



**WHAT CAME FIRST, VOYEURISM OR EXHIBITIONISM?
OR HOW IN THE “NEW SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE,” NOTHING IS PRIVATE**

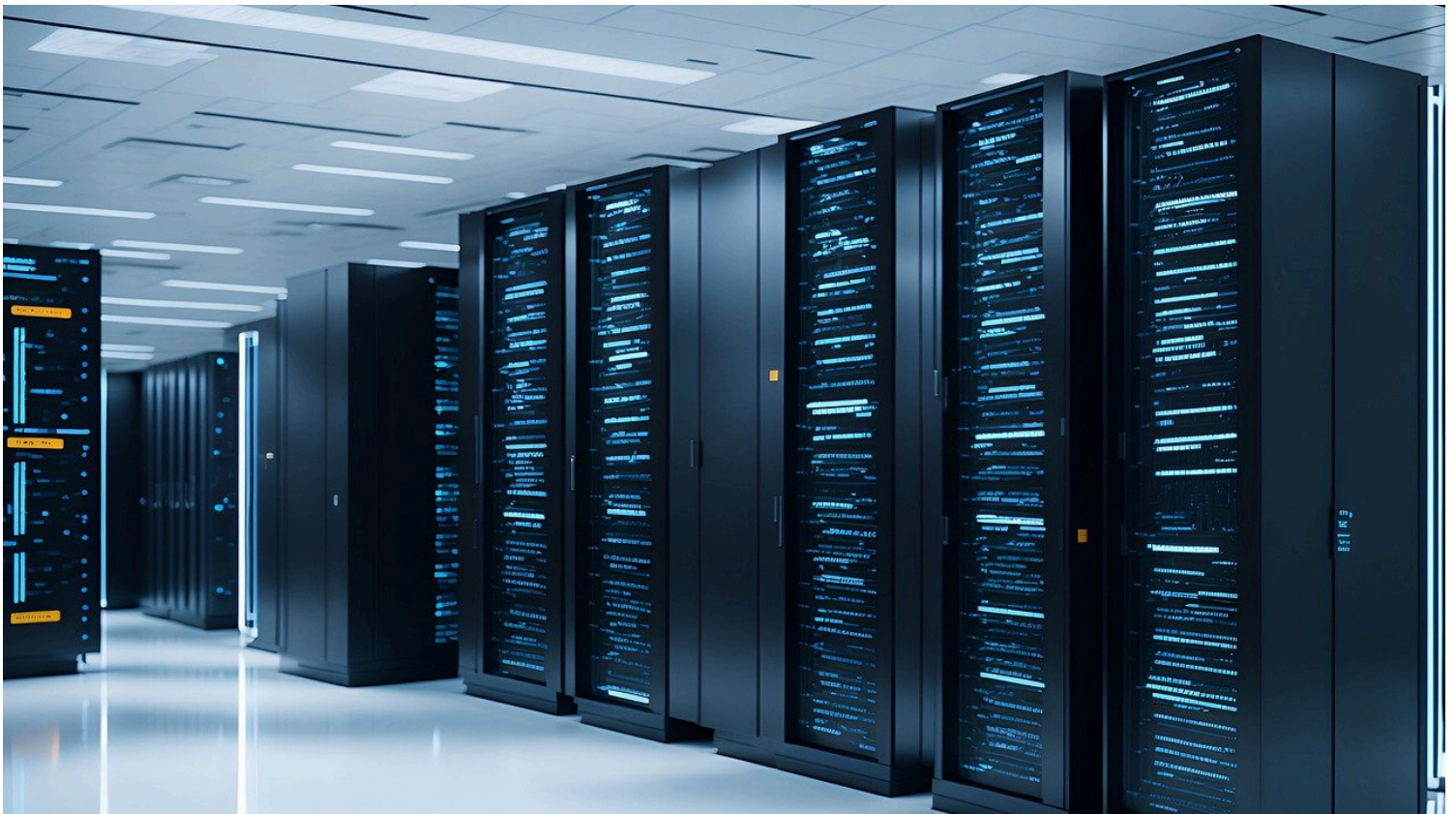
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To say that “nothing is private” is nothing new, but never before in human history has privacy been so violated. The use of our personal data, in today’s hyperconnected world is unprecedented, as it is exploited by individuals, companies and sometimes even governments.

In Mexico, according to the General Law on the Protection of Personal Data Held by Obligated Subjects, personal data is understood as: *Any information concerning an identified or identifiable natural person. A person is considered identifiable when his or her identity can be determined directly or indirectly through any information.*

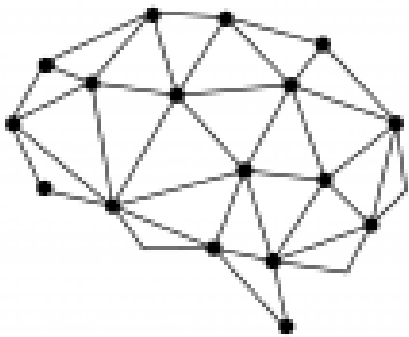
The same regulations explain that sensitive *personal data is: data which might refer to the most intimate sphere of its owner, or whose improper use might give rise to discrimination or entail a serious risk for the owner. By way of example, personal data that could reveal "racial" or ethnic origin, present or future health status, genetic information, religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, political opinions and sexual preference are considered sensitive.*

For this reason, the protection of personal data has become particularly important worldwide in some sectors, mainly organized civil society, as well as some academic sectors. The consequences of data violation , are too high when it comes to sensitive personal data, especially in potentially vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents.



Now that a new electoral campaign in the USA has ended with the victory of Donald Trump, in which \ the social network “X” played a fundamental, and likely unethical role, let us recall one of the most emblematic and scandalous cases of data violation: the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Cambridge Analytica was a British company that developed an algorithm capable of predicting the behavior of people with an accuracy close to 100 percent, a situation that influenced more than 200 electoral processes around the world, including that of Donald Trump's own presidential campaign in 2016.

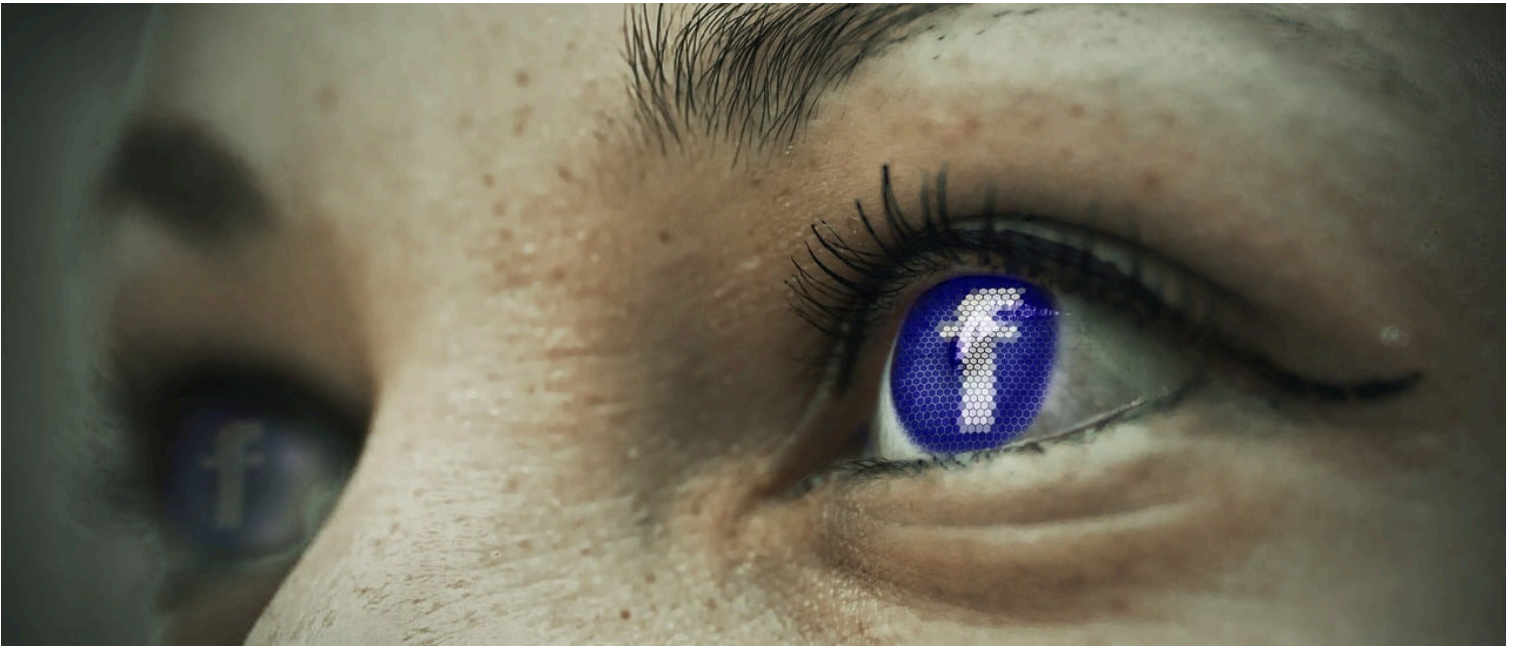
In this particular case, the British firm promised to identify the personalities of American voters in order to influence their behaviour, for which it extracted private information from the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users, of course, without their full consent. In this way, by knowing vulnerable aspects of people's personalities, it was able to target specific advertising at well-defined sectors of the American population, with the aim of influencing their voting decisions.



Cambridge Analytica

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Basically, what happens is that when a person logs onto a social media network, in this case, Facebook, and views a photo or a video, or gives an “innocent like” to a post, let’s say in support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people, for the social network you are in some way “pro-Russian” or “pro-Israeli,” and from that moment on, the network will track your activity, collecting data on your behavior in relation to this event. If you open a note, a video, share a meme, everything is recorded and a profile of you is created regarding the subject.



In this way, after a period of analyzing user behavior, social networks know exactly what we like, and can target specific advertising or information, guaranteeing with a high probability that users will open and share it. Thus, through highly sophisticated algorithms, a real-time record is created for each “like,” search, location, online purchase, etc., which serves to create an identity of the users, where our moods and feelings become simple commodities.

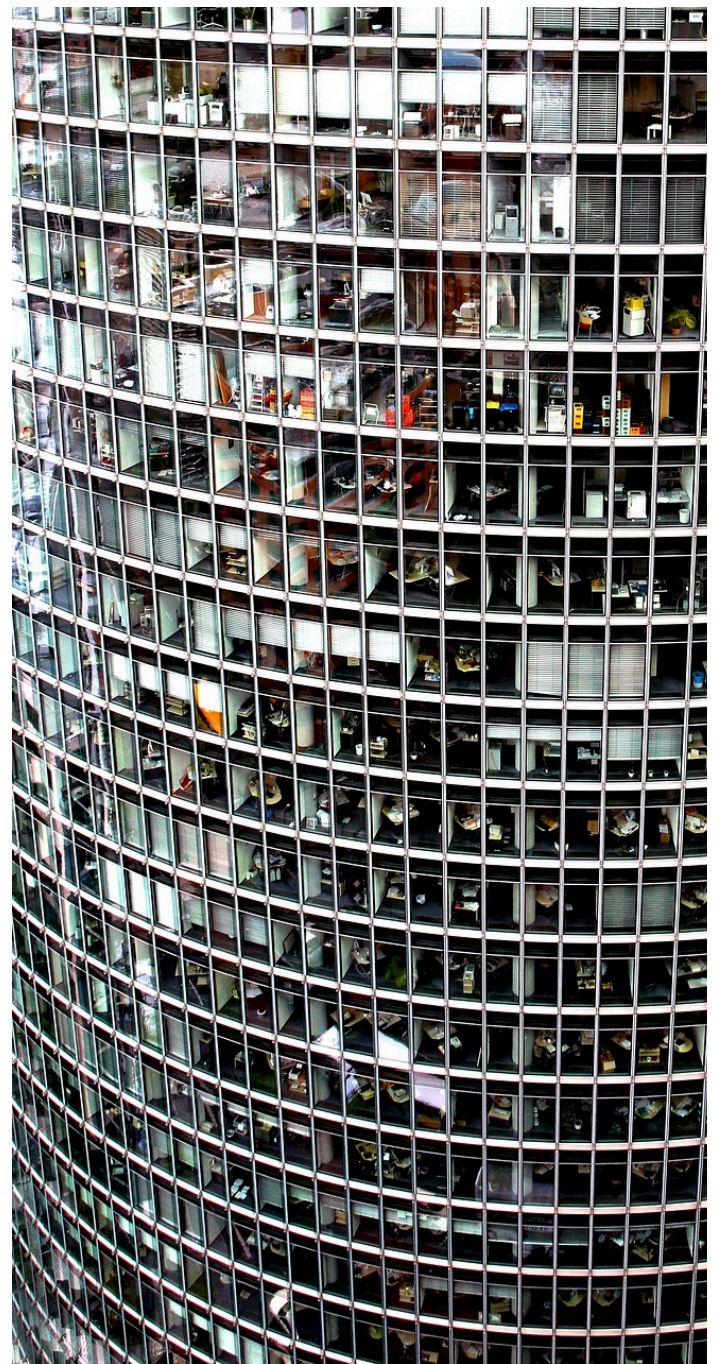
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It is clear to us that digital companies and those who hire their services express an insatiable voyeurism, but what happens when these exhibitionist (and also voyeuristic) tendencies (which almost all human beings express) open the door to turning us into digital merchandise?

Exhibitionism and voyeurism are terms that may at first glance seem completely removed from the scope of social networks, because they tend to be associated with the sphere of "inappropriate" sexual behavior, those that, like fetishism or sadism, do not reflect a sexual interest based solely on "conventional" erotic stimuli, such as preliminary (genital) stimulation within voluntary and conscious human relationships between physically and emotionally mature couples (normophilias). Rather, exhibitionism and voyeurism are generally ascribed to the scope of paraphilias, that is, sexual arousal based on objects, situations, and/or recipients that a priori would seem "atypical", such as corpses or animals, or to transgressive sexual relationships, such as pedophilia or harassment. In reality they could well constitute contemporary expressions of both 'conventional' and 'paraphilic' behaviors.

In this sense, nowadays, where many relationships are established through social media networks, paraphilic behaviors or



paraphilias such as exhibitionism and voyeurism could also be expressed in areas other than the observation of intercourse, nudity or the exposure of genitals; based on the simple gratification that many humans get from exhibiting aspects of themselves or scrutinizing others. The risk is that this also represents the opportunity for delicate aspects of human life, such as privacy, to be systematically and abusively violated.

Although it is not known with certainty whether exhibitionism and voyeurism constitute each other, one defines the other, or one comes from the other, it is a fact that these philiias are part of our human reality, which can be expressed in the social sphere itself, as well as in that of electronic social networks.

George Bataille observed that existence is a plane wherein the most hidden desires are repressed because of the fear caused by social segregation. To remedy this suppression, Bataille proposed the text as the medium in which it is possible to shape, through our creative energies, that world where everything is possible.

Within this scope, we note the various textual possibilities available today, in order to transfer them to other planes of creative expression, where fine arts find their place. Thus, thinking of the text as a canvas onto which the imagination is poured, in the current spaces of textual expression that provide us with infinite possibilities, they may manifest themselves, in a virtuality where art is expressed in a new way that without remedy, could succumb to commodification.

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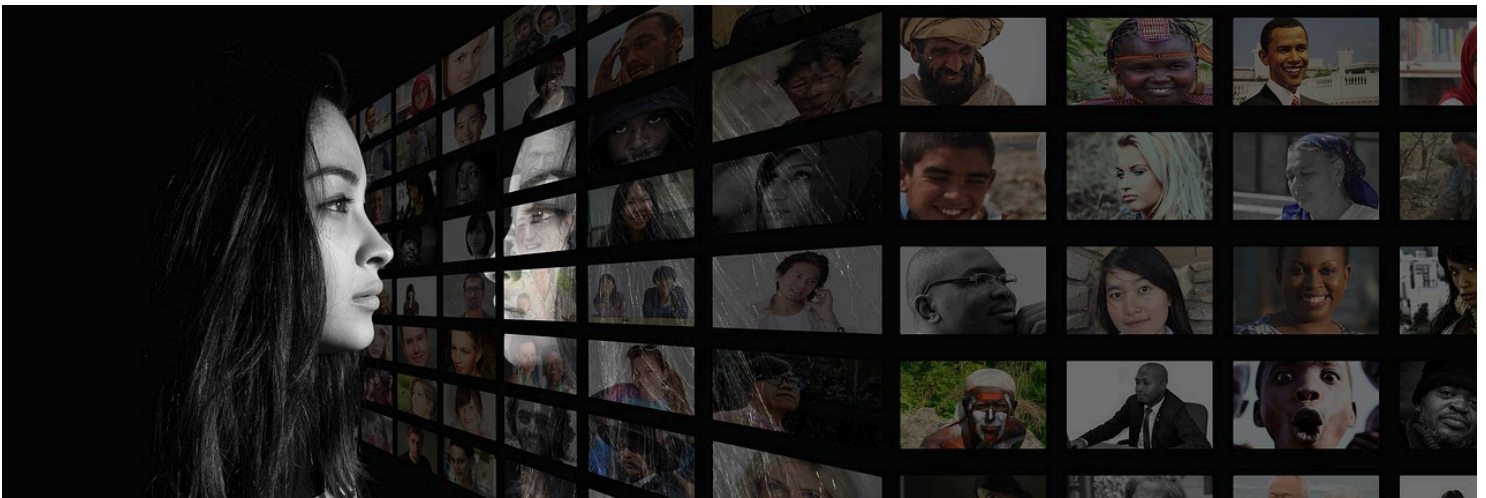


It is not just that personal data can be violated. In this infinite universe of possibilities, voyeurs and exhibitionists come together; it is possible to see a communion between the two, with the danger of joining in and exchanging roles — like everything in the market — and without knowing for sure which happened first.

What we do know is that inquisitiveness is a derived trait, at least in the primate order, and as primates, humans are inquisitive beings, and perhaps this is one of the biological or evolutionary arguments used to justify the seductive appeal of prying into the lives of others, and at the same time, to display our own, in an excessive manner. In fact, we are well aware of the apparently “voyeuristic and exhibitionist” aspects of sexual behavior among bonobos.



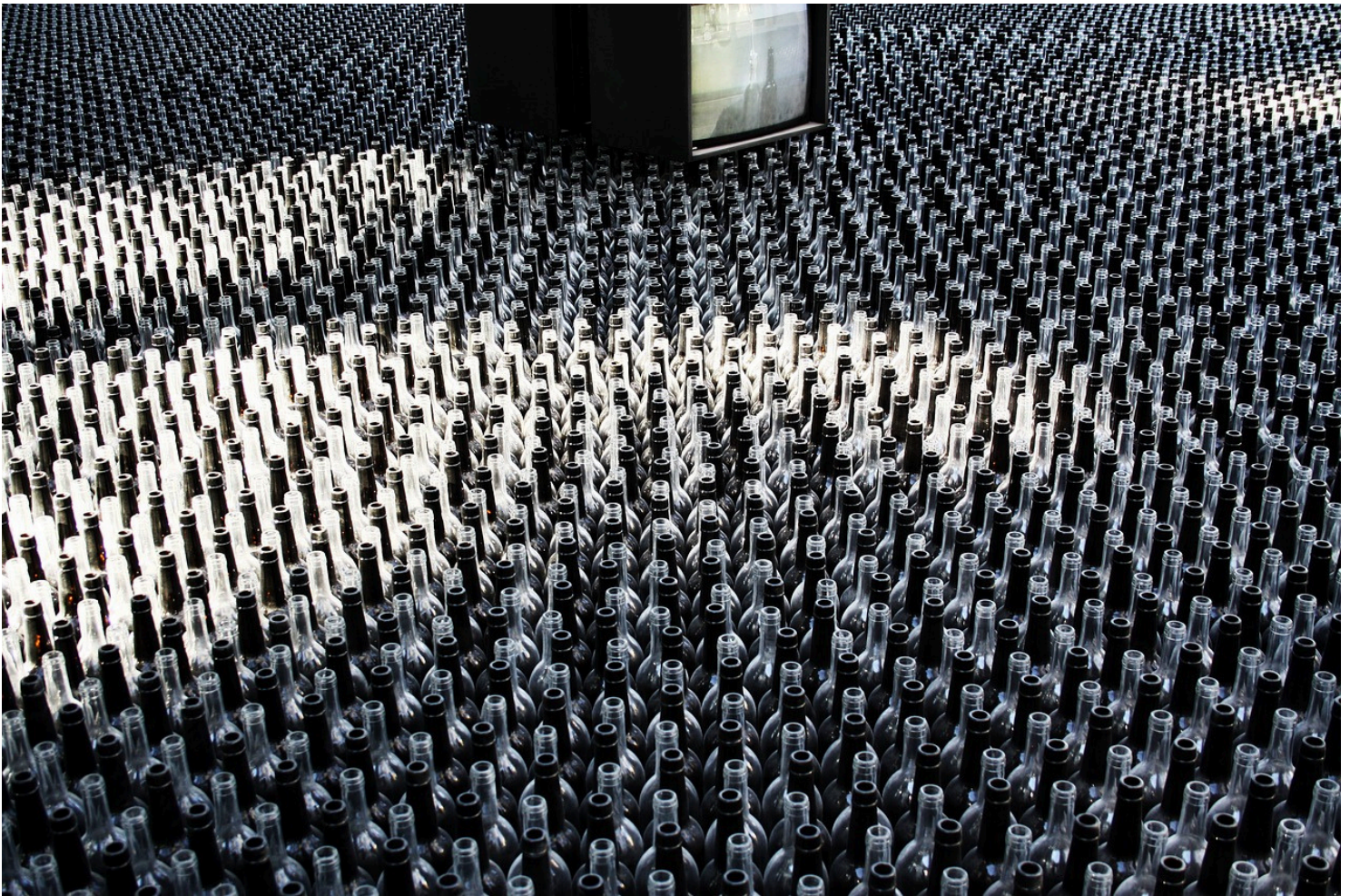
Obviously, we cannot simplistically anthropomorphize bonobo sexual behavior, because their “exhibitionist and voyeuristic” hypersexuality is not intertwined with notions of good and evil. At the same time we cannot “naturalize” human exhibitionism and voyeurism as if these are merely typical primate. To do so would be to enter into the dangerous terrain of biological determinism, which not only “naturalizes” but also potentially justifies our most horrendous behaviors. Our behavior is more complex, more historically contingent and more cultural.



It is also unclear what the neurobiological bases of paraphilic and philic behaviors are, nor how much of it is simply due to biological variability in the various ways in which humans find pleasure and erotic stimuli. The social nuances of observing and being observed are particularly fraught given that we live in societies that are structured by political and social processes that generate great inequality, disconnection, and division between people. Such complexities may lead to a plethora of prejudices and blind spots that segregate people, and which in turn may compromise the ways in which we interact, particularly when we use social media. By allowing a certain anonymity, it eliminates fundamental aspects of human sociability, such as face-to-face interaction. Not only does this opens the door to aggressive, rude, and mean behavior, but it also allows the abusive and systematic exploitation of people that large electronic platforms allow, through the unethical handling of personal data.



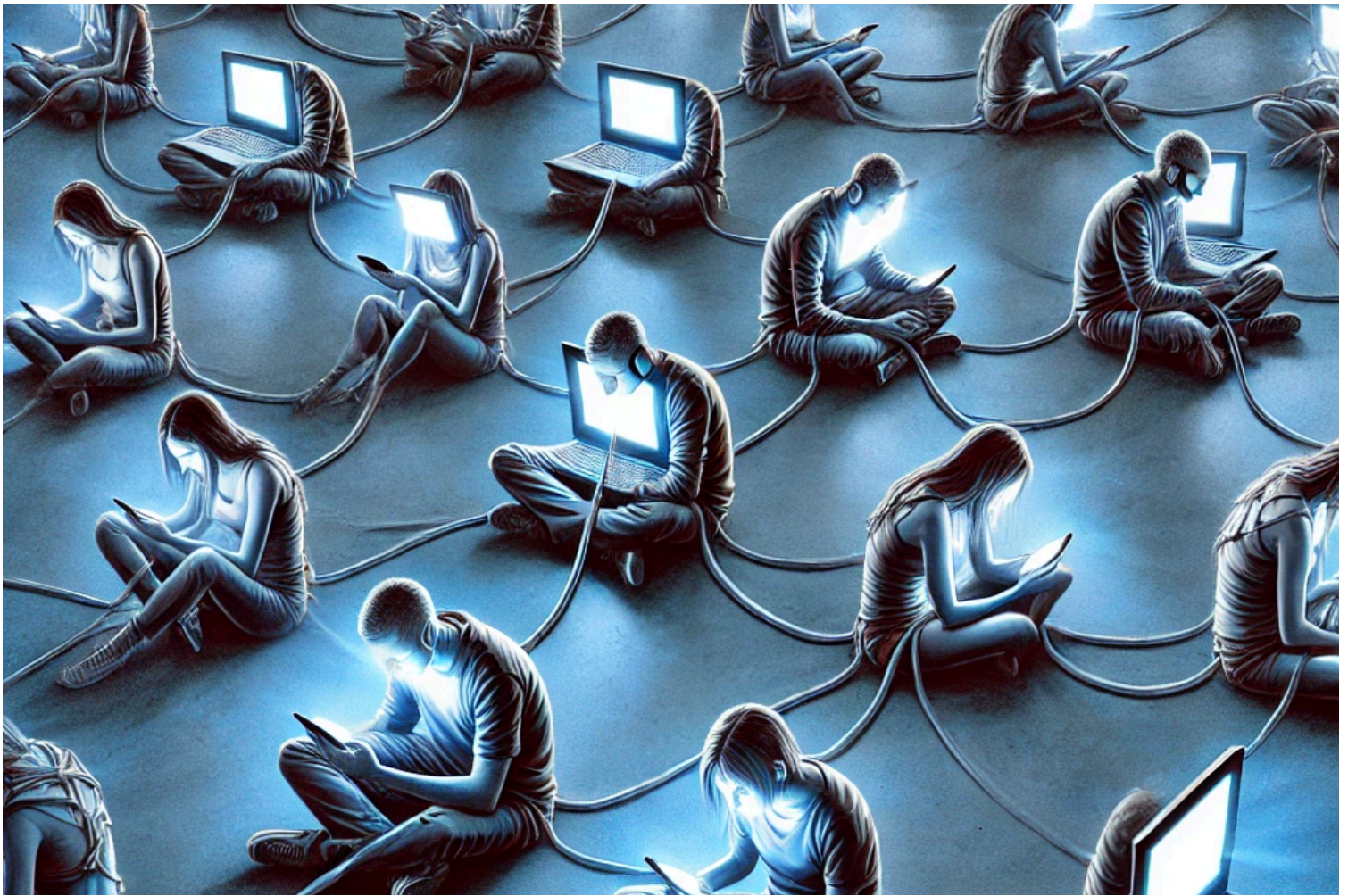
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In the mid-20th century, Guy Debord noticed that contemporary society was already dominated by the production and consumption of images. These have become a way of experiencing an alternative reality, where mass culture, the mass media, and atrocious and unethical advertising have transformed social and political life.

People's perceptions of themselves and others become distorted by filtering them through the media (increasingly social media) and advertising. Such false perceptions of human needs and desires promote sociopolitical passivity and mass alienation.





This “new society of the spectacle”, prophesied by Debord a few decades ago, in which visual culture is converted into a capitalist commodity, may be the cultural trigger that has turned harmless human inquisitiveness (shared to a greater or lesser degree within the order of primates) into the dangerous psychological “weapon” that social media companies exploit. Our personal data is a commodity in this society of the spectacle, and so human privacy is violated, without any ethical qualms, not only that of people who clearly have exhibitionist and/or voyeuristic desires, but also that of all those individuals who, for work and/or geographical reasons, are socially isolated from family and friends, and choose to publish and look at intimate details of their lives and those of others on social networks, with the authentic and necessary objective of forming or maintaining a community.

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