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# OPINIONS AND ALGORITHMS: TRUST, NEUTRALITY AND LEGITIMACY[1]

## Introduction

Why were opinions and algorithms merged here? The answer is very simple. It is particularly important in the digital age, who we trust, whose decisions we rely on and what expectations we have about neutral and impartial sides of any communication and any activity.

We may feel like we have more freedom in our choices today than ever before. Indeed, the availability of information, the number of options and the openness of the world allow us to think in this way. At the same time, these choices may not to be the results of our own decisions. In online environment we can literally have an individual reality that looks like the result of our own choices about what to see and read, what services to use, and what opinions to trust. However, there are behind-the-scene people in social media, who communicate with us through our feed, virtually convey their ideas by filtering off the information they believe we ought not to see. Developers and customers of digital instruments may know us better than best friends, collecting digital breadcrumbs in incredible numbers. Sophisticated algorithms make it relatively easy to define our preferences, successfully profiling and targeting us, and – influence us strongly.

The goals of many digital interactions, moreover, may be to make us spend as much time as possible and become as involved as possible in the network on the particular online platform to sell us something: services, goods or certain opinions.

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Digital platforms and tools are persistent, adaptive, ubiquitous and almost imperceptibly pervasive. They are part of the familiar landscape for us, but we do not notice changes in this landscape if we are not offered a new user interface. All underground currents, new algorithms, and all subtle degrees of influence on opinions remain hidden to us, just as the groundwater and the edge of the ravine eroded by it remain hidden until it turns into a landslide under our feet.

## I. Being Self-determining and Self-governing Agents

How often do we operate today as self-determined agents? Are we more or less autonomous in how we make decisions and what opinions we trust, or are we artfully led to such? Can we still be called self-governing given how much manipulation seems to have increased successfully with certain technologies?

Considering the features of manipulations by online technologies and algorithmic systems, Fleur Jongepier and Michael Klenk write that "a manipulative act, perpetuated by an individual or group agent, may turn out to be more effective, more consequential < … >, 'aggravated' in some sense because of the use of technological artefacts."[2] We can see today how much the reach of the audience in some issues, including political debates, is increasing thanks to technological tools. We can also see that these tools are able to bring together representatives of extremely rare and controversial views and literally give a voice in public discussion to those who would not have previously found supporters in the misconceptions about the flat nature of the earth or that the photo of the sausage is actually an image of Proxima Centauri taken by the James Webb Space Telescope.[3] Even if technological artefacts have not brought something fundamentally new to the sphere of influence, manipulation and control of us, they definitely allow their owners and beneficiaries to increase the impact, as well as to make it more targeted.

Manipulation does not have a well-established definition, but it seems that there are some characteristics that can be key and are discussed in connection with. Those that affect our freedom, those that connect with the hidden nature of the manipulation, those that affect the motives of the manipulators, primarily malicious intent, and those that speak of the degree of influence and the tools used to exert influence. Manipulation often considers as seriously interfering with our autonomy, as something that "disrupts our capacity for self-authorship – it presumes to decide for us how and why we ought to live."[4] It is also often

[2] Fleur Jongepier and Michael Klenk, "Online Manipulation: Charting the Field," in *The Philosophy of Online Manipulation*, ed. Fleur Jongepier and Michael Klenk (New York, Routledge, 2022), 21.

[3] Michael Kan, "Sorry, that James Webb Space Telescope 'Image' Is Just a Close-Up of a Sausage: French Scientist Étienne Klein Tweeted the Image as a Joke and a Cautionary Tale about Fake News, but It Seems Some People Took Him Seriously," August 5, 2022, https://uk.pcmag.com/news/141924/sorry-that-james-webb-space-telescope-image-is-just-a-close-up-of-a-sausage.

[4] Daniel Susser, Beate Roessler and Helen F. Nissenbaum, "Technology, Autonomy, and Manipulation," *Internet Policy Review* 8(2) (2019), https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.2.1410.

defined as covert, indirect interference. According to Daniel Susser, Beate Roessler and Helen F. Nissenbaum:

> When we are coerced we are usually rightly upset about it, but the object of our indignation is the set of constraints placed upon us. When we are manipulated, by contrast, we are not constrained. Rather, we are directed, outside our conscious awareness, to act for reasons we can't recognize, and toward ends we may wish to avoid.[5]

Invisible restrictions and correcting our opinions, aspirations or actions become especially dangerous in the digital age, when they are becoming or are able to become truly massive. For example, nudging is traditionally considered less dangerous than propaganda, yet it could as successfully and more subtly change the landscape of opinions when done with digital tools.

What is also important about some of the technological and communication tools is that they seem could be manipulative without having an overt interference with our autonomy or having a covert nature. Michael Klenk and Jeff Hancock claim that "online technology can manipulate us without compromising our autonomy."[6] Gregory Whitfield writes about some "types of communication" that do not meet the "standards for manipulation but nonetheless fall short from the point of view of the reliability conditions."[7] The issue of autonomy is quite complex and multifaceted, and it is especially difficult to draw a line between where we make independent choices and are responsible for them and where we can no longer be called self-determining and self-governing agents. What is perhaps coming to the fore in the digital age is the increased exploitation of vulnerabilities and the degree of influence exerted.

As for the condition of the covert nature of the manipulation, what if giant corporations told us that all the free services they provide us are actually paid for – by our data or by nudging us to buy certain goods and services? Could we now stop and give up all our "digital conveniences"? And if not, then it's a good question when this path has become so irreversible and certain technologies are so firmly woven into our existence that the rejection of them seems to us more threatening than the rejection of freedom.

It is probably no longer a question of stopping certain influences, but at least of how to contain them within a fragile framework. It is worth noting that not only corporations successfully implement the scenario of influencing our preferences, but also other actors, mainly governments, do not hesitate to use technological artefacts for this, including for the benefit of citizens, as they understand it.

Controlling people's choices is then used to nudge them a little towards better behavior. Nudging is far from being seen as bad by default by everyone, especially when it achieves

[5] Ibid.

[6] Michael Klenk and Jeff Hancock, "Autonomy and Online Manipulation," *Internet Policy Review* 8 (1) (2019), https://policyreview.info/articles/news/autonomy-and-online-manipulation/1431.

[7] Gregory Whitfield, "Two puzzles for shared-reason Accounts of Persuasion," *Journal of Political Power* 14 (2) (2021): 330.

lofty goals, such as those that motivate people to maintain physical distance during a pandemic or to carefully sort garbage for recycling. In particular, according to Bart Engelen and Thomas Nys, "one of the most pervasive criticisms of nudges has been the claim that they violate, undermine or decrease people's (personal) autonomy."[8] They then argue that not all decisions need to be strictly autonomous, and show that both decisions and nudges can contain both rational and informative as well as a-rational aspects. "Think of pictures of cancerous lungs on cigarette packages, which provide information in salient and emotion-inducing ways and thus (at least partly) rely on less rational mechanisms and thus do not merely inform people,"[9] – they write. They also claim that the burden of proving that particular nudges are bad should be on critics: (1) to highlight the exceptional nature of those circumstances that require stringent autonomy conditions and (2) show why nudges specifically, in contrast to non-nudged choice environments, violate those conditions.[10]

The justification for influence that leads people to better choices partly revives paternalistic ideas that people need guidance in making choices so that they do not act in a way that is harmful to themselves or society.

According to Mark D. White "policymakers have no way to know whether a particular choice made by a person is good or bad – only that person can make that judgment because only that person knows his or her true interests and motivations for that choice."[11] He wrote that "policymakers are not justified in 'nudging' that person to make a different choice which suits the interests imposed by the policymakers – especially by relying on the same cognitive biases and heuristics that motivated the nudge in the first place."[12] Criticizing "libertarian paternalism"[13] offered by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, he also wrote "that it is not about helping people make better choices – it's about getting people to make the choices policymakers want them to make."[14] The technological tools available to politicians in the digital age, especially algorithms, make this task much easier. Unlike those digital capabilities that actually bring voters into direct contact with politicians, such as targeted emails or video conferences, algorithms are adept at creating the illusion of direct contact. Narrow profiling and the application of psychometrics bring some opinions and images directly to us, on the screens of our smartphones and home computers, in spaces we used to think of as controlled and safe.

[8] Bart Engelen and Thomas Nys, "Nudging and Autonomy: Analyzing and Alleviating the Worries," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 11 (2020): 137–56, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13164-019-00450-z.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Mark D. White, *The Manipulation of Choice: Ethics and Libertarian Paternalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xiii.
[12] White, *The Manipulation of Choice*, xiii, xiv.
[13] Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 4.
[14] White, *The Manipulation of Choice*, xv.

Alan Ware considered a concept of manipulation as "central importance in democratic theory."[15] He wrote about the "spread" of responsibility in cases of manipulation as well as to its "transference" showing that, at least in the case of moral responsibility, we do not distribute losses proportionally between the parties, weighing who and to what extent is guilty; "we may wish to say that A was more blameworthy than in some parallel case without this affecting the extent to which we blame B."[16]

In this sense, it is useful to remember that politicians and governments bear a greater degree of responsibility when they act as public persons and institutions. In particular, our demands on them are not the same as we would make on people in private relationships. Attempting to influence and control our preferences when we are being targeted for goods and services can be unfair and dangerous. Indeed, we may not notice when algorithms and those behind them finally become the ones who control all our everyday life choices. However, the impact on our preferences and management of them, when someone is trying to sell us certain opinions, can be much more dangerous, including because it destroys institutional and interpersonal trust.

## II. Managing Trust

Technological artefacts and their owners are increasingly setting the agenda today. Certain technologies can make one person or a group of people very influential and make their opinions of a few vitally important for many. In addition, the boundaries between actions in physical reality and digital space are gradually erased. We have started to live more and more in the online environment, less and less separating it from offline, making it a daily habit and not noticing gradual changes.

According to Mireille Hildebrandt "in cyberspace the inanimate environment begins to observe, infer, predict, and anticipate human behaviour, while also acting on its own inferences."[17] She wrote about pre-emptive abilities of cyberphysical systems, which that allow them to directly or indirectly influence the decisions and actions of people.

Invisible algorithms are increasingly determining important decisions, in both, public and private life. The frequency and breadth of the use of certain technologies is increasing. In an almost invisible way, trust is growing in artificial agents parallel.

It is important to highlight that we can have the feeling that nothing special is happening, just that the online services we are used to are getting better every day and their recommendations are more and more in line with our interests. Users are "receiving partially distinct streams of online content, initially based on their own (and/or those of similar others) behavioral choices, and subsequently, further personalized by online platforms'

[15] Alan Ware, "The Concept of Manipulation: Its Relation to Democracy and Power," *British Journal of Political Science* 11 (2) (1981): 163–81, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400002556.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Mireille Hildebrandt, *Law for Computer Scientists and Other Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 7.

algorithmic determinations of what should be prioritized and for what purpose."[18] Considering personalization algorithms, Max Z. van Drunen, Natali Helberger and Mariella Bastian write that they could "promote a wide range of objectives, not all of which resemble traditional news values and each of which will shape a reader's news diet in a different way."[19] They emphasize that "the public still oftens algorithms as inherently see objective or neutral," although "algorithms are used to advance concrete objectives."[20] Algorithms, thus, receive our unreasonable trust and moreover, we stop wondering if they deserve it. This mechanism is similar to how we rarely question our long-established habits or beliefs that we have absorbed so long ago that they have become part of us. We are certainly capable to reconsider this, under the influence of a strong life shake-up or really serious internal efforts. However, in the relatively calm course of life, we hardly notice how deep our habits or beliefs are.

Besides, there has been a disproportionate increase in trust in corporations, which are traditionally seen as members of the private sector of society. In particular, it was found that students show surprising trust in Facebook and Google, and "many individuals, both adolescent and adult, seem prepared to accept the barter arrangements that characterize Google and Facebook (i.e., my data for your free service) as inevitable."[21] This trust in corporations, in turn, may contribute to undermining trust in other institutions and some redistribution of legitimacy. Firstly, the information we receive from companies may be perceived by us as more truthful than that given to us by public institutions. Second, corporations are increasingly dictating the agenda, increasing dependence on their digital products and using their influence on public opinion. Third, since many of the algorithms used in public decisions are provided by companies, are privately developed or contain trade secrets, they are increasingly less accountable, while the moral responsibility for the negative consequences of their use falls largely on governments.

Pascal D. König and Georg Wenzelburger considered how AI is affecting liberal democracies in terms of their possible impact on responsiveness and accountability.[22] They discuss standards of democratic legitimacy in this regard, since in such democracies informational needs arise to protect a particular form of decision-making and to continuously integrate citizens' preferences.

[18] Brahim Zarouali, Sophie C. Boerman, and Claes H. de Vreese, "Is This Recommended by an Algorithm? The Development and Validation of the Algorithmic Media Content Awareness Scale (AMCA-scale)," *Telematics and Informatics* 62 (2021): 101607.

[19] Max Z. van Drunen, Natali Helberger, and Mariella Bastian, "Know Your Algorithm: What Media Organizations Need to Explain to Their Users about News Personalization," *International Data Privacy Law* 9 (4) (2019): 220–35, 233.

[20] Ibid, 233.

[21] Margaret S. Crocco, Avner Segall, Anne-Lise Halvorsen, Alexandra Stamm, Rebecca Jacobsen, "It's Not Like They're Selling Your Data to Dangerous People: Internet Privacy, Teens, and (Non-) controversial Public Issues," *The Journal of Social Studies Research* 44 (2020) 21–33, 29.

[22] Pascal D. König and Georg Wenzelburger, "Opportunity for Renewal or Disruptive Force? How Artificial Intelligence Alters Democratic Politics," *Government Information Quarterly* 37 (3) (2020): 101489, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101489.

Responsibility and accountability issues are one of the painful points of the implementation of algorithms. The question of who is morally or legally responsible for certain operations of AI is proposed to be resolved in different ways, ranging from the distribution of responsibility between all persons involved in the creation and deployment of the algorithm, and ending with the creation of special insurance funds that would financially cover these consequences.

According to Andreas Matthias "the society must decide between not using this kind of machine any more (which is not a realistic option), or facing a "responsibility gap,"[23] which arises because the gap between the actions of the creators and/or operators of smart algorithms and what the algorithm does. This gap, moreover, is probably widening. In other words, certain types of algorithms, primarily self-learning and based on cognitive architecture, are becoming increasingly unpredictable. At the same time, we are becoming more and more predictable for algorithms.

Theodora Lau asks what might happen if AI becomes more contextually aware and empathetic?[24] She writes that "we can imagine a future where machines will augment our human abilities and help us make better life choices, from health to wealth. Instead of conducting a question and answer with a device on the countertop, we will be able to converse naturally with our virtual assistant that is fully embedded in our physical environment."[25] Based on a huge amount of interconnected data and taking into account the amazing computational power of algorithms, they could come up with solutions that will seem more and more reasonable and trustworthy to us, whether or not it really is. In this case, the question of whether we trust AI enough to make decisions for us automatically will lose its meaning, because at some point we will stop asking such a question.

## III. Searching Neutrality

Undoubtedly, we can hate the very idea that someone or something manipulate or controls us and look for neutral sources in order to form our own opinion about what is happening. We may also seek independent reviews of opinions, products, or services that we are interested in, instead of relying on an algorithm to make our decisions.

However, it is getting harder, almost impossible in the digital age. Social networks give us a personalized news feed. Algorithms keep track of what we've been interested in and weave it into our online searches, intrusively or more subtly. Programs and applications that we increasingly rely on fail to work correctly if we try to change settings in a way that minimizes their access to our personal data. Ultimately, it is the algorithm that chooses what to show and offer us. A good question is whether it makes a choice in our interests. Moreover,

[23] Andreas Matthias, "The Responsibility Gap: Ascribing Responsibility for the Actions of Learning Automata". *Ethics and Information Technology* 6 (2004): 175.

[24] Theodora Lau, "When AI Becomes a Part of Our Daily Lives," *Technology and Analytics, Harvard Business Review*, May 23, 2019, https://hbr.org/2019/05/when-ai-becomes-a-part-of-our-daily-lives.

[25] Ibid.

it is also a question of how algorithms will or are already acting in such a way as to exploit our cognitive distortions, biases, vulnerabilities or lack of knowledge in order for us to be convinced that these interests are our own.

Mark D. White defines autonomy as "the right to determine one's own interests and actions,"[26] where "interests" are everything a person cares about and all the reasons why he or she makes choices and takes actions.[27] While both of these definitions are fairly broad, it is hard not to agree that interests should be our own, that we care about them and have motives to act on them. At the same time, it seems that we are not born with an understanding of what these interests constitute. So, it takes some time to figure out our aspirations as we gain life experience. What can be quite ominous today is that we are literally growing up in fusion with technological tools, primarily algorithmic, and digital spaces, and this is shaping our experience in a completely different way. Perhaps this is not threatening in itself, but one cannot help but think that we are probably less and less able to separate imposed interests from really our own.

In addition, those who could potentially reasonably warn about some of the dangers of algorithms and help minimize harm – philosophers, lawyers, ethicists – may not be sufficiently privy to the technical jungle of AI or the specifics of today's media communications. Those who understand this, on the contrary, often miss the ethical, legal and philosophical sides – out of ignorance or in the pursuit of creating truly intelligent AI, or, in the case of corporate representatives, in the pursuit of economic profit.

In a more optimistic view, AI gives us the opportunity to reimagine not only experience but also the exchange of value, and the ability to learn, process and complement creates a symbiotic relationship between humans and machines.[28] Recognizing that algorithms can have adverse consequences, some researchers suggest to rise algorithmic awareness that "might predict people's trust perceptions toward online algorithms in online platforms,"[29] however, the mechanisms for such awareness forming or rising are still being developed. In the same way, we still have to find out whether the growing trust in algorithmization generates fatal mistakes for humanity. But what we probably need to admit to ourselves right now is that some technologies, primarily algorithmic ones, are not neutral either in their essence or in the ways they are used by their creators and owners.

## IV. Redistributing Legitimacy and Power

The power of certain technologies and the spread of algorithms in the digital age is growing to the extent that it can change our societies beyond recognition. According to Adam Pham, Alan Rubel and Clinton Castro "when people act collectively, they often do so through public institutions, formal or otherwise < … > Under favorable conditions, and

[26] White, *The Manipulation of Choice*, 84.
[27] Ibid, 64.
[28] Lau, "When AI Becomes a Part of Our Daily Lives."
[29] Zarouali, Boerman, and de Vreese, "Is This Recommended by an Algorithm?" 101607.

only under such conditions, can these institutions serve as truly self-sustaining sources of trust,"[30] what we usually see in societies with strong traditions of democracy and mutual trust. In this way "when bad actors sow misinformation to undermine trust in these institutions, without regard to whether they serve a critical role in supporting public infrastructure or providing any sort of alternative, they serve as a drag on a source of epistemic legitimacy."[31] An additional effect of the digital age is that these bad actors do not necessarily have the intention of undermining institutional trust or shifting democratic legitimacy. Sometimes it is just the consequences of releasing into the world certain technology that out of control.

We are cannot be sure today that there is a "reliable persuader," behind our devices screens, who are more limited in her or his action and power than manipulative one, since in terms of definition offered by Gregory Whitfield, she or he

> to only ever offering his own grounds to others, and in that way can be assured of either rightly persuading who shares those grounds, or simply expressing the source of his disagreement with them over the proposition, when they do not share his grounds < … > The persuader cannot argue for just anything. The manipulator is not similarly constrained.[32]

Unlimited and manipulative influence, as described above, is becoming increasingly dangerous in the digital age. Not least because there are fewer and fewer spaces left untouched by the consequences of the introduction and deployment of certain technologies. As rightly noted, "since traditionally 'offline' spaces are increasingly digitally mediated (because the people occupying them carry smartphones, the spaces themselves are embedded with internet-connected sensors, and so on), we should expect to encounter online manipulation beyond our computer screens."[33] Besides, "the ease with which our technologies become invisible to us – simply through frequent use and habituation – means the influences they facilitate are often hidden, and thus potentially manipulative."[34]

Algorithms and those behind them are increasingly able to use this influence to shape our choices in the private and public realms. Moreover, it is already quite difficult to determine the degrees where the influence turns into manipulation, and where already into the correction of behavior and literally control over us. Therefore, power is redistributed, flowing away from the hands of traditional public institutions, to which we have entrusted this power under certain conditions, to the owners of certain technologies, which are often companies. The conditions for this actual redistribution are unclear, and the democratic restrictive mechanisms are rather powerless here.

[30] Adam Pham, Alan Rubel, and Clinton Castro, "Social Media, Emergent Manipulation, and Political Legitimacy," in *The Philosophy of Online Manipulation*, ed. Fleur Jongepier and Michael Klenk (New York, Routledge, 2022), 365.
[31] Pham, Rubel, and Castro, "Social Media," 365.
[32] Whitfield, "Two Puzzles for Shared-reason Accounts of Persuasion," 330.
[33] Susser, Roessler and Nissenbaum, "Technology, Autonomy, and Manipulation."
[34] Ibid.

Hans Asenbaum and Frederic Hanusch write about two current trends in democratic governance: "the emergence of novel forms of participation through democratic innovation, in parallel with a technocratic tendency for elite control. Democracy is futured when free and equal participation is enhanced; it is defutured when depleted of these features."[35] In this sense, it is worth considering to what extent free and equal participation is possible today. On the one hand, some digital tools greatly expand the opportunities for participation, as access to certain procedures, interaction and finding a common interest become very accessible. On the other hand, there are a number of problems, ranging from how seriously those who, for various reasons, do not use digital tools fall out of public discourse, and ending with how some technologies, especially the algorithms, restructure the interaction of people and impact the formation of their opinions.

In particular, political belief systems rely on networks of opinions. These systems "are interrelationships between attitudes and beliefs."[36] Beliefs themselves are often defined as "a network of perceptual experiences that have something in common, and this network is self-sustaining."[37] Today networks of opinions are increasingly forming and flourishing in a digital environment that occupies a significant part of our lives and at the same time is largely beyond our control. Finding like-minded people and working together can help build strong, self-sustaining networks. Finding our vulnerabilities and using them to nudge us into doing something, or fine-tuning our trust, is more likely to create enduring addictions. Algorithms can play a key role in this, being adapted to fit the pieces of the puzzle together, getting to know us better and guiding our choices better. AI may literally instilled certain images in us based on our own preferences or even emerging preferences.

When algorithms begin to literally shape our beliefs and experiences, it becomes increasingly difficult to limit them through legal regulation or technological frameworks. In any case, the implications are fundamental and require a serious rethinking of what we truly value and what we base our societies on. As Abeba Birhane rightly suggests, that demands rethinking justice and ethics rather than looking for technological or legal solutions to algorithmic systems that are increasingly penetrating the social realm.[38] Perhaps the most important question is not how we live and deal with algorithms, but how we would like to live with them. What balance of interaction between people and AI would we like to have, how much power and under what conditions are we ready to give algorithms or those who are behind them, what control mechanisms for all this we would like to have – all these are

[35] Hans Asenbaum and Frederic Hanusch, "(De)futuring Democracy: Labs, Playgrounds, and Ateliers as Democratic Innovations," *Futures* 134 (2021): 102836, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2021.102836.
[36] Mark J. Brandt, Chris G. Sibley, and Danny Osborne, "What Is Central to Political Belief System Networks?" *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 45, no. 9 (2019): 1353.
[37] Ramon D. Castillo, Heidi Kloos, Michael J. Richardson, and Talia Waltzer, "Beliefs as Self-Sustaining Networks: Drawing Parallels Between Networks of Ecosystems and Adults' Predictions," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01723.
[38] Abeba Birhane, "Algorithmic Injustice: A Relational Ethics Approach," *Patterns* 2 (2) (2021): 100205, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2021.100205.

not speculative, but very practical issues today. Perhaps we should also come to terms with the fact that the future with AI as we imagined it turned out to be less about space travel and humanoid robots than about prompts popping up on a smartphone screen and highly targeted ads in a language learning app, as well as virtual battles in social networks for votes.

The intervention of algorithms and those behind them today is seriously changing the relationship between and dynamic of lifeworld and system, to use Jürgen Habermas terminology.[39] Predetermined ways of coordinating and communicating through algorithmic systems expand their field. At the same time, the lifeworld no longer remains either authentic or common-shared, and its vulnerability to manipulation only increases. Law that grows out of the lifeworld and is grounded on experience in its roots, but nevertheless based on the system in some of its elements, can no longer contribute to integrity. However, we are desperately trying to solve this more instrumentally than in depth.

## Conclusions

Adaptive and imperceptible algorithms are spreading in all areas of life, significantly influencing them. Our dependence on algorithmic decision-making and relying on other's opinions is growing at a much faster pace than the changing in reality, in legal regulation and our own experience can keep up with. Some of these problems are the result of certain non-neutral technologies, some are the result of deliberate or ill-conceived by the creators and owners of these technologies. Unfortunately, in both cases it is influence our free will and affect our freedom of choice narrowing our autonomy and impoverishing interaction.

The manipulation of opinions is not new, but the use of certain technologies and especially algorithmization make it incredibly successful today for some and threatening for others. Subtly getting people to make choices that are not really their own is a task that technological tools excel at. The exploitation of vulnerabilities, the massive nature of the impact and the illusion of control over what is happening significantly exacerbate the effect. In addition, algorithms successfully bring some opinions and images directly into spaces that we used to consider controlled and safe.

Influencing and managing our preferences when someone tries to sell us certain opinions can be even more dangerous then they try to sell us goods or services, primarily because it destroys institutional and interpersonal trust and leads to a redistribution of legitimacy. Growing trust in artificial agents, as well as the owners of certain technologies, creates an imbalance of power and undermines public institutions. Disproportional trust in corporations and growing dependence of technologies they provide lead to increasingly dictating the agenda by them, using influence on public opinion to achieve private goals and strengthen the algorithmic component in decision-making on socially important issues, which, in turn, makes it almost impossible to be independent of certain technologies. Breaking this circle is getting harder. Given this, we should focus not so much on how to cope with the existing

[39] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

problems from the use of algorithms, but how we would like to exist with them from private and public life. Ultimately, this is a question of what values are most important to us.

Amplified and narrow-targeted impact on our behavior, growing use of human irrational reactions, successful sale of opinions and meanings to us instead of us forming our own – these are just a small list of what is already happening in a world full of algorithms. Stop asking, stop thinking, stop acting – that is probably our future as humans. While we are still able to do so, we must use the shrinking time to ask, think and act considering the situation of algorithms and their primary beneficiaries' enormous influence.



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**Юлія Размєтаєва. Думки та алгоритми: довіра, нейтральність і легітимність**

**Анотація**. Статтю присвячено думкам та алгоритмам у цифрову епоху з фокусом на те, як маніпулювання першими при використанні других відбивається на довірі та легітимності. Крім того, деяка увага приділяється проблемі нейтральності як щодо неупереджених думок, так і щодо неупереджених технологій. Стаття піднімає питання про те, чи можемо ми бути агентами, що самостійно визначаються та самоврядними агентами, особливо щодо того, як ми приймаємо рішення та яким думкам довіряємо, якщо нас вміло ведуть до цього алгоритми або ті, хто за ними стоїть.

Враховуючи, що не тільки корпорації, а й уряди сьогодні використовують технології для впливу на наші уподобання та думки, стаття торкається питань автономії та персональних інтересів,

а також проблеми підштовхування до певної поведінки, що визначається як найкраща для людей, у тому числі у патерналістському розумінні. У статті стверджується, що злиття повсякденного життя з цифровими просторами та алгоритмізація формують наш досвід як принципово новий і не сприяють вмінню відокремлювати нав'язані інтереси від справді власних.

Питання того, як перерозподіляється влада та легітимність в умовах цифрового суспільства, залежного від алгоритмів, розглядаються у цьому дослідженні. Висувається припущення про те, що вплив на наші уподобання та управління ними, коли нам намагаються продати певні думки, може бути небезпечнішим, ніж продаж нам товарів та послуг, оскільки руйнує інституційну та міжособистісну довіру та сприяє ерозії публічних інститутів. У дослідженні показано, як деякі технології, насамперед алгоритмічні, які не є нейтральними ні за своєю суттю, ні за тим, як вони використовуються їх творцями та власниками, сприяють сприяють зростанню залежності та збіднюють людську взаємодію й уміння формувати смисли.

**Ключові слова**: алгоритми; цифрові технології; легітимність; нейтральність; думки; агенти, що самостійно визначаються; довіра.

**Юлия Разметаева. Мнения и алгоритмы: доверие, нейтральность и легитимность**

**Аннотация**. Статья посвящена мнениям и алгоритмам в цифровую эпоху с фокусом на то, как манипулирование первыми при использовании вторых отражается на доверии и легитимности. Кроме того, некоторое внимание уделяется проблеме нейтральности, как в отношении непредубежденных мнений, так и в отношении беспристрастных технологий. В статье поднимаются вопросы о том, можем ли мы быть самоопределяющимися и самоуправляемыми агентами, особенно с точки зрения того, как мы принимаем решения и каким мнениям доверяем, если нас умело ведут к этому алгоритмы или те, кто за ними стоит.

Учитывая, что не только корпорации, но и правительства сегодня используют технологии для влияния на наши предпочтения и мнения, затрагиваются вопросы автономии и персональных интересов, а также проблема подталкивания к определенному поведению, определяемому как лучшее для людей, в том числе в патерналистском понимании. В статье утверждается, что слияние повседневной жизни с цифровыми пространствами и алгоритмизация формируют наш опыт как принципиально новый и не способствует умению отделять навязанные интересы от действительно своих.

Вопросы того, как перераспределяется власть и легитимность в условиях цифрового общества, зависимого от алгоритмов, рассматриваются в этом исследовании. Выдвигается предположение о том, что воздействие на наши предпочтения и управление ими, когда нам пытаются продать определенные мнения, может быть опаснее, чем продажа нам товаров и услуг, поскольку разрушает институциональное и межличностное доверие и содействует эрозии публичных институтов. В исследовании показано, как некоторые технологии, в первую очередь алгоритмические, которые не являются нейтральными ни по своей сути, ни по тому, как они используются их создателями и владельцами, способствуют растущей зависимости и обедняют человеческое взаимодействие и умение формировать смыслы.

**Ключевые слова**: алгоритмы; цифровые технологии; легитимность; нейтральность; мнения; самоопределяющиеся агенты; доверие.

**Yulia Razmetaeva. Opinions and Algorithms: Trust, Neutrality and Legitimacy**

**Abstract**. The article is devoted to opinions and algorithms in the digital age, with a focus on how the manipulation of the former while using the latter affects trust and legitimacy. In addition, some

attention is paid to the issue of neutrality, both in relation to unbiased opinions and in relation to unbiased technologies. The article raises questions about whether we can be self-determining and self-governing agents, especially in terms of how we make decisions and what opinions we trust, if we are skillfully led to this by algorithms or those behind them.

Considering that not only corporations, but also governments today use technologies to influence our preferences and opinions, issues of autonomy and personal interests are touched upon, as well as the problem of nudging for certain behaviors that are defined as the best for people, including in a paternalistic sense. The article argues that the merging of everyday life with digital spaces and algorithmization form our experience as a fundamentally new one and does not contribute to the ability to separate imposed interests from really our own.

The questions of how power and legitimacy are redistributed in a digital society dependent on algorithms are discussed in this study. It has been suggested that the impact on our preferences and management of them, when someone try to sell us certain opinions, may be more dangerous than selling us goods and services, since it destroys institutional and interpersonal trust and contributes to the erosion of public institutions. The study shows how some technologies, primarily algorithmic ones, which are not neutral either in their essence or in the way they are used by their creators and owners, contribute to growing addiction and impoverish human interaction and the ability to form meanings.

**Keywords**: algorithms; digital technologies; legitimacy; neutrality; opinions; self-determining agents; trust.

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