

# THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE INVISIBLE THIRD MEME

## THE SEEN & THE UNSEEN

First of all, it's important to know that, when we're navigating the net, our eyes are capturing the information we're reading but also capturing a lot of information we are not specifically reading. This happens all the time, whether we're reading information on the Internet or observing an open field landscape. To make it more clear: when we read the news on a digital paper, our eyes are capturing the words we're reading but also capturing all the information that is around these words: ads, pop-ups, gifs, pictures, colors, shapes, other headlines, etc. This means that a huge amount of information we're not aware of is stored in our brains, unconsciously. And, as you know, that it's unconscious doesn't mean it's less important, it only means we are not aware of it. In fact, it has always been important, and more since Freud started to investigate it. And you will know that it was, precisely, Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, who introduced Freud theories into the United States but he did not only that: this Freud's nephew used his uncle's theories about the unconscious to build an economical empire being the first to use subliminal manipulation in advertising.



Of course, I am not saying at all that there is subliminal information in everything we read on the Internet. That would be too conspiranoid and absolutely false. But I just wanted to recall this example to remark how important it is to have an active experience when navigating the net, more than having a passive experience (which happens frequently, when we're absorbed completely until almost physically disappear and we're caught in a kind of rapture, in those moments – absorbed into the mechanism – in which we're specially vulnerable not because of the certainty that there's someone behind the Internet trying to manipulate us – although maybe there is – but because of the ways in which simply experiencing the Internet is shaping our brains and our perception).

## BRAIN MECHANISMS UNDERLYING THE BRIEF MAINTENANCE OF SEEN & UNSEEN SENSORY INFORMATION

So, in first place, we have to have in mind – as neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene says – that the definition and empirical measurements of conscious and unconscious visual perceptin remain a topic of high controversy. But it seems the results of Dehaene's study points in the same direction I was suspecting: that the brain accumulates unseen information (in this case, when navigating the net) unconsciously<sup>1</sup>.

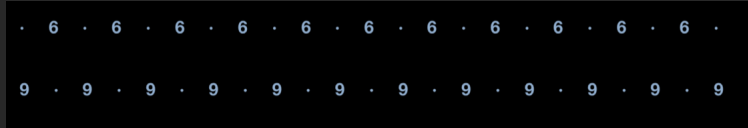
## DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INFORMATION & THE WEAKENING OF THE NOTION OF PRIVACY

Also we have to think about the different levels of information we're consuming at the same time: for instance, on Facebook, we can read in the same newsfeed international news (for example: a country bombing another country and the number of injured civilians) just above a comment of a friend sharing a very intimate experience or thought about something. It's precisely at this point when I think *the* notion of privacy – meaning the invisible wall that separated public things (things that involved everyone in a community) from private things (things that involved just yourself or your nearest ones) – gets cracked.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanislas Dehaene, Brain mechanisms underlying the brief maintenance of seen and unseen sensory information, Neuron, 2016. <https://www.cell.com/neuron/fulltext>

Related to these different levels of information consumed at the same time, I wonder if my brain stores this information in the right place, let's say, in the right drawer: for instance, will my brain store the public information in the public information drawer? or will my brain store the private information in the private information drawer? because if it doesn't, if my brain does not store the information received in the right drawer, most possibly a semantic deformity will unconsciously take place.



### MEMETIC SUPERPOSITION

**S**uperposition is a phenomenon that I've been perceiving lately, occurring in the form of memetic<sup>2</sup> simultaneity and organised around a kind of pendulum movement. What does this mean?

When using social networks, there exists a pendulum pattern that accelerates and decelerates but never stops. So, for a while, I was able to recognize that the same day in my newsfeed, when information appeared about, let's say, X there also appeared information related with K. Days after, when in my newsfeed there appeared information about H, there also appeared information about Y. We're talking, therefore, about a synchronicity or superposition of memes<sup>3</sup>. The reason, I think, for the occurrence of this phenomenon is the algorithm that the network – in this case Facebook – is using. I wonder then about what the consequences may be of our reality being shaped by algorithms. And I say 'shaped' because, at this point, it's useless to defend that our interaction with the Internet should be understood as a reality apart from what we call real life. This is not true: the Internet is also a part of our real life and it's producing changes in our neuronal plasticity and perception.

### CAMUS & TRUMP

**L**et's say every time I saw a picture of Albert Camus, I also saw a picture of Donald Trump. On one hand, to find repeatedly a memetic superposition like this one, when there is an apparent antagonistic interrelation between these two memes, makes me think that I am heading to a discursive ending. And I have the feeling that this discursive ending can be a fatal ending given that the memes are antagonistic. And in front of this discursive ending I have to decide if tacking into another direction -to avoid the ending and continue with the discourse- or, on the contrary, keep on walking in the same direction and take the risk of generating this fatal ending that I have called *discursive paralysis*, *discursive explosions* or *collapses of meaning*.

## ARE WE ALL JUST NUMBERS?

Also, a superposition of memes like this one implies a symmetry but these kinds of symmetries are false: could it be true that Camus and Trump are symmetric?

What I think happens is that the algorithm works by approximation, the relation between things doesn't have to be exact or precise and our brain just fills the gap that exists between these approximations and the precise.

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<sup>2</sup> Understanding by meme the concept Richard Dawkins developed in 1976 maning a unit of cultural transmission.

So having this in mind, the superposition of the two memes have to lead, indisputably, to deformities of meaning. In the first place, this may occur because forced analogies are established: if every time we see X we also see K, we will end up searching for connections – conscious or unconsciously – between X and K even if the meanings of X and K are far one from the other.

And how does this deformity come to be?

What happens is that the interrelation between X and K generates, necessarily, a third meme, a third unit of meaning born from the relation between X and K although this unit of meaning won't materialize in other places than in our brain, unconsciously. So from the mix between an Albert Camus meme and a Trump meme a new imaginary creature is born in our unconscious: a creature, for example, called... Trampus?



### THE THIRD TONE

**W**hen I explained the subjects of this essay to a musician I know, he told me about a psychoacoustic phenomenon that has been used to illustrate what I'm trying to explain in terms of this superposition of memes. The phenomenon is called the combination tone or the third tone or the Tartini tone (because it was discovered by Giuseppe Tartini).

The combination tone is like a ghost tone, a tone we cannot determine physically exists or if it's only a trick of perception. It happens that when playing two notes at the same time, a third note can be perceived without being played anywhere and this happens because of the result of the difference between the frequencies of the two notes that we're playing.

### HOW IS LANGUAGE DAMAGED?

**S**o a similar thing happens with the superposition of two memes, unconsciously causing a third ghost-meme to appear. The difference between this and the combination tone is that this third tone doesn't damage anything or anyone, as far as I know, while the third meme can indeed damage, and what can be damaged is language.

How is language damaged?

1. *meme X* and *meme Y* meet and create a third meme.
2. This third meme is a semantic deformity because the analogy established between the two memes is not real or is a simplification.
3. This semantic deformity is stored in our brains unconsciously.
4. We give back to the collective narrative this semantic deformity through language, by talking, writing, thinking.

5. We deform language by adding the semantic deformity stored in our brain into the collective narrative.

This is how language becomes imprecise. And this imprecision provides the occasion for misunderstanding and manipulation.

### ALTERING THE NARRATIVE

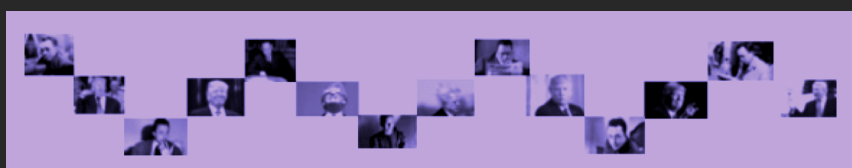
If the relation between *X* and *K* is happy, if an harmonious meeting between the two memes takes place, the result will be a third meme of an integrative and non-violent tendency and the result of that is that the discourse will continue its way. If the relation between *X* and *K* is unhappy, if a crash takes places between the two meanings, a collapse of meaning may occur and what derivatives from it is this third meme that will tend to conflict and that can lead to -as said before- *discursive paralysis* or to *discursive explosions or collapses*.

So, in both cases micro-realities are generated and, once assimilated by our brains, are projected again by us altering the narrative, that means that once that what it comes to us from the outside is digested – in this case, a semantic deformity – we give back to the collective narrative the result of this digestion through projection, having in mind that projection is language too.

### THE PENDULUM

Maybe it's the pendulum pattern in itself what should be called into question. Without this pendulum pattern the synergies that are generated between the both meanings of a memetic superposition would be never insistent, both meanings would never meet through this constant pattern and, therefore, the energy that could generate an insistent antagonistic synergy would dissipate.

It would be as if this pattern produced an itinerary, causing two enemies to meet every two days on the same street-corner at night, at the same time. Intuitively, the more they meet, the greater the probability that a fight is going to start between them. But if they meet once in a while instead, the probabilities of that fight substantially decrease. Yet the contrary would demonstrate this principle equally as well.



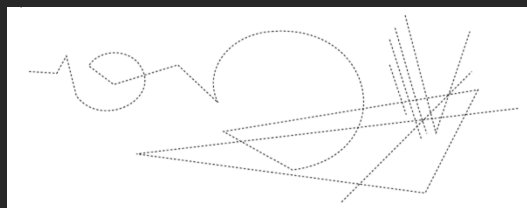
### HEAVEN/HELL: WHAT'S THE RELATION THEN BETWEEN CAMUS & TRUMP?

Most possibly, what relates Camus and Trump may be that both are living in *hell*. But we should clarify and say that they are living in *hell* in different ways: while Trump enjoys ad maximum, let's say, the *hellishness*, what makes the existence of Camus a *hell* is having to deal with the consequences of coexisting with someone like Trump.

Entering the game of *Heaven* and *Hell*, though, means to be caught -again- in the traps of binarism: in a great and infamous simplification exercise, given only two options we're seduced to make us believe that there is no other option possible than choosing between these two options. It seems there is no option to not choosing or to imagine a third option or, even, multiple options or, why not, infinite options, as many options as possible perceptions. The one who does not choose eternally walks, wanders borderline, marginal, intermediate landscapes, is the one who does not have a home and that, in Judeo-Christian terms, would be the soul that is waiting *ad infinitum* a destiny in the Purgatory.

And this makes me think about Bartleby. When we think about Bartleby, the guy who preferred not to do the things he should be doing, we maybe think of the state of mind of a perpetual wanderer. We know that Bartleby preferred no to do the things he should have been doing but we don't know in which place Bartleby locates himself. It is, of course, a place located somewhere since the negation of Bartleby has a real consequence, but it is, definitely, not the place where the game is taking place, although the consequence of his negation - as I said- has an impact in this game anyway.

But let's be honest, *Heaven* and *Hell* need each other, one could not exist without the other. The constant battle between one force and the other does not know (and never will) a conclusion. Neither of the forces is interested in it because the extinction of one of them would carry the immediate extinction of the other. Therefore, as we cannot -it seems, for the moment- escape from this binary game, it's more about finding a balance between one force and the other. That's why they talk about destabilization as a tactic to break the balance between these two forces. It is precisely the organisation of this binary game in a pendulum pattern that makes us used to the mechanism.



## INDUCTION OF THE IMAGINARY

**A**nd talking about destabilization and manipulation and now that it seems is true that some hidden squads are hired by an invisible hand to post information of all kind on what we now call post-truth era, I don't think the idea of the possibility of an induction of the imaginary to modulate our perception is a mad idea at all, in first place, because this has been one of the main uses of television too, since the television was inside every home. I wonder, for instance: would we be having the feeling of a climate of cold war without the Internet or the media wars we're witnessing everyday? How does this induction of the imaginary work?

Let's imagine I am powerful enough to hire people to post pictures of Hitler and Stalin on the Internet at the same time for a period of time.

If they do their job properly, the Internet will go plenty of pictures of Hitler and Stalin.

If the Internet is suddenly awash with pictures of Hitler and Stalin, what would you think about?

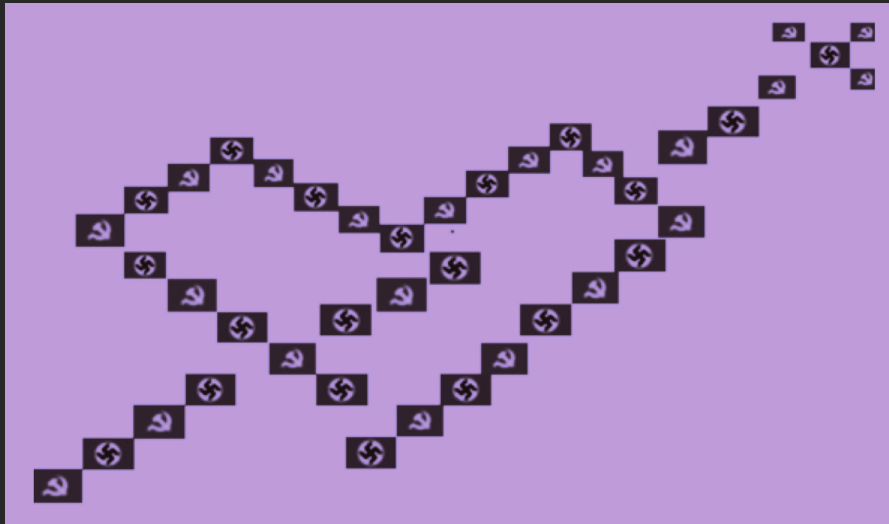
You would probably think about WWII.

Nazism, communism, the holocaust, gulags, cold war and all that's related to Hitler and Stalin. Therefore, we could say I am inducing this imaginary into your brain.

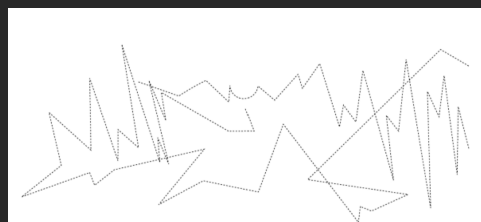
So if millions of people see pictures of Hitler and Stalin at the same time millions of people will think about WWII, Nazism, communism, etc.

What I think is that there is a high percentage of possibilities that what we're all thinking at the same time will finally come true by the simple fact that we're all thinking about it at the same time, through projection.

And if it finally doesn't come true, we're giving space enough to speculation and we should never forget that behind the Internet there are lots of investors trying to gain money and it's the re-investment and the circulation of this money what make a lot of things come true in what we call real life.



To say it more clearly: we are what we eat, our conscious is, in most part, the result of our unconscious. That we are, in most part, the result of our unconscious could seem something obvious at this point of the story but it seems it's something unnoticed in our everyday lives and the more unnoticed the easier it is to be manipulated. So it's not that we have to be completely paranoid about it but just to be a little bit aware when we're exposed to the media and to the Internet.



## AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF MEANING

**A**nd what happens after a collapse of meaning? In the shock of two antagonistic memes and once a collapse of meaning has occurred, unpredictability reigns. This would be – as far as I can see and understand – the principle of *accelerationism*, to search for the collapse of meaning that lead to a period of unpredictability. Within this tactic a goal is achieved: in first place, to generate a crisis in strategic points of the binary predictability and, in second place, that this same crisis generates unpredictability. And the more unpredictable the more difficult to control.

## LIBERATION FROM MECHANISM: IF ALL THIS IS TRUE & EXISTS, WHO AM I BUT ONLY SOMEONE BEING UNCONSCIOUSLY GUIDED TO FIND OUT?

**I**t's in periods of unpredictability when improvisation takes place, that means the non-mechanism. Therefore, we could understand the improvisation as a way of breaking the pendulum pattern that favors the liberation from mechanism.

