Design for Society

Understanding and designing human-technology relations

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Design for Society

- 'Responsible design': shaping society with technology
- Example: nudging
- But:
  - how to analyze the impact?
  - what are desirable impacts?
  - how far can technology go?
- Using philosophy of technology to design for society
Outline

1. Mediation Theory: understanding human-technology relations
2. Hubris and Hybrids: the limits of humanity
3. Ascetic Design: ethics from within
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Human-technology relations

• **Extension**: instrumentality
  – intentional humans, neutral things
• **Dialectics**: tension
  – oppression, externalization
• **Hybridity**: mutual constitution
  – boundary blurring
Mediation Theory

Technologies mediate the relation between humans and their environment:

human - world becomes:

human - technology - world
Human-technology relations (Don Ihde):

- **embodiment relation**
  \( \text{human} - \text{technology} \rightarrow \text{world} \)

- **hermeneutic relation**
  \( \text{human} \rightarrow \text{(technology - world)} \)

- **alterity relation**
  \( \text{human} \rightarrow \text{technology (world)} \)

- **background relation**
  \( \text{human (technology / world)} \)
Google Glass
New configurations (1):

• **Fusion:**
  (human / technology) \(\rightarrow\) world

• **Use:**
  (human - technology) \(\rightarrow\) world
  human \(\rightarrow\) (technology - world)
  human \(\rightarrow\) technology (world)
  human (technology / world)

• **Immersion:**
  human \(\leftrightarrow\) (technology / world)
New configurations (2):

• **Lab-on-a-chip**: alteration
  human → technology → human

• **Glass**: augmentation
  (human - technology) → world
  '→ (technology - world)
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Humans and Technologies

- hybrids: mixtures
- hubris: going too far
Humans and Technologies

- hybrids: mixtures
- hubris: going too far
Do Artifacts Have Morality?

• Artifacts and Morality:
  – moral instrumentalism
  – artificial agency
  – moral mediation

• Technological Mediation:
  • mediation of praxis and experience
  • technologies help to shape moral actions and decisions
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Technologies of the self

- Michel Foucault:
  - technology as power
- dialectical approach:
  - technology as overpowering
  - oppression and liberation
- hybrid approach:
  - technologies of the self
  - 'technological ascesis'
Ethics from Within

- from 'yes' or 'no' to 'how?'
- from 'assessment' to 'accompaniment'
- 'ascetic design and use'
The ethics of design: materializing morality

1. Anticipating mediations
2. Assessing mediations
3. Designing mediations
Designing Mediations

Types of influences

(Tromp, Hekkert, and Verbeek)

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Nudging

- Nudging: the ultimate solution?
  - ‘liberal paternalism’
  - ‘transparent persuasions’

- Liberalism:
  - ‘the blackmail of autonomy’
  - nudges and mediations are inevitable

- Ascetic design:
  - taking the mediated self as a starting point
  - designing room for 'subjectivation'