

Me Myself and I or Self Amplified

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The common understanding of human romance with the cyberspace is that through the new medium we are reaching out to each other. Can we talk about actual connection though when the interface built by us to supposedly facilitate this connectivity is exaggerated, a bit doctored, missing details that one chooses to hide or otherwise completely made up? The representations of a single person scattered through the world wide web are under no obligation to present congruent information. These apparitions are not a transposition of the true self open for frank exchange with another human being. Rather, they serve as shields and partial unveilings communicating first and foremost an intensity. This phenomenon parallels Baudrillard's view of media in terms of intensity circuits that instead of carrying a message, transform all input into code. In using the Internet we don't communicate but rather amplify ourselves.

MeMyselfAndI is a project conceived as a means of creating a complex yet autonomous unit of representation in the midst of intertwined sea of relationships that is the Internet. The project is concerned with its own inter workings and blurring the line between subject and object characteristics of its constituting parts. MeMyselfAndI is a social networking website where the only person allowed to join it is the artist herself. The profiles are maintained daily by the artist who is logged randomly by the computer into one of the accounts. The members are able to communicate among themselves via internal message system, write blogs and post comments. They can potentially form clicks, become best friends or online nemesis displaying a full range of social behaviors. Whenever the artist feels so inspired, she adds a new profile to the network thus multiplying and fracturing the system further. In essence, it is an online puppet theater performed by the artist for the entertainment and voyeuristic pleasure of the audience. The outside public is able to communicate with the members of the social network via email and leave comments on the website itself.

In thus conceived environment, the artist is able to amplify and multiply her reflection infinitely. The fracturing of the psyche and its enumeration present today on the web acts as a broken mirror reflecting persons through their net representations (photos, videos, writing, interactions and associations). It also propagates the reflections infinitely through sheer enumeration (number of views, links, and citations) presenting pieces of information in ever new and different contexts. By keeping the website exclusive for presentation of only herself, the artist creates a loop that doesn't allow the diffusion of her representation. Instead, it builds up, expending inwards, creating a mega person emanating through confusion of the profiles and intensity.

An important feature of MeMyselfAndI is the built in ability of the profiles to communicate with each other. Despite the content being obtained from one individual, her continuous subjectivity is split up into numerous parts that can

assume the role of either a subject or an object in a conversation. This device renders the profiles into objects discontinuous from the agency acting on them, the artist. Similar disassociation of oneself from his/her image has been invoked in the myth of Narcissus. According to McLuhan, the source of the hero's desperation was not the fact that he fell in love with himself but his inability to recognize himself in the reflection, and his perception of self as a stranger.¹ Respectively, the artist has to assume a third person position in order to communicate with the rest of the members. She sets herself outside of her own subjectivity and in this gesture disowns a part of her representation. The insistence on the third person position competes with the sense of the self speaking directly to the viewer and demystifies the illusion of objective frankness.

Likewise, Baudrillard's view of Narcissus leaves no option for assertion of continuity by the original self. He conceives of "digital narcissus, who is going to slide along the trajectory of a death drive and sink in his own image."² MeMyselfAndI similarly dissolves the once coherent self into a multiplicity of images, opinions, points of view and recollections. The scattered content is organized anew in emerging personalities of the profiles. In this sense, the website not only dismantles the source subject but provides a constructive environment for the formation of a new entities. Each profile is a partial image of the original source. While disowned by the source, a profile tries to assume its own identity. This process happens in the face of sheer repetition and similarity of the material. As it is the case with DNA code and human reproduction the different profiles inherit the patterns of the source subject and spring into life as daughter-like entities.

The whole world around us has grown faster and louder. Extreme experiences not only became increasingly accessible but they invade our privacy and impose the outside on us. The electronic technology is all-pervasive and serves as the permeable cell wall between the private and the public. The mechanically advanced machines such as cars, trains and airplanes heighten our experience of space and provide avatars for our grandiose self-perception. Confronted with that intensity we push back colonizing the circuitry with our intense and intimate representations. As a byproduct, this barrage of self-exposure lends a human element to otherwise technological landscape. Perhaps it is our main mode of operation when confronted with something foreign: fetishise it and populate it with self. MeMyselfAndI is a virtual place where the subjective self went supernova. This appropriating in its original aim gesture gave birth to semi autonomous entities: the profiles alienated from their source and struggling for their own boundaries.

Notes:

1. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, The MIT Press, 1994, p. 42

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991, p. 166