## "Educating and Evangelizing Today in the Digital Habitat. Together with young people, toward the future": Part Two

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A new habitat exists in which we are all involved. The world is changing rapidly, due to digital connectivity, the Internet, and Artificial Intelligence.

There are epochal transformations taking place, in the paradigm and in the way they function, that are forming the convergent world we inhabit: they concern the way we manage money, buy, invest, security, the health system, the way we travel, the world of education and entertainment. In just a few decades, the world has experienced a profound cultural and social paradigm shift because of information technology, the Internet, social media, and smartphones.

Clearly, with the growth of the digital world some challenges emerge as well, such as security and privacy; and, among other challenges, the digital divide should also be mentioned.

Given the digital and virtual world we live in, a world in continuous transition, we now live in an immersive environment, one in which we have all our contacts, data, and information to work, travel, and move. In addition, the robotization of society is a concrete reality both in large industrial manufacturing companies and in the automation of sectors such as health and safety.

The infosphere opens up a new frontier of major investments after that of smartphones, creating the possibility of immersing oneself in a world with different dimensions, temporal, psychological, and social, and expanding the experience of the reality of relationships. The infosphere (a term invented by philosopher Luciano Floridi) is a complex term.

In essence, it is the environment in which the real and virtual worlds are integrated, where time and space intertwine and merge, so that both the online and offline interact with each other.

In this scenario, the field of automation and artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality is also expanding. In this encounter between the person, technology, and the immersive environment, aspects of the life of the person and society emerge in the public sphere.

When we use this terminology - virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), Infosphere - it is important to have a simple idea of this conceptual complexity.

Through the 5 senses, therefore with our visual, sound, sensitive abilities, and interaction with devices (installation of virtual tools such as 3D glasses) we can enter a reality present-absent to us, we can immerse ourselves (through the senses) in different interactive realities (made of people and devices).

More recently, Mark Zuckerberg, announced that Facebook will become Metaverse. This is a term created by fiction writer Neal Stephenson, in 1992, simply to say that there is a virtual world that can be inhabited by 3-D avatars of real people.

We can say that the metaverse is a universe of various dimensions in a parallel universe. Moreover, in the complexity of communication that the infosphere presents to us, we progressively see the influence of cybernetics, biogenetics, biopolitics, and artificial intelligence, which thus form a true kaleidoscope of the communicative environment, with their diversity and changes.

As can be seen, the digital becomes extremely complex when we insert it into human, interpersonal, community, and institutional communication. Also, there are many ways of interpreting the digital phenomenon and the socio-cultural and economic context of humanity.

The ways of interpreting the digital present us with practical situations that have and shall have consequences for the present and future of humanity.

Recently, there are several authors who propose a reflection based on the concept of the Anthropocene. The starting point of these authors is that we humans, through the past decades and technological development, have generated a vast and devastating impact on the planet, changing the environment in broad and significant ways, altering fauna, flora, oceans, organisms, and their environment.

These changes affect not only the environmental system but also the complex global system, culture, human relations, and way of life.

Despite some disagreements among theorists of this view, there are currently several authors who argue that we are living in a new era, in which this environmental change and the new way of living and coexisting with technologies and the virtual are combined. Massimo Rizzante - poet, writer, and translator - argues that the only religion left in the world today is techno-scientific progress and asks: are we living in a post-human society?

Another well-known author, Thomas Eriksen, a scholar of the information society, makes a statement that touches precisely on a very important issue and one that deserves to be explored: we are living in an "anthropology of accelerated change," "a society out of control." However, it does not seem simple to argue for an anthropology of the mutations of the human.

Virtual communication has introduced the human person into a new temporal and spatial dimension, characterized by speed, instantaneousness, and interactivity. Through a mobile phone, a 13-year-old teenager can make a movie, edit it, post it on the Internet and social networks, and perhaps make a business out of it, hiding his or her identity, age and origin.

There are a wide variety of studies published in the last 30 years on the psychological, philosophical, social, and educational aspects of the virtual. There is a constant debate about whether we are truly experiencing the primacy of technologies, whether the virtual world is becoming a new religion, whether we can continue to live immersed in the digital habitat without an ethic that offers us security, freedom, responsibility, and justice. The primacy of technologies.

There are attempts at dialogue, for example, between philosophy and virtuality, psychology and artificial intelligence, theology and neuroscience. In my opinion, it is exactly at this point that we find great impasses and great challenges to this dialogue.

For example, artificial intelligence dialogues very well with neuroscience because it fosters the relationship of the human brain with digital and virtual logic. This relationship favors the logic of automation, but it finds a very serious obstacle concerning the person's free will, conscience, freedom.

For anthropology, philosophy, humanistic, cognitive, analytical psychology, freedom, consciousness, free will, in the case of psychoanalysis (the role of the unconscious) are fundamental elements of the respective epistemologies. Finding out how to establish a dialogue between these sciences with neuroscience and artificial intelligence will be a great challenge for the future.

While some propose a vision of human mutation in the relationship with technology (augmented reality, metaverse), there are, on the other hand, also those who are extremely critical of technology, arguing that the virtual has made us stop living/experiencing the real, and that information technology is a new way of controlling people and society.

In the next article, Part 3, we shall see that major challenges emerge in this new digital landscape.  The big challenge is represented by the fact that technology is not neutral. The virtual, in fact, emerges within the complex universe of the development of capital, politics, different ideologies of groups, and the dominance of companies whose capital and research have control over the structure, organization, and contents of the Internet and social networks. Furthermore, everything is connected: the technological, economic system, health, education, security, and the conflict of interest between the State and Corporations.