

MUSING HEIDEGGERIAN CYBERSPACE

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Abstract. Where we do we make our “being?” Since our existence [being-there = Dasein] is the original place of intelligibility, fundamental ontology must clarify the conditions of having any understanding which itself belongs to the entity called Dasein. Today Dasein is increasingly becoming more and more digital, in fact all activity is digital or becoming digital in one mode or another, it’s ubiquitous! On the pragmatic side corporate architecture as well as its daily interaction and transaction are all digital. With the advent of games as well as webmasters using VRML or some equivalent of it poses the questions and concerns as who will design the digital domains, graphic artists, IT personnel, game developers and where will we make our being? As architects and designers where will our “digital gesamtkunstwerk” be? Making places for human inhabitation in a nonphysical space raises interesting questions concerning presence, authenticity, adaptability, orientation, and suspension of disbelief. What kind of activities can be supported by nonphysical spaces? What will it take to support them in a socially and psychologically appropriate manner? And **WHO** will design them? On the applied side this ontological view is demonstrated in an Interior Design Corporate Office Design Studio that has been taught for a decade wherein students are required to develop an E-Commerce, a business deemed to succeed including the Corporate Office, facility program, space planning, corporate image, interiors, graphics, webpage, and logo. The semester project has one unique design stipulation: The one major design requirement is that the “feel” of the reception has the same “feel” as the website. A phenomenological sameness...all work is accomplished with a plethora of digital media. This design process is still in its infancy.

1. Musings

Where we do we make our “being?” Since our existence [being-there = Dasein] is the original place of intelligibility, fundamental ontology must clarify the conditions of having any understanding which itself belongs to the entity called Dasein. Today Dasein is increasingly becoming more and more digital, in fact all activity is digital or becoming digital in one mode or another, it’s ubiquitous!

On the pragmatic side corporate architecture as well as its daily interaction and transaction are all digital. A prime example is the design and construction of the new 2.7 billion Wynn Casino in Las Vegas. In February 28, 2002—Autodesk, Inc announced that it had teamed with TRIRIGA INC. to provide Wynn Design & Development with a digital design data environment that will manage the development of Steve Wynn’s multi-billion-dollar Le Rêve hotel casino and resort for Las Vegas. TRIRIGA is a leading provider of business automation software for the hospitality, aerospace, and design/build industries. This combination of Autodesk Architectural Desktop used with TRIRIGA Intelligent Business System (IBS) represents a major shift toward an intelligent design framework capable of streamlining all phases of a project’s life cycle—from concept to facility management. This is in fact the equivalent to Boeing design and construction of its 777.

The walls be they actual wood stud, metal stud with gypsum board, brick, concrete, glass or metaphorical representations as firewalls, WebPages, URLs are becoming blurred as to what is “reality” between the physical and the digital. The construction industry is becoming increasingly reliant on new electronic technology, ranging from project-specific Web sites and online equipment auctioning to bid analysis software and negotiation tools. Even though the construction industry has been slow to warm up to the technology, usage is increasing every day. Surveys indicate that 80 percent of contractors and owners use Web-based communications, 25 percent purchase or sell products over the Internet and 17 percent bid for jobs online. Fifty-eight percent of owners report they have used a project management Web site. Project Web Sites and Extranets (Berning, 2000). Project-specific Web sites and extranets may present the biggest change to how construction companies conduct day-to-day business. These systems promise reduced paper consumption, lower costs, improved communications, and quicker turnaround on requests and timely (or even early) project completion.

Numerous companies have been using computerized systems for years to manage and schedule projects. Today’s project Web sites and extranets claim to provide more opportunities for consistent document review, multi-

party collaboration and expanded communications, both on the site and in the office. As an example, companies can post drawings and documents on the system so everyone can easily access and share the latest changes and additions. With many programs (known as interactive collaboration), users can mark up documents online without changing the original drawings, allowing for resolution of design and engineering conflicts in the field without expensive and cumbersome CAD software. Other online applications such as TRIFIGA are more complex; combining the interactive collaboration features with a workflow tracker that posts and records communications and other documents between architects, engineers, contractors and subcontractors. These systems provide for lightening-quick (compared to traditional methods) responses to requests for information and change orders, streamlining the field process, thwarting disputes and speeding up the project. Furthermore, the Web site or extranet becomes a common depository for communications, creating an accurate and comprehensive virtual paper trail for the project. Because these systems create a record of all requests, orders, submittals and other communications during a project, the Web sites supposedly create a greater sense of accountability and ward off disputes. However, before project Web sites are embraced as a solution for all of the industry's problems, there are several significant legal and practical concerns to keep in mind, as well as the theoretical paradigm shifting the metaphysical concept of what is, design... space... and place.

This is nothing new, being that these metaphysical concepts have been prophesized by such futurists as Bill Mitchell, father of CAD in architecture and Ray Kurzweil. Ray Kurzweil is a prize-winning author and scientist. He was named Inventor of the Year by MIT in 1988 and was awarded the Dickson Prize, Carnegie Mellon's top science prize, in 1994. Collin McGinn The New York Times Book Review notes, "His book *The Age of Spiritual Machines* ranges widely over such juicy topics as entropy, chaos, the big bang, quantum theory, DNA computers... neural nets, genetic algorithms, nanoengineering, the Turing test, brain scanning... chess-playing programs, the Internet--the whole world of information technology past, present, and future. This is a book for computer enthusiasts, science fiction writers in search of cutting-edge themes, and anyone who wonders where human technology is going next" (Publishers Weekly, 1999). If Kurzweil has it right, in the next few decades humans will download books directly into their brains, run off with virtual secretaries and exist "as software," as we become more like computers and computers become more like us. Still others are more realizable: human-embedded computers will track the location of practically anyone, at any time. More problematic is Kurzweil's self-congratulatory tone. Still, by addressing (if not quite satisfactorily) the overpowering distinction between intelligence and consciousness, and by

addressing the difference between a giant database and an intuitive machine, he has a provocative, if not very persuasive, view of the future from a man who has studied and shaped it (Accardi, 1999). Kurzweil does more than simply prognosticate about the future; he provides a blueprint for the next stage of human evolution, in which we will begin to develop computers more intelligent than ourselves. We must ask ourselves whether these new thinking machines are indeed conscious entities.

The theses of this applied research and studio agenda integrates this blurred reality in an exercise to wholly adopt the world, as it is wherein we make our "digital" being. Today's complex business environment demands that organizations find new ways to streamline and coordinate workplace activities. In the past, workplace functions - including real estate, facility management, asset management, project management, and employee self-service have often been handled by different systems with individual functions and goals. Increasingly, organizations are recognizing that a variety of business functions related to creating, supporting and maintaining the workplace can be brought together to create efficiencies, reduce operational costs and provide management with more accurate and current information about their business and assets.

According to Bill Mitchell architect and author of a plethora of texts on the future of design comments, "The global digital network is not just a delivery system for email, Web pages, and digital television. It is a whole new urban infrastructure--one that will change the forms of our cities as dramatically as railroads, highways, electric power supply, and telephone networks did in the past. Picking up where his best-selling *City of Bits* left off, Mitchell argues that we must extend the definitions of architecture and urban design to encompass virtual places as well as physical ones, and interconnection by means of telecommunication links as well as by pedestrian circulation and mechanized transportation systems. He proposes strategies for the creation of cities that not only will be sustainable but will make economic, social, and cultural sense in an electronically interconnected and global world. The new settlement patterns of the twenty-first century will be characterized by live/work dwellings, 24-hour pedestrian-scale neighborhoods rich in social relationships, and vigorous local community life, complemented by far-flung configurations of electronic meeting places and decentralized production, marketing, and distribution systems. Neither digiphile nor digiphobe, Mitchell advocates the creation of e-topias--cities that work smarter, not harder. With *Me++* Mitchell completes an informal trilogy examining the ramifications of information technology in everyday life. The transformation of wireless technology in the hundred years since Marconi--the scaling up of networks and the scaling down of the apparatus for transmission and reception. It is, he says, as if "Brobdingnag had been

rebooted as Lilliput"; Marconi's massive mechanism of tower and kerosene engine has been replaced by a palm-size cell phone. If the operators of Marconi's invention can be seen as human appendages to an immobile machine, today's hand-held devices can be seen as extensions of the human body. This transformation has changed our relationship with our surroundings and with each other. Hence, Mitchell proposes, the "trial separation" of bits (the elementary unit of information) and atoms (the elementary unit of matter) is over. With increasing frequency, events in physical space reflect events in cyberspace, and vice versa; digital information can, for example, direct the movement of an aircraft or a robot arm.. He argues that a world governed less and less by boundaries and more and more by connections requires us to reimagine and reconstruct our environment and to reconsider the ethical foundations of design, engineering, and planning practice.

An unusual stage of players usually not identified are players from such domains as AI, merchandising, digital advertising and game developers. J.C. Herz (1997) is the author of *Joystick Nation*, which talks specifically about the development of video games from historical, social and psychological point of views. The author, Herz, discusses the pre and early development of video games, which is dated before the development of Pong and Atari 2600, two consoles that marked the very beginning of video games' frenzy. She argues that there is more than video games as a game. It is important, according to what she implies in her book, to realize that video game, in its twenty years of its development, consists of such a complexity that sometimes we cannot comprehend. She discusses the importance of character design in the development of console's game. Character could be an element that attracts people to play, but could also be the negative factor of a video game, according to the book. This could be considered as a factor in which the development of video games impacting the psychology of people. They could, as Herz implies, like the character, especially children, and be influenced by the character. In other words, the players would likely to identify themselves with the characters that they play when they are playing a video game. Secondly, the settings in which the video game running could affect people psychologically. The third one is the fact that video game could be used as a means to deliver a method of education. It is quite evident that video games are used for simulation education at military schools. There are a lot of opinions (including the governor of Illinois) saying that video games are only a means of violence delivery that destroys children's moral, this one fact that video games could be used for education is a complete opposite and add to the other research about the impact of video games in a positive way. With the advent of games as well as webmasters using VRML or some equivalent of it posses the questions and concerns as who will design the digital domains, graphic artists, IT

personnel, game developers and where will we make our being?...as architects and designers where will our "digital gesamtkunstwerk" be?

Yehuda E. Kalay is a professor of architecture and director of the Center for New Media at the University of California, Berkeley comments, "Historically, the inability of computers to comprehend any design activities that take place outside the computational environment itself, hence the need to design "in" the computer, had the unintended but critical effect of transforming the computer from a design "tool," in the traditional sense of the word, into a design environment: a "place" where design occurs. Instead of following the designer, like a pencil does, allowing him or her to design wherever and whenever desired, computers force designers to come to them. By becoming the environment where design occurs, the computer has changed the culture of the design profession. In the early days, when computers were too expensive to sit idle, designers had to work in shifts — a most unnatural imposition on the intuitive and serendipitous process of design.

In its 21st-century incarnation, the vision of inhabitable environments infused with many computational devices has taken the form of computer-controlled temperature, humidity, lighting, security systems, elevators, doors, even electronic building "skins," creating seamlessly networked and ever-changing electronic landscapes. The diffusion of computers into our everyday environment has the effect of making the environment more "intelligent" — at least more cognizant of our presence and activities — and enabling "it" to take action on our behalf.

The third and potentially most radical effect of computers is the advent of cyberspace — a term coined by William Gibson in *Neuromancer* to denote the information space created by the Internet — and its steady assertion of itself as a "place." William Gibson is the New York Times bestselling author of *Virtual Light*, *Count Zero*, *Burning Chrome*, *Mona Lisa*, *Overdrive*, *Idoru*, and *All Tomorrow's Parties*. Here is the novel that started it all, launching the cyberpunk generation, and the first novel to win the holy trinity of science fiction: the Hugo Award, the Nebula Award and the Philip K. Dick Award. With *Neuromancer*, William Gibson introduced the world to cyberspace--and science fiction has never been the same.

Although it can only be experienced through the mediation of computers and can only be inhabited by proxy, cyberspace is fast becoming an extension of our physical and temporal existence, offering a common stage for everyday economic, cultural, educational, and other activities.

Making places for human habitation in a nonphysical space raises interesting questions concerning presence, authenticity, adaptability, orientation, and suspension of disbelief. What kind of activities can be supported by nonphysical spaces? What will it take to support them in a

socially and psychologically appropriate manner? And **WHO** will design them?

The opening of a new kind of space made possible by computers and networks promises to revolutionize our perception of reality like no other invention before it and challenges the professions of architecture, town planning, and interior design, which have been striving to accommodate human activities in the physical domain for thousands of years.

On the applied side this ontological view is demonstrated in an Interior Design Corporate Office Design Studio that has been taught for a decade wherein students are required to develop an E-Commerce, a business deemed to succeed including the Corporate Office, facility program, space planning, corporate image, interiors, graphics, webpage, and logo. The semester project has one unique design stipulation: The one major design requirement is that the “feel” of the reception has the same “feel” as the website. A phenomenological sameness...all work is accomplished with a plethora of digital media. This design process is still in its infancy.

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