

# Democracy, Infocracy and the Challenges of Algorithmization to Democratic Rhetoric: The Digital Narcissism and Colonialism

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**Abstract:** The proposal is to establish, by the method of rhetorical rereading, the possible relations between what Han called infocracy, and its correlated complete digitization of life and the necessary and constitutive rhetoric of democratic practice in general, pointing to the important role that algorithms and the recent and sophisticated means of communication fulfill the constitution and manipulation of the subject and its process of subjectivation, no longer from the calculation of power over life, which Foucault called biopolitics, or even over death, which Mbembe defined as necropolitics, but rather, from an algorithmic calculation, complete, precise, and definitive, of power over human thought or desire and its capacity to dream, which Han called psychopolitics. In this new contemporary technology of governmentality, democratic governments and their rhetoric are late manifestations of the absolute control of information systems over our will that, now through an algorithmic rhetoric, subsumes that democratic rhetoric and turns citizens into consumers, artificially forging convenient understandings of ourselves and the world, reinforcing, at the same time, the narcissistic and self-centered appreciation of what is properly ours and the colonialist aversion to the other, naturalizing a superficial and inauthentic existence, where the criterion of value becomes how many "likes" or followers one can get. In this new "culture of likes", as Han called it, the libidinal energies move away from things and we start to live under the spell and fetish of information. Democracy here is only the delayed, fictional and hallucinatory rationalization and legitimization of an infocratic government that exercises its control from a digital panopticon.

**Keywords:** Infocracy, Democratic Rhetoric, Algorithmic Rhetoric, Psychoanalysis, Digital Colonialism, Digital Narcissism

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## 1. Introduction

"Our computers have difficulty understanding how homo sapiens speaks, feels and dreams. So we are teaching homo sapiens to speak, feel and dream in the language of numbers, which can be understood by computers" [23].

"We were given mirrors and we saw a sick world" [39].

With the advent of *hypercommunication* and the endless accumulation of data or petabytes, have the scientific method and traditional theories become obsolete today? This was the hypothesis advocated by Chris Anderson according to which the data are enough [2]. That is, according to him, any theory and, more specifically, a theory of law or democracy no longer makes any sense. In a previous context, models or theories

were bad, but some were more or less useful. But with the advancement of information storage capacity, this has changed radically. Since they appeared, computers have made data readable and patterns discoverable. In a second moment, this mass of readable data became, with the internet and its popularization, accessible. From the growing interaction with the system, notably through social networks, there was, in a third moment, a massive concentration of this data in single bases, now, capable of not only making it readable, accessible and concentrated, but also, available to large corporations, uninterruptedly armed, algorithmically, by the users themselves. Which led us to what Anderson called the petabyte age or the era of inexhaustible cloud storage capacity for an immeasurable amount of data (cloud).

In this new phase, theoretical models are no longer important and are seen as old ways of doing science and theorizing about something, leading us to deal with an understanding of the world that is independent of the actual correction of the models, as we traditionally did. “Forget taxonomy, ontology and psychology... With enough data, the numbers speak for themselves” [3] and are able, by themselves, to decide for us, with much more competence, regarding the fairer decisions, more democratic regimes, more republican institutions. In this new and apparently destined contemporary and post-factual context that Han dubbed the infosphere [20], reality is algorithmically governed by the transmission and frenetic consumption of information in an incessant flow of informational entropy feedback from the system itself, programmed to co-opt the user and his capacity for attention and decision-making and immersing him in an artificial and fictitious version of reality: the hyperreality. In this, libidinal energies revolve exclusively around information, pure and simple, and tend to move away from the way the world presents itself. In this infosphere, nothing is unavailable, nothing is postponed. All things are just a click away and everyone becomes, like spoiled children, accustomed to non-mediated satisfactions. The infosphere world is in a hurry. Boredom, reflection, idleness, so necessary for theoretical work, are no longer tolerated. We are constantly inebriated (sic) by the planetary pandemic of infomania that makes us increasingly dependent on digital drugs [22].

But all this would not be possible without the rhetorical and persuasive capacity of algorithms or, simply, the algorithmic rhetoric. It feeds the system with data at the same time that it adapts it, through digital persuasion, to our needs and desires created, for the most part, by the system itself through the same algorithms, giving rise to a post-factual culture of excitements [20] that captures, shapes and controls the very action of desiring [19]. It is the empire of infocracy and its algorithmic rhetoric that thus begins to coexist and compete with a properly democratic rhetoric that remains as such only as an argument for the legitimation of the political process in general, but which is incapable of being distinguished from the previous, otherwise hallucinatory. What we witness, more and more, is that, under the aegis of algorithms, there is the kidnapping or subsumption of democratic rhetoric by this digital and algorithmic rhetoric, that is, the increasingly exclusive and despotic government of algorithms and digital systems. Different from the disciplinary power that tames us, which makes us docile, the smart power does not make us docile, but dependent and dominates through absolute permissiveness. The very notion of “the good life” is psychopolitically manipulated by the algorithmic and infocratic government that massifies and delimits, through naturalization, normalization and discursive neutralization, the very possibility of saying [11, 6] and, with that, of the critical, rational, and rhetorical capacity of democratic participation in political decision-making. It is the death of politics, democracy and theory itself that is glimpsed here.

"Imperative for the production of meaning that translates into the incessantly renewed imperative of moralizing

information: better informing, better socializing, raising the cultural level of the masses, etc. Nonsense: the masses scandalously resist this imperative of rational communication” [6].

The link between infocracy and rhetoric is not reckless or gratuitous. The power of information and big data depends on genuinely persuasive agendas, efficient to the same extent that they are silent and repetitive, because only repetition reaches hearts [20]. It is therefore important here to think more slowly about the rhetorical-persuasive process itself in general, paying attention to the fact that understanding it helps us to elaborate more robust forms of persuasion, of course, but, above all, of resistance, by enabling us to not letting ourselves be persuaded so easily by what wants to control and submit us [24] To this end, an attempt was made, at first, to propose psychoanalysis, no longer mathematics or even law, as a model of theory in these infocratic times, due to its plasticity and permanent capacity to defamiliarize and revisit itself, giving rise to greater resistance to digital persuasion. In a second moment, a brief presentation was made of the Freud's concept of narcissism and narcissism of small differences, in a third moment, make its relation with the algorithmization of communication systems and with algorithmic rhetoric itself. The fourth topic talks about the epidemic of narcissism and alienation that sickens the world today and makes us less sensitive to others and their pain. And, finally, in the fifth topic, an attempt was made to point to one of the most serious consequences of this situation that presents itself to us: the growing sharpness of this narcissistic self-absorption in its digital form and its correlated ghettoization and hyperpolarization that translates into the expulsion of the distinct [21] which, with that, becomes radically dispensable for what we call here digital colonialism.

A brief explanation of the method adopted is also necessary: rhetorical rereading. It consists of revisiting or re-reading a theme or problem based on the categories or vocabularies of the rhetorical tradition, which is basically understood as a speech adapted from an orator to an auditor. Traditionally, the West, in general, has adopted an analytical paradigm, as defended by Toulmin [46]. That is, dialectical, topical and rhetorical reasoning [4, 5] were disregarded by a metaphysical and Enlightenment tradition that viewed all rhetorical discourse with distrust and even contempt. In the rhetorical rereading, the very disregard and contempt for rhetoric is itself considered rhetorical. That is, it also consists of a speech adapted from an orator to an auditor and that uses the rhetorical strategy of the denial of rhetoric as an argumentative strategy of exclusive maintenance of power-discourse. In other words, according to this method, all discourse is rhetorical because rhetoric is language itself and human nature [7, 35]. Making it explicit, through rereading or rhetorical analysis, is resistance. In this way, all the problems that were objects of theoretical investigation in the past can and should be revisited from the rhetorical rereading, implementing the previous, supposedly non-rhetorical approaches, due to the rhetorical concern of directing attention now to the idealized and supposedly universal audience by

behind every speech. As Perelman [38] suggests, each era, each society, each culture, etc., has a certain conception of a hypercritical assembly composed of reasonable minds, which he called the universal audience [38]. But such an audience is only universal for those who understand it that way, maintains Alexy [1]. Like priests preaching to believers, the discourse, previously seen as objective, is now understood as endowed with circumscribed validity to those who share the same assumptions. Thus, every rhetorical rereading parochializes or circumscribes the reach of discursive validity. Note that there is no invalidation or contestation of what is said, far from it. Only attention is drawn to the fundamental conditions that make speeches more or less persuasive.

## 2. Psychoanalysis as a Theoretical Model and Algorithmic Rhetoric

For centuries, mathematics was considered a model of knowledge and a criterion for the legitimacy of a given piece of knowledge. More recently, Perelman [38] and Toulmin [46] proposed law as a model of knowledge due to its intrinsic capacity for prudential conflict resolution. That is, it is not enough to blindly apply the law, but to consider all the factual elements in this application. However, both in the first proposal and in the second, the theory still has a status of permanence that, with the advent of petabyte age, becomes not only illusory, but above all irrelevant. Quite different from that, the perpetual principle of restlessness that, according to Foucault [10], determines psychoanalysis, makes it permanently review itself, preserving, like no other human science, its critical function, preventing it from to have the safe and thetic harbor of objectivity (ideologically established). Called by the French thinker as a true counterscience, psychoanalysis has the merit of going against the flow of the effort to positivize its epistemic bases. And it is precisely this permanent revisitation of its principles that brings it closer to rhetoric, understood as a form of reasoning in the midst of controversy, that is, when the premises from which one departs are endoxic and not apodictic or unequivocal.

In this way, both, psychoanalysis and rhetoric, share the delicious indigence of the thought that reflects in the middle of a lived world, with all its carnality and desire, smells and anguish felt in the womb of those who think; which makes, in a certain sense, psychoanalytic all rhetorical discourse and rhetorical all psychoanalytic discourse. Thus, the analyst's qualified listening should not be apprehended with any hasty, objective and impersonal designation, but inserted in the primordial totality of a living and mediated context where transferences and counter-transferences take place. The analyst supports the delusional discourse of a psychotic, the neurotic symptom and the perverse fetish not as a scientist or a theorist, endowed with apodictic knowledge, who seeks to objectively describe the causes for what is presented, but as a subject subject to the imposition of the desire that compels him to recognize himself as lacking. Desire, in this way,

remains unthinkable at the heart of thought [10], or perhaps more precisely, in psychoanalysis, desire remains indomitable and thus subtracts the mute ground beneath our feet and forces us to rethink it as moving and loquacious, as contingent and circumscribed, dangerously insecure and unstable, always provisional and vacillating. The floor we have is topical. Paraphrasing the gospel of John, Lefebvre maintains that "In the beginning was the topos" [31]; our conclusion, following the same reasoning, could not be any other but: and metaphysics became flesh and dwelt among us!

This embodied metaphysics now translates into an insurmountable contingency that starts to determine the very way of doing theory in general. Thus, psychoanalysis, understood as a model of knowledge, translates well this thought that takes flesh and lives among us and that is now born de-idealized and admittedly committed to its own place of birth. De-idealizing, thus, the constitution of a self in the increasingly common recognition of its crossings and estrangements avoids the digital numbness or, more precisely, the narcotization that reflection suffers from the mirroring that the algorithmization and growing digitization of life performs. Like true digital sirens, the algorithms want, with their song, to drown in the waters of the system all critical sense and all resistance to the imposition of their will that is capillarized by all communication means, through marketing, social networks and digital media, of companies in general and of political and financial institutions, of all levels of government and its intelligence agencies, of all human relations, from sexuality to friendship, from affection to resentment, etc. Today, everything is crossed and constituted by the permanent pornographic exposure of data [20]. It is what is conventionally called dataism or the generalized government of big data, which starts to occupy the same space traditionally occupied by the more traditional *visio dei* or divine vision. What made our society worse, according to Lanier, is the permanent centralization of power and wealth [30]. A world hyperconnected by hypercommunication is increasingly unequal, narcissistic and hyperpolarized, narcotized by a communicational frenzy that makes critical thinking impossible. Lanier maintains that the data doesn't cost anything, that is, having all the information of a society for free favors large companies or institutions that can better manage this information through giants computers and, thus, adapt products and services and address them to a specific part of society and the rest takes the risk!

This specular adaptation of the system to the user is, in Ingraham's words, a type of digital or algorithmic rhetoric [25] and that has permeated everything we do in the contemporary world. Analogous to the concept of rhetorical sensitivity that is wanted as almost universal [43], algorithmic rhetoric is also increasingly universalized, making us narcissistically see the other as nothing more than an extension of ourselves [8]. For Ingraham, there is no algorithm that is not also rhetorical [25].

"In a more complex sense, then, algorithms are best understood as rhetorical if we consider that their outcomes are not empirically inevitable but rather the product of a particular set of parameters designed strategically to lead toward a

particular kind of result. In other words, algorithms implicitly make a rhetorical argument for what factors matter in order to persuade their “audience” that their resultant outcome is the best, truest, or most important” [25].

Thus, an algorithmic rhetoric makes us see in the “objective” world nothing more than a little of ourselves, but as these operations are concealed in the system itself, as a supposedly impartial and impartial combination of binary codes, they are more similar to a grammar than a rhetoric itself [25], making its effects even more harmful by suppressing the user's critical capacity to ponder, more slowly and erotically, what is pornographically shown as factual, true, fair or good.

“Thinking about algorithms as rhetorical thus means recognizing that they are neither infallible nor disinterested, but rather motivated by quite specific epistemic standards that can radically delimit what counts as valid or meaningful in various spheres of our intellectual, social, and material world” [25].

### 3. Narcissism and Narcissism of Small Differences

If, in Freud's view, narcissism is self-absorption that takes oneself as an auto-erotic libidinal object [14], common in the early stages of life, but which remains present, effective and unrecognized even in adult life [14], we can conclude that every topic is, thus, narcissistic. Because it believes, within its scope and range, to be the best, most appropriate, most effective and persuasive. In our speeches is hidden what lasts in us until death: an unconfessed topical hope of being once again the center and core of the universe, as once, while still babies, we imagined ourselves [14]. This same self-attention, represented in the Greek myth at the moment when Narcissus sees his own image reflected in the water, forms late and always precariously the process of identification and constitution of what Freud called the ideal-ego or self-image. [14], as a translation of an effort (doomed to failure) to recover the narcissistic perfection of the past [14]. Thus, it becomes easier to understand how, for the father of psychoanalysis, this libido or love of the ego for its own ego is now directed towards this ideal-ego that childishly idealizes itself as completeness and perfection [14]. But, as there is no idealization without abstraction, the formation of an ideal increases the demands of the ego [14] which starts to repress and sublimate what is excessive in itself, as Freud wanted: “what it projects before himself as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal” [14], which makes narcissism, deep down, an indifference between what he/she is and how he/she idealizes himself/herself.

Quite opposed to the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, the narcissism of small differences, another type of narcissism [12], leads us to hate people from our environment or region due to another political, religious or any ideological option, other skin or hair color, other sex or sexual option, other origin or accent, or even another financial

condition. We are more likely to love those who are far away than our closest neighbors, revealing the irresistible impulse to distinguish ourselves and differentiate ourselves from those around us, analogous to a territorialism also present in the behavior of several species, from lions to giraffes, eagles or fish, the narcissism of small differences makes us disqualify and reject, often through violent means, someone who is a little different from us. Making it easier to talk about peace between nations in UN (United Nations) assemblies, when there are big differences, than with those similar people we meet every day, who vote for another candidate or cheer for another team.

“Every time two families are united by marriage, each considers itself superior or of better birth than the other. Of two neighboring cities, each is the other's most jealous rival; each small canton looks down on the others with contempt. Closely related races keep a certain distance from each other: the South German cannot stand the North German, the English cast all kinds of slander on the Scotsman, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese. We are no longer astonished that greater differences lead to an almost insurmountable repugnance, such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semitic, and the white races for colored people... by strangers with whom they have to deal, we can identify the expression of self-love, of narcissism” [13].

In this sense, we have the permanent propensity to turn into an enemy someone who is seen as another or another due to a small difference. These small differences form the basis of the hostile feeling of strangeness and refusal. Which only reveals an unconscious resentment for not being able to count on all the attention, affection and love that one had in the first years of life. The absolute suffering of birth is only compensated for by the equally absolute consolation obtained, but nowadays lost, from the mother's lap. Narcissism shows itself as a stubborn, resentful and infantile hope of getting back everything that was taken from him/her through the many frustrations he/she had to endure in order to mature and become an adult, thus recovering all the libidinal investment of those who fulfilled the paternal and maternal role and made life possible and tolerable in our early years.

### 4. Narcissism, Algorithmization and Algorithmic Rhetoric

We cannot talk about narcissism without mirroring. Today, the reflected image that reaches us does not come from the surface of the waters, as in the Narcissus' time, or even from a mirror, but from smartphones and the growing use of algorithms in the virtual universe in general, which are also capable of mirroring and, ever better, to reflect to ourselves the look we direct to the world, converting subjectivity into a objectivity that now tends to perceive itself as the most relevant, truest, fair and essential. It is the picture of the more and less world that HAN tells us about [18]. But, after all, what are algorithms? Even if we don't know what they are, they know everything about us [30, 23]. Almost as old as

mathematics itself, algorithms consist of a set of specific and appropriate processes that aim to carry out a certain task, which, therefore, is conditioned to the way in which these same instructions are carried out. Ingraham sustains:

"In its widest sense, then, to speak of algorithms is to speak of any set of instructions, with specific steps, that lead to certain results. On this view, a recipe for chocolate chip cookies is as much an algorithm as the directions you give to a friend to help her reach your house. Each offers instructions and steps—a procedure—that can be repeated indefinitely to achieve results with the same effectiveness" [25].

Widely used in computing in general, the recent algorithmization of digital media well expresses the non-neutral and ideological nature of these technologies and is configured today as an indispensable means for conveying all information and a large part of the production of theoretical and scientific knowledge. It is through this machinic logic of correlation of different data that one can predict the most recent interests of a certain user of any media, due to the incredible capacity of connection between different representational spectrums. What results, in practice, in a permanent and insistent adaptation of the system to the one who accesses it. Thus, movies, series, publicity in general and various links conveyed are directed specifically to that person, masking and hiding other information because certain results are desired or feared.

"An investigation of the unique contribution that these and other brilliant minds have made to develop the complexity of algorithms, from the days of stone tablets to these days of microchips, is beyond the reach of this chapter. My sights have rather been on the algorithm as we know it today, in order principally to show that we will not know it as well as we may suppose until we know it as rhetorical" [25].

Ingraham is very correct if we understand that rhetoric is adapted speech [38], as we said, and that persuasion can occur by all means, including music and perfume [38]. That is why he says: no algorithm exists that is not also rhetorical [25]. Thus, the so-called algorithmic or digital rhetoric consists of a powerful contemporary means of uninterrupted and epideictic persuasion that makes us dive even deeper into ourselves and into our own narcissistic and circumscribed universe, as it makes us believe, more and more, that there is only the personalized information we receive, the website we visit or the movie we watch according to what we believe or like best, generating a greater tendency to universalize our particular perspectives, implementing radicalisms that can be political, religious, and ideological in general. Favoring the appearance of circumscribed and tribal reports with pretense of absolute, uncircumscribed or atopic validity (which would not depend on the place, the conditions of their utterance, etc.) This last form of rationality gives way to the digital rationality of the system that listens like no other to human desires to make them deaf to the desires of other humans [22]. In these terms, the algorithmization of digital media translates it thus, in a permanent and effective rhetorical-discursive adaptation to the user based on what is known about him/her through the profiling and its absolute control of a digital panopticon [20]

and through the explicitness of his/her interests in his/her previous accesses.

"It would be beneficial to think more about algorithms as digital rhetorics with terrific power to sway what counts as knowledge, truth, and material reality in the everyday lives of people across an astonishing range of global communities in the twenty-first century" [25].

What is true and what is reality about ourselves and the world starts to depend on what will be algorithmically informed by the system. Algorithms have the status of truth-makers [25], since they are, hidden and covertly, what make certain versions of reality have more importance than many others, translating well that soft annihilation that Han tells us by the violence of the consensus generated by digital rhetoric [18]. Making our self-esteem now depend on the number of followers of our profiles and the likes we receive. Reckless and without the critical awareness of a psychoanalytic posture that permanently reviews itself, we expose ourselves helplessly to all sorts of autopoietically available manipulation [25], we begin, without realizing it, to gradually withdraw into ourselves, to see and understanding the world and ourselves from the centralization of our parochialities, desiderabilities and idiosyncrasies. It's the bubbles, the ghettos, the digital tribes that have their own identity now dependent on these reports. As the poet wanted, "mirrors were given to us and we began to see a sick world" [39]. It has always been possible to think of rhetoric from the perspective of desire understood as a metonymy of all meaning [28], that is, to think of it as a narcissistic effort to colonize other identities. All rhetoric is, therefore, narcissistic, as we said, but the algorithmization of information, insofar as it radicalizes the anchoring and centralization of a given identity, only makes it clearer to see the hidden autoerotic character of all discourse and its permanent refusal of love or of object cathexes [14].

"While these automated bots listen to the input users give them, they nevertheless act persuasively by processing input in a particular way: a way that unavoidably privileges certain assumptions about what qualities it thinks matter most in order to explain a user's tastes. Though their procedures may be linear and irrefragable, algorithms like this act rhetorically the moment they make these privileged qualities matter" [24].

## 5. Narcissistic Epidemic, Alienation and Digital Narcissism

We live today in a narcissistic epidemic [45]. The excessive use of smartphones has radicalized this illness in all of us. There were 2,13 billion Facebook users in 2018 [26]. Now there are 2.963 [27] who, in the overwhelming majority, accessed their accounts through cell phones and who had their data collected by third parties [44]. Long ago, Gadamer said that the other is shown from (what is) our own [17]. That is, the otherness is always seen from the sameness of who sees, as Castro [8] also maintains. Excessive attention from oneself to oneself inflates the self, silences otherness and diminishes the

world, impoverishing it, forming bubbles, tribes and ghettoizing subjectivities that are constituted from the refusal of diversity and antipathy towards what is different. It is what Han called the hell of the same and the expulsion of the different [21]. Thus, intolerant and full of certainty, we strive to convert otherness into sameness, under penalty of all sorts of hostility and exclusion, which gradually become the unconscious reason for every saying!

"Transparency and hypercommunication rob us of any protective interiority. Yes, we voluntarily renounce it and expose ourselves to digital networks that penetrate, illuminate and pierce us. Digital overlighting produces a latent anguish, which refers not to the negativity of the other, but to an excess of positivity. The transparent hell of the equal is not free from anguish. Distressing is precisely the ever stronger murmur of the same" [21].

On March 23, 2016, in yet another interaction experience between artificial intelligence and humans, Tay, as Microsoft's AI was known, became, on the same day, in less than 24 hours, racist, homophobic, xenophobic and sexist. Defending Hitler and his henchmen against all Jews, it had been created to converse through Twitter with people in a fun way and was algorithmically programmed to correspond and interact according to what was tweeted [34]. What is clear is that, in this very current example, narcissism and, more specifically, the narcissism of small differences becomes digital and makes us act almost always from a negative projection that establishes, algorithmically and imaginarily, in the other what we feel bad in ourselves and do not recognize it, making hatred of the slightly different the only hope of constituting ourselves. Which may explain not only why homicides and bodily harm for futile reasons have become so common with digitization, but all sorts of violence, aggressiveness, hate speech and hyperpolarization. In a culture of the positivity of the same, of the hell of the same, any deviation is reason for a radical marginalization and disqualification that symbolically wants to be a symbol of the annihilation of the one or the other who dares to be slightly different. It is the cancellation culture in which people kill, attack or offend simply because the victim dares to think for himself and gives a different opinion, has a different skin color, has a different gender, speaks a different language, votes on another candidate, supports another team, lives in another neighborhood or attends another school, etc. The hell of the same happens because low self-esteem is circumvented and supported by the worsening of low self-esteem in the other, as a psychic correspondent to an initial failure that constitutes ourselves through a digital narcissism that precariously seeks to turn back on itself and constitute itself digitally while another. As Lacan wanted, narcissistic identification is identification with the other [29].

That is, the French psychoanalyst points here to a fundamental alienation in the constitution of ourselves and its relationship with primary narcissism [29]. For him, "if a unit comparable to the "I" does not exist at the origin... the autoerotic drives, yes" [29]. There is not an *Ur-Ich* or a *petit-homme-dans-l'homme* [29]. And it is this original

indigence of the narcissistic process that constitutes the self that leads us to place all hope of identity in the feeling of hatred of the different, because it is assumed and wanted as not being, as if the end of the hatred of the other from which it is nourished would correspond to the end of itself [33]. Making the narcissism of small differences the basis of the constitution of the we and the other [16] and, in times of algorithmization, digital narcissism as the basis of all sorts of intolerance, prejudice and lack of empathy. The Aryan myth of the pure race would be nothing without the corresponding anti-Semitic hatred. In this sense, speaking of an algorithmic rhetoric that implements in us this lack to be postponed and repressed makes us see better how the dialectic between these two fundamental drives in us, a *Libido-triebe* and an *Ich-triebe* [29], makes us what we are and act prejudicedly as we do. Prejudice is narcissistic and, with digital media, it has become the basis of a radical tribalization that threatens or even makes democracy impossible.

As a true prophet, Gordon Allport knew how to scrutinize in 1954, like no other, the origin of all prejudice, and consequently, the formation of subgroups within the same society [2, 41, 42]. He maintains that inclusion and cohesion are paradoxically opposed. An in-group or inclusive subgroup is less cohesive. A cohesive group is less inclusive. His fundamental question is: how can we have an inclusive and cohesive social group in which its members respect and even come to love each other? Or, in other words, how to reduce or eliminate prejudice? This is not the place to go into his theory of intergroup contact or into the Schiappa's interpretation of Allport, the parasocial contact hypothesis. Both, Allport and Schiappa, aim to minimize prejudice which has been the subject of debates and theorizations over the last decades. We only intend here to point out that intergroup hatred and prejudice, for the first American thinker, have their basis in that same narcissism which Freud called small differences and which, with algorithmization, tends to become more radical, forming more and more cohesive and exclusive bubbles and ghettos [2]. Apparently, Lanier is right when he says that digitization has made the world worse. Our hope is to psychoanalytically recognize this process and, in this recognition, minimize its effects, making us more available for the anti-narcissistic acceptance of the other as other, as Castro [8] also defended, respecting their spaces, their big or small differences.

## 6. Infocracy and Digital Colonialism

"As for non-Western humans, one is quietly led to suspect that in matters of the world, they are only modestly endowed. We, only we, the Europeans, are the complete and finished humans, or rather the grandiose unfinished ones, the fearless explorers of unknown worlds (*plus ultra!*), the accumulators of worlds, the millionaires of worlds, the "shapers of worlds". As you can see, Western metaphysics is the *fons et origo* of all kinds of colonialism... But the wind turns, things change, and otherness always ends up eroding and making the most solid walls of identity crumble... minor anthropology will make

small multiplicities proliferate - not the narcissism of small differences, but the anti-narcissism of continuous variations: against consummated or finalized humanisms, an 'endless humanism'" [8].

Traditionally understood as the control of a power over distant lands, peoples and economies [32], colonialism has always been seen as the power of a Nation-State over another State or territory that strongly outlines its own way of existing and being. In this way, goods of all kinds are exploited and often violent and inhumane means are used, such as slavery or forced labor analogous to slavery, as was the case in the South American and French and Belgian colonies in the Congo [37]. The exploration of precious metals and stones, rubber, sugar, coffee, cattle, tobacco and wood is well known, representing economic cycles of production that exclusively enriched the metropolis and impoverished, even more, the conquered and subjugated regions. The historical debt of the colonizers is enormous and is still outstanding today. But one thing about this theme is unequivocal: the direct fruit of colonialist domination is alienation [9].

However, today that same alienating effect of former colonization is dispersed and felt in multiple directions and different meanings with the advent of technology and communication giants, with the remote manipulation of hackers who, from incognito places, are able to influence state decisions by everyone, and, finally, with cultural and capitalist globalization. Previously colonizing States also tend to be subtly subjugated to the interests of others in this great destined process of globalization and planetary communion of spaces and their digital, economic, political and social interconnections. It is the infocracy that starts to rule the world [22] and makes democratic governments impossible. As Castro well prophesied, the winds indeed seem to have changed direction and today we feel the effects of a new form of global government and colonialism that no longer start from a large center or a specific metropolis, but are related to the political and costs generated by the growing process of algorithmization of the world and the radicalization of narcissism in its digital form. The result of infocratic government is a new model of colonialism, even more perverse and inhumane: a digital colonialism.

"Consider the U.S. stock market. Our markets are no longer operated by a bustling floor of frenetic traders, waving their arms and papers, shouting out, "Buy! Buy! Buy!" (or even, more grimly, "Sell! Sell! Sell!"). Today, algorithms run the market quietly, coolly, and faster than you can ever imagine. Sixty percent of all trades now "are executed by computers with little or no real-time oversight from humans". In a global political economy that encourages free market competition, algorithms offer an indisputable advantage, making it possible to execute automated trades both faster than others and based upon the interpretation of enormous data stores. The rhetorical *topoi* that contributed to this takeover have tacitly mobilized such values as speed, consistency, repeatability, and the logical indubitability of quantification in order essentially to make a case that algorithms are a better, more competitively viable way to operate Wall Street today. The more investment

bankers, hedge fund managers, and other powerful industry players utilize algorithmic automation to broker their financial decisions, the more others will have to do so to keep up. In this case, as in countless others, algorithms thus exhibit a built-in capacity to sustain and regenerate their own authority" [25].

Thus, Ingraham maintains that there are three rhetorical-algorithmic registers operating in the world: a macro-rhetorical level that performs and manipulates algorithmically and unprecedentedly all information conveyed on the planet, composing an epistemological aspect of this type of rhetoric; a meso-rhetorical level, which translates the properly technical register as the *tekné* of the ancients and which starts to compose our world and how we exist in it. Hence the American author links this rhetorical record to ontology. And finally, the micro-rhetoric that consists of the daily and interpersonal discursive use that would be, for him, related to axiology. It is from the first, the macro-rhetoric, that we can extract this new form of government and digital colonialism, more subtle and, in this sense, perhaps more efficient than any other because it encompasses the entire planet by the subtle diffusion of specific visions of the world, and of the what we know about it. The planetary infocracy is already a reality today, which merely makes apparent the clash between freedom of access to information and its control by national and international organizations. The national control and service sub-systems themselves become infocratically governed by what is purposely made available by the information macro-systems that make up, in turn, autonomous and algorithmic systems for massive data collection. Thus, the eventual remote interruption of services or their continuity is related to their previous automation made possible, ultimately, by the algorithms. This allows predicting, and influencing certain emotions, valuations, and behaviors [36]. Emotions and Elections, says the journalist, referring to the Russian bots that would have influenced both the British referendum on Brexit and the American elections. The alienating and controlling winds of infocracy and colonialism in the so-called postcoloniality seem to have, in fact, changed, and today we see its digital and inverted version, in which the exercise of control, or authority over people, or over another territory starts to disperse, and spread across the planet, without having a specific colonizing State in control of this process.

This algorithmic and infocratic macro-rhetoric now encompasses all of our lives, and as it adapts to us effectively, and silently, it mirrors us to ourselves, implementing its narcissistic-digital effects on a planetary basis increasingly monologous and undemocratic spirit. As we said, we have come to see exclusively more and more of ourselves in the world. This gives rise to hyperpolarizations, because, if, as we said with Gadamer, the other is shown from (what is) proper to us, everything that clashes or is in dissonance with our moral or political perceptions is a scandal and the translation of a great and intolerable error. Our opinion is always the true and superstitious the other's [30, 23]. Or if you are left, or right, against, or in favor of a candidate, against, or in favor of specific religious conceptions, ideologies, types of government, or judicial, and public decisions, against, or in

favor of science, or reason, partisan of this, or of that philosophy, etc. As if we were saying: either it's my way or highway!! No chances for the agreement, for healthy dialogue, for rhetorical and democratic weighting of the reasons for a debate, this impoverishes interpersonal relationships because false rivalries are created between different groups, or subgroups through which their supporters, in name of their ideals, values or worldviews, they are even willing to kill or be killed. Without the proper understanding that it is the data that generated the conflict. That is, in times of complete digitization of life, discord (*Eris* or *Polemos*) is no longer the father and mother of all things, but rather, paraphrasing Heraclitus, *data are the father and mother of everything*, as Thanatos' cruelty seems grow to the same extent that the certainty, always resentful, of the one who sees in the world exclusively the mirror of himself/herself also grows [15, 16].

And now, with this digital, planetary and epidemic narcissism, intensified and radicalized by algorithmization and infocracy, and which is the cause of a digital colonialism, we have lost the ability to dialogue democratically, and to do politics properly, and to understand the other as other because every true dialogue hurts our narcissism, as it requires, from those who effectively dialogue, the willingness to eventually learn, review starting points, change, recognize mistakes, etc. The rise of new forms of political extremism, Nazi-fascism, totalitarian governments and immigrant crises appear as clear symptoms of this digital narcissistic/colonialist binomial in the second decade of the 21st century. It is the new form of nihilism [22]: the more inclusive, the less cohesive and the more prone to fragmentation and identity crises. The more cohesive, the less inclusive and the more prejudiced towards what is different, preventing the advent of a political community of listeners [21], the only hope of having an effectively democratic government. Anyone who does not deal psychoanalytically with the very desire that permanently evicts us from ourselves [28] is always ready to hate and is always slow to understand, to accept the difference and to coexist. Narciso only dialogues with himself and with his peers who reinforce his limited and resentful view of things. It is the world that becomes smaller as the self is inflated to exhaustion, to the point where nothing exists beyond itself, forging what Han called perception without the negativity of the other and which leads us toward an unilateral absolutization of the positive power [18] in which the state of normality becomes a totalitarian state [18] and we all become killable life [18]. Dataism does without politics and democracy itself. In this digital post-democracy, the government is in the hands of an algorithmic general will [22] that nazifies the world and puts us back in a kind of digital cave where we go back to seeing only the shadows of ourselves and taking them for objective reality.

"These vernacular rhetorics are powerful conversations, small discourses, circulating among ordinary people in everyday life to shape public opinion and inspire political action. Even if "the algorithm" never comes up explicitly as a topic of conversation in vernacular publics (it remains a fairly specialized subject, after all), citizens with no institutional

power still contribute to the macro-rhetorics that position algorithmic technologies as desirable and nonpareil on a variety of measures. Our personal computers, cell phones, tablets, and all the services their applications provide, are made possible by algorithms on which we are increasingly made to depend. When algorithms now write AP news articles; when they help us book a plane ticket, help air traffic controllers map the flight patterns, and help pilots fly the planes; when they navigate our way through customer service calls ("For English press one, para Español oprima el numero dos"); when they deliver us customized banner ads on the Internet; when they recommend movies or books we're likely to enjoy; when they predict everything from the weather to *coup d'etats* to the outcome of sporting events—and when we let them do all these things and more, whether we relish their possibilities or are wholly oblivious to their existence, we contribute to the macro-rhetorical realm that sustains the algorithm's influence" [25].

Our hopes of finally having a better world, more understanding, inclusive and peaceful, now reside again in a reinterpretation of the myth of Narcissus of the ancients. If the nymph Echo was cursed with repeating words, Narcissus was also cursed with the curse that he would live until he could see himself. Understanding how antipathy, prejudice and even hatred of what is a little different from us are born in us can lead to an end to the harmful effects of this digital narcissism in us, which is at the base of several current human conflicts and profound intolerance and which it has been ratified and intensified by the subsumption of democratic and republican rhetoric to algorithmic rhetoric. The old and good maxim "know yourself" allied to the poet's speech that points out that "narcissus finds ugly what is not a mirror" (Caetano Veloso) continue to be good advice for those who do not allow themselves to be persuaded by a digital, everyday and global rhetoric, which increasingly it blinds more by showing exclusively in the world a little more of ourselves.

## 7. Conclusion

Each era has its fundamental illnesses, teaches Han [18]. In our time, it seems that we are sick of algorithms and their capacity to mesmerize billions around their own image reflected in smartphones and in the media, which have bequeathed us an epidemic of narcissism and inhuman colonialism with a digital face, and which thus mirror for us nothing much beyond what we know and idealize about ourselves. We live, as Han also teaches, a pandemic of selfies [22] because we are immersed in the *infosphere* that heightens this self-centrism and self-reference, inserting us into self-absorbed and autistic bubbles and preventing the very possibility of the advent of the other. If the rhetorical rereading of what is presented to us draws attention to the problems of adapting the speeches of an orator to an idealized auditor, it is important, therefore, to abandon the previous perspective that departed from the prerogative of the first over the second. In other words, good rhetoric teaches us the importance of adopting a Copernican revolution in speeches in

general, that is: *permanently showing the eccentric character of every saying*. That is, the formation of a political community of listeners, as suggested, would depend on the radicalization of the rhetorical reading of these phenomena to the point of migrating from a traditional protagonism of the orator to the protagonism of the listener [40], because, normally, an attitude was adopted that sees the one who speaks as endowed with the privileged place of saying true, fair, good and beautiful. Thus, it is up to us to effectively prioritize democratic rhetoric to the detriment of algorithmic rhetoric based on a posture, as Castro wanted, anti-narcissist [8], and inclusive, which is capable of psychoanalytically resisting the dictates of macro-rhetoric and its pure positivity and its inhuman disappearance of all negativity of the other, of the different, of the distinct.

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