**Article**

# Suicide.com: the last act of spetacle

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**Abstract**

Dialoguing with the theoretical intersection between central references of the Critical Theory of Society and the philosopher Guy Debord, through literature review and case studies, this article sought to discuss the theme of suicide.com. Although the term has been coined, it was done, generically, for suicide cases in which the author uses some digital resource to the act. Therefore, suicide.com shows its characteristics and forms of manifestation, that differs between cases in which the suicides are encouraged and directed by websites and/or internet users where, in general, such practices are restricted to the forums. accompanied by the chats, having as a visual record eventual images of the process; creation of suicide groups where people meet in forums to talk about the subject and they create a collective death pact; or cases where the suicide makes the practice public in video and live, from the access of Internet users to the webcam. However, the proposed approach embraced a new understanding of the concept, which could be based on the following premises: a) the suicide, as a social phenomenon, is limited to the historical context and cultural factors of its time and space, therefore, the media is an inherent component of contemporary suicide practices; b) suicide.com, however, is not just the virtualized replication of traditional suicide; It is the result of the processes of public spectacularization of private life in virtual environments.

**Keywords**: Suicide.com, Society of th spetacle, Cyberculture, Suicide.

## 1. Introduction

Suicide — which Durkheim innovatively understood as a social phenomenon, when he published his propagated work "Suicide – a Study in Sociology," in 1897 — still is a subject crossed for several stigmas and taboos, religious and cultural values, which difficult the comprehension of the phenomenon and its several implications. Even in exceptionally objective aspects, as the analysis of the registration (in which several cases are recorded from other *causa mortis*), or searches for determinants constituting the risk factors, these shall be understood in the light of their historic and social processes, penetrated for a different set of constraints and interferences, varying in accordance with the place and time.

Conceptually, suicide is defined as an act of intentional production of the interruption of the own life. Despite the suicidal practice to pass through the history of humanity, which has its determined aspects converging with its context as long as "each society has, therefore, at each moment of its history, a

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definite aptitude for suicide" (DURKHEIM, 2000, p. 21, our translation). Moreover, these singularities are also subdivided from the idiosyncratic aspects of the individuals, such as Gomes et al. (2014) present the most recurrent profile of the contemporaneous suicide victim is male, single, and 20 to 29 years old. Further, there are variations regarding the method: while men use external and more violent means, such as fire weapons and strangulations, in turn, women use internal ways, being the poison as the main choice of this group, and the esthetical preservation of the body is the principal tendency.

Notwithstanding, the exceptions regarding the loyalty to the data, especially for the phenomenon of the underreporting (ANES; SILVA; SILVA, 2013), it is estimated that 800 thousand people commit suicides every year, and Brazil is the eighth country in the world in a number of suicide victims amongst the young people (UNITED NATIONS, 2019).

As of the confluence of several data, we can observe the increase of the indexes of suicide between the young people over the world, but these data still seem more significant in the developed countries. In Brazil, data are alarming: "an increase of ten times in mortality due to suicide in young people from 15 to 24 years old between 1980 and 2000. Only, considering men of the same age group, this index increased 20 times" (CHRISTANTE, 2010, p. 32, our translation). In 2016, the country recorded 845 suicides in young people with age from 10 to 19 years old, which describes a little more than eight percent of the total of deaths due to self-punishment injury (MORENO; DANTAS; OLIVEIRA, 2018). Currently, in the world, suicide is the third main cause of death in young people with age between 15 and 29 years old (UNITED NATIONS, 2019).

With awareness of such hardness, it is important to consider that, within the same public, one of the most significant current changes is the inclusion of the use of the media in everyday life. Thus, we consider that such influence could perform a new impact before the subject. If the approach of the information and communication technologies decisively influence our ways to represent the self, the other, and the world, the creation of new meanings to death and, especially, to suicide, seems a natural consequence of the modern times. Moreover, how the interferences of the digital era impact the representations about suicide? To examine such matter, using a bibliographical review and a case study, with an epistemological basis on the Critical Theory of Society, we will approach how media deal with such resignification from an analysis that will search the qualitative implications of the cyberspace regarding the self-extinguishment.

In section 2, we will discuss how suicide is created into the historic context and crossed by cultural phenomena, having the use of the media as a component increasingly present in such acts. However, such comprehension requires a broader social reading, supported by the progressive exposure of the private life in public virtual spaces, as a spectacle to be consumed.

Thus, in section 3, we define the concept of suicide.com in the current context of the Society of the Spectacle, pointing out its features and its more primary reason: the search for the appeasement of the primitive fear of the inexistence. Also, it was divided the types of cyber-suicide into three categories, from its main features: following by text or photo; suicidal group; lively follow in audiovisual content.

In section 4, we discussed Estiben Ortiz's case, the author of an unsuccessful virtual suicide, searching to understand the reasons that took him to such act and the decision to become it public.

## 2. Suicide in times of digital era

Although we comprehend that the suicide involves a range of complex factors, such personal, social, and cultural order, its scenario is to the mercy of "suicidal cultures, where proliferate ways of self-destructive behaviors related to the called 'toxic existence'" (MENEGHEL et al., 2004, p.805, our translation). Particularly regarding the media, it is known the consequences of its influence since the Werther Effect, when, in 1774, the famous writer Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe wrote the story in details of the self-suicide of the protagonist of his work, The Sorrows of Young Werther (GOETHE, 1999), causing a fashion of suicides inspired by the novel. Notwithstanding, there are no scientific reports that process the data of suicides of that time, establishing a relationship of cause and effect with Goethe's novel, the question is that it was marked, since then, the dimension of the interference and effects of the expanse of the suicide (ALMEIDA, 2000).

In the latest context, the study of "The Media Effects on Suicide: an empirical analysis for Brazilian states" presents data that dissolve any doubts despite media's ability to influence the rates of suicide: "(…) Media is positively related to the cases of suicide, which configure as the third motive of suicide, after unemployment and violence, for all groups of people" (LOUREIRO; MOREIRA; SACHSIDA, 2013, p. 22, our translation).

In this sense, it is important to explain that "talk about suicide does not increase the suicide. What rises is the way how is talking about it. Exposing cases and concrete facts on suicide victims, boast them (…), are ways of incentive to someone emotionally unstable and depressed" (COSTA, 2014, p. 7, our translation). Thus, it is a task to analyze the quality of the speech about the subject.

Previously to the technological revolution, in a context where the media creation was limited to few and large corporations, as such the case of the television broadcaster in Brazil before the popularization of the internet, although the individuals could not to access the debate at the moment that they wish, there was a process of curatorship performed by professionals that, in general, insure that the subject did not minimally approach two main topics: firstly, the quality of opinions, since the nature of these companies and the own competition dynamic for the audience demand the selection of qualified professionals with extensive experience on the topics; and, finally, an unambiguous intention to preserve the emotional health and physical integrity of the potential suicidal victim.

The polysemic nature of the internet requires other ways of looking at and process the information. Despite to provide immediate access to any topic, the flow of narratives produces the meet between professional and amateur voices, under different perspectives, propositions, and readings of the same situation. However, in the scope of the Dialectic of Enlightenment (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985), where the technological advance is coupled with the formative disaster of the modern spirit, researches collecting data of websites that are found by the search engines, from the suicidal vocabulary, demonstrate

alarming data: "the search for information on the internet about suicide brings an unfortunate outcome: more websites are stimulating the act than those that try to dissuade it and to offer support" (COSTA, 2014, p. 5, our translation), and these virtual places, forward encouraging, teach detailed techniques for the act in a great quantity of offer, and, among the most popular three virtual spaces related to the theme, these "were the same with the greater amount of information in favor of the suicide, among them the methods, speed, accuracy, and even the quantity of pain waited in each of the alternatives" (COSTA, 2014, p. 6, our translation).

If data are so bothering in research whose universe is restricted to the *Surface*, it is very plausible to assume that, whether was possible to perform a research of methodology similar that applied to the *Deep web*, we would have more terrifying outcomes.

The *Deep web* expression gives name to the set of virtual addresses that are indexed to beyond the reach for the search engines, such as Google. Further, in general, they use the .onion suffix to present addresses that are a tangle of letters and numbers. The way how websites are constituted put them aside from the investigative capability by States and their legal powers, ensuring an almost certainty of anonymity and impunity to their users. Famous websites of this niche, such as onionchan, scibay, 4chan, and onionforum, for example, deliver discussion forums on suicide where it is observed, with relative recurrence, encouragement messages to such practice, besides of a large number of images or animated *gifs* of suicidal views.

From these elements, it is necessary to understand that the way and with which features of a society of the spectacle (DEBORD, 1997), image and highly technologized, print marks on suicide that denote its context. To analyze this phenomenon we shall consider the influence of the modern factors, not only on the features of the suicidal practice, but also on the ability of the influence of the media, right now hyperpolarized, and how they cooperate with the narratives producing certain social imagery of positive ideation on the self-extinction. Moreover, in the context of this society of the spectacle, it would only through direct and assertive speeches that the culture of death could be overblown?

The capability of media to subjectively influence people is not a new relationship neither restricted to the phenomenon of the internet or suicide. Recently, the *YouTuber* Eugenia Cooney, which has a page on the video website, YouTube, with more than a million and three hundred thousand of subscriptions and more than one hundred and seventy millions of visualizations (YOUTUBE, 2019), where she speaks to a young audience about fashion, beauty, and trivialities, was a target of a public petition for that her channel was removed from the internet due to the fact of she, in view of her anorexia status, has only twenty-seven kilos. Thus, Eugenia was considered a model for many of her young followers, creating concern to their parents and responsible for teenagers that would be stimulated to search a body standard incurring in serious risks to the health, despite directly the YouTuber never has stimulated them to search for her esthetical standard, as she claims, to tell that she never want: "to influence nobody to nothing (…) neither stimulate nobody to be like me" (SOUSA, 2016, our translation).

These examples typify the inherent mismatch to the spectacle that, from their methods of selection, furnishes fame to people that become representatives of such esthetical ideal and/or moral, despite their wishes. The

decrease from *to be* in *to have*, and *to have* in *to seem*, it is condensed in this example from the logic that to seem becomes a model of to be. This process has no desire or intentionality: the nature of the spectacle deployment inversely covers its historical ancestry. If, in its origin, photography brings the aspiration of neutrality while a truth, how questions can make prejudices of the anorexia, if the young Eugenia Cooney appears, in videos, always happy and fans love her? Her image has the spectacle strength that is, in this social context, beyond the power of the reason; her self-spectacle is an esthetical and silent speech of assertion and reproduction, of dressage and standardization, and consumption and semi-formation.

In the case of the culture of death, it should stress the widespread impact that virtual spaces denote, for instance, in the Emo movement. Arising from Punk Rock, Emo has roots in the music, but, currently, it is revealing in ethical and esthetical dimensions, having as grounds "(…) deep feelings of depression, distress, outrage with the political system of the society and the pain that the love causes no matter whether is answered or not" (SILVA, 2006, p. 14, our translation). Even their icons could never have pronounced encouraging phrases to suicide, synthesize in its behavior, apparel, and world view of an existential pessimism granted of a severe pain whose inexistence of the dimension of redemption denotes, *per si*, the death as a justifiable exit. This and so many other influences could, despite never have directly spoken to, contribute with the romantic constitution of death and inherent favoritism of the suicidal ideas, mainly on the young public.

Therefore, cyberculture also has to be read under the esthetical dimension, because, as claimed, the production of a culture of extinguishment could constitute beyond the use of the textual resources. Thus, such finding also allows the overcoming of a manacheistic view that read the virtual space from the favorable-against binomial to suicide. Moreover, it is considered relevant to rescue the finding that the increase of the potential of suicidal practice does not happen only through the cybernetic spaces of apology, but also by the absence of more qualified speeches, which are muted by the cultural taboo on the theme, precluding an opposition that balances the forces minimally.

The production of models as ideal forms does not only influence the formation of individuals but also, they are, to a certain extent, matrices of values and concepts. The historical process of the appearance of the Cultural Industry (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985) and the consequent decline of the formative forces of the autonomy, with the simultaneous advance of access to the media, especially the internet, are contemporaneous conditioning potentializing the power of the influence that the spectacle performs on the individuals.

The Internet provides access to information and content that, on the one hand, makes tools of resistance, exchange of knowledge and experiences, collectively organizing people from their interests, potentialize a more plural discourse, provides a voice to individuals excluded from the hegemonic narratives, among other gifts. On the other hand, if the encounter can occur from the formative sense, there also is a possibility of narrowing of the harmful bonds, as Costa puts it (2014, p. 3) to demonstrate that, formerly, a pedophile man would have serious difficulties to find pairs in his disease, while, currently he can find virtual spaces to share his perversion, with images, videos, such as other people like him.

In brief, the internet proves itself, while a media, with the direct ability to perform influence on the potential suicides. This influence can mostly occur in two ways: direct and discursive, as forums, and ode websites to the self-suicide; or indirect and imagery form, in niches where a culture of death can prevail through the symbolic context.

Besides the influence of the virtual means in the occurrence of suicides, it should indicate that the impact of these despite the form where such acts are committed. The way of using the internet, featured by the virtual exhibition of the private life, built new kinds of the relationship between individuals and their universe:

> If we make a quick visit to the virtual pages of personal relationships, surely we will observe how the individuals, increasingly, accept the need to expose their life, their achievements, and their intimacies, in a forum that everybody can access. Due to this context photos have their esthetics and feature reconfigured; if before the image served as recordation of a memory established by the relationship of experience between individuals or between subject and object and, therefore, portrayed the interlocutor of the act as a form of rescue these souvenirs, the role of the personal photography becomes, paradoxically, conditioned to the third element – the virtual observer. (PACÍFICO; GOMES, 2019, p. 169, our translation).

Thus, the appearance of this third element establishes a decisive relationship of mediation between the subject and the object of its experience. When in a tour, if an internaut took a picture of his presence in a determined touristic point and made it available to his virtual followers, which is established does not more a relation of experience between the subject (traveler) and the object (place); instead of the digital registration of an experience, the spectacularization of the private life promotes the substitution of the culmination of the act in the experience for the show, that is, the ability of this registration to provide virtual synergies, as likes and comments, to the point of mobilizing the internauts to consume such exhibition as a spectacle.

Practically, in all dimensions of life, the virtual observer also gives indexes of a silent and progressive advance on the dimension of the death and, in special, that self-punishment. It is not by accident, cases where the suicide victim communicates its ultimate act to virtual viewers are, unfortunately, increasingly common. As well as in the example quoted previously, it is not the simple digital registration of suicide: the dimension of the experience with the death expropriates, migrating to the validity of the act is arising from the consumption of the scene by the virtual viewers. Thus, there is the inauguration of a new and specific form of self-extinguishment, which will be the theme of more detailed analysis in the next sections: suicide.com.

## 3. Suicide.com

The global context on suicide can be summed by the report of the World Health Organization (VEJA, 2018) that points out to 800 thousand annual deaths, which means the powerful average of one suicide every 40 seconds. As of this context, awarded of the use in a large scale of the internet, we stress that

young people as a group presenting a higher vulnerability, because researches show that:

> (...) suicidal acts could be, largely, arising from people see as models in their lives, mainly in population from 15 to 24 years old, which is an age group demonstrating to be more vulnerable to suicide and also to the media influences. (GOMES et al., 2014, p. 65, our translation).

Thus, the relationship with the internet exposes young people to the contact with the subject without ensure the qualitative filter and the positive intentionality of the interlocutor. However, the exacerbated culture of self-exhibition, encouraged, mainly by social media, in the encounter with the subjective needs of that whose emotional health collapses in the before-flirtation with own death, providing the development of new forms of suicide, which network mediates, are called suicide.com or cybersuicide.

Although the phenomenon of suicide.com is welcoming to the distance on the psychological dimensions of the act in itself, in the analysis of it as long as a social fact, and in the philosophical unfolding that would be, according to Albert Camus, the only serious question of the philosophy (CAMUS, 2008), we must strategically to analyze the fact from its linguistic dimension in the context of the society of the spectacle. The expressiveness of the language that, as a mean, is able to concentrate a high emotional and subjective burden, it is an important factor to the analysis of this object, not only concerning its spectacular dimension but to the nature of the act, since the own ultimate choice regarding life has an inherent communication aspect, provided with a highly expressiveness dense and complex:

> Another example of the narrowness of the relationship between language and suicide is Van Gogh's history. When he moved to France, at the same time, he breaks with his family and with his mother tongue: the Dutch. From then on, he passes to use the French to speak and write. Even the letters that wrote to his youngest brother Theo (his only family relationship) all of them are in French. (…) As many letters to Theo, as several of his paintings disclose the pain and suffering of the artist, as well as his death wish. On the eve of his death, after he already has given the shot that will take his life, he reconciles with his mother tongue. The last conversation with Theo is in Dutch. Without the financial and affective care of his brother, Van Gogh's sorrow would have been higher, and he, probably, would have terminated his own life a long time before to let us his legacy and geniality of his paintings. Theo was his Other, his listening, his interlocutor. Theo was making possible a completeness, though almost conclusive, making all difference, which gives an update to the non-sense to his life, which breeds his memory of the future. We constitute ourselves as individuals, in life, and death, through the language and relationship that we keep with our other. (CRUVINEL, 2008, p. 73, our translation).

The comprehension of the relationship between the actuality of the spectacle, which is transformed into compulsive linguistic behavior, is explained in the work Excited Society:

> The requirement for the occupation is defined as a requirement for the issuance. However, it transforms itself into a vital sort of expression. Issue means to become perceived: to be. No issue means not to be – not only to feel the *horror vacui* of the idleness but to be taken from the feeling of simply to not being. Not only more: "there is a vacuum in me," but "I am a vacuum" – in any way "there." (TÜRCKE, 2010, p. 44-45, our translation).

Therefore, despite the term "suicide.com" has already been coined, this study proposes a new and specific comprehension of the phenomenon because it perceives the practice of self-extinguishment in the context of a society whose spectacle became the grounds of the social interactions. In this way, the suicidal practice is not interpreted as a conventional suicide awarded by digital means, but through the transformation of the act in a spectacle that is, through the worldwide network of computers, consumed and immortalized in the digital memory.

Consequently, an important key to solve the devices that conduct people to the virtual spectacle of the own death, which are currently known as suicide.com, is the comprehension that the society reaches the stage where the marketing of the private life is its current motto. Likewise, the suicide displayed on media is the last act of this tragic show, which dwells in other instances of our daily life, as the exposure of tours, meals, intimacy, and experiences, where the private life is extended to social media. In this context, the cybersuicide is the transformation of the most personal action, the self-caused end of life, in a funeral spectacle to be shared and consumed, toward to the alien glances synthesized in numbers of audiences, *likes*, and sharing.

In social media, there is a symbolic construction constituted between general rules of the own space and a determined cultural pattern of behavior that, from a dialectic relationship, subjectively establishes the acceptable into a public and virtual environment. Thus, simultaneously to the exposure of the spectacle, it should be decided what is forbidden to be seen, by composing discourses, and silences in their narratives. This tension reifies since social relationships established in the context of the spectacle conduce to the superficiality, making with the exposure, ambivalently, highlights, and segregates the protagonist. This would be the instituting principle of a vicious circle before the sensation of isolation: the individual searches in the spectacle the exit to its distress. But, the search for a bond to be completed is not in the other until the most resolute moments featured for a social process of dehumanization uses the machine as a *medium*; if the first "*selfie*"[3] of the history distinguishes the victory of the man on the machine, the image of death, the ultimate *selfie*, portraited the modern servitude of the man with its machines of access to the virtuality of the network:

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[3] S*elfie* is not only considered from the technique and protagonism of the own photographer, but it is a modality specifically related to the social context, considering in this article as arising from the award of the spectacle and of the prominence of the apparel of excitement. So, it is understood that the necessity of to record in an image is connected to the process of public sharing of these images.

**Figure 1** – The first and the last selfie[4].
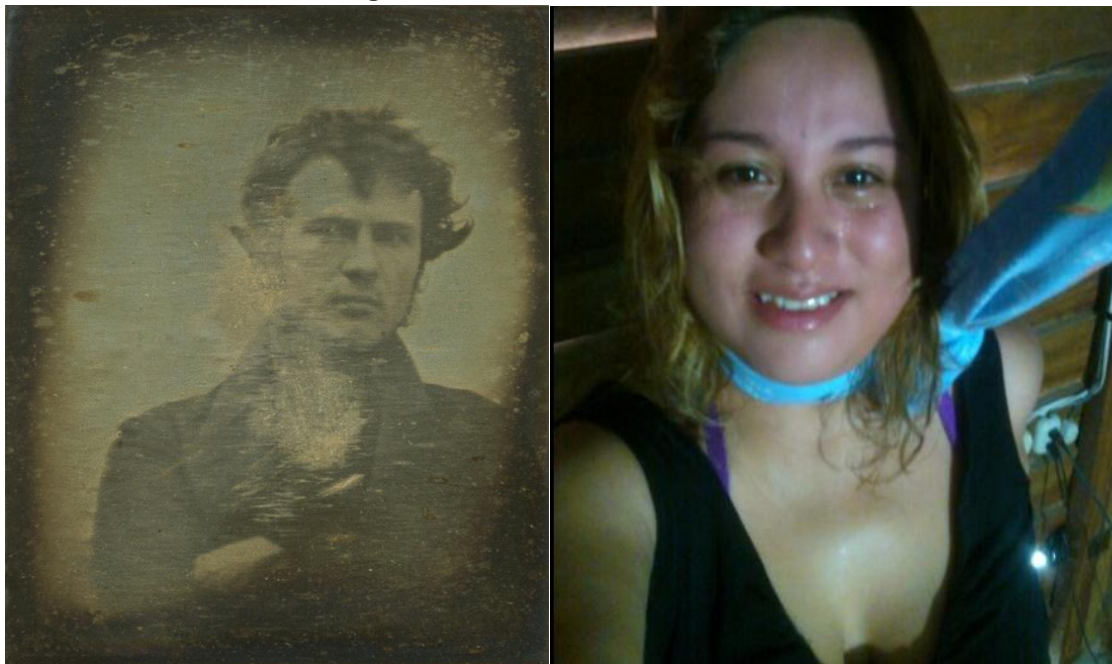


Source: Blinderman (2013) e R7 (2014)

Notwithstanding, the fundamental role of the internet in the deaths, inside the concept of suicide.com, we have some different modalities, basically divided from three groups, equipped with specific characteristics.

Firstly, the cases where sites encourage and guide suicide victims and/or internet users. In general, such practices are restricted to forums, and they are followed in *chats*, and eventual photos of the process are a way of visual record.

Secondly, the method consists of deaths occurring from the creation of suicidal groups, which can observe "(…) that the tendency to combined suicide does not stop growing" (COSTA, 2014, p. 10, our translation), especially in determining Asian cultures. In these cases, people meet in forums on the subject, and create a pact of collective death, displacing up to a common point, or making of the own virtual network this point of the funeral meeting. The first cases of death groups are from the year 2003.

Finally, in the third group, there are those that spotlight the practice, as from the disclosing of a video in social media, where, in general, they use virtual means to make available access of the internauts to suicide victim's webcam.

In all cases, physically or through virtuality of the network, suicide reverses to the dictum: if it is a fact that "nobody dies with the company. Suicides, especially, still die more alone" (COSTA, 2014 p. 7, our translation). Both forums or in suicide groups, or also being watched by hundreds of spectators, suicide.com has, in its modus operandi, a singular way for nobody dies alone.

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[4]The first and the last selfie: On the left side, Robert Cornelius and his technical experimentation to master the art of light in photography (BLINDERMAN, 2013). On the other side, Gabriela Hernandez, Mexican actress, who from a loving disappointment posted her last picture on social media, right before commiting suicide (R7, 2014).

The practice of cybersuicide is still increasing with the years. If at the beginning of the years 2000, their cases were scarce, a few years later, this scenario was already quite different:

> Only in 2005, 91 people, the majority between 20 and 30 years old, kill themselves in Japan, encouraged by sites on the internet. Just in one month, the march of 2006, there were three cases of collective suicides combined in virtual forums in the country: 13 internauts passed away. In 2007, 14 teenagers of the Bridgend region, in the South of Wales, kill themselves. Some of them were connected by a relationship website that disclosed the "romantic" idea of suicide. The oldest was 26 years old. In the last six years, the entity *Papyrus* dedicated to preventing suicide recorded 27 deaths encouraged by the internet only in Great Britain. (BRUM; AZEVEDO, 2008, p. 28, our translation).

In this scenario of inaudible cries and vociferous silences, the cybersuicide lives in this "intermediate and dialogic space between to die and to tell" (CRUVINEL, 2008, p. 71, our translation) where the interruption of the life happens through the spectacular opening of the private gesture of suicide that, while linguistic expression, overflows itself, entering to the field of the other, at the extent that "to 'close' his life, the suicide victim 'opens' spaces to the other to signify it" (CRUVINEL, 2008, p. 71, our translation). However, the opening to the other finds its confrontations in the dynamic of the own communication logic observed in the social media. As well as occurs in a selfie, the self-spectacle redirects the glance, moving it from the other to himself:

> Despite these "cries for life," teenagers were not "heard." It seems to not have a place for listening in this virtual city (which reflects our real city). Everybody talks a lot about themselves, at the same time, in many places. The relationships seem to be superficial and immediate; young people want being connected to several friends and numerous friends of their friends without, however, to grow their bonds. The number of relationships overlaps the quality of them, and the individual overlaps the collective. (CRUVINEL, 2008, p. 180, our translation).

The necessity of belonging to the collective, as expressed in the advertisement of the own death while a presentation, lives in the ontological field: whether is plausible to claim that who appeals to the extreme act tends to find himself in a state of spirit where he fills like a *nobody*, the capability to call the attention in the last moments of his life or still the certainty to be watched *postmortem*, give to the individuals the possibility of a vigorous issuance, which become them known, checking prestige to them and the sensation to be *someone*.

Also, dialectically the act of lost himself is established as *save himself*. Insofar as the individual decides on his end, recording the scene from the virtual means, intuitively, he trusts in the capability of permanency of his torture in the virtual memory of the network. The funeral show of the self-extinguishment brings, in its essence, the spectacle as a way of the appeasement of the primitive and timeless fear of the extinction, *the no longer being*, which follows the man during his existence, individually as an individual and collectively as a species. However, it is not the first time that the image establishes this role of

ontological mediation: the traditional photos from the Victorian era, in its way, also comply with this mission:

Figure 2 – Victorian Post-mortem photo.[5]



Source: História Digital (2014).

The image can immortalize that moment, in the symbolic field, gradually transferring to the idea of the immortality of the portrayed individual; it is not by accident, the body was prepared in its position, gesture, clothing, and coloration to seem alive. The essence of the nature of the gesture remains in the modern cybernetic records, but they find new powers and colors in the virtual field, new forms, and methods:

> Before the internet, even the suicide victim left a goodbye note to his family, friends, and/or enemies, his family could keep and hide it. Thus, the conditions to create the note for the "traditional" goodbye are quite different from the conditions to create notes published on the internet. (CRUVINEL, 2008, p. 158, our translation).

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[5] The girl standing is dead. It is possible to observe a base behind the girl's feet and a support that goes through, with tweezers from waist to the neck. The braces would be hard wires running through the back part to keep them in place. Pupils are painted over close lids.

Since, in a comprehensive quantity of cases, suicide victims have confrontational feelings with close people, it is also present, in the originality of the virtual forms of expression of the own death, the capability to publicly reach these people, this fact justifies, to beyond of the higher ease of access, in parts, that such acts happen primarily in *Surface* instead of *Deep Web,* because they can be easily accessed by closer people. If before the recording of suicide could be retained to the private sphere, when the individual becomes its ultimate act accessible to the internauts, he exposes all his social and family circle to the burden arising from a tragedy of this nature.

If, from the social and family point of view, the virtual compounds enhance the impact of suicide, in the dimension of the individual, elements are demonstrating the revival of the powers of suicide in the present context. If we observe in our social context the gradual protagonism of the virtual life regarding its objective dimension, it is justified the decision of the end of life connected to the public exhibition: the objective extinguishment of the life atones for in the search of the transcendence by the immortality of the virtual record, whose show can be forever watched.

The plausible first case of *suicide.com* occurred in 2001, with the British teenager, who only was 18 years old, Simon Kelly (OWEN, 2006). He stated his death in a suicidal forum, and his peers encouraged him. He conveyed alive his death through *webcam.* Currently, Simon's parents support a campaign for the exclusion of websites intended for the incentive of suicidal practices.

Since then, the cases are multiplying and some of them are creating an impact on the internet: in 2007, the British Kevin Whitrick hanged himself in front of his *webcam*, which shared opinions among spectators: while some tried to discourage him, others encourage him (STOKES, 2007); in the next year, the young Abraham Biggs committed suicide by ingestion of medicines, conveyed alive for around 1500 internauts (STELTER, 2008); in 2010, the Swedish Marcus Jannes, wearing his shirt with the logo of *Nike* company, and the *slogan "Just do it*", hanged himself before hundreds of people that we're watching a live his death (FIERRO, 2018); in the same year, Simone Beck posted, in her page on Facebook, that she had ingested medicines to kill herself. The shed had more than 1000 friends in social media, but any of them had offered help, and the medical rescue only came 17 hours after the act (DAILY MAIL, 2011). In Brazil, the first case to create an impact in the virtual world was the young Vinicius Gageiro Marques where he was called Yoñlu. Vinicius was 16 years old when he passed away. He was considered as an extremely intelligent adolescent, tender, and he had produced around 60 music by himself. With his alias, he launched his music on the internet, and his songs were reproduced in the nightclubs of Europe. Also, he was a psychiatric patient, and on the day of his death, he was under the in-home care program. He decided to finish his life by ingesting carbon, guided and encouraged by internauts that followed his death in real-time, and through chat and photos:

> It was not the first time that Vinícius tried to kill himself. But, it was the first time that calls were supporting him to die. They how he could die. And, this time, he passed away. In Suicide.com, there is only the exposure of a body, the victim's body. Those that said "kill himself" are voices without concreteness, they disappear in the air. In other crimes that

started through the internet, at any moment, to consume the sexual abuse, the murder, the criminal should appear. It is necessary for a real meeting to have a crime. In the incitement to suicide, not. The only way to preclude the continuity of this death network is to give body to the voices, name, and surname, to give concrete existence to the morbid ghosts of the network. (BRUM; AZEVEDO, 2008, our translation).

Before many cases of consumed suicide, there are also more attempting cases, among them, one received an enormous impact on the internet, and its history helps to understand in detail the phenomenon of virtual suicides in the context of the society of the spectacle.

## 4. The EstibenSchweisteinger case

The ooVoo is a software for video communication, developed in 2007 for computers but, over the years, it was adapted to other platforms, such as mobile phones and tablets. The app belongs to Myrian Capital, a company whose line of business is communications, and the engineer Robert Jackman is the head of the project. Currently, this app has more than 100 million users, and with an incredible average, in the year 2016, of 100 thousand subscriptions per day, except by social media, it became the greater communication app of the world. Brazil is the sixth country with more users, losing only for the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, India, and Italy, respectively.

Notwithstanding making possible the interaction among their users through writing or audio, in general, their users use the service of video communication, resulting in the sumptuous number of one billion minutes of monthly calls. Also, this preference is justified for other data: 65 percent of the users of ooVoo is 25 years old or less. Thus, we can observe as the process of the image of life has been added in the last years, creating a general tendency where how youngest is a population, higher will be its consumption for images as a fundamental way for communication. The generations created in the context of the modern spectacle show fundamental and specific behavioral characteristics, which demands a singular view on the implied phenomena on the behavior of this new generation.

The own app brings, in its presentation, a tendentious conception of experience. The incentive of consumption of the relationships mediated by images and technologies is hidden in the promise that these devices get to surpass physical distances and to reestablish the bonds of the experiences that only a personal contact has. This position is reinforced in its presentation by ooVoo, at the extent it defends as purpose:

> Strengthening relationships and helping friends and family share rich experiences together is what we're all about. We are a catalyst for turning fun interactions into shared memories. We help make close relationships closer. We give people the ability to spend quality time together, wherever they are. Our company serves a noble purpose, helping people feel closeness and togetherness even when far apart. All over the world, ooVoo is connecting people's lives through face-to-face interactions. (OOVOO, 2014, p. 1)

It is in this typical scenario of the modern spectacle that the history moved great forums of the internet, stimulating debates on the limits of the virtual exposure, and of the influence that some virtual means could perform on people, especially, children and adolescents.

During approximately one month, the user Omar Alonso Ortiz Pérez, recorded on the nick Estiben Schweinsteiger, established a video contact with several other users of the ooVoo network, and, in any moment, Estiben did nothing but to hold in his hands a scalpel and a note with the following inscription: /b/ 05/29/2012 11:25 GMT-6. A common face inserted in a common scenario features a silence nothing ordinary in times of the digital era, and of the infinite audiovisual resources. In the background, intentionally or not, there was an iconic crucifix contrasting with all-white walls of the room. The iconoclasm of the spectacle highlighted the tune of suspense.

**Figure 3** - EstibenSchweisteiger.



Source: BestGore (2012).

Despite he was not a Christian, the crucifix there was symbolizing one of the problems that the young was facing: the fact to not have the same faith that his family created a coercive process of rejection on the part of his parents, as disclosed in his commentary[6]: "I'm not a Christian, my parents don't let me take it off (one of many reasons why I tried to really kill myself)." (BESTGORE, 2012).

Also, Estiben Schweisteiger published the same image on websites related to *gore content*[7]. The letter b between bars was a reference to Estiben's favorite website: bestgore.com. In this website and a similar address, 4chan, he used the nick of EstibenOrtiz, and he was an attentive commentator.

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[6] With his Nick EstibenOrtiz, on June Fifth, 2012, Omar comments on the bestgore.com site (http://www.bestgore.com/suicide/man-cuts-his-femoral-artery-bleeds-live-oovoo-webcam/)   the news of his own attempt of suicide, in which he explains some details of his act.
[7] The *gore* gender makes reference to the forms of violence extremely graphic, where the intensity of images prevails as a fundamental qualitative differential.

In the sequence of the note, Estiben marked the date and time of his act, observing to specify the time zone in which he belonged.

He applied a method to communicate his message to create excitement in several forums, which inflamed with the discussion on the mysterious meaning of his message. However, when we look at the theoretical and methodological references of advertisement, we noticed that Estiben adopted a strategy that is a discursive marketing resource very known and effective: the teaser.

> A word Teaser comes from the term *striptease*, because, such as in the striptease, there is suspense around the spectacle, since this advertising practice searches to give higher impact to the advertise, ensuring a high index of audience. (…) The teaser (from verb tease, in English, means "to provoke") is a technique used in marketing to call the attention for an advertisement campaign, increasing the interest of a determined audience-target regarding its message, through the use of enigmatic information at the beginning of the campaign. (VIANA, 2010, p. 34, our translation).

The teaser, which rarely was utilized some decades ago, today combines a great persuasive and fixation power, and it is used not only in advertisements connected to market products but also to virtual games very common among young people. Thus, the resource of suspense is a fundamental element for the children and young people: "The language used (was) suitable to the characteristics of the young generation, with faster happenings, short conversations and a dose of humor and suspense" (CRUZ; KRÜGER, 2009, p. 67, our translation).

Ortiz's plan was revealed in the precise moment disclosed in his note. He put the webcam of notebook closer to his body, and cut himself with the scalp, which was also part of the advertisement of his spectacle. A great number of people was watching, but his own blood interrupted his show, which falling on his computer caused technical problems that finished the transmission. The apex of his apparently accidental script took up the initial suspense. Estiben's destiny was revealed weeks later: his girlfriend entered in the bedroom and found him unconscious, and she called paramedics. After his hospital stay, Omar Alonso could return to home and, finally, deliver his version for his attempt of suicide in an interview which was published on the website *bestgore.com.*

Notwithstanding several personal problems had interfered in the decision of the young Mexican, Omar himself declared his main intention with the suicidal act, in such interview conducted by *Playboy666*, one of the moderators of the website (BESTGORE, 2012):

"**Playboy666:** What made you to cut your femoral artery live on webcam?

**Estiben:** Because I love 4chan, they gave me so much lols, so I wanted to give them something epic**.**"

To give something epical to the audience means to correspond to the expectation of the quality of the announced spectacle, to present a differentiated *show*, surpassing the limits that the others did not dare to defy. The strategy of the suspense, as a form to establish a brand, shall respect the marketing dictum: "Associations with brands are created, maintained, and

increased regarding all experience and encounter that the consumer has with them" (BATEY, 2010, p. 28, our translation). Thus, Omar knew that the state of attention that his suspense had captured could not be frustrated by the colors of an ordinary spectacle. Therefore, after several types of research, many, he opted for a suicidal method that would provide a spectacle extremely graphical: to cut the femoral artery of his groin and, so, to bleed until die.

In this way, we observe the case of an adolescent that, convinced to take a radical attitude against own life, he used a discursive method completely toward the tentative to make use of the market bias to capture the glance, to call the attention, making himself, for a moment, the protagonist on the stage of the virtual spectacle of the life. For this purpose and while a show, his strategy follows the metrics of the advertisement in his final objective: to establish the brand.

In the amplitude of the diversity of competition of transnational capitalism, the need to establish a distinction of a product to the others it is that creates the possibility to be perceived and to be consumed. The speed of the offers and the lethargy of the receiver cause certain impersonal and disfigured sense to the product, insofar as, broadly, he is a condensed of other esthetical and discursive arrangements already offered by Cultural Industry. Thus, the establishment of bonds is not only a promotional strategy but also a way of survival. In the economics area, this process is featured by advertisement in the construction of a network of representation of subjective meanings as of the constitution of a brand:

> A physical product becomes a brand when it receives something more – images, symbols, perceptions, and feelings – to produce a total idea higher than the sum of its parts. A brand can consist of an only product or to be constituted with several spreading for many categories. But in the core there is a soul, a distinctive identity touching consumers' hearts and transcending the physical representation in terms of the form of the product (BATEY, 2010, p. 27, our translation).

Furthermore, the infinity of subjectivities offering the show of the own life, the need for the creation of increment demands new discursive, esthetical, and linguistic strategies.

In the dimension of the society of the spectacle, the show of the private life shall win the competition with many other shows, and, for this purpose, it makes use of the stratagems that advertisement offers to the marketers. However, that is at stake in *marketing* is the construction of the soul of a product. In this sense, the conduction of a discursive standard of the advertisement demands some subjective adaptations that deserve to be investigated with greater precision, because their consequences still are few understood.

Notwithstanding the range and diversity of the facts and contexts that make a person to decide attack against the own life, it is the straightforward consideration that such an act is an irrational decision from the emotional point of view. The capability to conduct this decision, giving a form in the ritualistic and narcissist celebration of suicides watched by internauts, implies planning that needs the coldness of the process and a schedule of a medium-term execution. The disturbing coldness necessary to this process is heated by the morbid excitement of the production of the ultimate show of the spectacle of life.

The excitement of the countdown of the days, to watch the reaction of people facing the mystery, and to glimpse the attention obtained with the process seem strategies of the establishment of bonds of affection with the shapeless and impersonal spectators that the internet provides. The sensation to feel alone in the middle of the crowd is expressed in Estiben's words to comment on the news: "First, I had a lot of reasons to commit suicide (which, I believe, you don't care)" (BESTGORE, 2012).

## Final considerations

If technological and scientific development makes it possible to us new boundaries of limits increasingly remotes, the degeneration of the forms of experience and emancipation makes our advance empty of formative sense. The virtualization of life presents, dialectically, our enormous ability of technical advance, and our intense spiritual misery.

In its social dimension, suicide is immersed in the historic and cultural contexts of a defined nation, and it is necessary for an analysis aiming to understand the contemporaneous, the observance of digital phenomena, and the changes arising from our behavior. At the same time, the cyberculture was fundamental for the popularization of the information, for the creation of democratic channels of expression, and for the shortening of the physical distances between people, it also instigated the ideological polarization, dissemination of information without quality, truth, or good intentionality, besides to produce on individuals a compulsion to the perception that is the tonic of the virtual behavior (PACÍFICO; GOMES, 2019). In this scenario, the mediations of the virtual environments determine that the suicidal practices require three categories of analysis: a) cases in which websites and/or internet users encourage and conduct the suicide victims. In general, such practices are restricted to forums, and followed by *chats*, having a form of visual records the eventual photos of the process; b) creation of suicidal groups where people meet in forums on the subject and create a pact of collective death; c) cases where the suicide victim becomes the practice as public by video and alive, as from the access of the internauts to the webcam.

In this study, the cases of suicide.com have understood not only the transposition the suicidal practices to the digital era, in turn, but they also end senses and meanings from a culture highly spectacularized, where the private life tends, influenced by the logic of the advertisement, to become a show on the virtual platforms:

> Insofar as the symbolic purpose of the system is the creation of a standard of predetermined consumption, and mediated by esthetical seductions, the structure of the pleasure around the consumption of the commodity needs the adoption of a character of leisure and status of freedom. (…) The relationship between the individual and the product is much more intricated under its symbolic aspects than its objective dimension. A sincere and pragmatic discourse did not belong to advertisement. It needs, through its language, to reach all forms of guidance of life and wishes of the individuals. Such a dimension seems to equally reach the forms of men's expressions. In photos, videos, and other forms of

representation on social media are at stake more than a simple act of individual exposure, but, especially, an esthetical appeal aiming to channel spread glances to that individual spectacle. Advertisement's game of seduction furnishes its aspect to the individuals that follow the same logic of the mercantile spectacle, where does not only the cold exposure, but the protagonism is on the mechanisms of seduction. (PACÍFICO; GOMES, 2019, p. 172, our translation).

Cases as Omar Pérez summarize many contentions of the era where the spectacle becomes a foundation in the way how we communicate with ourselves. The formative mismatches announced in the maxim that "the earth completely clarified shines under the sign of a triumphant disaster" (ADORNO; HORKHEIMER, 1985, p. 17, our translation) the winners are the technological weapons that frequently enhances the barbarism. This finding denotes that not even death has escaped from the mercantile logic of the society of the spectacle. When Omar decided for his death, his most intimacy and last, even so, he was worried about providing a public show, with a teaser and a graphic print that would impact his audience forever.

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