

Warping the Self: Active Inference, Social Media and Mental Health

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Abstract:

Social media is implicated today in a wide array of mental health concerns. While these concerns have become mainstream, little is known about the specific cognitive mechanisms underlying the correlations seen in these studies, or why we find it so hard to stop engaging with these platforms when things obviously begin to deteriorate for us. In this talk, we will endeavour to cast some light on these issues by considering social media use through the lens of the Active Inference Framework (AIF). The danger, so we will argue, of social media (and other so-called digital hyperstimulants) is their power to warp an agent's predictive models in ways that lead optimizing agents like us to fit with their environments in suboptimal ways.

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