

Reset of Perception & Construction of Experiences in the Digital Age

Abstract

This project explores the philosophical aspect of perception, the influence of digital technology in human experiences and the speculation for a future machine that can construct new experiences and reset human perception.

Research Methods Research Question

The sources that used in this research are mainly books, articles, online posts, design and artistic projects, and films.

Could we construct our own experiences and reset our perception with futuristic digital technologies?

Background

The Allegory of the Cave Plato Socrates describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to ascribe forms to these shadows. The shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. The philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are not constitutive of reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners.

Phenomenology of Perception Maurice Merleau-Ponty Perception is the background of experience which guides every conscious action. Perception is not purely sensation, nor is it purely interpretation. Consciousness is a process that includes sensing as well as reasoning. Every sensation belongs to a sensory field, which implies that all senses are spatial and that all sensory objects must occupy space.

The Experience Machine Robert Nozick "Suppose that there was an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time, you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences?"



Matrix The Wachowski Brothers The main character is trapped in a false reality created by a computer program. While in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, a prisoner is able to comprehend the reality of the cave and the real one outside the cave.

Outrospectre Frank Kolkman To tackle "death anxiety" among terminally ill hospital patients, this device simulates a near-death experience.

The machine to be another Be another lab An embodied virtual reality system that allows anyone to experience the world from the perspective of another.



How Does Technology Transform Our Perception? Don Ihde At the heart of Don Ihde's post-phenomenological approach to technology is an analysis of various types of relations between human beings, technologies, and the world.

Neurophysiology-based art in immersive virtual reality Doron Friedman, Ayal Donenfeld and Eli Zafran This article refers to virtual reality art which often deals with issues of embodied interaction versus the fantasy of disembodiment.



Peak Performance Rachel Rossin This exhibition explores how we lose touch with our bodies in virtual spaces.

Objective Realities Automato farm Becoming an object in a smart home is a VR experience that changes the perspective from a human point of view to the one of an object.

TV Helmet/Portable Living Room and Small Room Walter Pichler These isolating simulators remove one from a given reality and can be seen as the ultimate conclusion of technology's encroachment on the body.



Perception & Reality

We invest the perceived reality with values and understandings that refer essentially to our lives and bodies, but we often forget that this reality is as it appears to these perceived values and that it is not a truth in itself.

It is the same in Plato's allegory, in which what people take to be real would, in fact, be an illusion. According to Plato, the "Forms" or "Ideas", and not the material world of change known to us through sensation, possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality.

Looking at the results of Nozick's experiment we see that most people would not choose to plug into the experience machine. **There are more things that matter to us than just the way that we feel. We want to do things, and not just to experience doing them.**

In the Digital Age

From the perspective of the evolution of human consciousness, technology can be seen as both an effect and a change agent. It is an effect in that it requires a certain sophistication of human thought to develop a particular technology.

Technology has altered also our flow of time. With the tech progress, we are forced to function on a tech speed, which contradicts our human rhythms. We also customize our experiences by doing multiple things at once and document every moment of our life, detaching ourselves from living the moments ourselves.

Technology affects our perception of the world not only by offering sensory feedback but also by **shaping our interpretive acts of perception**. The technologies that we take into an embodied relation-such as VR, fade from our awareness as objects in themselves.

Analysis

I imagine the digital world as a contemporary Plato's cave. Our virtual portraits live into it and experience and learn with different ways and with accelerated rhythm, in contrast to real life experiences. It is like two parallel lives, that its one interrupts the other though.

But these technologies don't really change the way we perceive. We still perceive with our senses and with our subjective perspective of the world. Present digital technologies, like empathy VR projects, have many benefit influences in human experiences, but they don't change the way we perceive the reality, they are just strong and extraordinary experiences.

Another major problem with these technologies is that **we have become blind to so much seeing**. We have to consider that the body is not absent during the viewing. A person connected to the internet is considered not only physically in the space in front of the computer but also virtually represented. This indicates the potential for the body to simultaneously exist in two realities, internally and externally experiencing and being experienced.

Conclusion

Inspired by the Experience machine, I speculate a futuristic digital technology, through which we could succeed to construct new experiences and reset our perception. We could erase memories or build new fake realities. Through this machine, our perception would reset.

The reason that I make this proposal is because I want to criticize the disembodiment and the discomfort that a fiction machine like that would have. **A machine that lives our life for us**. My aim is to create a work like a manifestation of the digital "uncanny". A "good-bad" machine that we can identify on an anthropocentric level yet still seem unreal or inauthentic.

Regarded to current "intelligent" machines, I believe that to change our perception we need an unbiased machine. But can a machine, which is made by humans, be objective? And what does the change of perception mean? Do we want a change in this way?

As we become ever more disembodied from daily life through various means of technology, my work aims to locate an expanded awareness of how we might physically engage the world, using our entire bodies-not just our heads-as tools for gaining experience and knowledge. **My work aims to possess a skeptical or sarcastic undertone for the experience machines of the future.**

"If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite."

William Blake

Criticism & Speculation