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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Digital Mythologies

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Abstract
This study presents a research manifesto aimed at opening a new field of inquiry: digital mythology as a form of ideological structure in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). Rather than cataloguing specific digital myths, the article serves as a *prolegomenon*—a call for interdisciplinary investigation into how digital technologies, algorithms, and "onlife" environments reshape cultural narratives, symbolism, and collective imagination. The text is also directed at professionals in STEM fields who may not yet be familiar with cultural theory or theories of ideology. To that end, the authors explain the foundational approaches of Barthes, Marx, Althusser, and Jameson, demonstrating their relevance for critically engaging with contemporary technological discourse. The study further distinguishes between industrial and digital mythology, highlighting the specific features of algorithmic narratives, including the role of AI in reproducing hegemonic ideologies. Particular attention is given to the myth of AI objectivity and to the question of how digital myth-making processes differ from earlier forms of ideological reality construction. The result is a conceptual framework for future research that bridges political philosophy, sociology, and media studies within the context of digital transformation and its broader social significance.

Keywords Mythology · New technologies · Ideology · False consciousness · Narratives

Introduction

Our understanding of the contemporary world is inextricably intertwined with new technologies and artificial intelligence, which not only illuminate various aspects of our lives but often actively shape them. In the humanities and social sciences, concepts such as ideology, mythology, or hegemony are commonly employed. However, a pressing question arises: should these concepts not be expanded to encompass the technological nature of the contemporary world? Should we not focus solely on social distortion, but also consider whether digital technologies themselves might constitute forms of false consciousness? (Michael, 2022).

If technologies are now integrated into our interpretation of the world, we should also examine how and what they communicate about this world (Bowles, 2018). This is not merely about describing the present moment, but also about interpreting both the near and distant future. Experts, academics, and cultural narratives alike no longer envision a future without new technologies and artificial intelligence. It is therefore necessary to rethink the concepts of ideology (Marx and Engels, 1975; Althusser, 2001; Jameson, 1992) and mythology (Barthes, 1957) within the context of digital culture and the digital turn.

Artificial intelligence has become an integral part of our everyday lives. From movie recommendations on Netflix to the operation of autonomous vehicles—algorithms today influence our decision-making more than ever before (Bridle, 2019; Greenfield, 2017). But what if these algorithms are not merely decision-making tools, but also instruments of power? What if they are producing new forms of ideology that shape our thinking and behavior? (Coeckelbergh, 2020).

When we generally reflect on the concept of ideology and interpret it in the context of artificial intelligence, two fundamental levels of analysis can be distinguished. The first is neutral and understands ideology as a system of beliefs and values through which we interpret the social world (Heywood, 2021). The negative conception, developed within critical theory, views ideology as false

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consciousness: ideology distorts our knowledge and correct understanding of our position in the world (Allmer, 2017).

In light of these challenges, this article aims to build a bridge between the world of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on the one hand, and the humanities and social sciences on the other. It offers a systematic overview of key theories of ideology and myth—particularly for scholars and professionals in information technology who may not yet be familiar with these concepts within a cultural-theoretical framework. Today, digital infrastructures not only reflect but also actively shape our everyday experiences, values, and modes of thinking. This text thus functions as a methodological manifesto, proposing that cultural theory be regarded not merely as a description of the past or critique of the present, but as an essential tool for navigating a world of algorithms, predictions, and automated meanings. By connecting theoretical approaches to ideology (Marx, Althusser, Jameson) and mythology (Barthes), we seek to demonstrate how digital technologies not only mirror societal values, but also actively construct new cultural narratives and forms of false consciousness.

Methodology

The outlined considerations raise the following questions: In what specific ways do technologies create false consciousness? What concrete examples can be provided? What are the consequences of technologies becoming the dominant tool for interpreting our future? What are the ethical and political implications of these new forms of ideology? How can we critically assess the information that technologies provide about us and our position in society and culture? What new tools and methods can we propose for analyzing ideology and mythology in the context of technology? These questions offer a potential direction for research as follows:

1. **Analysis of specific technologies**: A detailed examination of how specific technologies (e.g., social media algorithms, policy formation, and the creation of general norms) influence our thinking and behavior. However, it is essential to apply these dimensions within the context of the social sciences while also questioning whether these frameworks possess hegemonic tendencies (Kowaliková et al., 2020).
2. **Critical theory of technology**: The application of critical theory tools to examine technologies and their social impacts. This approach allows for a specific understanding of technology through selected concepts, such as ideology, the reproduction of social structures, and the application of alienation (e.g., user data) (Fuchs and Mosco 2016; Feenberg, 2009; Lindgren, 2023).
3. **Philosophy of technology**: The exploration of fundamental questions related to the nature of technology and its relationship to humans. This level of analysis provides a broader perspective on the relationship between technology and society (e.g., questions of determinism or constructivism) (Polak and Anshari, 2024; Floridi, 2014).

It is also assumed that technologies are no longer merely passive tools that we use, but active agents that shape our understanding of the world. Therefore, it is essential to critically examine their role in our society and their potential impacts on our future (Bowles, 2018; Coeckelbergh, 2020).

Mythology and New Technologies

The concept of "myth" or "modern myth," as Roland Barthes defines it, is connected to a tradition expressed through narrative. This concept indirectly draws on primitive, archaic thought, which serves as a model for mental and manipulative influence. This influence operates through a mediated structure that remains hidden from the society in question. It represents an epistemological relationship between sign and life, which Barthes seeks to capture in order to demonstrate the movement of life in the modern era as part of this social structure. Semiotics provides tools for interpreting society based on modern myths, and thus the relationship of narrative as a medium mediating the connection between the individual and culture. "Myth transforms anti-nature into pseudo-nature, on all levels of human communication." (Barthes, 1957) Myth restores the lost image that was never really lost: it becomes an instrument of ideology that determines what is considered real. Ideology fosters the illusion of communication and articulates its message through myths. Barthes' quest to uncover the messages of modern myths sparks public interest in their unmasking. A key question (even in our context of technological change) is: what is the message of these myths, and who is their intended recipient?

The culmination of this reflection reveals that the message is not natural. The problem lies in the inversion of artificiality and nature (anti-nature into pseudo-nature). Progress and industrialization present an image of nature, but history points to the existence of untamed nature — anti-nature. Modernity cloaks itself in myths that substitute the natural: pseudo-nature. On one hand, we have history, and on the other, its naturalized image in myth, which is part of modern ideology (Barthes, 1957). This also occurs in the context of artificial intelligence development and the vision of the future, which speaks solely of AI and technology.

Barthes identifies that the mystification of historical reality leads to questions about the source and the culprit of the denaturalization of *fysis*. While myths are cultivated by society as a whole, Barthes argues that the production of myths is attributed to the dominant class. In the naturalization of history, we must seek the subject "that understands its ruling position as the natural state of things." Barthes identifies this subject as the one that disseminates a consciousness confirmed by history. Today, we might say that artificial intelligence shapes our understanding of the present and the near or distant future. However, the question remains: who is the source of such a narrative?

Simon Lindgren asserts: the ideological nature of AI can be understood through critical theory as its inclination to reinforce the prevailing ideology. The concept of a dominant ideology in society is debated within Marxist thought and stems from the idea that "the ruling ideas are, in every age, the ideas of the ruling class" (Marx and Engels, 1975, pp. 59). However, one challenge with this view, that those in economic power impose their ideas on society at large, is that it allows little space for resistance. What if those subjected to this ideology do not passively accept the dominant views, but instead resist them? (Lindgren, 2023).

The Mythology of Artificial Intelligence

Barthes' theory can be applied to the analysis of artificial intelligence (AI) and the mythologies associated with it. Just as modern myths naturalize historical realities, AI myths naturalize technological progress and its consequences. AI is frequently depicted as an inevitable and natural step in human evolution, ignoring the ideological and economic interests driving this technology. The "dominant" ideologies shaping AI narratives often present it as a neutral and objective tool, while in reality it serves specific power structures. For example, the idea that AI ensures objective decision-making obscures the fact that AI systems frequently reproduce and amplify existing social inequalities and biases. Mark Coeckelbergh (2021) highlights the problematic nature of this narrative and situates it within the context of political philosophy.

The myth of AI as an omnipotent and autonomous entity capable of transcending human limitations also fosters the illusion that technological progress is an independent process, free from the need for human oversight and ethical regulation. This myth depoliticizes discussions about AI and distracts from critical issues such as accountability, governance, and its impact on labor markets. Applying Barthes' critical theory allows us to deconstruct these myths and understand the underlying ideologies shaping our perceptions of AI and technology. This opens the space for a more critical and informed discussion about the societal role of artificial intelligence (Striphas, 2015).

Barthes analyzes modern myths through semiology, the science of signs, which examines the relationship between the signifier and the signified. In the system of myth, the sign acquires an additional layer of meaning, transforming ordinary objects and phenomena into carriers of ideological messages. Barthes' semiology enables us to uncover how dominant ideologies construct images and narratives. For instance, the image of a robot assisting humans or an intelligent assistant simplifying everyday tasks functions as a sign that conveys hidden messages about technological progress and AI neutrality. In reality, these representations and their connotations may obscure issues such as surveillance, control, and labor displacement (Ford). Through Barthes' analytical lens, we can identify how these myths are formed and how they influence our perceptions of AI. This insight reveals that every representation of AI is ideologically charged, emphasizing the need to critically examine who creates these images, how they are constructed, and whose interests they serve (Chandler & Fuchs, 2019; Lindgren, 2023).

Old and New Myths

Digital mythology represents a contemporary form of collective narratives and symbols arising from the use of digital technologies in online environments. These myths serve similar functions to traditional mythology: they foster social cohesion, strengthen group identity, and present values through intelligible stories that reduce the complexity of the world to simple narratives, offering orientation in a changing world (Blank, 2009). The heroes of these narratives are often individuals, events, or memes popularized through social media, which modify and distribute these digital stories. Unlike traditional mythology, digital mythology is fluid, constantly evolving, crossing regional boundaries, and taking on a global dimension. At the same time, it significantly affects social interactions, the construction of authority, and political and cultural dynamics in society.

While industrial myths of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were often built around ideals of progress, rationality, the mastery of nature, and centralized power (e.g., the factory as a symbol of order and efficiency), digital myths emphasize decentralization, individualism, participation, and autonomy. Industrial myths were typically created by state institutions, media, or corporate giants, whereas digital myths often emerge "from below"—through viral content, memes, community creation, and interactive platforms.

Their formal structure also differs—while industrial myths rely on static, repeatable symbols and narratives (e.g., the machine as a symbol of progress), digital myths are

mutable, fragmented, and memetic. The digital environment allows for rapid modification, remixing, and participatory dissemination of narratives, making digital myths not only more adaptable but also less stable and increasingly dependent on algorithmic structures and platforms.

As Mosco (2004) notes, industrial mythology frequently relied on the myth of "inevitable progress," where technology was seen as a tool for civilizational dominance. By contrast, digital mythology, as described by Jenkins (2006), is based on the logic of cultural convergence, where users actively reshape and share content, thereby co-creating new myths. Levy (1997) emphasizes that digital environments facilitate the emergence of collective intelligence, forming the basis for new, open-ended narratives.

Moreover, digital mythology is not bound to national or linguistic borders—its stories spread globally, adapt to various cultural contexts, and respond in real-time to current events. This distinguishes it from industrial myths, which were often slower, institutionalized, and disseminated through centralized media channels (e.g., television, film, press). This contrast in speed and participation reshapes the nature of collective imagination and ideological influence (Castells, 2011; Dean, 2010).

Digital Mythology: The Case of Bitcoin

One example of a digital mythology with both new structure and content is the story of Bitcoin and blockchain technology. This narrative forms around the promise of radical decentralization, resistance to state and corporate structures, and the return of power to individuals. In this mythology, Bitcoin is portrayed as a liberating tool—digital gold not controlled by any central authority, enabling a more just global financial system.

The figure of Satoshi Nakamoto, the anonymous creator of Bitcoin, takes on a mythological role—an elusive founder, a prophet of a new era, whose disappearance has only amplified the legend. This digital myth offers not only the hope of financial independence but also an ethical framework based on transparency, cryptography, and community governance. The Bitcoin community shares a narrative of resistance against the fiat system and frequently uses symbols such as logos, memes, and slogans (e.g., "In Crypto We Trust") that act as signs imbued with ideological meaning.

At the same time, this myth is ambivalent—alongside its emancipatory elements, it includes risks of speculation, environmental harm from mining, and the concentration of power in the hands of technical elites. This duality invites full Barthesian analysis: Bitcoin is not merely a tool but a sign charged with ideological and cultural meanings.

As Swartz (2018) shows, Bitcoin has become not just a technological tool but a cultural phenomenon—a new kind of belief grounded in trust in code rather than institutions. The culture surrounding cryptocurrencies employs evangelical language, creates rituals (e.g., HODL, crypto conferences), and generates a hierarchy of figures—from technical visionaries to the "martyrs" of the economic system.

This narrative also resonates with libertarian ideology and efforts to redefine the notion of value in the digital economy. According to Golumbia (2016), Bitcoin discourse exemplifies a form of technocratic belief wherein technological architecture is seen as inherently fairer than societal and legal institutions. Such myth-making deflects attention from social inequalities that may persist even in decentralized systems.

On the other hand, decentralization has enabled the emergence of alternative economic models, such as decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs), which present themselves as fairer systems of collective decision-making without intermediaries. In these cases, the Bitcoin myth may serve as a motivation for experimentation with new forms of participation and autonomy.

This layered complexity illustrates that the digital mythology surrounding Bitcoin is neither wholly positive nor negative; rather, it is a site for negotiating values, power, and belief in the digital age. A Barthesian analysis of such myth reveals how technical signs become cultural tools that help shape our collective notions of justice, authority, and the future.

Digital Mythology and Empowering Marginalized Voices

Not all digital myths are repressive or ideologically problematic. Some serve to empower marginalized communities and amplify their voices in the broader public sphere. Movements like #MeToo represent digital narratives that blend personal testimony, symbols of resistance, and collective identity. Through hashtags, viral videos, shared testimonies, and visual content, these movements evolve into emancipatory digital myths that not only mobilize collective action but also transform societal norms.

In the case of #MeToo, personal experiences of sexual harassment and violence are transformed into a collective symbol of resistance that has real consequences in both corporate and public spheres. Shared stories create networks of solidarity and challenge power structures previously protected by silence and institutionalized invisibility. This digital narrative enables a reinterpretation of traditional gender roles and amplifies the voices of women in digital spaces (Gill & Orgad, 2018).

Such myths establish new ethical frameworks, legitimize change, and destabilize dominant ideologies. Their virality is not merely a function of technology but a result

of shared experiences and a demand for cultural transformation. These myths can also be examined semiologically—hashtags, photos, slogans, and iconic visuals become signs that carry profound meanings and help construct collective memory and identity. In doing so, symbolic power shifts toward those whose voices were historically marginalized.

Digital space further enables new modes of articulating subjectivity and collective experience. Myths of this kind often bypass traditional media gatekeepers, allowing for autonomous narrative framing by those previously objectified or silenced. In terms of media communication, this marks a shift toward multilayered interaction, in which feedback between individual and collective occurs in real time. Myth here functions not merely as fiction, but as a tool of political articulation and cultural self-determination. Digital mythology thus becomes not just a mirror of reality but a means of transforming it. The significance of these myths lies in their capacity to produce a resonant effect—not only by sharing experience, but also by actively reshaping the societal frameworks in which that experience exists.

Rather than concluding the discussion, we wish to emphasize the need for continued research into digital mythology that can account for its fluidity, contextuality, and cultural diversity. Based on the theoretical foundations and examples discussed, several research directions merit further exploration. First, it is necessary to examine how digital myths emerge and what mechanisms govern their circulation—how algorithmic logics shape their form, longevity, and reach. In this regard, integrating semiological approaches with the study of data infrastructures and viral dynamics would be fruitful. Second, ongoing analysis of the power dynamics embedded in digital myths is warranted—who produces them, who benefits, and what ideological frames they reinforce or disrupt. This includes investigating how digital myths become institutionalized and how their dynamics vary across cultural and linguistic contexts. A third avenue involves studying the emotional and affective functions of these myths—how they mobilize audiences, the roles of empathy, humor, or anger, and the interplay between individual experience and collective narrative. Finally, it is vital to consider how digital mythology evolves over time—what stories disappear, which ones resurface in new forms, and how myths intersect with technological innovation. Research should also focus on how myths adapt to new platforms, formats, and audiences.

Digital mythology should not be seen as a closed system of meanings, but as an ever-changing structure that helps shape contemporary cultural imagination. In this light, interdisciplinary approaches combining media studies, cultural analysis, digital humanities, semiotics, and critical theory are essential.

New Technologies as Camera Obscura

According to classical Marxism, ideology functions as a primary instrument of the ruling class, producing a form of false consciousness that obscures the true conditions of existence for the oppressed. In contrast, scientific knowledge—particularly historical materialism (now associated with critical theory)—offers tools to uncover these concealed contradictions within the social structure. Ideology, in Marx's view, distorts human consciousness, preventing individuals from recognizing their real social relations. Andrew Heywood (2021, pp. 24–25) summarizes Marx's theory into four theses. First, ideology represents false consciousness, an epistemological problem that can only be resolved through the scientific study of history. This approach aims to foster class self-awareness, which today would include demands for the democratization of technology (Feenberg, 2014). Second, ideology is intrinsically linked to the class system, serving to preserve hegemony by naturalizing ownership relations and suppressing historical consciousness—a mechanism that, as Jameson (2002) argues, inhibits dialectical thinking. This process aligns with Roland Barthes' concept of myth as the transformation of the historical into the `"natural."

The third thesis posits that ideology conceals social contradictions—such as exploitation and surplus value—thus reinforcing class structures. In this context, digital technologies prompt questions about ownership and control: who possesses data, and have traditional contradictions simply migrated into a new technological framework, the "onlife" world? (Allmer, 2017; Floridi, 2014). The fourth thesis views ideology as a historically contingent phenomenon, arising only in the context of class antagonism (Marx and Engels, 1975). This position was later challenged by Louis Althusser, who argued that Marx offered only a limited theory of ideology, one insufficient for analyzing broader societal structures. Althusser (2001) proposed a more expansive concept of ideology that transcends class struggle and applies universally across political formations—even within a classless communist society.

Althusser argues that ideology is not so much false consciousness but rather a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to the real conditions of their existence" (Althusser, 2001, p. 109). In Marx's view, the source of ideology is the ruling class, which intentionally distorts the consciousness of the oppressed class to maintain the status quo—without awareness, social change (revolutions) does not occur. Althusser, however, speaks of ideology more broadly, as a principle whose function is to maintain the physical existence of the given mode of production. Ideology reproduces individuals who are

placed into societal functions as experts, without the use of force. It thus mediates the relationship between the individual and their societal role. Althusser points to mechanisms that give ideas a general form: these are ideological state apparatuses. By this term, he refers to the role of state institutions, which can reproduce the conditions of production without the use of repressive state apparatuses. The conditions of production are necessary for the continuous development and survival of a society. "Every social formation must simultaneously reproduce the conditions of its production in order to reproduce itself. For this reason, it must produce: 1. productive forces and 2. existing relations of production" (ibid, p. 128). Althusser then claims that ideological practice is realized through a sum of institutions (including media, religion, schools, family, and even sports), with which we interact daily. However, for a state based on economics to function, the means for its operation must be produced somewhere. This perspective is relevant if we understand technology as a reproduction of the dominant discourse of values in the current political-economic system. But there is another level here, of interpreting not only the present but also the future (utopia).

Utopia: A Vision of the Near or Distant Future

Application of the concept of ideology in the context of AI can follow on from Louis Althusser's theory, which regards ideology as a reflection of an imaginary relationship of individuals to the actual conditions of their existence, and from its further elaboration by Fredric Jameson. Jameson analyzes ideologies through cultural texts. According to his theory, the text mediates the very relationship of an individual to the conditions of his/her existence. By this reflection, a critic can perceive the whole social and political reality that derives from the dynamic of late capitalism. This interpretation of cultural artifacts is a sophisticated system that attempts to decode ideological messages of the political unconscious that is buried under the form of the artifacts. (Jameson, 2002) Like this, we can find out what kinds of contradictions are deliberately masked in society as all cultural texts are regarded as symbolic acts. It means that all texts are imaginary resolutions of real contradictions. We should grasp ideology as a means of legitimation of the class division in society. A dominant ideology repudiates a divergent interpretation of reality and represents the class division as "naturalness," thereby helping the reproduction of the class relations continually. The questions that arise are how to identify the origin of ideology and how to analyze it. If we decide to analyze culture as a symbolic act, it means to explore inconsistent positions of a human being in the socio-economic system (race conflicts, gender inequality, inequality coming from geographic conditions, etc.).

This leads us to the question: how does the ideology close the cultural text? According to Jameson, the text does not only produce limits of thought (by introducing thinking into false ideas), but also produces an idea or a vision in the collective unconscious (utopia). (Jameson, 1992, 2002) Utopia is a false idea about the near or far future that is free from social problems (contradictions): for example, liberalism and freedom can fully bloom only if we get rid of the welfare state, a huge barrier that obstructs progress itself. Utopia offers a concrete idea of the better world, thereby uniting the fragmented society in the capitalist system and becoming an instrument of manipulation. For this reason, a negative interpretation (ideological analysis) is completed by a positive analysis that attempts to find some (ideological) function (not only distortion of the conscious) in the culture, i.e., the utopian impulse. At this point of the analysis, it is an instrument for examining the rise of right-wing populism in the post-communist countries where a populist brings an idea of a better future for the fallen society under the condition of neoliberalism and technology. Althusser's theory of interpellation, understood as the process by which individuals are addressed as subjects, offers a useful framework for analyzing the functioning of modern AI systems. Personalized algorithms, such as those recommending content online, engage users on an individual level while subtly shaping their worldview. By collecting data about users, these algorithms influence preferences, opinions, and perceptions of reality. However, these technologies can also contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities. Automated decision-making, when based on historical data, may carry biases or discriminatory patterns, thereby reproducing existing injustices.

On the other hand, Fredric Jameson focuses on the ideological dimensions of cultural texts, which he views as symbolic acts reflecting social reality. (Jameson, 2002) AI systems, such as chatbots or generative models, can be analyzed as cultural texts that either reveal or obscure social contradictions. Jameson argues that texts mediate the relationship between individuals and their societal conditions, and similarly, AI can be seen as a technology that mediates political unconsciousness by producing and distributing content that both reflects and shapes social consciousness. AI often generates utopian visions of a future free from social problems, but these visions may serve as ideological tools, uniting society around the idea of technological progress as a solution to all issues, while concealing deeper social conflicts.

Critical Analysis of AI as an Ideological Tool

In the social sciences, the concept of ideology is frequently used, along with its variations such as mythology or hegemony. The question arises whether we should extend these concepts to include the technological nature of the contemporary world. Rather than focusing solely on social distortions, we must also consider whether digital technologies contribute to this false consciousness (Allmer 2017; Fuchs and Mosco, 2016). If technology is now embedded in how we interpret the world, we should examine what and how it communicates about this world. It is not merely about describing the present but also about interpreting the near or distant future: experts, academics, and cultural narratives rarely envision a future without new technologies or artificial intelligence (Rakowski and Kowaliková, 2024) The sources of ideology in the context of new technologies, based on the aforementioned theories, can be identified as follows:

1. **Values articulated in technology design:** The ideology of developers and investors influences what kind of AI is developed and what goals it pursues. For example, if developers are guided by humanistic values, they will aim to create AI that benefits humanity. Conversely, if they are motivated by profit, they may focus on developing AI that maximizes revenue, regardless of ethical consequences. Here, we can apply the classical concept of ideology as false consciousness. Simultaneously, we observe the reproduction of the value system of liberalism, which functions as the dominant political-economic ideology of contemporary neoliberalism. (Coeckelbergh, 2020)
2. **Data and algorithms:** The data used to train AI and the algorithms that shape its functioning can be affected by existing biases and stereotypes. This can result in AI reproducing or even amplifying these biases. In simpler terms, our interpretation of the world is embedded in the very data sources that technologies work with. (Bowles, 2018) Here, Althusser's concept of ideology, as the reproduction of the means of production, can be applied.
3. **Use of AI:** The ideology of those who deploy AI affects how it is implemented. For instance, AI can be used to reinforce authoritarian regimes or discriminate against certain groups. At the same time, the values of hegemonic viewpoints are reproduced. A current example is the widespread coaching on how AI can enhance productivity, coupled with the persistent depiction of a future that cannot function without AI. Jameson's concept of ideology as utopia can be applied here. (Jameson, 2002)

The development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology more broadly span numerous areas, from social constructivism to ethical and legal concerns. If we accept that technology is not merely a neutral tool but also shapes our perception of the world, a crucial question arises: how can society consciously influence the design of technology? This leads directly to the issue of ethics, which is essential for ensuring that AI serves beneficial purposes and is not misused. Furthermore, the problem of biases embedded in algorithms, which affect our social and political interpretations, must also be addressed. Another critical issue involves the social impacts of automation and robotization, particularly regarding potential job displacement and the inequalities that AI could exacerbate. These concerns tie into the broader discussions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the competing narratives of techno-optimism and techno-pessimism. A key question here is whether government policies and educational frameworks are adequately prepared for these changes. Lastly, the protection of privacy in an era where AI processes vast amounts of personal data is a significant concern. Rapid technological developments often outpace legal responses, raising questions about data ownership and how data is managed. This introduction thus highlights the key issues that are essential for a critical reflection on contemporary technological development.

Democratization of AI and Technology

If we understand technology through the lens of social constructivism—as a product of society that simultaneously defines our worldview—we must ask how society can actively participate in the design of technology. If such participation is lacking, the ethical dimension becomes crucial (Rakowski and Kowaliková, 2024).

AI Ethics and Technological Design

How can we ensure that AI is developed and used ethically? How can we prevent AI from being exploited for harmful purposes? It is important to recognize that ethics touches on distinct concepts, such as social and political philosophy. Though the boundary between these domains is thin, they allow for different interpretations (Bowles, 2018; Coeckelbergh, 2020).

Bias in AI and Algorithms

How can we address the biases often embedded in the data and algorithms on which AI is trained? This is an epistemological issue that ultimately relates to our interpretation of the social and political universe. (Keen, 2019).

Social Impacts of AI (Automation and Robotization)

What will be the social impacts of large-scale AI deployment? How can we address potential job losses and the inequalities AI may exacerbate? This question relates to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the application of various scenarios of techno-optimism and techno-pessimism. The central concern here is the preparedness of state policies and education systems in the context of automation and robotization (Kowalikova et al., 2020).

Privacy Protection

How can we protect individuals' privacy in an era when AI is capable of processing vast amounts of personal data? A critical issue is also the production of data—who owns the data and how it is managed. The challenge is that data practices are evolving faster than legal frameworks can respond (Floridi et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The current technological advancements, including AI, are significantly reshaping our understanding of the world, contributing to the formation of cognitive and interpretive frameworks, value systems, and distorting our cognitive map. This transformation brings about a shift in how we think about concepts such as ideology and mythology. Algorithms and AI have evolved from mere tools to active agents, profoundly influencing our decision-making and perception of the world—not only in the realm of everyday life but also within academic discourse. Technology has become the creator of new forms of ideology, often without users fully realizing it—or one might say that ideology remains the source of technology. The information and interpretations it offers inevitably support specific interests and values, distorting our perception of reality in ways already described by critical theory. Algorithms and technologies create new myths about who we are, what we want, how we should live, and what the distant future will hold. These myths spread at an unprecedented speed and shape our understanding of the world. We can thus assert that technology is not neutral, as it often claims to be, but rather an actively constructive element of reality. How do we contend with this new form of mythology, which is both omnipresent and invisible?

For a discussion on the nature of the relationship between technology and society, it is necessary to address this relationship on three levels. First, technology and artificial intelligence are presented as integral parts of our current understanding of the world. They not only help explain various aspects of the world but also actively participate in its shaping. Technological innovations are thus understood as a set of ideas and beliefs presented as objective truth, but in reality, they serve to reinforce specific social orders or interests. Second, it is essential to rehabilitate the concepts of ideology, mythology, and hegemony in the context of technology: expanding these traditionally social-scientific concepts into the realm of technology and their impact on the formation of false consciousness about the world is crucial. Third, there is the question of interpreting the present and future: Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, has become the dominant tool for describing and predicting the future. Scientists, experts, and culture at large can no longer imagine the future without these technologies. In the concept of narrative, this dimension is key to utopian thinking and the articulation of possible alternatives. Technology not only describes the present but also actively shapes our visions of the future, thus influencing our decisions and behavior.

In conclusion, it can be stated that in the digital age, the concepts of ideology and mythology intersect through technological innovations, especially artificial intelligence. Algorithms now create new myths and symbols that shape our understanding of the world, much like Barthes described in relation to mythology. Technology is not only a tool for interpreting the world but also actively reshapes our perception of reality and the future. How we address this new form of mythology, which is omnipresent and invisible, remains a critical question for contemporary society. The technological hegemony that presents us with a distorted image of reality challenges us to reflect more deeply on how these systems influence our thinking and how we might critically engage with their impact on our everyday lives.

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Declarations

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