

WE

Techno consequences on the human

Edited by
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Presentation

We are us, come on

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The title of this book, “We – techno consequences on the human”, owes its inspiration to the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamiatin (1884-1937). This is what Pollyana Ferrari, organizer of this work, tells us in the introduction. She reminds us that, between 1920 and 1921, Zamiatin wrote the novel “We” to draw a then distant future. In that future, there would be a Single State exercising strict control over the population of the world, administratively limited to ten million inhabitants. Technology at the service of power would play the central role. “There is no space for the individual, only for the collective, and people who have found the formula for happiness are called by numbers,” observes Pollyana Ferrari. One of the most sensitive and outstanding Brazilian researchers dedicated to thinking about the labyrinthine tangle of relations between humans and machines, she, once again, shows us how it’s done.

The tribute to Yevgeny Zamiatin is opportune and past due. Indeed, the work which is considered the forerunner of the dystopias that marked the literature of the 20th century – having in “1984”, by George Orwell, perhaps its greatest exponent – is still influencing us to this day. Whether we like it or not, he is there. Whether we like it or not, one day after another, we are condemned to ask ourselves what place the human factor plays in the face of the newest monstrosities of artificial intelligence, big data, and the predominance of technoscience over political decisions. Is

there a field where what makes us human can breathe freely? Will there be freedom?

This leads us to go around groping with a question in the head and in the heart: in the middle of the touchpad gadgets, what is human, after all? It is not enough to talk about reason, it is not enough to talk about religiosity, it is not enough to talk about the ability to live in the polis. And it's not just a question of considering what's going on with love, this question that also appears in these pages. Perhaps we should take into account that sex itself (another topic in the papers), now irreversibly mediated by algorithms, ended up transplanted to new digital hyperconnections of pleasure and enjoyment, with non-viscous silicon and bits tooling, but still sensual. It's intriguing. The so-called romantic love, we well know, is a buzzword, itself a historical product of a given dated technological standard. But what about sexual pleasure – or addiction? Where does the machine help the body? Where does desire serve mechanics?

Pollyana claims her new book is "a transgression in pursuit of the human." We transgress, therefore, at the taste or against the taste of technologies that block the sunlight and blind us with their artificial lamps. I stop, digress, get stuck on the topic of the pleasures of the flesh and the mismatch of the flesh. From the meat that only contacts the other meat through software inseminated in social webs. Since the human is humanity, one (or one) only accesses the other's (the other's) body through language – lubricity and eroticism are imaginary operations, even though jouissance has a face imprinted on reality, on nerve fibrillations, in the demise of matter. Now, a body only touches another body through and through the binary digit (even when there is no computer involved in the physical act itself). The binary digit lives within language, within every language. In such a way that it doesn't hurt to ask: with how many digits

can an orgasm be made? And how many orgasms make up the commercial desiderate of an algorithm?

I don't shy away from remembering that this book was completed during the pandemic, when the Brazilian middle class followed diligently or negligently the instructions to stay in domestic confinement, while the poorest had no home to stay inside. I write this presentation in times of pandemic. These are times of the heyday of the *home office*, this somewhat distasteful Anglicism. The clandestine loves, I ask, will they have entered the home office times as well? Or home affair? Or, considering that the term “extramarital” will apply there, have they entered into extra-home-love times, pardon the vernacular abuse?

We are a civilization that has learned to make love through the intercourse of electronic screens, even when love is made, as I warned you above, in so-called “face-to-face” circumstances. Machinic mediation has become immovable, constitutive, defining. What's up? Where is the human?

Pollyana Ferrari explains further: "The book 'We' seeks to map current dystopia to help you find on city sidewalks, in bank lines, in governments, examples of humans." I would add: whoever finds it, please let me know. Unless we consider the advent of the inhuman from the human to be human - that is, unless we consider the autonomous and automaton machinery initially generated by humans of machine designs to be something "human" - we are on the threshold of the post-human, indeed. Or we're already immersed in the post-human, and there's not much we can do. It is necessary to follow.

I also follow, or continue, in my own way or in the way that was stipulated to be mine, and, to go on, I change the viewing angle. Let me explain. So far, in this light presentation, I've been risking guesses about what “we” are in light of the themes of this book, or even I've been

speculating about the actual existence of a “we humans”. It is not difficult to see, however, that on this itinerary I will come to an insurmountable wall. The clash between “we humans” and technology is intellectually sterile. It yields something, but there is no way to go forward satisfactorily.

That's where the alternative of switching the angle comes to the rescue. Instead of thinking about this collective “we”, about this first-person plural, I consider the possibility of taking another possible path, already contained in the title. The word “we”, in Portuguese (“Nós”), also lends itself to naming, in addition to the known and vague first-person plural, the node of the network. Or the networks, in the plurals. We are nodes – and we are not much more than nodes. Among other reasons, we are nodes because, if we are not nodes (in the network) we cannot be us/we (in the first-person plural). And not just by choice. It's us grudgingly. We are also involuntary ones, that is, the senses pass through us, the speeches, the interactions, the flows, the currents of energy and the quanta pass through us without us being aware of it and, through us and through us, they complete their journeys and close their purposes.

In spite of us. We are chips, we are crossing junctions. We are a global circuit. We are then no longer an “other” of the machine – we are the machine swallowed up by the machine that was invented by us. The papers in this book give us something to do with, as was said in the days of typing courses. The authors, who are members of the Comunidata research group, present creative answers and new questions that can give us even more.

The search continues. Research is a struggle, although it is also the course of the waters. You have to go with the current and swim against the current. In the research, we walked through data and bibliographies. In either case, what is expected of “us” is that we walk the ground with a certain malice. There are academic pitfalls along the way.

From data, the new times make a kind of religion: the automatic belief in data leads us to lose touch with the criticism of the generating matrices of these same data. On the other hand, bibliographies generate mantras, which are exhausted again when nothing else flourishes in the imagination. Bibliographies are like airport pick-up points, where passersby park to recharge their gadgets, whose only function is to connect the bearer to an electronic web that the bearer in question cannot understand. One way or another, it is necessary to walk. The data, I doubt, even if I must trust on them.

The bibliography, I distrust, even if I must use it. Having said that, enjoy this book. There would be more to be said, but then I would have less chance of you getting this far, at the end of the little I had to say about how much the work of the Comunidata group represents.