

The Twitter Revolution: how the internet has changed us

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“Discussion of the subject of relating is a much easier exercise for analysts than is the discussion of usage, since relating may be examined as a phenomenon of the subject, and psychoanalysis always likes to be able to eliminate all factors that are environmental, except in so far as the environment can be thought of in terms of projective mechanisms. But in examining usage there is no escape: the analyst must take into account the nature of the object, not as a projection, but as a thing in itself.” (Winnicott 1969)

Preface

This chapter explores what psychoanalytic thinking can add to our current understanding of the ubiquitous ‘Twitter’ phenomenon, and considers how it might be changing our object relations and our societal relatedness. The chapter examines several interconnected aspects of the information revolution, including the Internet’s impact on individuals, markets, and society. It ends by considering how the “Twitter Revolution” might be changing the relationship between the individual and the realm of political.

Introduction

The Twitter Revolution reflects a change in our online experience. This chapter considers the impact of this online experience on our relationship to an increasingly dynamic environment, and how this impact may be changing us, whether as individual, enterprise or psychotherapist. I am an engineer who came late to psychoanalysis. I have spent most of my life working in enterprises that face structural challenges to their competitive identity. As consultant I worked on these questions of strategy arising from these structural challenges, which always involved questioning the basis of the relationship between the enterprise and the way it understood its environment.

The quote above from Winnicott identifies the difficulty those with an analytic background have when consulting to enterprises competing in these dynamic environments. This difficulty arises because of the need to work with the relationship between objects both as part of the environment and also as psychic phenomena (Winnicott 1969). In effect, psychotherapists are comfortable working with across the psychic boundary between conscious ('surface') and unconscious phenomena ('below the surface'). But their way of thinking has difficulty working across the boundary created by the way their clients define the environment itself. This difficulty is not unique to psychotherapists. Enterprises also have difficulty including the dynamic impact of changes in the way their environment is organized.

The chapter starts by considering the impact of the Twitter Revolution in terms of our current online experience. It then draws parallels with Gutenberg's Printing Revolution spanning the 15th and 16th centuries, to consider how the current Twitter Revolution might be affecting us. It explores how a return to Freud can help us understand what is happening, particularly with respect to the three forms of identification he described in group behavior (Freud 1921c). These distinguished between a direct emotional tie to another (for example falling in love), the taking up of a way of being (for example emulating an admired approach to life), and the taking up of some aspect of another's relationship to themselves (for example by following a fashion). In these terms, the online experience is seen as changing the balance between these three aspects of who we take ourselves to be. The chapter concludes by drawing out some of the implications of this change for the nature of work and for politics.

The Twitter Revolution: something more than an information revolution

The Twitter revolution is not just another way of accessing information that could ultimately be found in books. It is a revolution in the way we interact with each other. Reading a book is something individuals do alone. But despite appearances, and unlike reading a book, the online experience is an interactive experience in which it is not possible to be wholly private. Twittering takes this interactivity to an extreme. A Twitter is a 140 character text message broadcast by an individual to the world. It goes to the person's social network, but also to whomever else might be interested. It is a sentence or a headline that captures something of the moment for the individual sending it, and it invites interaction. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there are 50 million of these being sent each day (Twitter blog 2010).

Looking more widely at the online experience, there are more than 24 million internet searches per day (The Nielsen Company 2010), more than 60 million twitterers in the USA (Quantcast 2010), and more than 500 million Facebook users worldwide (Facebook 2010). The majority of online users connect daily, with the use of the technology much higher in the rapid growth markets of emerging economies than in the mature economies. Mobile online users accelerate this use in all of these markets, with blogging and the use of social networks increasing the most in the rapid growth markets (Digital Life 2010). In the midst of all this, online use by children shows the extent of the move away from reading books. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that children in the US between the ages of 8 and 18 were using their phones, computers, TVs and video-game systems for more than 50 hours each week (Barovick, Fitzpatrick et al. 2010). Reading, something done without interacting with others, was the only thing they were doing less.

With all this interaction comes a tension between personal privacy and the individual's wish to be found by others, apparent in the recent concerns over the way the Facebook platform used personal data (The Economist 2010). But the continuing growth in online use suggests that managing this tension between privacy and the wish to be found by others cannot be without benefits. From the perspective of businesses, a recent McKinsey report on the networked enterprise found that highly networked organizations were 50% more likely to have both market share gains and higher profit margins against their less networked competitors (Bughin and Chui 2010). The growth in online use by individuals suggests that something similar is happening for them too. Taken overall this explosion in online social connectivity indicates that something more than an information revolution is taking place (Drucker 1999).

A social network is something more than the network itself

The explosion in online connectivity cannot be explained by the direct use of the links themselves, even though these are of course valuable. Thus whether or not we approve of the particular form the online experience takes, the overall scale and scope of its impact is unprecedented. If we consider its effects on commerce, we see it leading to changes both in the economics of the enterprise, for example through the uses of mass collaboration (Tapscott and Williams 2006), and in the structure of industries themselves, for example in the way they reflect changes in the way we use print, music and pictures (Tapscott and Williams 2010). And the social networks emerging from this online connectivity are of course valuable to businesses wishing to target potential customers. The value of such targeted advertising forms the very foundations of Google's success (Levy 2009).

It may be the intention of the Google, Facebook or Twitter platforms to support the emergence of social networks, but the networks that do emerge form not just around people, but around specific issues too. Examples of specific issues giving rise to networks include the blog in China commenting on a Japan-China incident involving a fishing boat (Link 2010), the role of Twitter in the Iranian protests following their elections (Grossman 2009), or twitters in Thailand following the protests in Bangkok (Sambandaraksa 2010). The issues may not even be real, as in the networks forming around multiplayer online role-playing games such as the World of Warcraft (Wikipedia 2010a), or around virtual worlds such as Second Life (Wikipedia 2010c).

These social networks exist at all scales of social activity. Within the context of the single enterprise, such networks have been studied before in the guise of 'sentient' groups (Miller and Rice 1967). A sentient group is a group with which human beings identify that is distinct from task groups, and in which what is being shared is a particular way of sensing and responding to the world. The health of an enterprise depends on understanding how sentient groups and task systems interact. At local civic and national scales, Theodore Roosevelt identified 'fellow-feeling' between citizens as an equally important factor in producing a healthy political and social life, even though the technologies then available for their realization as social networks took a very different form (Roosevelt 1900). More recently, this fellow-feeling was mobilized successfully by Barack Obama in the US presidential election (Wagner 2008). Currently the tea party movement in the US (Montopoli 2010) is a social network that embodies such fellow-feeling far more than representing a coherent policy response to the current challenges facing US society (Ungar 2010). As such, it is nevertheless credited with mobilizing the landslide movement against the Democrats in the US mid-term elections (Thompson 2010).

Social networks may not always emerge for reasons that everyone would approve of, or even that other individuals would approve of, as in the cases where partners track the interests of their spouses (Leake 2010). For example, the Google chiefs found themselves in court for not being fast enough in suppressing a YouTube video of bullying (Pisa 2010), while the Chinese censors suppressed details of unrest in Xinjiang inconsistent with Chinese sensibilities for social harmony (The Telegraph 2009). WikiLeaks recently provided us controversially with insights into the conduct of the war in Afghanistan (O'Loughlin, Witmer et al. 2010). And the responses to their more recent release of documents on the conduct of US foreign relations have spawned yet further networks, including 'hactivists' intent on taking action against those who disapproved (Watkins and Bradshaw 2010), provoking yet further responses from Facebook and Twitter (Bradshaw 2010).

Whatever the reason for their emergence, however, these social networks create *affective networks* based on fellow feelings glimpsed along a kaleidoscope of different dimensions. These networks are based on some shared feeling, but they also provide something more than a feeling, enabling the person to celebrate something of themselves in the networking process (Dean 2010): this something reflected by the network is something of the individual's experience of themselves. See also the chapter on The Psychodynamics of Fashion by Anna Konig in this volume.

We are all potential markets now

This focus on the subjective experience of the customer makes potential markets of each one of us. And it demands 'agile' enterprises (Goldman, Nagel et al. 1995) that can organize themselves around the quality of the customer's experience (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2003). Instead of 'pushing' products and services, these enterprises must be shaped by the 'pull' of their customers (Hagel III, Seely Brown et al. 2010). Thus looked at from the perspective of the enterprise, the internet has changed the economics of distribution, enabling the enterprise to target markets containing very small numbers of customers (Anderson 2006). For example, iTunes enables its users to buy only those individual tracks that appeal to their personal tastes. The effect of this is that the enterprise need not compete just on the basis of the products and solutions it supplies to markets, but on the basis of the support it can provide to the subjective experience of the customer (Zuboff and Maxmin 2002). For example, the traveler who wants to use a travel service need only be offered services that fit with the way s/he likes to travel. In this environment, markets are 'co-produced' by the relationship between the enterprise and its customers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), enabling what the traveler wants to shape the travel experience s/he gets. This focus on the subjective

experience of the customer demands ‘agile’ enterprises (Goldman, Nagel et al. 1995) that can organize themselves around the quality of the customer’s experience (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2003). Instead of ‘pushing’ products and services, these enterprises must be shaped by the ‘pull’ of their customers (Hagel III, Seely Brown et al. 2010). Of course enterprises have been doing such things for industrial customers for a long time. What is new is the ability to do it for the individual.

‘Pull’ markets may still be in the early stages of becoming viable. An example is the case of Microsoft providing personal health care records in the US (Charette 2010). Or it may not be the market itself that is what is of value, as in the case of the way voting was organized in ‘Dancing with the Stars’ (Roach 2010), or the way mobile phones are given away for ‘free’ (Evans, Hagiú et al. 2006). Indeed the ‘market’ may not even be one that we would recognize as such, as in the case of the Al Qaeda market for ‘open source jihad’, aimed at disrupting the economics of US systems (Robb 2010). But the direction is one of innovation at the edge of the enterprise where it meets its customers, leading the enterprise ultimately to the particular demands of the individual customer (Hagel III and Seely Brown 2005).

And for all that is written about the effects of this focus on the individual customer, it is true that most suppliers still adhere to the ‘push’ model when dealing with individuals – they do what they do, and the rest is up to us to sort out, including all those hours wrestling with the computerized menus of call centers! But the research nevertheless shows that over the last 40 years, while large enterprises have become more efficient, their returns have dropped by 75% in the face of intensifying competition, while their dependence on physical assets to generate profits has dropped 40% (Hagel III, Seely Brown et al. 2010). And now we find ourselves in the midst of a jobless recovery from the Great Recession of the last few years. The recovery is jobless because so much more can be done using information technology, so that the only recourse is to innovate if we are to generate growth in employment (Peck 2010).

So the change may not be rapid, but it is inexorable. It leads the enterprise in but one direction, towards every affective network being a potential market, at the limit creating potential markets of each one of us.

What are the consequences for us as individuals?

At the levels of both employment and the state, the contract with the individual will no longer support a through-life dependency. Rather we must compete with each other in seizing what opportunities we can find in a world that appears to have become all markets, in which the most that can be expected from the state is that the individual should be provided with opportunities (Bobbitt 2002). What are the

consequences for us individually if we are each to become potential markets for ourselves and each other? To eBay it may mean that we are now all potential sources of revenue for each other. But revenue for what? Are we to be markets despite ourselves (Harvey 2005), subject to subconscious manipulation in a throwback to our worst fears in the 50's (Packard 1957). Or are we newly liberated in this twittering age, enabled by the new technologies to know what we want in ways that were previously unthought-of (Baumann 2009)? Our subjective experience is one of encountering an increasingly fragmented plethora of sources on what is right, what is true and what is necessary for us. How are we to know where to turn in order to find what we want, whether we are looking for an education, a spouse, a job or even just a meal? What can be considered authoritative in a world where every icon can be proved to have feet of clay (Boxer 1994)? The individual faces risks all around them as they are faced with having to make choices for themselves, giving rise to new communities of interest based on shared anxieties (Beck 1992).

A psychoanalytic perspective provides us with useful insights into our experience of these risks. The very technology through which we pursue our truths renders truth itself questionable. To address this, we need to consider both sides of it: what is happening to the technology, and what is happening to the way we can establish truths for ourselves within it. And to do that, it is helpful to look back to a time when all this happened before, although on a different scale.

The Printing Revolution: technology's impact on the social

The invention of the printing press had an impact on society that is comparable to the impact of the information revolution. Gutenberg assembled the first mechanical printing presses in 1440. Within a few decades, printing had spread across Europe. By 1500 more than 20 million volumes had been printed, and during the course of the 16th century this rose to over 200 million. At the present time, Google estimates that there are about 130 million printed and bound unique books. It seems appropriate to quote from Wikipedia (Wikipedia 2010b):

“The ready availability and affordability of the printed word to the general public boosted the democratization of knowledge and laid the material basis for the modern knowledge-based economy. In Renaissance Europe, the arrival of mechanical movable type printing introduced the era of mass communication which permanently altered the structure of society: the relatively unrestricted circulation of information and (revolutionary) ideas transcended borders, captured the masses in the Reformation and threatened the power of political and religious authorities; the sharp increase in literacy broke the

monopoly of the literate elite on education and learning and bolstered the emerging middle class.”

Two different kinds of change were happening. The first of these was a change in the ‘material basis’ of what could be read, that is the technology used for reading changed, so that what previously had only been accessible in hand-written form became widely available in printed form. Just as with the impact of information technology, however, this brought a second kind of change in the people who were writing, reading and publishing. At the beginning of the 16th century, these people were mainly members of the clergy, but by the middle of the 16th century the balance was shifting towards the students of the humanities, extending to the ‘natural philosophy’ of science in the 17th century (Burke 2000). This change in who could be well read began to become apparent inside a period of 60 years, comparable to the length of time the information revolution has been with us.

The first impact was on who could be well read

To understand the impact of the change in the ‘material basis’, we need to consider the nature of the institutions using the texts. The previously hand-written and hand-printed texts were used primarily by members of the clergy. From the Middle Ages, the Universities within which they worked as teachers were enterprises that had establishing strategies of monopolization of knowledge and exclusion of those not qualified, in the same way as the professions of law and medicine. But the Universities were still embedded within the much older institution of the Catholic Church.

The trial of Galileo as a heretic made it evident where the power lay in this world. Galileo was forced in 1633 to recant his reasoning that the Sun was at the center of the Universe, supporting the work of Copernicus with his observations of the movement of heavenly bodies. The Church required this of him because it was against its teaching that the Earth was at the center of the Universe. Galileo had been disrupting the received wisdom, and the Establishment was seeking to defend itself then, just as the censors do now.

The heretics were a different kind of community. They were held together by their discussion of the ideas to be found in books and letters, and not by their allegiance to a higher authority. They formed affective networks cutting across the communities working under the aegis of the Universities. The hundred-fold increase in the rate of production of printed books made new ideas accessible to a greatly enlarged community of writers and reader that was increasingly outside the traditional knowledge communities. The printing technology thus changed the balance between the Universities and the heretic communities, creating a material basis on which it was much easier to form new affective networks of shared

interest. True, these networks were on nothing like the scale of today's networks, but they laid the foundations for the emergence of science in the 17th century and the enlightenment in the 18th century, in which the locus of innovation moved decidedly beyond the Universities (Burke 2000). In the same way, the current rapid increase in the accessibility of online textual material brought about by the information revolution has changed the balance in who can know what.

The second impact was on what was considered authoritative

This change in the balance of who could know what was enabled by the printing revolution, but it was the social revolution that began to emerge during the course of the 16th century that is the equivalent of today's Twitter Revolution. This revolution was in the basis of what could be said to be true, and two aspects to this social revolution appear relevant.

The first aspect involved the emergence of the Protestant movement. Luther argued for the importance of reading the texts themselves, and not depending on the clergy's reading of the texts passed on by the clergy's word of mouth. A key argument made by the Church against Luther was that his approach would lead to religious anarchy. Luther was able to counter this by establishing a social movement through communicating directly with the people in their own language on an unprecedented scale. To do so, he relied on being able to mass-produce pamphlets, over 3000 being written by him during his lifetime, creating circulations of hundreds of thousands. The result was a change in the basis of what was authoritative. This moved from being based on the spoken word of those in positions authorized by the Church, to being based on the reading of the texts themselves by men of letters and members of academies. It wasn't until the enlightenment in the 18th century that this shift in the basis of authority began to be taken up by the Universities themselves (Burke 2000).

Luther's criticism was of the basis on which religious truths were authorized by the Church. Rather than being based on the spoken word of the clergy, it should come directly from a reading of the texts themselves. His argument was nevertheless that religious truths could be established on this basis with certainty. The truth was there in the texts to be read.

The second aspect can therefore be identified with Erasmus' difference with Luther. Erasmus argued that no-one could claim to have found *the* true meaning of a text, so that it was therefore most important to treat any claim over the truth with scepticism. Both modern scientific method and biblical criticism can be traced back to this second kind of shift, in which direct consideration is given to the effects of the text on the reader (Popkin 1979). With scepticism, it was not so much one form of authority (the received truth of the Church) being replaced by

another form (truth emerging from a reading of the texts themselves). Rather it was that the nature of what authorised the truth itself that was called into question. From today's perspective on the enlightenment, scepticism remains an attitude of mind to be applied to the thinking process itself, rather than becoming a movement *per se* (Popkin 1979).

We can observe both aspects of what can be said to be true in the current controversies surrounding global warming and its probable causes. The reader is referred to the chapter in this volume by Paul Hoggett on this very subject. If we take the establishment view to be that man-made greenhouse gases are the primary cause of global warming (New York Times 2010), then the Lutheran equivalent would be to argue that this view is a grand conspiracy serving (for example) the interests of scientists (Dimiero 2010), which can be overturned by examining the evidence itself. The Erasmian equivalent would be to argue that to make man-made greenhouse gases the primary cause is too simple an explanation for something much more complex that we do not yet fully understand (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2010). It is this second aspect that best captures the attitude of inquiring from which affective networks emerge.

The impact depended on the relationship to the text

Both aspects of change depended on the new relationship to the text made possible by the revolution. In contrast, the earlier authority of the Catholic Church rested on the effectiveness of the words spoken by the clergy. The concept of the 'speech act' describes how the act of speaking made things happen in the world through the effects it produced on the listener (Austin 1962). Thus the efficacy of a statement such as "I pronounce you man and wife" depended very much on the circumstances surrounding its enunciation. Prior to being able to read the Bible for themselves, people depended on the speech acts of clergy for their understanding of what faith meant to them. The Church provided the circumstances in which these speech acts could produce their effects.

The new relationship to the text depended on individuals being able to read for themselves. The concept of the 'script act' is based on reading rather than listening. It assumes not only that no work is ever read as a whole, but also that any given text is at best a partial representation of a literary work. A literary work therefore becomes an assemblage of read fragments that come together in a way that is particular to the reader (Shillingsburg 2006). Script acts are the particular way in which the individual reads, and the circumstances surrounding the way script acts come together are the circumstances in which the reader reads. In these terms, reading a literary work in such a way as to grasp its author's meaning is at best a special case, and perhaps even a fantasy entertained only by the author.

The impact of Gutenberg was therefore to make the education of the reader the determining factor in how truths were located, rather than the circumstances surrounding the speaker. The enlightenment saw newly authorized readings emerge that were equal to the authority of the Catholic Church's spoken truths, including those truths authorized by the State itself (Burke 2000). And the institutions of education eventually expanded to provide individuals with the education they needed to read in this way, even today, when these authorized readings have become established truths.

The early fears for the information revolution in the 1960's were that it would further consolidate the authority of these truths, heralding an age of centralization and standardization based on the ability of the technology to process large quantities of data. In fact the reverse happened, and it became increasingly apparent that the meaning of information depended on the particular social circumstances in which it was both created and subsequently used (Brown and Duguid 2002).

The Twitter Revolution takes this further by enabling individuals to replace the 'whole' texts of authors with the particular assemblages of text fragments that emerge in response to their online searching. In this environment, the blog serves as a representation of the assemblages that emerge as a result, creating the modern equivalent of the pamphlet. And the individual's affective networks assume a new importance, since it is they that inform what text fragments get considered. So how does the individual create truths in this environment? From where do truths emerge? The difference between the perspectives of the Catholic Church, Luther and Erasmus provide us with a way of thinking about what happens at the level of the individual.

Identifying Truths: recognizing what we want

The information revolution captures something of the technological impact which parallels that of the printing revolution. But the Twitter Revolution captures more of its social impact. The fragmented nature of the interactions reflected by twittering makes explicit the challenge the individual faces both in choosing what to read, and assembling what they do read into meaningful wholes. A glimpse of this could be seen in one person's assemblage of online reports detailing chaos and deaths in Tunisia (Carvin 2011). It was not that the use of these media were themselves a cause of events, their part at best allowing individuals to catch glimpses of others' experiences (Allnutt 2011). But following the Twitter feeds for #Egypt nevertheless altered what was present for the individual affected in a way that the authorities saw fit to suppress (Kravets 2011). The multiple affective networks intersecting in the individual illuminates the challenge the individual

faces. What does s/he make of so many disparate sources? Using the examples of Tunisia and Egypt, these sources clearly reflect affective networks across which individuals are making meaning, but how are we to understand the way these meanings are being made?

The individual in the midst of the printing revolution could rely on the authoritative voices of the Church, or learn to read. And in learning to read, s/he could assume with Luther that truths were to be found in the texts, or, like Erasmus, assume that the truths s/he read were in some way shaped by his or her own interest. The Twitter Revolution presents the individual with these same choices today in the way s/he identifies truths. A psychoanalytic perspective expresses these choices in terms of how the individual creates and sustains their own identity through the way s/he identifies truths. The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have shown us that real consequences can follow from being able to share such truths across affective networks in ways unmediated by the State's authorized truths.

In his work on group psychology (Freud 1921c), Freud distinguishes between identifying with someone, in the sense of wanting to *be* them themselves (“I want to be you”); and identifying with someone in the sense of wanting to *have* that person’s way of organizing the way they are (“I want to learn how to be like you”). Here we have the difference between identifying directly with the speaker, and learning to read like the other reads. The first of these two forms of identification are distinguished by the primary processes associated with establishing a ‘perceptual identity’ corresponding to the individual’s relations to pleasure and pain; and the second by the secondary processes associated with establishing a ‘thought identity’ through which the individual’s relationships to the world are organized (Freud 1900a).

We see this distinction in Bion’s work, between the manifestation of basic assumptions below the surface of the individual’s working relationships, and the working relationships themselves, organized by a shared sense of purpose and outcome (Armstrong 2005). The primary processes and their manifestation as basic assumptions are always there, the issue being the extent to which they are in support of or in conflict with the secondary processes appearing as ideals shared in working together (French and Simpson 2010). Together, however, primary processes subordinated to secondary processes form the warp and weft of any social endeavor in which there is shared purpose and outcome, constituting for the individual an ‘organization-in-the-mind’ that reflects in some way the emotional experience of the endeavour itself (Armstrong 2005).

We can recognize in Luther’s objections to the institution of the Catholic Church a rejection of the privileging of the voices of its clergy, and the particular forms of

identification this supported. The Printing Revolution made it possible not only for new networks to be formed on a scale that could challenge the Church's own following, but also created the conditions in which different institutional forms could be established on the basis of a direct reading of the text. The same thing happened with the information revolution, enabling each one of us to read what had been previously hidden from us by the interests of scientists, corporations and states. Except that this time the variety of institutional voices being put in question is much larger, and, as we saw earlier with WikiLeaks, what is true is not always immediately apparent. So what happens in the spaces between and beyond those institutional voices? How does this the Erasmian perspective of the sceptics emerge?

It's a matter of attitude

The Twitter Revolution is enabling the emergence of affective networks, challenging the basis of the authority of scientists, corporations and states (as for example in the case of global warming). To understand what happens between and beyond these institutional voices, we need to consider the process by which affective networks emerge, on what basis they form, and under what circumstances they might be said to be a good thing.

When the way an individual has learnt to be fails, they experience ambivalence about what is true which places their secondary processes at risk (Beck 1994). They no longer know for sure what is true, exposing themselves to traumatic anxiety in which their very sense of themselves is at risk (Freud 1926d). A psychic retreat is a particular type of defensive organization by means of which a person hopes to avoid such intolerable anxiety, for example taking the inter-personal form of a business organization, a religious sect or a Mafia-like gang (Steiner 1993). We have seen examples of this in fundamentalist networks, for example relating to jihad (Robb 2010), in which the individual surrenders their identity to a larger system that absolves them of the question(ing) of their personal identity (Hopper 2003). The opposite extreme is also possible, in which the individual withdraws from any inter-personal form of working, cutting themselves off from any interaction with others that might threaten them (Armstrong 2005). An example of this would be in the way avatars can be used in multiplayer online role-playing games (Wikipedia 2010a), in which whatever happens, it happens to the individual's avatar and not to him or her!

If the basis of an affective network is the attitude that it enables the individual to share with others, then there is a quality of mindlessness in these two extreme responses, fitting with the loss of 'thought identity'. But if the basis of the extremes is a defense against traumatic anxiety, then there are a wide range of

possible attitudes in between these two extremes in which new forms of truth can be established. It is this third possibility that constitutes the third form of identification distinguished by Freud. This is an identification formed not by identifying with someone, but rather with a situation that engenders a particular affective relation to themselves. The story used by Freud to distinguish this third form is as follows:

“Supposing, for instance, that one of the girls in a boarding school has had a letter from someone with whom she is secretly in love which arouses her jealousy, and that she reacts to with a fit of hysterics; then some of her friends who know about it will catch the fit, as we say, by mental infection. The mechanism is that of identification based upon the possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same situation.” (Freud 1921c) p107.

This third form of identification can describe for example the experience of joining football crowds or political movements. It also describes the basis for the affective networks so easily formed online, falling between the two extremes supporting psychic retreat.

To understand this third form of identification, the use of the word “desire” in the quote above needs to be examined more closely. Whether or not the affective networks formed by this third identification are a ‘good thing’ depends on understanding it as the link to the Erasmian perspective on truth, in which truth is in some way shaped by the individual’s own interest.

Attitude toward the Real

Lacan distinguished Freud’s first two forms of identification as *imaginary* and *symbolic* identifications (Lacan 1988). By ‘imaginary’ identification Lacan meant identification in terms of the reality within which the individual encountered an image of himself or herself. And by ‘symbolic’ identification he meant an identification mediated by the effects of language: the individual could *say* something of who s/he was, while always experiencing himself or herself as being something more than that. The single trait of which Freud spoke became the ‘unary signifier’ in Lacan, which represented for the individual the symbolic identification that was the organization of that individual’s way of being (Lacan 1961).

As with Freud, taking up this organization involved subordinating primary process to a particular way of being, resulting in a loss arising from the repression of primary process involved. But understanding this as a symbolic identification, in which an organization of signifiers stood in the place of primary process, also enabled Lacan to speak of what was left out by that organization. What was left

out was what could not be said or what was in some other way untranslatable in the individual's experience. This was the *lack* that gave rise to desire, forming the basis of the third identification. *Desire* was that which remained left out, constituted by the lack which was structural to the symbolic identification. For Lacan, the third identification was a *Real* identification. Desire reflected what the individual wanted or rather found wanting in their current way of being. This is the way the environment shows itself to the individual, showing what goes beyond the individual's own psychic boundary.

The 'Real' was for Lacan that which could not be articulated within the symbolic, so that in pursuing their desire in this sense, the individual was pursuing something of what they lacked in their current way of being. In a Real identification, the individual exhibited an attitude toward the Real in the way they formed affective networks in pursuit of their desires.

Recognizing a beyond

Lacan draws together the three identifications in terms of three kinds of moment, representing the different ways in which the individual is able to know what s/he wants (Lacan 2006 [1945]). The first moment involves immediately recognizing what is wanted, literally seeing it. Much of online shopping tries to operate in this way.

The second moment only comes when it is not possible to find what is wanted in this way because it is not directly available. Instead what is wanted has to be researched and uncovered. This second moment can take a long time as knowledge is acquired, opinions sought, and possibilities examined. Such researching may be limited by our knowledge, in which we can continue searching deeper and wider. But we may also reach the conclusion that there is no answer to what we want. It does not exist. It is also this limit to what currently can be known which creates the possibility of a beyond, the possibility of something more. The Information Revolution makes it much easier to discover this limit.

The third moment arises when the individual concludes that this is indeed true, and no answer will be found. Instead the individual has to make a choice on the basis of what feels right in the situation that involves creating an answer. It is in this third moment that desire comes into play. The end of the second moment comes with recognizing what is lacking, what is wanting. The affective networks which then form around this recognition support this relationship to the 'something more' that motivates them. This is the dynamic that is made so much more accessible by the Twitter revolution. It is also the way objects in the individual's environment are experienced as independent of their own psychic phenomena.

Social Consequences

The sceptics were motivated by the limits they recognized in their reading, and their social effectiveness was mobilized through the affective networks that they formed. These networks were considered heretical in their time, and the establishment response included the inquisition to which Galileo was subject. Even though many of these heretical networks were shut down or led nowhere, their legacy is nevertheless to be found in the aftershocks of the Printing Revolution that led to the enlightenment and beyond. Today we can draw on this history to anticipate some of the consequences of the Twitter Revolution.

The word “heretic” comes from the Greek, meaning “able to choose”. The object of the inquisition was to ensure that this ability was exercised by the individual in the right way, just as scientific communities still tend to impose right ways of doing ‘normal’ science (Kuhn 1962). Today the Twitter Revolution is greatly emancipating this ability to choose.

The Information Revolution started to change the balance between the supplier and the customer by making it easier to supply the individual customer. The Twitter Revolution represents the further impact of this revolution in the individual’s ability to form networks: networks in which s/he can say what s/he wants both from the others in the network and from the suppliers to the network. As such, these networks represent a means by which individuals can defend themselves from anxiety through the alliances made possible with like-minded people sharing common attitudes. And they are also a means by which individuals can form alliances based on a shared recognition of the limits of what is currently possible for them. Such networks, like those of the sceptics, raise at least the question of what might be involved in going beyond those limits. And to the extent that individuals act on the basis of such questioning, they change things for themselves. They change things for suppliers too. The markets formed by these affective networks present challenges to their suppliers as they exert ‘pull’ (Hagel III, Seely Brown et al. 2010), expecting whatever services are provided to be dynamically aligned to the individual’s experience (Zuboff and Maxmin 2002). And in order to respond in this way, suppliers have to adopt a different kind of organization of industry in which competition is subordinated to the need for collaboration within business ecosystems (Moore 1996), in which the vanishing hand of the enterprise (Langlois 2003) seeks to dominate the way collaborations are organized (Iansiti and Levien 2004).

But these markets, however they are brought into existence, do not serve everyone’s interests (Stiglitz 2002). They can inflate themselves into bubbles that are dangerous for us all (Soros 1998), and may produce unwelcome side-effects

whether left free or regulated (Kay 2003). It does not follow, therefore, that the Twitter Revolution is a good thing if the markets emerging from its networks are only to be re-colonized by the interests of their suppliers. But this is not the only possible outcome, as the history of the sceptics has shown.

American Federalism was a response to States' rights being suppressed by the colonizing interests of the British Imperium (LaCroix 2010), leading eventually to the most successful of the market States (Bobbitt 2002). Something similar is happening today at the level of the individual's rights subject to corporate interests. In the private sector, the shift in competitive dynamics from protecting markets to disrupting them (Christensen, Johnson et al. 2002) speaks of a new level of dynamism and turbulence emerging in direct response to new forms of demand (Hagel III and Seely Brown 2005). In the public sector, the same effects lead to a questioning of what constitutes public value in a way that insists on building directly from the citizen's interests (Moore 1995). And in the not-for-profit sector, they lead to a need for generative forms of governance that are capable of continuous innovation in order to keep good works alive (Chait, Ryan et al. 2005). Greater responsiveness to the individual demands new institutional forms and it is these new forms that are emerging, fed by the effects of the Twitter Revolution. We do not yet know what new forms of governmentality this will require of us in the 21st Century.

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