

Conference: Philosophy of Human-Technology Relations 2020

Cristel Kolopaking (c.a.kolopaking@uva.nl)

Abstract

Behind our digital services is an informational mechanism that escapes our attention, namely datafication. It enables personal recommendations by translating our actions and interactions into data. It is this mechanism that enables cases such as the Cambridge Analytica (C.A.) controversy around the 2016 U.S. elections and the Chinese Social Credit System (S.C.S). News coverage of these cases brings awareness to this technological phenomenon, but it cannot explain how datafication transforms our experiences of our actions and ourselves. To that end, I approach datafication as a form of technological mediation, as formulated within postphenomenology. In that reading technological mediation is believed to co-constitute human's experiences and existence. I argue that datafication, as a form of technological mediation, co-constitutes one's subjectivity on the level of self-perception and intentionality. This is because datafication, as present in the case of C.A. and S.C.S., leads to a personal dataprofile, which I refer to as 'databody'. By experientially appropriating the databody, one needs to constantly negotiate the self-perception of one's primary, natural body with insights and socio-political expectations surrounding the databody. Since these insights are often delivered in the form of recommendations, repercussions and rewards, or 'R's' in short, the subject also enters reflexivity with regards to potential enactment thereof. If one would fully attune to the R's, we can speak of hybrid intentionality with that of the technological mediation. Altogether, this leads to hybrid subjectivity in the sense of abstracting one's behavior into data and appropriating the insights thereof into one's perception and intentionality.

Keywords: postphenomenology, datafication, subjectivity