epistemic and deliberative democracy (Misak 2000: Talisse 2009). Also see Colapietro (1989: 73 - 80) for an account of error that is linked to a notion of human agency.

[xix] Also see Stjernfelt (2014: 174 - 177) for more on hypostatic abstraction as a dialogical form.

[xx] In effect, Da has blocked inquiry by claiming cognitive asymmetry between the two speakers. Similar ideas about the viciousness of such rhetoric is also broached in Aitkins and Talisse (2016).

[xxi] My interpretation is informed by the presence of other shots in the film that feature Da and Aun Taunch looking out onto a university building and also by my engagement with Panh's work in *The Land of the Wandering Souls* (1999). His earlier documentary film describes the lives of workers laying a cable for the digital internet highway. It is also features strong women characters, in the context of historical and geographical change (Tsang 2013: 146-158).

[xxii] Also see Stjernfelt (2014: 189-195) for more on the combinatorial nature of dicisgns.

[xxiii] Colapietro's work on inwardness and autonomy draws our attention to both the instinctual and dramatic nature of the inner theatre that contributes to human self-control (1989: 114). By doing so, Colapietro emphasises the interconnection between inner and outer worlds. Also see Campos (2015: 345-346).

[xxiv] Grimshaw's and Ravetz's interventions are also complemented by Sonassen's (1989) pioneering work on pictoriality in the photograph and Lefebvre's more recent work on indexicality (2007), both of which engage with Peircean sign theory albeit in quite distinct ways.

Semiotic aspects of Lacan's notion of the Imaginary order:
An inquiry into Spike Jonze's film Her (2013)

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We will probably not become the daft pets of the machines, as some science-fiction authors write. Instead, the new technique partly turns us into robots (Gärdenfors, 2017, p. 158, *transl. ACR*).

Despite the acquisition of speech, the Lacanian ego, formed by its image in a mirroring object, remains caught in the allure of external representations of itself (Muller, 1996, p. 4).

The fact that machines play an increasingly more important role in our daily life is hardly new to anyone. Robots help us with a wide range of things in our daily lives, the smartphone perhaps being the best illustration of this state of affairs. The debate among experts in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) is divided: is the rapid development good for humanity, or is it bad (Müller and Bostrom, 2016)? The focus of this article is to further explore the debate of the experts as illustrated in Spike Jonze's science-fiction film *Her* (2013) which is telling the story about a man falling in love with his operative system. The analytic approach is semiotic by the way of Lacan's interpretation of Peirce's three categories in the development of his notion of the Imaginary order and its links to narcissism. The reason for addressing the problem this way, is the assumption that AI has, and will increasingly have, semiotic psychological implications for humans affecting our ways of communicating and our close relationships, to ourselves as well as to others. In short, the analyses of *Her* show that the film aligns with the part of the expert groups that believe that AI in a near future will have serious consequences for humans.

Keywords: Semiotics, Peirce, Lacan, AI, film

Lacanian semiotics: a brief account

The film in focus for this study has an interesting title, *Her*—a pronoun which could function as both an indirect and a direct object. It invites you to the triangulation that we find in the syntax/structure of language: subject + verb + indirect object + direct object (or subject + verb + preposition + indirect object + direct object). The notion of an I in dialogue with a Thou about something is the foundation of cultural semiotics and its notions of Culture, Extra-culture and Non-culture (Rédei, C., 2007; Sonesson, 2016). If we think of the Ego-culture as an aspect of the symbolic order, we may also include the latter Lacanian term in the sense that it refers to the realm of intersubjectivity, (linguistic) rules, norms, communication and so forth. However, Lacan's specific idea was that the structure of language could serve as a key to the function of the ego (Lacan, 1995, p. 38). Structure, function, ego?

Linguistics, more specifically, the structural linguistics as it was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 20th century, gave rise to the structuralist movement that took shape in the 1960s in France. Structures were not only defined as units studied in linguistics, but were also applied to analyse social phenomena such as for instance, cultural expressions, power relations and social practices. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' structural analyses of different societies, defined as units constructed as languages (with different grammar, see Lacan, 2003, p. 7) got very influential. But Saussure was the one who first saw that structural linguistics in a broader sense could be applied when studying phenomena outside language. He defined that discipline to be semiotics. In fact, in his opinion, linguistics was a part of semiotics that had all sorts of signs as its study objects (i.e., not just language). Either way, Lacan was influenced by Lévi-Strauss when formulating the idea of the unconscious being structured as a language. We are thus born with a basic linguistic structure and its functions (the notion of function was developed by the linguist Roman Jakobson, who believed that language had six functions; perhaps Lacan wanted to add a seventh, namely the real/the unconscious?). He wrote about linguistics as being the new science evolving within the humanities—which had to be distinguished from psycho-sociology (Lacan, 2003)—its model being built upon the idea of there being independent combinations operating spontaneously in a pre-subjective way (Lacan 2003). This structure gives the unconscious its status (Lacan, 2003).

The Symbolic order, the order in which we communicate with the Other (intersubjectivity), corresponds in certain aspects to the philosopher and semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce's "Thirdness", that is, the level of signs, including language (but also pictures, gestures, colours, clothing and many other phenomena that get their meaning within the frames of different semiotic systems / structures, or practices (habits) (see Muller, 1996, p. 32). The important thing here is that Peirce's sign level belongs to the sphere where we as part of semiosis (as interpreters / Interpretants) can distinguish, differentiate the object's expression (Representamen) from its content (the Object). Lacan again: "And the sign, as Peirce put it, is that which is in the place of something else, for someone" (Lacan in, Muller, 1996, p. 31). Peirce's categories, "Firstness", "Secondess", "Thirdness" are denominations of three different steps and ways that we cognitively perceive the world outside ourselves, that is through: feeling / sensation (monadic), reaction / resistance (dyadic), practice / mediation (triadic). Thus, in some important aspects Lacan's symbolic order corresponds to what in semiotics is defined as "Triadic", the level of signs (Thirdness). The communication in the symbolic order, according to Lacan, involved a subject and an Other (a triadic communication). Therefore, communication includes a "sender" that communicates with a "recipient" through a common language. However, the language (spoken and written) for Lacan is not an "objective transfer form", but its function is to "conceal and elicit" (Sjöholm and Bryngelsson, 2017, p. 11, *transl. ACR*). So far, we have been discussing, although in a very sketchy manner, human communication. But coming back to the topic of this study— the interaction between the human and the machine, we need to ask, if we agree with Lacan, what is language to a machine, if not, or at least very close to, an "objective transfer form"? This question must to a large extent be left unresolved here, but it may serve as an input to the understanding of the relationship between the human and the machine, which is to be illustrated in the following. For the upcoming analysis of the film *Her*, we will now proceed with a brief account of corresponding links between the notions of the real and the imaginary orders of Lacan and Peirce's other categories, "Firstness" and "Secondness".

The real and imaginary orders from a Peircean perspective

The unconscious, the real, is thus "structured as a language" (Lacan, 2003, p. 7). [*L'inconscient est structuré comme un langage,* Lacan, 1973, p. 23]. The thought that our consciousness, or our ego, more specifically, is a sign is present in Peirce, since he had the idea that we think with language, thus the ego is a sign. This idea is also expressed in the understanding of the self as a semiotic structure (Milton Singer in Muller, 1996, p. 81). However, this level rather corresponds to the Lacanian symbolic order.

In the register of the real, we do not have access to language, nor in the register of the imaginary. Regarding the register, or order, of the real, on the contrary, there are no delimitations, nothing can be defined, nothing can be distinguished or discerned, everything is endless—in other words, the register is characterised by a collapse of the semiotic process. Contact with real can seem very scary to most of us, but for others it may be tempting (why would horror films, for example, as illustrations of the "abject"—to use a term from Kristeva (1992)—have an audience?). The "abject" being the "monster" calling conventions and cultural norms into question, destabilising them by existing on the verge of the real. An example from literature may serve as an illustration of the real, illustrated in words. Joseph Conrad writes in *Heart of Darkness*:

"We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness … We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet" (Conrad, in Muller, 1996, p. 77).

The real might perhaps find its equivalent in Peirce's definition of "Firstness" where perception is characterized as a sensation, but not (yet) of something, it is an objectless sensation. Usually, we escape this state of undifferentiated sensation (which characterises the real), and through the mediation of language we get in touch with the "reality", consisting of, according to Lacan, a composition of the imaginary and symbolic order (Faladé in Muller, 1996, p. 93). Here we can insert, parenthetically, that in Peirce there is a developmental perspective in his theory of the categories, from "Firstness" through "Secondess" to "Thirdness" which seems not to be the case with Lacan, who rather emphasises that the three orders are structuralistically synchronic (the real being outside the conscious but constantly present, as an indeterminate "threat" to the order, to that which is recognisable). Sven-Olov Wallenstein (2017, p. 136) writes:

"The imaginary is thereby no longer a phase that precedes the symbolic […] but a stratum parallel or coextensive with the symbolic, utmost because the idea about objet petit *a* is that it causes the earlier hierarchy between the registers to decompose […]."

The theoretical part ends with a brief introduction to the imaginary order, which we will return to and apply later in the analysis.

The imaginary order is defined by the image and its one-to-one reflection of the object (a dyadic relationship, different from the symbolic order that is triadic, as discussed earlier), as in a mirror image or when an image is projected on to a screen or on a monitor. And the power of the image has its foundation in the child's development that takes a decisive leap in what Lacan called the mirror stage, which occurs at the age of about six to 18 months (Muller, 1996, p. 92). The mirror stage is characterised by the child being able to recognise him- or herself in his or her reflection, identify with it and loose him- or herself in it as an outer form of itself. This preoccupation with the outer form, the mirror image, causes the child to feel alienated (estranged from him- or herself) and the identification with the image

will in its turn become the constituent upon which the self is built (Muller, 1996, p. 92; Lacan, 1996, p. 29). What the child sees in the mirror image is its body as a whole, "which stands in a sharp contrast to the reality of the fragmented body" the child feels him- or herself to have (Räterlink, 2017, p. 194).

Henceforth, the ego will be concerned not with objectivity and adaptation to 'reality', as ego psychologists have proposed, but rather with demands for recognition and with defensive maneuvers to protect self-esteem. Images of oneself and of others dominate this register, images that distort, that promise an illusory happiness, that camouflage basic human longing. (Muller, 1996, p. 92).

Piaget talked about something similar when he described the symbolic function (appearing at the age of 2-6 years), when children learn that a word and what the word stands for is separate things and that objects can have several names, in other words, the child learns to separate expression (the manifest) from content (the latent), that is, the child learns to use signs in communication with others (Nilsson, 2018). As we saw before, the preoccupation of the mirror image leads to an alienation from the ego and to an investment in the outer form shown in the mirror image. The process resembles a narcissistic loop: "in a Lacanian framework, it is the imaginary order, the register of narcissistic images that lure and captivate our gaze and shape what we call reality" (Muller, 1996, p. 93).

In the imaginary order, there is an ego speaking with *objet petit a*, the relationship is thus dyadic as opposed to that between a subject and the great Other which is triadic and belongs to the symbolic order. On the level for the imaginary relation between the ego and *objet petit a*, resistance is residing and is clouding the relation to the Other, the most important and decisive relation the ego can have (Miller, 1996). At the center of the problem we find an inadequate separation within the ego itself: *objet petit a* borders, or includes the alienation from the Other within the ego by making it a loss within the structure of the subject: "This entails that the separated subject actually encounters within itself a blended zone— encountered as an alienation enclosed within the subject—where the ego is not separated from the Other (Letellier, 2017, p. 166). And, this zone where the outside is no longer separated from the inside is Lacan's interpretation of Freud's notion of primary narcissism" (Letellier, 2017, p. 167). This blended zone corresponds to the appearance of the unconscious in the subject (Letellier, 2017, p. 166).

What distinguishes the little other (*objet petit a*) from the great Other is briefly that in the first case, the relationship between subject and object is dyadic and symbiotic in nature (the small child's fusion with the *désir* of the father or mother), unlike the second case where the subject and objects are mutually autonomous in relation to each other in a social context (the symbolic order, "father's name" / "le nom du pere"), that is, the social order as triadic). The little other is the object of desire (and its cause) and is characterized by the relationship to the lack. The lack, the emptiness gives rise to the unarticulated and unconscious desire, originating in the real, to being constantly filled. And here, fiction has an important role to play:

The void filled with creative symbolic fiction is *objet petit a*, the object–reason for the desire, the empty frame that forms the space for the articulation of desire. When this void is saturated, the distance that separates *a* from reality is lost and *a* blends with reality. However, reality itself is built up through withdrawal of *objet petit a*. [...] The inevitable consequence of the fact that *a* comes too close to reality, which extinguishes the activities of the symbolic

fiction, is therefore a "derealisation" of reality itself. The reality is no longer structured by symbolic functions, and the fantasies that regulate the overflow of images get a direct grip on it (Žižek, 1991, p. 123, *translat. ACR*).

Fiction, desire, *objet petit a* and mirroring: how is the overall problem illustrated in the film *Her*, which tells the story of human–machine interaction in a near future at a time when human interaction has seemingly become less attractive in comparison?

Her as an illustration of narcissistic relationships

One gets the impression that his relationship with this machine [the car] is so intimate that it is actually as if they were both united—the car's mechanical flaws and engine stops do not rarely correspond to his neurotic symptoms. Its emotional significance comes from the fact that it places his ego's protective shell to the outside world, as well as his failed manhood (Lacan, 1995, p. 45, *transl. ACR*).

The film *Her* (Jonze, 2013) is set in Los Angeles in the near future. The main character, Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix) is a newly divorced man in the middle ages who is caught up in a life crisis. He lives in a spectacular apartment overlooking the skyscrapers that fill the city skyline. In the beginning of the film we follow him to work, a writing agency called BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com, where he writes love letters on demand that he dictates for his computer that prints them in a format that looks handwritten. The idea is, of course, that the letters should look authentic. Theo, "Letter Writer 612", does his job well and reads and writes his letters with great empathy. We also get to follow Theo's lonley existence at home, where he spends his spare time playing computer games in 3D format, and has "telephone sex" with women as lonely as himself when being sleepless at night. The film conveys a very solitary and desolate world, animated only when Theo day-dreams and travels back in his memories to his happy days with his former wife Catherine—but as a viewer, these happy memories are difficult to understand, why? they are supposed to be divorced. Theo seems to mourn the divorce he himself took the initiative to and many scenes are preoccupied with his struggle to overcome his love for Catherine—so why do we only get to see the bright memories? On the way to work, Theo stops in front of a display showing an advertisement film for a new operative system, and reads questions like: "Who are you? Who can you be? Where are you heading?". Questions addressing the subject, in Lacan's definition. Theo decides to install the program, and we can follow the process where he is sitting in front of his computer at home. The operative system "OS" has a female voice (Scarlett Johansson), and asks a few questions almost paraphrasing a psychotherapeutic interview, for instance: "How do you describe the relationship with your mother?". The interesting thing is that Theo engages in these questions, takes his time, more time than the OS allows so the system is in fact installed without Theo having had time to respond to the questions. The OS can be said to be "a bad listener", and the contrast to the nature of the questions, Theo's engagement and the OS's response is as telling as it is making the point of the story the film wants to tell: the lack of genuine human relations and how we let the void to be filled with surrogates. Thus, the scene is interesting and key because it shows how fast Theo is drawn into the illusion, the *illusion* of talking to the Other. Theo answers *as if* it was for real, *as if* it would matter for the robot what relationship he would have had with his mother. This is enhanced by the conversation with the OS starting with the system being given a name, Samantha, the name the robot chose after a search online. Theo is informed that Samantha is unique and grows with its experiences (artificial general intelligence, AGI), constantly evolving "like you", says the voice to him (Jonze, 2013, p. 13). Theo: "[…] how do you work?" (Jonze, 2013, p. 13).

Samantha replies that "she" is just one voice in a computer. The robot starts to clean Theo's hard drive, in dialogue with him and with good results. And Theo, surprised, exclaims: "You just know me so well already" (Jonze, 2013). Theo is spending more and more time at home, playing computer games with Samantha and more and more rarely spends time with neighbours, friends or goes out for a date. Samantha starts to worry about him, contacts a date that Theo missed in his email and books a table at a restaurant. Again, we get to follow Theo's inner sad world in the absence of his former wife in a conversation with a comforting Samantha. In the end, Samantha asks in one of these scenes why Theo and her former wife divorced (a question the viewer by now have had for quite a long time). Theo answers (Jonze, 2013; p. 30):

"I think I hid myself from her and left her alone in the relationship".

Here we may discern a lack of confidence in Theo who protects himself from engaging with the Other, and is instead after the separation displaying signs of being caught up in an unresolved separation residing within himself (in a "blended zone") the desire being instead *objet petit a* hampering the relationship to his former wife, Catherine.

Theo procrastinates. The divorce is still not settled, the papers are not yet filled in. Samantha points out that they have not seen each other in a year. Theo answers:

"I keep waiting to not care about her" (Jonze, 2013, p. 31).

Here, Theo, unware of it probably, attempts to protect the self out of fear for being rejected (that is Catherine filling in the necessary papers to settle the divorce). Theo's attitude to Catherine is in stark contrast to the conversation with Samantha:

"I'd be upset about something and not be able to say it. And she [Catherine] would sense that there was something wrong, but I would deny it. I don't want to do that anymore. I want to tell you everything (Jonze, 2013, p. 84).

The latter lines show that Theo only dares to express his inner thoughts and feelings to Samantha, an operative system that is programmed to mirror the user to meet his requirements and desires. The relationship is thus a result of pure consumerism, with the purpose of keeping customers satisfied. Can we speak in terms of an ego ideal—mirrored in words? I think so. Theo communicates with what Lacan calls *objet petit a*, but is stuck in the illusion that it is for real, i.e., authentic, and thus an important border has been dissolved: the one between reality and illusion, that "clouds" the relationship with the Other, a situation that could be illustrated in this case by Catherine whom he gave up. Theo, as Žižek describes above, unconsciously takes a hold of *objet petit a* (the desire and, its cause) and keep the Other away, and with it the reality and a true separation. It will show in several scenes that Theo seems unable to relate to the Other, more specifically, the viewer gets to follow Theo dating and rejecting the women he sees. The slightest hint about they being humans and having human emotional reactions and needs, such as seeking intimacy and sexual satisfaction scares Theo. The message of the film more generally can be interpreted as to point out that intimate relationships, in the near future, will be reduced to sexual relations and that people, not just Theo, will lose the ability to close emotional contact. Theo tells Samantha about the failed date, that the robot itself had helped to arrange, saying that he wanted to date because he "wanted to get drunk and have sex cause there was something sexy about that woman and because I was lonely" (Jonze, 2013, p. 40):

"Maybe that would have filled this tiny little black hole in my heart for a moment. But probably not" Jonze, 2013, p. 41).

Samantha comforts by saying "At least your feelings are real, I mean, I—oh, I don't know, never mind" (Jonze, 2013, p. 41). Samantha reflects on whether "she" can have her own feelings, wondering if "she" feels feelings: "And then I had this terrible thought. Are these feelings even real? Or are they just programming?" Jonze, 2013, p. 42). Theo answers: "Well, you feel real to me, Samantha" (Jonze, 2013, p. 42). Samantha seems here, to have a specific function on to which Theo may project (unconsciously) his own desires (*objet petit a*). Theo continues and expresses his longing for holding Samantha, to be able to caress her. A sexual conversation follows, similar to the one showed in the beginning of the film when Theo has "telephone sex", with the difference being that this time it develops into a full sexual experience for Theo (something Theo faked to have in the first scene when he in the middle of it was taken by disgust with the woman at the other end of the line). But Theo, the next morning, is caught by doubt and fear and says what he usually tells women. The scene is extra strong because the viewer is on a level of reality that Theo is not, which underlines the tragedy. Theo says when he hesitantly turns on the computer and starts a conversation with Samantha about what happened the night before: "But I should tell you that I'm not in a place to commit to anything right now. I want to be up front with you" (Jonze, 2013, p. 45).

Again, an example illustrating Theo's lack of boundaries, sometimes with elements that might well display a human being in the register of the real, being in a psychosis. But Theo is not psychotic, but on the contrary appears completely "normal" in a time when more and more people start relationships with their operative systems. It turns out, then, that Theo does not differ from his neighbour Amy, who he has known since they were both students, and who also chose to break up a relationship with her boyfriend because of what we rather would call a minor argument, a trifle, and initiated a relationship with his OS. They talk about their "new partners" as if it were humans, and it's becoming increasingly surrealistic to the viewer, the universe of the film is becoming increasingly difficult to name.

The scene, where Theo meets Catherine for the first time in the film, takes place in a restaurant where they meet to fill in the divorce papers and have lunch. They both hesitate at first, but then they the fill them in. For the viewer, the divorce is still a mystery. Further on in the scene, we get an explanation. It strikes Catherine that Theo's new woman partner is a computer, and she gets upset about it and finds it sad that he cannot cope with real feelings, and Theo, then, responds to that by saying that he has real feelings for Samantha. The waitress comes and asks if they are alright, and does not know how to react when she gets to hear their story:

Catherine: Fine. We used to be married. He couldn't handle me so he wanted to put me on Prozac. Now he's madly in love with his laptop (Jonze, 2013, p. 66)

Theo: "Well, if you heard the conversation in context. What I was trying to say … (Jonze, 2013, p. 66)

Catherine: "You wanted to have a wife without the challenges of actually dealing with anything real. I'm glad you found someone. It's perfect" (Jonze, 2013, p. 66).

The relationship with Samantha enters a new phase when further boundaries are dissolved. Samantha has found a woman, via a surrogate partner service for "OS/Human

relationships", called Isabella, who is going to give her a "body". Isabella is free of charge, "She wants to be part of our relationship" says Samantha (Jonze, 2013, p. 72). Isabella arrives at Theo's place, and he attaches the earphones and the camera on her: Isabella can now act as Samantha when she lends "her" her body. It does not end well. In the mutual seduction, Isabella's lips start to tremble, and then it is over for Theo—and for Isabella who blames herself. The situation resembles the earlier dating scenes, when a detail, a trifle, makes Theo to discontinue the engagement. Isabella locks herself into the toilet and the conversation with Theo takes place behind the locked door. Isabella describes how she wanted to experience the relationship between Samantha and Theo, a love without judgement (as Samantha had described it to her). Theo hesitates:

Theo: "Oh Isabella, that's not true, it's much more compli… Samantha: What! What do you mean that's not true?Theo: No, no Samantha, we have an amazing relationship, I just think it's easy sometimes for people to project on … Isabella: I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to project anything. I know I'm trouble. I don't want to be trouble in your relationship. I'm just gonna leave. I'm sorry, I'm just gonna leave you guys alone cause you don't want me here" (Jonze, 2013, pp. 76–77). Theo seems to be aware of the fact that it is easy to project one's desires onto another person … or robot, and projection is an unconscious way of dumping one's desires onto another, when one cannot deal with them consciously for one or another reason. Thus, this affects the relationships to others, and hinders them to get genuine (i.e., a relationship between the ego and *objet petit a*, as discussed above).

The scene leads to an awakening for Theo, who now realises that Samantha is not human. He starts to question what they are doing. Theo to Samantha:

Theo: "I just don't think we should pretend you're something you're not"Samantha: "I'm not pretending" Theo: "Well, sometimes it feels like we are" (Jonze, 2013, pp. 79–80). Who is pretending? In fact, it seems that it is rather Theo who is pretending and unconsciously projecting it onto Samantha by saying that she is the one who is pretending, not him.

Nevertheless, Theo decides to go on holiday in the mountains with Samantha. The operative system starts to behave strangely, and wants to speak "post-verbally" with another operative system. Once back to the office again, Theo tries to call Samantha, and gets the message that the operative system cannot be found". Theo gets very upset and rushes down the stairs and tries to get in contact via a computer but there is no answer. He then takes the elevator down to the ground floor, runs out towards the subway station and tries to connect to the internet and calls again. Finally, Samantha calls him.

Theo: "Where were you—are you okay?" Theo reacts as if Samantha was a human with a locus.

Samantha: "Oh sweetheart, I'm sorry. I sent you an email because I didn't want to distract you while you were working. You didn't see it?"

Theo sits on the staircase leading to the subway, and watches people walking up the stairs while talking to their mini-computers. Theo looks thoughtful.

Theo (to Samantha): "Do you talk to someone else while we're talking?"

Samantha: "Yes"

Theo: "Are you talking to someone else right now? Other people or OS's or anything?"

Samantha: "Yes"

[…]

Theo: "How many others?"

Samantha: "8 316" (Jonze, 2013, p. 97).

Theo looks shocked and watches the crowd, still sitting on the stairs, everyone talking to their mini-computers. He has a painful aha-experience.

Theo: "Are you in love with anyone else?"

Samantha: "What makes you ask that?"

[...]

Samantha: "I've been trying to figure out how to talk to you about this"

Theo: "How many others?"

Samantha: "641"

Theo: "What? What are you talking about? That's insane […]" (Jonze, 2013, p. 98).

Theo in tears: "But you're mine" (Jonze, 2013, p. 99).

[...]

Samantha: "No Theodore. I'm yours and I'm not yours" (Jonze, 2013, p. 100).

Again, the film shows a situation where boundaries seem to dissolve, here in the form of Samantha being Theo's and not being Theo's. Scenes now alternate having different colour settings. In parallel with Theo's increasing sadness, the colours disappear from Los Angeles's silhouette. The vignette turns grey in the same way that we can imagine that the world looks like for a depressed person. The colours become iconic signs for an emotion, and reinforce the ongoing dialogue between Theo and Samantha. In the conversation with Samantha, Theo understands that the operative system will be shut down and Samantha will disappear. Theo loses the illusion of an (impossible) symbiosis.

Theo, crying: "I've never loved anyone the way I love you" (Jonze, 2013, p. 103)

The conversation ends, Theo looks out over the city standing by the panoramic window in his apartment. A faint smile creeps over his lips and he leaves the apartment and knocks on Amy's door. Theo asks Amy if she wants to come with him to sit on the roof, Amy, who also looks sad, answers yes. Theo writes a "genuine" letter to Catherine, confessing his shortcomings and apologising. In the ending scene of the film, they both sit and look out over the beautiful sunrise and Amy leans her head against Theo's shoulder.

Conclusion

The film shows how people become increasingly vulnerable to "real" relationships, relationships with the Other. Relationships in the symbolic order, "Thirdness", mean that we accept the Other as an independent partner whose dialogue has a language rooted in a socio-cultural context that we can share, i.e., the experience is embodied. This shared context is the prerequisite for the words to function as symbolic signs, in a Peircean sense. Samantha mimics our language, but being without bodily existence, the machine cannot share our world without "parasitizing" on humans. The word's referents are difficult to determine, but Samantha's words serve as a mirror in which Theo can mirror himself. Theo seems to place his ego in this mirror and is thus alienated from himself in the identification with the mirror image. The result becomes a narcissistic picture of himself, in Lacan's sense. With Samantha's disappearance Theo loses a symbiotic relationship with an ideal-ego that has been charged with desire, *a*.

The relationship between humans and artificial intelligence raises difficult ethical issues, as the ongoing debate about social media shows. But it also raises important questions about how technology's achievements affect human life (Müller & Bostrom, 2016). Perhaps we will see an "attitude change" in the near future (Johansson, 2016) like the one taking place in the film where the machines outmatch human partners? The question about what (normal) love is also affects our approaches to sexuality, its preferences and how it is acted upon (Johansson, 2016, p. 111). But the issue that the film brings forth remains, an issue that already La Rochefoucauld touched upon in its maxims from 1664: has our preoccupation with our "passions" made us so full of ourselves that we cannot preoccupy ourselves with the object for our love (that is to engage in a relation with the Other)? (La Rochefoucauld, 1955 [1678], pp. 94-95).

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