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# **SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, ALGORITHMIC MEDIATION AND THE EMOTIONAL TURN IN COMMUNICATION**

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The interest of this work is to discuss how the new dynamics of content circulation in social media platforms (SMPs), mediated by machine learning algorithms, have amplified the role of messages of moral-emotional appeal in decision-making processes.

We start from the hypothesis that there is an ongoing emotional shift in communication, a shift away from argumentative reason to make room for content constructed by images (memes), short videos and content with a strong emotional charge.

SMP's algorithmic systems distribute content based on emotional discourses, which impact on subjectivities, deepening fears, anxieties, aversions, doubts, hatred, and reinforcing prejudices.

In the SMPs environment, which are characterized by speed, instantaneity and large amounts of content, the user stays for seconds on each message and reacts immediately, getting trapped in a circle of stimuli activated mainly by moral/emotional content, which quickly fires in the cognitive system.

Based on Peirce's semiotics, we will discuss how in this environment, the methods of fixation of beliefs by tenacity and authority (EP 1 1992) are favored, since we are stuck in a first-secondary cycle, and we look at the contents without rational mediation, that is, we do not move on to a higher cognitive stage, in which time and space are embodied to allow the representation of these contents.

This emotional turn is displacing rationality from the center of decision-making processes, negatively impacting the public sphere and democracy, which poses new epistemological challenges to understanding the ongoing changes.

We define this turning point as the *dissemination of content of a moral/emotional nature favored by algorithmic mediation to access emotions – from specialized strategies to achieve practical and rapid persuasion effects – and use them to manipulate and modulate impulsive social behaviors, which do not require understanding processes and do not have an argumentative reason to form beliefs and guide attitudes.*

Lakoff (2009) developed an extensive study in the field of cognitive sciences on how the functioning of the mind plays a role in the political decision-making process. He says that it is an innocent mistake to believe that people only take a stand on the basis of a conscious rationality, whose attributes are logic, literalness and the absence of emotion aimed at serving their interests. For Lakoff, the use of emotion in political persuasion is legitimate and not an appeal to irrationality.

Peirce points out that emotions “arise when our attention is strongly drawn to complex and inconceivable circumstances” (CP 5292):

The indescribable, the ineffable, the incomprehensible, commonly excite emotion; but nothing is so chilling as a scientific explanation. Thus an emotion is always a simple predicate substituted by an operation of the mind for a highly complicated predicate. (CP 5292)

Based on the discussions brought by Lakoff and Peirce, this work will reflect on how emotions triggered by algorithmic models and expression dynamics marked by instantaneity are interfering in this rational dialogue.

## References

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