

The perfect one: should we allow technologies to find our soulmates?

The idea of soulmates traces back to antiquity: in Plato's *Symposium* Aristophanes tells the myth of androgynes who angered the gods, so Zeus cut each person in two and since that, they are condemned to seek the "other half" to complete themselves. This ancient story can be found in different variations through cultures and time. Unsurprisingly, this narrative is exploited by contemporary technologies (e.g. *Tinder*, *OkCupid*, *eHarmony*, etc.) that promise help in finding a "perfect match". However, only in fiction, this dream became fully true: recently, popular television shows started to explore the near future in which advanced technologies are able to find you a soulmate (e.g. *Hang the DJ* episode (2017) of *Black Mirror*, *Soulmates* (2020), *The One* (2021), etc).

In my presentation, I want to have a close look at *Soulmates*, an American science fiction television anthology series, the main theme of which is the imagined technology developed by the company *Soul Connex* that can determine your soulmate with 100% accuracy. Besides the discussions of the very possibility of creating such technology, I believe that the world presented in *Soulmates* is an interesting "thought experiment" that specifically shows what role choice and perfection play in the value of love and that there are areas where we do not want algorithms to make choices for us.

Contemporary dating apps create a "paradox of choice" (Schwartz, 2004) making us doubt whether our partner is a perfect match and even lead to the rejection mindset (Pronk, Denissen, 2019), so we desire certainty. The *Soul Connex* test provides it: you know who your soulmate is and there is no need to seek them anymore. Interestingly, the TV show clearly states that this certainty does not guarantee happiness, on the contrary, it creates even more problems: the soulmate-ness of someone compared to other persons is unlikely to make you happier (episode 1). Moreover, your soulmate could die before you meet (episode 5) or turn out to be a morally bad person (episode 6). In episode 4 the main character even makes a conscious choice to build a relationship with his not-soulmate thus fighting against the determinism of technologies.

Soulmates is also arguing with Aristophanes' myth itself. Episode 3 researches polyromantic relationships proving that the idea of the one does not fit all people. The whole television series is riddled with the narrative that it is specifically the feeling of love that makes someone perfect for us, but not the person herself.

All television series on this topic teach us to give up the idea of soulmates but the dating apps are still attractive to people partially because of this idea and partially because they use this narrative in their ads (even though it is questionable and also not profitable to make it real). That is why I do believe that we should discuss more why the idea of soulmates is so desirable for us.