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Datafication and Dataism

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Datafication and Dataism

Jose Van Dijck (2014) describes the differences between datafication and dataism. The scholar defines datafication as transforming social actions to online data that allow tracking and giving predictions. Dataism, on the other hand, refers to the philosophy developed by the advancement of big data. The literature analyses the argument Dijck is trying to develop in differentiating datafication from dataism and how the concepts are used to understand contemporary media's changing role in Ireland.

One notable idea established by Dijck is that datafication is used as a life mining tool. In the past years, it has been used to gather information about social behaviors (Van Dijck, 2014). For example, Web 2.0 has enabled researchers to gain information about friendships, preferences and interests, which was not collected earlier. Facebook introduced the liking algorithm to determine how well the public prefers a product or an idea. Also, Twitter introduced followers and retweets that provide a lot of information on how people feel about a certain topic. When an individual has many followers, it means they influence the public a lot. The scholar adds that datafication enthusiasts claim that the platforms help determine the users' personalities. Influential individuals' content is both imaginative and organized. It happens as users interact with contents and unknowingly leave marks, which, when analyzed, provide detailed information about humans. It is, therefore, an accurate platform to predict humans' behaviors in the future.

Regarding dataism, Dijck says that it betrays the idea that datafication could be used to determine all types of human behaviors (Van Dijck, 2014). More so, metadata is considered a raw material that would be analyzed to understand human's future behaviors. The statement means that the data gathered online is raw and require processing so that life is mined. Here, the scholar says that while datafication considers the online big data as a finished product

representing the actual human behaviors, dataism claims that the data is raw and needs to be processed. For example, when many people retweet a post, it does not communicate about their personalities directly. Instead, proper analysis needs to be done to identify the actual motive and factors involved. She quotes Richardson's 2008 research, where people googling about home mortgages were assessed. The first time they searched, they looked for information on prices, but six weeks later, they looked for the staff to put in the new homes. The study concluded that people's actual intention was to identify their needs in particular moments and not the homes themselves (Van Dijck, 2014). The point discussed here is that analysis has to be done as the online data does not directly interpret human behavior.

The above description is useful in understanding the changing role of contemporary media in Ireland. Before the introduction of big data, the public relied on print media, television and radio. It is not the case today, as they get most of the information from social media. The primary goals of media were to inform, persuade, entertain and transmit culture. It means that the media had great influence on societies. Based on the differences between datafication and dataism, the opposite has happened. It is the people influencing the media and not the other way round. The information gathered by data firms and the government about human behavior determines the news presented. For example, observing human behavior online and evaluating it showed that people preferred healthy foods to prevent illnesses. Therefore, today's changes are evident, where the public shapes the media other than the media influencing the people. As described in the dataism concept, the data gathered online is a raw material that needs to be processed. The idea implies that modern-day journalists must develop trust with the public to get data used to ensure media remains relevant.

In a nutshell, Jose Van Dijck's description of the difference between datafication and dataism helps understand modern-day media. As described, the scholar says that datafication describes more on human behavior, but dataism has to be involved in that data is processed and analyzed. It means people influence media today and not vice versa. For that reason, the realization calls for media firms to develop trust with the public so that the needed data is collected making media relevant despite the technological changes.

Reference

Van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. *Surveillance & Society*, 12(2), 197-208.

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