

# Review of: "Beyond the Physical Self: Understanding the Perversion of Reality and the Desire for Digital Transcendence via Digital Avatars in the Context of Baudrillard's Theory"

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In this paper Freund recognizes the power of Baudrillard's narrative which strongly underlies dangers and influences of medias such as AR and AI, and their operations, on human beings. Before voicing a discussion about definitions of 'representations' and more, I must give a remind on the risks of analyzing a certain phenomenon without expressing clearly which population, which society and basically which human knowledges are involved in the processes itself and distinguish it from the phenomenon itself. Baudrillard's vision about humans "experiencing experiences", is mostly passive and disregards the role of perception and intentionality behind both users and developers of those technologies. When Baudrillard writes about "representations becoming realities" as a risk, he admits a genuine possible confusion between those. This affirmation talks about an evaluation and a fear, that doesn't give access to any sort of conclusion, new solution, or critical aspect. People experiences of digital realities and their forms of gratification, are well known to every human having access to smartphones and Wi-Fi connection, not necessarily involving AI generated contents. Cognitive psychologists and philosophers could both agree that physical reality is experienced in a form of multi-sensorial perception. The reality we live in and we perceive is not at all a copy of physical reality. On the other side, defining the construct "representation" before arguing on the risks of the "melting" between reality and representation, is indispensable. Baudrillard in fact uses the term "representation" sometimes as "experience" (and what's behind it), sometimes as "vivid feeling/imagination, indistinguishable from reality". So, his fear of representations becoming realities as a risk speaks a lot about how poorly he's informed about cognitive functioning, arguing that one can become a kind of mix with the other and neglecting all the scientific discoveries about the formation of percepts and his neural locations. He will be surprised that one way of studying and defining percepts, are optical illusions (Jiang et al., 2007). The information represented in primary sensory areas, is perfected and integrated at different stadiums of the neural processes before it is conveyed to secondary sensory areas. In one of these stadiums, sensorial stimulation becomes something that we feel and experience as a phenomenon. Reality outside digital world, is already in fact a perception, an integration based on representations and more. (Gazzaniga, Ivry, Mangun).

In cognitive neuroscience, we refer to the term "representation" as "absence of percept". Representations aren't images or mental images (Holt, 1964; Paivio, 1965, 1969, 1971) that can become so strong, so vivid, that they can melt into reality. Psychosis is the only experience we can define, as a result, as a melting, of reality and pleasure (and its representation)

since Freud's era. So Baudrillard is basically talking about an experience that can become psychotic, and more precisely, a schizophrenic experience with positive symptoms (where "positive" refers to a symptom that adds an experience in a form of percept, such as visual hallucinations, opposed to "negative" symptoms that deprive experience of a perception such as clinical apathy, anhedonia etc). There's no such external event that can develop a form of psychosis, in an individual that is not genetically predisposed, or that is under the influence of psychoactive drugs. Of course, digital content in general (that is strongly visual) can have a power on psychological processes, but the actual risk of not distinguish "real and simulated" reducing the human experience on a visual one, is strongly biased.

For e.g., Baudrillard and the author of the article they overlap the mind experiencing reality, with the functions of AI. AI can imitate, simulate abilities, intentions, decisions, but our consciousness and way to use our abilities is more than that. An AI can imitate an emotional content, but as humans, we do not experience those emotional contents the same way digital technologies present them. Vice versa, not even our greatest neuroscientists, neurosurgical researchers, engineers etc., can recreate in a technological media, the neural structures, and connections that support an emotional response, emotional and cognitive empathy, or give back the social function of emotions.

The role of gratification while experiencing a replica of reality, can of course distort expectations on reality and our singular experience of it. Reality itself (events that we can see, smell, touch, and the emotions, intentions, sense of Self, human knowledge behind those) won't be defined by visual experience of contents, by singular moments of gratification that are so strong to destroy everything behind it. The risks Baudrillard talks about, are like referred to a group of humans without memories, without contradictions and with anything other than a consequence describing them. Dennett's literature (2003) is a great explanation of our (and especially Baudrillard's) bias that make ourselves feel and the experience the Self, as a sort of "theatre", a mental space where the results of millions of elaborations' operations are exhibited to become a conscious or unconscious object. The Self is definitely not unitary.

The point in the text citing Wejers (2014) "Nozick argued that if pleasure and happiness were the sole indicators of a good life, then individuals should willingly enter the Experience Machine and stay plugged in permanently" should open an important reflection: there are plenty of humans that are permanently plugged into the solid belief that pleasure, power or fears are an indicator of a good life and solid values. That pleasure and its' sensations are unique, something irreplaceable and indispensable, even outside the Machine. Even those naive humans, even before the invention of personal computers, understand there's no substitution in that.

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