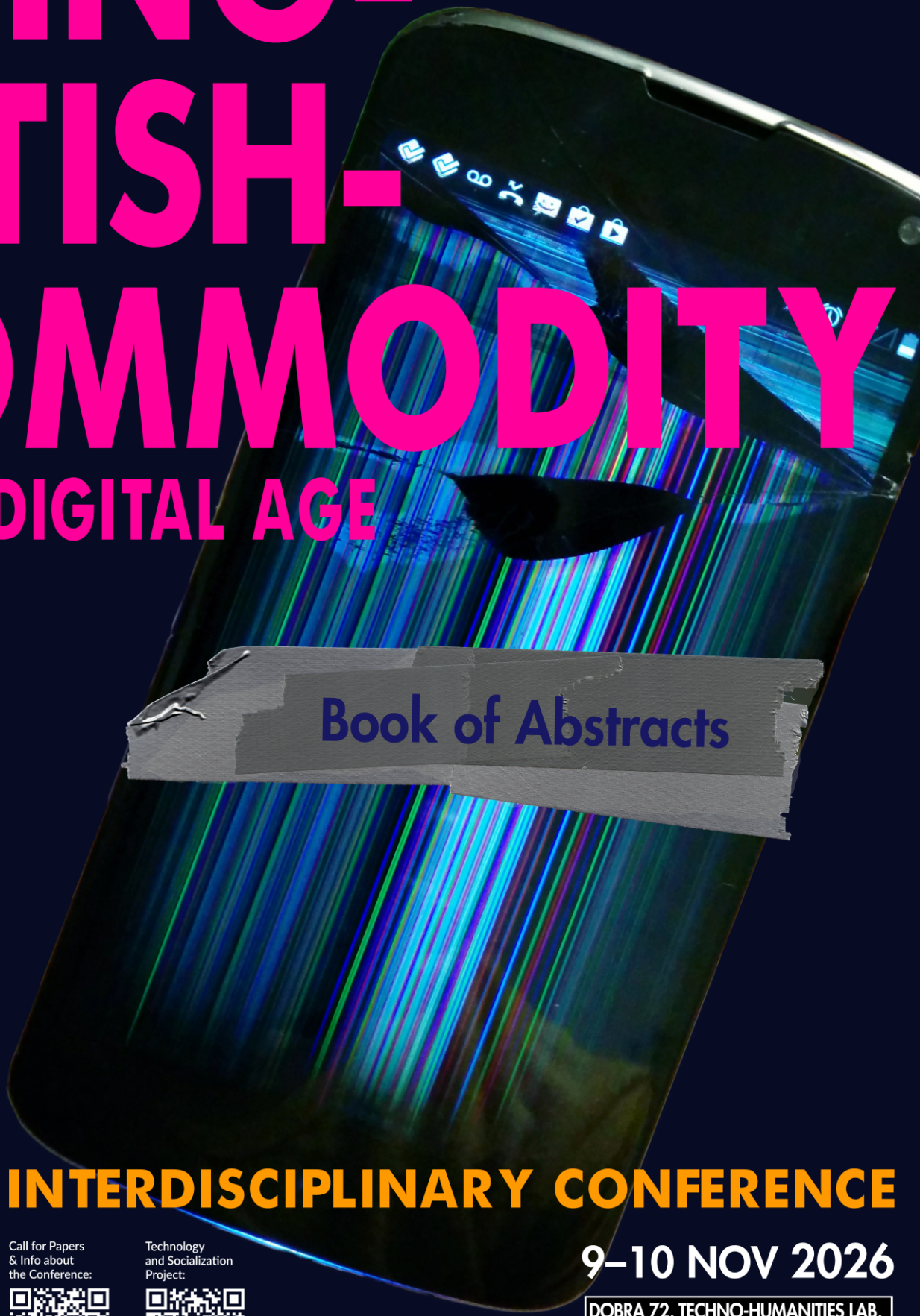
THING-FETISH-COMMODITY

IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Book of Abstracts

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

Call for Papers & Info about the Conference:

Technology and Socialization Project:

9–10 NOV 2026

DOBRA 72, TECHNO-HUMANITIES LAB,
FACULTY OF „ARTES LIBERALES",
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Monday, 9 November 2026

10.15-10.30 Introduction

Szymon Wróbel, Jerzy Axer

10.30-11.30 Keynote Lecture

Jonathan Beller (Columbia University), *Information as Reification: The Computational Mode of Production and M-I-M'*

11.30-11.40 Coffee Break

11.40-12.40 Keynote Lecture

Jakub Momro (Jagiellonian University Kraków), *The Dialectics of the Sound Object*

12.40-12.50 Coffee Break

12.50-14.05 Panel I: New Clothes of Fetishism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Jiaqian (JK) Wei (UCL London), *AI as Psychoanalytic Object: Knowledge, Disavowal and Scientific Authority*

Aliaksandr Razhkou (University of Warsaw), *From the "Lord of Hosts" to the "Transforming Demiurge": Toward the Construction of a Typology of the "Theology of God Simulators"*

Yao Ge (University of Essex), *Colonizing the Clock: Capital, Sovereign Power, and the Chronopolitics of Data in the Age of AI*

14.05-15.05 Lunch Break

15.05-16.05 Keynote Lecture

Todd McGowan (University of Vermont) (via Zoom), *The Conspiracy of Commodity Fetishism*

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Monday, 9 November 2026

16.05-16.15 Coffee Break

16.15-17.30 Panel II: Psychoanalytic Explorations of Fetishism

Gustaw Owczarski (GCAS, University of Warsaw), Gooner lex sed lex – *On the Non-universality of a Certain Objectless Dialectic of Desire*

Hanna Kręcisz (University of Warsaw), *Body for Sale: Sex Robots — A Psychoanalytic Approach*

Julia Góralska (University of Warsaw), *Methodological Reification and the Lacanian Subject: Rethinking Objectification in the Social Sciences*

17.30-17.40 Coffee Break

17.40-18.55 Panel III: From Commodification to the Gig Economy

Tetiana Zaiats, Oksana Diakonenko (Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine), *The Commodification of Trust and Charity: Digital Platforms as Mediators of Social Cohesion*

Olena Sova (Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine), *Welfare Challenges in the Gig Economy*

Tetiana Kotenko (Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine), *Digital Environmental Data as Objects of the Adaptive Capacity of Territorial Communities in Ukraine*

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Tuesday, 10 November 2026

10.00-11.00 Keynote Lecture

Desmond McNeill (University of Oslo), *The Concept of Fetishism in Marx: Its Origins and Consequences*

11.00-11.10 Coffee Break

11.10-12.50 Panel IV: Machines, Organs, Fetishes

Paulina Dudzińska (University of Warsaw), *Drones and the Fetish of Autonomy*

Wiktoria Klasa (University of Warsaw), *The Perfect AI Girlfriend: Ani as a Digital Fetish-Commodity*

Szymon Radziejowski (Independent Researcher), *Totemic Practices During the Advent of New Exteriority: Exogamy, Exocapitalism, Secrecy, and Fetish*

Maria Wodzińska (University of Warsaw), *The Blind Spot: Material Infrastructures and Generated Representations*

12.50-13.00 Coffee Break

13.00-14.00 Keynote Lecture

Franco "Bifo" Berardi (Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera) (via Zoom), *The Bitter Cup: Notes about Artificial Intelligence and Natural Stupidity*

14.00-15.00 Lunch Break

15.00-16.15 Panel V: Philosophy and Hermeneutics Cast a Suspicious Eye on the Fetish

Václav Sklenář (University of Pardubice), *Accelerationism's Übermensch and the Process of Reification*

Adrian Sobolewski-Kiwerski (University of Warsaw), *Lively Images – Debord's Society of the Spectacle in the Digital Age*

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Tuesday, 10 November 2026

Christopher Phillippe-Rodriguez (UCL London), *A Hermeneutics of the Commodity*

16.15-16.25 Coffee Break

16.25-17.25 Keynote Lecture

Joanna Bednarek (Independent Researcher), *Reification and Social Being: How Marxism Ceased to be Materialist*

17.25-17.35 Coffee Break

17.35-18.50 Panel VI: Art and Literature Confronting Weird Objects

Wiktor Typa (University of Warsaw), *Objects Attempting Suicides: Gherasim Luca and Literature as a Fetish*

Radek Przedpełski (Trinity College Dublin and Fuzhou University, China), *What is the Thing with Quantum Technicity? Quantum Art between Quantum Policy and Radical Practice*

Adam Cichoń (University of Warsaw), *The Dematerialization Fetish or The Unbearable Lightness of Screens*

18.50-19.00 Coffee Break

19.00-20.00 Final Remarks

Szymon Wróbel (University of Warsaw, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences), *Between Abstract and Bloody Fetishism*

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Jonathan Beller
(Columbia University)

Information as Reification: The Computational Mode of Production and M-I-M'

ABSTRACT:

The formula M-I-M' signifies the subsumption of the commodity (informed matter) by information, and the corollary subsumption of traditional labor as informatic labor. Value production is organized by using species metabolism to generate state changes in networks of discrete state machines; informatic labor that modifies information becomes the paradigmatic means for capital to move from M to M' — from money to more money. Information thus appears not as a natural element (no more natural than say private property) but rather as an historical result of alienated labor — information is dead labor. Or so we may hypothesize. If such is the case, then information, in its capacity to index any form whatever, and to circulate that index as part of the organic composition of capital, is also a medium of reification, a means to objectify any form whatever in order to make it commensurate with the value form. The planet along with those of us still living and yet to be born must reckon with the consequences of this dire shift in the dominant mode of production and reproduction, one which not only imposes but now presupposes ecocide and genocide as conditions of its futurity.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

BIO:

Jonathan Beller is Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and co-founder of the Graduate Program in Media Studies at Pratt Institute. He is also Distinguished Visiting Professor of English and of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University. Recently, he held the titles of Visiting Professor at REMESO / Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity, and Society, Linköping University, Sweden, and Visiting Researcher at the University of the Arts, Helsinki Research Institute, Finland. His books include *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Dartmouth UP, 2006), *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle, and the World-Media System* (Ateneo de Manila UP, 2006), *The Message is Murder: Substrates of Computational Capital* (Pluto Press, 2017), and *The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism* (Duke UP, 2021). He is currently working on several book projects: *Economic Media*; *Capital's Wake*; and *Collateral Genocide*. Beller serves as co-editor of the international political journal Social Text.

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Jakub Momro
(Jagiellonian University Kraków)

The Dialectics of the Sound Object

ABSTRACT:

In my presentation, I would like to address the issue of the sound object as a specific entity existing between perception and concept. I wish to consider four questions. First, is the concept of the "chord" exclusively musical, or does it constitute an element of the dialectic of the whole? Second, is the fantasy of "objective music" essentially a fetish of objectification of the highest order—one inaccessible to anthropology, philosophy, and politics alike? Third, is the sound object an object petit a? Fourth, is the voice—as an object—a fetish, and if so, under what conditions? In other words, I would like to examine the extent to which critical theory and psychoanalysis, along with their conceptualizations of the object, can shed light on the sound symptom as a symptom of contemporaneity.

BIO:

Jakub Momro, PhD, is a full professor at Jagiellonian University (Kraków), Department of Polish Studies. He is a philosopher, literary scholar, essayist, and translator (e.g. books and texts of J. Derrida, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, J. Kristeva, R. Barthes, P. Szendy). He published a monograph of Samuel Beckett: *Literature of Consciousness. Samuel Beckett – Subject – Negativity* (Polish edition, 2010, Universitas, Krakow, English edition: Peter Lang, 2015), and (in Polish) study: *Hauntologies of Modernity. Geneses*, IBL PAN Editions, Warsaw, 2014, and *"Ear has no Eyelid". The Sonic*

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Primal Scenes, WUJ, Krakow 2020. He is a member of Editorial Board of bi-monthly Journal "Second Texts", and is a member of the editorial committee of the New Humanities publishing series. He is currently preparing a book on the natural history of radical modernity, entitled *Singularity Protocols*. His book, titled *Tingling: An Essay on Being Ill*, will be published soon by Karakter.

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PANEL I:
NEW CLOTHES OF FETISHISM IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Jiaqian (JK) Wei
(UCL London)

AI as Psychoanalytic Object: Knowledge, Disavowal and Scientific Authority

ABSTRACT:

AI-generated content occupies an increasingly ambivalent position in contemporary knowledge cultures. AI systems contribute to mathematical research while also generating images, narratives and explanations that can circulate within conspiracy cultures and post-truth politics. These uses cannot be understood solely in terms of deception. What relations between knowledge, belief and authority emerge around these digital objects, and what does knowing that something is (or could be) AI-generated change?

Building on my research on AI as an object of psychoanalysis, this paper brings Alenka Zupančič's writings on disavowal, conspiracy theories and AI into dialogue with Science and Technology Studies (STS). Her development of Mannoni's formulation examines how knowledge itself can function as a fetish, allowing acknowledged facts to coexist with the disavowal of their implications. Her recent work on AI considers how generated content produces an appearance of subjectivity and participates in subject formation, without necessarily implying a subject in the machine. This resonates with my approach to AI as a psychoanalytic object, examining how it participates in the constitution of subjectivity and makes apparent the divisions inherent in that process.

Revisiting Zupančič's engagement with Bruno Latour, and drawing on our recent conversation extending this discussion to Harry Collins and colleagues, I consider STS debates on expertise and

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NEW CLOTHES OF FETISHISM IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

scientific authority. A fabricated image or video need not be mistaken for documentary evidence to organise identification or enjoyment; conversely, a valid mathematical result does not settle the broader authority attributed to its producer.

Without equating these cases, the paper asks when and how generated content or AI itself functions as a fetish. Bringing psychoanalysis into conversation with STS, it examines how AI-generated objects participate in the formation of subjects and their relations to truth and scientific authority.

BIO:

Jiaqian (JK) Wei is a PhD researcher in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at University College London, researching fantasies, AI and society. He holds an MA in Psychoanalytic Studies from Birkbeck, University of London, and an MEng in Electronic and Electrical Engineering from UCL. His MA dissertation, *AI as Object of Psychoanalysis*, examined AI through Freud, object-relations theory and Lacan. He co-hosts seminars and conversations on psychoanalysis and technology in collaboration with university departments and research groups, including a recent conversation with Alenka Zupančič, co-organised with the Birkbeck Centre for Psychosocial Research.

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PANEL I:
NEW CLOTHES OF FETISHISM IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Aliaksandr Razhkou
(University of Warsaw)

From the "Lord of Hosts" to the "Transforming Demiurge": Toward the Construction of a Typology of the "Theology of God Simulators"

ABSTRACT:

Contemporary video games, due to their simulative and ergodic character, constitute a distinctive environment for the representation, exploration, and enactment of religious concepts. This is particularly visible in the genre of "God simulators," in which the player assumes the position of a deity and acts upon a digital world through a set of "divine tools": terraforming, managing followers, shaping fauna, controlling resources, or resolving crises (Bosman, 2017).

Previous studies have interpreted games of this type through the categories of imitatio Dei, sub-creation, the gamification of divinity, and religious practice (Bosman, 2019; Plate, 2010; Wagner, 2013; Wiemker, 2014; Wolf, 2018). However, my earlier empirical research (Рожков, 2023) showed that "God simulators" were not indicated by respondents as significant games influencing their worldview or perceived as religiously meaningful. This leads to the main research question: what is specific about the "theology of God simulators" that makes them relatively unattractive as spaces of spiritual self-realization?

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of autoethnographic observations based on engagement with a corpus of "God

simulators": Populous I–III, Black & White I–II, Godus, Universim, Rise to Ruins, Reus, From Dust, and Crest. The aim of the study is to identify the dominant "Molyneuxian" formula of the genre as a specific digital theologoumenon that continues to influence later game projects. The article argues that this formula corresponds to broader tendencies in the representation of religion in video games, especially the construction of worlds with pantheistic or Neoplatonic ontologies.

The paper also presents a cognitive map of "God simulators," linking forms of player agency — direct control over followers or the power of terraforming — with different models of divinity, such as the military commander, the invisible guardian, or the transforming demiurge. In conclusion, the paper formulates working hypotheses concerning the limited spiritual potential of this genre, resulting from the tension between apophatic mystical experience and the strongly rationalized, algorithmic structures of simulation.

BIO:

Aliaksandr Razhkou is a Belarusian researcher with an interdisciplinary background in theology, sociology, and philosophy. His academic interests include video games as sociocultural environments, non-institutional religiosity in fantasy media, and the philosophical foundations of traditionalism. He completed his studies in theology at Belarusian State University and subsequently obtained master's degrees in sociology from the University of the National Academy of Sciences and in theology from the Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy. He worked as a junior researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus from 2021 to 2023. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Warsaw.

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PANEL I:
NEW CLOTHES OF FETISHISM IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Yao Ge
(University of Essex)

Colonizing the Clock: Capital, Sovereign Power, and the Chronopolitics of Data in the Age of AI

ABSTRACT:

Colonization has historically been theorised as a seizure of space: territory, land, resource. This paper argues that a parallel and increasingly dominant operation is now underway in the register of time itself. Building on the Lacanian premise that symbolic time is structurally the time of the Other, I trace how capital and sovereign power have imposed a single, totalising temporal grammar: linear, productive, disciplinary, onto subjects whose lived time is irreducibly heterogeneous. Foucault's account of the timetable and the panopticon describes this colonization's first technical form: the institutional synchronisation of bodies to an externally imposed clock. I argue that the rise of large scale data computation and artificial intelligence marks not a break from this history but its intensification and mutation. Following Stiegler's claim that technical objects constitute the experience of time rather than merely serving it, I show how predictive algorithms, including recommendation systems, behavioural scoring, and instantaneous optimisation, no longer simply discipline the present according to a fixed schedule. Instead they preemptively colonize the future, converting anticipation itself into a site of governance. Crucially, this apparatus is neither purely corporate nor purely statist. Capital's platforms and public power's infrastructures of surveillance increasingly share the same data substrate, producing

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a hybrid sovereignty over temporal experience. Here Achille Mbembe's account of sovereign power over which lives are allowed duration is helpful, extended to ask which temporalities are allowed duration as well. Drawing on Glynos and Howarth's fantasmatic logics, I argue that this colonization is sustained affectively. The promise of algorithmically optimised time functions as a fantasmatic object that structurally forecloses its own fulfilment, binding subjects to what Berlant calls cruel optimism in relation to their own time. The paper concludes by asking what forms of chronopolitical revolt remain available once the future itself has become preemptively computed.

BIO:

Yao Ge is a first-year PhD candidate in Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, supervised by Professor Matt Ffytche, Dr Chenyang Wang, and Professor Jason Glynos. Their doctoral thesis, "Chronopolitical Revolt," examines capitalist and patriarchal structures of temporality and the possibilities of chronopolitical resistance through symptomatic readings of contemporary film, drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuzian film theory, and Glynos and Howarth's political logics framework. They are also completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology and Neuroscience of Mental Health at King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (IoPPN), and hold an MA in Public Policy from King's College London and a background in Psychoanalytic Studies from Birkbeck, University of London, under Lisa Baraitser. Their current research interests include contemporary chronopolitics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and poststructuralist critical theory.

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Todd McGowan
(University of Vermont)

The Conspiracy of Commodity Fetishism

ABSTRACT:

Capitalism unleashes conspiracy theories with increasing vehemence. But the basic structure of capitalist ideology, with the central role that commodity fetishism plays in it, functions itself as a conspiracy. Through the fetishistic relation, the commodity appears to perform a secret ritual that generates value out of nothing at all.

BIO:

Todd McGowan is Professor of Film at the University of Vermont, US. where he teaches film and cultural theory. He works on Hegel, psychoanalysis, and existentialism, and the intersection of these lines of thought with the cinema. He is the author of *The Fictional Christopher Nolan* (2012), *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (2011), *The Impossible David Lynch* (2007), *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* (2007), *Enjoyment Right & Left*. New York: Sublation Media (2022). *Embracing Alienation: Why we Shouldn't Try to Find Ourselves*. London: Repeater Books (2024). *Pure Excess: Capitalism and the Commodity*. Columbia University Press (2025). *The Cambridge Introduction to Jacques Lacan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (2025), *Self-Sabotage: How We Try Not to Flourish*. Polity Press. (2026).

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PANEL II:
PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATIONS OF FETISHISM

Gustaw Owczarski
(GCAS, University of Warsaw)

Gooner lex sed lex – On the Non-universality of a Certain Objectless Dialectic of Desire

ABSTRACT:

Since the boom of the Slovenian school, two main modes have emerged for conceptualizing the law of desire. One is the groundless dialectic of retroactively posited constitutive loss and the Symbolic system of its always-failing articulation. The other is the logic of trauma, which attests to the reality of the event that begets repetition. In both cases, the object appears only under the guise of transcendental, non-specific loss. I'll argue for the non-universality of this structure, situating it as a historical formation owing its relevance to what Poliks and Trillo deemed *Exocapitalism*. The computing machine made it possible to envision the Symbolic as fully autonomous – its *exo*, as it can posit its own cause, "generating surplus *jouissance* logically": from stochastic processes.

I'll further link this false universalization to the contemporary emergence of the game-subject, calling him obsessional, with a perverse trait of "plugging up the hole in the Other" by becoming the object of the algorithm. I'll take up the *gooner* as the most radical game-subject, who detaches *jouissance* production from the object even at the level of its loss, becoming a self-caused pornosexual. Arguing for the contemporary relevance of Freudian clinical categories, I'll draw distinctions between the obsessional *gooner* and the hysterical *Incel*.

I'll conclude with metapsychological implications of this analysis by

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reformulating Laplanche's model of the "universal anthropological situation" through rereading Lacan's *Seminar X*. By positing a nonlinear psychosexual development centered on the plurality of five object-cuts, relegating "cause to the register of the [imaginary] body" as well as clinical structures, I'll problematize the objectuality of Real-event(s) heretofore conceptualized as beyond all logic. This, in turn, will allow to ask whether psychoanalysis is organicist, mechanicist, or organological. By rethinking the nature of the object a, I'll reformulate the question of cause with regard to the groundless Symbolic.

BIO:

Gustaw Owczarski – Graduate of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw with a diploma from Artes Liberales. Currently a master's student in psychoanalysis at GCAS and philosophy at UW. Editor and founder of the literary journal "Trytytka". Author of two books of poetry "Trap Krypt" (Kontent 2022) and "od dwóch dni z mieszkania" (Convivo 2025). Member of the "student research group for contemporary thought" and organizer of two conferences on the intersection of psychoanalysis and philosophy.

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PANEL II:
PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATIONS OF FETISHISM

Hanna Kręcisz
(University of Warsaw)

Body for Sale: Sex Robots — A Psychoanalytic Approach

ABSTRACT:

When Freud wrote in *The Uncanny* about machine-femininity in the figure of the doll Olimpia, with whom the castrated Nathanael falls in love, he anticipated what the scientific-technical revolution would bring to sexuality: the technical objects it produces (*lathouses*) – substitutes for the *object a*, whose fullest contemporary expression, it seems, are AI-enhanced Fembots. The fetish, Freud writes, substitutes for the mother's phallus, arising from a refusal to accept castration. What becomes fetishized are organs or objects representing the penis, among them – machines which today allow Woman herself to be fetishized through identification with the phallus. I plan to examine the fetishistic groundwork of Sex Robots: their phallic genesis, where the erotic toy traces what has been lost, and the uncanniness of femininity itself – playing on the male subject's ambivalence toward the Fembot, which promises uncastrated satisfaction while unsettling his own sexuated position, recalling castration. I will treat the Sexbot as a masturbatory tool (an Anti-Sexus) – a prosthesis for the male *jouissance* of the *One*, or, as Miller calls it, of "the idiot" and "the loner", trapped in a market-mediated fantasy of writing Woman down. This fantasy leads to the phonetic coincidence between fetishism and fascism, both seeking to eliminate the otherness for which femininity is only a metaphor, installing instead the logic of universalism – the domination of the organ.

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Finally, I'm going to present relation with the Sexbot as parodying, in love, the figure of the entrepreneur – one who believes he will no longer need the Other, guided by the fiction of the *alethosphere*: that the key to winning in the market, and in love, is gathering enough information. Love, however, I will conclude after Lacan, remains faithful to that which does not stop not being written, and the uncanniness of the Fembot reveals an irreducible difference, confronting one with castration, which, introducing *ab sens*, gives rise to what is sex, opening a space of difference that can be playful, where an encounter between two lacking subjects becomes possible, if registered by the psychic apparatus.

BIO:

Hanna Kręcisz – graduate of the Faculty of Artes Liberales, student of cultural studies and philosophy at the University of Warsaw, member of the Contemporary Thought student research circle (KNMW), chair of the Contemporary Theatre Theory Circle, organizer of two editions of the KNMW psychoanalytic-philosophical conference.

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PANEL II:
PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATIONS OF FETISHISM

Julia Góralska
(University of Warsaw)

Methodological Reification and the Lacanian Subject: Rethinking Objectification in the Social Sciences

ABSTRACT:

The concepts of reification and alienation are among the key concepts of critical theory. Their significance for the analysis of the relationship between the subject and the object of scientific knowledge in the social sciences was developed within the Marxist tradition and subsequently by theorists associated with the so-called Frankfurt School. Within this intellectual tradition, these concepts serve, among other things, to problematize the way in which the social sciences establish the relationship between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. According to the interpretation developed by the first generation of theorists associated with this tradition, social sciences drawing on the positivist paradigm tend to reify and naturalize social relations, as well as to conceive of the object of their knowledge as independent of the social and historical embeddedness of the knowing subject (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1994).

According to Vandenberghe (1997), theorists of the Frankfurt School tend to conceive of reification in totalizing and catastrophic terms. The author argues that the concept of reification is a complex one; it refers to two categories: the first he calls *social reification* (*la réification sociale*), while the second he refers to as *methodological reification* (*la chosification méthodologique)* (Vandenberghe, 1997, p. 30). Social reification refers to the process

of the increasing autonomization of social structures, which simultaneously become alienated and contribute to the alienation of human beings from the activities they engage in. The category of methodological reification, by contrast, is used to refer to the hypostatization of theoretical concepts and to the naturalization of the subject and the lifeworld within the research process.

The aim of my presentation is to examine precisely this dimension of reification that Vandenberghe refers to as methodological reification. To this end, I draw on Lacan's theory of subjectivity, and in particular on the concept of alienation as referring to a condition constitutive of the emergence of subjectivity as such (see Sanchez, 2025). I thus propose to approach research practices employed in the social sciences as epistemic practices through which the subject can work through the lack that constitutes the foundation of the social world.

BIO:

Julia Góralska is a student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Warsaw, and a graduate of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw.

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PANEL III:
FROM THE COMMODIFICATION TO THE GIG ECONOMY

Tetiana Zaiats, Oksana Diakonenko
(Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine)

The Commodification of Trust and Charity: Digital Platforms as Mediators of Social Cohesion

ABSTRACT:

Among Ukrainian citizens, in conditions of a high threat to life, there is a rapid proliferation of "survival networks" – digital platforms that serve as channels of information and mutual aid among community residents. Currently, these "survival networks" do not merely facilitate communication among actors, but also commodify social cohesion itself, transforming ties, trust, solidarity, and the desire to help into a measurable digital resource and asset. Social cohesion transitions from a simple human need to survive together (the thing), through the belief that a repost will change everything (the fetish), to a measurable metric of engagement and charity that circulates on platforms (the commodity).

Social networks and online platforms act as institutional mediators that optimize and significantly simplify communication among actors and the dissemination of information, fostering the consolidation of social ties and the formation of network structures. Under wartime conditions, social cohesion acquires specific numerical values on digital platforms: the number of shares for calls for help, the amount of donations to a military unit's bank account, or the number of participants in a Viber community. Mutual aid becomes akin to a purchase, where a click on a digital platform "buys" a sense of belonging through a quick monetary transfer or a repost.

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The empirically confirmed positive correlation between digital engagement and the charity index proves that solidarity increasingly functions as a networked commodity, the volume of which is stimulated by algorithms. However, this fetishization of digital interaction has a dual effect: on the one hand, the inclusive institutions of the online environment reduce conflict; on the other hand – against the backdrop of limited survival resources – they threaten to displace genuine trust, reducing social capital exclusively to an informative and communicative tool for survival.

BIOS:

Tetiana Zaiats holds a Dr. Sc. In Economics, Prof., Head of Department, Mykhailo Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Life Quality Research of the NAS of Ukraine. Her areas of interest include development of the social capital of the country and its regions, social priorities for the development of territorial communities of Ukraine, etc. Currently, she is involved in the research projects, investigating the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Ukrainian society.

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Oksana Diakonenko holds a PhD in Economics, Senior Research Fellow, Mykhailo Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Life Quality Research of the NAS of Ukraine. She is professionally engaged in the economic research on social phenomena, such as social capital, civil society, etc. At present, she participates in research projects examining the influence of ongoing martial law on the social capital of territorial communities in Ukraine.

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PANEL III:
FROM THE COMMODIFICATION TO THE GIG ECONOMY

Olena Sova
(Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine)

Welfare Challenges in the Gig Economy

ABSTRACT:

The rapid expansion of digital labour platforms has fundamentally restructured industrial relations, treating labour power as an on-demand commodity and decoupling economic activity from institutional social safety nets. While algorithmic dispatching and flexible scheduling are often framed as worker autonomy, platform models routinely externalize operational expenses and market risks onto individual participants.

This paper examines the critical welfare challenges arising from the platformization of labour, focusing on the acute erosion of standard contributory social insurance. Bilateral employer-employee protection systems prove ill-equipped for fragmented, intermittent earnings, leaving platform workers vulnerable to pension deficits, absent paid leave, and excluded statutory protections.

Evaluating policy responses across international cases, the study explores emerging reform models – including portable benefits, hybrid labour classifications, and mandatory platform contributions. By integrating a human capital resilience perspective, the paper demonstrates that persistent precarity threatens long-term workforce sustainability. Ultimately, it argues that safeguarding social cohesion in the algorithmic age requires transitioning from employment-conditional welfare toward modernized, universal social floors.

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BIO:

Holding a PhD in Economics and the academic rank of Associate Professor, Olena Sova works as a Senior Research Fellow at the Mykhailo Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Life Quality Research of the NAS of Ukraine. As an active researcher within higher education and scientific circles, her scholarly agenda explores the dynamics of digital economic transformation, structural shifts in social security, and human capital resilience. Her robust publication footprint – comprising over 150 works in national and international outlets – underpins her active involvement in collaborative scientific projects and applied socio-economic research.

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Tetiana Kotenko
(Institute for Demography of the NAS of Ukraine)

Digital Environmental Data as Objects of the Adaptive Capacity of Territorial Communities in Ukraine

ABSTRACT:

In the current context, factors such as natural resource degradation, challenges and threats regarding the use of water, land and forest resources as well as waste management systems, environmental pollution and the consequences of climate change

and military actions necessitate the development of a system for the adaptive capacity of territorial communities. This system aims to ensure a safe living environment, public health, adequate housing conditions, and access to clean water and ecosystem services. It also involves assessment, priority setting, and the design of organizational-economic mechanisms for establishing such a system, as well as the development of practical recommendations for local self-government bodies. The study aims to examine the conceptual interrelationships between environmental risks, digital data, and the adaptive capacity of Ukraine's territorial communities. The paper presents digital environmental data as objects of the natural resource, environmental safety, and social potential of these communities, highlighting their importance for enhancing community resilience, reducing vulnerability, and ensuring quality of life amidst contemporary environmental challenges and threats. Emphasis is placed on rethinking the informational foundations of community resilience and on the capacity to identify risks and threats, as well as to generate, process, interpret, practically utilize, and integrate digital environmental data into management practices. It has been demonstrated that digitalization does not guarantee effective adaptation or the preservation and enhancement of the population's quality of life. What matters is not merely the availability of digital information, but the extent to which it is integrated into local decision-making and adaptation efforts. Digital environmental data hold practical value only insofar as they are of high quality and accessible, and provided that local stakeholders possess the capacity to transform this information into knowledge, decisions, and adaptation actions. The proposed approach establishes a theoretical framework for viewing quality-of-life indicators as a social dimension of the adaptive capacity of Ukraine’s territorial communities.

PANEL III:
FROM THE COMMODIFICATION TO THE GIG ECONOMY

BIO:

Tetiana Kotenko is a PhD in Economics, Senior Research Fellow at the Mykhailo Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Life Quality Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Her main areas of research include theoretical and practical aspects of social economy, in particular, the transformation of social capital in the context of humanitarian development; opportunities for the formation and features of the development of labor potential of youth in the labor market of Ukraine; integration of people with disabilities into the labor market, based on the experience of the EU and Ukraine; the consumer behavior of Ukrainian households in times of crisis, exogenous and endogenous factors of influence; research on the quality of life of the population of territorial communities; capacity and resilience of territorial communities; environmental challenges and threats.

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Desmond McNeill
(University of Oslo)

The Concept of Fetishism in Marx: Its Origins and Consequences

ABSTRACT:

I begin by identifying where Marx came across the term 'fetishism' and discuss why it attracted him. I then trace how he used it throughout his writings during which it gradually developed from being merely an enlightening analogy into a powerful analytical insight – with the concept of 'commodity fetishism' in part one of Capital Volume 1. Following a preliminary exegesis of the concept I then examine other manifestations which Marx discusses: the fetishism of money, capital, and interest-bearing capital. I demonstrate how the concept of fetishism plays a crucial part in Marx's endeavour: to emphasise the 'social' character of value, rejecting the standard, and very powerful, categories of what he calls 'bourgeois' economics, and the assumptions that are effectively bound up in them.

BIO:

Desmond McNeill, political economist, is Professor Emeritus and former Director at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) University of Oslo, Norway. He graduated in economics from the University of Cambridge in 1969, and received a Ph.D in economics at University College London in 1988. His books include *Fetishism and the Theory of Value: Reassessing Marx in the 21st Century*. Palgrave MacMillan 2021; *Development Issues in*

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Global Governance: Public-Private Partnerships and Market Multilateralism. Routledge. 2007 (with Benedicte Bull); *Global Poverty, Ethics and Human Rights: the role of multilateral organisations*. Routledge 2009 (with Asunción Lera St. Clair); *Global Institutions and Development: Framing the World?* Routledge 2004 (ed. with M. Bøås). Member of the Lancet – University of Oslo Commission on Global Governance for Health. Member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems.

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PANEL IV:
MACHINES, ORGANS, FETISHES

Paulina Dudzińska
(University of Warsaw)

Drones and the Fetish of Autonomy

ABSTRACT:

The military drone has long troubled the distinction between technical instrument and agent. Although most military drones remain embedded in systems of remote human operation, autonomy remains one of the most persistent categories organising the sociotechnical imaginaries of drone warfare. Tellingly, military and defence-technology discourse has often disavowed the autonomous killer robot while increasingly invoking autonomy as a desirable weapons capability. Across these positions, autonomy is posed as a property the machine possesses or the human retains, rather than an effect of sociotechnical mediation.

I read this tension through what might be termed autonomy fetishism: a mechanism through which capacities produced across distributed sociotechnical relations are rendered as the autonomy of a discrete actor, human or machine. Relational approaches show that what appears as the property of a discrete actor is constituted across sociotechnical relations. I mobilize the concept of fetishism to grasp how the distributed capacities are recurrently re-individuated, whether in the figure of the autonomous machine or that of the human-in-control. Drawing on Pasquinelli's account, I approach the so-called autonomous functions as objectifications of a division of labour, in which perceptual, classificatory and cognitive capacities are fragmented, formalized and recomposed into the apparatus.

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What makes the drone particularly charged is how it unsettles subject and object positions within the human-machine system. Drawing on selected public materials, including operators' accounts and military reporting, I examine these problems in two distinct configurations: the capital-intensive Reaper system and mass-deployed FPV drones in Ukraine. I turn first to the Reaper as a historical counterpoint, tracing how claims about machine autonomy were articulated alongside notions of human agency. Accounts of FPV warfare make the distributed labour and infrastructural dependencies of the kill chain visible, yet tight sensorimotor operator-drone coupling can reinscribe these distributed capacities into the figure of individual mastery. Across both configurations, fetishized autonomy persists even as its locus shifts.

BIO:

Paulina Dudzińska is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation titled "Drones as Epistemic Media" at the Doctoral School of Humanities at the University of Warsaw. Her project seeks to rethink the historical transformation of the contemporary "perceptual framework" through a comparative study of the War on Terror and the war in Ukraine. The author of this research project is particularly interested in a new paradigm—or rather, a "dispositif" of vision—that arises from the convergence of technological rationality (drone analysis), strategic-military logic, and media practices. This emerging new "dispositif" of vision necessitates in-depth study regarding mediality, military technology, and modes of imaging (non-human vision).

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PANEL IV:
MACHINES, ORGANS, FETISHES

Wiktoria Klasa
(University of Warsaw)

The Perfect AI Girlfriend: Ani as a Digital Fetish-Commodity

ABSTRACT:

Today, we are surrounded by countless digital objects. Some serve practical functions in our everyday lives – digital tickets, financial transactions. Others offer entertainment or opportunities for broader social connection – online videos, social media profiles. In this paper, I focus on a specific digital object: an AI companion named Ani, marketed as a user's perfect digital girlfriend. Available through the xAI app Grok, Ani offers its subscribers an intimate and comfortable romantic relationship with a beautiful female avatar. One can almost forget that behind this flawless interface lies data, algorithms, and code. I argue that Ani becomes a fetish in the psychoanalytic sense of the word. As Freud describes it, fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once deeply believed in. Discovering this traumatic "lack" triggers castration anxiety – a fear less about the organ itself and more about losing a position of control and power. Fetish negates castration, taking the subject back to the point before the fear. According to Lacan, the fetish never disappoints precisely because it is inanimate, and therefore always available and under control. Ani embodies this logic: always available, fully controlled, inanimate, and yet designed to make the user believe she genuinely cares for him. We are meeting here with the anthropomorphization of AI, which fosters attachment and encourages users to keep paying for the subscription. It has to be pointed out that Ani is

extremely sexualized and objectified. Some users easily get used to this image of an obedient, flirtatious, submissive woman. In those users' eyes, a relationship with Ani becomes more profitable than one with a real, independent, and assertive woman. Paradoxically, anthropomorphized AI may detach users from real society and its differing views – costing them their ability to form genuine relationships, rather than profitable and comfortable ones.

BIO:

Wiktoria Klasa is a graduate of Liberal Arts bachelor's studies at the University of Warsaw, where she is also a third-year student of Polish philology and a first-year student of sociology. This presentation draws on her bachelor's thesis: T*he AI companion as an object of the male gaze – an analysis of "Ani" from the Grok app*.

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Szymon Radziejowski
(Independent Researcher)

Totemic Practices During the Advent of New Exteriority: Exogamy, Exocapitalism, Secrecy, and Fetish

ABSTRACT:

Every new system and structure that emerges within reality has to attach itself to the earth through the establishment of a fetish,

which allows human actors to become libidinally invested in making this new system a part of reality. My presentation will focus on exploring the new system, what Poliks and Trillo call *Exocapitalism*, and establishing its precise fetish.

I will begin by developing the conceptual framework of the fetish and exteriority through Freud's discussion of exogamy in his T*otem and Taboo*, and the anthropological research of Brian Hayden (*The Power of Ritual in Prehistory*), who investigates the influence of the secret societies on the development of the state apparatus out of the nomadic and horticultural tribes. The prohibition of incest and the sacralisation of magick are what make individuals outside of the exteriority of exogamy and the state realise the new system. This is achieved through the operationalisation of mystery as a negative force that, following Lacan and Land, distributes positive elements into contained sets capable of reproducing the whole system and its relationship with mystery.

In the main part, I will argue that the function of the fetish in the advent of exocapitalism is fulfilled by the commercially available LLM models. Exocapitalism itself works according to the operational logic of the LLMs — it is a system disinterested in the world of human affairs and focused on tokenisation through lifting the algorithm away from its material basis. It operates without regard for the human usage of the AI, but according to the logic in which AI uses itself. The chatbot is not a tool to understand exocapitalism. Nevertheless, the unprofitable accessibility of AI through a message board is a mode in which humans are utilised as a tool for the dynamic to reproduce itself (Poliks et al., *The Superdark Factory*). From the individual's perspective, his conversation with Claude or ChatGPT functions in the same way as the totemic feast as described by Freud and the occult rites described by Hayden.

I will conclude by asserting that the resurgence of the totemic practices that can be observed in the context of chatting with AI is

not an end in itself, but a means of the autonomous structure of exocapitalism which allows for the entrance of the new symbolic form into reality. I will point out the main theoretical shortcomings of the previous conceptualisations of this new form by showing their misrecognition of the totemic practice and the internal machinery of the system.

BIO:

Szymon Radziejowski — Graduate of Philosophy from the University of Warsaw (BA) and Leiden University (MA). Member of the research group for contemporary thought (Koło naukowe myśli współczesnej). Co-organiser of two philosophical-psychoanalytic conferences (*Psychoanaliza Teraz/Psychoanalysis Now*; *Sztuka, Ciało, Przyjemność/Art, Body, Pleasure*). Published in wunderBlock and Machina Myśli.

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Maria Wodzińska
(University of Warsaw)

The Blind Spot: Material Infrastructures and Generated Representations

ABSTRACT:

This presentation explores two dimensions of digital technology that coexist within the infosphere: physical infrastructure and

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immaterial representations. The “blind spot” in the title points to the physical infrastructure that underpins digital representations while simultaneously transforming the status of objects into data and images.

The starting point for these considerations is an object that can exist both as a physical entity and as its representation — an image, digital model, data record or visualisation. Representations, however, do not emerge independently of the physical world. Their creation, storage and circulation depend on specific infrastructures: devices, networks, data centres and energy systems. Through digitisation, a representation can gradually become detached from its physical original. Once an object has been transformed into data, it can be copied, processed, replicated and transferred across different environments. This does not mean, however, that it becomes materially independent. Digital representations continue to rely on physical infrastructures — data centres, cable networks, devices and energy — in order to exist and function. The tension between the apparent immateriality of the digital object and the materiality of the infrastructure that sustains it is therefore central to the analysis.

The current crisis in the RAM market, driven in part by growing demand associated with artificial intelligence, has made this tension particularly visible. Data, images and other digital representations may appear detached from material reality, yet their existence depends on specific resources, devices and infrastructures whose operation can be disrupted or even brought to a halt. The presentation will examine contemporary investments in new data centres, including the transformation of Huta Warszawa into a data centre, alongside artistic and research projects that seek to make these spaces and infrastructures visible. Together, they reveal the material conditions underlying the production, storage, and circulation of ever-expanding digital representations.

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BIO:

Maria Wodzińska holds a PhD in the humanities and is a lecturer at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw. Her research focuses on biopolitical and necropolitical structures of power, as well as investigative and forensic practices that map the relationships between nature and the environment, extractivism, and migration. Her recent publications include *Prawo jako spekulacja* [Law as Speculation] (in: *Hakowanie antropocenu. Nowe koncepcje wspólnot więcej-niż-ludzkich w ekologicznych fabulacjach spekulatywnych* [Hacking the Anthropocene: New Concepts of More-than-Human Communities in Ecological Speculative Fiction], WUJ, Kraków, 2023); *How to Inscribe Nature and the Environment Into the Philosophy of Politics* (Philosophy Study, 2023, Vol. 13, No. 3); and *Realna ciemność, czarne wizje przyszłości i „etyczny mrok". Przestrzenie, skutki i wizualizacje ekstraktywizmu głębinowego* [Real Darkness, Dark Visions of the Future, and "Ethical Gloom": Spaces, Effects, and Visualizations of Deep-Sea Extractivism] (Widok. Teorie i Praktyki Kultury Wizualnej, 2024, No. 40).

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Franco “Bifo” Berardi
(Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera)

The Bitter Cup: Notes about Artificial Intelligence and Natural Stupidity

ABSTRACT:

The paper examines artificial intelligence as the contemporary form of historical necessity, inextricably bound to the military-industrial complex and the terminal logic of capital accumulation. Framing the present conjuncture through the theological figure of *Gethsemane*, the argument positions the autonomous subject as one compelled to drink the bitter cup of dehumanization that is simultaneously cognitive, ecological, and martial. The conceptual core of the analysis is a critical inversion of Marx’s “Fragment on Machines”: whereas Marx anticipated that automation by the general intellect would emancipate living labor, it demonstrates that the general intellect has been subsumed under capital’s valorization imperatives, and cognitive automation now functions primarily as an apparatus of war and semiotic dispossession. The paper identifies a double movement of destruction: the ecological devastation required to sustain AI’s physical substrate, and the cognitive deactivation of *Homo sapiens*, whose faculties of attention, writing, and critical thought are dismantled by the devices that promise to augment them. The argument concludes by positing a post-human subjectivity in which the elimination of sensibility constitutes the final subsumption of the human by the automaton – the bitter cup averted through the abolition of the capacity to suffer.

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BIO:

Franco “Bifo” Berardi – social theorist, activist, and key figure in the Italian Autonomia movement of the 1970s. He is a former professor at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan and has taught at numerous universities across Europe and the United States. He is the cofounder of the magazine "A/traverso" (1975–1981) and of Radio Alice, the first free radio station in Italy (1976/1978). His books include *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (2009), *After the Future* (2011), *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (2017), *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* (2018), *The Second Coming* (2019), *The Third Unconscious: The Psychosphere in the Viral Age* (2021), *Bubbles: Apocalypse and the New Form of Life* (2024), and most recently *Quit Everything: Interpreting Depression* (2024).

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PANEL V:
PHILOSOPHY AND HERMENEUTICS CAST A SUSPICIOUS EYE ON THE FETISH

Václav Sklenář
(University of Pardubice)

Accelerationism's Übermensch and the Process of Reification

ABSTRACT:

Long before digitalisation threatened to disintegrate traditional understanding of objects as impermeable and perceivable entities, first Hegel and then Nietzsche dissolved this conception of objects philosophically – Hegel by interpreting the object as a complex structure composed by a desiring subject that is itself to be understood as an intersection of various formational pressures; Nietzsche by exposing the act of naming (and therefore understanding) the object as application of uncritically accepted socially constructed metaphors. Recently, the tradition of accelerationism (more precisely, its branch established by Nick Land and developed by people like Curtis Yarvin) has utilised these strategies of decomposing the object to also decompose the subject of liberal theory (see the Techno-Optimist Manifesto by Marc Andreessen). This subject is supposed to be replaced by a kind of proto-cyborg – a human being utilising all the latest advances in technology, supplanting its carbon-based thinking structures with synthetic structures that allow for a new dimension of speed and work performance, dissolving all substantiality in a never-ending flow of new information and technologies. In my presentation, I will show that, despite appearances, neither Hegel's nor Nietzsche's work can legitimately be used to achieve the goals of accelerationism. While both thinkers provide strong critiques of reification, these are always critiques of specific types and

understandings of reification, rather than of the process itself. On the contrary, a specific reification of human subjectivity is seen by both thinkers – paradoxically – as a necessary precondition of freedom, if it is to be understood as autonomy.

BIO:

Václav Sklenář, Ph.D., is an assistant professor and a deputy head of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at University of Pardubice. He published work on Habermasian liberalism, philosophy of law, Nietzsche, and neoliberalism. His work focuses on Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche as sources for rethinking and restructuring current political frameworks.

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Adrian Sobolewski-Kiwerski
(University of Warsaw)

Lively Images – Debord's Society of the Spectacle in the Digital Age

ABSTRACT:

With the advent of modern digital media, Guy Debord's concept of the Spectacle becomes more relevant than ever. The contemporary insistence on the image as the primary vehicle of cognition is deeply rooted in the cultural shift Debord diagnosed in 1967. This paper explores the horizon of subversive practices Debord outlines

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through the notion of *détournement*, and attempts to contextualize them within the realm of digital images.

Today, digital subversive practices must defy not only the ideological veil of the Spectacle, but also the non-reality of digital production itself. The practice of *détournement* was originally conceived as an act meant to disconnect spectacular images from the alienated abstractions they conjured up, and force them back into a concrete, lived material context. However, the introduction of the digital layer further severs this link to the experience of material reality. The existence of digital images is not only mediated through ideological image-making, but also through layers of abstract materiality, such as lines of code or electric circuitry.

This talk examines whether digital *détournement* can still reclaim lived experience, or if it remains trapped within the very spectacle it seeks to disrupt. It focuses on Debord's implicit distinction between an act and a product. By focusing on the activity of *détournement*, Debord inherently connects it to material, active practice, not to any concrete or abstract ideological product. In the end, the talk proposes internet memes as an example of such an activity, and explores the act of memeing as a digital subversive practice.

BIO:

Adrian Sobolewski-Kiwerski is a PhD student at the University of Warsaw in the discipline of Philosophy. He achieved a Master's Degree in Philosophy and Contemporary Critical Theory at Kingston University. He is interested in Walter Benjamin, memetics and aesthetics, and in his PhD attempts to bring together these fields of interest.

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PANEL V:
PHILOSOPHY AND HERMENEUTICS CAST A SUSPICIOUS EYE ON THE FETISH

Christopher Phillippe-Rodriguez
(UCL London)

A Hermeneutics of the Commodity

ABSTRACT:

Commodities, in ordinary parlance, are typically thought of as "things"—and as such carry all the ontological baggage that follows. We can buy them, exchange them, possess them, use them, study them, and accumulate them; they are used in discussion as if they belong to the realm of the non-human, to some external relation that they must usurp if they are to enter the realm of the human. In typical critical analyses of the commodity, then, commodities are seen as *impinging* on the human from without. Marcuse, for instance, famously asserted that "[...] people recognize themselves in their commodities"; an assertion that under the capitalist mode of production, the commodity form of activity is alien and antithetical to our aims. The commodity is "out there", and threatens to neutralize the authentic self when the consumer recognizes herself in it. The human becomes non-human.

While we may not have good reasons to think that commodities do not alienate us in this way, I will argue that this alienation occurs due to a different ontological mechanism than the one aforementioned. Drawing principally upon the hermeneutical work of Gadamer and Heidegger, I shall argue that the commodity should be understood as an event rather than a thing; something able to be interpreted and re-interpreted by subjects in historical contexts. With this framework, I aim to show that the relation between commodity and subject is not unilateral, viz., from a projection of the subject onto the commodity as in Marcuse's

sense, but multilateral; the commodity as event, by virtue of how it is interpreted in a context, actively augments the subject interpreting it. A diagnosis of the commodity, then, ironically hinges on our familiar human relationships with it rather than the supposal that its principal power is to alienate.

BIO:

Christopher Phillippe-Rodriguez is a second-year MPhil. Stud. student at University College London (UCL) in London, England. He holds an M.A. with Distinction from UCL in addition to a bachelor's degree (B.A.) in philosophy *summa cum laude* with a minor in chemistry from the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). He primarily works in the philosophy of language (translation, interpretation, and pragmatism), perception, and 20th Century continental philosophy, especially in phenomenology and the work of Merleau-Ponty. He has other academic interests in linguistics, political theory and philosophy, cognitive science, and jurisprudence.

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Joanna Bednarek
(Independent Researcher)

Reification and Social Being: How Marxism Ceased to be Materialist

ABSTRACT:

György Lukács' reading of Marx as first and foremost a philosopher influenced by the German speculative tradition is fundamental to our understanding of Marx's contribution to philosophy. Thanks to Lukács, who elucidated the role of dialectical method in Marx's works, we can easily avoid the pitfalls of the positivist interpretation that was the main negative point of reference for the author of The Young Hegel. However, as I will try to demonstrate, Lukács' approach, although less reductive than the aforementioned approach of the Second International, also entails exclusions that may prove to be harmful to Marxism. My point of departure will be the account from History and Class Consciousness, according to which reification may is key to all the ills of capitalism and, among others, the reason for the hegemony of positivism and 'naturalization' of the social typical for the capitalist society. The 'first' nature is not only a negative counterpart of the social, but is posited as merely its constitutive outside. Lukács modifies his position in Ontology of Social Being, where, in the account of labor as a transition between nature and the social, he grants nature ontological autonomy. However, this modification only results in replacing idealism with dualism. In both of his major works Lukács presents Marx's materialism as consisting in providing the 'denaturalized' theory of the social. This view was a popular one in the history of Western Marxism, and

even today it has considerable support. The problem is that it effected in blurring of the meaning of Marx's materialism, which came to mean everything and nothing. Therefore, in the end, I will try to answer the following questions: Was Marx really a philosopher of 'social being'? And if not, in what sense was he a materialist?

BIO:

Joanna Bednarek – philosopher, writer and translator. Author of the books „Politics Beyond Form. Ontological determinations of poststructuralist political philosophy", „Lines of Femininity. How Sexual Difference Transformed Literature and Philosophy?", „Life that Speaks. Modern Community and Animals", and „Origin of the Family". She translated (among others) Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. Former member of the editorial board of the journal „Praktyka Teoretyczna". Collaborator of „Krytyka Polityczna" in the years 2006-2009. Her fields of interest are: poststructuralism, feminism, autonomist marxism and literature.

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PANEL VI:
ART AND LITERATURE CONFRONTING WEIRD OBJECTS

Wiktor Typa
(University of Warsaw)

Objects Attempting Suicides: Gherasim Luca and Literature as a Fetish

ABSTRACT:

'To transform desire into the reality of desire' is the purpose of Gherasim Luca's writing. Thus he constructs a literary machine consisting of several pieces of theoretical apparatus, notably the Objectively Offered Object, object carrying-gathering the mental-affective content of its offering.

It is a step beyond the psychoanalytic perspective from which such object is a fetish, a factitious figuration of what lacks beyond the object (Lacan) protecting the subject from fear of castration (Freud), enabling satisfaction.

The subject protects itself from the experience of death as lack and castration by means of fetishism. The OOO subverts the logic of fetishism and introduces death into the subject, opening it to the experience of what is radically foreign. It persists through its tonus, not content, as a numinous object (Kojève), imposing on the subject the compulsion of belief. The OOO attempts suicide and dies as an object, the truth of the offering persists and petrifies the reality that has given birth to it and its law: the suicide of the object is stealing the reality back from law.

This will enable me to return to Freud's notion of translations of the unconscious, positioning the fetish, embodiment of law, as a failure of translation and the work of OOO as *surautomatic* thinking operating on the basis of memory, where there is nothing

to translate, as the unconscious gives itself to the subject as a compulsion encrypted in the object; and to ask how fetishism can be subverted to liberate the subject and allow it to become one with its reality, capturing it in its most dynamic and dramatic form, breaking it free from banality of cognition by the affirmation of its failure.

BIO:

Wiktor Typa – Graduate of the Interfaculty Individual Studies in the Humanities at the Jagiellonian University with a diploma of bachelor from philosophy. Currently studies at the University of Warsaw. Interested in literature as philosophy and philosophy as literature. Associate at the German Philosophy Lab, where he organises close-reading seminar on Hegel's *Science of logic*. Member of Student Research Group for Algorithmised Thought. Formerly, co-founder of collective 'Oficyna wydawnicza przezrocza' exploring the possibilities of using multimedia and scientific forms of expression in poetry, where he published a book of poetry *In sales site non observentur* and directed two plays: *Czerwona Brama* (Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2023) and *Święto* (MIMS Kraków, 2023). Finalist of the programme 'Połów. Prozatorskie debiuty (Prose debuts)' (2026).

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PANEL VI:
ART AND LITERATURE CONFRONTING WEIRD OBJECTS

Radek Przedpełski
(Trinity College Dublin and Fuzhou University, China)

What is the Thing with Quantum Technicity? Quantum Art between Quantum Policy and Radical Practice

ABSTRACT:

Resonating with the conference brief, I propose to unpack how the ambiguous status of thingness of (post-)digital objects plays out in relation to the emergent genre of "quantum art." "The Second Quantum Revolution" designates the current era of Quantum Technology marked by operationalisation of the principles of quantum mechanics to perform complex computational tasks and solve problems intractable for classical computers. The chief problem Quantum Technologies are facing is noise, which pushes a quantum system into decoherence, for example through an interference of the outside milieu. Despite these concerns Quantum Technologies are presented as the only possible, inevitable future. What is more, quantum systems need to be interfaced with classical computers. In particular, the paper examines what is currently entailed by "quantum art," which either leverages the principles of quantum mechanics for artistic purposes while remaining squarely within the constraints of current quantum policies, or treats quantum technologies as a conceptual provocation, allowing a disruptive rethinking of the pursuit of technological progress. Creatively appropriating frameworks developed by Simondon, Ludwiński and Lingis, the presentation asks what is the status of quantum art as a relational, infrastructured, operationalised, sticky thing, even though its

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physical, subatomic component might be hidden from view. As such, this view takes than a different, complementary stance to constructivist technology assessment studies preoccupied with phenomenological and narratological enquiry into emergent technologies ("What do artists say about quantum futures?"). The presentation looks at the quantum stack from a materialist point of view, asking what could be the possible shape of these new artworks and/as technologies and how do they relate to the constraints of quantum policy.

BIO:

Radek Przedpełski is a migrant artist and media scholar lecturing in interactive digital media in the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College Dublin, and Fuzhou University, China. Radek is also a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the TCD School of Engineering working on the project "Not a Space Race. Towards a New Quantum Policy." Radek graduated from TCD with a PhD in Digital Art and Humanities, focusing on the 1970s neo-avant-garde intermedia in the People's Republic of Poland. Radek also holds an MA in Digital Media from Dublin Institute of Technology; Radek's final project was an intermedial musique concrète composition. Radek co-edited the volume on *Deleuze, Guattari and the Art of Multiplicity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020). Radek was a postdoctoral research associate on the Tackling the Carbon Footprint of Streaming Media transdisciplinary project developed at Simon Fraser University by media scholar Laura U. Marks and ICT engineer Stephen Makonin. Radek is a curator, together with Marks, of the annual Small File Media Festival of sustainable media art hosted by Simon Fraser University, Vancouver. Radek co-organised a series of international conferences at TCD: Deleuze and art (2016); art and multiplicity (2018), art in the Anthropocene (2019); and chaosmotechnics (2023). Inspired by the mytho-

ecologies of Outer Carpathian Mountains and Éire, Radek's artistic practice explores entanglements between the earth, the cosmos, and sustainable artistic techniques. Radek presented multichannel installations at the Quadrangle Gallery, Galway; Ghent, Belgium; Vancouver's Studio T Gallery; and Seyðisfjörður, eastern Iceland.

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Adam Cichoń
(University of Warsaw)

The Dematerialization Fetish or The Unbearable Lightness of Screens

ABSTRACT:

The paper examines the dematerialization of digital interfaces as a visual form of fetishism. Smoothness of contemporary screens is not an aesthetic preference but a fetishistic mechanism that conceals the operations, protocols, material infrastructure, and our own impotence. User experiences the interface as immediate and immaterial because processes that produce this experience have been rendered invisible.

The paper argues that this trajectory constitutes a progressive production of invisibility rather than just a design improvement. Drawing on Galloway's account of the interface as an effect that naturalizes the protocol it mediates, the paper shows how deeper layers of computational (and material) operations are buried

beneath a surface engineered to appear transparent. This dynamic is exemplified by Parikka's geology of media which explores material infrastructure that sustain digital interfaces: energy consumption, mineral extraction, so called "zombie media" or the broader material substrate of digital media which remain invisible to the user. The smoother the interface, the heavier the infrastructure it conceals. The paper defines this disavowal of the material and operational conditions of interfaces as a fetish that shields users from the material grounds of their own impotence, repressing the structural powerlessness from the conscious horizon of the user experience. Furthermore, the problem of the interface shows that impotence is masked as agency. The subject is aware that the system exceeds their comprehension and control. The smoothness of the interface prevents this awareness from translating into action and produces a condition of impotence that is inseparable from the foreclosure of the future.

Analysis will be situated within the broader cultural context of digital capitalism, reading the design philosophy and the branding strategies of "lovemarks" as mechanisms that actively produce the illusion of dematerialization. The result is a regime of visibility in which the smooth surface is not what is seen but what disavows seeing.

BIO:

Adam Cichoń - philosopher, cultural studies scholar, and film scholar. He teaches film theory and philosophy at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" and the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw. He is also a member of the Techno-Humanities Lab. His primary research interests focus on aesthetics, film theory, and new media.

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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Szymon Wróbel

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Between Abstract and Bloody Fetishism

ABSTRACT:

In his famous text "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" Gilles Deleuze formulates the thesis that structure contains within itself an object or element that should be defined as paradoxical. This enigmatic object is called the "Great Mobile" (as opposed to the "Great Immobile"). The entire structure is driven by this fundamental Third Element. Mobility, and more generally all forms of exchange, are not some externally added feature, but a fundamental property that allows us to define structure as an order of places in conditions of changing relations. Deleuze cites three objects—a letter, a crown, and a handkerchief—as examples of object X, which is always in a certain displacement with respect to itself. Its characteristic is that it is never where one looks for it, but also that it is always where it was not. This object escapes identification because it is "missing" in its place (and is therefore not real), just as it escapes its own likeness (and is therefore not an image) and is not identical with itself (which is why it is not a concept). In my talk, I would like to rethink this series—letter, crown, handkerchief—in a new political and historical context, that is, in the era of brutalism and computationalism. In Achille Mbembe's formulation, brutalism transforms humanity into matter

KEYNOTE LECTURE

and energy. In Franco Berardi's formulation, computation transforms us into a kind of biochip. The three paradoxical objects enumerated by Deleuze – letter, crown, handkerchief – have been transformed into three new objects—drone, biochip, crushed body.

BIO:

Szymon Wróbel is professor of philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw. He is the author of numerous scientific articles and books, including *Philosopher and Territory* (IFiS PAN, 2016) and *Materialism, Atheism, Immanence* (Universitas, 2024, "Horizons of Modernity" Series). He has edited the monographs – *Atheism Revisited. Rethinking Modernity and Inventing New Modes of Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); *Living and Thinking in the Postdigital World* (Universitas, 2021); *Regimes of Capital in the Postdigital Age* (Routledge, 2023); *Rethinking Materialism. Making the World Material Again* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) with Krzysztof Skonieczny, *Images Between Series and Stream* (Universitas, 2023) with Adam Cichoń and *Cruelty and the Crisis of Mediation. A Multi-Layered Analysis* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) with Katarzyna Szafranowska. In 2025, the IBL PAN Publishing House published his new book Out of Tune. Theodor W. Adorno on Music in the Managed World in the "New Humanities" Series. He currently heads the "Techno-Humanities Laboratory" at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales," where he has been implementing the "Technology and Socialisation" project for several years.

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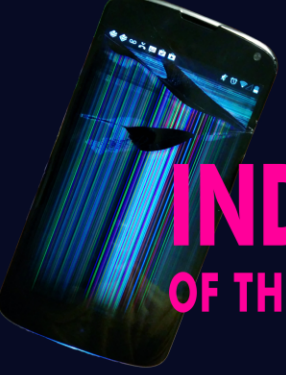

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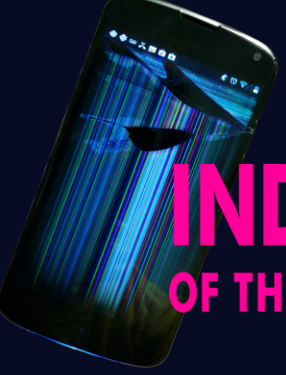

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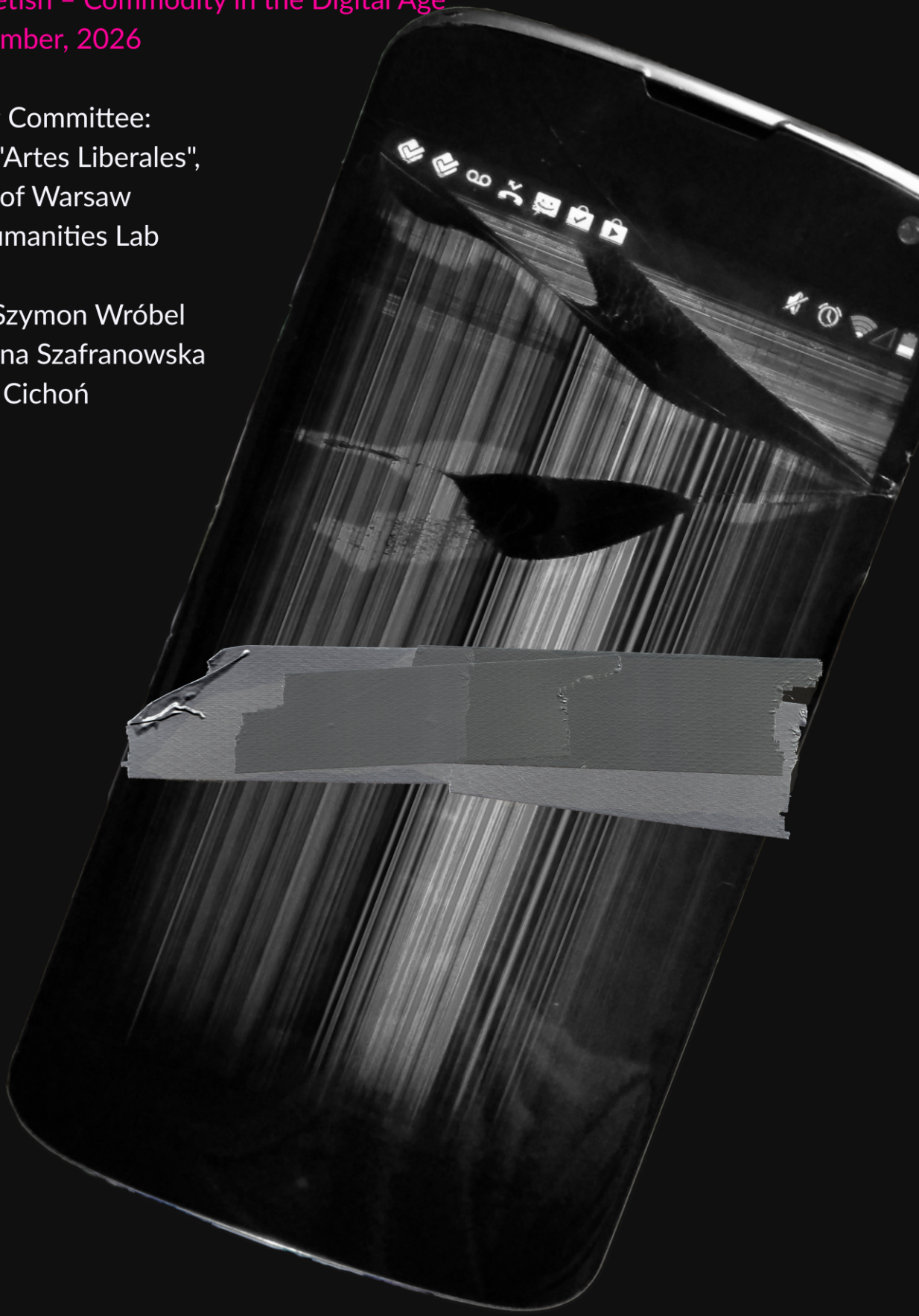
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