.

The formation of values and the corresponding process of evaluation during the aestheticisation of evil takes the form of axiological judgment. Such a judgment is not only formed in rational space, but becomes a consequence of the action of certain aesthetic and psychological

laws of sensory perception, it becomes the result of what is more likely to be felt thus what can be transmitted, produced, and corrected by aesthetic means.

In this context, the author of *A Philosophy of Evil* Lars Svendsen notes: 'Now it [evil] is not only a serious problem but has neither much nor little – attractiveness' (Svendsen, 2010:7). Svendsen attributes this "attractiveness" of evil to the fact that evil becomes 'an object of aesthetics rather than morality. Evil has turned into something else and, as a result, acts as the opposite of boring routine' (Svendsen, 2010: 7). The usual propensity for evil based on selfishness can easily take extreme forms of expression in an appropriate social context. The source of such transformations is not only the substitution of maxims but also self-deception, i.e., the issuance of immoral maxims as moral ones by maintaining the appropriate social reality. Hence, in the 21st century, evil has its source not only in selfishness but also in self-deception based on social media.

The development of information technology not only influences human behaviour but also creates new forms of expression of evil, seemingly without human participation. In 2001, philosophers Luciano Floridi and Jeff Sanders introduced the term into terminology to denote the actions of autonomous inhuman actors. 'As a result of developments in autonomous agents in cyberspace, a new class of interesting and important examples of hybrid evil has come to light. ...it is called *artificial evil*' (Floridi & Sanders, 2001: 58). The philosophers argued that it is not necessary to be human to be evil or to be the victim of the evil actions of others. Also, artificial evil, according to them, can spread and be understood using mathematical models.

Truth

The next component of the value triad is Truth that is undergoing a significant transformation in the network space. This transformation is embodied nowadays in the phenomenon of "post-truth", which the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) refers to as the word for the year 2016 and one of the defining words of our time. The dictionary publisher defined post-truth as an adjective 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (OED, 2021: 234). Oxford Dictionaries said it recorded a spike in the use of *post-truth* in the year 2016 in the context of the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States; the adjective became associated overwhelmingly with a particular noun, in the phrase *post-truth politics*. It is not surprising that

modernity is called the era of post-truth, fake news and alternative facts. The onset of this era is primarily associated with technological advances and the power of social networks, in which the boundaries between fact and opinion, experts and ignoramuses, truth and fiction are blurred. The latter has a strongly pronounced philosophical basis, the ancestor of which is Nietzsche. It was with him that the long process of undermining the very value of truth began, along with the logical question that every person asks themselves: why should truth be preferred to lie?

Post-truth is a mask of a lie – its politically correct version (Arendt, 1968: 234). And lie has always been a form of violence, sometimes much more dangerous than physical pressure. The result of its systematic application is a special cynicism, a rejection of the categories of “truth – lie”, which leads to the loss of sense of reality. In the article, we will refer to the concept of truth in its generally accepted understanding of the Aristotelian correspondence theory as a correspondence between the content of judgments and reality. This statement is completely distorted on the Internet, which claims: ‘Truth is what I tell’. In today’s world of accelerated information consumption, new technologies for constructing and disseminating the post-truth have been created, and they have some similarities with the mechanisms of propaganda and manipulation. We will analyse some of them, which can also be considered moments of the aestheticisation of evil through the refraction of the highest values – truth/lies.

Nowadays, social networks, as a source of news, have long overtaken television, newspapers and media in popularity. The flow of contradictory information on social media is continuous, so a person is simply unable “to digest” it and reflect on it. ‘The impressions are too strong, vivid and at the same time always directed against spiritual balance’ (Berg, 2011: 42). But social networks do not even count on a rational analysis of information, on the contrary, they rely on irrational factors, due to which they gain such popularity. And the essence of any populism is “romantic primitivism”, which has a certain shade of anti-intellectualism, due to which a person loses the ability to create his or her clear position and is exposed to the mood of the masses. This is what social networks rely on, the main task of which is not to encourage people to think and analyse, but to entertain them, forcing them to forget about the routine of everyday life.

Such simplicity of perception, primitivisation, naivety, supplemented by visualisation, a person gets from the net. The entertainment policy of social media focuses on a simplified and schematic presentation of complex topics, combined with humorous notes, featuring bright headlines that

attract most of the modern audience. Social media serve our spare time, which brings it closer to the entertainment industry. Even Benno Hübner (Hübner, 1996) once cautiously began to talk about the human's loss of senses, about ennui as a burden of consumer culture and unbearable boredom. Alain Brossat and Jean-Louis Déotte complement this disappointing picture of modernity with another characteristic – “the era of disappearance” (*l'époque de la disparition*), in which the ability to feel is at stake (Brossat & Déotte, 2000).

It takes less than a second for a person to know if they are interested in the news or not. Fake news is deliberately made to evoke strong emotions in us, such as anger, fear, trust, bewilderment, sadness, joy, disgust. Thanks to this, we take the news personally and share them faster. Through the use of emotions, even a “negative character” can be made a philanthropist and a saviour, and vice versa. That's why social media easily pass off lies as truth, and we willingly believe them. In addition, social media are aesthetically organised, they do not have a predetermined reality, it is confirmed and constructed by acts of its media-mediated perception. To describe this situation, Boris Groys speaks of the commercialisation of taste in the semiotic economy (Groys, 2015).

Today, a well-packaged and skillfully presented half-truth, and sometimes outright lie will have great success with the audience, which will provide them with the highest sales. A striking example of this is Oprah Winfrey's scandalous interview with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in early March 2021 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2lFvFhWE2Y&ab_channel=SkillShareOliver). Journalists found at least 17 “inaccuracies” in it, but such an obvious “lie” did not prevent Prince Harry and his wife from earning, according to various sources, 6 to 9 million dollars – which perfectly confirms the fact that untruth, decorated and presented in an aesthetically attractive way, and fuelled a bit by scandalous notes, is sold very well. Social media are thus becoming one of the most important sectors of the economy, turning into a key resource of modern society. Today we are in the era of popularisation when commercial success decides the price of the issue. Therefore, we agree to rewrite the past, distort facts, and conceal information. All for the sake of dubious success and popularity on the Internet.

The spread of post-truth on the Internet is facilitated by the fact that it allows every user of social networks to become a journalist (blogger), but without strict control by the “editor in chief”, who would evaluate the information in terms of its veracity. Therefore, from now on, man gets an excellent opportunity to become “the measure of all things” himself, as

Protagoras wanted. New technologies offer a great idea: each of us has the same right to express ourselves. At first glance, this is the best idea in the world, the idea of democratisation of truth, but it also has its flip side, the unpleasant one: every voice, every suggestion, every spoken word has the same weight and value under the auspices of truth. And the point is not just that I have the right to express my thoughts, but what I have said has an absolute right to claim the status of the only truth.

Today, the so-called *agonal rhetoric* plays an important role on the Internet, denoting conflict-generating communication in which there is psychological confrontation, where the right to speak becomes the right to power, the interlocutor is objectified and influenced by a “strong” speaker. The latter considers himself “the ultimate truth”: this, in his opinion, gives him the right to dismiss the opinions of others. In the same direction, another communicative trend is developing – the habit of exchanging negative information. Conversations on the topic “how bad everything is”, the retelling of horrors, plots of accidents, life dramas and sensations are becoming paradoxical “entertainment” of visitors to social networks.

These two dimensions – collective and personal – form the common meaning of truth. Its criterion, in contrast to the propositional truth, is the experience of authenticity or inauthenticity of one’s existence. This is the key point of online propaganda that distorts the truth by creating a collective idea of a lie regarding the real state of affairs.

Scott Lash, a professor of sociology and cultural studies, in his *Critique of Information* points to ‘the irrational side of information society which is reflected in information overloads, misinformation, disinformation, and out of control information’ (Lash, 2002: 141). The researcher explains, ‘...the contradiction is that as the information leads ever more to a *smartening up*, it at the same time brings with it a certain inevitable *dumbing down*...Unlike narrative, information compresses beginning, middle and end into a present immediacy of a *now-here*. Unlike discourse, the information does not need legitimating arguments. Does not take the form of proportional utterances, but works with an immediate communicational violence’ (Lash, 2002: 145). All these factors together lead to the emergence of a large amount of information, but at the same time cause a lack of practically relevant information – such a piece of knowledge about the world that can be useful to a particular person to guide and direct their lives. Lash refers to this loss of knowledge as a crisis of representation. Referring to the terminology and theory of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, he writes that a person fundamentally seeks to create his or her own space for orientation in the world. This is not only about physical, but also symbolic

space. Not only mimesis and representation of natural space are important for a person, but also “poetics of space”, i.e. setting up one’s personal space of values, and eventually the formation of collective knowledge and collective memory (Lash, 2002: 114-128).

In fact, we are talking about a worldview narrative that can change, but at the same time must be holistic and sustainable enough to preserve and determine a person’s self-positioning in the world, to help them navigate. The problem of the information society is that the bulk of information in it ceases to perform this function of representing or explaining the world. The information is objectified, it becomes similar to the things of daily household use we live among. Information seems to formulate a parallel world of facts, and ‘what used to be an image or a narrative now takes the form of objects’ (Lash, 2002: 128).

Thus, the information space, which previously served as a discussion for the search and exchange of truths and, ultimately, the definition of landmarks in the world, today has turned from a space of comprehension into a space of quick exchange of “facts”. That is why we can talk about the loss of knowledge, or at least about the increasing displacement of knowledge by information. Harvard professor and military expert Tom Nichols develops this topic in a modern context. At the same time, Nichols delves not only into social processes but also into their personal dimension, critically analysing the behaviour of a particular person in a situation of overload with disparate facts. In *The Death of Expertise* Nichols criticises the man of the information society for cultivating “narcissism combined with disdain to professionalism” (Nichols, 2017: 22).

Internet culture, according to Nichols, creates the illusion of access to all knowledge but does not teach a person to distinguish truth from lie and formulate a convincing worldview for themselves and the community. The illusion of intellectual omnipotence is created along with the fact that there is no active personal involvement in the formation of knowledge: ‘Never have so many people had access to so much knowledge, and yet been so resistant to learning anything’ (Nichols 2017: 10). Resistance to cognition is based on a culture of narcissism and egocentrism, which makes a person incapable of recognising the presence of truth beside and above themselves, in the thoughts of other people, and ultimately in the still unknown world of nature. Without such guidance, one should not hope for constructive discussion. The culture of narcissism, in turn, is rooted in the irrational belief that ‘we are all equally competent’ (Nichols 2017: 21). Freedom of speech, which presupposes competition of thoughts and theories, among which the one closest to the truth wins, has suddenly been transformed into the idea

that each opinion is equal to the other. ‘We are supposed to “agree to disagree”, a phrase now used indiscriminately as little more than a conversational fire extinguisher’ (Nichols 2017: 12).

Under such conditions, it is not the search for truth that is valuable anymore but the thought itself, not being involved in the matter of general cognition but the most vivid manifestation of one’s ego. Therefore, instead of going beyond one’s ego to a community of other people, the defence of only one’s ego and the hostile rejection of the “false truths” of other thinkers are cultivated. According to Nichols, ‘To reject the advice of experts is to assert autonomy, a way for Americans to insulate their increasingly fragile egos from ever being told they’re wrong about anything. It is a new Declaration of Independence: no longer do we hold these truths to be self-evident, we hold all truths to be self-evident, even the ones that aren’t true’ (Nichols 2017: 12).

In the information society, distrust of the truth leads to the loss of oneself and a sense of aimlessness. Under such circumstances, the culture of observation or reality culture develops to fill the inner emptiness and boredom that arise from frustration. Being able to follow others is the highest value and at the same time brings the greatest satisfaction to the network user. In this case, the star for observation is not a person having some bright personal characteristics, but on the contrary, ordinary people, usually, members of fairly stereotyped groups with whom society can easily associate itself. Simplifying, cropping, beautifying the picture and the plot, reality television and social networks make a set of bright moments out of ordinary lives and thereby encourage and cheer up all observers. It is much easier to actualise oneself online than in real life. Today’s teenagers no longer dream of being doctors or teachers, as they did fifty years ago. Their dream is to become YouTube stars.

Aesthetic (Beauty without Beauty)

The concepts of truth and good are incomplete without beauty, which in turn manifests itself where the mind has approached the truth, and freedom is directed towards good, because ‘truth and good are united by family ties only in beauty’ (Hegel, 2010: 501). The concept of beauty combines the positive characteristics of man that belong to the aesthetic, moral, intellectual, social and other spheres of his life. Therefore, it is beauty that completes the triad of higher universal values and is characterised by the syncretism of its nature, which is the inseparable unity of conceptual, value-based and figurative components.

Beauty, however, is the most controversial component of this triad of higher values. External beauty (fair face) and attractiveness can contradict a person's morality (fair soul): 'A fair face without a fair soul is like a glass eye that shines and sees nothing' (John Stuart Blackie). Ethics often associate human beauty with temptation that leads a person astray from the path of truth and goodness. Nowadays, the absolute value of beauty is increasingly being questioned when it is assumed that beauty may not be perfect, may not be beautiful. Peter Weibel explains this by the end of the era of beauty, and that beauty itself is a historical concept (Weibel, 2011: 36). Beauty is actualised in the discourse following the aesthetic norms of an era and therefore undergoes historical variation with the development of the socio-cultural system. The current axiological crisis and the devaluation of cultural tradition stimulate an urgent rethinking of the content of beauty, the degree and tendencies of its historical transformations.

Beauty, not without the help of Internet resources, is undergoing a significant axiological transformation today: its value is mainly utilitarian and material. Beauty is transferred from the inner to the outer. In this way, modern Internet networks postulate the nonesuch of a beautiful human face and a beautiful (physically perfect) body. Artists used to admire the beauty of the body, but today it is already a subject of the fashion and design industry (Weibel, 2011: 20). This is how beauty indeed turns into kitsch and decor in the contemporary world of the Internet. Every day, the Internet forces us to reconsider the ideals and standards of beauty until they are eliminated and broken at all.

The newly formed emptiness is filled with artificial beauty. Women's magazines with photos of overly skinny models, moreover, processed in Photoshop, have long been recognised as a source of low self-esteem in young women. But now some groups of activists have also become concerned about social networks. Special filters, as well as lighting and shooting angle, make it possible to create unrealistic photos in them.

Social networks break down the classic standards of beauty and sometimes advocate their absolute absence resulting in our receiving contradictory messages along with the promotion of artificial beauty. Beauty is widely believed not to be necessarily an innate human property; it can be acquired in the process of purposeful action. Perfect bodies and faces, actively shown on social media, are largely based on the latest advances in technology. In addition, in modern discourse, the correlative sphere of beauty metaphors is supplemented by frames of health, glamour and sex, projected into the slogans of social media: beauty is health, beauty is glamour, beauty is sexuality. Objects of mass, low-standard culture

emphasised by the corresponding metaphorical images-symbols – “*model*” (“*supermodel*”, “*top model*”) and “*sex*” (“*sex symbol*”, “*sex appeal*”, “*metrosexual*”) – become the ideal of such external “beauty”.

Today social networks make us look like “30” in “50”, and “40 is the new 20” becomes the new slogan. The pages are full of demonstration of impressive results of “youth” and “beauty” to a grateful audience. However, these efforts look at times absurd, comical and sometimes even sad. As for the incredible transformations of present-day women (and even men), there is a joke that they have one plastic surgeon for all, because all these “young and beautiful” people are similar to each other like clones or twins. The same rubbery faces, the same snow-white smiles, the same trained bodies, like those of athletes.

Therefore, a logical question arises: who needs it – and what for? The answer is obvious: a person in real life often lacks catharsis that occurs through the contemplation of beauty. Dissatisfied with their appearance, people seek to reshape their selves but do not dare to do so. The Instagram stars who improve their appearance so vigorously, up to anorexia or, on the contrary, “body positive”, attract our attention, fascinate and capture us and encourage us to imitate. People who lose their own identity often resort to pretending or imitating. And what is the best model for the imitation if not “stars” of Internet networks? Beautiful, rich, and, therefore, happy. We are not able to understand that ‘the lack of reality is compensated by the symbolic forms of appropriation and consumption’ (Groys, 2003: 15). Thus, we can talk about a common cultural trend that includes the mutual influences of aesthetics and everyday conditions against the background of broad consumption, when ‘aesthetics of social production can be recoded into aesthetics of individual pleasure’ (Groys, 2003: 16).

There are, consequently, social networks acting as the creator-interpreter of life, and on the other hand, we have the everyday person – the “everyman” and consumer. When Wolfgang Iser talks about the approach of beauty to kitsch, he means exactly its “embellishment” and “styling” (Iser, 1977: 2) as essential elements of present-day aestheticisation that cannot give an unambiguous answer to the question of who formulates the needs – the consumer or industry. Iser identifies two sides of the aestheticisation taking place in the modern world (Iser, 1977: 2). On the one hand, we are dealing with “superficial” aestheticisation, expressed in the desire to embellish and design the living space, to a comprehensive aesthetic “processing” of reality. On the other hand, experiences, feelings of pleasure, attraction towards hedonism, which is becoming a new cultural matrix, are taken into account. This version of

aestheticisation is based on the desire for beautiful forms, it appeals to the sense of beauty, setting the standards of mass society.

Slavoj Žižek interprets the “hyperrealist” nature of modern social networks as the saturation of the emptiness “keeping open space for symbolic invention”, removing the minimum distance between reality and the object that is the cause of its structuring desire. As a result, reality itself is “derealised” and experienced in the form of an “aestheticised performance” (Žižek, 2005: 70), in which nothing is true – never and nowhere. The human body, in its pursuit of perfection, began to be modified through implants and artificial body parts (prostheses). The work on body modification is carried out within the framework of the developed special life extension programs. However, information and communication technologies both expand the body’s capabilities and impose certain restrictions on its improvement. Žižek notes that in the conditions of the information revolution, the body moves less and less (Žižek, 2013: 89).

For example, a computer mouse becomes a sort of prosthesis – a computer begins to perform certain operations for a person who is less and less reliant on his or her own body. A person hyperactivates their own body, sometimes creating a virtual image of it on the Internet. A defining feature of the virtual presence is its secrecy, manifested in the demonstration of all kinds of avatars, faces that mask the true essence of a person. A perfect image consists of partial elements, which, thanks to the ability to create a virtual image of a body on the Internet and take over other bodies, get erased, forming a perfect integral body.

The improvement applies not only to the body but also to one’s biography, which combines real and fictional facts. The subject is, therefore, in one or several possible worlds, implementing the precept of plurality of “Ego” and bodies in cyberspace. Thanks to the implementation of these facts in virtual space, the effect of reality is created, and a tendency to manipulate “life stories” can be observed. In such a way, the virtual corporeality complements the virtual picture of human existence, according to which it is possible to change the sex, age, status and roles of a person in computer networks.

Conclusions

Thus, the phenomena of moral, aesthetic and epistemological, which acted as a universal principle of the creation of the world, fixing the close connection of being with Truth, Good and Beauty, made it possible to think of the world as rational, orderly and beautiful. Today, a person loses a general perspective on the vision of life, they have to immerse themselves in

the tactical development of individual situations. The word *challenge* has become popular in many languages. It also points to the general mode of existence as suffering from challenges. Values acquire the ability to adapt rather than set goals. Therefore, identity in itself becomes unnecessary: the smaller it is, the better our adaptive capabilities. Universal truths become unnecessary since one has to live from event to event. Values are considered fiction because they oblige to something more than local interactions.

If we replace “inspiration” with “pleasure” or “entertainment”, we get the formula of social networks. It is this manipulation of concepts that seems to become the cornerstone of today’s Internet space. The design of a “beautiful life” becomes more beautiful than life itself. Therefore, the charming and attractive, produced on an excessive scale by social media today, only masks the true problems of a person. The main thing nowadays is to “pretend”, not to be. Beauty is primarily the relationship between content and form, their balance. Today we get something quite the opposite: good, separated from beauty, turns into a powerless impulse of uncertain feeling, truth without good – into an idle talk (play of empty words), and beauty without good and truth becomes an ephemeral idol.

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