

# Review of: "[Essay] The Algorithm; Mind of a Virtual Era – Our Code of Codes"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Anna Aragno's work sounds like an appeal, an SOS to raise awareness of the issues of Anthropocene change (Haraway, 2016). Are we all in danger of turning ourselves into machines? Is there still something that can resist this process that drives us into the Post-Human (Braidotti, 2019)? There would be humanistic culture to act as a point of resistance, if it were not that chatbots have already reached a level of sophistication to, as the author says, make the source doubtful: human or technological? Surely a child would struggle to distinguish them, but I remember that already in the early 1990s I did some experiments with the first bots, a little coarse. I used "Eliza", which simulated a psychotherapeutic dialogue (Weizenbaum, 1984). I built the technological therapy session with Eliza and submitted it to the students of the University where I taught at the time. The effect was vaguely alienating, but they did not go so far as to say that perhaps the psychotherapist in the game, "Eliza", was nothing more than a computer (Scognamiglio, 1991; 2019). And we were just starting out, the very rough first steps of this simulation road that has led us to today's chatbots.

The whole long review of Aragno revolves around divergent opinions, between those who prelude to a posthuman evolution as a "natural" consequence of the evolution of civilization, and those who cry out the alarm of an inevitable destruction of humanity in the proper sense of the "human" and its most inimitable products, such as the dream.

At this point we could also say the "symptom": who knows if a machine can go crazy and be crushed by a persecutory anguish as it happens in paranoia or if it can remain inhibited in the face of an unconscious conflict. In this sense we can agree that Psychoanalysis becomes a sort of a guardian of that profoundly human dimension, unique and perhaps inimitable, that concerns the whole repertoire of the *Durcharbeitung* (working-through) of the unconscious (Freud, 1914), made of stumbles, traces, hallucinatory deformations of reality, lapsus, missed acts, removals, dissociations and all the sequence of defenses, which in "all consciousness" cognitive and rational as the machine seems to be, we still cannot imagine possible. The unconscious, with its *Witz* (joke) (Freud, 1905), that makes "the human" what most escapes the algorithm. Even if the machine could dream, it would probably lack the most human possible part of the dream: its "navel", where the sense and logical concatenation of representations sink (Freud, 1899; Scognamiglio, 2022).

On the other hand, with regard to the use of digital, I agree that it is fundamental to recognize the context of global digitization in which we are immersed, whether we want it or not, and which re-signifies everything we do in our daily lives. There are psychoanalysts (Missonier 2003; Vlachopoulou & Missonier, 2015) who focus a lot on the possibility of welcoming into the setting also the interaction that the patient has with the machine. In the case of video games, the interaction can lend itself, if accompanied by the psychotherapist, also to an elaboration of the intrapsychic contents that

are projected into the plots of the game on the screen. The perspective is sometimes very fruitful and is conceived as an evolution of the expressive forms of young (or not so young) patients of today. I think this clinical drift is very delicate to explore precisely because sometimes it does not analyze a macro involvement of the patient's life in the digital and all the consequences of this on the psychic structure (Scognamiglio 2021; Scognamiglio, Russo & Fumagalli, 2023, forthcoming).

The author gives us a cue in this direction of global reading of the phenomenon when she cites authors such as Barbieri (2015) who, even from the perspective of Biology, make us aware of how the little understood power of the machine on the human world is summed up in a key to access that is precisely a *passe-partout* between apparently very different worlds.

Among nature, culture, technology, there is a common element that can be easily manipulated: the code. It is true that genetic-molecular biology has brought worlds closer to the point of overlapping: "genetically modified organisms" (GMO) are the most elementary example that is deposited every day on our tables. Stem cells, the genetic manipulation of human cells is its most significant development. Therefore, I had already used the metaphor to talk about "digitally modified clinic" (Scognamiglio & Russo, 2018; Scognamiglio, 2021) as a phenomenon that by then already represented our current clinic and not only of the new generations.

Perhaps in a long valuable article that appeals to Freud and psychoanalysis, it would have been interesting to give space to these articulations that make clinical and therapeutic fallouts.

Can the psychotherapist of the near future be a machine like Eliza? We can hope, from reading Aragno that it will not be the case, until he learns to dream together with his patient (Bion, 1965).

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