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Subject

Critical Thinking

Two of the different articles help us to think critically about the issues of social media and the gay marriage licences. Kim Davis, turned into a symbol of opposition to gay marriage on religious grounds, stopped issuing any marriage license to homosexuals, when the Supreme Court made same-sex marriage a constitutional right and legalized these unions in all the country. This historic decision forces the thirteen states that then still forbade it, including Kentucky, to allow same-sex people to marry. When Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, the Democrat, ordered the courts to issue marriage licenses to homosexuals, Davis decided to file a lawsuit in federal court, arguing that his religious beliefs should exclude him from having to fulfil that obligation.

There is “confusion and uncertainty” among state judges over the “effect” on the “existing orders” after the historic ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States legalized marriage between same couples. sex in the whole country. With that ruling, gay marriage became a constitutional right in the United States, forcing the thirteen states that still forbade it to allow same-sex couples to marry in their jurisdiction (Rajczi).

In the article entitled, “Social Media: Destroyer or Creator”, explains the role of social media in different society issues. In the TED Global, with an intervention entitled “ Let's design social media that drive real change “. In his talk, Ghonim makes an interesting reflection, based on his personal experience, about the effects and evolution of actions promoted through the Internet and social media. This intervention is added to a list of previous papers that work the power of social media, and is closely related in particular to the one given by academic Clay Shirky in June 2009 on the power of news transmission through social networks by citizens in repressive regimes.

In the TED talk given by Wael Ghonim, it is interesting to discover how this activist, who initially expressed a cyber-optimistic attitude about the possibilities of the Internet and social networks to change a social and political reality - a fact that can also be seen in his previous intervention TED , dated in 2011 - has transformed his speech, as a result of his experience, to encourage a more reflective online behaviour . Ghonim's critique focuses on the polarization of the Internet and on five crucial challenges we must overcome in order to reformulate the current ecosystem of social media (Friedman).

The first of them has to do with rumours, information that is disseminated very quickly through social networks and that many users share, comment, viral and consider valid without having been correctly verified. This vitalization has to do with another of the challenges that Ghonim proposes to overcome: the facility to turn online discussions into enraged mobs. In relation to this reflection, we cannot avoid mentioning Cass R. Sunstein and his work on the rumour, which he has also studied on the Internet and linked to the spiral of silence. The third challenge is the creation of our own echo cameras, a concept that also advanced Sunstein in his work Republic.com 2.0.

On the Internet we have the possibility, not only to follow only people who are related to our line of opinion, we can also easily ignore those who think differently, which makes it difficult for us to change our opinion, the fourth challenge assumed by Ghonim. Finally, this activist points out as the fifth challenge, and more important, the primacy of the massive messages on the discussions. The importance of achieving more impacts - more retweets, more I like, more favourites - through a message or a striking photograph than using the Internet to convey deeper messages that, although they reach fewer people, at least provoke a genuine reflection and debate for the quality of its content.

As a proposal to begin to change this situation of polarization in social media, Ghonim has founded the Parlio platform, which experimentally aims to promote discussion and exchange of opinions on issues as controversial as important for society. This concrete case, documented through a TED talk, is especially interesting to see how a clearly cyber-optimistic attitude has evolved in four years towards a much more critical reflection on social media. In addition, it is interesting to discover how the speaker has been able to draw on ideas or academic papers that still represent interesting lines of research to advance the study of social media.

Works Cited

Rajczi, Alex. "A populist argument for legalizing same-sex marriage." The Monist 91.3/4 (2008): 475-505.

Friedman, Thomas L. "Opinion | Social Media: Destroyer Or Creator?". Nytimes.Com, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/03/opinion/social-media-destroyer-or-creator.html>.