

## Where is an Author?

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If you're reading these words on a digital device, we are not alone: our encounter as author and reader is taking/making place in and through an uneven, evolutionary planetary digital infrastructure of cognitive production, measurement, and monetization. Five and a half millennia after symbolic discourses of literacy and authorship co-evolved with the first urban revolution, the material, embodied phenomenological encounters of planetary urbanization have arrived at the precise moment of explosive contingency in the scalar nexus between cities and literacy. "What is an author?" Foucault asked in a brilliant lecture in Paris in February, 1969. Today, if we put Foucault's question into an intertextual dialogue with contemporary critical urban theory as well as earlier elements of Comte, Marx, and Kant, we gain fresh insight into the ways reading and writing are being reconstituted through partially automated constellations of quantification and commodification of human consciousness. Foucault's genealogy of the "author function" has become an increasingly contested and lucrative circuit of accumulation as Marx's concept of the "general intellect" has materialized through the transnational urban networks of what is now widely described as "cognitive capitalism." The growth and evolutionary adaptation of socially networked cultures of reading, viewing, sharing, and writing are now performing a new neo-Kantian time-space construction of sense perception in a planetary version of Harvey's "urbanization of consciousness," putting individual authors into constitutive conversation with global knowledges once imagined by Comte as the "Great Being" of collective intergenerational inheritance of post-theistic human knowledge.