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Developing a Conception of Technological Domination,  
Alienation and Ideology with Marx beyond Marx  
Marino, O.**

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GÜNTHER ANDERS' THEORY OF MEDIA AND  
COMMUNICATION: DEVELOPING A CONCEPTION OF  
TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINATION, ALIENATION AND  
IDEOLOGY WITH MARX BEYOND MARX

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requirements of the University of Westminster for the  
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## Abstract

In this thesis, I contribute to the emergent English-language scholarship on little-known 20th century German-Austrian philosopher Günther Anders (1902-1992), whose work is unique for its critical focus on technology. Anders studied under Husserl and Heidegger and was Hannah Arendt's first husband. He also knew members of the Frankfurt School such as Marcuse and Adorno. However, he gained little notoriety during most of his life and has been described as an outsider of philosophy. In 1936, Anders fled Europe for the United States to escape Nazi persecution owing to his Jewish heritage. He returned to Vienna in the 1950s and dedicated the second half of his life to the struggle against nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War. In this thesis I argue that, despite often being associated with Heidegger, Anders' experience of the Second World War led him to undergo an epistemological break. He turned away from Heidegger and towards Marx. Anders can therefore be viewed as a humanist-Marxist. His work updates Marx's view of domination, alienation and ideology, applying it to the question of industrial warfare, nuclear annihilation and post-war consumer technologies. I show how aspects of contemporary digital societies illustrate Anders' critical theory of technology. I choose two case studies: military drones and dating apps. I show that Anders' theory can help us understand how these technologies are involved in modern forms of domination, alienation and ideology. I do this by using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to evaluate the written and spoken accounts of military drone operators. I moreover conduct 18 semi-structured interviews with dating app users, which I equally analyse using CDA. According to Anders, modern technologies allowed humans to act absent-mindedly without identifying with the consequences of these actions. This meant that terrible atrocities could be committed without the accompanying moral feelings of empathy and regret. I show how military drone operators and dating app users equally convey the sense of a conflicted identification with their own actions. However, I derive the concept of technological splitting to update Anders' concept of Promethean shame. With technological splitting affects are not absent but expressed in a raw, overtly direct fashion. They can consequently be compartmentalised and split off from operators' and users' sense of self.

## Table of Contents

<b>GÜNTHER ANDERS' THEORY OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION: DEVELOPING A CONCEPTION OF TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINATION, ALIENATION AND IDEOLOGY WITH MARX BEYOND MARX.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Figures .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Author's declaration .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Definitions.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1. General Introduction.....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 The guiding research questions of this thesis .....	15
1.2 Who was Günther Anders? .....	16
1.3 Did Anders' alleged personal pessimism influence his critical view of technology? .....	20
1.4 Anders' reception and my argument regarding Anders' Marxism.....	22
1.5 Anders' theory in relation to the case studies .....	25
1.6 How Anders' work fits into Marxist debates surrounding technology .....	31
1.7 Presentation of the thesis.....	36
<b>2. Theoretical Foundations.....</b>	<b>39</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	39
2.2 Human essence .....	41
2.2.1 Introduction.....	41
2.2.2 Hegel and Aristotle .....	42
2.2.3 Postmodern anti-essentialism.....	43
2.2.4 Marx's reversal of Hegel's idealism.....	45
2.2.5 Conclusion .....	46
2.3 Technology .....	47
2.3.1 Introduction.....	47
2.3.2 What is a machine? .....	47
2.3.3 Does technology have an autonomous essence? .....	49
2.3.4 Conclusion .....	51
2.4 Domination.....	52
2.4.1 Introduction.....	52
2.4.2 Marx and Engels' critique of the Young Hegelians.....	53
2.4.3 Critique of the postmodern conception of power .....	55
2.4.4 Conclusion .....	57
2.5 Alienation .....	57

2.5.1 Introduction.....	57
2.5.2 Religious alienation .....	58
2.5.3 Political alienation .....	59
2.5.4 Economic alienation .....	61
2.5.5 Conclusion .....	63
<b>2.6 Ideology.....</b>	<b>64</b>
2.6.1 Introduction.....	64
2.6.2 Materialist conception: ideas as tied to the mode of production .....	64
2.6.3 Criticism of the postmodern view of ideology .....	67
2.6.4 Conclusion .....	68
<b>2.7 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3. Günther Anders' Theory of Technological Alienation: from Heidegger to Marx.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>3.2 The human.....</b>	<b>76</b>
3.2.1 Introduction.....	76
3.2.2 Early Anders.....	77
3.2.3 Epistemological break .....	78
3.2.4 Mature Anders .....	80
3.2.5 Conclusion .....	81
<b>3.3 Technology .....</b>	<b>82</b>
3.3.1 Introduction.....	82
3.3.2 Early Anders.....	82
3.3.3 Epistemological break .....	83
3.3.4 Mature Anders .....	85
3.3.5 Conclusion .....	87
<b>3.4 Domination.....</b>	<b>88</b>
3.4.1 Introduction.....	88
3.4.2 Early Anders.....	89
3.4.3 Epistemological break .....	90
3.4.4 Mature Anders .....	91
3.4.5 Conclusion .....	93
<b>3.5 Alienation .....</b>	<b>93</b>
3.5.1 Introduction.....	93
3.5.2 Early Anders.....	94
3.5.3 Epistemological break .....	96
3.5.4 Mature Anders .....	98
3.5.5 Conclusion .....	100
<b>3.6 Ideology.....</b>	<b>101</b>
3.6.1 Introduction.....	101
3.6.2 Early Anders.....	102
3.6.3 Epistemological Break .....	103
3.6.4 Mature Anders .....	105
3.6.5 Conclusion .....	106
<b>3.7 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>106</b>

<b>4. Günther Anders and Other Theorists .....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>4.2 The human.....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.2.1 Introduction.....	112
4.2.2 Other theorists: McLuhan, Simondon .....	113
4.2.3 How Anders is different .....	114
4.2.4 How this is relevant to today .....	116
4.2.5 Conclusion .....	117
<b>4.3 Technology .....</b>	<b>118</b>
4.3.1 Introduction.....	118
4.3.2 Other theorists: Feenberg.....	119
4.3.3 How Anders is different .....	120
4.3.4 How this is relevant to today .....	121
4.3.5 Conclusion .....	122
<b>4.4 Domination.....</b>	<b>123</b>
4.4.1 Introduction.....	123
4.4.2 Other theorists: Baudrillard .....	124
4.4.3 How Anders is different .....	125
4.4.4 How this is relevant to today .....	127
4.4.5 Conclusion .....	128
<b>4.5 Alienation .....</b>	<b>128</b>
4.5.1 Introduction.....	128
4.5.2 Other theorists: Ellul .....	129
4.5.3 How Anders is different .....	130
4.5.4 How this is relevant to today .....	133
4.5.5 Conclusion .....	135
<b>4.6 Ideology.....</b>	<b>136</b>
4.6.1 Introduction.....	136
4.6.2 Other theorists: Frankfurt School .....	136
4.6.3 How Anders is different .....	138
4.6.4 How this is relevant to today .....	139
4.6.5 Conclusion .....	140
<b>4.7 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>5. Methodology for Applying Günther Anders' Theories to Two Contemporary Case Studies: Military Drones and Dating Apps .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>5.2 Selecting the case studies .....</b>	<b>144</b>
5.2.1 Presentation of military drone and dating app technology .....	144
5.2.2 The relation between military drones and dating apps and Anders' theory.....	150
<b>5.3 Research questions .....</b>	<b>152</b>
5.3.1 Military drones .....	152
5.3.2 Dating apps.....	154
<b>5.4 Outline for the military drone case study .....</b>	<b>157</b>

5.4.1	Analysing pre-existing written and oral material on military drones .....	157
5.4.2	Ethics .....	158
5.4.3	Using CDA for both official and civil society accounts .....	159
5.4.4	Using elements of CDA to investigate domination, alienation and ideology .....	160
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Outline of the dating app case study.....</b>	<b>161</b>
5.5.1	Using interviews as a research method .....	162
5.5.2	Ethics .....	162
5.5.3	Sampling and recruiting participants .....	163
5.5.4	Formulating a semi-structured interview .....	165
5.5.5	Elements of CDA I will use.....	169
<b>5.6</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b><i>Domination: Killing Made Easy Through Military Drone Use .....</i></b>	<b><i>172</i></b>
6.1	Introduction.....	172
6.2	Military drones and Apache helicopters.....	173
6.3	Commands to kill from the air .....	174
6.4	CDA analysis of conversational descriptions of attacks .....	176
6.5	Nomination and argumentation strategies.....	182
6.6	Do military drones gamify killing?.....	187
6.7	Conclusion .....	191
<b>7.</b>	<b><i>Alienation: The Dissociation Enabled by Drone Use and Operator Agency .....</i></b>	<b><i>193</i></b>
7.1	Introduction.....	193
7.2	Did I or we kill? .....	194
7.3	Strategies of dissociation.....	198
7.4	Strategies of identification .....	202
7.5	Conclusion .....	206
<b>8.</b>	<b><i>Ideology: Drone Footage Functioning as Propaganda .....</i></b>	<b><i>207</i></b>
8.1	Introduction.....	207
8.2	Surgical strikes and precision killing.....	208
8.3	War porn and drone porn.....	212
8.4	Infrared footage of strikes on YouTube and the automation of propaganda.....	215
8.5	Conclusion .....	219
<b>9.</b>	<b><i>Domination: Dating App Design, Individualistic Sex and Surveillance .....</i></b>	<b><i>221</i></b>
9.1	Introduction.....	221
9.2	Catfishing.....	223
9.3	A 'numbers' game' in a 'separate moral universe' .....	229
9.4	Dating app use and toxic gender scripts .....	239
9.5	Surveillance on dating apps: justified by questions of security and a culture of openness but also perpetuating systemic forms of intrusion .....	246

9.6 Conclusion .....	255
<b>10. Alienation: Sex and Romance Through the Prism of Dating Apps, an Alienating Dimension .....</b>	<b>257</b>
10.1 Introduction .....	257
10.2 Preliminary examples of the reduction and fragmentation of mental and physical attraction .....	258
10.3 The standardisation of communication arising from a process of alienation.....	264
10.4 Beauty standards and users' presentation of self .....	275
10.5 Users' discourses denoting one-dimensional communications and homogenisation .....	280
10.6 Feeling 'disposable' .....	285
10.7 Consumeristic sex and feelings of disconnection .....	287
10.8 Users' preference for in-person sexual and romantic encounters .....	298
10.9 Conclusion .....	300
<b>11. Ideology: Dating App Use as an End in Itself .....</b>	<b>304</b>
11.1 Introduction .....	304
11.2 The perfect match ideology .....	305
11.3 Swipe life, Swipe city .....	310
11.4 Dating app marketing reacts to user common sense surrounding dating apps .....	316
11.5 Dating app realism .....	322
11.6 A sex positive ideology? .....	325
11.7 Conclusion .....	329
<b>12. General Conclusion .....</b>	<b>330</b>
12.1 Summary .....	330
12.2 New concepts emerging out of the case studies .....	335
12.3 Is Anders a technological determinist? .....	349
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>358</b>
YouTube Comments.....	393
<b>Appendix A: Sampling Source Material for the Military Drone Case Study.....</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>Appendix B: Questionnaire for dating app case study .....</b>	<b>409</b>
<b>Appendix C: Copyright permission .....</b>	<b>414</b>



## Table of Figures

Figure 2.7.1: The cycle of technology, domination, alienation and ideology	70
Table 3.7.1: Summary of Anders' epistemological break	109
Table 5.3.1: Military drone research questions	154
Table 5.3.2: Dating app research questions	157
Table 5.5.4: Dating app research questions and questionnaire	169
Figure 6.3: Ministry of Defence. 2015. "RAF Reaper Neutralises Taliban Bomb Factory," November 25, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 1 min 20 sec. From the UK's Ministry of Defence	179
Table 6.3: Expressions used to designate targets and shoot at humans	181
Figure 6.4.1: terms referring to targets. Table by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From The Intercept	188
Figure 6.4.2: representation of people killed on official documents. Image by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From The Intercept	188
Table 6.4: Expressions used to speak of killed or soon to be killed humans	190
Figure 7.2: List of personnel indirectly involved in operation of drones. Image by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From The Intercept	195
Table 7.2: The perspectivisation strategies adopted by drone operators to speak of their involvement in drone killings	198
Table 8.2: Euphemistic and techno-euphoric expressions used to designate weapons	211
Table 8.4: Racist and gaming expressions used to designate footage of drone and apache helicopter attacks, plus ironic bad logic to justify killings	217
Table 9.3.1: Dating app users' discourse and the topoi of gaming, hunting and commerce	234
Table 9.3.2: Dating app users' discourse and feelings of subjective identity and responsibility	239
Table 9.5: Dating app privacy policies and the construction of surveillance as benign	254
Figure 10.2: The League advert tells prospective users their 'time is valuable' and presents an ideal 'Harvard Law School' graduate who is 'Head of operations @ Google' as a potential match	260
Figure 10.3.1: Non-alienated interpersonal relations	266
Figure 10.3.2: Structuring of interpersonal relations through dating app interfaces, involving specialised, alienated communication	267
Figure 10.3.6: Process of alienation and structuring of communication	269
Figure 10.3.3: An official promotional video from Tinder promoting a song 'inspired by Tinder bios'. From Tinder. 2021c. We Made A Song Inspired By Tinder Bios   Tinder. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhRU7tKLd6c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhRU7tKLd6c</a>	270
Figure 10.3.4: Google search checking for the originality of a user's Tinder bio	271
Figure 10.3.5: Hinge prompts and responses. From Hernandez, Eddie. 2020. "Best Hinge Prompts, Answers To Use On Your Dating Profile." March 6, 2020. <a href="https://eddie-hernandez.com/best-hinge-questions/">https://eddie-hernandez.com/best-hinge-questions/</a>	273
Table 10.4.1: Users discourses comparing dating app encounters to in-person encounters	283
Table 10.4.2: Users' discourses characterising dating app encounters	284
Table 10.5: Users' discourse describing their relation to their use of dating apps	297
Figure 11.2.1: Two Hinge users metaphorically bumping into each other for the first time on the app. From Studio NYC. 2017. The Dating Apocalypse (Hinge App). <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU</a>	306

Figure 11.2.2: Two Hinge users immediately forming a 'meaningful match' (Hinge 2020) within seconds of meeting. From Studio NYC. 2017. The Dating Apocalypse (Hinge App). <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU</a>	306
Figure 11.3.1: Tinder makes the argument that it can efficiently allow people to meet others while travelling. The user can pre-emptively connect with people in Paris, her next travel destination, while still in London. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus   Product Release   Tinder. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04</a>	312
Figure 11.3.2: Tinder argues that it can ensure that users' holidays are packed full of enjoyable life-events. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus   Product Release   Tinder. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04</a>	313
Figure 11.3.3: Tinder promotes a casual vision of sex and romance, whereby users explore their options by flirting and dating multiple users at the same time. Accordingly, the user changes her location setting to Istanbul, the new city she is exploring,	314
Figure 11.3.4: Tinder's advert highlights how its user is fully satisfied with her holiday. She has been able to make the most of her free time. Now her labour time is bearable. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus   Product Release   Tinder. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04</a>	315
Figure 11.4.1: Tinder advertising slogan. From PATIO Interactive. 2014. Tinder App Commercial. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r6YZvle4jE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r6YZvle4jE</a>	318
Figure 11.4.2: Tinder commercial. From Pan Up Productions. 2018. Tinder - Our Story. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ83J7R85sA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ83J7R85sA</a>	319
Table 11.4: Realism in contemporary dating app PR	325
Figure 12.2.1: Technological splitting and digital identity diffusion reproduce domination, alienation and ideology	348
Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders' thought on the relation between society and technology 1/3	351
Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders' thought on the relation between society and technology 2/3	352
Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders' thought on the relation between society and technology 3/3	353
Figure 12.3.1: Evaluating the degree of Anders' techno-determinism. Photograph courtesy of Gerhard Oberschlick	355
Figure 12.3.2: Anders techno-pessimism and techno-optimism. Photographs courtesy of Gerhard Oberschlick	356
Table A: Military drone tokens	408

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Despite receiving great help and advice from others, all errors, arguments and conclusions are my own.

## **Author's declaration**

I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

## Definitions

Dialectical relation: dynamic relation between two or more separate but mutually influencing categories. Examples: essence and existence; ideal and real; subject and object; freedom and necessity; ought and is; unity and separation; inner and outer; Eros and Thanatos. In Hegel's philosophy, the tension arising from the interaction between these elements can be resolved by moving towards more general, all-encompassing concepts. Thus 'reason overgrasps [i.e. reaches over and into] reality' (Maybee 2009, 7). When applied to humans, this conception results in a view of 'society as a complex of complexes' (Fuchs 2016b, 54). Society then forms a 'totality consisting of overgrasping moments' (Fuchs 2016b, 54).

Affordances: functionalities, intended modes of use and possibilities of use embedded within software and hardware design. This term seeks to find a middle ground between technological determinism and social constructivism. Users of technology are influenced and conditioned by software and hardware design. However, they remain situated agents able to discover new functions and 'domesticate' (Sørensen in Berker et al. 2005, 44) appliances.

Techno-optimism/euphoria: the belief that technological progress automatically yields social progress. This leads individuals to over-estimate the emancipatory potential of new technologies, overlooking their negative effects. Techno-optimism/euphoria is connected to an optimistic hope that new technologies are the key to providing solutions to current and future problems. It consequently excludes social factors.

Lad culture: male group behaviour characterised by 'misogynist banter, objectification of women and pressure around quantities and particular forms of sexual interaction and activity' (Phipps and Young in Lewis, Marine and Kenney 2018, 58). See also Nichols (2018) for the more complex concept of 'laddism'.

Hook-ups: transient sexual encounters that are often direct and feature minimal emotional involvement between partners.

## **Abbreviations**

ICTs: information communication technologies

SNSs: social networking sites

CDA: critical discourse analysis

UAVs: unmanned aerial vehicles, a.k.a military drones

PR: public relations; marketing

# 1. General Introduction

## 1.1 The guiding research questions of this thesis

The main research question of this thesis is: How does Günther Anders' critical theory of technology help us analyse contemporary digital societies. To answer this, I first respond to the following sub-questions RQ.A: How can Günther Anders' theory of technology be interpreted as a humanist-Marxist theory of domination, alienation and ideology? Chapters 2 and 3 provide a foundation for responding to this question. I then look at RQ.B: How does Günther Anders' theory help us analyse the way in which modern day examples of digital media are involved in the reproduction of domination, alienation and ideology?

To respond to RQ.B, I select two case studies: military drones and dating apps. For the military drone case study, in the sphere of domination, I ask RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators' psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans? In the sphere of alienation, I ask RQ1.2: What is the impact of military drone operator's work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt, and their mental health? In the sphere of ideology, I ask RQ1.3: In what respects do military drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of 'surgical strikes'?

For the dating app case study, in the sphere of domination, I ask RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users? In the sphere of alienation, I ask RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards? In the sphere of ideology, I ask RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a "perfect match" of individuals?

In answering these questions, this thesis aims to contribute to the emergent English-language scholarship on Günther Anders (see Müller 2019, 2017, 2015; Müller and Anders



2016; Schwarz 2019; Beinsteiner 2019; Nosthoff and Maschewski 2019; Babich 2019, 2013; Dawsey 2019, 2017, 2012). In particular, I wish to develop an understanding of the parallels between Anders' work and Marxian theory, showing how Anders can be used to update and apply the latter to the digital societies.

## **1.2 Who was Günther Anders?**

Günther Anders was born Günther Stern in Breslau in 1902. Breslau was the largest city in the historical region of Silesia, which was governed by Prussia after 1742. The city is now called Wrocław and is situated in modern-day Poland. Anders died in Vienna in 1992, after becoming an Austrian citizen and spending most of the second half of his life there. Anders came from an intellectual family. His mother and father, Clara and William Stern, were early founders of the field developmental psychology (Driers 2018). Anders was also the first cousin of famous cultural critic Walter Benjamin. Despite presently enjoying little notoriety outside of Germany, Anders was involved in prominent intellectual circles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He went to university in Freiburg where he studied under the direction of Edmond Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Anders [1980] 1992, 430). He later moved to Marburg where he continued his studies and became friends with Hans Jonas. Anders would go on to marry Hannah Arendt in 1929, who also attended the same universities. He would later separate from her in 1936.

Anders' connection to German intellectual circles continued when, in 1929, he gave a conference on behalf of the Kant-Gesellschaft [Kant Society] in Frankfurt. The latter was attended by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Karl Mannheim and Paul Tillich (Anders [1980] 1992, 430). In 1930, Anders attempted to habilitate in philosophy under the direction of Paul Tillich in Frankfurt. This would have involved writing a thesis, the acceptance of which would have then allowed Anders to qualify as a teacher within the university of Frankfurt am Main. He would have joined the Institute of Social Research, a centre for social theory with a strong Marxian influence that grouped together prominent figures such as Adorno and Horkheimer. However, his dissertation on the topic of philosophy of music

was rejected by Adorno (Anders [1980] 1992, 430). In his biography of Anders, Liessmann argues that this was due to 'Anders' supposed proximity with Heidegger' (Liessmann 2002, 139-140, *computer generated translation*). He further states that this 'meant that the project could not be realised, which led to the subconscious resentment between Adorno and Anders that dominated their relationship for decades' (Liessmann 2002, 140, *computer generated translation*).

Anders nevertheless stayed in contact with members of the Frankfurt school including Adorno throughout his life. However, he also retained a critical perspective on their work. Hence Liessmann states:

In American exile, Anders probably had contact with Horkheimer and Adorno; for a time he lived in Herbert Marcuse's house in Santa Monica; he also wrote a few articles for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, mainly reviews. Anders took part in discussions at the Institute for Social Research, and in 1942 he also presented theses on a theory of needs there, without, however, belonging to the narrower core of exiled social researchers. His relationship with Horkheimer and especially with Adorno remained cold. Even after their return from emigration, their relationship remained extremely tense. On the one hand, Anders could not forgive Adorno for refusing an active commitment against nuclear annihilation, and Anders did not wish to be mentioned in the same breath as Adorno (Ketzereien, p. 318). On the other hand, Anders had always appreciated Adorno's philosophical, especially music-philosophical, gifts. Moreover, the closeness of these two thinkers in terms of content is so evident that an enmity out of similarity seems conceivable. Out of all the Frankfurt School theorists, Adorno, whose critique of Heidegger also owes a great deal to Günther Anders, was the only one who for a moment, in *Negative Dialectics* came close to Günther Anders' radical concern about the man-made apocalypse: "No universal history leads from savagery to humanity, but certainly one from the slingshot to the mega-bomb. It ends in the total threat of organised humanity." (Liessmann 2002, 140, *computer generated translation*)

His proximity and distance from the Frankfurt School illustrates how Anders came to occupy the position of an 'outsider of philosophy' [*Außenseiter der Philosophie*] (Putz 2017, 160) of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical circles. This explains why interest in Anders is legitimate, but also

only began to gain momentum belatedly outside of Germany in the last decade, particularly in Italy, France and now the US and the UK.

After his setback in Frankfurt in the 1930s, Anders returned to Berlin where he became a journalist for the *Berliner Börsen-Kurier* (Driers 2018). According to a widespread but unverified anecdote, in the context of the rise of Hitler to power, the editor of this newspaper was concerned that the Jewish surname Stern was appearing under too many articles. Anders therefore chose a pseudonym, Günther *Anders*, which in German literally means *different*. When Hitler gained power, the Gestapo raided playwright Bertolt Brecht's apartment and found Anders' details on his address book (Liessmann 2002, 164). Anders had to suddenly flee Berlin. He moved to Paris, which he had already visited between 1926 and 1928 (Arendt and Anders 2017, 187). Here he quickly became integrated within Parisian intellectual circles. For instance, he assisted Kojève's lectures on Hegel (Young-Bruehl 1986, 116). Hannah Arendt joined him later that year. This is where she would subsequently meet her second husband, Heinrich Blücher.

From Paris, Anders eventually fled to New York in 1936 (Anders [1980] 1992, 431). Here he initially sustained himself through factory work and journalism. In 1939, he moved to Los Angeles where he also spent time working as a cleaner in prop rooms in Hollywood studios (Liessmann 2002, 24), possibly in the hopes of becoming a screenplay writer (Anders and Eatherly 1962, 28). These odd jobs were to provide him with significant observational material without which, he later professed (Anders [1979b] 2008, 69), he could not have written his magnum opus, *Die Antiquiertheit Des Menschen [The Obsolescence of Man]*, vol. I and II, (Anders [1956] 1961, 1980). In particular, Anders' experience of the production line and the world of cinematic entertainment helped solidify this work's focus on the relation between humans and technological systems. Anders finally returned to Europe in 1950, after both his parents, who had also fled to the US, died in New York. He moved to Vienna and took up Austrian citizenship (Driers 2018). The city would constitute his base from then on.

Anders first published *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. I [*The Obsolescence of Man*] (Anders [1956] 1961), in 1956. This work contained both a critique of the information communication of technologies (ICTs) of Anders' time, the radio and the television, and a critique of the nuclear bomb. In a letter to Anders dated 9 January 1957, Arendt defined this as 'excellent – the best piece which exists on the topic' (Arendt and Anders 2017, 44, *my translation*). Overall, the work deals with the ways in which technology frames and conditions human life. Anders further shows how technology problematises humans' relation to their actions, complicating their moral and emotional appraisal of them. This work crystallised Anders' as a critical theorist of technology. His almost exclusive focus on technology sets him apart from most other critical theorists with affiliations to the Frankfurt School. Perhaps in some respects Anders' work mirrors Marcuse's while being tangibly different.

However, Anders shunned an academic career, refusing a post as professor at the Free University of Berlin in 1958. Liessmann writes that Anders

turned down a possible career as a literary essayist, which could have arisen after the success of his book *Kafka - Pro und Contra*, as well as a professorship allegedly held out for him by Ernst Bloch. (Liessmann 2002, 25, *computer generated translation*)

This decision was probably due to Anders' desire to address everyday people rather than academic circles.

In fact, Anders states in the introduction to *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. 1 (Anders [1956] 2003), that:

the following pages are addressed first and foremost to consumers, that is, to the radio listeners and television viewers. They are only in second place addressed to professional philosophers and to the specialists of radio and television (Anders [1956] 2003, 98, *my translation*)

In a later interview, Anders further argued that during the war:

writing texts on ethics that only academic colleagues would have read and understood, would have been senseless and absurd, not to say immoral. Just as

senseless as if a bread maker only made bread for other bread makers (Anders [1979b] 2008, 61, *my translation*)

This gives an insight into Anders' bitter view and relation to academia. Indeed Anders only published the second volume of *The Obsolescence of Man* (Anders [1980] 2011) in 1980 towards the end of his life.

Anders' commitment to activism occupied most of his schedule and would have been hard to sustain through an academic career. Liessmann describes how:

The extermination of humankind made possible by the construction of the atomic bomb became the subject to which he devoted the following decades of his life as a freelance journalist. In 1954, he became a co-founder of the anti-nuclear movement, travelled to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and published his reflections and observations in the volume *The Man on the Bridge*. In 1958, he flew to Tokyo to participate in the anti-nuclear congress taking place there, where he led a seminar on "Morality in the Atomic Age". In 1959, he began a correspondence with Claude Eatherly, the reconnaissance pilot who gave the signal to drop the first atomic bomb. (Liessmann 2002, 25, *computer generated translation*)

This mirrors Anders' description of how:

[b]etween the publication of the first volume and that of the second, I therefore dedicated the most part of my activity to opposing nuclear armament and the Vietnam war (Anders [1979] 2002, 12, *my translation*)

The second volume of this work is largely a collection of essays written from the 1960s onwards. Anders maintains a provocative style in both these volumes. In them, he primarily took on the role of a 'spreader of panic' (Anders [1987] 2008, 84, *my translation*), largely alerting the world to the danger of nuclear weapons. Hence Anders did not arouse academic interest during most of his life. His work was primarily recognised toward the end of his life. For instance, he received the Adorno Prize in 1983 and the Sigmund-Freud-Prize in 1992 (Driers 2018).

### **1.3 Did Anders' alleged personal pessimism influence his critical view of technology?**

Anders remained in contact with Hannah Arendt after helping her and her second husband Heinrich Blücher flee to the United States in 1941. The correspondence between the two (Arendt and Anders 2017) shows that they had a complex relationship. There are many points when the pair fail to meet. In fact, they only met twice after 1950. There is also a gap in the correspondence of nearly a decade and a half. Some have suggested that this indicates that Anders had a bitter and pessimistic character. According to this view, Anders' rather pessimistic philosophy of technology derives from his equally negative personality.

For instance, Di Cesare comments that, in the correspondence with Arendt, Anders employs a 'cold and detached' (Di Cesare 2017, XIV, *my translation*) tone indicating that he felt resentful and irritable towards Arendt. Di Cesare speculates that this is due to his jealousy at her success and notoriety. She hypothesises that, in turn, Arendt considered Anders to be a 'megalomaniac, who was incapable of stable affection, and clumsy even in his work' (Di Cesare 2017, XIV, *my translation*). She further portrays Anders as a failed intellectual with artistic aspirations, noting that for Anders the 'outcome of the 17 years of emigration was disastrous' (Di Cesare 2017, XIII, *my translation*). His poverty during this period 'buried his dreams' (Di Cesare 2017, XIII, *my translation*). Putz further notes that, with age: 'Anders developed an image of himself that was not very humble. He sometimes adopted a superior tone. In short, he was not very easy company' (Putz 2017, 156, *my translation*).

Anders' philosophy of technology is arguably fairly pessimistic. In the conclusion, I comment on whether it constitutes a form of techno-determinism, arguing instead that it is a form of techno-pessimism without techno-determinism. It therefore seems fair to speculate that Anders had a degree of pessimism within his character and that this was reflected in his work. However, the construction of the negative myth of Anders as a failed intellectual become bitter and existing in the shadow of Arendt — a difficult husband, with three failed marriages — is unhelpful in attempting to evaluate Anders' unique philosophy of technology. In this thesis, I focus on Anders' theoretical contribution. I exclusively look at his life history to further clarify his theory, without speculating on his personal character

and personal relations. In particular, I make the argument that Anders experienced a turn away from a Husserlian and Heideggerian influence and towards Marx and Marxism during and after the Second World War.

Hence, in this thesis, I do not focus so much on Anders the polemicist or the activist but rather on Anders the theorist. The same condition as an outsider of academic circles which allowed Anders to be provocative also enabled him to develop an original and valuable theory of technological domination, alienation and ideology. In this thesis I argue that the latter can be seen as a continuation of Marxist themes applied to technology. The resultant theory is highly relevant to the digital era.

#### **1.4 Anders' reception and my argument regarding Anders' Marxism**

In Germany, scholarship on Anders started gaining momentum towards the end of his life. It then reached other continental European countries relatively quickly. In Italy, an edition of *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I, was published as early as 1963 by Il Saggiatore (Anders [1956] 2003, 4). His most important books were then published and republished in the early 1990s (e.g. Anders [1956] 2003, [1980] 1992). Interest in France followed, with his books being translated beginning from the early 2000s (e.g. Anders [1956] 2002, [1980] 2002, [1984] 2015). Awareness of Günther Anders is just starting to gain momentum in the English-speaking world, though many of his books have yet to be officially translated into English. Christopher Müller, Jason Dawsey and Babette Babich are some of the first German-speaking academics to promote Anglophone research on Günther Anders. Müller has translated some important texts of Anders' into English such as Anders' essay on Promethean shame (Müller 2016) and most recently *Language and End Time (Sections I, IV and V of 'Sprache und Endzeit')* (Anders 2019). Mounting interest in Anders in the English-speaking world became tangible in 2019 when the journal *Thesis Eleven* (vol. 153, issue 1) dedicated a special issue to Anders.

The German scholarship on Anders is arguably the most advanced. It is unique in evaluating Anders' influences in terms of Husserl and Heidegger while at the same time

highlighting his, in some respects, less evident influences from Marx (see Dijk 2000; Clemens 1996). The fact that I don't speak German has meant that I have had limited access to the complete secondary literature on Anders. However, because growing up I spent 7 years in the Italian school system and the 5 remaining years in the French one, I am fluent in both Italian and French. This has allowed me to access the secondary literature on Anders in Italy and France. I have also been able to read an extensive range of Anders' work, as most of Anders' books have been translated and published in Italian.

Some translations into English of Anders' work remain attached to anonymous documents found on the internet and particularly from sites such as [Lib.com](http://lib.com). An English translation of *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011), for instance, is a PDF document that appears to be translated from a Spanish version of this text. I have used these texts after evaluating that the quality of the translation is sufficiently good through comparisons with the Italian and French versions. When English texts were not available, wherever possible I have looked at Italian versions owing to the more established nature of the book editions compared to the French ones. I have looked at the original German versions of these works when I needed to consider specific terms used by Anders. Finally, as seen above, I have employed translation software to quote some passages on Anders from the German secondary literature.

In preparing the theoretical foundations for the qualitative empirical analyses, I have had the opportunity to make a theoretical contribution to Anders studies. The latter follows leads within the German secondary literature, which emphasise Anders' affiliations to Marxism. Specifically, I have used Anders' interview with Mathias Greffrath (Anders [1979b] 2008), given at the age of 77, together with a comprehensive reading of Anders' works to highlight that Anders' thought is not continuous but subject to radical breaks. I have argued that Anders underwent an epistemological break with his early Heideggerian and phenomenological influence. Beginning from his early thirties, he turned instead toward Marx. Hence, in Chapter 3, I map biographical elements of Anders' against the development of his thought. I originally argue that Anders' thought can be divided into an early, middle



and mature period. Anders underwent an intensifying rapprochement with Marxism, which began from his middle period after his emigration to Paris. It intensified with his coming to terms with the Second World War, his emigration to the US and return to Europe in the 1950s. This argument has allowed me to show that Anders' theory can help us understand how technology is involved in the modern re-production of domination, alienation and ideology understood in Marxian terms. I have, moreover, updated Anders' notion of Promethean shame through outlining a new concept arising out of my research: that of technological splitting. I outline this in the conclusion, tying it to domination, alienation and ideology.

My reading of Anders as a Marxist represents a point of departure from most of the English-language secondary literature on the topic. For instance, Müller has highlighted parallels between Anders' philosophy and postmodern thinkers. Thus Müller compares Anders with Derrida (Müller 2015). He further foregrounds how Anders' philosophy can be linked to questions of big data and privacy, the hyper-visible (Müller 2017) and Masco's concept of the 'nuclear uncanny' (Masco 2006, 27). Babich has focussed on how Anders' philosophy relates to questions of the posthuman, reading Anders through reference to Husserl and Heidegger and comparisons to Donna Haraway, Friedrich Kittler and Bruno Latour (Babich 2013, Babich 2019).

A notable exception is constituted by Dawsey (2019), whose latest work explicitly highlights Anders' influence by Marx. In contrast, to Dawsey's overall understanding of Anders as a post-Marxist, however, I view Anders as a humanist-Marxist. Humanist-Marxism, which is also sometimes known as Socialist humanism, comprises theorists such as Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. It is notable for its focus on alienation and its rejection of a purely economic understanding of the latter. Humanist-Marxists are also generally influenced by Marx's early writings as well as his later ones. This chimes with Anders' statement in 1979 that during his late twenties: 'the young Marx started to have a certain influence [on me], but that occurred only after my thesis' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 57, *my translation*). Barbara Epstein argues that: 'Socialist humanism asked what human nature

consists of and what sort of society would be most conducive to human thriving' (Epstein 2017, 17). She further states that:

What socialist humanists did (and do) believe is that there is such a thing as human nature, that is, that humans, like other animal species, have characteristics, including specific needs, abilities, and limits to those abilities. (Epstein 2017, 17)

This view is compatible with Anders' view of technology as exceeding the normal limits of human sentiments and faculties of understanding.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this thesis is globally an original application of Anders' theory to a qualitative empirical analysis of two case studies: military drones and dating apps. Overall, it shows how Anders' theory can illuminate aspects of contemporary digital societies, while equally updating a humanist-Marxist critique of the latter. I show how Anders' theory can help clarify in what respects military drones and dating apps are involved in the reproduction of modern forms of domination, alienation and ideology. For the military drone case study, I look at a variety of material including poems, blogposts and interviews involving current and former military drone operators (chapters 9, 10 and 11). I equally supplement this material with YouTube comments and leaked documents. For the dating app case study, I conduct 18 1 hour-long semi-structured interviews with dating apps users (chapters 9, 10 and 11). I then employ CDA to evaluate the material and demonstrate how it both illustrates, and is clarified by, Anders' theory.

### **1.5 Anders' theory in relation to the case studies**

Anders' critique of the nuclear bomb highlights its absolute nature, which arises from its power to destroy humanity. His critique is unique in employing the all-encompassing nature of this threat as a springboard to discuss the role of capitalist technologies more generally. Thus Anders' theory connects weapons of destruction with ICTs. For instance, he argues that modern humans only apprehend nuclear explosions in the form of televised images of detonations from the comfort of their living rooms. According to Anders, the small format of television sets from the 1950s meant that nuclear explosions were represented as

insignificant, far-off events that did not directly concern the viewer. Thus Anders highlighted how modern media dissociated human perception and emotions from human actions, facilitating modern forms of domination, alienation and ideology. The fact that nuclear bombs could spell the end of the very people who built them illustrated this disconnect.

Just as Anders' theory produces a broad view of technology as a whole, I focus my case studies on two apparently disparate yet related pieces of technology: military drones and smartphone-enabled dating apps. Anders was concerned with assessing how technology mediated and framed human emotions, such as feelings of empathy and moral responsibility. Anders argued that: 'Our soul has stayed way behind compared to the point reached by the metamorphosis of our products, that is of our world' (Anders [1956] 2003, 26, *my translation*). Hence he highlighted 'the limits of all [man's] faculties (of his imagination, of his capacity to feel, of feelings of responsibility etc.)' (Anders [1956] 2003, 26, *my translation*). If Anders was alive today, he would be interested in military drones and dating apps because these modern forms of technology frame and complicate two interrelated primary human drives: hate and love.

Anders discussed how the individuals occasioning nuclear explosions were only directly involved in the factory production and aerial deployment of atomic weapons. They did not directly witness the devastation they achieved as a result of this activity. Thus nuclear bombs made killing operations seem 'in order and clean' (Anders [1956] 2003, 231, *my translation*). Military drones are unmanned planes that can stay in the air for extended periods of time. They are equipped with cameras and laser guided missiles. These are directly operated by two personnel that control the plane and receive battleground information through video- and audio-feeds, through monitor screens and earpieces. However, other teams also check the footage in real time and direct the operations. All personnel can sit completely out of harm's way tens of thousands of kilometres away from the aircraft, which is controlled remotely via satellite and cable links. Just like the nuclear bomb, military drones involve a sanitisation of killing. They enable operators to conduct

strikes at a distance, viewing humans targets as pixelated silhouettes on black and white screens.

Anders further discussed how the radio and television came to fulfil sociality needs of individuals who treated the images and voices they saw and heard as 'portable chums' (Anders [1956] 2003, 122, *English in original*). Anders described how humans could feel emotionally close to these 'intimate ghosts' (Anders [1956] 2003, 121, *my translation*), going so far as to prefer their company to that of actual people. I similarly look at how dating apps respond to users' desire for proximity. Dating apps are image and geo-localisation-based smartphone applications that facilitate sexual and romantic communication. They enable users to assess and engage with others who are situated within a certain geographical region. This happens primarily through the digital portraits that each individual uploads onto their profile. If users mutually approve each other's profile, they can send direct messages to one-another. Dating apps thus offer humans the opportunity to develop feelings of love and attraction through images and short form written communications on virtual chats. In chapters 9, 10 and 11, I analyse how this practice frames and influences modern sentiments related to sex and romance.

Just as Anders did with the nuclear bomb and the television, it is possible to establish a connection between drones and smartphones, the hardware component of dating apps. Modern drone operations are based on the surveillance of phone networks and internet surveillance. For instance, SIM signals are often employed, instead of a laser beam, to aim weapons at individuals (U.S. Military 2013a) (B.5). Smartphones, in turn, can be used to view footage from drone video feeds, which record attacks and make their way onto video sharing platforms. These images show a sterilised view of killing that contributes towards modern ideologies and war propaganda. Similarly, Anders analysed how televised images of mushroom clouds could inspire enthusiasm for, rather than fear of, atomic bombs.

Nuclear weapons can kill the humans deploying them. Similarly, there are contradictory aspects to the possibilities of riskless killing granted by military drones. Despite being considered 'precision weapons' (General Atomic Aeronautical Systems 2017, 4) (B.11), drone

operations are often conducted in remote areas. This means that there is limited accountability for who is killed, as there are no personnel on the ground to assess casualties. Innocents can be mistaken for enemies. At a distance, their killing may be perceived as a positive event. All this may fuel radicalisation, meaning that military drones can be involved in a form of technological overkill. Indeed one drone operator states:

Obviously you're taking out a lot of targets and it looks good. But oftentimes, the bad side of a drone is the only thing that a person on the ground would see. (Westmoreland in Heller 2015, 50 sec)

Here we find the interplay between 'appearance' and 'true function' (Anders [1997] 2014, 48/83) that Anders highlights in relation to technology. It is not clear that 'precision weapons' (General Atomic Aeronautical Systems 2017, 4) (B.11) and the apparent effective use of drones is an accurate solution against terrorism. The use of such weapons may make the problem worse in the long run.

In turn, there are contradictions within the affordances for high-speed sexual and romantic communication granted by dating apps. These are often advertised as a tool which opens countless possibilities of communication. However, use of smartphones also frequently interrupts and, sometimes, ruins direct face-to-face communication, as individuals develop the habit of constantly using and looking at their phones. Some have called the effect this gives rise to the 'death of proximity' (Miller 2021, 8). This resembles a process of alienation Anders described with regard to the television. He highlighted how the introduction of television sets within the home created obstacles for domestic conversations because 'family members are no longer sat in front of each other' (Anders [1956] 2003, 103, *my translation*). Dating apps similarly function through smartphones, which are individually handheld devices. This heralds the possibility of individuals being physically isolated from others and almost exclusively conducting sexual and romantic initiations through screens, rather than a fuller sensory appraisal of the other.

There is evidence that many people are not satisfied with this situation. Most of my participants conveyed the sense that meeting people through dating apps is 'not as

interesting of a story' (J, female, age: 29) as meeting someone through chance encounters. Hence, similarly to drones, dating apps can be said to contain an element of technological overkill. In chapter 10, I argue that there is a reductive and standardising dimension within smartphone-enabled sex and romance. For instance, dating app use tends to diminish the narrative dimension of sexual and romantic encounters, which many people find appealing. In staging seduction as a competitive game, they further contribute toward general social media trends through which:

friendships or romantic relationships are inscribed in 'today's new ethos of elective intimacy' (p. 139) which emphasises choice, compatibility and mutual benefit. (Chambers in Gangneux 2021, 996)

Similarly, dating apps offer affordances for users to pre-emptively describe what type of person (or in some cases what type of sex) they are looking for, even before they interact with their partners. Consequently, many respondents reported a 'transactional' (R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27) and 'disposable' (S, female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; J, female, age: 29) dimension within sexual and romantic encounters mediated by dating apps. For instance, one user stated that: 'the fact that everything becomes sexual might devalue relationships overall' (K, male, age: 30). Users must overcome these negative dimensions to establish the strong relationships many of them desire while using dating apps.

The trend towards the standardisation of sex and romance resembles the one criticised by Anders in describing how lovers' meetings now happen under the tutelage of a 'mechanical chaperone' (Anders [1956] 2003, 108, *my translation*), the transistor radio. According to Anders, the radio sets the mood of the lovers' encounter, as their simple human proximity no longer suffices. It thus offers a 'pre-masticated sexual excitation' (Anders [1984] 2004, 129, *my translation*). Anders also criticised the use of pre-recorded musical letter tapes, over which people could record a message to send to their lovers, stating that this meant that their simple voice was not enough. He consequently called these tapes a 'wedding matron made thing' (Anders [1956] 2003, 105, *my translation*).

Similarly, dating apps represent a matchmaker made thing, as users rely significantly less on friendship networks and spontaneous social interactions to find sexual and romantic partners.

They therefore also illustrate the general social trend toward mediatisation, ‘understood as the progressive temporal, spatial and social spread of mediated communication’ (Murdock 2017, 120), including within the intimate sphere. Their reliance on a business model centred on data mining, advertising and continued user engagement structures their design. They thus can be said to further illustrate the ‘commodification of social relationships’ due to ‘commercial dynamics’ (Hepp Hjavard and Lundby in Murdock 2017, 129) and the notion of audience labour (Fuchs 2014a, 74).

Dating apps experienced a boom during the Covid-19 pandemic as they became virtually the only legal space for sexual and romantic communications during lockdowns. In the US, according to some estimates 30% of all adults had previously used dating apps (Anderson, Vogels and Turner 2020, 6). A further 48% of adults between the ages of 18 and 29 had used these services (Anderson, Vogels and Turner 2020, 6). The pandemic saw around a 20% increase in dating app use. Tinder reports that 60% of its users reported feeling lonely during the pandemic (Tinder Newsroom 2021, 3). This suggests that dating app use is correlated with general feelings of loneliness in its users. The pandemic thus accelerated a pre-existing trend towards people increasingly relying on smartphones and social networking sites (SNSs) to fulfil their need for sociality (Lisitsa et al. 2020). In light of their increased popularity, one 2021 BBC podcast sought expert advice for their listeners on how to successfully use dating apps. A dating coach on the programme stated:

the problem is it’s not so accurate because, you know, if you’re face-to-face, you’ve seen someone, you’ve had a connection... whereas if you’re on the app, [i]t could be an old profile. [...] Nothing really replaces a face-to-face connection [...] you can be messaging for weeks which is what I tell my clients to avoid, because you can waist a lot of time really, chatting to someone where you just really end up not having a proper connection with. (BBC 2021, 23 min 27 sec)

The advice is to just meet people face-to-face because that is when users will see if there is chemistry between them and their partners. So the question arises: in a non-pandemic situation, why is an app for sex and romance necessary in the first place? Does the use of dating apps not highlight the lack of free time and physical space at people's disposal for general sociality? In that case, why should this increased use be celebrated in accordance with dominant techno-solutionist/optimist ideology, which I review below?

### **1.6 How Anders' work fits into Marxist debates surrounding technology**

My thesis illustrates how Anders both challenges and adopts a Marxist perspective. This is useful in view of contemporary debates within post-2008 Marxism. Within Marxist theory generally, technological advance is the foundation for moving to a communist society. Increases in productivity mean that there is less labour time required to meet humanity's needs. This leaves the rest of individuals' time free for a new kind of activity described by some as 'productive leisure' (Kurz [1991] 2011). However, at the same time, *Capital*, vol. 1 (Marx [1967] 1990), already introduces the notion that machinery can become a mechanical vector of domination and exploitation. Here Marx states:

all means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine (Marx [1867] 1990, 799)

This is despite the fact that Marx was not alive to witness the industrial killing of the First and Second World Wars, nor did he see the advent of nuclear weapons. Marx could moreover not foresee how deeply digital technologies would permeate everyday interactions in the 21st century.

In the post-War era, Marxist theorists such as Marcuse did not hesitate to speak of how:

Technology is always a historical-social project: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things. (Marcuse [1968] 2009, 168)



This opens the paradox that 'to the extent that the technological project is in itself inimical to liberation it cannot serve as a foundation for it' (Vogel 1995, 25). Hence Marcuse calls for the production of a "liberated technology" (Vogel 1995, 25). The idea is not to reject technology wholesale but to think about the ways science and technology must be changed if they are to be integrated into an emancipatory political project.

It is not immediately clear whether Anders' fits into this tradition. Indeed some of Anders' statements such as that technology is 'the subject of history' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1) appear to constitute a form of pessimistic techno-determinism. For instance, reflecting his broad interest in how technology shapes human life, Anders' states that now it is not only human masters who determine social life directly:

The determinant factor is, rather, the fact that the products have taken the place of our fellow men; therefore, also the fact that they mold the way man behaves with man. The fact that the motorbike or the television set or the world of phantoms that is shown every day on the screen has an impact on our behavior vis-à-vis these products is only one characteristic aspect of our current situation; another aspect is the fact that these products (or their possession) also collaborate in the molding of the forms of behavior with our own kind, whether our mother, the teacher or the girlfriend. To the extent that we have a code of conduct today, it is dictated by things. And social life, which takes place within the world of products, is a life molded by that world of products. (Anders [1980] 2011, 182)

Some might link such a view to Anders' Heideggerian background. Indeed Anders' techno-pessimism seems incompatible with Marxism's reliance on technology as a foundation for human emancipation.

However, I argue that these statements are instead connected to Anders' later 'contacts with Hegel and Marx' (Anders [1973] 2017, 129). They should be understood in terms of a reversal of subject and object. This is the hallmark of Marx's notion of alienation and ideology. Indeed the above quote parallels Marx's statement that in the factory system of organised machinery 'the automaton itself is the subject, and the workers are merely conscious organs' (Marx [1867] 1990, 544) of the machine. Similarly, Anders' theory is not one of direct determinism but rather of subject-object inversion. Anders' highlights how

modern humans are influenced by the mode of use, of modern technologies. These are what the contemporary literature refers to as affordances, in an effort to find a middle ground between technological determinism and social constructivism (Comunello, Parisi and Lercitano 2020). This refers to the intended, as well as possible, uses that are embedded within a technology's design. The latter are not neutral but largely derive from the economic interests of producers acting within the capitalist system. According to Anders, when human life is heavily mediated by such a technology, one which, in some respects, crystallises capitalist dynamics, humans' relation to themselves and their actions is fragmented and complicated as a result. Humans lose full cognisance of what they are producing and hence no longer fully control the objective world as subjects.

Anders wanted to guard against dogmatic Marxism, which had emerged with the main European communist parties and their continued support for the Soviet Union. They were involved in a purely economic view of alienation whereby the adoption of technology was seen as an easy solution to overcome poverty and alienation. Anders felt that this denied other forms of alienation, including technological alienation, which Marx had already discussed. Hence the economic, dogmatic Marxist view showed a lack of understanding of Marx's core message. It was unable to apply the theory to changing circumstances and the advent of industrial warfare. Accordingly, in his mature years, Anders states:

We should not be very surprised that the believers in progress, whether pro-Marxists or anti-Marxists, should be so naïve as to praise technology in every circumstance. Those Marxists, however, who treat the term, "dialectics", with more respect than they would a mere official business card, must not allow themselves to do so: they are obliged to recognize, investigate and combat the contradictions inherent to technology as such and therefore its potential dangers. There is nothing more ridiculous than to view these dangers as derisory and to view the investigation of these dangers as something ridiculously anti-Marxist. From the moment that Marx made the machine and the technology of capitalist society responsible for alienation and announced the self-transformation of the capitalist system into a socialist system—it does not matter whether correctly or incorrectly—he also affirmed the

dialectical overthrow precisely with respect to technology. (Anders [1980] 2011, 84-5)

This understanding cannot only help us think about the role of modern ICTs within modern digital societies. It can also help address the often-cursory look at technology provided by Marxist theories, which often are reductive in saying that it is simply a question of the capitalist application of technology that is the problem. These views do not adequately deal with how the design and function of modern technologies is also deeply structured by the dynamics of capital. They can therefore be a factor in reproducing the latter.

The most striking examples of this form of reductive thinking within contemporary Marxism is provided by techno-optimistic/euphoric accounts such as *Inventing the Future* (Srnicek and Williams 2015) and *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (Bastani 2019). The passage (Srnicek and Williams 2015, 145-153) in the former book where the question of a need to re-design technology is confronted is too small compared to the pivotal role technology plays in its main argument. For instance, Srnicek and Williams state that 'the design, meaning and impact of a technology are constantly shifting, altering as users transform it and as its environment changes' (Srnicek and Williams 2015, 152). Even though it is true that users can resist technological changes, there is a power imbalance when it comes to control over technology. This is due to how capitalist private property relations structure production. Existing technologies are not the result of free creative activity on the part of users. At best, they are commodities that are designed to appeal to consumers.

In turn, Bastani's vision of technology tends to maintain its present role as a means of limitless accumulation. Accordingly, he promotes the notion of 'extreme supply' (Bastani 2019, 37) supposedly granted by future advances in technology. Mirroring contemporary techno-solutionist ideologies, summarised in the expression 'click here to save everything' (Morozov 2013), he states that the 'technological fix is different' (Bastani 2019, 36) to other fallacious fixes. Techno-optimist/euphoric accounts thus risk celebrating the given, focussing on the 'is' rather than the 'ought' (Lukács [1923] 1971, 160-163) of technology. These accounts come very close to 'identify[ing] technological progress with social progress, and

therefore political progress' (Anders [1980] 2011, 16). They do not sufficiently emphasise some of the negative effects of capitalist technological systems. They do not highlight how the latter should be deeply transformed.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted what is problematic with techno-euphoric perspectives that celebrate the fact that individuals' virtual life *is* their life and deride 'a return to some human desire for face-to-face sociality and simple cooperation' (Srnicsek and Williams, 2015, 81). On the one hand, during the pandemic many people felt thankful for modern ICTs. These offered the possibility of a relatively rich communication at a distance. This improved people's experience of lockdowns and social isolation. On the other hand, the limits of technological communication became apparent. For instance, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic Fuchs states:

Mediated communication can provide some emotional support, but lacks the capacity of touching, feeling, smelling, hugging, etc. one another. You can say nice words to a friend or relative via a webcam, but you cannot look him or her into the eyes, which is part of empathetic communication. [...] It is much more difficult to communicate emotions, love, solidarity, and empathy in mediated communication than in face-to-face communication. (Fuchs 2020b, 380)

Hence the experience of lockdowns has highlighted the limits of the ubiquitous use of modern ICTs. It has shown that the excessive use of digital technology can be sub-optimal in at least some areas of human life.

In this thesis, I argue that two such spheres are the expression of aggression and love. If specific forms of technology have nevertheless been designed for these areas, this is perhaps an indication of them fulfilling a palliative function within modern capitalist societies. In the case of military drones, this fulfils a potentially counter-productive desire for de-caffeinated wars, wars without casualties on one side. These create an unjust situation that can fuel radicalisation. In the case of dating apps, smartphone technology provides an answer to the desire for efficient sexual and romantic encounters. However, my interviews suggest that, for many users, this desire arises out of a material limitation, namely the lack of space and time allowing for more general forms of socialisation. It is not

due to an inherent desire for efficiency in the sphere of love. This suggests that some forms of modern technology address the symptoms but not the causes of social unease.

### **1.7 Presentation of the thesis**

This thesis first discusses abstract and essential concepts. It then applies them to more concrete examples. Hence the first half of the thesis is theoretical and the second is empirical. This allows me to show how Anders' theory applies to the case studies. In each section, I focus on essential categories for social theory constituted by the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. These are also ordered from the most essential to the most complex categories. In the case study chapter, the human and technology are involved in each of the subsequent concepts. This means that I focus on domination, alienation and ideology, from chapter 4 onwards.

In chapter 2, I look at Marxian theory's underlying theoretical foundations with regard to the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. I discuss the concept of human essence tying it to social production. This view encompasses humans' physical being as well as their capacity for conscious thought. Accordingly, I argue against anti-essentialist postmodern conceptions. I further argue against Heidegger's understanding of machines as separate from humans. Finally, I show how a Marxian view of domination, alienation and ideology is characterised by a separation and inversion of subject and object.

In chapter 3, I make the argument that Anders' thought is not continuous but subject to radical breaks. Anders turned away from phenomenology and Heidegger and toward Marxism during the Second World War. His shift towards Marxism intensified during the remainder of his life. Hence Anders' theory updates Marxian theory to account for modern technology. He develops the notion of technological alienation already present in Marx.

In chapter 4, I show how Anders can be contrasted with other theorists of technology. I show that Anders is unique in focussing on technology. However, he also highlights that modern technical appliances are first and foremost commodities. They are shaped by this

condition. Consequently Anders shows how the television and weapons are artefacts that accommodate the demands of consumer capitalism.

In chapter 5, I present the case studies and introduce the methodology I will use to analyse them. I show how military drones and dating apps mediate two interrelated drives: aggression and love. I show how I will analyse existing material relating to military drones including material written and spoken by drone operators. I further outline how I will conduct semi-structured interviews with dating app users, outlining a questionnaire. I show how I will use tools offered by critical discourse analysis to evaluate the resulting material.

In chapter 6, I discuss how military drones make killing easy by analysing the terms used to conduct strikes and designate targets. In chapter 7, I discuss how use of military drones complicates individuals' relations to their own actions. Military drones offer affordances for operators to compartmentalise their 'war lives' and view the latter as something separate from their identity. Subsequently, I show how drone operators can adopt either distancing strategies or strategies of identification with regard to their part in drone killings. In chapter 8, I show how videos of drone killings widely circulate on the internet and feed into racist ideologies, which pit good vs bad. I do this by analysing YouTube comments under such videos.

In chapter 9, I discuss how dating apps reflect and reproduce lad and hook-up culture which pre-existed dating apps. Hence their structure is not neutral but tends toward organising sex and romance according to these very standards. I show how their very functioning offers affordances for individualistic attitudes regarding sex and romance. I discuss instances of sexual harassment reported by some of my participants. In chapter 10, I highlight how dating apps tend toward fragmenting and standardising individuals' experiences of sex and romance. For instance, I discuss practices of direct sex on dating apps and users' feelings of alienation stemming from the standardised, mechanical nature. In chapter 11, I discuss how dating app companies' public relations (PR) has evolved and has had to adapt to users' common sense regarding dating apps.

In chapter 12, I conclude by updating Anders' concept of promethean shame through the notion of technological splitting. I show how this notion relates to the spheres of domination, alienation and ideology. It concerns a split between the self-presentation of users and their 'real life' identity. As a result, individuals tend to express aggressive and libidinal drives in a more direct, unsophisticated way. They thus deny feelings of responsibility and adopt reductive ideologies. I conclude by arguing that Anders' philosophy of technology is not techno-determinist but techno-pessimist. Anders never saw technology as separate from capitalist dynamics, but as embodying and crystallising the latter.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations

### 2.1 Introduction

One of the main arguments I make in this thesis, and which I detail in chapter 3, is that Günther Anders can be understood as a humanist-Marxist. Hence I resist the temptation to categorise him as a postmodern thinker, as other scholars have tended to do (e.g. Babich 2013, 2019; Nosthoff and Maschewski 2019; Beinsteiner 2019; Müller 2015). The latter may arise because of his focus on elements that seem so relevant to the period in which postmodern theory arose (1970-1990). But, instead, in this thesis I show how this focus can be used to update Marxian theory.

I use this theoretical chapter to build a foundation for this argument by highlighting some of the weaknesses of postmodern theory. I look at Marxist and alternative views of the fundamental concepts involved in my thesis. Accordingly, I evaluate and contrast Hegel's, Marx's, Lukács', Heidegger's and Foucault's understanding of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. I contribute to debates surrounding Marxist versus postmodern views of these concepts by reformulating a dialectical materialist (Marxist) approach that links ideal and material processes. Indeed I use Marx's and Engels' criticism of the Young Hegelians to argue against what I see as equivalent positions held by postmodern theorists. I argue that the notion of human essence is not purely abstract and transcendental, as is suggested by thinkers such as Foucault. On the contrary, it is tied to the idea of man as a concrete, natural being. In turn, looking at the concept of human essence sets the ground for me to counter Heidegger's notion that technology has an autonomous essence which is independent from humans. Instead, I argue that technology's essence is tied to human activity. Beyond this, I praise some aspects of a postmodern theory of domination. But I show that these elements do not demand a complete rejection of Marxism. For instance, a concept of alienation grounded in human essence has some of the benefits of the postmodern diffuse and networked view of domination. But it makes this understanding more concrete, anchoring it to material processes. Moreover, in terms of



ideology, the postmodern overemphasis on discourse obscures the mechanism through which ideas can potentially be false and produce an inverted image of real phenomena. Indeed I argue that ultimately the postmodern argument re-establishes a form of idealism that understands ideas as a driving force behind material developments. One implication is that purely mental criticism is deemed sufficient for driving human emancipation.

I now explain the order in which I treat the themes of my thesis: the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. This mirrors Marx's method of analysis. In the *Grundrisse* (Marx [1857] 1993), Marx lays out his method in opposition to that of the political economists of his time. This consists in 'advancing from the abstract to the concrete' (Marx [1857] 1993, 101). The reason that Marx gives for this rather counter-intuitive approach is that 'the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse' (Marx [1857] 1993, 101). Therefore it should not constitute the starting point for the formation of categories of analysis. If one agrees with Marx's method, the analysis should start from the most core, abstract categories and build successive layers of complexity on top of these. Hence adopting this method allows me to show how each category forms a basis for the next. In turn, this helps me show how the themes of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology are logically related.

Thus in this chapter I make several arguments in relation to how the thesis' essential themes fit together. Human essence is the starting point for my analysis. Human essence is revealed to be tied to community and social production. It is moreover characterised by subject-object identity, as humans can realise their subjective designs in the objective world. Technology, in turn, is shown to be dependent on humans. It represents the application of scientific knowledge about nature to practical ends. Hence technology and humans are closely connected. Subsequently, tools and technology can be linked to domination, because direct forms of domination depend on material resources. However, domination is also related to how individuals interact in their daily lives. Alienation represents a specific dynamic where domination is linked to systems that all actors feed into through their daily activity. Alienation distorts human essence, which is related to mastery

over the objective world, by separating and inverting subject and object. With alienation, the subject is now dominated by the object, the worker by his/her own product. As alienation inverts subject and object, it simultaneously concerns the ossification of subjective consciousness. Fixed ideas that mask and legitimate material domination and alienation form ideology. Class based society produces abstract, universal ideas that obscure concrete processes. These ideas feed back onto the interplay between human essence, technology, domination and alienation.

Hence I structure my chapter according to this logic. In the section on the human, I first look at Aristotle's and Hegel's concept of human essence (2.2.2). I then oppose this to Foucault's postmodern anti-essentialism (2.2.3). I conclude arguing in favour of Marx's concrete, potentiality-based conception of human essence (2.2.4). In the section on technology, I first discuss Babbage's distinction between tools and machines (2.3.2). Then I discuss Heidegger's notion that technology has an autonomous essence, finally arguing against it (2.3.3). In the section on domination, I firstly discuss Marx and Engels' critique of the Young Hegelians' idealist concept of domination (2.4.2). Subsequently, I apply this criticism to postmodern theorists. In the section on alienation, I discuss religious (2.5.2), political (2.5.3) and economic alienation (2.5.4). These concepts highlight how alienation is characterised by a process of separation and inversion of subject and object. In the section on ideology, I discuss Marx and Engels' materialist conception of the link between ideas and reality and show how they conceive ideology as a material inversion of this relation (2.6.2). Finally I show that the postmodern criticism of the concept of truth and emphasis on discourses risks reproducing an idealist concept of domination (2.6.3).

## **2.2 Human essence**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Thinking about the human means engaging with the idea of human essence. An essence can be defined as that which unites members of a group of objects 'regardless of the

endless multiplicity of their attributes' (Marcuse 2009, 33). It reflects 'a quest for the unity and universality of Being in view of the multiplicity and changeability of beings' (Marcuse 2009, 32-33). For instance, arguably, subjective consciousness is one of the essential features of humans. According to Hegel, humans can only discover their subjectivity by interacting with other humans. Moreover, humans can only realise this subjectivity by engaging with the objective world. Therefore essence is nested within the objective world and expresses itself in the latter. On this ground, I reject Foucault's anti-essentialism, because it is based on the idea that essence is, on the contrary, transcendental. Foucault argues that any concept of essence posits the latter as existing in a completely separate realm. But this is not the case for Hegel's conception of human essence.

However, Hegel's conception is not faultless. I show that it is idealist, as it assumes that reality and thought automatically mirror one-another. In this sense, it falls prey to Foucault's criticism that the notion of essences denies the world any flexibility. Consequently, I show that human essence is best conceptualised in Marx's terms. Marx understands human essence as tied to both natural necessity and freedom. Hence it gets expressed historically. This is because humans are able to consciously act on themselves and the objective world, bringing the latter closer in line with their internal designs.

First, I look at Hegel's conception of the human (2.2.2). Subsequently, I show that postmodern theorists such as Foucault have a reductive, transcendental view of essence (2.2.3). Finally I argue that Marx's conception is the best at showing how essence is both tied to reality and expressed in various forms, meaning that human life can take on many different shapes (2.2.4). This understanding overcomes Foucault's criticism to Hegel while carrying Hegel's legacy forward.

### **2.2.2 Hegel and Aristotle**

Hegel's understanding of human essence mirrors Aristotle's conception of man as social and political. In *Politics*, Aristotle famously argues that 'man is by nature a political animal.' (Aristotle 1999, 5)

However, Hegel's conception is more dynamic. A social instinct is not simply 'implanted' (Aristotle 1999, 6) in man, as with Aristotle. For Hegel, on the contrary, human essence comes to fruition through a community. This is an idea that he fleshes out in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel [1807] 1977). Here Hegel argues that '[o]nly in a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness do we have a true accomplished case of self-consciousness, where the object of consciousness is also its subject' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 520). Indeed one can regard the mind of another person both as a subject and object. One also distinguishes him/herself from such another through his/her dealings with them. Consequently, Hegel argues that 'human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds.' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 43) These last element shows how, for Hegel, human essence is tied to subject-object identity, which he believes can only be achieved through cooperation.

Another significant theme in this relational conception of human essence is desire and work. For Hegel, desire expresses the relation of the subject to the object at a fundamental level. The desired object denotes both the subject's separation from (as in the case of a frustrated desire), and unity with, the object (as in the case of obtaining the object of desire). Subsequently, Hegel defines work as 'desire held in check' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 118), because it represents a deferral of gratification. But it is also an activity through-which the worker objectifies him/herself, i.e. transfers part of him/herself onto the object. In doing this, the object, which initially frustrated subjective desire, goes from being that which stands in the way of the realisation of the subject to the thing that helps him/her realise his/her freedom. Hence, for Hegel, 'consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence.' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 118) In other words, when it recognises that its activity can make the external world accord with its internal designs, consciousness gains a higher level of independence. Through work, humans can make the objective world theirs.

### **2.2.3 Postmodern anti-essentialism**

The preceding analysis reveals that Hegel's notion of essence is tied to the objective world. Nevertheless, the notion of essence and human nature has been criticised by postmodern theorists for being transcendental. According to Foucault (1926-1984), one of the main thinkers that influenced this current, essence denotes an inner truth that lies at the origin of things. Foucault succinctly formulates his rejection of essence by stating that s/he who properly observes history

finds that there is "something altogether different" behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms (Foucault [1971] 1980, 78)

In this formulation, Foucault reveals that, for him, what really counts in constituting what a thing is are all of its accidents, i.e. the forces that are exerted onto it externally. Foucault has drawn on Nietzsche to make this argument. The latter's idea that things are subjected to change contrasts with Hegel's notion of history as tightly connected to a subject both preserving and going beyond itself through change (Marcuse [1941] 1954, 138-142).

According to Lukács (1885-1971), one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of the 20th century, this type of relativism, which he saw in Nietzsche, is one 'where an 'absolute' is in some sense assumed' (Lukács [1923] 1971, 187). Thus endless fluidity becomes the new absolute. Accordingly, Lukács criticises Nietzsche because his 'relativism only abolishes the absolute in appearance' (Lukács [1923] 1971, 187). Paradoxically, by calling for an infinitely fluid approach, Foucault's framework ends up asserting a form of rigid structuralism whereby there are no agents, only ever-changing paradigms in which individuals find themselves. For instance, Foucault substitutes for the notion of essence the notion of 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980, 131) which structure human actions.

On these grounds, I argue that Hegel's conception represents a middle ground and a better way of conceiving essence as tied to material reality. In the next section I will show how Hegel's conception of essence and human nature forms the basis for Marx's normative conception of human essence.

#### 2.2.4 Marx's reversal of Hegel's idealism

There are many points on which Marx agrees with Hegel's social and dynamic conception of human nature. For him, humans are socially productive animals because

[n]ot only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product [...] that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being. (Marx [1844b] 2010, 298)

Under this premise, Marx gives his key definition of human essence, which parallels Hegel's notion of subject-object unity. For Marx, the distinguishing feature of humans is that '[m]an makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 275-6). The subject can treat itself as an object. In Marx's words, 'just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 298). It is in this sense that Marx defines man as 'universal' and a species being [*Gattungswesen*]. This means that humans can modify the character of their own existence by understanding and determining their activity.

However, Marx highlights how Hegel's understanding of work in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1807] 1977) is idealist. It is one where reality automatically follows the logical movement of thought. For Hegel, 'a particular individuality is reconciled with pure thought itself' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 130). Thus '[s]pirit becomes an 'other' to itself, or enters into existence, and directly into immediate existence. Accordingly, it *creates* a world' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 467). Put simply, 'thought is thinghood, or thinghood is thought' (Hegel [1807] 1977, 352). Consequently, Hegel defined the state as an "[o]bjective mind" (Hegel in Marcuse [1941] 1954, 213), a universal that perfectly regulated individual and collective interests. Opposing this, Marx and Engels criticised German philosophy for 'descend[ing] from heaven to earth' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36). For Hegel, ideas, not concrete activity, were the driving force behind objective developments. In contrast, in Marx's analysis, concrete activity, or work, is not equivalent to thought but to material production.

Marx insists on the idea that man 'must remain in continuous interchange [with nature] if he is not to die' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 276). It is in the sense of this material necessity that

work is, first and foremost, a characteristic of human essence. Hence it is concrete work that makes human essence universal, for Marx. Marx and Engels will later argue that what men are 'coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 31-2). As will become clear throughout the thesis, Anders' focus on consumer technologies analyses the link between humans and what they produce.

Moreover, Marx argues that man is part of nature in so far as he is endowed with 'natural powers' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 336) and 'instincts' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 336). In this sense, Marx did not completely dissolve the concept of essence into endless flux as postmodern theorists such as Foucault sought to do, nor did he produce a completely abstract version of this like Hegel. For Marx, there is an original link to nature from which humans emerged and which they are not able to shake off. However, this should be understood as a beginning for a dialectical, i.e. historical, process.

Thus Marx's understanding of human nature as universal is best understood as maintaining and encompassing these contradictory elements. His concept of universal essence is summarised by Marx when he says that

[a]n animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man [...] knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty. (Marx [1844b] 2010, 276)

This invocation of 'the laws of beauty' shows how, for Marx, human essence can be understood in terms of the inherent actualities/potentialities of nature considered as a whole. Humans are universal because they are able to bring the immanent, ideal side of nature into existence. This equally means that they are able to treat themselves as natural beings, while also fully developing their capacities and potentialities.

### **2.2.5 Conclusion**

The idea of human essence need not be disconnected from reality as Foucault argued. Marx's reversal of Hegel shows that human essence is both connected to reality and

expressed historically. Humans tend to want to harmonise subject and object, the ideal and the real. Hence there is an interplay between freedom and necessity, consciousness and human biology, when it comes to the expression of human essence at the level of existence. This shows how Marx's conception does not posit human essence as transcendental, as Foucault would suggest, nor does he posit its expression as completely abstract. Instead, human essence is tied to, and gets expressed in, material reality.

Technology, for instance, is a sphere where humans have objectified their powers and ideas. Hence it can be understood as tightly linked to human essence. Accordingly, I discuss it next.

## **2.3 Technology**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Basing himself on the work of Babbage, Marx argued that technology can be distinguished from mere tools in that it forms an integrated system where the action of many tools is joined together and operated by a simple transmission of power that sets them in motion. However, this does not mean that technology's essence is disconnected from humans, as Heidegger's conception suggests. Technology is based on human scientific discoveries, and it has to be built and maintained by individuals. Hence technology's essence is not independent from humans but fundamentally connected to them.

Firstly, I look at how Marx defined machines in line with the scientific thought of his time. I also show how Marx and Engels produced a demystifying view of machines that shows how they are built by humans. Secondly, I argue against Heidegger's notion that technology has an independent essence that is separated from humans.

### **2.3.2 What is a machine?**

The word technology comes from the Greek *technē*, which means art or craft. However, as opposed to simple tools, the notion of technology refers to complex systems, especially



in industry, as well as the branch of knowledge dealing with the latter. Consequently, I will begin my treatment of technology by discussing the emergence of machinery from the start of the industrial revolution. I use Marx because his work dealt with this time-period.

As has been highlighted by Wendling (Wendling 2009, 61), Marx was an attentive reader of the scientific literature that accompanied the new inventions and discoveries of his time. His mature thinking surrounding machines is significantly based on the writings of Charles Babbage (1791-1871), an English philosopher and engineer. Babbage is credited with conceptualising the first computer. The latter was not electric but mechanical in its proposed operation and a working model of it was only built long after Babbage's death.

A central theme that emerges out of Marx's reading of Babbage is that what distinguishes a machine from a mere tool is that machines incorporate the action of many different tools, which are activated through a single driving mechanism. Accordingly, Marx cites the following passage in Babbage's *Traité sur l'économie des machines [Treatise on the Economy of Machines]* (Babbage 1833, 230).

While the division of labour has reduced each particular process to the use of some simple tool, the union of all these tools, actuated by one moving power, constitutes a machine. (Babbage in Marx [1861] 2010, 388)

It does not matter whether the source of power is a human, an animal or an engine for this combination of instruments to qualify as a machine. In fact, Marx states that during the initial phase of the industrial revolution, 'The motive force here is at first still man himself' (Marx [1861] 2010, 392). The main fact is, however, that

operations such as previously needed the virtuoso to play upon the instrument, are now brought about by the conversion of the movement directly effected by the simplest mechanical impulse (turning the crank, treading the wheel) of human origin into the refined movements of a working machine. (Marx [1861] 2010, 392)

For Marx, this latter aspect is the real 'turning point' (Marx [1861] 2010, 392). It reveals that machines are things that replace the functionality of the worker. Marx will later reformulate a similar idea in the *Grundrisse* (Marx [1857] 1993) and *Capital, Volume I* (Marx [1867]

1990). Marx therefore argues that ‘the skill of the worker in handling [the tool] passes over to the machine’ (Marx [1867] 1990, 545). Consequently, Marx speaks of how capital aims ‘to transfer skill [...] into the dead forces of nature’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 587). This gives a glimpse into the notion of technological alienation that I will develop in section 3.3 and 3.5.

However, Marx also characterises capital in the form of machines as ‘dead [i.e., past] labour’ (Marx [1867] 1990, 548). Machines need to be firstly discovered through scientific work. Moreover, the machine itself is a structure that needs to be built and maintained by humans. Accordingly, Marx talks about how machines continuously enter ‘piece by piece into the process of valorisation’ (Marx [1867] 1990, 509). This forms the basis for their cost and shows that they are not completely free and independent. As a result, Marx’s understanding of technology is demystifying. Marx sees technology as tied to humans and as the result of their work. It is tied to the discovery and application of natural laws.

Through speaking of how machines replace the functionality of workers but are nevertheless produced by them, this sets the ground for the notion of technological alienation. The worker confers life onto machines while sacrificing his own in the form of labour to maintain them.

### **2.3.3 Does technology have an autonomous essence?**

However, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century and one of Anders’ teachers, argued that it is not humans that structure technology but technology that moulds and conditions people. For Heidegger, technology encompasses humans instead of the other way around. According to Heidegger technology has an essence which is independent of humans. In other words, technology is autonomous and can bring its own essence into existence.

There are two steps to this argument. The first can be found in the section of *Being and Time* (Heidegger [1927] 1967) which is commonly referred to as the “tool analysis”. Here Heidegger discusses the relation between individual phenomena and the world, or their environment. In this passage Heidegger discusses how we come to know things and their

relation to the world through our practical 'concern' and 'dealings' with the latter (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 97).

Two important arguments emerge out of this discussion. The first is an embodiment of the idea that we discover what tools really are by using them. This is what Heidegger means by 'readiness-to-hand' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 99). It is only in this way that the tool 'manifests itself in its own right' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 98). In this regard Heidegger asserts that

the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, the more we seize hold of it and use it, [...] the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is. The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' of the hammer. (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 98)

This implies that tools guide our discovery and knowledge of the world while, at the same time, shaping our activity.

The second is the finished version of Heidegger's argument regarding technology, which can be found in his essay *On the question concerning technology* (Heidegger [1954] 1977). Here Heidegger argues that the essence of technology is tied to revealing. This is because new inventions allow humans to discover truths that they did not know previously. For Heidegger, technology 'brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 11). Consequently, it discloses to humans that of which they are capable. Moreover, a tool's use is linked to its materiality because every technology has an adequate use. In this regard, Heidegger argues that the action of 'hammering' both produces 'knowledge about the hammer's character as equipment' and appropriates 'this equipment in a way which could not possibly be more suitable' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 98). As a result, technology and tools have a determining effect on human life. They uncover truths hidden within the world and develop our consciousness. But they also determine their own mode of use. Therefore they shape both our knowledge and our activity.

However, Heidegger distinguished between tools' fundamental essence of revealing and modern technology. For Heidegger, modern technology has a specific mode of revealing called *Gestell*, or enframing. According to this view, modern technology does not bring-forth

the truth contained in nature, helping actualise its inherent potentialities. Rather, Gestell implies the notion of challenging nature and of placing upon it unreasonable extractive demands (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 15). Hence for Heidegger, modern technology has a specific internal logic, that of 'maximum yield at minimum expense' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 15).

Thus Heidegger considers technology to have a fixed and autonomous essence that follows its own inner logic. For Heidegger, although 'man drives technology forward [he is also] challenged, ordered, [...] even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 18). Hence 'the unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never a human handiwork' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 18).

This highlights how Heidegger sees technology as prior to other factors such as the economy and society. He only mentions 'profit-seeking' once in his essay. He speaks of 'the forester [...] commanded by profit-making in the lumber industry' and hence being 'made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 18). However, this is preceded by a discussion of how technology *enframes* nature. Therefore this argument seems to imply that profitability arises out of technology rather than the other way around.

#### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

I argue that this is the problem with Heidegger's idea that technology has an autonomous essence separated from humans. This implies viewing technology's logic of 'maximum yield at minimum expense' as solely related to the technology itself and as isolated from other social factors, such as the economy.

By using Marx and Engels' understanding that machines do not have a will of their own but that they depend on humans designing them and setting them in motion, we can link what appears to be the inner logic of modern technology to other social factors. I argue that the supposedly 'inner' logic that Heidegger attributes to technology is in fact related to a capitalist organisation of production and society. Social dynamics can become ingrained within technology.

Technology confers power to whomever controls it. Technology can therefore become an instrument of domination. Hence I place my discussion of domination after my discussion of technology. This is not to say that technology necessarily results in domination, but that it can be used as a means of domination.

## **2.4 Domination**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Domination can be understood as the use of power by an actor A over and against an actor B. For instance, Max Weber's (1864-1920) definition makes domination practically synonymous with power. He states:

In general, we understand by 'power' the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. (Weber, Gerth and Mills 2009, 180)

Hence arguably power involves domination and, in turn, domination is based on power over.

This point is further developed by Weber's discussion of how institutions are often involved in the exertion of power and domination. Hence Weber asserts that the 'bureaucratic organization is technically the most highly developed means of power in the hands of the man who controls it' (Weber, Gerth and Mills 2009, 232).

A more basic view is that control over means and resources, a category which includes instruments and machines, confers power and therefore can be used to dominate others. In what follows, I show how, in its simplest form, Marx and Engels' understanding most resembled this one. However, their conception also includes the idea that the organisation of production itself, and structures such as the state, indirectly subjugate workers.

Firstly, I show how Marx and Engels' view of domination was built in opposition to the Young Hegelian's idea that domination was purely tied to false beliefs. Secondly, I show how

the postmodern conception risks falling into the same trap. I conclude that the view that domination is tied to material factors is preferable.

#### **2.4.2 Marx and Engels' critique of the Young Hegelians**

The Young Hegelians were a group of 19th century German philosophers. Marx was initially part of this group of 'unruly spirits' (Mehring 1962, 16), who contributed towards breaking the the 'alliance between the philosophy of Hegel and the State of the Frederick-William' (Mehring 1962, 16). Indeed, Marx collaborated in journals with one of its main members, Bruno Bauer. However, he subsequently broke with the group because of what he saw as the members' excessive idealism; that is, their faith in purely philosophical criticism as a means for emancipation.

*The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010) represents Marx and Engels' major criticism of the Young Hegelians. The Young Hegelians adopted a position that saw ideas and beliefs as the source of domination. Thus they saw the role of philosophy in criticising these ideas as directly emancipatory. In their opposition to this view, Marx and Engels ridiculed the Young Hegelian's idea that it was 'only because of the domination of ideas and concepts that mankind has up to now been subjected to all sorts of misfortunes' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 431). To them, it was fantastic to believe that "'the offsprings of [man's] own head" [...] begin to dominate' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 161) him as though they are concrete entities. They concluded that, through their understanding, the Young Hegelians ended up brushing aside the fact that domination happens because of real processes. The Young Hegelians were thus talking about 'domination of spectres', i.e. of ideas, in place of 'the domination of the many actual masters' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 223).

Indeed, for Marx and Engels, domination had developed into class domination. A ruling class dominated an impoverished labouring class through their control of social production. Accordingly, the 'personal power' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 329) of the ruling class was based

on conditions of life which as they develop are common to many individuals, and the continuance of which they, as ruling individuals, have to maintain against others and, at the same time, to maintain that they hold good for everybody (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 329)

To say this means taking an active position with regard to the idea that power is based on the possession of material means and resources. For Marx and Engels, it is not just who possesses what at a given moment that counts, but how resources actively get produced and distributed.

Accordingly, for Marx, there is also a transition from direct forms of domination to ones that are indirect and less reliant on the exertion physical force. For instance, Marx states that in an advanced capitalist system '[d]irect force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but only exceptionally' (Marx [1867] 1990, 899). Here Marx alludes to the fact that the mere threat of physical violence is enough to dominate people indirectly. For instance, Marx quotes the Morning Star, a left-wing newspaper, to argue that in early capitalist systems 'the scourge of starvation' is used, 'instead of the crack of the whip, as the instrument of compulsion' (Marx [1867] 1990, 365). He further remarks how within the factory 'the overseer's book of penalties replaces the slave driver's lash' (Marx [1867] 1990, 550). This suggests that domination becomes embedded within the organisation of production.

Indeed as an increasingly complex system of production is established, the conditions that reproduce it are recreated so perfectly that a working class develops 'which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature' (Marx [1867] 1990, 899). This also highlights the interplay between domination and ideology Marxist conception, which I further detail in section 2.6. Thus, 'the organisation of the capitalist process of production, once fully developed, breaks down all resistance' (Marx [1867] 1990, 899). Therefore, according to Marx, the ruling class can exert control over individuals both by controlling the system of production and making them feel powerless to change it.

In determining the general conditions of life, the ruling classes also tend to produce structures that reinforce this same organisation. Marx and Engels' argued, for instance, that 'the state arises from the material mode of life of individuals' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 330). The state is therefore linked to power because it represents a structure that regulates and controls production. Accordingly, Marx and Engels argued that 'the ruling class establishes its joint domination as public power, as the state' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 355) and that the state was not, as some Young and Old Hegelians believed, the result of a rational concept. I argue that the state can be understood as a technology of domination, an apparatus which exists to serve the purpose of social control and maintaining power.

Moreover, technology itself can fulfil this role, highlighting a technological aspect to domination. In fact Marx speaks of the 'technical subordination of the worker' (Marx [1867] 1990, 549) and speaks of the "master", [...] in whose mind the machinery and his monopoly of it are inseparable' (Marx [1867] 1990, 549). On the whole, this understanding shows how domination is both active and reliant on material structures.

#### **2.4.3 Critique of the postmodern conception of power**

Later postmodern theorists such as Foucault produced an interpretation of power that emphasised the active aspect of domination. For Foucault, power was both dynamic and relational. According to Fuchs, Foucault produced a conception in which power primarily had a 'networked character' (Fuchs 2015b, 5). Moreover, for Foucault, the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners but is 'a way in which certain actions modify others' (Fuchs 2015b, 5). Hence for Foucault '[p]ower exists only when it is put into action' (Fuchs 2015b, 5). For instance, Foucault pointed out how 'power is related to people's bodies, sexuality, consciousness, and everyday life' (Fuchs 2015b, 5). In acquiring this active character, power relations come to possess not only an objective but also a subjective side. This makes power increasingly tied to the production of knowledge. Indeed Foucault states



There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (Foucault 1980, 93)

Hence for Foucault

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault 1980, 131)

There is no doubt that power possesses a subjective character. But Foucault's conception over-emphasises the diffuse and subjective aspects, theoretically minimising material factors. An over-emphasis of this conception can end up conflating structures of power with discourses, or regimes of truth. This risks falling into the same fallacy as the Young Hegelians; that is, believing that changing one's mindset is sufficient to liberate oppressed individuals.

Foucault later produced a more concrete idea of domination, but not at a theoretical level. He did this through his historiography. For instance, in his 1975-6 lectures at the Collège de France 'Society must be defended' (Foucault 2003), Foucault suggests that new forms of domination have emerged out of the search for increasingly cost-effective ways of asserting domination. Hence Foucault highlights the importance of

techniques for rationalising and strictly economising on a power that had to be used in the least costly way possible, thanks to a system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeepings and reports—all the technology that can be described as the disciplining technology of labour. (Foucault 2003, 242)

This account is more material because it does not exclusively explain domination through ideas that people hold. Rather, it explains it through the material and social environment people find themselves in. Here the idea that domination can be tied to technology, which, as suggested above, Marx anticipated, re-emerges.

#### **2.4.4 Conclusion**

The Young Hegelians produced a conception where domination was the result of a mind-set, ideas or concepts. The postmodern understanding risks reproducing this notion. It implies that the response to domination should occur at the level of individual actions and conceptions. However, Marx and Engels show that complex forms of domination are tied to the organisation of social production and embedded in structures such as technology and the state. This view shares some aspects of the postmodern conception, such as conceptualising how domination can be tied to diffuse factors. Actions that reproduce domination can become a matter of routine. Domination can become bound up with everyday practices that seem mundane and not directly violent. However, it does not fall into the trap of positing a completely immaterial form of domination. Contrary to the Young Hegelians and postmodern theorists, for Marx and Engels, domination can only be overcome through collective action and class struggle which change material structures of production.

As domination becomes more complex and ingrained within routines and social structures it comes to resemble alienation. Alienation can be conceptualised as not only the subjugation of some actors by others but as that of all actors to an object, be it the state, religion, money or, as I will argue subsequently, technology.

### **2.5 Alienation**

#### **2.5.1 Introduction**

The change from direct domination to domination mediated by the state and technology reflects a shift towards alienation. Indeed the state and technology are examples of structures that are produced socially but which can also be used as instruments of social control. I will show that Marx's conception of alienation pushes this idea even further, as it is characterised by an inversion whereby the object controls the subject.

Marx built his understanding of alienation on Feuerbach's notion of religious alienation. This is highlighted in *Contribution to a critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Marx [1843] 2010), a text which predates Marx's first exposition of economic alienation contained in *Comments on James Mill* (Marx [1844a] 2010) and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Marx [1844b] 2010). Here Marx implicitly references Feuerbach's criticism of religion contained in the *Essence of Christianity* (Feuerbach [1841] 1881). Accordingly, he states that '[f]or Germany the criticism of religion is in the main complete, and criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 175). Hence Marx builds on the notion of religious alienation to produce a conception of political alienation. Through engaging with Marx's earlier conceptualisations of religious and political alienation, I aim to show how Marx developed his idea of alienation as a division and inversion of subject and object. I further show how this idea can be applied to machinery.

Firstly, in section 2.5.2, I look at how religious alienation was the basis for Marx's later conception of alienation. Subsequently, in section 2.5.3, I show how Marx produced a conception of political alienation that mirrored the latter. Finally, in section 2.5.4, I show that Marx's concept of economic alienation shows how alienation can primarily be defined as a division and inversion of subject and object.

### **2.5.2 Religious alienation**

Marx's idea of economic alienation is built upon Feuerbach's criticism of religious alienation. According to Feuerbach's (1804-1872) influential formulation, religious alienation is based on humans misrecognizing their own creations, such as idols, as detached from them. These representations are invested with powers and qualities that are tied to humans, but which believers attribute to the representations. Hence Feuerbach states that

The divine being is nothing else than the human being [...] contemplated and revered as another, a distinct being. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature. (Feuerbach [1841] 1881, 14)

Similarly, Marx speaks of religion as the '*fantastic realisation* of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality' (Marx [1843] 2010, 175). For Marx, religion put forward an idealised version of human essence because this essence was not allowed full realisation in everyday life. But this version of human essence remained confined to a 'fantastic reality', i.e. in an abstract realm.

Indeed Marx's understanding of religion sees it as having a functional role in maintaining order by making social ills bearable. It is in this sense that Marx states that 'religion is the opium of the people' (Marx [1843] 2010, 176). For Marx, '[t]he struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma' (Marx [1843] 2010, 175) and that it carries '[t]he demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions' (Marx [1843] 2010, 176).

This view carries within it, in germ form, the idea that the subject (believers) are subjugated by the object (idols) they have created. I will show how Marx further developed this notion through his other understandings of alienation.

### **2.5.3 Political alienation**

Whereas the introduction to *Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Phenomenology of Right* (Marx [1843] 2010), which was written last, focuses on the criticism of religion, the main body of the work discusses political alienation. I will show how these two forms of alienation are connected.

Political alienation concerns the fact that people are represented in political institutions only as abstract individuals divorced from their real-life activity. For instance, they are not free to form political associations on the basis of their trade or guild. This diverts people from engaging in the sort of politics that directly concerns their daily lives. Marx formulates this idea through a criticism of Hegel for not accounting for the 'realisation of the actual empirical person' (Marx [1843] 2010, 38) in his theory of the state and civil society. For Marx, Hegel treats institutions that are supposed to represent man's 'actual empirical person' (Marx [1843] 2010, 39), such as family and guilds, as though they reflected an

'abstract person' (Marx [1843] 2010, 39). This means that the individual must 'effect a fundamental division with himself' (Marx [1843] 2010, 39). Hence Marx states

[i]n order to be an effective state member, he needs to withdraw from the organisation that reflects his daily life (civil reality) and become a pure abstract individual (blank individuality). (Marx [1843] 2010, 77)

Hence Marx accuses Hegel of treating the latter's 'personality as yet only abstractly' (Marx [1843] 2010, 39). This parallels the idea of the abstract realisation of human essence effected by religion. The point is that there is a disconnect between the political life and the real life of individuals.

Because the significance of the individual within the estate is divorced from his/her significance within the state, Marx argues that 'the estate has the significance that *'difference and separation constitute the very existence of the individual'* (Marx [1843] 2010, 81). This theme of 'separation' is a significant basis for Marx's later development of the concept of alienation. For instance, Marx states that the estate system 'separates the human being from his general essence, it turns him into an animal that is directly identical with its function' (Marx [1843] 2010, 81). Individuals are not allowed to think politically about their daily activity. If one takes politics to be an essential characteristic of humans, this means that they are not able to realise their inner nature in their concrete existence. This provides the foundation for Marx's mature understanding of alienation as one where social production is no longer free and conscious. On the contrary, 'individual life in its abstract form' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 276), i.e. the narrow idea of individual survival, has been made its 'purpose' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 276).

The separation outlined with political alienation emphasises how individuals can be estranged from their essence in their political and social existence. Hence this idea concretises the idea of subject-object separation contained in religious alienation. Next, I show how Marx's idea of economic alienation develops this idea further by showing, in concrete terms, how the object can control the subject.

#### 2.5.4 Economic alienation

Marx's conception of alienated labour under conditions of capitalist production is one where the function of work in realising the designs of the subject in the object is no longer fulfilled perfectly. Now labour represents a process through which humans, on the contrary, lose control over the object. Consequently, the product and instruments of their labour actually start to control them.

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Marx [1844b] 2010), Marx sets out his four-fold conception of alienation. For him, alienation concerns an estranged relation (1) to the product of labour; (2) to the activity of labour; (3) to the species as a whole and (4) to other humans. In what follows, I pay greatest attention to the first two aspects, as these are closely tied to my argument in this section, which is that alienation concerns a concrete separation and inversion of subject and object.

An analysis of private property forms the backdrop for (1) alienation from the product of labour. When social production is structured by the market and private property, workers do not possess the materials and means of their labour. These belong to their employer who consequently has automatic claim over the product. Thus Marx argues that the 'realisation of labour appears as a loss of realisation for the workers; objectification as a loss of the object' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 272). Hence Marx applies the notion of separation that he developed in the context of political alienation to production proper. In doing this, Marx also recovers the notion of inversion of subject and object which is contained in the idea of religious alienation, where objects and idols are worshiped as though they had (super)human powers.

In fact, Marx argues that, with the further development of these conditions, the worker, the subject, comes to be dominated by the object. For instance, in Marx's earlier text *Comments on James Mill* (Marx [1844a] 2010) Marx speaks of money as 'the sensuous, even objective existence of this *alienation*.' (Marx [1844a] 2010, 221) It heralds 'the general domination of the *thing* over the *person*, of the product over the producer.' (Marx [1844a] 2010, 221) This is because money actively regulates social relations. It determines how

much of one commodity another can fetch. Consequently, it also conditions how humans interact to acquire the material goods they need to live. Accordingly, Marx states that ‘this *mediator* [money] now becomes a *real God*, for the mediator is the *real power* over what it mediates to me. Its cult becomes an end in itself’ (Marx [1844a] 2010, 212).

The active element in the alienation produced by both money as mediator is the basis for the second dimension of alienation highlighted by Marx. In terms of (2), i.e. the estrangement of the worker’s activity, Marx reasons that if ‘the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation’ (Marx [1844b] 2010, 274). What this perspective emphasises is that alienated labour does not just result in the loss of the objective world for the worker but also in the separation between his/her essence and existence. Consequently, in his/her work the labourer

does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. (Marx [1844b] 2010, 274)

In other words, the worker cannot express his/her human essence in the one activity which is properly human: work, understood broadly as a creative and social activity that mediates between subject and object.

This active notion of alienation demonstrates that a framework based on the notion of human essence can produce an understanding of how domination and power is exerted diffusely and through networks, like in Foucault’s conception. These consist in the worker’s social relations and his/her environment. For instance, the case of machinery exemplifies how this effect is compounded by the worker’s objective environment becoming increasingly alien.

Indeed, beginning from his early work and speaking of the products of labour, Marx already explains how, for the worker, ‘the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.’ (Marx [1844a] 2010, 272). But in his later work, particularly in the *Grundrisse* (Marx [1857] 1993), Marx ties this idea to machinery specifically. For instance, Marx described how, with machinery, the worker produces a

‘power independent of himself’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 453) that ‘rules over him through his own actions’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 453). Marx further describes how, through machinery, ‘the appropriation of labour by capital confronts the worker in a coarsely sensuous form’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 704). Like with money, this alienation achieves a ‘direct reality’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 704). In fact, mirroring the passage above on money, Marx will state that it is equally in ‘fixed capital [i.e. machinery] that capital posits itself as an end-in-itself’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 710). This is because machinery is ‘active’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 710) and its structure incorporates ‘the aim of production’ (Marx [1857] 1993, 710). Thus I argue that Marx’s work contains the notion of technological alienation.

(3) and (4) are consequences of this dynamic. As human activity becomes alienated, humans’ existence conflicts with their essence as a socially productive species. They no longer make conscious decisions that impact their life-activity, and they lose the bond that connects each individual to society and to one-another.

### **2.5.5 Conclusion**

By developing the notions of religious, political and economic alienation Marx developed a conception of alienation that is characterised by a separation and inversion of subject and object. For instance, with economic alienation, individuals act within parameters they do not control. They thus confer an independent life onto the object of their labour. Hence the subject becomes dominated by its own object.

Thus Marx’s notion of alienation allows us to show how social control can be effected in a diffuse way and with a networked character. However, this conception does not require a rejection of the notion of essence and an emphasis on discourses, as is suggested by postmodern theorists. On the contrary, a conception of alienation which is based on essence and material factors, including technology, can help explain mechanisms that lead to social unfreedom.

As is most clear with religious alienation, the concept of alienation encompasses the notion of consciousness and beliefs. Ideology represents a more developed and concrete



manifestation of these types of warped beliefs. In the next section, I show how class-based production spreads distorted understandings of the world. Hence I now move onto analysing ideology, defined as the purposeful production of mystifying conceptions.

## **2.6 Ideology**

### **2.6.1 Introduction**

Marx and Engels' conception of ideology is based on a critique of the post-Hegelian philosophy of their time, which is contained in *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010). Marx and Engels denounced post-Hegelian philosophy for glorifying and legitimating the status quo, while nevertheless presenting itself as critical. Their critique of idealism is important for understanding their conception of ideology because it reveals Young Hegelian philosophy as a form of ideology. The Young Hegelians produced theories that were intent on purely intellectual critique. They therefore did not challenge their own bourgeois class interests. Marx and Engels' conception of ideology avoids the idealism of the Young Hegelians, for whom ideas were directly dominating. In contrast, for Marx and Engels, ideologies are both tied to material processes and mask and distort our understanding of these processes.

Firstly, in section 2.6.2, I look at Marx and Engels' materialist framework, which views ideas and actions as dynamically related. I show how this conception was built through a criticism of the Young Hegelians. Then, in section 2.6.3, I show how this same criticism applies to postmodern understandings.

### **2.6.2 Materialist conception: ideas as tied to the mode of production**

Marx and Engels' materialist conception emphasises the fact that ideas and consciousness arise out of the material conditions established by the mode of production. Ideas are generated by the particular way in which humans associate in order to produce what they need to live.

In formulating the mode of production as a premise for consciousness and history, Marx and Engels reversed the direction of causality of the Hegelian approach, which saw logical thought as a primary driver. Hence they state that

[i]n direct contrast to the German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. That is to say, not setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive [...] in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but setting out from real active men, and on the basis of their real life process demonstrating the development of their ideological life processes and the echoes of this life process. (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36)

Thus Marx and Engels show that activity and consciousness are tightly linked. However, they show that ideology obscures this connection. Indeed, the first determinant of ideology is that it produces a separation whereby ideas appear detached from their material base. The fact that ideas reflect the interests and circumstances of those producing them is concealed.

This outcome depends on the stage of development of the forces of production. Marx and Engels argue that: 'The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36). However, as social intercourse becomes more complex, ideas also become more detached. For Marx, this dynamic reaches its decisive stage with the separation of mental from physical labour. It is only now that consciousness 'can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 45).

At this stage, a narrow section within the ruling class has the time and resources to produce concepts. The rest of the population, on the other hand, is burdened with physical labour and does not possess the means to come up with and disseminate ideas. It therefore simply consumes the mental production of the intellectual class. Thus Marx states that

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. [...] The class which has the means of intellectual production at its disposal, consequently also controls

the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 59)

What's more, Marx argued that the ideas of the ruling class inevitably tended to reflect the latter's particular interests. However, from their position of control, each new dominant class is 'compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interest as the common interest of all the members of society' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 60).

Hence the second characteristic of ideology is that 'ever more abstract ideas hold sway, i.e. ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 60). In acquiring this abstract character, the link between ideas and material relations appears 'upside-down' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36). Universal concepts seem to stand at the root of concrete social relations, thus concealing the fact that they are in fact products of the latter. For instance, an abstract concept of man as essentially selfish is the product of market relations. But it can also be used to justify them. Hence, ideology is, on the whole, characterised by an inversion whereby the fact that ideas reflect the interests of a narrow elite is concealed. They no longer appear to be produced by particular social relations but appear as the universally valid foundation for these social relations. The view of their relationship with the material base is thus distorted.

Marx and Engels' applied this understanding to the Young Hegelians. Their conception is materialist because it shows how the material intercourse of humans, itself, produces an inversion of objective processes, which conceals and justifies them. Hence they state that,

[i]f in all ideology men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomena arises just as much from their historical life-processes as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process. (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36)

Accordingly, their critique of the Young Hegelians didn't simply dismiss their idealism but analysed it from a material perspective. They established a 'connection of German philosophy with German reality' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 30). They argued that the historical method which reigned in Germany could be traced back to the 'dogmatic dreamings and distortions' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 62) of jurists and politicians. It

could be explained by ‘their practical position in life, their job, and the division of labour’ (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 62). This explained why the Young Hegelians created works that used flowery concepts that were not connected to any material demands, passing these off as critical. This was simply a way for them to maintain their social position as bourgeois intellectuals.

### **2.6.3 Criticism of the postmodern view of ideology**

However, this conception, which encompasses both ideal and real sides of existence, has been criticised by postmodern theorists. Postmodern theorists focus heavily on the production of ideas, discourses and narratives. For them, these elements are so strong that they have direct influence over the real world. Consequently the distinction between the ideal and the real no longer holds.

For instance, postmodern theorists, such as Foucault, reject the idea of truth. In a situation where things are subject to external factors and change constantly, truth is relative. This rejection goes hand in hand with a rejection of the notion of ideology. Foucault suggests that any form of knowledge is already ideological because it is bound up with power relations. For instance, Foucault states that

truth isn’t outside power [...] Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth [...]: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true (Foucault 1980, 131)

Moreover, Foucault speaks of ‘the power of knowledge of the truth and the power to disseminate this knowledge’ (Foucault 1980, 34). As a result, Foucault argued that ‘power and knowledge imply one another’ (Foucault 1975, 27).

The problem with this conception is that it can end up re-establishing a form of classical idealism whereby ideas drive developments in objective reality rather than the other way around. With postmodern criticism there is no precise distinction between power and discourse. This can result in criticism of discourses being deemed sufficient. Hence, at the

level of explanation and theory, the postmodern view does not separate objective processes from their ideal representations. Marx and Engels' view, on the other hand, demystifies complex ideas by showing how they result from simple material interests. They show that the latter's abstract character has a functional role in obscuring these material interests. This abstract character makes such ideas more universal and hence more appealing to a broader section of people.

#### **2.6.4 Conclusion**

To conclude, Marx and Engels' criticism of the Young Hegelians helps create a framework for understanding how ideology is characterised by a material inversion that leads to increasingly abstract ideas being produced. These appear as the foundation for social relations instead of their product. Hence ideology is characterised by the same inversion dynamic as alienation. However, it is a more specific form of alienation which concerns ideas and consciousness. Postmodern theory's rejection of the notion of truth and intense focus on discourses risks concealing these objective dynamics and making the same mistake as the Young Hegelians. One implication is the idea that freeing one's consciousness and spreading ideas is sufficient to enact emancipatory change. Modern day examples of this dynamic can be seen with 'clicktivism' (Dean 2012, 233), the idea that simply liking and sharing posts on social media is sufficient to enact emancipatory change. This neglects the need for making material and structural changes.

#### **2.7 Conclusion**

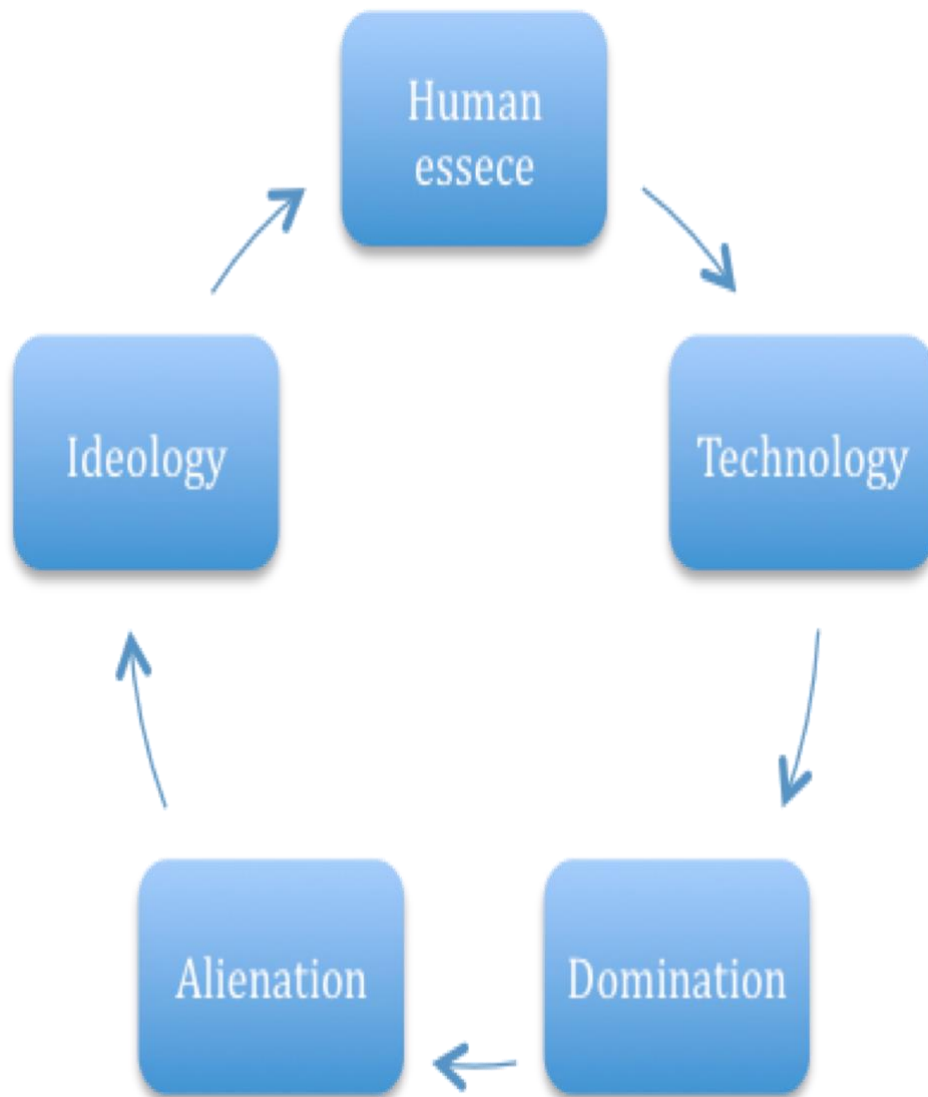
In conclusion, my argument has used Marx and Engels' criticism of the idealism of the Young Hegelians to reformulate a dialectical materialist approach. The latter always seeks to link the subjective and objective sides of social processes. This has allowed me to criticise postmodern understandings. I have argued that these represent a modern version of the idealism of the Young Hegelians. This is because postmodern theory similarly tends to take our focus away from material processes and set it solely on ideas and discourses. In treating

human essence, technology, domination, ideology and alienation, I have shown how, on the contrary, subject and object are interrelated.

I have shown that human essence is tied to human natural powers and instincts. But, at the same time, this means that humans are conscious and socially productive. Hence human essence implies a dialectic between subject and object that tends towards their harmonisation. Technology is an object that is produced by humans and is dependent on them. Hence it does not have a prior and autonomous essence, as suggested by Heidegger. Domination is firstly based on power relations between people. These in turn are based on material resources and direct physical violence or its threat. But domination can also have a diffuse and networked character. Alienation reflects the domination of the subject by the object. Alienation is produced by people acting within parameters that they do not set that distance them increasingly from their own product. This inverts the relation of mastery of the subject over the object that characterised human essence. Alienation can take on a concrete manifestation at the level of machinery in instances where the worker must follow the rhythm of the machine, rather than the other way around. Alienation shows that a diffuse and networked concept of domination need not dissolve the concept of essence into endless flux, as Foucault did. Similarly to alienation, ideology inverts the relation between humans and their ideas and consciousness. These ideas are no longer free and representative of each individual's experience of material reality. Instead, they are produced by a particular class. Ideology is characterised by abstract, universal ideas that seem divorced from the particular social relations from which they arise. This conceals the fact that they reflect the interests of a narrow group. Therefore ideology can serve to legitimate material forms of domination and alienation. Consequently ideas should not be understood, as they were by the Young Hegelians and risk being by postmodern theory, as directly dominating but as always linked to material processes.

In treating these concepts in this order, I have shown how we advance to increasingly specific and complex categories from more abstract and general ones. Categories that are closer to the beginning, like human essence and technology, are more susceptible to form a

basis for alternative social trajectories. Categories that are closer to the end are more susceptible to perpetuate an alienating cycle by feeding back onto these basic categories (Figure 2.1). For instance, ideology can give rise to toxic human subjectivities.



*Figure 2.7.1: The cycle of technology, domination, alienation and ideology*

Hence Figure 2.7.1 could be conceptualised as a downward spiral seen from above, where each revolution adds a layer to the process of alienation that the cycle outlines. This spiral incorporates an abstract dimension towards the beginning. It becomes increasingly more concrete towards the end, forming concrete abstractions such as money, technology and mystifying world views. Ideology gives rise to alienated human subjectivities, which produce technologies for domination, which also perpetuate alienation and are legitimated by contemporary forms of ideology, which they ultimately incorporate.

The next chapter discusses the following layer of this spiral. Indeed in looking at Anders' theories, I move from analysing the dynamics of early capitalism to those of established capitalism, where production is abundant and the logic of capital has crystallised into the mode of operation of machines and technology.



### **3. Günther Anders' Theory of Technological Alienation: from Heidegger to Marx**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Günther Anders (at the time: Günther Stern) was a student of Heidegger and Husserl in Freiburg, ultimately conducting his PhD under the supervision of Husserl. His thesis dissertation, entitled *Über die Situationskategorie bei den ‚Logischen Sätzen‘. Erster Teil einer Untersuchung über die Rolle der Situationskategorie [On the situational category in the 'Logical sentences': First part of a study on the role of the situational category]* (Anders [Stern] 1924), which he defended in 1924 and remains unpublished, was nevertheless critical of Husserl's philosophy (Dawsey 2004). He later did postdoctorate work with Heidegger at Marburg and further assisted Max Scheler afterwards in 1926 (Dawsey 2004). Hence Anders studied under some of the most important non-Marxist philosophers of the 20th century. Yet Anders also had ties with Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School. Anders' career was further overshadowed by his first wife's. He was married to Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) from 1929 to 1937 (Young-Bruehl 1982). Arendt had also been an enthusiastic student of Heidegger's, with whom she had an affair from 1924 (Young-Bruehl 1982, 53).

Hence Anders' late 20s were filled with the influence of Heidegger and phenomenology. However, over the course of the rise of the Nazi's, Anders lost this focus and turned to engaging with Marxism as an alternative to Heidegger's phenomenology. In what follows, I map this turn through the principal events that marked Anders' life. I argue that the influence of Marxism on Anders' thought has been under-appreciated. In some respects, Anders' work can be seen to pick up and develop threads that were already contained in Marx.

In his interview with Mathias Greffrath (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51-85), Anders speaks of the four fundamental breaks of his life (Anders [1979b] 2008, 60). The first one consists in Anders' witnessing the horrors of the First World War. In 1917, around the age of 15,

Anders was forced to join a paramilitary organisation which travelled to occupied France near the Western front. Here he witnessed the ill-treatment of the civilian population by the Germans and was particularly shocked by the sight of mutilated soldiers ‘that started at the waist’ (Anders [1979b] 2008, 60, my translation) waiting for a train. Moreover, he experienced anti-Semitic attacks from other members of the group. All this contributed to Anders’ becoming a moral philosopher (Anders [1979b] 2008, 60). These early experiences represent the first intellectual turning point of his life.

The next three are Hitler’s rise to power, the discovery of the existence of Nazi extermination camps and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I argue that these last three events caused Anders’ to develop his thought in a non-continuous way. For instance, Anders describes how:

[i]t is undeniable that the 6th August 1945, that is Hiroshima, meant a break. It was the most profound caesura of my life, though certainly not the first. (Anders [1979b] 2008, 72-73, my translation)

I argue that this event was the culmination of a development that saw Anders resolve to update and apply Marx’s concept of alienation to the modern era.

Indeed, in the early 1930s during Hitler’s rise to power, Anders abruptly abandoned his focus on philosophical anthropology and lurched into producing ‘political’ (Anders [1979b] 2008, 73 my translation) writings. This is evidenced by his early anti-fascist novel *Die Molussische Katakombe* [*The Molussian Catacomb*] (Anders 1992b). This work’s manuscript was ready for the press in 1933 but found no publisher. Anders later produced a second draft of the novel in 1938, but the work was only finally published near the end of Anders’ life in 1992. It tells the tale of a fictional land dominated by a fascist regime. It is therefore an allegorical tale about the Nazis. This can be contrasted with, for instance, Anders’ first monograph *Über das Haben. Sieben Kapitel zur Ontologie der Erkenntnis* [*About having: Seven chapters on the ontology of knowledge*] (Anders [Stern] 1928), which was more philosophical and dealt with ontology. This illustrates how Anders went from doing phenomenology to anti-fascism.

Subsequently, there was yet another break. To come to terms with the human loss caused by the industrial warfare of the Second World War and following his experience of factory work in the US in the 1940s, Anders decisively turned to engaging with early Marx and Marxism. Indeed Anders' found Heidegger's analysis increasingly unsatisfactory for understanding industrial society, as it did not account for modern technology. As an alternative, he picked up on a conception of technological alienation already contained in Marx's work. This conceived workers as living appendages of machines. It allowed Anders to produce an analysis of how domination, alienation and ideology were increasingly tied to technology. Anders' adoption and engagement with Marxism increases in strength throughout his life. It is at its most intense and explicit in his later years, for instance with the 1992 publication of *Die Antiquiertheit des Proletariats [The Obsolescence of the Proletariat]* (Anders 1992a, [1992] 2013). However, in identifying technology as the main alienated driver of human affairs, over and above capital, Anders can also be said to have developed the notion of technological alienation beyond Marx.

Thus I argue that the current literature is limited in simply describing Anders as idiosyncratic and hard to classify. Specifically, this literature frames Anders as primarily a student of Heidegger and Husserl that was somewhat influenced but also critical of Marxism (Dijk 2000; Sonolet 2006). Babich further frames the writing of Anders' main book *Die Antiquiertheit Des Menschen: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution [The Obsolescence of Man: on the Soul in the Epoch of the Second Industrial Revolution]* (Anders [1956] 1961) as 'reflecting his formative experiences with Husserl and Heidegger' (Babich 2013, 52). Hence for Babich:

Anders undertakes his discussion of radio ghosts via the phenomenological modalities he learned as a student of both Husserl<sup>26</sup> and Heidegger. (Babich 2019, 62)

And:

Anders' critical reflections on technology can be understood only in the context of his understanding of Heidegger. (Babich 2013, 47)

While Babich is careful not to identify Anders' thought with Heidegger's, her statements contrast with Dawsey's finding that Anders was '[a]mong the very first of his peer group to break with Heidegger' (Dawsey 2017, 2-3). Dawsey further states that around 1929 Anders 'intensively studied the critical theory of the early Karl Marx, whose ideas on alienation and dehumanization shaped him for years to come' (Dawsey 2017, 8). Much of the literature on Anders fails to highlight this engagement with early Marx, which further evidences the discontinuities in Anders' thought. Anders lived through the huge upheavals of the 20th century, moving to and from very different contexts. For instance, he went from Nazi Germany to intellectual circles in Paris, to working odd jobs in California. In the following chapter, I show how this led to changes in Anders thinking and how his critical theory of technology is profoundly influenced by Marx, and not just Heidegger.

To make my argument, I look at each of the themes of this thesis, the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. For each theme, in a first subsection, I outline Anders' early thought. Then, in a second subsection, I discuss the historical factors which produced an epistemological break in Anders thinking and show how this made Anders' thought take on a new direction. Finally, in a third subsection, I present Anders' mature thinking, showing how it is inspired by Hegel and Marx, not just Heidegger as is so often claimed.

Hence in the section on the human, first, in section 3.2.2, I show how Anders' early conception ties the notion of the human to abstraction and indeterminateness, rejecting the concept of human essence. Secondly, in section 3.2.3, I show how Hitler's rise to power meant that Anders lost interest in pursuing the question of characterising what humans are authentically, preferring to focus on political writings. Finally, in section 3.2.4, I show that, in his mature years, Anders characterises humans as social homo faber partially contradicting his initial position that humans have no essence. In the section on technology, first, in section 3.3.2, I show that Anders did not focus on the question of technology in his early work, which instead deals with ontology and phenomenology. Secondly, in section 3.3.3, I show that Anders' period in factories encouraged him to turn to a Hegelian analysis of

machines. Indeed Heidegger's theory's omission of modern machinery proved untenable. Finally, in section 3.3.4, I show that Anders adopted a conception of technology which mirrors Marx's conception of capital. In the section on domination, I firstly, in section 3.4.2, show that Anders' early work focuses on domination within a human centred context. Here domination is tied to power being exerted within and between groups. Secondly, in section 3.4.3, I show that, over the course of the 1940s, Anders reckoned with the industrial killing of the Second World War. Consequently, Anders started to grapple with the idea that technology and weapons were a factor in domination. Finally, in section 3.4.4, I show that Anders' mature work emphasises that industrial technology is a factor in re-producing capitalist domination and seeks to enlarge the concept of the proletariat on this basis. In the section on alienation, firstly, in section 3.5.2, I show how Anders' early concept of alienation is tied to Heidegger's idea of inauthenticity. Secondly, in section 3.5.3, I show that, after Anders' period in factories, his concept of technological alienation becomes more concrete and Marxist. Finally, in section 3.5.3, I show that Anders produces a concept of technological alienation beyond Marx. In the section on ideology, firstly, in section 3.6.2, I show that Anders had a phenomenological view of ideology in his youth. Secondly, in section 3.6.3, I show that he broke radically from this understanding after his time in Paris. Finally, in section 3.6.4, I show that he took inspiration from Marx and Engels' conception of ideology, while going beyond it. Indeed he suggested that ideology is automatically produced by humans interacting with the structure of the media.

## **3.2 The human**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

Anders developed a theory of the human during his youth. In parallel, he wrote about art and aesthetics. However, during Hitler's rise to power, Anders abandoned this focus and turned his attention to politics. This marks Anders' turn to analysing the distorted existence

of humans rather than their true essence. Below I show how this led Anders to adopt a vision of the human that was closer to Marx's.

Anders' early writings on the human are still heavily under the influence of Heidegger and phenomenology. This is despite the fact that Anders is critical of Heidegger from very early on. In this early work, Anders heavily emphasises the instability of human essence, coming close to rejecting the notion of essence altogether. In his mature work, Anders does not deny the accuracy of his early conception of human essence as artificial or unstable. He simply questions the value of thinking about what man is authentically when the very survival of humans is jeopardised by atomic weapons (Anders [1979b] 2008, 77-8). However, this encourages Anders to talk about human essence synthetically. He summarises his conception of the human into the idea of *homo faber* [man as a maker]. In summarily talking about the fact that man's essence is that of a social *homo faber*, Anders contradicts his initial position that man has no essence. This, in turn, shows that Anders becomes less concerned with defending an existentialist conception of man, whereby humans can reinvent themselves at each moment. He becomes more concerned with describing man's alienation from his essence as a socially productive species, bringing him closer in line with Marx's work.

Firstly, I look at how Anders' conception of man is based on abstraction and therefore contrasts with Marx's idea that man is nature. Secondly, I show how Anders' focus moved away from philosophical anthropology and how this coincided with a move towards Marxism. Finally, I show that Anders' mature theory prioritises theorising alienation as a distancing of humans from their essence as social producers over maintaining his argument that humans have no essence.

### **3.2.2 Early Anders**

Anders grounds his early conception of the human on a distinction between humans and nature. Indeed one of Anders' earliest works published in 1930 is entitled *Die Weltfremdheit des Menschen: Schriften zur philosophischen Anthropologie* [*The Strangeness of Man:*

*Writings on Philosophical Anthropology*]. As there is no English translation of this work, I rely on some later texts published by Anders in French in the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* between 1934 and 1937. According to this early philosophy, man differs from animals in that he 'is not cut out for any particular material world' (Anders [Stern] [1937] 2009, 279). Anders argues that human freedom arises out of this disconnect:

[t]o be free, this means: to be strange, to be bound to nothing specific, to be cut out for nothing specific, to be within the horizon of the indeterminate (Anders [Stern] [1937] 2009, 280)

Hence, for Anders, 'the retreat from the world' (Anders [Stern] [1937] 2009, 279) and 'within himself' (Anders [Stern] [1937] 2009, 280) is what makes man free. Hence, at first glance, Anders makes human freedom exist in the gap between humans and nature.

This characterisation of human freedom as residing in the abstract, as opposed to nature, and being completely indeterminate, contrasts with Marx's concept of human freedom. For Marx, it is 'natural powers' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 336) and 'instincts' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 336) that form the basis for human freedom. Indeed Marx states that man

acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being. He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects—because at bottom he is nature. (Marx [1844b] 2010, 336)

For Marx, humans are so closely tied to nature that they are nature, a point which seems diametrically opposed to Anders' insistence that humans are disconnected from nature. Marx ties human freedom to the fact that humans are a socially productive species. Hence Marx has a concrete conception of human freedom.

### **3.2.3 Epistemological break**

It is possible that Anders' early insistence on human beings being outside the world is a critical reaction to the insistence on rootedness in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Heidegger [1927] 1967). Subsequently, Heidegger moreover criticised what he would call the 'homelessness of contemporary man' (Heidegger 1992, 241-244). In fact, this aspect of

Heidegger's thought has been linked to his antisemitism. During the Nazi era, Heidegger wrote privately of the 'worldlessness of Judaism' (Faye 2015, 115, my translation). He saw this as the foundation for Jews' 'gigantic [and] tenacious ability to calculate' (Faye 2015, 115, my translation). I argue that Anders detected traces of these beliefs in his interactions with Heidegger and reacted against them. However, this form of resistance ultimately proved insufficient, for Anders.

In his interview with Mathias Greffrath given at the age of 77 (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51-85), Anders refers to his writings on 'anthropology and philosophy of art' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 60, my translation) as belonging to a 'pre-Hitlerian period' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 60, my translation). Anders later discusses the break from this period as being due to the political circumstances in Germany at the time. Hence he states that '[t]he content of my writings was, between 1931 and 1945, exclusively National Socialism and war' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 61, my translation). He adds that writing academic texts about ethics, given the political context, would have been 'foolish, absurd if not immoral' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 61, my translation). This suggests that Anders' focus shifted away from academic philosophy even before most of his early works were published.

Anders reveals that, during his political phase, he started to become influenced by Marx. In his interview with Mathias Greffrath, Anders states that 'the young Marx started to have a certain influence [on me], but that occurred only after my thesis. I became acquainted with him before Hegel' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 57, my translation). Here Anders refers to his thesis dissertation (Anders [Stern] 1924).

The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology* were first published in 1932. Hence it is likely that Anders became acquainted with Marx during his time in Paris between 1933 and 1936. Anders had fled Berlin in 1933 because the Nazi's seized Bertolt Brecht's contact booklet, which had his details on it (Young-Bruehl 1982, 102). Brecht was an active communist at the time. Moreover, in the following years in Paris, Anders' 'circle of acquaintances during the months he worked on his novel consisted largely of artists, journalists, and intellectuals in and around the Communist party' (Young-Bruehl



1982, 99). Anders' later writings bear the trace of this engagement with Marxist circles. Indeed Anders' exposition of human nature in his main work *Die Antiquiertheit Des Menschen: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* [*The Obsolescence of Man: on the Soul in the Epoch of the Second Industrial Revolution*] (Anders [1956] 1961) becomes less existentialist and more concrete and social. Here Anders speaks of man creating 'on each occasion the framework of his world and his society [and] carrying within himself [...] a "generic sociality"[, a] sociality in itself' (Anders [1956] 2003, 290, my translation).

### 3.2.4 Mature Anders

Overall, in his mature work, which includes *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I, (Anders [1956] 2003) and the second volume, originally published as *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen Bd. II: Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution* [*The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II: On the Destruction of Life in the Epoch of the Third Industrial Revolution*] (Anders 1980a), Anders does not deny the validity of his early conception of man. He reasserts his early response to philosophical anthropology's question regarding human essence, stating that "[a]rtificiality is the nature of man" (Anders [1956] 2003, 289, my translation) and "[t]he essence of man consists in not having an essence" (Anders [1980] 2011, 12). Thus Anders uses a paradoxical definition of human essence to emphasise human freedom and consciousness. However, this does not mean that Anders does away with the concept of essence completely, as Foucault would later do.

For instance, in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II, Anders calls his work 'a philosophical anthropology in the epoch of technocracy' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1), suggesting that an idea of the human is important for his theory. He further asserts 'that the complaints about the "end of man" must be based on a particular image of man. In a formal sense this argument is not false' (Anders [1980] 2011, 298).

This produces a contradiction within Anders' thought whereby, on the one hand, Anders asserts that 'anyone who still speaks today of [man's] "essence" (as Scheler still did) is a

figure from the distant past' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1). However, on the other hand, in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II, Anders speaks of man as homo faber as if this constitutes man's fixed essence. For instance, Anders argues that automation means that man 'is defrauded, however, with respect to his own productive activity' (Anders [1980] 2011, 42) and claims that this, 'if one takes seriously the definition of man as homo faber, means that he is defrauded with respect to his essence' (Anders [1980] 2011, 42). Hence here Anders appeals to the notion of essence to ground his criticism of modern society.

### 3.2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, Anders early theory of the human critically plays on many aspects of Heidegger's work. For instance, it makes wordlessness into a positive characteristic of man. However, Anders soon abandoned his exclusive focus on philosophical anthropology during Hitler's rise to power. Moreover, Anders became engaged with Marxism during his years in Paris between 1933-36 and this led him to adopt a more social view of the human in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I (Anders [1956] 2003). Nevertheless, Anders both defended and contradicted his early conception of man in his mature years. The conception he produced in his early 50s maintained a vision of man as having a very unstable essence, or no essence at all. However, in all his mature work, and especially in his later years, Anders explicitly described man's alienation from his essence as *homo faber*. Hence I argue that the need he felt to analyse post-War society meant that Anders prioritised producing a theory of alienation over defending the idea of human essence as totally fluid. This, in turn, made him adopt a determinate conception of man's essence which contradicted his initial characterisation of this essence as non-fixed. All these elements show that Anders overall conception of man shares more with Marx than postmodern theorists, for instance. He conceives humans as essentially free, conscious and socially productive.

Anders often adopts the concept of Prometheus (Anders [1956] 2003, 30-33, 50, 253; [1980] 2011, 203, 204, 279) to describe human essence as homo faber. Thus Anders highlights how humans are tightly connected to technology. Humans arguably appropriated

fire, which is a central feature of the Greek myth of Prometheus, as an early form of technology that allowed them to develop as a species. Hence technology, which I discuss next, represents a concrete manifestation man's essence as a socially productive species.

### **3.3 Technology**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

In this section, I show that Anders' intense focus on technology began after his experience of working in factories following his emigration to the United States in 1936. Before this period, Anders' work does not deal with the question of technology. It is instead focussed on phenomenology and philosophical anthropology. When Anders does confront the question of technology after 1936, this also coincides with a definite shift away from Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger's theory did not account for modern machinery. Therefore Anders found it unsatisfactory for dealing with his experience in the mid 20th century. He instead opted for using a Hegelian and Marxian framework for analysing the role of technology in modernity, while nevertheless retaining some insights from Heidegger's work. Overall, this predominantly Hegelian-Marxian framework allowed him to think of technology as a system within which humans were situated and integrated.

Firstly, I show that Anders' early work does not have an intense focus on the question of technology. Secondly, I show that Anders moved to a more Hegelian conception in order to conceptualise modern technology, as this need became felt in the wake of the Second World War. Finally, I show how this brought Anders' conception closer to Marx. Indeed Anders plays on, and develops, Marx's analysis of machines.

#### **3.3.2 Early Anders**

Anders' writings before 1936 were produced during his time in Berlin and Paris. They are characterised by the fact that they do not address the question of technology. For instance, there is no mention of technology in Anders' work on phenomenology in *Über das Haben*

[*On Having*] (Anders [Stern] 1928), nor in Anders' later presentation of his philosophical anthropology in *Une Interpretation de l'aposteriori* [*An Interpretation of Aposteriori*] (Anders [Stern] 1934). In *Die Weltfremdheit des Menschen* [The worldlessness of man] (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2018), Anders discusses the notion of progress in its connection to technology, stating that the vocabulary of progress grew out of the technical vocabulary of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2018, 328). But the notion of progress is the main theme of this passage and technology is secondary to an analysis of the latter. Indeed *Die Weltfremdheit des Menschen* (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2018) is mainly a work of philosophical anthropology (Dawsey 2017, 8). It does not put forward a critical analysis of humans' interaction with technology, as Anders' later work will do.

### 3.3.3 Epistemological break

However, there is a moment in Anders' life at which he began to focus very intensely on technology. This also coincides with a partial rejection of Heidegger's understanding of the latter. At this point, Anders began adopting the dialectical framework of Hegel and Marx.

During Anders' stay in Paris from 1933 to 1936, Kojève was giving lectures on Hegel at the École Normale Supérieure, which combined aspects of Heidegger's existentialism with Hegel. Anders and his first wife, Hannah Arendt, were able to attend these lectures thanks to Raymond Aron, who introduced them to Parisian intellectual circles (Young-Bruehl 1982, 116-117). In fact, Anders published his early works of philosophical anthropology in the journal *Recherches Philosophiques*, whose main editor was Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964), a student of Kojève's. Young-Bruehl states that

thanks to Aron's introductions, [Arendt] and Stem [Anders] were able to attend several of Alexandre Kojève's seminars at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes. These seminars were the basis for Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* [*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*] (Young-Bruehl 1982, 116-117)

This suggests that Anders came into contact with Hegel during his years in Paris. Indeed his early work on the human critically references Hegel (Anders [Stern] [1937] 2009, 306).

This engagement with Hegel was succeeded by a formative life-experience that motivated Anders to analyse technology. In his interview with Mathias Greffrath (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51-85), Anders discusses how the time after he emigrated to the United States from France in 1936 influenced his later work. During this period, Anders was obliged to take up odd jobs in factories in order to make ends meet. Anders reveals that:

without my period in factories, I would never have been able to write my critique of the era of technology, i.e. my book *The Obsolescence of Man* (Anders [1979b] 2008, 69, my translation)

I argue that Anders found a Hegelian Marxian approach more adequate for analysing this experience than Heidegger's philosophy. This is because Hegel's notion of dialectic and totality are tools that can help theorise the complex systems of technology that Anders encountered on the production line.

In contrast, Heidegger's thought did not account for modern machinery. Hence, in the same interview, Anders argued that Heidegger's

“Zeugwelt” is an artisanal village-like world, a world of workshops. This is why Scheler called his philosophy a “shoemaker's ontology”. In *Sein und Zeit* there are still no factories; the analyses are not only non-Marxist or anti-Marxist but pre-Marxist, actually they are even pre-capitalist. (Anders [1979b] 2008, 54, my translation)

These last mentions of Marxism suggest that Anders saw the latter as the alternative theory that instead did deal with factory life. Anders published a critique of Heidegger called *On the Pseudo-Concreteness of Heidegger's Philosophy* in 1948 (Anders [Stern] 1948). In this work, Anders summarises his key criticisms of Heidegger. Here Anders states that ‘[t]he province of Heidegger's concreteness [...] ends before economy and machine’ (Anders [Stern] 1948, 347). This mention of the machine in connection to the economy is reminiscent of Marx and suggests that Anders was engaging with Marxism at the time.

On the whole, Heidegger had joined the Nazi party in 1933. This confirmed Anders suspicions about Heidegger's antisemitism, discussed in the previous section. In light of this, Heidegger's analysis of machines appeared, more clearly than ever, to romanticise a

forgotten, artisanal past, which resembled the Nazi ideal of traditional German society. I argue that Anders was, to a significant degree, consequently repelled by Heidegger's conception of technology. This made him open to exploring other frameworks.

### 3.3.4 Mature Anders

Anders' mature work, especially his writings that succeed the publication of *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I (Anders [1956] 2003), start to increasingly analyse technology in terms of it forming a system or totality. This shows how Anders' analysis of machines is arguably both Hegelian and Marxian.

In his open letter to Claus Eichmann, Anders explains that all machines tend to become 'machine parts' (Anders [1964] 2015, 18) because 'they would be mechanical components of one gigantic "total machine," into which they would be merged' (Anders [1964] 2015, 18). Hence Anders here applies Hegel's concept of totality to machines. Moreover, in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011), in an essay called 'The Obsolescence of Machines' dated 1969, Anders speaks of a 'dialectic of the machine' (Anders [1980] 2011, 84), a clear reference to Hegel's dialectical philosophy. Indeed Hegel's dialectic helps us understand relations between the whole, or totality, and its parts (e.g. Hegel [1830] 2010, 204). This can ground an understanding between separate but mutually constituting elements, such as humans and technology. In following this Hegelian logic, Anders comes close to Marx's analysis of machines. This is because Marx also used a Hegelian framework. Indeed Anders' 'great machine' (Anders [1980] 2011, 84) which is a 'functional complex of a higher order' (Anders [1980] 2011, 84) resembles Marx's understanding of a 'collective working machine' (Marx [1867] 1990, 502) which includes 'various kinds of single machine' (Marx [1867] 1990, 502). Here Marx is also adopting Hegel's notion of totality and applying it to machines. Hence Anders' analysis is very similar to Marx's.

Anders moreover attributes an expansionary drive to machines that mirrors Marx's definition of capital. Indeed both conceptions are tied to Hegel's notion of spurious infinity. For instance, Anders states that '[i]n short, their self-expansion is limitless; the machines'

thirst for accumulation is insatiable' (Anders [1964] 2015, 17). This corresponds to Marx's description of capital's 'blind measureless drive [and] insatiable appetite [which] oversteps [...] physical limits' (Marx 1967, 375). Finally, for Anders, technology is so totalising that it 'has actually become the subject of history' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1). This echoes Marx's characterisation of capital as an 'automatic subject' (Marx [1867] 1990, 255). I argue that Anders saw modern technological systems as mirroring the capitalist social system described by Marx. Anders defined the principle, or essence, of machines as 'maximum output, [for which] they need surrounding worlds that can provide maximum input' (Anders [1964] 2015, 17). This is different to Heidegger's notion of technology's essence as 'maximum yield at minimum expense' (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 15). Indeed it mirrors Anders' understanding of 'the ideal of the world of work of maximum yield and the economic principle' (Anders [1956] 2003, 311, note 5). This conception reveals how Anders' understanding of machines is influenced by Marx's analysis of capitalism as characterised by a limitless drive for profit, which sucks dry surrounding resources.

Nevertheless, I do not wish to deny that Anders gained important insights from Heidegger's work. In fact, I argue that he integrates these into his mature analysis of technology. One of the main insights he adopts from Heidegger is that technology's design is related to a specific purpose or use. Marx's work also describes this but not in as much detail as Heidegger's. Indeed Heidegger produced the notion that technology is characterised by *Stellen*. This word refers, among others, to *bestellen*, which means to set in order, order and command (Heidegger [1954] 1977, 15). The implication for Anders is that technology is tied to a specific mode of use, which conditions human activity. Hence Anders argues that what

shapes and deforms us, are not just the objects that the "means" mediate, but the means and contraptions themselves. These are not merely objects multiple possible uses, but have their own determinate structure and function. (Anders [1956] 2003, 98, *my translation*)

Taking the television as an example, Anders states that what “moulds” us and “alters” us just as much as the programme that we choose to watch is the fact that ‘we do not take part in it but only consume its image’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 98, *my translation*).

Hence Anders uses Heidegger’s insights into technology having a specific structure and mode of use to produce a micro-level explanation that complements his general view of machines as forming a totality. The two levels of his analysis combine to shed light on why technological systems have such a profound effect on human life. This is something I will look at in more detail in the next section on domination when I outline Anders’ idea that the division of labour tied to machines can be a factor in facilitating acts of domination.

### **3.3.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, after Anders’ experience of factory work in 1936, he became critical of Heidegger’s conception of technology. Indeed Heidegger omitted modern technologies and factories from his analysis. This criticism reinforced Anders’ more general shift away from Heidegger’s philosophical influence, which had gathered pace after the latter joined the Nazi party in 1933. I argue that consequently Anders turned toward Hegel and Marx in order to formulate a more complete analysis of technology, which accounts for modern machinery. Accordingly, Anders started to view technology as forming a totality, or system, within which humans are situated. Hence, for Anders, technology had a profound influence on human life. In characterising technological systems as expansionary and all-encompassing, Anders ends up mirroring Marx’s thought surrounding capital but applying it to technology. For instance, Marx calls capital an ‘automatic subject’ whereas Anders says that technology is the ‘subject of history’. As I show in section 3.5, Marx also thought that machinery was a material embodiment of capital.

I argue that it is this thread that Anders picked up on and developed in Marx. Nevertheless, Anders supplemented his re-interpretation of Marx by applying some of Heidegger’s insights on technology to the notion of technology as a subject. In particular, Anders analysed in detail how technology came with a particular mode of operation,



functioning, structure or design which influenced human consciousness and actions. For instance, the next section will show how Anders highlighted the moral issues arising out of the industrialisation of warfare.

### **3.4 Domination**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

Anders' early work deals with the theme of domination as enacted within and between groups of people. However, I argue that after the Second World War, Anders' focus shifted toward thinking about technology as a crucial factor in producing domination. Anders was shocked to the core by the discovery of Nazi concentration camps and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both were examples of scientific rationality being applied to killing. In fact, Anders referred to Hiroshima as the 'day zero of a new era' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 73), as nuclear weapons made possible total human annihilation. Anders' dismay at the industrial killing of the war was compounded by his personal experience of factory work in New York immediately after his emigration to the United States in 1936. Accordingly, Anders started to analyse how domination was facilitated by industrial technology, i.e. by the division of labour, weapons and surveillance. Anders adopted a progressively more Marxist view in parallel to this shift. For instance, he began to understand domination in terms of class, albeit unconventionally. In one of his last essays, *Die Antiquiertheit des Proletariats [The Obsolescence of the Proletariat]* (Anders 1992a), Anders attempts to redefine what the proletariat is in the technological era based on a standard of freedom (not living) (Anders [1992] 2013, 147). He concludes that the new proletariat includes almost everyone who does not control the effects of their actions mediated by technology.

First, I look at Anders' early notion of domination through social control (3.4.2). Then I show how this consisted in an early subversion of Heidegger and how Anders' focus shifted with his experiences of the end of the first half of the 20th century (3.4.3). Finally, I show

that Anders mature writings shift toward a focus on technology as the main factor in producing domination (3.4.4).

### 3.4.2 Early Anders

Anders' early anti-fascist novel *Die molussische Katakombe* [*The Molussian Catacomb*] (Anders 1992b, [1992] 2003) was ready for publication in 1933 and was later revised by Anders in 1938. It deals with the theme of domination and social control. However, in stark contrast to Anders' later work, in this book technology is not the main factor in producing domination. Rather, the novel is primarily set in a prison. Here the characters relate to each other tales of resistance within their fictional land dominated by a fascist regime. Hence the novel is an allegory for the mass politics and repression of the Nazis.

This early work contains the theme of power being exerted within and between groups. The characters of the novel are often gently coaxed into following orders. For instance, the novel contains the maxim "[i]f you want a loyal slave, give him an underdog" (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51, *my translation*) and discusses how, appearing as lords, characters 'forgot that they continued to be servants' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51, *my translation*). Hence this early work theorises domination as arising from power being exerted by one group over another. Hierarchical social structures create an authoritarian chain of command that encourages people to mistreat others.

It is possible that Anders developed this theme to oppose his old teacher, Heidegger. For early Anders, being strongly embedded within a social hierarchy is a source of domination. Here Anders plays on Heidegger's idea of Dasein as Being-in-the-world (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 94) and as having a rooted existence, which Heidegger saw in a very positive light. For Heidegger,

[i]t is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'—a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a relationship with the world. (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 84)

In opposition to the positive role rootedness plays in Heidegger's search for authenticity, Anders suggests that being one with the world can be a source of unfreedom. Hence Anders will later speak of 'being-unfree-in-the-world' (Anders [1980] 2011, 152). For early Anders, being too rigidly inserted into any kind of social structure is a source of unfreedom.

### **3.4.3 Epistemological break**

However, there was a break from Anders' early period which made him develop another conception of domination. This conception emphasised the technological factor as well as the human factor in the production of domination. According to this conception, being integrated into technological systems which escape individual and social control is also a source of domination.

This view was shaped by Anders' experience of the Second World War. Anders described the news of the existence of concentration camps and the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima as the third and fourth great breaks of his life (Anders [1979b] 2008, 73). Given his Jewish heritage, Anders had intense and complex feelings about these two events. Indeed, through witnessing these events and his experience of the production line, Anders had gained an insight into how 'man of the time of mass production could also industrially produce millions of corpses' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 73, *my translation*).

Anders focussed on the fact that industrial technologies, such as the atom bomb and asphyxiating gas Zyklon B, had been employed for mass killings and genocide (Anders [1956] 2003, 271). This made Heidegger's omission of industrial technology even more unjustifiable. In contrast, Anders' argued that the machine's

"alienation" is obviously reckoned with in present-day society and in its division of labor. Already this preliminary example proves that at the point where Heidegger seems to become "concrete" or "pragmatic," he is most obsolete, shows, so to speak, a machine-smashing attitude, for all his examples are taken from the provincial shoemaker workshop. The alienation produced precisely by those tools that are supposed to be revealing, is alien to him. (Anders [Stern] 1948, 344)

I argue that Anders therefore turned away from Heidegger and toward Marxism. To analyse the industrial killing of the Second World War, Anders became much more prepared to engage in crucial Marxist concepts such as labour and its fragmentation. Hence his concept of domination was no longer solely based on divide and rule tactics but on the development of integrated technological systems under capitalism. These broke down dominating actions into many different steps. Anders' theory laid emphasis on how being embedded within a social system of technology entailed being separated from the effects of one's actions.

#### **3.4.4 Mature Anders**

Thus Anders' mature work analyses how technological mediation facilitates domination and how the nuclear bomb exemplifies this trend. For Anders, one of the basic problems of the nuclear bomb is that the complexity of its production and deployment explodes the notion of individual responsibility. Hence Anders states that the use of nuclear weapons from their production to their deployment

would consist of so many steps and intermediate partial steps, of so many instances, of which no single one would constitute the step that, finally, everyone would have merely done something, but no one would have "done" it. Ultimately it will have been no one. (Anders [1956] 2003, 230, *my translation*)

In *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011), Anders will formulate this idea more clearly in terms of industrial labour, suggesting an even closer move to Marxism. Hence he states

there is no longer any difference between punching a hole in a piece of sheet metal and the destruction of a city located on another continent. (Anders [1980] 2011, 46)

Anders concludes this analysis by arguing that in the modern age 'the distinction between the worker and the soldier [has been] abolished' (Anders [1980] 2011, 46) Hence technology, and the division of labour it implies, become pernicious vectors of domination for Anders.

For instance, in an essay *On Privacy*, written in 1958, Anders speaks of how surveillance technology leads states to become more totalitarian. He argues that ‘surveillance devices are totalitarian merely by virtue of the fact that they are used’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 152). This is because they eliminate the difference between the public and the private sphere, making the person “*totally deliverable*” (Anders [1980] 2011, 151, *italics in original*). Hence Anders speaks of how

the individual must remove all impediments to and deliver over to the totalitarian power the “internal space” that he had taken and reserved for himself as an isolated and “discrete” being. (Anders [1980] 2011, 154)

Anders further details how the ubiquity of surveillance devices can facilitate mass control. Hence he states that

From the times of the dictatorship we know that, from the moment when one considers that it is possible or even only not impossible that one is under surveillance, one feels and behaves differently than one did before, [...] The unverifiable possibility of being under surveillance has a decisive capacity for molding: it molds the entire population. (Anders [1980] 2011, 155-156)

Hence surveillance technologies erode individual autonomy with respect to society. Hence Anders states that

As surveillance devices are used routinely, the main premise of totalitarianism is already created and, with it, totalitarianism itself. (Anders [1980] 2011, 154)

Thus Anders moves away from an idea where social hierarchies are the main factor behind domination. He moves towards the idea that technology itself drives universal domination.

The result is a reformulation Marxism, which is humanist and centred around technology. Anders’ ultimate conception is one where domination is class-based and completely mediated by technology. Hence, in one of his last essays *Die Antiquiertheit Des Proletariats* [*The Obsolescence of the Proletariat*] (Anders 1992a), Anders produces a new enlarged concept of the proletariat. The latter is not based on the ‘standard of living but on that of freedom’ (Anders [1992] 2013, 147, my translation). Anders argues that, for instance, an

engineer and with him the 99 per cent of his colleagues – lives and works as blindly as the unqualified industrial worker, who without knowing for what purpose [...] presses a lever up and down a thousand times a day (Anders [1992] 2013, 147, my translation)

Anders therefore argues that *'today we are all proletarian'* (Anders [1992] 2013, 149, my translation) and favours *'extend[ing] solidarity as far as our weapons can be deployed'* (Anders [1992] 2013, 145, my translation). This shows how Anders' theory adopts elements of Marxism but ultimately seeks to go beyond Marxism.

### **3.4.5 Conclusion**

Anders early thinking around domination focuses on domination as it occurs within social hierarchies and groupings. According to this view domination was dependent on individuals being rigidly inserted into a social hierarchy. However, after the industrial warfare of the Second World War, Anders turned his attention to focussing on how technology was a factor in producing domination. In his mature years, Anders adapted a Marxist framework in order to analyse the division of labour operated by technology. His idea was that this amplified and removed emotional safeguards that could prevent humans from effecting brutal acts of domination. This led Anders to radically enlarge the notion of the proletariat, stating that all those who do not control the effects of their own actions are proletarians. Hence Anders' theory is influenced by Marxism but also sought to go beyond Marxism.

In discussing how domination can affect everyone but is also universally produced Anders' concept of domination starts to increasingly resemble alienation, which in the last chapter I described domination of the subject by the object. Indeed alienation can be understood as a general inversion of subject (humans) and object (including technology). Hence I now turn to this theme.

## **3.5 Alienation**

### **3.5.1 Introduction**

Anders' early writings include an analysis of Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Döblin [1929] 2018). This was finished in 1931 and is contained in Anders' book *Mensch Ohne Welt: Schriften zur Kunst und Literatur [Man without world: writings on art and literature]* (Anders 1984b; [1984] 2015). I will argue that Anders' early analysis of Döblin is made through the lens of Heidegger's concept of inauthenticity. According to this conception, alienation is characterised by external social pressures. Individuals are pressured to conform to society by the judging gazes of the 'they'. However, after Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* became available in German in 1932 and his experiences in factories, Anders moved away from focussing on a Heideggerian concept of inauthenticity. He started to view alienation primarily in early Marx's terms as a separation and inversion of subject and object. Anders analysed the industrial killing of the Second World War through this lens. For mature Anders, it is technical apparatuses' destructive aim coupled with their immense power that means that their effect escapes human understanding and control. This creates a negative relation between individuals, technology and other people, but also between individuals and their own identity, as they no longer identify with their own actions. Anders calls this form of alienation Promethean shame. I show how it is influenced by Marx's concept of alienation.

Firstly, I look at Anders early analysis of Döblin's characters and show how it is influenced by Heidegger's philosophy (3.5.2). Secondly, I map Anders' shift toward Marx's conception of alienation. To do this, I show how mature Anders builds on Marx to produce a new concept of alienation (3.5.3). Finally I discuss how Anders' concrete examples of Promethean shame in both the sphere of production and consumption develop Marx's view of alienation (3.5.4).

### **3.5.2 Early Anders**

In his writings from the early 1930s on literary criticism, Anders' understands Döblin's work as painting a picture of a modern man who lacks a world of his own and must adapt to the one in which he is thrust by circumstances. Indeed the book begins with the main

character, Franz Biberkopf, being released from prison and having to start a new life in the Berlin of the 1920s (Döblin [1929] 2018, 5-36). Embarking on his new life, the character is faced with constraints foisted onto him by society. For instance, Anders says of one of Döblin's characters,

his life [is] the narrow path along which he is pushed and on which he advances just because, behind him, they are throwing rocks and he is exposed on all sides to critical gazes. (Anders [1984] 2015, 62, my translation)

This talk of life as a narrow path one has no choice but follow stands opposed to Heidegger's notion of authenticity. For Heidegger,

Distantiality, averageness, and levelling down, as ways of Being for the "they", constitute what we know as 'publicness'. Publicness proximally controls every way in which the world and Dasein get interpreted [...] it is insensitive to every difference of level and of genuineness (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 165)

Heidegger's discussion of authenticity in relation to Dasein, which is a term that Heidegger uses to designate the conscious subject, contrasts with this. For Heidegger, 'Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself' (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 68). This shows how, for Heidegger, authenticity means discovering one's own path.

In fact Heidegger later discusses how inauthenticity is connected to paying too much close attention to others and forgetting what one is oneself. For instance, he states that

Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'. "Falleness" into the 'world' means an absorption in Being-with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 220)

This indicates that Anders' description of a character being 'pushed' (Anders [1984] 2015, 62, my translation) onto a path which is not his own and 'exposed on all sides to critical gazes' (Anders [1984] 2015, 62, my translation) is likely inspired by Heidegger's notion of inauthenticity.



Hence, in 1931, Anders does not see human alienation as the result of the separation of subject and object, or the worker from his/her product. This is the theme that pervades Marx's early writings, which were only finally published in 1932. Rather, Anders understands individuals as slipping into inauthenticity as they succumb to external pressure. Hence it is the force of Heidegger's 'they' that still defines alienation for Anders at this point.

However, I will show that Anders' work between 1933 to 1944 shifts away from this conception. Hence Anders started to adopt a new framework of analysis in his 30s. After his period in factories and the Second World War, Anders will adopt a conception that views human relations as fundamentally affected by production and the fact that the worker is separated from his/her product. Hence there is a shift in Anders whereby early Anders thinks of alienation in terms of inauthenticity (Heidegger) and mature Anders thinks of alienation in terms of a separation and inversion of subject and object (Marx).

### **3.5.3 Epistemological break**

There is a clear moment in his early 40s where Anders started to formulate his concept of Promethean shame. This marks the point where Anders started to develop his own theory of technological alienation. The first building block for this conception is the notion of Promethean discrepancy. The latter is based on the contrast between the limited human faculties of imagination and the immense power of human actions executed through technology.

Anders developed this idea at a time when he was coming to grips with the huge human loss caused by the industrial warfare of the Second World War. In an excerpt from Anders' journal from 1944, Anders expresses his concern that the destruction caused by modern weaponry is too big to adequately register on the human psyche. Indeed he states:

7000 people died, he told me.

[...]

Who is capable of holding within their hands the sum of this horror?

We are inferior to ourselves. Our actions are too big for us to comprehend them.  
(Anders [1979a] 2008, 32, *my translation*)

This provides one of the first articulations of an idea that Anders will later further detail in the *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I and II (Anders [1956] 2003, [1980] 2011). Here Anders calls for a critique of the limits of man, of ‘the limits of all his faculties (of his imagination, feeling, responsibility etc.)’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 26, *my translation*) in an age where ‘his productive activity seems to have surpassed every [one of these] limits’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 26, *my translation*). Hence Anders made the idea of dissociation and separation, between limited human faculties and the great effects of human actions produced via technology, central to his understanding of alienation.

Because of their focus on technology, Anders’ reflections form an understanding of technological alienation. This is the idea that the increasing size, power and complex workings of machinery plays a role in the fact that the worker is reduced to a mere appendage of the machine. However, before Anders, Marx had a similar idea of how

all means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine (Marx [1867] 1990, 799)

Marx further described how the

factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces and the mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism (Marx [1867] 1990, 286)

This shows how, already in Marx’s work, the inverted relation between machine and worker is in part tied to the objective size, power and workings of the technology used in capitalist production.

Thus Anders produced a concept that fits with Marx’s. Indeed it is very likely that Anders was influenced by early Marx during the period when he first developed these ideas, 1944-1956. For instance, in his work criticising Heidegger, *Nihilismus und Existenz [Nihilism and Existence]*, written in 1946 and only published posthumously in *Über Heidegger [On*

*Heidegger]* (Anders 2001), Anders mentions Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Marx [1844b] 2010). This is the crucial work in which Marx outlines alienation as a separation and inversion of subject and object. In his essay, Anders argues that Marx addressed the question of authenticity for workers whereas Heidegger was only interested in a bourgeois concept of authenticity. He states:

But the despair of the unfree, although a fact of more than a hundred years, was not subtle enough to be ontologised by Heidegger. He could easily have shown that the Dasein of the proletarian is "inauthentic" because, as labour-time made flesh, it belongs to other Dasein; he could easily have seen that their struggle for liberation aims to win "authenticity" and "selfhood". But Heidegger left that to someone who, eighty years before him, in his *Economical-Philosophical Manuscripts* and in the *German Ideology* discussed these concepts of actuality, and whose aim was to turn the insight into inauthenticity into something other than a ritual. (Anders 2001, 67, computer generated translation).

This shows that Anders' preference for Marx's concept of alienation over Heidegger's was established by his early 40s. Anders striking reference to the proletariat as 'labour-time made flesh' further evidences his Marxist understanding of factory labour and command of Marxist terminology.

### **3.5.4 Mature Anders**

The initial description of Promethean shame is philosophical. It is tied to a discrepancy between the absolute power of technology and man. However, in his mature formulation of this concept, Anders discusses concrete examples of Promethean shame. These further highlight how Anders' concept of alienation is compatible with, but also goes beyond, Marx's.

Indeed Anders argues that a concrete manifestation of Promethean shame occurs with the worker's inability to follow the rhythm of the production line. Anders describes this as 'the fact that his body is not able to adapt to the combination of movements that are required for the necessary operation' (Anders [1956] 2003, 89, *my translation*). In this mature formulation, Anders draws from his experience as a factory worker during the early

years of his emigration to the US in 1936 (Anders [1979b] 2008, 69). For instance, he states that

whoever has already found himself facing the task of working at the production line for the first time knows the effort that is necessary to transform the first contact into an adequate rhythm for the machine (Anders [1956] 2003, 86, *my translation*)

This is a concrete example of humans feeling themselves to be at odds with the workings of the machines they operate. Hence I argue that Anders' work on production lines helped him develop and concretise his notion of Promethean shame in line with Marx's concept of alienation. Indeed Marx describes how 'it is not the worker who employs the conditions of his work, but rather the reverse, the conditions of work that employ the worker' (Marx [1867] 1990, 548).

However, Anders also went beyond Marx in applying this idea to the industrial annihilation he witnessed during the Second World War and post-War consumerism. For instance, the former opened up the question of who is responsible for the operation of killing machines. Indeed Promethean shame also means that humans do not take responsibility for their own actions because they see these as distinct from themselves. Technological systems are mistaken for the subject which is responsible for these actions. Anders takes Adolf Eichmann as a paradigmatic example of this. In his open letter to his son, Claus Eichmann, Anders addresses the Nazi holocaust, which he theorised as a 'systematic production of corpses' (Anders [1964] 2015, 34). The excuse people like Eichmann gave for participating in the latter is: 'No, actually, I did not do anything; at most I only collaborated' (Anders [1980] 2011, 44). They saw their role as limited to the technical task they had been set within the whole operation. They can be said to feel Promethean shame in that they do not want to recognise their part in perpetrating the brutal actions they have helped carry out.

Moreover, with Promethean shame, brutal actions did not seem to be questionable, because of the smooth operation of the system through which they were carried out. Anders explains that the fact that 'everything is "in order"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 231, *my*

*translation*) means that the ‘operation is clean’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 231, *my translation*). This makes individuals feel as though it is they themselves who are fallible and not these technical systems. Thus people undertaking brutal acts dismiss their own reserves, because the ‘perfected devices’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 48) they operate must be right. Anders discusses how, even in the context of nuclear weapons, it is humans who are ‘principally considered as a [potential] source of error’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 304). This notion is tied to Anders’ initial observation regarding Promethean shame. Anders notes that when humans compare themselves to machines, they feel themselves to be of little worth and as though they were ‘*faulty constructions*’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 39, *English in original*). This is an example of subject-object inversion that goes beyond Marx’s because it concerns feelings of inferiority humans experience in relation to machines, which they anthropomorphise.

Indeed, the theme of Promethean shame also has a concrete manifestation in the sphere of consumption. One instance of Promethean shame in this sphere is when humans feel that their bodies are inadequate compared to the idealised images of human bodies they see on the media. Thus, in a passage of his diary from 1941 quoted in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. 1, (Anders [1956] 2003), Anders discusses plastic surgery and pressures for actresses to conform to the beautified image of their own televised reproductions (Anders [1956] 2003, 192-195). This is also a concrete example of Promethean shame. Here mechanical representations acquire a ‘higher ontological status’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 196, *my translation*) than the persons they are modelled after.

Hence Anders built on Marx’s concept of alienation and applied it to spheres that were not as significant during Marx’s time, such as technologies of destruction and consumption.

### **3.5.5 Conclusion**

Up until the 1930s, Anders’ concept of alienation follows Heidegger’s idea of inauthenticity. This is tied to succumbing to the external social pressure of ‘the they’ (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 165). However, after 1932 Anders’ engaged with Marx’s concept of alienation as outlined in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Marx [1844b] 2010).

Here alienation is characterised as a division between subject and object. Anders' concept of alienation thus became centred on the discrepancy between man and the immense power of technology. What's more, between 1936 and 1944 Anders' experienced factory work and witnessed the industrial killing of the Second World War. This meant that his conception of the inversion between man and machine became more concrete. With this, Anders' theory of technological alienation is no longer simply one where man is faced with the immense effects of technology, but one where man's everyday activity is conditioned by machine production. This dissociates people from their actions, which they no longer recognise as their own. But they also feel themselves to be inferior to the notion of perfection that machines embody.

### **3.6 Ideology**

#### **3.6.1 Introduction**

Anders initially resisted the notion of ideology on ontological and phenomenological grounds. Anders' early 1930s conception was against disconnecting thoughts from reality. However, very soon afterwards, Anders came closer to a Marxist understanding. His novel *Die molussische Katakombe* [The Molussian Catacomb] (Anders [1992] 2003), which was completed during his years in Paris between 1933-1936, dealt with how power is based on lies and vice-versa. This resembles the Marxist idea of base and superstructure. Finally, in his mature years after the Second World War, Anders speaks of how ideology is no longer necessary because the very structure of media, such as the television, invert the truth and collapse the difference between appearance and being. This criticism seems to be based on Marx's understanding of the concrete basis underlying ideology production. However, it takes this conception beyond Marx by making technology the driving material factor. Hence with late Anders it is as though the production of ideology is, to some extent, automated by the very structure and design of media.

Firstly, I show how Anders early conception is still very influenced by phenomenology (3.6.2). Subsequently, I show that Anders broke radically from this framework in favour of a more Marxist and Hegelian lens (3.6.3). Finally, I show that Anders took inspiration from a Marxist conception of ideology to then go beyond it (3.6.4). This is because he argued that ideology was automatically produced by the structure of the media.

### 3.6.2 Early Anders

In his youth, Anders wrote a review of Mannheim's book *Ideology and Utopia* ([1929] 1954) entitled "Über die sog. ‚Seinsverbundenheit‘ des Bewusstseins. Anlässlich Karl Mannheim ‚Ideologie und Utopie‘" [On the so called 'situational determination' of conscience in Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*] (Anders [Stern] 1930). Here he criticises Mannheim's conception for not accounting for how ideologies are also part of reality.

The young Anders adopts an ontological and phenomenological approach that encourages him to argue that it is not valid to assume that history is an absolute against which the truth or falsity of opinions and beliefs can be measured. He states that: '[i]f consciousness is situationally determined, then it constitutes the character of being itself' (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2017, 120, *my translation*). What's more, 'consciousness is a character of being contributing to the constitution of the same historical situation up against which it is measured' (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2017, 121, *my translation*). Hence ideologies cannot be definitively judged false according to the young Anders because:

if consciousness is thought of as a function of the ontological situation, then it cannot be compared to it or judged "false" compared to it, because the situation is nothing without that function. (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2017, 119, *my translation*)

Indeed the young Anders argues against the notion of a single vision of history. He conceives of history as approximations and narratives told after the fact. This is an anti-Marxist position close to the postmodern one. It questions the idea that historical development follows a logic of progress and emancipation. Indeed the young Anders argues that '[a]

historical subject never belongs to the history that is attributed to it *a posteriori*' (Anders [Stern] [1930] 2017, 127, *my translation, italics in original*). This conception takes away agency from the subject.

This rejection of the notion of the subject of history contrasts with Anders' later proclamation that technology is 'the subject of history' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1).

### 3.6.3 Epistemological Break

In a brief afterward written in 1973, Anders explains that '[t]his essay, which was written 48 years ago, does not contain a single thesis to which I would still subscribe' (Anders [1973] 2017, 129, *my translation*). He goes on to detail how this divergence stems from the fact that he was still under the influence of Heidegger and Husserl and that, 'at the time of the text's writing, [the young him] had had very few contacts with Hegel and Marx' (Anders [1973] 2017, 129, *my translation*). This comment suggests that Anders broke radically with this kind of ontological and phenomenological view. It suggests that Anders made a conscious shift toward Hegel and Marx. In fact, he adds that the reservations that he maintains about Mannheim's book are that it 'exposes Marxism itself to a Marxist critique of ideology so as to disempower it' (Anders [1973] 2017, 129, *my translation*). This last comment suggests that the mature Anders is sympathetic to Marxism.

In fact, false conceptions of the world gain a progressively more important role in Anders' thought. The completion of Anders' book *Die molussische Katakombe [The Molussian Catacomb]* (Anders 1992b) follows his essay on Mannheim by just a couple of years. Yet, in this work, the concepts of truth and lies play an important role in subjugating populations. For instance, one of Anders' characters speaks about how some people are 'fooled; they consider lies to be the truth and are ready to sacrifice themselves for them' (Anders [1992] 2003, 207, *my translation*). Moreover, there is a conversation between the two main characters where the question is asked of whether '[p]ower is founded on lies' (Anders [1992] 2003, 203, *my translation*). The other character responds: 'And what do lies rest on?' (Anders [1992] 2003, 203, *my translation*) On 'nothing other than power as such' (Anders



[1992] 2003, 204, *my translation*), the other responds. Hence the conclusion that 'lies rest on power' (Anders [1992] 2003, 204, *my translation*) is reached.

This expresses a dialectical conception which fits with the Marxist vision of base and superstructure. In fact, the characters follow by speaking of a 'process that transforms the sincere man into a liar and makes appear, to his eyes, truths as lies' (Anders [1992] 2003, 207, *my translation*). Hence for Anders everyday people may come to believe lies about the world without being aware of this. This appears to pick up on Marx's idea that it is class distinctions that produce ideology as inversion of reality. This is because the majority of the population does not have the means for intellectual production and must accept that of a narrow elite. For Anders, too, 'the power of lies is based on that of the liar' (Anders [1992] 2003, 576).

However, a second shift seems to have occurred whereby, after the Second World War, Anders started to focus on how lies are a structural part of the media and technology. I argue that this idea originated with Anders' experience of factory work in the US in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This was compounded by his reckoning with the huge human loss produced by industrial warfare during the Second World War. Indeed, in opposition to Heidegger's idea that tools reveal hidden truths through their use, factory work led Anders to ask:

Are modern machines really "revealing" themselves by their operation? Is their product their purpose? Is not their purpose to be seen only by making transparent much more than the machines themselves? (Anders [Stern] 1948, 344)

Anders answers that '[o]perating a modern machine does not reveal it at all' (Anders [Stern] 1948, 344). He consequently questioned whether 'our simple perception is insufficient to comprehend the modern world' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 33, *my translation*) and therefore becomes 'a kind of "fantasy"' (Anders [1979b] 2008, 33, *my translation*). With this, he shifts towards an understanding where the prevalence of media and technology obfuscates reality. Lies and false perceptions are intertwined within the workings of the technological system itself.

### 3.6.4 Mature Anders

Hence in his mature work, Anders argues that advanced industrial societies have moved beyond the need for ideologies, understood as false conceptions of the world. This is because technologies like the television make us mistake a particular image or 'fragments of the world' (Anders [1956] 2003, 129, *my translation*) for the world itself. This because the structure of the television means that viewers interpret the images they are seeing as though what they show is right before them, and they are seeing it with their own eyes. Hence Anders states that the 'television passivizes man and teaches him to systematically mistake being and appearance' (Anders [1979] 2002, 12, *my translation*).

Indeed, for Anders, a media image is always loaded with a message, through how the pictures are shot or how the sequence is edited, for instance. The image thus already tells us the 'sentiment that it must provoke in us' (Anders [1956] 2003, 186, *my translation*) and what we must think of it. Consequently, there is no longer the space or the need for individuals themselves to produce rationalisations and narratives about the world. For instance, Anders states that

we cannot cook and cut at home pre-cooked and cut bread. In the same way we cannot ideologically re-arrange and reinterpret the events that reach us ideologically "pre-cut", pre-interpreted and arranged; or we cannot "imagine" all over again that which is presented to us in the form of an image. (Anders [1956] 2003, 185 *my translation*)

This shows how, for Anders, the technological system inherently produces false conceptions of the world. Hence Anders argues that the assumption that everyone "'has" his own opinion [is] unjustified' (Anders [1980] 2011, 130, *my translation*).

For Anders, it is as though the television screen is like Marx's famous example of the camera obscura, which produces an inverted image of reality. Anders questions whether it is really possible to accurately represent an event so big as the detonation of a nuclear bomb through the small screen of television sets. Indeed, he speaks of how '*the TV transforms all events into playthings*' and how this produces a 'serious lack of seriousness'

(Anders [1956] 2003, 143, *my translation*). Hence Anders builds on Marx and Engels' idea that it is the material social intercourse of people, 'their historical life-processes' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36), which produces the inversion whereby 'men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura' (Marx and Engels [1845a] 2010, 36). He adds to it the idea that this inversion is produced mechanically by the very structure of ICTs. Small screens act like the small hole of the camera obscura, according to Anders. In this sense, Anders mature conception of ideology goes beyond Marx, as it is no longer people or social structures that are the main factors in producing ideology. It is technological structures.

### **3.6.5 Conclusion**

Anders' conception of ideology is initially anti-Marxist and phenomenological. However, during his time in Paris, Anders quickly radically broke from this conception and became more sympathetic to Marxist understandings. Subsequently, Anders' experience of factory work in the US helped him produce his mature notion that capitalist technology obscures human perception. This culminates with his conception that ideology is, to some extent, automatically produced by the structure of media and technology. The television comes to resemble Marx's example of a camera obscura in Anders' conception, as it minimises the importance of horrific events such as atomic bombings. It inverts the fragment into the whole, the image into world and the bad into the good.

I argue that this conception can be distinguished from postmodern understandings in that it ties discourses and consciousness to material factors without mistaking one for the other.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

I have based much of the autobiographical material in this chapter on Anders' interview with Mathias Greffrath in 1979 which he gave at the age of 77 (Anders [1979b] 2008, 51-85). This has allowed me to map the development of Anders' thought against what Anders himself described as the main breaks of his life. Thus I have demonstrated that Anders'

oeuvre is not monolithic and closed to interpretation. On the contrary, I have shown how, starting out as a phenomenologist and philosophical anthropologist, Anders increasingly turned to Marxism throughout his life.

Understanding Anders' body of work as contradictory and containing internal epistemological brakes addresses a gap in the literature. The latter tends to dismiss the question of Anders' Marxism by stating that Anders was an idiosyncratic critical theorist who was inspired but did not fit in with the Frankfurt School (Dijik 2000, 13; Sonolet 2006). This obscures Anders' gradual engagement with Marxism, which, as I have shown in this chapter, intensified throughout his life. One exception is Dawsey's most recent work, which argues that: 'evaluations of [Anders'] critique of modern technology should stress the engagement with Marx more and that with Martin Heidegger less' (Dawsey 2019, 50). However, Dawsey also defines Anders as a 'post-Marxist' (Dawsey 2004), which suggests that Anders' theory came to fill a void left by Marxism. In contrast, I have argued that Anders actively applied Marx's methodology and theoretical framework to the question of technology, picking up on threads already contained in Marx. Thus, although similarly dealing with contemporary issues, Anders' work can be differentiated from postmodern accounts, which reject Marxism.

In particular, I have argued that Anders developed the theme of technological alienation contained within Marx's work. Marx's work already features the idea that as machinery becomes bigger and bigger an inversion occurs whereby the worker is directed by the machine and not the other way around. Hence the worker appears as a mere conscious organ of the machine. Anders took this logic and applied it to the 20th century, arguing that what we are able to produce through technology exceeds our capacity of representation and imagination. Therefore technology escapes our immediate control while hugely impacting our lives.

In doing this, Anders addressed the need to theorise technology as a new specific force. Indeed, after Marx's death, technology entered as a major factor in world politics in the shape of the nuclear bomb. Hence for mature Anders technology is involved in each of the

subsequent themes of this thesis: domination, alienation and ideology. Referring back to Figure 2.1, Anders' theory effectively represents an understanding where technology overreaches into all the categories that follow it. It therefore reflects a more advanced stage in the spiral, where technology has become structured by domination and alienation from a previous cycle. Consequently, it now reproduces these. Hence Anders' theory shows how further theorisation of technology is required to understand the dynamics of modern capitalism.

In this thesis, I primarily argue that Anders can be understood as a humanist-Marxist that resisted the economism of other forms of Marxism by focussing on the relation between the human and technology. However, to the extent that Anders made technology the new determining factor of his analysis media society, eclipsing capital and the economy, his theory can be understood as also going beyond Marxism.

	Early Anders	Epistemological break	Mature Anders
The human	Humans are abstract and indeterminate	Political period in Paris. Anders adopts the Marxist idea that human essence is tied to social production	Contradicts initial position by speaking of alienation from human essence understood as social and linked to homo faber
Technology	Little mention of technology in Anders' early work	Various factors behind the break: period in factories, industrial killing of the Second World War. Anders criticises omission of modern machinery in Heidegger	Turns to a more dialectical analysis in order to theorise modern machines. This analysis reflects Marx's analysis of capital
Domination	Domination occurring within a social context. Some groups or people dominate others	Time in factories and industrial killing of the Second World War means that conception of domination gets tied to industrial technology	This concept of technological domination gets more concrete and Marxist. Domination is produced by machines fragmenting violent

			acts. Anders produces an enlarged concept of the proletariat to fit with this conception.
Alienation	Alienation as inauthenticity and submitting to the external pressures of the 'they'	Promethean shame becomes not identifying with one's actions, like Adolf Eichmann	A concept of technological alienation beyond Marx. Humans are ontologically inferior to machines.
Ideology	Early conception is heavily phenomenological: questions whether ideas can be deemed false	Clear break with these early remarks and explicit reference to a later adoption of Hegel and Marx	A concept of ideology beyond Marx: the structure of the media materially inverts what we perceive as reality

*Table 3.7.1: Summary of Anders' epistemological break*

Table 3.7 traces the evolution of Anders' concepts showing that an epistemological break occurs mid-way through Anders' life.

In the next chapter, I show how Anders' thought stands out when compared to some of his contemporary theorists. I show that despite touching on some of the same themes, Anders distinguishes himself from other theorists through his engagement with Marxism.

## 4. Günther Anders and Other Theorists

### 4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I argued that Anders underwent a turn towards Marxism during the mature phase of his life. In this chapter, I continue to show that Anders' work can be read as a humanist-Marxist analysis of technology. I do this by comparing and contrasting Anders' work to other critical theorists of technology. I continue to look at the themes of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology.

I engage with the work Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), especially in section 4.2.2, because of his importance within media studies. However, elsewhere I have opted to place emphasis on comparing Anders' work to French critical theorists, such as Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) and Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007). These thinkers have inspired contemporary critical theorists of technology such as Langdon Winner (1978 1980) and Andrew Feenberg ([1999] 2001, 2002), whom I also compare to Anders. Indeed, David (2006) has argued that Anders' theory shares remarkably strong similarities with Ellul's. I take the opportunity in this chapter to argue against such a comparison. The question of technology occupies a strong position in both theorists' analysis. Moreover, both theorists were influenced by Marxism. However, I argue that there are fundamental differences. Namely, Ellul departed from Marxism to primarily base himself in Christian theology. Conversely, as I argued especially in the last chapter, Anders turned towards Marxism. I argue that Anders can be understood, not only as a post-Marxist as argued by Dawsey (2004) but also more squarely as a humanist-Marxist. In this, he is fundamentally different to Ellul.

In sections 4.3.3 and 4.5.3 of this chapter, I highlight how Anders did not think of technology as excluded from the capitalist economy. He thought of machines as commodities involved in the dynamics of consumer capitalism. I argue that Anders' statement that 'technology has actually become the subject of history' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1) can be viewed as a provocation, which is part of his method of philosophical exaggeration [*gelegentlichesphilosophisch*] (Anders [1956] 2003, 23, 86, 221). In the context of the

disproportionate dangers single nuclear bombs could produce, Anders sought to compensate by exaggerating his claims regarding technology. In contrast, Ellul argued that '[t]echnique has become autonomous' (Ellul [1954] 1964, 14) in a more literal sense.

In turn, comparing Anders to Baudrillard, reveals that Anders had a similar intuition to Baudrillard. Both theorists produce the notion that the information conveyed by media has a virtual or phantom-like quality. Indeed it is possible that Anders' stay in France between 1933 and 1936, during which Anders participated in Parisian cultural life, meant that he received similar influences to French theorists such as Ellul and Baudrillard. However, I argue, especially in section 4.5.3, that Anders' analysis of media is a lot more detailed and concrete than Baudrillard's. It does not rely on the idea of semiotics and cybernetics as much as Baudrillard's work. It, rather, outlines material mechanisms through which media can produce distorted and deceptive images of the world.

Another influence on Anders' work came from the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer helped Anders flee to New York from Paris in 1936 (Arendt and Anders 2017, 164). Moreover, Anders came into contact with Adorno in 1939 in Los Angeles after his stay in New York (Arendt and Anders 2017, 188). However, Anders' relation with Adorno is documented by Young-Bruhel ([1983] 1992) and Liessmann (2012) as being tense. Moreover, there is a significant difference in style between Anders' work, which is prosaic and non-academic, and Horkheimer's and Adorno's work in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ([1944] 2002). Anders' work aims to produce a deep analysis of the structure and affordances of modern forms of media and technology. It does not seek to describe the evolution of Western thought as Horkheimer and Adorno sought to do. Hence, in section 4.6.2, I outline how Anders' conception of ideology is different to that of the culture industry approach of the Frankfurt school.

Finally, in this chapter, I also compare Anders to contemporary discourses surrounding the potential harms of digital media such as smartphone technology. In recent years, a critique of social media and smartphone apps has become established within public discourse. Some of these criticisms have emerged from Silicon Valley developers



themselves. The argument goes that, in attempting to monetise platforms, developers designed interfaces to make them addictive. This has culminated in Tristan Harris, an ex-employee at Google, becoming a public intellectual and criticising the alienating dimension of modern apps and social media. A recent documentary called *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski 2020) that features Tristan Harris has been seen by 38 million households, according to figures published on the documentary's Twitter page. Consequently, in the last, subsection of each section of the following chapter, I show how Anders' theory can help us go beyond these common-sense approaches and avoid some of their pitfalls.

The structure of this chapter follows the order of the main themes involved in this thesis, which are the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology. Each of these themes forms a section. Each section is divided into three subsections. Firstly, I present the other theorists I wish to compare Anders' work to. Secondly, I show how Anders is different to these theories. Thirdly, I show how Anders' theory can help us avoid falling into some of the oversimplifying traps of the contemporary discourses criticising modern media. I specifically refer to the theories of Tristan Harris in *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski 2020).

## **4.2 The human**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

It is hard to speak of the human in isolation from technology when comparing Anders to other media theorists, whose work is never far removed from the question of technology. Therefore, in this section, I focus on the relationship between the human and technology rather than just the human.

In section 4.2.2, I look at how the theories of McLuhan and Simondon highlight how the relationship between humans and technology is continuous. According to these conceptions, humans and technology are not discreet entities. Technology extends humans faculties. Therefore humans and technology develop one-another. In section 4.2.3, I show how this understanding is brought to fruition in Haraway's understanding of humans and

machines sharing a similar ontological status. According to Haraway, there is almost no separation between humans and machines. I show how Anders' work militates against this conception.

Anders views humans and machines as intimately connected and mutually influencing one-another. However, he also understands them as distinct. For Anders, a complete identification between humans and machines amounts to a form of Promethean shame characterised by submission to the mechanical rhythm of machines. In contrast, Anders argued that, through a conscious effort, human sentiments could adapt to technological developments to allow humans to gain better control over technology.

In section 4.2.4, I show how Anders' conception of humans as both mentally flexible but also fixed organic beings can counter a modern positivist turn toward genetically determinist evolutionary theories of the human and technology. These explain technological domination, alienation and ideology through the notion of physiological addiction and psychological hijacking.

#### **4.2.2 Other theorists: McLuhan, Simondon**

Lawson (2010) has shown how McLuhan's conception of the human and technology does not pit one against the other. Rather, McLuhan understands humans and technology as forming a continuum. Hence she states that, for McLuhan:

Electronic media are understood as extensions of the information processing functions of the central nervous system (Lawson 2010, 210)

Lawson further highlights McLuhan's statement that humans in the information age are 'an organism that now wears its brain outside its skull and its nerves outside its hide' (McLuhan in Lawson 2010, 210). Here McLuhan is suggesting that computers can be understood as human organs.

Indeed McLuhan famously stated that, in turn, humans can become the 'sex organs' (McLuhan, [1964] 1967, 56) of machines. This implies that humans and machines are not discrete entities but share a symbiotic relationship. He states:

Physiologically, man in the normal use of technology (or his variously extended body) is perpetually modified by it and in turn finds ever new ways of modifying his technology. Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as is the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms. The machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires, namely, in providing him with wealth. (McLuhan, [1964] 1967, 56)

A similar understanding is also shared by Simondon, who uses the image of organs to speak of machines, albeit while, according to Combes, specifying that:

mechanical evolution is very different from that of organisms: with machines, it is as if the organ separated from the body and functioned as a seed or germ for a new individual or a new line of individuals. (Combes 2013, 104)

Indeed Simondon provides theories of both human and technological individuation, or structuring. Regarding the human, Simondon asserts that 'the human being still remains in evolutionary terms unfinished, incomplete' (Simondon in Combes 2013, 49). Hence Simondon tends to see humans and technology as always in a process of becoming. Simondon's notion of the 'pre-individual' (Combes 2013, 3) implies that humans contain potentials that are always in a process of actualising and are not yet complete. Both McLuhan and Simondon's theories show how humans and technology can be understood as developing in an interconnected fashion through a mutual relation of influence.

#### **4.2.3 How Anders is different**

Anders also conceives of humans and machines as existing in relations of mutual influence. However, he never let this translate into a vision of how humans and machines seamlessly enmesh, as is suggested by Haraway's theory, for instance. Haraway states that:

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. (Haraway [1991] 2013, 150)

For Haraway, cyborgs are 'couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices' (Haraway [1991] 2013, 150). Hence she identifies humans and machines,

arguing that they are ontologically the same. In contrast, Anders prefers to conceptualise humans as both connected but also distinct from machines. Contemporary interpreters of Anders such as Beinsteiner (2019) have read Anders in light of Haraway's work and pointed to some similarities and differences. For Beinsteiner, Anders' work 'aims to illustrate is that technologies mediate our access to ourselves and to reality' (Beinsteiner 2019, 128). However, he also highlights that Anders' notion of alienation, Promethean shame, 'consists precisely in accepting machines' agency and flexibility as the standards that our own bodies have to live up to' (Beinsteiner 2019, 120).

I agree with Beinsteiner's conception here. Anders says that appliances and means 'mould and alter us' (Anders [1956] 2003, 98, *my translation*). But he also insists on what he calls humans' 'ontic endowment' (Anders [1956] 2003, 71, *my translation*). This refers to their organic being, i.e. 'that which one inevitably is' (Anders [1956] 2003, 70, *my translation*). For Anders, humans' organic being is determined by chance evolutions. Humans are not designed for anything specific like the machines they build. This means that from the perspective of the logic machines, humans remain a '*faulty construction*' (Anders [1956] 2003, 40, *italics and English in original*). For Anders:

This derives, precisely, from the fact that, instead of being a real prime material, humans are "tragically" morphologically fixed, because they are pre-formed [by nature, i.e. not consciously designed] (Anders [1956] 2003, 54)

This means that Anders conceptualises the relation of man and machine as one of mutual influence rather than fusion, like Haraway and to a lesser extent McLuhan and Simondon.

This conception highlights how Anders could produce a theory of technological alienation based on the idea that technology can overwhelm human faculties of understanding and imagination (see sections 3.5.3-4) while not making this conception completely deterministic. As was shown in section 3.2.4, Anders' understanding is based on the idea that humans are both fixed and malleable at the same time. Anders asserts that humans have a biological pre-disposition for social production but that this pre-disposition exists as a

'blank check' (Anders [1956] 2003, 290, *my translation*). Consequently, Anders believed that:

Man is not obliged to accept a limited endowment of sentiments that is defined once and for all; instead he always invents new sentiments; in fact he even invents sentiments that exceed the normal volume of his soul. (Anders [1956] 2003, 295, *my translation*)

Hence what Anders' considers to be flexible in humans remains at the level of conscious social activity. Anders believed that technological advances necessitated the adaptation of man through the creation of new sentiments. He speaks of how:

Today our crucial moral task consists in developing our moral fantasy, that is, in the attempt to overcome the "discrepancy", of adapting the capacity and the elasticity of our imagination and of our sentiments to match the dimensions of our products (Anders [1956] 2003, 256, *my translation*)

Hence Anders thought that there is room for humans to enlarge the scope of their sentiments to keep up and gain better control over technology. But this process is not automatic, for Anders. It is part of a real and conscious struggle humans must undertake to appropriate emergent forms of technology.

#### **4.2.4 How this is relevant to today**

Today there is a positivist trend, in which Tristan Harris participates, of considering humans, including human psychology, principally on the basis of evolution and genetics. This has revived a discipline from the 19th century, evolutionary psychology, which reductively and deterministically explains human psychological behaviour principally through genetics. Hence Harris says that:

We evolved to care about whether other people in our tribe... think well of us or not, 'cause it matters. But were we evolved to be aware of what 10,000 people think of us? We were not evolved to have social approval being dosed to us every five minutes. That was not at all what we were built to experience. (Orlowski 2020, 43)

Tristan states that consequently:

Human beings, at a mind and body and sort of physical level, are not gonna fundamentally change. [...] you're living inside of hardware, a brain, that was, like, millions of years old (Orlowski 2020, 48)

Harris' thinking displays a degree of Promethean shame and machine fetishism that Anders' work highlights. He speculates that humans were 'built' (Orlowski 2020, 43) for something as though they were machines, or 'hardware' (Orlowski 2020, 48), created by a conscious entity. Instead, Anders highlights that humans were not purposefully designed for anything.

In some respects, Harris' conception resembles Anders' idea that technology can exceed human faculties of understanding. However, ultimately Harris' adopts a machine logic that conceptualises humans as '*faulty construction[s]*' (Anders [1956] 2003, 40, *English and italics in original*). He depicts humans as inferior to 'the supercomputer [which is] on the other side of that screen' (Orlowski 2020, 77). He fails to recognise the plasticity of the human mind and gives into functionalist thinking mirroring technical sciences to speak of the human. He does not accept the part played by chance transformations in human evolution, which may explain human mental plasticity. It is interesting to note that Harris' conception both resembles and stands diametrically opposed to Haraway's conception that humans and computers are not ontologically distinct entities. It is a pessimistic version of this understanding.

#### **4.2.5 Conclusion**

Anders' explanation manages to avoid both extremes of an infinitely fluid conception of the relation of humans and machines and one that is too rigid and based on a fixed view of human mental capacities. Anders argued that humans should attempt to grasp technological appliances through their mental faculties to better control them and steer them in the right direction.

This conception is not opposed to McLuhan and Simondon's conception of the relation between technology and the human. However, it is opposed to Haraway's provocative questioning of the difference between humans and machines. It is also opposed to

genetically determinist evolutionary notions of humans, which regard modern human brains as Stone Age brains. In contrast, Anders' theory acknowledges the plasticity of mental human faculties, while also accepting the relative fixity of human biology.

## **4.3 Technology**

### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Just as in the last section I discussed the intersection between the human and technology, in this section I discuss technology as it intersects systems of power and domination. This is because I am comparing Anders to other critical theorists, who analysed how technology could re-produce systems of power and domination.

Hence, in section 4.3.2, I discuss Feenberg's notion of how technological systems can reproduce class domination. However, I argue that Feenberg produces a dualistic understanding of technology, which treats the general function of pieces of technology as neutral and necessary. Conversely, he treats the superficial design of these implements as open to transformations. He further fetishizes the notion that such emancipatory design transformations happen automatically.

In section 4.3.3, I discuss how Anders' understanding of technology goes against such dichotomisations. Anders' theory shows how pieces of technology can not only form a system with other pieces of technology, but also fuse with the commodity-form. Therefore he conceptualised the link between technology and existing power-structures linked to the capitalist economy. For Anders, technologies are integrated within systems of social control, commodity production and consumerism. Hence I argue against many of the contemporary appraisals of Anders, which argue that Anders thought of technology in isolation from other factors. In section 4.3.4, I show how Anders' conception of an integrated system of techno-commodities can help us avoid dichotomising between hardware and software design, regarding the first as neutral and the second as dominating.

#### 4.3.2 Other theorists: Feenberg

Feenberg understands technology as non-neutral, arguing that technological systems are inscribed with a 'technological code' (Feenberg 2002, 76; [1999] 2001, 88) and can therefore re-enforce structures of power. He states that:

invariant elements of the constitution of the technical subject and object are modified by socially specific contextualizing variables in the course of the realization of concrete technical actors, devices, and systems. Thus technologies are not merely efficient devices or efficiency oriented practices, but include their contexts as these are embodied in design and social insertion. (Feenberg [1999] 2001, xiii)

This leads Feenberg to divide technological systems into what he calls 'primary' (Feenberg [1999] 2001, 202) and 'secondary instrumentalizations' (Feenberg [1999] 2001, 202). Based on Fuchs (2016a), I argue that this is dualistic because it dichotomises between the internal structure and outward design of technology.

Primary instrumentalization concerns the '*functional constitution* of technical objects and subjects' (Feenberg [1999] 2001, 202). The secondary instrumentalization concerns '*realization*' (Feenberg [1999] 2001, 202) through styling and design. Hence Feenberg states that 'the orientation toward reality [primary instrumentalization] characteristic of technology is combined with the realization of technology in the social world [secondary instrumentalization]' (Feenberg 2002, 175). According to Feenberg, the secondary instrumentalization is more open to reworking and contestation, whereas the primary instrumentation remains more fixed. Speaking of how the Minitel office computer system of the early 1980s was employed for leisure communication, he states that:

[i]t was mainly nonprofessionals (or professionals not associated with the design and management of the systems) who pioneered these unexpected uses of the new technologies. And they succeeded because ordinary people wanted computers to serve personal goals and not just the official functions emphasized by experts. In the process they refuted widespread deterministic assumptions about the rationalizing implications of the computer and revealed its communicative potential. (Feenberg 2002, 118)



Feenberg believes that users and producers can redirect technological developments in radically new directions by solely adjusting the design or secondary instrumentation of such technologies. Hence Feenberg describes how technology has these 'integrative potentialities that can be enlisted to repair the damage it does' (Feenberg 2002, 176).

Fuchs (2016a) has shown how this conception fetishizes the notion of user participation. Hence Fuchs argues that: 'Feenberg's theory of technology is [...] dualist because it does not thoroughly analyse the antagonisms between capitalist technologies and alternative technologies' (Fuchs 2016a, 221). According to Fuchs, Feenberg

ends up with a fetishism of technological struggles that does not see that alternatives and struggles are always potentials, but do not automatically and also not with necessity emerge because struggles can be contained by power asymmetries, ideologies, repression, violence (Fuchs 2016a, 220)

I further argue that Feenberg reifies the primary orientation or the function of specific commodities, treating it as necessary and natural. He then fetishizes the idea of user influence over the design of specific technologies, such as through alternative uses of a given technology.

#### **4.3.3 How Anders is different**

Anders' conception of technology is unifying rather than dichotomising. Anders doesn't radically separate different aspects of the same technology, like Feenberg. As shown in section 3.3.4, Anders understands technological devices as tending to form a system. Their functioning further becomes integrated with what is external to them. Hence "the world becomes a machine" (Anders [1964] 2015, 19). Because of this dialectic between the inner and outer of each appliance, there is no neutral layer of technology. All elements interact. In fact, technologies are influenced by, and feed back on, the social environment. In section 3.3.4, I used citations from Anders' relatively late exposition of his idea of technology forming a totality from *We, Son's of Eichmann* (Anders [1964] 2015). In Anders' earlier but still mature work, which is in fact his main oeuvre, *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I, (Anders

[1956] 2003), Anders has a slightly different explanation. In 1964, Anders speaks of technology qua machines, whereas in his earlier 1956 work he speaks of technology qua commodities.

Anders' 1956 piece on radio and television is called 'The World as Phantom and Matrix' (Anders [1956] 2003, 97-195). He uses the term matrix to refer to the structure of the technological environment he is describing. Anders makes the argument that the expansion of the world of commodities is the original motor for the expansion of machines. The fact that machines require an external environment to function mirrors the fact that commodities refer to one-another through the price system and necessitate the buying of other commodities. Hence he states:

every commodity that is offered to us and that we buy as a "must have" contains, in turn, needs which become our needs. This represents the climax of the matrix phenomena (Anders [1956] 2003, 169)

In a passage (Anders [1956] 2003, 167-169) of this chapter, Anders further evidences that he is discussing commodities and technology at the same time. He argues that 'our needs are nothing other than the imprints of the needs of our commodities' (Anders [1956] 2003, 169, *my translation*). He links this idea to technology by stating: 'what we will need tomorrow is not written in the sky [...] but on our fridge which we bought yesterday, and in our television which bought today' (Anders [1956] 2003, 169, *my translation*). This shows how, following on from his dialectical conception, Anders doesn't separate technology from the demands of the capitalist social environment within which it is produced. Hence, contrary to Feenberg, Anders does not see the main function of given technologies as independent from the economic system within which they were produced.

#### **4.3.4 How this is relevant to today**

In many ways Anders' conception of techno-commodities militates against dualistic conceptions such as Feenberg's. Feenberg's dualistic conception is mirrored by Tristan Harris understanding that app design is the problem and that phone developers such as

Apple might welcome transformations to their technology that promote people using phones less. Harris asserts that ‘their business model not being about attention and data[, it] can actually move in this direction’ (Harris and Schüll 2019b, 13). He adds,

Apple could do this in the next version of iOS [...] You know you get 16 notifications a day, and if we split them up in these six different types that would actually reduce your looking at your phone by like 30 percent (Harris and Schüll 2019a, 6)

Harris’ conception re-establishes Feenberg’s dualism. Harris dichotomises between hardware and software design. He assumes that hardware design is neutral while software design is moulded by economic imperatives and aimed at creating addiction within its users. However, I argue that smartphone hardware design is also not neutral.

The original striving for mobile phone development was portability. The aim was to produce devices that were as small and lightweight as possible. However, modern phones have increasingly big colour screens. These privilege viewing images, rather than codex or portability. If Anders was alive today, he would highlight how the dominance of images in today’s communications is not unrelated to the demands of late capitalism. Coloured images easily captivate attention and communicate a lot of information including abstract information such as values proposed lifestyles, etc., in a short amount of time, and often without viewers realising it. Consequently, they are ideal for consumerist societies driven by advertising. They can furthermore be consumed continuously. The shift to operating technology through touchscreens accommodates this function. Indeed this feature comes at the expense of others. Touchscreens free up space for hosting large, coloured images but they are not as good for typing. A touchscreen cannot be operated without looking at it. These elements arguably reduce portability, while further increasing users’ time viewing adverts. Hence the structure and interface of modern technology is not neutral and necessary but responds to interests and demands within modern capitalism.

#### **4.3.5 Conclusion**

With reference to section 3.3.4, I have argued that Anders' notion of technology is anti-dualistic because Anders conceptualises technology as forming a system, or matrix. This conception is not solely dependent on an understanding of how an expansionary logic is intrinsic to technology, as I will show it is for Heidegger and Ellul (see section 4.5.3). Anders thinks of technological systems in the context of capitalist consumerist economies. The demands of these systems deeply structure technological appliances. They influence their function and increasing orientation towards other technologies. Hence Anders does not dichotomise between different levels of technology, as Feenberg does.

This unifying conception is useful for understanding how, not only the software design of apps but also the very form of modern technological hardware is not neutral. It responds to a drive within capitalist economies towards consumerism and surveillance. Large, coloured images are useful supports for captivating user attention to convey advertising, shopping online and generating user data. Hence smartphone hardware design is not unrelated to the business models that influence software design. Feenberg's and Harris' understanding fetishizes existing technological hardware, taking its structure as necessary.

## **4.4 Domination**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

In this section, I look in more detail at how technological systems can reproduce systems of domination. In section 4.4.2, I discuss Baudrillard's theory of postmodernity and domination. I show that Baudrillard focuses on how technologies can re-produce cybernetic and semiotic systems that benefit the ruling classes. I argue that this overlooks the concrete functioning of technologies. It produces an esoteric theory of domination which asserts that domination is based on ideology alone. In section 4.4.3, I show how Anders' theory similarly makes a detailed analysis of the structure of modern media, arguing that it complicates humans' perception of reality by making what is absent present and vice-versa. However, Anders does not simply assert that modern media make reality more virtual. For Anders,

they also contain a reductive and separating tendency. Anders showed how the latter could lead to desensitising humans to violent acts, facilitating domination. In section 4.4.4, I show that Anders' subtle understanding of how media can be a factor in re-producing domination helps us avoid exaggerated claims regarding the manipulative power of software and algorithms.

#### **4.4.2 Other theorists: Baudrillard**

Baudrillard's conception of technological domination is intimately bound with cybernetics and semiotics. Baudrillard focuses on how the increasing dominance of ICTs means that the ruling class can manipulate and structure systems of meaning to favour their own interest. Hence he states:

the simulation model of a differential aristocratic code still acts as a powerful factor of integration and control, as participation of the same rule of the game. [A community] fused together by the same rules of the game and the same system of signs is collectively beyond economic value [...] this is the keystone of domination. (Baudrillard [1972] 1981, 119)

Hence, for Baudrillard, domination is enacted through cybernetics and semiotics, making it similar to ideology. Kellner has further argued that:

For Baudrillard, modern societies are organized around the production and consumption of commodities, while postmodern societies are organized around simulation and the play of images and signs, denoting a situation in which codes, models, and signs are the organizing principle of a new social order where simulation rules (Kellner 2003, 320)

This shows how Baudrillard's concept of domination is ethereal. For instance, there is no deep analysis of how weaponry technology facilitates domination, as in Anders.

Baudrillard's work is arguably aimed at being provocative more than at grasping real processes. Anders criticises the impoverished one-sided nature of the world delivered by the radio and the television. In contrast, according to Kellner's interpretation, Baudrillard argues that:

The realm of the hyperreal (media simulations of reality, Disneyland and amusement parks, malls and consumer fantasylands, TV sports, and other excursions into ideal worlds) is more real than real, so that the models, images and codes of the hyperreal come to control thought and behaviour (Kellner 2003, 321)

I argue that this places too much importance on ideology and effectively makes ideology infuse all the other categories involved in my thesis: the human, technology, domination and alienation. This means that Baudrillard's theory also ends up being one-sidedly based on structures of meaning. It thus overlooks the concrete structure of ICTs understood their mode of operation and the set of affordances they offer, which in some cases can facilitate domination.

#### **4.4.3 How Anders is different**

In section 3.4.4, I outlined Anders' understanding of technological weaponry and surveillance. I linked it to Anders' conception of technological domination. Here, however, I take the opportunity to outline how Anders' analysis of radio and television also suggests that other less threatening technologies can be factors in facilitating domination. For instance, as I show in chapters 6-8, in modern times, the video feed and audio link are features of military drone technologies. Anders' analysis shows how the radio and television split individuals' perception, thereby producing a reductive understanding of what is far and an impoverished experience of what is near. This forms a foundation for understanding some of the negative effects that can be associated with ICTs.

In his critical analysis of radio and television, Anders shows how ICTs complicate human perception of the world. In some respects, ICTs reproduce a deceitful, phantom-like version of reality, which impoverishes human understanding of the latter. For Anders,

broadcast events are at the same time present and absent, at the same time real and apparent, they are here and at the same time they are not: because they are phantoms (Anders [1956] 2003, 126, *my translation*)

Here Anders follows Heidegger's lead who spoke of how: "With the 'radio', for example, Dasein has so expanded its everyday environment that it has accomplished a de-severance

of the 'world'" (Heidegger [1927] 1967, 140). However, Anders' development of this theme is compatible with a Marxian understanding of the subject losing control over the object. For Anders, the separation effected by the radio means that humans are no longer able to act effectively within the world and 'the relation between man and world becomes unilateral' (Anders [1956] 2003, 124, *my translation*). Anders uses the strong expression 'mutilated relation' (Anders [1956] 2003, 125, *my translation*) to convey this situation.

The effect is one of impoverishment. Hence Anders argues that '[r]epresentation and represented object on television are synchronous. Synchronicity is the atrophied form of presence' (Anders [1956] 2003, 126, *my translation*). Anders' use of the term 'atrophied', conveys the sense that transmitted images do not provoke rich emotional responses. In the military drone case study (chapter 6-8), I detail how drone operators are made to kill humans on the basis of this atrophied perception. This highlights the link between the splitting of presence and absence through ICTs and domination. I show that military drone operatives' very removal from the battlefield makes it easier for them to kill, while also making their own experience of the war, in some respects, reduced. This creates feelings of guilt which make them suffer mentally.

My interpretation of how Anders' notion of presence-absence can be linked to domination makes a stronger claim on this topic than the one that can be found in Babich (2019). Babich (2019) points out how '[p]henomenologically, Anders observes, music can be acoustically located in space [...] directionally and in terms of distance' (Babich 2019, 62). In contrast, according to Babich's interpretation of Anders "'real presence' is annihilated by the radio' (Babich 2019, 62). Hence Babich speaks of how modern ICTs can produce a 'schizo-topic' (Babich 2019, 62) environment, which is split between where the sound is being broadcast and where the sound is being played originally. Babich ties this analysis to an understanding of how mediated reality has become more uncertain. She does not tie this process of fragmentation to domination. She does not look at how the reductive, impoverishing aspect of this process, can make acts of domination easier. I argue that this is

what Anders' work highlights, especially with his discussion of televised images of nuclear explosions.

#### **4.4.4 How this is relevant to today**

Hence Anders' work reveals a subtle understanding of how the very structure of media can produce a reduced impoverished experience of the world. In contrast, modern theorists such as Tristan Harris lay enormous focus on the idea that software interfaces dominate modern humans through manipulating their emotions and reactions. Hence Tristan states that companies use:

AI to predict what's gonna perfectly addict you, or hook you, or manipulate you, or allow advertisers to test 60,000 variations of text or colors to figure out what's the perfect manipulation of your mind. This is a totally new species of power and influence. (Orlowski 2020, 46)

Harris' view overemphasises the extent to which humans are manipulated by the functioning of software and algorithms. This leads into a crude form of technological determinism. For instance, Harris seems to endorse the view that ethnic violence against the Rohingya people in Myanmar was principally caused by Facebook's algorithm suggesting radicalising content (Orlowski 2020, 86). This denies other socio-economic and historical factors leading to the persecution of the Rohingya people.

In contrast, Anders' analysis reveals a more subtle form of domination, which is less based on direct and purposeful manipulation. The processes of domination Anders reveals are based on the very functioning of the technology, which limits our capacity to control and experience the world directly, while making us act on the basis of a phantom-like version of it. Hence as I show in chapter 6, drone operators are able to kill humans as though they were mere silhouettes and not feel immediately responsible for these acts. At the same time, as discussed in the previous section 4.3.3, Anders does not view technology as operating in a vacuum. Rather he sees it as fusing with other systems of power which also create the conditions for such violence.



#### **4.4.5 Conclusion**

I have argued that Baudrillard produces an excessively ethereal conception of domination. For Baudrillard, domination and power are driven by signs and meaning. Hence domination resembles ideology. In contrast, I have shown that Anders focusses on how the structure of ICTs can be a factor in facilitating domination. Anders has a subtle analysis of how media fragments human perception and means that humans exist in a reduced emotional environment whereby they can conduct acts of violence as though they were not responsible.

However, I argue that analyses of these negative effects should look at how they also interact with other factors, such socio-economic and historical ones. They should not assert that social media interfaces or algorithms can, by themselves, explain human violent behaviour, as is suggested by Harris in the documentary *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski 2020).

### **4.5 Alienation**

#### **4.5.1 Introduction**

In this section, I pick up some of the themes I introduced in section 4.3.3 regarding the interaction between technological and economic systems in Anders' philosophy. I use these to make an important distinction between Ellul's and Anders' work. In section 4.5.2, I look at how, on the surface, both Ellul and Anders' work portrays technology as autonomous or the subject. Both theorists argue that technology is an increasingly important frame through which other spheres of life are mediated and that humans are reduced to mere objects in the face of this process. However, in section 4.5.3, I argue that Ellul literally believes that technology has superseded the capitalist economy. In contrast, Anders argues that technologies embody and carry forward the demands of capitalist economies. Hence, Anders has a conception of how media consumerism is integrated into the capitalist system

of production. Arguably, this conception is compatible with later theorists of 'audience labour', such as Smythe (1977). The latter linked consumption of media even more explicitly to value creation within capitalist economies. In section 4.5.4, I show how Anders' conception of technology fusing with the economic system is useful for showing how use of modern technologies is not simply the result of technological addiction, as argued by Harris. Technologies such as smartphones have become part of the essential infrastructure individuals must engage with in modern societies.

#### **4.5.2 Other theorists: Ellul**

Ellul is one of the theorists whose work resembles Anders' the most on the topic of alienation and technology. Similarly to Anders, Ellul also takes inspiration from Marx and Marxist theory while at the same time attempting to update it. For instance, Ellul refers to Lukács' concept of reification applying it to technology. He states:

Man is progressively eliminated as a subject (apt to make decisions autonomously and singularly), by technical growth which imposes on him modes of life, attitudes, and calculated rules, more and more rigorous. Man is subjected to a progressive "reification" by this invasion of objects. [...] The Marxist "theory of goods for explaining this reification was correct a century ago. It is now only a detail. (Ellul in Lovekin 1991, 89)

Moreover, Ellul produces a concept of technological alienation, which is similar to Anders'. Accordingly, he states

The very grandeur of means produces the situation of alienation in our society when the meaning we can attach to life and action is no longer commensurate with these means. At this point man is effectively alienated in his own means and his own power. (Ellul 1976, 28-29)

Here Ellul, similarly to Anders, connects the idea of the power of technology as exceeding human sentiments to alienation.

At first glance, both Ellul and Anders seem to give the same weight to technology in their analyses. For Ellul, technology has become the dominant structure with which humans have

to interact. He states: 'the political world is today defined through its relation to the technological society' (Ellul 1962, 395). Hence, for Ellul,

in any sphere whatever, there are nothing but technical problems. We conceive all problems in their technical aspect, and think that solutions to them can only appear by means of further perfecting techniques (Ellul 1962, 414)

This logic is similar to that of Anders in his outlining of a dialectic of the machine where the 'world becomes a machine' (Anders [1964] 2015, 19).

Moreover, there seems to be a common conception of technological alienation with Ellul and Anders where technology becomes autonomous (Ellul) or the subject (Anders). On the surface, Ellul's concept of how: 'Technique has become autonomous; it has fashioned an omnivorous world which obeys its own laws and which has renounced all tradition' (Ellul [1954] 1964, 14) resembles Anders statement that 'technology has actually become the subject of history, alongside of which we are merely "co-historical"' (Anders [1980] 2011, 1). For Anders, humans become 'mere parts in a machine, raw material' (Anders [1964] 2015, 23). Similarly, Ellul states that: 'When Technique displays any interest in man, it does so by converting him into a material object' (Ellul 1962, 401).

However, I show that there are some significant differences between Ellul and Anders, despite their similar alarmist style of writing. Namely, Ellul asserts that: 'It is useless to rail against capitalism. Capitalism did not create our world; the machine did' (Ellul [1954] 1964, 5). He further argues that: 'We are here in the presence of a new alienation that has nothing to do with capitalism' (Ellul 1967a, 79). In contrast, Anders' mature work conceptualises machines as participating in the production and consumption of commodities. He therefore sees technological alienation as linked to economic alienation.

### **4.5.3 How Anders is different**

While both theorists' conceptualisation of alienation relies on the idea of an inversion between humans and technology, Anders' conceptualisation of this inversion doesn't lose sight of capitalist economic processes. For instance, in his 1956 work Anders states that:

Today's fundamental neutralising force is naturally not of a political nature. It is of an economic nature and concerns the commodity-character of all phenomena. (Anders [1956] 2003, 117)

For Anders, it is first and foremost 'the commodity character [which] produces, as a is well-known, alienation' (Anders [1956] 2003, 117, my translation). Thus technological forms embody this commodity character and extend the alienation arising from this form. For instance, Anders states that the television or radio 'transmission is a commodity' (Anders [1956] 2003, 117, my translation). In his late work, he further details how

it is in the interest of production to dispatch a product B as rapidly as possible after product A, which can only be done if product A is made in such a way that it is consumed as soon as it is used, that is, that it is liquidated as soon as it is supplied. This principle has encountered its most perfect realization (up until now) in radio and television. (Anders [1980] 2011, 178)

Hence, for Anders, the constant stream of television and radio programmes constitute ideal commodities that can 'reduce as much as possible the span of time between the production and the liquidation of the product' (Anders [1980] 2011, 32). He also specifies how: 'Weapons also belong to this class of ideal objects, of those objects that must be consumed with their (first) use' (Anders [1980] 2011, 29). Hence Anders understands technological forms as embodying and giving a material manifestation to the logic of commodities. Their very structure feeds back into the logic of consumerism and capitalist production, as television images can be consumed relentlessly and immediately.

The link between technical systems and capitalist production is something that contemporary interpretations of Anders have not highlighted. I argue that the resultant reading portrays Anders as concerned with technological systems to the exclusion all else. For instance, Nosthoff and Maschewski argue that Anders is an 'an interpreter of an all-encompassing process of cybernetization' (Nosthoff and Maschewski 2019, 76), despite Anders only mentioning cybernetics twice in vol. I (Anders [1956] 2003) and zero times in vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011) of his magnum opus. They further state that, for Anders, the universe is 'de facto and unchangeably always-already technological' (Nosthoff and

Maschewski 2019, 85). In contrast, the passages I have highlighted suggests that Anders thought that technologies produced under capitalism were always-already commodities. Indeed Anders' returned to this 1956 conception in his late work. Here Anders highlights how: 'all objects of all types have been infected by all the objects of the current dominant type, that is, of the commodity type' (Anders [1980] 2010, 109). He further states that 'the universe of commodities [...] has achieved dominance' (Anders [1980] 2010, 110) and refers to 'the abundance of the objects that have become assimilated to it, that is, to the universalization of its principle' (Anders [1980] 2010, 110). This evidences how there is no technological a priori in Anders' work, as there is in Heidegger's. Instead technologies respond to, and perpetuate, the demands of the capitalist system. Machines are 'in advance' (Anders [1980] 2010, 109) commodities, rather than the other way around.

Dawsey's (2019) most recent work has stressed Anders' engagement with Marxism. However, Dawsey also, to some extent repeats, Nosthoff and Maschewski's interpretation of Anders' conception of machines forming a system. Dawsey states:

Rapid, ceaseless technological innovation Anders explains, implausibly, not by competition or Marx's dynamic of absolute and relative surplus-value but by an inherent 'pressure to expand' (Expansionsdrang) in machines (see Anders, 1964). (Dawsey 2019, 50)

Such readings of Anders disregard Anders' mature turn towards Marxism. Anders did not conceive of technological systems as being independent from capitalist economic dynamics. Anders understands technology produced under capitalism as a technical realisation of the commodity-form.

Anders' analysis is not as squarely based on an economic understanding of 'audience labour' as Dallas Smythe's (1977) conception. Nevertheless, Anders does argue that modern consumers can be understood as an '*unremunerated domiciled workers who cooperate in the production of mass man*' (Anders [1956] 2003, 99, *my translation, italics in original*). According to Anders, their work activity is the 'consumption of the commodities of mass production' (Anders [1956] 2003, 101, *my translation*) and the final product is 'the

transformation of themselves into humans of mass production' (Anders [1956] 2003, 101, *my translation*). This is because '(in a non-materialist sense) man "is what he eats"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 100, *my translation*). Humans adapt their lifestyles and very being to consumerism. Thus, for Anders, modern man consumes 'a maximum of leisure products so as to cooperate with the production of 'mass humans'' (Anders [1956] 2003, 101, *my translation*).

Anders concludes that consumption is 'camouflaged labour' (Anders [1980] 2011, 126). He asserts that

The output that is demanded of us, is demanded of us in the form of domestic consumption; and this means: in the form of domestic labor. (Anders [1980] 2011, 126)

While Anders does not develop the connection of this assessment with economic value, he does think of the impact of it in terms of alienation. He shows how the relation between consumers and their activity is inverted. He states:

This process is at its most paradoxical when the domiciled worker, instead of being paid for his collaboration, has to pay it himself; that is, he must pay for the means of production (the device and, in many countries, the programmes) through the use which he lets himself be transformed into a mass man. Therefore, he pays to sell himself. (Anders [1956] 2003, 101, *my translation*)

Consumers actively transform their consumption into objective activity that benefits production. For Anders, this standardised activity itself has 'become a commodity' (Anders [1956] 2003, 101, *my translation*) for which they themselves have to pay. This shows how the subject's position is that of an objective source of value and standardised activity.

#### **4.5.4 How this is relevant to today**

Addiction could be viewed as a form of alienation, as individuals behave in ways that they would prefer not to. They further do this without direct forms of external coercion.

Harris fuses his understanding of algorithmic manipulation with the notion that technology is designed to be addictive. He states, 'I [the developer] wanna dig down deeper

into the brain stem and implant, inside of you, an unconscious habit so that you are being programmed at a deeper level. You don't even realize it' (Orlowski 2020, 28). Harris draws the conclusion that,

technology exceeds and overwhelms human weaknesses. This point being crossed is at the root of addiction, polarization, radicalization, outrage-ification, vanity-ification, the entire thing. This is overpowering human nature, and this is checkmate on humanity. (Orlowski 2020, 55)

On the surface, this understanding seems compatible with Anders' notion of technological alienation. Some contemporary theorists argue that Anders also makes this type of argument. For instance, Bernsteiner argues that Anders shows how 'cars transform their drivers into ruthless car racing addicts' (Bersteiner 2019, 127).

In contrast, I argue that Anders' view does not rely on the notion of addiction. Anders recognises that the use of technology is not due to 'human weaknesses' but to socio-economic factors, which make the use of certain technologies necessary. Hence Anders states:

if a madman wanted to attempt the experiment of becoming independent even of only one of these gadgets or of the forces that constitute our world, for instance electricity, he would rapidly perish. (Anders [1956] 2003, 169, *my translation*)

Anders emphasises how techno-commodities form a system that mirrors economic relations, and with which individuals must engage in order to survive. Anders never argues that, given his diagnosis of a techno-commodified society, people should individually choose to use less technology. Indeed, he reminds us that

[w]hatever we choose to do or renounce, this private strike does nothing to change the fact that by now we live in a world for which 'the world' and the experience of the world have no value compared to the phantom of the world and the consumption of these phantoms (Anders [1956] 2003, 11)

In fact, Anders himself never engaged in 'private strike[s]' consisting in individually abstaining from using technology for political reasons.

In *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011), Anders further argues that workers listen to the radio passively when they get home because their work is tiring. He further states:

During the period when I worked at the factory, I was no exception. [...] I, too, lived at the time in the company of that radio. (Anders [1980] 2011, 61)

If Anders were alive today, he would certainly not exclude the possibility of using more technology, if this is required to change the status quo. The aim of his theory is a deep transformation of the technical infrastructure of society. He would not consider it a great achievement, as Harris does, to get phone users to look at their phones 30% less (Harris and Schüll 2019a, 6). Hence I argue that Anders' theory is useful in highlighting how Harris' view over-emphasises the addictive-power of modern technological devices, while not going far enough in his demands for transforming technology.

#### **4.5.5 Conclusion**

I have shown how, while appearing on the surface very similar, Anders' theory of technological alienation is different to Ellul's. While Ellul thinks of technological alienation as something separate from the capitalist economy, Anders' thinks of technology in relation to the latter. His theory of radio listening and television watching as a form of labour, in some respects, anticipates theories of audience labour which tied this activity more explicitly to value creation and profit. I argue that modern interpretations of Anders, while acknowledging the presence of exaggerations and provocative statements in Anders' work, have taken Anders' assertion that technology is the subject of history too literally. They thus fail to highlight how Anders' work connects technology to the commodity-form.

Anders' theory of technological alienation is useful in countering modern critical conceptions of technology that over-emphasise the addictive nature of modern app designs. Apps may be designed to foster habits in users. But treating this as the principal factor that explains user engagement with such apps misses the fact that the social environment is structured in such a way as to make use of certain apps and smartphone technology, for



instance, necessary. Hence technology is not independently all-powerful. It is connected to, and mirrors, economic and social systems.

## **4.6 Ideology**

### **4.6.1 Introduction**

In this section, I look at ideology. In section 4.6.2, I focus on Anders' relation to the Frankfurt school. I show that despite his sometimes-conflictual relation to members of the Frankfurt School such as Adorno, their theories also provided foundations for Anders' work. However, Anders' theory is also different. It attempts to almost mechanically describe why the very functioning of ICTs is a factor in reproducing ideology in advanced capitalist societies. Anders' work offers a subtle explanation of how ICTs can distort our understanding of the world by making subjective judgements of the world pass as objective images. In section 4.6.4, I show how this is useful in avoiding conceptions which over-emphasise the power of algorithms. Indeed Harris (in Orłowski 2020) argues that the modern prevalence of conspiracy theories can principally be explained by recommendation algorithms. By offering a detailed, phenomenological analysis of how ICTs have an impact on human perception of the world, Anders can help us avoid such totalising conceptions. We can integrate Anders' analysis into other socio-economic and psychological processes.

### **4.6.2 Other theorists: Frankfurt School**

Anders had a conflictual yet, in some respects, close relationship with some members of the Frankfurt School. As stated in chapter 1, Anders was on bad terms with Adorno, who rejected his habilitation thesis at the University of Frankfurt am Main. This dashed Anders' hopes of joining the Institute of Social Research, home to the Frankfurt School. Anders held a long-term grudge against Adorno, whose intellectual style he criticised for not being sufficiently politically engaged. Hence in a 1958 letter to his ex-wife, Hannah Arendt, Anders told her that:

Yesterday I was confronted with a nauseous and spectral past. At a Mahler concert, I was accosted by a bald old man with bulging eyes: Adorno, for whom I had suddenly become “dear Anders”. He’s even more of a dismal figure than before, with the agility of an old hand kisser; with age, he’s become aggressive against the defenceless. Nothing is more disgusting than aggressiveness united with cowardliness (he has not endorsed a single one of the declarations against the atomic) (Arendt and Anders 2017, 50, *my translation*)

This excerpt shows how Anders had considerable spite for Adorno and was bitter about his past relation with him. Yet Anders was also considerably influenced by the Frankfurt School, including Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse.

One influence is Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s critique of positivism and the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002). These theorists show how an interplay between universal and particular is connected to the production of ideology within the culture industry. Hence they state:

The conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002, 95)

This false unity of universal and particular is also mirrored by a blurring of the inner and outer which characterises the radio and the television. Hence Horkheimer and Adorno further state:

The more densely and completely its techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of the one which has been revealed in the cinema (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002, 99)

This quote shows how Horkheimer and Adorno tie the production of illusions and ideology to audio-visual material presented to viewers in the cinema.

Anders picks up on this theme when he gives the example of how planetariums ‘creat[e] the illusion of being the starry sky’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 157). The planetarium is an instrument that appears

disguised as the “world”. It’s a tool in the shape of a microcosmic model that passes itself off as the world itself. (Anders [1956] 2003, 157, *my translation*)

Hence Anders thought about how the very structure of instruments could create illusions. Conversely, Horkheimer and Adorno assert that the adverse effects accompanying industrialisation, such as standardisation, ‘should not be attributed to the internal laws of technology itself but to its function within the economy today’ (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002, 95). Hence there is not as much emphasis on the structure and set of affordances of modern ICTs.

Next, I show how Anders went beyond Horkheimer and Adorno’s influence by linking the production of ideology to the very structure of this media.

#### **4.6.3 How Anders is different**

In his essay ‘The World as Phantom and Matrix’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 97-195), Anders makes an analysis of how the reality that is shown to us through the television can be deceptive. For Anders, with information that is conveyed through print or oral communication what is communicated is a “a matter of fact” which is detached from this original object [the event]’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 145, *my translation*). Such pieces of news ‘pre-suppose a division’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 145, *my translation*); they are ‘divided in two parts, S (subject) and p (predicate)’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 145, *my translation*). Anders favours this type of delivery of information because it means that what the reader or interlocutor receives is not an ‘incomplete surrogate; but something about the object’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 149, *my translation*). In contrast, for Anders the radio and the television do not tell us something about the thing. Through being able to transmit us sounds or images of real explosions, for instance, they present us not with an idea about the latter but with ersatz versions of them. Hence he states:

If we listen to a radio broadcast relaying a scene of war or a parliamentary session, we do not only hear news about the explosions or the speakers, but we hear the explosions and the speakers themselves. (Anders [1956] 2003, 124, *my translation*)

For Anders, with the television and radio, viewers receive the fact itself with a phantom-like quality. Hence Anders states that the ‘transportability which until now only concerned “matters of fact” has now contaminated the object itself’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 149, *my translation*).

Anders’ theory thus emphasises the passivation argument contained in Horkheimer and Adorno’s work, which is that technology ‘automat[es] mental processes, turning them into blind sequences’ (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002, 149). For Anders,

The fact that events — these themselves and not just news about them —, that football matches, church services, atomic explosions visit us [...] is the truly revolutionary transformation of brought about by the radio and television (Anders [1956] 2003, 107, *my translation*)

Anders thought that viewing an atomic explosion in one’s living room subtly changes one’s perspective on it. He argues that events therefore reach us ‘ideologically “pre-cut”’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 185, *my translation*). Anders highlights how the ‘small format of the images that appear on the screen [...] transforms any world event into a scene populated by playthings’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 144, *my translation*). Nuclear explosions can be seen as an unexceptional event. The main distinguishing feature from other theorists is that Anders shows in detail how the very workings of each appliance create images of the world which are ideologically pre-formatted.

#### **4.6.4 How this is relevant to today**

All the speakers on the programme *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski 2020) attribute the perpetuation of fake news to algorithms. They do not have a structural account of how media such as internet video feeds can produce deceptive or reductive images of reality. For instance, Harris personifies algorithms stating that their ‘job is to figure out what to show you’ (Orlowski 2020, 22). He fails to instead treat them as a blind mechanism designed by humans. Diresta, another speaker on the programme, explains:

So, if a user was, for example, anti-vaccine or believed in chemtrails or had indicated to Facebook's algorithms in some way that they were prone to belief in conspiracy theories, Facebook's recommendation engine would serve them Pizzagate groups. (Orlowski 2020, 61)

By personifying algorithms ('indicated to Facebook's algorithms'), this explanation overly mystifies what is essentially a recommendation of content on the basis of what other users, with similar watch histories, have viewed. This perspective ends up giving too much importance to the idea of algorithmic manipulation. It does not highlight socio-economic and environmental factors as Anders' theory does. Participants in the programme consequently simply blame 'algorithms and manipulative politicians' (Orlowski 2020, 69).

#### **4.6.5 Conclusion**

Anders had a conflictual relationship with Adorno especially. Nevertheless, Anders maintained contacts with members of the Frankfurt School after emigrating to the US and exchanged intellectually with them. Horkheimer and Adorno's criticism of the culture industry is likely to have influenced Anders' thought. However, Anders' point of departure is that he attempted to explain processes such as the collapsing of the difference between particular and universal, described by Horkheimer and Adorno, through analysing the very functioning of ICTs.

I argue that Anders' analysis offers a sophisticated understanding of how the structure of modern media can produce warped and deceptive images of reality. This is useful in not over-emphasising what is now the common conception that algorithms can very effectively manipulate social media users, strengthening problematic worldviews through mere content suggestions. This understanding denies more subtle environmental factors, which mean that social media users exist in an impoverished, and potentially isolated, reality that makes them prone to reductive understandings.

To conclude, it is possible to criticise Anders' theory of how media such as the radio and the television necessarily convey an ideological image of the world. This understanding seems exaggerated and too absolute. However, I argue that Anders himself did not have an

absolutist view. For instance, he praised the television (referring to the series miniseries Holocaust which appeared in 1979 on German television) as means to convey the horrors of the Holocaust through narratives that humanised victims (Anders [1997] 2014). This shows how Anders, similarly to Adorno (Fuchs 2016b, 81), did not argue that one should not engage with ICTs.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have compared Anders' understanding of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology to that of other critical theorists of technology. I have focussed particularly on French theorists Ellul and Baudrillard, because they share significant similarities with Anders. These are perhaps the result of common influences that Anders received during his time in Paris from 1933 to 1936. I have equally contrasted Anders' theories to contemporary theorists who are influenced by these thinkers, such Feenberg, Winner and Haraway. This has allowed me to refine some points regarding Anders' theory, while showing that it is still relevant and can be fruitfully applied to the digital era. Finally, I have shown how Anders was influenced by members of the Frankfurt School with whom he maintained complicated relations throughout his life.

In section 4.2, I showed that Anders conceives the relation between humans and technology as one of mutual influence, but not fusion. Anders argued that humans must make the mental effort of enlarging their human faculties to better control technology. In section 4.3, I showed how Anders views technology as unifying and characterised by a dialectic of inner and outer. Systems of technology consequently respond to, and incorporate, the demands of the capitalist system of commodity production. Hence Anders' understanding is anti-dualistic. It highlights how neither technology's primary nor its secondary orientations are neutral. In section 4.4, I showed how Anders' theory argues that there is a reductive dimension to technologies such as the radio and the television, as these convey a world which is neither present nor absent. I showed how this could facilitate domination. In section 4.5, I argued that Anders understands technological alienation as an

inversion between subject and object, where technology becomes the subject. However, I have argued that the expression 'subject of history' should not be taken too literally. Anders shows how technological appliances constitute ideal commodities, and hence are linked to economic alienation. Hence I argued against contemporary interpretations of Anders who portray his theory as solely focussing on a machine logic. I detailed the notion of techno-commodities to make this point. I further argued that, in some respects, Anders can be said to anticipate the work of 'audience commodity' theorists such as Smythe (1977). In section 4.6, I showed how Anders has a subtle understanding of how media such as the radio and the television can distort reality. In contrast, to members of the Frankfurt School he explicitly tied this to the structure of ICTs rather than to the content they conveyed.

It is well known that Anders' theories of technology can seem overly pessimistic and defeatist. But I have attempted to show that, to a significant, this is simply a surface appearance which is due to Anders' style of writing. Anders defiantly adopted the label of 'spreader of panic' (Anders [1987] 2008, 84) which was used against him. This fit with his philosophical method of exaggeration [*gelegenhetsphilosophisch*] (Anders [1956] 2003, 86). By contrasting Anders' theory to modern discourses surrounding the alienating dimension of smartphone technology and social media I have shown how, on the contrary, Anders' work can be used to produce more moderate and less technologically determinist understandings of the negative effects of modern ICTs.

## **5. Methodology for Applying Günther Anders' Theories to Two Contemporary Case Studies: Military Drones and Dating Apps**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The task of this chapter is to set out a methodology for applying Anders' critical theory of technology to the digital era. In order to do this, I outline three steps.

Firstly, in section 5.2, I select as case studies technologies that Anders would have been interested in. The technologies I have chosen are military drones and dating apps. In section 5.2.1, I briefly describe these pieces of technology, showing how they are relevant to the nexus Anders' highlighted between technology and human sentiments. In section 5.2.2, I outline how the human sentiments they intersect, namely aggression and love, are interrelated. I do this through Freudian drive theory. Secondly, in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 I formulate research questions based on Anders' theory about military drones and dating apps, respectively. To do this, I look back at chapter 3, which focussed on Günther Anders' theory. I take the themes that I highlighted in that chapter and apply them to the case studies in order to formulate research questions. Thirdly, in sections 5.4 and 5.5, I set about designing a research strategy for each of my case studies.

Hence, for the military drone case study, first, in section 5.4.1, I explain why I will opt for a qualitative 'lurking' approach based on an analysis of pre-existing interviews and writings involving drone operators. Then, in section 5.4.2, I discuss ethical considerations to conducting this study. Subsequently, in 5.4.3, I refer to the research material that is contained in Table A in Appendix A. I include both critical and non-critical accounts in this source material. I discuss how I can apply critical discourse analysis (CDA) to evaluate both critical and non-critical accounts. In section 5.4.4, I will outline specific tools I adapt from CDA for the purpose of examining whether the discourses surrounding military drones illustrate Anders' theories. I show how I can use these tools to analyse the themes of domination, alienation and ideology.



For the dating app case study, first, in section 5.5.1, I discuss the general approach I will adopt. I opt for a qualitative method, conducting semi-structured interviews. Then in section 5.5.2 I discuss ethical considerations related to this study. Subsequently, in section 5.5.3, I outline what population samples I will include in my study and why. Then in the same subsection I outline how I will recruit participants for the study. In section 5.5.4, I discuss how I will formulate a semi-structured questionnaire on the basis of the research questions I have outlined in section 5.3.2. In section 5.5.5, I will discuss specific elements of CDA I will use to analyse domination, alienation and ideology in the context of dating apps.

## **5.2 Selecting the case studies**

### **5.2.1 Presentation of military drone and dating app technology**

Chamayou characterises military drones as different to the ‘flying torpedoes’ (Chamayou 2013, 27) used during the Second World War. He specifies that: ‘The drone is not a projectile, but a projectile-carrying machine’ (Chamayou 2013, 27). Unmanned reconnaissance drones were first used in the Vietnam War by the U.S. but research and development into them was dropped in the 1970s. It was taken up by the Israel Defense Forces, who developed drone cameras for battlefield observation. Considering their efficacy, the U.S. military subsequently re-adopted them. It first had a drone fire a missile at a target on 16 February 2001 (Chamayou 2013, 29). Military drones were subsequently used in the war in Afghanistan before the end of that year. Hence the modern drone equipped with missiles grew out what were initially observational aircraft equipped with cameras.

Although these unmanned aircraft cannot achieve the fast speeds of fighter jets, they are able to stay in the air for far longer, at high altitudes. This, coupled with the powerful cameras they have on board, means that they can circle around specific areas to conduct surveillance. The fact that they carry laser guided missiles with a blast radius of 15 metres further allows them to target single individuals or groups of individuals. These are called Hellfire missiles and can also be fired from the ground and other types of aircraft. Finally,

drones can be piloted from an unprecedented distance. For instance, a wireless communication network allows the signals for the controls of drones flying over Afghanistan to be bounced off a satellite and sent to a military base in Germany (Scahill 2015). Here they are linked to the US through a transatlantic cable. This means that drones flying in the Middle East can be operated from cities like Las Vegas.

Hence military drones represent the culmination of a historical drive to produce increasingly long-range weapons that mechanise killing. Landmines and booby traps are examples of early autonomous weapons. Similarly, to drones, the person laying a landmine is not present when it detonates. Moreover, bombs dropped by an airplane equally distance the attackers' action of setting up or releasing the weapon from the effect of the weapon and the devastation it causes. In turn, modern Apache helicopters similarly use a monitor screen to aim weapons. However, drones have reached a tipping point. Drone operators are now radically distanced from the theatre of war they operate in. They are completely out of harm's way. In contrast, an accidental explosion could kill or maim a bomb layer, for instance.

Anders' theory allows us to acknowledge the continuity of drones with other weapons, while still assessing the way in which drones crystallise and render even more problematic the effect killing from a distance has on human feelings of responsibility and compassion. Drones combine different aspects of previous technologies. They therefore group together different, apparently contradictory characteristics. Drone operators sit a great distance away from their targets and are part of a team of a dozen or so people directing the operation (U.S. Military 2013b) (B.6). They nevertheless gain more information about the effects of strikes (via a video feed and audio link with ground troops) than someone who is similarly acting through a team to, for instance, fire a mortar or load a bomb onto an aircraft. Indeed, drones stay over their target immediately after a strike to gather information. Though quantitatively abundant, this information is one-dimensional: it contains mono-chromatic (infrared or black and white), digital images which are taken from

above. On these images, humans appear as 'silhouettes' (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec) (A.11).

Hence, drone operators have, in some regards, an informationally rich experience of killing. However, this is not in a format which humans are used to interpreting. The distorted nature of the images drone operators receive means that they do not directly trigger the human emotions which are normally associated with killing: for instance, a combination of fear, hatred, glee, disgust and compassion. Drone operators can see exactly how many people they have killed, and the precise moment that they die, as their body turns cold on the infrared video feed, where the colour white correlates with heat. However, they do not see a face or smell burning flesh. They perceive what they are doing rationally but they don't have enough environmental information to produce the emotional reactions one might expect from someone directly witnessing a killing. This structural aspect of the technology is accounted for by Anders' analysis of the televised images of his time. Anders speaks of the 'ontological ambiguity [of] transmitted events' (Anders [1956] 2003, 126, *my translation*). I argue that his notion of presence-absence (discussed in section 4.4.3) captures the divided and contradictory experience of drone operators surveilling and killing from a distance.

At first glance, one could be forgiven for thinking that the nuclear bomb, radio and television are the main focus of Anders' work. Anders highlighted how many of the people responsible for the production of nuclear weapons would only go on to perceive nuclear explosions through televised images. These, by virtue of their small format, minimised their significance. Military drones illustrate Anders' theory because they fuse together the aspect of watching destruction through a screen and carrying out this destruction in a distanced, apparently emotionally detached manner. However, I show that Anders was not only interested in how technology impacted human sentiments in war, but also in the sphere of love. Hence looking at dating apps and not just military drones is justified. Anders' account of the radio mentions how the latter comes to act as a 'mechanical chaperone' (Anders [1956] 2003, 108, *my translation*) in the romantic encounters of couples. Anders further

speaks of how the television disrupts the custom of families talking and facing each other at meals (Anders [1956] 2003, 103). Hence Anders' work anticipates modern understandings that study the 'death of proximity' (Miller 2021, 8) in relation to smartphone use.

Anders' interest in love and sexuality is further demonstrated by his book called *Lieben gestern: Notizen zur Geschichte des Fühlens* [*Being in love, yesterday: notes on the history of sentiments*] (Anders 1984a), which contains observations written in the 1940s. In the introduction written in 1984, Anders reiterates a call for the production of a 'history of sentiments' (Anders [1984] 2004, 10). He asks: Why is there a history of philosophy but not one of human emotions? Anders also made this call in *Die Anquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. I, (Anders [1956] 2003, 254, 255-259). Here Anders' argued that

the performances of our heart, our inhibitions, our anxieties, our solicitude, our remorse develop in inverse proportion to the significance of our actions. (Anders [1956] 2003, 255, *my translation*)

This mention of performances of the heart evidences Anders' interest in how technology framed loving emotions. Anders feared that technologically mediated actions including in the sphere of love had become out of proportion with existing capacities for feeling. Thus Anders often comments on how technology mediates sexuality in his major work *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I and II (Anders [1956] 2003, [1980] 2011).

There is growing research (Liu 2016; Chan 2018a, 2018b; and Wang 2018; Berström 2019) in how dating apps influence sexual and romantic behaviour within society, making them a good technology to study through the lens of Anders. My argument highlights how dating apps eliminate the spontaneous eye contact that often characterises in-person chance encounters. This has implications for the types of emotions humans feel while interacting with one-another in a sexual and romantic setting. In chapters 9 and 10, I discuss how dating app use thus tends to replace the intuitive and emotional experiences commonly associated with the initiation of sexual and romantic relations. Now, these feelings are often tied to competitive and individualistic calculations, favouring the direct expression of personal desires.

Dating apps have soared in popularity over the course of the last ten years. Previously stigmatised, they have now become a common-sense approach to establishing sexual and romantic connections for tens of millions of people (Iqbal 2018). In their basic structure, dating apps combine the participative dimension of the Web 2.0 and its affordances for instant communication, with the capacity of modern smartphones to employ geo-localisation and access the internet from anywhere. On dating apps, users curate a profile by uploading images (typically of themselves) and writing a brief self-description, or a 'short bio' (Preston 2021). They also sometimes fill out personal information such as their age, height, education level, whether they drink, smoke, take drugs and/or exercise regularly. They can then text message each other on the interface through one-to-one chats. Most dating apps only allow users who have mutually approved each other's profiles to communicate through direct messages (Preston 2021). Similarly to military drones, dating apps represent evolutions of technologies that Anders was already interested in. They are arguably an evolution and fusion of the radio, the television and the wiretap, which Anders discussed in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011, 145-173). This is because they are technologies that connect big groups of people together, allowing for synchronous exchanges. Moreover, the latter are recorded, as the data of the exchanges between users is stored by dating app companies.

Dating apps have slight variations in how they present profiles to other users, though all of them primarily base this on geographical proximity. For some of the earliest apps, such as Tinder, profile pictures are shown as though they are playing 'cards' (Preston 2021). Users then 'swipe right' (Preston 2021) with their finger on the screen over the profile to express the wish to exchange direct messages with the person on the other end of the profile. Alternatively, they swipe left to reject the profile. This means that they do not wish to communicate further with the person it represents. Once these motions have been completed a new profile appears on the screen. This process is repeated iteratively. Only users who mutually swipe right on each other's profiles, or 'match' (Tinder.com 2021), can communicate through direct messages. These communications appear in a different section

of the app. They appear in a list form, meaning that users typically communicate with multiple other users while using the app. The last person to respond to a message is figured at the top of the list. Some but not all dating apps allow users to send photographs within these chats (Wolfe 2020).

This is the most basic structure of dating apps but some have slight variations. The first successful platform of this kind was, Grindr, which caters to the gay community and was first launched in 2009 (Grindr 2021). Despite marketing itself as a ‘social networking app’ (Grindr 2021), it is more accurately described as a hook-up platform (Albury et al. 2017, 4). Hook-ups are transient sexual encounters that are often directly sexual and feature minimal emotional involvement between partners. On Grindr, users’ profiles appear in a grid-like format, the structure of which is based on geographical proximity and level of engagement with the app (Grindr 2021). Users can directly chat to others without the need to ‘match’ (Preston 2021).

In contrast, in a heterosexual context, Bumble, another dating app, only allows women to message first (Wolfe 2020), meaning that a match will disappear if a female user does not initiate a text conversation. This superficial interface design feature is meant to discourage unwanted sexually crude advances. Similarly, in their PR, dating apps such as Hinge argue that the action of swiping makes other platforms superficial (Hinge 2020). Hinge is accordingly structured so that users do not swipe to solicit or reject other users. Instead, it is based on users approving and commenting on their pictures or written prompts. Hinge’s PR argues that this means that it encourages more caring and deep interactions among users. However, arguably, it is the basic structure of dating apps, including the fact that they are image-based and operated through screens on individually handheld devices, which contributes to organising seduction along individualistic lines. In section 9.5, I clarify how apparently diverse dating apps, sometimes with supposedly radically different interface designs, are based on the same business model. The latter relies on data collection and continued user engagement.

Consequently, I choose to consider all dating apps because I argue that their individual differences in design are relatively superficial. They are all fundamentally image and geo-localisation-based applications supported by smartphones. Insisting too much on individual differences in interface design risks fragmenting the data and obscuring general trends. This would equally play into dating app companies' PR, in which each tends to trumpet itself as different. I would thus fail to recognize that these differences in interface exist primarily for purposes of market segmentation (Liu 2016). Different branding ties in with different superficial elements of design. These are meant to appeal to, and capture, different segments of the population rather than encourage radically different uses.

Unlike other SNSs, there are strong incentives for especially heterosexual male users to pay for dating apps to increase their chances of obtaining in-person meetings. One factor behind this is the disproportionate number of heterosexual men compared to heterosexual women who use these applications (see section 5.3). Dating apps thus partly monetise their services by placing limits on the number of right-swipes users can make, offering to 'boost' (Tinder.com 2021) users' profiles so that their profile becomes more visible to other users, and enabling paying subscribers to see who 'likes' (Tinder.com 2021) them. At the time of writing, Hinge is one of the most expensive dating apps, costing £19.66 a month for its recommended plan (Beck 2021). This compares to Bumble's recommended plan, which stands at £14.99 a month. In turn, Tinder charges £7.33 for a similar package. However, dating apps reportedly often adopt price discrimination selling strategies, charging different prices to over-thirties for instance (Beck 2021). These costs suggest that dating app companies would like consumers to consider their usage as equivalent to going out to a bar or coffee shop.

### **5.2.2 The relation between military drones and dating apps and Anders' theory**

Now I briefly explain how the case studies I have selected are connected. First, I discuss the interrelation between the drive for destruction (Thanatos) and life (Eros), which concern

the military drone and dating app case studies respectively. I then show that this link features in Anders' work.

A theory of the link between Thanatos and Eros can be traced back to Freud's work. Marcuse argues that Freud highlights how aggressive and sexual drives both share 'the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli' (Freud in Marcuse [1955] 1969, 38). In this sense, they are both drawn towards 'the quiescence of the inorganic world' (Freud in Marcuse [1955] 1969, 38). Freud calls this the 'Nirvana principle' (Freud in Marcuse [1955] 1969, 38). Marcuse argues that the Nirvana principle implies the 'terrifying convergence of pleasure and death' (Marcuse [1955] 1969, 38) and that '[s]exuality would thus ultimately obey the same principle as the death instinct' (Marcuse [1955] 1969, 39).

The idea of the interconnection of aggression and love is also found in Anders' work. Anders came into contact with Marcuse when he moved to Los Angeles in 1939. He cites Marcuse's work *Eros and Civilisation* (Marcuse [1955] 1969) in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011, 166). He then formulates the concept of '*voluptis contritionis*' [pleasure of destruction] (Anders [1980] 2011, note 147, page 167) and the notion of 'soft totalitarianism' (Anders [1980] 2011, 167). These concepts demonstrate that for Anders, too, pleasure and domination can become interlinked. Anders was concerned about a situation where aggression could come to dominate love, while integrating aspects of it. Domination, violence and totalitarianism could thus become 'soft' (Anders [1980] 2011, 167). Accordingly, Anders describes how:

the ideal situation of the conformist system will be realized only by way of a totalitarianism of enjoyment, that is, only when a situation is created in which the appearance or the "feeling" of acts of enjoyment is conferred upon all our activities. (Anders [1980] 2011, 124)

This shows how Anders feared that practices of enjoyment such as sexuality and romance could become integrated within systems of social control.



I argue that analysing how technology mediates the expression of primary drives for destruction and love is related to the question of human sentiments that Anders highlighted. Hence in this section I have detailed why applying Anders' theory to these two seemingly opposed technologies is justified.

### **5.3 Research questions**

In this section, I derive research questions by elaborating Anders' theory and applying it to my two case studies. But first I explain why I mainly focus on the themes of domination, alienation and ideology for the case study chapters.

How the human interacts with technology is the main theme of Anders' work. However, Anders focuses on how this interaction produces negative effects such as domination, alienation and ideology. Anders argues that, in modern times, domination, alienation and ideology are not simply driven, respectively, by brute force, abstract economic laws or misleading rhetoric. Anders' main thesis is that these outcomes are also reproduced through human use of technological forms, whose specific design reflects the economic and social demands of the system that produced them. Hence I do not produce a research question about the themes of the human and technology, as these themes are involved in each of the subsequent categories.

I now turn to developing a research question for domination, alienation and ideology.

#### **5.3.1 Military drones**

With regard to domination, in section 3.4.4, I discussed how Anders' understanding of domination became increasingly connected to technology. This was catalysed by Anders' experience of the Second World War. At this time, Anders was confronted with industrial warfare. The latter meant that tens of thousands of civilians in the same city could die in one day. Anders' focus shifted onto how technological weapons automated killing by creating a division of labour whereby huge devastation could be unleashed at the push of a button, without it being clear who was responsible. This made killing easy.

Hence I ask: In what measure drone operators can become de-sensitised to killing someone from such a great distance while watching this happen through a video feed? One research question that can be derived from this reasoning is RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators' psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans?

With regard to alienation, in section 3.5.4, I showed how Anders' conception of alienation culminated into one that examined the discrepancy between the immense effects we can produce through technology and our limited human faculties of comprehension. The material manifestation of this fact was that war criminals such as Adolf Eichmann could argue that they were not responsible for their actions, as they were simply following orders. They argued that they had accomplished a specific task within a larger operation that was not their responsibility. For Anders, this implied that, in the age of industrial killing, humans could no longer fully identify with their own actions.

Applying this idea to drones encourages us to investigate how drone operators relate to the drone strikes they have executed. Hence I derive research question is RQ1.2.: What is the impact of military drone operators' work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt and their mental health?

With regard to ideology, in section 3.6.4, I showed how Anders' mature conception of ideology is one where the technology, to some extent, automates the production of ideology. It does this through distorting human perception of the world. Consequently, in operating technology, individuals automatically adopt distorted, ideological ways of thinking that are tied to its functioning.

In the context of military drones Anders' theory suggests that the ideology that surrounds drones is automatically produced by their use. There is a positivist ideology that is tied to drones which presents drone strikes as mathematically precise 'surgical strikes'. However, it seems contradictory to say that lethal explosions against unknown enemies can

ever be precise. Therefore a research question is RQ1.3: In what respects do drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of “surgical strikes”?

In Table 5.3.1 below, I have summarised the research questions I have formulated. RQ1 means that this is a research question (RQ) with regard to the first case study on military drones. The second number refers to the theme that the research question refers to, with domination being equivalent to 1, alienation to 2 and ideology to 3.

Domination	RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators’ psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans?
Alienation	RQ1.2: What is the impact of military drone operator’s work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt, and their mental health?
Ideology	RQ1.3: In what respects do military drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of ‘surgical strikes’?

*Table 5.3.1: Military drone research questions*

### 5.3.2 Dating apps

Following on from the research questions I have formulated in regard to military drones, I now do the same work for dating apps. Just like I have done for drones, I omit the themes of the human and technology from chapters on dating apps. However, I expand the theme of alienation because dating apps could involve multiple forms of the latter.

Regarding domination, I discussed how Anders’ mature conception moved toward conceptualising domination as increasingly closely tied to technology. In section 3.3.4, I showed how Anders argued that technological appliances could condition human behaviour because they came with ‘their own determinate structure and function’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 98 my translation). They thus reduced humans to ‘machine parts’ (Anders [1964]

2015, 18). Similarly, dating apps offer affordances for specific usage patterns, such as liking many profiles at once and flirting with many other users at the same time. Hence I formulate the first half of research question RQ2.1: How does the design of dating apps influence user behaviour?

In section 3.4.4 I showed how, for Anders, technology automates surveillance and therefore confers the power to blackmail (Anders [1980] 2011, 155) on the possessors of technology. This is relevant to dating apps. Tinder, one of the most popular dating apps, states in its privacy policy that: 'If you chat with other Tinder users, you provide us the content of your chats' (Tinder 2017). This means that companies have control over users' private conversations. I consequently formulate the second half of RQ2.1: How does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users?

For this case study, alienation can be sub-divided into three types: alienation from others, from oneself (or one's values) and from one's physical being.

Regarding the theme of alienation from others, Anders described how technology tends to increasingly mediate human relations, making the latter more abstract and less direct. Human interactions are thus sensorially reduced. Hence one research question relating to dating apps is: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feelings of connectedness and isolation?

In regard to alienation from oneself, in section 3.5.4, I showed that Anders' mature conception of alienation is one where the increasing use of technology in human activity makes human actions more mechanical, as individuals must follow the rhythm of the machines they use. Dating apps encourage users to play a 'numbers' game,' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) messaging many people at the same time. This may make users feel like they are acting mechanically or in an inauthentic manner that doesn't

correspond to their personality. Hence I ask: How do dating apps influence users' behaviour and identity?

Moreover, in section 3.5.4 I showed that Anders thought that media images could acquire a higher ontological status than people themselves. Individuals consequently feel pressure to conform to their media images. Hence one research question is how does the use of dating apps impact users' perception of beauty standards and feelings of happiness and sadness?

In Table 5.3.2, I have summed these questions into one question (see RQ2.2).

In regard to ideology, in section 3.6.4, I discussed how Anders theorised that, to some degree, ideology in the sense of narratives is no longer necessary. This is because the technological world with which we interact produces ideological perceptions independently, without the need for the intentional production of ideological narratives.

There are ideological notions that are tied to dating apps. One is the idea of finding the 'perfect match' through powerful algorithms. This means forming a romantic relation with someone solely on the basis of compatibility, which in turn implies that love can be calculated. However, there is an alternative understanding of romantic relations. This is that partners who are on the surface not compatible may fall in love. Hence love is about a narrative and active fusion, not pre-established compatibility. Hence I can formulate RQ2.3: in what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a "perfect match" of individuals?

Domination	RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users?
Psychological and subjective alienation	RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of

	happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards?
Ideology	RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a “perfect match” of individuals?

*Table 5.3.2: Dating app research questions*

## **5.4 Outline for the military drone case study**

First, in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, I discuss the general research strategy for the military drone case study. Secondly, in section 5.4.3, I refer to Appendix A outlining all the tokens of discourse that I will analyse. Thirdly, in sections 5.4.4 and 5.4.5, I discuss in more detail the framework that I would like to use to analyse the material.

### **5.4.1 Analysing pre-existing written and oral material on military drones**

Firstly, I discuss why I will not be conducting face-to-face interviews with drone operators and present the material that I would like to analyse. Secondly, I discuss the general research approach that I will adopt to analyse this material.

There are legal restrictions on what information drone operators can divulge about their military role. The Standard Form 312 (SF312), which is the U.S. military’s non-disclosure agreement, prohibits military personnel from 'unauthorized disclosure, unauthorized retention, or negligent handling of classified information' (ODNI 2013, 3). Hence details of most operations including specific technological capabilities cannot be divulged by current or ex-drone operators. This is especially true since many drone missions are officially headed by the CIA and are therefore classified (Himes 2015, 163).

Consequently, interviewing drone operators directly runs the risk of breaking the law. However, there is a significant amount of material publicly available online that can be analysed for the purposes of this case study. This material includes video footage from drone and Apache helicopter attacks published on websites such as YouTube and Liveleak. In section 6.2, I explain why I use videos from Apache helicopter attacks to gauge what the

commands to kill are for airmen, and the attitude of gunners as they kill through a monitor screen. I further analyse the comments underneath these videos to triangulate (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 30) among various discourse tokens. In addition, I look official U.S. Air Force recruitment videos (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a (B.1), 2019b (B.2), 2019c (B.3)), which feature interviews with drone operators; spoken word poetry performed by an ex-drone operator (Wilkie 2015 (A.1-A.6); McGregor 2015); an independent low-budget documentary (Engman 2018 (A.17)) where drone operator Brandon Bryant is interviewed at length; and blog posts by two separate others. Some of these blogs are posted on a website called Red Hand Project (Westmoreland 2014a (A.20), 2014b (A.21)). This was set up by ex-drone operators to speak out against the US drone programme. Finally, there are some leaked US military documents relating to drone operations published by The Intercept (Scahill et al. 2015 (B.5-B.8)).

Hence to conduct research on this project without breaking the law, I adopt a qualitative 'lurking' approach (Bryman 2012, 657). This means that I do not seek to actively engage with military drone pilots. I simply observe the written, audio and visual material that is publicly available online. I do this without announcing my presence to current or ex-drone operators. This has the advantage that the data collected in this way is 'given' (Bryman 2012, 657) and is therefore not influenced by the researcher.

#### **5.4.2 Ethics**

There are also ethical considerations when it comes to dealing with publicly available classified information. These documents could potentially contain sensitive information revealing the identity of individuals. Malicious actors could use this information with harmful intent (Thomas et al. 2017).

The risk of this is extremely low with regard to the material I will use. This is because the leaked documents that I will use have been published on a reputable online journal for investigative journalism, The Intercept. Care has already been taken by the editors of this online journal to erase sensitive information on these documents by means of blacking out

certain areas of the latter. The same goes for information supplied by ex-military drone operators. These persons have already taken care to withhold sensitive information. Moreover, because these documents are already widely available, there is no risk of causing additional harm through the republication of these documents (Thomas et al. 2017).

### **5.4.3 Using CDA for both official and civil society accounts**

In Appendix A, I outline and discuss the material I want to analyse. Here I turn to outlining how I wish to analyse it using a framework which I adapt from Reisigl and Wodak's (Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak and Meyer 2016) critical historical approach to conducting critical discourse analysis (CDA).

CDA is primarily designed to analyse the ideological content of discourses. And indeed, some discourses surrounding the operation of drones are ideological. For instance, official statements from the RAF or U.S. Airforce are often based on the idea that drones are precise weapons that limit civilian casualties. This is connected to the notion that the more a weapon is precise, the more it is acceptable to use it. This is a positivistic ideology which says that the ethics of killing can be calculated and that a limited number of civilian casualties is acceptable.

Other discourses surrounding drones are more critical. The discourse of drone operators who have spoken publicly about drones tends to be critical of the official position and attempts to get to the truth of the matter regarding drones. Hence it can be said to contain non-ideological elements. It is in general sincere and does not conceal hidden interests or agendas.

But this is not always the case. Lynn Hill, the author of spoken word poetry about piloting drones, has adopted a slightly ambiguous stance regarding military drones. In some poems she speaks of committing 'atrocities' (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec) (A.2) and of these haunting her. But in others she borrows the ideological language of war, speaking of killing for her country and protecting 'my marine' (Wilkie 2015, 17 min 30 sec to 19 min 45 sec)



(A.4). Hence Lynn Hill is an example of how some of the civil society discourses can contain both ideological and critical elements.

The fact that ideological notions are present in both official and critical accounts means that I can use CDA to analyse all the discourse tokens that I have sampled. By looking at discourse through the lens of CDA, I am able to highlight false and ideological concepts in both official and civil society accounts. Moreover, a linguistic analysis of discourses helps me highlight what is implicitly conveyed by the speaker. Hence CDA helps achieve a goal of qualitative research, which is that of probing 'beneath surface appearances' (Bryman 2012, 400). Anders' theory identifies various ideologies linked to technology and weapons. Next, I explore ties between the ideological notions that emerge out of the research and Anders' work.

#### **5.4.4 Using elements of CDA to investigate domination, alienation and ideology**

Now I present in more detail how I will deploy tools offered by CDA to analyse drones. I do this for the three themes: domination, alienation and ideology. This is the structure my case study chapter will follow. Within that chapter, each section corresponding to one of these themes will be subdivided into an analysis of discourse tokens using CDA and then a supplementary analysis using Anders' theory. The main elements I use from Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Wodak and Meyer (2016) are a framework for analysing nominational strategies, argumentative strategies, topoi (i.e. conclusion rules) and mitigation strategies.

In terms of domination, I look at referential and nominational strategies (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 500) such as the words used to convey commands and the words used to designate targets and victims. These expressions shed light on how drone operators relate to their targets and civilians on the ground. Moreover, looking at topoi, which are the implied meanings of statements, and argumentative strategies (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 74-75) helps me shed light on arguments and justifications for killing. The same goes for studying logical fallacies used in argumentation. Studying mitigation strategies further helps

me analyse how drone operator discourse seek to minimise the severity of killing and their involvement in it.

In terms of alienation, firstly, an analysis of nominational strategies is useful for uncovering strategies for mitigating responsibility used by drone pilots and US and UK armies. For instance, one essential question that the drone case study is concerned with is whether drone operators use 'I' or 'we' to speak of their experience of killing using drones. Conversely, do they switch between the two? Answering this helps me understand whether drone pilots identify with their own actions. Secondly, alienation understood as a process which separates and inverts subject and object (see sections 2.5 and 3.5) produces internal conflicts within individuals. Individuals may not be happy with their actions because they feel that these were not the result of their own conscious decision. Hence I pay close attention to contradictions and tensions in drone operators' account of their experiences.

In terms of ideology, I look at nominational strategies to see what kind of language official sources and drone operators use to describe drone strikes. For instance, do they use language that plays up the idea that drones are precise? I also use topoi and argumentative strategies in relation to statements describing drone attacks. Both these tools allow me to look at what is unsaid or implied by a given discourse. Finally, I triangulate (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 30) between various elements to determine whether certain discourses are misleading and ideological. For instance, I contrast the terms used in official language with the terms used informally by drone operators to describe attacks.

## **5.5 Outline of the dating app case study**

In this section, first, in sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.3, I discuss the general qualitative interview approach I will adopt for the dating app case study. This is based on conducting anonymous semi-structured interviews with around 20 participants. Then, in section 5.5.4, I discuss the questionnaire schedule and its relation to the research questions. Finally, in section 5.5.5, I adapt elements of CDA I will use to analyse the resultant material.

### **5.5.1 Using interviews as a research method**

For the dating app case study, there are no laws that I risk potentially breaking by talking to dating app users. Hence I can speak with them directly and ask them about experiences and feelings they have had while using dating apps. This will help me gain information from users to address my research questions.

I opt for a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. I therefore privilege interview depth rather than quantity of participants. The reason for this is that the topics I wish to approach, such as feelings of alienation, isolation and body-image, are sensitive. Hence discussing these topics requires a relatively long and relaxed conversational style. This is what will enable the participants to feel at ease enough to discuss personal matters. Accordingly, I seek to interview around 20 current or former dating app users. I opt for adopting a semi-structured anonymous interview approach, allowing interviews to last 40 min to 1 hour.

A vertical rather than a horizontal analysis of the resultant material will be most beneficial to draw out valuable insights. Therefore I will use CDA to conduct a relatively deep analysis of each interview. I choose this over a more quantitative approach such as coding (Bryman 2012, 298). I now turn to discussing ethical considerations.

### **5.5.2 Ethics**

I have participants read an information sheet. This explains that the interviews are anonymous but that a recording is made for transcription purposes. This recording will be permanently deleted as soon as it has been transcribed. Participants will be notified when this process has been completed. I take care to anonymise conversations not only by taking away the name of the participants but also by removing potentially identifying pieces of information from the interview transcript.

I record oral consent of the interviewees that I cannot meet face-to-face owing to the first 2020 coronavirus lockdown. They state they have read, understood and agree to the informed consent form.

I take care in handling recordings of conversations by storing these on a single device with no wireless connectivity.

At the start of the interview, I make sure that participants are aware that they are free to decline to answer any question. I also look out for, and acknowledge, signs of discomfort that they may display during the interview.

Following my ethics committee's request, in order to avoid going against the terms of use of dating apps, I do not set up researcher profiles on the latter. This means that I cannot take screenshots of dating app interfaces to use as illustrations in this thesis. It also means that I will use my personal networks, snowballing (Bryman 2012, 424) and social media such as Reddit, Twitter and Instagram in order to recruit participants. I now discuss this process in more detail.

### **5.5.3 Sampling and recruiting participants**

Data regarding the age of users on one of the main dating app websites, Tinder, suggests that in 2017, 83% of users were under 34 (Iqbal 2018). Moreover, the same study found that 76% of users are based in urban settings. Finally, according to some reports, there are roughly twice as many men on Tinder as women, with 20% of males who are over 18 and 10% of females who are over 18 using Tinder in the US (Iqbal 2018).

I can only take these figures as indicative as I will conduct my study in the UK. But they show that, if I want to investigate general trends on dating apps, I should focus my study on relatively young people. Consequently, the age-range of the participants that I will seek to contact will be between 18 to 34 years of age. This follows the range looked at in other studies on dating apps (e.g. Strubel 2017; Albury 2017) and is designed to obtain the most representative sample.

The main dating apps cater to both heterosexual and LGBT+ users. For instance, Tinder added a feature which allows users to choose from 37 different gender identities. Hence I will attempt to contact users of all genders and sexual orientations. Many studies in media and communication focus either on heterosexual users of dating apps or LGBT+ users to

zero in on the specificities of each group. However, I seek to, on the contrary, look at what unites all users. This fits with a Humanist-Marxist framework. For instance, Anders addressed ‘one humanity [because] what can affect all of us concerns all of us’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 288, *italics in original, my translation*). I consequently try to make my sample follow a similar distribution of sexual orientations and genders as the one that is likely to be found on dating apps today. I aim to get 66% male participants and 34% female participants. I also aim to include at least 10% of gay, bisexual or transgender participants. This reflects the likely distribution of these categories of users on dating apps (Iqbal 2018).

The main dating apps are Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Feeld, CoffeeMeetsBagel, OKCupid, Happn, Grindr and POF app. I accept participants from any of these dating apps, as my focus is on the general form of technology that is used. Anders’ theory encourages us to examine the structure of technological hardware in terms of affordances, as well as those of the software. Consequently, I focus on apps that are supported by the modern smartphone. I exclude online dating programmes that require a computer, as this is a significantly different type of technology with a separate structure and set of affordances. Conversely, I argue that the differences between individual software are limited enough to warrant a study that includes users of any of these apps. All are essentially software that allow users to text message one-another through connecting them on the basis of image-based profiles and geo-localisation.

I now turn to discussing how I will recruit participants.

As mentioned, I use my personal networks to recruit potential participants. I will ask people known to me if they know people that I do not know who use dating apps and might be willing to be interviewed. I look for people I do not know in order to avoid contaminating my research sample. This could happen if my participants know too many details about my research.

In terms of searching for participants using social media, I use multiple approaches. On Reddit, I will send direct messages to all the accounts that have posted on 7 separate discussion pages, which are part of the Reddit community called r/Tinder. On Twitter and

Instagram, I will search for relevant hashtags such as #TinderLondon and send direct messages to the accounts that have posted relevant material on this hashtag. I will moreover ask acquaintances with many followers to put out invitations to participate through their IG stories, i.e. disappearing public messages.

In terms of using snowballing, each time that I find a new participant I ask them whether they know anyone that may be interested in participating.

In terms of the set-up of the interviews, owing to the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown measures imposed by the UK government on 23 March 2020, which outlaw non-essential face-to-face contacts with individuals who do not live together, I start conducting these interviews over Skype. However, I had already conducted 4 face-to-face interviews prior to the lockdown.

#### **5.5.4 Formulating a semi-structured interview**

With regard to the order in which I deal with the main themes of this thesis, I invert the order of how these themes are approached in the questionnaire. Hence I put the questions concerning ideology first. Then I turn to the questions on alienation. Finally, I ask the questions concerning domination. This is because some questions are weightier than others. The questions concerning domination are more likely to produce negative responses because they are about data collection and surveillance. In contrast, the questions concerning ideology seem more general and light-hearted, because they simply ask participants about their general experience on dating apps. The questions about alienation, which I place in the middle, are likely to provoke nuanced responses that may contain both positive and negative aspects. Hence it is best to start with the seemingly more inconsequential questions and arrive at the ones that could provoke stronger reactions at the end.

This follows an approach which I adopt throughout the questionnaire, which is that of building up to vital questions by first asking background questions and speaking about other examples relating to social media. I also ask participants if they have examples about

someone they know, before asking them about their own experiences. The main benefit of this is that participants won't feel that the researcher is pressuring them to respond in a particular way. They will answer more freely and perhaps say things in response to some apparently light-hearted questions that already give an indication of what they think about the seemingly weightier questions. This encourages them to be honest in replying to these slightly more delicate questions that follow, such as the ones concerning body-image. However, they may also potentially contradict themselves. This could be beneficial as I can then use CDA to analyse the tensions in the respondent's answers. In particular, I can triangulate (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 30) between conflicting remarks and other details to interpret my findings.

In formulating questions, I make sure that I leave respondents the chance to answer in at least two different ways to my questions. I ask follow-up questions that take into consideration the opinion the respondent has expressed. This is beneficial because the respondent might react against this follow up question and give a more nuanced and detailed position. For instance, if they say dating apps have a neutral or potentially positive impact on body-image, I ask them whether dating apps are a platform to take ownership of body-types that may diverge from the standard ideal. The respondent may then either say that this is going too far and that this is not the case, or they might confirm this idea.

Finally, I ask respondents to talk about concrete examples. This can serve as more objective evidence of certain dynamics that emerge in relation to dating apps. I can use CDA to analyse what is implied by the way a participant are recounting events. But the more objective information conveyed by the example itself can also be useful for triangulating between various elements the participant has spoken about throughout the interview.

In Table 5.5.4 below I link the research question to the main questions from the questionnaire that will help me answer them.

Domination	RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or	(2.1) In general, do you think it is rather easy or rather difficult to find someone on
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	<p>the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users?</p>	<p>Tinder who matches what you are looking for? In what respects?</p> <p>(2.2) Is it rather time-consuming or not so time-consuming to find an interesting “match” on Tinder?</p> <p>(3.1.5) The media often say that [chosen dating app] is primarily a platform for quick sex and one-night stands. Do you think this is rather true or false? Why? Do you think that’s a good or a bad thing?</p> <p>(3.1.6) How would you characterise your behaviour on dating apps?</p> <p>(4.10) Did you know that [chosen dating app] stores lots of data about you for a long time? Has this in any way impacted your behaviour on the platform? Are there things you have deliberately not talked about on the platform that you would talk about in a face-to-face conversation? If so, can you say more about it?</p>
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<p>Psychological and subjective alienation</p>	<p>RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards?</p>	<p>(3.1.4) And what about you, have you ever had experiences on [chosen dating app] that created negative feelings such as disappointment or isolation? If yes, can you talk more about it and give a concrete example?;</p> <p>(3.2.5) Have you ever been confronted with unrealistic expectations with regard to standards of beauty on dating apps? Has this ever made you feel negative about yourself?;</p> <p>(3.1.5) The media often say that [chosen dating app] is primarily a platform for quick sex and one-night stands. Do you think this is rather true or false? Why? Do you think that's a good or a bad thing?</p> <p>(3.1.7) Are you happy with [your behaviour on dating apps] do you see it as fitting with your personality?</p>
<p>Ideology</p>	<p>RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a "perfect match" of individuals?</p>	<p>(2.8) Do you think that the algorithm or the interface used on [chosen dating app] are effective at matching individuals? If yes, why and if no,</p>

		why not?
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*Table 5.5.4: Dating app research questions and questionnaire*

### **5.5.5 Elements of CDA I will use**

Similarly to the military drone case study, I structure my analysis of dating apps according to the three themes: domination, alienation and ideology.

In terms of domination, I look at nomination, predication and mitigation strategies used to describe negative experiences on dating apps. Hence a CDA analysis of the interviews will benefit from a relatively precise transcription that includes pauses and unfinished sentences. These are elements that could be analysed by the above CDA tools. I also look at topoi employed to describe normal use of dating apps, paying particular attention to how users speak about interacting with other users.

In terms of alienation, firstly I look for topoi relating to machines, the human, isolation and disconnection. Secondly, I look for sentences that include a personal pronoun and adjectives relating to the human body. This helps me answer the body-image side of the question on alienation. Thirdly I pay particular attention to conflicts within a person's identity. For instance, I look at contradictions that highlight distinctions between a person's will and behaviour and speech acts such as questions addressed at oneself. This fits with the idea of alienation I have derived in section 3.5.4 on Anders, which looked at Promethean shame.

In terms of ideologies, I will pay particular attention to logical fallacies and contradictions within the discourses of participants. The presence of logical fallacies suggests that certain ideas may be ideological. Contradictions in users' narratives may indicate that a particular belief is not their own but is ideological. This would be suggested by the fact that they express an opinion somewhere else which contradicts this belief. I also pay attention to nominational strategies and topoi to understand the ideological content of a particular

expression that users may use. For instance, words that convey an idealised notion of romance.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

To conclude, in this chapter I have presented a methodology for applying Anders' theories to the digital era. In section 5.2.1, I have selected two case studies, military drones and dating apps. These represent instances where actions that are related to two dialectically related primary human drives are carried out using digital technologies. Indeed, as shown in 3.5.4, Anders' work encourages us to ask how technology impacts humans at the level of emotions and sentiments. In the case of drones, the instinct in question is the drive for destruction and violence (Thanatos). In the case of dating apps, it is the life instinct, which is connected to sexuality and love relations (Eros). Hence these case studies concern the relation between technology and human emotions and sentiments. Consequently, they can help us assess whether Anders was right to argue that modern technologies could give rise to domination, alienation and ideology.

In order to do this, I have first elaborated research questions by basing myself on section 3 of this thesis, which showed that Anders' became more closely tied to humanist Marxism towards the end of his life. I did this for the military drone case study in 5.3.1 and the dating apps case study 5.3.2. Subsequently, I outlined my methodology for the military drone case study in 5.4. Here, in section 5.4.1, I firstly discussed why I will adopt a qualitative research method by 'lurking' around written and oral material, such as spoken word poetry, blogs, articles and interviews involving current and ex-military drone pilots that is available on the internet. Then, in section 5.4.2, concerning ethics, I showed how this material is publicly available and so does not put the project at risk of breaking any laws or doing harm by disseminating military secrets. Secondly, in section 5.4.4, I presented the source material that I have collected in Appendix A by differentiating it into discourses present in civil society and official discourses. Finally in sections 5.4.4 and 5.4.5, I specified the framework that I will use to analyse these discourses, which I adapt from critical discourse analysis.

Then in section 5.5, I outlined the methodology for conducting the dating app case study. First in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2, I discussed using semi-structured interviews as a research method for gaining information that relates to the research questions and related ethical considerations. Then, in section 5.5.3, I discussed my aim of finding a research sample that represents the user base of dating apps. In section 5.5.4, I discussed how to formulate the question schedule. In section 5.5.5, I outlined the elements of CDA I will adapt to help me analyse the collected data.

## 6. Domination: Killing Made Easy Through Military Drone Use

### 6.1 Introduction

The research question that I formulated in chapter 5 for the section on domination of the drone case study is RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators' psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans?

In the present chapter, I investigate this question by, in section 6.2, outlining why I use video feeds from Apache helicopters as stand-ins for those of military drones. In section 6.3, I then outline the protocol airmen must follow leading up to strikes. I subsequently look at the commands to kill they use, including those employed by drone operators. I conduct a CDA analysis of the commands, looking at nomination, predication, perspectivisation and mitigation discursive strategies (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). Finally, in section 6.4, I look at how attacks are described by operators. I triangulate (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 30) this analysis these with comments on YouTube. Then in section 6.5, I look at the nomination strategies drone operators use to describe attacks and designate their enemies and civilians. I compare these to expressions used by soldiers on the ground.

I argue that the expressions used both re-enforce and reflect a distancing effect drone technology has. The latter allows drone operators to avoid feeling personally involved or empathetic in relation to the violence they are enacting. However, paradoxically, the distance and apparent detachment promoted by drones also creates space for the projection of un-modulated, primitive forms of aggression by drone operators onto their targets, whom they reductively come to see as 'bad guys' (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a [B.1]; Brandon Bryant in Power 2013 [A.11]; Westmoreland 2014b [A.20]). In making this argument, I go against a trend within media studies on drones that emphasises that drone operators are not distanced but immersed in the battlefield. I argue that such literature, gives into techno-fetishism by misleadingly exaggerating the quality of the video feed drone operators receive. I further argue that the audio link may immerse

drone operators in the situation of their allied troops, but it does not immerse them in the circumstances of the people they are shooting at.

In section 6.6, I conclude by looking at the question of whether drone technology gamifies killing. I argue that there is a gamified dimension contained within drone killings but that this shouldn't be over-emphasised. Anders' theory of killing made too easy, or like job, which I discussed in section 3.4.4, is a better description of the facts. It sheds light on how commanding drones is also detrimental for the drone operator, who may become traumatised by the repetitive and potentially senseless nature of the killings s/he has helped occasion.

## **6.2 Military drones and Apache helicopters**

With the exception of a partially censored transcript obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by the Los Angeles Times (Cloud 2011) (B.20), I do not have access to the audio of communications between drone operators during strikes. Internet videos which contain sections of the video feed from drone cameras are always heavily edited and do not contain audio. Indeed they are most often released by official military entities. Consequently, I use audio-visual material from the video feed and radios of Apache helicopters, which is also published, and sometimes leaked, on the internet through websites such as YouTube and Liveleak. I employ the latter as stand-ins for drone audio. These video feeds are also used to aim weapons and guide missiles. They help me gauge what the commands to kill are, and what the attitude of military personnel is, when gunners and operators are looking at targets through a monitor. With drones, the cameras are further removed from the target, hence the footage less clear. I further discuss bandwidth limitations in section 6.4.2. In addition, drone operators are not in harm's way, as is the case for personnel flying on Apache helicopters. Therefore, I argue that if I find that the effects which I am interested in, namely de-sensitisation and detachment, are present with Apache helicopter personnel, they are also likely to be present with drone operators. Given their structural characteristics, drone use can only amplify these desensitising effects. This is

confirmed by what little information we have through drone operative's conversations (see Cloud 2011) (B.20).

### **6.3 Commands to kill from the air**

In theory, air and ground attacks must follow the same engagement protocol but, as I explain below, this protocol is followed in a more formulaic fashion from the air, with less variation in the different steps leading up to killings.

According to an official US Marine training manual, the rules of engagement surrounding combat in Iraq and Afghanistan are defined by a handful of principles. Among these are 'military necessity', meaning that the target must pose a threat to Allied troops or civilians, and 'distinction', requiring 'that combatants be distinguished from noncombatants' (United States Marine Corps 2017 ca., pp. 4, 5) (B.9). This implies that targets must demonstrate a 'hostile intent' (United States Marine Corps 2017 ca., 21) (B.9) towards US, allied forces or civilians. In practice this means that, especially from the air, getting a 'positive identification' (Cloud 2011) (B.20). The latter often involves determining whether a person is carrying weapons, materials to lay improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or a radio. This becomes crucial for deciding whether that person can be shot at. Hence there are fixed steps that are followed when deciding whether to fire at someone from the air, which include identifying them as a threat and obtaining clearance to use weapons against them. The command to kill 'clear to engage' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 10 sec) (B.13) is always used from the air, whereas it is not always necessary when fighting breaks out on the ground and soldiers must immediately shoot to defend themselves.

I use CDA (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to analyse these commands. The expression 'positive identification' uses nomination and predication discursive strategies. It uses the verb 'identification' to denote the action of deciding to kill someone. This discursive device constitutes a nomination strategy which constructs the action as well-regulated. 'Identification', moreover, has a topos (or related theme) (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 74-75) of precise procedures, also implying that the action is well-managed. 'Positive' is an adjective

which gives a approving evaluative attribution to the process. This discursive device feeds into a discursive predication strategy which positively qualifies the action.

The expression 'clear to engage' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 10 sec) (B.13) uses nomination, predication and argumentation strategies (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). Using the categorisation device 'engage' it discursively constructs the action of bombing individuals as life-affirming, i.e. as similar to interacting socially, or engaging in a conversation, with someone. This is a nomination strategy that constructs the action of shooting as benign. The expression 'clear to' also discursively qualifies the action as authoritative, well managed and secure. It does this through evocations of, for instance, medical processes and structures. For instance, doctors also give screenings that 'clear' patients. The term 'clear' further contains the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that the operator is not responsible—that s/he can have a clear conscience about his/her actions—because the decision has been taken by someone else who is higher up in a hierarchical structure. These linguistic devices feed into a predication strategy that also constructs the action as well-regulated. The topoi involved in this expression (e.g. that of medical or of other official procedures) also function as argumentation strategies. These employ the *argumentum verecundiam* device (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 72), i.e. they say this is so because a figure of authority said so—e.g. this is a 'positive identification'. They try to convey the sense to the operator that the action s/he is undertaking is legitimate and righteous, while at the same time implying that s/he is distanced from this action and not directly responsible. The topos of medicine was also involved in an expression used during the Gulf War: that of 'surgical strikes' (Calhoun 2015, 57). The topos of being clear or surgical implies that the operation of drones precisely deals with unwanted elements, promoting security and well-being. This terminology buys into the idea that war operations can somehow be comparable to the actions of a surgeon cutting away cancerous tissue, for instance.



This linguistic qualification of the action of killing individuals through aerial strikes as related to the topos of authority and safeguarded, technical processes fits with Anders' theory that

when an organisation is in function, the idea of the morality of an action is substituted by that of the goodness of the operation. If everything is "in order" in the organisation of an enterprise and the operation is clean, its effects also seem in order and clean (Anders [1956] 2003, 231, *my translation*)

The topos of being precise and surgical is echoed by some YouTube commentators. For instance, a commentator, on a video showing dozens of individuals being killed over the course of 10-15 minutes, says: 'Of most Apache fire teams , this one has been the most surgical ... [three heart emojis]' (Raymond Cassidy 2020) (B.13.6). However, a war is not played out on a single individual, like the work of a surgeon, but on a particular group of humans, with its own complex cultural, political and economic dynamic. Hence this is not a fair comparison; it functions as an abstraction that covers up concrete processes.

#### **6.4 CDA analysis of conversational descriptions of attacks**

I argue that the distancing language used by Apache and drone operators both participates in, and reflects, a distancing effect the structure of the technology has on their consciousnesses. Indeed, the audio of the conversations of gunners during Apache helicopter attacks, which I obtained from YouTube videos, reveals little complex emotional engagement on their part. This is reflected in the nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation and mitigation strategies they employ (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). It is additionally revealed in some of the comments on such videos. To illustrate these desensitising effects, I look at the same video feed from an Apache helicopter, which was obtained from YouTube. An attack on around 20 individuals who appear to be armed is initiated after the command 'clear to engage' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 10 sec) (B.13) is given.

Subsequent comments by the gunner use perspectivisation and mitigation discursive strategies. Hence following a killing using a Hellfire missile the gunner comments: 'that was a blast just on one guy, he, um... he's no longer with us' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 12 min 27 sec) (B.13). The gunner uses an 'animating prosody' (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) discursive device, which can be employed to express one's perspective on an action, process or event. In this case, the low-pitched inflection on the second subclause expresses a lack of involvement on the part of the gunner. YouTube commentators glorify the sense of detachment with which the gunner kills, calling attention to this very sentence. Hence one commentator writes: "'He's uh, no longer with us." Classic bad-assery US owners of the night sky...' (Kyle Komarek 2020). This flat tone is a common feature of most audio from Apache helicopter attacks. For instance, another YouTube commentator writes about the gunner on a different video that: 'Dude sounds like a dentist' (616e6f6e 2020 ca.) (B.15.1). This comment highlights how the gunner's tone is similar to that of someone who is merely fulfilling a precise technical or medical task. The gunner's use of a flat animating prosody device for commands and communications necessary for the operation of video feed-commanded weapons shows how this technology allows the gunner to employ a discursive strategy that distances him/her from the killing s/he is enacting.

I argue that this mitigating discursive strategy participates in, and reflects, the fact that the very way in which Apache and drone operators perceive their enemies, through a video-feed, which makes them appear as 'silhouettes' (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec) (A.11) on a screen rather than humans, allows these personnel to become detached from what they are doing, treating this as a technical task or a job. Hence drones are involved in a modern form of 'Taylorization' (Asaro 2013, 205) of killing.

This is also reflected in some of the official terms used to describe the impact of bombs. The expressions 'good missile' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 5 min 35 sec) (B.13), 'good impact' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 10 min 40 sec) (B.13) and 'good effects' (AH64Apacheaction 2013, 14 min 40 sec) (B.13) are used, for instance. The word 'effect' has a technical topos. It acts as a nomination strategy that constructs the process as a merely technical occurrence. The

word 'good' is an affirmative evaluative attribution. The expression further contains the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that a technical process is running smoothly. Hence what is happening is good.

This discursive device illustrates Anders' theory that killing can be conducted like a job following a work ethic that replaced 'moral consciousness' [*Gewissen*] with 'meticulousness' [*Gewissenhaftigkeit*] (Anders [1956] 2003, 17). Consequently, each individual could feel like s/he was maintaining a pre-established technological apparatus rather than carrying out an atrocity. Thus Anders argued that:

The extermination camp officer did not "act", but, however horrible this may sound, he did his job. And since the aim and result of his work did not concern him, since his work in as much as it was work is considered "morally neutral", he also accomplished an act that was "morally neutral". (Anders [1956] 2003, 273, my translation)

Sitting in a container box on military bases in the U.S. modern drone operation also resembles what Anders described as 'the "office job" done by [Adolf Eichmann] and by other, less representative employees of extermination' (Anders [1964] 2015, 32). Indeed an attitude of conscientious meticulousness is reflected in direct testimonies coming from drone operatives. Some have spoken of how drone technology allows them to have 'cognitive thought processes rather than emotional reactions' (Mason 2013, 3 min 11 sec) (B.10). This shows how operating drones can effect the distancing Anders spoke about between the act and the sentiment (Anders [1956] 2003, 24), leading to the kind of absent-mindedness that is characteristic of some forms of employment. Hence rather than thinking of drone operation as a video game as many critical media reports have done (Hessen Schei 2015) (A.14), it is best to think about it as a job, just as Anders' theory invites us to do. This allows us to consider the detrimental effect drone operation has on drone operators, as well as victims of strikes.

Nevertheless, the effort to mask the reality of conducting aerial strikes using laser-guided missiles, both in the commands and descriptions that qualify these strikes, illustrates another insight offered by Anders' mature work. In *We, Sons of Eichmann* (Anders [1964]

2015) Anders goes over and partially defends the argument that many Nazis were simply following orders. However, he refuses to completely absolve Nazis participating in crimes against humanity. For Anders, to consider this ‘process as a purely passive event would be mystification’ (Anders [1964] 2015, 13). This is because Nazi’s had to actively “kill” their sense of taboo’ about killing’ (Anders [1964] 2015, 13). Indeed, I argue that the terminology used in the commanding of drones, on the whole, both reinforces and reflects the way military drones can normalise killing. It can thus be said to participate in the process of killing the human sense of taboo about killing that Anders spoke of. The affordances of military drones can partially replace this mental process.



Figure 6.3: Ministry of Defence. 2015. “RAF Reaper Neutralises Taliban Bomb Factory,” November 25, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 1 min 20 sec. From the UK’s Ministry of Defence

This is illustrated by another expression both officially and colloquially used to describe the impact of a missile. The expression ‘splash’ originates from an abbreviation used for describing the impact point of a torpedo and a ship (Jones [1973] 2007, 3). But it has been adopted by air force personnel in general, including on official documents relating to military drones, see Figure 1. I argue that the use of ‘splash’ to signify a drone strike which hit its target uses deictics (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) (i.e. relies on context-dependent

information to extrapolate meaning) as a perspectivisation device. This positions the speaker away from the scene of what is happening, allowing him/her to ironically and metaphorically refer to it. By referring to the event indirectly, it places the operator in the position of someone who is not involved in the event taking place.

At the same time, ‘splash’ uses a metaphor as a nomination strategy, which also acts as a hyperbole that constitutes an intensification strategy. Indeed the expression suggests that the impact of a bomb on humans produces a similar effect to a bomb exploding underwater, as humans are disintegrated by the explosion. The expression conveys a cartoon dimension to the violence taking place on the screen. There is an ironic dimension to the colloquial use of this expression as described by Brandon Bryant. Bryant recounts his training instructor counting down his first missile impact and exclaiming: ‘Splash! You killed everyone’ (Power 2013) (A.11). The expression ‘splash’ acts as a nomination strategy, which discursively constructs the process of killing as spectacular. It also contains a mitigation strategy based on a cartoon analogy, which minimises the importance of this action, at the same time. Paradoxically, the term ‘splash’ is not detached but expressive. It conveys the projection of un-modulated aggression towards enemies. I argue that the cartoonish, Hollywood character of this expression participates in drone operators’ efforts to kill their sense of taboo about killing. Visualising destruction on an infrared or black and white monitor screen facilitates this process, enabling operators to glorify and make jokes about it.

Discursive strategies	Purpose		
Nomination strategies: How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions related to drone killings named and referred to linguistically?	<b>Discursive construction of processes and actions</b>		
	Verbs pertaining to a technical lexicon:	identification (designating someone as an enemy); engage (giving the order to kill); impact (people killed); effects (people killed)	Apache operators and pilots see: B.13; B.14
	Metaphors:	splash (people killed)	Brandon Bryant A.17; MoD B.19

Predication: What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena and events and processes?	<b>Discursive characterisation/qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions</b>		
	Evaluative attributions/explicit adjectives:	Positive (identification), clear (to engage), good (effects)	Apache operators and pilots see: B.13; B.14
Perspectivisation: From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?	<b>Positioning the speaker's or writer's perspective and expressing involvement or distance</b>	Splash (people killed)	Brandon Bryant A.17; MoD B.19
Mitigation: Are the respective utterances articulated explicitly are they intensified or mitigated	<b>Modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect of their epistemic or deontic status</b>		
	Hyperbole:	splash (people killed graphically)	Brandon Bryant A.17;

*Table 6.3: Expressions used to designate targets and shoot at humans*

Table 6.3 outlines the linguistic strategies and devices present in the discourses used to give commands to drone operators. It shows how, on the one hand, operators use words that convey a sense of order, cleanliness and a surgical nature. On the other hand, they use hyperbolic irony to describe, while at the same time distancing themselves from, the violent consequences of their actions. On the whole, these two contradictory discursive strategies open up the possibility for drone operators to express unmodulated aggression towards their enemies, as they make ironic jokes about other people's deaths. This reveals how the process of operating drones is devoid of complex emotions. But it is not entirely affectless. On the contrary, it opens up the space for the expression of primitive aggression.

Drone operators such as Michael Haas worked for the programme from 2005 to 2011 before speaking out. Michael Haas has described what it is like to kill people through drones, stating that viewing his video feed:

I feel like... I'm in power... feel like, if I get these sons of bitches in the crosshairs right now, I can kill them. It's like it was easy; it was too easy. You never know who you're killing, because you never actually see a face; you just have silhouettes. And it's easy

to have that detachment – that lack of empathy for human life. And it's easy to really just think of them as something else. They're not people, they're just terrorists. (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec) (A.11)

Above I discussed the cool tone that characterises some Apache helicopter audio feeds. This testimony highlights how this form of detachment, paradoxically, also allows for drone operators to think and act aggressively. In some respects, this challenges the notion that drones privilege 'cognitive thought processes' over 'emotional reactions' (Mason 2013, 3 min 11 sec) (B.10). Drones may be involved in the production of regressive, unsophisticated emotions rather than a total absence of emotions.

This testimony gives glimpse into how drone operators relate to their targets in an equally reductive and regressive manner. I explore these referential strategies in the next section.

## **6.5 Nomination and argumentation strategies**

Michael Haas's account is a critical testimony, as he has publicly spoken out against the US drone programme. However, as I show below, the same tendency to refer to enemies by peculiar terms is manifest in other drone operator accounts who are less critical, such as Lynn Hill (see B.1-B.10), and the language of official documents. I argue that this highlights how the limited visual information drone operators receive about their enemies de-sensitises them from the act of killing. This allows them to express un-modulated aggression towards perceived enemies.

In making this argument, I go against the commonly accepted understanding of drone operators put forward by Gregory (2011). Gregory rejects the often-repeated claim that drone operators are de-sensitised and kill as though they were playing a 'video game in which killing becomes casual' (Gregory 2011, 188). In reality, drone operators are very much engaged in the battlefield through audio communications with troops on the ground. Hence Gregory quotes one operator as saying:

Those employing the system are very involved at a personal level in combat. You hear the AK-47 going off, the intensity of the voice on the radio calling for help. You're looking at him, 18 inches away from him, trying everything in your capability to get that person out of trouble (McCloskey 2009 cited in Gregory 2011, 200).

I argue that Gregory's insight that drone operators form close bonds to troops on the ground through radio communications is valuable. However, his suggestion that the 'constant exposure to high-resolution images' (Gregory 2011, 198) drone operators receive explains their immersion in the battlefield is misleading. Indeed, on the basis of Gregory's argument, Maurer has further asserted that:

they are only 18 inches away from the screen that shows the scene of violence; they see the killing right in front of them [...] The video feeds the pilots are watching do not stage violence as a passive spectacle, but as a highly immersive one (Maurer 2017, 146)

However, the nomination strategies drone operators employ to designate their targets evidence how they do not witness the killing as though they were there, as suggested by Gregory (2011) and Maurer (2017).

For instance, Michael Haas testifies that: 'You never know who you're killing, because you never actually see a face; you just have silhouettes' (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec) (A.11). He states that this makes it easy to have 'that detachment – that lack of empathy for human life' (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec) (A.11). 'Silhouettes' is a nomination strategy that employs a metaphor to construct humans as shadows. This contains the implicature that they are insubstantial, and hence that their killing does not really register on the human psyche as significant. The fact that humans are viewed as faceless shadows goes to show that the camera on drones may be extremely technically advanced. However, this does not mean that drone operators experience the battlefield as though they were not 10 000 km away but only '18 inches away'. This is further highlighted by the fact that drone operators, in contrast to soldiers on the ground, often construct stereotypical, black and white images of their enemy. They can then project un-modulated aggression onto this image.



Lynn Hill is an ex-drone pilot who has written poetry about her experiences piloting drones. The latter does not constitute a political criticism of the US drone programme. However, the expressive nature of these poems offers a great insight into the psychology of operating drones. In 'My Marine', Hill describes perceiving enemy combatants as 'fighting slithered sticks' (Wilkie 2015, 18 min 30 sec) (A.4). She opposes these to the 'white hot squares' (Wilkie 2015, 18 min 30 sec) (A.4) that represent Marines on her video feed. Marines show up as bigger heat signatures because they carry a lot of equipment. Hill's description favours the Marines. Using the metaphoric device that Marines are a square, positively constructs these social actors. The topos (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 74-75) of square is one of stability. The predication of square as 'white' and 'hot' also uses adjectives that positively qualify Marines (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). White and heat is commonly associated with light and goodness; black and cold with darkness. In contrast, the nomination strategy that uses a metaphoric device that constructs enemies as 'sticks', relies on a topos of weakness and withered-ness. 'Slithered' is linked to the predication verb slithering, which evokes the idea of snakes. 'Fighting', another predication verb, has the implicature that the enemies are aggressive. This shows how the way Hill perceives her enemies through a monitor screen offers affordances for her to construct a stereotypical negative image of them.

I argue that a further reason that Lynn Hill projects a positive image on the Marines and a negative one on the other combatants is not due to her immersion in the video feed but rather her immersion in the auditory feed, as she directly speaks to marines on the ground through a radio signal. The current literature (Gregory 2011; Fairhead 2019; Maurer 2017; Pugliese 2016) has over-emphasised the importance of the video feed and left the effect of the audio feed relatively unexplored. For instance, Maurer speaks of a 'scopic regime of total visual immersion' (Maurer 2017, 147) producing a 'high-definition reality effect' (Maurer 2017, 147). But this conflicts with the account of drone operators, who say they see people as silhouettes. In contrast, Anders' theory highlights the deep effect the audio feed could have. Anders states:

unlike the visible world, the auditory world can introduce itself into us [...] it obliges us to participate. No one who listens to something is only where he or she is. [...] [T]he person who hears it [is] simultaneously in two places at once: despite being “here”, he is always also “there” (Anders [1980] 2011, 171)

Anders adds:

Anyone, whether he wants to or not, who is found in the circuit of a particular acoustic world and hears it, since it is impossible not to hear it, finds himself trapped in the net of sound, he belongs to that world. (Anders [1980] 2011, 171)

Anders’ theory on sound suggests that the audio feed is the truly captivating sensory input drone operators experience. Further investigations in this direction are needed.

Gregory (2011) is thus right to point out that when a

Predator pilot claimed that ‘I knew people down there’, it was not local people he claimed to ‘know’ [...] One joint team reported that ‘the personal and almost daily interaction’ between ground forces and UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] operators, and ‘the strong personal relationships with the pilots and sensor operators’ successfully ‘compressed kill-chains’ (Gregory 2011, 200)

This illustrates how the structure of drone audio links is fundamentally distorted. This is because drone operators communicate directly with troops on the ground, with whom they are linked through a radio. However, they do not have the same level of contact with civilians or enemies. They consequently empathise more with fellow allied forces, who the operators can speak to, and less with civilians on the ground, who the operators simply see as blobs on a screen. Hence Lynn Hill feels total empathy with marines. At the same time, she can project total aggression onto enemy fighters. Anders’ theory allows us to understand how drone operators can be immersed in the war, while experiencing it solely from the side of the soldiers on their side, whom they hear through radio communications. Drone technology could, in some respects, be immersive, while still distancing operators from the killing, which is only represented visually. The affordances of drones consequently favour disconnected, primitive forms of aggression to carry out the killings. Indeed the

above quote shows how operators actively attempt to expediate the killing authorisation process ('kill-chains').

This is further highlighted by the use of stereotypical images of enemies within official military drone discourses, as well as within informal ones such as Hill's poems. Drone recruitment videos and drone operators describe the people they are killing as 'terrorists' (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015 [A.11]; U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a [B.1]) and 'bad guys' (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a [B.1]; Brandon Bryant in Power 2013 [A.11]; Westmoreland 2014b [A.20]). This expression uses 'bad' as a predicate that explicitly negatively qualifies the silhouettes the operators view. The expression 'bad guys' belongs to the topos of villains in cartoons. It thus constructs the enemy as a one-dimensional evil boogiemán. I argue that operators hear the human voices of the Allied soldiers, but they only see insurgents as dark silhouettes on the screen. Hence it is easy to project the image of the 'bad guy' onto them.

These stereotypical views contrast with accounts of soldiers on the ground. For instance, Ben Anderson interviews a US marine who describes a Taliban fighter as both a 'warrior' and 'just a kid' (Anderson 2013, 25 min 13 sec) (A.18). The term warrior is a nomination strategy that employs a positive evaluative attribution alluding to the code of honour of fighters. It implies that even enemy combatants should be treated with dignity. The implicature of this expression is that the marine recognises the legitimacy of this dead combatant's choice to fight against the US invading troops. The expression 'just a kid' participates in a nomination strategy that employs a verbal-tee up to position the speaker in proximity to the killed combatant. Both expressions highlight how marines on the ground can, to some extent, identify and empathise with their enemies, the Taliban. Indeed Anderson further relates how 'a few soldiers admitted to admiring the Taliban, some for their tactical ability but mostly for their bravery' (Anderson 2011, 45) (A.19). After a weapon called 'flechettes', which are 'nail-filled rockets that shower thousands of small steel darts across a wide area' (Anderson 2011, 38) (A.19) is fired at the Taliban, Anderson relates a soldier commenting that: 'You wouldn't want to be the poor fucker under that' (Anderson 2011, 49). Anderson

specifies that the soldier is using 'tones of pity, rather than glee' (Anderson 2011, 38) (A.19). The expression 'poor fucker' uses a predication strategy based on the adjective poor to express pity. It uses a nomination strategy based on the use of explicit profanity 'fucker' to express proximity and familiarity with the enemy.

## **6.6 Do military drones gamify killing?**

Arguably, the expression 'bad guys' reveals a gamifying dimension within drone killings. Nevertheless, I argue that this is not totally determining. Pugliese (2016) has commented on how the interfaces of drones and the world of casino gambling and gaming interact, speaking of a 'drone casino mimesis' (Pugliese 2016, 516). He has also pointed to how games are used as recruitment tools and hence also potentially help form gamers into drone operators. Hence, for Pugliese, drones mimic games and games mimic drones by integrating war and the military into their narratives. Pugliese calls attention to the expressions 'dismounts' (Pugliese 2016, 502), to designate a targeted individual whose sim signal disappears as a result of the strike, and 'squirter' (Pugliese 2016, 502), to designate individuals fleeing after a strike. Dismounts uses a technical/mechanical topos as a metaphoric device. It hence effects a perspectivisation (Meyer and Wodak 20016, 33) strategy that distances the operator from the point of view of the targeted individual. Squirter contains the same topos of water, which I described with the expression 'splash'. It similarly produces an ironic distancing perspectivisation and mitigating discursive strategies.

On official documents, people killed by strikes are automatically either referred to as 'jackpots' or 'EKIA' (see Figure 2) (Enemies Killed In Action). Strikes are further referred to as 'touchdowns' (Begley 2015) a term which is connected to baseball matches. This gamifying dimension is further exhibited by operators describing how Hellfire shots were considered to be 'trophies' (Heller 2015, 04 min 08 sec) (A.15). These are nomination and predication strategies that construct the process of killing through drones as a game and enemies as elements within this game.

HAYMAKER Operations (01 May – 15 Sep 2012)					
Type	# Ops	EKIA	Detainees	JP	%
Enabled Ops	27	2	61	13	48%
Kinetic Strikes	27	155	N/A	19	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>32</b>	

Figure 6.4.1: terms referring to targets. Table by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From *The Intercept*

SECRET//REL USA, ISAF, NATO

## OPN HAYMAKER Effects Update


CAO 06FEB13

### Objectives & Measures of Effectiveness

- AQ No Longer Views Konar / Nuristan as Alternative Safe Haven: Temporary Disruption
- Afghan-based AQ Members are Captured / Killed / Displaced: Marginal Disruption
- Taliban Dynamic Enablers unable to Provide Sanctuary: Significant Disruption

Effects against AQ and TB enablers in Konar and Nuristan are considered temporary without a long-term, persistent campaign

OPN HAYMAKER (01 May 2012 – 05 Feb 2013)				
Type	Ops	EKIA	Detainees	IP
Combined/ Enabled Ops	36	3	106	28
Kinetic Strikes	55	217	N/A	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>61</b>



### Senior Nuristan Taliban Detainee

Ahmad (OBJ BRANDYWINE)

*"Hands down, the scariest/most intimidating message for the Taliban, at any level, from fighter to Taliban senior leadership, is anything to do with drones or aerial bombings. The Taliban has no way to defend against them and they are certain to end in absolute destruction of whatever their target is."*

Figure 6.4.2: representation of people killed on official documents. Image by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From *The Intercept*

Michael Haas further describes how children who appeared on screen were jokingly referred to as 'fun-sized terrorists' (Heller 2015, 2 min 19 sec) (A.15). This expression projects the identity of terrorists onto children. The expression further uses 'terrorist' as a nomination strategy that negatively constructs the victims of drone attacks. 'Fun-sized' enacts a predicative strategy that constructs the process of targeting children as light-hearted. It thus also constitutes a mitigating strategy through using vague sentences and ironic distance, to make light of the idea of killing children. I argue that the comparison of strikes with the theme of games is not a sign that operating drones is like playing a video

game. Rather this is a perspectivisation (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) discursive strategy which uses the metaphor of games to distance the operator from the point of view of the targets of strikes.

Employing the referential strategy that constructs children as terrorists has led some operators to make use of non-sequitur argumentative strategies to attempt to justify the possibility of killing of children. For instance, Michael Haas relates the expressions 'cutting the grass before it grows too long' and 'pulling the weeds before they overrun the lawn' (Pilkington 2015) (A.12). These were used as rationalisation to gloss over the possibility of killing or having killed children. These non sequitur argumentations act as mitigation strategies (Meyer and Wodak 2016, 33) which use vague, non-sensical expressions to make light of the idea that children have died as a result of strikes. The context-dependent, deictic device further contributes toward a perspectivisation strategy that denotes the speaker's lack of involvement in the action.

Discursive strategies	Discursive device and citation		Speaker
Nomination strategies: How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions related to drone killings named and referred to linguistically?	<b>Discursive construction of social actors Ideological anthroponyms</b>		
	Metaphors:	white hot squares; fighting slithered sticks; silhouettes	Lynn Hill (A.4); Michael Haas (A.14, A.15)
	Ideological anthroponyms:	terrorists; bad guys	Michael Haas (A.14, A.15); Brandon Bryant (A.14, A.15, A.16); U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting (B.1)
	Professional	warrior	US Marine

	anthroponyms:		(A.18)
	Relational anthroponyms:	just a kid	US Marine (A.18)
Predication strategy: What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena and events and processes?	<b>Discursive characterisation/qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions</b>		
	Explicit adjectives/collocations:	fun-sized (terrorists)	Michael Haas (A.14, A.15)
Argumentative strategies: what arguments are employed in discourses about drone killings?	<b>Persuading listeners of specific claims of truth and normative rightness</b>		
	Non sequitur:	cutting the grass before it grows too long	Michael Haas (A.14, A.15)

*Table 6.4: Expressions used to speak of killed or soon to be killed humans*

Table 6.4 outlines the terms used to describe enemy combatants. The terms used by drone operators use irony to produce caricatural images of enemies as evil or justify their killing. Soldiers on the ground, in contrast, use terms that express empathy for enemy combatants. On the whole, paradoxically it seems that they topoi of order, the surgical and cleanliness outlined above plus ironic distance produced through jokes and references to games, offers affordances for black and white, unfiltered expressions of aggression towards the enemy.

Hence I argue that the very structure of the drone interface contains a gamifying dimension. This is reflected in how the terminology that arises in the context of drones employs perspectivisation and mitigation discursive strategies, which aim to re-enforce the distance between the operator and the targeted individuals. However, overall, the operation of drones is not a light-hearted affair. The gamifying language used within drone operation might be better explained by drone operators' attempt to kill their taboo about killing, using the affordances of drone technology. The latter allows them to construct

enemies as ‘bad guys’ (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a [B.1]; Brandon Bryant in Power 2013 [A.11]; Westmoreland 2014b [A.20]) and children as ‘terrorists’ (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015 [A.11]; U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a [B.1]). Drone operation is detrimental to drone operators hence it cannot be termed a game. For instance, Lynn Hill relates post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms stating that: ‘I’ve been out of the military for 10 years; I’ve been living with the war inside of me all of this time’ (Wilkie 2015, 12 min 59 sec) (A.7) she further recounts how:

When I see something fall to the ground, I can see that black and white image again, and I can taste it and I can hear it. And when I see striker tanks, when I see them going into the city, I know what that sounds like. (Wilkie 2015, 13 min) (A.7)

On the basis of the discussion of the captivating power of audio feed in section 6.5, I argue that it is the synchronicity of the combined video feed and audio feed that is likely to produce ‘combat stress’ (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2) in drone operators. These relate stressful information to them as it unfolds on the ground in real time. Hence Anders’ understanding of killing becoming an onerous job, like factory work, which I discussed in section 3.4.4, rather than a game is a better conceptualisation of drone operation.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this section, I have analysed how drone technology facilitates killings and makes them, in some respects, easier to conduct. To answer RQ1.3, this increases operators’ psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans. The structure of drone technology, which allows operators to sit many thousands of kilometres away from their targets, helps drone operators feel detached from the effects of their actions. I first showed how this is reflected in the commands to kill that are used with military drones, which I analysed in section 6.3. The latter show that it is possible to operate drones in an apparently cold manner with less empathy for enemies. This contrasts with ground combat where soldiers act in the heat of the moment. Drones thus tend to transform killing into a merely technical



process. However, I also showed in 6.4 how this paradoxically then allows drone operators to project un-modulated aggression onto their enemies. Thus irony is used to describe killings, even though from the surface of the video-feed they appear to be 'clinical'. I linked this to Anders' idea of killing one's taboo about killing. In section 6.5, I highlighted how the referential strategies operators use to designate their targets also testify to this effect. Operators tend to hold black and white views portraying their side as good and the enemies as evil. The stereotypical image of the 'bad guy' and 'the terrorist' is projected onto the enemy. This contrasts with accounts from soldiers on the ground where enemy combatants are described as 'just a kid'. In section 6.6 I showed how, to some extent, drone operators can gamify the act of killing. However, I have argued that Anders' notion of killing transformed into a job is the best conceptualisation of the repetitive and senseless aspect of drone killings. Operating drones is an onerous job, which is detrimental to drone operators' mental health. It could be seen as a modern manifestation of the mentally punishing dimension of factory work.

In making this argument, I go against accounts that over-emphasise the idea that drone technology immerses drone operators in the battlefield. These accounts uncritically go along with an over-estimation of the power of 'high-tech' devices. This type of perspective exists within media reports and society at large and is connected to an ideology of techno-optimism/euphoria which excitedly gets caught up in, and amplifies, the novelty effect of new technologies.

Next, I turn to examining how drone operators can both identify and dissociate themselves from the strikes they have participated in. I argue that in order to identify with strikes drone operators must make a concerted effort to overcome the desensitising effect produced by the structure of drone technology.

## **7. Alienation: The Dissociation Enabled by Drone Use and Operator Agency**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The research question that I formulated in section 5.3.1 for the theme of alienation is RQ1.2: What is the impact of military drone operators' work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt, and their mental health?

In this section, I look at how Promethean shame, Anders' mature conception of alienation, which I outlined in 3.5.4, applies to operating drones. Anders focussed on how the vast number of intermediary steps leading up to the dropping of a nuclear bomb allowed each participant to avoid responsibility. In an original way, he also outlined how televised images of nuclear explosions failed to convey the danger of nuclear weapons. Television viewers were confronted with a phantom-like image of the explosion, both present and absent, within the comfort of their homes. They consequently failed to accurately understand their relation to it. Below I show how the same logic applies to the video feed and general operation of military drones.

In section 6.3.2, I look at how drone operators use nomination, predication, perspectivisation and mitigation strategies, notably switching from using 'I' to 'we' to describe their role in drone killings. They further employ argumentative strategies using fallacious syllogisms to argue that everyone is responsible. In section 6.3.3, I look at how some drone operators adopt distancing strategies in relation to their part in drone killings. They employ predication and perspectivisation strategies, which use allusions, metaphors and evocations (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33), to convey the sense that someone else is responsible. I argue that the structure of drone technology and the environment they operate favours this. In section 6.3.4, I look at how other drone operators react to their Promethean shame by, on the contrary, making the effort to enlarge the scope of their sentiments and empathise with their victims using new approaches. This is reflected in the intensification strategies they adopt, which employ hyperbole and exaggeration as

discursive strategies to express their part in the killings. In this, it is as though they were following Anders' method of philosophical exaggeration [*gelegenheitsphilosophisch*] (Anders [1956] 2003, 86).

## **7.2 Did I or we kill?**

Drones disaggregate the action of killing into many different steps. The operation of drones involves a room full of people who, in real time, survey and direct operations (see Figure 4). They conduct these activities alongside the two personnel directly commanding the aircraft. For instance, a role that is important to drone missions but not directly tied to the operation of the aircraft is that of the image 'analyst' and 'targeteer' (U.S. Military 2013b, 8) (B.6). These personnel determine whether the aerial footage coming from the drone shows enemy combatants with 'hostile intent' (United States Marine Corps 2017 ca., 21) (B.9), which generally means assessing whether they are carrying weapons, a radio or material to lay IEDs. Because analysts may be working in closer proximity to where the drone is flying, they may receive better image resolution than operators of the drone, who are generally stationed in a base in Las Vegas. Indeed, in such a scenario, analysts' video feed would not face as many bandwidth limitations (see section 6.4.2). The presence of the image analyst means that drone operators may be called to fire on individuals without knowing why, or without themselves having confirmed that the people are enemies.

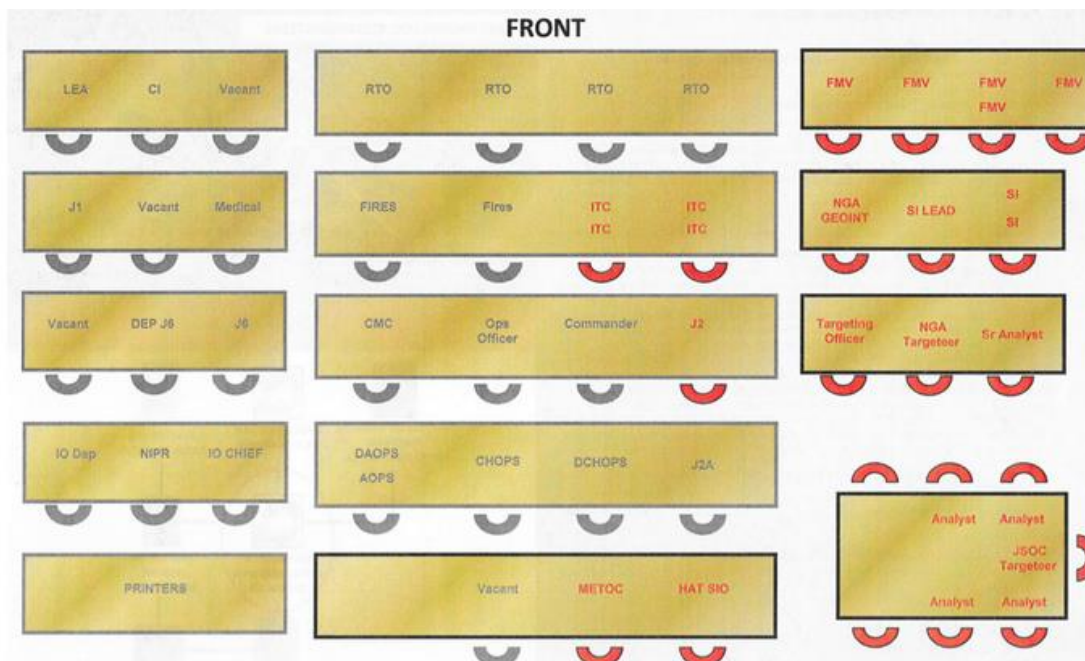


Figure 7.2: List of personnel indirectly involved in operation of drones. Image by U.S. Military. 2013. "Operation Haymaker". From *The Intercept*

Even when we zoom into the role of the operators, the two people directly commanding the aircraft, the action of launching rockets is split up. The direct operation of a military drone involves a pilot who flies the aircraft and a sensor operator, who manoeuvres the cameras on the aircraft and directs the laser which guides the missiles (Westmoreland 2014b). This means that, with each strike, even the action of deploying weapons is divided into two. The pilot releases the weapons, but the sensor operator must guide the weapon onto the target by aiming the laser. Hence, there could be genuine confusion when it comes to drone operators taking ownership of the killing that they helped carry out. This is not just because drone operators are given orders to kill, which they must legally follow. As Anders' theory also suggests, it is also because the structure of the technology itself disassembles this action, making weapon release and weapon aiming fall on two different people. As I quoted Anders as saying in 3.4.4, this means that there are so many steps that '[u]ltimately it will have been no one' (Anders [1956] 2003, 230).

Given how disaggregated the act of killing is with drones, the question arises: do drone operators say that they have killed using 'I' or do they use 'we' to say that they have killed.

As Michael Haas, an ex- drone operator who has spoken out against the drone programme, explains:

There's so many of those shots where you depend on the word of others. But they don't have to take the shot, they don't have to bear that burden. *I'm* the one who has to bear that burden. The pilot's the one who has to bear that burden. My mission controller is the one who has to bear that burden. So it's easy for them to say, yeah, shoot him, yeah... that's him, shoot it. But they don't have to do the action and they don't have to live with the repercussions if it turns out that that is not our guy and *we* just wast[ed]... *we* just made orphans out of all these children. You know, they don't have to live with that. *I* do. (Michael Haas in Hessen Schei 2015, 3 min 15 sec, emphasis added) (A.11)

The nomination strategy 'shoot *it*', i.e. the silhouette on the screen, illustrates my argument in the previous chapter about the dehumanisation of the enemy fostered by drones. At the end of this citation Michael Haas naturally shifts from 'I' to 'we' to describe the act of killing. This constitutes a mitigation strategy, partially effected through a nominative strategy. The particle 'we' functions as a membership categorisation device (Meyer and Wodak 2016, 33), which denotes the fact that drone operator is not acting alone but as part of a team which is governed by a strict military hierarchy. The switch from 'I' to 'we' employs hesitations and vague expressions in order to downplay the implication of what the operator is saying. This is that he indeed feels personally responsible for the killing and that he has to 'bear that burden'. However, he engaged in the killing partly because he was following orders.

Michael Haas' testimony is aimed at highlighting the problematic dimension of drones. However, other drone operators employ these discursive strategies to truly attempt to avoid responsibility for their actions. Lynn Hill describes how when asked whether she has ever killed she would reply: 'That's a bad question' (Wilkie 2015, 13 min to 15 min 20 sec) (A.5). Lynn uses a high level of abstraction to say that:

I didn't go to war alone—didn't do it for you. We vote as a collective in this country. So when you send me, they are sending you. [...] When I go to war, I take you with me over there (Wilkie 2015, 13 min to 15 min 20 sec) (A.5)

Here, Lynn Hill is, more forcefully than Michael Haas, employing perspectivisation devices that use the metaphor that 'I take you over there'. These make the listener imagine him/herself in her shoes. The expression participates in a mitigation strategy, which also relies on her using vague discursive devices, namely the switch from 'I' to 'we' to 'you'. Lynn Hill further employs a syllogistic argumentative strategy to imply that everyone who voted ('we vote as a collective'), is responsible for her actions. But there is a fallacy in this argumentation. Many people who voted, may have done so in the belief that they're vote would limit wars. They are moreover not directly responsible for how their senators voted with regard to wars. Finally, they did not actively join the military, as she did. Hence this is a fallacious hasty generalisation argumentation (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 72).

Lynn Hill seems to exhibit a strong case of Promethean shame in this poem. She appears unwilling to accept her part of responsibility for the operation of drones. She does not identify with the actions she helped carry out. Indeed Anders defines promethean shame as a

a reflexive act [...] which fails because man experiences himself [...] as something he "is not," but in an inescapable manner is condemned to be (Anders [1956] 2003, 70, my translation).

Lynn Hill does not believe that her actions are compatible with her own personality and self-hood. However, she is condemned to acknowledge the fact that she did in fact carry out these actions. Hence she employs discursive strategies, such as perspectivisation strategies, mitigation strategies and argumentation strategies, to place the listener in her shoes, arguing that everyone is just as guilty as she is. Hence Hill states: 'I'm gonna make you take ownership and not turn away' (Wilkie 2015, 13 min to 15 min 20 sec) (A.5) for the role *she* played in the military. She thus ultimately denies full responsibility for, and identification with, her actions.

Discursive strategies	Discursive device and citation		Speaker
Perspectivisation strategy	Positioning the speaker's point of view and expressing involvement or distance		
	Deictics expressing distance	I didn't go to war; didn't do it for you; I take you with me over there	Lynn Hill (A.5)
	Deictics expressing closeness	I'm the one who has to bear that burden; we just wasted... ; I do	Michael Haas (A.14)

*Table 7.2: The perspectivisation strategies adopted by drone operators to speak of their involvement in drone killings*

Table 7.2 shows how drone operators use expressions that convey both distance and closeness with their actions. It illustrates the ambiguous conflictual nature of drone operations on the psyche of drone operators. The latter do not always integrate these actions into their sense of self and personal responsibility.

### **7.3 Strategies of dissociation**

I highlight how it is some of the structural affordances of drones that help drone operators adopt strategies of dissociation from the effects of their actions. In her poem Name, Hill speaks of how she was able to not feel guilt for what she was doing because she dissociated her identity in the military from her identity at home. She explains:

I didn't hear my first name for years. It was replaced by my rank and last name, stripping me of my gender and ethnicity – where Sergeant Hill could be anybody [...] I was a sergeant and when sergeant was given an order, she followed. (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec) (A.2)

However, Lynn explains how this kind of separation and non-identification with herself became untenable. She described how she moved to a new unit that didn't follow military formalities. Hence she says:

I was addressed by the unfamiliar first name that my daddy had given me at birth: Tamika'. I wanted to be sergeant at work and Lynn at home. When orders to fire were attached to Lynn, I had nothing to hide behind when I got home. No blue mask, no DOD seal, no insignia on my sleeve, nor the name sergeant to separate me from the atrocities I had committed. It was as if I had done them. When Lynn was given an order, she questioned. Now Lynn is a monster. My name is scarred, the holder of my reputation. And I can't change it. (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec) (A.2)

In this poem Lynn Hill initially employs nomination strategies to construct the social actors in the process of operating drones as different from herself. She says that 'Sergeant Hill could be anybody'. She uses synecdochic expressions such as 'blue mask', 'DOD seal' to construct the person operating drones as different to herself, which in contrast she relates to her name 'Tamika'. She further uses mitigation strategies using uncertain, subjunctive discursive devices. Hence she speaks of 'atrocities' *she* has committed. And then says: 'It was as if I had done them'. This switch also acts as a vague expression device (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that acts as a mitigation strategy that distances Lynn Hill from her actions. By the end of the poem Lynn Hill faces up to her part in the killings, but still speaks of herself in the third person saying: '*Lynn* is a monster'; '*My name* is scarred' (*emphasis added*). This form of indirect speech is a discursive device which participates in a mitigation and perspectivation strategy that distances her from the effects of her actions.

The poem gives an insight into how Hill could use the apparently clean and orderly environment she was operating in, which allowed her to be called sergeant and wear a precise military uniform, to also distance herself from the responsibility of what she was doing. It is the structure of the technology itself that allows for this, as drone operators can work in civilian towns such as Las Vegas. Indeed Hill describes 'sitting back here, chillin' in Las Vegas' (Wilkie 2015, 24 min 37 sec) (A.7). Operators consequently receive the impression that the activities they do are similar to those of white collar office workers. This



fits with Anders' notion that, with the division of labour implied by the technical operation of bombing, tendentially 'the product and the making of the product are dissociated' (Anders [1956] 2003, 271, *my translation*). Consequently,

the moral status of the product (for instance of asphyxiating gas or the hydrogen bomb) does not in any way cast its shadow on the moral status of the person who, by working, takes part in this production. (Anders [1956] 2003, 271, *my translation*)

Indeed Lynn Hill speaks of her involvement in the drone programme as 'a good career move' (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec) (A.1). She further plays on the notion of soft skills by speaking of 'soft kills' (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec) (A.1). This time Lynn Hill adopts an oxymoronic discursive device, opposing routine and killing, as an intensification strategy that expresses her internal anguish and conflicted experience. This arises from her being both at war and in a civilian work context.

Yet official US Air Force recruitment videos suggest that prospective drone operators play on this aspect of the technology to help them deal with what they call 'combat stress'. Hence these videos suggest that new recruits find ways to deal with the impact of operating drones on their mental health by 'compartmentalising' their experience of the war. One featured drone operator stresses that: 'You have to be able to compartmentalise that stuff and find a way to deal with combat stress' (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2). Hence recruitment videos also emphasise that

There is no other career field where you get to have an impact on the Air Force's mission and then get to go home and go for a hike or have dinner with your family. (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019a) (B.1)

Hence drone operators are actively encouraged to act as if their actions within the drone programme do not concern their personal lives.

In doing this, it is as though the US army were encouraging their personnel to act in a way which Anders criticised in the Nazis. Anders discusses the fact that

the same man could be an extermination camp administrator and at the same time a good family man. These two fragments of life no longer impeded one-another,

because by now they no longer had any contacts. This atrocious innocence of atrocious acts is no longer an isolated case. We are all the successors of these schizophrenics (Anders [1956] 2003, 256, *my translation*)

Around 2011 there were media reports of drone operators getting PTSD (eg. Pilkington 2015) (A.12). This is what prompted the US military to acknowledge the impact on mental health operating drones can have. PTSD had for a long time been associated with intense feelings of helplessness in the face of mortal danger. However, it has been argued more recently that PTSD can also be associated with what is called ‘moral injury’ (Molendijk et al. 2018). It could be the result of an experience that strongly conflicted with the values and desires of someone, or the inability to properly rationalise the system of values one is operating under. She further explains that the drone programme:

left me with one foot in the war and one foot out of the war and sometimes I didn’t care, and then I felt guilty that I didn’t care (Wilkie 2015, 8 min 30 sec)

Indeed Lynn describes herself as a ‘cop out’ (Wilkie 2017, 24 min 30 sec) for not having been to Iraq and as feeling ‘guilty to be ok’ (Wilkie 2017, 26 min 24 sec) and not having been injured like many other combatants.

Gregory’s account of how drone operators suffer from PTSD because of ‘exposure to high-resolution images of real-time killing and the after-action inventory of body parts’ (Gregory 2011, 198) in some respects misses the mark. I accept that the real-time, synchronous element of drone piloting certainly contributes to ‘combat stress’ (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2). However, the role of ‘high-resolution’ imagery has been over-emphasised. Indeed, in section 6.4, I show that the footage produced by drones does not produce shock in those who watch it but can become a form of entertainment. In contrast, I argue that the very division between home life and war life that drone operation fosters, which ends up demanding of drone operators that they act as though they were not themselves, is a significant factor in their mental distress. This situation fits with Anders’ assertion that modern humans suffer an ‘artificially produced schizophrenia’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 131). For Anders, this means that they must ‘suffer a

schizophrenic life, a life dominated by a fracture which can never be mended between two contradictory forms of actions' (Anders [1956] 2003, 273).

In the next section, I discuss how some military drone operators became outspoken critics of the drone programme and hence adopted strategies of identification with their actions. I discuss how this strategy resembles Anders' account of how the development of new sentiments is necessary to grasp the effects of new technologies.

#### **7.4 Strategies of identification**

I have highlighted how drone operators use many of the structural affordances of drones to dissociate themselves from the killings. But in this section, I discuss how some drone operators use other aspects of drone technology to imagine the effects of their actions and claim responsibility for them.

As I highlighted in section 6.5, the relation of drone operators to the violence they are committing is ambiguous. They are present on the battlefield but in a dis-embodied, physically distanced manner. They do not make eye contact, see the expression, hear the voice of, or smell, the people they are attacking. Drone operators do not have the host of information that humans receive when someone is embodied and not just pixels on a screen. However, they receive other forms of precise information. For instance, this information relates to the heat signals of the people on their screen. They can use the latter to understand whether the person is dead, alive or 'bleeding out' (Bryant in Goodmand and Gonzalez 2013, 5 min 48 sec) (A.16). Drone operators perceive more of this information than traditional pilots dropping a bomb from a plane. This structural affordance means that, if they want to, drone operators can piece together the information to attempt to imagine what it must have been like for the person they attacked, or what a person on the ground would have witnessed. They can feel empathy through making a mental effort to expand their sentiments and imagination.

This is illustrated by some of the drone operators that have become whistle-blowers such as Brandon Bryant and Cyan Westmoreland. In contrast to Hill, Brandon Bryant has

attempted to take full responsibility for his actions. Instead of using 'we' when describing his part in drone operations, he uses 'I'. After 4 years working operating drones, Bryant decided to take ownership for the number of people he killed, describing how:

I did it; I killed 13 people directly with missile strikes plus one child that I know of. And then, when I got out, they gave me a certificate that said that I had participated in 1626 enemies killed in action, plus 748 high value targets. So across the four and a half years that I did active mission work. 2300 people were killed during my mission. (Engman 2018, 2:31) (A.17)

In this extract, the statistics act as hyperbolic discursive device, as it is hard to attribute that many killed human to a single name or particle 'I'. This device acts as an intensification discursive strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that emphasises the scale of responsibility the drone operator thinks that he should feel. Indeed, Bryant and Westmoreland describe how receiving this statistic made them feel an intense sense of un-ease. They felt that they had reached a tipping point, whereby they were no longer able to dissociate themselves from the killings.

Indeed, Bryant says that although he was shaken by his first experience of killing, he continued working in the US drone programme. He states how in 2007 with '[m]y first shot, I killed three men' (Engman 2018, 19 min 27 sec) (A.17). He goes on: 'But I did it. I continued doing it from then until 2011' (Engman 2018, 24 min 20 sec) (A.17). This shows how, up to a point, drone operators can set aside their moral issues about the operation of drones. But, at some point, they are confronted with the moral conflicts of what they have done. They feel the need to mentally process their actions.

On exiting the drone programme, Bryant gave an interview to GQ magazine where he describes his first killing in almost poetic language. Although all Bryant saw of the people he played a part in killing were silhouettes, in his interview he described the scene as follows: 'blood is squirting out of his leg, and it's hitting the ground' (Power 2013) (A.11). This vivid description of blood squirting out acts as a hyperbolic device which, again, contributes to a discursive strategy of intensification. What Bryant is actually describing is the infrared imagery he saw which tracked the blood as a white heat signal. In this way, through

interpreting the imagery Bryant was able to construct his own mental image. Hence his post-festum mental processing of his first kill re-imagines in vivid detail the person he saw dying. This lyricism and intensifying discourse are not necessarily a sign of Bryant glorifying the killing. I argue that Bryant's description of blood 'squirting out' is a sign of his attempt to feel compassion for the person he killed. Four years after his first killing, he uses his imagination to fill in the gaps and represent the events in a way that a human in close proximity would have witnessed them.

Bryant's hyperbole fits with Anders' philosophical method of exaggeration [*gelegenhetsphilosophisch*] (Anders [1956] 2003, pp. 23, 86, 221). Bryant's effort at creating vivid images of the killing he helped carry out fits with mature Anders' notion that 'it is the range of our modern weapons which should determine the reach of our consciousness and the nature of our moral obligations' (Anders [1992] 2013, 144, *my translation*). Just as Bryant uses his imagination to compensate for the limited nature of his experience of the killing, as he only sees the individuals he targets as black silhouettes on a screen, Anders argued that: 'we must follow the moral imperative staying on par with that which we produce artificially through the artificial development of our imagination' (Anders [1992] 2013, 142, *my translation*). He further speaks of seeking to overcome the discrepancy between humans and the effects of their actions which they accomplish through technology by 'voluntarily expanding the bounds of our imagination and of our feelings' (Anders [1956] 2003, 257). Drone operators such as Bryant are mentally processing their ghostly experiences of the war. This mental effort allows them to feel compassion for the people they witness as silhouettes through the screen of drone video-feeds.

Hence Bryant hangs onto every minute detail of the killing, re-elaborating it four years later. The principal exact information he received of the latter is the time frame. He watched events as they unfolded in real time and was able to interpret the heat signature of the body on his screen. He ascertained the exact moment of death as the body turned cold. Hence he states:

It took him a long time to die. I just watched him. I watched him become the same color as the ground he was lying on. (Power 2013) (A.11)

I argue that this description reflects Anders' emphasis that images conveyed by the media are absent in the sense of material presence but, at the same time, they are synchronous in the sense of temporal presence. Hence Anders speaks of the television's role in 'bringing to us that which is merely simultaneous in such a way that it appears as genuine presence' (Anders [1956] 2003, 128). This synchronicity allows Bryant to intensely interpret the images he sees. It highlights Bryant's attempt to expand his imagination and the scope of his sentiments to match the technologically conditioned distance between him and the effects of his actions. As was shown in section 7.3, without this level of interpretation, the images he perceives do not inspire human emotions that are normally associated with killing.

Cyan Westmoreland underwent the same kind of mental process. Cyan describes that the experience that traumatised him was simply seeing flashing lights indicating that the communications system that he had helped put in place was working. This happened after his superiors announced that the communications system was now helping kill people. Hence he states:

I will never forget when my boss proudly announced the fact that we were now killing bad guys.

Truthfully, I was not prepared for those words... I wanted to believe that we were so far removed from what was happening there, that it was not my fault for what happened on the other end. But I couldn't help imagining airstrikes as they went down in my head. Transfixed, I must have stared at those radios for over an hour, just staring. What was connected to those green blinking lights, I knew were the electrical extension of whatever happened on the ground. (Westmoreland 2014b) (A.20)

Here Westmoreland speaks directly of how his imagination triggered the feeling that his actions did not sit well with his conscience and that he was responsible for them. Hence he speaks of being 'transfixed', an expression which relates to the topos of inner mental activity. He further uses metaphors such as 'electrical extension' to construct his actions as

connected to real events. These elements of imagination thus constitute an example of the effort Anders called for in his philosophy of technology.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

In this section, I have shown how the troubles of conscience that drone operators experience illustrate Anders' conception of alienation, which he termed Promethean shame. Individuals become alienated from their own identity and their actions as they experience the war as both present and absent from their lives. To answer RQ1.2, this situation puts strain on operators' personal life and mental health, producing feelings of shame and guilt.

Hence, in section 6.3.2, I have outlined how drone operators have an ambiguous relation to their actions, arguing that this is in part down to the very structure of drone technology. Not only is the release of weapons divided between pilot and sensor operator, but many more agents follow and direct the operation of the drone, as they receive its video feed in real time. In section 6.3.3, I discussed how some drone operators make special use of these affordances offered by the technology to distance themselves from the actions they help carry out through drones. Indeed, drone technology allows them to lead a double life, part civilian and part military. However, I ultimately connected this split experience to the mental distress experienced drone operators. In section 6.3.4, I show how some operators use other affordances offered by the structure of the technology to overcome this ambiguous situation and take ownership for their actions. They use the information such as heat signature and time frame, which this technology accurately conveys, as a basis for imagining how a human would perceive what is happening on the ground directly. They make a mental effort to find new ways of empathising with their enemies and produce emotions that are appropriate to the operation of drones. In this, it is as if they were following Anders' suggestion to enlarge the human spirit to catch up with the transformations to human life brought about by technology.

## 8. Ideology: Drone Footage Functioning as Propaganda

### 8.1 Introduction

The research question which I formulated in section 5.3.1 on the theme of ideology was RQ1.3: In what respects do military drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of 'surgical strikes'? This was based on the fact that, in section 3.6.4, I showed how Anders' mature theory puts forward the idea that ideology in the sense of a grand narrative devised by individual thinkers is obsolete. This is because ideology is inscribed within technology itself and is automatically reproduced by its functioning.

In this chapter, I show that in some respects this idea is relevant to military drones. Hence I look at how the notion of 'precision strikes' grows out of the structure of the technology itself and is adopted by the public at large. Official U.S. military and RAF sources publish on the internet edited extracts from the video feed of drone and Apache helicopters as their operators attack and kill. Amateur accounts then further disseminate these videos. On platforms like YouTube and Liveleak, such videos make up a form of entertainment known as 'war porn' or 'drone porn'. Comments on these videos highlight how the infrared, black and white aerial footage produced through drones sanitises killing. It doesn't convey the age, backstories, facial expressions, cries or the smell of the victims. Viewers, who see only silhouettes, often glorify the killings shown, projecting racist tropes or the image of the terrorist onto the people killed. This process illustrates Anders' idea surrounding the automation of ideology through media. For Anders, events viewed through the prism of certain media acquire a distorted form. They are 'ideologically "pre-cut"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 185). This is relevant to the advent of drone porn, which reproduces a phantom-like, and hence distorted, image of war. To viewers, such videos appear as a video game. This directly reinforces the ideology that portrays the U.S. military as powerful and righteous.

Hence in section 6.4.2, I look at the ideology of the surgical strike and show what aspects of drone strikes this ideology obscures. In section 6.4.3, I look at the notion of war porn and drone porn, examining how Baudrillard introduced the concept. In section 6.4.4, I look at



videos of drone and apache strikes and show how these elements of drone technology automatically produce ideology. The videos themselves are an ideological view of the enemy, which portrays him/her as cartoonish and minimises his/her death.

## **8.2 Surgical strikes and precision killing**

The notion that bombs can be precise and surgical took on its present form in the Gulf War, with the advent of laser guided missile (Thussu 2003, 124). Military drones epitomise this type of weaponry. The main manufacturer of military drones for the US Air Force euphemistically describes bombs as 'kinetic options' and 'precision weapons' (General Atomic Aeronautical Systems 2017, 4) (B.11). The notion of precision when applied to military drones is connected to their affordance of accurately guiding a missile using a laser.

However, just because a bomb is precise, and will explode where the laser is pointed, doesn't mean that there are no other factors that could make this form of killing un-precise overall. Data from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism shows that drone strikes have killed up to 16,901 people in four countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia) since records began in 2005 (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2020). This includes up to 2,200 civilians, among which 454 children. Given the opacity of drone operations, actual figures may be higher. If drones were really a 'surgically' precise weapons, there wouldn't be as many civilian deaths.

One reason behind the number of civilian deaths is signature strikes. US military drones target individuals on the basis of metadata and telephone surveillance. Leaked documents reveal that individuals are associated with the signal coming from their sim card (see Figure 5). Speaking at a debate about privacy General Michael Hayden, a former NSA and CIA director, argued that 'metadata absolutely tells you everything about somebody's life. If you have enough metadata, you don't really need content' (Cole et al. 2014, 17 min 59 sec). Alluding to the US drone programme and signature strikes, he added that: 'We kill people based on metadata' (Cole et al. 2014, 17 min 59 sec). If the data produced by this sim follows pre-established patterns of behaviour that are associated with insurgency, the

holder of the sim is deemed a target. In fact, the signal from the sim card is often used to aim the missile, as an alternative to using a laser to guide it onto the target (Begley 2015). The drone programme targets individuals based on patterns of behaviour such as calling known Taliban leaders and travelling to regions controlled by the Taliban. However, this could include patterns of behaviour exhibited by mediators or journalists.

Drone operators have an inkling that this dynamic can be counter-productive, stating

Obviously you're taking out a lot of targets and It looks good. But oftentimes, the bad side of a drone is the only thing that a person on the ground would see. (Westmoreland in Heller 2015, 50 sec) (A.15)

Indeed the efficacy of drone missions has also been questioned by internal documents. Internal reports within the drone programme show how: 'Kill operations significantly reduce the intelligence available from detainees and captured material' (ISR Task Force 2013b, 8) (B.8). This makes future operations 'take months to years instead of days to weeks' (ISR Task Force 2013b, 8) (B.8). Figure 3 on a different report further shows how effects of such campaigns are considered 'temporary' (U.S. Military 2013b, 1) (B.6).

And yet cultural production surrounding military drones in the West mostly portrays them as formidable, ultra-precise weapons. *Eye in the Sky* (Hood 2015), a film taking a critical look at drone technology in warfare and focussing heavily on the issue of whether probabilistic risk assessments can replace moral considerations ends up vastly over-estimating the precision of drone intelligence gathering capabilities. The film portrays their video feeds as ultra-precise. This has prompted a backlash by drone operators, who have stated that the video feed of drones is not that clear. Westmoreland, the whistle-blower who was deployed as an engineer stationed in Afghanistan and tasked with setting up the telecommunication network through which drones operate, states about the film that

the imagery is not as good as portrayed, not even remotely, and this has more to do with bandwidth limitations than anything. We do believe that people would be outraged if people actually saw what has been used up till now [...] (Westmoreland 2016) (A.24)

In her account for the Guardian Heather Linebaugh has argued that

What the public needs to understand is that the video provided by a drone is not usually clear enough to detect someone carrying a weapon, even on a crystal-clear day with limited cloud and perfect light. This makes it incredibly difficult for the best analysts to identify if someone has weapons for sure. One example comes to mind: "The feed is so pixelated, what if it's a shovel, and not a weapon?" I felt this confusion constantly (Linebaugh 2013) (A.22)

This sentiment is also echoed by Lynn Hill, despite her not being a whistle-blower. A line in her poem describes this type of stressful confusion:

Is that the guy? Is that the guy?! [...] Unclear details and shaky intel but still... I pull the trigger. (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec) (A.1)

This triangulation (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 30) reveals that military drones are precise in aiming a bomb at certain location on the earth, but they are not necessarily precise in determining who to aim at. Mistakes have been made with drone strikes killing 40 tribal elders in 2011 (BBC 2011b), right up to them killing 30 civilians in an attack in 2019 (Sediqi 2019). In both cases, these civilians were simply mistaken for combatants.

There is a perpetuation of the techno-fetishist myth that drones provide operators with ultra-precise imagery within the academic literature on drones. Both Gregory (2011) and Maurer (2017) describe in detail the high-resolution cameras on drones, implying that this means that the operator views crystal-clear images of the battlefield. Gregory speaks of 'high-resolution images via a multi-gigapixel sensor with a refresh rate of 15 frames per second' (Gregory 2011, 193). Maurer describes the drone's

surveillance technology Argus-IS (again a telling name), which contains over one hundred cellphone-like cameras, they can quilt together a mega-stream of images into a large-scale mosaic and feed them into networks of ground stations. (Maurer 2017, 144)

This citation uses nomination, predication and intensification discursive strategies. The quotation of the acronym-bearing name 'Argus-IS' constructs the object as formidable. The discursive device of collocation (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 83), employed through the use of

‘multi-gigapixel’, ‘surveillance technology’, ‘mega-stream’, ‘large-scale’ and ‘networks of ground stations’ qualifies the technology as awesome, contributing to an intensifying discursive strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). The hyperbolic image of quilting together a ‘mega-stream of images’ is a discursive device used as a strategy of intensification, to drive home the point that this technology is formidable.

Hence both writers over-estimate the effects of technological progress and fallaciously equate the power of the cameras with the idea that operators receive ‘immersive’ (Maurer 2017, 146; Gregory 2011, 198) high-resolution images on their screen. But Westmoreland explains why, owing to bandwidth limitations, this is not necessarily the case. There is a risk that a too easy acceptance of the idea of high-tech progress ends up falsifying analyses of military drones. This is a form of ideology which is in part tied to the structural affordances of the technology, which indeed is precise in terms of aiming bombs. It is further in part reproduced by arms companies and military institutions themselves.

Discursive strategies	Discursive device and citation		Speaker
Nomination and predication strategies	Euphemistic technical terms to designate weapons	Precision weapons; kinetic options	General atomic (B.11)
	Technical terms implying power and precision	Multi-gigapixel sensor; high resolution images; mega-stream of images; networks of ground stations	Maurer 2017, 144-146; Gregory 2011, 196-198

Table 8.2: Euphemistic and techno-euphoric expressions used to designate weapons

Table 8.2 outlines techno-euphoric terms that celebrate the technological advance of weaponry.

Anders identified the ideology which is connected to this type of terminology, which is employed in the field of high-tech. According to Anders, it amounts to a ‘*Myth of Progress*’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 54, *italics in original, my translation*) that is however not recognised as such. This consists in seeing ‘progress in every new step, whether it is an additional step in

the development of the decompression chamber or in systems of refrigeration' (Anders [1956] 2003, 54). Anders adds that the people who believe in this myth 'are calm, because we are going forward, and they are proud of the novelty' (Anders [1956] 2003, 54). The idea that the supposed 'high-resolution' of drone imagery represents a hopeful step in the right direction, that may allow for increased operator compassion, arguably represents this form of ideology. This idea is latent in many media theory analyses of military drones that emphasise the visually immersive, rather than distancing, effect military drones have on the senses of the operators. If he were alive today, mature Anders would say that this idea is based on

the superstition [...] that identifies technological progress with social progress, and therefore political progress. (Anders [1980] 2011, 16)

In the next two sections, I show that the imagery produced by drones puts the viewer in the position of a distanced voyeur of the scenes of violence.

### **8.3 War porn and drone porn**

Ever since the Gulf War, aerial footage of war taken from bomber planes showing precision strikes have been broadcast on television. For instance, Thussu argues that during the Gulf War,

the hi-tech, virtual presentation of war, cockpit videos of 'precision bombings' of Iraqi targets were supplied to television networks by the Pentagon, thus presenting a major conflict, responsible for huge destruction of life and property "as a painless Nintendo exercise, and the image of Americans as virtuous, clean warriors" (Said cited in Thussu 2003, 124)

Later, Baudrillard wrote an article on what he called 'pornographie de guerre' [war porn] (Baudrillard 2004) which referred both to these early images and the sexualised images of torcher of Iraqi war prisoners in Abu Grhaib, which were taken on amateur cameras.

Today, the expression 'war porn' is not solely associated with Baudrillard but has become a genre of video available on the internet from websites such as Liveleak.com and YouTube. Such videos gain millions of views. A big proportion of these videos are footage taken from

the video feed on drones and Apache helicopters as they attack. This video feed is used to aim weapons and hence it shows the killing of humans in as much detail as the gunner would see. Within 'war porn' there is entire category known as 'drone porn'. Sthal (2013) has highlighted how some of the most viewed videos of 'drone porn' have been released by official military institutions themselves. For instance, the video 'UAV Kills 6 Heavily Armed Criminals' (dividshub 2008) (B.17) was released in 2008. It has gained 2.7 million views. The YouTube account which released this and other similar videos is called 'dvidshub'. It is connected to the Defence Video and Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS), a PR institution which acts as an interface between the U.S. military and the media. Other videos have been released by the UK's RAF and Ministry of Defence accounts on YouTube and specify the copyright to such videos as belonging to The Crown (Ministry of Defence 2015a (B.18); Ministry of Defence 2015b (B.19)).

I argue that the advent of 'drone porn', which is composed of footage that arises as a by-product of the operation of drones, the footage which is used to operate drones and aim their weapons, illustrates Anders' notion that ideology has, in part, been automated and is now directly tied with the operation of machines. This is because the very format of the video feed used to aim weapons favours reductive, desensitised and black and white understandings of war.

Most comments on such videos do not express horror or disgust, which are common human emotions in the face of such violence, regardless of who is being killed. Indeed the videos show humans being blown up and dismembered. Instead, these comments are light-hearted. On one video, commentators react against the warning given in the title of the video that the footage is distressing. The title contains the words '(GRAPHIC WARNING)' (Alex Broadbent 2017). However, viewers speak about the fact that the footage shown is not distressing despite the extreme violence it contains, stating: 'I didn't find this video to be distressing at all' (daniel hannon ca. 2019) (B.16.1). Another states: 'I am not distressed at all except I should have added more butter to my popcorn' (lands8115 ca. 2019) (B.12.2). Another commentator adds about another video: 'Not graphic. Quite satisfying actually'

(Lori Girl ca. 2017) (B.14.2). These comments use mitigating discursive strategies employing vague rationalisation of adding butter to popcorn and evocations implying that one is in a homely environment (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). This evidences how these videos have a sterilising effect on violence which makes the latter more easily digestible, allowing it to go unquestioned.

This illustrates Anders' idea that the world conveyed through the television loses its quality as an external world that we must seize hold of and control. For Anders, this means that 'the pieces that constitute this kind of world have no other aim than that of being incorporated, devoured and assimilated' (Anders [1956] 2003, 185). Consequently, the outside world 'loses "its character as an object"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 185). He states,

we do not grasp the pill that slides down us without resistance; conversely we do grasp the piece of meat that we first need to chew. But the world "that penetrates" too easily resembles the pill. (Anders [1956] 2003, 186, my translation)

For Anders, 'it is this very absence of resistance of the transmitted world that stops us from seizing hold of it and interpreting it' (Anders [1956] 2003, 186). Similarly, images of killing which are made easy to watch through their grainy, mono-chromatic, aerial-angled character mean that viewers do not pause to think and produce human emotion of compassion and empathy regarding the content of what is shown. Viewers watch these images as voyeurs. This comes close to mirroring Anders' statement that: 'the transformation of people of all ages into [...] spies or *voyeurs* is repugnant' (Anders [1956] 2003, 139, emphasis in original).

Contemporary theorists have commented on drone footage and 'drone porn', stating that they produce a kind of '[h]umane warfare [which] offers the pleasure of a spectacle with the added thrill that it is real for someone but not the spectator' (Coker 2001, 150). Even the details viewers supposedly notice, do not shock them and are a source of glee and techno-fetishism. Hence one commentator writes: 'I love seeing the [body] parts fly...just shows how destructive the weaponry is' (T FP 2020). The sentence uses a mitigating discursive strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). It employs hyperbole (as it is not clear the

viewer is interpreting the imagery correctly and that what s/he is seeing are body parts) and verbs of feeling, stating that s/he 'loves' seeing this. This expresses a positive appreciation of the video and trivialises the violence it shows. I argue that this type of comment is made possible by the black and white character of the imagery and the angle at which it is shot. Coloured footage of the same scene from close up would probably not inspire this type of comment. Singer has concluded that: 'The public's link to its wars transforms from connection into merely a kind of voyeurism' (Singer 2009, 841 of 1524 on ebook). Indeed as I will show in the next section many people comment on the fact that the images resemble those of a video game.

#### **8.4 Infrared footage of strikes on YouTube and the automation of propaganda**

Below, I conduct a discourse analysis of YouTube comments on videos that show killings through infrared imagery. The video feed is the same as the one used to aim weapons carried by Apache helicopters.

There are three tropes that emerge from YouTube comments on such videos. The first is that commentators compare the images to a video game. They jokingly say that they didn't realise this was a real video. For instance, one commentator playfully describes the death of one of the fighters as 'xxX-TLIBAN\_ALLAHUAKBAR-Xxx left the game' (DoOnalD TrUmmP, ca. 2019) (B.13.4). This comment uses a racist nomination strategy that uses the expression 'Allahu Akbar' as a membership categorisation device. It promotes the direct association of the Taliban with the Muslim faith. It also enacts a predication strategy based on the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that the Muslim faith is the essential descriptor of the targeted individuals. The commentator's username's reference to Donald Trump, constitutes an inter-textual (Fairclough 1992, 105) reference to other Islamophobic discourses existing in the US. The joking allusion to a video game constitutes a metaphoric and euphemistic device. It enacts a predication strategy aimed at qualifying the actions as light-hearted and benign. These euphemisms also constitute a mitigation strategy that modifies the deontic status of the scene (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33).



Referring to the similarity of the footage with a popular video game, another's comment reads: 'When you notice this is not call of duty modern warfare' (Exotic Proxi ca. 2019) (B.13.3). Yet another ironically asks: 'Will this run on a 4gb ram pc??' (Max ibrahim ca. 2018) (B.15.5). Here the commentator is pretending that he has mistaken the footage for a video game which he wishes to play on his PC. Another jokes: 'I would never buy this game because the hit marker is so glitchy' (Its3v ca. 2017) (B.14.3). These comments primarily use a predication strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that uses metaphors and allusions to qualify the footage as resembling a video game. These comments are not so much aimed at mitigating the content of the footage. They rather use exaggeration to make the point that the footage closely resembles a video game.

Another trope is that comments on the scenes of extreme violence ironically ask whether the animals visible in the video, which is shot in rural Afghanistan, are OK. Hence one commentator states: 'The dogs survived! hooray!' (Charles P. ca. 2019) (B.15.3) Another says, 'I'm glad the animals made it to safety !' (IV IV ca. 2018) (B.15.4) Some do this while praising the gunner for his technical skills: 'I like the way the operator try not to kill animals' [3.4K likes] (Jean-Marie Asclépios #DBL\_G1# #FDPH ca. 2018) (B.13.5). These comments dehumanise the people who have been killed by using the topos (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 74-75) of human concern for animals. This participates in a predication strategy that uses allusion as a discursive device to convey the idea that the humans being killed are below the status of dogs. Hence the sentence also uses indirect speech and vague expressions as devices to carry out a mitigation discursive strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). By indirectly expressing the idea that the humans killed are below the status of dogs, these comments also make light of the killing.

The infrared videos depict extreme violence whereby the bodies of people killed in the video are completely disfigured and disintegrated. The third trend among the commentators is to say that these human remains serve a good function as fertiliser for the fields. Hence one commentator states: 'Nothing better than Taliban compost to fertilize the local wildlife.' [658 likes] (diddle the poodle ca. 2020) (B.13.1). Another comments, 'Free

fertilized fields [sic]' (eijmert ca. 2020) (B.13.2). These discourses employ the topos of crop production to positively qualify what is being shown as good and productive. Hence the discourse employs a predication strategy which further uses allusions, evocations and metonyms (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that qualify human remains as fertiliser. This is used to convey the idea that what is being shown is productive in the same way that fertilising a field is productive.

Discursive strategies	Discursive device and citation		Speaker
Nomination and predication strategies	Gaming terms	Left the game; This game; the hit marker...glitchy; call of duty modern warfare; run on 4gb ram pc	DoOnalD TrUmmP (B.13.4); Itsj3v (B.14.3); Exotic Proxi (B.13.3)
	Islamophobic anthroponym	xxX-TLIBAN_ALLAHUAKBAR-Xxx	DoOnalD TrUmmP (B.13.4)
Argumentative fallacy	Non-sequitur	The dogs survived hurray; animals made it to safety; try not to kill animals; Taliban compost; free fertilized fields	Charles P. (B.15.3); IV IV (B.15.4); Jean-Marie Asclépios #DBL_G1 #FDPH (B.13.5); diddle the poodle B.13.1; eijmert (B.13.1)

*Table 8.4: Racist and gaming expressions used to designate footage of drone and apache helicopter attacks, plus ironic bad logic to justify killings*

Table 8.4 outlines the racist expressions employed by YouTube commentators. It also shows how they use irony to minimise the death of the people on the footage.

The footage of these attacks which ends up on YouTube makes a spectacle out of war. Because of its very structure as grainy footage that can be watched in domestic situations on mobile phones and laptops, it sanitises war transforming it into a kind of game or spectator sport which helps viewers vent out their inner frustrations. Hence some commentators state: 'I watch this video whenever I'm mad' (hctiB alliK ca. 2017) (B.13.1). Others similarly proclaim: 'I watch this everytime [sic] there is a new terror attack'

(TheSpanishInquisition ca. 2016) (B.14.4). The use of such footage as a form of entertainment, provoking light-hearted discussions of killing illustrates Anders' theory that: *'the TV transforms all events into playthings'* and this produces a 'serious lack of seriousness' (Anders [1956] 2003, 143, *my translation, emphasis in original*). Commentators employ the visual characteristics of the footage (which is grainy, black and white, and taken from an aerial angle) to promote the idea that what is shown is benign and not much different from a video game. This illustrates Anders' point that visual media can mean that

events [...] reach us ideologically "pre-cut", pre-interpreted and arranged (Anders [1956] 2003, 185 *my translation*)

This footage is not neutral but shows killing in a way that encourages simplifying and falsifying projections of stereotypes and identities on the individuals who are killed.

The tropes that are expressed in the comments form inter-textual (Fairclough 2013, 164) chains with other discourses, which are sites of traditional ideology production. Hence, in some respects, they highlight how the 'logic of automated society is interlocking and self-reinforcing' (Andrejevic 2020, 21). However, as I have argued, such videos (because of their black and white—sometimes colour-inverted—character, their grainy-ness and the angle at which they are shot) are already ideological in so far as they resemble a 'shoot'em all' video game. Hence they also partially automate the production of ideology. Indeed, they illustrate Anders' provocative argument that

the contemporary interest groups, which seek to keep us in a state of "false consciousness", can spare themselves the effort of supplying us with false theories or with artificially produced world views. And they can refrain from having to do so because the artificially produced world itself, especially the world of machines that surrounds us, presents itself as the world, that is, it so dazzles us and so effectively influences our consciousness that the production of special world views for the shaping of opinions is rendered superfluous. (Anders [1980] 2011, 131)

The images show real things but the way in which they are shot and position in which the viewer discovers them, the position of someone consuming media on YouTube, for instance,

produces a highly distorted image of the war. Hence they are conducive to the kind of reductive, black and white world views expressed in the comments.

## 8.5 Conclusion

In section 8.2 I showed how, to some extent, the notion of precision strikes grows out of drone technology itself. The latter is indeed effective at aiming missiles where a laser is pointed. However, I also argued that this understanding of precision is reductive given that these lasers can target the wrong people. In section 8.3, I followed on by presenting the phenomenon of drone porn, arguing that the video feed used to aim weapons on drones can become a form of propaganda which makes a spectacle out of war. Anders' notion of the present-absent character of images and how televised images can fail to convey the significance of troubling events, such as nuclear explosions, is still relevant to this dynamic.

Drone video feeds can be directly uploaded onto the internet and function as a form of entertainment, which transforms war into a spectacle. Battle scenes are apprehended one-dimensionally, through vision alone and through only perceiving humans from above as black and white figures or silhouettes. I have shown how these images favour a distorted understanding of the reality of the war, which appears to viewers as a video game. This transforms them into voyeurs of war. In section 8.4, I further showed how viewers reproduce reductive understandings of their perceived enemies, venting their frustrations on the latter. Thus drone technology arguably partially automates the production of ideology. However, to answer RQ1.1, it is not so much drone operators that come to believe ideologies surrounding precision strikes and black and white understandings of the war. Rather, it is the ordinary people viewing this footage.

In 1979, Anders wrote a preface to the fifth edition of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (Anders [1956] 1961). While reasserting the validity of his theses on how the mass media conditions human life, he also acknowledged that televised images could, in some circumstances, serve to disseminate 'a reality, which without them, would remain unknown' (Anders [1979] 2002, 13, *my translation*). The case of drone footage finding its way onto

YouTube and becoming a mere spectacle whereby viewers cheer on the killings of people who they do not know, but on whom they project the image of the terrorist, denies this uncharacteristically hopeful avenue that Anders acknowledged in 1979. This footage does not make viewers pause to think about whether the extreme levels of violence effected by drone strikes may not be counter-productive in the long term and favour increasing radicalisation. On the contrary, it gives viewers the impression that Western militaries are all-powerful and that those killed are guilty, as they are simply viewed as enemies. Indeed drone strikes are seen as both technologically and ethically advanced, as they appear to be 'surgical' (Raymond Cassiday 2020) (B.13.6).

## 9. Domination: Dating App Design, Individualistic Sex and Surveillance

### 9.1 Introduction

My research question for the domination section in the dating app case study was RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users?

The themes of user behaviour and surveillance tie into the debate over whether dating apps offer a predominantly emancipatory or regressive set of affordances. In academic research, dating apps have been presented both as instruments of sexual liberation and oppression. On the one hand, dating apps are shown to allow people, and especially women, greater sexual freedom. Hence Bergström argues that

the discretion of online encounters is keenly felt by women, for whom it translates into an opening up of a horizon of possibilities. Sheltered from surrounding gazes they can now access a sexuality for itself more easily. (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §69, *my translation*)

Thompson speaks of a space where women ‘have an almost unprecedented ability to search for and selectively respond to potential dates’ (Thompson 2018, 84). Chan equally discusses how dating app use helps ‘women’s reworking of the traditional sexual script that stresses sexual exclusivity’ (Chan 2018, 309). On the other hand, other research has highlighted the new forms of sexual harassment connected to dating app use. Shaw (2016) highlights female resistance to lewd comments online. Gillet (2018) analyses intimate intrusions online in the form of unwanted sexual images women often receive. Lauckner et al. (2019) analyse the practice of catfishing (deceiving users by creating false identities online). Finally, Illouz (2012) argues that with internet dating,

love circulates in a marketplace of unequal competing actors [...] some people command greater capacity to define the terms in which they are loved than others. (Illouz 2012, 6)

Her conception comes closest to my own argument, which highlights how the structure of dating apps incorporates aspects of dominant cultures relating to sex and romance, such as lad culture (see Lewis, Marine and Kenney 2018, Nichols 2018). They thus tend to organise sexuality and romance following competitive lines, offering affordances for individualistic expressions of sexuality and love.

I take Bergström's work as the best illustration of techno-euphoric conceptions that equate 'technological progress with social progress' (Anders [1980] 2011, 16). This is because she explicitly opposes Illouz's conception. She presents an overall optimistic picture that links the advent of dating apps with progress in the domain of sexual liberation. Nevertheless, Bergström also discusses how

On the internet as elsewhere, interactions take place within clearly defined social frames: they have as their principle feminine reserve and take place under the shadow of masculine violence (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §33, *my translation*)

This aspect of Bergström's analysis enters into a tension with her claim that dating apps allow for a freer 'emancipatory' (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §7, *my translation*) sexuality for women. Indeed she speaks of the 'ritualistic character' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §65, *my translation*) of feminine reserve on dating apps stating that female 'prudence is a social expectation' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §62, *my translation*). It functions as a 'permanent reminder that violence is always on the horizon of the possible' (Bergström 2019, 5, §65, *my translation*). Hence she states that 'violence perpetrated against women is present in the seduction game' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §65, *my translation*).

In the following chapter, I argue that sexual violence exists within and outside dating app use. However, I employ Anders' theory and the concept of a continuum of sexual violence (Kelly 1987), which understands smaller and more apparently insignificant daily aggressions as playing into and legitimating more serious forms of sexual violence, to argue that the structure of dating apps offers affordances, and even encourages, practices that feed into

objectifying and individualistic expressions of sexual desire. This can be linked to the 'missing discourse of consent' (Thompson 2018, 80) analysed within dating app messages by feminist authors. It can further lead to serious instances of sexual harassment, as discussed by two of my female respondents. Therefore I understand regressive 'social expectation[s]' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §62, *my translation*) to be embedded within the design of dating apps. They are not exclusively linked to external 'social frames' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §33, *my translation*), as suggested by Bergström.

Hence, in section 9.2, I discuss the practice of using online profiles as a form of deception and how dating apps present affordances for harassment and intimidation. In section 9.3, I conduct an Anders-inspired structural analysis of dating app functioning. I discuss how the set of affordances offered by dating apps means that users often form individual conceptions of their own desire and what they want to achieve through dating app use. Hence I look at the terms relating to commerce and finance (such as 'investment', 'return' and 'transactional') that users employ to describe their use of dating apps. I show how Anders was aware that modern ICTs could make individuals' feel less responsible for how they treated people. In section 9.4, I discuss sexually direct messages and photos, which feminist scholars have defined as 'intimate intrusions' (Gillett 2018, 212) and related to a 'missing discourse of consent' (Thompson 2018, 80). I discuss how Anders was aware of the issue of how images and recordings could be used for purposes of sexual gratification and how these involved issues of consent. In section 9.5, I discuss how within this context, surveillance on dating apps is ambivalent. On the one hand, many users see it as necessary in order to combat sex crimes. On the other hand, it is an attack on privacy through which individuals could be subjected to blackmail and persecution. This illustrates Anders' theory on ICTs and privacy.

## **9.2 Catfishing**

Anders was interested by the way visual and audio media complicates notions of presence and reality. He called the images viewers perceived through the television 'ghosts'



(Anders [1956] 2003, 126, *my translation*), because the people they represented acquired a phantom-like reality within the homes of viewers. Similarly, referring to WhatsApp, another messaging service, one user spoke of how ‘the person feels less like a person on the [dating] app than they do on WhatsApp because WhatsApp is part of my real life’ (H, female, age: 27). When prompted to expand on the expression ‘less of a person’ the user explains: ‘Em, it’s just a photo that’s sending me text’ (H, female, age: 27). The expression ‘real life’ further refers to the topos of online interactions being fake or virtual. The way ICTs can produce deceptive forms of reality was not lost on Anders. He highlighted how ‘in the processing of magnetic audio recording tapes there is no limit to cutting and editing and therefore, to falsification’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 162). Indeed the user’s expression ‘just a photo... sending me text’ contains the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that the dating app profile may be misrepresentative of the person who is actually using it.

In the below section, I show how dating app users can upload digitally modified, old or generally unrepresentative images and supply false information about height, weight, etc., to create false profiles. This process is known as catfishing. Generally, catfishing involves the creation of ideal profiles that have a too-good-to-be-true quality. These are aimed at enticing and misleading other users. In the most extreme cases, catfishers create a completely false online persona, the catfish, which other users interact with as though it were a real person. Thus some catfishers can be understood as con artists of the digital era, while others make more modest attempts to cheat the system to obtain more in-person meetings. Anders focussed on how falsification could make individuals vulnerable to baseless prosecutions and state violence. In contrast, I look at how falsification on dating apps is a moderate form of breach of consent aimed at deceiving and emotionally manipulating users. I discuss two of my respondent’s accounts of such deceptions to show how this can nevertheless pave the way for serious forms of harassment.

In my sample of participants, more women than men I spoke to had experienced instances of deception on dating apps. Instances of deception discussed by men amounted to examples of online scams whereby fake profiles would direct users onto websites that

'would then prompt you for banking details and things like that' (K, male, age: 30). Alternatively, they related to the modest use of 'profile enhancing software' (L, male, age: 28), essentially the Photoshopping of images used on profiles to render them more attractive. Women, on the other hand, spoke of deception being produced through lying about height. One user said: 'if you say that you're 6' and you're clearly not, like 5'5[,] it's just not cool that you lie about stuff like that' (N, female, age: 30). Indeed, another user spoke of being deceived in this way and described her reaction as one of shock and intense discomfort. She stated:

when I looked at him honestly I was just shocked and I just couldn't continue the conversation or anything. I was just like: No I can't talk to you. And, you know, if we chat like a friend of course it's OK. But then he starts keeping on touching me and I was just like no no no. [...] So afterwards I went back and I looked at his profile to see what he said. And he definitely cheated about his height in the profile. (O, female, age: 30)

In this testimony, the participant adopts a perspectivisation and intensification discursive strategy to convey the distress she experienced in this situation. She uses free direct speech ('No, I can't talk to you') to place the listener in her shoes to better convey the emotions she felt. She further uses utterances that convey feeling, such as 'no no no'. The repetition of 'no' participates in an animating prosody discursive device that intensifies the illocutionary force (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) of the expression of distress the user felt.

This testimony highlights how deception on dating apps affects issues of consent. Through the continuum theory of sexual violence (Kelly 1987, 2012), these instances of deception can be considered a small form of breach of consent that could pave the way for more severe forms of the latter. Indeed another female user spoke of an instance of deception, or catfishing, saying 'it was a really negative experience [...] I felt so unsafe to the point where I thought he was gonna follow me home and like attack me or something' (N, female, age: 30).

She explains: 'So it was an example of catfishing, so I think the photos were just like really, really old. And also he just kind of lied on his profile' about his height (N, female, age: 30). She further explained:

you go on this date, and you kind of feel like there is no chemistry. Well, I didn't feel like there was anything but I felt: I'm already here, we're already one drink in, so that's fine. I can always excuse myself after. So we started... (N, female, age: 30)

The user employs deictics ('you go on this date') as a perspectivation strategy to place the listener in her shoes (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). She further employs free direct speech to convey nonchalant state of mind ('Already here... so that's fine'). However, she explains that, later, after she found an excuse to leave after one drink, her date insisted on walking her to the station. The user then explains:

And then he said: Why don't you text me when you're done and then I can come over and then we can, like, have some fun. And then I said: I'm not interested, thank you. I'm just not interested. And then he just turned into like... he became quite aggressive. He started saying... This is in public in a tube station and I still felt unsafe. Oh you know, what the fuck is wrong with girls like you, like why would you appear to be enjoying yourself and then, you know, flirt with me and then you turn around and say that you're not interested. That's fucking bullshit. And so then I said: I'm sorry, I'm just not interested, so I'm gonna go. Please leave. And I was quite scared because I thought like: Is he gonna follow me? to the, like, tube I'm going on, and then follow me... like I don't know. As a woman you get quite scared. (N, female, age: 30)

In this testimony the user similarly uses perspectivisation and intensification discursive strategies using free direct speech ('Oh you know...girls like you') and expressive speech acts ('Is he gonna follow me?') to convey to the listener the distress and surprise that she felt in this situation. For instance, she uses indirect speech acts in the form of questions instead of assertions to intensify the feeling of distress and disbelief she is describing. Hence she states: 'Is he gonna follow me? to the, like, tube I'm going on, and then follow me?... like I don't know' (N, female, age: 30).

Her account demonstrates how deception on dating apps, in this case using old photographs that make the user appear much younger, can be followed by more serious

forms of harassment, intimidation and aggression. Her aggressor uses expletives and indirect speech acts such as questions instead of assertion ('what is wrong...you') as an intensification discursive strategy to produce intimidation (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). He uses nomination discursive strategy to negatively discursively construct the user. Hence he uses the sexist anthroponym 'girls like you'. He further uses fallacious argumentative strategies such as *argumentum ad hominen* (the personal attack through the use of the sexist anthroponym) and *non sequitur* composition fallacy. Indeed the aggressor blames the user for his perception of her 'appear[ing] to enjoy' herself and 'flirt[ing] with' him, implying that this means that she owes him sex.

Her aggressor employs the affordances of the dating app, which mean that she has invested time and energy to come to the meeting and hence is inclined to go along with the date because 'we're already here' (N, female, age: 30), to then pressurise her. He further uses the fact that she is alone and has her contact details to put further pressure on her even after the meeting has ended. Indeed the user explains that he continued to bully her by 'follow[ing] up with a very long text continuing to say all this stuff. And I had to block him, like block his number and everything' (N, female, age: 30).

In this chapter, my argument is not that the virtuality of dating app communications creates more affordances for instances of harassment and sexual violence to occur than other environments. Kavanaugh has shown how there are equally significant affordances for sexual violence to happen in a music club environment (Kavanaugh 2013), for instance. However, I do highlight the negative dimension of what Bergström has called the 'dis-embedding' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §7) dimension of dating apps, namely that they separate sexual and romantic encounters from broader forms of sociality. This means that users must often face their aggressors on their own without the help of friends, or other members of the music scene close by who could intervene — as related by Kavanaugh (2013, 30). This highlights a problem within Bergström's idea that this dis-embedding, atomising dimension of dating app use is sexually freeing and emancipatory.

Anders could not predict the advent of dating apps and the proliferation of online profiles as a means of communication. However, Anders' theory already described the occurrence, during his life, of people spending time with televised images as though they were intimate friends. He thus called them television viewers' 'false intimate friends' (Anders [1956] 2003, 121) and 'phantom slaves' (Anders [1956] 2003, 121). He stated that, in these 'portable chums[,...] we no longer see substitutes for real people, but our real friends' (Anders [1956] 2003, 122). These descriptions highlight how Anders considered the effect created by televised images as deceptive. This applies to dating apps where profiles of users can similarly be deceptive, as users present an idealised or fake image of themselves.

Anders' work in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I and II, which focuses on the link between technology and commodities, explains what might drive people to do this. Here Anders states:

it is correct to say that our world is, in advance, a universe of advertisements. It consists in things that offer themselves to us and solicit us. Advertising is a mode of existence of our world. (Anders [1980] 2011, 109)

Anders perceived how there was a strong drive for all objects within advanced capitalist societies to become objects of consumption and hence to contain a soliciting, manipulative dimension. This is relevant to catfishers constructing false profiles promoting idealised images of themselves or others in order to lure unsuspecting users. Anders further speaks of how

In addition to the "falsifications of commodities", which everyone knows, today there are also corresponding falsifications of activity (which are strictly related to the falsifications of commodities). (Anders [1980] 2011, 114)

The concept of 'falsification of activity' is relevant to catfishing on dating apps. Users interacting with fake profiles are conducting a form of false communication, as the person they think they are speaking to is not real. Those who fall prey to catfishers may flirt online with fake representations, further experiencing what are arguably falsified emotions, as they are based on a mere profile. They finally go to meet the person on the other end of the

profile for a date in a sexual or romantic setting on the false basis that they found their pictures attractive. Instead of finding themselves on a date, they suddenly find themselves in a predatory situation where the catfisher may attempt to bully them into having sex. Hence their activity of chatting/flirting and getting ready for the date has been falsified by the false character of the commodity, the catfish profile. What they were really doing was making themselves into an object for someone else's predatory form of sexual gratification.

Next, I turn to how the general framework of dating apps also fosters a more general, though admittedly less extreme, individualistic dimension within dating app use.

### **9.3 A 'numbers' game' in a 'separate moral universe'**

Bergström (2019) discusses how 'on the internet social norms do not evaporate' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §13, *my translation*). She further states that 'although online services change the conditions in which sexuality is exercised, interactions do not escape social regulation' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §3, *my translation*). For instance, flirtation scripts on dating apps 'take place under the shadow of masculine violence' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §33, *my translation*). For Bergström, this is one factor that explains 'feminine reserve' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §33, *my translation*) on these platforms. Indeed '[b]y presenting themselves as forthcoming, women risk being perceived as unconditionally available' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §54). Hence Bergström explains:

For women, [feminine reserve] not only implies presenting a modest public image and refusing explicit advances, it also consists, more broadly, in displaying temperance within interactions with men. Firstly, this means not making the first move. (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §44, *my translation*)

Hence Bergström highlights how heterosexual men tend to be forward and enterprising on dating apps, while heterosexual women take on a more passive role.

Below, I connect this dynamic not just to external social norms and the threat of male violence, as Bergström does, but also to the very structure of dating apps. This encompasses both the set of affordances offered by their interface, or software, and those offered by

smartphone hardware more generally, which is designed to connect physically distanced individuals. I highlight how specific affordances, embedded within the software design of dating apps, structure seduction as a competitive 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) in which users invest 'time and effort' (R, male, age: 30). This plus users' physical isolation encourages them to form individualistic goals at the outset, even before meeting their partners. Consequently, I show how some users of dating apps do not identify with their behaviour on the platforms. They speak of following 'lower moral standards' (E, male, age: 21) when using dating apps than they would in other circumstances. In the next section, I further detail how this may contribute towards the climate of a 'missing discourse of consent' (Thompson 2018, 80) that Thompson links to dating app use.

Research has shown (Wang 2018; Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018) that especially male users' engagement with dating apps is one based on the expectation of finding a sexual or romantic connection through their use. This contrasts with employing dating apps more broadly for 'validation' (H, female, age: 27), which may include simply using them to receive compliments or interest from other users. For instance, Wang has surveyed how gay male dating app users in China 'game' (Wang 2018, 187) the interface features of dating apps because this offers them a "'direct', 'efficient' [and] 'convenient'" (Wang 2018, 187) user experience. Indeed, one of my respondents spoke of Grindr, a gay hook-up app, as a 'good channel' (M, male, age: 30) to account for a 'physical need' (M, male, age: 30). The topics of functionality this user employed shows how especially male users of dating apps often seek directness and use dating apps with a pre-conceived goal in mind.

When asked what his motivation for using dating apps was, one of my participants replied: 'sex basically' (L, male, age: 28). A few of my respondents further referred to the topics of functionality stating that their use of dating apps was an 'investment' (R, male, age: 30; H, female, age: 27; C, male, age: 23). One stated that it was an 'investment of time and effort' (R, male, age: 30). He further explained: 'it becomes like a monetary kind of investment and return kind of play' (R, male, age: 30). Here the user employs a nomination

(‘time’, ‘effort’, ‘monetary’, ‘return’) and predication strategy (‘investment’), based on the metaphor of a monetary investment (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). These discursively construct his use of dating apps as an activity that is linked to his expectation of personal gain. This is obtained from their use in the form of sexual and romantic relations. The notions of time, effort monetary gain and games (‘play’) are connected to the topoi of numbers (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 79), competition and individual success. It is not clear whether the respondent considered dating apps a monetary investment because he paid for a subscription to access ‘boost’ (Tinder.com 2021) features on the interface, or not. Arguably the affordance to do this highlights a structural tendency embedded within their interface that transforms dating app use into a monetary investment or game. Indeed the topoi of the expression ‘boost’ is connected to that of casino and slot machines. Anders described Japanese gambling pachinko parlours in *The Obsolscence of Man*, vol. II, stating: ‘Anatomically, this *pachinko* [slot machine] belongs in any case to the same genus as her sisters in the factory, all drenched in oil’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 49).

Another respondent detailed the general functioning of dating apps. He gave an insight into why time spent on them, regardless of whether a subscription has been paid or not, could be perceived as an ‘investment’ (R, male, age: 30) looking for a ‘return’ (R, male, age: 30). He and others described dating apps as ‘a numbers’ game’ (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27), further referring to a topoi of numbers, gambling, competition and individual gain. The user explained:

Well basically for men, I would say – maybe not for women, I don’t know – if you want to actually meet a girl, you have to have a lot of prospects. So you have to chat up lots of different girls. First of all, in order to have the matches, you have to spend a lot of time swiping or whatnot till you get the matches. And then you have to have lots of prospects lined up so that you can actually have bait (L, male, age: 28)

Here the user refers to the action of swiping on dating app interfaces. Many dating app interfaces rely on this motion to allow users to positively or negatively judge profiles, depending on the direction of the swipe. Each profile (containing pictures and sometimes a short text) disappears and is iteratively replaced by another profile after each swiping



motion is complete. Users who have mutually swiped-right on each other's profiles are connected, or 'matched' (Preston 2021). This enables them to send direct messages to each other. The infinitely repetitive nature of this process highlights why dating app use can be perceived as a 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) and an 'investment in time and effort' (R, male, age: 30). Swiping more times increases the likelihood of matches and meetings. Indeed user L refers to the topos of numbers ('lots of'). He additionally refers to the topos of time, stating: 'you have to spend a lot of time swiping' (L, male, age: 28). The imperative verb tense ('have to') further refers to the topos of constraint and constitutes a predication strategy that constructs the action of swiping as similar to a job. This highlights how the functioning of dating apps means that their use is an 'investment in time' (R, male, age: 30) where something is transactionally expected in return.

The user further employs the term 'prospects' to designate other users of the app he has matched with. Prospects is a term borrowed from the topos of business and commerce. It refers to prospective buyers, customers or clients. Hence the user employs a nomination strategy that discursively constructs other users as buyers rather than potential sexual and romantic partners. This contributes toward a perspectivisation strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that employs the metaphor of clients to expresses the respondent's distance from his potential partners. He further refers to the action of online flirting as one of 'lin[ing] up so that you can actually have bait' (L, male, age: 28). 'Bait' here refers to achieving an in-person meeting and is related to the topos of fishing or entrapping animals. This expression participates in a predication and nomination strategy based on the implicature that the process of flirting on dating apps is analogous to hunting and the users' potential partners are similar to prey. The expression 'lined up' participates in a nomination strategy that constructs the action of flirting as both strategic and based on comparing other users' against one-another. This de-individualises his potential partners and constructs them as interchangeable. This respondent's description of dating app functioning gives an insight

into how these platforms offer a set of affordances that encourages users to act individualistically and in an emotionally distanced fashion.

Discursive strategy	Linguistic device	Citation	Users
Nomination strategy	Commercial anthroponyms:	prospects	L, male, age: 28
	Gaming anthroponyms:	matches	L, male, age: 28; N, female, age: 30; P, male, age: 31
	Hunting/gaming metaphors:	numbers' game; game; have bait; swiping...till you get the matches;	L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27
	Verbs or nouns used to denote processes or actions of online flirting:	chat up lots of different girls; a lot of time swiping	L, male, age: 28
Predication strategies	Commercial adjectives:	Investment of time and effort; return; transactional; monetary;	R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27
Topoi	Topos of hunting:	have bait; physical need; alpha male group	R, male, age: 30; L, male, age: 28; P, male, age: 31; M, male, age: 30

Topos of gaming:	game; a numbers' game; swipe; match	L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27
Topos of investing and finance:	a monetary investment and return kind of play	R, male, age: 30
Topos of functionality:	channel for a physical need; what I needed at the time	M, male, age: 30; E, male, age: 21
Topos of numbers	Numbers' game; lots of	L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27

*Table 9.3.1: Dating app users' discourse and the topoi of gaming, hunting and commerce*

Table 9.3.1 shows how users' discourses contain nomination and predication strategies and topoi. All these discursive strategies relate to the sphere of numbers, hunting, gaming, commerce and monetary investment and finance. These spheres share common characteristics, as commerce and financial investment can have a competitive predatory character. Moreover, numbers are involved in games and finance. Within the context of dating app use, the dominant common denominator uniting all these themes is that of competition and individualism. Indeed hunting involves prey, games set participants against one-another and finance involves betting against others. Hence the table shows how dating app users discourses highlight how the structure of dating apps promotes individualistic and competitive rationalisations and behaviour.

This individualistic atmosphere can sometimes lead to a conflict of interests between users who are nevertheless flirtatiously interacting with one-another. Though different to a breach of consent, this individualistic dynamic illustrates how flirtations can, to some

extent, become one-sided rather than responsive to the other persons' desires. Indeed another male respondent explained how, using dating apps, he felt:

a bit of regret, regret and guilt, because I felt like my objectives and the other person's weren't the same for using the app. Like, some people I've met have wanted something a lot deeper and less transactional. [...] but I just always saw them more as a tool to find something a bit more short term, to be honest. So yeah expectations is the only thing that I'd say was disappointing about using them. Different expectations. (A, male, age: 27)

This user insists on how, on dating apps, his and his partners' individual expectations differed and were hard to combine. He further employs the topos of commerce, indirectly describing his encounters as 'transactional'. Indeed many of my respondents (R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27) used this term to describe dating app encounters. The above user employs the euphemistic expression 'a bit more short-term' and the verbal tee-up 'to be honest'. This participates in a mitigation strategy that reduces the illocutionary and hence deontic status (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) of his communication of 'regret and guilt' for seeking 'transactional' encounters that may have stressed his partners emotionally.

Another user equally spoke to the individualism present on dating apps by employing a topos of morality and responsibility. This user described how the set of affordances offered by dating apps influenced him to act in a self-interested fashion that did not fit with his 'moral standards' in 'real life' (E, male, age: 21). Indeed he called dating apps a 'separate moral universe' (E, male, age: 21). I asked him:

–How would you characterise your behaviour on the app? do you think that it's authentic? does it fit with your personality?

No, I don't think... I think that I judge myself by a lower moral standard inside the app than outside of it. It's almost kind of like a separate moral universe where people don't expect very much of one-another and therefore you can get away with a lot more. Em, I think I... I don't like to think that my behaviour on that app was representative of who I am as a person outside of it, but that's probably a question

that I should think about a lot more but em... Yeah, I don't think it's... Sorry, repeat your question one more time.

–I guess: are you happy with the way you've used dating apps? Do you think that this fits with your personality?

Em, I am happy with it in that I think it gave me what I needed at the time. But I don't think it fits with my personality in terms of who I am and how I treat people in real life. (E, male, age: 21)

This user also employs the topos of need ('what I needed at the time') linked to the idea that dating apps are functional and cater to users' individual need for sex and romance. He further employs the topos of individualism, stating 'people don't expect very much of one-another'. He also speaks of being able to 'get away with a lot more'. The expression 'get away' participates a predication strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that constructs sexual and romantic interactions as zero-sum games, where one can gain at the expense of others. Finally, he refers to the topos of virtual and 'real life' identities being separate, stating: 'I don't like to think that my behaviour ... was representative of who I am as a person outside of it' and 'I don't think it fits with ... how I treat people in real life'. This litotes participates in a mitigation strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to reduce the illocutionary force of the user's expression of moderate shame and avoidance of feelings of responsibility for the fact that he may have mistreated people on dating apps. In fact, he states: 'I judge myself by lower moral standards inside the app'. Moreover, he refers to this being different to 'how I treat people in real life', which he on the contrary identifies with stating that this is 'who I am'. When prompted, he asserts that his behaviour on dating apps did not fit with his personality. However, it is not clear whether he regrets this behaviour. Indeed he states that he is 'happy with it' because it fulfilled a personal need.

In his open letter to Claus Eichmann, Anders states that individuals caught in a system of machines must:

“play the game” by working with the same perfection and the same solidity as [machines]; in short, [they must] become [...] co-mechanical’ (Anders [1964] 2015, 92, my translation)

User L described how the very functioning of dating apps involve treating people like pawns in a ‘numbers’ game’ (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) aimed at achieving one’s individual objectives. This is relevant to users E and A who relate participating in behaviour that may not be serious enough to constitute a form of domination but which they nevertheless regret or do not identify with. They do not see this behaviour as fitting with their personalities but consider it to be part of how dating apps work. These last two accounts highlight how technological domination and alienation overgrasp one-another. Promethean shame arises from a non-identification with one’s actions. This is enabled by technological affordances for separating off the latter from one’s everyday experience. This dissociating dynamic constitutes an affordance for technological domination.

Indeed, the users’ non-identification with their behaviour on dating apps is reminiscent of drone operators’ non-identification with their part in drone warfare, which they could equally consider to be part of a separate universe. For instance, recruitment videos actively tell operators to ‘compartmentalize that stuff’ (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2) in order to manage ‘combat stress’ (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2). The vague expression ‘that stuff’ refers to the violence operators have been involved in. ‘[C]ombat stress’ is a euphemistic term that designates trauma. Together, these expressions participate in a mitigation strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that aims to reduce the deontic status of operators’ concern for their experience of war. The verb ‘compartmentalize’ enacts a nomination strategy that constructs this experience as separate from them. Drone operator Lynn Hill thus discusses ‘compartmentaliz[ing] the war between your real life and your war life’ (Reed 2013, 10min). Here Hill uses the expression ‘real life’ that many dating app users employ (16 out of 18). This expression contains the implicature that actions mediated by dating apps or drones are virtual and do not fit into

users' or operators' personal lives. One of my respondents similarly described how dating apps are 'a slightly different part of your life which you can almost isolate, which might be just a reflection of how I like to compartmentalise things in my life' (Q, male, age: 27). The common use of the expression 'compartmentalise' highlights how, in both instances, the very structure of the technology offers affordances for individuals to act in ways that do not fit with their usual moral standards. This alienating, fragmenting dimension thus offers affordances for domination.

According to Bergström, the design of dating apps 'short-circuits' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §69, *my translation*) users' social entourage. This means that users' friends are 'deprived of control over their nascent sexual and romantic relations' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §69). In contrast, I argue that this separation is not 'emancipatory' (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §7, *my translation*) as maintained by Bergström. It is also atomizing and disempowering. It places initial interactions in an individualistic and competitive frame. This means that users become co-mechanised and "play the game" (Anders [1964] 2015, 92, *my translation*) of dating apps.

Discursive strategy	Discursive device	Citation	Users
Topoi	Topos of morality	regret and guilt; I judge myself; lower moral standards; separate moral universe; how I treat people; a question that I should think about a lot more	E, male, age: 21; A, male, age: 27
	Topos of individualism	people don't expect very much from one another; my objectives and the other person's weren't the same; different expectations; wanted something a lot deeper and less transactional	E, male, age: 21; A, male, age: 27

	Topos of online vs real life	separate... universe; real life; my behaviour on the app...who I am outside it	M, male, age: 30; G, male, age: 27; L, male, age: 28; S, female, age: 29; H, female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; D, female, age: 21; N, female, age: 30; Q, male, age: 27; K, male, age: 30; J, female, age: 29; I, male, age: 29; E, male, age: 21; R, male, age: 30
	Topos of subjective identity	who I am as person; my personality; how I treat people in real life	E, male, age: 21; A, male, age: 27

*Table 9.3.2: Dating app users' discourse and feelings of subjective identity and responsibility*

Table 9.3.2 shows how users of dating apps employ the topoi of morality, individualism, online vs real life and subjective identity. These topoi share in common an abstract ontological dimension. All are concerned with philosophical questions. For instance, individualism refers to a system of values. The topos of online vs real life questions the ontological status of online interactions. These are posited as virtual and therefore as not counting as much as 'real life', the person's offline identity. The topos of offline subjective identity concerns one's own values and systems of beliefs. Together the deployment of these topoi shows that some users take stock of their individualistic behaviour on dating app. They perceive this behaviour as being at odds with their values, identity and beliefs. This shows how the structure of dating apps offers affordances for potentially dominating behaviour that does not fit with users' moral standards, identity and beliefs.

#### **9.4 Dating app use and toxic gender scripts**

The climate of individualistic sexual desire just described means that many users employ directly sexual pick-up lines and send sexually explicit photos and requests. In keeping with many men's desire for directness and functionality on dating apps, this may constitute an



attempt to ensure that the resultant interactions are sexual from the outset, perhaps to increase the chances of them leading to sex. For instance, one of my respondents described how: 'Well, um, my line was... on dating apps, if a girl asked me what I'm doing... I'll say: You – if you're about tonight?' (P, male, age: 31). The user employs a play on words to escalate the conversation, giving it an overtly sexual tone. The tag question 'if you're about tonight?' participates in a mitigation strategy to reduce the illocutionary force of the users' direct, and potentially unwanted, sexual advance.

Thompson has highlighted how direct pick-up lines on dating apps could 'also be read as sexual acts in themselves for the men, who seek gratification by sending explicit, and unasked for, sexual messages online' (Thompson 2018, 80). Other feminist authors have highlighted how some direct sexual advances on dating apps constitute a form of 'intimate intrusion' (Gillett 2018, 212). Thompson analyses content on feminist call out web pages, where women post screenshots of sexist comments that they have received on dating apps. She argues that such advances feature a "'missing discourse of consent" [...] as they included, amongst other things, demands or commands for (casual) sex, as well as threats of sexual violence' (Thompson 2018, 80). Thompson comments that 'these men show little to no interest in what the woman's desires might be and whether she might even want to engage in such conversations' (Thompson 2018, 81). Hence, in this section, I highlight how the structure of dating apps tends to reproduce toxic gender scripts.

I argue that there is a continuum between the affordances dating apps offer as functional solutions to users' individualistic desires and issues relating to consent. As noted in the previous section, often on dating apps especially male users play a 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27), making advances to multiple other users at the same time. They frequently do this to obtain in-person meetings leading to sex. Indeed one of my respondents stated:

I think that a lot people get a lot of inappropriate messages. Like a disproportionately high number of messages which were quite inappropriate. And it wasn't very enjoyable (N, female, age: 30)

Another user said: 'I met guys who immediately want to go to another type of texting media, just because they want to get a photo of you' (O, female, age: 30).

Anders was interested in the technological mediation of sexuality, exploring its darker side. In his 1958 essay 'The Obsolescence of Privacy' (Anders [1980] 2011, 145-174), Anders considers the market for secret audio recordings of sexual encounters, stating:

The fact that people, and even young people, are surrounded by this kind of commodity; that they can purchase the most extreme indiscretion; that they can learn to take pleasure in the pleasure of others; that they enjoy sexuality indirectly by way of things and the defencelessness of those who are spied upon: all of these things are so repugnant that, in comparison, the most vulgar satisfactions are simply the quintessence of probity and purity. (Anders [1980] 2011, 158)

Here Anders demonstrates an interest in the question of consent and how new forms of technology render individuals vulnerable to intimate violations. In connecting the question of sexual violations to technology, Anders gives the notion of intimate intrusions a systemic frame. Such violations are now not solely connected to individuals, who may be innocent 'young people' (Anders [1980] 2011, 158), but to the system that commercialises sex and produces techno-commodities catering for individual sexual gratification at the expense of others. Through linking the notion of sexual intrusions to the structure of modern technology, Anders also shows how sexual intrusions are not just a question of individual wrongdoing. They can be founded on social and technological systems.

This conception moves in the same direction as contemporary feminist authors who oppose the fact that 'male violence is widely considered to be individually motivated' (Walby 1990, 128). In contrast, Walby argues that 'male violence against women has all the characteristics one would expect of a social structure' (Walby 1990, 128). Walby states that '[m]ale violence against women includes rape, sexual assault, wife beating, workplace sexual harassment and child sexual abuse' (Walby 1990, 128). Walby argues against abstract definitions of violence (Walby, Towers and Francis 2014). For her, violence is always connected to physical assault. Nevertheless, her conception is one where acts of violence are not extraordinary occurrences. They are integrated into everyday sexual scripts, or

mores. Similarly, I argue that the ‘missing discourse of consent’ (Thompson 2018, 80) on dating apps described above reproduces a culture that can serve to legitimate instances of sexual harassment.

Walby refers to Jackson’s work, which argues that rape ‘is not a manifestation of personal pathology, but of the undercurrent of hostility that runs through our sexual scripts’ (Jackson 1978, 35). Jackson further argues:

Explanations for rape are not to be sought for within the individual psyche of the rapist or victim but within our accepted sexual mores, for it is these which condition interaction in rape settings and which provide vocabularies of motive for the rapist (Jackson 1978, 29)

This conception is relevant to dating apps. Dating apps offer a set of affordances that is strongly influenced by hook-up and lad culture. These construct seduction as a competitive game. They arguably also represent a virtual version of speed dating, a practice which emerged within advanced capitalist systems where individuals had little time to socialise. These are dominant, highly competitive and individualistic cultures that pre-existed dating apps and which are connected to other media and power-structures. They have arguably become ingrained within the technological structure of dating apps.

Indeed Jackson’s description of dominant sexual scripts from the late 1970s fits perfectly with the competitive element of dating app functioning and the notion of ‘feminine reserve’ (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §33, *my translation*) outlined in section 9.3. On dating apps, as elsewhere, men are not only ‘expected to take the lead but to establish dominance over the woman, to *make her* please him, and his ‘masculinity’ is threatened if he fails to do so’ (Jackson 1978, 31, *italics in original*). Thus especially male users employ the topos of monetary investment, games and hunting to describe their use of dating apps (R, male, age: 30; L, male, age: 28; D, female, age: 21). These spheres are connected to hegemonic masculinities and perceptions of self-worth, which are based on ‘identities such as aggression, competition, domination and control’ (Nichols 2018, 75) but may also include ‘strength, [...] physicality, wit and heterosexuality’ (Nichols 2018, 75). In section 9.3, I

connected this dimension to the general functioning of dating apps. But there are also elements of superficial design that exacerbate this culture.

A likely sponsored magazine piece presenting Tinder states:

You can see a full list of every profile that's liked you so that you can browse through and swipe either way on them while knowing they're interested in you.

Top Picks is a more recent Gold feature, which shows you a daily selection of profiles selected specifically for you by the Tinder algorithm. (Preston 2021)

This piece employs a nomination strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) based on metonyms ('full list'; 'every profile'; 'selection') that constructs other interested users as bountiful and at the disposal of the single (prospective) user it is addressing. It further employs a predication strategy based on the metaphor of 'browsing' and 'select[ing]' that constructs the process of initiating sexual and romantic connection as similar to shopping. The topos of 'browsing' also contains the implicature that the user is in control. The extract further refers to 'Top Picks', profiles that it recommends to other users. Like with 'selection', this expression discursively constructs (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) some users as chosen ('Picks') for others, implying that they are at their disposal. It further discursively qualifies some profiles as being 'Top'. This contains the implicature that users are on a hierarchy. Here, the piece is talking about special features for subscribers to its 'Gold' services. The topos of 'Gold' is also connected to that of high social standing and is equally employed by gambling slot machines. The general design of the app further contains affordances for quantifying and hierarchically ordering users. For instance, the number of likes each user has received are communicated to them through highly visible gold badges (Preston 2021). Users are further alerted to new messages through an attention-grabbing red dot on the interface (Preston 2021). When they tap on it, users see how many messages they have received.

Dating apps are consequently described by some men as a 'confidence boost' (P, male, age: 31), with the term 'boost' further evoking the topos of games. Alternatively, they are seen as triggers for insecurities relating to not belonging to the 'alpha male group' (P, male,

age: 31) or 'high-value males' (L, male, age: 27) classification. This may arise if the user does not get a number of matches that he deems sufficient. The expression 'alpha male' refers to the topos of the dominant male among animals. This expression participates in a nomination strategy based on membership categorisation device (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that constructs the ideal human male as a dominant, aggressive provider who attracts many women. The expression 'high-value males' participates in a predication strategy that similarly discursively constructs humans as existing on a narrow hierarchy of high or lower value individuals. The competitive and quantifying affordances of dating apps are thus compatible with patriarchal sexual scripts centred on male dominance outlined by Jackson (1978).

Contemporary work (Gillet 2018; Luckener et al. 2019) has shown how, on dating apps, deception, intimate intrusions and expectation for sex can pave the way for more serious forms of sexual aggressions. Among the female users I interviewed, two had direct experience of sexual harassment through dating apps and the remaining six were aware of the issue of security on the platforms. One user said: 'I bumped into bad people through dating apps. For instance, some people were forcing you to have sex with them or doing something quite harassing in terms of stepping into my personal sphere' (O, female, age: 30). She further explained:

I did meet up with somebody and they were forcing me to do something that I didn't want. And I found it quite difficult to navigate through the scenario but it's just because I was trying to be polite. (O, female, age: 30)

The user employs a nomination strategy based on the verb 'forcing' to express the fact that she experienced an instance of coercion. The metaphor of navigation further conveys the difficulty of this situation. The account of this user highlights how dating app encounters involve the awkwardness of meeting someone new one-to-one. Users invest time, energy in coming to meetings. Hence the interviewee refers to 'trying to be polite', expressing the fact that users may go through with a meeting even if they have immediate second thoughts upon seeing the person. In reference to advances made by men, another user explains: 'as a

woman you sometimes feel pressured. And you feel like: Oh you should just like go through with it' (N, female, age: 30). This user employs modal particles ('Oh'; 'just') and free indirect speech as part of an intensification strategy that conveys the sense of resignation and pressure she feels in such situations.

I argue that the functioning of dating apps, which offers affordances for directness — for instance, through supposedly connecting users on the basis of feelings of attraction — and presents itself as a competitive game, can foster expectations for sex in some users. This may make some less mindful of issues of consent. Tinder's online magazine, *Swipe Life* (Tinder 2020b), acknowledges the danger of rape and sexual violence. However, it strikingly treats them in a flippant manner. An article on Tinder's online magazine states: 'you don't get bonus points for pulling out after someone says no. [...] Use your words not your dick to get consent' (Jackson 2018). This statement uses deictics ('you', 'your'), free direct speech ('someone says no') and explicit profanity ('dick'; 'pulling out') to express the speakers' chummy proximity to a prospective user committing rape. The statement further relates to the topos of games ('bonus points') to discursively qualify dating app encounters as light-hearted and fun, even when sexual violence and rape is being discussed. The statement further employs litotes ('you don't get bonus points') to mitigate the illocutionary force (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) and deontic status of the warning it is giving to users to not to rape and sexually assault one-another. This statement highlights how dating app companies, and the gamified designs of their interfaces, are not neutral. They are imbued with lad culture (see Lewis, Marine and Kenney 2018, Nichols 2018).

My understanding contrasts with Bergström's (2019) view that dating app users are subject to external social pressures that are not tied to the very structure and design of these technologies. Bergström dichotomises between technological and social frames, stating that 'though external control diminishes on the Internet, internalised control increases' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §70, *my translation*). This she explains through user's adherence to social expectations urging them to self-regulate their usage of dating apps.

Instead, I argue that social control is exerted onto users through the very structure of dating apps, as well as through external social frames.

Given the risk of sexual violence on dating apps, some users stated that they were happy for their online chats to be surveilled. For instance, some users stated: 'from my perspective I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing. Because I bumped into bad people through dating apps' (O, female, age: 30). Others said: 'One-hundred, a hundred percent. Because it's a safety thing, because you don't know what kind of people are out there' (P, male, age: 31). However, the same user later added:

But yes, I don't know, it's weird because it's a sort of an infringement on their privacy, innit. So I don't know. Where's the like middle ground of safety and infringement for... I don't know. (P, male, age: 31)

This user accurately expressed the conundrum of surveillance on dating apps. His statement is related to a topos of threat (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 77). This implies that questions of security legitimate surveillance. It frames the question of surveillance in terms of the desirability of finding a 'middle ground', implying that just measure and balance are desirable when it comes to surveilling for the purpose of security.

Next, I turn to evaluating surveillance on dating apps through the lens of Anders' theory. The latter suggests that, in some respects, surveillance on dating apps could also be understood as a form of intimate intrusion on users' privacy, as it occurs in the sensitive sphere of sex and romance. This intrusion is tied to the structure and affordances of smartphone technology and dating apps, which directly store user chats and encourage individuals to reveal sensitive details on their profiles.

### **9.5 Surveillance on dating apps: justified by questions of security and a culture of openness but also perpetuating systemic forms of intrusion**

Tinder's privacy policy says that it stores users' personal 'sensitive information' (Tinder 2018b) including the pictures that they upload, their bios, the information that they upload such as age gender, sexual orientation, height, weight, level of physical activity, etc., and the

content of their chats. Hinge, another dating app, suggests that users also upload information relating to whether they smoke, drink, take soft drugs and/or hard drugs. On the surface, uploading this sensitive information on the app is presented as a way to better 'match' individuals. However, it also means that users provide dating app companies with a host of sensitive personal information which can be transferred across borders and shared with unspecified authorities, third parties and separate companies (through mergers and acquisitions) (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). Dating app companies thus profit off this information, which can be employed for targeted advertising. The collection of sensitive data forms part of their business model.

Tinder and Hinge have opposite branding, with Tinder apparently being more directed towards hook-ups and Hinge seemingly being more relationship orientated. However, both platforms are owned by the same conglomerate, Match Group. This means that their privacy policies are identical. Tinder and Hinge's privacy policies state that they allow third parties to access user information to pursue their business interests. For instance, Tinder's privacy policy says: 'We keep your personal information only as long as we need it for legitimate business purposes (as laid out in Section 5) and as permitted by applicable law' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). This privacy policy uses a predication strategy that employs the topos of business ('legitimate business interests') where 'legitimate' evokes the just and right, to discursively qualify practices surrounding privacy as just and natural. The privacy policy's assertion that gathering sensitive data from users is a legitimate business practice illustrates Anders' observation that *'the experience of being a Peeping Tom is transformed into a marketable object'* (Anders [1980] 2011, 158). It also illustrates his prediction that the prohibition of surveillance devices would be said to 'represent an interference with business' (Anders [1980] 2011, 160). Here Anders accurately highlights how the fusion of economic factors with technological systems means that surveillance becomes a common-sense practice.

The above clause sends the reader to a different section, Section 5. The policy thus employs a tautological system of referencing as a mitigation strategy aimed at



accommodating vague language (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). This means that it gives as little detail as possible regarding its operations. Indeed Section 5 broadly defines legitimate business purposes as: 'Develop[ing], display[ing] and track[ing] content and advertising tailored to your interests on our services and other sites' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). Legitimate business interests also include fighting against 'wrongdoings' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020) and 'prevent[ing], detect[ing] and fight[ing] fraud or other illegal or unauthorized activities' and 'assist[ing] law enforcement' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). This clause exists in tension with the fact that Hinge, for instance, explicitly suggests users share their illegal drug use information on their platform. In terms of applicable laws and jurisdictions, Tinder and Hinge's privacy policy states: 'Sharing of information laid out in Section 6 sometimes involves cross-border data transfers, for instance to the United States of America and other jurisdictions' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). The privacy policy further states that:

We may transfer your information if we are involved, whether in whole or in part, in a merger, sale, acquisition, divestiture, restructuring, reorganization, dissolution, bankruptcy or other change of ownership or control. (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020)

It thus uses vague expressions such as 'wrongdoings', 'unauthorised activities', 'only as long as we need it', 'other jurisdictions' and 'change of ownership and control' as devices that participate in a mitigation strategy that attempts to reduce the illocutionary force and deontic status (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) of the information it is communicating. This is that users' data is held with limited accountability. Dating app companies will share this data if it benefits their economic interest, even if it causes potential harm to users.

For instance, when Grindr was acquired by a Chinese company the question of whether this gave access to the Chinese government to the sensitive information, including HIV status, of its users was raised (Aunspach 2020). Aunspach further highlights how: 'South Korea (Hancocks and Suk, 2017) and Egypt (Raghavan, 2017) are just two countries that have relied on Grindr to identify and jail queer individuals' (Aunspach 2020, 47). He also notes how: 'In the case of Grindr, its collection of users' sex practices, locations, and

serostatuses could make rich fodder for Chinese agents to coerce people who might not be openly queer into carrying out military and corporate espionage' (Aunspach 2020). These practices fit with Anders' early awareness that there are

many ways such information can be used: in order to discredit a person, to ruin him socially, to ruin his career or to ruin him politically, to deprive him of his privacy, all of these things do not require, when all is said and done, any use of such information in a trial or courtroom. (Anders [1980] 2011, 159)

The example of data collection leading to surveillance on dating apps further illustrates Anders' thesis that 'the means justify ends' (Anders [1956] 2003, 237, *my translation*). The technology may not originally have been designed to surveil users, and the recording of data occurred as a serendipitous by-product. However, an 'economic ontology' (Anders [1956] 2003, 175, *my translation*) fuses with systems of modern technology. This fosters the principle that: "There must be nothing that is not used" [and:] "Make everything serve some use" (Anders [1956] 2003, 175, *my translation*). Therefore the surveillance affordances offered by ICTs are likely to get translated into surveillance practices.

Anders was acutely aware of this dynamic. He highlighted that:

every society that makes use of these devices, acquires—and even must acquire—the habit of considering the person as totally deliverable, as someone whose delivery is permitted; [it] thus succumb[s] to the danger of sliding towards a totalitarianism that is also political. (Anders [1980] 2011, 151)

The fact that data transfers occur because of a merger and acquisition, or a request by authorities (hence legal systems); the fact that there is an economic incentive to keep the data (profit); but also the technological system itself which automatically records conversations, as user chats must be stored on external servers for the system to work: these are all interconnected factors that contribute towards regimes of surveillance.

When speaking about what could be seen as their intrusions into users' private conversations, Tinder and Hinge communicate their data collection practices as follows: 'Of course, we also process your chats with other users as well as the content you publish, as part of the operation of the services' (Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020). In this sentence the verbal

tee-up 'Of course' participates in a mitigation strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) through positioning the speaker as close to the reader. This reduces the illocutionary force of the communication that user private chats are surveilled. It also constitutes an expressive speech act, expressing a psychological state of sincerity (Searle [1979] 2005, 15). The aim is to convey to the reader that Tinder and Hinge sincerely believe the way they treat user data is natural and legitimate. It further serves to convey the sense that these companies work with users rather than against them. This indirect speech act (Dijk 1984, 126) thus aims at mitigating the illocutionary force and deontic status of what is in effect a warning the company is making that all uploaded user content is stored and used by the company to make profit. This data might also be shared with the authorities any country.

The verbal tee-up 'Of course' further illustrates Anders' idea that societies can become used to the notion of surveillance. It contributes towards a predication strategy that constructs the activity of surveillance as benign, common-sense and natural. The euphemistic expression 'we process your chats' constitutes a predication strategy which qualifies the action of surveilling and recording user interaction as necessary for the technical upkeep of dating apps. The statement further uses vague expressions such as 'as part of the operation of the services' as discursive devices that further play into a mitigation strategy that reduces the apparent significance of the treatment of user data, discursively constructing it as a technical necessity. However, this is not true because dating app companies could choose to encrypt private information sent between user and eliminate data when it is no longer needed.

Bumble is a dating app company that is not owned by the Match Group conglomerate. Bumble's privacy policy similarly uses omission as a mitigation (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) discursive strategy stating: 'Bumble does not sell your data and has not sold your personal data in the previous 12 months' (Bumble 2020). However, Bumble was founded in 2014, which leaves open the possibility that Bumble has sold personal data in the 5 years preceding the current privacy policy. The statement also uses the presupposition that selling is completely distinct from sharing information with third parties for the purposes of

advertising on site to imply that Bumble does not monetise the data. This is a predication strategy which constructs their data practices as neither profit-orientated nor potentially harmful to users.

Most of my participants (12 out of 18) had shared sensitive information about illicit drug use in the chat of dating apps (C, male, age: 23; O, female, age: 30; I, male, age: 29; H, female, age: 26; N, female, age: 30; J, female, age: 29; Q, male, age: 27; G, male, age: 27; S, female, age: 29; L, male, age: 28; B, male, age: 27; P, male, age: 31). One participant had uploaded this information on her profile on Hinge using the provided feature. She later had second thoughts and took the information down (H, female, age: 27). Participants were informed of data privacy policies during the interview and most (10 out of 18) said that they would be more careful in future about sharing such information. This corroborates with other findings showing that SNS users are evenly split between those who accept targeted advertising and those who would prefer to not see targeted advertising (Allmer et al. 2014). However, when these users are informed of the full extent of data mining on SNS, a sizeable proportion switch to opposing these data collection practices. Thus Allmer et al. state: 'We were able to observe a significant number of interviewees who switched to a negative perception of targeted advertising on social media' (Allmer et al. 2014, 63).

The fact that most users stated that they would be more careful going forward about what information they shared on dating apps illustrates Anders' argument that:

From the times of dictatorships we know that, from the moment when one considers that it is possible or even only not impossible that one is under surveillance, one feels and behaves differently than one did before, that is, in a more conformist way, when not in an absolutely conformist way. The unverifiable possibility of being under surveillance has a decisive capacity for moulding: it moulds the entire population. (Anders [1980] 2011, 156)

Indeed many of my participants expressed the feeling that they did not like their data being used as set out by the privacy policy. Similarly to Seignani's findings that users consider privacy policies as a form of invasion and '*selling my own self*' (Seignani 2013, 737), some

of my participants spoke of the invasive nature of data collection practices on dating apps. For instance, one participant stated:

It's very simple. If I go into a coffee shop to meet a person and I have a conversation, I don't believe there is any way shape or form imaginable where we will have a discussion about whether the coffeeshop owner should take and keep the conversations that I've been having with the other person. Like, there is no question; nobody would think that this is an okay question to ask. With the Internet, we are somehow asking ourselves this question. And like, no! The answer is still no. You are offering pretty much a place for people to talk. You are not offering a recording service for the KGB. (K, male, age: 29)

Through employing the topos of KGB surveillance this user seems to express frustration at the economically and technologically conditioned fact that on dating apps '*[t]he others [including the state] have become unavoidable*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 156).

Nevertheless, some users spoke of accepting such surveillance. Employing the topos of security, one user stated that surveillance was justified because 'it's a safety thing' (P, male, age: 31). He thus illustrated Anders' argument that through security concerns '*something immoral, spying, is transformed into a guarantee of morality*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 162, *italics in original*). The same user professed to having 'nothing to hide' (P, male, age: 31). This illustrates Anders' argument that a cultural shift accompanies surveillance devices. Indeed, according to Anders, in the era of privacy

the person who is ashamed is ashamed not because, or in any case not only because, his secret vices or transgressions are revealed, but because he is revealed. (Anders [1980] 2011, 160)

In contrast, in the present era, the idea that one might feel shame because his inner self is revealed is considered to be

a symptom of introversion (and therefore of "self- withdrawal", in the sense of being "closed off"); [...] this introversion is the sign of inhibition, of "repression"; and [...] all inhibitions [are seen to] lead eventually to frustrated social adaptation, that is, to defective conformation (Anders [1980] 2011, 162)

Hence for Anders the modern expression

*But I have nothing to hide*, proves that shame (in the sense of “having the need for shame”) is now identified with immorality, and shamelessness (in the sense of “not having the need for shame”) is identified with morality. (Anders [1980] 2011, 160, *italics in original*)

Subsequently, asserting one’s reluctance to be surveilled is accompanied by suspicion. Consequently, Anders states that: ‘Every one of us has been assigned the domestic task of transforming ourselves, by way of the lack of shame, into collaborators in the destruction of our own privacy’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 166).

Dating apps illustrate this cultural shift. On dating apps individuals are encouraged to present themselves in a coy manner as they would to a lover. However, whereas this was previously a private behaviour, now it occurs through images on public profiles. Dating app design moreover often actively encourages users to openly discuss their vices and sexual preferences, making this part of the process of setting up a profile and matching individuals (see Feeld in section 10.3). This illustrates Anders' provocative statements that: '*Our bodies have become universal property*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 164) and '*[s]exual relations have become universal property*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 164) which he related to the openness with which individuals discussed sexual details and their bodies on commercial magazines. Together these elements catered to the demands of the soft totalitarian systems Anders described. This was to 'to abolish the border between “outside” and “inside”' (Anders [1980] 2011, 159). Indeed Anders notes that

the totalitarian state will only be perfect if there is absolutely no “discretion” [...] “privacy” or “intimacy” in the psychological sense. (Anders [1980] 2011, 153)

Anders’ theory shows how the openness encouraged by apps and often depicted as a sign of progressiveness, can instead function as an instrument of social control.

Discursive strategy	Discursive device	Citation	Users
Nomination strategies	Value laden nouns:	wrongdoings; unauthorised activities	Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020

Predication strategies	Positive evaluative attributions:	legitimate business interests	Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020
Topoi and argumentative strategies	Topos of law and order and security:	it's a safety thing; to prevent, detect and fight fraud or other illegal or unauthorized activities; assist law enforcement	P, male, age: 31; Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020
Mitigation strategies	Vague expressions:	only as long as we need it; and other sites; and other jurisdictions; has not sold your data in the previous 12 months; we may transfer...change of ownership or control	Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020; Bumble 20
	Euphemistic expressions:	we process your chats as part of the operation of our services	Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020
	Verbal tee-ups and expressive speech acts:	Of course, we process you chats...	Tinder 2018b; Hinge 2020

*Table 9.5: Dating app privacy policies and the construction of surveillance as benign*

Table 9.5 shows the expressions used by privacy policies. On the one hand, it shows how dating app privacy policies employ a topos of law and order and security to justify and legitimate their data collection practices. On the other hand, the privacy policy employs a discursive mitigation strategy based on discursive devices such as vague and euphemistic expressions, verbal tee-ups and expressive speech acts. The latter convey a sense of closeness and trustworthiness to dating app users. These discursive strategies highlight how dating app privacy policies attempt to legitimate and minimise the processes of surveillance they enact. This section corroborates other research that has found that many SNSs' privacy policies constitute an attempt at manipulating users' perception of data collection practices. For instance, Sandoval states that

These documents rather aim at creating the illusion that personalized advertising is beneficial for web 2.0 users. The language used obviously intends to approach users

in a personal way to create an atmosphere of friendship; but these documents ideologically mask the unequal power relation between owners, who design the terms of use in a way that allows them to generate profit out of users' work and information, and users, who have to accept them. (Sandoval in Fuchs et al. 2013, 163)

I have shown the how the linguistic strategies dating app companies use participate in this strategy, while also highlighting how surveillance on dating app is connected to both technological and economic factors.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

Bergström holds an optimistic and positive view of dating apps, which is representative of a broader techno-euphoric discourse that conflates technological advances with social progress. This thesis aims to respond to the latter through highlighting how Günther Anders' work can help us analyse contemporary digital societies. In this chapter, I have followed the lead of other feminist analyses by looking at the question of deception and sexual harassment on dating apps. Bergström understands sexual violence on these platforms as principally the result of external sexist cultures. In contrast, I have conducted an Anders-inspired structural analysis of dating apps. I have argued that their very functioning offers affordances for competitive and individualistic expressions of sexual desire that sometimes lead to intimate intrusions and sexual harassment. Anders was aware of how technological systems could lead to such functional and individualistic views of sex. His work helps highlight how intimate intrusions on dating apps are not just founded on individual malice but are also fostered by the technical structure of dating apps themselves, which mirrors external social frames. This fits with feminist views that, through the continuum theory of sexual violence, speak of social systems of male domination. I have applied this notion to technological structures. I argued dating apps are not a neutral tool that allows for female sexual emancipation. They are also imbued with lad culture.

I have thus shown how especially male users of dating apps are encouraged to play a 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27), messaging many



different profiles at once. They consequently view others not as individuals but as 'prospects' (L, male, age: 28) who might 'bait' (L, male, age: 28) their advances. They are also encouraged to form individualistic expectations and goals in relation to their use of dating apps. Hence they come to view dating apps as an 'investment' (R, male, age: 30) looking for a 'return' (R, male, age: 30), often in terms of 'transactional' (R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27) encounters. By offering affordances for speed and functionality, toxic gender scripts carry over into in-person encounters. Individuals meet away from their friends and with individual expectations in mind. Indeed, some of my female respondents relate encountering men who put pressure on them to have sex, treating this as something that was expected. Thus Anders' theory has proved helpful in providing a non-deterministic answer to the question of how dating app design and structure influences user behaviour, showing how this influence can foster instances of intimate intrusions and sexual harassment. This occupied the first half of RQ2.1.

Turning to a discussion of surveillance on dating apps, which answers the second half of RQ2.1, I have shown how users outwardly say that they do not directly perceive that dating app conversations are surveilled. They further employ a topos of security to justify similar surveillance. However, when they are made aware of the extent of surveillance on these platforms, they often assert that they might be more mindful about sharing sensitive information on dating apps in the future. This, on the one hand, highlights how many users deem this surveillance to be necessary and are willing to relinquish their privacy for the sake of security. However, on the other hand, I have discussed how surveillance of intimate conversations establishes the foundations for forms of totalitarian domination, which view the elimination of privacy as a natural and progressive process. Anders already described this process in his era, highlighting the expression *I have nothing to hide*. In contrast to the carefree attitude conveyed by the expression, I have shown that the collection and storage of sensitive information on dating apps renders individuals vulnerable to persecution.

## **10. Alienation: Sex and Romance Through the Prism of Dating Apps, an Alienating Dimension**

### **10.1 Introduction**

My research question for the alienation section in the dating app case study was RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards?

Accordingly, I look at Anders' theory that ICTs can be a factor in reproducing alienation. I ask how this fits with a Marxian conception. I outline Anders' argument that outside images delivered to television viewers and radio listeners recreated an impoverished virtual world in their homes. For Anders, the relation of viewers to this phantom-like universe was furthermore unilateral, as viewers had little control over the images they consumed. ICTs thus effected a division between subject and object, which denied humans' potential to act on their environment consciously and socially. I argue that this process of estrangement, outlined by Anders, mirrors early Marx's understanding of economic alienation as arising from the structuring of human activity through the prism of private property relations. As seen in section 2.5, this resulted in the workers' separation from the object of labour and his/her consequent alienation from his/her own life activity.

I show how an Andersian-Marxian conception of alienation applies to dating apps. The way the interfaces of dating apps structure communication in the sphere of sex and romance mirrors and fuses with the principle of private property. Private property relations determined workers' alienation from the object of labour (raw materials, means of production and products). Similarly, dating apps, to some degree, separate users from other users, who they view in the first instance as profiles, the interface, which is not subject to their control, and their ensuing sexual and romantic communications, which are conditioned by this interface. The affordances presented by dating app technology respond to a profit motive. It thus favours speed of communication and quantity of separate interactions. This fragmentation of romantic communication often leads to short-term, 'disposable' (S,

female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; J, female, age: 29) encounters, after which users go back to using the apps. The result is a standardisation of sexual and romantic encounters, whose narrative always begins in the same way, with dating apps. Subjective communication thus becomes more objective, resembling a mass commodity. This inversion of subject and object is further illustrated by the fact that objective profiles acquire a semblance of subjectivity, as they are treated as embodied persons for whom users can develop feelings of attraction.

Hence, in section 10.2, I make preliminary remarks that explain in what respects dating apps offer a sensorily reduced and fragmented experience of sexual and romantic initiations. I argue against postmodern conceptions of digital embodiment. In section 10.3, I outline a theory based on Anders and Marx that outlines how dating apps alienate and standardise communication in the sphere of sex and romance. In section 10.4, I analyse users' discourses showing that they tend to characterise online communications as virtual and split off. In contrast, they characterise in-person interactions as sensorily unifying and intuitive. In section 10.5, I outline how some users report feeling 'disposable' within the sphere of dating app interactions. I link this to Anders' theory of obsolescence of humans and Marx's theory of alienation, whereby workers are reduced to appendages of machines. In section 10.6, I discuss consumerist uses of dating apps. I argue that these lead to impoverished satisfactions of sexual and romantic desires. This shows how standardisation on dating apps denies the full realisation of the potentials for human enjoyment. In section 10.7, I discuss users' preference for in-person encounters, arguing that this highlights how dating apps can be understood to alienate humans from their preferred lifestyles, a measure which Eisenstein (1972, 67) uses to highlight the difference between human essence and existence within capitalism.

## **10.2 Preliminary examples of the reduction and fragmentation of mental and physical attraction**

Research has shown that, for some people, smell is more important than looks or voice when it comes to sparking feelings of attraction (Mahmut and Croy 2019). However, prior to meeting in person, the olfactory dimension is completely absent from the interface and functioning of dating apps. This exemplifies how dating app use means that individuals select potential partners they would like to go on a date with on the basis of reduced sensory information about the person. The principal sense that dating app use recruits is sight. Users employ their sense of sight to apprehend mostly still, two-dimensional images on a small smartphone screen.

In narrowing down the breadth of sensory information they require for their operation, dating apps share a common element with military drones. They produce a sensorily reduced experience of the initial stages of forming a sexual or romantic relationship with someone. For instance, in the case of the practice of direct sex on dating apps, which I discuss in 10.7, users decide to meet others for sex primarily based on viewing small images of them. Similarly, drones produced a sensorily impoverished version of killing a person, where the person's face, expression, smell, etc., was not included. In section 6.4, I connected the idea of impoverishment of sensory experience to Anders' notion of presence-absence. In this chapter, I develop this idea further. I show how it is connected to a Marxian understanding of alienation as arising from a separation and inversion of subject and object.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how dating app users often characterise dating app functioning as 'transactional' (R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27). In this chapter, in section 10.5, I specify that the term was often opposed to what was described as the 'organic' (R, male, age: 30; N, female, age: 30; E, male, age: 21; B, male, age: 27; A, male, age: 27) nature of in-person encounters. The term organic is connected to the topos of unifying and free-flowing nature. This suggests that in-person encounters promote an oceanic feeling of unity whereas dating app encounters are partial and reductive. Arguably they thus favour behaviour based on mental rationalisations rather than both sensory and mental intuition.

A rationalistic as opposed to organic and intuitive logic is illustrated by 'elite' (N, female, age: 30; H, female, age:26; O, female, age: 30) dating apps such as The League, which some of my respondent used. These 'screened' (N, female, age: 30) users on the basis of their education level, encouraging users to also select each other on this basis. Hence The League website states that it helps users find partners that 'have a strong enough command of grammar [to] know not to end sentences with a preposition,' adding: 'Let us do the LinkedIn stalking for you' (The League 2021). The statement uses the topos of careers to imply that having a prestigious job and education is a crucial factor in finding a partner for its users.

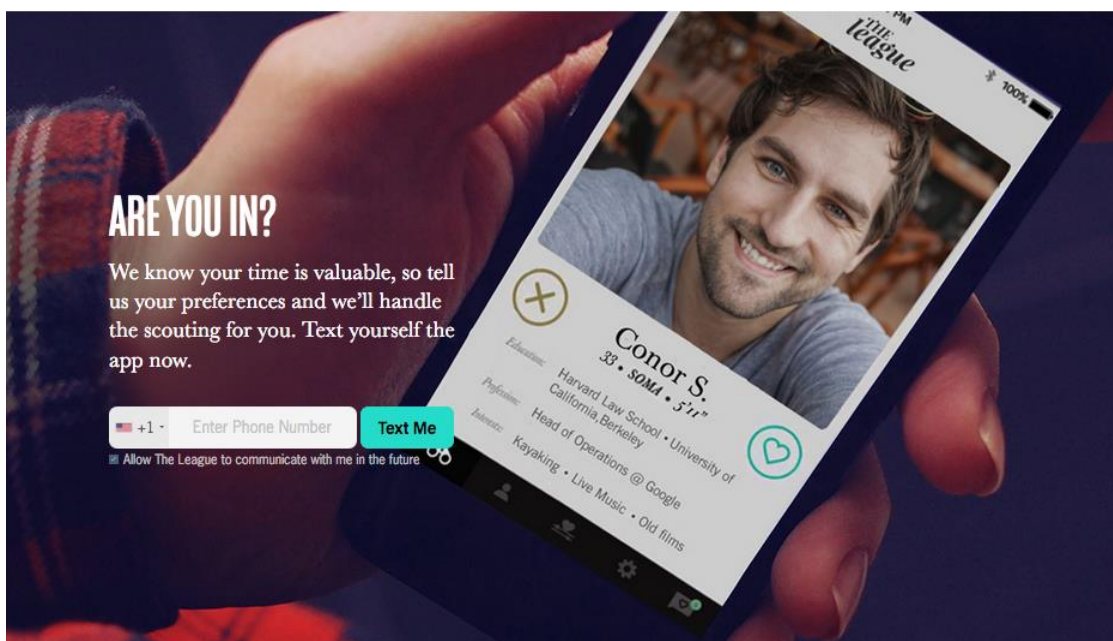


Figure 10.2: The League advert tells prospective users their 'time is valuable' and presents an ideal 'Harvard Law School' graduate who is 'Head of operations @ Google' as a potential match

The League's focus on job and education level is a paradigmatic example of how mental and physical sensations are fragmented by dating app use. In contrast to the notion of love at first sight, which denotes the idea that mental and physical sensations dynamically interact, producing a unifying effect, dating app use is characterised by a staggering of rational (mental) attraction based on profiles (presenting users' appearance on pictures, age, height, job, education level, interests, sexuality, ethnicity, weight etc.) and intuitive, physical attraction based on in-person meetings. This advert highlights Illouz's argument that:

Technologies of choice mark the demise of non-rational modes of partner selection, chiefly based on the body, in which emotions are put into play with very little knowledge or information about the other, and in which romantic partners are viewed as unique entities, not as units measured along highly cognized criteria and compared with each other. (Illouz 2012, 184)

Despite this trend, all of my respondents conveyed the sense that it was only possible to judge feelings of attraction from in-person meetings. This was very weakly correlated to whether they got on well online. For instance, one user spoke about how:

a lot of the time you think: Oh these conversations are going really well and you can't wait to meet them and you're almost always slightly disappointed because either there's no chemistry or they don't seem to... it's not what you were expecting, but in a negative way. (N, female, age: 30)

This user employs hesitations as a mitigation strategy to reduce the illocutionary force of her communication of disappointment and emotional exhaustion due to disembodied functioning of dating apps. Asked: 'How do your feelings develop for someone you like that you've met off dating apps? Do you get very positive feelings online when you chat to them? Or do very positive feelings of attraction occur after you've met them in real life?' The same respondent answered decisively: 'Always the latter, so always when I actually meet them' (N, female, age: 30).

This illustrates how the affordances of dating apps split initial feelings of attraction into at least two stages. Users first decide that they would like to meet a person based on their profile. They then decide whether there is 'chemistry' (N, female, age: 30) in an in-person encounter. This idea corroborates Illouz's notion that

Where traditional romantic imagination once was characterized by a mix of reality and imagination, based on the body and accumulated experience, the Internet splits imagination – as a set of self-generated subjective meanings – and the encounter with the other, by having them happen at different points in time. Knowledge of another is also many times split because the other is apprehended first as a self-constructed psychological entity, then as a voice, and only later as a moving and acting body. (Illouz 2012, 229)

In fragmenting the action of meeting other users into different stages, dating apps share a common feature with drones. In section 7.2, I showed that the latter also separated the act of killing into the separate steps of identifying targets, pulling the trigger and aiming weapons.

Anders' theory shows how ICT induced fragmentation renders human activity more objective, as opposed to conscious and subjective. Hence Anders states:

If one can speak of "subject" or "subjects", these are merely constituted by his organs: in his eyes which hover over illustrations, his ears which listen to the football match, his jaw which chews gum — that is to say: his identity is so utterly disorganised, that to look for 'his true self' would be equivalent to looking for something that does not exist. He is not therefore dispersed in a plurality of places on earth, but in a plurality of single functions.' (Anders [1956] 2003, 132, *my translation*)

This description mirrors the split between rationalistic and emotional faculties through dating app use.

Anders' theory thus goes against postmodern conceptions that celebrate how ICTs produce a:

polycentric experience [which] fits in with the neurological and psychological theories that argue that our psychological self is not a unity but 'rather a problematically yoked-together bundle of partly autonomous systems' (Dennett in Mul 2003, 260)

This conception mistakes the fragmented existence of humans within digital capitalist societies with their essence, effectively celebrating the given.

Anders had a negative take on the separating of sensory functions through ICTs. For Anders, this means that there is less scope for creative work as each sense is not allowed to work in concert with others. For instance, Anders speaks of a state of the self where:

it is divided into two or more partial beings, or at least into two or more partial functions; in beings and functions that not only are not coordinated, but that cannot be coordinated. (Anders [1954] 2003, 131-132)

Uncoordinated activity was also a marker for Marx's concept of alienation. Marx highlights how factory work

does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and in intellectual activity (Marx [1867] 1990, 548)

Here Marx speaks of physical and mental faculties together, implying that it is part of human essence for them to be united. Indeed, he bemoans the 'separation of the intellectual faculties of the production process from manual labour' (Marx [1867] 1990, 548).

My critical interpretation of the process of fragmentation on dating apps also runs counter to Lee's theory of the Informatic Person that 'highlights embodied relations to data not just at a discursive or sensory level, but at a material one, and suggests we consider what data is doing to our bodies in literal terms' (Lee 2021, 178). Accordingly, Lee considers how:

the rise of dating apps (e.g., Tinder) leverages the locative media functions of an interface, pieces of information held in social media networks (i.e., circulation), and a matching algorithms (abstraction), to fulfil embodied experience of love, loneliness, and companionship. While the public discourse has tended to emphasise a moral panic around young people and casual sex, Timmermans and Courtois (2018) note a quarter of user seek long-term relationships, reflecting a desire for authentic and meaningful connections facilitated through digital technology. (Lee 2021, 177)

Hence Lee argues that the digital mediation of romance does not reduce, or impoverish, users' emotions. They apprehend digital data in an embodied way and realize their plans through this data. This is highlighted by the fact that they still seek meaningful, deep connections. In contrast, I argue that users' desire for authentic relationships does not alter the reductive and fragmenting affordances of dating apps, which are not a neutral form of digital mediation. Furthermore, while it is true that users are fully embodied while looking at their phones, it is no less true that their partners are not embodied with them, but only separately. This creates an obstacle for the development of sexual and romantic sentiments, which users must overcome.



Hence I argue that splitting and fragmentation of the individual online contributes towards a process of alienation understood as an separation and inversion of subject and object. The subject is separated from the object upon which s/he acts through the split effected by ICTs. In the next section, I graphically apply this understanding of alienation to dating apps. I show how consequently the activity of the subject becomes standardised. The living subject becomes an objective source of value and objective profiles acquire a semblance of subjectivity. They are treated as living subjects on whose basis users can fall in love.

### **10.3 The standardisation of communication arising from a process of alienation**

For Anders, the absence of 'living presence' (Anders [1954] 2003, 125, *my translation*) disrupts the relation between the subject and the object. According to Anders, perceiving a spectral image of the object (or the world) conveyed by media means having less scope to act upon it. Hence Anders states that: 'the voices of the world have a free access to us [but] we are deprived of rights with respect to it and have no voice in any of the events that are transmitted to us' (Anders [1954] 2003, 125, *my translation*). This notion is similar to Marx's notion that the worker discovers the work process as something that exists and functions without him/her. It is discovered as a 'lifeless mechanism which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages' (Marx [1867] 1990, 548). Lukács later specified how the worker, but also individuals at large, come to be mere spectators of their own actions, stating:

we are witnessing in all behaviour [...] the structural analogue to the behaviour of the worker vis-a-vis the machine he serves and observes, and whose functions he controls while he contemplates it. (Lukács [1923] 1971, 98)

Lukács' mention of contemplation mirrors Anders' notion of radio listeners and television viewers living in a world of ghosts who have access to them but not the other way around.

Anders also speaks of an inversion whereby objects acquire a living reality while real subjects are reduced to observers. For instance, Anders highlights how humans' body:

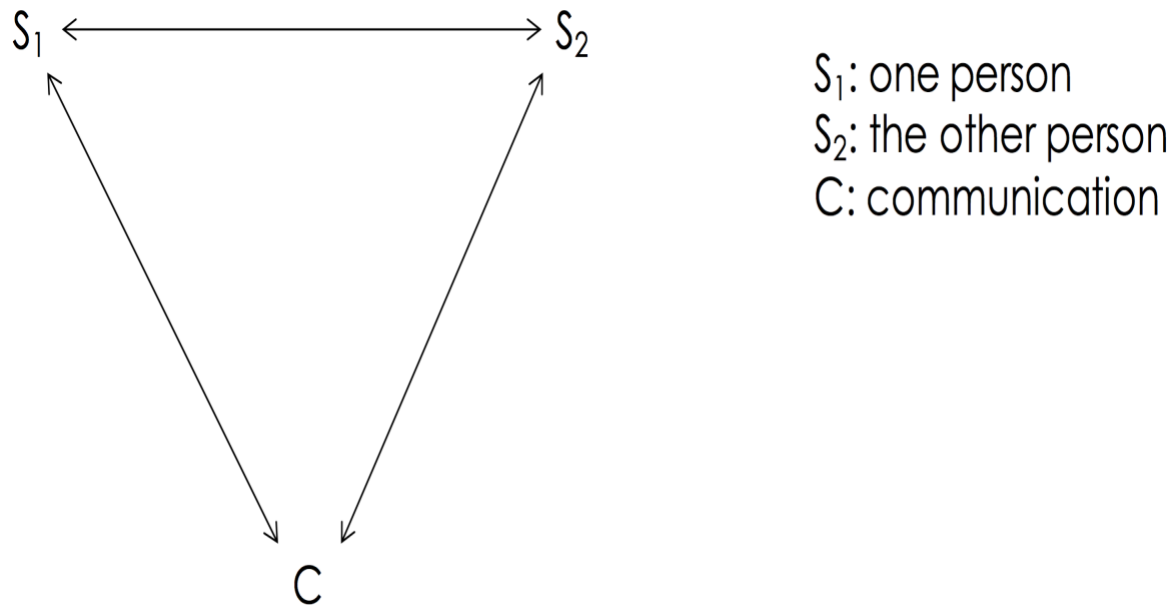
is morphologically constant; [...] from the point of view of machines: [it is] conservative, non-progressive; antiquated; non-modifiable, a dead weight in the ascendancy of machines [...] the “living creature” [is] frozen and “lacking in freedom”; “dead things” are instead dynamic and “free”; because it, as a product of nature, being born from a woman, from flesh, is too obviously determined to participate with the changes of the world and its products. (Anders [1956] 2003, 41, *my translation*)

Here, in speaking of ‘dead things’, Anders takes up a Marxist vocabulary which conceptualises fixed capital, i.e. machinery, as ‘dead labour’ (Marx [1867] 1990, 548). Arguably today mass media are more interactive. Audiences have more input into the content they consume. However, I argue that Anders is still relevant to this state of affairs because, although users can communicate dialogically, they cannot change the frame, the interface, through which they interact (see ‘interactive spectacle’ in Briziarelli 2017, 167). They are still, in some respects, spectators of the virtual ecosystem that conditions their interactions. What is more, this virtual ecosystem actively endeavours to transform them into spectators as its profits are based on users’ viewing adverts on the platforms, and thus gazing at its content (see Fuchs 2016a, 243-244). As discussed in section 4.4.3, this is not disconnected from the technological hardware that gets produced, which is designed to support such interfaces.

Thus Anders is speaking about a form of alienation which is based on the Marxian notion of alienation as a separation and inversion of subject and object. He responds both to Marx's ([2010a] 1844, [2010b] 1844) conception of alienation from the object of labour and Marx's second conception of alienation, which concerns the worker’s consequent alienation from his/her own life activity. In this section, I analyse the first notion by discussing the separation between users and between users and ICTs. Second, I look at how the consequent alienated activity (in this case communications surrounding sex and romance) is characterised by standardisation.

Below, I draw three diagrams that help to conceptualise a process of alienation arising from dating app use. I base this diagram on Mészáros’ discussion of alienation (Mészáros

1975, 104-108) as being produced by activity that is structured by private property relations. Taking inspiration from this and Anders' theory, I argue that the structuring of users' activity by dating app interfaces contains an alienating dimension.



*Figure 10.3.1: Non-alienated interpersonal relations*

Figure 10.3.1 represents interpersonal relations that are free from external mediations. Some of this direct communication may be through eye-contact or body-language, for instance. This is why S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> are connected through a direct line marking mutual influence. In fact, each element in the triangle influences one-another. Intuitive body-language thus influences verbal communication and vice-versa. This form of interaction does not necessarily mean that no technology is employed, or that such communication occurs outside of given contexts. It simply implies that individuals have a significant degree of freedom within the general context in which they find themselves. For instance, S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> contribute, and freely react, to the atmosphere of a physical locale, which they can easily leave, for instance. More subjects could be added to this graph by making it three-dimensional. I have represented two subjects for the purpose of simplicity.

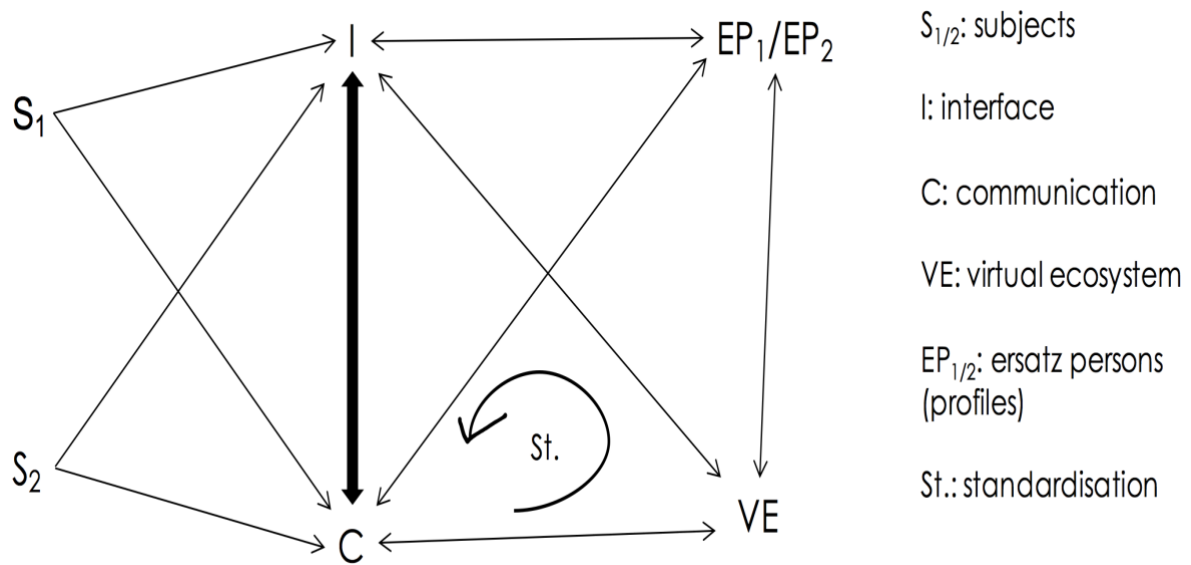


Figure 10.3.2: Structuring of interpersonal relations through dating app interfaces, involving specialised, alienated communication

Conversely, Figure 10.3.2 represents a situation where the relation between S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> is mediated by the interface of dating apps. The original relation between S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub> and C is disrupted. Even if S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> were in the same geographical area, they would no longer be directly communicating through, for instance, body-language. Instead, their communication would be strongly influenced by the affordances of dating app interfaces, I, favouring short form written communication, or texting, and the viewing of people as profiles. Three observations highlight the alienating character of this situation.

Firstly, there is no relation of direct mutual influence between users and the interface (I), or the types of communication it favours (C). Use of dating apps involves accepting privacy policy agreements that institute and protect the economic interests of dating app companies. Generally, but also in this instance, private property relations determine the fact that workers (or, in the case of dating apps, users) do not directly control the machinery (with dating apps, the interface) or the product (here, data and communication) they produce through it. Dating app users are thus separated from the object — understood as other users, whom they view as profiles, the technology, over which they have no direct control, and the initiation of their sexual or romantic relations, which occurs within the frame of dating apps. Because it follows these constraints, S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> are linked to I and C

through unidirectional lines. This marks a relation of use-time extraction, rather than creative mutual influence.

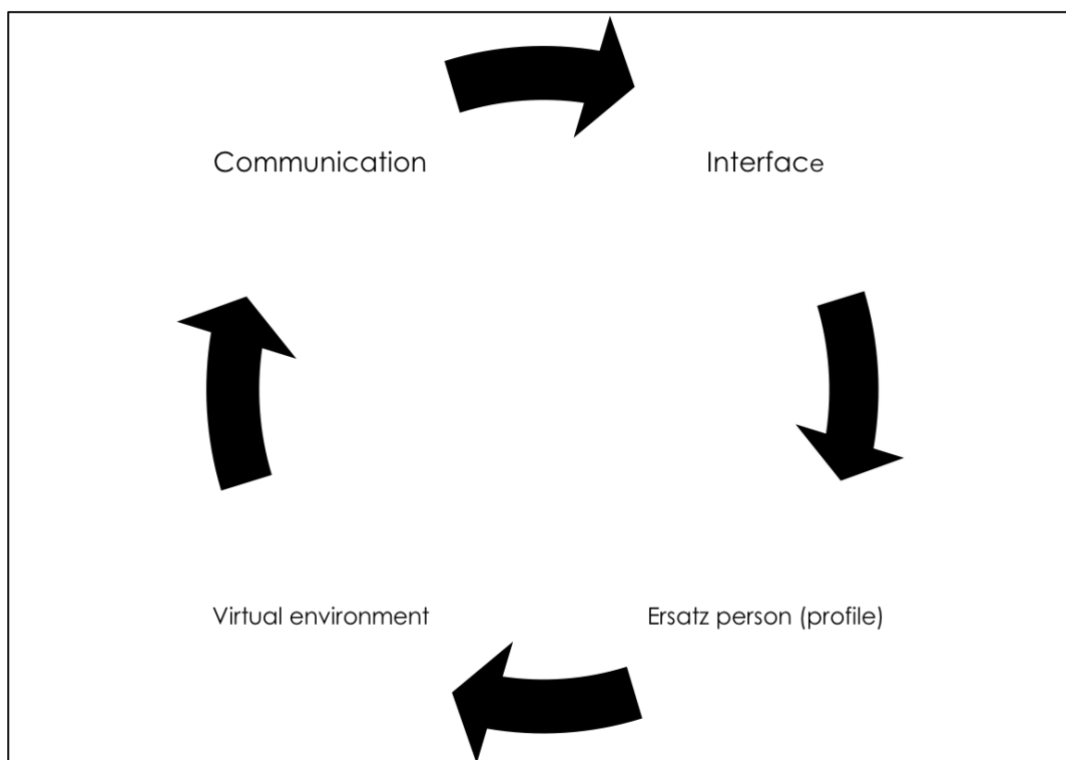
Secondly, and following on from this, the process which conditions communications escapes users' direct control. User activity is monitored by developers and employed to fine-tune dating app affordances. This ensures that these encourage behaviour that is aligned with the profit motive of dating app enterprises, involving continued use, data collection and advertising. This instance corresponds to Marx's derivation of active alienation from alienation from the object (Marx [1844b] 2010). Active alienation is thus produced by the estranged relation to technology. This is highlighted by Anders' statement that:

Just as the Marxist definition is still valid, which says that as non-owners of our means of production we are not free, it is also true, on the other hand, that today this definition does not go far enough. More precisely: it is only valid for one-third of our current non-freedom. To describe it completely, we have to complete it with two additional features: first, we must add that today we are also excluded from the co-determination of the effects of our products, which, in certain circumstances, would also be valid if we were the owners of our means of production; and second, we have to add that the pleasure we obtain from the products, insofar as it performs a service function, in the last instance belongs to those who are served by means of that pleasure and therefore it is not our property, either. (Anders [1980] 2011, 119)

Hence Anders states that not only means of production but also products, especially technological ones, condition human activity. This statement's inclusion of the concept of pleasure and of pleasurable activity as being potentially exploited and alienated seems particularly relevant to dating apps. The latter enable flirtatious communications and sexual and romantic relations but only through the prism of a specific technological structure that is strongly moulded by a profit motive.

Third, the interface of dating apps further interacts, and follows patterns, of other social media platforms. They are compatible with other platforms where users further produce and curate an online presence. For instance, as I described in 10.2, the dating app The League mentions users' LinkedIn page. Moreover, dating apps such as Tinder, Hinge and Bumble allow users to link their Facebook and Instagram pages. This creates a virtual

ecosystem where communications are increasingly founded on image-based profiles with minimal text. Both the fact that users interact as profiles and the fact that this form of interaction becomes increasingly standard online produces a generalised effect of standardisation in the presentation of the individual online. Hence I, C, EP and VE are connected by bi-directional lines that mark mutual influence. The graph thus illustrates how there is tendency for objective platforms have influence over subjective communication, while real subjects' (users') control is limited. These three elements thus mark a separation and inversion of subject and object.



*Figure 10.3.6: Process of alienation and structuring of communication*

Figure 10.3.6 represent the process of narrowing down and standardisation of communication. Real subjects feed into this circuit as communication occurs thanks to their actions and the interface functions thanks to the content they upload and the work of developers. However, the circuit happens outside of their control, as they do not have direct control over the interface. Hence it is as though they were producing an alien object through their activities. The latter sets the conditions within which they act subsequently.

Dating app affordances favour speed and hence privilege images over long text or sound. Written communications are constrained by the inefficiency of typing on a smartphone and

therefore tend to be reduced to a few sentences. This limits the scope of what can be discussed. As I show below, consequently many different users present themselves following the same format and using the same tropes. Many profiles come to resemble one-another, and users become interchangeable and easily replaced, or 'disposable' (S, female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; J, female, age: 29). As the recipe for communications becomes standardised, it is almost as though it did not require users' subjective input to take place. Standardised chat up lines and bios are used. All that is needed is users' use time. This effect is analogous to the workers' work presenting itself as a fixed and 'objectively calculable work-stint that confronts the worker as a fixed and established reality' (Lukács [1923] 1971, 88). Hence subjective communication acquires an increasingly objective quality.

This process of standardisation is highlighted by a recent Tinder advert that highlights the supposed creativity of its users by showcasing their bios, the short text accompanying their profiles. The video hosting the advert is entitled: 'We Made a Song Inspired by Tinder bios' (Tinder 2020). This caption uses a predication strategy that constructs the act of producing a bio as inspirational, creative and craft-like. Some of these, are presented as daring statements such as the one featured in featured in Figure 10.3.3.

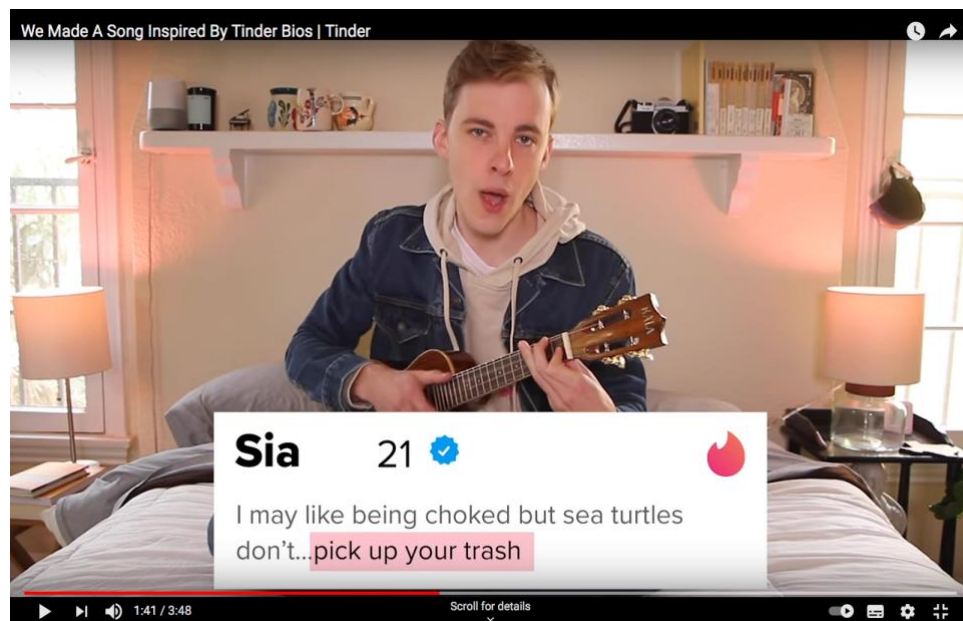


Figure 10.3.3: An official promotional video from Tinder promoting a song 'inspired by Tinder bios'. From Tinder. 2021c. We Made A Song Inspired By Tinder Bios | Tinder. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhRU7tKLd6c>

The statement makes direct reference to sexual practices and uses a pun and metaphor to also make a point about the user's support for environmental causes. However, an exact search for this sentence on Google yields over 4000 matches, evidencing how the sentence is also printed on t-shirts for sale (see Figure 10.3.4).

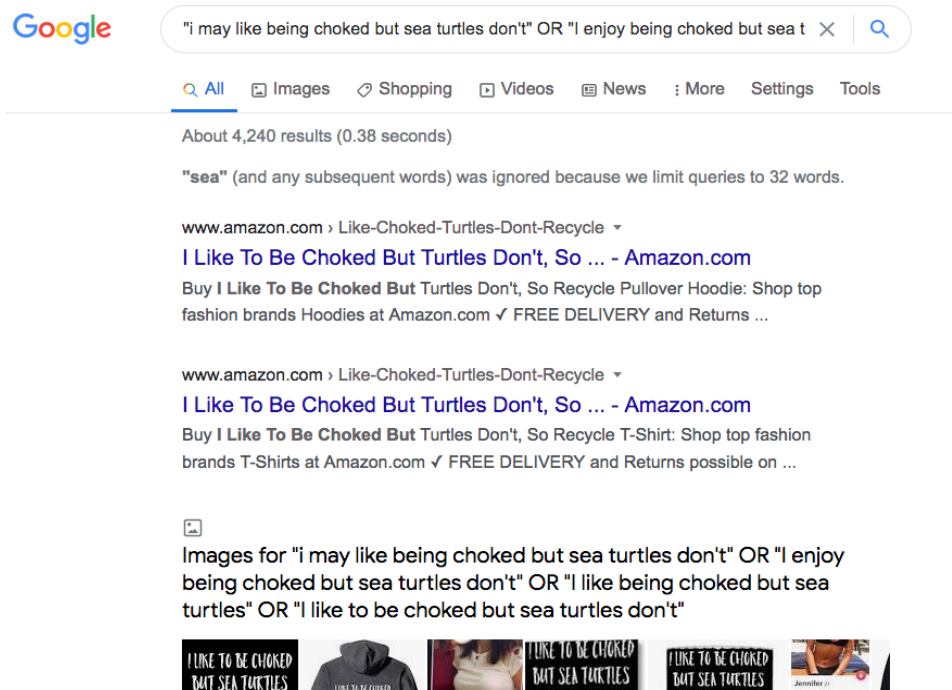


Figure 10.3.4: Google search checking for the originality of a user's Tinder bio

This evidences how ready-made phrases circulate on dating apps in guise of daring presentations of the person. At the same time, this statement highlights the culture of speed and directness on dating apps, which I discussed in section 9.3, as users list desired sexual practices even before they interact. For instance, one dating app, Feeld, is specifically designed to match users on the basis of their sexual preferences. As one journalist interviewing the Feeld CEO states, on Feeld:

“there's a 'desires' section in your bio for interests beyond your book club. You can type anything, with common entries being 'threesomes', 'sexting', 'dominant', 'submissive', 'kink', 'friendships', 'group' and [...] 'FWB' (friends with benefits)” (Bergum 2021)

The app interface creates affordances for sexual preferences to be communicated up front, through suggesting 'common entries' to choose from. Feeld professes to be '[o]ne of the



largest open-minded communities worldwide' (Feeld 2021) and to allow users to choose from '20+ sexualities and gender identities' (Feeld 2021). However, I argue that this apparent liberalism masks a process of technological alienation.

The very structure of the technology risks reinstating rigid codes in the sphere of sexuality under the guise of progressivism. Users are encouraged to outline a preconceived idea of what type of sex they are seeking even before they interact with their partners. This potentially limits dynamic sexual and romantic communication and self-discovery, favouring transactional interactions. It also illustrates the culture Anders described (see section 9.5) that tends to abolish the private sphere, as users are encouraged to make public their sexual preferences and conform to specific labels. Hence, despite the app founder's best intentions, rather than helping users 'explore dating beyond the norm', Feeld risks reinstating a new norm. Rather than 'normalising sexual desire' (Feeld 2021), Feeld risks standardising the latter.

Feeld mirrors a neoliberal ideology. The platform emphasises more choice rather than the freedom to modify the parameters offering these choices. Like other SNSs, it ultimately treats individuals as mere 'prosumers' (Fuchs 2016a, 244) of culture, seeing in every one of their idiosyncrasies an opportunity for profit. Feeld illustrates Anders' argument that '*the epoch of the reproduction is the fundamentally non-revolutionary epoch*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 59). However, Anders also states that the

permanent revolution, that of technology, which is neutral with respect to the system, that is, it has established its dictatorship equally everywhere, and also remains constant even after sudden political changes, as if nothing had happened, that is, it continues its feverish pace of development. (Anders [1980] 2011, 72)

Thus it does not matter if Feeld is an outwardly progressive company. The fact that it uses technologies forged under capitalism, which are not substantially different to the ones used by other dating app companies, means that it is likely to reproduce capitalist forms of alienation. Paradoxically, the apparent openness and variety in sexuality on Feeld feeds into

the general process of standardisation of sexual and romantic communication on dating apps.

For instance, the dating app Hinge also uses stereotyped openers and prompts to encourage users to flirt. It proposes the same prompts to all users worldwide, demonstrating a lack of concern for cultural specificities.

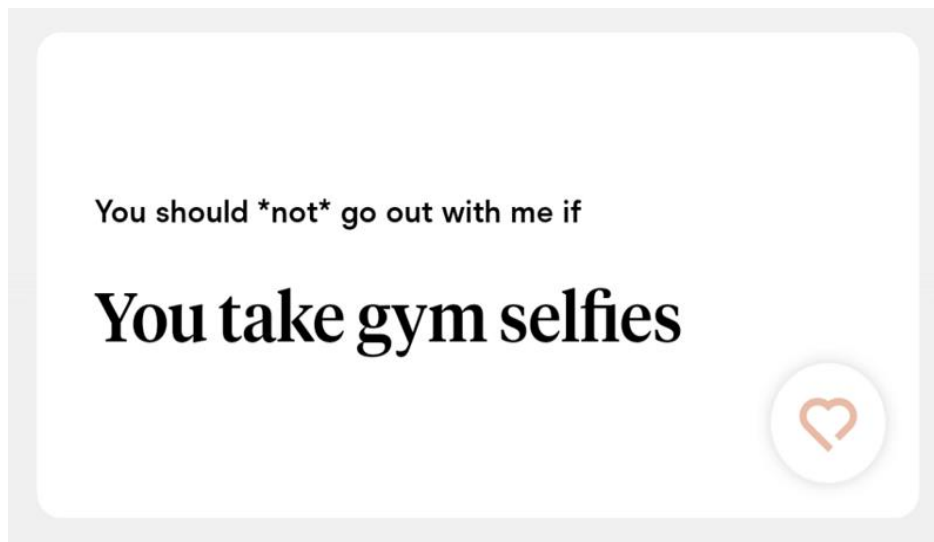


Figure 10.3.5: Hinge prompts and responses. From Hernandez, Eddie. 2020. "Best Hinge Prompts, Answers To Use On Your Dating Profile." March 6, 2020. <https://eddie-hernandez.com/best-hinge-questions/>

On Figure 10.3.5, the first line represents one out of a selection of prompts that the Hinge app requires users to respond to. The second line is the user's response. It was published on the website of an 'online dating consultant' (Hernandez 2020) who helps users respond to such prompts. The use of a coach to create a profile further shows how dating app profiles may be unrepresentative of each individual's personality and values. Instead, profiles are primarily aimed at 'filtering' (A, male, age: 27; L, male, age: 28; K, male, age: 30; B, male, age: 27) and 'bait[ing]' (L, male, age: 27) prospective partners.

In following a narrow format, all conversations tend to resemble one-another. One user spoke directly to the 'disinterested' and 'superficial' effect this has on the ensuing conversations. She stated:

I think it was just a not very healthy way of interacting with people, because it means that you're not really invested in any of these people that you're talking to. You actually end up with a very high level of indifference to just these relationships that

you're forming. Em and that makes it again quite a superficial, like really superficial conversations which are about nothing really. It's either about nothing, or two parties trying to impress each other with would be banter or: I've done this, I've done this too... you know trying to like do one-upmanship sometimes. So I think that that's not negative but I think that it makes you quite jaded in terms of speaking to people or interacting with people. (N, female, age: 30)

This user employs a nomination strategy that constructs the users she interacts with as numerous and interchangeable. She calls them 'any of these people' through a negative sentence construction ('not really invested in'). The topos of lack of investment is connected to apathy. She also employs a nomination strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) discursively qualifies the conversations as valueless describing them as being 'about nothing'. She employs the topos of indifference in relation to interactions with strangers on the internet. Indeed she doesn't qualify the interactions as outright 'negative' but prefers to qualify them as 'superficial', 'not very healthy' and as tied to feeling 'jaded'.

Anders was preoccupied with the standardisation of sexual and romantic communication during his time. This is evidenced by his observation that lovers turn on the radio because it 'offers that pre-masticated sexual excitation that, in reality, you should generate through your proximity' (Anders [1984] 2004, 129, *my translation*). Anders also criticised the practice of lovers sending vocal messages with stereotyped background music, stating:

When a lover recites a similar love letter for illiterates, he does so to a pre-recorded musical piece, because "nothing but his own voice" would be considered too meagre a gift. When it reaches its destination, the one that needs to talk or persuade, in some respects a wedding matron made thing, is this third voice (Anders [1956] 2003, 105 *my translation*)

This passage shows how Anders was sensitive to the trend of standardising sexual and romantic communications, seeing it as evidence that human potentialities were not fully realised during interactions. Human creativity was replaced by machine functions.

I argue that therefore the processes of standardisation linked to dating app use does not just produce disenchantment as suggested by the concept of McDonaldization (Ritzer 2019). It limits the scope for creative communication and hence the scope for the conscious and

social fulfilment of human potentialities. It is consequently properly a process of alienation. Anders spoke to the fact that this process resulted in a distancing of human essence, particularly with regard to its self-consciousness and self-determining character.

Anders, in a statement that could almost be understood to refer to dating app users establishing feelings of attraction for one-another on the basis of virtual profiles, states that 'there is nothing that accomplishes alienation so definitively than us continuing to pass the day under the guidance of these pseudo-friends' (Anders [1956] 2003, 122, *my translation*).

This is because the:

supposition that we, beings that are exclusively fed with surrogates, modules and ghosts, are still individuals endowed with our own personality, and that it is therefore still possible to prevent us from being or finding "ourselves", is too optimistic. (Anders [1956] 2003, 122, *my translation*)

Anders' analysis fits with a Marxian interpretation of alienation. It highlights the fact that communication taking place through the prism of modern mass media risks splitting, fragmenting and standardising human interactions. This means that this form of communication no longer affords a full realisation of human essence. In the case of dating apps, it acts against the creativity inherent to the formation of sexual and romantic relations.

Next, I highlight how this process of standardisation has ramification for users' presentation of self.

#### **10.4 Beauty standards and users' presentation of self**

RQ2.2 touched on the issue of how use of dating apps affects users' perception of beauty standards. Hence my questionnaire included the question: (3.2.5) Have you ever been confronted with unrealistic expectations with regard to standards of beauty on dating apps? Has this ever made you feel negative about yourself? This question is relevant to the notion that users' presentation of self on dating apps is standardised, as it is encouraged to adhere to a rigid structure linked to the affordances of the technology.

The answer to this question given by my interviewees was not clear-cut. On the one hand, many interviewees expressed the opinion that dating apps were not as bad as other types of media for fostering negative body-image in users. For instance, one user stated that Tinder, for instance, is 'probably a much more honest lens because the media is an echo chamber whereas Tinder is very direct' (I, male, age: 30). The topos of echo chamber implies that traditional media narrowly re-enforce specific types of beauty ideals. The same user stated that, in contrast, Grindr is 'a jungle' (I, male, age: 30). The topos of jungle is connected to being free and feral like an animal. The respondent used this topos to convey the sense that Grindr contains a liberating dimension. He argued that any body type is accepted on this platform, including ones that do not conform to the standard ideal of beauty. Another user emphasised how there are a lot of 'unattractive people who use Tinder as well and that helps to, I don't know, make it more humane, I guess' (E, male, age: 21). By referring to the topos of humanity, this user implies that Tinder and other similar platforms create space for a range of different body types.

However, there were also responses that contradicted this impression. For instance, E described how dating apps also respond to a

ruthless law of the market in which thousands of bodies are pressed into. There is a very savage adherence to the mean, in that case. And I think that that mean is: if you're a man, being over six foot and quite muscle-y. (E, male, age: 21)

The topos of a 'ruthless law of the market' and 'savage[ry]' underlines the competitive and individualistic aspect of dating apps that I have discussed in section 9.3. The user explained his dislike for the fact that many female users of dating apps specify that they are not interested in men that are under 6'. Indeed another user spoke of feeling 'small' (C, male, age: 23) because 'I'm 5'10. So every second profile was [asking for partners who were] 6 foot or more' (C, male, age: 23). He moreover referred to a friend of a similar height to him also becoming more concerned with his divergence from this ideal image of male beauty that is demanded by other users on dating apps. He recounted about his friend that:

he's about the same height as me. And he had never really thought about it. But now I hear him talking about it. And yeah, I don't know if it's because he's been using more dating apps, or because I said to him that... Yeah, he's certainly mentioned it more than... Well the first time I mentioned it he said that he'd never thought about it. (C, male, age: 23)

The respondent uses the verbal tee up 'certainly' and 'well' as an intensification strategy to highlight the likelihood that his friend's new concern with height was linked to his dating app use. This illustrates how dating apps provide space for everyday humans to set up a profile and interact with each other. However, the competitive and individualistic aspect of dating app design, which offers affordances for users to set out their desires and expectations one-sidedly on their profiles even before interacting with other users, tends to make use of dating apps reinforce existing beauty standards, as there is initially less space for dynamic interaction between users. Indeed pre-formatted profiles are matched by the algorithm on the basis of right-swipes that occurred at different times and in different physical locales. This finding corroborates Zuboff's notion of 'self-objectification associated with social comparison' on SNSs, where 'first we present ourselves as data objects for inspection, and then we experience ourselves as the "it" that others see' (Zuboff 2019, 464).

A female user summed up the bottom-line situation on dating apps by stating: 'definitely everyone is trying to look attractive, because they're trying to attract people' (D, female, age: 21). The same user spoke of her thought process in constructing her profiles as being based on pictures that 'had got quite a lot of likes on Instagram' (D, female, age: 21). This would make her think that '[t]hat would be a good photo to use' (D, female, age: 21). Hence users select photos which have gotten the most likes, i.e. approval by users of other social media. This illustrates the notion of an alienated digital ecosystem I introduced above, whereby a general logic of quantified popularity influences most social media platforms. However, approval seeking behaviour is also reinforced by the internal set of affordances offered by dating apps. Hence another user equally described how:

the images I initially chose were quite conservative, putting one in formal attire, one doing sports, one with friends or something like that. And then I started changing

that. So, once I'd been using it a bit more, I don't know why—maybe it's because of sort of subconsciously looking at other profiles—but I selected more images with less clothing. So like I started putting up like shirtless pictures and stuff, and I actually got more matches doing that than not. So I continued with that, to be honest. (A, male, age: 27)

The repetition of filler words 'so' and 'like' coupled with the verbal tee-up 'to be honest' participate in a mitigation strategy aimed at reducing the illocutionary force (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) of the users' communication that he succumbed to the 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) dynamic of dating apps in his presentation of self. He employed photos which would captivate the most attention, rather than the one he initially spontaneously selected.

This shows how the standard structure of dating apps, which is designed along competitive lines, predominates over and negates the affordances for the free expression of each users' individuality, which it also contains. To attract other users, individuals present themselves on the basis of external judgements about what self-representations are desirable. There are also specific affordances that automate this process. For instance, as described on one magazine article, on Tinder, a feature called Smart Photos:

will continually assess how favourably people have responded to each of your profile photos, and automatically order them so that your most popular photo appears first - taking out all the guesswork as to which photo you look best in. (Preston 2021)

This statement employs deictics (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) ('you') to enact perspectivation strategy that expresses proximity with users. It thus constructs the act of appealing to the greatest number on dating apps as common sense and logical. It thus evidences how the presentation of users' profiles may often fail to meaningfully reflect the individual. Instead it may primarily respond to external constraints.

This highlights how there is an unfree dimension in the presentation of dating app users' personality on these platforms. For instance, various users reported following precise, standardised parameters for presenting their profiles on dating apps, which they learnt from friends who were more experienced users. For instance, user D states: 'there seemed to be

quite a lot of strict rules about what photos work and what photos don't' (D, female, age: 21). She explains:

So for girls it's like: don't just put photos that are selfies. Like, you definitely have to put photos that other people have taken of you. You can't be wearing make up in every single photo. What other thing? Oh, yeah, you can't just have photos of only like your face. You have to have one photo where people can view your entire body. Like, you should be like smiling in some of them. That kind of thing. (D, female, age: 21)

Another user similarly stated that: 'You always have a selfie and then a photo with other people. And then maybe one where you're in a different situation. So like on holiday or whatever' (N, female, age: 30). The imperative tense ('you can't'; 'have to') employed by respondent D participates in a predication strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that constructs following the above rules as an obligation. The implicature is that this is something that must be done for the apps to work. These respondents show how users of dating apps must, on the one-hand, put forward a positive image of themselves and, on the other hand, put their bodies on show for other users to assess in terms of attractiveness. This evidences how dating apps offer affordances for flirtation to be structured like a beauty and popularity contest.

It moreover highlights Anders' idea that modern forms of apparent creativity actually contribute towards mass production. Anders' observes that, caught in the web of modern technology, we:

misinterpret the assigned character of our creative acts [...] causing us not to recognize that our contributions only represent intermediate phases in the process of production and distribution as a whole (Anders [1980] 2011, 128)

Indeed dating app users act as prosumers (Fuchs 2016a, 244) because through uploading captivating images that fit the requirements of dating apps they provide the content that others view on these platforms. They thus, in some respects, partly produce the platform. However, this production is unfree because it follows rigid parameters. Accordingly, I argue



that dating apps alienate users in limiting their creative control over communication in the sphere of sex and romance, which they end up impoverishing and standardising.

Arguably, this dynamic fosters the 'staged' aspect of dating apps that most respondents reported (16 out of 18). For instance, speaking of himself, one user suggested that: 'I mean, I definitely would have had a picture of me at a festival and I haven't been to a festival for years now' (B, male, age: 27). This illustrates Anders' idea that the '*conversion of our lives into images is a technique of illusionism*, since it gives us and must give us the illusion that we are viewing reality' (Anders [1980] 2011, 177, *italics in original*). It shows how there is a difference between appearance and essence on dating apps. Users produce their own fetishized personal presentations, which often conform to dominant cultures. This is because their personal presentations happen through a standardised medium, the online dating app profile. This illustrates Anders' argument that:

Because most products are commodities that are mass-produced, they transform those who use them in the same way they are produced, and thus homogenize them, and therefore turn them into masses. The mass commodity produces standardized mass style. (Anders [1980] 2011, 181)

Similarly, the very structure of dating app technology creates pressures for users to appeal to the greatest number. Individuals feel that they must adhere to a standard ideal even when they are seeking sexual and romantic partners that, one would hope, appreciate them for who they are. In the conclusion, however, I comment on practices of resistance some users put up against this pressure.

Next, I discuss how the interactions that standardised presentations of self foster appear to users as less rich and meaningful than the ones that are favoured by spontaneous in-person encounters.

## **10.5 Users' discourses denoting one-dimensional communications and homogenisation**

Many users spoke about the intuitive, organic and immediate nature of chance encounters. They opposed this to the deceptive character of online interactions. Describing how chance encounters compare to dating app meetings, one of my respondents stated that:

I mean, it's a lot more fulfilling, I guess. Because it's less transactional. It's more kind of like organic and emotional. There's more of an adrenaline [rush] [...]

–And do you have a preference between that or using dating apps?

Yeah, I mean, I definitely prefer, hands down, the chance encounters... because it's like a full... it's a full-body experience, it's a full mental, physical... It's a much more satisfactory kind of experience (R, male, age: 30)

Here the user employs the topos of wholesome nature, implying that what is 'organic' is richer, freer and more 'fulfilling' than what is business-like and 'transactional'. The user further employs the topos of human nature being both 'mental' and 'physical'. This echoes the passage, cited in section 10.2, where Marx argues that these faculties should be united. Hence he speaks of a 'full mental, physical...[experience]' and a 'full-body experience' which is 'emotional' and much more 'satisfactory'. The respondent further uses a strategy of intensification, to underline the sincerity of his expressive speech act (Searle [1979] 2005, 15). He thus uses modal particles, verbs of feeling and metaphors: 'I definitely prefer, hands down'. He further characterises in-person encounters as an 'adrenaline [rush]' to convey their pleasure and intensity.

Another user spoke of the intuitive nature of in-person meetings as opposed to the virtual nature of online interactions on dating apps, stating:

I think that in my case the online was almost like a premise for meeting. Like, if you didn't have the online part, you wouldn't meet. And then...because I think that online is still a very virtual thing, you need to actually meet somebody to know the look and feel and actually like the vibe and if you actually get along. (J, female, age: 29)

This interviewee uses the topos of online interactions being 'virtual' and hence less real to express the feeling that it is difficult or impossible to establish feelings of attraction for

someone one has not met in person. The user further employs the topos of a distinction between virtual as being one-dimensional and in person interactions being rich, unifying and multi-faceted. She therefore speaks of a 'look and feel' and 'vibe' in relation to the latter. The expression *vibe* refers to the concept of vibration, or energy, exuded by someone's entire physical being. The expression contains the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that physical and mental sensations are unified.

Another user spoke of finding it hard to relate to someone emotionally over text stating that what was important in forming feelings of attraction was:

body language that type of thing... I obviously built a connection through that, where I find it difficult generally to relate emotionally over text anyway. So I think that was the difference, just having that body language. (A, male, age: 27)

This user also employs the topos of the look and feel of somebody conveying the sense that body-language was a crucial way for him to feel attracted to someone. The topos of body-language is linked to implicit communication joining physical gestures with mental intuitions. It is seen as uncontrolled and spontaneous and thus less prone to being deceptive. Through a reverse logic, these users indirectly mirror Anders' notion of alienation as being produced by the separation of human faculties, which in turn mirrors Marx's notion of alienation involving a fragmentation of various aspects of physical and mental labour.

Other users referred to the staggered dimension of dating app use by describing the process of getting to know someone through dating apps as uncertain, misleading and sclerotic. One user opposed this to the 'immediate' sensation he attributed to in-person encounters. He stated:

I think that like, you know, if you've met someone in person, there's like an immediate attraction and feeling, in my opinion. I mean, it's very hard. It's very easy sorry to get carried away through an app where you kind of feel like you're developing this relationship with someone despite not even meeting them. I think the immediacy you get from meeting someone face-to-face at a gig or whatever the circumstances is, you kind of understand immediately how you feel or, maybe not

completely, but you know, you have that level of attraction for someone that it feels worth pursuing. (B, male, age: 27)

Here the interviewee uses deictics (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to place the listener in his position. This participates in a perspectivisation strategy which is aimed at conveying the sense that interactions on apps are deceptive and that it is easy for anyone to get ‘carried away’. In contrast, in-person interactions confer ‘immedia[te]’ knowledge over one’s feelings. The topos of ‘immediacy’ is unifying. It implies that feelings are related to all the senses, both mental and physical faculties, not sight alone. In-person interactions thus present a well-rounded picture of the person.

Discursive device	Discursive device	Citation	Users
Nomination strategies	Tropes related to the human body and denoting a unifying dimension	full body experience; full mental, physical...; body language; organic and emotional; adrenaline [rush]; look and feel; vibe; chemistry	S, female, age: 29; N, female, age: 30; K, male, age: 30; I, male, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; A, male, age: 27
	Tropes related to a sense of agency; the subject is acting on a definite object (the other person; in-person communication), not an uncertain one (highly mediated communication occurring through a smartphone)	immediate attraction and feeling; immediacy; that level of attraction...worth pursuing; build a connection	B, male, age: 27; R, male, age: 30; N, female, age: 30
Predication strategies	Evaluative attributions qualifying in person interactions as more fulfilling	more fulfilling; much more satisfactory kind of experience	R, male, age: 30

*Table 10.4.1: Users discourses comparing dating app encounters to in-person encounters*

Table 10.4.1 highlights the discursive strategies that users adopt to talk about in-person sexual and romantic encounters. Some employed tropes that related to the human body

and that also implied a sense of unity. For instance, 'body language' denotes a form of communication that occurs through use of the entire body. Another user speaks of a 'full body experience', implying that with in-person encounters perception of the other person and resulting sensations occurs with the entire body. He further speaks of these interactions being organic (topos of the organic whole) and emotional (topos of mental faculties). The users also consequently characterise the ensuing feelings of attraction as immediate and as giving rise to the agential activity of 'building a connection'. This conveys a sense of unity between subject and object.

Discursive strategy	Discursive device	Citation	Users
Nomination strategies	Tropes denoting the superficiality of in-app communications	really superficial conversations which are about nothing really; would be banter; one-upmanship	N, female, age: 30
Predication strategies	Adjectives and evaluative attributions	Transactional; virtual (world); not a very healthy way; not really invested; high level of indifference; quite jaded	R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27; J, female, age: 29; M, male, age: 30; B, male, age: 27; O, female, 30

*Table 10.4.2: Users' discourses characterising dating app encounters*

In contrast, table 10.4.2 highlights the nomination and discursive strategies some users employed to describe communications on dating app platforms. Users speak of a transactional, competitive and individualistic character of communications. They speak of disinterestedness for their partners and of this form of communication not being 'healthy' (N, female, age: 30). These aspects show that many users dislike the fragmented and standardised character of communications on dating apps.

Next, I show how this situation can result in users feeling interchangeable and 'disposable'.

### **10.6 Feeling 'disposable'**

As discussed so far, the mediation of sexual and romantic interactions through the prism of dating apps contains a tendency for communications to become fragmented, as physical and mental sensations are separated. There is also a tendency for them to become standardised, with conversations losing meaning. In this section, I outline how some users feel 'disposable' (S, female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; J, female, age: 29) as a result, as users become interchangeable objects of others' individualistic desire.

For instance, one user stated:

I can characterise relationships that come about via dating apps as short-lived and disposable (S, female, age: 29)

Here the user employs the topos that dating apps favour quick sexual and romantic relationships that are 'short-lived'. The user suggests that dating apps favour uncommitted sexual and romantic relationships.

Another respondent spoke to this idea. The user connected the notion of disposability to the topos of individual convenience. He stated:

Oh, no, it's the convenience and the just the, the disposable-ness of it. Yeah, you know, people are disposable now, whether you know them or not, or wherever you met him on a dating app. It's just a conversation. (P, male, age: 31)

This user employs an implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) stating ('people are disposable now') to imply that with the advent of modern ICTs all interactions are 'just a conversation'. This implies that human relations mediated by modern ICTs within the virtual ecosystem are non-committal.

Another said:

some people, I think, when they use dating apps, they are just: Ok, I'm interested in it for a short-term thing. And it has a very disposable aspect in mind. I think those people are more likely to just ghost people if this doesn't go well. (J, female, age: 29)

The user employs free direct speech ('Ok I'm interested in a short-term thing') as a perspectivation strategy that highlights the notion of individual gain on dating apps.

She further employs anthropomorphic images stating 'it [the app] has a very disposable aspect in mind' to argue that users' feelings of disposability is tied to the very functioning of dating apps. The user further connects the notion of disposability to that of 'ghost[ing]'.

Ghosting is an expression that has become popular in the latter part of the 2010s. It refers to the practice of breaking off communications abruptly with a friend, lover or acquaintance without any apparent justification or warning and ignoring all subsequent attempts by the person to re-establish contact. Ghosting applies to online communications, where individuals can both reach out to and ignore each other more easily. Ghosting is connected to the feeling of disposability some dating app users experience, as the practice of ghosting denotes a lack of care for the person who is ghosted as no 'closure whatsoever' (B, male, age: 27) is provided to them, even where romantic feelings and sex is involved.

Users were generally unhappy with the disposable character of dating app interactions and the practice of ghosting, reporting 'bleak' (B, male, age: 27) and 'lonely' (B, male, age: 27) feelings in connection to it. However, I argue that the abruptness of ghosting is legitimated and institutionalised by the very functioning of the app, where users have '100 chats on the go' (P, male, age: 31). P's hyperbole (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) underlines the frenetic speed of dating app functioning, with which users struggle to keep up.

The difference between ghosting and breaking up with someone, even in a sudden manner, is its integration into a practice of sampling and disposing of other users. Bergström has positively characterised this process as that of 'experie[n]c[ing]/trial[ing]' [*éprouvent*] (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §16, *my translation*) other users. However, I argue that the latter implies little regard for their feelings, or the common courtesies normally expected by individuals. Users are thus treated as though they were products and not humans. In fact,

the expression 'disposable' contains the implicature (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that humans are like trash.

Anders argued that, in a world where products were designed to have a limited lifespan so as to favour increased consumption and production, it was natural for modern consumers' disregard for products to transform into a disregard for people. Hence he states:

Since we live in a world that consists exclusively of things that are not only replaceable, but must be replaced [...], it is not only plausible, but simply inevitable [...] that we should cultivate a lack of attentiveness and respect in handling things, in our activity, in our habits and our physiognomy. And not only with regard to things. [...] Humanity, which treats the world as a world to use and then throw in the trash, also treats its own kind as humanity to use and then throw in the trash. (Anders [1980] 2011, 25)

This shows how, for Anders, capitalist consumerism is connected to the deterioration of interpersonal relations and their transformation into individual relations of consumption. This results in a process of alienation whereby humans are no longer treated as humans but as objects of consumption. This applies to the world of dating apps where users seem replaceable and 'disposable'. This is reflected in their very functioning where each swipe or like literally results in a new profile appearing on the screen.

This section has introduced the notion that dating app use could be tied with a consumeristic attitude with regard to sex and user interactions. I further explore this next.

### **10.7 Consumeristic sex and feelings of disconnection**

In section 9.3, I discussed the individualistic dimension of dating app use, linking it to interface functioning and the fact that it is structured like a competitive game. I primarily discussed the effect that this could have on how users treat each other rather than on each user's individual psychological state. However, I touched on the fact that some users feel 'regret and guilt' (A, male, age: 27) for their own behaviour on dating apps. Others further feel that this does not reflect who they are. Hence one user stated: 'I don't like to think that my behaviour on that app was representative of who I am as a person outside of it', adding



'I don't think [the way I've used dating apps] fits with my personality' (E, male, age: 21). Below, I expand on this thread by showing how the consumeristic, repetitive functioning of dating apps can sometimes lead users to behave in ways that are disconnected from their identity.

One user spoke of the practice of direct sex on the gay hook-up app Grindr. Despite being more accurately described as a hook-up rather than a dating app, Grindr is also the first successful app of its kind: image-dominated smartphone applications connecting users through geo-localisation. It spawned the concept for later dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, CoffeeMeetsBagle, Feeld etc. Hence it arguably brings into focus essential dynamics relating to this form of technology.

The specificity of user practices on Grindr is that users typically decide to have sex before they meet in person, asking in the chat of the app 'Sex? Yes? No?' (M, male, age: 30). Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz (2018) have shown how this can sometimes lead to tensions upon meeting someone face-to-face, with some uploading misleading photographs so as to exploit:

the notion of commitment and expectations that increase the resistance to terminating connection at this phase of interaction [upon arrival at someone's home]. It is possible that the man was seeking to strategically exploit this resistance in using an old photograph, expecting that Travis would follow through on his commitment to hook-up (Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018, 2480)

When I asked one of my respondents whether this practice could lead users to sleep with people they would not have otherwise slept with, he replied:

Ehm, I think it's very likely.

–Can you explain a bit more why perhaps?

I mean for me I used Grindr before. You just have that desire all of a sudden, you need something, someone. And then you just go and see who is available. Like, literally who is here. And you just go there. And when you're finished, it just feels like you've got no connection with that guy. But it satisfies your physical need and then you just go away. In many cases, you wouldn't talk to that guy again. You just finish

that one off and then you talk to the next. Even, when it's the next time and you're in need, he might be there nearby, but you wouldn't try him out again.

– That's interesting. So do you think that, in a sense, you have sex with someone just because that's what you're there to do, and it doesn't really matter whether you have a connection with that person or not?

Yeah, I think that's right. It's not right. But that happened to me. And it's just very physical the whole thing.

– So are you neutral about that kind of thing? You said that as long as you practice safe sex, it's fine. Or do you think that there's perhaps a more negative aspect to it?

Morally it could be quite negative. Because sometimes, even if I did that – I fulfilled the physical need... But then afterwards I would find it slightly weird. Like, What have I done? What have I just done? And then that might last for maybe a couple of days and then it might happen again, who knows. (M, male, age: 30)

The user employs both nomination and predication strategies to define his motivation for engaging in this form of activity as a 'physical need'. By stating that his desire is both a 'need' and qualifying it as a 'physical need' the user is conveying the sense that engaging in this practice is a question of necessity. Indeed he further uses the expressions 'next time', 'the next' and 'in need'. Together these expressions participate in a nomination strategy that constructs app use as a consumption cycle that is similar to that of addiction, where a craving is fixed and iterative.

The respondent also employs nomination strategies to construct actors and processes relating to direct sex on Grindr as individualistic and consumeristic. Hence he states 'you need something, someone'. The anthroponym 'something' participates in a nomination strategy that constructs his prospective sexual partners as objects of his sexual gratification. He also refers to them as 'the next', which constructs the process of meeting them as a chain of consumption. He specifies he wouldn't 'try him out again'. This constructs the action of sleeping with someone as a form of consumeristic sampling of a product. The user

further highlights the individualistic quality of the encounters when he relates feeling 'no connection with that guy'.

The user employs expressive speech acts and strategies of intensification and mitigation (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to equally underline the consumeristic way in which he had sex with his partners. Hence he uses augmentatives ('literally'; 'just') to intensify the illocutionary force of his expression of feelings of need and, later, disconnection. Hence he states: 'literally who is here' and 'it just feels like you have no connection with that guy'. He further uses direct free speech as perspectivisations strategy to place the listener in his shoes and convey to him/her his feelings of confusion by saying: 'What have I done? What have I just done?' This use of free direct speech conveys his confusion and disorientation with regard to his actions. He thus arguably illustrates Anders' notion of Promethean shame, which is a 'relation with one-self that fails' (Anders [1956] 2003, 68, *my translation*). However, he also mitigates the illocutionary force (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) of his communication of confusion and regret, by using diminutives such as 'slightly' and questions rather than assertions 'who knows'. The fluctuating rhythm of the user's narrative thus also points towards the cyclical and consumeristic nature of his usage practices.

He further employs a perspectivisation strategy based on the use of passive sentence 'it's not right. But that happened to me' to express his distance with regard to his own actions on Grindr. He employs a predication strategy to characterise the experience of 'fulfil[ling]' his 'need' as being purely 'physical'. This suggests that the experience is reduced because the fulfilment is not also mental. In fact, the user characterises his post-coital feelings as 'weird'. This evaluative attribution of his feelings in relation to his actions suggest he views them as not quite right. In fact, the user states regarding his usage practice that: 'Morally it could be quite negative'. However, the topos of morality which the user employs makes it unclear whether the respondent thinks that his actions are negative for him or in the eyes of society. The modal particle 'quite' and subjunctive 'could' act as mitigation strategies (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to nuance the expression of the user's feeling of unease provoked by his usage practices. His communication that 'it might happen again, who

knows' suggest that they are simply part of a consumeristic cycle for this user, about which he is ambivalent. Indeed the tag question 'who knows' is an indirect speech act (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) (a question instead of an answer) that indicates that the respondent is also defiant with regard to his usage practices.

Anders was interested in the alienating side of consumerism whereby the object of desire is obtained immediately. In *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I (Anders [1956] 2003), he speaks about immediate gratification as not allowing individuals to develop their desires and self-consciousness. In *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. II (Anders [1980] 2011), Anders elaborates this theme further connecting it with technology. He describes:

the utopian ideal of our existence is the Land of Cockaigne, that is, an existence in which satiety magically treads on the heels of desire without the need to overcome or traverse any distance. Our technology does not aspire to anything else but the approach towards this Cockaigne goal. [...] The expression of impatience, *Let's get it over with*, is the slogan of our modern life. (Anders [1980] 2011, 247)

Emphasising the iterative dimension of consumption, he adds that:

In the happiness of work and the hunt, time flies, "instantly", that is, it is de-temporalized, despite the fact that it objectively passes according to the clock. On the other hand, time can also be annihilated when it is filled with an occupation so monotonous that the approach towards the goal (due to the fact that every step along the road towards it is always equal) is no longer perceptible. (Anders [1980] 2011, 246)

This can explain why the user M receives what he perceives as merely physical and temporary fulfilment, but not an emotional one. Indeed the user's actions are iterative as he speaks of 'the next', 'a couple of days' and how 'it might happen again'.

Dating apps offer affordances for immediacy by effectively allowing strangers to agree to have sex even before meeting. The risk of embarrassment is minimised in the event advances are declined because these are made online. Anders' theory suggests that this mode of use, which may appear desirable at first, is actually a factor in the merely partially fulfilling quality of some of the ensuing interactions. Anders states:

we should pity whoever is able, at the slightest sexual whim, to immediately slide their hands into the spaghetti bowl. They are depriving themselves of everything: of anticipating the slow materialisation of the inn; of appreciating the menu; the wait; the table and the candid tablecloth; the fragrance of the food; the *hors d'oeuvre*; the desert (Anders [1984] 2004, 125-124, *my translation*)

Marx, too, paid attention to the way human needs were met through consumption, arguing that not all forms of satisfactions of needs are equal. Hence he famously stated that

Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth. (Marx [1957] 2010, 29)

Marx's conception also shows how unsophisticated modes of consumption are alienating because they do not strive towards the conscious realisation of human potentialities and the free play of human faculties. They remain one-dimensional, as in the case of some users' purely 'physical' fulfilment.

The idea that there are different 'mode[s] of enjoyment' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 306) of objects of consumption gives an insight into Marx's conception of consumerism. For instance, Marx states: 'The worker's crude need is a far greater source of gain than the refined need of the rich' (Marx [1844b] 2010, 311). This reveals how, following Marx, one can define modern consumerism not as consumption in general (as consumption of oxygen is necessary for life, for instance) but as consumption that serves as its primary aim the accumulation of profit (though this is likely concealed) and whose form is strongly moulded by this fact.

Anders, along with many others, identified how sex could come to serve the purpose of commodity production stating that the:

sexual taboo [...] has been superseded not only by the production of the birth control pill, but also by the manufacture and public sale of pornographic images, films and gadgets, not to speak of public displays of sexual acts, common everywhere for the last ten years; in short: the producers of these commodities have changed the function of the sexual impulse by transforming it into a demand for commodities and, thus, eo ipso, into something that must be accepted (since it would be an

unpardonable waste not to use as a commodity something that can be used as a commodity) (Anders [1980] 2011, 218)

Here Anders shows that his understanding is one where sex, and the culture surrounding it, has been co-opted for commercial purposes. Arguably, dating apps represent a step further in the process of the transformation of sexual mores that Anders first described. Dating app companies benefit financially from a situation where users integrate dating app use into a long-term lifestyle, hence from a situation where sexual and romantic encounters are brief, transitory and iterative.

The repetitive dimension of dating app use fits with the account of another user. Asked whether dating app use was ever accompanied by feelings of isolation and disappointment, the user replied:

I think it's more about actually when you meet with these people and you think, actually, we met through this certain way, that you don't think that, actually, it's a very genuine connection, and actually you think that this could happen a million times, and you feel isolated because of that, rather than before meeting that person.

–Wow, that is the opposite of what I would have imagined. So you're tying this feeling of isolation to the fact that this could happen so easily?

I think it's so easy. And, for example, when I first met my boyfriend because he's always not here and got some personal reason. And so he kept on pushing me away. And then I was like: Oh but I like him so much. But then I was like: Oh stop for a second. I met him through this way and I could meet many other people through the same way. Then why do I need to care about this person so much because we only met once. And then that's how I built the isolation. It's by trying to meet with more and more people, thinking that every new swipe that I'm making will lead to something that is exactly the same. And isolation and disconnection actually comes from there... because there is a lack of trust when me and my boyfriend started to develop a relationship later. (O, female, age: 30)

Similarly to M, this user also speaks of an iterative dimension to app use ('every new swipe'), which she also conveys using predication strategies ('more and more people'), which further refers to the topos of numbers (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 79). She further

employs expressive speech acts, which employ free direct speech, ('this could happen a million times') and the repetition of the filler word 'actually' to convey the sense that she is confused and feels detached and disenchanting because of the repetitive functioning of the app, which leads her to believe that a love interest can be exchanged for another equivalent. This user underlines that, strikingly, she feels isolated not before but after meeting people through dating apps. The virtual, quantitative and iterative dimension of online interactions bleeds over into her offline meetings. She speaks of her consequent feelings of 'isolation', 'disconnection' and 'lack of trust' when it comes to her offline relationships that were initiated through dating apps.

Another respondent confirmed the sense of alienation arising from casual sex on dating apps such as Tinder, calling the sex 'meaningless' and 'degrading'. He stated:

Ehm, I think that... if you are just using it for casual sex... and the best-case scenario is that you have sex with someone and then it's meaningless and then you probably don't see them again. I think that that's the best-case scenario in a lot of situations for people who use it. And even that is quite degrading and alienating a lot of the time, especially because it doesn't feel so much like an organic human connection that you've bumped into someone and then... You've kind of gone through an algorithm and an app. It feels... It's almost like dehumanising on a meta-level, because it's this kind of machine process for assorting humans and I think that it can...

[...] And I'm trying to think about whether that's something that's better or worse compared to a real-life organic meetings. I think that... And I think that, for most people, it is worse because the casual, slightly kind of inhuman way in which it works means that, to an extent, you give up the right to feel that proud when you enter into it, if that makes sense. (E, male, age: 21)

The user employs predication and nomination strategies (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) to construct the functioning of the app as opposed to human nature and as consequently 'degrading and alienating'. Indeed user employs the topos of the human and the organic as being opposed to a 'algorithmic', 'machine process' which is 'inhuman'. The user is arguing that the functioning of the app is fundamentally opposed to human enjoyment and

fulfilment. Therefore prolonged use would be 'detrimental' (E, male, age: 21). By suggesting that the machine component in dating app encounters means that, to some extent, users 'give up the right to feel that proud', the E echoes Anders' argument about how alienation in consumer societies not only 'consists in labour without its fruits, but also in fruits without labour' (Anders [1956] 2003, 189, *my translation*).

Anders' concept of Promethean shame deals with the deleterious drive of humans to identify with the machine. In the section that, somewhat questionably, criticises jazz as a 'ball [held in honour] of the machine' (Anders [1956] 2003, 84), Anders states

It could seem, at first that, the two hostile 'forces of the es', the "original force" and that of the "thing", that of sex and that of the machine, have formed an alliance [...] to pulverise the self between them in a mechanism become orgiastic and an orgasm become mechanical. But with this intrepid alliance the machine has still not reached its ultimate goal. Its objective is that of liquidating sex itself. If it entered into contact with sex, it did not do this to collaborate, but to transform the violence sex contains into its own specific type of energy: that is, [...] transform animal energy into mechanical energy (Anders [1956] 2003, 84, *my translation*)

Anders could not have anticipated how intimate the connection between sexuality and machines would become with the advent of dating apps. This passage nevertheless highlights that Anders was aware that sex and technology could merge, and that this identification could favour mechanisation. Anders highlights how it may be tempting to deem modern industrial technology as an enabler for sex, and to hold a Dionysian celebration of the quantity and speed of sex obtained through machines. However, there is a risk of the mechanical factor dominating over the sexual one. Sex would then lose its human/animal quality and be entirely structured by the rhythms of industrial production and consumption, yielding a senseless, dehumanised version of love.

This dehumanising effect is apparent in the discourse of user E. Indeed, he further stated: 'I think that it does have a bad effect on your self-esteem and sense of self-worth and I think it's quite alienating. [...] I think that on an individual level it... for me, it's been for myself at least, it is a bit... it isn't very good for your long-term mental health' (E, male, age: 21). Here



the user employs a mitigation strategy based on modal particles ('at least'; 'a bit') to nuance his communication of mental distress in relation to the use of dating apps. He employs the topos of mental health to express the idea that prolonged dating app use can have ill effects on individuals' psyche.

Another respondent similarly spoke of a friend switching to using dating apps for direct sex because of becoming disillusioned as a result of using dating apps for too long. She stated: 'So that's what I mean, when you get so jaded then everything is transactional so why don't you just make it just overtly transactional then' (N, female, age: 30). The expression 'overtly transactional' refers to the practice of direct sex on dating apps. The respondent specified that at least these encounters meant that her friend was 'immediately validated' (N, female, age: 30). Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz describe 'commitment and expectations that increase the resistance to terminating connection' (2018, 2480) when users have already made the effort of travelling to meet someone for a hook-up. Similarly, N cited the fact that through such interactions: 'there is a very low risk that you are gonna be rejected' (N, female, age: 30). This user adopts the topos of having nothing to lose using the argument structure (Reisigl and Wodak, 74): 'when you get so jaded...then why don't you just then' (N, female, age: 30). The adverb 'then' emphasises that this practice is conditioned on a pre-existing negative state: that of being 'jaded'. This expression belongs to the topos of disillusionment and apathy, suggesting that the practice the respondent is describing is not deeply fulfilling. It may contain a purely consumeristic, and potentially self-defeating, character.

Linguistic strategy	Linguistic device	Citation	Users
Nomination strategies	Objectifying anthroponyms:	the next; something, someone	M, male, age: 30
	Verbs or nouns used to denote direct sex:	try him out; finish that one off; it might happen again; that happened to me	M, male, age: 30

Predication strategies	Positive evaluative attributions:	genuine connection	O, female, age: 30
	Ambivalent evaluative attributions:	weird; no connection; it's not right; morally negative	M, male, age: 30
	Negative evaluative attributions:	disconnection and isolation; lack of trust; so jaded; alienating; degrading; meaningless; inhuman; detrimental	O, female, age: 30; N, female, age: 30; E, male, age: 21
Topoi and argumentative strategies	Topos of biological need:	physical need; when you're in need	M, male, age: 30
	Topos of numbers:	a million times; many other people; more and more people; everything is transactional	O, female, age: 30; N, female, age: 30
	Topos of repetition:	that might last for a couple of days; it might happen again; every new swipe	M, male, age: 30; O, female, age: 30
	Topos of mechanical:	through this certain way; machine process for assorting humans; inhuman way; algorithm and an app	O, female, age: 30; E, male, age: 21
Intensification strategies	Repetitions:	what have I done? What have I just done?	M, male, age: 30

*Table 10.5: Users' discourse describing their relation to their use of dating apps*

Table 10.5 shows how users of dating apps employ terms related to numbers, repetition and mechanical action. This suggests that their activities on dating apps are consumerist, meaning that they are a form of activity that benefits profit rather than individuals

themselves. The hidden purpose of this activity is the profit of dating app companies, rather than the profound fulfilment of users. These terms also show how users come to think of their consumption activities as responses to needs, as they also often cite biological needs as reasons for engaging with dating apps. This illustrates how dating apps condition the form of need that users perceive, arguably imprinting on users their need for sex as purely physical and not as also mental and emotional.

### **10.8 Users' preference for in-person sexual and romantic encounters**

The alienation arising from consumerism described by Anders and Marx is compatible with Eisenstein's (1972) interpretation that alienation denotes a distancing from human potentials that are realisable within a given historical situation. I have also shown how it is equivalent to a reduction of enjoyment as the pleasures of sex and romance become fleeting, purely physical and not also mental. Eisenstein also notes that alienation can be understood in terms of a denial of a 'preferred style of life' (Eisenstein 1972, 67). Many of my respondents professed to having a preference for in-person encounters. However, they use dating apps because of limitations on their free time and space arising from wage labour and commodified cities, where socialising costs a lot of money.

Asked whether she preferred in-person or dating app encounters, an interviewee stated:

I think that everybody likes to tell that how-we-met story. And, like, chance encounters are more of a sort of appealing... Oh we met at the coffee shop or whatever. And everybody knows that on the dating app it's not as interesting of a story. But I feel that [...] now that I am working, it's harder to actually meet people through chance encounters. So I would say, like, it's more of a realistic way to meet people. (J, female, age: 29)

This respondent uses the topos of numbers and argumentum ad populum (Reisigl and Wodak, 79) 'everybody likes to tell that how-we-met story' and 'everybody knows' to argue that it is a given that using dating apps is not as good as meeting someone through chance encounters. However, she then uses the topos of reality (Reisigl and Wodak, 79) ('more realistic way to meet people') to argue that the reality of employment and wage labour

means that meeting people through chance encounters is unrealistic. Therefore use of apps is necessary and justified.

The topos of numbers ('so many'; 'filled with') and reality was also used by other respondent to justify use of dating apps. One user stated:

there was definitely a point in London where I felt like: Yes, there's so many people, but it almost seems too hard to meet someone, in a way. It's like a city filled with lonely people. (B, male, age: 27)

The user employed the topos of numbers in stating: 'there's so many people'; and that London is a 'city filled with lonely people'. The user employs this topos to refer to the paradoxical situation that people often feel lonely in big cities with lots of inhabitants due to the pressures of advanced capitalist economies. He further employs the topos of reality and harshness in stating: 'it almost seems too hard to meet someone, in a way'. He, however, reduces the illocutionary force of this statement (which may appear to communicate excessive sadness) through modal particles ('almost'; 'seems'; 'in a way').

Another user added a topos of efficiency ('efficiency of chance encounters') to the topos of numbers ('slim'; 'a million miles an hour') and speed ('a million miles an hour') to further justify his use of dating apps, saying:

the opportunity to have those chance encounters is so slim in our culture, that it's so ineffective, that dating apps become this tool, which allows you to have efficiency of chance encounters. [...] It basically allows you to squeeze... allows you to compress all [...] your potential meetings into such a compressed timeframe, which then fits into this cultural thing of us running a million miles an hour the whole time. (R, male, age: 30)

This user employs predication strategies based on the metaphor of 'compress[ion]', 'squeez[ing]', and 'fit[ting] into' to qualify the process of using dating apps as efficient and fast. The topos of reality ('the opportunity [...] is so slim'; 'ineffective') is also used to justify the use of apps, despite R's previous assertion that he prefers chance encounters. Hence R later added that given the time pressures associated with wage labour, 'the opportunity to create a meaningful relationship is so diminished that you need to rely on something that's

purely transactional' (R, male, 30). Here R also uses deictics ('you'; 'our'; 'us') as a perspectivisation strategy to position his point of view as that of any other person in his position.

Together these discursive strategies highlight how users engage with dating apps because of constraints in their daily life due to lack of free time and space rather than because of a preference for the way dating apps organise sexual and romantic encounters. This finding goes against Bergström's argument that the success of dating apps can be explained by the affordances for sexual liberation and experimentation they offer (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §27). Here it is conversely found that convenience and lack of free time and space is the main driver of dating app use.

## 10.9 Conclusion

To conclude, many of my respondents stated that app use is not so much a choice as a necessity, if one is to realistically find partners while working a time and energy demanding job. To answer RQ2.2, users of dating apps may, on the one hand, feel connected to others because they are presented with the possibility of meeting many different people, whom they otherwise would not have been able to encounter. However, they also experience fatigue and disenchantment when they interact with many people following the same script and procedure. This leads some to feel isolated and like there is no connection between them and other users, even after they have met in person — as interviewee O (female, age: 30) underlined. Hence some users speak of prolonged dating app use as potentially having a negative impact on their mental health and self-worth. I therefore question whether dating apps are really sexually liberating, as some techno-euphoric accounts argue.

For instance, Bergström maintains that critical conceptions of dating apps 'struggle to conceal uneasiness aroused by the fact that they allow for a multiplication of sexual partners through the internet' (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §10, *my translation*). However, I have endeavoured to show that, to the contrary, a critique of generalised dating app use need not reflect a critique of specific sexual preferences. Techno-euphoric understandings of

dating apps such as those found in Feeld's PR often imply that sexual and romantic variety are automatically enhanced by digital media, even when the functioning of this media contains a standardising dimension. It is possible that dating app use perfectly suits some individuals' sexualities, allowing them to obtain complete fulfilment. But my interviews suggest that this is not the case for most people. For most of my respondents, dating app use arises from a situation of limited alternatives. It is tied to wage labour and the consequent constraints placed on the free time of individuals in advanced capitalist systems. It cannot be defined as having 'emancipatory effects' (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §7, *my translation*) because it is a functional component of these systems. It allows a bare minimum of Eros to be expressed in a direct and unsophisticated way.

To highlight this, I have outlined how Anders' theory of technology and Marx's theory of alienation are compatible and can be fused. Accordingly, I have elaborated a theory of how dating app use produces alienation in the Marxian sense of a division and inversion of subject and object. Just as for Marx the object is represented by the materials, instruments and product of labour, the object for dating app users is threefold. It is represented by the other users they interact with, the interface and the product of this interaction, the ensuing sexual and romantic relationship or communication. The very functioning of dating apps determines a physical separation between users, who now relate to one-another, at least in the first instance, through images and profiles. This separates users from their object in the form of other users. It also fragments their sensory experience of each other. Secondly, users are separated from the object understood as means of communication. They do not control the technological frame that strongly conditions their interactions. Finally, users are separated from the product of their use of these technologies. Access to dating apps is conditioned on users accepting privacy policies that commodify user data and communications. This influences interface design, which offers affordances for multiple short-form communications. Within this individualistic and competitive frame, presentations of self and interactions tend towards being standardised. The resulting relations between users are often short-term, iterative and merely physically fulfilling. They

are consequently often described as 'transactional' (R, male, 30; N, female, 30; E, male, 21; A, male, 27; Q, male, 27) and 'disposable' (S, female, age: 29; P, male, age: 31; J, female, age: 29). However, this is not to say that users cannot overcome the consumeristic dimension of dating apps.

To finish, I briefly discuss how some users employed certain affordances of dating apps in unexpected ways that go against their general frame. Rather than engage in a 'private strike' (Anders [1956] 2003, 11) of dating apps, certain users pushed some of the existing affordances of these platforms to their limits so as to subvert them. They thus demonstrated a tendency towards 'domesticating' (Sørensen in Berker et al. 2005, 44) dating apps. For instance, certain respondents exaggerated the staged nature of profiles, selecting highly stylised pictures that did not reveal looks. These were intended to appeal to other users with similar values and interest. For instance, one respondent described 'reverse engineering' what she saw as the superficial dimension of dating apps. She stated:

I think that in an opposite way, when I put up my own photo, I try not to find a very pretty photo. Just because how the media is portraying these apps people are going after looks. People want to find somebody that is super good-looking. Because of that, I do the reverse engineering; I try to put very normal looking photos of myself even ones where you can't fully see the face. It's very abstracted. With no body exposure, you can't see any of my body part, because I am trying to reverse engineer it. So that people that match with me they match with me not seeing any of those aspects. And I just feel really comfortable. At least it seems like it is not those guys who are going after these model-looking people. (O, female, age: 30)

Employing the topos of engineering and reverse-engineering demonstrates the users' desire to actively control dating app technology, rather than passively follow their affordances. Reverse-engineering is a nominative strategy that implies that the user is aware of the general orientation of the set affordances presented by dating apps. But she wishes to challenge and subvert these. This user demonstrates the desire to not play a 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) on dating apps by constructing

a profile that appeals to the greatest number. Instead, she wishes to attract people based on shared values that imply not being focussed on looks.

This practice may also indicate a desire to save some aspects of personal discovery for in-person meetings. Preserving mystery and uncertainty on dating apps may help replicate the aura of chance encounters when users meet offline. For instance, another user stated: 'I'd rather post worse photos online and then people are pleasantly surprised when they see you' (J, female, age: 29). This users' reference to the topos of surprise suggests that she would like to preserve the unexpected dimension of chance encounters within her in-person meetings on dating apps. These testimonies suggests that some users would like to reduce the highly sexually charged atmosphere of dating apps. They seem to prefer to attempt to use dating apps as a general method enabling them to meet like-minded and interesting people.

Next, I explore the ideology surrounding dating apps and how these companies' PR has had to adapt to these user reactions.



## 11. Ideology: Dating App Use as an End in Itself

### 11.1 Introduction

My research question for the ideology section in the dating app case-study was RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a “perfect match” of individuals?

In the last chapter, I outlined a theory of alienation inspired by Anders and Marx and applied it to dating apps. I discussed how users' engagement with dating apps followed constraints in their daily lives. These meant that they did not feel it was realistic to meet people through chance encounters. I highlighted the fact that users' engagement with dating apps does not reflect their preference for virtual sociality over in-person sociality. In this chapter, I discuss how nevertheless use of dating apps has become normalised within popular culture. Over the last decade, use of online platforms to find sexual and romantic has gone from being somewhat stigmatised to being generally accepted and considered 'pretty normal' (C, male, age: 23).

I look at advertising campaigns conducted by dating app companies and analyses of dating apps within academia. I argue that dating app companies produce an ideology that encourages users to be constantly sexually available and adventurous. I further show how some academic discussions of dating apps are uncritical and overlook their negative, alienating dimension. These end up reflecting an ideology which constructs individuals' desire for sex, intimacy and companionship as perfectly catered to by dating app use. This plays into the economic interests of dating app companies, some of whom promote continuous use of dating apps as part of a fixed lifestyle.

Hence, in section 11.2, I discuss dating apps' original ideology of the 'perfect match'. I highlight how this constructs romantic relations as being based on the notion of a preordained compatibility, rather than on a shared how-we-met narrative. I show that, while unconvinced by the idea of 'perfect matches' users tend to adopt considerations relating to compatibility rather than narrative when forming feelings of attraction for their

partners on dating apps. They thus adopt the notion of 'good matches'. In section 11.3, I discuss the latest marketing strategy on the part of Tinder, which consists in portraying Tinder use as organic, compatible with city exploration and youthful lifestyles. In section 11.4, I discuss how dating app companies react to common sense understandings surrounding dating apps. In section 11.4, I describe the turn towards realism in the marketing strategies of dating apps. With this evolution, dating app companies tend to acknowledge the difficulties and harshness of dating app use while placing the responsibility for withstanding these difficulties on users. I discuss how this fits with a neoliberal conception of individual responsibility. I criticise sociological approaches that celebrate this privatisation. Hence, in 11.6, I question whether there exists a sex positive ideology within some understandings of dating apps that constructs users' sexual desires as fit for commodification through these platforms. These ideologies benefit the economic interests of dating app companies.

## **11.2 The perfect match ideology**

The initial ideology promoted by dating apps was tied to the idea of the 'perfect match' (Quint 2020). This expression employs both nomination and predications strategies (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33). The expression 'match' functions as both a verb and noun. The verb describes the process of dating app users establishing feelings of attraction for one-another. It refers to the topos of an essential harmony between two elements, such as two colours. Hence this expression discursively constructs feelings of attraction as preordained and based on a fixed harmonious correspondence between two persons. The expression further employs the positive evaluative attribution 'perfect'. This discursively qualifies the process of initiating a sexual and romantic connection as seamless and complete. The notion of 'perfect match' implies that relationships are easy and ahistorical. It is opposed to the notion that sexual attraction and romance develops through a narrative and the overcoming of difficulties and obstacles. It implies that successful relationships are pre-ordained and

down to some essential compatibility. Thus persons can also be referred to as a 'perfect match'.

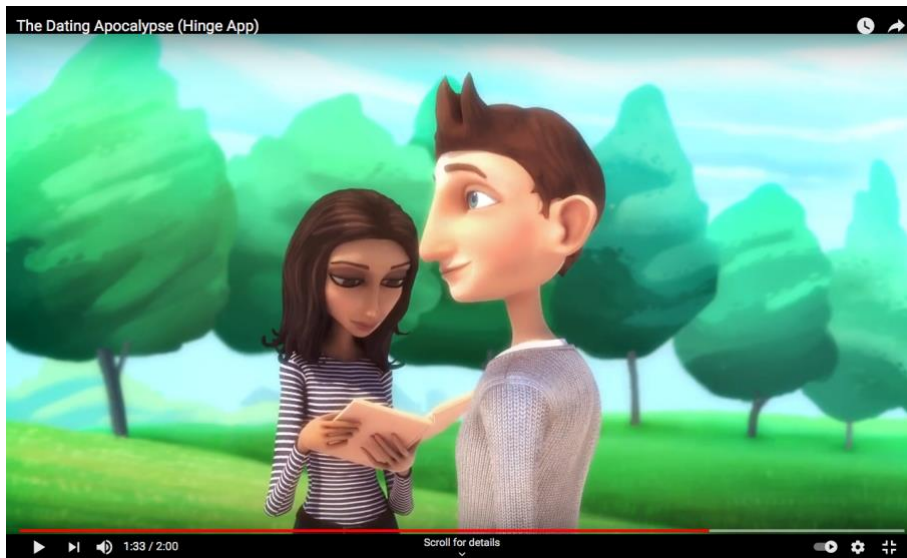


Figure 11.2.1: Two Hinge users metaphorically bumping into each other for the first time on the app. From Studio NYC. 2017. *The Dating Apocalypse (Hinge App)*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU>



Figure 11.2.2: Two Hinge users immediately forming a 'meaningful match' (Hinge 2020) within seconds of meeting. From Studio NYC. 2017. *The Dating Apocalypse (Hinge App)*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzfDGVJdpoU>

Figures 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 give an insight into why the idea of the perfect match is deployed by dating app companies. They illustrate how dating app marketing often constructs use of these platforms as similar to an idealised version of in-person encounters.

They argue that their platforms allow users to experience the immediate attraction associated with the notion of love at first sight. Thus, paradoxically, the ideal employed by dating app marketing is the absence of dating apps. Dating app companies compete with one another on the basis that it is the use of their platform that most resembles in-person meetings. For instance, a Tinder advert features a person walking down a street while making eye contact with passers-by (Tinder 2018a). However, eye-contact with other users is not possible while using the app. The person waves her finger in front of the passers-by mimicking the left-swipe motion denoting a negative response on the platform interface to reject them. There isn't a phone in sight. This shows how dating app companies themselves do not depict the realities of using their interfaces. They argue that users should use their services because they are almost like the real thing, where an immediate level of attraction is established. They have attempted to translate this notion into the idea of the 'perfect match'.

The idea of the 'perfect match' is connected to the topos of *a match made in heaven* and of two people being *made for one-another*. This is an idea that pre-dates generalised dating app use but that was revived and given a modern twist by it for a certain time. For instance, an article on Bumble's virtual magazine The Buzz refers to the idea of virtual dates, which has become increasingly popular since the 2020- coronavirus crisis. It says: 'It's entirely possible to meet your perfect match from the comfort of your couch' (Quint 2020). This statement uses a predication strategy ('from the comfort of your couch') to qualify the action of finding a long-term romantic partner as easy and effortless. Perhaps this notion is intended to refer to the aura of spontaneous in-person meetings, which one of my respondents described as characterised by 'understand[ing] immediately how you feel' (B, male, age: 27).

However, the idea that sex and romance can be obtained from the comfort of one's couch also exemplifies Anders' notion of immediate gratification, which I outlined in section 10.7. Anders speaks of the ideal of a Land of Cockaigne, where "roasted squabs" "dispatch" themselves; that is, they fly into mouths that are already opened wide to receive them'

(Anders [1956] 2003, 185, *my translation*). According to Anders, this situation is alienating because it is inimical to self-discovery and personal development. He consequently states:

The life of the worker — the life of all of us — is doubly alienated: it not only consists in labour without its fruits, but also in fruits without labour (Anders [1956] 2003, 189, *my translation*)

Indeed Figures 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 depict a seemingly timeless landscape where users sit around playing board games and reading. There is arguably something disquieting about this ultra-idealised understanding of human life.

I asked my respondents about how they related to the idea of the 'perfect match'. Overall, users' experience of 'perfect matches' was tied to disappointment. Users generally appeared to adopt the idea of perfect matches while chatting online on the platforms, believing the person they were speaking to may be a 'perfect match'. However, upon meeting the person face-to-face my respondents discovered that this was not the case. Hence one interviewee stated:

Mm, I've had it where I've thought: This person might be a perfect match. And then we've met up and it hasn't been a perfect match. (B, male, age: 27)

The users' employs a flat animating prosody (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) for the second sentence, conveying a sense of disappointment.

Speaking about a friend another user said:

she says she meets people and there's always no chemistry because you big them up in your head. Because of their profile, you think that they're gonna be a great match. Ehm, and she's just really jaded. (N, female, age: 30)

This user employs deictics ('you big them up in your head'; 'you think their gonna be a great match') as part of a perspectivisation strategy that expresses proximity with her friend's experience. She thus conveys the fact that it is natural to have this experience and that it is connected to the functioning of the app. In fact, the user states that feelings of hope arise 'because of their profile'. Here she employs the topos that people portray an idealised

version of themselves on their profiles and therefore it is natural to 'big them up in your head', or idealise them, before meeting them thinking they are a 'great match'.

In fact, users report more positive experiences when they have 'moderate to low' expectations based on a profile but then discover the person is different to what they had imagined and are pleasantly surprised as a result. Hence N states:

So when you actually meet someone where you're expectations are like, you know, alright, moderate to low, and they actually turn out to be a good fit then it's surprising but also quite nice. (N, female, age: 30)

Here the expression 'good fit' shows how the concept of 'perfect match', the notion of romance being based on fixed essential compatibility as opposed to overcoming incompatibilities and a how-we-met narrative, has influenced the thinking of dating app users. The expression 'good fit' participates in a nomination strategy that constructs the process of establishing a relationship as one based on the notion of a pre-existing, fixed and seamless compatibility. It also relates to the topos of functionality.

The notion of perfect match was met with outright scepticism by some. For instance, one user stated: 'I believe that the idea of perfect matches is in itself wrong' (K, male, age: 30). However, the notion still influenced users' speaking and thinking. For instance, the same user then added: 'But you can get good matches' (K, male, age: 30). Another user similarly refers to conversations ending after a meeting by saying that the reason that they do is that he thinks:

We might not be the perfect match; it doesn't feel like we have the... You might not be the best find for me. (M, male, age: 30)

Here the expression 'best find for me' equally shows how the notion of the 'perfect match' influences users' vocabulary. I argue that this happens through the very functioning of the app. Their structure means that physically isolated users are looking, or trying to 'find', a preconceived idea of what they want. They also meet many individuals who they do not get along with at all in a romantic dating setting, producing a jarring experience. Hence the user employs nomination strategies to discursively construct his potential romantic partners as

'good finds'. 'Good fit' and 'good find' both relate to a topos of functionality. They could be applied to the sphere of work and employment. For instance, a job application candidate could be considered a 'good find' or a 'good fit' for a specific role.

The fact that users adopt ideological notions employed to market dating apps and tied to the set of affordances they offer illustrates Anders' notion, which I detailed in 3.6.3, that the functioning of modern machines does not reveal their truth but can produce partial truths. In this case, the emphasis within romance on pre-ordained compatibility rather than narratives. It also illustrates Anders' notion that the world of technology is 'ideologically "pre-cut"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 185, *my translation*), which I detailed in section 3.6.4. The experience of looking for a partner on dating apps is already ideological. For instance, there is an emphasis on 'new specifications of individuals that put people into different sexual categories' (Liu 2016, 559). Choice among these options then contributes to new forms of 'consumerist individualism' (Liu 2016, 562).

### **11.3 Swipe life, Swipe city**

Another ideology that dating app companies promote is that using these platforms is fun, exciting and progressive. This messaging is an evolution of the notion of the perfect match. It de-emphasises the idea that app use seamlessly recreates the experience of love at first sight. It is instead connected to the idea that dating app use feels natural and organic, as it fits neatly within the daily routines of its users. Tinder's online magazine 'Swipe Life' (Tinder 2020b) uses a nomination strategy (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that implies that use of Tinder is 'life'. Life is a noun which is sometimes opposed to work, as in *work-life balance*. It positively constructs the image of Tinder use as being tied to freedom and leisure. The expression 'life' also alludes to the topos of lifestyle. Swipe is a predication strategy that refers to the action of swiping on Tinder (the action of mutually right-swiping with one's finger on the screen of a smartphone on profiles is required for users to connect). The expression 'Swipe life' qualifies Tinder use as a lifestyle that individuals choose for

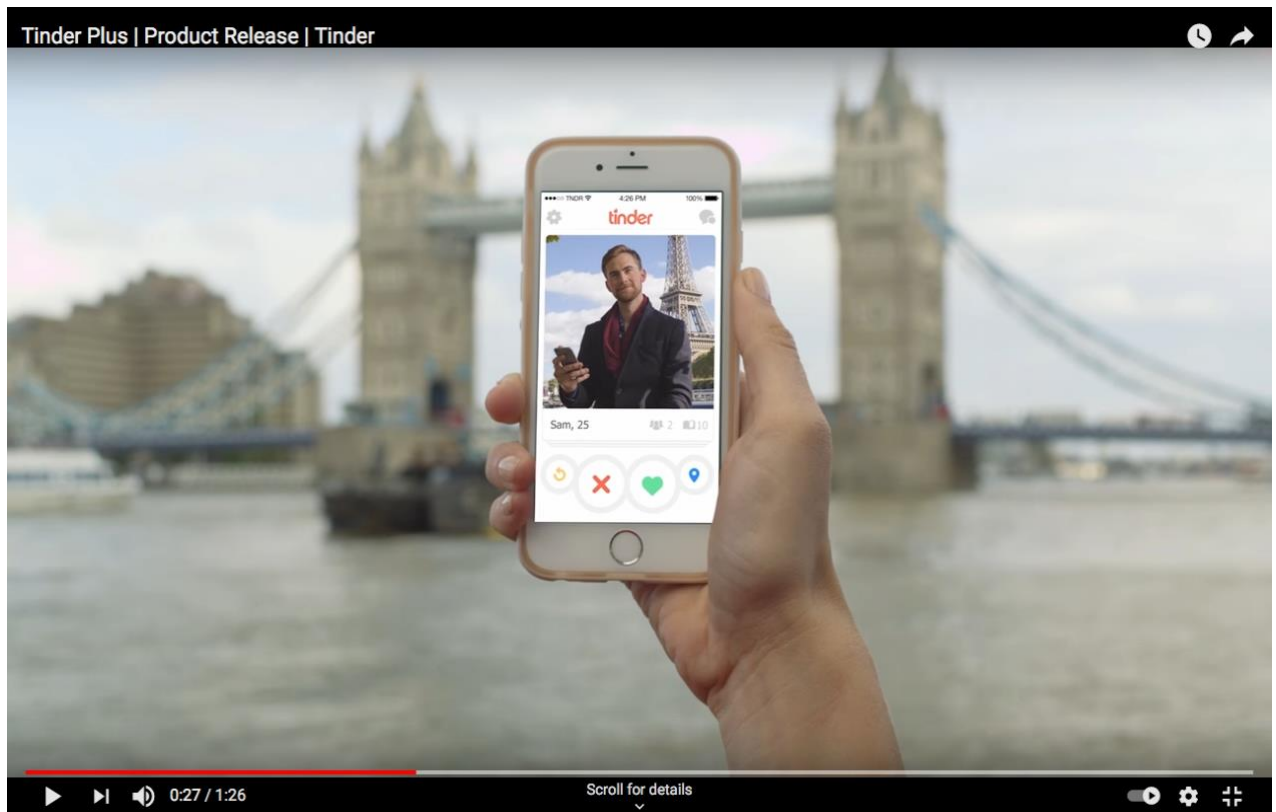
themselves, as opposed to something users do because they are compelled to through lack of free time and space.

Tinder's latest series of promotional videos feature LGBT+ users and individuals with body-types that deviate from standard ideals often presented in the media. These individuals promote a campaign that portrays Tinder use as relatable and centres around the idea that Tinder is a good means to explore new cities. Indeed the persons featured go on many dates around cities that they are exploring and are shown around by their Tinder matches. Hence the campaign states: 'Welcome to swipe city where real-ass Tinder users, like me, use Tinder to explore my new city' (Tinder 2021b, 20 sec). The expression 'real-ass Tinder users' employs a predication strategy that employs colloquial appositions ('real-ass') to qualify the experience of dating app use opposed to being virtual, fake and staged. This follows a trend on the part of Tinder and other dating apps towards realism, which I explore in the next section. This sentence also uses a predication strategy with the neologism 'swipe city' that qualifies cities as being compatible with and open to Tinder use. This expression uses the topos that Tinder use is a great tool to get out and about and to make the most of a city one is exploring. Tinder thus effectively capitalises on the appeal of city exploration to promote its app.

Tinder's most high-production advert (Tinder 2015) features a woman as the protagonist (see Figures 11.3.1-11.3.4). Given that, as discussed in 5.5, most Tinder users are male, this illustrates how Tinder is trying to market the platform to women, as it cannot work effectively without them. The advert makes a compelling case for using Tinder while travelling. It makes the implicit statement that Tinder helps users make the best of their leisure time, transforming their travels and holidays into fun-packed and memorable time periods. It initially shows a woman at work in her dreary open plan office cubicle. She receives a text asking how her holiday went. The time stamp on the message is 8:09 am, the very start of what might be a drab workday. The woman reclines and looks up, beginning to daydream about her most recent trips abroad. The advert then cuts to flashback scenes where we see her travelling to London. She accordingly switches her location on the Tinder

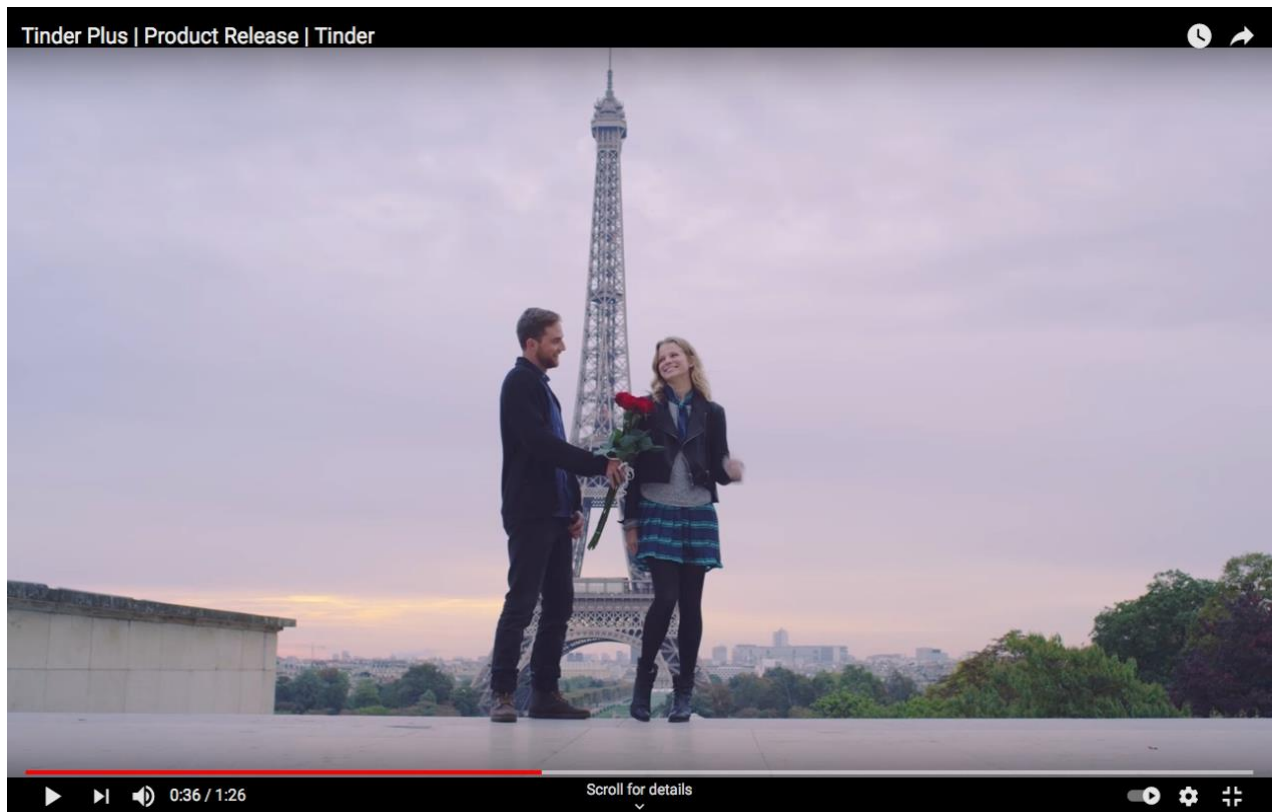


app to London, allowing her to connect with local people. There, she swiftly meets a local man through Tinder and is shown around the city. She is taken to a football match and to see famous sights. Her date flirts with her in a light-hearted and respectful manner. She ultimately declines his final approach, politely closing the door to her apartment on him. She then travels to Paris. Thanks to the bonus features the advert is promoting, she is able to pre-emptively change her location on the Tinder app to Paris.



*Figure 11.3.1: Tinder makes the argument that it can efficiently allow people to meet others while travelling. The user can pre-emptively connect with people in Paris, her next travel destination, while still in London. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus | Product Release | Tinder. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04>*

This means that there is no waiting around. She is able to match with a Parisian man already from London. The next scene shows her meeting this man in Paris and engaging in a passionate romance with him.



*Figure 11.3.2: Tinder argues that it can ensure that users' holidays are packed full of enjoyable life-events. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus | Product Release | Tinder. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04>*

However, her planned trip to Europe also includes a stop in Istanbul. True to the culture of casual sex and romance the Tinder app developers promote, she kisses this man goodbye and switches her location to Istanbul.

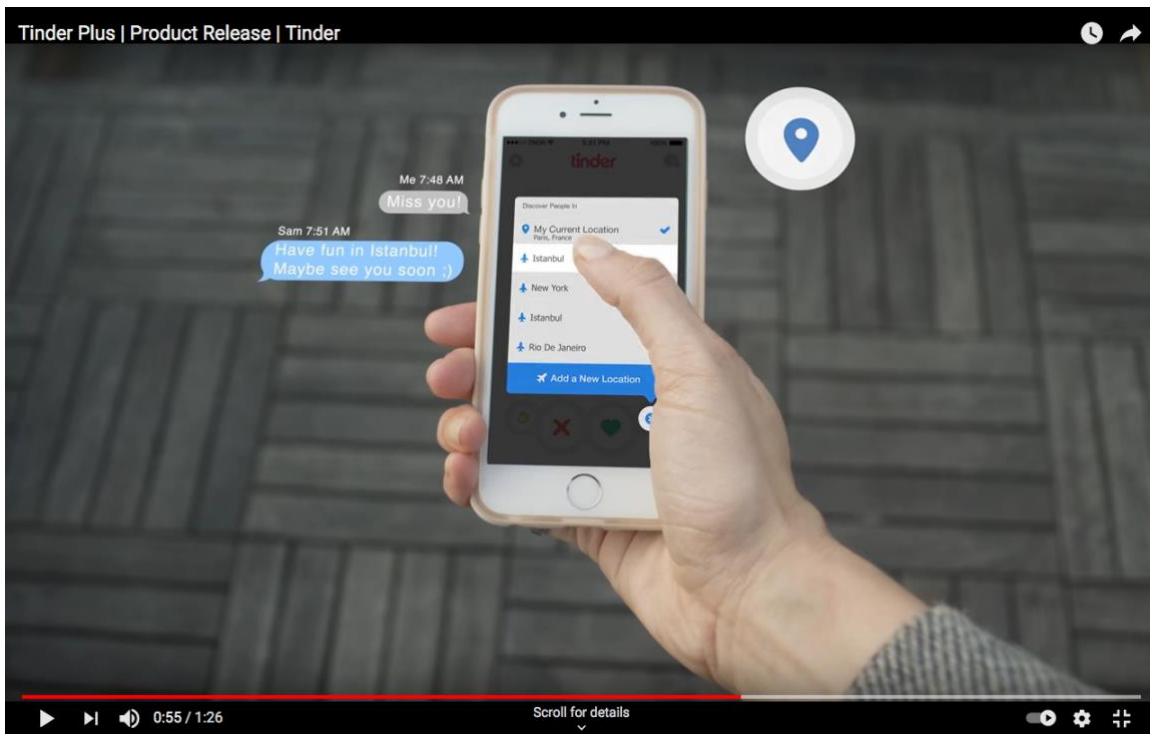
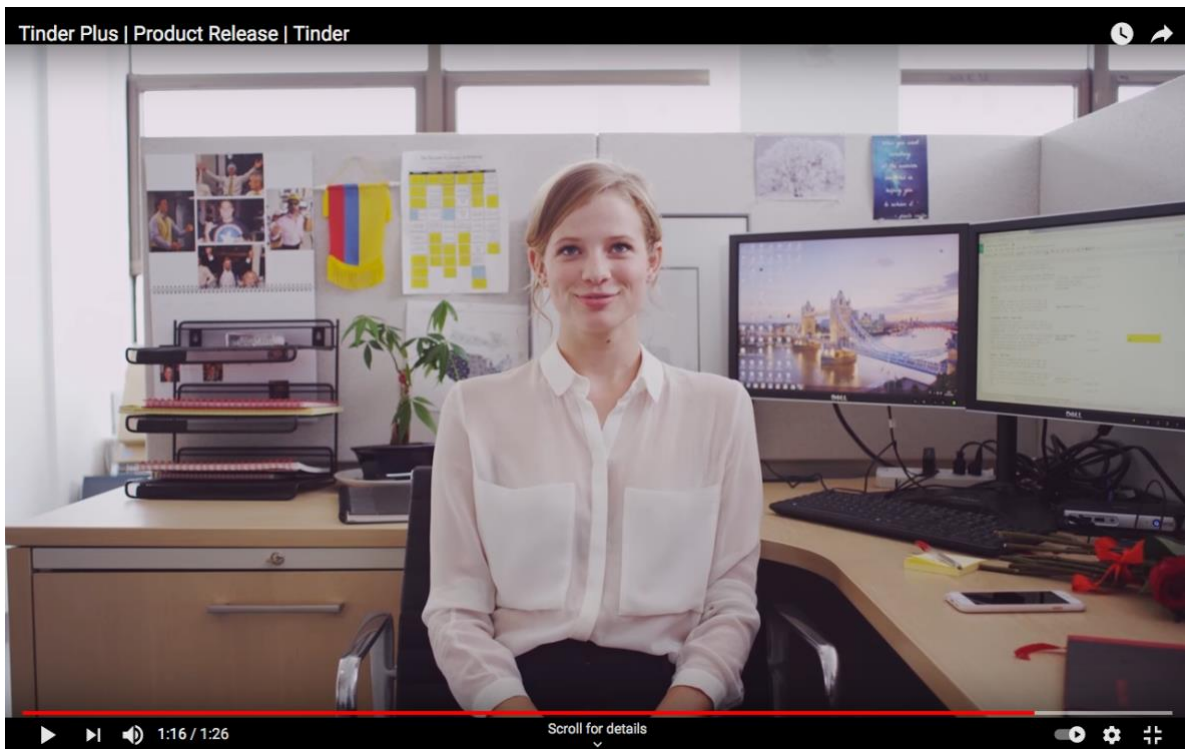


Figure 11.3.3: Tinder promotes a casual vision of sex and romance, whereby users explore their options by flirting and dating multiple users at the same time. Accordingly, the user changes her location setting to Istanbul, the new city she is exploring,

However, this advert does not give up on traditional notions of romance altogether. In Istanbul, she is surprise-visited by the man she met in Paris. When the advert finally cuts back to the initial scene of her at work daydreaming, we see her with an expression of full contentment. This holiday romance still feels present. In fact, we see his flowers on her work desk. The integration of work environment symbolism into this advert illustrates “Foucault’s assertion that sex is not produced ‘apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise’” (Foucault in Liu 2016, 562). This idea is also reflected in Anders’ notion of a ‘totalitarianism of enjoyment’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 124), which I discussed in section 5.2.2.



*Figure 11.3.4: Tinder's advert highlights how its user is fully satisfied with her holiday. She has been able to make the most of her free time. Now her labour time is bearable. From Tinder. 2015. Tinder Plus | Product Release | Tinder. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdef2anpd04>*

Overall, Tinder makes the case that use of Tinder is a fun and efficient way of fulfilling users need for sociality and their desire for sex and romance. But this argument stands in a paradoxical relation to the fact that most dating app adverts feature little to no time showing users on their phones using the app. For many actual users of dating apps, the time spent using the phone app vs going on dates might feel disproportionate. Indeed one of my respondents described her use of dating apps as: ‘maddeningly time-consuming. And their in-built in such a way as to be addictive and endorphin releasing so you spend more time on them’ (D, female, age: 21). Here the user employs the topos of apps being ‘addictive and endorphin releasing’ to refer to the idea that many apps and social media interfaces offer casino-game-like affordances. Through applying techniques borrowed from gambling slot machines, they are designed to be habit-forming (Hobbs et al. 2017, 272). This is because they are based on a business model that profits from users spending as much time as possible as frequently as possible on their interfaces.

This users' description of dating app use, whereby spending time on the app takes precedence over experiencing sexual and romantic connections, illustrates Anders' notion that the new post-puritanism, similarly to puritanism, is characterised by:

little joyous appreciation of pleasure. In each, it is natural that sexuality is a mere "means in view of an end" [...] What counts here is the movement, not the mooring. For instance, [...] driving the car, not the destination. The autonomous development of this monstrous technical system, which never allows us to grasp ends, is therefore, one can say, the only "destination" of this perpetuum mobile. (Anders [1984] 2004, 129-130)

Here Anders' thought fits with the cyclical nature of app use described by users. It highlights what present day Tinder users might feel is wrong with the idea of using Tinder for city exploration. Namely, this might require a considerable amount of time spent on one's device, attracting and sussing out potential dates. This would actually take time away from city exploration.

#### **11.4 Dating app marketing reacts to user common sense surrounding dating apps**

Dating app companies cannot perfectly control the image dating apps acquire within society. As soon as dating app use spreads among certain populations a common sense surrounding them gets produced. This common sense is influenced by both official content promoted by dating app companies and user reactions to this content and their own experience of dating apps. For instance, reacting to the game-like presentation of dating apps, respondent D characterised them as being 'maddeningly time-consuming' (D, female, age: 21). A further common sense linked to dating app use that emerged with their early popularisation was tied to the notion that dating apps, especially Tinder, were superficial, as they involved swiping based on split-second judgements about photogenic beauty alone. Finally, there was pre-existing stigma attached to meeting people through the internet. This stigma, in some respects, endures. As discussed in the last chapter, many users still view meeting people through dating apps as less 'interesting of a story' (J, female, age: 29) than meeting people through chance encounters. Dating app companies cannot ignore this

common sense and must react to it in their promotional content if they are to effectively manipulate public opinion surrounding dating app use.

In the late 2010s, Tinder launched some advertising campaigns that cynically made the case for dating app use despite what many people perceived as their negative characteristics. It provocatively actively acknowledged and celebrated their superficial character. One Tinder advert from 2014 depicts two like-minded people engaging in what seems like a promising date (PATIO Interactive 2014). Both share the same interests and sense of humour. At one point, speaking about the topic of tomatoes being classed as fruits, they jointly exclaim about tomatoes: 'just be yourself' (PATIO Interactive 2014, 18 sec) i.e. a vegetable. The expression 'just be yourself' is related to the topos (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) that individuals should not feel ashamed for what their personality is like or what they look like. This topos is moreover connected to the idea that this shame often arises because of idealised images of humans promoted by the media.

Then one of the persons gets up to go to the bathroom. While alone, the other party receives a phone notification saying that he has matched (i.e. been connected on the Tinder app) with the profile of what seems like a more conventionally attractive woman. This match asks him whether he wants to meet now. After anxiously hesitating for a moment, he gets up to leave the restaurant. He cannot resist the temptation of potentially sleeping with the woman represented by the profile. As he is about to exit, he runs into his date. They collide and fall, letting go of their phones. He grabs at his and accidentally picks up hers. He is initially confused because he sees a different profile to the one he had up on his phone. It is one of a muscular man also active in the area. This indicates that him and his date were just about to do the same thing. On realising what has happened, they both awkwardly part ways. The advert then turns to the Tinder logo with the provocative caption: 'the only connection that matters' (PATIO Interactive 2014, 56). This contradicts the initial apparent message of the advert connected to the topos of being oneself.



Figure 11.4.1: *Tinder advertising slogan. From PATIO Interactive. 2014. Tinder App Commercial. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r6YZvle4jE>*

This advert deals with the topos of Tinder use being superficial. The slogan that Tinder is 'the only connection that matters', implies that users do not value chemistry but only aspects tied to the app such as physical attraction based on photos and availability for sex. It attempts to own up to the fact that its users are atomised individuals, as it suggests that they share no connection apart from use of the Tinder app. In short, Tinder developers and marketers sell the app as a tool that allows users to easily sleep with people they find attractive. This message is based on, and promotes, the idea that humans are subject to fixed, inevitable instinctual impulses for a standard type of person and that they cannot deny this. The advert sets an ambiguous relation to the potential consumers it is trying to woo. Far from treating them with exaggerated respect as traditional adverts do, this advert berates its users. It comes close to suggesting that they are hypocritical in wanting anything more than what Tinder has to offer. Its main message is *this is what you want*. This shows how Tinder marketers and developers are aware of negative notions potential users may have regarding its functioning. They therefore adopt an almost confrontational relation to their prospective prosumers.

Another Tinder advert contains a similar message (Pan up Production 2018). However, produced in 2018, the advert also moves away from portraying Tinder as an instrument for quick sex. It argues instead that it allows users to form satisfying relationships. The advert ironically dramatizes a how-we-met narrative between two individuals. It shows one finding a notebook on his way home from work. He reads it with visible relish and uses his intelligence to work out, on the basis of the information it contains, that the person who lost it must frequent a particular park. He goes there and approaches a lady sitting on the bench asking her if it is hers. The advert then cuts to a scene in a restaurant of the two persons, now a couple, relating this seemingly impossibly romantic story of how they met to another couple. One of the listeners says: 'I do not believe a word of that' (Pan up Production 2018, 54 sec.). But the original couple insists it is true. The advert cuts to the Tinder logo and the slogan: 'tell whatever story you want' (Pan up Production 2018, 57).

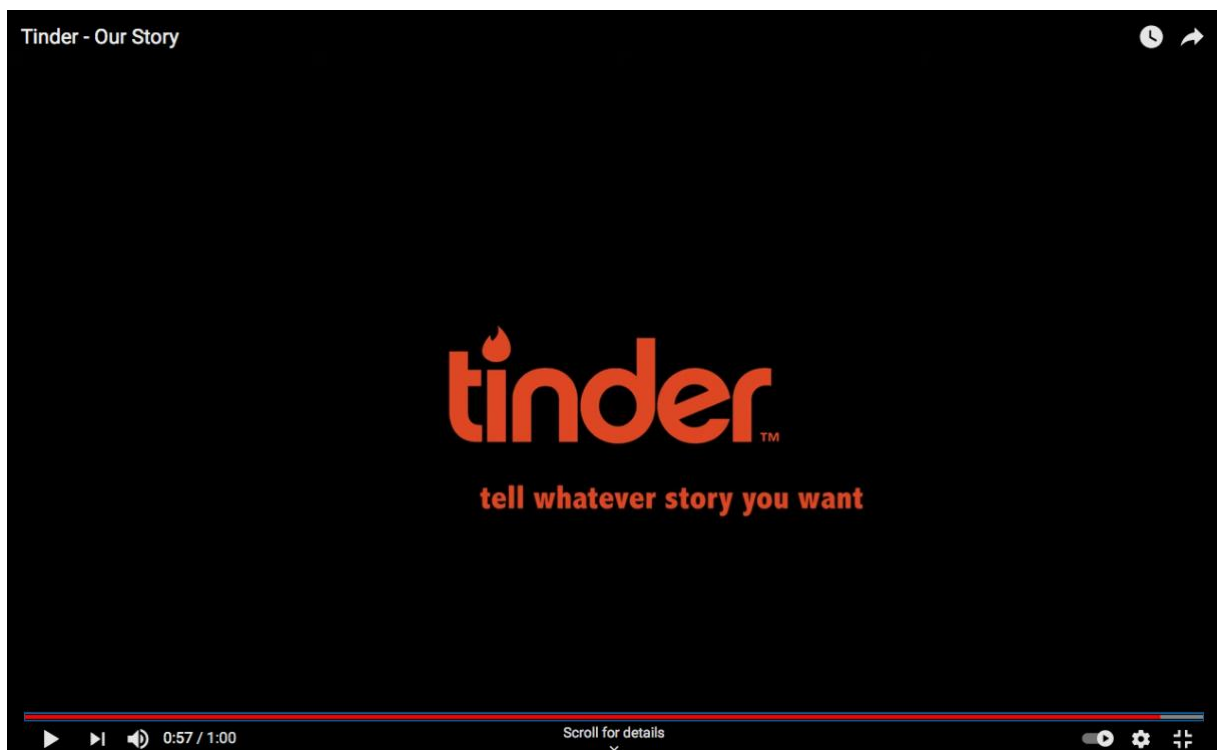


Figure 11.4.2: Tinder commercial. From Pan Up Productions. 2018. *Tinder - Our Story*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ83J7R85sA>

This advert also addresses its potential users with cynicism and irony. It deals with the topos that its use tends towards denying life-moments that many people cherish, such as the initial spark of unforeseen sexual attraction, or romance, that can occur with in-person



encounters. It argues that users say they want an interesting how-we-met narrative. But, in reality, they are simply satisfied with being with someone they like and are attracted to, no matter how they met. The advert therefore condescendingly ends with the suggestion that users just lie and say they didn't meet through dating apps. This shows, yet again, how Tinder marketers and developers have an ambiguous relation to their users. They know many of the latter are embarrassed to say they met their partners through Tinder. They consequently patronisingly suggest: if you don't like it, just lie.

However, in its latest phase, dating app PR has had to acknowledge that the very process of using dating apps is not as easy and enjoyable as these middle-period adverts seem to suggest, despite their cynicism.

Indeed one of my respondents discussed how the speed of dating app functioning means that some users feel pressure while using it to continuously self-promote themselves. One user stated: 'You're selling yourself constantly on these apps' (B, male, age: 27). This statement employs a predication strategy that discursively constructs app use as similar to selling and promoting commodities on the market. The statement relates to the topoi that in advanced capitalist societies individuals' personalities are also commodified, promoted and sold in this fashion. In opposition to the idea of the 'Swipe Life' (Tinder 2020c) lifestyle, it constructs dating app use as more similar to a job than a leisure activity.

Another respondent similarly described dates feeling like job interviews, stating:

this feels like an interview, in the sense that you have a limited timeframe to show them everything about you that's really great. And therefore it feels transactional; it doesn't feel organic. And how can you then develop like an actual like genuine relationship with someone...not even a relationship, but even like a connection with someone. (N, female, age: 30)

This user refers to the topoi of a demand for time-efficiency and self-promotion connected to the world of employment, stating: 'you have a limited timeframe to show them everything about you that's really great'. The modal particle (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) 'really' expresses irony to denote the fake and forced character of the personalities users display to each other. The user further employs the topoi of organic human connections

('genuine connection') vs the 'transactional' nature of dating apps. The user employs indirect speech acts such as questions instead of assertions as part of an intensification strategy that increases the illocutionary force of her expression of exasperation in relation to the self-defeating, transactional nature of dating apps. Another user employs an increasingly stressed animating prosody (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 33) on each subclause to express the self-defeating character of dating app use stating: 'most people that I've met, we don't even have anything in common, we don't even connect' (O, female, age: 30). This also represents an intensification strategy that conveys exasperation.

Modern dating app messaging is still struggling to react to the harsh reality of dating app use reported by many users, while trying to put an effective marketing spin on it. Hence modern dating apps have moved away from the image that they provide a seamless experience of love (as expressed in the idea of the 'perfect match'). Indeed Hinge, another dating company, prefers to speak of 'meaningful matches' (Hinge 2020) in its promotional content. Dating apps have, moreover, started to acknowledge some of the difficulties and pressures of their use.

For instance, the topos of the harsh and draining nature of dating app use prompted Hinge to run a campaign assuring its users that it is 'designed to be deleted' (Hinge 2020). This reacts against the idea that users may become locked within a detrimental cycle of prolonged dating app use. This is also opposed to Tinder's advertising campaign that encourages users to make Tinder part of their lifestyle. Indeed Hinge and Tinder have diametrically opposed branding images, as Hinge portrays itself as a less superficial dating app because it is not based on swiping, a covert reference to Tinder (Studio NYC 2017). Hence Hinge's branding effectively criticises the way Tinder works. However, Hinge and Tinder are owned by the same parent company, Match Group. They have identical privacy policies, which means that their business model is also the same. The notion that Hinge is 'designed to be deleted' employs the topos of everlasting true love. Hence Hinge uses PR that trumpets traditional values relating to life-long monogamous love to obscure the fact that the company makes money from users' data and attention, which it gains from users'

repeated use of the app. This illustrates the functioning of ideology that I discussed in section 2.6.2 where universal abstract concepts come to conceal real social relations.

### **11.5 Dating app realism**

The latest wave of Tinder's promotional videos goes beyond Hinge in actively acknowledging the harshness of dating app use. Hence one person featured says: 'I know it's really scary to put yourself out there but honestly just go for it' (Tinder 2020c). The expression 'put yourself out there' uses the metaphor of being outside ('out there') and showcasing one's inner self ('put yourself out') to convey the challenging and tough environment of dating apps. Indeed the latter exposes users and their intimate desires for sex and companionship to the outside world. This illustrates Anders' observations that modern surveillance:

devices have no other purpose than to cancel out distances and to render this cancellation real, that is, to abolish the border between "outside" and "inside".  
(Anders [1980] 2011, 159)

Anders further states that:

privacy has been destroyed by means of bugs, as if we were living in glass houses  
(Anders [1980] 2011, 159)

The image of the 'glass house' illustrates the feeling of this user of putting something intimate 'out there' on a public profile. Moreover, a parallel between 'bugs' placed in the intimate sphere of the home, and the storing of sensitive user data on dating apps can be drawn. This advert also uses the argument structure ('I know that... but') to convey the sense that using dating apps is hard but it's worth it, or necessary.

Indeed, another featured person states: 'you have to put yourself out there. That's just the name of the game' (Tinder 2020c). This statement employs the expression 'name of the game' as a nomination strategy that constructs Tinder use as natural. The verbal tee up 'just' participates in a mitigation strategy to reduce the illocutionary force of this argument, which promotes a form of resignation to dating app use as fixed and a fact of life. Tinder use

thus becomes synonymous with *throwing oneself at life*. In fact, the advert refers to the topos that *life is a game*. One featured person states 'wake up and go outside and play the game' (Tinder 2020c). This constructs the absence of Tinder use as being for reserved people who do not get the most out of life. Framing dating apps use as tough and challenging is a clever marketing scheme. It is conceivable that users can then relate to the difficulties they encounter on dating apps as useful occasions for personal growth. Indeed one of the two (2 out of 18) participants that I spoke to who stated a preference for dating use over in-person encounters, told me that, through dating app use she felt 'empowered' to 'select' rather than be 'selected' (H, female, age: 29). She further stated: 'I think that you become a lot more, like, brutalist when you're using dating apps' (H, female, age: 29). The expression 'brutalist' is a predication strategy that that discursively constructs dating app use as brutal and as fortifying the character of whoever uses them.

Using an imperative tense, another person featured in the Tinder advert says: 'do it while you're young'. These messages employ the topos that there is no alternative to dating app use and that the latter has become the way in which people meet nowadays. The imperative tense participates in an intensification strategy that increases the illocutionary force of the company's command to people viewing the advert to use the app. Indeed some users speak of social pressure they feel to be on dating apps. One respondent said:

How would I say? Yeah, it almost felt like if you were... if you were single, you kind of had to...not not had to have it, but that was like, seemed like a pretty normal thing (C, male, age: 23)

This user employs a mitigation strategy based on hesitations ('...not not had to have it') to reduce the illocutionary force of his expression of social pressure to go on the app. This user illustrates Anders' conception that technology forms an all-encompassing system mirroring socio-economic structures (section 3.3.4).

Indeed another respondent highlighted how dating app use fitted into a social routine:

Sometimes it's always almost like I'd have a conversation and say the most ridiculous things just so I could show my mates what I've said to someone, as well.

And then sometimes, we... when my mates get together and we're quite bored, we just use each other's Tinder for half an hour. And you're allowed to say whatever you want. (A, male, age: 27)

This last statement further evidences how dating app use can be harsh and misleading for people on the receiving end of these jokes, which are connected to lad culture.

Tinder's promotional content now acknowledges this harshness while putting the responsibility to withstand it on the user. Using the imperative tense, another of the company's statement says: 'you have to keep putting yourself out there until you find that right person' (Tinder 2020c). This statement refers to the topos of strength and toughness through the expression: 'you have to keep putting yourself out there'. It also employs an imperative which encourages users to *tough it out* in the face of adversity encountered on the platform. Nomination strategy 'out there' constructs Tinder's interface as the world, and as something that the company does not entirely control. Hence this advertising messaging appeals to users' sense of strength while also placing responsibility for withstanding adversity encountered on the app on users themselves. This follows neoliberal conceptions of individual responsibility (Fuchs 2014c, 162).

Linguistic strategy	Linguistic device	Citation	
Nomination strategies	Metaphors denoting a frictionless user experience	swipe life; swipe city	Tinder 2021a; Tinder 2021b
	Metaphors denoting a lack of responsibility	out there [as opposed to <i>on our app</i> ]	Tinder 2020c
Topoi and argumentative strategies	Topoi of harshness and competition:	keep putting yourself out there until you; it's really scary; play the game	Tinder 2020c
	Conclusion rules denoting realism:	I know... but; that's just...how it is (the name of the game)	Tinder 2020c

Intensification strategies	Imperatives:	you have to keep putting yourself out there; do it while you're young; wake up; play the game	Tinder 2020c
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Table 11.4: Realism in contemporary dating app PR

Table 11.4 shows how dating apps companies employ linguistic devices that convey the harshness of the situation on dating apps as though it were something external to dating app companies. This participates in a general strategy of transferring the responsibility for security and resilience in the face of adversity on dating app users. Hence the ideology surrounding dating apps fits in with neoliberal ideologies that promote the idea of individual, as against collective, responsibility.

### 11.6 A sex positive ideology?

Bergström describes the main effect of dating app use as one of 'privatisation' (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §7, my translation). This is because sexual and romantic encounters are now separate from broader friendship groups and networks of sociality. Bergström holds a non-critical view of this process. Indeed she argues that:

economic privatisation and social privatisation, understood as a transformation of sociality, are two distinct processes. [...] whereas the process of "dis-embedding" effected by the economy is often examined for its negative aspects, these [online dating] applications give us the chance to, at the same time, interrogate the emancipatory effects of this process. (Bergström 2019, ch. 6, §7, my translation)

Bergström dichotomises between economy and society. She suggests that economic privatisation is detrimental. However, social privatisation promotes freedom, as users' 'entourage is deprived of its matchmaking function, but also of its role as an inspector of nascent relationships' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §19, my translation). Therefore social privatisation translates into 'less external control over established relationships' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §19, my translation). For Bergström, this dynamic played 'a central, though

rarely highlighted, role in the success of these websites and applications' (Bergström 2019, ch. 0, §19, *my translation*). She further explains that now it is:

down to each individual to define his or her own sexuality, and what constitutes his or her 'right measure' (Bergström 2019, ch. 5, §70, *my translation*)

This non-critical view is jarring when considering dating app companies' injunctions to 'keep putting yourself out there' (Tinder 2020c), using imperatives to encourage users to go on dating apps as much as possible.

Bergström's understanding assumes that individuals cannot resist peer pressure and act as agents within their friendship groups. She hypothesises that they instead want to react by fleeing group sociality in general. Moreover, Bergström does not account for the fact that users' entourage can control their nascent relations on dating apps by accessing their online accounts. Indeed respondent A (male, age: 27) described how it was part of his usage practice to swap phones with friends, letting them pretend to be him on his chats. He would also show friends dating app profiles and 'historical conversations' (A, male, age: 27), stating: 'you show your friends all the most attractive women that you've matched with. Some point out that some could be fake, but no matter' (A, male, age: 27). This evidences how peer pressure and group surveillance can happen through the technology of dating apps, with some friends questioning the viability of the users' connections. The present tense ('you show') highlights how this practice, which contains a competitive dimension linked to lad culture, is habitual and subject to group influence. Some dating app affordances are in line with this practice. For instance, Hinge featured an option for users to 'share' (i.e. send) profiles to their friends' phones. It further floated the idea of having friends recommend profiles to others (Techcrunch 2017).

Ultimately, Bergström assumes that emancipatory self-governance is a question of determining a quantum of engagement with dating apps, rather than one of achieving greater collective control over general frames for sociality. This is a limited view of emancipation. Participation in music scenes, youth culture, etc., arguably allows for a broader scope of knowledge and control over frames of sociality in which sexual and

romantic connections occur than dating app use. These spaces are not specialised but multi-functional and can also be the seat of political action and movements, including feminist movements for sexual freedom. In some instances, they are tied to occupied spaces which are directly self-governed. In contrast, all political content is explicitly banned by Tinder's community guidelines and subject to deletion (Tinder 2020a). The political agency of atomised individuals is low. Hence it is only possible that Bergström is discussing an extremely limited notion of emancipation, based on individual choice among existing options rather than democratic control over the parameters that produce these options. Authors such as Bergström promote a limited sex positive viewpoint that praises the fact that individuals have access to more sex through dating apps, while paying little attention to the quality of interactions and feelings of alienation reported by users. Hence, in contrast to Her and Timmermans (2020) for instance, Bergström largely overlooks the potentially negative effects of dating app use on mental wellbeing.

Other understandings of dating apps such as Fitzpatrick's and Birnholtz's (2018) seem to similarly view these platforms as neutral spaces, simply considering them as the modern way sexual and romantic relationships take place. Hence, despite studying the 'tensions' (Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018, 2469) and 'negotiations' (Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018, 2469) of interactions on dating apps, these authors argue in favour of merely cosmetic changes to the design of their interfaces stating: 'our results offer several contributions for designers of LBSAs [location-based social apps], both for dating/hook-ups' (Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018, 2483). Accordingly, they suggest creating features that:

allow for the ephemerality of certain messages that are associated with an in-the-moment goal or interest (such as a hook-up). This removes the problem of what we might consider the residue of prior goals (Fitzpatrick and Birnholtz 2018, 2484).

Though intending to support the possibility of spontaneity on dating apps, this understanding plays into the culture of individualistic objectives and consumeristic sex that benefits dating app companies, and which I have tied to an alienating dimension (see section 10.7). Contrary to the work of Liu (2016), Chan (2018a, 2018b) and Wang (2018),



there is no discussion of the link between neoliberal ethos, alienation, lack of privacy and the very structure of dating apps. The authors help app developers for free through superficial design suggestions. They participate in promoting the convergence of different platforms within the virtual ecosystem (see section 10.3), as disappearing messages are a feature of Snapchat, a popular messaging and photo/video sharing platform. Disappearing text messages arguably offer affordances for compulsivity and superficiality. They may further promote 'intimate intrusions' (Gillett 2018, 212), as these would leave no traces that could be used as evidence.

The limited sex positive understanding of dating apps, which could be summarised by the idea that dating apps liberate users from social constraints and pressures, benefits dating app companies. Indeed it constructs sex as a constant need that is fit to be commodified. It resembles the post-puritan culture in America in the 1950s, which Anders observed in his students. Anders argued that this culture shared more with puritanism than his students cared to admit, stating:

you, similarly to your puritan forefathers, do not see love as love, but only as instinct, and therefore as nature. You, like your forefathers, are suspicious of cultural forms of love. They considered the instinct as impure natural energy. They did not believe in its humanisation. And they were convinced that they could only legitimate it through marriage. You, in the same way, see love as a natural energy, which though "pure", should be freed from cultural inhibitions. You give the instinct a plus sign; they gave it a minus sign (Anders [1984] 2004, 97, *my translation*)

Anders argued that consequently, in the post-puritan culture, sex was seen to have a 'purely hygienic purpose: asceticism is unhealthy' (Anders [1984] 2005, 129, *my translation*). For Anders, this meant that the human capacity to enrich sex was reduced. Anders further detailed how 'this is, de facto, the point of view from which sex is seen. Because abstention is not healthy, sex is necessary' (Anders [1984] 2004, 131, *my translation*). Here Anders' suggestion that the idea that 'sex is necessary' is an injunction reminds one of Tinder's adverts that order listeners to 'keep putting yourself out there' (Tinder 2020c) and 'do it while you're young' (Tinder 2020c). However, just as it is wrong to tell someone not to have

sex, it is also wrong to tell them to have sex. Sexuality and romance should be a sphere that is free from external pressures, including those arising from the normalisation of dating app use.

## **11.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the marketing strategy of dating apps and the ideology that surrounds their use. To answer RQ2.3, I have shown that the ideology dating apps produce, to some extent, filters down into the discourse of their users. However, I have also shown that some ideas promoted by dating app companies, such as the idea that dating app use is easy and organic, clash with users' experience. Hence there has been a turn towards more realistic forms of promotional content being put out by dating app companies. Dating app companies such as Tinder have started to acknowledge some of the difficulties and challenges of their use. However, they resort to advertising campaigns that challenge users to deal with these difficulties themselves. These adverts refer to users' strength and encourage their competitive spirit, enjoining them to keep putting themselves 'out there' on dating platforms. They thus also encourage users to be continuously sexually available and adventurous, stating 'do it while you're young'. I discuss how some theorists consider this individualistic culture to be emancipatory and consequently evaluate whether there is a sex positive ideology also reflected within some analyses of dating apps. The latter benefits dating app companies by promoting the idea that an easier access to sex necessarily equals emancipation. This constructs individuals' desire for sex, intimacy and companionship as fixed and perfectly compatible with dominant cultures. This implies that it is consequently fit to be commodified through dating app use.

## 12. General Conclusion

### 12.1 Summary

The main research question for this thesis has been: How does Günther Anders' critical theory of technology help us to analyse contemporary digital societies? I have then subdivided this main research question into RQ.A: How can Günther Anders' theory of technology be understood as a humanist-Marxist theory of domination, alienation and ideology? And RQ.B: How does Gunther Anders' theory help us analyse the way in which modern day examples of digital media are involved in the reproduction of domination, alienation and ideology?

Chapters 2 and 3 have helped respond to research question RQ.A. In chapter 2, I looked at the essential categories of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology through a Marxist lens. I argued that this lens is preferable to a postmodern one. I showed that human essence should be understood as linked to conscious and social activity, through which humans shape their history and social being. This conception encompasses both humans' biological nature as well as their capacity for conscious reflection and abstract thought. It is therefore tied to, and expressed, within reality. Hence I argued against anti-essentialist conceptions such as Foucault's. These misinterpret the concept of essence as being something separate and purely abstract. I also argued against Heidegger's understanding of technological essence as existing a priori. Instead, I showed that technology's essence is tied to humans. This means that social dynamics can become ingrained within technology.

I showed that domination should not be conceived as abstract domination, as the Young Hegelians and postmodernists do, but as the concrete projection of power over others through the control of weapons, resources and social structures. This means that some subjects subjugate others. Alienation represents a situation where this type of unfreedom has become generalised and is felt by everyone. Alienation means that a social relation separates subjects from their object. I showed how religious and political alienation can be

understood as based on separation. I discussed how Marx used this concept to derive the notion of economic alienation as one where workers no longer control the object of their labour, but it controls them. The relation between subject and object is consequently inverted. Yet this situation appears as the natural order of things. This concept of alienation provides the foundation of ideology. Ideology is equally characterised by an inversion whereby abstract universal ideas mask concrete interests and processes. Globally, establishing the Marxian theoretical foundations of the themes of the human, technology, domination, alienation and ideology show how technology is intimately connected to the human, but it can also form the basis of systems that perpetuate human unfreedom. Technological systems can become factors in the reproduction of domination, alienation and ideology

In chapter 3, I showed how Anders' thought is not continuous but is subject to radical breaks. During his early years Anders was strongly influenced by Heidegger. But in coming to terms with the rise of Hitler to power and the industrial killing of the Second World War Anders effected a radical break away from Heidegger. His approach became increasingly influenced by Marx's early works. There is also evidence of him drawing from Hegelian philosophy. Accordingly, he conceptualises machines as a system. He further conceives of technological alienation in similar terms to Marx, as a division and inversion of subject and object. To account for the development of modern ICTs, Anders produces an original conception of technologically enabled ideology. According to Anders, the very functioning of ICTs minimises the effects of the nuclear bomb by presenting nuclear explosions in a small-screen format and as far-off events.

Chapters 2 and 3 show that Anders' theory of technology is compatible with a Marxian conception of the human, domination, alienation and ideology. Anders' critical theory applies Marxian understanding to technology, developing threads that were already present in Marx's work. Indeed, in biographical terms Anders appears to have undergone a shift from a Heideggerian influence to a Marxian one during and after the Second World War. Hence, in answer to research question RQ.A, one of my main arguments in this thesis is that

Anders' theory is considerably influenced by Marx. Often this has been overshadowed by research into his links to phenomenology and Heidegger. Some work has also emphasised parallels between Anders and postmodern theory.

Hence, in chapter 4, I distinguished Anders work from other theorists, including postmodern ones. I showed how his humanist-Marxist theory sets him apart from other critical theorists of technology, who often are closer to postmodern understandings than to Marxist ones. For instance, I showed that, in opposition to Jacques Ellul, Anders does not think of technology as separate from the economy. To the contrary, Anders shows how televisions and weapons are ideal commodities. In some respects, Anders' work parallels the culture industry approach of the Frankfurt school. However, Anders more explicitly ties the alienating and ideological character of ICTs to their very structure and mode of operation, or what would today be termed the set of affordances they offer. He focusses on the form and structure of ICTs rather than on the content they generally supply to individuals.

The second general research question was RQ.B: How does Gunther Anders' theory help us analyse the way in which modern day examples of digital media are involved in the reproduction of domination, alienation and ideology?

Hence, in chapter 5, I elaborated my methodology for conducting the case study analysis on military drones and dating apps. I detailed the connection between these case studies and outlined some of the features of these technologies. I showed how I would use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to conduct research on existing material including material written by drone operators for the drone case study. For the dating app case study, I outlined how I would recruit participants for semi-structured interviews about their dating app usage. I explained how I would adopt a neutral approach in conducting this questionnaire by asking non-leading questions and following leads contained within users' responses. I subsequently showed how I would linguistically analyse the material by employing tools offered by CDA. I also derived 3 main research questions for each case-study.

For the military drone case study, in the sphere of domination, I asked RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators' psychological and

emotional willingness to kill humans? In the sphere of alienation, I asked RQ1.2: What is the impact of military drone operator's work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt, and their mental health? In the sphere of ideology, I asked RQ1.3: In what respects do military drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of 'surgical strikes'?

For the dating app case study, in the sphere of domination, I asked RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users? In the sphere of alienation I asked: RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards? In the sphere of ideology I asked RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a "perfect match" of individuals?

In chapter 6, I outlined how military drones are involved in domination. I therefore answered question RQ1.1: What is the impact of the operation of military drones from a distance on operators' psychological and emotional willingness to kill humans? I argued that drones fragment the action of killing into various steps. They further make enemies appear as colourless and odourless blobs on a screen. Hence they, to some extent, make killing more detached and easier. Paradoxically, this means that drone operators can also express direct, unmodulated forms of aggression onto their enemies.

In chapter 7, I outlined how military drones are involved in the production of modern-day alienation. I answered RQ1.2: What is the impact of military drone operator's work on their personal lives, their feelings of shame and guilt, and their mental health? I showed how the structural affordances of drone operators allow them to adopt strategies of dissociation with regard to their actions. Despite this, some drone operators attempt to actively identify with their actions, reflecting Anders' call for producing new and enlarged emotions to account for the distancing effect of modern technologies.

In chapter 8, I looked at ideology and ask RQ1.3: In what respects do military drone operators believe or not believe in the ideology of 'surgical strikes'? I showed that drone operators do not come to believe this ideology. Indeed they generally fear the idea that they have inadvertently killed children or civilians because of 'unclear details' (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec) (A.1) while conducting strikes. However, I detail how videos of drone killings circulate widely on social media and produce a spectacle-like version of war. Commentators glorify the 'surgical' (Raymond Cassiday 2020) (B.13.6) and extreme force with which the weapons carried by drones kill humans. Such videos tend to feed into racist ideologies. These tend to be black-and-white, pitting good Allied forces against evil terrorists.

In chapter 7, I looked at the theme of domination in relation to dating apps and respond to question RQ2.1: How does the design and structure of dating apps influence user behaviour and how does the knowledge or the lack of knowledge about the circumstance that all communication and activity on dating apps is recorded and can be shared with companies and the police impact the everyday behaviour of users? Hence I discussed how dating apps reflect and to some extent re-produce lad and hook-up culture that pre-existed dating apps. Indeed their very structure is not neutral but offers affordances for competitive and individualistic understandings of sex and love. I discuss instances of sexual harassment reported by some of my participants. Regarding surveillance, I showed that many users employ the topos of security to justify dating app surveillance. However, at the same time, they assert that surveillance on dating apps might make them more careful about the information they share on these platforms. Dating app surveillance thus seems to illustrate Anders' argument that technologies of surveillance establish the pre-conditions of totalitarianism, with users accepting a lack of privacy in the intimate sphere.

In chapter 8, I looked at alienation on dating apps and ask RQ2.2: How does the use of dating apps impact users' feeling of connectedness and isolation, their identity, their feeling of happiness and sadness and their perception of beauty standards? Accordingly, I analysed users' expressions of feelings of estrangement from their own use of dating apps. Users feel

isolated due to the mechanical and ‘inhuman way in which it works’ (E, male, age: 21). Others state that sexual and romantic encounters on dating apps feel like they could be reproduced ‘a million times’ (O, female, age: 30). Hence some users feel isolated and internally conflicted about trying to establish sexual and romantic relations on dating apps. I further showed how the very structure of dating apps makes sexual and romantic communication more fragmented, less rich and unique and more standardised. Some users speak of a ‘savage adherence to the mean’ (E, male, age: 21) in terms of beauty standards. Men, for instance, feel pressure to be ‘muscle-y and over six foot’ (E, male, age: 21). Female users speak of selecting their profile pictures on the basis of how many likes these obtained on Instagram. This shows how dating app users become aware of a standard ideal of beauty, with which they sometimes feel pressure to conform.

In chapter 9, I looked at the question of ideology on dating apps and ask RQ2.3: In what respects do users believe in or do not believe in the ability of dating app algorithms to create a “perfect match” of individuals? I showed how dating apps are involved in reproducing a sex positive ideology, which masks the fact that they promote sex and romance only to the extent that this feeds into their business model. Users of dating apps do not entirely believe in the notion of ‘perfect match’ as this conflicts with their experience of dating app use, which is generally far from smooth. However, the notion of ‘matching’ individuals does enter into their vocabulary. I ultimately showed how dating app PR encounters resistance among users and how this PR has had to adapt. This highlights some of the fallacies surrounding sex positive dating app discourse, including within academia. Anders’ theory that the simple use of technology produces ideology is both true and false. Users adopt a mentality connected to the affordances of dating apps, but they also remain critical of dating app functioning.

## **12.2 New concepts emerging out of the case studies**

As I have argued in this thesis, Anders' critical theory of technology and his key concept of Promethean shame are significantly influenced by a Marxian conception of the human,



technology, domination, alienation and ideology. However, Anders' analysis is also inspired by a theory of human psychology. Indeed both Anders' parents were pioneers in the field of developmental psychology. Thus Anders repeatedly described Promethean shame as an 'identity disorder' [*Identifizierungs-Störung*] (Anders [1956] 2003, 74, 77, 82, 83, 88, *my translation*). Anders argued that Promethean shame is a 'relation with one-self that fails' (Anders [1956] 2003, 68, *my translation*) further stating that 'the person who feels shame finds himself at the same time both identical and non-identical with himself' (Anders [1956] 2003, 68, *my translation*). Hence, for Anders, Promethean shame is characterised not by 'an equilibrated condition of a stable "mental state", but by a mental state oscillating between irritation and disorientation' (Anders [1956] 2003, 68, *my translation*). It is a 'troubled self-identification, a "state of distress"' (Anders [1956] 2003, 68, *my translation*) characterised by a 'situation that one seeks to avoid' (Anders [1956] 2003, 69, *my translation*). Hence Promethean shame relates to a person's conscious subjectivity and identity. It refers to an identity crisis the person experiences in relation to his/her actions and existence. This arises when the latter are profoundly influenced by alienated forms of technology, giving rise to a discrepancy, or mismatch, between the person, the machine and their combined effects.

Subsequently in his work Anders decided to express this idea through an analogy with a schizophrenic state whereby 'the individual becomes a *divisum* [division]' (Anders [1956] 2003, 129, *my translation*). Indeed the root meaning of schizo-phrenia is 'to split' 'the mind'. As a result, Anders speaks of the radio and television as 'instruments of dispersion' (Anders [1956] 2003, 129, *my translation*). He argues that these 'devices produce artificial schizophrenia' (Anders [1956] 2003, 129, *my translation*). He later further speaks of '*schizotopia*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 56) when we are at home and lead a '*spatial dual existence*' (Anders [1980] 2011, 56) through ICTs. For Anders, through distancing what is close and rendering close what is distant, the radio and television 'split the self into two or more partial beings' (Anders [1956] 2003, 131, *my translation*). According to my interpretation, Anders uses the concept of schizophrenia, as a stand-in for Marx's concept of alienation, which is also characterised by a process of fragmentation. His argument parallels Marx's

description of how machine labour 'distort[s] the worker into a fragment of a man' (Marx [1867] 1990, 799) by splitting apart physical and mental labour. Rather than being harmonised, human faculties are consequently scattered and fragmented. Human agency is lost as conscious faculties do not direct physical ones and physical experience is not accurately reflected in conscious thought. Hence activity and consciousness become reified. The subject is fragmented and becomes more objective.

Anders shows how his concept of schizophrenia is meant to mirror Marx's concept of alienation by referring to factory labour. He speaks of

a split that we shall call a schizophrenic disorder of labor. The workers are "splintered", because the relation between their affection (in this case, the innocent and pleasant happiness caused by the music at the workplace) and the nature of their affection (in this case, the production of means of annihilation, which makes them guilty) has ceased to exist (Anders [1980] 2011, 122)

In this quote, Anders refers to a situation whereby weapons factory workers produce bombs while listening to gentle music supplied by loudspeakers. This is meant to make their work activity more pleasant. Workers' affects are thus split off from, and at odds with, the reality of what they are producing. Anders thought that the concept of schizophrenia, characterised by a split away from reality and an inappropriate conflation of fantasy and reality, illustrated this situation.

I argue that Anders' concept of technologically induced schizophrenia should be updated. This is because it does not adequately express the condition of modern-day subjective fragmentation through digital ICTs. Schizophrenia understood as a mental disorder is characterised by "psychoticism" (Kernberg 2018, 23). This is a prolonged hallucinatory and delusional state where the difference between thoughts, ideas and reality is blurred. Individuals with this severe condition do not just have illogical ideas about themselves and the external world. They also tend to withdraw from all social interactions. This does not fit the fact that in the digital age individuals are said to be, on the contrary, highly connected through the internet. They are constantly available for remote communication. Perhaps the use of the term could highlight the ideological character of technology in Anders' theory.

However, I argue that — if we are to adopt the modern psychological understanding of schizophrenia — it conveys a hallucinatory character to ideology that is too extreme and does not appropriately reflect Anders’ analysis. The latter conveys the sense that use of modern technology can be deceptive and that it can minimise serious processes. It does not convey the sense that modern ICTs are involved in the production of baseless fantasies and delusions. Admittedly today a case may be made that digital ICTs are involved in the promotion of conspiracy theories. But Anders’ theory did not predict this and the use of the concept of schizophrenia remains too strong to accurately encapsulate this relatively marginal process.

Moreover, Anders’ theory is not just about ideology. Reflecting Marx’s theory of alienation, it is about a split experience and a divided, fragmented self, leading to a reduction of subjective agency. Anders’ concept of Promethean shame shows how technology can be involved in a process where people conduct actions that they separate off from themselves. Consequently, they do not experience these actions in terms of their own emotions and moral sentiments. In sections 7.3 and 9.3, I showed how military drones and dating apps create affordances for operators and users to delay or even avoid altogether their feelings of responsibility for actions involving these technologies. Hence I argue that the more appropriate psychological concept to account for this alienating fragmentation of the subject is that of splitting. This is a primitive, image-distorting psychic defence whereby:

conflicting motivations and aspects of self experience are compartmentalized or “split” apart. Thus, although nothing is repressed when dissociative defenses are employed, conflicting aspects of psychological experience are not simultaneously experienced in relation to the self, and in this process conflict is avoided. (Kernberg, Caligor and Clarkin 2007, 28)

Building on Melanie Klein’s (Klein 1946, 102) original conception, Kernberg further states that:

The main objective of the defensive constellation centering on splitting [...] is to keep separate the aggressively determined and the libidinally determined intrapsychic

structures [...] The price the patient pays for this defensive organization is twofold: the inability to integrate libidinally and aggressively invested self-representations into a self-concept which more truly reflects the actual self and to integrate libidinally invested and aggressively invested object-representations and so to understand in depth other people. (Kernberg [1984] 2004, 67)

In psychoanalytic terms, the splitting defence mechanism is activated when negative or conflictual experiences are at risk of overwhelming positive feelings. It is an attempt to keep the bad and the good separate to protect the good (Lichtenberg and Slap 1973, 780). However, the result is a splitting off of negative feelings from one's own self-understanding, values and responsibility. These affects are not integrated into the broader context of other affects and the principles and values that form part of the individual's identity. Hence splitting is characterised by extreme, unmodulated, black-and-white affects, which lack nuance. I argue that military drones, dating apps and to some extent digital ICTs, more generally, offer affordances for individuals to conduct a form of technological splitting whereby they can separate off extreme affects from other emotions and their feelings of responsibility. Indeed, mirroring the splitting defence mechanism, these technologies channel aggression and love into completely separate arenas. Consequently, technological splitting leads to a fragmentation of the subject. The latter can no longer coherently integrate feelings of aggression and love, producing nuanced understandings of him/herself and the world.

I highlight Kernberg's use of the term 'compartmentalization' (Kernberg et al. 2007, 28) in the above quotes. Compartmentalisation is understood to be equivalent to fragmenting, as opposed to integrating, different aspects of subjective experience. It implies splitting off subjective experiences from the self. Compartmentalisation is something that characterised both the military drone and dating app case studies. With military drones, operators are told to actively 'compartmentalise' (U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting 2019b) (B.2) between their war life and their civilian lives, which they live out at the same time. For instance, drone operators speak of conducting strikes during their work hours and then 'go[ing] home and go[ing] for a hike or hav[ing] dinner with [their] family' (U.S. Air Force and

Space Force Recruiting 2019a) (B.1). With dating apps, users describe them as a 'channel' (M, male, age: 30) for a 'physical need' (M, male, age: 30), which is separate from the rest of their lives. Indeed, as pointed out by Bergström (2019), there are two radical breaks represented by dating app use compared to previous forms of sexual and romantic socialisation. Firstly, dating apps reflect a generalised use of a specialised service for recruiting sexual and romantic partners. Secondly, partners are recruited from outside the social environment of users. There is therefore a radical separation between users' sexuality and the rest of their social lives. One user described this as a 'compartmentalis[ation]' (Q, male, age: 27) (see section 9.3) of his sexual and romantic life. Together with others, who spoke of a 'separate moral universe' (E, male, age: 21), he highlighted the disconnect between his use of dating apps and his everyday life.

Technological splitting also has implications for individual's online self-presentation and experience. In section 10.3, I discussed how users select which pictures they upload on the basis of rigid conventions and the fact that these photos 'had got quite a lot of likes on Instagram' (D, female, age: 21). These conventions can sometimes lead users to present themselves online in a way that does not fit with their personality or values. Instead, this presentation is influenced by external socio-economic dynamics, which structure and are structured by the affordances of the technology. These affordances tend to reward behaviour that is direct and that captivates the most attention. For instance, Caldeira et al. report an account from one Instagram user, Ndiza, stating:

despite not feeling comfortable sharing sexualized photographs of herself, Ndiza still recognized the popularity of such strategies and acknowledged that for her, 'the pressure to be a naked lady of Instagram is very real.' There is, as Megan explained, an uncomfortable temptation to share such sexualized content to gain popularity. (Caldeira, Bauwel and Ridder 2020, 1082)

Equally the 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) dimension on dating apps discussed in section 9.3 creates pressure for users to approach others in ways that do not necessarily fit with their personality but are instead understood to conform to the way in which dating apps work. Hence technological splitting seems to

operate on dating apps within users' 'staged' presentation of self (16 out of 18 respondents endorsed this term). This effect may also be relevant to social media more generally.

Indeed users' discussion of migrating photos from Instagram to dating apps highlights the process of mutual influence between dating apps and other social networking sites discussed in section 10.3 and represented in Figure 10.3.2 through the concept of the virtual ecosystem. This also fits with other research conceptualising social networking sites as places of convergence. I argue that this trend towards convergence masks a primary process of technological splitting in terms of users' presentation online.

Even though they converge into single profiles, the online presentation of individuals is influenced by the affordances of social media in general. For instance, Meikle and Young state that generally social media share the feature that they

manifest a convergence between personal communication (to be shared one-to-one) and public media (to be shared with nobody in particular) (Meikle and Young in Fuchs 2014b, 37)

This means that:

Young people deploy an array of strategies to manage their online identities and activities in relation to imagined audiences on social media and negotiate visibility and various forms of monitoring (Gangneux 2021, 996)

Trottier and Fuchs further state that:

On social media like Facebook, we act in various roles, but all of these roles become mapped onto single profiles that are observed by different people who are associated with our different social roles. This means that social media like Facebook are social spaces, in which social roles tend to converge and become integrated in single profiles. (Trottier and Fuchs 2014, 15)

On dating apps, for instance, users face the pressure of presenting through public profiles an attitude that they wish to be seductive for single individuals. This seductive aspect of online presentation is influenced by other platforms with affordances for accumulating 'likes', such as Instagram. In turn, dating app design influences platforms with affordances

for networking and general sociality such as LinkedIn and Facebook. This means that a generalised modes of online presentation emerge.

These favour the splitting off of online presentation as it becomes subject to the influence of the affordances of social media. As I showed in section 10.4, online presentations thus tend towards a subtle form of standardisation and conformity. For instance, Caldeira et al. speak of how the importance of

following particular self-representation strategies in order to gain more likes and positive feedback [This] emphasizes one of the current central guiding logics of Instagram and of contemporary social media more broadly – the logic of quantified popularity (Caldeira et al. 2020, 1082)

Hence a unified standardised code comes to appear within the presentation of individuals online in general. Presentations on Facebook and LinkedIn can also become influenced by quantified dynamics on dating apps, which emphasise an image of success based on physical traits such as youth and fitness.

In some respects, this situation resembles Goffman's argument that in presenting themselves in social situations individuals create a mask, a social persona, that fits with each situation. Hence there is a frontstage and a backstage to these social interactions. However, Goffman's conception encourages us to think that the frontstage of social interactions is what really counts. According to some interpretations, Goffman demonstrates 'that a self awaits individuals in every situation and every situation is a multi-situated activity system' (Allan 1997, 6). Goffman further states that:

In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves—the role we are striving to live up to—this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. (Park cited in Goffman 1959, 19-20)

This view anticipates postmodern conceptions that there is no subject or human essence but only individuals' history or accidents.

However, most of my participants used the expression 'real life' (14 out of 18) to denote their offline activities. Despite the fact that many people who employ this extensively used

expression view their virtual lives as part of their material existence, the expression nevertheless implies that online activities are separate and virtual. The topos of real life implies that offline activities are more integrated with the person's experience and identity. The irony contained in the use of the expression is revelatory. It signifies that even though online activities are real, they can also, to some extent, be distorted and split off. Indeed one of my interviewees stated that he doesn't consider his behaviour on dating apps to reflect who he is 'as a person outside of it' (E, male, age: 21).

Anders helps us understand how users' presentation of self on dating apps and social media, more generally, can stand at odds with the reality and identity of individuals. This is illustrated by Anders' play on Hegel's notion that the truth is totality. Anders describes the whole formed by the totality of images transmitted through the television, stating that:

[e]ven if every single thing were transmitted in conformity with truth, the mere fact that many real things are not shown would allow the totality to be transformed into a "prepared" world. Therefore the totality is less true than the sum of partial truths; in other words, modifying Hegel's famous preposition: The whole, and only the whole, is mendacious. The task of those who supply us with the image of the world therefore consists in composing for us with many truths a mendacious whole. (Anders [1956] 2003, 156, *my translation*)

In constructing a profile with multiple pictures that are supposed to represent the person as a whole, but which are actually carefully thought-out individual moments selected following external judgements, dating app users illustrate this argument. As one user stated: 'it's ridiculous that you can reduce the quintessence of someone's personality into a small bit of text and a few photos which are probably very unrepresentative' (E, male, age: 21). What appears as a well-rounded truth on dating apps, i.e. pictures of users with friends, going to concerts etc., is actually not an accurate representation. Users' actual reality is generally that of wage-labour, solitude and leisure time spent behind the screen of their phones. Some use these applications for up to 40 minutes a day (R, male, age: 30). Hence dating apps promote splitting between the real and the ideal sides of a person in their presentation of self, leading to a mismatch, or fragmentation of these facets.



For both military drones and dating apps, this splitting in terms of the presentation of the self can bleed over into splitting in the sphere of activity and behaviour of operators and users. Indeed Lynn Hill states that she was 'sergeant at work' while operating drones and 'Lynn at home' (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec) (A.2). This fragmentation of her daily experience was facilitated by the fact that she waged war through a monitor screen. It involved the production of split off affects and behaviours which stood at odds with Lynn Hill's identity. As shown in sections 7.2 and 9.3, actions and behaviour mediated by military drones and dating apps further respond to external parameters, be it the military chain of command or the 'numbers' game' (L, male, age: 28; H, female, age: 26; A, male, age: 27) dynamic on dating apps. With military drones, operators can use the affordances of the technology to dehumanise enemies and sanitise killing. With dating apps, users can play the game of messaging, or conversely 'filtering' (A, male, age: 27; L, male, age: 28; K, male, age: 30; B, male, age: 27) through, many different users at once. This leads some to reproduce toxic gender scripts and expectations regarding sex and beauty standards, which nevertheless stand at odds with their values and core beliefs.

Indeed, in using drones, Lynn Hill discovered inclinations for violence within herself that she had previously thought to be impossible. Hence in her poem she states: 'I have a capacity for war, I have a capacity for hate, I have a capacity for destruction, for violence, for lies' (A.1) (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec). She nevertheless struggled to identify with these capacities and integrate them into her sense of self. She states that she wanted 'the name sergeant to separate me from the atrocities I had committed' and that, without it, '[i]t was as if I had done them' (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec) (A.2). Here the subjunctive tense participates in a predication strategy that discursively qualifies the actions she has undertaken as not being her responsibility. She recounts the state of identity crisis that this created through her poems stating:

There's a limit to sanity, gage clocks out at two years. We ate poison like entrées at Blueberry Hill. I'll have the crazy with a side of numb please. It took 63,072,000

seconds to go from me to someone else. (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec)  
(A.1)

In this poem Lynn Hill conveys the sense that her two years in the drone programme made her feel 'crazy' and 'numb'. The 'me' in the poem refers to a past, authentic self. She explains that the experience of drone war has made her become 'someone else'. Similarly, in actively seeking out transactional, direct sexual relations, some dating app users felt 'regret and guilt' (A, male, age: 27). They state: 'I don't like to think that my behaviour on that app was representative of who I am as a person outside of it' (E, male, age: 21). This highlights how technological splitting enables operators and users to channel their aggression or sexuality in an unmodulated, black-and-white fashion that they later dissociate from themselves. Each expression of affect occurs in a virtual arena. Hence it can be split off and not experienced in relation to the persons' values and sense of responsibility.

Summarising, technological splitting reflects a situation where modern ICTs are involved in the fragmentation of different aspects of users' lives, leading to a conflict between their self-presentation, individuality and behaviour. The overall implication is the same as the one arising out of Anders' concept of Promethean shame: the relation between human actions and human emotions and sentiments is complicated and rendered problematic. However, there are also differences. Technological splitting means that affects are not totally absent, as indicated by Anders' theory. Indeed the latter highlighted how dropping an atomic bomb can be done absent-mindedly, without emotions. In the above quote, Anders speaks of how workers can listen to music and feel mild emotions while producing weapons. Conversely, with technological splitting, affects are expressed in an overtly aggressive or sexual and hence de-sublimated form. Below, I show how technological splitting thus has ramifications for domination, alienation and ideology.

In terms of domination, technological splitting favours a de-sublimated un-tempered expression of human drives. With military drones, operators conduct the absolute act of killing as though it were not their responsibility. With dating apps, users present sexualised photos of themselves online or send directly sexual messages because they perceive this to

be how dating apps work, and not a reflection of their personality. This split off expression of human drives means that affects are fragmented, and less susceptible to subjective control and modulation. For instance, Marcuse shows how Freud's mature work conceptualises sexual and aggressive instincts as originating from a single quiescence seeking drive, which Freud calls the Nirvana principle (Marcuse [1955] 1969, 40). Because of their original unity, the life instincts can soak up aggressive drives if they are brought into contact with them. However, if technologies favour a fragmented, compartmentalised expression of these drives, this integrative and modulating process is inhibited. As shown in chapter 6, the words used to describe drone killings make use of irony and belittle the death of humans represented by blobs on the screen. There is scarcely any degree of empathy integrated within these killings. Hence technological splitting offers affordances for the projection of unmodulated hate. In terms dating apps, in section 9.3, I showed how dating apps offer affordances for direct, unmodulated individualistic expressions of sexuality that view obtaining sex and romance as a 'return' on an 'investment' (R, male, age: 30). This led to a climate of intimate intrusions. Some of my respondents also reported instances of sexual harassment.

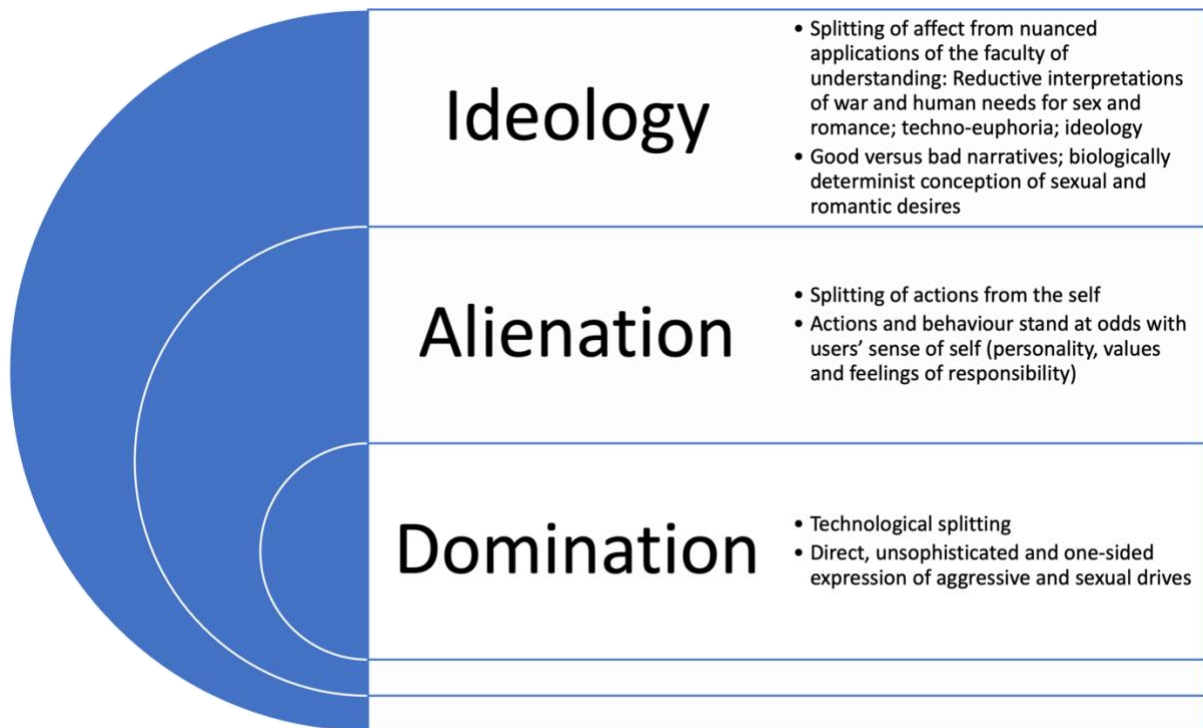
In terms of alienation, drone operators do not describe an emotionless experience of drone war, but one that is marked by conflicting emotions that they do not recognise as their own. Their subjective emotions appear to them as external objects that nevertheless they must identify with. Hence Brandon Bryant recalls entering a bloodthirsty headspace toward the end of his time operating drones. He recounts starting the day telling himself: "what motherfucker's going to die today?" (Power 2013). However, this attitude was at odds with his identity as someone fighting for democracy and defending the US constitution. Similarly, dating app user M speaks of seeking direct sex with 'who is available. Like, literally who is here' (M, male, age: 30). He then experiences 'no connection with that guy' (M, male, age: 30). This suggests that he is expressing his sexual drive in a direct, de-sublimated way. His desire for sex is split off from any emotional, subjective concern and is reduced to the level of a 'physical need' (M, male, age: 30). After a sexual encounter, he is

left asking: 'What have I done? What have I just done?' Others state about their dating app use that: 'I don't think it fits with my personality in terms of who I am and how I treat people in real life' (E, male, age: 21). This illustrates how, through technological splitting, primary drives are expressed in an unmodulated, black-and-white manner that stands at odds with other aspects of the person's individuality. Operators' and users' subjective experience is thus fragmented, reducing the share of free conscious activity within their life activity. This creates internal conflicts within operators and users.

There is also a connection between technological splitting and ideology. As shown in chapter 8, reductive, callous and racist comments are made underneath 'drone porn' videos. The format of these videos is often black and white footage (sometimes infrared, with colours inverted) taken from an aerial view and showing people as figures or silhouettes. This creates affordances for viewers to jokingly compare the footage to a videogame. They can project their inner frustrations onto videos of killings and view these as a spectacle. This projection of affects is split off from any attempt to understand the complexity of the war. This favours reductive conceptualisations of the latter. Here good and militarily superior US forces are seen to oppose bad and militarily weak Taliban.

In the dating app case study, in chapter 11, I highlighted how adverts cynically promoted dating apps by suggesting that users have standard desires to sleep with conventionally attractive people. Such views tie into user P's understanding that some male users are part of the 'alpha male group' (P, male, age: 31), implying that they are more successful with women for ingrained biological reasons. Indeed the topos of 'alpha male' implies that other men are 'beta', or physically inferior. User L also spoke of how women are 'by nature very discriminating' (L, male, age: 27). Both these users' desire to be successful on dating apps was split off from a nuanced understanding of off-line human interactions. The very design of dating apps, which structures flirtation along competitive and appearance-based lines similar to those of a speed dating event, or a beauty pageant, seemed to encourage these users' reductive and fallacious theories about human attraction. Dating apps seem to cater perfectly to the competitive and individualistic culture of sex and romance that they

themselves reinforce, and which these users mistook for a fixed and natural state of affairs. Accordingly, the splitting of affect from complex understandings of reality favours techno-euphoria, the unquestioning celebration of given forms of technology because these are seen as accomplishing a valuable social function.



*Figure 12.2.1: Technological splitting and digital identity diffusion reproduce domination, alienation and ideology*

Figure 12.2.1 shows how the process of technological splitting offers affordances for domination, as modern digital technologies allow for the direct expression of affects and drives. In the case of military drones, this yields a strong affordance for violence. In the case of dating apps, this yields a tendency toward individualistic and competitive sexual and romantic behaviour. Some theorists further highlight how a tendency toward sexual harassment is present in the very sexual scripts enacted on dating apps. Such technologically based domination can form the basis for alienation as split off actions and affects are not integrated with regard to the self. The notion of technological splitting builds on Anders' theory of how technology conditions human activity and complicates the relation between humans, their actions and their sentiments. Operators of military drones

and users of dating apps express extreme affects that are at odds with their sense of self. Figure 12.2.1 shows how technological splitting can form the basis for the production of modern-day ideology. The impersonal projection of de-sublimated affects favours the construction of reductive, black-and-white narratives. These construct the Taliban as the evil enemy without accounting for the historical-social-political and economic reasons for their existence. Conversely, these construct dating apps as perfectly catering to a standardised human need for casual sex and romance. Given the feelings of alienation discussed by my respondents, this celebration of dating apps constitutes a form of techno-euphoria.

### **12.3 Is Anders a technological determinist?**

In 2020, the video of the murder of George Floyd sparked international outrage and helped re-ignite the Black Lives Matter movement against systemic racism and police brutality in Western democracies and elsewhere. The video of the killing was taken on mobile phones by bystanders. It circulated rapidly on social media and protests were quickly organised using the same platforms. Given that modern forms of technology were a factor in creating such a crucial movement, one could question the overall negative and pessimistic view of technology found within Anders' theory. One may further question why such a theory should be updated and reformulated in this thesis. I answer this question by first looking at Anders' own experience of an analogous circumstance.

In 1979, in the preface to the fifth edition of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (Anders [1956] 1961), Anders re-examined 'the totally negative judgement that I made in regards to the mass media' (Anders [1979] 2002, 12-13, *my translation*). Since the publication of the first volume of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (Anders [1956] 1961), television was used in ways that Anders could not have predicted in the 60s. Namely, journalistic reports showing the suffering of the civilian population in the Vietnam war were disseminated to American homes thanks to the television. However, instead of going back on his main techno-pessimistic argument Anders stated:

my theses – the television makes man passive and teaches him to systematically mistake appearance for essence; the world comes to mirror the images because historical events always model themselves on the basis of the needs of the television – are even truer today than they were then. [...] the theses, despite everything, still need to be completed and sometimes strengthened: even if it has appeared that since then televised images deliver to our homes, in some situations, a reality that, without them, would remain unknown to us. The direct perception of reality is certainly preferable to the perception of images, but the latter are still better than nothing. The images of the war in Vietnam which were broadcast daily in American households helped “open” the tired and vacant eyes of thousands of citizens, triggering a protest movement that played a significant part in putting an end to the genocide that was being committed at that time. (Anders [1979] 2002, 12-13, my translation)

Hence Anders was able to maintain a critical view of technology while not denying the fact that technologies that are produced by advanced industrial societies can also be used for good ends. One of Anders’ primary arguments is that what

shapes and deforms us, are not just the objects that the “means” mediate, but the means and contraptions themselves. These are not merely objects of multiple possible uses, but have their own determinate structure and function. (Anders [1956] 2003, 98 my translation)

In other words, Anders conceived technology as potentially offering affordances for good ends. However, he conceived the general frame of technology as predominantly negatively influencing human existence. Hence, contrary to the impression one could receive by reading some of Anders’ most provocative statements, such as that technology has become ‘the subject of history’ (Anders [1980] 2011, 1), Anders’ argument about technology is not absolutist. Below I trace the evolution of Anders’ thought on technology to argue that Anders presents an overall techno-pessimist theory of technology. However, his theory is not techno-determinist, as it conceptualises the essence of technology as being forged within, and influenced by, capitalist societies. Moreover, it accepts that existing technologies can be used for good ends.

In Table 12.3 I summarise how Anders' view of technology progressed throughout his life. I show how Anders' conception of technology is one where society and technology mutually influence one-another. Moreover, with time, Anders became increasingly prepared to recognise the positive impacts modern forms of technology could have. He did this while maintaining a critical view of the direction in which technology should be steered.

Year	1948	1956	1964
Publication	<i>On the Pseudo-Concreteness of Heidegger's Philosophy</i>	<i>The Obsolescence of Man, Volume I: on the Soul in the Epoch of the Second Industrial Revolution</i>	<i>We, Sons of Eichmann: An open letter to Klaus Eichmann</i>
Quotation	<p>Operating a modern machine does not reveal it at all; its "alienation" is obviously reckoned within present-day society and in its division of labor (Anders [Stern] 1948, 344);</p> <p>The province of Heidegger's concreteness begins behind hunger and ends before economy and machine (Anders [Stern] 1948, 347)</p>	<p>It is not the single commodity which is thirsty, but the universe of commodities in their totality; because what I have called the 'the thirst of objects' is nothing other than the interdependence of production, that is the fact that all products have interdependent relations and refer to one-another. (Anders [1956] 2003, 168-169, <i>my translation</i>)</p>	<p>In short, their self-expansion is limitless; <i>the machines' thirst for accumulation is insatiable.</i> (Anders [1964] 2015, 17)</p> <p>all the machines would be dependent on one another, and vice versa, and each and every one of them would have to help their peers to operate as best as possible. (Anders [1964] 2015, 17)</p>
Interpretation	<p>Break with Heidegger. There are no machines in Heidegger's philosophy, only tools. How does this account for the modern experience of factory work? Heidegger does not see a link between technology and the economy. He does not see the alienation arising from machine work.</p>	<p>Reference to Marx ([1867] 1990, 154-177). Technologies are ideal realisations of the commodity-form. The commodity-form has conquered the entire world and technologies are furnishing it with its most perfect realisation.</p>	<p>Technologies now do what commodities have done previously; they expand and conquer the world. The world of commodities has become the world of machines.</p>
Direction and type of influence	Society > Technology (negative)	Society > Technology (negative)	Technology > Society (negative)

Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders' thought on the relation between society and technology  
1/3



Year	1977	1969
Publication	<i>The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II: On the Destruction of Life in the Epoch of the Third Industrial Revolution</i>	<i>The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II: On the Destruction of Life in the Epoch of the Third Industrial Revolution</i>
Quotation	<p>It would be senseless to expect that the non-freedoms (described above) will disappear with the end of capitalism (which may very well come to an end someday), because they are the consequences of technology to a much greater extent than they are the consequences of property relations. (Anders [1980] 2011, 73);</p> <p><i>the consequences of technology will not be transformed with the transformation of property relations (Anders [1980] 2011, 61, italics in original)</i></p>	<p>The attitude towards technology in the underdeveloped countries has to be completely differentiated from the attitude that must be adopted in the countries with advanced technology. The absence of technology in the underdeveloped countries is an incomparably greater danger than its existence. In these countries, an anti-technological attitude, which is valid among us, must sound like madness. (Anders [1980] 2011, 85)</p>
Interpretation	Specifies that, because a dominating, alienating and ideological dimension has been inscribed into modern technologies, it is no longer enough to transform the economic system. For instance, surveillance technologies will not cease to be problematic if private property relations are abolished. Argues that this is not opposed to a Marxist view.	Specifies that he is not against developing nations adopting existing industrial technologies. His argument is about what technologies are produced and established in advanced capitalist countries in the future.
Direction and type of influence	Technology > Society (negative)	Technology > society (positive)

Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders' thought on the relation between society and technology  
2/3

Year	1979	1992
Publication	<i>The Obsolescence of Man, Volume I: on the Soul in the Epoch of the Second Industrial Revolution</i>	<i>The Obsolescence of the Proletariat</i>
Quotation	The direct perception of reality is certainly preferable to the perception of images, but the latter are still better	that engineer and with him the 99 per cent of his colleagues – lives and works

	than nothing. The images of the war in Vietnam which were broadcast daily in American households helped “open” the tired and vacant eyes of thousands of citizens (Anders [1979] 2002, 12-13, <i>my translation</i> )	as blindly as the unqualified industrial worker, who without knowing for what purpose [...] presses a lever up and down a thousand times a day (Anders [1992] 2013, 147, <i>my translation</i> )
Interpretation	Technologies played a role in spreading information about the horrors of the Vietnam war. However, this does not take away from the fact that the general frame through which this information is conveyed is problematic.	Merges an explicitly Marxist view of class struggle with a concern for the dominating, alienating and ideological character of modern technologies. Says that, given our relationship of non-control over technology, we are now all proletarians.
Direction and type of influence	Technology > Society (positive)	Technology > Society (negative)

*Table 12.3 The evolution of Anders’ thought on the relation between society and technology 3/3*

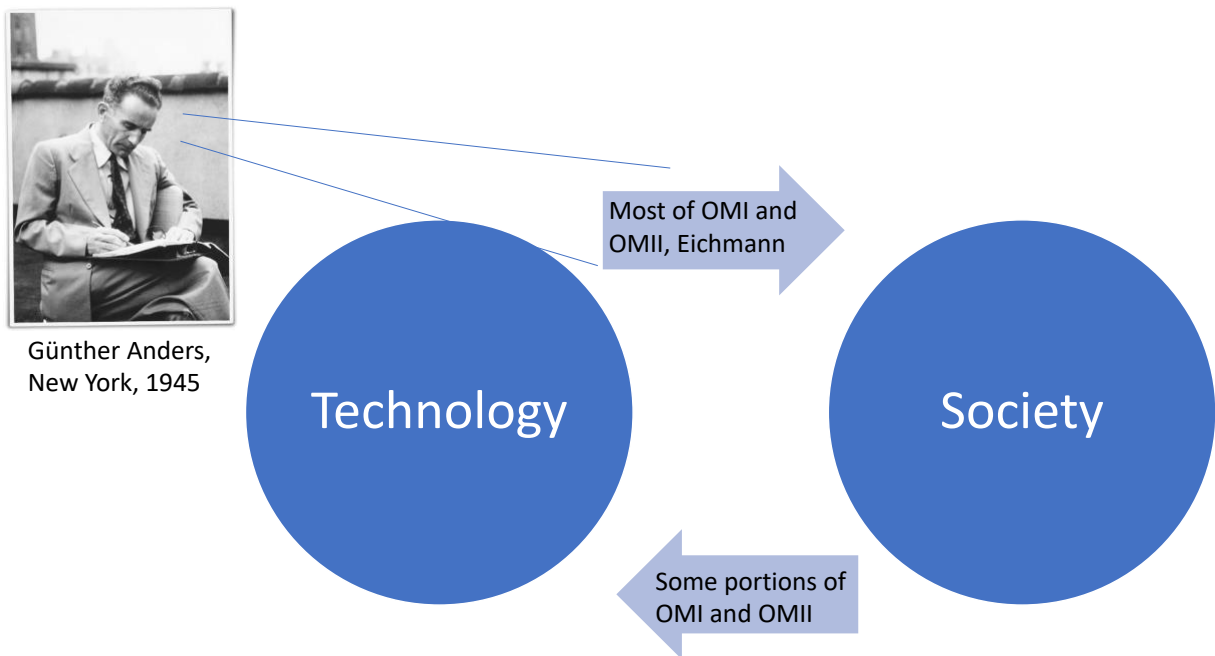
Table 12.3 shows how Anders did not believe that technology shapes society and not the other way around. For instance, in *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. I, Part II: ‘The World as Phantom and Matrix’, Anders speaks about consumerism and how technologies such as the radio and the television represent ideal realisations of the logic of commodities. Specifically, see sections: 5 ‘occurrences come to us, we do not go to them’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 106-109, *my translation*); 8 ‘Familiarisation and its commodity character’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 116-118, *my translation*); 21 ‘the creation of needs. [...] commodities are thirsty, and so are we with them’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 162-169, *my translation*); and 22 ‘The first axiom of economic ontology, the single exemplar is not’ (Anders [1956] 2003, 173-177, *my translation*). Here Anders speaks of how ICTs mirror the logic of commodities and the economy. Anders’ 1964 book, *We, Sons of Eichmann* (Anders [1964] 2015) no longer refers to a ‘universe of commodities’ (Anders [1980] 2010, 110) thirsting after one-another and expanding to conquer the world. Now it is machines who take on this role (see Anders [1964] 2015, 16-19). This indicates that Anders thought that, in some respects,

modern forms of technology had taken over the role that commodities previously held in structuring the interaction of individuals.

Anders' latest writing *Die Antiquiertheit des Proletariats* [The Obsolescence of the Proletariat] (Anders 1992a) makes most explicit how Anders conceptualises that technology has taken on the role that was previously attributed to commodities, private property relations and the economy, making individuals lose control over their production. Here Anders argues that modern wellbeing should be assessed according to the standard of freedom (Anders [1992] 2013, 147) granted by modern machines. He argues that this is low because individuals are powerless to shape their own technology. Increasingly there is a dimension within Anders' thought that argues that: 'the consequences of technology will not be transformed with the transformation of property relations' (Anders [1980] 2011, 61).

Anders' conception can be characterised as techno-pessimist. It primarily views modern forms of technology as an obstacle for human emancipation and a foundation for totalitarian systems. However, Anders is not techno-determinist, because he saw how the essence of the technology that he criticised derived from consumer capitalist societies. Moreover, he did not argue for a wholesale rejection of technology. To the contrary, Anders criticised Heidegger for adopting a 'machine-smashing attitude' (Anders [Stern] 1948, 344). Anders believed that technological structures are totalising in the same way that social and economic systems are. Consequently, his conception is not one that invites individuals to embark on a 'private strike' (Anders [1956] 2003, 11) and individually reject technology. It invites individuals to engage in collective action to address the unfreedom that technical systems are a factor in reproducing. His theory encourages us to think about the conception, design and application of modern forms of technology. It shows us, with unprecedented detail, how the latter is not neutral, but reproduces modern forms of domination, alienation and ideology. I argue that Anders' work further understands these categories through a Marxist lens which views alienation as arising from a division and inversion of subject and object. In this, Anders' thought can be fundamentally distinguished from that of Heidegger, who argued for a return to artisanal forms of technology.

Below I graphically represent how Günther Anders' philosophy is, to a significant degree, techno-pessimistic without being techno-deterministic. I do this using the 'dialectic of technology/media & society' elaborated by Fuchs (Fuchs 2011, 114-115). The latter offers a non-techno-determinist frame, showing how media/technology influence society and vice-versa.



*Figure 12.3.1: Evaluating the degree of Anders' techno-determinism. Photograph courtesy of Gerhard Oberschlick*

Figure 12.3.1 shows how most of Anders' work (e.g. Anders [1956] 2003 [OMI], [1980] 2011 [OMII], [1964] 2015 [Eichmann]) focussed on the influence of technology on society. However, some portions of this work (e.g. Anders [1956] 2003, [1980] 2011) also show how this technology was, to begin with, forged within consumer capitalist societies. Hence it reproduces the domination, alienation and ideology of these societies, potentially carrying it forward into post-capitalist societies. This means that Anders' theory is not techno-determinist, as it conceives technology and society as mutually influencing one-another. This can also be seen by looking at the last row in Table 12.3, which charts how some of Anders' statements accept that technology can positively influence society. However, in

focussing on the primarily negative effect of technology on society Anders' theory can be characterised as techno-pessimistic.

In figure 12.3.2 below, I show how Anders' techno-pessimism was not absolute. With time, Anders became increasingly prepared to accept that capitalist forms of technology could positively influence society. However, he never turned back on his criticism of the general frame of modern forms of technology. I graphically represent the focal point of Anders' mental work through lines. During Anders' middle years he narrowly focussed on the negative effects of technology on society. The dotted line shows the cursory interest Anders had for the negative effect of society on technology. The figure also shows that as Anders aged and reached the end of his life, the focus of his attention broadened to account for the positive effect existing technologies could have on society. He also became prepared to accept that society could have a positive effect on technology, through promoting photojournalism, for instance.

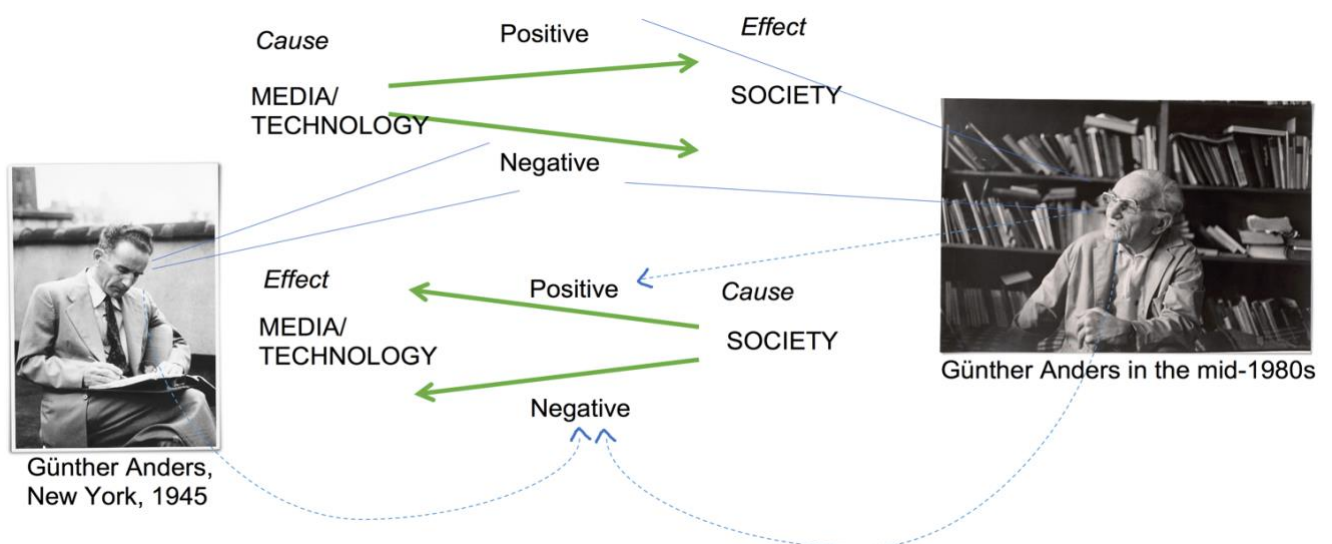


Figure 12.3.2: Anders techno-pessimism and techno-optimism. Photographs courtesy of Gerhard Oberschlick

What lessons does Anders' work offer for contemporary conceptions of technology? Anders' insistence on how the frame of modern technology can have a negative impact on society encourages us to question technology more deeply than most theories. The aim should be to change the current essence of technology. This was forged within the capitalist

economy and is based on maximum output *and* maximum input, for Anders (see section 3.3.4). In the digital era, military drones and dating apps are examples of this essence. They promise efficiency but they also promote continued, almost unending use. They thus illustrate Anders' argument that the means have become the ends (Anders [1956] 2003, 236). This mirrors the inversion of subject and object described by Marxist theory, which renders human activity standardised and objective, rather than creative and subjective. Some Marxist theorists wish to name the type of social and conscious activity that is to replace wage labour in communist societies 'productive leisure' (Kurz [1991] 2011). This implies that it is something different to labour. Similarly, Anders' critique of technology does not concern mere cosmetic changes to software and hardware design, or even its repurposing. It encourages us to radically re-think the modern technological project, to produce articles of necessity which aim at enriching human experience and emotions and not simply at maximising output, while also drawing a maximum of input. Perhaps such forms of technology should also bare a different name.

Future studies could investigate to what extent some existing technologies point towards this new essence. For instance, in what respects do green technologies differ from the essence of maximum yield at maximum input outlined by Anders? In what other respects are they compatible with this essence and potentially factors in reproducing domination, alienation and ideology?

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## **Appendix A: Sampling Source Material for the Military Drone Case Study**

First, I explain how I have divided the material that I sampled into civil society and official discourses. Then I present this material in Table A.

Looking at material which is already available on the internet runs the risk of producing a biased sample. This could arise if there is a 'distortion in the representativeness' (Bryman 2012, 187) of the discourses that I am analysing, meaning that the voice of certain groups is excluded from the research. In my case, I run the risk of mainly including discourses produced by ex-operators who are critical of the drone programme.

To counter this tendency, I design my study by looking at both critical and non-critical accounts. Hence, I divide tokens of discourse into two categories: tokens that belong to the sphere of civil society and tokens that are produced by governments or military institutions. The main basis for the discourse tokens pertaining to civil society are interviews, video testimonials and written material produced by ex-military drone pilots. The main basis for government and military tokens is official recruitment videos, open days for the press featuring interviews with active drone operators, official statements and video releases by the RAF and U.S. Air Force.

I use videos of Apache helicopters as stand ins for drone videos. I rely on the similarity of the video feed, which in both cases is used to aim weapons. Apache helicopters and drones share in common the fact that they both fire Hellfire missiles, though Apache helicopters also fire a chain gun, which drones do not have. I use Apache helicopter footage to overcome the limitations of footage of military drone attacks on YouTube. For instance, audio is always absent from these videos. Moreover, this footage is typically heavily edited and censored. In contrast, videos of Apache helicopters mostly have audio, which allows me to analyse commands to kill used by pilots and gunners. The footage is less edited. One difference in the footage is that it is more detailed than that of drones, as, for instance, it is taken from closer proximity. However, this means that any evidence of the desensitising effect of this black and white or infrared footage taken from an aerial view, logically also applies to the video feed of drones, which typically is grainier and less clear.

Below is a Table that lists the source material I will use for the military drone case study. This material is composed of written and spoken tokens that I will analyse using critical discourse analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2001).

I number items in the civil society column A.1, A.2, etc. I number items in the official discourse column B.1, B.2, etc. The A column contains 6 poems; 4 podcasts; 1 magazine print interview; 6 newspaper video and print interviews; 1 YouTube documentary which focuses heavily on an interview with Brandon Bryant; 2 journalistic reports in the form of a documentary and a book; 3 blogs, among which 1 film review; two articles written by drone operators (one is a film review); and one film. The B column contains 3 recruitment videos; 1 investigative report; 4 leaked documents; 1 training manual; 1 video report from a press open day at an RAF base in Lincolnshire from which military drones are commanded; 2 weapons' brochures; 4 videos with audio of Apache helicopter attacks on YouTube; 16 comments on these videos; 3 videos of drone attacks without audio and 1 partially censored transcript from a drone attack that killed civilians published in the Los Angeles Times.

The civil society column (A) contains material that is more expressive and unconstrained. The poems give an insight into the inner thoughts and subjective perspective of drone operators. Similarly, the podcast interviews and long interviews on other media highlight the subjective experience of drone operators and the narratives they construct about their own lives. The blog posts are equally an insight into the subjective take on the world of drone operators. The articles give an insight into the political opinions of drone operators. The poems and interviews are the most information rich, which explains why they form the majority of sources in this column. However, I also value the articles, blogs and film reviews operators have written themselves. I therefore have included 3 blogs and 2 articles. I have opposed to the civil society column the official discourse column. The material in this column is more constrained and follows official protocols. This material gives me an insight into the official image and ideology produced in relation to military drones, which I find, for instance, in weapons brochures. This is especially true of the recruitment videos, where drone operators promote the drone programme. However, I also include official discourses

such as those found on official internal documents describing operations and in the commands drone and Apache helicopter operators use to strike. This official discourse gives me an insight into the attitude military agents adopt while killing, and how they construct, qualify, and position themselves with regard to these processes.

A. Civil society	B. Official
<p>Person featured: Lynn Hill, ex-sensor operator and image analyst</p> <p>Material: Poetry written and performed by Lynn Hill. It is primarily contained in an audio-visual recording of the show called ‘Holding it down: The Veterans’ Dreams project,’ which was performed at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2015 (McGregor 2015). (Duration: 1 hr, 28 min, 6 sec)</p> <p>These poems were also recited by Lynn Hill on various podcasts (1 for the BBC (Wilkie 2015), 1 for North Carolina Public Radio (Cole 2013) and 2 for the National Endowment for the Arts (Reed 2013; Reed 2014)). The BBC one can be easily accessed on the BBC Sounds app. There are links to the other two in the bibliography.</p> <p>Below I transcribe the poems from: Wilkie, Andrew. 2015. “Lynn Hill - 21st Century War Poet.” <i>BBC World Service</i>, November 29, 2015, sec. The Documentary Podcast, 27 min 2 sec.</p> <p>Poems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.1) Capacity (Wilkie 2015, 9 min 25 sec to 11 min 15 sec) (119 words)</li> </ul> <p>Synopsis: Lynn Hill describes how she discovered that she was able to carry out violent acts using drones. She thereby realised that she had a capacity for both love and aggression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.2) Name (291 words) (Wilkie 2015, 4 min to 7 min 20 sec)</li> </ul> <p>Synopsis: Lynn Hill describes how the killings she was carrying out through drones started to affect her consciousness when she switched to a new team that did not use official military titles but first</p>	<p>Person featured: Various active drone operators</p> <p>Material: US Air force, Recruitment video for ‘Remotely piloted Aircraft (RPA)’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(B.1) U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting. 2019a. “Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Sensor Operator—Training Pipeline,” March 15, 2019, sec. YouTube video, 2 min 6 sec;</li> <li>(B.2) ———. 2019b. “Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Sensor Operator—What Are Some Challenges?” <i>U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting</i>, March 15, 2019, sec. YouTube video, 114 sec;</li> <li>(B.3) ———. 2019c. “Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Sensor Operator—What Makes This Career Unique?” March 15, 2019, sec. YouTube video, 101 sec.</li> </ul> <p>Sources:</p> <p>(B.1) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oMOxu6S9us">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oMOxu6S9us</a>;</p> <p>(B.2) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8boc92ldCcs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8boc92ldCcs</a>;</p> <p>(B.3) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxuGkRhuEQM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxuGkRhuEQM</a></p>

<p>names. These acts were now associated with her name and so she could no longer separate them from herself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.3) Dreams in Colour (145 words) (Wilkie 2015, 1 min 27 sec to 3 min) Synopsis: Lynn Hill describes how, during her daily life in the US, her mind was full of vivid images of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq despite her only having experienced it remotely through the black and white image feed of the drones she was piloting.</li> <li>• (A.4) Untitled. Potential title: My Marine (255 words) (Wilkie 2015, 17 min 30 sec to 19 min 45 sec) Synopsis: Lynn Hill describes how she was emotionally invested in a Marine soldier that was fighting in the war in Iraq. On one occasion, she gained detailed information about a mission he was on because she was piloting a drone in the same area.</li> <li>• (A.5) Untitled. Potential title: That’s a bad Question (280 words) (Wilkie 2015, 13 min to 15 min 20 sec) Synopsis: Lynn Hill recalls a college student asking her flippantly whether she has ever killed anyone. She comes up with the idea that all US citizens share a part of responsibility for the actions she has committed, because the war was determined through a democratic process.</li> <li>• (A.6) Untitled. Potential title: Brother (112 words) (25 min 23 sec to 26 min 25 sec) Synopsis: waiting at the veteran’s affairs office Lynn speaks to a war veteran who lost his legs in combat. She feels guilty because her scars from the war are only mental and not physical.</li> </ul>	
<p>Person featured: Lynn Hill</p> <p>Material: four interviews on four separate podcasts featuring her poetry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.7) Wilkie, Andrew. 2015. “Lynn Hill - 21st</li> </ul>	<p>Material: Leaked confidential US army documents published as part of (B.4) Scahill, Jeremy, Josh Begley, Cora Currier, Ryan Devereaux, and Peter Maass. 2015. “The Drone Papers.” <i>The Intercept</i>, October 15, 2015.</p>

<p>Century War Poet.” <i>BBC World Service</i>, November 29, 2015, sec. The Documentary Podcast, 27 min 2 sec;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.8) Cole, Sean. 2013. “Ex-Drone Operator Captures Experiences in Poetry.” <i>North Carolina Public Radio</i>, 2013, sec. The Story, podcast 42 min 15 sec;</li> <li>• (A.9) Reed, Jo. 2013. “Lynn Hill Discusses Her Participation in ‘Holding It Down.’” <i>National Endowment for the Arts</i>, April 11, 2013, sec. Stories, podcast 26 min 44 sec;</li> <li>• (A.10) Reed, Jo. 2014. “Remembering War through Art.” <i>National Endowment for the Arts</i>, May 22, 2014, sec. Jacob Lawrence’s War Series, podcast 28 min 29 sec.</li> </ul> <p>Description: In these interviews, Lynn Hill elaborates on some of the themes of her poems and describes her life after leaving the military.</p> <p>Sources: (A.7) <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03mtjz6">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03mtjz6</a>; (A.8) <a href="http://www.thestory.org/sites/default/files/public/audio/story/2013_08_23_predator_drone_poet.mp3">http://www.thestory.org/sites/default/files/public/audio/story/2013_08_23_predator_drone_poet.mp3</a>; (A.9) <a href="https://www.arts.gov/audio/lynn-hill#undefined">https://www.arts.gov/audio/lynn-hill#undefined</a>; (A. 10) <a href="https://www.arts.gov/audio/remembering-war-through-art#undefined">https://www.arts.gov/audio/remembering-war-through-art#undefined</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (B.5) U.S. Military. 2013a. “Geolocation Watchlist.”</li> <li>• (B.6) U.S. Military. 2013b. “Operation Haymaker”;</li> <li>• (B.7) ISR Task Force, Requirements and Analysis Division. 2013a. “ISR Support to Small Footprint CT Operations – Somalia / Yemen”;</li> <li>• (B.8) ISR Task Force, Requirements and Analysis Division. 2013b. “ISR Support to Small Footprint CT Operations – Somalia / Yemen: Executive Summary.”</li> </ul> <p>Description: These are leaked official US documents detailing target lists, operation information and general analyses and assessments by the US Air Force about their operations. They detail referential strategies, layers of supervision and general tactics relating to drone warfare.</p> <p>Sources: (B.4) <a href="https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/">https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/</a>; (B.5) <a href="https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/geolocation-watchlist/#page-1">https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/geolocation-watchlist/#page-1</a>; (B.6) <a href="https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/14/operation-haymaker/#page-1">https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/14/operation-haymaker/#page-1</a>; (B.7) <a href="https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/small-footprint-operations-2-13/#page-1">https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/small-footprint-operations-2-13/#page-1</a>; (B.8) <a href="https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/small-footprint-operations-5-13/#page-1">https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/small-footprint-operations-5-13/#page-1</a></p>
<p>Person featured: Brandon Bryant</p> <p>Material: interview with Brandon Bryant in GQ magazine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.11) Power, Matthew. 2013. “Confessions</li> </ul>	<p>Material: Training manual explaining rules of engagement to marine cadets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (B.9) United States Marine Corps. 2017. <i>Law Of War/ Introduction To Rules Of Engagement B130936</i></li> </ul>



<p>of an American Drone Operator.” <i>GQ</i>, October 23, 2013.</p> <p>Description: in depth look at Brandon Bryant’s experience of killing using drones, which he reveals for the first time</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.gq.com/story/drone-uav-pilot-assassination">https://www.gq.com/story/drone-uav-pilot-assassination</a>.</p>	<p><i>Student Handout</i>. Camp Barrett, Virginia: The Basic School, Marine Corps Training Command</p> <p>Description: this training manual highlights the criteria that US military personnel use to decide whether they can kill someone. The same principles apply for air attacks.</p>
<p>Persons featured: various ex-military drone operators who have become whistle blowers denouncing the US Drone programme. These include (Cian Westmoreland, Michael Haas, Brandon Bryant, Stephen Lewis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.12) Pilkington, Ed. 2015. “Life as a Drone Operator: ‘Ever Step on Ants and Never Give It Another Thought?’” <i>The Guardian</i>, November 19, 2015, sec. World news</li> </ul> <p>Description: various statements made by the drone operators are transcribed</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/18/life-as-a-drone-pilot-creech-air-force-base-nevada">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/18/life-as-a-drone-pilot-creech-air-force-base-nevada</a></p>	<p>Persons featured: active drone operators and their superiors</p> <p>Material: RAF press open day, Channel 4 News report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(B.10) Mason, Paul. 2013. “Inside the ‘cockpit’ of a British Drone.” <i>Channel 4 News</i>, December 18, 2013, sec. YouTube video, 5 min 19 sec.</li> </ul> <p>Description: This is a news report presented by Paul Mason. This was based on the Ministry of Defence organising an open day for the press at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, the base from which RAF drones are piloted. This report features interviews with an active drone pilot and some members of his chain of command.</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e2t_mBk-o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e2t_mBk-o</a></p>
<p>Persons featured: RAF drone operator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.13) Rayment, Sean. 2020. “RAF Drone Pilot Kills Terrorists from 3,000 Miles Away ‘like Stepping on Ants.’” <i>Mirror</i>, May 30, 2020, sec. UK News</li> </ul> <p>Material: various statements made about the UK’s drone programme. Discussion of the psychological impact on operators</p> <p>Source:</p>	<p>Persons featured: Weapons companies General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and Northrop Grumman</p> <p>Material: Brochure describing weapons for sales purposes. B.11 describes drone models. B.13 describes the ammunition used by the chain gun on Apache helicopters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(B.11) General Atomic Aeronautical Systems (2017). MQ 9B Capability</li> </ul>

<p><a href="https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/raf-drone-pilot-kills-terrorists-22113244">https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/raf-drone-pilot-kills-terrorists-22113244</a></p>	<p>Profile II: Multi-Role—Single solution. <i>Www.Ga-Asi.Com</i> 1–8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (B.12) Northrop Grumman. 2018. “LW30 M789 HEDP: 30 x 113mm High Explosive Dual Purpose.” <i>Northropgrumman.Com</i>.</li> </ul> <p>Description: These brochures contain precision and capability discourses used by weapons’ companies to advertise drones.</p>
<p>Persons featured: various ex-military drone operators who have become whistle blowers denouncing the US Drone programme. These include (Cian Westmoreland, Michael Haas, Brandon Bryant, Stephen Lewis)</p> <p>Material: Press videos featuring interviews with ex-military drone operators. The Guardian video is an edited extract from the documentary by Hessen Schei, Tonje. 2014. <i>Drone – This Is No Game!</i> Filmmers Film.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.14) Hessen Schei, Tonje. 2015. “Drone Wars: The Gamers Recruited to Kill.” <i>The Guardian</i>, February 2, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 9 min 32 sec;</li> <li>• (A.15) Heller, Jake. 2015. “Former Drone Pilots Denounce ‘Morally Outrageous’ Program.” <i>NBC News</i>, December 7, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 6 min 55 sec</li> <li>• (A.16) Goodman, Amy, and Juan Gonzalez. 2013. “A Drone Warrior’s Torment: Ex-Air Force Pilot Brandon Bryant on His Trauma From Remote Killing.” <i>Democracy Now!</i>, October 25, 2013, sec. YouTube video 16 min 19 sec.</li> </ul> <p>Sources: (A.14) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGA8RFB0VSw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGA8RFB0VSw</a>; (A.15) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ1BC0g_PbQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ1BC0g_PbQ</a>; (A.16) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_l6ec62l6l">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_l6ec62l6l</a></p>	<p>Material: videos showing an apache helicopter attack plus comments on YouTube</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (B.13) AH64Apacheaction. 2013. “Apache Helicopter Kills 20 Taliban.” <i>YouTube</i>, February 27, 2013, sec. video, 10 min 35 sec. [video since removed ca. 2020] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o (B.13.1) diddle the poodle (2020) ‘Nothing better than Taliban compost to fertilize the local wildlife.’ [658 likes]</li> <li>o (B.13.2) eijmert (ca. 2020) ‘Free fertelized fields’</li> <li>o (B.13.3) Exotic Proxi (ca. 2019) ‘When you notice this is not call of duty modern warfare’</li> <li>o (B.13.4) DoOnalD TrUmmP (ca. 2019) ‘xxX-TLIBAN_ALLAHUAKBAR-Xxx left the game’</li> <li>o (B.13.5) Jean-Marie Asclépios #DBL_G1 #FDPH (2019) ‘I like the way the operator try not to kill animals’ [3.4K likes]</li> <li>o (B.13.6) Raymond Cassidy (2020) ‘Of most Apache fire teams , this one has been the most surgical ... [three heart emojis]’</li> <li>o (B.13.7) Kyle Komarek</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

(2020) "He's uh, no longer with us." Classic bad-assery from US owners of the night sky...'

- (B.14) SmokeyPG. 2012. "18+ \*Warning Graphic\* 2 Apache Helicopters Engage over 20 Taliban Fighters \*NEW\*." *YouTube*, July 19, 2012, sec. video, 15 min 18 sec. [Longer version of B.10 hosted by a different account; still not removed as of 20 October 2020]
  - o (B.14.1) hctiB alliK (ca. 2017) 'I watch this video whenever I'm mad'
  - o (B.14.2) Lori Girl (ca. 2017) 'Not graphic. Quite satisfying actually.'
  - o (B.14.3) ltsj3v (ca. 2017) 'I would never buy this game because the hit marker is so glitchy'
  - o (B.14.4) TheSpanishInquisition (ca. 2016) 'I watch this everytime [sic] there is a new terror attack'
  
- (B.15) Bone Tactical. 2015. "Apache Helicopter Blows Up Insurgent With IED in Backpack." *YouTube*, July 2, 2015, sec. video, 1 min 54 sec
  - o (B.15.1) 616e6f6e (ca. 2020) 'Dude sounds like a dentist'
  - o (B.15.2) Bingre (ca. 2019) 'No animals were hurt in the making of this production'
  - o (B.15.3) Charles P. (ca. 2019) 'The dogs survived! hooray!'
  - o (B.15.4) IV IV (ca. 2018) 'I'm glad the animals made it to safety !'

- o (B.15.5) Max ibrahim (ca. 2018) 'Will this run on a 4gb ram pc??'
- o T FP (2020) 'I love seeing the parts fly...just shows how destructive the weaponry is.'
- (B.16) Alex Broadbent. 2017. "(GRAPHIC WARNING) Apache Helicopter Takes Out Iraqi Insurgents." *YouTube*, July 12, 2017, sec. video 3 min 38 sec.
  - o (B.16.1) daniel hannon (ca. 2019) 'I didn't find this video to be distressing at all'
  - o (B.16.2) lands8115 (ca. 2019) 'I am not distressed at all except I should have added more butter to my popcorn'
- (B.17) dvidshub. 2008. "UAV Kills 6 Heavily Armed Criminals." *YouTube*, April 11, 2008, sec. video 78 sec.
- (B.18) Ministry of Defence. 2015a. "RAF Reaper Strike on ISIL Vehicle in Iraq July 6 2015," July 9, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 1 min 17 sec.
- (B.19) Ministry of Defence. 2015b. "RAF Reaper Neutralises Taliban Bomb Factory," November 25, 2015, sec. YouTube video, 1 min 20 sec.

Description: These videos contain extreme violence, but it is viewed through infrared images, which invert black and white. Because they aim to inspire awe and satisfy the violent fantasies of viewers, these videos can be classified as 'war porn,' or 'drone porn' in the case of B.17-B.19. For instance, B13 gained over 4,006,571 views and 28,000 likes, against only 2,400 dislikes, before it was removed by YouTube for containing graphic

	<p>violence.</p> <p>The Apache videos (B.13, B.14, B.15, B16) contain the audio of commands used to kill. Comments below all the videos commonly make light of the killings, glorifying them. The comments are unofficial discourse, but the content of the video is sometimes directly released by official sources. This is the case for B.17-B.19.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <p>(B.13)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWuP6dmYOE0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWuP6dmYOE0</a>;</p> <p>(B.14)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TZOXlTwAvA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TZOXlTwAvA</a>;</p> <p>(B.15)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egfVEz3Udmw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egfVEz3Udmw</a>;</p> <p>(B.16)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2XVetH9-Ko">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2XVetH9-Ko</a>;</p> <p>(B.17)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNNJ Jrcla7A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNNJ Jrcla7A</a>;</p> <p>(B.18)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8e9DiXK9Zc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8e9DiXK9Zc</a>;</p> <p>(B19)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m63c3W8I-Rw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m63c3W8I-Rw</a></p>
<p>Person featured: Brandon Bryant</p> <p>Material: Brandon Bryant interviewed in a YouTube documentary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.17) Engman. 2018. "Warrior in a Garden: Drone Operator Whistleblower," April 14, 2018, sec. YouTube video, 1 hr 03 min 28 sec</li> </ul> <p>Description:  This is a low budget YouTube documentary which mostly consists in a long interview with ex-drone</p>	<p>Person featured: Predator drone crew</p> <p>Material: Article featuring an edited transcript of an occasion where a drone was involved in targeting civilians. The transcript was obtained by the LA Times through a freedom of information request.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(B.20) Cloud, David. 2011. "Combat by Camera: Anatomy of an Afghan War Tragedy." <i>Los Angeles Times</i>, April 10, 2011.</li> </ul>

<p>operator and whistle-blower Brandon Bryant. Brandon explains his life journey since leaving the military, and how he came to take personal responsibility for his actions in the US drone programme.</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXkFdC0_cVA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXkFdC0_cVA</a></p>	<p>Description:  The transcript gives an insight into drone operatives' level of accuracy in identifying combatants. The transcript shows operatives desire to use their weapons, regardless of the limited evidence that the people they are targeting are combatants.</p>
<p>Material: extract from a documentary for Vice by independent journalist Ben Anderson covering the war in in Afghanistan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.18) Anderson, Ben. 2013. "This Is What Winning Looks Like (Part 1/3)." <i>Vice</i>, May 15, 2013, sec. YouTube video, 29 min 1 sec</li> </ul> <p>Description: journalist Ben Anderson embedded with U.S troops in Afghanistan over a period of many months. This documentary features a candid interview with a U.S. general who expresses compassion for a killed Taliban fighter.</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKHPTHx0ScQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKHPTHx0ScQ</a></p>	
<p>Persons featured: The British Army, 2007 Queen's Company, The Grenadier Guards; US Marine Corps, 2009 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, 2010 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 6<sup>th</sup> Marines, 2011 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines</p> <p>Material: book which chronicles Ben Anderson's time as an independent journalist embedded with US and UK troops. The conversations it contains are transcribed from tapes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A.19) Anderson, Ben. 2011. <i>No Worse Enemy: The Inside Story of the Chaotic Struggle for Afghanistan</i>. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.</li> </ul> <p>Description: Ben Anderson's reporting is valuable because he is one of the few reporters who went out with Allied troops during active battles. Because he took the same risks as troops, many of them opened up to him. His reporting contrasts sharply with official narratives and information obtained from press releases.</p>	

Person featured: Cian Westmoreland, ex- drone communication systems engineer

Material:

Westmoreland blog post on Project Red Hand:

- (A.20) Westmoreland, Cian. 2014a. "The Nomad." *Project Red Hand* (blog). November 3, 2014. (9,117 words);
- (A.21) Westmoreland, Cian. 2014b. "The Day I Stopped Being Afraid." November 12, 2014. (3,280 words);

Description:

These are posts on the website Project Red Hand which was set up by Brandon Bryant and others to speak out against the US drone programme. Cian Westmoreland reflects on the WikiLeaks video 'Collateral Murder' showing US troops firing on journalists from an Apache helicopter. He further recounts his struggle with mental health issues after leaving the military.

Source:

(A.20)

<https://projectredhand.wordpress.com/2014/11/03/the-nomad/>; (A.21)

<https://projectredhand.wordpress.com/2014/11/12/the-day-i-stopped-being-afraid/>

Authors: Heather Linebaugh

Material: Article for newspaper written by ex-drone operator.

- (A.22) Linebaugh, Heather. 2013. "I Worked on the US Drone Program. The Public Should Know What Really Goes on" *The Guardian*, December 29, 2013, sec. Opinion. (1100 words);

Articles discusses the issue of the image resolution of drones. Linebaugh discusses the difficulty of telling whether individuals are carrying weapons and are of combat age.

Source:

<p><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/29/drones-us-military">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/29/drones-us-military;</a></p>	
<p>Person featured: Lynn Hill</p> <p>Material: Film review posted on Lynn Hill’s blog: <i>The Predator and the Poet</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.23) Torres, Lynn. 2016. “Eye in the Sky Movie: Did They Get It Right?” <i>Predator and the Poet</i> (blog). April 8, 2016. (602 words)</li> </ul> <p>Description: Lynn Hill reviews the film <i>Eye in the Sky</i> (2015) paying particular attention to the question of who is responsible given the chain of command leading up to strikes and hierarchies within the operation of drones.</p> <p>Source: <a href="http://predatorpoet.blogspot.com/2016/04/eye-in-sky-movie-did-they-get-it-right.html">http://predatorpoet.blogspot.com/2016/04/eye-in-sky-movie-did-they-get-it-right.html</a></p>	
<p>Author: Cian Westmoreland</p> <p>Material: Film review in a newspaper article of <i>Eye in the Sky</i> (2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.24) Westmoreland, Cian. 2016. “Whistleblower’s Review of ‘Eye in the Sky.’” <i>HuffPost</i>, April 20, 2016. (1,410 word)</li> </ul> <p>Description: Westmoreland reviews the film <i>Eye in the Sky</i> (2015), stating that the film exaggerates the clarity of the digital images that drone operators see.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.huffpost.com/entry/whistleblowers-review-of-b-9737034">https://www.huffpost.com/entry/whistleblowers-review-of b 9737034</a></p>	
<p>Material: Film about drone warfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (A.25) Hood, Gavin. 2015. <i>Eye in the Sky</i>. Raindog Films. 1 hr 43 min</li> </ul> <p>Description: This film centres on the moral dilemma of killing</p>	



through drones. The film shows drone operatives using statistics on the likelihood that a strike will kill civilians to determine whether they will shoot or not. On the whole, the film deals with the question of whether the cost of a human life can be calculated. It portrays drone technology to be more advanced than what it actually is by, for instance, suggesting that it can produce extraordinarily clear visual feeds.

Both Lynn Hill and Cian Westmoreland have reviewed this film discussing whether it is accurate.

*Table A: Military drone tokens*

## Appendix B: Questionnaire for dating app case study

### OPENING REMARKS

This questionnaire is composed of three parts. The first is about your general experience of dating apps. The second looks a bit more in detail at usage practices. The third will be about your conversations on the platform. In addition, I will ask some very general questions at the beginning for context.

Please remember that you are free to decline to answer any question and you can stop the interview at any time. You don't have to give any reason for doing this. Finally, I just want to reiterate that I will transcribe the recording as soon as possible. The transcript will be anonymous. The only identifying information it will have is your age, gender and sexual orientation. After the interview has been transcribed, I will permanently delete the recording. I will notify you when this process is complete.

There is no right or wrong answer!

#### 1. General questions

(1.1) Can you say a little about when you started using Tinder or another dating app?

(1.2) And what was your motivation for using this app?

(1.3) Did you use other dating apps? If so, which ones?

(1.4) What do you think are the commonalities and differences between the platforms you used?

(1.5) Before you started using dating apps, did you meet people through chance encounters? Was this easy or difficult? Why? How does this compare to using dating apps?

## 2. PART I: General experience of dating apps

(2.1) In general, do you think it is rather easy or rather difficult to find someone on Tinder who matches what you are looking for? In what respects?

(2.2) Is it rather time-consuming or not so time-consuming to find an interesting “match” on Tinder?

(2.3) Do you have a specific type of person that you are looking for on dating apps or that you are generally attracted to?

(2.4) Have you ever met someone on [chosen dating app] where you felt that the person perfectly matched what you were looking for on [chosen dating app]? If yes, can you give an example and talk about it?

(2.5) Have you heard of other users having similar experiences of “perfect matches” on [chosen dating app]?

(2.6) Have you ever met someone on [chosen dating app] and felt that the person did not at all match what you were looking for on [chosen dating app]? If yes, can you give an example and talk about it?

(2.7) If yes, have you heard of other users having similar experiences of imperfect matches on [chosen dating app]?

(2.8) Do you think that the algorithms used on [chosen dating app] are effective at matching individuals? If yes, why and if no, why not?

## 3. PART II: Your experience as a user

(3.1) A: Your experience interacting with other users

(3.1.1) Can you maybe give an example of how you met someone via [chosen dating app] whom you liked? How did your first contact come about? And how did the first meeting come about? Can you describe how your feelings to this user developed?

(3.1.2) Did very positive feelings develop online or after a personal meeting offline? At what point did you know that you liked this person?

(3.1.3) Have you heard of cases where [chosen dating app] users invested a lot of time into communicating or meeting with a user, but then suddenly the contact ended. This is sometimes known as 'ghosting'. If yes, can you say more about this example? How do you think this user felt?

(3.1.4) And what about you, have you ever had experiences on [chosen dating app] that created negative feelings such as disappointment or isolation? If yes, can you talk more about it and give a concrete example?

(3.1.5) The media often say that [chosen dating app] is primarily a platform for quick sex and one-night stands. Do you think this is rather true or false? Why? Do you think that's a good or a bad thing?

(3.1.6) How would you characterise your behaviour on dating apps?

(3.1.7) Are you happy with this behaviour do you see it as fitting with your personality?

(3.2) B: How you set up your profile

(3.2.1) Can you talk about the images and profile information that you use on [chosen dating app] and that other users can see when viewing your profile? How do you select these images? How do you decide what information you put on your profile?

(3.2.2) Do you think that users' images are rather authentic or rather staged? Can you give examples?

(3.2.3) One can sometimes hear that the way the bodies and lives of women and men are presented in the media is unrealistic. It is said that they are often presented as beautiful, happy, and perfect and that real life and real people are different. Do you think [chosen dating app] has rather positive or rather negative impacts on the standards of beauty? In what respects? Can you give concrete examples?

(3.2.4) Have you ever felt that [chosen dating app] is a place where people can take ownership of the way their body is and put forward an image that is different to the ideal standard of beauty which is presented in the media?

(3.2.5) Have you ever been confronted with unrealistic expectations with regard to standards of beauty on dating apps? Has this ever made you feel negative about yourself?

#### 4. PART III: Conversations on dating apps

(4.01) Many commercial Internet platforms and apps collect a lot of personal data about users. Have you ever been made aware of data collection practices on social media platforms such as Facebook? What do you think are the impacts of platforms such as Facebook on privacy?

(4.02) Dating apps such as [chosen dating app] deal with quite personal information having to do with sexuality and intimacy. Do you think [chosen dating app] should store personal conversations that users have on the platform or not? If yes, why and if no, why not?

(4.03) And what about images and videos that one user sends to another user. Should [chosen dating app] store such images and videos?

(4.04) Have you ever talked about matters that you deem very personal, such as family, physical or mental health issues on [chosen dating app]? If yes, can you say more about it and give a concrete example?

(4.05) Have you ever sent sensitive images or videos via the platform? If yes, can you say more about it and give a concrete example?

(4.06) Have you ever talked in a sexually suggestive manner on [chosen dating app] or discussed sexual preferences and orientation? If yes, can you say more about it and give a concrete example?

(4.07) Have you ever talked about drug use on [chosen dating app]? If yes, can you say more about it and give a concrete example?

(4.08) Did you ever have concerns about the data usage and storage practices of [chosen dating app]? If so, in what respects? If no, in what respects do you think users can trust [chosen dating app] to behave responsibly with data?

(4.09) [chosen dating app]'s privacy policy says that the company stores personal data, including the content of your chats and sensitive data having to do with sexual orientation, intimate images or videos, etc. that you send. What do you think about these data collection and storage practices?

(4.10) Did you know that [chosen dating app] stores lots of data about you for a long time? Has this in any way impacted your behaviour on the platform? Are there things you have deliberately not talked about on the platform that you would talk about in a face-to-face conversation? If so, can you say more about it? (Is the reverse true?)

(4.11) How do you feel about [chosen dating app] analysing your conversations and uploaded data for targeted ads?

(4.12) [chosen dating app] shares information about a users' profile, uploads, and communication with the police if there is a request to do so. What do you think about this practice?

(4.13) Do you think that [chosen dating app]'s data storage and user practices could have negative impacts for you? If so, in what respects? If no, why not?

## 5. FINAL REMARKS

We've reached the end of this interview. Thank you so much for participating. This is sincerely appreciated.

## **Appendix C: Copyright permission**

In figures 12.3.1 and 12.3.2, I have used two pictures of Günther Anders. The copyright holder of the latter is Gerhard Oberschlick, who has kindly granted permission for me to use these pictures in this thesis.

He can be contacted at [gerhard.oberschlick@gmx.net](mailto:gerhard.oberschlick@gmx.net)