

THEMATIC CONTRIBUTION TO
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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AT THE TIME OF TWITTER AND CHANNELS IN
CONTINUOUS

The news shows us the considerable and uncontrolled effects of certain campaigns or **media hype** on the most diverse subjects, generally amplified by so-called social networks. These media hype are often triggered on their own, without the need to look for any "conspiracy" whatsoever.

Facebook, with its "intimate diary" side, its networks of "friends" (what kind of friendship is it?), by mixing family relationships, political relations, local news and major planetary subjects, by allowing remote (and therefore almost anonymous) expression and instantaneous, often unthinking reactions, exacerbates exchanges, amplifies agreements as well as disagreements, favors extreme positions and accentuates divisions without giving them any "outlet". It is a tool that should be used sparingly and methodically. We are far from it.

Twitter, meanwhile, has revolutionized the political debate in the United States. Already used "one step ahead" by Barack Obama in 2008 to make his competitors look old-fashioned, Twitter has greatly helped Donald Trump in his "one man against all" fight during the primaries and then in his campaign against Hillary Clinton. This striking tool ("perforator" would say the military) makes it possible to train the least thoughtful citizens, to raise their passions, to the detriment of those who are more interested in the reasoning of their fellow citizens and voters.

It worked during Donald Trump's victorious campaign and it continued to work during his tenure.

The instantaneous nature of information, already developed by continuous news channels for many years, places readers-listeners-viewers, but also other media, in a situation of **dependency**. Everything goes faster and faster, one reaction triggers another, and the only way to exist in this process is to create polemic, buzz or scandal. Everything is therefore amplified, exaggerated, distorted, caricatured, **if not non-existent!** One debate chases another, mingles with another, everything has the same importance, we no longer know clearly what we are talking about, but we have a point of view!

So certainly **none of this is entirely new**. In battles of opinion, whether political, cultural or social, there has always been "breaking news", rumors, false news, manipulation, slander. Without going looking for the Ems Dispatch or the Dreyfus affair, the first round of the 2002 presidential election in

France has probably been impacted by the aggression of an old man in Orleans, and we no longer count the inevitably harmful standards, on the status of apprentices or the size of the taps, for which "we" attribute the responsibility to the European Commission, which, however, can't help but be concerned.

In fact, what is new and damaging, in our time when an increasing proportion of our fellow citizens are informing themselves via the Internet, is the **speed and immediacy** of the propagation, as well as its planetary character, making it impossible to deny, relativize or even nuance it. What is said is said, everywhere and forever. These networks with general and instantaneous diffusion also make possible and frighteningly effective **indoctrination** processes such as those organized by Daesh in their time.

The French government, originally motivated by the maneuvers that (allegedly) victimized the current President of the Republic during his election campaign, has attempted to deal with the issue of "fake **news**" by law. Accelerated procedures, shortened deadlines, certainly, but the debate inevitably stumbles over the limits posed by the necessary freedom of the press.

In the real world the new communication tools mentioned above exist. This is a fact. So let's learn how to master them so we don't fall victim to them. After all, radio, a new means of communication at the time, did carry the Appeal of June 18.

A certain number of **legislative or regulatory measures** will be appropriate: to ensure net neutrality, to finally prohibit a search engine from "tracking" its users, to speed up (without weakening) legal proceedings in case of abuse, to prevent media concentration, or to create, for example, the status of an independent non-profit media.

In particular, it is a question of enabling citizens to find media, places where they can be sure to find verified, prioritized and contextualized information, untruncated and unbiased debates. Media that would help to get out of the emotional, to situate themselves in the medium and long term, to emancipate themselves (right away the big words!). It seems that this could be called "**public service**".

But of course, as in all fields, one must start with awareness, continue with education and extend with ethics.

In elementary school and then in middle school, courses in the use of social networks and media in general would be useful. The general climate and the behaviours they would help create would more than make up for the time spent. Not to mention the contribution to the development of **critical thinking skills** and the construction of an enlightened citizenry.

At the same time, any journalist could be encouraged from time to time to reread the Charter of **Ethics** that applies to his profession, to systematically verify information, its source and the intentions of the authors before taking over the said information.

As for politicians, unless they risk their taste for media manipulation turning against them one day (examples abound), they would do well to think before speaking or before answering a live question, and to take about ten seconds of **reflection before** pressing the "twitter" button, wondering, for each message, whether it is really worth the candle.

The two "corporations" could also learn to avoid the "Godwin points" and usefully make a point of reading one history book a month (one is moderate in ambition!) in order to perfect their **general culture**. They would thus avoid embarking on inappropriate formulas, or even getting carried away in risky comparisons by this or that "expert", blogger, or twitter.

In this world where "everyone is a journalist", let's get back to our minds and rediscover the fundamentals of the spirit of the Enlightenment.
