

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or title, in cursive script.

The Real Problem:

Avatars, User Identity, and Online Social Interaction

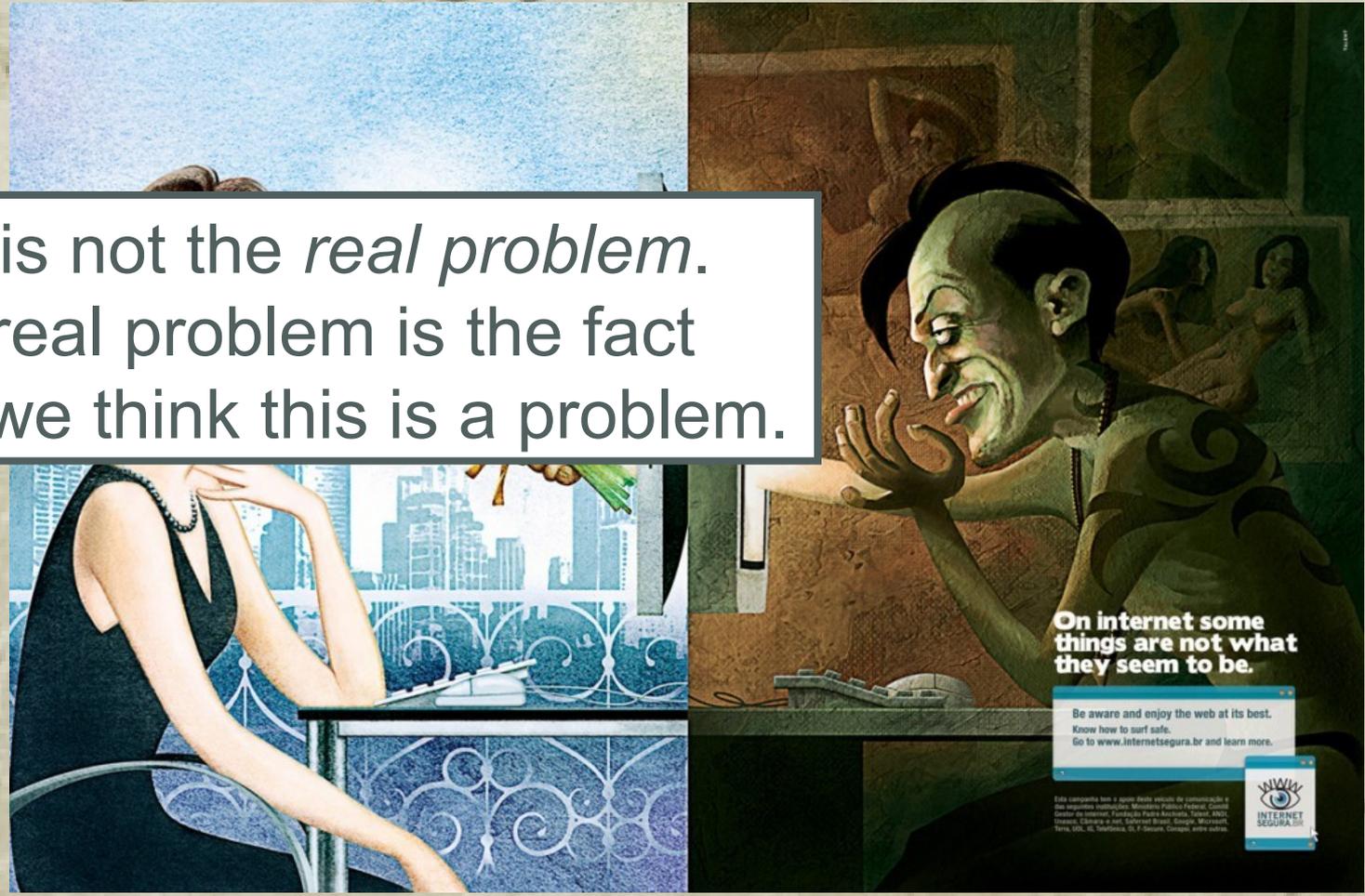
David J. Gunkel

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<http://gunkeweb.com>

Advertisement

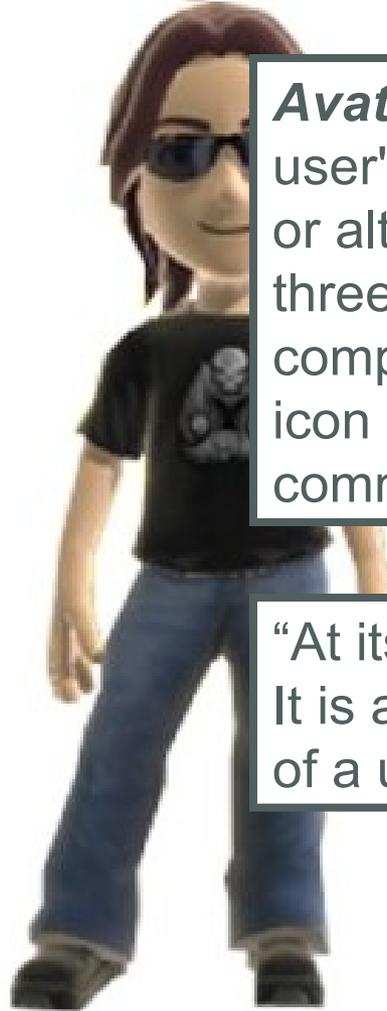
This is not the *real problem*.
The real problem is the fact
that we think this is a problem.



“On the Internet some things are not what they seem to be.”



Real me

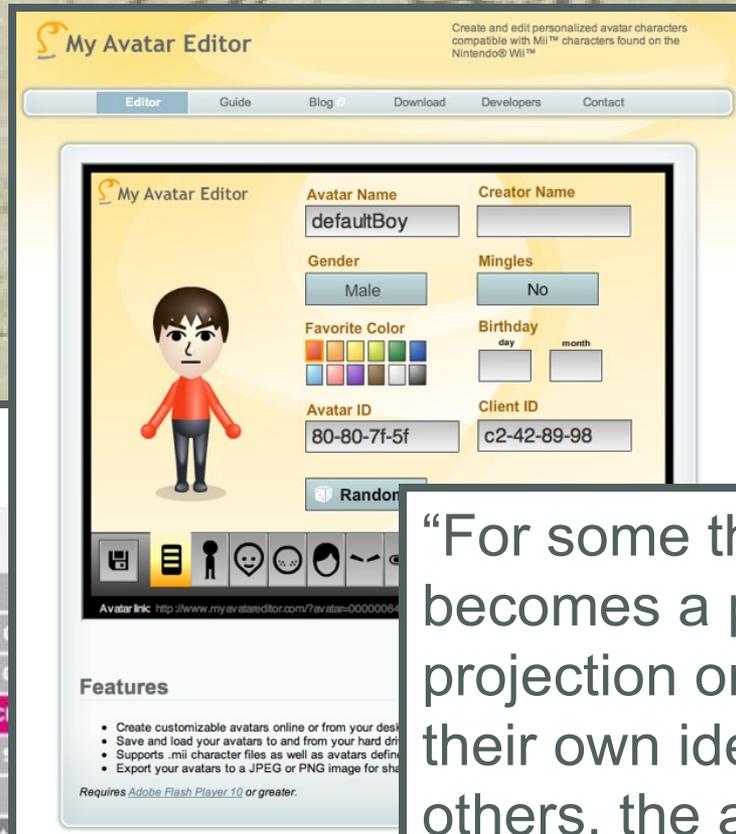


Avatar me

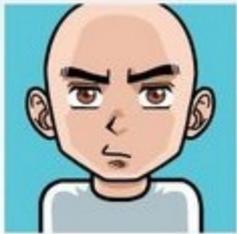
Avatar – An avatar is a computer user's representation of himself/herself or alter ego whether in the form of a three-dimensional model used in computer games, or a two-dimensional icon used on Internet forums and other communities. (Wikipedia)

“At its core an avatar is a simple thing... It is an interactive, social representation of a user” (Meadows, 2008, p. 23).

Introduction



Crea il tuo Mangatar!



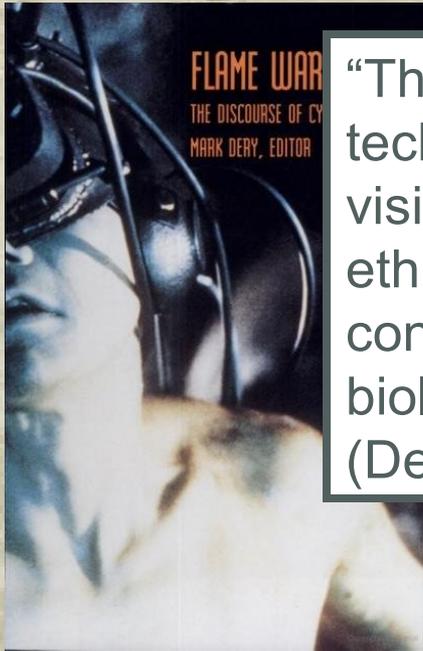
3

Attendi il caricamento e crea il tuo Avatar.
Quando sei soddisfatto clicca sul tasto TERMINA

TERMINA

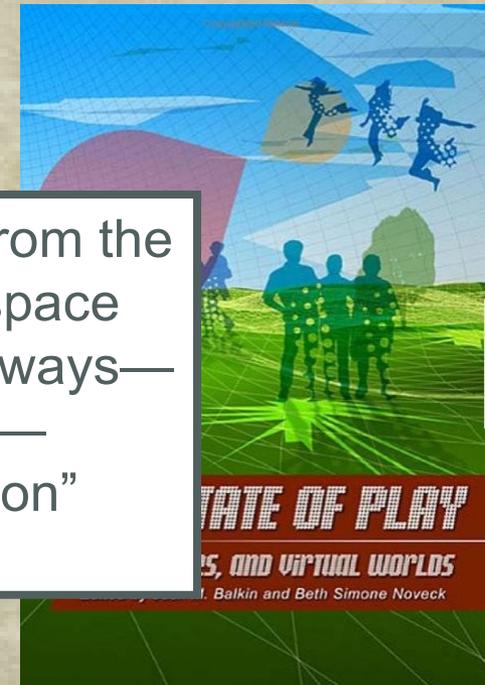
“For some the avatar becomes a purposeful projection or idealization of their own identity, while for others, the avatar is an experiment with new identities” (Yee, 2008).

Introduction



“The upside of incorporeal interaction: a technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. Online, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants” (Dery, 1994, p. 3).

“By virtue of being physically disembodied from the creator, avatars in the theater of the game space may act in antisocial and even pathological ways—ways in which the 'real' person never would—shooting, maiming, and killing in brutal fashion” (Noveck, 2006, pp. 269-270).

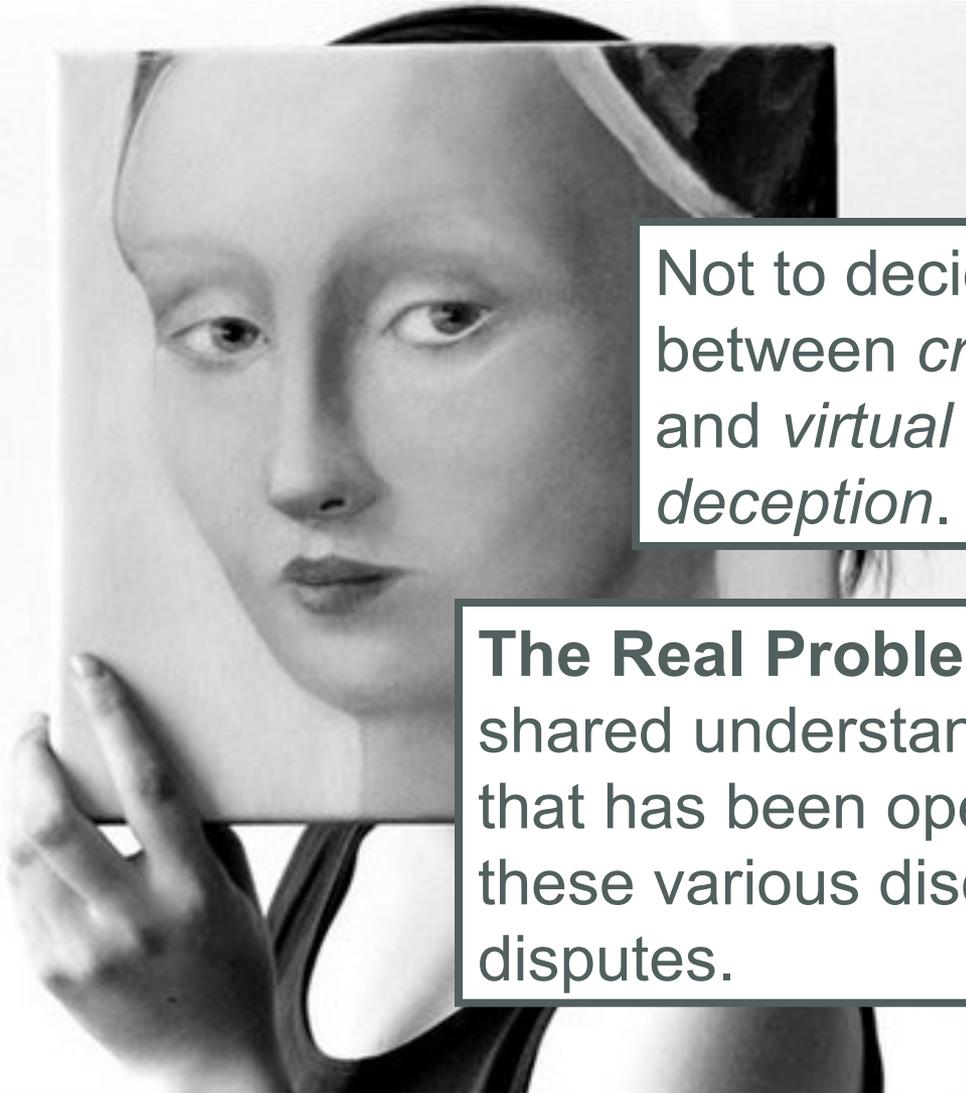


Introduction



Not to decide the dispute
between *creative role playing*
and *virtual violence* or
deception.

Introduction



Not to decide the dispute between *creative role playing* and *virtual violence* or *deception*.

The Real Problem - examine the shared understanding of the "real" that has been operationalized in these various discussions and disputes.

Default Setting

“The cartoon makes fun of the anonymity of network communications by showing a dog online, presumably fooling some credulous humans about its true identity” (Holeton, 1998, p. 111).



“On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.”

Default Setting

1. Ontological Difference

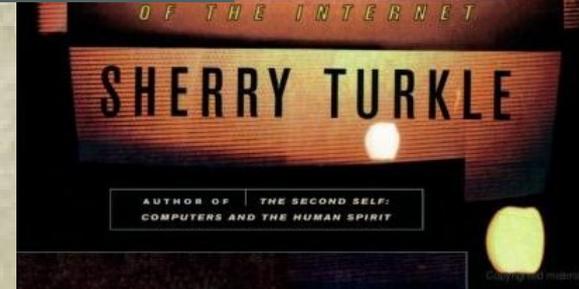
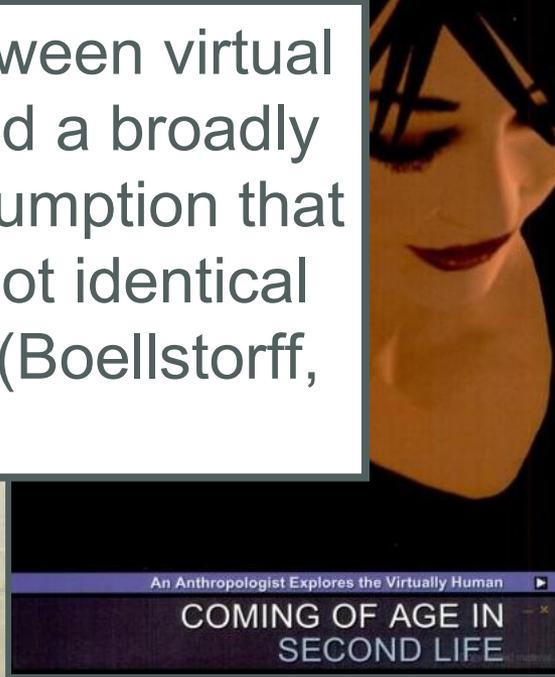
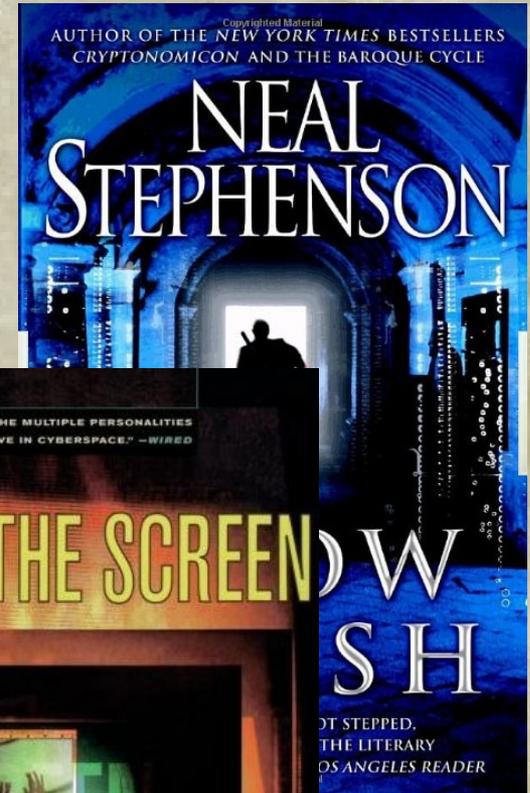
Difference between what appears online and what is really behind the screen or scene



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Default Setting

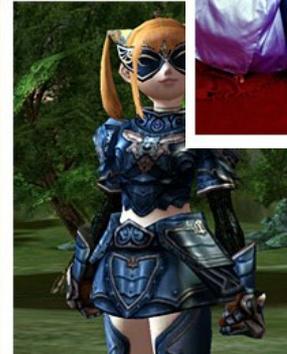
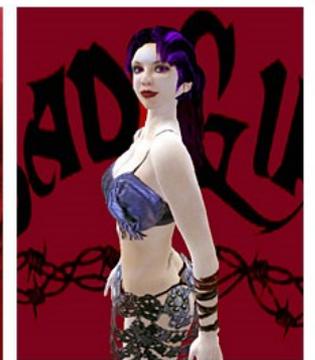
“There is a gap between virtual and actual self...and a broadly shared cultural assumption that virtual selfhood is not identical to actual selfhood” (Boellstorff, p. 119).



Default Setting



Alter Ego
Avatars and
their creators



“Graphically dramatizing the gap between fantasy and reality” (Cooper, 2007, p. 1).

Default Setting



REALITY

Worst game ever.

Default Setting

2. Real Access

To identify and to account for this difference one needs to have access to the real as it really is and not merely as it appears.



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Default Setting



a priori access

Default Setting

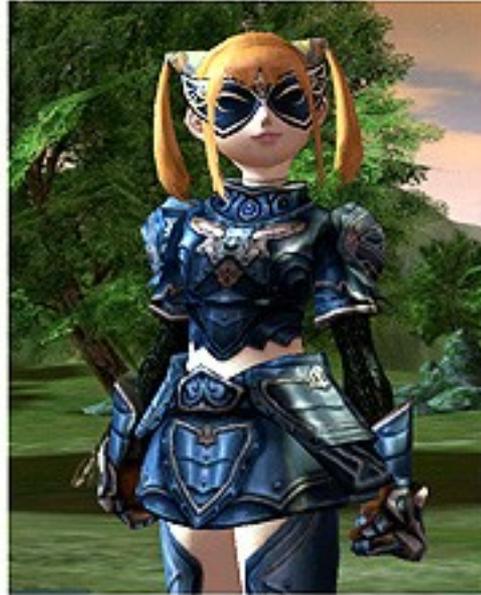


a priori access

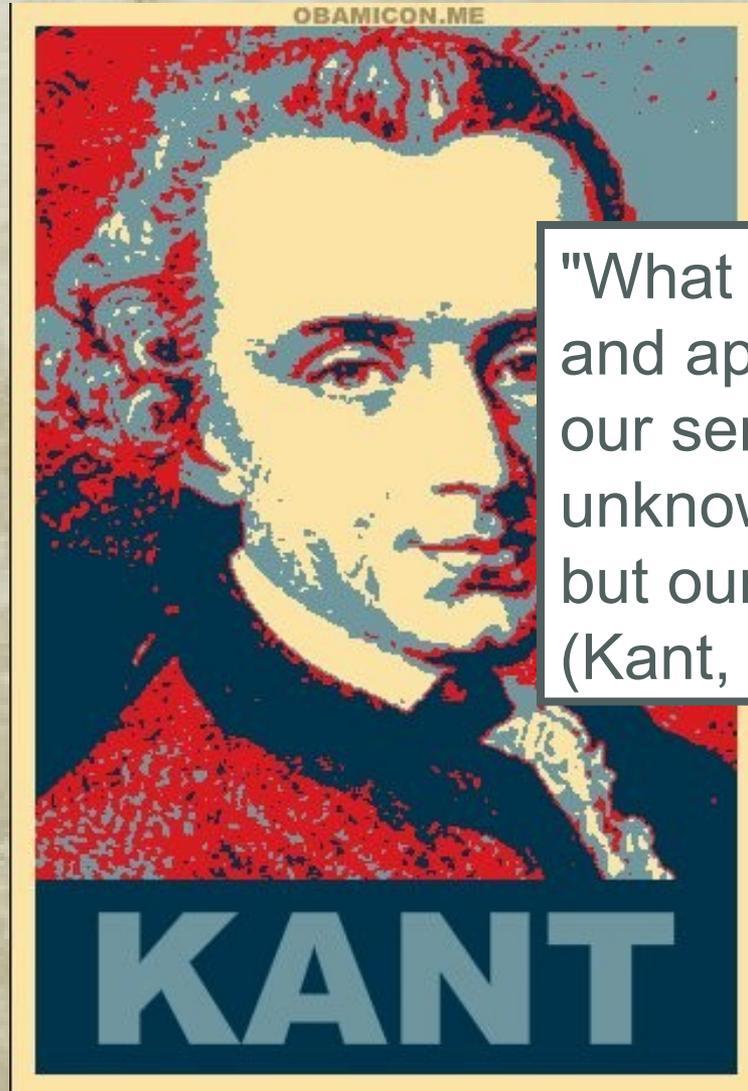


a posteriori access

Critical Complications

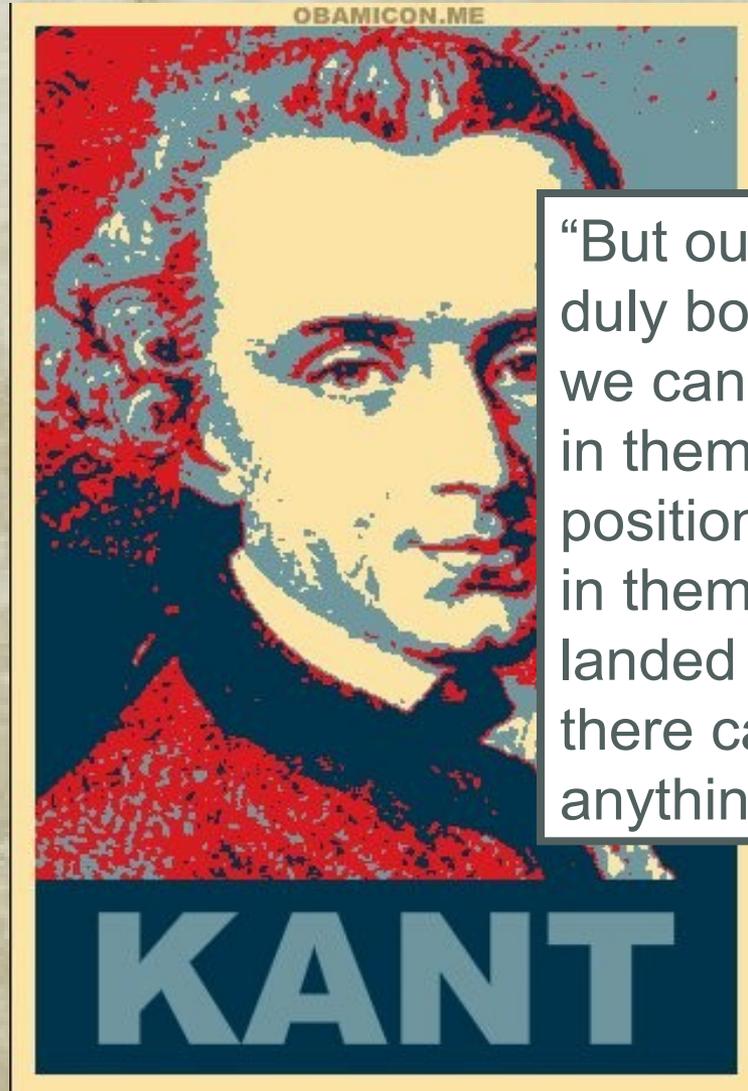


Critical Complications



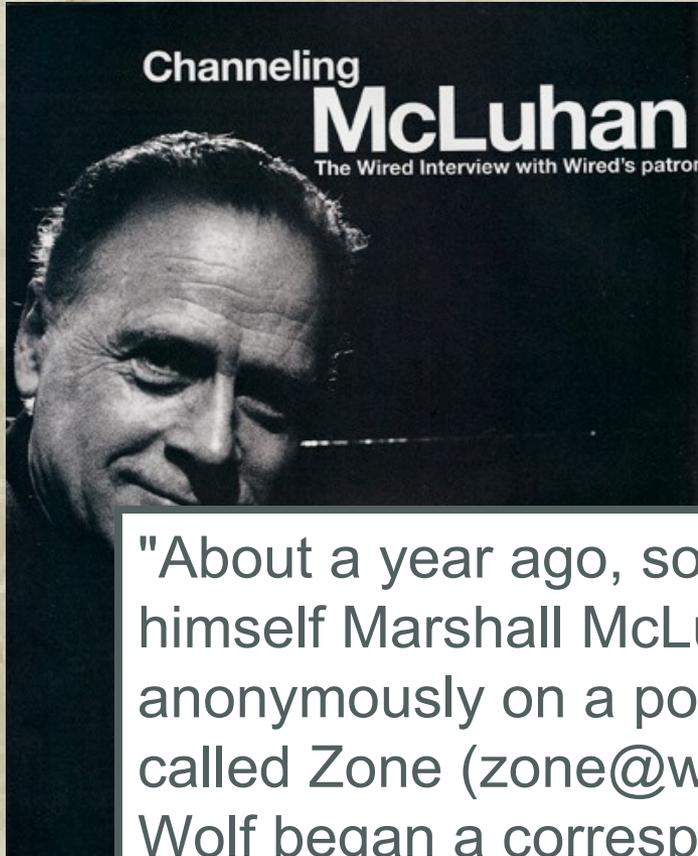
"What objects may be in themselves, and apart from all this receptivity of our sensibility, remains completely unknown to us. We know nothing but our mode of perceiving them" (Kant, A 42/B 59).

Critical Complications



“But our further contention must also be duly borne in mind, namely that though we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to think them as *things* in themselves; otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearances without anything that appears”(Kant, B xxvi).

Critical Complications



"About a year ago, someone calling himself Marshall McLuhan began posting anonymously on a popular mailing list called Zone (zone@wired.com). Gary Wolf began a correspondence with the poster via a chain of anonymous remailers" (Wolf 1996, 129).

Scholars agree that Marshall McLuhan's earliest books were written by him, but there is mystery and uncertainty about who really wrote his subsequent works. McLuhan would lie on a couch, head on a pillow, and spout ideas, for hours. Sometimes assistants would transcribe as McLuhan dictated, sometimes they would later write down what McLuhan had said, and sometimes they would write down what they thought McLuhan had said. Somehow books were assembled from these notes and recollections, and then McLuhan signed his name to them. This indefinite manner of creation was never a problem for McLuhan, who often insisted that facts were not as important as fallacies.

The fallacies of this interview with McLuhan are as follows: About a year ago, someone calling himself Marshall McLuhan began posting anonymously on a popular mailing list called Zone (zone@wired.com). Gary Wolf began a correspondence with the poster via a chain of anonymous remailers. McLuhan (who would have been 85 this year) said he now lives in a beach town in Southern California named "Parma." (This town does not exist.) One after another, tiny hints, confirmed by third parties close to McLuhan decades ago, convinced Wolf that if the poster was not McLuhan himself, it was a bot programmed with an eerie command of McLuhan's life and inimitable perspective. After many rounds of e-mail, the conversation got down to the meat of the matter: **What does McLuhan think about all this new digital technology?**

Wired: Do you still believe that the medium is the message?

McLuhan: The real message of media today is ubiquitous. It is no longer something we do, but something we are part of. It confronts us as if from the outside with all the sensory experience of the history of humanity. It is as if we have amputated not our ears or our eyes, but ourselves, and then established a total prosthesis — an automaton — in our place.

What happens when you see yourself outside yourself? It is disconcerting, like a hall of mirrors. A character in Dickens is a representation of a social role, but a modern movie actress who tries to play a role will seem old-fashioned. To cope with this, actresses have cooled themselves way down, become numb blanks. Thus today's stars are totally tranquilized. The smart thing for a girl nowadays is to play

message
create an

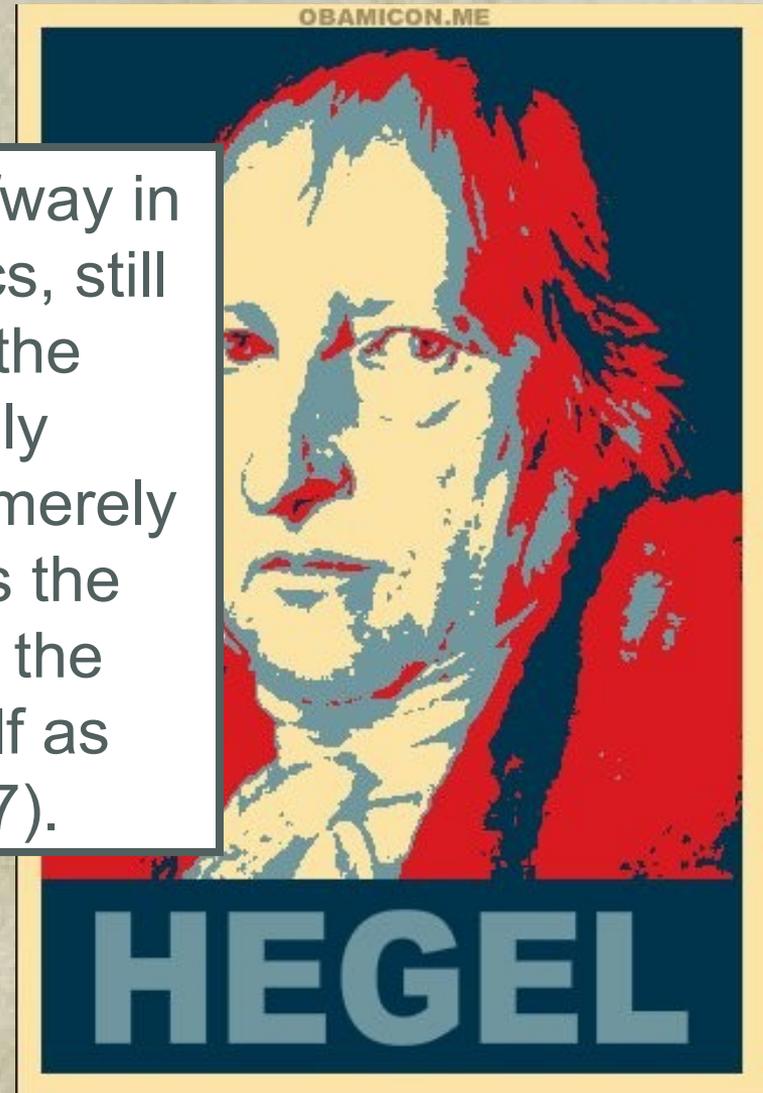
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and Michael Stan
h Works

JANUARY 1996

Critical Complications

“It is Kant who goes only halfway in his destruction of metaphysics, still maintaining the reference to the Thing-in-itself as the externally inaccessible entity; Hegel is merely a radicalized Kant, who takes the step from negative access to the Absolute to the Absolute itself as negativity” (Žižek, 2006, p. 27).

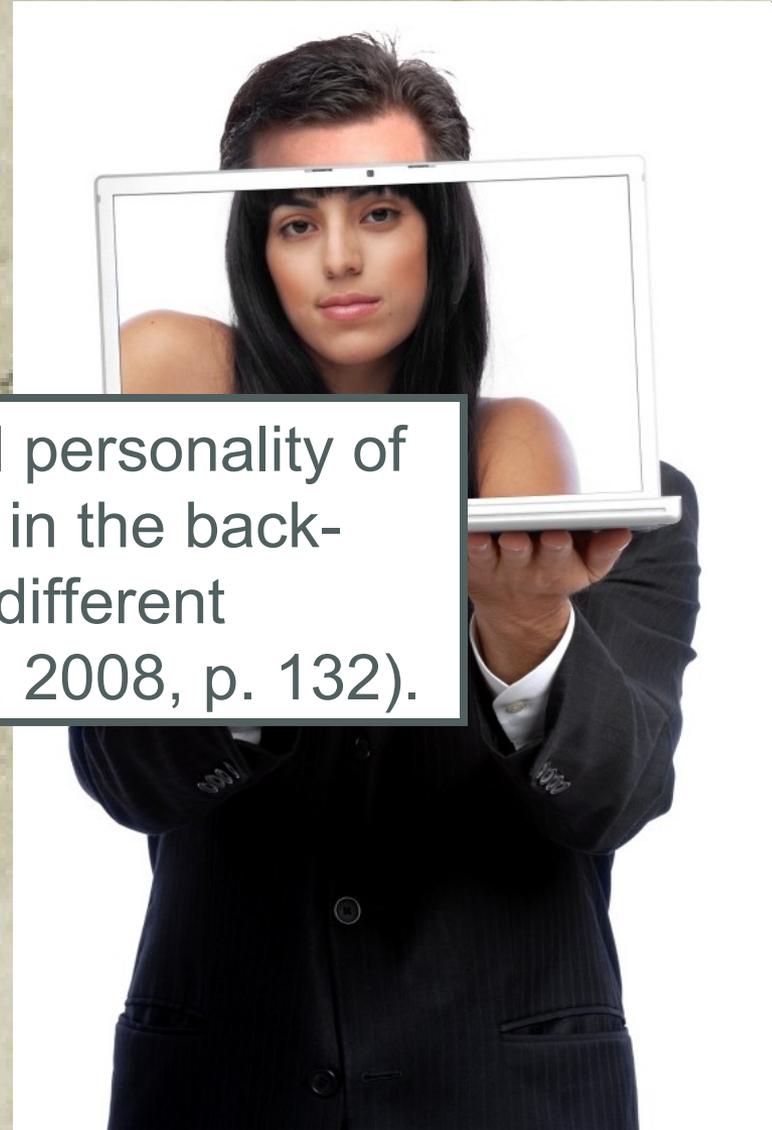


Critical Complications

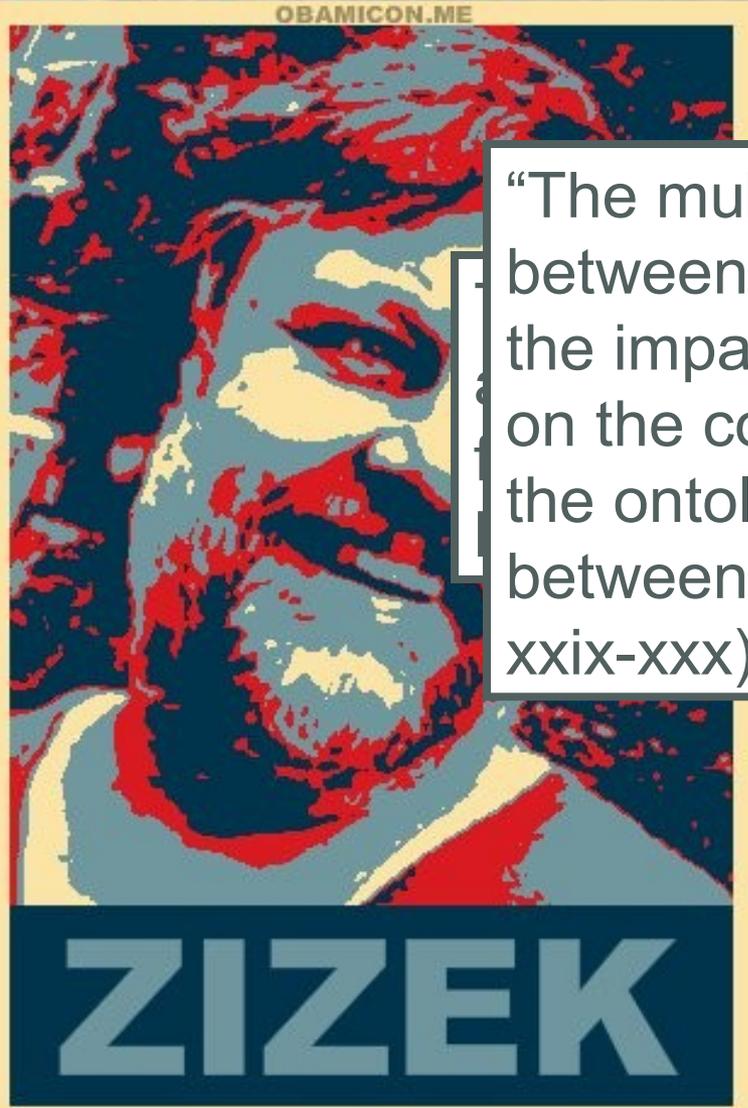


Critical Complications

“While the more fundamental personality of the real person is still driving in the background it's filtered through a different surface persona” (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 132).



Critical Complications



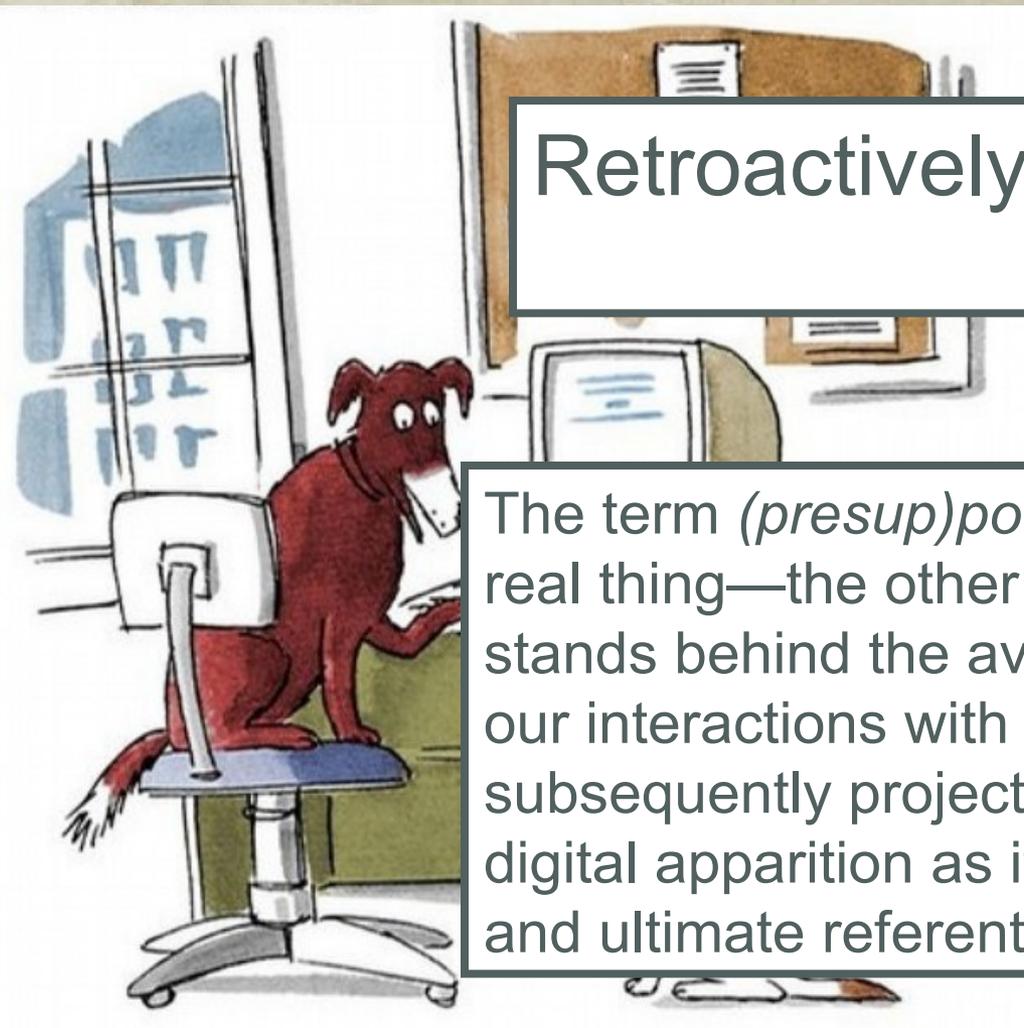
“The multiple perspectival inconsistencies between phenomena are not an effect of the impact of the transcendental Thing—on the contrary, the Thing is nothing but the ontologicalization of the inconsistency between phenomena” (Žižek, 2008, pp. xxix-xxx).

Critical Complications

Retroactively (*presup*)posited

(Žižek, 2008, p. 209)

The term (*presup*)posited indicates that the real thing—the other person—who we assume stands behind the avatar is in fact an effect of our interactions with the avatar that is subsequently projected behind and before the digital apparition as its supposed initial cause and ultimate referent.



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Conclusions



Conclusions

Cześć, jak się masz?

Cześć, keeping it real



Conclusions



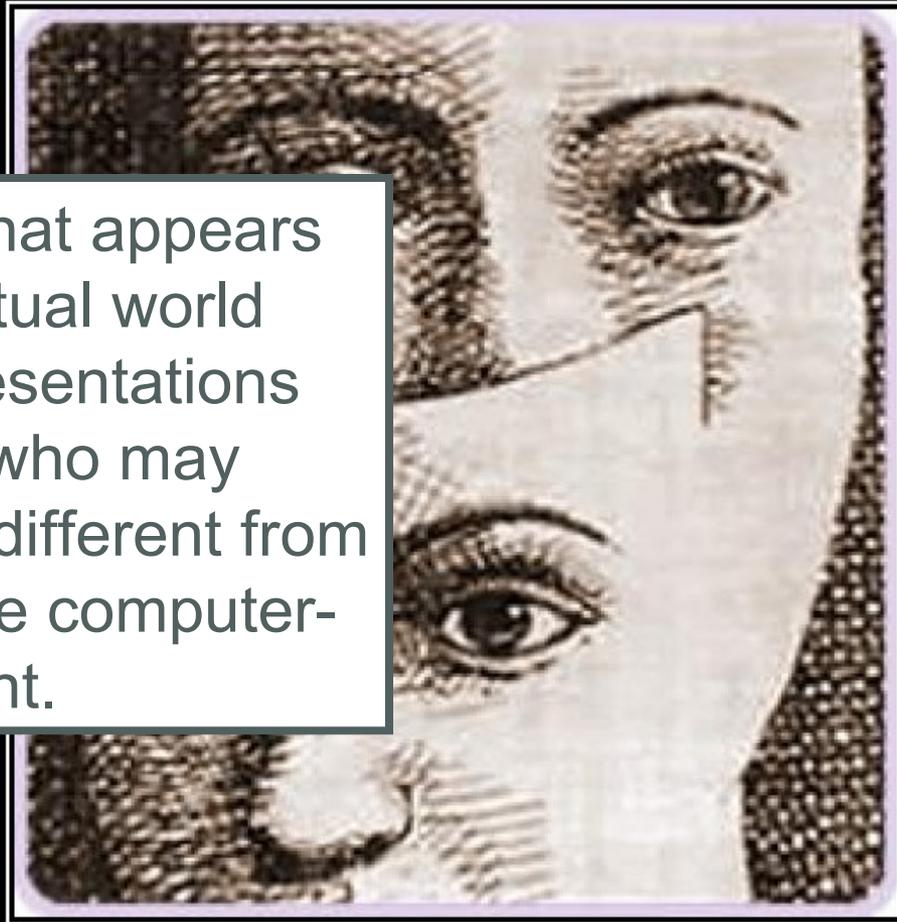
facebook

Facebook helps you connect and s
the people in your life.



Conclusions

Platonic Default - What appears in the space of the virtual world are manipulated representations of real human users, who may themselves be entire different from how they appear in the computer-generated environment.

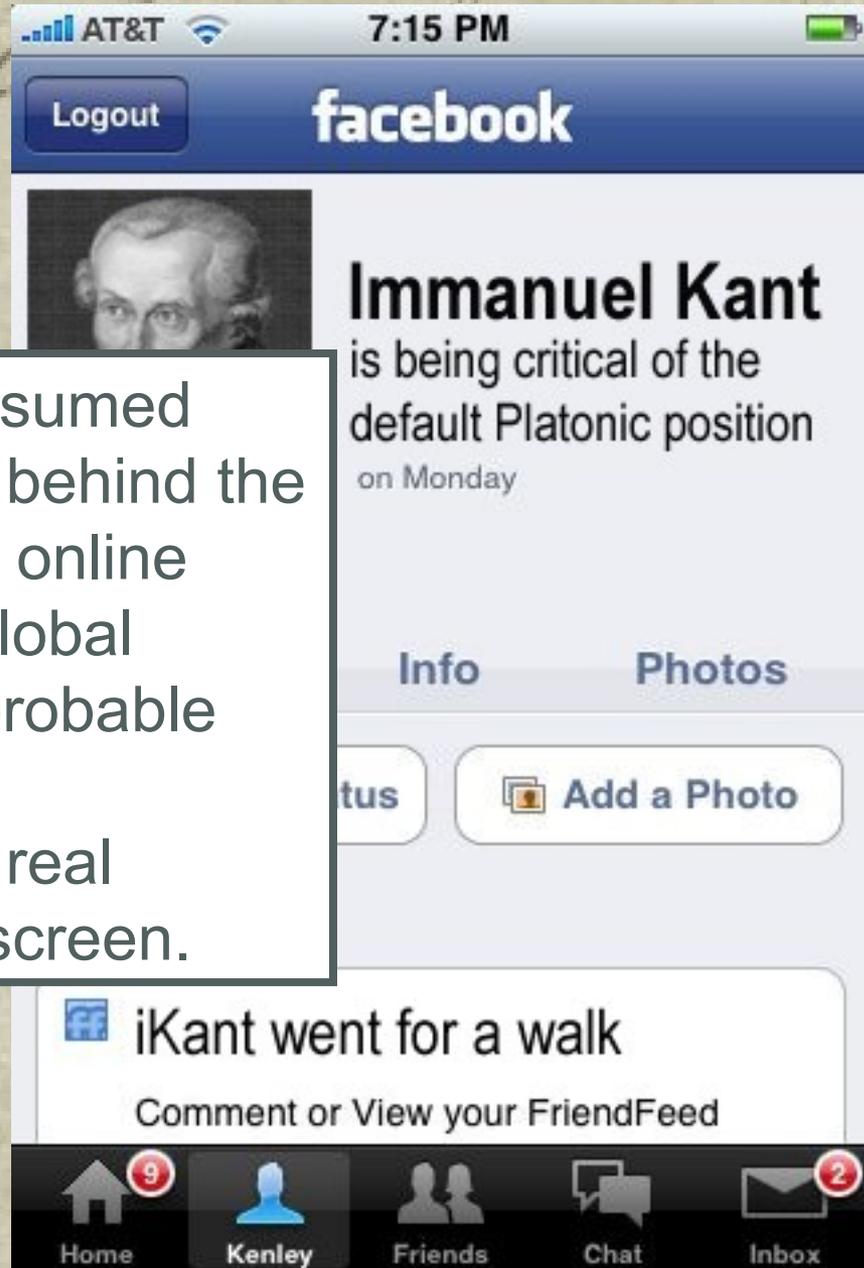


DECEPTION

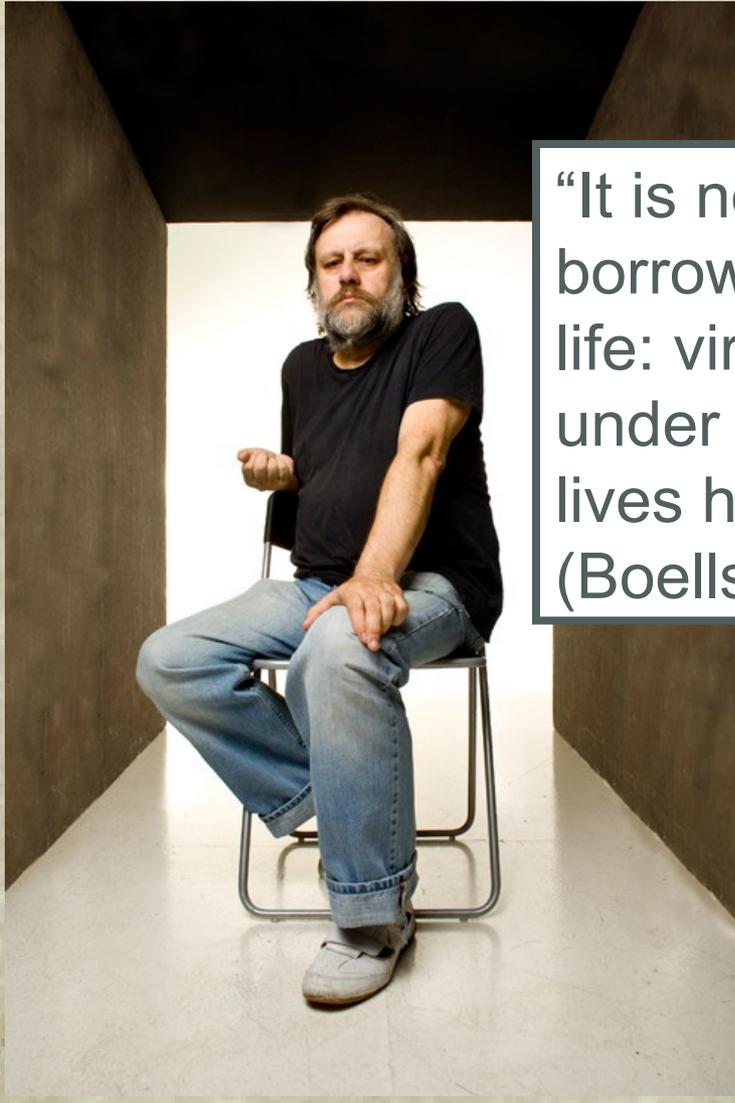
Not Everything & Everybody
On The Internet Is As It Seems

Conclusions

Kantian Critique - It is assumed that there is a real person behind the avatar, but because these online applications now have a global reach, it seems rather improbable that one would ever have unmitigated access to the real person behind the scene/screen.



Conclusions



“It is not that virtual worlds borrowed assumptions from real life: virtual worlds show us how, under our very noses, our 'real' lives have been 'virtual' all along” (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 5).

Conclusions

Xmas・年末年始はセカンドライブで、得する!! 知り合う!! 参加する!!

Virtual World

バーチャルワールド

誕生!
ウォーカーが
街を飛び回り、
バーチャルワールドに
参加!

カップルスナップコンテスト&
福袋プレゼント

今年のXmasはいつもと違う

セカンドライブ

デートが10倍楽しむ

世界一周、ショッピング、友達作り...
アレもしたい、コレもしたい!!

2時間で
リン稼

セカンドライブ

スポットガイド86

ウォーカーアイランドが深いワケ

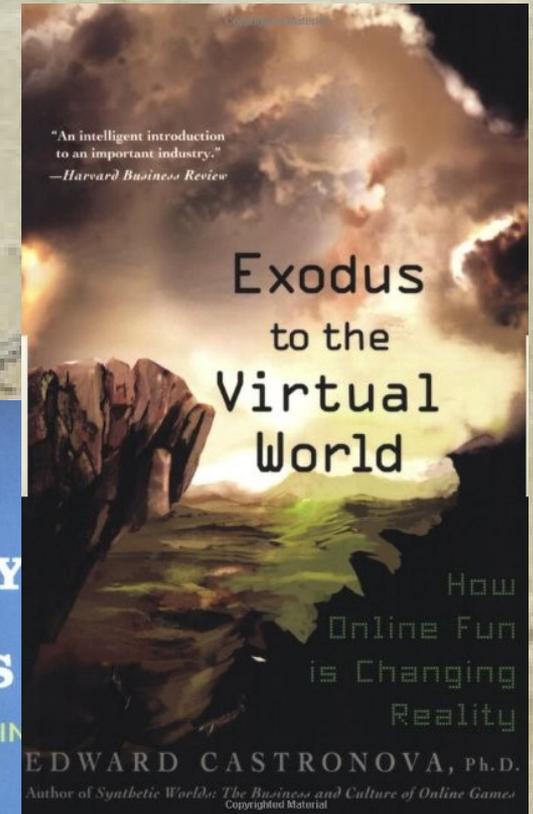
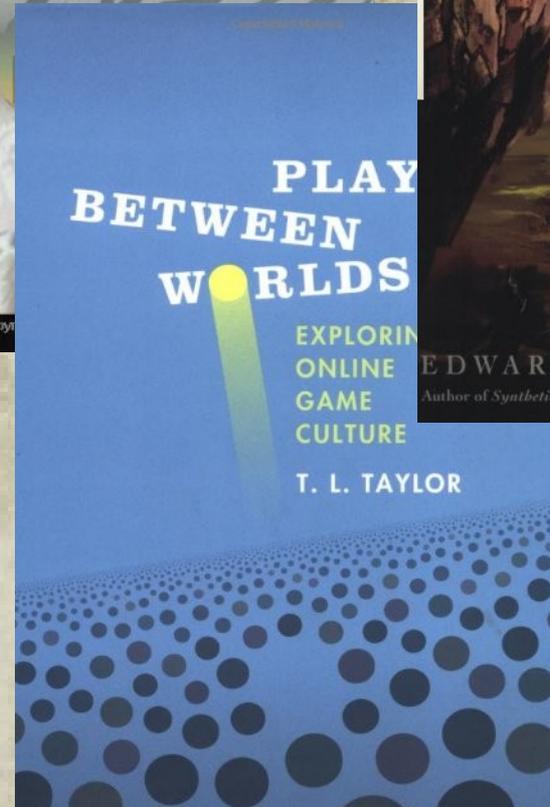
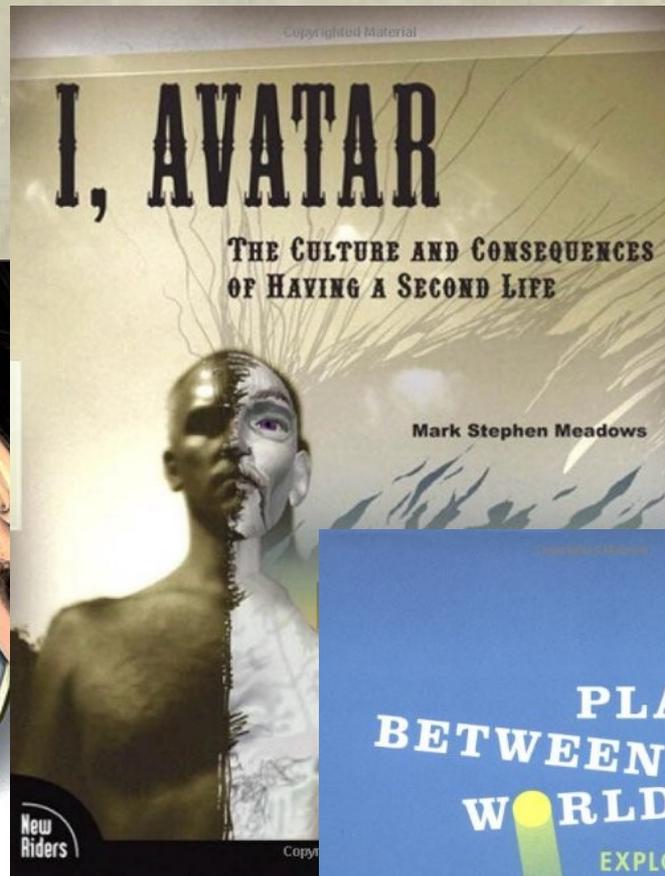
30分でできるアバター作成術
対談・千原ジュニア×三浦啓自

A decision concerning theory already and in advance determines the kind of que we be range

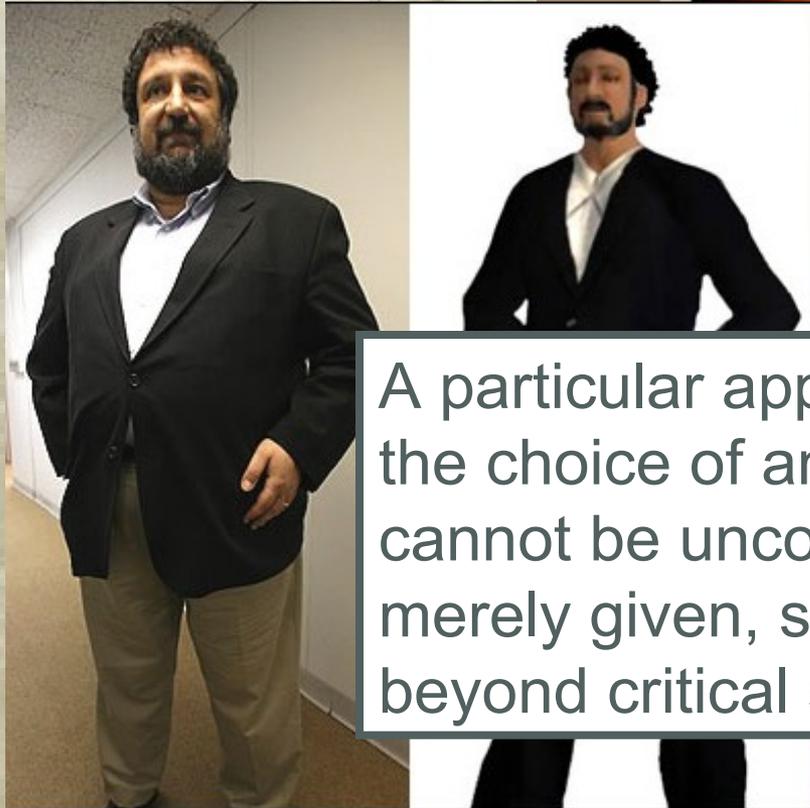


θεωρέω

Conclusions



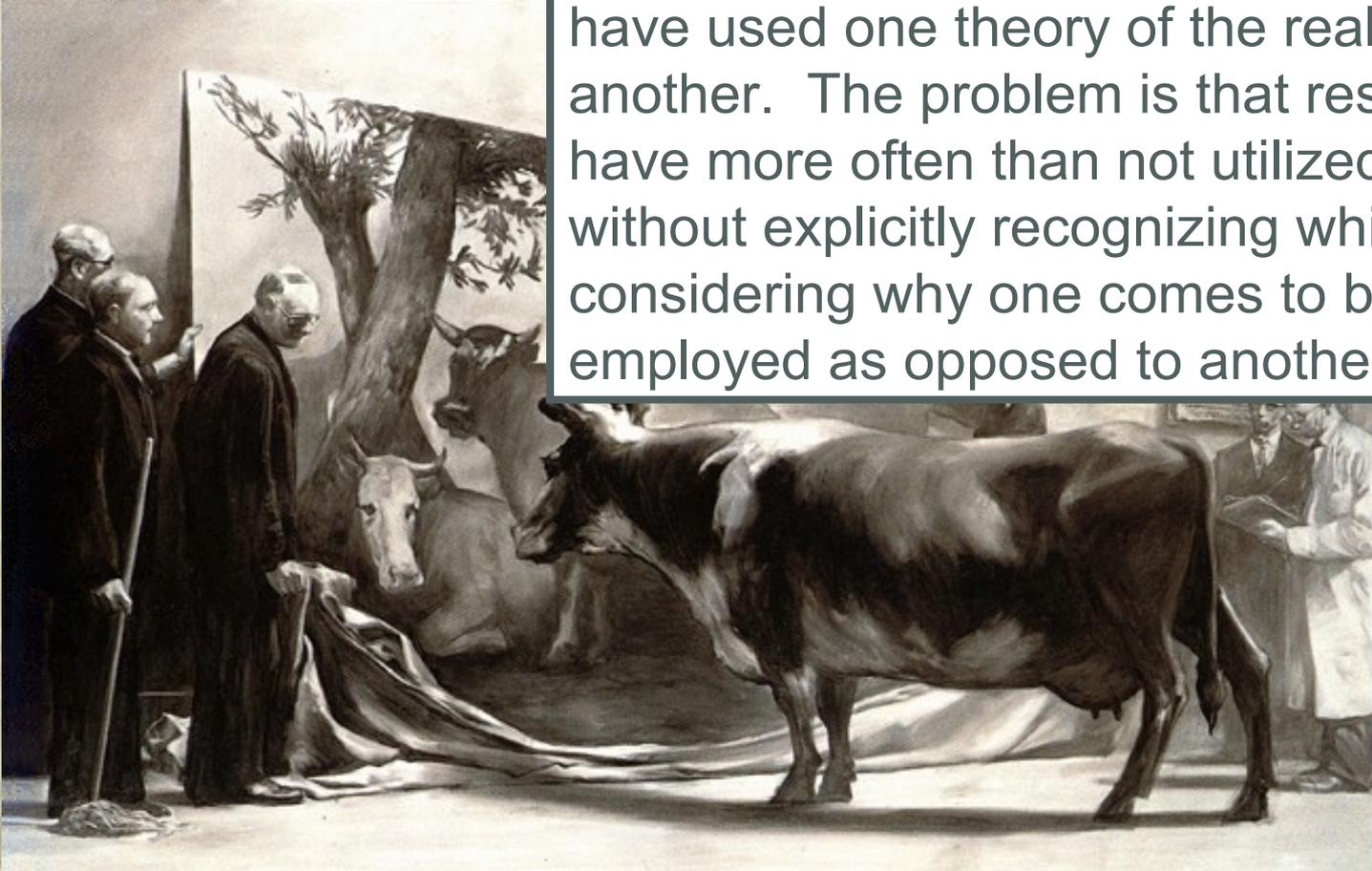
Conclusions



A particular application of theory, like the choice of any tool or instrument, cannot be unconsciously accepted as merely given, somehow natural, and beyond critical self-reflection.

Conclusions

The real problem is not that investigators of computer-mediated social interaction have used one theory of the real or another. The problem is that researchers have more often than not utilized theory without explicitly recognizing which one or considering why one comes to be employed as opposed to another.



Mark Tansey, *The Innocent Eye Test* (1981)

Conclusions

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<http://gunkelweb.com>
dgunkel@niu.edu



Mark Tansey, *The Innocent Eye Test* (1981)