

WHICH SUBJECT FOR THE DIGITAL?: A CRITIQUE OF DIGITALIZATION'S ROOTS IN (NEURO)PSYCHOLOGIZATION

Jan De VOS*

Abstract

This paper will not be about understanding digital culture or digital (inter) subjectivity with the help of (neuro)psychology. Rather, it will look critically into how (neuro)psychological models are used precisely in modelling our avatars and smart environments, today's placeholders of (inter)subjectivity. So instead of "Your brain on digital: How digitalization is shaping our brains", I choose for another approach informed by critical theory and psychoanalytic critique: "How neuropsychological models shape digitality". Hence, if anything, the digitalization of (inter)subjectivity rather than be assessed with (neuro) psychology should be connected to the psychologization and neurologization of (inter)subjectivity. From here the key question becomes, if current (neuro) psychological models allow for a technology with limited emancipatory potential (in which datafication equals the capitalist exploitation of intersubjectivity), would then a different psychology open up to something different? Hence, would the following be a viable question: which subject for the digital?

Keywords: digital, (inter)subjectivity, (neuro)psychology, neurologization, psychologization.

* Lecturer and Researcher/PhD, University College Ghent, Faculty of Art and Philosophy

DİJİTAL İÇİN HANGİ ÖZNE? (NÖRO)PSİKOLOJİLEŞTİRMEDEKİ DİJİTALLEŞMENİN KÖKENLERİNİN BİR ELEŞTİRİSİ

Jan De VOS*

Özet**

Bu makale ne nöropsikolojik bakıştan hareketle dijital kültürü, ne de dijital öznelarasılığın anlamak için kaleme alınmıştır. Burada daha çok nöropsikolojik modellerin içerisinde eleştirel bir bakışla avatarlarımızı ve akıllı çevremizi, öznelarasılığın da desteğiyle, nasıl modelleyeceğimiz anlatılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla da “dijital beynimiz üzerinde, yani dijitalin, beynimizi nasıl şekillendirmekte olduğu” sorusu yerine, eleştirel kuram ve psikoanalitik eleştiri ile şekillenen bir başka yaklaşımla şu soruyu soruyorum: “Nöro-psikolojik modeller dijitalliği nasıl şekillendiriyor?”. O halde öznelarasılığın dijitalleşmesi üzerinde durulacaksa eğer, bunun daha çok nöropsikolojik açıdan ele alınması gerekir. Bu da, öznelarasılığın nörolojileştirme ve psikolojileştirme ile ilişkilendirilerek ancak yapılabilir. Bu noktada anahtar soru, halihazırdaki nöropsikolojik modellerin sınırlı özgürleştirici potansiyelliğe sahip teknolojiye izin verip vermediği ve eğer öyleyse, farklı bir psikolojinin başka bir şeylere mi yol açtığıdır. Burada sözü edilen teknolojideki verileştirme, öznelarasılığın kapitalist sömürüne eşittir. Dolayısıyla da burada yanıtı aranacak sorulardan biri de; ‘dijital için öznenin ne olduğu’dur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dijital, öznel(arasılık), (nöro)psikoloji, nörolojileştirme, psikolojileştirme.

* Öğretim Görevlisi ve Araştırmacı/Doktor, Ghent Üniversitesi, Sanat ve Felsefe Fakültesi

** Çev.: Feride Zeynep Güder, Doçent Doktor, Üsküdar Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi

How to Understand Digitalization?

This paper will *not* be about understanding digital culture or digital (inter) subjectivity with the help of (neuro) psychology. Although the temptation to (neuro) psychologize, digitalization is omnipresent. Why this is the case can be rapidly argued for. That is, as Alexander Galloway argues for the urgency of “thinking digitality” (Berry and Galloway, 2016), two other prominent philosophers of the digital, Bernard Stiegler and David Berry, explain this urgency as follows: it is not just that the progressive digitalisation of our life-world fundamentally transforms *social life*; it also transforms *psychical life* (Berry and Beer, 2014; Stiegler, 2012). Hence, as digitalization most centrally affects the matter of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, many commentators and scholars alike proceed in the direction of the psychological and the neurosciences in order to think the digital.

To take a recent example: at the last World Economic Forum at Davos (January, 2018) George Soros grounded his attack on *Facebook* and *Google* (calling them “a menace to society”) in a psychologizing discourse: he pointed to the engineering of addiction and its harmful effects on especially adolescents (Soros, 2018). This idea to depict digitalization as a threat to subjectivity and understand this via (neuro) psychological paradigms is even clearer with *Facebook*’s founder, Sean Parker. Parker describes the operational principal of *Facebook* as *Facebook* “hacking people’s psychology to hook them” adding to this the outcry “God only knows what it’s doing to our children’s brains” (Ulanoff, 2017).

Also academic assessments most readily take recourse to the neuropsychosciences to understand the digitalisation of (inter)subjectivity, either in a direct way (e.g. Turkle, 2011 examining the “psychological power” of digital devices to change us, see also Aboujaoude 2011; Carr, 2010), or more covertly (e.g. Robert Cover’s [2015] idea of online performative identities and selves, silently relying on psi-theories on identity, see also e.g. Hansen, 2004; Masumi, 2002; Thrift and French, 2002). Stiegler, on his turn explicitly promotes the use of neuroscience to understand the digitalization of (inter)subjectivity (Stiegler, 2014).

However, as I pointed out in the beginning, this paper will not be about understanding digital culture or digital (inter)subjectivity with the help of (neuro) psychology. In contrast, the task that I want to engage with is the following: instead of looking how digitality shapes or alters our brains and psychology, we have to shift the perspective and precisely critically look into how neuropsychological models themselves are always already shaping digitality. To claim, for example, that *Facebook* posts or *Google* searches tell a lot on human psychology foregoes the fact that *Facebook* and *Google* and other platforms are always already informed by psychological theories and models. This makes that the contemporary assessments of the digitalization of (inter) subjectivity—and the critique of digitalization as such—are heading to an im-

passee as they use the same neuropsychological models, which are implicated in what they research. As we in Flanders say: you only pull out the cat out the sack which has been put into it.

To explore this further, let me take another example in which precisely a direct (and unproblematic) link is claimed between the psychological and the digital. I refer here to scandal concerning Cambridge Analytica using data of *Facebook* in order to, amongst others; influence the American elections and the Brexit campaign in the UK. As the whistle-blower Christopher Wylie describes it, he was the digital whizz kid who created "Steve Bannon's *psychological*¹ warfare tool" (Cadwalladr, 2018). Moreover, The profiles on persons extracted from *Facebook* data are explicitly called "sophisticated *psychological*² and political profiles" (Cadwalladr, 2018). Psychology, hence, a dangerous knowledge? Clearly, it were psychologists who were involved in designing the algorithms to "extract" profiles. Psychologists Michal Kosinski and David Stillwell both involved in Cambridge Analytica wrote in their academic paper "myPersonality project" the following:

In recent years there has been a remarkable shift towards more social and less anonymous Internet use. Interactions between people using anonymous nicknames, email addresses, or avatars are increasingly replaced by interactions within Online Social Networks (OSN) that are based on real identities and connections that largely mirror offline social links (...) (Stillwell and Kosinski, 2004).

So the idea is that we no longer cheat or play a role on the internet, or if we do, the internet can see through this. Big Data knows who you are. That is, it knows you via your desires that you express while surfing on the internet. Hence, is the internet not a psychologist or a psychoanalyst? Is surfing the internet something that resembles the free association of psychoanalysis? Think in this respect on the recent book of Stephens-Davidowitz (2017) entitled: "Everybody Lies. Big data, new data and what the Internet can tell us about who we really are". Stephens-Davidowitz argues that now for the first time we can see the inside of people's head. The digital opens a new and direct entrance into our psychology; hence, as said higher, psychology is potentially a dangerous knowledge?

However, does this claimed for direct link between the psychological and the digital not raise the question: is this really possible, is our psychology truly quantifiable, hence, is our psychology fully digitalizable? Or, alternatively, is life that what resists quantification, that what resists digitalization? This is what for example Antoinette Rouvroy (2018) seems to argue: for her, the truly important is life is not quantifiable, life is what resists calculation and hence digitalization. But we can go on of course: is life that what resists psychologization, is life that what resists neurologization? Is there hence a precious

¹ Author's note: "my italics"

² Author's note: "my italics"

agalma, a precious core in the human, to be defended not only from the psychology/neuroscience but now especially from digitalization?

To make it immediately clear: this line of thought is precisely the temptation we should resist. In my books on psychologization and neurologization I have always warned against putting forward something primordial and essential human core which would escape (neuro)psychologization (De Vos, 2012, 2013, 2016b). This is my argument: what resists psychologization and neurologization or digitalization is not something external/primordial to it, something vitalistic, but rather, what thwarts psychologization, neurologization or digitalization is the internal antagonism (something inherently problematic) of psychology, neuroscience or the digital itself!

Let me make this clear by referring to the Lacanian concept of the Real. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan discerned three registers structuring our human life: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. The most common understanding of the Real is that it is that what resists symbolization, which what remains after our conceptual grasp of reality. This is the idea that reality would be too big for our limited representations. I argue that this is a wrong understanding of Jacques Lacan's Real. Let me make this more tangible: in the naïve, common understanding one would say: *"I feel so much inside of me, but I can't put it into words"*. This is the idea that reality is too big for our representations. However, in a true psychoanalytic perspective of the Real, the former has to be reversed: *"I say so much, and in doing so something escapes me"*! Think for example about the Freudian "slip of the tongue" as I speak, an excess arises that I as a subject cannot fully master or control. This is the true psychoanalytic unconscious, this is the Lacanian Real. Hence, the Real is at the side of the *too much* of the Symbolic: it is the Symbolic which is too big. The Real is thus the monstrous excess, which sees light precisely because the human being speaks. This is the Freudian unconscious: it is not that what exceeds symbolization, but that which is the result, the excess of symbolization.

Hence, instead of proposing that vitalistic life resist symbolization (and thus psychologization, neurologization and digitalization), I argue the following: that what resists, is to be found at the side of symbolic itself. This is the true scandal of psychoanalysis: the Real only arises in language: it is only via symbolization that something arises which escapes us, something that we cannot fully master. Or, to transpose this to the issue of psychologization, neurologization and digitalization –as, arguably, those three issues are three (different but intertwined) forms of symbolizations of life: *it is only because of psychology, that there exists a gap in our knowledge on the psyche. It is only because of neuroscience that our "free will", for example, becomes something enigmatic (in a different way, as it was problematic before). Or, finally, it is only because of digitalization, that something sees light that resists it.* So instead of trying to defend life against neuropsychologization, quantification and digitalization, we should search for that what thwarts all that for within. What is

it in the psychological, the neurological and, at its turn, the digital paradigm itself which resists from within, which prevents those paradigms of reaching full closure?

To explore this, let me go back to the two psychologists Kosinski and Stillwell involved in Cambridge Analytica and their belief that social media provides us with so much personal data that our personality finally becomes fully quantifiable (Stillwell and Kosinski, 2004). How do they precisely operationalize their rationale? Kosinski and Stillwell devised an app "myPersonality" and disseminated it via *Facebook* where it spread like a fire. To be clear, *myPersonality* is nothing more than a simple psychological questionnaire of the kind that in pre-digital times were widespread in popular magazines. Kosinski and Stillwell claimed that their app allowed them to "chart personalities" to then link and match these data—and this was the particular move they made—to what people did on *Facebook*. This I claim is problematic for two reasons. First, what remains unquestioned is the already mentioned popularity of the app. On Stillwell's personal website, this is proudly mentioned but not put into question (Kosinski, May 2018). But what is the meaning of the app going viral? Why do people love being tested, love to be profiled, and are happy with the gratification to get a result back of the test telling them "this is what you are"?³ This is where the "we love to know you" from the researcher meets the "I love to know myself": and this the first thing the researchers are not able to grasp. I have described typical blind spot of psychologists also in my books on psychologization and neurologization: psychology and the neurosciences not only constitute their object (the [neuro]psychological object) but also a subject: the psychologized and neurologized subject. This is the situation of the colourful brain scan engendering an "oh-my-god-is-this-what-I-am" subject: science creates a new subject, contemplating itself, others, and the world from the scientific perspective (De Vos, 2016c). The modern (neuro) psychologized subject hence is itself the surplus, the excess of psychology or the neurosciences. Psychologists and neuroscientists as a rule tend to disregard this: they think they research real subjects, failing to take into account they are dealing with (neuro) psychologized subjects. Psychology and the neurosciences are the disciplines wanting to know the human being that itself wants to know him/herself. This is why psychology and psychologization are but two sides of the same coin, and the same holds for the neurosciences and neurologization. Here the neuropsychologies disregard and miss the fundamental von Münchhausen situation in which the modern human subject is caught: recall the story of the Baron von Münchhausen who most famously boasted to have saved himself from drowning in a swamp by pulling himself out of it by his own hair. Subsequently also the neuropsychologies cannot but themselves lack a firm basis in which they could ground both their theory and praxis.

³ "Soon, thousands of people were participating every day for fun, self-insight and to donate their data to psychological research." (Kosinski, May 2018)

Precisely here, from this fact of the impossible closure of psychology, we observe that Kosinski and Stillwell take recourse to digitality as they believe that the latter finally opens up a window to the human being as he allegedly really is. The assumption is thus that the digital and Big Data can provide psychology with its closure and the ground it always lacked. That is, the psy-profiles are cross-checked with social media activity, with data of what people like/do/post on *Facebook*. These data supposedly provide the neutral parameter, to be correlated to the psy-profile. And here we can formulate the second problematic issue of the rationale of Kosinski and Stillwell: the problem of the aimed at correlation between psychological profiles and *Facebook* data is that the latter (FB-likes; FB-activity) by no means can be seen as genuinely unconditioned an natural human behaviour. To begin with, from the very beginning *Facebook* and social media are first of all a business model: designed to make profit from steering and shaping behaviour. This means at the least that commodifiability colours and underpins all data deriving from *Facebook*. And, secondly, is it not clear that the very architecture of *Facebook* and other social media relies in the first place on mainstream psychological “insights” on the human being and its social behaviour”? Consider in this respect how Mark Zuckerberg once proclaimed that *Facebook* is all about psychology:

I think that that’s one of the core insights that we try to apply to developing Facebook. What [people are] really interested in is what’s going on with the people they care about. It’s all about giving people the tools and controls that they need to be comfortable sharing the information that they want. If you do that, you create a very valuable service. It’s as much psychology and sociology as it is technology. (Larson, 2011)

We should take this literally: *Facebook* is developed, constructed and set up with (socio) psychological theories and models. The latter are used to create, as we read, “a valuable service”, read: a profitable commodity. So, at the very least, Kosinski and Stillwell’s move to correlate their psychological profiles, obtained by their personality app, and cross check this with *Facebook* data is problematic: put simply, it correlates data obtained by psychological models/theories with behaviour/data already informed by and shaped by the same psychological theories/models. Again, you pull out the cat out the sack that has been put into it.

We therefore should contest the idea that Big Data is able to hack into our psychology. The internet is not as such a psychologist, but rather, the internet is structured *as a psychologist*. That is, the web is not able to reveal our real psychology, our deep psychological desires, but, rather, it is set up so as to shape, guide and mould our “psychology”. Psychology, thus, is used as a circular rationale to establish the business model of social media, to provide the tautological base of digital capitalism. However, does not here the question remains, even if it is a *Von Münchaussian* construction, does not digital psychological profiling has proved to work? Think again of the role of Cambridge Analytica in the US elections and the Brexit campaign. Hence, is not the question:

what, then, precisely works in the psycho-digitalization of subjectivity? This is the question for the next section.

What Works in Digitalization?

It has already been questioned: is not the story that Cambridge Analytica really influenced the American elections not an unfounded story, a promotional pitch framed by Cambridge Analytica itself? It is moreover a story the public loves, as it is fascinated by these kind of accounts of it being manipulated and brainwashed. Note again the redoubling: while both the experts and those who want to exploit us love to know us, we are ourselves are above all defined by our own love to know ourselves and marvel about all this (even in the negative sense: *look how easily we, or our brain, are tricked!*). As this paradoxical *Von Münchaussian* ground of human subjectivity is structurally missed by the neuropsychosciences, is the conclusion then not that psychology, instead of a dangerous knowledge that can be misused by people or corporations with bad intentions, is in the first place *a dangerous fantasy*? That is, although the pretention to chart the real of the human being is, as I described higher, but a myth based on a tautology, it is a dangerous fantasy, as it shapes and drives deceptive and manipulative methods and technologies.

Let me explore this by turning to the issue of the digitalization of education. Education, as a key field of the formation of (inter)subjectivity, has already be the site where the phenomena of psychologization and neurologization ran rampant. It is now clearly also a primordial site with regard to the digitalization of (inter)subjectivity. To immediately sketch the far reaching developments in this respect: recently the World Economic Forum promoted the use of technologies to foster social-emotional skills in education. The WEF referred for example to the *Empathy Watch*, "a wearable device that tracks physiological stress and activity" (as cited by Williamson, 2017). *The Empathy Watch*, so it is argued, can be used to measure students' affective responses to learning situations. When then, for example, the device would sense that a student is bored and disinterested, the computerized learning platform would offer the student more interesting or engaging learning content. Commenting on this Ron Spreeuwenberg writes:

This is not teaching robots to have emotions. Rather, it is about teaching them to recognize human emotions, based on signals, and then react appropriately based on an evaluation of how the person is feeling. Robots may actually be more useful than humans in this role, as they are not clouded by emotion, instead using intelligent technology to detect hidden responses. (Spreeuwenberg, 2017)

As a first side remark: here technology is considered to be a better psychologist than the human being (the teacher, or, for that matter, the psychologist): for the latter his or her own being human sits in the way! Moreover, as William Davies argues, these mood-tracking devices are intended "to achieve a form of emotional augmentation," to transform it and "render that emotion

preferable in some way (be it more positive, more acceptable, simpler etc.), turning it into a different emotion” (Davies, 2017). Does the digitalization of education directly leads to straightforward psychological manipulation or psycho-social engineering?

But before we go into that, let us first contrast this digitalization of education with its predecessors, the psychologization and neurologization of education. To schematize, one could argue that, up to a given time, education was an issue of discipline and the transfer of knowledge. Things started to shift with the psychologization of education (which could be situated in Belgium as reaching its height in the 70ties and 80ties of the former century): education began to centre on psy-matters such as well-being, social relations, emotions and things like that. The peculiar issue one should not miss is that psychologization is not about the straightforward implementation of psychological knowledge in education, rather, it passes over a kind of detour: the education of everybody, (teachers, parents *and* pupils themselves) in psychology. The idea of the importance of emotions in education, for example, resulted in educational packages, which actually dispense psychological theory: even toddlers are *taught* that there are four basic emotions “happy, sad, scared and angry”. After which the children are supposed to reproduce the theory: for example, in an educational technique called *circle time* toddlers are offered four standard masks to represent how they feel. In other words: psychology passes over psycho-education, the latter entailing an interpellation⁴: interpellating the subject to adopt the psychological perspective to look upon itself/others/world. So we all become little psychologists: understanding ourselves, the others and the world via the perspective of psychological theories (De Vos, 2012).

With neurologization this is repeated. We are all called upon to understand ourselves, the others and the world from the perspective of brain knowledge and theories. Neuro-education (the idea of using neuroscience in education) hence is always intertwined with literally educating everybody in neuroscientific theories. If once parental advice was ‘*talk with your children*’, it has now become “talk with your kids about their brains” (Jensen and Nutt, 2014). Hence youngsters reaching puberty are given lessons on the “pubescent brain” and even younger children are taught the basics of neuroscience. In this respect, the worldwide “Brain Awareness Week” (BAW, 2018), aiming to let children learn about their brain, is a prime example of a direct neurologization of the children. Basically, both psychologisation and neurologisation involve a subject that is supposed to know, in this respect they remain within the confines of the traditional school centered around the transference of knowledge. From the youngest to the eldest the human being is thus told what it is to be a human: “did you know that according to psychological research or brain scans...”, upon which we are called upon to adopt the scientific

⁴ Think of the concept of Louis Althusser: (Althusser, 2006)

neuropsychological gaze to look upon ourselves, the others and the world (De Vos, 2015, 2016a).

However, is not the subject in the digital age less and less supposed to know? The digitalized subject is not necessarily called upon to share the theoretical outlook: data gathering and handling can function perfectly without a knowing subject. Social media prompt us to like this, to be sorry for that, to remember our mother's birthday, to buy this... without us knowing the coded rationale behind all that. Hence, concerning parenting and education, there is less and less need for us (teachers, educators, parents) and the children themselves to be educated in theories about what is driving us: data-technology and algorithms working silently in the background will simply drive, guide and steer our behavior (De Vos, 2017). Think of *the empathy watch* probing the emotions of the pupil in order to adjust the learning content of the bored or disinterested pupil: the latter is no longer interpellated to adopt the theories and the models of the experts. He or she is simply nudged and steered. So, Big Data as such does not care whether one knows or not: Smart Environments real or virtual engage directly and algorithmically with human beings without the mediation of subjectivized knowledge.

Here the Foucaultian power/knowledge nexus no longer is operative: biopolitical power no longer relies on knowing subjects auto-disciplining themselves, rather, via nudging and digital social engineering we are led to do the right thing. The fundamental shift here should not be missed: in pre-digital times psychology was deduced (with experiments and questionnaires), it was surmised, hypothesized if not fantasized. Now (inter)subjectivity is given form within the virtual environment based on neuropsychological theories and models: hence, now psychology is made "real". The once surmised/fantasized models of (social) neuropsychology become reality passing over virtuality (De Vos, 2017). Here the famous quote of Hannah Arendt concerning behaviourism comes into mind:

The trouble with modern theories of behaviorism is not that they are wrong but that they could become true, that they actually are the best possible conceptualization of certain obvious trends in modern society. It is quite conceivable that the modern age –which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity– may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known. (Arendt, 1958: 322)

Hence: the trouble with (neuro) psychology is not that it would be wrong, but that it would become true via the virtualization of our lifeworld. Biopolitics 2.0, realizing neuropsychologization within the digital and thus fully controlling (inter)subjectivity, might hence lead humanity to an unprecedented deadly and sterile passivity (De Vos, 2017). What we face is that the basically unfounded assumptions of psychology are realized via the digitalization of (inter)subjectivity: they are scripted into the hidden algorithms of our digital environments and digital settings.

From here, we can restate our argument: the neuropsychosciences do not harbor a dangerous knowledge, but rather, they contain a dangerous fantasy. The fantasy, then, is that psychology can reach full closure, that is, that it can deliver the truth about the human being. Psychology, so it is fantasied, can objectify subjectivity in its totality. The paradoxical *Von Münchaussian* intricacies, although they clearly are fundamentally linked to subjectivity, are most conveniently ignored. It is this fantasy of psychology that furnishes the rationale which underpins the current digital technologies that claim that one can datafy one's subjectivity, and, from here, that one can "hack" someone's psychology.

But what is missed, or better, *obscured*, in the concrete practices of data gathering and psychological profiling, is that the whole operation is based on a prior psychologized pre-fabrication of the digital environment. What works in digitalization is precisely this: the pre-structuring of (inter)subjectivity with the chimeras of psychology. Hence, the first thing here that needs to be contested is the idea that there is this fantasy of a "first reality", a basic, natural psychology that one could finally fully cover with our new Big Data technologies. This very idea that *there is a psychology out there*, independent of the scientific psychological gaze, is the core of the dangerous fantasy fuelling the datafication and subsequent commodification of subjectivity.⁵

Conclusions

If current (neuro) psychological models underpin a digital technology with limited emancipatory potential (in which datafication equals the capitalist exploitation of intersubjectivity), would then a different psychology open up to something different? Hence, would the following be a viable question: which subject model for the digital? In other words, if *Facebook* and other social media rely on mainstream psychological theories of the human, would it be an option to start from an alternative psychology, from critical psychology for example, or, for that matter from the subject model of psychoanalysis as the latter could be considered primordially as a critique of psychology?

⁵ Here I hence disagree with people such as Antoinette Rouvroy, who argues that one could also use algorithms to create diversity and let people discover ideas to which they habitually are not confronted with (Rouvroy, 2018). Rouvroy thus seems to argue for a possible Good Big Data. But would this not come down to manipulation of the people, albeit for the good causes? The basic problem with Rouvroy is that she thinks that algorithmic politics address the people at the pre-conscious reflex-level, and thus short-circuit the conscious and subjective engagement with politics. However, the problem with that is that here she still situates a primordial (neuro)psychological level (and concedes an explanatory power to neuropsychology) which then could be exploited/misused by the Bad Guys. In contrast, I argue that the first political move needed here is to reject any essentializing and naturalising accounts of the human being as ideological.

But is the psychoanalytic conception of the human not full of paradoxes which makes this difficult to derive models from? Consider for example how Lacan conceptualizes the difference between the human and the animal. Lacan says: an animal can pretend, but only the human can *pretend that it pretends*, he can tell the truth whilst pretending to lie (Lacan, 2001, p. 305)! It is crucial not to understand this in the sense that the double pretending would show the *true desire* of the human being, a desire that could be easily defined and catalogued (which would make that you could define it within an algorithmic model). In contrast, we should understand the double pretending in a radical structural sense: it is only by the redoubling of the pretending that the pretence itself acquires its full weight.

That is, for the human being not *what* he hides counts, but the hiding itself (actually the hiding of the hiding) is crucial! In other words: a simple pretending can hide a true motivation or a true desire, in a redoubled pretending not what is hidden is central, but rather the hiding itself signals a desire on its own terms.

Let me explain this with Jacques Lacan's reference to the famous competition in the Classical era between the painters Zeuxis and Parrasio: they competed to determine who could paint the most convincing *trompe l'oeil* (Lacan, 1987 [1964]). Zeuxis produced a reproduction of grapes in such a realistic way that birds were deceived as they tried to eat them. Parrasio in turn painted a curtain; this curtain deceived Zeuxis himself as he tried to draw it back to see what his opponent's work was. Here Zeuxis had to admit his defeat and had to recognize the superiority of Parrasio's painting. Lacan comments that when you want to deceive a human, you are presented with the painting of a veil, something that prompts you to ask what is behind the veil. I argue: Parrasio stands for psychology: psychology paints grapes and turns us in deceived birds of whom is known what they want. Zeuxis, In contrast, stands for that what psychoanalysis aims at: Zeuxis's painting of a veil refers to the psychoanalytic doxa that claims that the human being is only constituted from the double enigma, of the redoubled pretending. Psychology claims to know what we want (from whence it becomes quantifiable and digitalizable). Psychoanalysis in contrast acknowledges that the human being stages him/herself as having a desire (here no simple answers on what the human want are possible).

Hence, is it not clear that technology needs the simple models and straightforward knowledge of psychology to set up the scene? The enigmas of psychoanalysis do nothing but deconstruct the scene, which make psychoanalysis useless as what concerns the drawing and the design of the digital scene itself. Only by converting psychoanalysis into a psychology, could psychoanalysis be used for technology. Robert Pfaller, the philosopher of art says: theory cannot tell art what to think, it can only tell art what not to think (2017: 92). In the same way: psychoanalysis cannot provide the base of technology, it can only show what should *not* be the base of technology.

References

- Aboujaoude, E. (2011). *Virtually You: The Dangerous Powers of the E-Personality*. New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Althusser, L. (2006). "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)". S. Aradhana and G. Akhil (eds.). *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. (86-111).
- Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- BAW. (2018). Brain Awareness Week (BAW). <http://dana.org/BAW/>.
- Berry, D. M. and Beer, D. (2014). "Interview with David Berry on Digital Power and Critical Theory". *Theory, Culture & Society*. <http://www.theoryculturesociety.org/interview-with-david-berry-on-digital-power-and-critical-theory/>. 1 May 2014.
- Berry, D. M. and Galloway, A. R. (2016). "A Network is a Network is a Network: Reflections on the Computational and the Societies of Control". *Theory, Culture & Society*. 33(4). 151-172.
- Cadwalladr, C. (2018). "The Cambridge Analytica Files. 'I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool': meet the data war whistleblower". *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump>.
- Carr, N. (2010). *The Shallows: How the Internet is Changing the Way We Think, Read and Remember*. New York: Norton.
- Cover, R. (2015). *Digital Identities: Creating and Communicating The Online Self*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Davies, W. (2017). "How are we now? Real-time mood-monitoring as valuation". *Journal of Cultural Economy*. 10(1). 34-48. doi:10.1080/17530350.2016.1258000.
- De Vos, J. (2012). *Psychologisation in Times of Globalisation*. London: Routledge.
- _____ (2013). *Psychologization and the Subject of Late Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- _____ (2015). "Deneurologizing Education? From Psychologisation to Neurologisation and Back". *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. 34(3). 279-295. doi:10.1007/s11217-014-9440-5.
- _____ (2016a). "The Death and the Resurrection of (Psy)critique. The Case of Neuroeducation". *Foundations of Science*. 21(1). 129-145.
- _____ (2016b). *The Metamorphoses of the Brain. Neurologization and Its Discontents*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- _____ (2016c). "What is Critique in the Era of the Neurosciences?". J. De Vos and E. Pluth (eds.) *Neuroscience and Critique. Exploring the Limits of the Neurological Turn*. (22-40). London: Routledge.
- _____ (2017). "The Neuroturn in Education: Between the Scylla of Psychologization and the Charybdis of Digitalization?". M. Vandembroeck (Ed.) *Con-*

- structions of Neuroscience in Early Childhood Education*. London: Routledge.
- Hansen, M. B. N. (2004). *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Jensen, F. E., and Nutt, A. E. (2014). *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Kosinski, M. (May, 2018). MyPersonality Project.
<https://sites.google.com/michalkosinski.com/mypersonality>.
- Lacan, J. (1987 [1964]). *Seminario XI. Los Cuatro Conceptos Fundamentales*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- _____ (2001). *Ecrits: A selection*. London: Tavistock.
- Larson, C. (2011). "Mark Zuckerberg Speaks at BYU". *Deseret News*. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/print/700121651/Mark-Zuckerberg-speaks-at-BYU-calls-Facebook-as-much-psychology-and-sociology-as-it-is-technology.html>.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Pfaller, R. (2017). *Interpassivity. The Aesthetics of Delegated Enjoyment*. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Rouvroy, A. (2018). "À mon sens, Zuckerberg est dépassé". *L'écho*. <https://www.lecho.be/opinions/general/antoinette-rouvroy-a-mon-sens-zuckerberg-est-depasse/9995228.html>.
- Soros, G. (2018). "Remarks delivered at the World Economic Forum". <https://www.georgesoros.com/2018/01/25/remarks-delivered-at-the-world-economic-forum/>.
- Spreeuwenberg, R. (2017). "Does emotive computing belong in the classroom?" . *EdSurge*. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2017-01-04-does-emotive-computing-belong-in-the-classroom>.
- Stephens-Davidowitz, S. (2017). *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Stiegler, B. (2012). "Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering". *Computational Culture*. 2. <http://computationalculture.net/comment/die-aufklarung-in-the-age-of-philosophical-engineering>.
- _____ (2014). "Les big data, c'est la fin de la pensée". http://www.ventscontraires.net/article.cfm/13444_bernard_stiegler__les_big_data_c_est_la_fin_de_la_pensee_.html.
- Stillwell, D. J. and Kosinski, M. (2004). "myPersonality Project: Example of Successful Utilization of Online Social Networks for Large-Scale Social Research". *American Psychologist*. 59(2). 93-104.
- Thrift, N. and French, S. (2002). The Automatic Production of Space. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 27(3). 309-335.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Ulanoff, L. (2017). "Sean Parker made billions off of Facebook. Today he basically called it evil". *Mashable*. <https://mashable.com/2017/11/09/sean-parker-slams-facebook/#gVnUWCGJ1mqc>.

Williamson, B. (2017). "Psychological surveillance and psycho-informatics in the classroom". *Code Acts in Education*. <https://codeactsineducation.wordpress.com/2017/01/17/psycho-surveillance-classroom/>.

