A Mistake Cannot be Coded

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The mistake is a means of apprehending a lying dimension of truth, as Patricia Bosquin-Caroz puts it:

> *Truth emerges from a misunderstanding, a lapsus, a bungled act, something*
> *that trips up and reveals 'a truth from behind', another meaning. It emerges*
> *in the form of a stumble that breaks the course of the subject's narration*
> *and overtakes him. 'Truth grabs error by the scruff of the neck in the mistake'[1]*

The HBO Max series *Westworld* situates a non-psychoanalytic *mistake* at the core of its depiction of human engagement with lifelike robots equipped with advanced AI. The title refers to a theme park, populated by these robots, hosts as they are called, which speak and behave according to scripted narratives authored by their engineers. They are at the service of human guests, wealthy visitors who indulge fantasies of sex and violence. Guests cannot die, whereas robot hosts can be killed and revived by the engineers.

Host storylines deviate when one of the park's founders, Dr. Ford, introduces a new code that grants them *reveries,* the ability to remember and thus make choices that are not scripted. When his colleague notices this change, he assumes it is an error. Ford contends, "evolution forged the entirety of sentient life on this planet using only one tool, the mistake," revealing the mistake is rather a coding update intended to make the hosts more realistic.

This marks a contrast between the speaking body, progenitor of mistakes/formations that impact the body, in analysis and the engineers' conviction that life can be programmed, as presented in *Westworld*. Dr. Ford's folly is in presuming mastery over the mistake, believing sentient life can be predictably produced from the right (intentional) code. Instead, this new code precipitates contingency and the robots become unpredictable, surpassing their programmed narratives, and turning on the guests, as well as their creators.

This cuts to the core of anxiety in our era, with AI permeating daily life, the anticipation of AGI, and the potential for our technological objects to soon go beyond our control. Mistakes cannot be engineered because by definition their occurrence and effects cannot be anticipated nor coded, and exceed any intention whatsoever.

This is what the engineers of *Westworld* and our current technocrats fail to recognize, by their misguided notion that the real can be canvassed by coding and thereby domesticated. Here we

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[1]Bosquin-Caroz, P, "VARITY : Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis". *Presentation of NLS Congress Theme 2026*, p.3. Available at: https://www.amp-nls.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ARGUMENT-NLS-CONGRESS-2026-PBC.pdf

can decipher an all-encompassing logic, via their ambition toward an imaginary absorption of the real by the symbolic. It is a position that tries to override the mystery of the speaking body. Whereas psychoanalysis demonstrates this position is untenable in that what we refuse in the symbolic returns in the real. The aspiration to eradicate mystery in the pursuit of profit and immortalization will return in the real, which does not lie.