

WELCOME TO THE PSYCHOPOLITICS OF AI

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I. The Fragmentation of Reality

What is truth? Does this question not feel a bit... *cringe*? As if we can still imagine truth as an object to be grasped, a solid thing to be held, observed, and measured? More than a century has passed since Ludwig Wittgenstein proposed that the meaning of a sentence depends on its use within a language game. Philosophers in the 20th century argued that truth is not a solid structure but a changeable architecture, like a *démodé* kitchen that is constantly remodeled by language, power, and desire. But this question has returned, zombie-like, with the rise of generative artificial intelligence. And like a zombie, it smells worse than it once did.

Generative AI systems have transformed the way millions of people search, write, and make images. If you ask ChatGPT a question, you get a single answer. That stands in for a fact, sans citations, and takes on the mantle of 'truth.' But the answer I get will be different to the answer you get. This doesn't just fracture the concept of truth; it annihilates the conditions of a shared reality. Now every screen is a private algorithmic theater, projecting a reality tailored to the microsecond with behavioral data. It's crafted to be maximally compelling to an audience of one. Where once there was a semblance of pluralism – political realities were contested and unstable – now there is a proliferation of singular, AI-generated realities, each presented with confident certainty.

This has ushered in a state of *disjunctive realism* – a time where multiple, incommensurate realities coexist, each designed to maximally engage and manipulate a single target. Disjunctive realism is characterized by a splintered state of being, where the architects of truth are AI companies that mediate, manipulate, and manufacture perception. Generative AI does not mirror the world; it generates it based on the statistical probability of what each individual wants, or what they might be persuaded to buy. And this is just the beginning.

II. The Psychopolitical Regime of AI

The emergence of these AI regimes represents a form of control that moves beyond blunt instruments of overt repression toward a more subtle form of power: the manipulation of perspective itself. Power no longer needs to wield its authority with a visible hand that controls information flows; it exerts itself through imperceptible mechanisms of algorithmic curation, molding reality to fit the desires of each individual while remaining completely unseen and unaccountable. It's not about what we see or don't see; it's about the contours of the reality we inhabit.

This influence over minds is a *psychopolitical regime*: it directs the environments where our ideas are formed, developed, and expressed. The brilliance of this control lies in its intimacy – it infiltrates the core of our subjectivity, bending our internal landscape without us even realizing it, all while maintaining the illusion of choice and freedom. After all, we are the ones asking AI to summarize that article or produce that image. We have the power of the prompt, but the real action happens with the design of the system itself. The more personalized the content, the more effectively the system has already predetermined the outcomes.

Consider the ideological implications of this psychopolitics. Traditional forms of ideological control relied on overt mechanisms – censorship, propaganda, repression. In contrast, today's algorithmic governance operates under the radar, infiltrating the psyche without the subject even realizing it. It is a shift from the external imposition of authority to the internalization of its logic. The subject believes they are acting on their own volition, unaware that their desires, fears, and perceptions have been manipulated from the outset. The open field of a prompt screen is actually an echochamber for a single occupant.

This brings us to the most perverse aspect of this regime: its capacity to generate a sense of comfort and convenience that makes questioning it seem absurd. Who would dare critique a system that offers everything at one's fingertips, catering to every whim and need? How can one object to infinite remixes of content? Yet this supposed convenience is the site of our deepest alienation. AI systems appear to be responding to our every desire, but the deck is stacked: from the data used to train the system, to the decisions about how to design it, to the commercial and advertising imperatives that shape the outputs. We are playing a predetermined game that ultimately plays us.

III. Epistemic Exhaustion

The result of this form of AI psychopolitics is a bone-deep tiredness. The subject, bombarded by a constant stream of information, much of it contradictory or unreliable, finds herself overwhelmed and disoriented. This is not a mere fatigue of the mind but a deeper exhaustion of the will to know. When you are just a prompt jockey, and every response is a statistical average that could just as easily be otherwise, the basic interest in truth begins to erode. This erosion is not incidental; it is a design feature of the AI regime. By undermining the possibility of shared truth, it renders collective action difficult, if not impossible. It isolates individuals within their own epistemic silos, each one quite certain of their own truth, yet more disconnected from the truths of others. Collective politics, once a site of negotiation and contestation, becomes fragmented, polarized, and ultimately, paralyzed.

IV. Strategies of Secrecy and Ambiguity

In this landscape, the traditional forms of protest and refusal can feel remarkably ineffective. Generative tools are already everywhere unbidden, making unsolicited "AI Overviews" and autocomplete recommendations with each search or email. It's flooding the zone with AI. What options are left? Our own creations – be it words, code, or images – have already been harvested for AI systems and reassembled as 'outputs' over which we have little to no control. Non-participation hasn't been an option for a while.

But there are lessons to be learned from alternative media histories. Samizdat were not just illicit pamphlets passed hand-to-hand under the Soviet regime; they were attempts to build different systems outside of the official machinery. Ribs were not just black market recordings of music cut into medical X-rays; they were a means to allow popular artists who were banned in Russia to be heard while also creating communities of listeners. Pirate radio did not just use makeshift stations to reclaim airwaves and bypass British licensing authorities; it formed networks of solidarity. These examples are often touted as victorious rebellions, but they were more ambiguous, hand-crafted, and makeshift. That too can be embraced. If you know, then you know: it's a wink and a nod.

When Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), she suggested that freedom is not about clear-cut answers or rigid frameworks but about embracing the complexities and uncertainties of existence. It's a compelling response to the psychopolitics of AI, to embrace the undefined and the unprogrammable. We can return to those forms of human experience that elude algorithmic capture – our inside jokes, one-off creations, clandestine forms of subversion – modes that resist commodification and standardization. In a world dominated by AI, ambiguity becomes a form of defiance.