Time: 45 minutes
Marks: 10

Answer any 2 of the following precisely and to the point (2 × 5; 100 - 200 words)

1. How does Miller reconstruct Pitt's argument for VNT (in terms of VNT1, VNT2, VNT3)? Briefly outline (a) Pitt's argument for VNT1 and VNT2 and (b) Miller's argument against VNT1 and VNT2?

   Miller reconstruction of Pitt's argument (1 mark if all three are given; 0.5 if any there's any missing point)
   (VNT1) For technological artifacts to embody, embed, or contain values in a nontrivial sense, these values must be empirically identifiable from the technological artifacts in which they are embedded.
   (VNT2) Values are not empirically identifiable from technological artifacts.
   (VNT3) Therefore, either technological artifacts do not embody, embed, or contain values at all or they do so only in a trivial sense.

   Pitt's argument for VNT1 (look for any one of the two; 1 mark)
   1. Pitt is a pragmatist. Pragmatists hold that a metaphysical distinction is meaningless unless drawing it has tangible influence on our lives (James 1907, Chap. 3). Pitt seemingly assumes that for the question of values in technology to have tangible influence, values must be empirically identifiable.

   2. Acc to pragmatist conception, values are motivators of action (VM: A value is an endorsement of a preferred state of affairs by an individual or group of   individuals   that motivates our actions). (p. 91) VM is pragmatist in that it conceptually connects values and action. Pitt seemingly assumes that to motivate a person's actions, values must be empirically recognizable to her

   Pitt's argument for VNT2 (look for any one of the two; 1 mark)
   1. The first reason, according to Pitt, that values are empirically unidentifiable from technological artifacts is that values are not directly readable off or observable from design schematics or material artifacts.

   2. Another rationale that Pitt (2014, 94) gives for values being empirically unidentifiable is that the same material object may mean different things to different people. If values are embedded in it, whose values are they?
   E.g., whose values does the Virginia Tech Football stadium embody?

   Miller's argument against VNT1 and VNT2
   Against VNT1 (1 mark):

Miller extends an alternate conception of values (VND: a value is anything that serves as a basis for discriminating between different states of affairs and ranking some of them higher than others)

Miller argues that values need not be empirically identifiable in order for artifacts to embody them. values in technology are so effective because they are often hardly empirically recognizable.

Against VNT2: Any one of the below (1 mark)
- Identifying values in existing technology is possible due to the following relation between values and reasons:
    - (VR) If x is valuable (in a certain respect) then one has reasons (of a certain kind) for a positive response (a pro-attitude or a pro-behavior) towards x
- Values are directly readable off design documents or material artifacts. E.g., Flanagan, Howe, and Nissenbaum (2008) discuss how computer games embody values (or any other example for that matter)
- from the Values-Principle (if a certain function is value laden, and certain physical features of an artifact are required to effectively perform it, and the existence of these features in the artifact has no other reasonable justification, then the artifact may be said to embody the respective values; this definition is optional), it follows that artefacts do embody values.
- The structure of the football table is dependent upon what the university values.

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2. How is ethics a matter of things according to Verbeek? What are the two criticisms leveled against the idea of moralizing technology? How does Verbeek respond to these criticisms?

Ethics as a matter of things (1 mark; any 1 point)

1. Ethics is a matter of things since in their functioning they help to shape the actions and perceptions of their users.
2. Technologies are not neutral "intermediaries," that simply connect users with their environment; they are impactful mediators, that help to shape how people use technologies, how they experience the world and what they do..

Two criticisms of moralizing technology (2 marks, 1 mark each)

1. Firstly, autonomy was thought to be attacked when human actions are explicitly and consciously steered with the help of technology. This **reduction of autonomy** was even perceived as a threat to human dignity.

2. Secondly, Achterhuis was accused of jettisoning the democratic principles of our society, because his plea for developing behavior-steering technology was considered **an implicit propagation of technocracy.**

Verbeek's counter (2 marks, 1 mark each)

1. First of all, **human dignity is not necessarily attacked when limitations of autonomy occur**. Our legal constitution implies a major limitation of autonomy, after all, but this does not make it a threat to our dignity. **Human behavior is determined in many ways, and autonomy is limited in many ways.**

2. Second, the analysis of technological mediation made clear that **technologies always help to shape human actions.** Therefore, paying explicit attention to the mediating role of technologies should be seen as taking the responsibility that the analysis of technological mediation implies. **When technologies are always influencing human actions, we had better try to give this influence a desirable form**.

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3. Why according to Pitt is it the case that if technology embodies values, it does so only trivially? What is Miller's argument against this? In the debate between Pitt and Miller, which position do you find convincing? Provide reasons in support of your position.

   Why according to Pitt, technology embodies values only trivially (1.5 marks)
   Pitt (2014, 98) argues that since humans make decisions based on epistemic judgments that are value laden in the way Rudner describes, the decisions are laden with the same values as the judgments on which they are based. Decisions about technology are no exception, and in this trivial sense, technology is value laden. So Pitt argues, the claim that technology is value laden amounts to **the trivial claim that human decisions are value laden.**

   Miller's argument against triviality (1.5 marks; 1 for the first; 0.5 for the second)
   Miller argues that what sets apart values embodied in technology and renders them nontrivial is their material longevity.
   This is because technology partly shapes its context of use, directing or constraining its replacement by new technology. For two reasons
   >   1. some amendments to technology are so complicated and expensive that they are practically or nearly impossible or at least seem so
   >   2. replacing existing technology often involves recovering lost knowledge embedded in it

   Position in the debate and reason in support of their position (2 marks; use your discretion here)

   1 mark for **clearly stating** their position in the debate. They can choose any position.

   1 mark for providing **at least 2 valid reasons** in support of their position (0.5 marks each).