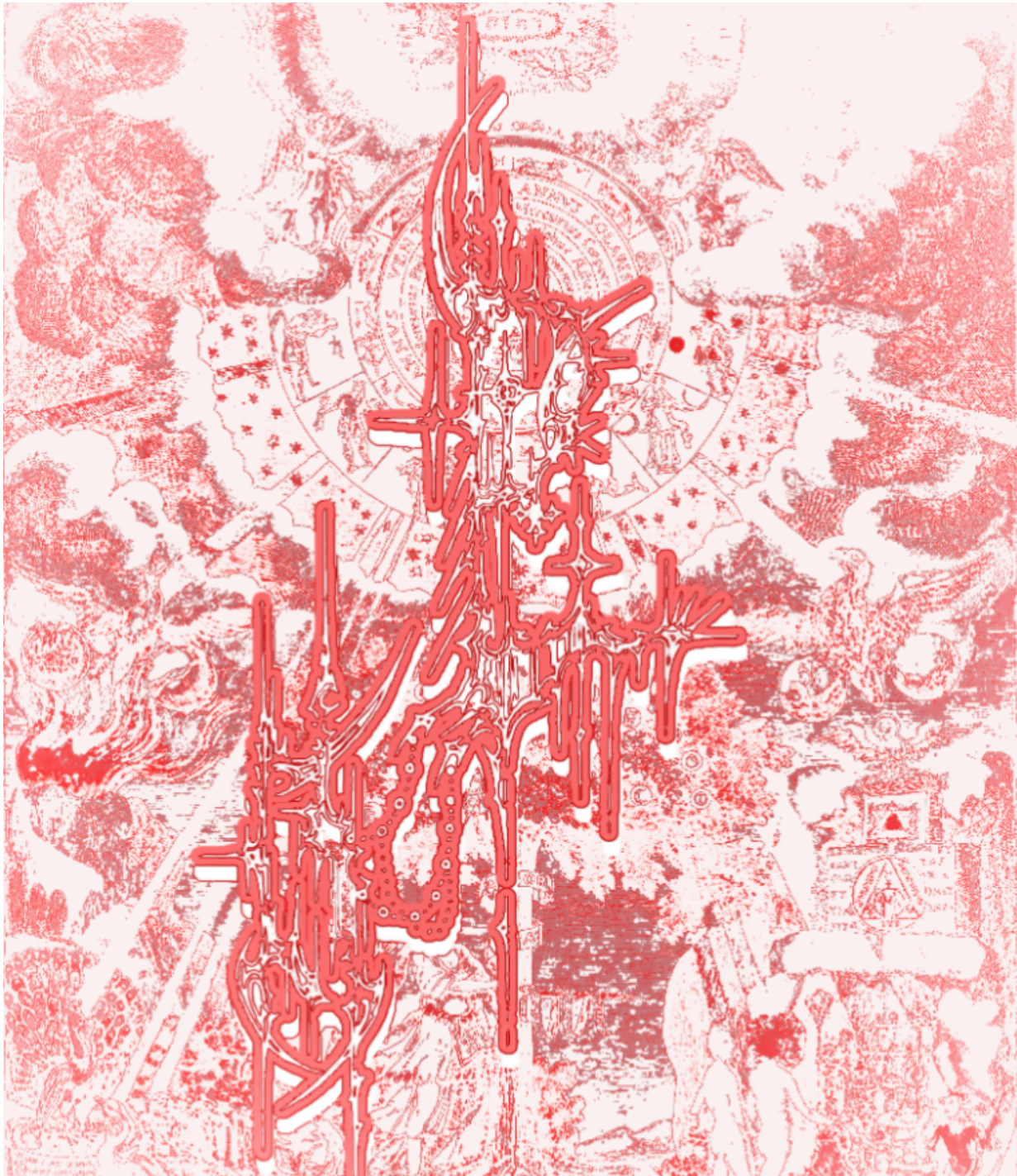# 4. Cyber Illusion and Fake Interconnectedness

1. The General Course

Since the early 2000's the internet seemed to rise in relevance to unprecedented and revolutionary levels, at the pace that the technology and the bureaucratic systems that support that ideology advanced in the western world it became unquestionable in most minds that the internet would become the new age's premier system of communication. With the "information age" firmly established as our present stage and the internet becoming accessible to everyone, specially with the advent of smartphones and the slow beginning of integration of real life everyday systems into the web's infrastructure, the internet became nigh inescapable. This process would eventually lead to its peak -When referring to meat-digital coexistence- with the Covid-19 Pandemic, the necessities that it brought and the solutions that the digital world brought forth made so that now real life and the internet were firmly, in all manners economic, social and cultural, locked shoulder to shoulder, the digital world rose from being a mere vassal of the meatspace to a system of information and communication that coexisted in equal relevance. The hikikomori is no longer the only person whose digital presence was bigger or as relevant as their meat presence, now with the interconnectedness between digital presence and meat presence everyone was a part of the great digital space, having themselves -In terms of their meat selves- reflected throughout the digital space which had grown to equal importance.

There is no escaping the digital information space anymore, but that's not the issue, the advantages in infrastructure and bureaucracy, information collecting and human communication brought about by these changes are mostly, if in the right hands, great, with the digitalization of our tools being done only due to efficiency and thus only follows the darwinistic game like every other technology. Rather, the internet's crushing cruelty comes in its capacity for catalysing a character creation process with a potential for alienation that far outpaces any other social system. The manner in which one comes to interact with the internet and the way in which the internet interacts back does not in reality characterise an example of human communication, rather, the social structures and incentives that exists in the internet -these being constructed either by average individual participation of the space and also through market forces- force the individual to forget itself in the identity they have and filters and recharacterizes their expression into character-identities that play into an overall spectacle of entertainment and consumerism that is taken by other internet goers, who also find themselves in that situation of alienation, as the overarching world that they interact with. In essence, the digital space is a space of vague abstraction and spectacle creation that entangles an individual into a process of "acting in a play" for the sake of its abstracted social interactions, which exists solely for the sake of spectacle. What follows from this, specially considering the aforementioned syncretism of meat and digital, is that the

world as well as individual identity is refracted, there does not exist any communication from beyond a screen, and we all are fundamentally enclosed in a cube of screens and fed entertainment while ourselves are mirrored and used for the very same. The Spectacle perfected.

The present world of the internet exists as a contradiction, to reach its present form it followed no plan or intention, rather being the consequence of a confluence of different factors interacting with unprecedented technological advancement, ultimately leading up to the establishment of its current Demiurge in the shape of the multimillionaire social media-entertainment companies and the Panopticon of society itself. An important but often ignored factor in the genesis of the alienating status quo of the internet is how it does not serve the purpose it was originally developed for, which is the simple trade of information for administrative and military purposes. Though it might sound redundant, and obviously the technology of the internet would evolve beyond that eventually and become a tool of the masses this historical factor actually reveals one important aspect: the strict and direct way it was a tool for informational exchange that left little to no space in its design for human immersion into the digital. The early internet was one of emails and eventually one of forums, and a result of this is the depersonalization of it, because you didn't need it, it was not a part of you it was simply "mail", quick mail. You had the human interaction you required already via the human connection you needed to have for it to be useful anyway, and when it came to forums you had to arrive at a passion for whatever the topic was first to then immerse yourself in the discussion those provided, whatever way you look at it the internet was at first an extension of meat human connections.

The first contradiction came as the digital space grew in relevance and reach, making engaging with it and digital interaction a purpose in of itself rather than a means to an end, during this period the human-digital interaction fully flipped, with anonymity and "frontierism" becoming the main characteristics of the internet, no longer just faster email the internet was now a large and open frontier to be explored, civically developed and expanded. In this initial period the concept of "Online presence" emerges as the engagement with that digital space now required an avatar or footprint to carry it out, it was still separated from the meat space and many may not have found themselves immersed in the digital as their own thing, but as the first well known accounts were forged in the forums and people's accounts became its own "object" with presence in multiple different sites and a continuous and non-contradictory presence. This process is what truly set the base and the pillars of the internet as a territory, and as territory it became more engaging, more interactable and more overlapping with the meat world. This primordial space of the internet frontier also set it for another thing, while the people were anonymous and therefore more

concrete social interaction was somewhat discouraged it still permitted deep engagement with artistic and generally creative pursuits, animations, paintings, drawings, games -most of them independent pursuits- and so on became the main focus of the internet, giving it its characteristic as entertainment.

Somewhat after this process, but also eventually alongside it and also limited to mostly less "engaged with the internet" people and thus generally to a wider audience came social media. Social Media was yet another contradiction to the development of the internet, as it broke at least somewhat with the conception of "anonymity", while data farms didn't necessarily exist at this primordial stage they still presented themselves as spaces for social interaction between "face-and-name people" not a media picture with a nickname, moreover it was less about the discussion of particular and predefined interests, as was the case with forums, but the general discussion of the user's personal life. Yet not even today they function that way for the younger generations, while older people use these exactly as they are supposed to in the great majority of cases the social media space is a large melting pot of different uses of this tool. People with avatars and nicknames, real names and real photos, people who share of their life and people who produce entertainment, all of them exist commingling and sometimes even overlapping with each other, the ultimate result of this being a space where entertainment and life-sharing was essentially conjoined into one thing, the "online presence" reached its ultimate form as the constructed object from the online environment, the user's creations and the user itself. And as the internet became ever more prevalent it would be this creation that would take precedence over all else, social medias would become uncontested in traffic and influence in the internet while forums and art-sharing spaces became relegated to certain corners of it, most times still existing only as "vassals" of the greater social media territory.

With the great expansion of the internet came the large companies and the State who began taking the reins of the development of the digital world, the "Internet Frontier" slowly lost its land and position as the wild lands as these greater powers began organising and "civilising" it. There was big money to be made on the internet, and big unrest to be prevented from spreading, and so these two powers came in conjunction to guarantee that the digital world will follow the path of the meat world. The internet became much more formal from then on, contractual obligation, the requirement for monetary return, data farming and all these other characteristics became everyday things online, now every social media was controlled by a large bureaucracy and interests, and as such it had stakes on its revenue, which were its users. Because of that every inch of the internet became organised and controlled, what ads are seen, what content is recommended, what its users do and want, the digital world became gears on gears on gears that spin solely to spin more gears on gears

on gears. The users were product and revenue and therefore had to be herded to not only purchase, but produce what was required for the continuous functioning of the internet and the environment that existed in Social Media was the one perfect for that. Users are easily controllable via suggestions and recommendations, demand created via "grassroots" movements between its users who would be the ones to supply that demand and were ultimately doing so because of the system suggestions and controlled content in these Social Medias. Since the creative endeavour and life-sharing were deeply tied within the online space, the "Online Presence" became everything, and everything was monetizable, meant to grow and be invested, controlled and presented for likes and views, the Online Presence was still a "Person" but one presented entirely as a performance made for gain in the logics of capital, the very act of living became part of the market, became competition and beyond that became quantifiable and controllable.

2. Gnosis

When interfacing with the internet the user is met with an overwhelming tsunami of information, the vast and deep ocean that is open to them in the digital world is unmatched in terms of pure distilled information and range of communication, upon its deep waters one can sink so deeply and far from the sun's light as to not be able to distinguish going deeper and going to the surface. Yet despite the vast oceanic universe of the internet the digital world is hardly the great sea of the frontier navigator, rather, it contains no currents, no artefact destroying pressure, no salty death nor beautiful nature to see. Instead, that vast ocean of information is illusory, artificial, its pressure, temperature and scenario closely manipulated and directed from outside, its environment is pre-selected and the vista that one can glean from it is mediated by a glass wall. Every aspect of the digital is inorganic, artificial and controlled to the utmost degree, this wasn't always the case, as explained previously, however after the integration of the internet into the real world the spectacular extended itself over the entirety of the digital, yet those within it can hardly grasp the extension of reality within.

This is not just the case of it being "pixels on a screen" or "lines of code", to deny the reality in those things is to deny the reality in our own biological processes, rather, the very social and creative aspect of the internet is manufactured and the very ways in which the individual is meant to participate and to "live" the internet are constructed with the explicit purpose to generate entertainment. That's the greater truth in the aquarium allegory, that the fish in it too are also there as artificial decorations in the creative process that generates the aquarium, all those people who exist in the internet, who post, share their life and genuinely are affected by their experiences online are themselves artificial, put there exactly to enhance the scenario of the internet. They are mirrors of the world, scattered reflections of what there is in entirety and yet they are entire things, their own beings with just as complex and complete biological processes and psychological experiences as those outside that spectacular creation. Looking in from outside might give us such a clear view yet it is undeniably also there, looking around, and being looked at from inside.

The "online presence" that most within the reach of the digital world have is also by perspective a "living" being from the sympathetic perspective of those also in the digital world, it is not simply a creation, a mere representation of something imparted on the screen that was agglomerated into a consistent idea of a person via memories and guesses and that exists only as a "painted" image, it is also a "living" image, with imaginary will, experiences and perspectives. This can be perceived by how those interacting with the internet also feel affected by it in the things it tells them and the ways it interacts with them, it generates its

own perspective by how the user interacts with the internet and by how that interaction is perceived. The ultimate product of that conjunction of factors is the online presence which is then the mediator between the user and the digital world, the internet does not actually interact with the user, rather it interacts with its online presence, and it is that online presence that interacts with it back, all the user does is receive those signals given by the internet and performing the actions necessary for that online presence to move to life again and continue the cycle.

But the online presence is also distant from the individual user, as it can only reach in its influence the things that the user chooses for it to reach, so it only exists in that space, it is limited and a product of its walls, with the interaction and perspectives that help create it also coming from those same limitations. Yet the individual user is not, at least not in the same way as their presence, they as human beings are a spring of possibilities whose full reach of understanding and of self-moulding influence is not limited by an individual choice of environment, rather the individual expands unto every environment and every environment expands onto them, creating a new Unique being upon every moment that this trade of property is done. From this difference in nature the Online Presence and Individual are separated in a manner dynamic enough that one can operate in an alien manner to the other, yet not separated enough that one begins where the other ends, in the state generated by this conflict one's pull becomes felt and, in an alienating manner, disconcerting for the other, the Online Presence gains its own suggestive power over the Individual.

It is not "the" Online Presence in the way that this phrasing might suggest that it is only one, rather, while the Online Presence has its territory in which it exists and is a product of, the individual user still can and does expand his interaction with the digital world in other territories as modern life demands it. Yet due to the digital world's nature as being a spectacular performance, those other territories reached by the individual user only create a different Online Presence, much as how in being an actor one must play a different character in each setting. So within the very space of conceptualization of the individual's identity in relation to their presence within the internet it is generated a system of Online Presences who are all contradictory to one another, bickering and antagonising each other due to their conflicting purposes and character, yet all of those Presences are the same thing, the individual user, and at the same time the individual user isn't any of them, because they cannot in their multitudes be defined solely by their limited Online Presence.

The Online Presence is something artificial, it is not solely the individual's projection into any given digital space, but a crafted persona meant to be a character played, to reduce it to a role would be far too reductive to the degree in which the Online Presence has its

personality crafted. It is easy to point to the demiurges that have endeavoured for the creation of this projection, the origin points of influence that mould an Online Presence are four. The first of them is the individual user themselves, which is a necessity for the creation of an Online Presence, the one who places the first blocks in creating the creature and also the hands -at first free but then forced by the Presence itself- who mould the Online Presence into anything that it is, but despite giving it a "seed" of personality the individual user is the one with the least influence as to what that Presence will become.

Second is necessity, the mould and environment upon which the Online Presence will be cast, at the time of the wild internet frontier this one wasn't as felt, it was impactful still but the will of the individual user in presenting as they wish in the frontier was what dominated. Those times are past, now the digital world is paved and housed, it became integrated with the institutions of the meat world and the meat world symbiotically also has become integrated with the internet, those institutions now demand a presence in their own spaces, they control and create spaces, from there the individual user is forced by necessity of also participating in meat society to exist in the digital world and it is that necessity that also moulds the Online Presence into what it needs to be for apt integration.

Third is suggestion, more specifically capitalist and pseudo-social suggestion, the individual user has its choice taken away as to how it will interact with the digital world and therefore the limits of its Online Presence are already either pre-set or manipulated. The power of suggestion takes hold, with advertisement, controlled feeds and recommendations the individual user is led to where the capitalist system needs them to be and with the systems of attention present in every social media the user is incentivized when acting in preferred ways and punished when acting in unpreferred ways. The spectacular nature of the internet is in this segment the most explicit, as the Online Presence is incentivized to exist as a performance that plays for a niche, by playing that performance one is rewarded with attention or material gain, treated no differently from any other performer aside from how it is supposed to actually be sincere.

Lastly there is the social organism itself, though it isn't a social organism of people, it is one of Online Presences. The digital space sees all of those factors above clash and mesh together into these Presences who then clash and mesh together to create themselves, those artificial conditions in which they are born are driven into every other one of them as if a hammer to a statue, and from that process the Online Presence is created, it does not exist fully without that outside perspective, without that hammer. The same way the individual cannot be defined without the society outside to define them the Online Presence cannot

find itself existing and living without first creating an impression and an identity of itself in the perspective of the general social consciousness of Online Presences.

The Digital World is miserable in a manner similar yet distant from the ways in which the meat space is alienating, as in the digital world one isn't simply forced into roles to play but their whole being is shattered and hidden, encased on the foreign constructed shells that are their Online Presence, from there they are sent into one of the most explicit manifestations of life denial as their entire existence in the ever-reaching the digital world is cloaked in artificialness in both "body" and spirit. Alienation at this point becomes so overreaching that the sincereness of the individual becomes a foreign body intruding upon the pre-established order and is shunned and punished. This arrangement of things isn't accidental at the part of those who created it, rather it is the system perfected, a machine-like agglomeration of cogs and wheels who operate perfectly in relation to each other and self-perpetuate without foreign influence, only requiring "fuel" in the form of individual users to continue moving, but fuel is all they are as any individual's will to interact with the digital world is diluted and burned into energy to be used for the continuation of those cogs and wheels.

After all of that, pessimism would remain idiotic. The pain inflicted upon people by this system has already been felt and has already set the spark for rebellion and resistance, and to simply lay your hands down and give up in the face of this seemingly eternal and omnipotent cosmos would be to play exactly as it wishes. Some have sought only to flee and seek refuge from this enemy, reducing their online presence and ingraining themselves in the meat world in an attempt to avoid the harm that the digital world will inflict upon them. This is misguided, it does not make anyone more liberated than a prey is liberated while fleeing its predator, they will still have their behaviour guided and motivated by the internet, and so, they are in its prison all the same, only playing a different part in it. Even beyond that the very reaches of the internet are too deep to avoid, it creeps upon everything and demands itself into you, furthermore avoiding the internet is luddite behaviour, it is still the denial of an important tool for the growth and change of an individual and the betterment of their life. To achieve this potential and to destroy this Demiurge there is no submitting or fleeing.

Rather, a confrontational course must be charted, the weak points in the machine have already been spotted, the God has been shown to bleed, and those enraged and conscious that fight for Deicide are already sitting in the planning room, ready for the operation that shall blow open this coffin of tyranny. And, despite its grandeur, or perhaps because of it, the solution is quite simple, negation and self-affirmation, the alienating characteristics of the internet only exists in the degree that one accepts its rules and its

nature, for the one who rejects that, who instead charts their own path in the digital world that alienation ceases. It is self-assertion that breaks the internet, because it places the individual user first, its Online Presence would still be there and be alien, but with the individual absolute over the systems of the internet there is little opportunity for that Online Presence to assert its influence over it, without that the illusion is dispelled, the individual is laid bare and the internet is once again open as a space for interaction between the individual and its digital contents.