Andrew Hannaoui

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UX designers are more important now than ever before. It seems like almost everyone around us is interacting with technology constantly. Not only does the experience have to work well in a more private setting, but also while one is out at a bar or on the walk to work. The user experience has become immensely important in peoples day-to-day lives, so UX designers now have to face new issues with satisfying our society. The job of a UX designer is to make sure that the user’s interactions with the platform are smooth, and pleasurable. Those in charge of this experience have a lot of power when it comes to how much time people spend interacting with products and services. If the user experience is comfortable for the user, then they will be more likely to fill their “cognitive surplus” with this experience. Cognitive surplus is the extra time people have on a daily basis, which can be used for activities such as watching television, or getting tasks done. The author Clay Shirky developed the concept of cognitive surplus in her work, *Gin, Television, and Cognitive Surplus.* The UX designers are those who decide how we watch commercials and how we navigate the websites we use on a daily basis. Shirky quotes Marko Gui and Luca Stanca in stating, “Television can play a significant role in raising people’s materialism and material aspirations, thus leading individuals to underestimate the relative importance of interpersonal relations for their life satisfaction and, as a consequence, to ever invest in income-producing activities and under-invest in relational activities.” So what people are shown through their user experience really shapes and develops what they are prioritizing in their lives. One who watches a lot of TV is sitting through countless commercials that entice them to buy the next hot product. The experience is laid out in such a way where each commercial blends into the next, giving the user an almost hypnotic experience.

Persuasive design is design which focus’ on influencing how the user behaves through the design work. When we look at the notes app on our phones, we are immediately reminded of the physical notebooks that we know all too well. Once we enter the app, the user is typing out their notes in the same format as an actual notebook. These apps that look like familiar items we all use are called skeumorphs. Skeumorphs are a part of persuasive design, designed to make the user more comfortable with the apps that they use. When one sees something familiar they are more inclined to use it and can immediately understand its purpose. If the notes app was just a blank square, users would use it less since it seems different than what they’re used to. Influencing users in this way both positively and negatively affects user behavior. Although the influence brought on by the UX designer does a lot of the time make the user experience much easier and straight forward, the user is left in the dark about how these designs work. Bentley University backs up this idea in their article, “The Ethics of User Experience.” “The UX professional must understand that for every product created with the ‘best intention,’ there will be another that deliberately nudges the user to ends not in the user’s best interest, (Bentley). So suppose a certain app design doesn’t suit a specific user. There is no way for the user to alter the experience or make suggestions unless they are quite familiar with UX design. UX design is made for the general public, and gets people used to the idea that all these things like how their app works should be done for them. This is parallel to how apple computers barely allow the user to make changes to how their experience works. UX design is important and helpful, but should greaten the divide between the user and their experience.

There are many different characteristics of what we call the “Digital World.” It is electronic, interconnected, and networked; meaning users in the digital world are all able to communicate/interacted with one another. This semi-new way of interacting with one another has forever changed the way that we develop artwork. The digital and physical worlds of art have intertwined. We can draw or paint something on paper and scan it onto our computers. Not only does this change the way the piece is viewed, but also artists can then add to their physical work using digital technologies. This leaves people with the question of, are physical works better, worse, or the same as digital? Many painters I’ve met claim that they will always hold physical paintings in higher regard than digital ones. This is because when creating a digital painting through something like Adobe Illustrator, one is using someone else’s design work to create their own work. Of course the same can be said for painters who don’t make their own paint or photographers who don’t develop their own film.

Another way in which the digital world has affected the world of art is how art can now be shared through digital media. Artists used to wait for their work to be shown or sold until there was a show for them to be displayed at. Now artists can simply post to Instagram or Facebook once they are finished with their work. Of course artists are not forced to share their work in this way, but the instant gratification is rather enticing when one makes a work they are proud of. Digital sharing is very helpful for artists, since they can sell their works to people they haven’t met, or show all their friends/acquaintances their work without having to leave their home. Digital sharing is definitely convenient, but there are some negative aspects of digital sharing as well. Once something is posted, it feels like that piece of work is now forever finished. When the likes come to a close and all one’s friends have seen their work, it’s as if no one will give it any more thought. As an artist, I relate to this and feel like sometimes I could’ve waited a bit longer to post certain works, or just not posted them at all. It gives us a fake sense of gratification when someone’s “selfie” gets as many likes as the painting someone worked on for months. So while the digital world can push someone’s career forward by helping sell their work or increasing their exposure, it is important to take a step back and remember that the judgment given online isn’t always accurate. Just because everyone can see one’s work doesn’t mean they will all judge it in the same way.

Human enhancement technology has been around for many years, and has come a long way. Janet Kourany, in her article, *Human Enhancement: Making the Debate More Productive* makes an interesting point with this idea. *"*Even Adam and Eve sought enhancement (in particular, the cognitive enhancement provided by the tree of knowledge!), and by ancient times the enhancements in use had already attained a high degree of sophistication," (Kourany). Some more recent developments of human enhancement technology are nanotechnology, or artificial organs. Developments like these are quite amazing, since they save many lives that would otherwise have been lost in the past. They positivity that comes out of these technologies is much more straight forward than the negative aspects. As a society we of course want to keep moving forward and further advance our creations, but there has to be a line where technology goes too far. One major issue is people’s privacy. It’s great when our computer fixes our sentences for us or guesses what we are about to search, but this can so easily go to far so that people will not be able to think for themselves as they once did. Spelling doesn’t mean as much as it did in the past, since most papers are typed with programs that will fix one’s spelling for them. This is not a huge deal, but it is the start of what could become the takeover of human enhancement technology. "Carried to the utmost, the result will be humans with such radically expand capacities as to be no longer humans at all-'posthumans'," (Kourany). By this Kourany means that if we keep using enhancements in technology to make up for our brain or body’s limitations, we will in theory become part machine. This brings about the question of morality; is it right for us to go so far as to let go of our body’s natural way and create a world where all our issues are solved? Life is the way it is because we have to struggle and not everything works perfectly. It’s these imperfections that make us who we are and give us the motivation to keep going. What we should be focusing on in the realm of human enhancement technology are disease and physical issues, not just to make our brain’s job easier. We can use these advancements in technology to help our brains become stronger, instead of accepting that we cannot use our brains to their full capacity. If we just keep finding ways to get around our body/minds limitations, then we as a species will become weaker and completely reliant on our technology.

Works Cited

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