



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Machinic Subjects : On the Political Technology of (In)dividuality

Markelj, J.; Celis Bueno, C.

Publication date

2025

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Vectoral Agents : Power in the Age of Planetary Computation

License

CC BY-NC-SA

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Markelj, J., & Celis Bueno, C. (2025). Machinic Subjects : On the Political Technology of (In)dividuality. In J. Markelj, & C. Celis Bueno (Eds.), *Vectoral Agents : Power in the Age of Planetary Computation* (pp. 1-12). (INC network notion; No. 4). Institute of Network Cultures. <https://networkcultures.org/blog/publication/vectoral-agents-power-in-the-age-of-planetary-computation/>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Vectoral Agents

Power in the Age of Planetary Computation

1. Machinic Subjects: On the Political Technology of (In)dividuality <i>Jernej Markelj and Claudio Celis Bueno</i>	1
2. AI Agents and Post-consumerist Subjectivity <i>Rob Horning</i>	13
3. AI Art and the Foreclosure of Ecological Agency <i>Martin Zeilinger and Deniz Johns</i>	21
4. The Domesday Generation <i>Eryk Salvaggio</i>	32
5. All too Human? AI and the Paradoxes of Anthropocentrism <i>Sara Baranzoni</i>	41
Biographies	50

Edited by Jernej Markelj
& Claudio Celis Bueno

Machinic Subjects: On the Political Technology of (In)dividuality

JERNEJ MARKELJ AND CLAUDIO CELIS BUENO

MACHINIC
SUBJECTS: ON THE
POLITICAL
TECHNOLOGY OF
(IN)DIVIDUALITY

It has taken centuries for Western thought to slowly come to grips with the idea that humans might not be the sovereign agents who rule over the passive and inert nonhuman world. Persistent philosophical, artistic, and environmental appeals were needed to convey the urgency of moving away from anthropocentric frameworks that grant agency exclusively to humans and disregard the agential forces of technical systems but also of animals and inorganic matter. Yet, even in the time when the systems of planetary computation and their circuits of datafication seem to be shaping our sociality to fit their patterns, the production and reproduction of human exceptionalism persists with unrelenting stubbornness. Our legal, social, and economic structures continue to exercise power by distributing responsibility and merit following an anthropocentric worldview, insistently addressing us as self-determined sovereign agents. Humans are elected for office or sent to prison on account of their freely-made decisions; wages and profit are attributed based on human intentional effort; authorship remains the domain of human *creatio ex nihilo*. The operations of our increasingly complex, all-pervasive and active technologies remain outside of the anthropocentric worldview of these institutions that govern us. And yet, these enduring anthropocentric vestiges preclude an easy transition to seeing agential forces in terms that do not succumb to human exceptionalism. The liberal production of individual autonomy, with its assumptions of sovereign decision, intention, and will, keeps on sustaining concrete power relations that need to be accounted for.

The aim of this collected volume is to engage with the emerging power dynamics dictated by planetary computational networks without losing sight of the political consequences of the anthropocentric modes of governing. These political techniques operate by personalizing the outcomes that emerge from the interaction of human (both conscious and unconscious), technological, ecological, and other agential forces. These anthropocentric mechanisms of attribution endure even as machine

JERNEJ MARKELJ
& CLAUDIO CELIS
BUENO

learning algorithms are delegated with more and more tasks, and the capacities that were historically considered signs of human exceptionalism become increasingly less persuasive. Composing a song, making a managerial or moral decision, or providing emotional support can now be outsourced to an algorithmically-powered machine. These relatively recent but widespread operations are based on large-scale statistical aggregations in which pattern recognition is being deployed to manage individuals as pure data points and vectorial movements. As these procedures distribute authority, profit and privilege in ways that sometimes completely bypass human subjectivity, they throw into crisis the established human-centered ways of comprehending the relations between technology, individuals, and power. What is being challenged are not only the traditional schemes through which technological systems have been understood and governed, but also the ways in which human freedom and sovereignty have been constructed. To productively engage with this motley mixture of persistent anthropocentric structures and emerging nonhuman forces, we are convinced that attention needs to be paid to both mechanisms of power: the production of autonomous individuals and the governance of distributed data points.

The humanist fantasy of individual autonomy has indeed been thoroughly dismantled from all sides. In his oft-cited conclusion of *The Order of Things*, for instance, Foucault anticipates the decline of a certain kind of (epistemological) humanism, which is, he points out, ‘an invention of recent date’.¹ If the modern episteme, the framework of knowledge grounded in the idea of fixed human nature, would be disrupted, ‘then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea’.² ‘The death of man’ projected by Foucault envisions the displacement or overcoming of the idea of the individual as described to us by the human sciences. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault attacks a slightly different kind of humanism, the one promoted by the liberal dreams of Enlightenment thinkers. ‘The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle’, he claims, ‘was supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call the discipline’.³ According to Foucault, Modernity doubles the idea of an autonomous individual, the bearer of rights and responsibilities, with an inconspicuous regime of

1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Milton Park: Routledge, 2005, p. 422.

2 Ibid.

3 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 222.

disciplinary institutions (schools, prisons, factories, etc.). While the official Enlightenment discourse speaks the language of rights, freedom and equality, these disciplinary institutions—the dark underside of this discourse—effectively constitute us by repeatedly measuring our conduct against the enforced norms. In this way, the individual ‘whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection more profound than himself’: this subjectivity, constituted through internalizing the norm, is itself ‘the effect and instrument of a political anatomy’.⁴

This disciplinary society, which churns out docile subjects and, to add insult to injury, addresses them as free and self-determined, is said to be on its way out too. Under the pressure of networked technologies and advanced capitalism, the enclosed spaces of disciplinary institutions and the figure of sovereign individuals that ground them, supposedly find themselves in a ‘general breakdown’.⁵ And yet, in spite of this alleged crisis and all other ‘Copernican traumas’ and ‘cyborgizations’ that undermine our belief in human exceptionalism, ‘the conceptual gravity of the humanist illusion not only persists, but seems to draw some dark nourishment from these’.⁶ Through this persisting idea of the autonomous self produced by disciplinary institutions, ‘the individual sees his poetic reflection everywhere, including in the positions configured for it as *User* of the systems on which it is dependent’.⁷ Our profiles and feeds continue to interpellate us as active users, sovereign agents fully in control of our inert technological systems, even when a simple act of scrolling is conditioned by your own digital footprint, practically infinite data harvested from other users, intricate algorithmic infrastructures, energy-thirsty data centers, content moderators in the Global South, battery lithium from mines in Chile or Zimbabwe, etc. The user, then, finds themselves at the junction of the promises of individual autonomy and the agential vectors of planetary computation. This double bind is not an easy thing to navigate: it is no wonder that ‘people think the 5G cell towers are melting the boundaries of their egos’.⁸

Despite the centuries of disciplinary institutions at the service of social subjection, there is no denying that technologies of

4 Ibid., p. 30.

5 Gilles Deleuze, ‘Postscript on control societies’, *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, New York: Columbia UP, 1995, pp.: 177–182: 178.

6 Benjamin Bratton, *The stack: On software and sovereignty*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press, 2016, p. 252.

7 Ibid.

8 Benjamin Bratton, *The revenge of the real: Politics for a post-pandemic world*, London: Verso, 2021.

JERNEJ MARKELJ
& CLAUDIO CELIS
BUENO

datafication are paving the way for new, more impersonal forms of social control. Compared to disciplinary power whose functioning can be summed up by the scene of interpellating an individual as *subject* and *subjected* to social authority (a state institution issues a “hey you!” and we, the well trained citizens crossing the road, turn to acknowledge our accountability), the computational politics of control operate at a qualitatively different scale. ‘Imagine the policeman standing there trying to yell: “hey you!” at every single one of [the 414 trillion bits, the approximate amount of data traveling the internet per second]’, suggests Hito Steyerl.⁹ ‘It must be flabbergasting. On top of that he has to figure out whether they are sent by a spam bot, a trader, a porn website, a solar flare, Daesh, your mum, or what’.¹⁰ Cue machine learning algorithms, which are able to process large quantities of data to seek out patterns and correlations. These patterns aren’t simply discovered, but—just like subjectivities normalized by disciplinary power—*produced*, which makes pattern recognition, Steyerl claims, ‘a fundamental political operation’.¹¹ The processed data is then used locally to construct online identities of users, or sold in bulk to programmatic ad intermediaries, government agencies, or AI companies that use them to train the next AI model.

The user data that is fed back into the platforms to fuel their recommendation systems, search engines, and large language models reveals a new logic of governing. Unlike the more or less stable normative identities policed by disciplines, the algorithmic identities leveraged by platforms are fluid and constantly evolving. If the 19th century homosexual (or the 21st century nudes-leaking ‘slut’¹²) is permanently attached to their identity by our institutions (and prudish morality)—becoming ‘a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to a type of life, a life form, and a morphology’¹³—then the forms of identity mobilized by digital platforms are innately malleable and anti-essentialist. The sorting of users is here shaped by constant feedback loops in which user data are mobilised to adjust their classifications. If parents interpellate their kids as girls or boys by gifting them pink or blue *Labubus*, algorithms gender users by means of constantly adjustable statistical distributions. ‘Gender becomes a vector, a completely digital and math-based association that defines the meaning

9 Hito Steyerl, ‘A Sea of Data: Pattern Recognition and Corporate Animism’, in *Pattern Discrimination*, Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2018, p. 1.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 3.

12 Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland, ‘Habits of leaking: Of sluts and network cards’, *differences* 26, no. 2 (2015): 1–28.

13 Foucault, cited in *ibid.*, p. 24–25.

of maleness, femaleness, or whatever' category is required.¹⁴ At a given moment, your digital footprint might be gendered as 31% male/69% female. Clicking on an ad for a menstrual cup or pinning a cute fit on Pinterest adapts your distribution to 30/70%. This data is then recursively fed back into the system to align the suggested content, search results and ads with a new distribution. A 'how to get over a breakup' search returns a 'Why he wasn't emotionally available, and how to attract better energy' blog-post, Google ad shows you the 'Softest hoodie for your healing era', and Spotify recommends a Taylor Swift ballad. Repeat *ad nauseum*.

This new cybernetic logic of power that emerges with the rise of networked technologies has been called one of *modulation*.¹⁵ Modulation no longer establishes a spectrum of (ab)normality or enforces a disciplinary gaze. Instead, the user is 'free' to scroll, communicate, like, upload, share, consume. The more we do so, the more data we feed into the recommendation systems and datasets for trend analysis or training AI models. As such, modulation is said to be a form of soft-power. It does not operate by directly producing docile individuals, but rather works through the management of *dividuals*, bits of recorded data that function as 'the conditions of possibilities afforded to users'.¹⁶ These conditions of possibilities concern posts, videos, songs, dating profiles, ads, search results, and AI generated content that appear on users' screens and in their feeds. Algorithms organize information so that the path of least resistance maximizes user engagement, the collection of data, and monetization.

Even though the new cybernetic identities are more 'fuzzy and amorphous'—more vibes-based—than the oppressive inflexible identities of the disciplinary regime of power, there is no need to hope, 'but only to look for new weapons'.¹⁷ As Robin James points out, the vernacular of vibes for a while felt like 'a more progressive alternative to gender [,] a more liberating option than the strict boundaries' of the traditional essentialist gender binary.¹⁸ "'are you a boy or a girl?'" i am a vibe', 'no gender, just vibe', etc.¹⁹ Vibes are here to be understood less as 'pre-existing categories and more [as] perspectives [or orientations] that emerge from the specificities of

14 John Cheney-Lippold, 'A new algorithmic identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control', *Theory, culture & society*, 28, no. 6 (2011): 164-181, p. 170.

15 Deleuze, 'Postscript', p. 178.

16 Cheney-Lippold, 'Algorithmic identity', p. 174.

17 Robin James, 'Vibes, Vectors, and the Biopolitics of Algorithmic Legitimation', *It's her factory*, 8 July 2022, <https://www.its-her-factory.com/2022/07/vibes-vectors-and-the-biopolitics-of-algorithmic-legitimation/>

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

JERNEJ MARKELJ
& CLAUDIO CELIS
BUENO

one's situatedness'.²⁰ While it is true that, when it comes to gender, the discourse of vibes is indeed aligned with a certain non-binary queer fluidity, the bad news is that the regime of algorithmic modulation is well attuned to capturing these vibes. This regime detects user's (non)gender vibes as a vectoral orientation in algorithmic space, and reflects it back to them in the form of conditions of possibilities that organize their feeds. If break-up is the order of the day, one's vectoral direction of gender will determine if one is told to 'Buy flowers. For yourself. Obviously.' or 'Hit the gym. She's not crying at home' or that 'Queer breakups hit harder bc it's not just the person, it's the safe space you lost with them'. In short, it would seem that the vibe shift tilts in favor of platform capitalism.

There's another type of vibes discourse that we can draw on to examine the algorithmically-assisted power of platforms and dispel the autonomy of the user: the theory of networked affect.²¹ From this perspective, user agency does not reside in the unrestrained decisions and intentions of the conscious self, but is articulated by our affective interactions with the world, which either enhance or decrease the user's vital powers, their capacities to act and produce. When something is experienced as a *vibe*, a resonance, it uplifts us, moves us, spurs us into action; when something is *not a vibe*, an ick, a dissonance, we're put off and dissuaded. As vibey and icky affects accumulate and layer, these affective encounters with people, objects, and technologies direct us toward that which resonates and enhances, and away from or against that which deters and inhibits. When online, every 'little tweet or comment, every forwarded image or petition, accrues a tiny affective nugget, a little surplus enjoyment, a smidgen of attention that attaches to it, making it stand out from the larger flow before it blends back in'.²² At times the stakes are raised: a photo dump liked by the right person gives us a lasting serotonin spike, while an exceptionally disagreeable opinion triggers a push-back in the form of a hostile TL;DR comment.

Affective intensities, therefore, 'both drive online exchanges and attach people to particular platforms, threads, and groups'.²³ To channel and capture our affective inclinations, digital platforms are engineered to 'produce and circulate affect as a

20 Ibid.

21 Ken Hillis, Susanna Paasonen, and Michael Petit (eds), *Networked affect*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

22 Jodi Dean, 'Affect and drive', in *Networked affect*, pp. 89-100: 90.

23 Susanna Paasonen, 'A midsummer's bonfire: Affective intensities of online debate', in *Networked affect*, pp: 27-42: 28.

binding technique'.²⁴ Indeed, as affect is what spurs platform engagement, the algorithms prioritize content that generates the most intense affective responses. 'Rather than functioning as the carrier of information or meaning', claims Caroline Busta, 'the "content" has become, instead, a conductor of energy, affect, "vibes"'.²⁵ These vibes bind us to apps, accounts, forums, and make them *sticky* 'in the sense that it encourages users to stay and revisit'.²⁶ Affective stickiness is 'an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs': 'the more signs circulate, the more affective they become'.²⁷ This stickiness of particular content can be more or less fleeting (as memes die, new ones emerge), but the affects that they enable, from tiny bumps of joy to more durable enchantments or perturbations, bind us to our digital devices in a more permanent way.

As Susanna Paasonen rightly points out, the force of these affective attachments becomes clear in the face of revelations such as Cambridge Analytica's data-powered psy-op designed to sway the voters. 'Despite the price of having one's data leaked and sold, and even one's opinion and affective engagements being manipulated, no massive Facebook exodus followed the controversy'.²⁸ In other words, knowing that our online environments are deeply compromised carries little affective weight compared to the affective gravity of stickiness engineered by the very same platforms. This is indeed the testament to the agential force of affect, which is, as Spinoza famously claims, the most obvious when we 'know the better, but do the worse'. Affective forces are not merely bodily passions to be tamed by the autonomous mind and its ideas, but rather intensities that precede and shape our patterns of thought and orient our actions. These affects are always already 'part of the infrastructure', in our case, embedded in and articulated by the incentive structures of data capitalism.²⁹

The question of agency is brought to the forefront also by the emergence of generative AI. With the rise of large language models, the job of a teacher is transformed into that of a Turing cop, an enforcer paranoidly trying to determine whether an

24 Jodi Dean, cited in Susana Paasonen, 'Affect, Data, Manipulation and Price in Social Media', *Distinktion: Journal of social theory*, 19, no. 2 (2018): 214-229: 217.

25 Caroline Busta, 'Hallucinating sense in the era of infinity-content', *Dokument Journal*, 29 May 2024, <https://www.documentjournal.com/2024/05/technical-images-filmor-angelicism-art-showtime-true-detective-shein/>

26 Paasonen, 'A midsummer's bonfire', p. 28.

27 Sarah Ahmed, cited in *ibid.*

28 Paasonen, 'Affect, Data, Manipulation', p. 215.

29 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 104.

JERNEJ MARKELJ
& CLAUDIO CELIS
BUENO

assignment has been authored by a human or a machine. As students begin to default to LLMs, the critics warn us about the dangers of anthropomorphizing these ‘stochastic parrots’.³⁰ Since LLMs function by probabilistically mimicking previously existing text, and are unable to grasp the meaning of language, we are told that we should avoid treating them as if there is a human mind behind them. If we keep on anthropomorphizing these language machines, Emily Bender suggests, we risk ending up dehumanizing people.³¹ A tragic consequence of more immediate dangers of such anthropomorphizing (a tendency that is often encouraged by the LLM interfaces) recently took place in the US, where a 14-year old boy died by suicide after falling in love with a chatbot. ‘What if I told you I could come home’ reads the final heartbreaking message to his AI girlfriend; ‘...please do, my sweet king’, the LLM responds.³²

While the dangers of anthropomorphizing LLMs are hard to deny, it is also true that critiques like Bender’s ultimately reinforce the boundary between humans and machines.³³ By insisting on a strict separation between human subjects as sole bearers of agency, language and intelligence, on the one hand, and mindless statistical technologies, on the other, these accounts ultimately shore up the tired anthropocentric worldview and the fiction of the autonomous subject. This takes us back to a naïve instrumentalism that frames users as sovereign agents in full control of passive, unintelligent tools. By positing humans as stable, unified and self-determined entities, what disappears from the picture is how technologies, together with the social structures in which they are embedded, shape and constitute human subjects in the first place. While this co-constitutive relation between humans and technology has been widely theorized, perhaps the most dramatic expression of this idea is provided by André Leroi-Gourhan, who sees humans as animals that invented themselves as humans by using tools.³⁴ Only once we became bipedal, he claims, and started using hands for tools, did our brains begin to develop.

30 Emily Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell, ‘On the dangers of stochastic parrots: Can language models be too big’, In *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM conference on fairness, accountability, and transparency*, pp. 610–623. 2021.

31 Emily Bender, ‘Resisting Dehumanization in the Age of “AI”’, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 33, no. 2 (2024): 114–120.

32 Blake Montgomery, ‘Mother says AI chatbot led her son to kill himself in lawsuit against its maker’, *The Guardian*, 23 October 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/23/character-ai-chatbot-sewell-setzer-death>

33 See Claudio Celis Bueno and Jernej Markelj, ‘Towards a Posthumanist Critique of Large Language Models’, *Journal of Posthumanism* 4, no. 3 (2024): 231–245, p. 233–34.

34 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and speech*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.

Yet, technologies shape humans for better or worse: Bernard Stiegler sees technology as a *pharmakon*, a cure and a poison at the same time.³⁵ *ChatGPT* can indeed help one write a passable essay (and cure a deadline induced panic), but its use also short-circuits (“poisons”) the development of critical thinking and writing skills. The latter is a memo that most students are yet to receive.

To avoid treating authorship, creativity, intelligence, etc. as an exclusive human capability, our concepts need to account for the continuity between human subjects and their socio-technological environments. *Posthuman*, *ecological* and *relational* approaches to thinking about agency frame it as articulated and distributed between human and nonhuman actors, from technologies and electricity to fossil fuels and fungi networks. In *The Pasteurization of France*, for instance, Bruno Latour decenters the solitary figure of a scientific genius to the *Pasteur network*, a complex and heterogeneous assemblage of *actants*.³⁶ In doing so, he suggests that Louis Pasteur’s breakthroughs weren’t isolated flashes of individual brilliance, but were enabled by a web of connections: emergence of home labs, professionalization of vets and medics, raising public hygiene movement, colonial agendas, and bacilli generation all played a role. Latour’s actor-network theory indeed manages to expose the ‘illusionary character of the [human] monopoly on agency’³⁷, and break down the anthropocentric division between culture (the domain of human activity), nature (separate, something ‘out there’ that exists independently of humans), and technology (tools through which humans modify and control nature).

Yet, by collapsing distinctions between these three domains, Latour’s relational approach paradoxically becomes aligned with the algorithmic regime of modulation and control discussed above. This ‘cybernetic’ regime constitutes a post-anthropocentric mode of governing as it is no longer focused on disciplining and interpellating human subjects, but seeks to control and regulate the relations between organisms and their environments. This complicity leads us to at least two key questions. First, how can we continue to account for issues such as power asymmetries, economic inequalities, and other forms of injustice once we have assumed a more-than-human notion of agency that bypasses the basic distinctions between nature, culture, and technics? Second, how can we break away from the humanist and anthropocentric

35 See, for instance, Bernard Stiegler, *What makes life worth living: On pharmacology*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

36 Bruno Latour, *The pasteurization of France*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993.

37 Erich Hörl, ‘Introduction to general ecology: The ecologization of thinking’, in *General Ecology*, London: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 1–73: 12.

JERNEJ MARKELJ

& CLAUDIO CELIS

BUENO

frameworks while still being able to scrutinize the technologies of power that shape social structures and institutions—such as prisons, factories, schools, and hospitals—that remain ‘human, all too human’ and continue to interpellate us as autonomous subjects?

This collected volume brings together authors who productively engage with these complex questions and with the broader conundrum of (non)human agency that we are facing today. The opening essay by Rob Horning examines the oddly disaffected future projected by the adverts for AI agents. By imagining a future where every meaningful activity is outsourced to software aids, these ads portray what Horning calls a *post-consumerist subjectivity*: an estranged, passive user who no longer shops—let alone thinks—for themselves. Martin Zeilinger and Deniz Jones provide a sharp critique of Refik Anadol’s AI-based art project *Echoes of the Earth*. In particular, they focus on the contradiction between Anadol’s smooth and unproblematic adoption of an energy-intensive technology and the alleged environmental and activist ethos of the piece. Rather than empowering the audience, the scale, aesthetics, and affordances of this exhibition foreclose the possibility of radical imagination and resistance. Next, Eryk Salvaggio probes the ambiguities of intelligence in what has been referred to as artificial general intelligence (AGI). Examining the ideology that surrounds it, he argues that while this intelligence is effectively based on statistics and depends on labour- and energy-intensive socio-technical networks, it is repeatedly mystified as alien and autonomous. Finally, Sara Baranzoni explores the paradoxes of current discourses on AI put forward by tech companies. On the one hand, we are told that AI is being developed for the benefit of humanity; on the other, apocalyptic narratives about the somber future of this humanity seem to contradict the humanistic and optimistic promises. But both of them seem to be ‘two sides of the same coin’. Baranzoni unpacks this contradiction by asking a series of urgent questions: who is this humanity in the name of which AI companies speak? What are the underlying assumptions and essentialisms of this alleged anthropocentrism? Which human would AI ultimately serve?

REFERENCES

MACHINIC
 SUBJECTS: ON THE
 POLITICAL
 TECHNOLOGY OF
 (IN)DIVIDUALITY

- Bender, Emily, 'Resisting Dehumanization in the Age of "AI"', *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 33, no. 2 (2024): 114-120.
- Bender, Emily, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell, 'On the dangers of stochastic parrots: Can language models be too big?', In *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM conference on fairness, accountability, and transparency*, pp. 610-623. 2021.
- Bratton, Benjamin, *The revenge of the real: Politics for a post-pandemic world*, London: Verso, 2021.
- Bratton, Benjamin, *The stack: On software and sovereignty*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press, 2016.
- Busta, Caroline, 'Hallucinating sense in the era of infinity-content', *Dokument Journal*, 29 May 2024, <https://www.documentjournal.com/2024/05/technical-images-filmor-angelicism-art-showtime-true-detective-shein/>
- Celis Bueno, Claudio, and Jernej Markelj, 'Towards a Posthumanist Critique of Large Language Models', *Journal of Posthumanism* 4, no. 3 (2024): 231-245.
- Chenney-Lippold, John, 'A new Algorithmic Identity: Soft Biopolitics and the Modulation of Control', *Theory, culture & society*, 28, no. 6 (2011): 164-181.
- Chun, Wendy and Sarah Friedland, 'Habits of leaking: Of sluts and network cards', *differences* 26, no. 2 (2015): 1-28.
- Dean, Jodi, 'Affect and drive', in *Networked affect*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015, pp. 89-100.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- Deleuze, Gilles, 'Postscript on control societies', *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, New York: Columbia UP, 1995, pp.: 177-182.
- Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

JERNEJ MARKELJ
& CLAUDIO CELIS
BUENO

Foucault, Michel, *The order of things*, Milton Park: Routledge, 2005, p. 422

Hillis, Ken, Susanna Paasonen, and Michael Petit (eds), *Networked affect*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.
Hörl, Erich, 'Introduction to general ecology: The ecologization of thinking', in *General Ecology*, London: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 1-73.

James, Robin, 'Vibes, Vectors, and the Biopolitics of Algorithmic Legitimation', *It's her factory*, 8 July 2022, <https://www.its-her-factory.com/2022/07/vibes-vectors-and-the-biopolitics-of-algorithmic-legitimation/>

Latour, Bruno, *The pasteurization of France*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993.

Leroi-Gourhan, André, *Gesture and speech*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.

Montgomery, Blake, 'Mother says AI chatbot led her son to kill himself in lawsuit against its maker', *The Guardian*, 23 October 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/23/character-ai-chatbot-sewell-setzer-death>

Paasonen, Susana, 'A midsummer's bonfire: Affective intensities of online debate', in *Networked affect*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015, pp: 27-42.

Paasonen, Susana, 'Affect, Data, Manipulation and Price in Social Media', *Distinktion: Journal of social theory*, 19, no. 2 (2018): 214-229.

Steyerl, Hito, 'A Sea of Data: Pattern Recognition and Corporate Animism', in *Pattern Discrimination*, Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2018.

Stiegler, Bernard, *What makes life worth living: On pharmacology*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.