

related to the correct and effective actualization of those possibilities.

5. Error, art and resistance

Emilio Vavarella is an Italian artist who has been researching the different roles the error plays in art and in technology for more than a decade. One of his central ideas is to observe technical errors closely, the errors not foreseen by the device, they “reveal the invisible technological mechanisms where that error originates” (p. 15) [8].

For him, an artistic practice that makes conscious use of technical error requires a deep comprehension of technology; thus, using and studying the technological error “implies indirectly a greater comprehension of the logics of technological power” (p. 15) [8]. He proposes, then, to go beyond unforeseen errors, using them as a key for interpretation: “on one side, by illuminating the changing and apparently invisible mechanisms of technological power, and on the other, proposing innumerable opportunities to find new resistance strategies, based on the exploitation of the cracks and weak spots” (p. 15) [8] of technoscience.

In *The driver and the cameras* (2012), one of the three pieces that integrate his Google Trilogy, Vavarella puts these ideas at play when exhibiting a series of images where the —usually invisible— faces of the drivers of the cars that construct the documentation for Google Street View are actually exposed. In fact, each Google Street View car is equipped with a Dodeca 2360 camera with eleven lenses, which is able to photograph in 360 degrees. Afterwards, the pictures are assembled to create a stereoscopic view, while an algorithm developed by Google erases people’s faces, whether they are on the street or driving the vehicles. In order to create his series, Vavarella searched for faces that had escaped Google Street View’s algorithm. The eleven portraits he isolated “immortalize the driver of the Google car”, as the artist affirms on his website: “His face is the symbol of an error yet at the same time shows a human side and, perhaps, the limits of technological power”.¹⁴

Another interesting piece for our analysis is *Pareidolia Digital*: a personal index of erroneous Facebook portraits (2012-2013). In order to make it, Vavarella uploaded to Facebook all the images in his personal file: 30.000 files taken since 2005. Next, he stopped on each of them and registered the names Facebook would suggest with its facial recognition, searching for possible errors within the program. Facebook recognized 193 times a face where there was none. The technology would recognize something random and seemingly trivial, like a piece of cloth, a hand, a wall or a plant, as a face. Once he had gone through the

process, Vavarella organized the mistakes into a “coherent system”,¹⁵ which is what constitutes the piece.

6. Some clues to wrap up

Having arrived at this point, I will only pause on some of the many topics this necessarily reduced panorama proposes to our thought.

First, I will recover the question in the title of this communication: these attempts to identify and decypher do not need —even if they pretend to— to postulate a new scientific, philosophic, anthropologic or psychological definition of man. These digital doubles constitute, as Michel Foucault would say, in *The Birth of Biopolitics* referring to the figure of homo oeconomicus, “the contact surface between the individual and the power that is exerted on them” (p. 292) [9].

They are what enables powers to act on actions (or reactions). They do not define us, they do not faithfully represent us, much less do they comprise everything we are or could be: they simply (and none of this is obviously simple) work. That is: they work predicting and inducting our eventual behaviors, revealing our data to possible interested parties and identifying our whereabouts with or without our consent.

Secondly, in order to face these procedures, artists have attempted to develop different tactics. We have seen three of them here: the critical appropriation of technologies, the anonymization strategies for trajectories online or in “real” life (from IP invisibilization to makeup and voluntary self-design); and the “profanation” through unexpected uses, in this case, technical error.

In the first case, through critical appropriation of technologies, to turn them against their real or potential use, in the hands of technological and governmental powers, promoting an “unblackboxing” of their procedures, or using their errors to uncover the capture mechanisms of individuals and individuations, as well as to reveal the presence of powers not always “inexistent” or “immaterial”, but human, all too human. They do so even assuming new risks, upon which it is important to keep reflecting.

In the case of anonymization strategies, searching to construct a new practice and a new pedagogy of distance and dissidence with regards to the attempts to capture and appropriate what is today called “prints”, singular traces of our ways of being in the world. And in the reappropriation strategies of the technological error, not with an intention to correct it, but to open up the possibility of something new: to recover the power of bodies and of thought, something that is never entirely available in a “database”, to raise the question once and again about what is, beyond and before our data, the singularity of the living.

Profanating, as the Italian Giorgio Agamben reminds us, meant to the Roman jurists “to return to the free use of men”

¹⁴ Source: <http://emiliovavarella.com/archive/google-trilogy/driver-and-cameras>. [Last access: November 2nd 2017]

¹⁵ Source: <http://emiliovavarella.com/archive/digital-pareidolia>. [Last access: November 2nd 2017]

