The digital Self.
The Impact of Big Data on Personal Identity.
Summary
Christian Zwickl-Bernhard

The dissertation deals with the influence of digital technologies on **personal identity**. A central starting point is the thesis that philosophical concepts and models of personal identity have historically always been determined or influenced by the technologies available at the time (language, writing, more complex recording methods, analogous methods).

Digitalization is the temporary climax of this development. It increasingly focuses on all facets and elements of personal **identity processes**. Digitisation and in particular Big Data provides a complex network of procedures and methods for the acquisition, processing and modification of personal data. Within this network, which operates on different technological levels, a **digital ego** is created.

Through an analysis of the technical-philosophically relevant aspects of the current **Big Data** technology (levelling, personalization, traces, distortions, self-learning effects) it can be shown, that Big Data's inherent and system-immanent characteristics lead to a fundamental change in the way in which all constituents of personal identity are handled in their entirety. Through the structures and methods mentioned above, all constituents related to personal identity, such as memory, personal past and related processes of remembering and forgetting, are changed or can be changed by Big Data methods.

With reference to some central approaches to personal identity (John Locke, William James, George H. Mead, Jerome Bruner, Paul Ricoeur), the introduction of the concept of an **identity space** makes it possible to systematize the different approaches, the concepts used and the personal identity processes behind an identity. Due to the influence of digital technologies, this identity space must be extended by digital elements so that one can speak of a **digital identity space**. This concept allows on the one hand a systematic discussion of the different contributions and leads on the other hand to a necessary re-evaluation of contributions to the discussion of personal identity. Additionally, demands on future models of personal identity can be derived from this model.

On the basis of these considerations, it can be shown that personal identity processes are becoming increasingly unstable. The **concept of instability** can be specified by means of system-theoretical approaches. This instability affects human options for action and the power structure.
Of decisive importance is the fact that the Big Data functionality available today can be seen as the first stage of further technological developments that can be assigned to **digital transhumanism**. On the basis of this systematization it can be shown, that these developments of transhumanism will lead to an increasing influence of digital technology on personal identity and therefor to increasing instability of personal identity.

The digital identity space is increasingly becoming the **central object of the exploitation economy**. Here **digital narrative elements** play a central role. The issue of digital personal identity can also be used to determine whether an overall concept oriented towards the philosophy of transhumanism becomes the basis for an economic model that will determine the future of society and technology. The instability of personal identity shown forms, from a socio-critical point of view, a central component of Charles Taylor's postulated *Malaise of Modernity*.