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- Ety Hillesum
- Ministérios ordenados
- Protagonismo laical
- Teologia e interculturalidade
- Igreja na AL – últimos 50 anos
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HYPER-CONNECTED GENERATION AND DISCERNMENT

A Franciscan perspective

GERAÇÃO HIPER-CONECTADA E DISCERNIMENTO

Perspectiva franciscana

Martín Carbajo Núñez*
Rom, Italy

Abstract: This article asserts the urgent need of discernment in our hyper-connected and hyper-accelerated society that drives people to frenetic activity and constant hurry. Furthermore, “the speed with which information is communicated exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgement.” The first part of the article focuses on discernment and indicates some of its characteristics, paying special attention to the Franciscan perspective. The second part reflects on how to practice it in order to meet the ethical challenges of our digital culture.

Keywords: Discernment; Digital culture; Communication; Franciscanism; Ethics.

Síntese: Este artigo afirma a urgente necessidade de discernimento em nossa sociedade hiperconectada e hiper-acelerada que leva as pessoas a ativismo frenético e constante pressa; além disso, “a velocidade da informação e da comunicada ultrapassa nossa capacidade de reflexão e julgamento”. Diante disso, a primeira parte do artigo concentra-se no discernimento e indica algumas de suas características, prestando especial atenção à perspectiva franciscana. A segunda parte reflete sobre

* Martín Carbajo Núñez, OFM, has a Doctorate degree in moral theology (Alfonsiana Academy, Rome), a license degree in Germanic philology (Santiago de Compostela Univ.), a Master in social communication (Gregorian Univ., Rome), and he is a qualified computer technician in management informatics. He is *extraordinarius* professor at the Pontifical University Antonianum (Rome, Italy), where he holds the Chair of Social Ethics. He currently teaches ethics and communication at three universities; two in Rome: Antonianum (PUA) and Alfonsianum (PUL), one in the USA: the FST, affiliated with Univ. San Diego (California). At the PUA he has been Vice-Rector and Rector Magnifico *ad interim* for three years.

como exercitar o referido discernimento ante os desafios éticos de nossa cultura digital.

Palabras chave: Discernimento; Cultura digital; Comunicação; Franciscanismo; Ética.

The hyper-connection and hyper-acceleration of today's society "exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgment".¹ "Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity"² and thoughtless agitation. Pope Francis calls it "rapidification" this intensified pace of life and work that provokes indifference, tension, violence, and confrontation, instead of favoring a respectful approach to everything that surrounds us. In this context, discernment is more necessary than ever.

The gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today, since contemporary life offers immense possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good. All of us, but especially the young, are immersed in a culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend.³

The first part of this article underlines the need for discernment in today's society and indicates some of its characteristics, paying a special attention to the Franciscan perspective.⁴ The second part reflects on how to practice it in order to face the ethical challenges of the digital culture.

1. Discernment

Discernment is usually understood as the faculty of judging, evaluating, and distinguishing in the right way. It "calls for something more than intelligence or common sense".⁵ The tradition of the Church con-

1. FRANCIS, Pope. *Message for the 48th World Communications Day* [=WCD], p. 8.

2. ID. *Encyclical letter Laudato Si'* [=LS], n. 225.

3. ID. *Apostolic exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate* [=GE], n. 167.

4. On discernment in the Franciscan perspective: KOHLER. *Vida franciscana y discernimiento*, p. 165-167; URIBE. *Presupuestos y principios básicos del discernimiento según San Francis of Assisi. Selecciones de Franciscanismo* [=SelFran], p. 337-356; MAESTRE. *El discernimiento de espíritus y su aplicación según san Francisco. Laurentianum*, p. 414-448; FORTUNATO. *Discernere con Francesco d'Assisi*. A reduced version, in: CARBAJO NUNEZ. *Il contributo francescano al processo di razionalizzazione e la tesi di Max Weber. Studia Moralia*, Roma, v. 56, n. 2, p. 109-136, 2018.

5. GE. n. 166. "Discernment, then, is not a solipsistic self-analysis or a form of egotistical introspection". GE, n. 175.

siders it a divine gift that enables us to make decisions and guides our actions in situations of uncertainty.⁶ It must not be reduced to extraordinary times: “We need it at all times”, even “in small and apparently irrelevant things”. (GE 169) It applies to a variety of situations; for example, “one form of discernment is exercised in reading the signs of the times”. There are other forms: moral, spiritual, vocational etc.⁷

Spiritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them.” It has to do with the meaning and purpose of my life before the Father. “It requires no special abilities... The Father readily reveals himself to the lowly” (GE 170).

Referring to Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure describes discernment as the constant concern “to search with special eagerness in what manner and in what way he could serve God more perfectly”.⁸

1.1 Necessity and purpose of discernment

The tradition and the spiritual praxis of the Church assert that discernment is indispensable to know the will of God.⁹ In fact, “each time I reach a crossroads, I must discern a concrete good, a step forward in the love I am called to give and in the way the Lord wants me to give it”.¹⁰

With discernment, the subject tries to identify the good that is possible for him in specific situations. In other words, he tries to find “what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal”.¹¹

At present, discernment keeps being essential. Bombarded by so many technological and consumerist appeals, we may have the impres-

6. XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Preparatory Document: Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* [=Synod], n. 2.

7. Synod n. 2; cf. GAGLIARDI. *Sul discernimento degli spiriti*; AROLDI. *La responsabilità difficile*; DOUGHERTY. *Discernment*; MARTIN, J. *Discernment*. In: McELWEE; WOODEN (Ed.). *A Pope Francis Lexicon*, p. 48-52.

8. BONAVENTURE, *The Major Legend*, [=LM], 12,2. In: ARMSTRONG; HELLMANN; SHORT (Ed.). *Francis of Assisi: Early documents* [=FAED]. *Idem.* v. II. p. 525-683; cf. THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS, n. 16 (FAED. v. III, p. 566-658).

9. BIANCHI. *L'arte del discernimento spirituale*, p. 17.

10. FRANCIS, Pope. *Address to the Parish priests of the diocese of Roma*, p. 8.

11. ID. *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia* [=AL], p. 303.