Artificial Intelligence and Humanities

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The COVID-19 pandemic does not mean a crisis of capitalism but instead compounds the existing problems within the capitalist mode of production. The precarious status of the essential workers, regardless of their living conditions, has been worse. In contrast, unrestricted capitalist accumulation valorizing the market above everything else, has been more efficient and has exacerbated social inequality. These contradictory consequences of the pandemic prove that capitalism's nature does not need workers for its completion. The pandemic serves not so much as the end of capitalism but as another moment to sustain its paradox. Indeed, what is being observed at the moment is the more traumatic experiences of capitalist restructuring. Some critics take the concept of the "shock doctrine" to explain how capitalism survives through the disastrous process. Naomi Klein's theory of the shock doctrine, her critique of the Chicago School, is based on the assumption that "the human cost of shock therapy" is tactically designed to control the working class. The ground of the shock doctrine is undoubtedly the human's psychical realm and essentially requires production's social relations. However, the current prevalence of disaster capitalism seems to achieve its culmination by erasing the working class' presence. It does not mean the removal of workers but the modification of work. This transformation dramatically evolved into mechanical management based on surveillance technology during this pandemic. In other words, the mechanization of work, the perversion of Taylorism, reconstructs the labour force's fundamentals and drives each worker to be a part of the mechanism. The financial bull market on technology investment precipitates this shift further and reformulates the distribution of labour. We would call this inversion of capitalism the essence of "pure capitalism," i.e., the "free" economic system that encourages individuals' voluntary competition to produce and trade without government intervention. It is difficult to determine where administrative interference could engage the system if the workers have no human management. From this perspective, this course will show how the automated algorithm of Artificial Intelligence modifies our desire through traumatization and then suggest resistance within its mechanization.

Week 1

Can AI be wise like humans, or do humans want to become AI?

1) The Imagination of Cybernetics
2) Surveillance and Modernity
3) The State as a Cyborg
4) Weak Technologies
5) Toward Planetary Cybernetics

Week 2

Gamification and Politics

1) Games

In 2014, amid the #GamerGate saga, games became a site of political contestation between the Left and the Right. Books such as Jamie Woodcock's *Marx and the Arcade* and my own *The Playstation Dreamworld* attempted to imagine a future of gaming that could serve progressive politics, socialism or even communism. On image boards and in online gaming communities, advocates of Republicanism and further Right politics also attempted to leverage games in the run up to the Trump election and to push support for Putin. A lot was at stake on both sides. Now, in 2022, games seem to have been co-opted by a kind of capitalist liberalism where their roles is depoliticized. This session discusses this recent history of games in relation the softening

2) Memes

As with games, memes had their political moment. When Pepe was in his heyday, memes were election focussed or adjacent, looking to influence 'Politics' by creating humorous quotable fragments to push an agenda. Now, virality remains in the cookbook of activism, but it has diverted from 'politics' to 'culture'. Trans advocates like Jeffrey Marsh rely on short form snippets in place of rational argument and vegans pour milk in Selfridges to catch the memetic wave for the sake of vegetables. But what does this recent shift in the activism of memes mean? This session considers how difficult is it to know where real politics is capable of happening, how often digital capitalism is able to mystify and redirect activism and whether viral content can still be part of politics.

3) AI

With the Turing test out of the window, conversational AI have forced the question of what sentience is and reopened questions of human and machine. AI is the product of techno-capitalists, and it serves them: replacing workers, streamlining profit systems, etc. The media debate about the future of machines also serves this exploitative class: upholding a progress narrative, making unemployment seem inevitable, etc. Nevertheless, is the robots make us question what it means to be human, perhaps a new conception of humanity - a universalist, socialist one - could emerge to replace the humanism of liberalism. The robots are stupider than we're being told to believe, but they can still be a prompt for changing our approach to humanity.

4) Social Media

In a sense, social media is already an old topic. What is new is that it's subjects have grown up. Teenage users of Facebook and YouTube are now among us in the workplace. They are your teachers, lecturers, even your analysts. This generation grew up on a diet of recognition completely unlike the one before it. From a cybernetic perspective, the feedback loops that made this generation who they are, that created their subjectivity, were new. But who are the children of the social media revolution? The American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson argued that in our 30s, we turn away from the necessary narcissisms of adolescence and focus the next chapter of our lives on creative work. Have the conditions (material and social) of digital capitalism created a generation unable to leave their narcissistic adolescence behind? Should we be taking their advice, in the classroom, at work, on the couch?

5) Film

From *Her* to *Ex Machina* to *Blade Runner,* we've been falling in love with robots on film for the last several decades. Now, from ChatGPT to AI partners like Replika to sexy assistants like Gatebox, we're falling in love with them for 'real'. This session considers the connection between the romanticization of robot love on screen and the way it plays out in contemporary capitalism. What does the technologization of desire show us about desire itself? Is desire mutating in a new world of desiring-machines, or are these technologies revealing home truths about how desire has long since functioned?

Week 3

Against Techno-Metaverse-philia

1) Ethics, literary and cinematic representation of the Metaverse I: World brain, noosphere, collective algorithmic unconscious (criticism of Elon Musk)
2) Ethics, literary and cinematic representation of the Metaverse II: history of Westworld, video games, anime
3) Critical philosophy of technology contra techno-Metaverse-philia: Introduction to Bernard Stiegler's philosophy II
4) Critical philosophy of technology contra techno-Metaverse-philia: Introduction to Bernard Stiegler's philosophy II
5) Discussion and presentations on the reform of the World Wide Web

<u>* Students must submit a 1500-word essay for evalutation after the course.</u>
(Attendance 50 %, Assignment 50%)

Dr. Alfie Bown is Lecturer in Digital Media Culture and Technology. He joined Royal Holloway after being Assistant Professor at the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong and Lecturer at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has also taught at The University of Manchester and Liverpool John Moores University. He is author of *The Playstation Dreamworld* (Polity, 2017) and *In the Event of Laughter* (Bloomsbury, 2018) among other things. His most recent book is an edited collection of essays entitled *Post-Memes: Seizing the Memes of Production,* out in late 2019 with Punctum Press. The collection brings together academics, journalists and meme artists to discuss the political and cultural importance of the meme. His principle research interests are in psychoanalysis, digital media, critical theory and videogames, though he has also published in nineteenth-century studies, film studies and medieval studies. He supervises PhD theses on topics ranging from science fiction and videogames to digital activism, literature and philosophy and his undergraduate teaching focusses on digital storytelling, digital histories and the role of the digital in geopolitical and cultural relations. Alfie also writes journalism for places such as The Guardian, The Paris Review, The Independent, New Statesman and Newsweek. He is editor of the international cultural studies collective <u>Everyday Analysis</u>, which has published several books including Why Are Animals Funny? (2014), Twerking to Turking (2015) and Politactics (2016).

Dr. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee is a professor of cultural studies at Kyung Hee University in South Korea and a visiting professor at Jamia Millia Islamia University in India. He is a member of the advisory board for The International Deleuze and Guattari Studies in Asia, Asia Theories Network, and the board member of The International Consortium of Critical Theory. He has written extensively on French and German philosophy and its non-Western reception, Korean cinema, popular culture, art, and politics. He has lectured and published widely in South Korea and beyond. In a quest to discuss today's continued importance of communist principles with contributions from intellectuals worldwide, particularly in Asia, he co-edited *The Idea of Communism 3* with Slavoj Žižek (2016). His books *Red Deleuze: Philosophy and the Third World* and *The Absence of Darkness: Capitalism in Asia* are forthcoming.

Dr. Joff P.N. Bradley is Professor of Philosophy and English, Faculty and Graduate School of Foreign Languages, Teikyo University, Tokyo, Japan, visiting fellow at Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Korea, and previously visiting professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. He is vice president of the International Association of Japan Studies. Joff has co-written *A Pedagogy of Cinema* & coedited: *Deleuze and Buddhism*; *Educational Ills and the (Im)possibility of Utopia*; *Educational Philosophy and New French Thought*; *Principles of Transversality, Bringing Forth a World*; *Bernard Stiegler and the Philosophy of Education*. He published *Thinking with Animation* in 2021. His magnum opus entitled *Schizoanalysis and Asia* is due for publication this year.