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Distance education in the context of visuality: pro and contra

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Abstract. The paper analyzes the problem of implementing the achievements of visual culture in distance education. The evolution of the discourse of visual culture and its specificity in relation to visual studies, which perform special functions in cognition, language, education, art, science, religion, is shown. The main parameters of the relations between visual culture and distance learning as a natural result of the development of the information-digital age are determined. The efficiency of including visual presentations in the variety of their forms in distance learning is substantiated, it is proved that they carry a certain semantic load, make the subject material visible, generate various visual metaphors that form new images and visual schemes, and develop visual literacy.

Keywords: visual culture, distance learning, education, information technologies, visual thinking, visual literacy

Urgency of research. Analysis of education in its epistemological, cognitive, cultural, social dimensions remains today the most important matter of philosophical research. Furthermore, education retains its peculiarities, which gain new concretization, is filled with unusual meanings and, at the same time, reveals the relationship with the achievements of the information age, and with the field of visual culture in particular. The emergence and spread of the Internet has given a new revolutionary leap in the field of learning, which aims to understand visual culture as one of the most important factors in the educational process. The experience of social life shows that the spectacle in its diversity affects all spheres of life, including education, politics, cognition, psychology, and so on. The world of spectacles and vision is not limited to the circus, theater, cinema, television. Modern information technologies demonstrate the gap with traditional forms of spectacles, which lose the specific character of direct contact and communication. Society in the information age enters the world of visual environment, which is realized for most people not only in the individualized space, but also in the system of communications — socio-cultural, political and educational features. Today, the achievements of visual culture and visual studios in general are actively correlated with distance learning, which has become extremely relevant in relation with the spread of COVID-19.

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The purpose of the article is to identify and study the main strategies for the development of the educational process, in which distance learning is gaining priority, in the context of visual culture, which determines the nature and specifics of perception of knowledge and information, identifies and actualizes new forms of education, which create the virtual self and virtual space in which the differences between the real world and the imaginary world are lost, generates new images and visual schemes that are autonomous in relation to the object of sober perception.

The state of scientific elaboration of the problem. The problem of "visuality" was posed by H. Foster, who tried to distinguish it from the concept of "vision". According to N. Bryson, the nature of visuality is formed under the influence of social discursiveness, mental and linguistic practices of behavior caused by the needs of the socio-cultural situation [8, p. 91–92]. The condition for understanding the postmodern form of visuality, according to V. Rozin, is media visuality, which has absorbed many different visual nuances [4, p. 155]. In the context of visuality, a "visual culture" is emerging, which studies the visual aspects of social life, including education, in the sociological aspect. The most famous representatives of this area are N. Bryson, K. Jenks, L. Cartwrites [11, p. 4–5]. In the new theoretical trend, "visual studies", which represent the works of T. Mitchell, N. Mirzoeva, M. Dykovytska [10], are studied in combination with the history of art, culture, theory of literature, which have developed in line with the "pictorial turn" [11, p. 4–5]. Research of strengthening the content of theoretical and practical classes by means of multimedia presentations in the process of formation and development of critical thinking of students and cognitive perception of educational material in modern visual media reality, using information-visual presentations, etc., is performed by N. Cherepovska [6, p. 6–7]. In addition, existing visual research includes new concepts, including ocular centrism, vision hegemony, visual paradigm, rational vision, visual communication, and others. G. Ilyina studies visual thinking in existential, phenomenological, postmodernist discourses [2]. In this situation, it is important to fill distance learning with opportunities and ways of visual culture in its numerous manifestations.

The scientific novelty of the study is determined by the mainstream visuality of the modern era, deviation from which leads to a misunderstanding of social reality, its institutions and prospects for development. The problem of visual culture is a new area that allows us to study the structure of modern education and the learning process in its various forms, including distance learning practices. Its productivity today is determined by the active introduction of achievements of visual culture in interaction with verbal thinking in its various manifestations into the field.

Research methodology. In the process of analyzing the problem, the methods and principles of social philosophy, philosophy of media, visual sociology, sociology of mass communications are used. The main focus is made on the principle of interdisciplinarity, which is the ability of the researcher to work at the "junctions" of sciences, with the ability to integrate concepts, approaches,

scientific methods and methodological reflections. The principle of reification allows to load visuality and distance with an ontological status that is independent of human activity. The address to the sociology of knowledge allows to "see" special processes in the field of functioning of the theory of cognition as a specific virtual phenomenon. Semantic synergy led to the cognition of concrete-practical and abstract-theoretical semantic aspects in their proportionality.

Research results. In the dynamics of information technology development, education is increasingly incorporating and applying their achievements for a better quality educational process. One example of such new forms is distance learning. It is the product of the information world, in which, along with the virtual reality, the visual-digital reality is asserted, the deep basis of which is the ability to obtain knowledge and meanings by means of vision, to make them "visible". Visuality appears in the world of "active eyes", which open reality for a person from the standpoint of clarity, understanding, creating new parameters for cognition and thinking. After all, "overloading" people with information changes their way of perceiving, as well as knowledge, mental, cognitive abilities and resources. At the same time, computers, smartphones, televisions, etc. have become ways to make knowledge more accessible. As a result, there was a transition to a new perspective of science, education, cognitive and educational processes. This means the transition to educational practices in which the distance between the "Self" and the outside world is overcome. Modern "practice of vision involves the elimination of subject-object rupture, asserting the merger of the observer and what is being observed" [1, p. 59], while neutralizing the distance between them. As a result, the individual (observer) places himself in the world of images, the world of what is observed, trying to penetrate "inside of their visual flesh" [1, p. 50].

The possibilities of "informationalism" (M. Castells) in the condition of pandemia, due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, have expanded the option of distance learning, which has become widely accepted for most schoolchildren and students around the world. There is another question of the day: will distance education be able to completely replace the traditional forms of learning that are practiced primarily in secondary schools, colleges and universities? From R. Godon's point of view, the task of education is to introduce children to learning by means of the real, social world; the task of pedagogical science is to develop an adequate to the present day concept of human learning by means of the contexts that most optimally lead to it. The concept which emphasizes the importance of their own existence in the world and combines educational theory and practice under this idea. This way the "openness" of thinking is achieved in pedagogical activity, adequate to the "open" society (against one-sided perception), and the intersubjective nature of cognition as a factor of cognitive diversity [12, p. 593–599].

Such diversity is, of course, revealed by distance education, among the obvious advantages of which is its accessibility, flexibility and variability. In particular, pupils and students are able to independently choose the time and place of study. This is a valuable opportunity for people who combine education and work, want to learn from different courses and even in several

educational institutions, live in hard-to-reach places, raise young children or due to limited opportunities can not attend classes. Training materials are also becoming more accessible. The teacher, departing from the usual form of lecturing, creates educational and methodological support of the discipline in electronic form. This may not be just the text of the lecture — the variability of audiovisual material also increases, which undoubtedly has a positive effect on the perception of information by pupils and students. Moreover, access to all necessary scientific, educational, methodological, visual materials remains open throughout the course. Thus, there are no problems with the lack or absence of textbooks, monographs, necessary books, articles, etc.

Along with this, a number of educational platforms that make knowledge more accessible to a wide range of people, regardless of age, gender, nationality or other characteristics emerge. Many students use video platforms for foreign language classes (although online learning is not limited to them), especially for native speakers. Coursera, one of the most popular online educational platforms is an example. It is the project that provides thousands of online courses (free and paid ones) in a variety of disciplines, authored by professionals from the world's leading universities. The subjects of the courses vary — humanities, natural sciences, courses on personal development, business, politics, learning foreign languages, etc. The number of those who have already taken advantage of Coursera training is more than 50 million. These facts confirm the popularity of this platform.

The enormous possibilities of using visual images (pictures, diagrams, schemes, films, photos, etc.) are important for mastering the material in the process of conducting a remote lesson. Vision in distance learning is understood as the process of obtaining information from the outside world about images and ideas, which as a result of intellectual activity are transformed into something new, cognitive and meaningful. By analogy, visuality is rooted in education and "shows" educational activity, therefore, it is a way of intellectual intelligence, associated with creative thinking. Based on Aristotle's assessment of vision as a property that elevates it above other senses, G. Jonas proposes to consider the features of vision by three characteristics of images or vision: simultaneity in the presentation of diversity; neutralization of the causality of sensory attachment; distance in spatial and mental senses [13, p. 507].

An important factor and result of the process of distance learning is "spatial distance", which is a characteristic of visual orientation, because "vision is the only sense, the advantage of which lies not in proximity, but in distance, — says H. Jonas. — The best view is, by no means, the closest view; to get the right view, we take the right distance, which may be different for different objects and different purposes, but which is always realized as a positive rather than a defective feature in the phenomenal presence of the object" [13, p. 518]. No other mode of perception than sight benefits from spatial distance. And in the process of conducting a distance lesson, the individual (subject of study) is able to determine the correct distance for the most appropriate visual contemplation of a particular object. However, the distance in space that exists during a distance lesson, which is covered or not covered by the gaze, gives rise to the idea of infinity, that is important to open a certain perspective for the objects of visual contemplation and study, in which it is impossible to establish or identify boundaries [2, p. 179].

Proponents of distance learning believe that it is one of the main areas of education reform, as its traditional foundations are outdated and unable to prepare the child for modern life. The priority goal of general education from now on should be the development of students' ability to independently set learning goals, design ways to implement them, monitor and evaluate their achievements. In other words, today the most important task is to teach students the ability to learn. This skill is a significant factor in improving the effectiveness of students' mastery of subject knowledge, the formation of their competencies, a holistic picture of the world and value-semantic orientations. The teaching technologies may be different. An approach based on the principle of "More knowledge in less time / resources / money" is important. It is not worth spending three years on what can now be learned in three months [5].

According to V.M. Spivakovsky, an active adept of radical reforms in the education system, it is necessary to change everything in modern educational institutions — from technology and content to infrastructure, personnel, governing and funding. Modern education must move from the presentation of educational material to its understanding, from subject lessons to case studies, from offline to online, from general to individual, from tradition to design, from local to general, from processes to results, and so on. In contrast to the current state of education, he offers an 80 by 20 formula, where 80% of the learning process takes place online. While only 20% of all training is devoted to offline classes. First of all, these are 3D lessons . They are gradually displacing half of the teachers' work. Second, the attention to nanotechnology, which provides the replacement of the old with new. Since the work with updating knowledge "manually" is too slow and unsystematic, the computer program is developed and patented to search for such new knowledge that can be automatically taken from open sources: world scientific journals, reports, research, dissertations, popular science literature, books -articles of famous journalists and popularizers of science [5, p. 113].

However, to what extent can the proposed ratio (80 to 20) in favor of online learning give the desired result? Even with regard to the psycho-emotional component, because the student is in a comfortable atmosphere and can choose the most comfortable pace of learning, being able to pay more attention to complex and unclear issues. There is also no need to adjust to the schedule of the educational institution, there are no (especially for pupils) problems with the peers, which also have a negative impact on the educational process.

In the same time, despite the undeniable advantages, distance learning, firstly, does not provide direct communication between students and teachers. Instead, there is an impersonal transfer of information, and the methods of subject-object communication make it less effective. As a result, students and especially pupils do not develop the necessary communication skills and teamwork. After all, a school or university has always been a kind of mini-model of society for students. This allows the child or young person to learn to interact with a large number of different people, to make agreements or compromises necessary to achieve a common or individual goal. In addition, during schooling, children are instilled with cultural norms, they get their first skills of behavior in the team. Obviously, the traditional form of education is designed not only to present, deliver certain educational material, but also to instill the necessary cultural models of social behavior, the system of social values.

Taking it into consideration, modern pedagogical theory and practice should focus on the return of man to the learning system, with a view to overcoming the impersonal approach and the formation of a holistic person, rather than a "solver" of educational problems; it is necessary to focus on the formation of a "living" individuality in the context of social requirements and subjective potentials. Such education-formation reveals a fundamental connection with the "creation" of the individual. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account the influence of socio-cultural factors on the content of knowledge and the educational process [3, p. 207–210]. One of such factors is visual culture.

In this context, the thesis that a child can better socialize by attending clusters of his or her interest or communicate online, because there are cases of bullying at school, the child experiences many stressful situations, is not very convincing. After all, a young person who enters "adult life" after school and university must be able to interact with society. It should be borne in mind that society does not and can not consist of identical or similar people. For a healthy society to function, each of its members must be aware of the importance of the existence of the "Other", its difference, the factor of natural variability. Schools, in this case, aim to show children this diversity and instill tolerance, which usually reduces (both in the past and in the future) the existence of national, religious, racial or any other intolerance. Along with this, the responsibility for the quality of the mastered material, its timely processing depends entirely on the student. Hence, there is difficulty of assessing such knowledge and its objectivity. Apart from that, distance learning becomes a real challenge, requiring considerable willpower and responsibility, which not every pupil or student possesses.

Given the difficulty of distance learning at this stage, we note that one of the effective ways to improve it is the active introduction of achievements, opportunities, methods and forms of visual culture, on the basis of which visual literacy is formed. The inclusion of selected visual materials will expand the range of online lessons, get to the heart of its problems, to involve visual thinking in the learning process. Coexisting with verbal thinking, it helps to enhance the perception of the material being studied.

Conclusions. An important indicator of modern socio-cultural life is the active development of visual practices, objectified in the discourse of visual culture, which has a cardinal influence on the educational process. Active introduction of distance learning in it, despite its positive significance, creates a number of problems of social, psychological, cognitive, moral nature. Given the lack of necessary resources and its significant shortcomings, it is difficult to talk about its complete replacement of traditional forms and methods of teaching. It is more expedient to distribute online classes as a supplement to the established traditional methods, during advanced training courses, etc., but not to use them as the only form. In order to increase the effectiveness of distance learning it is important to fill its content with the achievements of visual studios, visual culture, video lessons that can help better understand the material, to form visual literacy along with verbal and linguistic one, the literacy one can not be considered an educated person in information and digital reality.

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