On Icarus' Wings

Craft and the Art of Hybridization

Peter-Paul Verbeek

University of Twente
www.ppverbeek.nl
Outline

1. Interaction Design: human-technology relations
2. Mediation Theory: understanding hybridity
3. Hubris and Hybris: the limits of humanity
4. Ascetic Design: crafting the mediated self
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Interaction Design
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Conceptualizing human-technology interactions

- **Extension:** instrumentality
  - intentional humans, neutral things
- **Dialectics:** tension
  - oppression, externalization
- **Hybridity:** mutual constitution
  - boundary blurring
Neutrality

- Joe Pitt: Instrumentalism
  - human intentions, instrumental things

- B.J. Fogg: Persuasive Technology
  - transparent persuasions

- Basic model:
  - things as ‘tools’ or ‘enablers’
  - neutral extensions of human possibilities
Dialectics

• Philosophical anthropology:
  – Ernst Kapp: organ projections
  – Hermann Schmid: externalizations
  – Arnold Gehlen: relations to the organic

• Phenomenology:
  – alienation from self / reality

• Applied ethics:
  – technological risks

basic model: tension
Hybridity

- **basic model:**
  - interwoven character of humans and things
  - from interaction to 'intra-action' (Barad)

- **beyond the split between ‘subject’ and ‘object’:**
  - symmetrical:
    - *actor-network theory: associations*
  - asymmetrical:
    - *postphenomenology: mediations*
Designing Things as Crafting Subjects:

- **craft / technè:**
  art and technology

- **art:** specific 'interaction':
  'earth' versus 'world'

- **design:**
  - technological crafting of human-technology relations
  - helping to reveal not only 'things' but also 'humans'
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Mediation Theory

Technologies mediate the relation between humans and their environment:

*human - world*

becomes:

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

- **embodiment relation**
  (human - technology) → world

- **hermeneutic relation**
  human → (technology - world)

- **alterity relation**
  human → technology (world)

- **background relation**
  human (technology / world)
Postphenomenology

perception / experience

human ← technology → world

action / practices
New configurations (1):

• **Fusion:**
  (human / technology) → world

• **Use:**
  (human - technology) → world
  human → (technology - world)
  human → technology (world)
  human (technology / world)

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

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

• **Glass**: augmentation
  (human - technology) → world
  '→ (technology - world)
Toward a theory of mediation

- Expanding postphenomenology: while opening the black box of technology, the black box of the human remained closed
- Corporality: ‘somatechnology’
- Appropriation: domestication, subjectivation
Appropriation

• Foucault: subjectivation (Steven Dorrestijn)

• Conversation Analysis
  – 'phenomenological' approach
  – how do agents make entities ‘real’?

• ‘techno-hermeneutics’
  investigating human-technology relations ‘from within’
Toward a mediation theory

• Three questions of Kant:
  • Know? —> Epistemology
  • Do? —> Ethics
  • Hope? —> Metaphysics

• One more turn after the material turn:
  • mediation and appropriation
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Humans and Technologies

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

- **hybrids:** mixtures
- **hubris:** going too far
Sigmund Freud
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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Ascesis and technology

• Michel Foucault:
  - technology as power

• dialectic reading:
  - Panopticon
  - oppression and liberation

• hermeneutic reading:
  - technologies of the self
  - ascesis as 'subjectivation'
Technologies of the self: ethics as subjectivation

• ethical substance
  – mediated existence

• mode of subjection:
  – technological mediations

• self practices:
  – understanding, appropriating and designing technological mediations

• teleology:
  – what hybrids do we want to be?
Ethics from Within

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

1. Anticipating mediations
2. Assessing mediations
3. Designing mediations
Anticipating Mediations: sources of mediation

designer (delegation)

user (appropriation)

thing (emergence)
Assessing Mediations

- Ethics from within:
  - conversation analysis
  - ethical theory
- Making available implicit morality for explicit reflection
Designing Mediations

Types of influences

(Tromp, Hekkert, and Verbeek)

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<td>Coercive</td>
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Example: 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'
Design as Crafting Hybrids

- Approaching interaction as intra-action ...
- ... shows that designing things is designing humans ...
- ... involving technological mediation and appropriation ...
- ... asking for ascetic design.