Human development and the psychology of social growth and personal transformation

IDHUS
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Dossier

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Introduction

Society is undergoing continuous transformation, a perennial phenomenon occurring on an annual, monthly, and even weekly basis. This dynamic state of change is not a novel concept, but rather an inherent characteristic of our contemporary existence. The question at hand pertains to the precise nature of these transformations and the discernible trends likely to manifest in the forthcoming years.

From a vantage point high above, an observer might perceive an enigmatic tapestry of collective consciousness, a vast reservoir of energy poised to shape the evolving narrative of humanity. Within this intricate tapestry, social dynamics appear to traverse diverse trajectories, all seemingly interwoven by a common thread that propels our civilization in a distinct direction.

The crux of the matter lies in ascertaining this direction and subsequently dissecting its constituent elements. This endeavor would afford us the opportunity to offer objective insights into the trajectory of personal, social, and collective growth and development within our species. Are we progressing in terms of social awareness? Are we fostering greater compassion among ourselves? Are the denizens of our planet increasingly engaged in mutual assistance? Can we assert that we have evolved into a more humane society, or have we embraced a colder, more distant, and artificial demeanor? Importantly, do we possess the agency to alter the course of our development, should we possess the knowledge to do so?

Numerous inquiries naturally arise, and the answers seldom reside within the purview of individual analysis gleaned solely from the compilation of political, economic, and social events disseminated by the media. Consequently, it becomes imperative for us to fulfill our obligation by forecasting the pivotal factors destined to shape humanity's development in the years ahead. This involves extrapolating from the social and cultural dynamics of preceding years and scrutinizing data to validate

whether we are indeed charting a consistent course or poised to enact transformative changes.

The profound impact of technology on our perception of reality and the transformation of our urban milieu

We have previously noted, in select publications at the IDHUS Institute, the profound impact of technology on our perception of reality and the transformation of our urban milieu. In the subsequent pages, we shall delve further into alterations within the domains of economics and geopolitics, which, whether welcomed or not, exert considerable influence on the analysis of societal development from psychological, evolutionary, human, and collective standpoints.

Given that humans are inherently social, rational, communal, and emotional beings, what prospects are emerging with marked emphasis and substantial influence on our interpersonal behavior?

Undeniably, we find ourselves increasingly introspective, largely due to the pervasive presence of mobile technology. Over the years, our interactions with those in our immediate surroundings, even our life partners, have diminished, as we constantly tether ourselves to mobile devices, readily accessible for consultation regardless of our location—be it at home or in a restaurant, celebrating anniversaries. We no longer seek directions from local inhabitants, for Google Maps effortlessly guides us. In general, for most tasks, we find that we can accomplish nearly everything without the need for direct human interaction, as forms can be completed, orders placed online, or emails dispatched, often supplanting the role of face-to-face conversation.

Yet, we seldom pause to evaluate whether this shift is advantageous. Each individual applies technology and its conveniences according to their own judgment. However, it is an overarching observation that, within the social realm, we increasingly inhabit isolated personal universes, with minimal inclination to explore the unique universes of others beyond the necessities of daily coexistence, work, or familial responsibilities. For the rest, our mobile devices typically suffice.

Consequently, society becomes more insular, less inclined to engage in meaningful exchanges with fellow members, affecting the mechanisms that sustain its functioning. This reliance on technology surpasses reliance on our innate psychology to interpret or engage with others. Emoticons in platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, or Signal often convey more about our emotional states than our facial expressions or the condition of our eyes on a given day.

This trend not only persists but intensifies with each passing year and technological advancement. It is intriguing that the very tools designed to simplify our lives inadvertently foster a heightened sense of isolation, a development seemingly at odds with the historical functioning of human

beings. We have not ceased to be social animals capable of efficient cooperation in large groups; rather, we have begun to seek opportunities to minimize contact with our fellow beings whenever possible.

It is conceivable that a significant portion of the prevailing societal dynamics can be attributed to the intricate psychological systems inherent in the human psyche and the apprehensions surrounding potential harm in interpersonal engagements. Dealing with unfamiliar individuals, conveying one's intentions or needs, and accommodating the moods of others can often prove challenging. Consequently, it is entirely reasonable that a preference for anonymity, technological mediation, and the reduced stress associated with human interaction has emerged.

As with most aspects of life, relationships with fellow members of our species exhibit a spectrum of potentialities, spanning from psychologically and energetically toxic encounters to those offering solace, encouragement, support, or assistance.

However, an observable trend is steering individuals toward their personal domains with increasing dedication. This trend takes root from the early stages of life when forging lasting friendships during childhood has

become increasingly challenging. Likewise, on a societal scale, there is mounting resistance among peoples, societies, and nations to maintain deep-seated bonds of friendship or brotherhood beyond superficial affiliations that cities may exchange based on mutual "compatibility" or "liking."

Numerous global communities now find themselves entangled with others, sometimes over matters of natural resources, raw materials, ideological disparities, religious divergences, or cultural conflicts. These confrontations persist and cyclically resurface across our geographical landscape, akin to a concealed hand igniting conflicts to serve interests that remain inscrutable to many or are completely unknown.

Returning to our initial inquiries, have we evolved greater consciousness? Are we more advanced than we were a year, three years, or two decades ago? Generally, the consensus suggests that our understanding of the world, reality, and the universe in which we dwell has not appreciably progressed. Advancement is not limited to scientific knowledge but encompasses human, psychological, and even spiritual comprehension, the latter being an intangible facet persisting within each of us.

The moral dimension, an integral part of beliefs and systems in every corner of the globe, assumes significance in how we perceive our fellow humans, not merely based on their possessions or social standing. Regrettably, few individuals delve beyond the surface, typically assessing others through the lens of social titles or classes presented to the world. This superficiality gives rise to countless subjective judgments, primarily founded on appearance, public presentation, or public image.

A profound chasm often separates one's outward presentation from their true essence, as individuals adeptly wear various masks of personality tailored to each circumstance. Consequently, judgments are rendered, criticisms voiced, and opinions formed, often in the absence of authentic data or comprehensive understanding of the underlying reasons or motivations.

Thus, contemporary society progressively leans toward individualism, increasingly ensconced in the virtual realm facilitated by mobile technology. As we perpetuate the habit of scrutinizing others through a biased lens, offering only a fragmented understanding of one another, our capacity for mutual comprehension diminishes. Evidently, the dynamics of these years are exacerbating this reality, propelling us further into a world characterized by diminished mutual assistance, comprehension, and a prevailing preference for solitude over devoting a fraction of our existence to assisting others.

Nevertheless, it is also undeniable that upon closer scrutiny, a discerning observer who ventures beyond the macrocosmic view of humanity's psychological and evolutionary trajectories may discover instances to challenge these conclusions. At street level, they would encounter acts of kindness, individuals aiding others in crossing streets, children sharing coins with those in need, and strangers exchanging greetings. Such observations beg the question: What ails the macrocosm that the microcosm does not replicate? How can it be that individual instances of kindness, empathy, and readiness to assist coexist with societal trajectories seemingly heading in the opposite direction?

Individually, by and large, we all endeavor to fulfill our roles as benevolent beings when the opportunity presents itself. We seldom refuse aid to those in need and readily collaborate with others when circumstances necessitate. However, there are always conditions to our actions, contingent upon our convenience, alignment with our schedules and mobile phone agendas, and the absence of interruptions within our private universes. It is only when these stars align that we spontaneously engage in acts of kindness benefiting others.

The current paradigm warrants a reversal: a shift towards a mode of existence characterized by natural, social, communal, and collaborative living. Our immersion in the virtual realm of small screens should ideally occur only when our primary mode of living leaves us with no other responsibilities. Regrettably, the current norm is the inverse; we extend our hand to help someone retrieve an out-of-reach item or assist a pedestrian

in crossing the street only when we have no messages to send, articles to peruse on our mobile devices, or social media statuses to scrutinize. In these moments, we cease to function as social beings, characterized by kindness and cooperation, because we retreat into our individual universes, oblivious to the needs of those around us.

This sociocultural dynamic becomes perceptible on a macro level, even though individual micro-level instances may sometimes contradict this pattern. The extent of such observations hinges on the time devoted to scrutinizing human behavior on a smaller scale and the capacity to engage in comprehensive analysis of broader societal dynamics.

This pattern of existence is proving exceedingly resistant to change, as we have become ensnared in a habit of withdrawal from the physical world. Paradoxically, the external world, the one "beyond the mobile device," offers us precisely what we need for comfort and fulfillment. Yet, we find ourselves ensnared in a psychological quagmire wherein the virtual realm has supplanted reality as the primary reference point for managing our lives. Subsequently, the genuine world recedes into the background until it is deemed convenient to re-engage with it.

It is highly probable that this trend will persist and intensify, especially among younger generations, as reflected in our reports analyzing humanity's dynamics. It remains crucial, therefore, for parents to cultivate an awareness of these issues and encourage their children to experience "real" life. While acknowledging that many teenagers require mobile devices to participate in contemporary society, there is still room to influence a balance between the two "worlds." The emphasis should be placed on appreciating the physical world, fostering interpersonal relationships, engaging in outdoor activities whenever feasible, and advocating detachment from technology when appropriate. Mobile devices should be regarded as tools to support life's necessities, rather than mechanisms for escape and withdrawal.

Moreover, parents themselves must relearn the art of living as they did before the advent of mobile phones, treating these devices as tools to be used as needed. When necessary, one can take them, accomplish the required tasks, and return them to their designated places without succumbing to the anxiety of receiving immediate messages or constant updates on social profiles. Achieving this seemingly formidable objective would set us on a path to manifest a micro-level transformation that, contingent upon the number of individuals adopting this approach to reclaim control over their reality and human interactions, may eventually extend to the macro level. Such a shift could foster enhanced understanding among peoples, cultures, and societies, although it is vital to recognize that broader geopolitical interests remain influential factors in global dynamics. Nevertheless, achieving this balance in the utilization of our time between the virtual and physical realms would represent a significant accomplishment, affording the opportunity to reorganize society from this new equilibrium.

In summary

We hope to have shed light on the intricate relationship between societal evolution, technology, and human conduct. They underscore the imperative of maintaining genuine connections amidst the prevalence of technology. While acknowledging the challenges, they offer hope for change at both individual and societal levels.

The overarching message calls for a reevaluation of our technological relationship and a renewed focus on the fundamental human elements that promote empathy, collaboration, and shared experiences.