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Mind and Matter

Comparative Approaches towards Complexity

October 2011, 230 p., 29,80 €, ISBN 978-3-8376-1800-6

The terms »mind« and »matter« appear to signify two concepts irreplaceable and permanent in nature. The increasing challenges and modes of reflection of digital life and cultural creation have contributed to a productive doubting of said dichotomy. Net culture has exposed the causality of the two only superficially contradictory systems and translated these into new technological realities. This publication, using an interdisciplinary approach, strives to investigate the entanglement of cultural, artistic and technical praxis, to document the developments, to clarify the status quo of the scientific community in a practical and exemplary fashion and to enable glimpses of potential future developments.

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MIND AND MATTER. Comparative Approaches towards Complexity

GÜNTHER FRIESINGER, JOHANNES GRENZFURTHNER, THOMAS
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The terms *nous* (the philosophical term stems from ancient Greek knowledge, spirit, intellect) and *matter* appear to signify two concepts irreplaceable and permanent in nature. The increasing challenges and modes of reflection of digital life and cultural creation have contributed to a productive doubting of said dichotomy. Net culture has exposed the causality of the two only superficially contradictory systems and translated these into new technological realities. This reader, using an interdisciplinary approach, strives to investigate the entanglement of cultural, artistic and technical praxis, to document the developments, to clarify the status quo of the scientific community in a practical and exemplary fashion and to enable glimpses of potential future developments. The process of transformation of the scientific disciplines, the replacement of extremely heterogeneous meta-scientific values will be made as graspable as the evolution of abstract concepts or the digital saturation of the human body. This reader tries to describe, transmit and clarify a paradigm shift of society as a whole which is still in process.

This three-part reader corresponds to the thematic priorities Archives, Technology and Networks. The part Archives will assume the challenge of the manifold archives and their relationship towards the public to which they should be indebted as much as to the preserved content itself. Cultural science is joined in unison with more practical fields in the examination of storage, traces and latency as focal points.

The next part will take a close look at technical innovations and technological implications, lay out the basics of different fields and

sketch the shifts of cultural, technical or political scientific and productive methodology.

The third and final part will revolve around the main metaphor of the "network" and react constructively to the preceding panels with the discussion of the terms "complexity" and "emergence". The net and the networks should, however, not only be treated as exclusively computer-related terms, but rather also be interpreted and pondered as sociobiological and neuro-scientific phenomena.

The digital reformulation of the relationship of mind and matter

FRANK APUNKT SCHNEIDER, GÜNTHER FRIESINGER

THE BODY-SOUL PROBLEM AS A MATRIX OF THE WESTERN WORLD

Our traditional construction of reality is based on the schematic opposition of mind and matter.

This dualism was continually updated through the course of Western history in a long series of dichotomies: God and the world, this world and the afterworld, body and soul, forms of being and consciousness, idealism and materialism, culture and nature, art and economy, man and machine, inside and outside but also interior and exterior world. This polarity was anchored in cognitive practice through clear borders and differences: mind was not matter, matter was not mind.

All these constellations shared giving the areas of mind and of matter their own structure and order, their own place. This also occurred at points where the many interferences and interdependencies between the two areas were principally recognized.

Cultural practice exists in a complexly woven cooperation of objects and subjects, mind and matter. But even where this togetherness was densely thickened and its dynamic and complexity grew exponentially, as in historic modernity, the foundationally placed spheres of mind and matter were principally imagined to be pure and unmixed, as unproblematically detachable from one another and essentially separate. The specifically Other in each sphere could be – at least in a reflexive and comprehensive analysis – removed without residue.

On such a horizon, the particularly unique quality of each sphere is determined in the conditional relationship between them: mind needs matter in order to be realized, matter needs mind in order to become a figure that goes beyond the contingency of natural form. In order to prevent the dissolution or the revelation of this culturally producing relationship, mind needed to push itself off of the material in the image it made of itself. In this way, mind hoped not to fall prey to a materialistic worldliness, which Descartes in his epistemological basis of autonomous subjectivity could only imagine as delusional tendencies. *What can I rely on if it is imaginable that everything I perceive is simply an illusion projected by a demon who wants to trick me?* This is the imaginary scenario with which Descartes arrived at the subject as a pure mind-based materialisation. Descartes' imagination of mind as that which is capable of withdrawing itself from entanglements with the world into that which it is essentially, has implicitly molded our ideas of the mind and the world throughout the centuries. This strict separation stirs the suspicion of the mind *visà-vis* the world, precisely because this purity is always threatened with contamination.

Stemming from the fear that the mind could lose aspects of its specificity whenever it becomes involved with matter, a certain ideological matrix became established which had epistemological consequences for centuries – from antique Greek philosophy all the way to the cultural religiosity of the educated middle class in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Adjusting continuously, this matrix certainly had to adapt to changing social life but its central idea remained stable: the hierarchical relationship into which mind – as higher principle – was coupled with the poorly esteemed matter, could be maintained through all external changes and reformulations of its central idea.

Plato's antique ideology already attributed to existing world objects an abstract world of ideas, which ahistorically, that is without history, quasi floated over their respective concrete manifestations in human cultural life, in which they were brought to their particular changeable and time-specific forms. Each given object thus has a "platonic" idea form which precedes it, which can never be completely abrogated, that is to say realized to its full extent in this material form.

Later in Europe, Christian thought which had become hegemonic took over this platonic Denkfigur and newly interpreted it in the

special relation between God and the world. In this interpretation, the creation was the secondary execution of a primary creative potential attributable only to God.

Through the course of the Enlightenment, this potential became secularized and was reinterpreted to be genuinely human. Man was thusly transformed from created into creator. Man's technological and cultural achievements were material forms of a human spirit of invention, which once again needed to maintain distance to its creations. The human spirit of invention could only be and remain free – “unattached” and “autonomous” – in that it was fundamentally differentiated from the sphere of matter, of its creative and game material. In this way, history has often attributed more significance to the person of the inventor (as a vessel in which the abstract mind is articulated) as to the creation. This historical term “genius” is the Bekenntnisform of the admiration of creativity in creators, and not of what they created: the genius work is admired because genius is expressed in it and not vice versa.

In this way, the 18th and 19th century have prepared and passed on the idea of the “autonomous mind” in a way that remains effective until today. The autonomous existence of man as it is symbolically expressed in the aesthetic form of the art work and in the biographical form of the genius, has for centuries been based on the virulent and contemporary reformulation of the fundamental difference between mind and matter.

THE REMOVAL OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MIND AND MATTER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

However, this categorical difference becomes brittle at the point where matter stops existing as a solid and simultaneously autonomous reference *for itself*. The closer and the more precise science and technology have taken “matter” as an object of investigation, the stronger the previously unbreakable evidentiality of matter (as a specifically ontological category) began to dissolve, as a matter of fact in the objects of matter themselves. The previously unquestionable and seemingly self-explanatory difference between “mind” and “matter” appreciably disappeared. The natural sciences discovered previously unknown dimensions of the material, for example, the microorganisational level of atoms as a constitutive level of the world. The human sciences

developed a new materialistic and also technicized understanding of mind which conceptualized the content of human consciousness and mental capacity as being determined by their material conditions. These were as a result no longer only vehicle or tool box for the mind. Ferdinand de Saussure saw linguistic signs themselves, Marshall McLuhan communicative forms – “the media” – as the origin of consciousness itself. With psychoanalysis, consciousness lost its autonomous shape in that to the “ego” an “id” and a “we” (the super ego) were added as a supplement. Consciousness became part and parcel of a psychic apparatus, which can tendentially be thought of as analogous to the machines which it also contrived.

And this psychical apparatus in turn was an effect of conditional relationships. In it experiences were collected and – exaggeratedly put – transformed into programs: behavioral patterns for example.

At least the world in and with which humans experienced things influenced consciousness in such a way that it became difficult to continue to plant an autonomous center of consciousness into this psycho-physical web, which was illuminated successively by psychology, neurobiology, and cybernetics. Furthermore, in the 20th century newer natural scientific disciplines replaced older human sciences when it came to understanding human thought and its processes.

While the classical, antique understanding – through all its historical changes – primarily saw mind as static and ahistorical, that is to say subtracted from the changing forms of human culture, modern and postmodern theory (from evolutionary biology to gender theory) saw it increasingly as the product of this change. It was not the issue of simply abrogating the old immateriality of thought as epistemological problem. In general, basic assumptions about the status of man in the world were destroyed.

The principle of the digital processing of information complicated the traditional opposition of “mind” and “matter” even more. Binary code, which lies at the foundation of digital appearances, is no longer integrated meaningfully and certainly not unquestionably into such a dual system. The physical object form, which long emblematically embodied the pole of matter, has in many areas – especially in that of mediality as the leading entity of everyday perception – given way to virtual storage for coded information. That computer-supported data processing could not be unproblematically attributed to the side of

matter, was already shown in the fact that the binary thought tradition at first attempted to carry its dualism into the world of computers in that it differentiated between hardware and software components. It assumed that the computer was made up of two categorically separated areas: the “mind” and the “body.”

With the Internet the spatial world is expanded by a virtual dimension, which certainly no longer functions as a medium for storage and communication but is increasingly incorporated into areas of human life. In this way, the Internet seems to have developed a life of its own in which we can see formations analogous to consciousness which certainly at the same time represent only transferences – in the shape of analogies and metaphors. The principally imaginary form of the Internet has sometimes led to its misconceptualization as a sort of meta-mind, which exists above or outside of the material world. The problematic notion of “virtuality” contains and transports this reading. In fact though, the Internet can no longer (at least not exclusively) be described in this way.

In its well-nigh “queer” ambivalence between object and mind, materiality and ideality, the Internet breaks through the traditional (conventional) dualism between mind and matter. This dualism has obviously not gone obsolete simply by this development, but through the existence of a third that is neither one nor the other but nevertheless combines aspects of both in itself, the rigid opposition in which object and mind have been fixed throughout centuries is gradually softened.

The ontological status of the Internet is perhaps best described by its common shorthand term the “web.” The “web” of the Internet places not only various computer interfaces into a global non-hierarchical relationship but also terms and categories of different cultural worlds are brought into webbed contact.

As key medium of the present, the Internet has established digital forms of production, transformation, and spread of information as a standard in many areas of our cultural and social practice. And in the extent to which the informational and organizational forms of the Web permeate our daily life, so also the digital permeates our body. This still doesn't make the Web a gateway as popular cyborg fantasies fear and desire it. But on an everyday level we are nevertheless at a

point at which we merge with the computer and become “digital everyday nomads.”

For example, Web and computer carry consequences for our space-time organization. The time structure and signature of the digital society have transformed industrialized time, which depended on the specific cycle of the process of production. The mechanical, even, or “Fordist” time becomes accelerated, straightened, and flexibilized in the process of digitalization; and thus is also certainly (in a still Fordist sense) optimized. Production and reproduction – the two periodically each other completing cycles of the production process – were under Fordist conditions of the factory and its workplaces large and particularly closed blocks of time. Their continual alternation structured the life of the subject enveloped by it), just as the “natural” change of daylight did.

The simultaneous timelessness of the Web however allows a barely overseable variety of individual time organizations. Similarly our forms of perception are digitally structured which plays out in our psyche, our subjectivity, our sensuality, and our reflexivity.

This is certainly not new because hegemonic technological and economic culture has always already reeducated and perhaps even constructed the body and mind of man. The character and purpose of technology is to adapt and soften us to its representational and presentational forms. However, the extent to which this is possible through digitalization is new. It creates the impression that we were actually partaking in this cultural paradigm shift, the consequential reach of which is not yet predictable. The old techno-utopia of the new creation of Man in the sign of digitality (for example as cyborg creatures in science fiction stories) here achieves plausibility.

Since the first stone-age tools, technology was an attempt to replace or extend the lacking human body with prosthesis. The computer first realized this on an intelligible level, namely as a form of “artificial intelligence.” This artificial intelligence was achieved in that it managed to simulate two elementary functions of the human brain in one and the same machine: the calculator and the archive. In other words: the storage function and the ability to process abstract codes. The computer can, just like the human brain, not only store knowledge but also operationalize it, “think” with it. This is a capacity which long

belonged only to the human brain. Only with the computer was the Auslagerung of human brain capacity in an extended and automatable sense achieved, by which operations which went far beyond human capacities also became possible.

DIGITAL ART AND CULTURE AS CONSCIOUS PARTICIPATION IN AND SHAPING OF THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The process of cultural and technological digitization is not merely a section of everyday life that fits comparably next to other aspects and areas of life. A whole digital culture unto its own has developed. "Digital culture" here is an umbrella term for a dizzying array of organizational schemes and communication forms which reflect and highlight our digital everyday life.

Just as the digital seems to be able to abrogate the old difference between mind and matter so too the digital everyday dissolves the segmentation of industrial social forms in the areas of work and leisure. The digital not only creates new and categorically different professional occupations. It also arches over the many different areas of our everyday life: those belonging to the realm of production and those belonging to the realm of reproduction. Digital leisure takes place during or after digital work at the same time as digital sociality, which communicates and finds new friends over the web. This however raises the question whether this emerging digital society will overcome or rather exacerbate the structure of alienation in capitalist society.

What digitality means and how it can shape us must be decided by those that inhabit the digital world. The digital culture that surrounds us and structures us emerges through our own practice, which we should not surrender to as to fate but which we must consciously confront, for example by apprehending ourselves as digital culture. With such a self-conception we will better be able to engage creatively with the culture of the digital, which is already determining our subjectivity and which will continue to influence it with far-reaching consequences.

How we live, that is to say communicate, relax, work, and experience a digital world is one of the most significant questions of the present.

The design of digital spaces of encounter and communication has always been an important issue for web culture. From early on digital culture has attempted to establish its own culture of the digital that would better meet the needs of people as the exploitation of the digital by an economized mode of domination could, which is defined by the implicit force of exchange.

This area encompasses foundational theoretical considerations on the egalitarian potential of the digital as well as practical accords regarding digital communicative forms, such as “netiquette,” which regulates modes of behavior in digital spaces, or also emoticons which attempt to add the communicative dimension of aural and expressive signals and accents to email communication.

Digital art has also early on developed out of and as a sub-domain of general forms of digital culture. Just as art refers to the framework of reality in which it emerged, so too does digital art relate to and work with the material reality of the digital world. Digital art manipulates the material of its reality in the old way of art: in that it represents and engages with digital reality, participating in and changing it. As such, digital art, like earlier arts forms, attempts to reflect on the digital world in which we work, live, and encounter each other. In this way, the functional mechanisms of the digital world should become apparent in order to understand what extent digital reality too is only a reverberation of the late capitalist conditions in which it emerges.

This may help to relativize overblown demands of the digital (as a formal revolutionizing of communicational media) and to put exact knowledge of the possibilities and potentials of the digital in the pace of media-specific illusions and idealistic projections, which in the sense of the old hierarchy of mind and matter are already proclaiming a possible transformation of consciousness as a wholesale modification of the world. With this, however, they only continue to deceive themselves as to their own dependency on late capitalist relations of reality.

At this point, an opportunity is created to show what else might be possible through the technological revolution if it allowed itself to be extracted from its entanglement in economic exploitation. That, however, the majority of digital practices verily supports and maintains this exploitation must certainly always be considered. This concerns, for example, questions of the historically older copyright which is confronted with a digital copyright reality in which protectable originals

no longer exist due to the specific ontology of digital artifacts as reproductions.

In this way, digital art is today carrier of a utopian as well as practical enlightening potential, which constitutes art in each of its historical manifestations, but which nevertheless always collides with its at least apparently opposed system-stabilizing role.

Unfortunately, this potential is often blurred due to certain manifestations of digital art which sometimes disclose themselves as banal and unreflected expositions of specific digital design options. That such media art is often hardly distinguishable from “advertising” is its own succinct judgment. This deficiency is exacerbated by a false and abbreviated public perception which deriving from an outdated world view, thinks that in digital art it only sees games with technical gadgets.

In contrast, paraflows 2010 makes a different demand of digital art and culture: the technically possible should be engaged in its concrete practice as in its founding theory. Technology may not be left to those who would only incorporate it in to what exists and make us of it according to its requirements. Digital art which only concerns itself with the realization of technology as art merely accentuates and ornaments exploitative interests in that it concretizes all utopian content of the technical into a bonsaiform of bafflement.

New technologies not only open up new possibilities for action in ways that enable us to do things which we were previously incapable of, and which we would then only have to falsify and verify – either practically or aesthetically – with the help of technological artifacts. Every technology contains – in the specific use which it enables, in it being “ready-to-hand” – the potential of new experiences, different apperceptions and illegitimate forms of thought. This is also valid for those technologies which are not available for our own individual use but those of whose existence (its “present-at-hand”) we are aware of because they represent the technical standard of our time.

For example, human space travel has already changed our picture of the universe in which we live even though we ourselves are not yet in the position to leave the earth. This will continue to be the privilege of specialists who travel into space under the assignment of others who undertake this because of economic and/or ideological interests

as is exemplified by the classic “space race” between the USA and the USSR.

With the history of human space travel, a new horizon of possibility emerged which was expressed in countless utopian or dystopian narratives. The space age – the threshold of which we are just stepping onto – has activated human imagination to come up with new modes of living together which are sometimes based on entirely different forms of economic organization. What is decisive here is not so much the realistic quality of these designs as simply their very existence which rather points out: when the technological foundations of a society change then its entire heretofore known form is at our disposal.

That this was made possible is also related to the fact that with space travel human culture has again entered an unknown, not yet discovered and possibly endless space which seems to dissolve previous regulatory forms of the imaginative world determined by its close connection to “earthly conditions.” With space, the unthinkable has become thinkable again, for example, in the shape of an imaginable outside perspective on human cohabitation. This outside perspective is determined in the (narrative) possibility to confront this world with the intelligent inhabitants of other worlds.

In this way, technology designs and changes our access to the world. The digital appropriation and transformation of data not only gives us new modes of action but also implements entirely new ideas of what may be possible.

The utopia – or at least the future promise – of the digital exists in the overcoming of the dualistic imprint in which our thought always only perpetuates old orders. Both mind and matter are in the process of combining in a way that would render impossible their re-opposition into wholly unrelated components. It may be speculated how soon this may arrive as well as what shape this materiality of the digital may take.

But it is conceivable (and desirable) that the relation produced by this specific combination would no longer be one of domination and exploitation of one by the other, just as the old relationship of mind and matter always helped to illustrate and legitimize relations and relational dimensions of domination. This may be the emergence of a certain kind of artificial intelligence which we believe to be seeing on

the horizon of digital technology of which current computer technology is only a glimpse that equips its promise with plausibility.

How exactly a true artificial intelligence may be positioned and how it will relate to us and our needs is never predetermined. Even the capitalist conditions from and out of which we imagine artificial intelligence today can only relatively convey their determining forces onto this intelligence. Before us lies the unknown, with unknown consequences on what is and what will be.

In this connection we must actively engage in shaping the (always insufficient) ideas we are already forming of this technological revolution through which we will be firstly confronted with real artificial intelligence. Only in this way can we prevent it from becoming merely a tool for exploitative interests which deprive us of our access and our engagement in the matter because the intentions which they attempt to realize will not be our own – and certainly not those of the majority of the world's population – but rather the particular interests of the ruling classes.

At the intersection of new technologies and utopian ideas possibilities for intervention arise that challenge and question the old political and economic order. Before this potential emerges the already historically known practice of obfuscation that describes the digital as a revolution in which the technical always already implies the political.

Digital culture has to take a stand on this issue if it seeks to be more than just advertising for new gadgets, machines, and technologies that merely reproduce the already extant on the next evolutionary level.

Artificial consciousness could definitely render obsolete the “natural” (that is naturalized) form of consciousness, which today still keeps us under the spell of countless ideological affiliations. We will however have to make sure that the potentials of digitality are indeed set free. They must be liberated from the narrow confines of exploitative interests which only want to use these potentials to optimize various problems; they must be freed from a relative deterritorialization, which will only have been a reterritorialization.

These battles have already begun: the digital conditions of cultural work and the digitalization of cultural artifacts have put the old concept of the “common good” on the agenda again; primarily in

the shape of the “creative commons” which resists still existing but unnecessarily restrictive copyright. The copyright – the author’s exclusive exploitation right of his or her “intellectual property” – originates from the historical formation of the age of the printing press. Marshall McLuhan catchily dubbed it the “Gutenberg galaxy.” Digital work and cultural practices – as well as their potential – are inhibited by such a copyright. Sooner or later, these practices will change the existing copyright to fit new possibilities, instead of submitting to it. The classic bourgeois copyright must be overcome precisely because it represents a limitation of cultural production and distribution as well as of democratic participation in given goods and possibilities.

What was foremost only articulated as a diffuse desire for freedom and boundlessness in the realm of digital media use has long since entered non-digital areas as well. The discussion surrounding the so-called “commons” has named and connected numerous things that have been privatized and exploited in the realm of private property: genetic codes of healing plants as well as traditional knowledge, natural resources (such as oil, air, water, and earth). The term “commons” wants to reclaim these things for the common good and ownership, piggy-backing on the popularity of “creative commons”, which have for a few years now broached the issue of the disastrous consequences of “private property” on our lives.

In the face of the digital it has become plausible that we ourselves participate in the creation and optimization of artificial consciousness. We have become responsible. And we are primarily given the opportunity to break away from our programmed behaviors that make our consciousness a condensation of societal reality, determining who we are supposed to be.

In inference of our digital everyday experience on our life we could develop the idea of proceeding with “consciousness” as we are used to proceeding with “artificial intelligence”: we can deprogram it, reconfigure it, format it, upgrade it, and delete certain program features that we no longer need. We could hack our gender and manipulate the source code of our subjectivity. This is surely not as easy as is suggested by the techno-euphoric and heavily “analog” application of digital terms to our “operating system.” And it will surely not always be as easy as we are used to from the user-friendly and self-explanatory technologies that surround us. What is important, however, is that

with the help of artificial intelligence it has become possible to newly conceive of our own consciousness and to open a horizon of understanding in which such interventions become acceptable.

The digital age also puts us in the position of being able to model artificial intelligence according to laws that are no longer the laws of nature (that is to say evolutionary) which still dominate our consciousness. "Human nature" (the specifically historical form of human naturalization) was long considered to be man's doom and fate in order to implement dominant and exploitative interests in the subjects: as the logical and necessary consequence of their internal constitution (for example as "women"). Under the transformed premises of mind under the sign of digitality, these "constitutions" can be newly negotiated and changed.

Now that digital technology puts us on the threshold of being able to artificially produce consciousness, this also implies the possibility of participating in the design of this (artificial) consciousness and not to leave it to those who would "design" it according to the old ways of capitalist production (on the basis of the market and its struggles of competition). Differing from these technocrats of new possibilities, we must work towards developing an artificial consciousness that represents advancement vis-à-vis traditional Western forms of consciousness. It must correct the dualistic opposition between Western consciousness and materiality and overcome its disposition towards the idealistic repression of the world and the body. If we succeed, we will not only have produced our own consciousness as something artificial, we will have improved it and with it transformed the world that generates it and perceives it.

If we as digital culture can agree that the possibilities of artificial forms of consciousness should not only reflect the individual interests of particular departments for product development (and their clients), we must counter with collective and webbed work forms. The possibility to create artificial consciousness and thus change humans as well as "cultural consciousness" demands overcoming the old monadic departmentalization of development. This possibility demands new forms and terms of team work that can rupture old borders of operational and national competition and put into motion a new human consciousness.

Such a possibility emerges as a rule where new instruments of production are introduced. We have already missed the last opportunity in this sense – classical industrialization (and also Soviet communism was only an attempt to introduce corrective measures after the fact). With digitalization we are presented with a new opportunity, even if today's instruments of production are still determined by the old order of the industrial revolution.

It is the mission of digital art to oppositionally claim a space, at least symbolically, that goes against the capitalist conditions under which instruments of production are owned, managed, and used. It must thus not only participate in the design of artificial consciousness and thus remove it from the influence of product designers, but this digital art must also show different forms of working which hold together a common consciousness that opposes the consciousness of the individualized late-capitalist subject.

It must actively engage in creating a new consciousness stemming from the artificial, which will either be a “common” in itself or simply the old consciousness in new clothes. Artificial consciousness must belong to all of us, simply because it will transform our lives in unforeseeable ways.

THE MATERIALITY OF DATA: ON THE FRAGILITY OF THE DISEMBODIED

Of special significance is of course the problem of data materiality which will be granted a particularly large space at *paraflows 2010*. In this regard, it is shown that the digital has never been the freely floating technology as which it has been imagined. Precisely the problem of the data storage medium in the application, archiving, and maintenance of digital cultural artifacts reveals this: as a product of a specific technology, data storage media are always tied to a medial substrate, to the technology which enables the reading of existing data and its conversion for later generations.

The scenario of technological development is currently closer to a “Babylonian data confusion” which foresees that the supralinguisticity of digital codes as the language of culture and communication could end up in the confusion of incompatibilities and technological

uncontemporaneity. This might be especially likely if we leave the technological foundations of digital culture up to private market forces which will only ever be concerned with individual interests and never with what concerns us all.

A special way of counteracting the market-oriented closure of the digital public sphere is the idea of open source which develops information technologies as a collective project. The wide influence and significance of digital culture in areas far beyond the Internet and personal computers is clearly evidenced by the many projects and ideas which have been inspired by open source in realms that don't directly belong to the field of digital culture. We would also like to counter the transience of digital culture with exhibits from the early ages of digital art. Together with current exhibits, they will communicate the polymorphism of digital culture and should inspire participation in its development.

OPEN QUESTIONS AGAINST THE MARKET-ORIENTED CLOSURE OF DIGITAL CULTURE

The fifth paraflows-festival for digital art and culture would like to direct its attention to those positions and practices within the digital art world, which ask about the particular potentials held by digitality, and further, which engage with the contemporary (realist, critical, and enlightening) as well as future (and utopian) potential of digital art.

Starting from positions formulated by paraflows in the last few years centering on the idea of space, the festival in 2010 will focus on digital users:

How does digitality change what we are or think to be? In which ways are we already cultural cyborgs and how can we appropriate this status for ourselves in order to use it for our age-old or completely new developing interests? Which subjectivity does the digital enable and to what extent is the old dualism of humans dissolved in mind and matter? What utopian potential and which fundamental changes will the new world composed of digital life, digital media, and digital art hold for us? And how do we want to treat this promise? What would we like to accomplish?

We would like to show that digital art – like all other art forms – is complex and multi-layered, and that in it exists successful and unsuccessful, productive and inappropriate articulations of problems, which do not correspond to the publicly circulating image of digital art as an adventure park of technology nerds. The digital art which paraflows wants to present and tie together lays claims, to be tied to late modernist conceptual art, to give us a developed shape as a special form of the imaginary and the virtual that already envelops us completely as the real.