

The Affective Media Apparatus: a brief study of Media's role in the Age of Information

Debarshi Arathdar

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Swami Vivekananda University

In the age of information and the propagating waves of the same, structures of correspondence have become increasingly entangled with the modes of their relation, each being a dynamic rendition of the societal variables. To characterize the role of media, society and cognition with their mutual affects, is to discuss the underlying points of unity that serve for the feasible transference and modulation of information across the following domains.

As one is always already conditioned to the epistemological biases of their own contemporary age, escaping the frameworks often seems a daunting task. For in attempting an escape, one by default places themselves in an extension of the same framework from which they seek to escape.

To exist as an individual in today's age is to remain in mediation from the very start. In the round-about of mediation and remediation is the state subject created. As Althusser notes, even before one takes birth and becomes a subject, one is already under the influence of ideology. In a similar manner, mediation starts quite early on (yet later than the ideological or mirror stage, is it so?) when one is exposed to the intricacies of identity as requisite for social conditions. The mediated subject is one whose subjectivity is (partly) a product of the very remediation it is exposed to.

Social media today functions akin to the ISA as discussed by Althusser, however, some fundamental features of social media makes it an even more softer version of ISA wherein each user is normalized to the tenets of the 'stockholm syndrome'. The philosophy of being a user on social media has its own ideological underpinnings that is derived from the physical society and transported into the virtual domain. The transportation is not without its consequences for such a transportation of societal relations from the physical to the virtual domain is also a transformation of the ontic of such relations themselves. The result is an emergent hybrid reality wherein both the physical and virtual levels mutually affect each other, transforming the dynamic of each and in turn forming newer 'modes' of producing, maintaining and terminating such relations.

Media in today's age is characterized by its reproducibility of content via different forms, often serving the essence of the content in a manner that reverberates across multimodal forms.

Discussion

The impact of Media forms in conditioning our lived experiences is arguably undoubtable, however the very media structure embodies within it a sense of double bind for "the twin preoccupations of contemporary media: the transparent presentation of the real and the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves" (Bolter and Grusin 1999).

Effects on individual's formation of the self

Any form of media is by default subject to severely impacting the nature of one's conditioning, that in turn affects the formation of the self as a whole.

Self Image: Exposure to digital and social media from an early age can significantly affect the outlook of one's own image and influence its construction and formation in the first place itself. Depending on the content viewed from an early age,

one's own nature either adapts or simulates similar actions as seen on the screen. The wide variety of roles on screens further affect a convoluted formation of oneself that always seeks solace on social media platforms via likes and comments.

Self Desires: Not only is the notion of one's own 'image' under the scrutiny of the media but even how the self desires certain notions and concepts. The conditioning of oneself with respect to the urges of the age isn't a new idea, perhaps it has been existent from the dawn of civilization itself. However, to be so dynamic in forming one's needs and desires with respect to the 'trend' is significantly characteristic of the media age.

Self Roles: The several forms of media that permeate our age heavily influence the formation of one's own identity, one's sense of purpose, achievement, even to the degree of one's likes and dislikes. Digital and Print media can affect the way one functions or navigates through one's environment, for "our experience is always changing and furthermore is always dependent on a particular situation. To be human, indeed to be living, is always to be in a situation, a context, a world" (Varela et al 1993). Media therein provides the locus for such shifting contexts and puts one's self in the intricate web of relations that affect both the self and an other.

Effects of Media on the formation of Community

Media not only affects the self but also affects the nature of collective selves, in the form of societies and cultures.

Communal Agendas: The dissemination of memes and reels/videos on social media platforms significantly affect groups and communities alike. One can easily figure out how the presence of political content significantly affects the formation of dominating narratives, often purported by the ruling ideologies of the current governance. Similarly, the increasing number of groups on both whatsapp, facebook and instagram are not only a platform for sharing images but also providing discussion platforms. An effect that was witnessed in revolutionary protests like 'black lives matter' or the 'me

too' movement to the 'storming of the capitol' or the 'invasion of area 51'.

Communal Entertainment and a sense of Escapism: Several forms of print media then and usually digital media now provide a common recluse for entertainment for all sorts of human-human relationships. Media provides communities with shared systems of entertainment that helps them to bond, organize, rationalize, ideate and systematize belief systems that further comprise shared schemas of thought. One can easily associate the family dramas and tv soap operas that run at particular dinner times, in order to capture the required audience apt for the following content, as dinner time is when the family is usually together (depending on cultures and countries).

Communal Desensitization: A significant effect that the modern digital media has wrought upon society at large is the collective 'othering' of a particular community, culture, language, caste, race, creed etc. Several narratives as channelized via news channels provide a sense of collective solidarity with respect to socio-political issues while placing a 'scape-goat' on often a minority sect. Such forms seem to purport a sense of supposed unity, yet they mask underneath the prototypes of communal disharmony.

Conclusion

Media aids in not only forming avenues for collective being but also provides elements that rupture the same. To be born in the information age is to remain heavily mediated via multimodal forms. The effect of Media in today's age is often ominous and represented exactly as the same in its own forms, for example- portrayals of dystopia in both film and literature. Perhaps, it is the very capability of media forms to form meta-commentary upon themselves that characterize their wide integration in modern societies. The tangible effect of both traditional and New Media in affecting one's cognition and in turn their discourses automatically open up

avenues for a dawning sense of cybercultural tropes wherein man's relation to their environment and themselves suffer significant mutation with the advent of bits and digits.

References

Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (2003). *Remediation: Understanding new media*. MIT Press.

Althusser, L. (1970). *Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état : (Notes pour une recherche)*. Stampatore Non Identificato.

Varela, F. J., Rosch, E., & Thompson, E. (2016). *The embodied mind : cognitive science and human experience*. The MIT Press.