Thinking Otherwise

Philosophy, Communication, Technology

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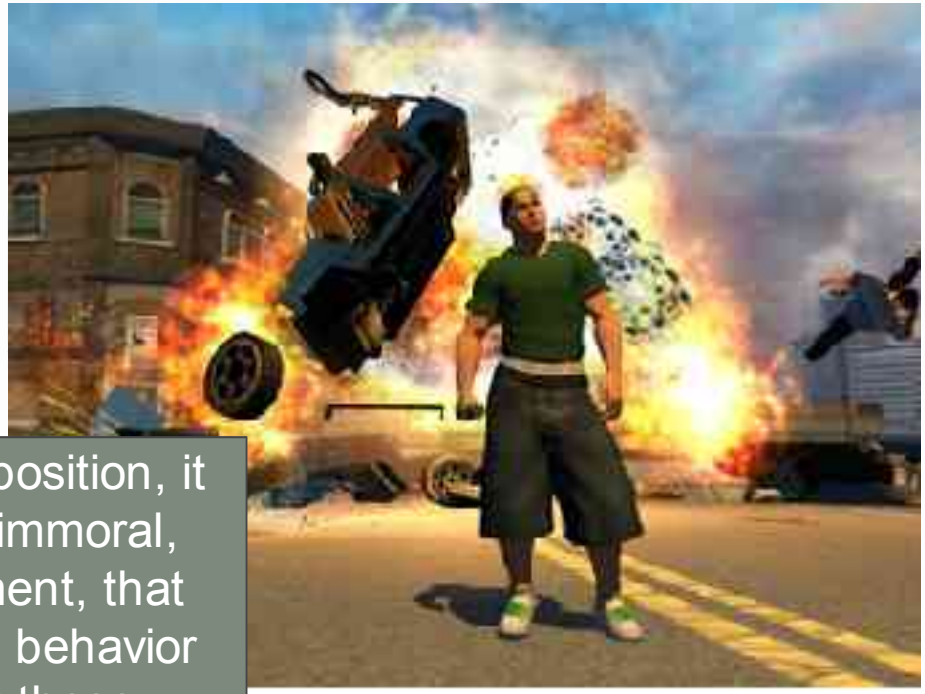
Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality.

Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

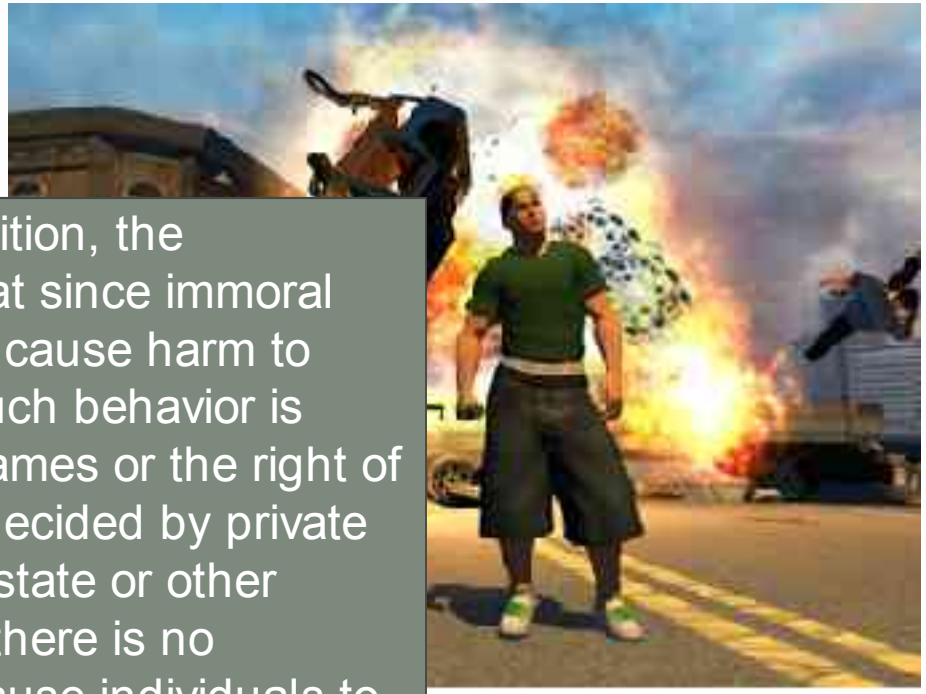
Pro-Censorship Position



In the standard pro-censorship position, it is claimed that such games are immoral, that they hinder moral development, that they cause immoral or antisocial behavior in the real world, and that under these circumstances the state has the right to impose censorship.

Philip Brey, 1999,

Anti-Censorship Position

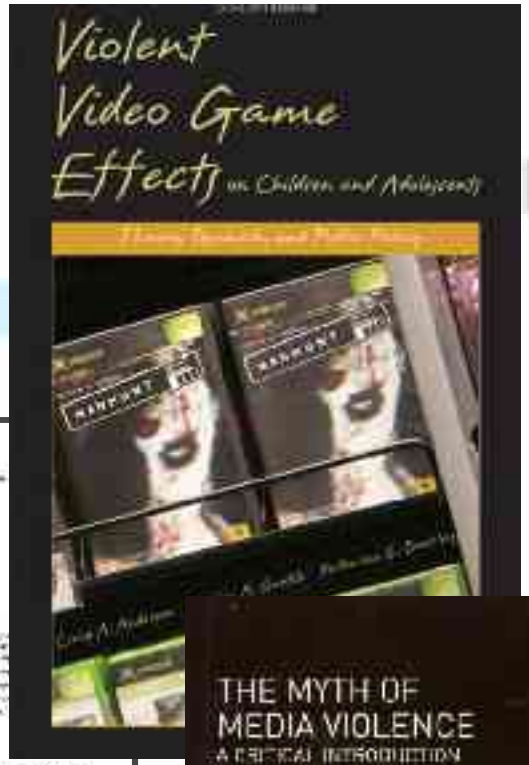


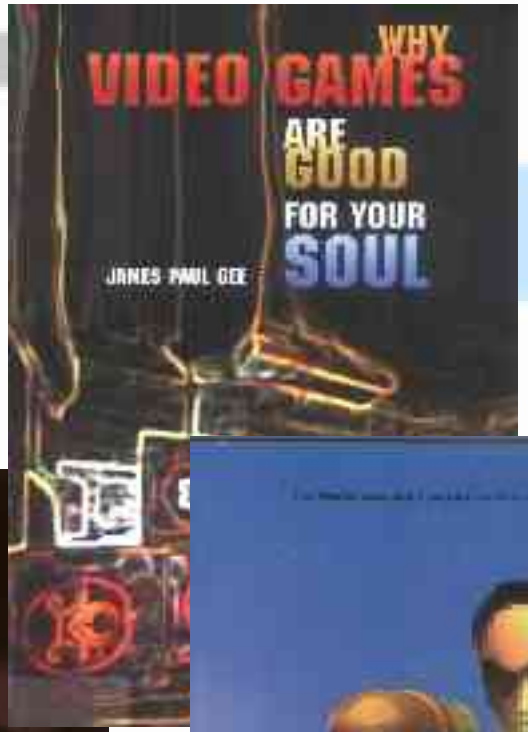
In the standard anti-censorship position, the libertarian viewpoint is defended that since immoral acts in a virtual environment do not cause harm to others, the decision to engage in such behavior is private, and the morality of these games or the right of individuals to use them should be decided by private citizens individually and not by the state or other acting body. It is often added that there is no evidence that such games would cause individuals to act immorally in the real world, and it is some-times claimed that such games may even be beneficial by allowing individuals to release pent-up frustrations and act out fantasies or desires that they might otherwise act out in the real world.

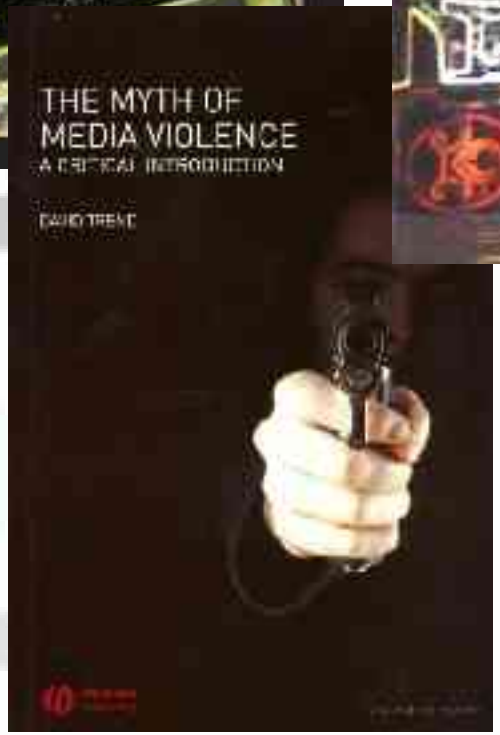
Philip Brey, 1999, p. 8

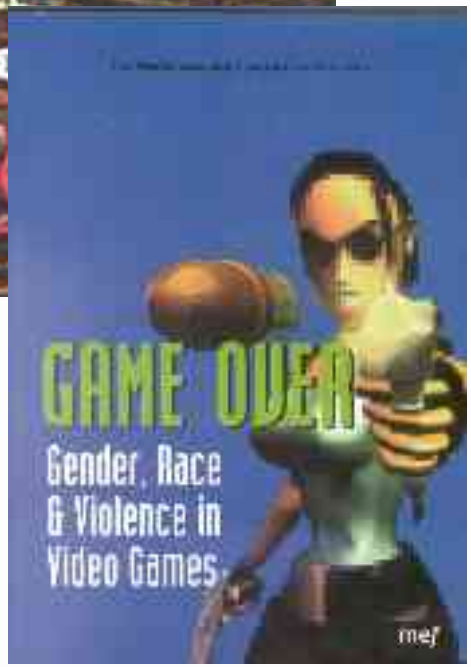
PLAYING VIDEO GAMES
Motives, Response
Peter Vorderer

The Effects of Violent Video Games


Violent
Video Game
Effects on Children and Adolescents

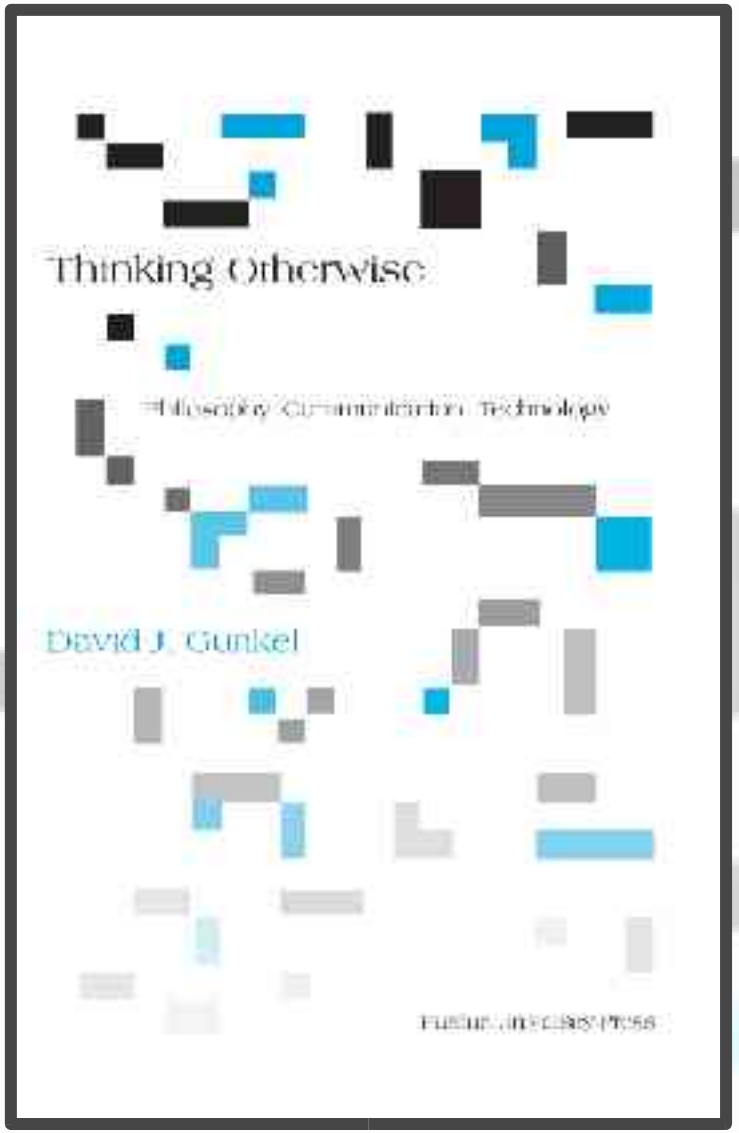

WHY
VIDEO GAMES
ARE
GOOD
FOR YOUR
SOUL
JAMES PAUL GEE


THE MYTH OF
MEDIA VIOLENCE
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
DAVID TRENDE


GAME OVER
Gender, Race
& Violence in
Video Games
mef

Pro-Censorship | Anti-Censorship

Common Values and Assumptions


Thinking Otherwise
David J. Gunkel

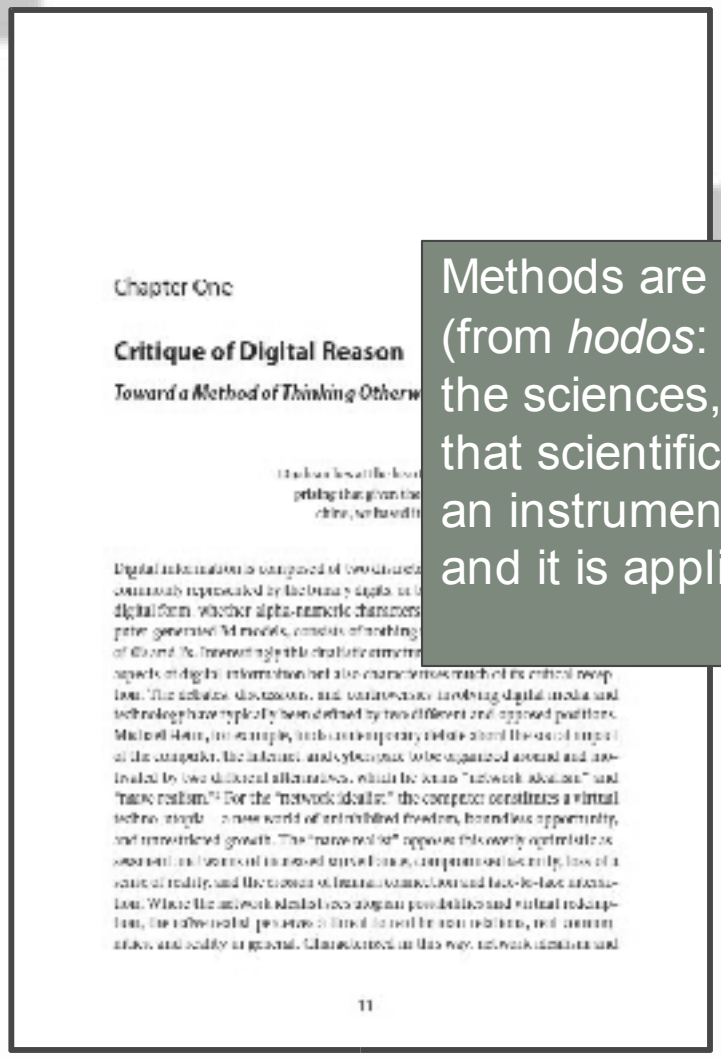
Chapter One

Critique of Digital Reason

Toward a Method of Thinking Otherwise

Dualism lies at the heart of life. It should not then be surprising that given the chance to build the ultimate machine, we based it on zeros and ones.

Peter Lurie, 2004,



Chapter One

Critique of Digital Reason

Toward a Method of Thinking Otherw

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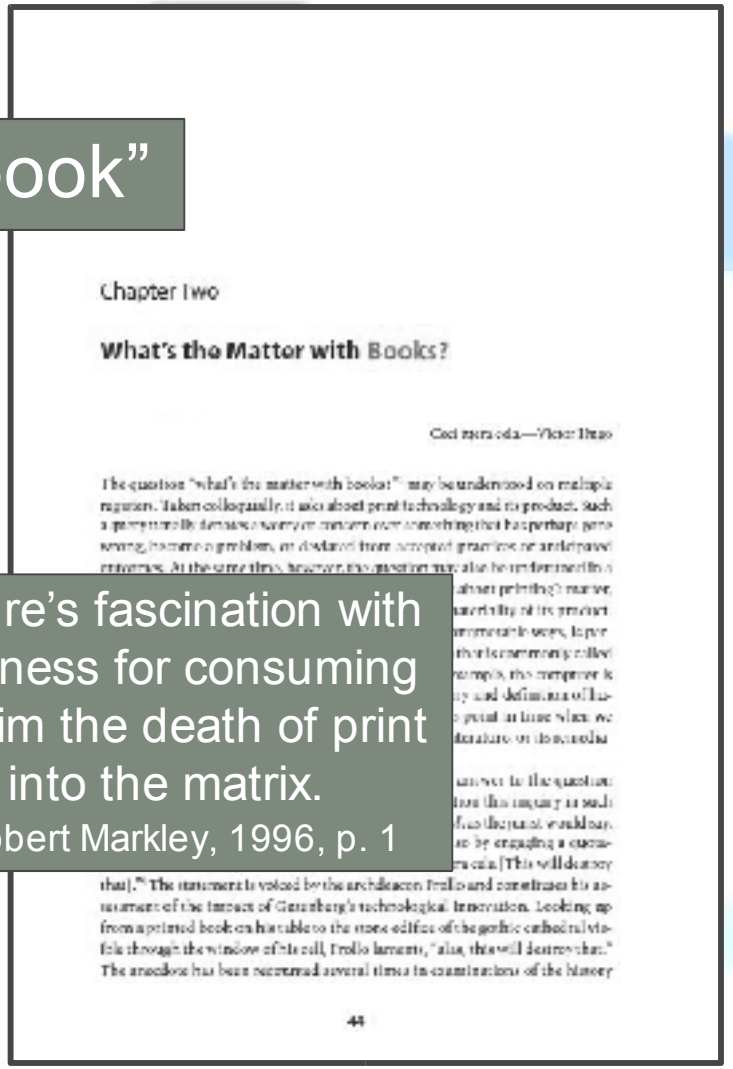
Methods are generally understood as roads (from *hodos*: 'way,' 'road') to knowledge. In the sciences, as well as in the philosophies that scientific thinking patronizes, method is an instrument for representing a given field, and it is applied to the field from the outside.

Rodolphe Gasché, 1986, p. 121

“The paradox of a book”

One of the ironies of our culture’s fascination with virtual technologies is its fondness for consuming books and articles that proclaim the death of print culture—or its disappearance into the matrix.

Robert Markley, 1996, p. 1

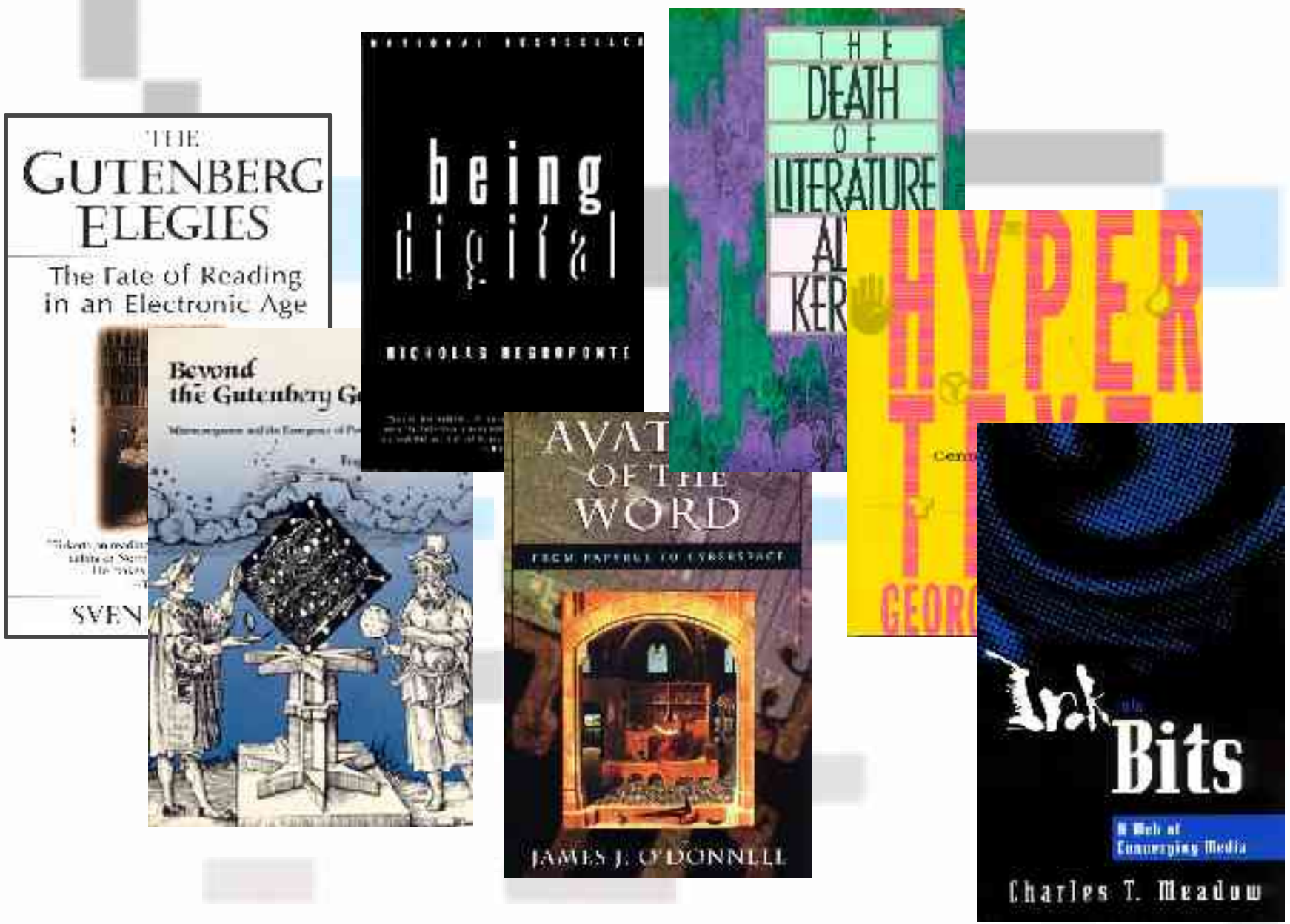


Chapter Two

What’s the Matter with Books?

Ceci tuera cela—Victor Hugo

44


THE
GUTENBERG
ELEGIES
The Fate of Reading
in an Electronic Age
being
digital
NICHOLAS NEGROPONTE
THE
DEATH
OF
LITERATURE
HYPER
Beyond
the Gutenberg
AVAT
OF THE
WORD
FROM PAPYRUS TO CYBERSPACE
JAMES J. O'DONNELL
Ink
Bits
A Walk at
Converging Media
Charles T. Meadow

ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

[Η ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΛΟΥ ΛΟΓΟΣ]

ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

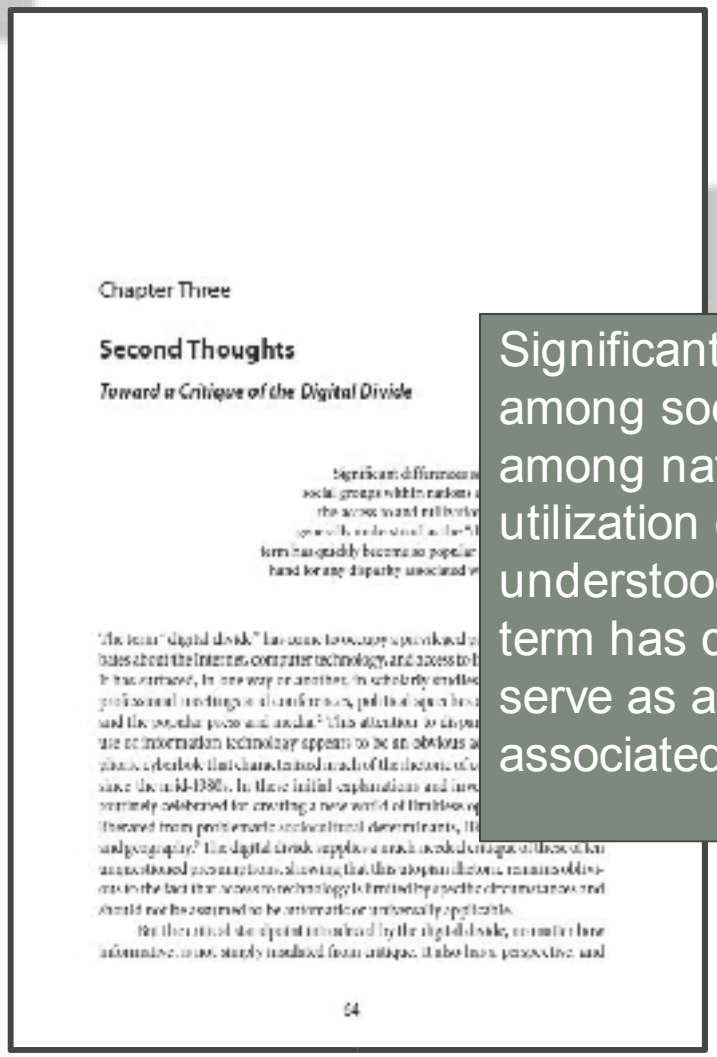
ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

Ω φίλε Φαῖδρε, ποῖ δὴ καὶ πόθεν;
Παρὰ Λυσίου, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦ
πορεύομαι δὲ πρὸς περίπατον ἔξω
χνὺν γὰρ ἐκεῖ διέτριψα χρόνον καθή-
θεινῷ· τῷ δὲ σῷ καὶ ἐμῷ ἑταίρῳ
Ακουμενῷ κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς ποιοῦμαι
ίτους· φησὶ γὰρ ἀκοπωτέρους εἶναι
δρόμου.
Καλῶς γάρ, ὦ ἑταῖρε, λέγει. ἀνὴρ
ὸς ἔοικεν, ἐν ἄστει.
Ναί, παῖ Ἐπικράτους, ἐν τῇδε τῇ
Ὀλυμπίου οἰκίᾳ τῇ Μορυχίᾳ.
Τίς οὖν δὴ ἦν ἡ διατριβή; ἢ δῆλον
ν ἡμᾶς Λυσίας εἱστία;
Πεῖσαι, εἴ σοι σχολὴ προϊόντι

Τί δέ; οὐκ ἂν οἴει με κατὰ Πί-

To write about media is to ask the question what gives writing the right to speak for other media.

Adilkno, 1998, p. 1



Chapter Three

Second Thoughts

Toward a Critique of the Digital Divide

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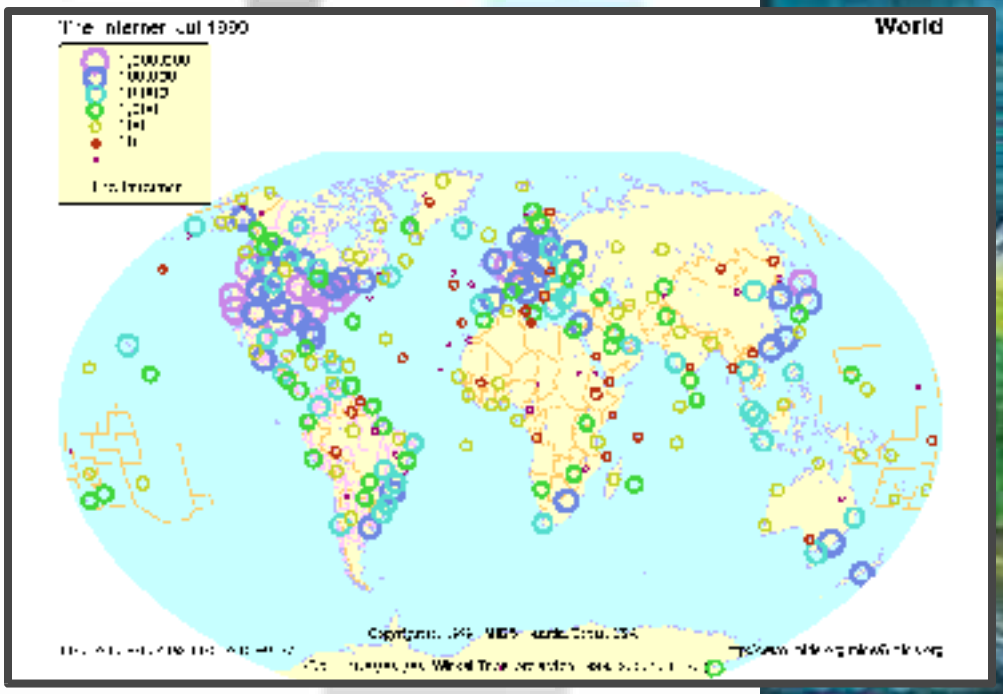
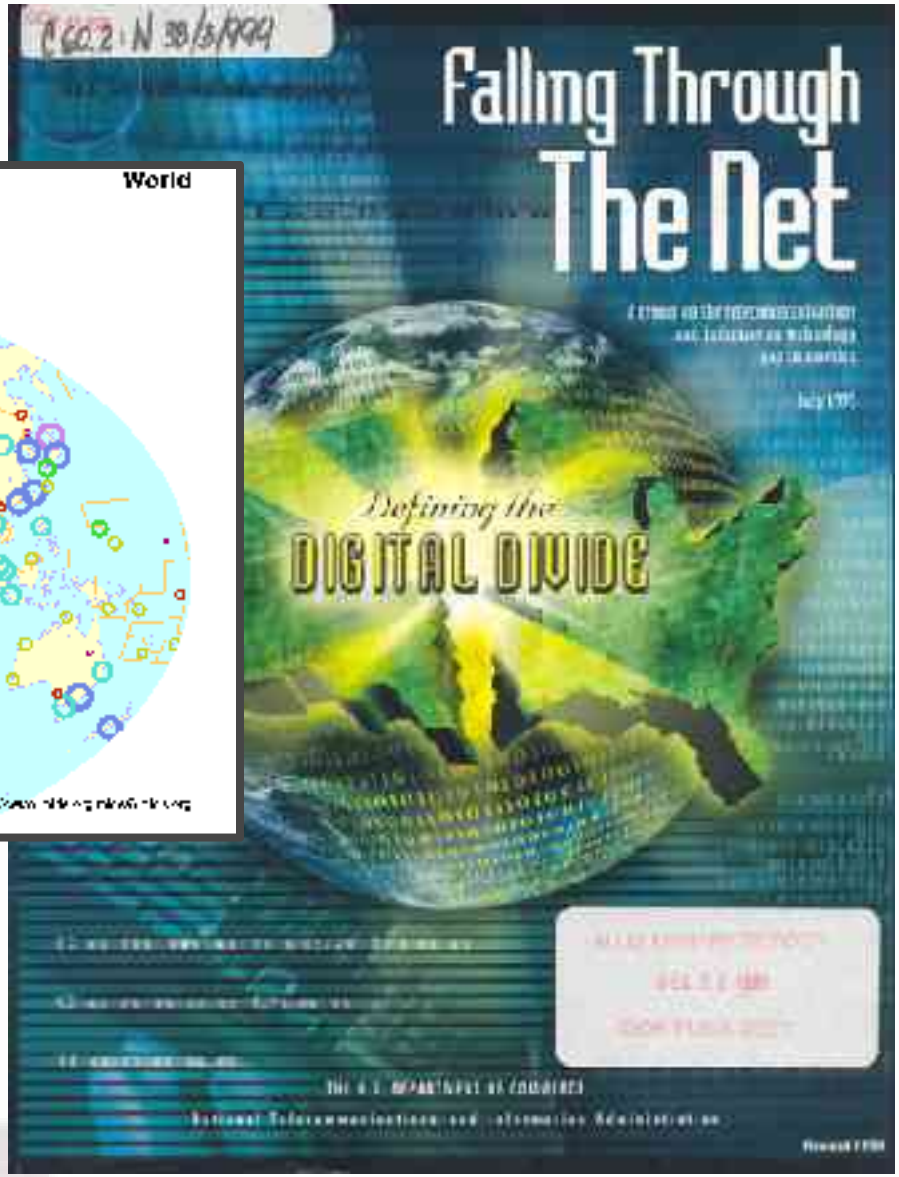
Significant differences seem to prevail among social groups within nations and among nations in the access to and utilization of new ICTs. This is generally understood as the 'digital divide' and the term has quickly become so popular as to serve as a shorthand for any disparity associated with digital networks.

Sinikka Sassi, 2005, p. 685.

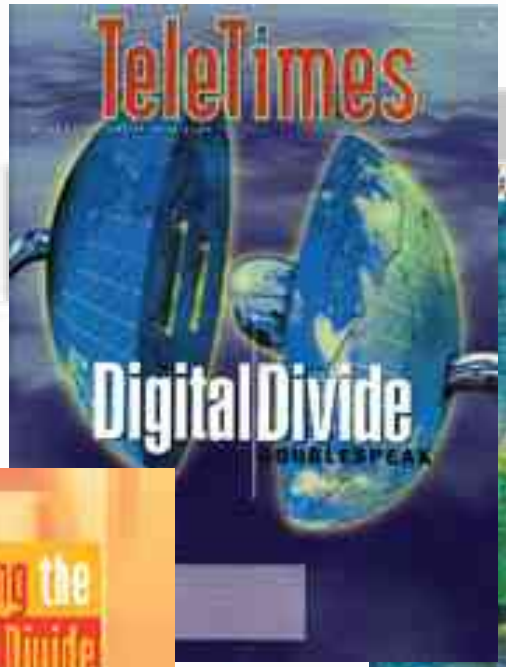




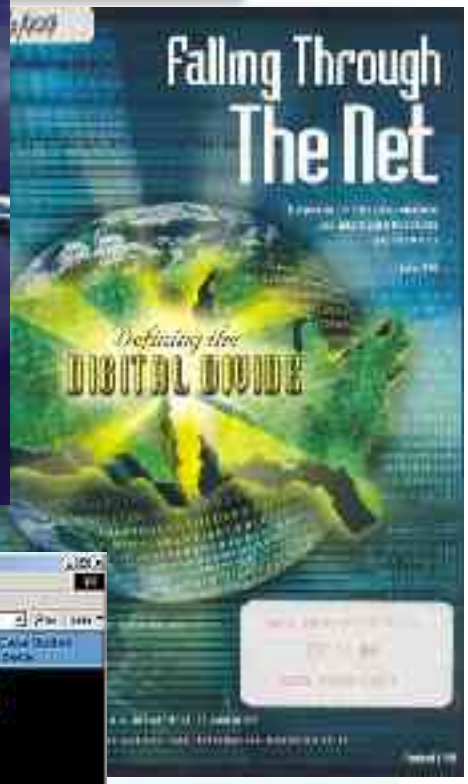
Information haves
Information have-nots

Digital Divide Network

Bridging the
Digital Divide


TeleTimes
Digital Divide

Digital Divide, Problem or an Opportunity?
Creating Digital Dividends


Falling Through
The Net
Defining the
DIGITAL DIVIDE

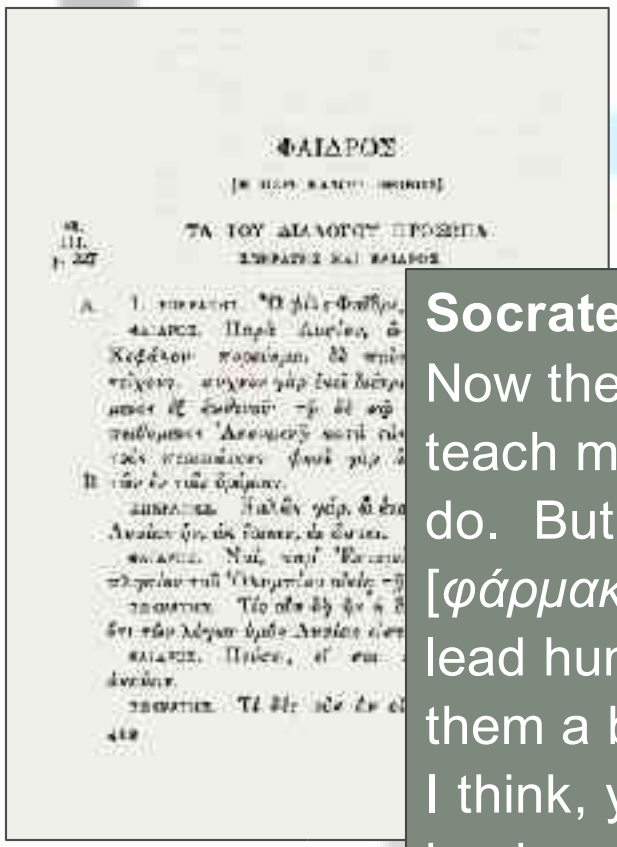
Chapter Four

VRx: Media Technology, Drugs, and Codependency

Drugs and media are equal partners.[1]—Adilkno

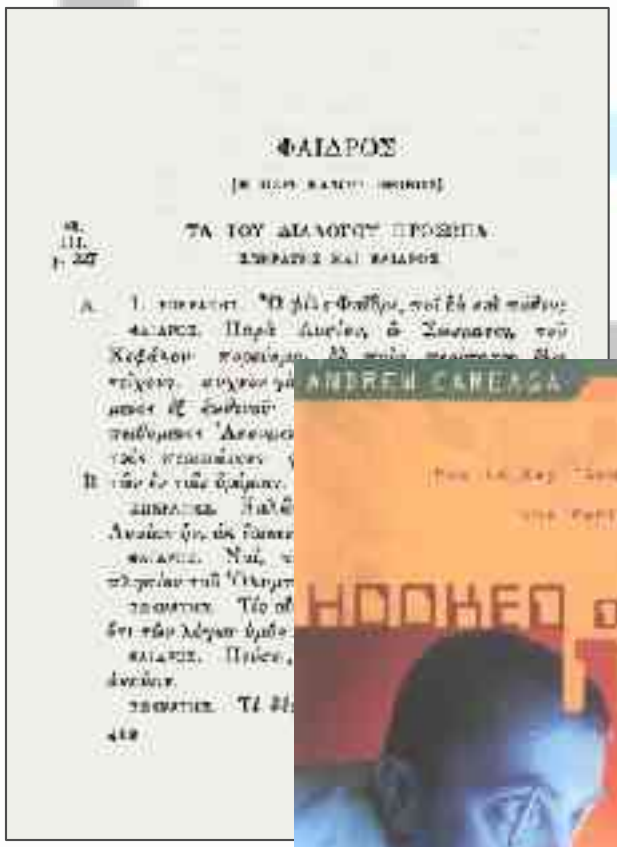
The debates and decisions surrounding "new media technology" (e.g. virtual reality, cyberspace, the Internet, and other forms of ICT) have been, like so much reasoning within the Western tradition, organized around antinomies. One of the principal concerns involves a tension between the real world and the computer-generated representations that appear in [illegible]. As Peter Horsfield describes it, the question is "whether the essential characteristics of virtual reality as a reality in which the frustrations and disappointments of the actual world do not exist, will inevitably lead to a diminishing desire to live in the actual world. So, instead of learning the disciplines of living with or changing one's individual or communal environment, one finds it easier to escape into a reality where these practicalities do not exist."[2] This concern, despite the future tense that is employed by Horsfield, is not just some speculative possibility; it is in fact already happening. In his empirical investigation of virtual worlds, economist Edward Castronova found that "Norrath," a computer-generated virtual reality situated in the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) *EverQuest*, possesses a gross national product (GNP) per capita that "easily exceeds that of dozens of countries, including India and China," supports an hourly wage of approximately USD 3.42, and has been identified as "the principle place of residence" for some 17,000 individuals.[3] According to Castronova's findings, MMORPGs are not just fun and games, but represent a real alternative and challenge to what used to be called reality.

This conflict, and the numerous metaphysical and ethical considerations


ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

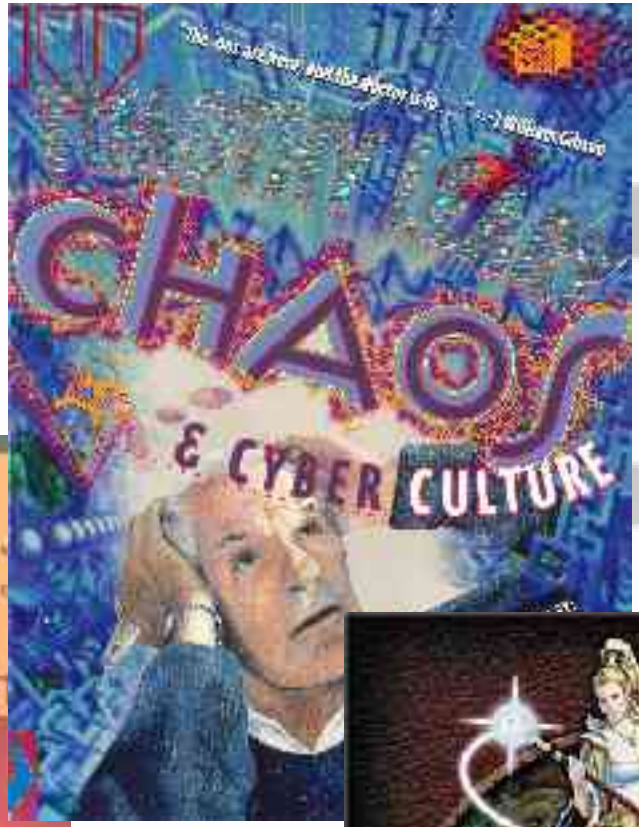
ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

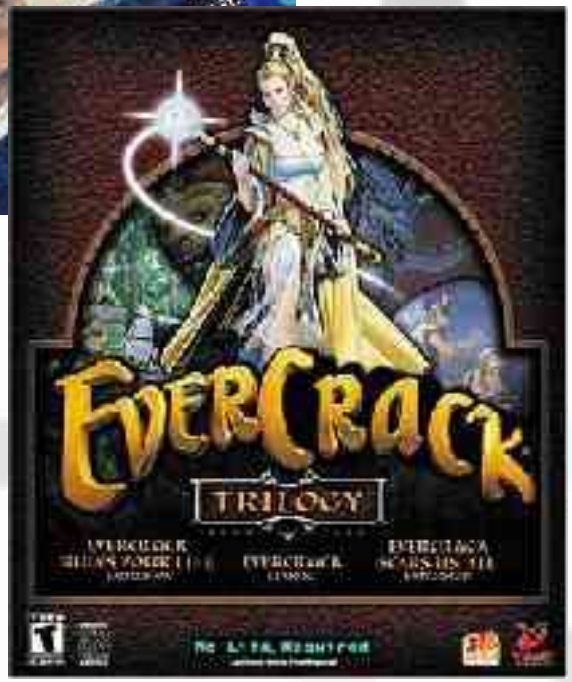
Socrates: “You see, I am fond of learning. Now the country places and the trees won't teach me anything, and the people in the city do. But you seem to have found a drug [*φάρμακον*] to bring me out. For as people lead hungry animals by shaking in front of them a branch of leaves or some fruit, just so, I think, you, by holding before me discourse in books, will lead me all over Attica and wherever else you please." (230d)


ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

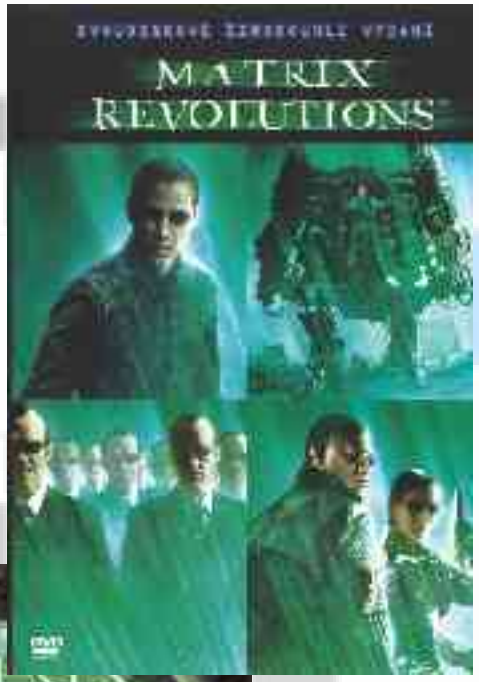




Chapter Five

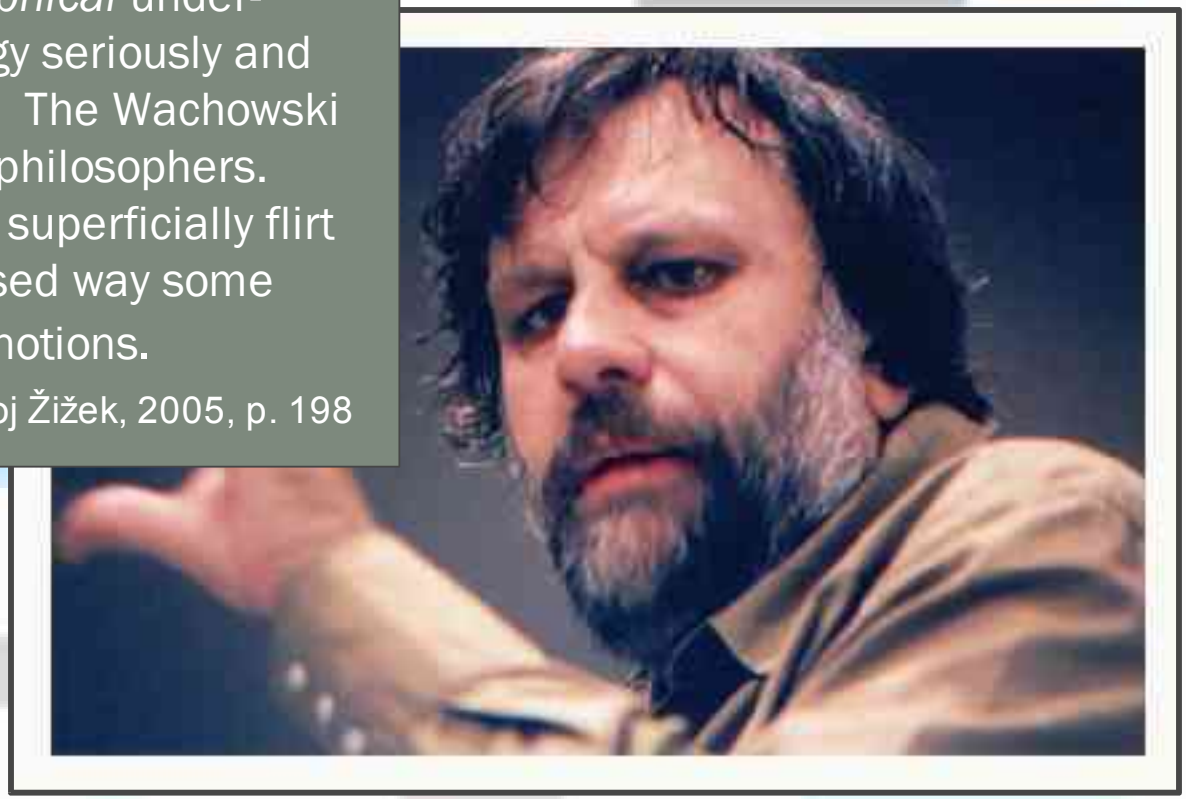
The Virtual Dialectic

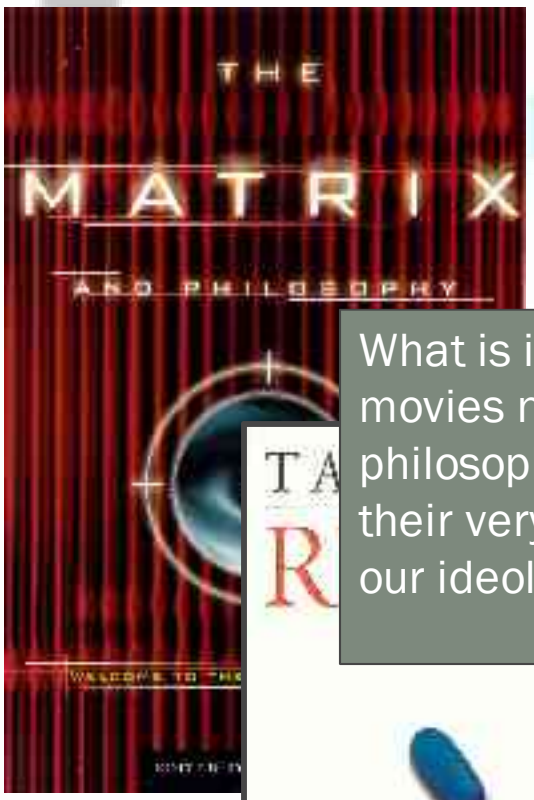
Rethinking* The Matrix *and its Significance

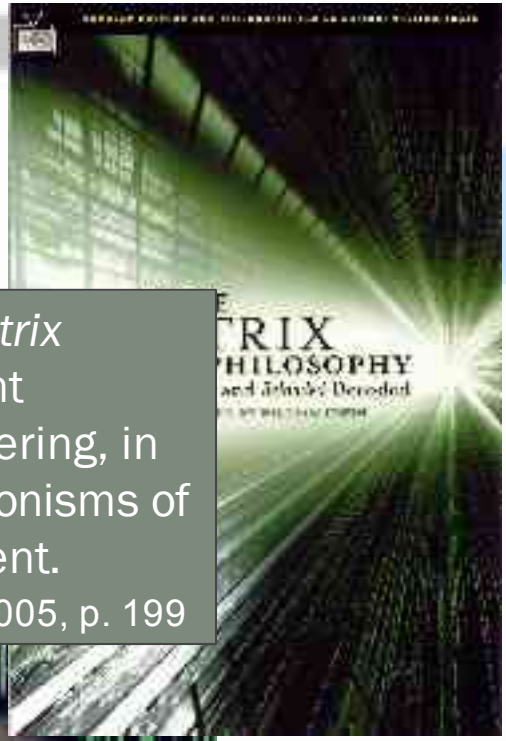


There is something inherently stupid and naïve in taking the *philosophical* underpinnings of the *Matrix* trilogy seriously and discussing its implications. The Wachowski brothers are obviously *not* philosophers. They are just two guys who superficially flirt with and exploit in a confused way some postmodern and New Age notions.

Slavoj Žižek, 2005, p. 198

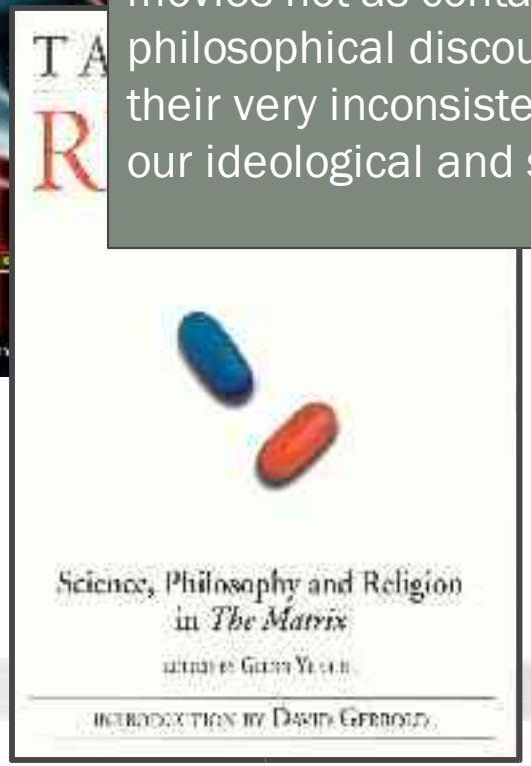


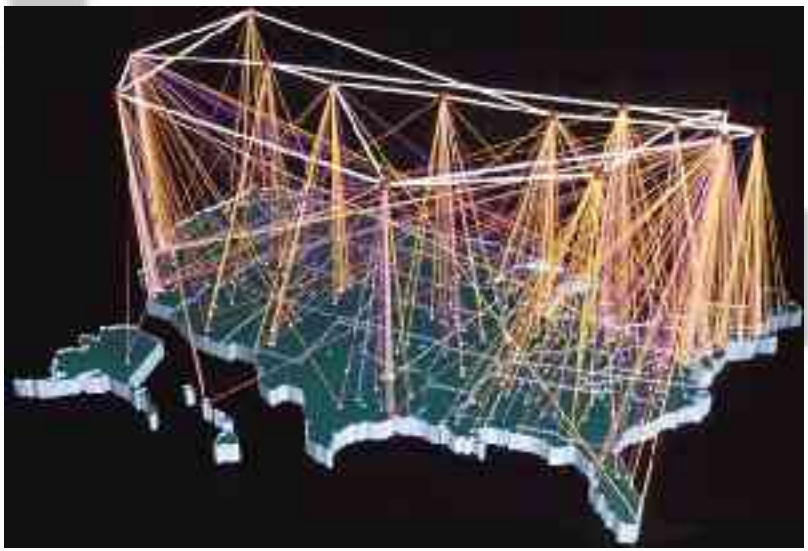




What is interesting is to read the *Matrix* movies not as containing a consistent philosophical discourse, but as rendering, in their very inconsistencies, the antagonisms of our ideological and social predicament.

Slavoj Žižek, 2005, p. 199





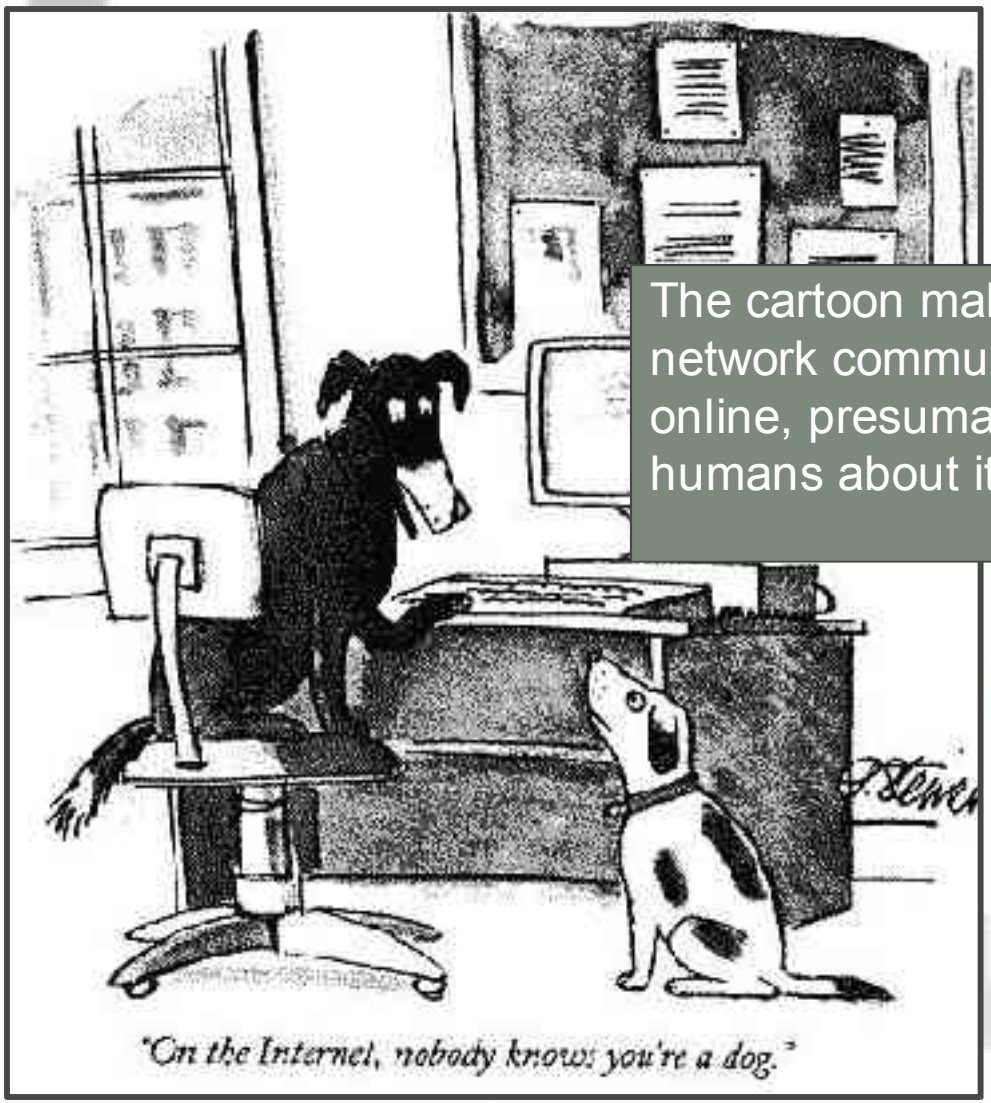
Chapter Six

The Machine Question

Ethics, Alterity, and Technology

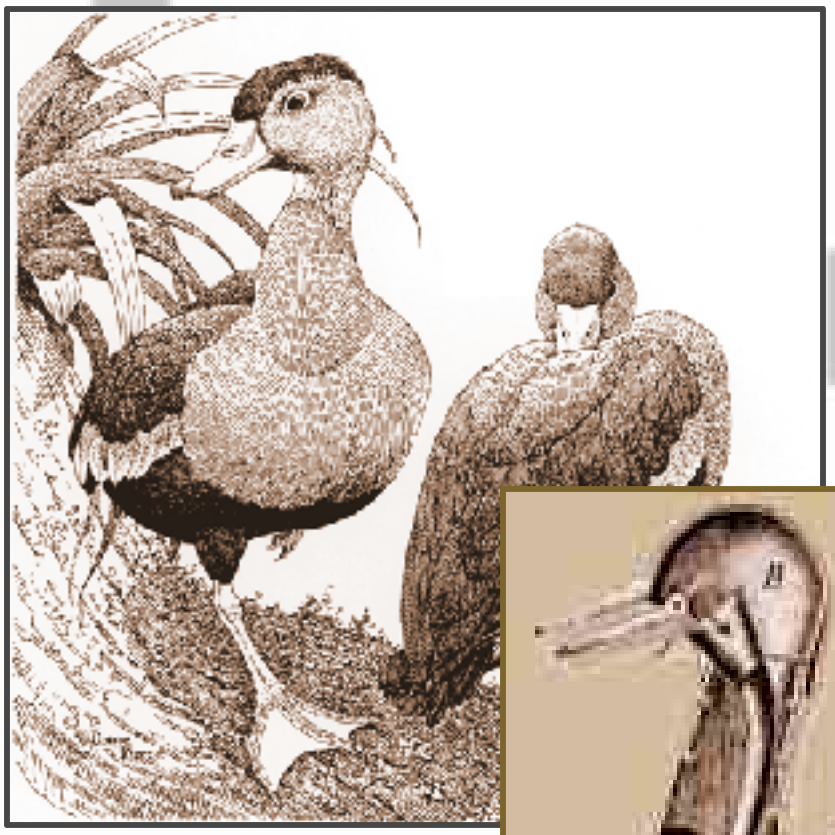
> In addition, we might ask about those ethical calls of the future from "beings" that we can not now even imagine.[1]
> —Jeffrey L. Nealon

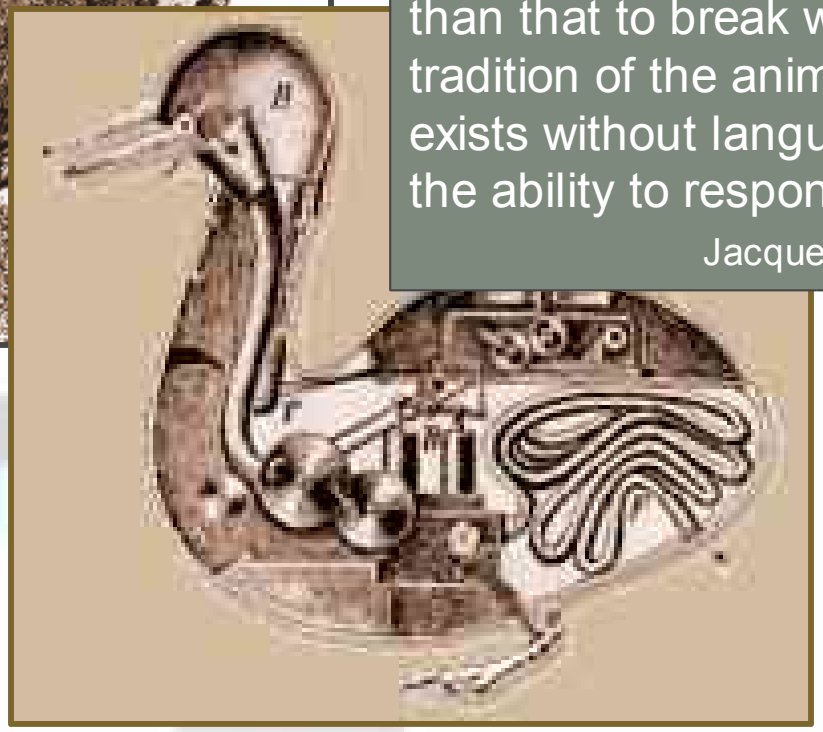
In the *Matrix* trilogy, as in many contemporary science fiction narratives, the machine is situated outside of and in opposition to what is defined as properly and uniquely human.[2] This decision, like the other binary oppositions that have organized thinking, is not without ethical complications and consequences. The following, therefore, takes up the question of ethics. And like much of the contemporary work on this subject matter, it is interested in the call from, our response to, and our responsibility for others.[3] However, unlike the capital "O" other, who has taken center stage in recent moral thinking largely due to the influence of Emmanuel Levinas and others, this question is directed otherwise. It is about others who remain, for reasons that will need to be explicated, outside the contemporary and essentially anthropocentric understandings of alterity that have persisted in and been definitive of the Western episteme. It is, therefore, a question that is not concerned with or limited to the present and the presence of these somewhat familiar Others. It is a question that is oriented to the future, toward other "beings," whom we may not now even be able to imagine and who call to us and appeal from elsewhere. It is, in short, a question about the future of ethics. And it involves and addresses itself to the possibility of an other who remains fundamentally and disturbingly otherwise.



The cartoon makes fun of the anonymity of network communications by showing a dog online, presumably fooling some credulous humans about its true identity.

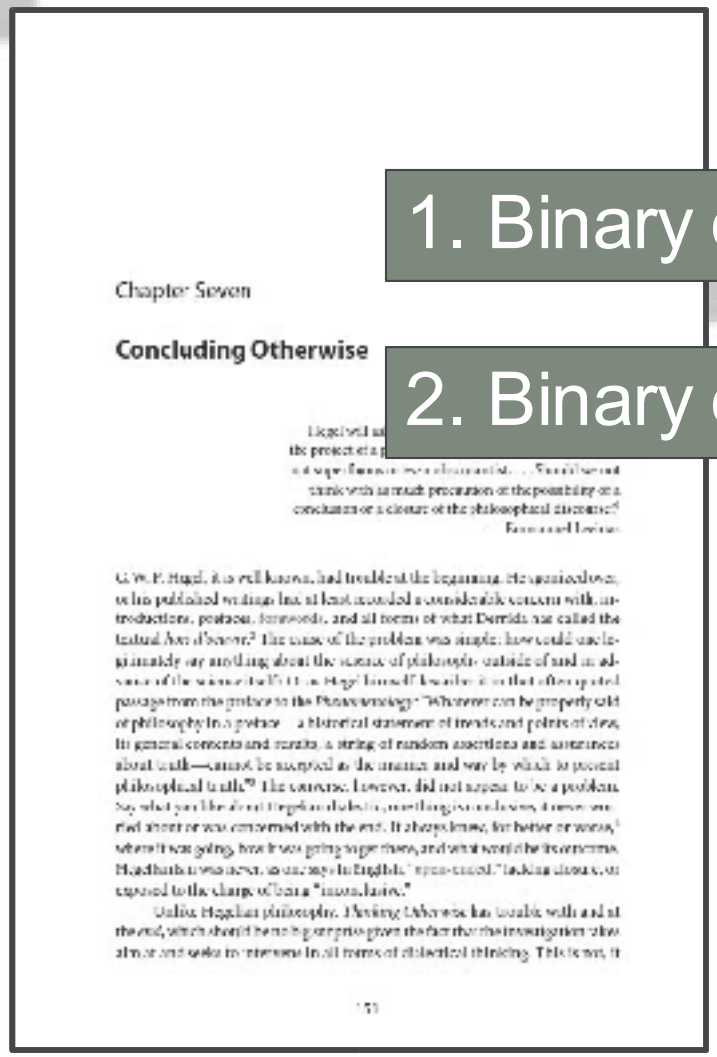
Richard Holeton, 1998, p. 111





Would an ethics be sufficient, as Levinas maintains, to remind the subject of its being-subject, its being-guest, host or hostage, that is to say its being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other? I don't think so. It takes more than that to break with the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine that exists without language and without the ability to respond.

Jacques Derrida, 2003, p. 121

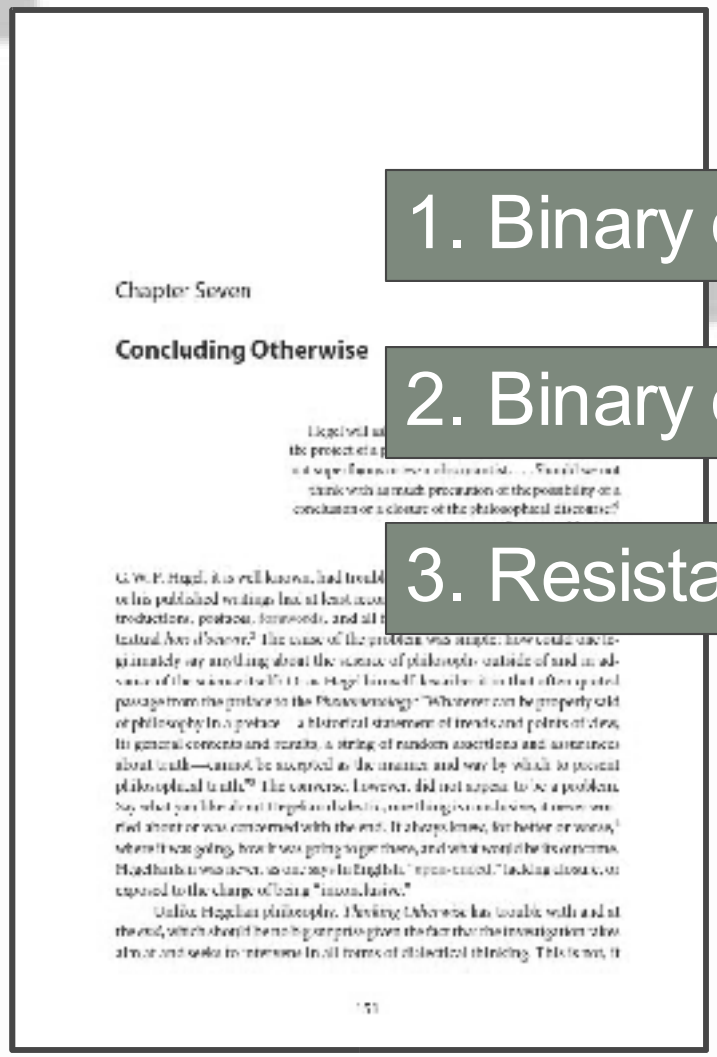


Chapter Seven

Concluding Otherwise

1. Binary opposition is not optional

2. Binary opposition is not neutral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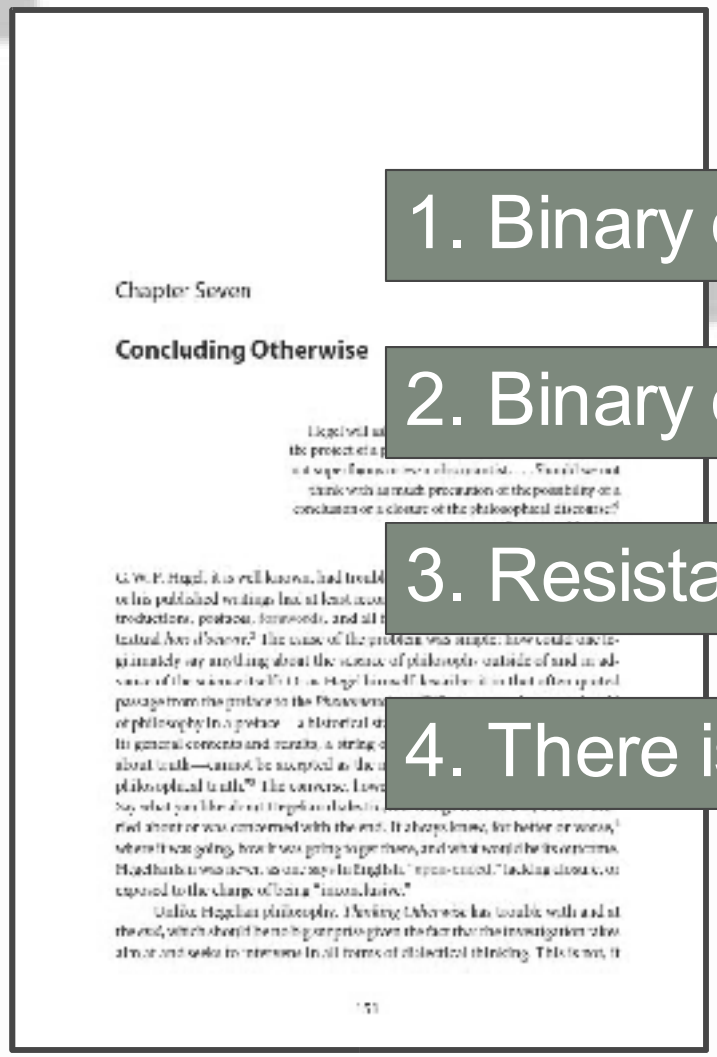
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Concluding Otherwise

1. Binary opposition is not optional

2. Binary opposition is not neutral

3. Resistance is Futile

4. There is no finality

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