<null> me <null>: Algorithmic Governmentality and the Notion of Subjectivity in Project Itoh's *Harmony*

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Abstract

Algorithmic governmentality is a new form of political governance interconnected with technology and computation. By coining the term "algorithmic governmentality," Antoinette Rouvroy argues that this mode of governance reduces everything to data, and people are no longer individuals but *dividuals* (able to be divided) or readable data profiles. Implementing the concept of algorithmic governmentality, the current study analyses Project Itoh's award-winning novel *Harmony* in terms of such relevant concepts as "subjectivity," "infra-individuality" and "control," as suggested by Rouvroy and colleagues. The analysis further draws on Foucault's ideas of "governmentality" and "neoliberalism" and Deleuze's concepts of "dividuality" and "society of control." In Itoh's fictional world, the entire society is subject to the new medical government, which replaced the chaotic world with a perfect but harrowing benevolent society, eradicating disease, suicide and crime. As elucidated in this paper, despite the dominant controlling government, there is a hope for humans to regain and reestablish their subjectivity and give meaning to their own personality by defying the nihilistic computational system.

Key Words: Algorithmic Governmentality; Society of Control; Infra-individuality; Dividuality; Consciousness; Project Itoh.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the topic

Since the emergence of Bentham and Foucault's architectural theories of surveillance (Panopticon and panopticism), the concept of *surveillance* and its sub-topics (e.g., governance) have featured increasingly in various contexts and disciplines. Tracing the evolution of these concepts diachronically, Galič et al. (2017) have demonstrated how the current media-saturated ecosystem has complicated the process of surveillance, with the appearance of new forms of *voluntary* self-surveillance. Self-surveillance, practiced through datafication of the self and self-tracking, necessitates a new interpretation of subjectivity and individuality. These forms of surveillance also allude to a new form of algorithmic-facilitated governance, or what Rouvroy (2013) refers to as "algorithmic governmentality."

By coining the term "algorithmic governmentality," Rouvroy defines a new governmentality run by complicated information technology, which moves toward the nullification of human potentiality by means of algorithmic system of data-aggregation, transcription and prediction (Roberts and Stefan 2016, 18). In her research, Rouvroy studies the way a subject is regarded as an object ready to be observed, classified and automated. The current study is an investigation of algorithmic governmentality and subjectivity in the award-winning science-fiction novel *Harmony* (Itoh, 2010). The novel, as argued in the following sections, embodies the notions of subjectivity and algorithmic governmentality. *Harmony*, revolving around a futuristic society controlled by nanotechnology to monitor people's medical abnormalities, is also a prefiguration of how algorithmic systems are currently being used in connection with the detection, treatment and prevention of Covid-19, hence even more relevant today than at the time it was originally published.

The notions of subjectivity (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 182), and individuality (Deleuze 1991, 5) in algorithmic governmentality, as applied in the context of *Harmony*, will be investigated in this paper through a theoretical framework which relies on discussions of Foucault's ideas of subjectivity, neoliberalism, power and resistance, and the Deleuzian notions of dividuality, virtuality (Rouvroy 2011, 139) and through the metaphor of the rhizome. The main focus here is on the way the individual would be both an influenced and influencing being in the new form of governmentality. These concepts help us distinguish between the economic, biopolitical-based government (a human-oriented government) and the data-based or the algorithmic government (a divisible-dividual-oriented government). The current study aims to draw on a Deleuzian prism to offer a better understanding of Rouvroy's (2013) ideas on the latter type of governance.

Most of the existing theories on subjectivity in neoliberalism (e.g., Lupton, 2016) hold that data subjects are still viewed as emotional beings (human-oriented government); however, in technological governmentalities (or divisible-dividual-oriented government) we are no longer dealing with things, because "there are no longer any things, there are no longer resilient objects: there are only networks of data evolving in real-time" (Rouvroy and Stiegler 2016, 7). These data networks' future is totally regulated and scrutinized for what they might do, how they might act and react and so on. By putting an end to privacy by the system, people are transformed into code susceptible to control and modulation. These mechanisms of control define the way we create and manage our own subjectivities and identities.

In the remainder of the article, the study will be contextualized through a presentation of a synopsis of the novel under the study. Following this, the key theories and concepts informing the current study will be outlined and elaborated. Finally, an analysis of the novel in terms of the introduced theories will be conducted and the implications of these theories and concepts will be discussed.

1.2. Synopsis

The award-winning science-fiction novel *Harmony* (Itoh, 2010) revolves around a futuristic post-apocalyptic society after a great nuclear war. Due to the large number of deaths, treatment and health have become the cornerstone of society, to the extent that a software called "WatchMe," connected to a governmental server called the "medcare (medical care) unit," is installed in the bodies of around seventy percent of Earth's population. This unit orders people what and when to eat, how and when to exercise and how to do their other daily activities. This device recognizes hormonal interferences and inconsistencies, and supplies people's bodies automatically with the relevant drugs through the use of "medicules" (medical particles). Activities such as drinking alcohol, smoking or anything harming people's physical and mental health is illegal. Individuals violating these laws are prosecuted.

> In order to live through an age of nuclear fallout and plagues, we had striven to conquer the last remaining vestiges of nature within us, and had largely succeeded. We installed medicules in our bodies and linked up to health supervision servers. (164)

There are no borders in the global medical administrative or "admedistrative" society. In this world, only thirty percent of the population, whom the imperialist medical society attempts to govern, is still outside the admedistrative society. The motif of control and dominance by this new kind of governance can be seen to a large extent in *Harmony*.

The main plot narrates the story of three friends, living in Japan: Miach Mihie, Cian Reikado and the narrator of the story, Tuan Kirie. Miach, the leader of the three, is a charismatic character with a considerable amount of information about the past (of which their society is largely ashamed). In their utopian society, human emotions are almost forgotten: "our society has been engineered to suppress your emotions" (130).

WatchMe is a software which is installed in puberty, revealing the physical state of individuals through their contact lenses. This interference with privacy, and its reduction to metadata, is rejected by Miach, who attempts to kill herself by self-starvation before becoming an adult. She tries to convince her friends to attempt suicide to escape the dominant government, which she finds nauseous, holding life as the main resource; and the benevolent society that she finds suffocating. Only Miach accomplishes her goal; her two friends survive. Tuan, the narrator, becomes a Helix agent (an agency that cares for people's health) and travels to places without admedistrations to enjoy prohibited pleasures like alcohol and smoking.

Miach, however, is revived by Nuada—Tuan's father and the inventor of WatchMe—to perform such experiments as destroying her consciousness and putting in her mind the heavenly image of life without consciousness. By replacing her own consciousness with a pseudo-consciousness longing for a joyful and nostalgic place, Nuada changed her into a pseudo-robot moved by technological devices. In fact, she would act according to the rules included in her WatchMe. This recreated Miach, changed into a different person seeking for a life without consciousness, creates a separate faction to help activate "Harmony," a nanovirus designed by Nuada to remove consciousness. Nuada sees this as the final solution to social chaos; Miach sees Harmony

as the best way to bear this "lifeist" society. The nanovirus, however, will only be activated in case of increasing human violence. So, by manipulating individuals' WatchMe, Miach provokes thousands of people to commit suicide. Among the victims are her friend Cian, and Nuada himself, Tuan's father. Eventually Tuan finds her and kills her, to avenge Cian's and her father's deaths. The story ends with the activation of Harmony and Tuan's saying goodbye to "me" and "<null> me </null>," that is, the termination of consciousness and subjectivity.

2. Theories and Concepts

The only researcher who wrote a detailed paper on Itoh's *Harmony*, Taillandier (2013), argues that in the post-war society of *Harmony*, individuals had to discard their self-consciousness to adapt to society. Taillandier maintains that in such a monitoring society, people, as subjects to the "lifeist" society, are enclosed by physical health measures which change them into *assessable beings* (2013, 179). This last claim, though not discussed with reference to a clear theoretical framework, speaks to the research problem our study conceptualizes through a reliance on a number of existing theories. In what follows, these concepts and theories (which constitute the theoretical backbone of this study) will be unpacked. To better understand the context of the novel, Lupton's ideas on digital health and power will also be discussed.

Informed by concepts from Rouvroy and colleagues (Rouvroy and Bern 2013; Rouvroy and Stiegler 2016) on algorithmic governmentality, the current study aims to investigate the notion of *subjectivity*. The discussion heavily relies on Rouvroy's deduction extracted from Deleuze's approaches to the society of control (Deleuze 1991, 5), *dividuality* and *virtuality*, as they are embodied in the novel under the study. This new form of governmentality is compared to Foucault's notions of *governmentality* (Vignola 2016, 270), *surveillance* (Foucault 1991, 77), *disciplinary societies* (Foucault 1991, 193), and *neoliberalism* (Rouvroy 2013, 151). How the unified individual is encountered as a divisible and readable profile, ready to be dissolved into the realm of code will then be scrutinized.

With the advent of neoliberalism in Western countries over the past decades came into focus a shift away from state-sponsored interference with social problems, and a move towards individualistic solutions. Under neoliberalism, individuals, as the main source of society, take responsibility for their own education, wellbeing, productivity, self-improvement and health (Lupton 2018, 10). Recognizing the convoluted genealogy of neoliberalism, Foucault explored the interrelationship between economy, culture and politics and the way the rethought power operates in the neoliberal governmentality. Foucault's concept of governmentality is concerned with the ensemble of institutions, calculations and procedures supporting the exercise of power to reach a desired goal (Cobbe 2019, 6). Governmentality is instilling in populations the desires and habits that would guarantee wellbeing, health, and wealth not via closely disciplining them but through remote and even invisible power operations (Foucault 1991, as cited in Li 2007).

Unlike sovereignty, whose purpose is to govern itself, in neoliberal governments, individuals' conditions of wealth, welfare or longevity are claimed to be of the utmost importance, because if individuals are not in appropriate conditions, they cannot serve

the government well. Thus they are taken as objects under the scrutiny of the government, which accumulates knowledge in order to govern them (Rodrigues 2016, 4). The neoliberal mode of government produces the subject it needs by internalizing the project of self-evaluation and self-control. Foucault's theory on selfhood extends to the concept of governmentality through *biopolitics* (Foucault 2008, 21); that is, the way in which people are managed and shaped by soft power emphasizing their own responsibility and care of their body, soul and self. For him, the self is fashioned via the articulation of power and discourses. The ideal worker is not only productive in her/his work but also is healthy and fit. The body cannot disappear in such a government when its actions, habits and movements are always being monitored by different discourses of power (Lupton 2016b, 91).

It is mainly thought that in line with neoliberalism, the advent of digital technologies somehow reinforces surveillance by self-tracking (Lupton 2016b, 135). Mobile digital devices connected to the internet have promoted monitoring people's bodies, thoughts, emotional states and work productivity both voluntarily and involuntarily. These datasets play an essential role in commercial activities, education, healthcare and other social policies. The collected digitized self-tracking data are all about the self, the source of neoliberalism (Lupton 2016b, 3). However, following Deleuze, Rouvroy (2013) discussed this subject separately from neoliberalism.

Algorithmic governmentality, as conceptualized by Rouvroy (2013), is a new form of governmentality which anticipates, monitors and modulates the future of individuals who are considered as aggregates of data; that is, it bypasses people as subjects with fleshly bodies (human nature), and this is where this concept diverges from neoliberal governmentality. Indeed, it contrasts with neoliberal governance in that "the latter creates the subject it needs for production and consumption" (Vignola 2016b, 270), whereas algorithmic governmentality maneuvers on agglomeration of infra-personal data (ibid). In other words, algorithmic governance differs from neoliberal governance on the point that the first governance bypasses subjectivity and consciousness, focusing on people as "dividuals" and broad aggregates of data. It addresses the potentiality rather than the real people with actual bodies and behaviors (Rouvroy 2013, 151). Of course, subjectivation and consciousness are interrelated; that is, when people are allowed to see themselves as agents with certain reasons for their actions, they are individuals with their own consciousness to choose and act. But algorithmic governmentality deprives people of their potentiality and potency to represent themselves as individuals in the real world (Vignola 2016, 271). So, this governance separates people from their will to act in their own way.

In *Harmony*, we encounter a governance caring too much about the health of its people, disregarding their emotions, experiences and personality. All must follow the established health policies, and any disobeying is followed by punishment. Tuan disrupts WatchMe with phony data in order to drink and smoke freely, but after discovering her disobedience is punished by being sent to Japan, the country she hates. In a society in which people cannot choose, the very algorithmic governmentality traps people in its enslavement. In a dialogue with Tuan, Miach tells her that "we should give up being human in the first place. (...) By which I mean, we should give up being conscious" (*Harmony*, 219). We see that being conscious equals being individual, but it is impossible for the individual to think, to choose and to use his/her consciousness in

personal life. In Tuan's declaration, saying goodbye to "me" proves data-behaviorism changes people's behavior to data-based dividuality: "Goodbye, me. Goodbye, soul. Though we may never meet again, goodbye." (228).

Algorithmic governmentality refers "to a certain type of (a)normative or (a)political rationality founded on the automated collection, aggregation and analysis of big data in order to model, anticipate and pre-emptively affect possible behaviors" (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 168). Rouvroy holds that before algorithmic governmentality, statistics and broad data were used for decision-making (e.g., a company using statistics to know about its consumers). And as this power operation is conducted invisibly at a distance, "the question of consent does not arise" (Li 2007, 275).

Deleuze argues that unlike the old disciplinary societies dealing with individuals, the societies of control operate with machines and computers. This is the mutation of capitalism which no longer concentrates on production and property or the owner of the means of production. It is the "capitalism of higher-order production" (Deleuze 1992, 6) which "no longer buys raw materials and no longer sells the finished products. It buys the finished products or assembles parts" (ibid). It is not the capitalism of production but the capitalism of the product to be sold or marketed. Deleuze discusses how the new society of control is characterized by immaterial constructs such as usernames and passwords, not document and signature. With the production of algorithmic subjects, another form of subjectivity (flexible and mobile) has emerged, built on dividuals in the circuits of the networks (Hacon 2017, 239). A society of control possesses a numerical language made of code. In such a society, we do not deal with individuals but dividuals or masses of data, but in disciplinary societies, the governance employs disciplines which constrain people through the *gaze*. It is an apparatus possessing coercive functions done on individuals. It produces individuals whose bodies are under the exertion of power (Rouvroy 2008, 15). The difference between the disciplinary society and the society of control can be explained by referring to money "that locks gold as numerical standard, while control relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies" (Deleuze 1992, 5).

Modulation in such societies makes continuous control over individuals as sub-dividable dividuals, masses, samples or data aggregated to form a unified subject in a coded language. Indeed, there is a shift from enclosed societies of discipline to an open-ended society of control (Lippold 2011, 177). This kind of society of surveillance immediately brings to mind Foucault's *Panopticon*. The Panopticon is an architectural design proposed by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century: a circular prison building with inward cells from where prisoners cannot observe the guard but the guard is able to see all prisoners clearly. Foucault takes it as a symbol of the continuous monitoring and power exertion over people by the society of surveillance (Sheridan 2016, 12) and as the metaphor for the disciplinary power of government watching the subject at any given point in time. But in line with Deleuze, Rouvroy (2011) maintains that Western societies have shifted from disciplinary societies to societies of control; that is, individuals no more feel restricted by fixed structures provided for individuals as physical subjects. Rather, societies of control would adopt free-floating and flexible means to modulate behavior (Cobbe 2019, 8).

The algorithmic subject is interpreted through bits and bytes independent from the human body. The data mining and profiling based on the raw digital data "instaurate a new 'truth regime'" (Rouvroy 2013, 146) called "data-behaviorism," engendering "the widest possible zone of indistinction between reality and the world, and eroding the 'unknown part of radical uncertainty'" (ibid). Knowledge is not produced anymore, it is always immanent to the code and data ready to be discovered in the algorithmic process; it is not "produced *about* the world anymore, but *from* the digital world" (Rouvroy 2013, 147, emphasis in the original). The reality is hidden inside the digital world with no direct contact with the world it would represent.

Rouvroy holds that algorithmic governmentality "operates often at a pre-conscious stage" (2013, 154) calculating their potentialities statistically. That is, it anticipates what people can do (potentiality) rather than what they are actually doing, profiling people, leaving no chance for them to maintain their subjectivity. Algorithmic governmentality "doesn't allow for the process of subjectivation to happen, because it doesn't confront 'subjects' as moral agents" (Rouvroy 2013, 154). It only needs supra-individuals "made of the infra-individual digital traces of impersonal, disparate heterogeneous, dividualized facets of daily life and interactions" (ibid). It resembles Nietzschean reactive forces, which Deleuze describes as forces that "separate active force from what it can do; they take away a part or almost all of its power. (…) reactive forces do not triumph by forming a superior force but by 'separating' active force" (Vignola 2016, 271). So, this data-driven person, from whom desire and will are stolen, would be changed into the infra-individual without consciousness. In such digital societies, people whose wishes, desires and actions are pre-figured by algorithms (Vignola 2016, 276) are observed as dividuations.

WatchMe, the novel's monitoring device, is installed in people's bodies when they become adults; which is why the three friends do not want to grow, so as not to be captured in the yoke of control. They make a declaration that "we won't become them" (*Harmony*, 9). Tuan's joining the World Health Organization as a Helix agent, allowing her to travel to the remaining battlefields on Earth, where no "admedistration" exists, is done in order to escape the embedded biotech and retina display, which can reveal everything in the human body in the form of data,.

The new regime of digital truth pretends to be a completely objective system modelling social reality and people's status regarding health, business, security and such, via data collected for the purpose of security, control, management and norms imposed not externally but spontaneously. Rouvroy (2013) identifies three stages for algorithmic governmentality: The first stage is the collection of big data. The second stage is data mining, profiling or the processing of big data to find the correlation between them, and the last stage is utilizing the statistical knowledge to predict individual behaviors with profiles based on the correlations emerging through data mining (171). This is a shift from the statistical, where the focus is on the average person to grasp the social reality. In algorithmic governmentality, subjects go under power not through their physical body or moral conscience, but through multiple profiles ascribed to them.

This indifferent-to-individual governance makes us no longer ourselves: "our statistical doubles are too detached from us, that we have no 'relationship' with them" (Rouvroy 2013, 180) and that is because of the relations this governance makes between data that organizes a realm of possibilities and our reality. Rouvroy and Berns (2013) compare this governance to the Deleuzian *rhizome*: a plant growing underground, sending roots and shoots from its nodes. It grows separately even when its roots are cut. Deleuze employs this as a symbol standing for multiplicity, difference and non-hierarchical growth. No part of a rhizome is single: it consists of multiple interlaced roots. The connection of rhizomes is a set of differences relating and connecting heterogeneous components. These components move together without sticking together (Hendricks and Koro-Ljungberg 2015, 27).

The rhizome has neither subject nor object. It has "no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing... The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunctions, 'and... and... and' 'Where are you going?' 'Where are you coming from?' 'What are you heading for?' These are totally useless questions" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 26). The rhizome is a chaotic structure connecting every point to the other, moving in a new direction. In contrast with the tree which grows upward, the rhizome moves along single surfaces with no hierarchy. Deleuze considers the tree as filiation, but the rhizome as an alliance (ibid).

Like the rhizome, algorithmic governmentality includes a two dimensional, horizontal topology with neither "depth nor vertically, nor project nor projection"; it is interested in "neither the subject nor the individuals" (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 190). Rouvroy and Berns (2013) inquire, how would we resist and regain or rebuild our subjectivity and emancipate this rhizomatic-transindividual assemblage if its desire could precede our own desire?

It might be thought that in societies of control people are left with little or no ability to resist their objectivity. However, resistance is an unavoidable part of any power system; as Foucault argues, "where there is power, there is resistance" (as cited in Cobbe 2019, 19). Following Foucault, Rouvroy claims that:

> It should be noted that as long as human beings possess the capacity of language, they can flourish as subject and make connections with others. Through this gift, they can perceive their singularity of their own existence and keep the process of subjectivation. As Foucault pointed out, we have two 'I's, the first one is what we understand ourselves as 'I' through interactions with others, and the futuristic 'I,' the potential 'I' that we might create. (Rouvroy 2011, 145)

Thus, even in a highly technological society, individuals are not ontologically reducible to data, nor are they absolutely under the grip of these apparatuses, "a dispositive as consisting of both discursive and non-discursive elements that constantly interact with a clear strategic function of manipulation of relations of forces" (Maestri 20-21).

3. Discussion

3.1. Narrativizing algorithmic governmentality: Harmony, *a case study*

Written in an unconventional style, *Harmony* contains sentences written in the form of coding, which has implications for a better understanding of the theme (i.e., nuclear war). As the novel unfolds, it can be seen that this kind of coding is generally employed to express the narrator's inner feelings. The story opens with Tuan's declaration as follows:

> I have a story to tell.
>
> <declaration:calculation>
>
> <pls: The Story of a Failure>
>
> <pls: The Story of a Defector>
>
> <eql: In other words, me.>
>
> > </declaration> (*Harmony*, 7)

The words "me" and "failure," repeated in the opening, closing and throughout the novel, can be seen as a motif which foreshadows a problem threatening this society; a problem concerning the failure of human-beings at rescuing their conscious self. With the aid of WatchMe, no choice is left for the people, who are not considered as humans with will, emotion and freedom, but as aggregations of readable and passive data, as we figure out in the first pages of the novel: "When children become adults, they become data" (*Harmony*, 2). This is the very algorithmic governmentality in which individuals are not unified subjects to power but instead abstracted dividuals broken into data pieces reporting their behaviors, interests and motivations as code. The codification of the self is made apparent in the way this discourse is naturalized throughout the novel.

In our technological society we find various wearable devices—such as "Fitbits"—worn as bracelets, watches, or belts, for self-quantifying or self-tracking, which can be used for people's telemedicine services. Nowadays we are witnessing also the emergence of COVID-19 contact-tracing apps (e.g., SaferMe, COVIDSafe, StopCovid, etc.). Automatically collecting such users' body data as calories, blood-pressure, body temperature and heart rate, they send wireless signals from the body to monitoring networks. Easy to use, they are designed in a way that compels people to enter the loop of self-surveillance voluntarily, and facilitate undertaking surveillance in order to easily discipline and regulate people. Through such signals and by generating predictions, algorithms intervene in people's decisions (Lupton 2016b, 25). Although one could think of these as instances of the soft power of contemporary neoliberal and biopolitical governments, since they put individuals at the center to utilize them as healthy and productive workers, Rouvroy and Berns (2013) argue that algorithmic governmentality avoids any direct connection with bloody and fleshy bodies. It simply ignores the embodied people; it revolves around the continuously evolving "data-body." In such systems, people's psychological motivations and intentions do not matter. What matters is the assemblage of data–making meaning through statistical correlations (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 177). Such devices (e.g., biometric devices) read people as aggregates

of data and collect tele-data on them to better control and predict them in a quasi-free atmosphere. They fragment the body into digitized pieces and then reconnect them into a unified visual body. This is somehow interpreted as the "medical gaze" that has changed into a tele-medical one. Regarding this medical gaze, Foucault maintains that medical care has become closer than ever while conducted remotely by means of surveillance capacities. However, in the digital health society, it has moved from the physician's gaze in the clinic to the patient's home. It can be said that the gaze is turned upon the patients to report themselves to the health authorities (Lupton 2016b, 102). But based on the context of algorithmic governmentality, it can be concluded that even if it is a medical gaze, it deals with atomized individual, not with a unified subject.

In the novel, Tuan is the only one who stands against the rules. She relates to Miach as her mentor, abhorring everything about the lifeist society and feeling alienated from a society that cares too much about human life. Even after Miach's death, Tuan continues remembering her friend's warning words:

> A regiment of medicules inside you, watching you, snitching on you. Little nanoparticles turning our bodies into what? Into data. They reduce our physical state to medical terminology and hand the information, our bodies, over wholesale to some well-meaning admedistration bureaucrat. (*Harmony*, 13)

Through the political-economic view, it can be argued that the more that medicine receives power, the more healthy working-class people will be ready to work and produce (Lupton 2003, 116). It is what happens in neoliberal society. But in *Harmony*, there is no attention paid to social class, gender or any categorization; what matters is the equalization of all people (their data profile) under the control of harmonious standards. This is what separates it from the neoliberal system.

The act of profiling and personalization done by "Big Data" differentiates algorithmic governmentality from neoliberalism and biopower, which Foucault illustrates as a system focused on humans as individuals with bodies and psyches. Of course, the data-based government shares some common features with biopolitics, especially in its use of statistics. But the importance of individuals is jettisoned for the benefit of the digital sphere. Indeed, it "does not aim at governing autobiographical animals" (Rouvroy 2016, 34)—people who have the capability to suffer and regard themselves as subjects with certain duties, rights, and self-decision—but aggregates of data, or predictable beings whose decisions are automatized.

As the health condition of individuals is important in *Harmony*, it can be held that the target society is not far detached from neoliberal society, as Miach repeatedly claims that the main reason for attempting suicide is to get rid of a society in which life and health are so important. Miach believes that society can better control and monitor people by limiting them in the domain of health care. Along with Tuan, she makes a declaration that; "<i: our bodies> <i: our tits> <i: our pussies> <i: our uteruses> </list> 'These things are *ours*.'" (*Harmony*, 8, emphasis in the original).

But through the founder of the self-tracking device WatchMe, Nuada, we understand that these tools of health-monitoring work for the benefit of something more than neoliberalism. They are the means to provide statistics for the algorithmic governmentality. In the whole story, we do not witness any conflict between social

classes or economic revolution. All citizens seem passive, equal and relying on medicine and its moral consultation. All of them are highly predictable through the data received from their retina. As Miach says about Japanese people; "They were all the same. Everyone" (*Harmony*, 60). Miach finally understands it when her body is revived with a fake consciousness. She tells Tuan in Chechnya that "Our bodies were being replaced by a record, and it all began with a CAT scan. Whatever happened next would be only a matter of degree" (*Harmony*, 214). It can be inferred from the novel that governmentality is capitalism in a new shape; it separates individuals from a signifying context. "Capitalism is the only social machine that is constructed on the basis of decoded flows" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 139).

Nuada's ex-colleague, Doctor Saeki, emphasizes this preference of the data-consciousness over the body when he tells Tuan that:

> You've read those science fiction stories where humans manage to digitize the consciousness and upload themselves to some computer network. We do that, and our bodies will be nothing but antiquated dead media as far as our souls are concerned. It's not hard to imagine a few soulless bodies lying around between the piles of magnetic tape and flash memory cards in my office once we evolve our consciousness beyond the need for the flesh. (113)

With a doctor's help, Tuan realizes that her father has taken Miach's revived body to his medical center in Baghdad. She travels there to further investigate. This center is devoted to experiments on destroying human's consciousness and constructing a feigned one lead by pre-given rules designed by Nuada and his colleagues. Through this process, the new Miach (her consciousness having been destroyed) leads a faction that, using the original WatchMe, persuades many people to kill themselves or others in the hope that this violence will force Nuada to activate Harmony, the nano-virus that will annihilate human consciousness, and which will only activate itself when humankind sinks into chaos. The aim in an algorithmic society is not to exclude what does not befit the average man, but to abstain from any unpredictability about the infra-individuals (Rouvroy 2013, 174). That is precisely why Miach and her team want Nuada to destroy consciousness; in order for all the unpredictabilities about human actions to be avoided. "Consciousness" is an important notion in the novel. The ultimate goal of the admedistrative society is to activate the nano-virus Harmony, to put an end to human violence and war. It is done by destroying human choice, free will and consciousness. Nuada experiments on Miach to see what happens when people lose their consciousness. He destroys her consciousness, installs a heavenly image of living without will in her mind, and then revives her consciousness. In her new life, Miach is changed into a person advocating a calm life without any will and consciousness. That is why she leads a rebellious group to disseminate this kind of life, without any consciousness that would lead to war, killing and disease. As mentioned before, the Harmony nanovirus will be activated in case of increasing human violence. However, it can be said that her act is done according to the rules put in her mind, not according to her own will. When Tuan goes to visit her in Chechnya and avenge her friend and father's death, Miach describes this heavenly life as a "brave new world" (*Harmony*, 216).

It may be highlighted that "government" does not only refer to political or economic structures; rather, "it designates the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed" (Rouvroy 2011, 126). The society Nuada aims at creating is a society without consciousness, where individuals are only data profiles, which he calls "the perfect harmony." People no longer have anything private; everything is obvious: "You go shopping, you eat, you enjoy entertainment—you merely no longer have to make decisions what to do at any given time because everything is self-evident." (*Harmony*, 169). This act of destroying consciousness is the very aim of algorithmic governmentality, that leaves no choice for people but to become subjects. The only subject it needs is the impersonal supra-individual and statistical body carrying a "future memory." The government develops its present and futuristic control based on the predictions resulting from the statistical body (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 182).

In a dialogue between Tuan and the neuromedical researcher Étaín, Tuan asks about the control of human will, reality and consciousness and how the researchers destroy people's consciousness so that a different reality can be constructed. Étaín's answer is:

> "But reality and consciousness are the same thing, Inspector Kirie."
>
> "Are they?"
>
> "The reality we can accept is limited to our consciousness, after all." (152)

Thus, all people's thoughts are constructed by the Next-Gen Human Behavior Monitoring Group in a way that will make reality predictable. Everything is selected "before it is permitted into the consciousness" (152), which supports Rouvroy and Bern's argument that the manipulation of the algorithmic governmentality occurs *before* consciousness. The consciousness in this novel is also phony and reconstructed by the government. Therefore, the reality that follows consciousness will be reduced to mere data. For Rouvroy, this is the new form of governmentality that moves beyond consciousness and thoughtfulness and operates based on reflexes (2013, 151).

The Next-Gen Human Behavior Monitoring Group, in which Tuan's father works as a main member, attempts to affect people's thoughts, emotions and decisions by "controlling the feedback web in the midbrain with medicules" (*Harmony*, 163). This aligns with what Rouvroy calls "Data Behaviorism" (2013, 143), positing the behavior of people as dividuals or data. By modelling people's behaviors and emotions, the government models people's future according to the information extracted from their profiles (Vignola 2016, 276). Hence, everything floats in a world filled with raw data carrying no meaning or interpretation (i.e., decontextualized); everything goes as if the world is needless of any meaning and interpretation and no meaning is necessary anymore (Rouvroy and Berns 2013, 177). Tuan's question is what will happen to soul, morality and emotions when the consciousness is destroyed: "We only experienced sadness and joy because they benefited our survival in a particular environment" (*Harmony*, 209). She also wonders that "mankind had once required the belief that 'I' was 'I'" (209), a notion that is almost abolished in this new government.

Before Tuan's father is killed by Miach's accomplice, Vashlov, Tuan has been blaming him for taking children like Miach to be experimented on. His justification is that when they destroyed her consciousness she had a normal life, and when they retrieved her consciousness, she remembered nothing but a joyful place she always longed for. Therefore, they concluded that will and consciousness are not required. It is called utopian because it appears as an objective world replete with freedom and free from regulation; however, it is the government who models social reality and controls cyberspace.

Eventually, Tuan avenges her father. She cannot, however, prevent the chaos from happening, and in the coda of the novel, we encounter the declaration: "goodbye me" (224) and "<null> me <null>" (225), which indicates that Harmony has been activated. Throughout the novel, the only person who shows the potentiality to fight against the dominant desire of algorithmic governmentality is Tuan, who wants to take a position and situate herself as an "I," a subject with soul, consciousness and emotion, cutting herself from the data profile in which her personality is recorded through rhizomatic relations. Correspondingly, Rouvroy believes that this new kind of governmentality does not absolutely take humans under its grip: one way to rebel against the passiveness is language, as "it is through language that one flourishes as a subject, interconnected with others by language" (Rouvroy 2011, 151). Through language we can perceive the singularity of our own existence. Possibly, this is the reason why Tuan invented a new language to write her own declaration. In the last dialogues between Tuan and Miach, Miach asks her friend "Why do you think people write things?" "[Tuan] shrugged. 'Because words remain'" (*Harmony*, 214). Through language, we can shape and reshape ourselves and give ourselves meaning.

It should be noted that, in this paper, it is not intended to rehabilitate the rational, autonomous, fixed, preexistent and unitary subject of liberalism. Rather, subjectivation or individuation is considered as a continuous and never-achieved process, not a phenomenon. The target of algorithmic governmentality is the potential, virtual and incorporeal dimension of human nature. It is concerned with what human beings might do and not what they are doing. Despite the atopy of this system, we can posit ourselves, as becoming subjects, through our virtuality. As Deleuze insists, the "virtual" should not be opposed to the "real" but to the "actual," since it possesses full reality. This process of subjectivation (as Foucault maintains) or thinking ourselves beyond ourselves helps us to overcome the melancholy of being trapped in this new system in which we experience losing our own or becoming unable to recollect our totality. The structure of the actual society shapes our subjectivity or changes it into meaningless code, but through virtuality (i.e., our potential and resisting dimension) we can suspend any definition regarding our 'I'-ness and our capacities. This is self-destruction and reconstruction, or in Deleuzian words, it is the very process of "becoming," the open-ended and rhizomatic action encountering a stable or stabilized ontology. We see Tuan is the only person possessing and believing in this virtuality, and "becoming," despite all the nihilistic and monitoring aspects of the dominant system.

3.2. Algorithmic governmentality: practical applications

The aim of this paper is to morally, socially, philosophically and politically discuss and criticize the rise of algorithmic governmentality and the reduction of individuals to data by smart devices. Referring to the context of the novel, there are morality centers in the admedistrative society giving healthcare advice and holding health conferences. These take the role of gods, controlling people's bodies, behavior and even consciousness. As Tuan describes the medicine leaders: "medicine people would never be abandoned by their gods. We had even put WatchMe inside our bodies, just to make sure there was no place where the eyes of our gods could not see" (*Harmony*, 25). Neither the philosophers discussed in this paper nor the novel reject technology completely, but the way in which technology is employed is important. It can be beneficial in helping people accelerate their work and receive certain services, but it is also able to capture individuals' will, freedom and consciousness. In *Harmony*, Tuan protests against the immoral act of admedistrative morality and the "all-benevolent health-obsessed society" (29) for annihilating humans' most vested rights, such as the experience of pain, suffering, and sympathy. As Tuan claims: "I am a part of the system, as you are part of the system. No one felt any pain about that any longer […] I had been replaced by a single whole, by 'society'" (228). In another declaration she says: "Mankind had once required anger. Mankind had once required joy. Mankind had once required sadness. Mankind had once required happiness" (209). Algorithmic governmentality does not confront people as moral agents, but it establishes some moral obligations for them to be better monitored:

> Focus for any amount of time on someone you saw in the street, and a box of data would appear by their head, telling you everything you could possibly want to know about them. In lifeist society, where it was considered a moral obligation to reveal personal information, especially that concerning one's health, the very word *private* had the illicit stench of secrecy to it. (84)

Socially and philosophically speaking, people no more feel the "I-ness"; that is, they are dividualized and reduced to readable data. They are no longer human beings with all their faults and merits. In this new form of capitalist society, the notion of individual differs from the modern society in which the person is regarded as a subject; as Tuan notes; "Mankind had once required the belief that 'I' was 'I'" (209). In such societies free will can be abandoned: "No wondering, no choices, no decisions. Something very close to heaven" (228).

In a political view, the way technology is used can damage society. It can change from good to evil and vice versa: "flip a switch, and the medcare unit would go from good to evil, from panacea to plague" (10). The best example is that of Miach, who provokes people to attempt suicide by sending them some data orders. Technology can be good if it helps people in their treatment, but what if this help ruins human privacy and takes our freedom and choice? This is the main question: if subjectivity, free will and consciousness are destroyed, what remains is a passive human faithful to the political-medical policies.

The socio-political concerns narrated in the novel can also fit our present society. Nowadays, we have been witnessing it due to the emergence of coronavirus. With the spread of coronavirus, we are witnessing the crisis of subjectivity and its privacy, which

concerns people around the globe. Governments commissioned contact tracing apps (some made by Apple and Google) aimed at controlling COVID-19's spread. Via Bluetooth, some of these apps trace any interaction between users and alert those who are near the confirmed cases (Nabben and Berg 2020). In 2015, Google revealed that with the help of a team of doctors, it could provide people with information about their disease symptoms and medical conditions. Some sites, namely PatientsLikeMe and CureTogether, invite people to share their body information and treatment experiences. Organizations like the World Health Organization are popular centers for disseminating health and medical information and guiding patients to the right path (Lupton 2018, 29). Lately, telemedicine (medicine performed at distance) using digital technology has been growing, replacing patient-doctor face-to-face meetings. In countries such as the U.K. and USA, telemedicine has become an essential part of healthcare services. American organizations like Walmart use digital healthcare to help patients with their eyesight, blood pressure, etc. Many other apps and platforms provide medical services, among which ZocDoc, Vitals and CastLight Health can be mentioned (Lupton 2018, 30). Some cases, like iPhone's Wello, can turn the smartphones into digital monitoring devices checking blood pressure, blood oxygen, heart rate and the like (Lupton 2018, 31). Google Play and Apple App Store carry a wide variety of fitness tracking apps (Lupton 2018, 32). Various wearable devices like Misfit, Fitbit and Jawbone UP also gather and share medical data.

From a Foucauldian perspective, medical power is a way of producing knowledge; its power is not felt as repressive but productive, diffused in heterogeneous approaches. But this is what Foucault called a new form of bodily surveillance (Lupton 2018, 17). According to *The Guardian* reports, 57% of Australian respondents were concerned that their personal information would not be secured; as governmental departments may have access to all data collected by COVIDSafe (a contact-tracing app developed in Australia) people would engage in continuous prosecution (Nebben and Berg). All in all, whether people of different countries will install such contact tracking devices or resist them is still a dilemma.

Lazzarato (2014) argues that the concept of "machinic enslavement" is imposed on individuals and brings desubjectivation or asignifying (25). In machinic enslavement, the person is no longer considered an "individuated subject, economic subject" (ibid), but a business part in different assemblages, namely financial, media and welfare (with its different institutions such as hospital, school, internet, etc.) assemblages. The concept of enslavement proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is derived from "cybernetics and the science of automation," (ibid) and means governing the components of a system via capitalism. For Deleuze, "[s]ubjection produces and subjects individuals," whereas in enslavement "[i]ndividuals becomes 'dividuals,' and masses become samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'" (Lazzarato 2014, 26). The dividual in enslavement acts as a non-human or a component of a technical system.

In enslavement, the human functions as non-human in relations and connections with other components of the machine; s/he is torn into pieces of subjectivity as "intelligence, affects, sensations, cognition, memory, physical force" (Lazzarato 2014, 27). These pieces no longer refer to a unified person calling him/herself "I," but their synthesis lies in the assemblages. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Lazzarato claims that in machinic enslavement, people are not encountered as subjects or objects, but as

decodified or deterritorialized components and flows (ibid). If subjection is followed by representation of the subject and consciousness, machinic enslavement generates more and less than representation and consciousness; "in other words, much more and much less than the person, the individual, and intersubjectivity" (Lazzarato 2014, 30). It is a system activating pre-personal and pre-cognitive forces like desire and sense and "supra-personal forces" (Lazzarato 2014, 31) like social, linguistic and economic machines.

The digitalized governance in the story justifies its dominance by the claim that removing consciousness and taking people's free will is for the benefit of their peace and wellbeing. It commands people's faith and trust so that it will look like a savior working for humanity's salvation. Miach's words show her conviction that society can go forward without consciousness and human truth: "If we could make everything around us artificial, it could be ours" (*Harmony*, 216). The digital world is considered a paradise that has abandoned the search for any truth. It rejects any form of interpretation for the sake of something immediate, calculable and meaningful in correlation and profiles (Rouvroy 2013, 151). As Miach puts it, "Will we strive for paradise, or will we strive for the truth? After the Maelstrom, mankind chose paradise. We chose a false eternity" (*Harmony*, 216).

At the end of the story, the death of consciousness occurs, and the only wise person who can analyze the situation and grieve for the death of subjectivity is Tuan: "This is the last day of human consciousness. The day that several billion 'mes' ceased to exist" (227). When Tuan goes down the mountain and leaves Miach, "the old folks decided to destroy consciousness and thereby equalize all members of society at once" (Harmony, 227). Neglecting individuals' operationality, creativity and production, it dehumanizes and dividualizes them disregarding their sex, profession, social class and nationality. This is what algorithmic governmentality does.

4. Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to bring together ideas from Foucault, Deleuze and Rouvroy to explore algorithmic governmentality in the context of Project Itoh's novel. The study aims at expanding critical perspectives that guide re-contextualization and rethinking of issues concerning subjectivity and governance in a context akin to the current media-saturated environment. We also advocate for a deeper understanding of a post-neoliberal system, taking the discussion from the narrativization of algorithmic governmentality in *Harmony* to the pragmatic. The article invites readers to observe how human emotions, thoughts and will could be entangled in an "admedistrative" society to the extent that nothing except code and data, constructing a phony reality for people, remain. The theoretical lens adopted in this study encourages researchers to distinguish between the economic, biopolitical-based government and the data-based or algorithmic government that puts a special emphasis on humans' health, leaving no chance for people to choose their fate as they are controlled even in eating, drinking and every daily activity. This mode of governance is believed to thrive on transforming individuals into data-based dividuals whose subjectivity is destroyed by politically regulatory government.

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