Technology and death. Post-mortem survival in the age of social media

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Abstract
Introduction: Aiming to transcend the binary system, the article raises questions that demonstrate the coexistence of categories that configure a narrative tension around the technology and death. **Methods and discussion**: Based on a theoretical review, the article addresses manifestations of death in virtual environments which, turning the experiencing of absence into presence, account for substantial transformations in communication processes. **Results and conclusions:** The ease with which the living can interact with the transmissible traces of the dead proves that technology not only breaks down the barriers of distance but also the barriers of death, restoring it as a social diachronic exchange

Keywords
Real; virtual; technology; death; communication.

Contents
1. Introduction. 2.1. The tension between reality and virtuality. 2.2. Cyberspace: universal without totality. 2.3. A spectacular and overflowing hybridisation. 3.1. Death and technology. 3.2. Virtual mourning: the dialogued death. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. Notes. 6. References.

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1. Introduction

> "What has changed is not the kind of activities humankind is engaged in, but its technological ability to use as direct productive force what distinguishes our species as a biological oddity, its superior capacity to process symbols".
>
> **Manuel Castells**

Technology has advanced by leaps and bounds in the 20th and 21st centuries and its innovations have diversified and transformed habits and traditions in different areas of everyday life, especially in cities, the setting of urban life par excellence. Consequently, as a result of a complex hybridisation process, the conceptual link between technology, culture and society allows for an interrelated approach between symbolic fields characterised by multiple readings. It this crossing of fields, Lévy (2007) defines *cyberculture* as the set of (material and intellectual) techniques, practices, attitudes and ways of thinking and values that are developed in direct connection with digital technologies. This cultural model is characteristic of societies in which digital technologies decisively shape the dominant forms of communication, information and knowledge, thanks to the *cyberspace* that emerged from the progressive global interconnection of computers. In this scenario, the debate about technology, in relation to its uses, effects and consequences, suggests, first, two immediate and opposing positions: optimism versus pessimism; creation versus destruction; panacea versus apocalypse. These are infinite dichotomisations that sometimes hinder the visualisation of interstices and cracks.

The first approximations of the approach developed in this research work emerged within the framework of the research project titled: "Young and not so young technologies. Online communication processes that build and transform lifestyles" **[1]**. The methodological design is based on a combination of qualitative strategies (virtual ethnography and discourse analysis) which served as the basis for the selection of case studies, by following the theoretical and methodological criteria of the aforementioned project. With the purpose of transcending the binary system, this article raises questions that demonstrate the coexistence of categories that configure a narrative tension around the technological. Based on a theoretical corpus, the article addresses manifestations about death in virtual environments which, turning the experiencing of absence into presence, account for substantial transformations in communication processes

2. 1. The tension between reality and virtuality

Given that Western metaphysical thought is structured in binary and dichotomous terms (soul-body; in-out; open-closed; good-bad; feminine-masculine; objective-subjective; natural-artificial, etc.) and that this logic is used to understand and interpret the world, with the rise of technologies the question about reality has opened a wide range of discussions. When the information society differentiates between real and virtual, what kind of question are we facing? If the basic premise is that the virtual is not real, then would virtual be non-existent? Is there something not real? If the virtual is reduced to what is real in material terms, then, perhaps the question would be to redefine what is real. In other words, if we consider the real as what exists, the virtual would not exist? Are there some realities that

are any more real than other realities? Or better yet, can we think about reality in another way? Even if the real is associated with what is true, speaking about the truth establishes a relation between the human and the real. In this regard, it is appropriate to review some theoretical contributions to evaluate how certain debates not only exceed the field of communication, but are controversies left open and unfinished since the origins of Western philosophical thought and are maintained in the exchanges mediated by language.

Unlike the Marxist approach that says that philosophy has done nothing but to interpret the world and that what is needed is to transform it, Nietzsche warns us that changing the world is to reinterpret it successively, understanding by it the questioning of everything that is presented as true. Specifically, Nietzsche defined truth as "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms […] illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are […] (Nietzsche, 1998: 245). Based on this definition, he questioned the objectivistic view of the intellectual history of humanity, which leads to the inevitable review of language, since it is where the construction of the world resides.

However, Nietzsche wondered whether language is perhaps the appropriate expression of all realities; and then concluded that the linguistic image only designates the relationships between things and humans and claims for its purposes the most daring metaphors. This way humans try to understand the world as a human thing, so that the anthropocentric view becomes the measure of all things. Thus, the interpretation that is best imposed will end up being the prevailing view, sustained on the will to power; since there, where there is life, possibility, potential, expansion and resources, there is a will to power. However, we never capture the essence of things because life is a transformation without truths. The truth is the most efficient lie; there is only displacements, metaphors, which are, in turn, taken as truth but are only conventions. "In a world that has really been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood (Debord, 2008).

Faced with the world-representations duality there are only interpretations that create forms and seize things (Nietzsche, 1998). It should be noted that the question of truth caries the weight of absolute truth as something unquestionable. In fact, in everyday life situations many issues are considered in terms of "truth". In other words, absolute truth would have as its counterpart truth in practical terms, and therefore would be different ways to define it. For instance, as a correspondence between what is said and what reality shows **[2]**, from the perspective of coherence, pragmatics, revelation (un-covering), or as a subjective interpretation of reality, among other possibilities. However, Nietzsche (1998) transcends those approaches to delve into the ontological and genealogical questions of reality, understood as constituent structures of the meaning of things.

In other words, there is no truthful truth or absolute truth because truth is a construction based on language, which is also false (or produces a false consciousness) because the only thing that exists are interpretations. While for Nietzsche things are as they are according to how we interpret them, then there is nothing closed. His famous phrase "there are no facts, only interpretations", breaks with the metaphysical idea of finding unity on explanatory principles that organise reality. Furthermore, neither for Nietzsche or Heidegger would be possible to think that the multiplicity of reality can be systematised or merged into one unit based on clear and evident principles because what exists is an empty vacuum. Put differently, in the bottom there is no bottom but an abyss, where there is no metaphysics but a continuous falling, decenterment. If everything is interpretation then there is no framework, there would be no metaphysics. Thus, the proposal lies in a permanent exercise of decenterment, since the idea of metaphysics suggests a moral question; which in accordance with the

Nietzschean expression *"God is dead"*, reflects his criticism of the idea of God as an organising principle of all things. Although both authors challenge positivist science and the calculating metaphysical thought that dominates through technique; for Heidegger (1990), this is related to the *oblivion of Being* [3] in favour of the entity, while for Nietzsche, it is due to the fall of supreme values, which are proposed as ideal, unattainable values and in contradiction with the fundamental impulses of men. Ultimately, the review of discussions in philosophical thinking strengthens the analysis of the tensions provoked by the arguments based on dichotomous positions; enabling the dismantling of dual analyses and the deconstruction of those narratives that impoverish or simplify the approaches.

2.2. Cyberspace: universal without totality

When adjectives are associated to binary categories, the dichotomy is strengthened further and mixtures and shades become undetectable. If the real is the truth, in opposition, the virtual or the apparent is built as its opposite, i.e. the virtual appears as a synonym of false. This binary structure, which is at the basis of our way of thinking, is feasible to identify when "technology" becomes the subject matter of the debate. In this sense, against the technological determinism, Lévy (2007) opposes the position that understands the processes of innovation and technological change as something autonomous and closed to all interaction with cultural and social systems. He argues that it would be impossible to unlink the human and the creation of technologies because such a division represents a kind of intellectual fiction in which certain forces tend to present problems as "purely technical" or "purely cultural" or "purely economic". According to the author, collective intelligence is what would enable the appropriation of the technological changes, configuring an acceleration of the techno-social movement, facilitated by the growth of cyberspace. However, Zizek (2007) questions the idea of interactivity associated with this movement that characterises cyberculture and replaces it with the notion of interpassivity in an active/passive game played through the Other. The alarming aspect of the new media is that digital tools deprive us of the passivity of our experience; "the passive consumption of a text or a work of art is over: I no longer merely stare at the screen, I increasingly interact with it" (Zizek, 2007:134).

The distinctive feature of cyberculture is given by virtuality. However, for Lévy (2007), the fascination caused by the so-called "virtual reality" is related to the confusion of the technological, ordinary and philosophical senses of the term. In other words, philosophically, the virtual only exists in potential (it is not an act yet), while in the ordinary use it is employed to refer to unreality. Therefore, it seems that any entity should assume the character of either real or virtual, since it would not be feasible to have both qualities. However, according to the author, virtuality is not opposed to reality but to "actuality", because the virtual exists even if it is not possible to give it time and space coordinates. So, the virtual is the dimension of reality, being "factual" the notion that allows dealing with the relationship between the two (virtual and real). Within this framework, the central piece of Lévy's proposal refers to "the universal without totality". The more universal cyberspace becomes the more information that is received, therefore the less totalitarian it would be [4]. This way, the virtual world (information in a continuous space) and the information flow (changing and scattered data) emerge as original informational devices of cyberspace. In this collective production environment, and from a less indulgent position, Sibilia (2012) argues that we are witnessing a phenomenon with two seemingly contradictory sides. On the one hand, the celebrated "explosion of creativity" that has emerged from the extraordinary "democratisation" of the media and, on the other hand, the renewed efficiency in the

exploitation of these vital forces, eagerly capitalised by a market that devours it and turns it into garbage:

> It is a real whirlwind of innovations that has received the pompous name of Web 2.0 revolution and has turned everybody into the personality of the moment (...) While the first generation of Internet companies wanted to sell things, the Web 2.0 relies on users as co-developers (Sibilia, 2012:17).

In Castells's terms (2009), the power of communication is located at the centre of the structure and dynamics of society, which leads to the transformation of mental processes and the construction of new meanings that shape the human mind and determine modes of feeling, thinking and acting. The new virtual stage is instituted as a placelessness that reiterates the interconnection rituals that are characterised by interactivity, speed and segmentation. Technology with its own languages and specific codes offers a view of the world in the best planetary mosaic or potpourri style where imaginaries with multiple scopes and possibilities are woven. Castells (2009) affirms that in this structure of the network society, digital communication networks play a fundamental role as instruments that enable greater civic autonomy, insofar as users become senders and receivers of messages, configuring the mass self-communication. However, Lévy (2007) maintains that, while this new universal character typical of cyberculture contains a strong dose of global and planetary features, it is not limited to only this. It is universal in the deepest sense, insofar as it is inseparable from the idea of humanity because it is a universal character that is experienced by immersion.

2.3. A spectacular and overflowing hybridisation

Hand in hand with collective intelligence, new mixture processes thrive as a result of the combination of practices, habits, objects, technologies and developments. "The word hybridisation seems more ductile for the purpose of naming not only the mixing of ethnic or religious elements but the products of advanced technologies and modern or postmodern social processes" (García Canclini, 2005: 22). Cyberspace expresses the diversity of humankind (Lévy, 2007) which, in terms of García Canclini (2005), reveals an overtone of new practices of cultural hybridisation where the popular is linked to the mass, the local with the global; and where innovation in interactive communication also accounts for creative users **[5]**. In this scenario of multiple hybridisation processes, Appadurai (2001) adds the concept of public spheres in diasporas, asserting that both images and spectators –many of whom are de-territorialised- circulate simultaneously and that for this reason it is not feasible to neatly identify circuits or audiences. Therefore, electronic media and migrations instigate a work of imagination that should not be understood as emancipatory or as disciplined since it constitutes a space of disputes and deep negotiations which seek to attach the global with the modern. These public spheres in diaspora are not small, marginal or exceptional but are part of the cultural dynamics of urban life in most countries and continents in which migration and the mass media contribute to give a new meaning to the global as modern and to the modern as global (Appadurai, 2001).

In this way, globalisation, understood as an uneven, historical process and generator of locations, has nothing to do with cultural homogenisation or "Americanisation". Put differently, the author proposes to understand culture as a subset of differences selected and mobilised to articulate the boundaries of difference. The challenge of this emerging order lies in the imagined worlds promoted by different interests and movements, which are increasingly more remote from the aspirations associated with the Nation-State. Without ignoring the fact that the life of societies is governed by modern conditions of production through substitutes that replace the real situation based on an accumulation of spectacles,

according to Debord (2008). Thus, we witness a spectacularised reproduction of the social insofar as what used to be lived directly now moves into a representation; the spectacle is not just a set of images but the social relationship between people, mediated through images (Debord, 2008). In this sense, Debord shares Appadurai's notion of consumption articulated with desire in permanent movement. While for Lévy (2007) cyberspace proposes a style of communication that is not constructed by the media, since it is community, transversal and reciprocal, for Debord (2008) the only possible participation is imaginary, because the centres disseminate messages to isolated receptors who do not have the ability to respond; being spectacle the affirmation of the appearance and the affirmation of human and social life as a simple appearance.

However, criticism against the truth of spectacle sees in it its visible denial of life; a denial of life that has become visible. In a de-territorialised territory where modernity is not only liquid, but overflows - borders are invaded and cracks start licking- the rupture with the traditional criteria updates human diversity. What flows is mixed, and in parallel the mixture that drips, slips or floods spaces in a heterogeneous manner, makes the multiple hybridisations even more complex. However, we should not forget that the power of spectacularisation configures this process -not in a uniform manner- by imposing specific logics in the communicative relations and exchanges.

3.1. Death and technology

Despite the biological outcome, death refers to a socially and culturally built concept. Therefore, the sense that each person attributes to death differs depending on personal convictions and beliefs, culture and time. Different cultures shape the experience of finitude in different ways, creating sign-symbolic artefacts to cope with it (Morin, 2011; Ariés, 2011; Thomas, 1991), and in that process the deployment of the technical or technological -in a broad sense- also crosses the full exercise of human agency, since the technological subject does not escape the logic of finitude (Feenberg, 2005). Both technology and death are categories that share certainty since the pattern of both prevails historically. People are dying as *usual*, because the human condition establishes so, and technology advances in an endless rally at increasingly unprecedented speeds. As a result, just as progress involves expiration, in postmodern times it is hard not to encounter "corpses" or "remains". Machines, mobile phones, computers, e-books, iPods, TVs, audiovisual players, appliances, at some point –whether we see it or not– all will be recycled, in the best of cases, or discarded in most cases. Materiality itself expires. Its ontology establishes that the cyclic rate of materials has an expiration date. For this reason, when the metaphor of death is embodied in objects of everyday life it offers the possibility of investigating not only, and certainly not least important, the fate of the supplies and materials we use to live, but also their final destiny.

In this regard, Norbert Elias (2009) mentions that there are four possibilities to deal with the fact that we are going to die: thinking that there is an afterlife; suppressing the idea of death; thinking that it is others who die, not ourselves; and looking at death as an inevitable fact. These approaches, in articulation with the technological sphere, can be materialised in some possible associations such as: the use of technological resources to prevent, slow down, or assist the death of human beings (undisputed mandate of today's medicine); the application of laws and regulations on death with dignity (orthoasthesia) or euthanasia; the entelechy of immortality as it is believed technology will "solve" human death; the legal implementation of testamentary dispositions; the registration of stories to be spread after a person's death; and the digital dissemination or media broadcast of mortuary rumours; and the fictionalisation of death across social networks **[6]**, among others. The possibilities

are diverse, whether it is a topic commonly known as real or virtual. The two facets are re-signified and mixed, which blurs the lines because, according to Lévy (2007), the virtual is not opposed to the real. For this reason, it is not possible to locate the virtual out for the real, given that, with its specific codes, the virtual manifestations are constituent parts of the real. Once more, binary thinking sneaks into debates imposing its dichotomous logic; making differentiations to avoid conceptual "impurities", going against the fusion and hybridity that characterises human relationships with technology. In addition, the borders could become even blurrier. While for Levy the conception of *actuality* admits addressing the relationship between virtuality and reality, in Derrida's terms *actuality* would only be *artifactuality*, i.e., it "is not given but actively produced, sifted, invested, and performatively interpreted by numerous apparatuses which are *factitious* or *artificial*, hierarchizing and selective, always in the service of the forces and interests to which 'subjects' and agents … are never sensitive enough" (1998: 15). Thus, the virtual and the real are articulated from an artifactuality, whereupon the borders between virtual, real, and the *actual* merge continuously. Making the oppositions relative, flexible and/or invalid and questioning the limits stimulates us to inaugurate new points of view and connection.

For Saintout (2014), just like no cultural product comes from a vacuum, discourses about death are designed in a particular place within the social space; even where the emerging or updated practices can be glimpsed at. The use of biodegradable urns, capsules and reliquaries for the conservation of human remains, pets cremation services, streaming of funeral and burial services [7], funeral blogs, online memories and obituaries; virtual cemeteries; QR codes on tombstones [8], electronic message boards for hearses, android apps to pay tribute to the dead, and Facebook profiles turned into memorial walls, are some of the innovations and convergences [9] (Jenkins, 2008) that reflect how technological expansion has infiltrated areas where death becomes the protagonist.

As proof of this, in the field of immortalisation of memorable moments, postmortem photography [10] was a recurrent practice for a good part of the immigrant population in Argentina, as it and its various uses were already commonplace in the mid-19th century (Maniusis, 2015). Put another way, in an environment where certain habits and uses are introduced as novel and manage to set trends, a retrospective analysis reveals that technology was historically at the service of humanity. In this new scenario, Morin's notion of organisational recursion highlights the need for a total break with the logic that maintains that machines create products that are foreign to them; since "seeing our society in the image of those machines, is to forget that these man-made artificial machines exist within a society that produces itself" (2004: 10). That is why certain technological resources are at the service of mortuary activities and also why digital tools offer people spaces to grief and honour the memory of the loved ones, which inevitably stimulates us to rethink the applications and practices of technology in relation to death.

3.2. Virtual mourning: the dialogued death

Thinking of a dialogued death evokes a strange paradox. How is it possible to have a dialogue with what cannot converse? How can one exchange meanings with something that is not able to make an exchange? If death is the end, what concludes and ends permanently, then isn't it a true contradiction to predict reciprocity? Communicative energies are arranged in a way that only an eternal silence would be possible to expect. While communication demands dialogue, exchange, connection, transmission or fusion as a condition, death voids this condition immediately. However, an

apparent *cleavage* is evident in some tragic practices in the network, which even resemble speculations and very old mentalist and spiritualist wishes.

 The concept of communication was developed in a culture that systematically sought contact with distant beings and dead people (...) Perhaps in an era of audio and video recording, of photo albums and home movies, death seems less absolute (Durham Peters, 2014: 190).

Death has been a constant concern throughout the history of humankind and has been associated with different traits and attributes according to epochs and cultures. Even the generations that were the protagonist of the different historical moments have rituals or practices around mourning, remembrance and tribute. For this reason, those who grew up in the heyday of new technologies and were formed by the institutions of the late 20th century and early 21st century, enjoy specific material and symbolic conditions of past centuries; which frame their reading, interpretation and appropriation patterns of the discourses that are produced and circulated in technological platforms. In that situation, access to the virtual realm comes hand in hand with audiovisual materials as well as written materials, that is, the word and its great potential: the ability to communicate. There, messages and exchanges whose contents refer to death, are crammed in an unusual way and, as a result, new burial practices are configured based on a mixture in the digital dimension. In parallel to the transformation of secular beliefs, mourning is also transformed in its manifestations while pain is experienced online and collectively. Although in some social areas it is categorically maintained that death is a taboo topic, in digital environments that premise is, at least, called into question. This is demonstrated by the use of digital resources that modify some provisions around dialogue about death among peers, known people and strangers. And in parallel, creativity is displayed in the various forms of virtual recreation of rituals:

> The way you show us you are here is surprising and beautiful...! I have an incredible certainty that you're taking other forms... It is sweet and moving to enter your virtual space and read so many beautiful and heartfelt messages about you! Always missing you, and today celebrating your life in our lives! I love you all the way to heaven! HAPPY birthday my love (message posted in the Facebook profile of a 35-year-old woman).

The dead teem in social networks through the voices of others, they come to life through the interventions of users who share their pain through memorial images, audio, videos, anecdotes, quotes and thoughts. The altar that is covered with candles, flowers, pictures, images of saints and amulets does not only co-exist in parallel, but is reconstructed in its digital version in the same manner. The popular is linked to the mass, the local with the global. Thanks to the Internet, death no longer means disappearing in the virtual environment; but all the contrary: it offers a kind of restitution as *living present* of what is dead (Derrida and Stiegler, 1998). So that mourning in its different manifestations has multiple membership and translates into diverse narratives thanks to the new forms of talking about the dead, which recreates the ways of crying and, perhaps, of accepting the death of another person:

> I'm thinking about you mother… No matter how old you were I miss you a lot… you know, your granddaughters play and mention you. They say "granny Zoila is in heaven and we won't see her anymore" and I don't know what to say, but this is life… the other day I went to our home-town and when I saw your little bed I felt like crying (message posted in the Facebook profile of a 65-year-old woman).

The comments section of the social network Facebook combines reflections, fears, the uncertainty provoked by the emptiness and pain caused by the death of a person. Thus, the interventions also collaborate in the construction of *sanctuaries* that are fed collectively, and in that becoming, a community dialogues with the dead as if it could, from the *other side,* appreciate what is shared. The dead is even granted the role of witness from *beyond,* acting as custodian of his/her loved ones who remain in *this side*. This is interpreted as what Van Gennep (1992) mentions about rites of passage, i.e., death is not an end but the passage to another state. The perception that the deceased is still present, albeit in a virtual way, would seem to provide some solace or a way for the relief of those who are still alive. The Catholic Church was the institution that in the 14th century forged the idea of the expiration of life, whereupon the transit between life and death makes possible the separation of body and soul (Martínez de Sánchez, 2011).

As a result, given the eternity of the soul, the communication that is maintained with the deceased -of intense spiritual character- also takes place in the virtual environment. And in this simultaneous triple dimension that is created between the real, virtual, and spiritual worlds, sharing a remembrance or anecdote with the deceased similarly provokes a series of successive and mutual communications and interactions that revolve not only around the deceased, but are also structured as protagonists among the living. Of course, the lack of necessary correspondence between the encoding and decoding (Hall, 2004) of communications, makes evident the contingencies of the multiple expectations and possible interpretations. In that process, greetings and tributes posted on Facebook sometimes grant it the function of a *wall of tears*, a collection of anecdotes, or confessionals; i.e. the sensitivity and emotional content of the messages is what largely determines the nature of the interventions. As Durham Peters point out, "all mediated communication is in a sense communication with the dead, insofar as media can store 'phantasms of the living' for playback after bodily death" (2014: 49). However, for Debord **[11]** (2008), the experience of death and the consequent mourning in the virtual world, could only be interpreted as a spectacle, as it is a spectacularised reproduction of the social, whose concrete inversion of life is the autonomous movement of the non-living. What used to be lived directly has become a representation based on a social relationship mediated through images; where the spectacular language is composed of signs of the prevailing production, which is the ultimate goal of this production, which is nothing more than the economy developing by itself.

Technology allows the coexistence of the images and voices of the living and the dead, which enables a sort of ghostly contact, as a kind of restitution as living present of what is dead (Derrida and Stiegler, 1998); turning the experiencing of absence into a presence. In other words, a testamentary survival that, through an economy of pollution and parasite-creation, does not invalidate absence and presence as coexistences. Thus, the boundaries between life and death becomes blurred. We are witnessing a spectrogenesis or spectropoiesis where the barrier or border that would separate the living inside from the dead outside. According to Derrida (1998), each culture is characterised by its way of learning, addressing and living the transit: "each culture has its own funeral rites, its representations of the dying, its mourning or burial practices, its own assessment of the price of existence, of collective life or individual life" (p. 49). Although funeral rites have historically been a way to link us with death, mortuary stories in virtual environments also reflect the ways of dealing with the death of another person. There is no doubt that, in life or the afterlife, the communicative stance towards the dead can only be dissemination (Durham Peters, 2014) and in this position technology configures the new modalities or updates the habits of the past.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The virtual environment, accessible in many technological devices, has enabled not only the breaking down of the barriers of distance but also the breaking down of the barriers of death. The deployment of creativity in the various forms of virtual recreation of the rituals reveals substantial transformations in the processes of communication. As Durham Peters (2014) points out, the two key existential facts about the modern media are "the ease with which the living can blend with the transmissible footprints of the dead and the difficulty to distinguish distance communication from communication with the dead" (9. 191). Cyberculture (Lévy, 2007) provides enough evidence that the communication processes on the web build and transform lifestyles. The affection of the living enters into dialogue and is relegated to the virtual and imaginary memory of the deceased; in which the universal contact, de-territorialised, in diaspora and enabled by virtual communities reclaims death as a diachronic social exchange. For this reason,

> (...) grasping the historical elements that give meaning to death as a socio-cultural event, located in direct relation to the biographical elements that feedback the diverse conceptions, makes it possible to address the complexity of death in its universal character, and also to recognise its universal character in its diversity and specificity (Mazzetti Latini, 2017: 51).

Therefore, the narrative constructions of an epoch shed light on the understanding of those events that, beyond the specific amount of affected people, have an impact on various forms of life. Here it is important to bear in mind that instead of talking about death in general, we should consider the position of the subject within a particular field of social relations in order to capture the emotional experience of the individual (Rosaldo, 2000:23). Ethnographic records confirm that dealing with death consists not only in daring to face and bear the pain and the suffering of others -trying to understand it- but also reviewing the epistemological position from which it is observed, analysed and interpreted. Therefore, apprehend a terrain in which someone has died, and nonetheless *is not dead*, requires adopting an epistemological attitude of openness that warns against the mere pursuit of relationship between empirical data and the already standardised forms of interpretation, and at the same time does not dismiss them as irrational or intangible and cause, instead, a disposition to the construction of meanings and relations between these meanings (García Sotomayor, 2012). Here we should be aware that the inescapable requirement of an epistemological attitude of openness is also the result of tensions, based on the positions disputed by different combinations between a technocratic model of control, or a democratic model of communication around the technological realm. As a result, this inspires in the subject a positioning that restricts its potential initiative or extends the initiative in more complex virtual worlds (Feenberg, 2005). In the end, in Nietzschean terms, changing the world is to reinterpret successively. Given that no one comes "from outside", neither death nor technology escape the strictly human, because death has defined us ontologically and technology has crossed the culture of humanity since its origins. Maintaining a closed idea of "human", even in terms of the "natural" as essence, not only means avoiding the cultural view but also ignoring that technology is a constitutive part of humanity because it goes through humanity. Thus, human nature is its potential, i.e., the technological in its broader dimensions.

5. Notes

[1] Developed in the School of Communication Sciences of the National University of Cordoba, Argentina, 2016-2017.

[2] Reflected in Aristotle's definition of truth: To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true (Tarski, 1943).

[3] In this quest for the self, Heidegger finds that the way to being specifically human is to "being in the world". The *Dasein* and human existence are built by time, but also by language, which is not only a means of communication; men actually belong to language and their life is experienced through language. Thus, speaking of language would be entering it from the outside of its instrumental specificity. Language is the means through which the world opens up, through which we can think the unthinkable and wonder about the Being (Dasein = being there), since, Being is always presented in a "there", at a time, in a construction of an epoch, and in the human (Heidegger, 1990).

[4] "The more universal (extended, interconnected, interactive), the less totalising. Each additional connection adds to heterogeneity, new sources of information, new scape lines (...) It makes us participate more intensely in the living humanity (...) with the multiplication of the singularities and the increase of disorder" (Lévy, 2007: 93).

[5] Where there were painters or musicians, there are designers and disc jockeys. Hybridisation in some ways has become easier and has multiplied when it does not depend on the long times of artisanal and scholar patience, but on the ability to generate hypertexts and quick audiovisual or electronic editing (García Canclini, 2005: 27).

[6] It is an emerging practice known as Dead pose challenge, which consists in faking your own death, taking a picture and then sharing it across social networks.

[7] It is a technology that allows users to stream or download audio and video files via a digital platform.

[8] QR code stands for Quick Response code. It is a system to store coded information in a matrix barcode or a two-dimensional barcode that may be displayed in printed format or on a screen. Unlike its predecessor, the barcode (which emerged in the 1950's), the QR code can store thousands of digits and can be read by many devices like mobile phone cameras and webcams (Huidobro, 2009).

[9] This convergence should not be interpreted only from the technological and material realms but mainly from the symbolic and human level, which in Jenkins's words (2008) requires us to allude to a complex network of interactions between technological, industrial, cultural and social systems.

[10] Postmortem photography was used to memorialised and immortalise the *memento mori* (Latin for "remember you must die"), an important phase in collective life. However, the tradition of photographing the recently deceased, funerals and mourners evolved with transformations in photographic technology, since painted mourning portrait was a tradition continued by photography (Henao Albarracin, 2013).

[11] Although the author does not refer explicitly to social networks, but the dedication he put into the spectacularised version of the social suffices to review some of his analyses.

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