



V torek, 17. 10. 2023, ob 18.15

bo imel

Prof. Dr. Tok Thompson

Univerza v Južni Kaliforniji, ZDA

v okviru ERC projekta DEAGENCY (№ 101095729) in predavanj
Evropska tradicijska verovanja
v predavalnici P2, OEIKA, Zavetiška 5,
predavanje z naslovom

Information Technologies and the Afterlife

[Informacijske tehnologije in posmrtno življenje]

Vabljeni!



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission





Povzetek

This lecture discusses how modern informational technologies are changing how people view themselves, their lives, and the deaths. As technology has become more and more a part of our everyday social lives, so too has it become increasingly connected with our afterlife. Cyber realms are increasingly haunted. Debates rage on topics such as transhumanism, android souls, AI mediums, and cyber ghosts.

Many of these topics are not new, but rather very old topics reinvigorated for contemporary times. Spirit mediums, for example, have long played a role in many, many cultures in their communications with the dead, yet there is something quite different when the medium is not human: are our souls instead based in our biology? (and, if so, do non-human animals have souls? Do plants?). Traditions are reworked, yet, in doing so, their fundamental bases become open to question. Can AI have a soul? Can I upload my consciousness/soul to an AI platform, to achieve a transhuman immortality? Can human souls become trapped as ghosts in their internet?

Relatedly, longstanding traditions of “haunted objects” conceptually allow for souls to inhabit non-living things: does that, then, allow for Androids to be soulful? This particular rhetoric seems to have an easier time in Japan, for example, than in countries with Abrahamic religions, and we can witness AI play increasing roles in Japanese religion, with Aibos being given Shinto funerals, and prayers said for their spirits’ journey in the afterlife. Similarly, Android priests perform sacred rites in Japan. Yet there are indications that the US might not be too far behind—consider the popular AI Jesus chatbot, that people talk to for spiritual guidance. People are increasingly befriending AIs, falling in love with AIs, and integrating AIs into their social and cultural world. Given this, the integration into the spiritual world, appearing at times as haunted spaces, and as spirit mediums, and indeed as cyber ghosts, would seem a natural progression of such a dramatic shift in our human culture from the introduction of digital information technologies. Increasingly, the dead speak to the living via, and within, the cyber realm.

The interactions with both official and vernacular religions, the increasingly cyborg quality of everyday life, and changing conceptions of the role of the souls and the dead, all play a role in these swift, substantial changes in people’s view of souls, the afterlife, and, in the end, of their very sense of self.

