

## Media psychology: Modern man and nonlocality of psyche

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The development of modern information technologies is causing changes in the structure of the human psyche, bringing about a new psychotype. The transition to a new level of evolution is accompanied by the growing manifestation of the psyche's ontological features — nonlocality and self-determination. From a sample of more than 300 people, it was demonstrated that active Internet users are significantly different in a number of parameters from those who mostly use traditional media. This article examines the resources of media psychology as a new paradigm in the study of mass communication phenomena and the laws of the development of psyche.

**Keywords:** media psychology, the nonlocality of psyche, net-thinking, hacktivism, communicative openness, information security, evolution of psyche

### Introduction

The relatively new concept of “media psychology” is steadily gaining ground in modern science, as well as in the minds of researchers, despite skepticism on the part of those who are used to the division of psychology into the traditional branches, one of which is the psychology of mass communication. However, more and more scientists are beginning to realize that “media psychology” is not just a buzzword or a handy term but the name of a new phenomenological field, which goes beyond the boundaries of traditional classifications and concepts. In the past several decades, it has become clear that none of the existing disciplines can give a satisfactory answer to such questions as *What is mass communication as such?* and *What are the patterns of its development?* The problem is that every time, depending on the position of the researcher, mass communication turns out to have different qualities and appears ei-

\* The first English journal on media psychology, called “Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods and Applications,” started to be published in 2008. It has an off- and an on-line version. A few years earlier, in 2001, a German journal, “Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie,” was first published. It is devoted to research in mass communication carried out in Germany and other European countries. In Russia, the first publication on media psychology was a collection of articles called “The Problems of Media Psychology” (2002). It was followed by “The Problems of Media Psychology — 2” (2003). The first book on mass media psychology translated into Russian was “Medienpsychologie” by Peter Winterhoff-Spurk (2007). The German version came out in 2004.

ther to be in the technological or psycho-phenomenological sphere. It is impossible to limit one's research to only one approach because the accountability and controllability of technological processes are nullified by the intangibility and polyvalence of psychological processes, and psychological phenomena make complex causative links with technological ones. The more advanced the communicative technologies are, the more unpredictable man's reaction is. Thus, attempts to control information flows lead to psychodynamic social processes going out of control and, in contrast, free stochastic communication leads to the processes becoming more streamlined. No sound explanation for the paradoxical phenomena of controllability / unpredictability, conditionality / spontaneity, openness / impermeability has been given so far. It seems as if we are dealing with an antinomy that cannot be resolved in the framework of the traditional linear-discrete model of mass communication, which implies the opposition of the speaker and the recipient, cause and effect, means and content. The first man to go beyond the linear way of thinking typical of people working in this field was the Canadian philosopher and researcher M. McLuhan who expressed the essence of his ideas in the well-known formula "The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1965), and even in the more defiant and seemingly illogical thesis "The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1967).

Fifty years later, we see that the industrial era has given way to a digital age, which proves that McLuhan's words were not a play on words but a clue, the elementary algorithm of the new paradigm of thinking created by mass communication itself. There is no doubt that electronic technologies have facilitated new thinking and the emergence of a new man and that people who lived in the days that the new technologies were introduced are different from those who see and hear the world through them today.

The electronic mass media have changed the psycho-technique of perception, thinking and behavior and expanded man's mental abilities. Within the global information processes, man's thinking has acquired new qualities that could be defined as net-thinking\*. It is a special form of psyche, rather independent and self-contained, with its own phenomena, paradoxes and system of self-regulation.

Until recently, these phenomena were not considered to be a subject for serious scientific study, leaving only bold guesses, hearsay and much vagueness. Scientific publications were full of new terms, such as "internet-dependence," "virtual reality," "virtual self" (Gumanitarnye..., 2000), which marked, similar to milestones, flashes of research enthusiasm every time a new fact was discovered. However, most of the academic community looked on them as simply local phenomena that did not affect the existing system of concepts and the structure of knowledge.

A global digital space, with its unprecedented possibilities, opened up so suddenly and without fanfare that, at first, nobody realized that a transition to a new stage in the development of science had occurred. After temporary disorientation, the first reaction was to try to hold on to the conventional concepts and long existing postulates. However, as time went by, it gradually became clear that a new language and new ways of thinking had to be developed to comprehend and describe the new reality (Pronin & Pronina, 2000). There had been a change in the scientific paradigm, a change that could be compared to the transition of science from

\* For the characteristics of Net-thinking refer to E.Pronin, E.Pronina (2000), E.Pronina (2002).

Newton's physics to quantum mechanics, or from linear determinism to nonlinear causality. In the same way that the phenomenon of quantum non-locality had led to the birth of the elementary particle physics and wave theory, the phenomena of the digital era became the "crystallization point" of a new paradigm in psychology, the theory of journalism and mass communication. Science faced a new "Everest" — the problem of the nonlocality of psyche. The nonlocality of psyche became tremendously important and contributed to the emergence of a new science — media psychology — which considers mass communication (the media) as an expression of nonlocal psychological processes. The comparison with quantum nonlocality is neither accidental nor intentional. It is a manifestation of the unity of the fundamental principles of existence on the one hand, and the heuristic nature of certain mental categories on the other.

The nonlocality of psyche manifests itself on three levels in terms of its existence, self-development and self-organization:

- 1) the psyche simultaneously exists in two forms, individual (quasi-local) and collective (nonlocal), between which the relations of complementarity and interdependence occur (Pronina, 2002);
- 2) the psyche develops as a co-evolution of those two forms (Pronina, 2011);
- 3) the psyche solves problems of adaptation by becoming more complex according to the principles of an "unlocked system", and as a kind of "functional organ" (Ukhtomsky, 1966), i.e., it spontaneously goes to a higher level of organization by creating and using external means (Vygotsky, 1999; Lyria, 1970) (such as meanings, ways of acting, norms, values, as well as practical activities and technical means, as long as they can change the structure of mental operations (Kirichenko & Pronina, 2011).

As a new "functional organ", higher-level technologies have led to an evolutionary leap in the development of the psyche. The mass media, together with the Internet, have become a gigantic accelerator and resonator of the evolution of the psyche. Changes have occurred both on the macro (collective) and the micro (individual) levels. Speaking about the collective phenomena, they are now so widespread that it is impossible not to notice them. Permeated by information flows, such as neuron networks, society today has turned into a hyper-subject possessing a hyper-psyche. The amazing mobility, synchronicity, coordination and magnitude of the collective processes that have been observed recently are proof of that. However, the most important thing is that the nature of social movements has changed.

During the so-called "Twitter revolution", the streets of Tunis and Cairo were filled with crowds of people that were very different from the "dancing opposition" that had constituted the "velvet" and "colored" revolutions several years before. The people in Tahrir Square in Cairo were united not by a sudden affect, or prolonged agitation, or a well-worked out political technology with entertaining shows, but rather by mutual understanding and concord and the spontaneous drive for self-organization, which is more typical of a flashmob. No wonder that at first, before the military and the police interfered, there were many decent people in the square, some of whom had brought their children (Stepashin, & Kots, 2011).

In street interviews, ordinary people who had taken part in the events expressed very clearly and passionately one common thought: "... this revolution

isn't controlled by religion or money. We are the ones controlling it. ... We haven't come here to say who we want to be president. We want our rights to be respected" (Stepashin & Kots, 2011). These words were said not by representatives of some or other group fighting for their leader or privileges, but by independent citizens hoping to establish laws that everybody would have to obey. It should be noted that the driving force of the protest movement was young educated people and people of the middle class. By the way, the country where the social unrest began was Tunisia, one of the most developed and, as it seemed, stable countries in the Arab world. The protest mood spread instantly, similar to a lit fuse, and revealed the depth of the gulf between the half-feudal clan government and the latent egalitarian consciousness of civil society.

Experts note that the mass protests in these countries have a common cause: "This common cause is the new generation. Being better informed than their parents, they have become a factor in the political life of the Arab world. They feel that they are citizens, rather than somebody's subjects. Paternalism, the feeling that there is somebody who is the father of our nation who "is thinking of us and leading us", is alien to them. They are both prepared and want to assume responsibility for the future of their country and their own future. The Arab world is ripe for democracy ..." (Podtserob, 2011). Some experts believe that the global network, which has introduced the more educated part of the population to global values and modern standards of life, greatly contributed to this. What seemed to be natural and was looked on as the only way possible to a man with a medieval psyche who fully submitted to the elite clan is now viewed as absurd and unjust by a person with a sense of individuality and who has a clear understanding of their rights.

Unfortunately, it was the mentality of the younger generation, the advanced "net generation," that changed, and very soon politicians and other greedy people hurried to be among the first to take advantage of the fruits of the victory. They started to zealously fight for power, and, in a number of countries, the situation began to develop according to the old and tragic scenario of civil war. To paraphrase a well-known idiom: the problem is not the new generation as such but its relatively small numbers compared to the total population of the country. However, taking into account the objective laws of social development and the spontaneous evolution of man, the victory of the new patterns is only a matter of time. Additionally, something has undoubtedly been achieved already: it has been recognized by the international community that the new constitution adopted in Tunisia in January of 2014, after three years of hard struggle, is the most progressive one in the whole history of Arab states. For the first time, not only does it guarantee human rights, but a freedom of religion and equal rights for men and women.

The new psychotype that is taking shape is evident in the lives, actions and personality traits of people who enjoy authority among the Internet community. These people have a need for truth, or, in other words, "the instinct of truth" (Pronina, 2011, p.136). With the role of information growing, the need for the truth that has always protected the individual's integrity and society from moral decay, even in the most difficult and critical periods in human history (Pronin & Pronina, 2011), becomes extremely vital. Recent events have clearly shown that the struggle for free access to information, as well as for its accuracy, is becoming the battle line in the modern world. The most heated debates and fierce fighting

are arising over this. For example, the case of J. Assange, the trial of B. Manning, the arrests of the Internet community Anonymous activists, the public outcry over large corporations who are trying to “monopolize” information and turn it into a source of super profits, the emergence of Pirate parties standing for freedom of information on the Internet, and the case of Edward Snowden who had to flee after he made public the facts of full-scale spying on ordinary citizens by the US National Security Agency (NSA). Therefore, on one side of the barricade, there is the world’s “administrative resource,” and on the other, the worldwide community of Internet users armed only with their will to resist pressure and ... the Internet. There have already been a number of dramatic collisions in this confrontation.

The fate of J. Assange, the creator of the site Wikileaks, was intended to intimidate supporters of information openness. Assange was arrested in London on a warrant issued by the Swedish government on December 7, 2010. The hastily made and scandalous allegations against him were obviously initiated by the organizations whose dealings had been made known by Wikileaks to avenge him.

What Assange had done incurred the wrath of “the powerful in this world.” Since the site came into existence in 2006, it has made public many secret documents and confidential files touching on the interests of ruling elites, secret services and big business around the world. However, it was the information on US activities that created a really dangerous situation for Assange. In February of 2009, his Internet resource made public 6780 confidential reports made in the US Congress. In 2010, Wikileaks published some of the Pentagon’s secret files on the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, including video films of helicopter troops shooting civilians in Baghdad (18 people, two Reuters journalists among them, were killed then). (TV Channel 5, 2012)

It was the last straw for the US government when Wikileaks made public pieces of correspondence of the State Department staff which contained some derisive remarks made by well-known American statesmen about political leaders from other countries. Those materials evoked many laughs from Internet users around the world and were reprinted by some of the leading world publishers — The Guardian (UK), The New York Times (US) and Der Spiegel (Germany). It turned out that the government could not forgive the blow to its image when the hypocrisy of the politicians was unmasked.

After some of the scandalous remarks made by high-ranking US officials had been made public, the largest American providers, under pressure from Washington, refused to host the Wikileaks site: Amazon stopped hosting it, and EveryDNS said that they were going to strip Wikileaks of its domain name. At the insistent request of the authorities, the funding channels for the site were blocked, the money-transfer system PayPal froze the Wikileaks account and stopped processing donations to it from sympathetic users — its main source of financing. Money transfers via Visa and MasterCard were also blocked.

Everybody understands that the case against Assange made in Sweden is just the first step to his further extradition to the US, where, most probably, he will be accused of espionage and conspiracy to undermine US national security. For those offenses he may be sentenced to life imprisonment. And this is not just speculation. Private Manning, a 26-year-old intelligence analyst, has been in prison since May 2010 for leaking secret documents to Wikileaks. Before he was indicted, he had

spent approximately 11 months in solitary confinement where conditions were terrible: handcuffed, naked, a cell without windows (CyberSecurity.ru, 2012). According to international human rights activists, the prisoner was kept in inhuman conditions and was subjected to torture and humiliation. However, those statements and appeals had no effect. Though having been tortured in different secret prisons for 2 years, Manning would not plead guilty. Nevertheless, he has been sentenced to 35 years in prison.

The public is not as unanimous in their opinion of Manning's actions as the Pentagon is. More than 250 prominent American public figures signed a letter of support for Manning. Every hearing is accompanied by protests near the court doors. The protesters called Manning a "whistle-blower and hero," "a patriot who has set an example to follow" (TV Channel Vesti, 2012). According to them, Bradley Manning's leaking information had a large role in the government's decision to withdraw the troops from Iraq. Not only Americans are worried about Manning's future. A group of Iceland's MPs have nominated Manning for the Nobel Peace Prize (TV Channel 5, 2012). According to the Icelanders, what Manning did is exactly what an honest man should do in a situation of "totalitarian lawlessness" (TV Channel Vesti, 2012).

It is hard to say how the situation will develop and who will win, the Internet community or the powers that be, in the global struggle for free access to information; however, the Internet has, as it were, made its contribution to the process. The psyche of man has changed irrevocably. Today he has a global network mentality, which means that a new human **psychotype** has been born. The information era has given birth to people with a new type of vision, thinking and understanding. And even if you try to "shut down" the Internet, it will not "bring back" the old mentality.

J. Assange, G. Perelman, B. Manning, R. Stallman, L. Torvalds, E. Snowden, as well as programmers developing free and open-source software, Anonymous hacktivists, people who are taking part in demonstrations organized by the Russian Society of Blue Buckets, the Yes Men group, and simply ordinary members of social networks seeking self-determination and the truth — these are the people of the new type. Under the influence of the new generation, humanity as such is bound to change as time goes by. The nature of social and economic relations, the cultural paradigm, and the vector of the development of civilization are going to change. Similar processes were metaphorically described by the Serbian writer M. Pavich, an ingenious intuitionist, in one of his bizarre stories that has the prophetic title "Life" (Pavic, 2002).

Dalaseña, an ordinary young woman, learns that she is going to have a baby who will be very unusual. As a successor of terrestrial and extraterrestrial civilization, it will have unprecedented abilities: "... all its organs, as well as senses, will perform functions different from other people's. For example, it will have three pupils in each eye. He or she will be able to see any remote corner of the Universe that they want to faster than light. A poet would say: one of the pupils sees time, another one — eternity, and the third one — what is round the corner ..." Stunned, intrigued and alarmed, Dalaseña asks who the child will look like. "Will it look like me, or his forefathers, at least?" And she gets an unexpected answer: "It will look neither like you nor like them. *You will start looking like your child...* (italics ours). That's how it will be. And you will have to reconcile yourself with that." (Pavic, 2002, p.216)

At the end of the story Dalasena miraculously escapes being killed by the jealous and envious Isadora Lisinski. Isadora, who was hiding in the dark stairwell of the house opposite Dalasena's, waiting for her hated rival to come out, could not pull the trigger because she was petrified at seeing her. Going down the lit steps, Dalasena looked calmly and confidently across the dark street straight at Isadora and into the muzzle of the gun. "There was not one but three pupils in each of Dalasena's eyes ... And those eyes could see both Isadora and the 6.35 mm bullet in the gun barrel well through the darkness of the night." Giving Lisinski a nod, she strode lightly into the heat of the night... Dalasena "didn't fully realize what was actually going on, but she felt there was no more darkness for her ... Now her child was looking out of her." (Pavic, 2002, p. 216).

The new psychotype, similar to Dalasena's child, is looking at us from everywhere. It is where there are new technologies and sharpness of thought, direct and honest answers, creative work that is not commercialized and contempt for greed, not accepting lies and the courage to be yourself, respect for the individual and aversion to manipulation.

And this is not just a premonition. The media's psychological approach aimed at studying the co-evolution of an individual and the media enables a researcher to identify the new personality traits that are emerging under the influence of the modern media.

## **Method**

One of the questions that the Center of Media Psychology, which was set up as part of the Faculty of Journalism of Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2008, is doing research on is the identity of the communicator in modern media. The research done under the guidance of Prof. E. Pronin produced rather unequivocal data. For example, it turned out that active Internet users are significantly different from those who mostly use traditional media in a number of parameters (Pronin & Pronina, 2012).

The most distinguishing trait is the need for self-determination (independence) regarded as a desire to freely decide and choose by oneself how to deal with different situations. The desire for self-determination was measured using the method developed by E. Pronin and E. Pronina. It is based on the principle of making a choice when facing a moral dilemma.

For example,

### Dilemma 2.2.

Should one inform the firefighters and builders working in a highly contaminated area of the real level of radiation?

- A) People should have the full picture of the danger they are facing, and they have the right to make the decision themselves as to whether to work at the accident site or not.
- B) One should not inform the emergency workers of the real radiation level, or they may not be able to work, and large territories and masses of people may be subjected to radioactive contamination. It is much more important to see to the emergency workers' safety by shortening their work day, providing them with protective clothing, etc.
- C) It is hard to say.

Option A, which suggests giving rescuers full information and the opportunity to make their own decision, was regarded as the key one and was worth 2 points. Option C, “hard to say”, — was worth 1 point, and option B, i.e., refusal to give information and assume responsibility — 0 points. The respondents were given a total of 10 dilemmas. The dilemmas had been composed in such a fashion as to address different aspects of modern man’s desire for self-determination: from the need for truthful information to defending one’s right to make a choice and have an opinion.

## Results

In the first series of the experiment, 190 people took part — adults with higher education, whose job was not connected with the mass media. It turned out that the more intensely a person used the Internet (searching for information, for entertainment, taking part in social networks), the stronger their desire for self-determination (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The need for self-determination and the intensity of using the Internet

The need for self-determination	Pearson correlation	The intensity of internet use
		0.186*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01
	N	190

A more detailed analysis of information consumption showed that the electronic mass media differ in how they influence audiences. It turns out that actively using the Internet results in a person becoming more independent, while watching TV a lot produces the opposite result (a significant negative correlation:  $r = -0.180$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The interconnection between the need for self-determination and the intensity of participation in social networks and watching TV

The need for self-determination	Pearson correlation	Participation in social networks	The intensity of watching TV
		0.185*	-0.180*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	0.013
	N	190	190

The next series of experiments was done on a sample group of 302 people. In addition to a more extended list of dilemmas, a detailed questionnaire form covering different information expectations was used. It helped to reveal the preferred mass media and acquired thinking stereotypes. That research showed that the desire for



self-determination correlates positively with participation in social networks and negatively with orientation on the traditional media in a situation when a person is looking for information (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The interconnection between self-determination and orientation on different mass media

The need for self-determination		Participation in social networks	Orientation on the traditional media
	Spearman's rho	0.165**	-0.186**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	0.001
	N	302	302

It turned out that active participation in social networks is accompanied not only by a growing need for self-determination but also by less thinking in stereotypes (which was measured by the number of stereotypical assertions chosen) and by a lesser interest in tabloids and glossy magazines (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Activity in social networks and information preferences

Activity in social networks		Thinking in stereotypes	Interest in the yellow press
	Spearman's rho	-0.183**	-0.119*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.039
	N	302	302

## Discussion

Thus, the data obtained are another argument in favor of the idea that new communication means are spontaneously giving rise to a new personality type and a new paradigm of thinking, which, in its turn, is transforming the scientific knowledge itself. The proof of the change taking place in the scientific paradigm is media psychology itself, the science of "the new generation," which considers self-determination, self-organization and self-development as fundamental psychological features, and the defense of personality sovereignty as the most important applied task.

Media psychology studies relations between the individual and collective psyche, the individual and collective consciousness, the individual and collective unconscious, autocommunication (inner speech, self-concept, self-communication) and mass communication (broadcast speech, we-concept, we-communication) as an expression of the psyche's fundamental features. Researchers in media psychology are looking into the following questions: personal identity in connection with the processes of globalization and transformation of the national identity; information pollution and hyper-exploitation of man's psychological resources;

safety regulations in mass communication, the principles of media psychology, and ways of solving communication and creativity issues (Pronin, 2010). There are three interconnected applied branches of media psychology: media analysis, media therapy and media education.

Media psychology analyses the content of mass communication to find out whether the principles of the psychological safety of information are being observed, whether any instruments of psycho-technology are being used in mass information campaigns, and if so, what consequences that might have, and, finally, it studies the psychological, legal and ethical aspects of a journalist's work (Pronina, 2001; Trubitsyna, 2002).

Another area of media psychological research — media therapy — entails the development of systems and methods of psychological defense from pathogenic information technologies, the elaboration of preventive measures against possible information traumas and rehabilitation after them (Rybalko, 2007), psychological rehabilitation with the help of mass communication (Verbitskaya, 2005), the stabilization of the psychological state of people, the formation of adequate and controlled reactions, assistance to individuals in national self-identification (Pronina, 2004) and self-determination.

By informing the public of the methods used by the media to influence audiences and of the modern mass communication technologies, one can enhance people's adaptivity and protect them. That is the main task of media education — the third branch of media psychology. Media education is intended to help the whole of society, including the journalists themselves, who are usually the first to be subjected to the destructive influence of manipulative technologies. Often-times they do not have a chance to fully comprehend the unfolding events and express their own traumatic emotions and inadequate reactions when covering them (Trubitsyna, 2002; Pronina, 2011).

Media analytics, media therapy and media education form the basic strategy and resource of the media psychological defense and are in line with the most important trend in the development of society, which is moving towards self-determination and individuation.

It is not surprising that more and more researchers working in different scientific fields (philology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics) turn to media psychology in search of new approaches to studying reality, life and oneself. A New Man and a new reality are looking at us from the concepts and categories of the new science. In 2001, media psychology obtained a new academic status, as it were. Like "a birth certificate" of the new science, a large collection of articles devoted to fundamental problems of media psychology was published by Lomonosov Moscow State University. The book is called "Man as the Subject and Object of Media Psychology" (Chelovek..., 2011). It brings together scholars from 3 faculties: the Faculty of Journalism, the Faculty of Psychology and the Faculty of Philosophy. These three different perspectives are the three "eyes" of media psychology, the wonder-child of this century: *"One of the eyes sees time, another one — eternity, and the third one — what is round the corner."*

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