



TRANSFORMATION OF CIVIC REFLEXIVITY IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY: EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY, CRITICAL THINKING, AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL DETERMINANTS OF DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE

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Abstract: Civic reflexivity is interpreted as a relationship between epistemic judgment and public responsibility. Evidence verification is examined under disinformation and synthetic media. A framework of source identification, contextual reconstruction, independent corroboration, and error correction is proposed. Critical thinking is linked to the quality of democratic dialogue. Epistemic trust is distinguished from unquestioning acceptance of information. The theoretical findings require further educational evaluation.

Keywords: civic reflexivity, epistemic responsibility, media literacy, disinformation, critical thinking, democratic dialogue, evidence verification.

INTRODUCTION

In an informationized society, a citizen is often confronted with a digital image, title, commentary, or short video of a social phenomenon before directly observing it. In such a situation, political opinion is not only concerned with the values of the individual, but also with the origin, context, and reliability of the information. The speed of digital communication makes it possible to compare different sources, but the same speed also raises the possibility of sharing an ambiguous message before verifying it. Therefore, the important question of civic culture should not be limited to "how was the idea expressed?", but should encompass the epistemological question of "how was the evidentiary basis of the idea verified?" [1; 2].

By "epistemic responsibility" we understand an individual's obligation to justify an individual's judgment of knowledge, to acknowledge uncertainty, and to correct an error if necessary. This notion does not require expert-level scientific knowledge from all citizens. It refers to a willingness to distinguish between an argument and an assumption in a changing flow of information, to seek an independent source, and to respond to another's justified objection. Civic reflexivity, on the other hand, is the individual's ability to apply the same process to his or her own views, i.e., to be able to critically see not only external information, but also the conditions under which his or her judgment is formed. Reflexivity, therefore, is a broader philosophical capacity than the habit of simple questioning.

Artificially generated audiovisual materials, person-like imagery, and recommendation algorithms put this capability in a complex position. The persuasive appearance of an image may not be an adequate indicator of its authenticity; conversely, even an absolute distrust of all images undermines the public's ability to agree on the facts. Rini explores the epistemic problems of deeply falsified content that complicate trust in testimony [7]. The problem of the article

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is precisely to look for criteria for responsible cognition between these two fringe positions, naïve belief and general skepticism.

The aim of the study is to uncover the ontological and gnoseological conditions of civic reflexivity in an informationized environment, to conceptualize the practical stages of epistemic responsibility, and to develop criteria for organizing democratic dialogue based on evidence. The key question is: how does a citizen respond to the epistemic consequences of his or her vision while having a free view in an environment where a false message can spread rapidly?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The source base of the study highlights the issues of media literacy and the distinction between false news in the information environment [1; 2]. Potanina examines the territorial changes in digital political attitudes, and the digital forms of civic mobilization [3; 4]. Livingstone et al. have systematically reviewed the research evidence related to young people's digital skills; Peart and co-authors have analyzed the relationship between digital citizenship and social competence [5; 6]. Rini investigates the effect of synthetic content on cognitive confidence, while Rogers investigates the phenomenon of de-platforming and transition to an alternative environment [7; 8].

Epistemological analysis distinguishes between the categories of "information," "evidence," "trust," "based judgment," and "uncertainty in knowledge." Information may exist as a message; however, its existence does not prove that the claim in the message is true. An argument is a verifiable basis that supports a particular judgment, and its credibility depends on the source, time, and context. A belief is not an absolute guarantee, but an attitude based on the trustworthy behavior of another person or institution. This distinction serves to understand fact checking as a broader ethical activity than the technical stage of information gathering.

Hermeneutic analysis is based on the requirement not to separate a text or image from the context in which it was created. An abbreviated video, a new comment added to an old image, or a partially rendered document may take on a different meaning than the content. Contextual restitution begins with asking by whom, when, in what circumstance, and for what purpose the judgment in the message was spoken. Normative analysis, on the other hand, examines what liability arises when a user shares a message without verifying it, and what criteria an institution can rely on to limit it.

The paper did not develop an automatic content detection model, did not measure the algorithmic error of real-world platforms, and no pedagogical experiment was conducted. All results are the result of a comparison between philosophical concepts as well as a logical reconstruction. The proposed skills scheme can be translated into assessment tasks in further research, but is not yet interpreted as a methodology whose effectiveness has been proven.

RESULTS

The Gnoseological Structure of Civic Reflexivity. The first result is to define civic reflexivity as a continuous relationship of three actions related to knowledge: acceptance of evidence, verification of judgment, and consideration of the social consequences of judgment. Acceptance of evidence implies that an individual is open to new information; verification of judgment is an independent discussion of the basis of that information; and consideration of consequence im-

plies the moral aspect of communicating the message to others. Civil reflexivity can be limited when one of these three elements is disconnected. For example, merely gathering news does not equate to critical thinking; even when the evidence is verified, deliberately disseminating the error may be contrary to the requirements of moral responsibility.

This notion does not equate critical thinking with a culture of constant denial. There is a difference between questioning an external message and acknowledging the possibility that one's own interpretation is wrong. The first approach can only lead to questioning others; the second expresses epistemic humility, the ability to change a conclusion when a new basis emerges. For this reason, the position that "I trust no one" is not in itself an indicator of reflexivity. Civil responsibility requires a criterion of evaluation between skepticism and justified belief [7].

The second result is to distinguish the quality of an argument from its similarity to a fact. The fact that there is an exact date, number, or video in a public discussion does not mean that the message is automatically correct. It is important that the source be rediscovered, that the document is complete, that it is time-appropriate, and that it is comparable to other independent evidence. This approach also does not absolutize the relativity of knowledge: just because there are different opinions about a report does not mean that all judgments are equally justified. A reasonable debate keeps open the distinction between facts and interpretations.

Systematic literature analyses on digital skills show that the concept of skill is multidimensional [5]. This article draws an independent conclusion about civic reflexivity from this: rapid use of a technical device, reliable verification of a source, and respect for another's right are different qualifications. Reducing them to a single level of "digital literacy" makes the necessary competencies in the curriculum ambiguous.

The third consequence relates to the need to re-evaluate the philosophical status of audiovisual testimony. In the past, the presence of a photograph or video was often considered a strong initial basis for a particular phenomenon. Whereas in the context of the expansion of digital editing and synthetic image tools, the external credibility of the image and its origin become a separate issue. This does not mean that the image is always false. Rather, the importance of document-based verification, a reliable source, and a comparison of multiple independent testimonies increases. It is precisely the issue of the "epistemic base" that Rini analyzes that provides the basis for a discussion of the terms of confidence that are attached to the testimony [7].

There are two possible fallacies in this problem. The first is the "what I saw with the eye, then it is true" rule; the second is the "everything can be falsified, so nothing is reliable" rule. Both weaken epistemic responsibility. The former sees scrutiny as redundant, and the second makes the very claim of proof meaningless. The philosophical middle ground consists of the verifiability of testimony, the openness of method, and the culture of admitting error. It is precisely in such circumstances that evidence-based disagreement serves democratic dialogue.

It is also questioned whether deplatforming or restricting one channel automatically solves the information problem. Rogers' study of deplatforming analyzes the likelihood that certain actors will move to other communication environments [8]. However, such an outcome cannot be accepted as a universal law for all situations. The article draws the following nor-

mative conclusion from this discussion: even when message restriction is necessary, the long-term need of civic culture lies in the development of independent evaluation of evidence and alternative verification capabilities.

A balance between the pursuit of truth and the protection of the identity of the individual is also necessary. The denial of the erroneous message must be made with a valid argument, not to be confused with discrimination against the individual or the unjustified disclosure of his or her personal information. Epistemic culture, therefore, is not merely a technical "factualism" but a communicative practice that adheres to legal and ethical boundaries.

One of the main authorial outcomes of the study is the division of epistemic responsibility into four operational stages. "Identifying the source" involves finding the author of the message and the place where it was first published; "restoring context" means examining time, situation, and the likelihood of fragmentation; "independent comparison" means distinguishing between duplicate copies and a truly independent source; and "correcting an error" means updating a previous judgment on a new basis. They were developed as philosophically grounded pedagogical and public questions, not as technical certification or ready-made measure.

Table 1. Normative Evaluation Criteria for Digital Citizenship

Phase	The main question	Knowing criteria	Ethical Commitment
Resource	Where does the message come from?	Author and Origin	Unreasonable sharing
Background	When and why?	Restore full content	Acknowledging misleading interpretation
Compare	Is there independent evidence?	Diversity of Sources	Disclosure of ambiguity
Correction	Xulosa o'zgardimi?	Adapting to a New Evidence	Error Correction Transparent

The purpose of the table is not to encourage the citizen to be suspicious, but to direct his or her process of working with the message to a reasonable conclusion. For example, the fact that two sites copied and pasted the same message exactly does not automatically mean two independent confirmations. Nor does the fact that the author of the message be indicated does not guarantee that its context is not violated. Each step complements the previous one and brings it closer to a reasonably concluded relationship.

To apply this matrix in education, the student may be asked to explain the way in which the prepared "correct answer" is searched, rather than memorizing the prepared "correct answer." However, the usefulness of such an assignment cannot be presented as proven effectiveness until it has been verified by special pedagogical design and experience.

A fourth consequence is that epistemic responsibility goes beyond individual thought. When citizens discuss a collective issue, the obligation to knowledge consists not only of checking one's own message, but also of hearing another's reasoned testimony. In some cases, because of the individual's social status or linguistic ability, his or her argument may receive less attention. In such a case, subtracting the external authority of the source for the evidence limits the process of generating social knowledge. In the article, the notion of epistemic justice is interpreted not as the acceptance of all opinion as a single truth, but as an evaluation of arguments according to the same criteria of scrutiny.

Democratic dialogue also involves responsible disagreement. A citizen may not accept the interlocutor's position, but deliberately distorting his argument, attacking an individual, or imposing ill will without examining the content of the message, will damage the epistemic basis of the dialogue. Critical thinking, therefore, is not the elimination of an alternative view, but the process of identifying its reasons and arguments and, where necessary, responding to them. The practical expression of this rule is to keep the question "By what evidence?" as well as "who said it?" in the debate.

In scientific studies on media literacy in the information environment of Uzbekistan, the problem of separating false news and evidence has been raised [1; 2]. Other country studies on digital citizenship skills show that it is possible to link critical activity with the social competence of young people [5; 6]. However, it does not follow from these sources that the four-stage scheme in this article has already been validated in experiment. The proposed scheme is an author's approach developed from a conceptual link between the same topics.

Emphasizing that epistemic responsibility is not limited to an individual alone, it is also necessary to distinguish between institutional responsibility. An organization disseminating information to the public should make its source and correction policies understandable, while the platform should not substitute unfair censorship for scrutiny. It is also imperative that the citizen, within the limits of his or her capabilities, accept the new argument of error and be prepared to make appropriate corrections. These duties are not the same, but they hold together in shaping a common knowledge environment.

DISCUSSION

The first controversial issue in the philosophical analysis of civic reflexivity is the boundary between critical thinking and general distrust. The knowledge that information can be falsified is a cause for caution, but it is not a sufficient basis for rejecting all testimony. While general skepticism seems to protect one from error, it can also undermine the criterion of independent scrutiny. Epistemic responsibility therefore advances the requirement to be able to explain the reason for believing or rejecting rather than the case of "believing nothing." The philosophical debate about synthetic content reveals the importance of this distinction [7].

The second controversy arises between the regulation of information and freedom of expression. Moderation aimed at reducing the spread of misinformation is not always a mistake, but when the reason for the restriction is not clear or there is no possibility of revision, there is a risk of a different kind of injustice in the information space. On the other hand, it is also not enough to interpret the phrase "freedom of speech" as a universal permission to disseminate a deliberately falsified argument without criticism. As a normative solution, the combined importance of proportional restraint, procedural interpretation, and independent fact checking is distinguished.

The third controversy is about equating digital skills with technical competence. A person who uses the platform at a professional level can also confuse the source of the wrong message. On the contrary, a person with a technical disability may carefully evaluate a credible argument. The results of research on digital skills remind us of the need to take this distinction seriously [5; 6]. Therefore, the outcome of civic education should not be measured solely by the speed at which the device and the application are used.

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Another controversy concerns the unity of the digital space. A message that is invisible on one platform may be moved to another, but the same migration does not always have the same social consequence. Rogers' empirical study discusses this issue in the case of specific content and actors [8]. Keeping its boundaries, it can be said that it is not enough to make epistemic responsibility dependent on the rule of one platform; the ability of a citizen to verify an argument in different sources is an independent value.

In the study of the issue of civic reflexivity in the context of Uzbekistan, it is possible to combine local media literacy sources, international research on digital political communication, and practical tasks of education [1; 2]. In this process, the phrase "fact checking" should not become a means of molding political opinion. The main goal is to strengthen the capacity to assess the verifiable content of messages, while recognizing that citizens may have different views. Normative pluralism does not require a complete abandonment of the criterion of evidence; rather, working on common facts is a condition for a meaningful disagreement.

In a course that relies pedagogically on a four-step scheme, students can be given a different title about an event, a full report, an old image, and alternative information. They identify the source, compare time and context, seek independent verification, and explain how the initial conclusion was altered. The purpose of the training is not to promote a particular political position, but to demonstrate the process of evaluation with a logical basis. This task can serve to explain the relationship between civic education and epistemological culture in a practical way.

The limitations of the study are obvious: it lacks a technical audit of the algorithmic recommendations of a particular platform; no survey was conducted to represent users' level of trust in the information; and the effectiveness of the proposed approach was not measured in an experimental trial. Methods for pre- and post-evaluation of source verification assignments, documenting the frequency of self-correction, and coding qualitative arguments in evidence-based communication may be proposed for further work. Any such test should be consistent with the requirements of personal information, consent, and academic objectivity.

The article's theoretical contribution is not limited to individual caution about civic reflexivity, but rather its attempt to justify it as an adjacent field of democratic debate, social recognition, and collective responsibility. Responsibility to knowledge begins with not hiding personal wrongdoing, but its value in society is manifested through the fair treatment of others' arguments, the publicity of correction, and the continuity of dialogue. Thus, critical reflection is interpreted not as a mechanism of control that restricts civil freedom, but as a condition for its realization in a justified form.

CONCLUSION

The study interpreted civic reflexivity in an informationized society not as a systematic denial of one's own opinion, but as the ability to verify a message, make an informed judgment, and revise a view when an error occurs. First, epistemic responsibility was explained in units of openness to information, critical evaluation of evidence, and consideration of the social implications of the message. Second, it was justified that in the context of synthetic content and digital editing tools, external credibility could not be equated with evidentiary assertion, but that absolute skepticism could not also derive from it. Third, a four-stage normative scheme was developed, consisting of identifying the source, restoring context, independent comparison, and

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correcting error. Fourth, epistemic justice was shown not to accept the opinions of others uncritically, but as a criterion for evaluating arguments made by different subjects with the same scrutiny. Fifth, the responsibility of the citizen, the institution disseminating information, and the platform for knowledge was differentiated, and their interdependence in communication was justified. These conclusions provide theoretical direction for the topics of information culture and civic education, but do not confirm empirical effectiveness. In the future, it is necessary that the proposed scheme-based pedagogical training, digital message analysis, and citizen evidence-checking practices be tested using special methods. For civic reflexivity, it can sometimes be more important to clearly state the boundaries of scrutiny than to immediately say that a message is false or true. At the same time, a statement of persistent ambiguity does not constitute a basis for abandoning the search for evidence. The normative approach intertwines a person's right to change his mind with the task of correcting his or her previous inaccuracies in an appropriate form. In higher education, it is desirable that training based on this view assesses the verifiability of the conclusion, not the rate at which the interlocutor is rejected. And the final conclusion about consequence requires a separate pedagogical experiment.

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