

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAEDIATRICS OF THE DIGITAL

Towards an Ecology of Interpellations in the Algorithmic Age

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INTRODUCTION — The Founding Displacement

There are moments in the history of ideas when a question long posed in the wrong terms is suddenly reformulated — and when that reformulation alone suffices to change the horizon of what is thinkable. We believe that the contemporary debate on the digital is at one such threshold.

For several decades, societies have interrogated the digital in terms of tool and usage: what contents circulate? what data are protected? what addictions are generated? what regulations are required? These questions are legitimate. They have produced legislation, charters, recommendations. But they all share a silent presupposition: that of a human being already constituted, exposed after the fact to technologies that influence him from the outside. A pre-existing subject whom the digital comes to disturb, seduce or threaten — but whose formation, intimate structure, and fundamental capacities would be anterior to this encounter.

It is this presupposition that the present text intends to displace.

Our thesis is simple in its formulation, but immense in its consequences: digital architectures are not tools that constituted subjects use — they are developmental environments in which human beings form, or unform. The digital does not act only on behaviours. It participates in the fabrication — or the fragilisation — of the most fundamental human capacities: attention, discernment, desire, relation, interiority, capacity for free response. And this changes the scale of the problem entirely.

This displacement is not rhetorical. It is clinical, anthropological, political and philosophical at once. For if the digital is a developmental environment, then the questions that impose themselves are no longer merely: what does it diffuse? — but: what kind of human being does it produce? No longer merely: what data do we protect? — but: what interior capacities do we preserve? No longer merely: how do we regulate contents?

– but: how do we guarantee that interpellation architectures remain compatible with human maturation?

It is precisely to name this new field of questions that we propose here the concept of anthropological paediatrics of the digital.

The expression draws its inspiration from medical paediatrics, which in its time operated an analogous displacement. For a long time, medicine treated the child as a miniature adult – applying the same protocols, the same dosages, the same therapeutic logics. Paediatrics was born from the refusal of this reduction: the child possesses its own rhythms, a specific vulnerability, particular developmental thresholds. What is neutral for an adult may be pathogenic for a child. Paediatrics is not a lesser medicine – it is a medicine of developmental precision.

Our displacement is rigorously analogous. We say: a human being in development – and, to varying degrees, every human being – cannot be exposed indiscriminately to all digital interpellation architectures. Some are developmentally compatible. Others are pathogenic. And the distinction between the two requires a serious anthropology of what a human being in formation actually is.

This text is part of the continuity of a philosophical corpus whose central piece is the Mahoukou Law and its triadic structure Call – Response – Resonance (A2R). This law formulates a fundamental relational anthropology: the human being does not constitute itself outside the regimes of interpellation it traverses. It forms – or deforms – in the quality of the calls that solicit it, the responses it can elaborate, and the resonances that these exchanges deposit within it. It is this anthropology that makes possible, for the first time, a genuinely grounded reading of the digital phenomenon in its developmental dimension.

Without it, one can describe behaviours, measure usages, deplore drifts. With it, one can understand why certain digital architectures structurally produce fragmented, dependent beings, incapable of silence and depth – and how to conceive environments that, on the contrary, support the maturation of fundamental human capacities.

We do not ignore that other voices — UNESCO, certain theological circles, some pioneers of developmental psychology — are beginning to perceive the contours of this problem. We read them with attention and respect. But what is still lacking in these approaches is precisely what an anthropology of interpellation can provide: a coherent theory of what a human being in development is when faced with industrially organised call architectures. Without this anthropological substrate, regulations remain technical, ethics remain declarative, and protections remain superficial.

This text is therefore both a theoretical act and an act of responsibility. Theoretical, because it seeks to found conceptually a new field. Responsible, because this field cannot wait: every year, entire generations are forming in environments whose full developmental impact we have not yet measured.

It will unfold in three movements. The first will establish the concept of anthropological paediatrics of the digital in all its clinical and philosophical rigour. The second will extend this concept to an anthropological ecology of digital environments — valid for all ages and all conditions of existence. The third will draw the political and juridical consequences of these first two moments, sketching what might constitute the anthropological rights of the digital. A conclusion will open two paths that this text prepares without exhausting: a political anthropology of attention, and a theology of response in the algorithmic age.

We write with the conviction that these questions are among the most important our era has to address — and with the humility of knowing that the subjects we approach always exceed, happily, what any single text can say of them.

PART I — ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAEDIATRICS OF THE DIGITAL

A concept, a rupture, a demand

1. The medical metaphor as conceptual displacement

Paediatrics was not born of a benevolent intuition. It was born of rigorous clinical observation and an intellectual refusal: the refusal to treat the child as a reduced version of the adult. This refusal changed everything — protocols, dosages, diagnoses, therapeutic environments, and ultimately the very conception of what a human being in development is.

We operate here a rigorously analogous displacement, in a domain that medicine has not yet fully entered: that of digital interpellation architectures.

The question we pose is not: is the digital good or bad for children? This formulation remains prisoner of the tool paradigm. It supposes a pre-existing child, exposed after the fact to an external technology, and it seeks to measure the effect of this exposure on already-constituted behaviours. It is a useful question — but an insufficient one.

Our question is different, and more radical: which digital interpellation regimes are compatible with the maturation of fundamental human capacities, and from which thresholds do they become developmentally pathogenic?

This reformulation changes everything. It no longer measures effects on constituted subjects. It interrogates the conditions of possibility of the constitution of the subject itself.

2. The human being in development: what we mean by this

Before going further, we must clarify what we mean by human being in development — for anthropological paediatrics of the digital does not concern only children, even if it is there that its stakes are most acute and most urgent.

Attentional capacities — the aptitude to sustain attention, to deepen it, to direct it freely rather than to undergo it. Attention is not a natural given. It constructs itself, progressively, through repeated experiences of concentration, waiting, silence, sustained reading, and enduring presence to others.

Desiring capacities — the aptitude to defer, to elaborate, to desire without continuous stimulation. Human desire is not a reflex. It supposes an interiority capable of holding a lack, of transforming it, of making it a force oriented towards something durable. This capacity is acquired slowly, and it is fragile.

Relational capacities — the aptitude for real presence, for listening, for non-capturing attachment, for reciprocity. Authentic human relation supposes an interior availability that cannot be improvised. It forms in experiences of slowness, of shared vulnerability, of silence inhabited together.

Capacities of discernment — the aptitude to hierarchise, to interpret, to distance oneself, to resist solicitations. Discernment is perhaps the most decisive capacity — and the slowest to mature. It supposes a stable interiority, an organised memory, a capacity to not respond immediately to every call.

Finally, the capacity to inhabit one's interiority — the aptitude to remain present to oneself, to tolerate silence, to not need continuous stimulation in order to exist. This is the substrate of all other capacities. Without it, attention fragments, desire short-circuits, relation becomes superficial, discernment vanishes.

These five capacities are not philosophical luxuries. They are the minimal anthropological conditions of a free human existence — that is to say, an existence in which one remains subject of one's own response, and not a mere receptor of external solicitations.

3. The concept of interpellative pathogenesis

We propose the concept of interpellative pathogenesis to designate the process by which an interpellation architecture harms the development of fundamental human capacities — not through its particular contents, but through its very structure.

A digital interpellation architecture becomes developmentally pathogenic when it prematurely overloads attention — by multiplying solicitations at a frequency, density and intensity that the developing attentional system cannot integrate without fragmenting. When it short-circuits the temporalities of maturation — by imposing instantaneity as norm, preventing the slow elaboration that is the condition of all depth. When it fragilises self-regulation — by producing reward loops that bypass the natural mechanisms of desire regulation, creating dependence on external stimulation. When it disrupts the structuring of desire — by maintaining the subject in permanent reactivity. When it prevents the constitution of a stable interiority — by colonising the spaces of silence that are the conditions of formation of the subject.

What is decisive in this concept is that it does not bear on contents — on what the architecture says or shows — but on what it does to the intimate structure of the human being who traverses it. An architecture may be perfectly lawful in its contents and nevertheless pathogenic in its structure. This is the blind spot that current law, focused on the regulation of contents, does not yet see.

4. Gradients, thresholds, intensities: the clinic we are calling for

The anthropological paediatrics of the digital calls for differentiated exposure gradients according to age, maturity and already-developed capacities. Not global prohibitions — but precise clinical questions that no one is yet posing with sufficient rigour: From what age does a human being possess sufficient attentional capacities to traverse certain digital interpellation regimes without being structurally fragilised? What intensity of solicitation is compatible with the maturation of desire at each stage of development? What minimal conditions of silence and interior availability must be preserved for capacities of discernment to form?

These questions do not yet have definitive answers — research is barely beginning to formulate them correctly. But this text maintains that their very formulation is a theoretical and political act of first importance. For one only protects what one knows how to name.

5. What neither UNESCO nor legislators have yet said

It would be inaccurate to claim that international institutions have not perceived the problem. UNESCO insists on human dignity, cognitive protection and educational responsibility. Certain theological circles perceive that the question of AI has become anthropological, civilisational, spiritual. Researchers in developmental psychology are accumulating concerning data on the effects of early screen exposure.

But what is still lacking in all these approaches is a coherent anthropological theory of interpellative development. Without this anthropological substrate, regulations remain reactive, ethics remain declarative, and protections remain superficial — they target visible contents without touching the invisible structures that, far more deeply, shape subjects. Anthropological paediatrics of the digital is an invitation to change level. The question is not whether these questions will be posed. It is whether they will be posed in time.

PART II — ANTHROPOLOGICAL ECOLOGY OF DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

From developmental environment to civilisational environment

1. The great displacement: from tool to environment

There is in the history of techniques a moment always decisive — and always belated — when a society understands that what it believed to be a tool has in reality become an environment. The tool maintains its distance from the subject. It is used, set down, taken up again. It leaves intact the interior space of the one who uses it. The environment, by contrast, envelops. It acts continuously, silently, structurally. One does not use an environment. One inhabits it. And in inhabiting it, one is shaped by it.

The digital has become an environment. This shift — from tool to environment — is the major anthropological fact of our era. And it has not yet been thought at the height of what it implies. To think the digital as environment is to accept posing a question radically different: not what effects does this content produce on that behaviour? — but: what kind of human being do contemporary digital environments render possible — or impossible?

2. What ecology provides that ethics cannot give

Ecology was born when biologists understood that a living organism could not be thought in isolation from its environment — that apparently minor perturbations of environmental equilibria could produce systemic collapse. Ecology is not the biology of living beings. It is the biology of relations between living beings and their environments.

Digital ethics poses important questions about values, rights and principles. But it presupposes a constituted, autonomous subject capable of choice. The anthropological ecology of digital environments poses a prior and more fundamental question: are digital environments compatible with the maintenance and development of the human capacities on which the very possibility of ethics depends? For it is of no use to defend

freedom of choice if the environments in which subjects form are progressively destroying the attentional, relational and discernment capacities without which free choice is mere fiction.

3. The five transformations of lived experience

The transformation of time

The digital produces a radically new experience of time: permanent acceleration, instantaneity erected as norm, continuous interruption, perpetually relaunched present. What this transformation silently destroys is duration — in the sense Bergson understood it: this interior experience of time that flows, accumulates, matures. Duration is the condition of depth. Without it, experience crumbles into discontinuous instants, and the subject progressively loses the capacity to inhabit its own past and anticipate its future with coherence.

The transformation of attention

Contemporary digital environments have produced a predatory economy of attention: each platform, each application, each notification is designed to capture and retain an attention that thereby becomes the most contested good of our era. The result is an attention increasingly hypermobile, decreasingly capable of settling, deepening, sustaining prolonged cognitive effort.

The transformation of desire

Digital environments, by continuously saturating the field of solicitation, tend to short-circuit the experience of fecund lack. Desire can no longer deepen because it is constantly reactivated before having had time to elaborate. What then occurs is no longer desire in the full sense — it is reactivity: a succession of impulses without depth, without memory, without horizon.

The transformation of relation

Digital environments tend to mediate, metricise and accelerate relations. What is lost is the dimension of shared vulnerability that is at the heart of every authentic relation — that reciprocal exposure without which there is no genuine encounter, only exchanges.

The transformation of silence

Silence is not an absence. It is an active space — the condition of interiority, discernment, maturation. Contemporary digital environments have made silence rare, uncomfortable, almost unbearable. Every moment of interior availability is immediately colonised by a solicitation. This is not a detail — it is a structural assault on the very possibility of interior life.

4. Human capacities as ecological stakes

These five transformations converge towards a single result: the progressive erosion of fundamental human capacities. Just as environmental ecology has learned to distinguish environments that sustain biodiversity from those that destroy it — not through malevolence, but through structure — anthropological ecology of the digital must learn to distinguish environments that sustain the development of fundamental human capacities from those that erode them. This distinction is not moral. It is functional and anthropological.

5. Towards attentional and interpellative hygiene

We call for the development of an attentional and interpellative hygiene — a set of practices, norms and exposure thresholds allowing for the preservation of fundamental human capacities in potentially erosive digital environments. This implies differentiated exposure rhythms, the rehabilitation of long temporalities — sustained reading, conversation in depth, inhabited silence, creative boredom — an education in digital habitability, and an architecture of disconnection that preserves zones of interior availability in schools, families, workplaces and public spaces.

6. Digital ecology as a civilisational question

A civilisation may be evaluated by the quality of the environments it produces for the formation of its members. A civilisation that destroys the conditions of possibility of attention, discernment, authentic relation and interiority — even unintentionally, by the simple logic of economic efficiency — is a civilisation that undermines its own anthropological foundations. We are not technophobic. But we firmly believe that a technically advanced civilisation can and must think the ecology of its own interpellation

environments. For a technique that progresses by destroying the human capacities it claims to serve is not progress. It is regression disguised as advance.

PART III — TOWARDS THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL RIGHTS OF THE DIGITAL

From the protection of data to the protection of human capacities

1. How rights emerge: a lesson from history

Rights have never preceded crises. They are their deferred responses — often too deferred. The industrial revolution produced labour law. Chemical industrialisation produced environmental law. Biomedicine produced bioethics. The digital produced the right to personal data protection. But we stand today at the threshold of a vulnerability of a different — and deeper — order. What is now exposed without sufficient protection is no longer merely data. It is the interior human capacities themselves — attention, discernment, desire, relation, interiority — that is to say, the anthropological conditions of freedom. And this new vulnerability calls for a new right.

2. The major shift: interior capacities as a matter of public protection

For centuries, law has protected principally entities exterior to the subject. Interior life was considered inaccessible to any external power. This presupposition is today obsolete. Contemporary digital architectures have demonstrated — by their very efficacy — that it is possible to act in a systematic, industrial and profitable manner on the interior structures of the human being. This is no longer a philosophical hypothesis. It is a business model — the attention economy model — whose mechanisms are now sufficiently documented to leave no room for doubt.

If interior human capacities can be systematically eroded by architectures intentionally designed to this end, they become a matter of public protection. We call the set of protections that this answer implies the anthropological rights of the digital.

3. What these rights protect: not contents, but conditions

Existing digital law protects essentially contents and data. This is necessary. But it is not sufficient. The anthropological rights of the digital protect conditions — the anthropological conditions without which human freedom is mere juridical fiction. They recognise that freedom depends on environments, rhythms, relational architectures, attentional conditions — and that these conditions can be preserved or destroyed by choices of technical design. One no longer protects only what the human being does in the digital space. One protects what the human being is capable of being after having traversed that space.

4. The anthropological rights of the digital: a first cartography

The right to attentional integrity

Every person has the right to evolve in digital environments that do not structurally destroy their attentional capacities. Addictive capture mechanics — compulsive notifications, variable reward loops, infinite scroll — are not simple design choices. They are interventions on cognitive structures and engage a responsibility that goes beyond the current contractual framework.

The right to protected digital maturation for minors

Every child and every adolescent has the right to be exposed only to digital interpellation architectures compatible with their stage of development. This right implies exposure thresholds, adapted architectures, strict limitations on captative mechanics — not according to contents, but according to interpellation structures. This is the heart of our anthropological paediatrics of the digital, translated into juridical terms.

The right to cognitive disconnection

Beyond the right to technical disconnection, this right guarantees the real possibility of finding non-soliciting spaces: times and places where attention is not required by any digital architecture. Interior availability is not a luxury — it is a condition of anthropological health.

The right to interpellative plurality

Every person has the right not to be enclosed within an algorithmically homogeneous interpellation regime. Filter bubbles, echo chambers, recommendation systems that progressively reduce the diversity of calls constitute a form of anthropological impoverishment. This right imposes on algorithmic architectures an obligation of interpellative diversity.

The right to psychic opacity

Every human being has the right not to be entirely predictable, profiled and modifiable. The possibility of remaining partially opaque to behavioural modelling systems is a condition of interior freedom. A subject entirely transparent to an algorithmic system is a subject whose spontaneity, creativity and capacity for unpredictable response are structurally threatened. Psychic opacity is not withdrawal – it is a condition of dignity.

5. The parallel with environmental law: its force and its limits

Environmental law recognised that certain goods – air, water, biodiversity – could not be treated as simple exploitable resources, because they constitute conditions of possibility of life. It imposed on economic actors a responsibility for the systemic effects of their activities, even when unintentional. And it developed the precautionary principle. These three displacements – recognition of conditions of possibility, systemic responsibility, precautionary principle – are exactly those we are calling for in the domain of anthropological rights of the digital.

The limit of the parallel is equally instructive. Interior human capacities are more difficult to measure than environmental pollutants. But this difficulty does not constitute a fundamental objection. The effects of lead on the neurological development of children were difficult to measure before adequate tools were developed – this did not prevent their legal protection once the reality of the risk was sufficiently established. The same logic applies here.

6. The foreseeable objections and what they reveal

The objection of paternalism confuses the protection of the conditions of freedom with the restriction of freedom itself. The anthropological rights of the digital do not

regulate individual choices — they impose on designers a responsibility for the structural effects of their design choices. The objection of economic freedom has been raised against every major protective regulation in history — labour law, environmental law, food regulation — and in each case, regulation ultimately produced not a slowing of innovation, but a reorientation towards more sustainable forms. The objection of measurability must be taken as an invitation to develop adequate tools, not as a reason to renounce protection.

7. The institutions these rights call for

If the anthropological rights of the digital are destined to exist, they call for new institutions: cognitive health authorities analogous to environmental protection agencies; anthropological eco-compatibility certifications allowing users to distinguish digital environments that support human development from those that erode it; mandatory anthropological audits of platforms. These institutions do not yet exist. But their necessity is inscribed in the very logic of what we are beginning to understand. The anthropological conditions of interior freedom are common goods — perhaps the most precious of all.

8. The formulation of the fundamental right

Every human being — and in priority every child and every adolescent — has the right to evolve in digital environments compatible with the development and preservation of their capacities of attention, discernment, relation and free response. Digital architectures that structurally destroy these capacities engage the responsibility of their designers, independently of the lawfulness of their contents.

CONCLUSION — INTERIOR SOVEREIGNTY AND OPEN HORIZONS

What the Mahoukou Law reveals of the human being in the algorithmic age

1. What we have built

We departed from a concept — anthropological paediatrics of the digital — and followed its logic to its broadest consequences, tracing a path that goes from the clinical to the civilisational, from the developmental to the political, from the philosophical to the juridical. This path is commanded by a central intuition: contemporary digital architectures are not neutral tools exposed to constituted subjects — they are developmental environments that participate in the formation or destruction of fundamental human capacities.

2. Interior sovereignty: the name of what we are defending

Behind anthropological paediatrics, behind the ecology of digital environments, behind anthropological rights — there is a single and identical demand: interior sovereignty.

Not the political sovereignty of states. Not the sovereignty of data. But something more fundamental and more fragile: the right of the human being to remain the original locus of its own response — to not be reduced to a conditioned receptor, to a modifiable behavioural profile, to an exploitable unit of attention.

Interior sovereignty is not self-sufficiency. It fully recognises that the human being is constitutionally relational. But it affirms that this relational formation can only be legitimate if it preserves the capacity of the subject to respond freely — to not be entirely captured, entirely predictable, entirely available to external modulation.

3. The Mahoukou Law as keystone

The Mahoukou Law departs from a fundamental observation: the human being never exists outside the dynamics of interpellation. It is constitutionally addressed, solicited, called. Human freedom is not the absence of call. It is the quality of the response to the call.

The Call opens a relational space. In the contemporary digital space, the call has become industrial: notifications, recommendations, alerts, social metrics constitute call architectures of unprecedented power and density. The problem is not the call itself — the problem is saturation: when calls become so numerous, so rapid, so precisely calibrated that they leave no space for a free response.

The Response is the locus of the subject. *Respondeo ergo sum*: I respond, therefore I am. But a free response supposes sufficient interior space for the solicitation to be received, processed, interpreted — and not merely reflected as a reflex. This interior space is precisely what pathogenic digital architectures erode.

Resonance, finally, is what the response deposits — in the subject itself, in the relation, in the common world. Resonance is memory, transformation, depth, shared world. It supposes time. Contemporary digital environments produce an inflation of calls and immediate responses — but a poverty of resonances. The common world fragments into bubbles of artificially amplified resonances, closed upon themselves.

A2R thus allows one to formulate with precision what a healthy digital ecology should guarantee: proportionate and non-predatory calls, free and differentiated responses, humanising and open resonances.

4. What reification reveals — and what it calls for

Was it necessary for the logics of commodification and capture to reach such an extreme degree for the question of the authentic human being to re-emerge with force? Probably yes. This is a painful constant of human history. But this answer must not produce fatalism. It must produce urgency.

The authentic human being is not an abstract and fixed essence. It is what still resists total reduction — gratuity, contemplation, love, forgiveness, creation, silence,

fidelity, vulnerability, presence, the capacity for unpredictable response. All that, in the human being, cannot be entirely calculated, predicted and exploited. It is this human being that we are defending. Not against technique — but against a certain logic of technique which, in seeking to optimise entirely, risks emptying it of what constitutes its dignity.

5. Two open horizons

First horizon: a political anthropology of attention

Human attention is becoming the central political stake of our era — without our traditional political categories being yet equipped to think it. Democracies were conceived for citizens capable of deliberating — capable of sustained attention, of reflective distance, of resistance to immediate solicitations. Yet these capacities are precisely those that contemporary digital architectures most systematically erode.

A political anthropology of attention would be the great theoretical text that thinks together: the formation of deliberative capacities, the attentional conditions of democracy, the responsibility of digital architectures in the erosion of the civic fabric, and the new institutions capable of protecting the common attentional heritage. This text remains to be written. It is one of the most necessary of our time.

Second horizon: a theology of response in the algorithmic age

If *Respondeo ergo sum* says that the human being is fully revealed in its response — in that irreducible capacity to respond freely to what calls it —, then the question that follows is vertiginous: what are grace, vocation, transcendence, prayer, when calls are industrially fabricated and responses algorithmically anticipated?

Theology has always thought the human being as a called being — called by a voice that precedes and exceeds it. But it has not yet fully measured what this foundational call signifies when the interior space in which it might be heard is colonised by interpellation architectures that leave no more silence. A theology of response in the algorithmic age would be a theology of interior availability — of what, in the human being, must remain sufficiently free and silent for the call that comes from further than

any platform to still be heard. This field has not yet been genuinely opened. It awaits its pioneers.

6. Final formulation

A digital civilisation becomes pathological when it exposes human beings in development to interpellation regimes incompatible with the maturation of the capacities necessary for a free response. It recovers its anthropological legitimacy when it sets itself as its primary requirement the preservation, in all its environments and at every age of life, of the conditions in which a human being can still hear, choose and respond — freely, deeply, irreducibly.

This, and nothing less, is what anthropological paediatrics of the digital intends to protect.

— Oramellon · *The Interpellation of the World* —

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