

Review of: "The Age of the Algorithmic Society — A Girardian Analysis of Mimesis, Rivalry, and Identity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Introduction

The subject matter of this article is obviously topical and significant and the theoretical framework used seems relevant and interesting. There is some potential in this approach for analysing developments in artificial intelligence. However, there are a number of limitations to be addressed that would strengthen the structure and content of the argument.

Strengths

The exposition of the algorithmic society idea and its underlying technologies is well handled as is the exposition of Girard's theory. Clear links are established between the technology and the theory. It is well-written. The questions are relevant and stimulating.

Limitations

- Research Questions

Although the theoretical questions asked are certainly interesting, it is doubtful that they can be described as 'research' questions. They are future-directed and speculative and it is unclear what methodology could be brought to bear in answering them. Rather, they are normative questions which combine a forecast about the future with a theoretical discussion. There is nothing wrong with this and the result is thought-provoking. But it would help to make it clear that it is not 'research' in any social-scientific use of the term. The questions have actually been addressed philosophically rather than sociologically.

- Theory and Empirical Examples

In an article such as this where there is a theoretical level in interaction with an empirical level, that interaction is crucial to establishing coherence and plausibility. The main weakness is the example given ("imagine a scenario") which functions like an ideal-type but is not of great sociological interest. It would be more valuable to actually review some empirical research into AI and the 'recursive loop' in order to test the plausibility of Girard's theory and its application to AI. This would also enhance the epistemological status of the empirical examples given to support the theory. Although the article is speculative, reference to actual empirical research on AI would strengthen it by providing the discussion with a firmer epistemological foundation. One idea would be to give more space to some of the examples given from the 'Awful AI'

website if they are in the public domain.

- Technological Determinism

The most obvious limitation is that the author could discuss more emphatically the pitfalls of assuming technological determinism both empirically and theoretically. This is an accusation that has often been levelled at Marxist approaches to information and communication technologies and also to Castells theory of the network society. Aesthetically, it rears its head in the many novels and movies devoted to dystopian science fiction. This author seems to repeat this determinism both in the application of the Girardian theory and in the speculation of the ideal-type scenario. So, what would strengthen the article would be the recognition of more contingency in the functional capacity of AI and inclusion of critiques of Girard's theory. As it stands, a decidedly dystopian impression is given alongside the sense that the Girardian theory is applicable without caveats. Theorising resistance to AGI and the recursive loop would make the discussion more balanced.

Minor issues

- The Abstract is very long. A shorter and punchier Abstract would help to orient the reader better.
- One of the article's sections begins, 'In this chapter....' giving the impression it has been cut and pasted from a longer work. This requires editing.

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