

Facing the future, facing the screen – 10th Budapest Visual Learning Conference

Screening the Future Faces of Rhetoric

We face a challenge that has a name: future rhetoric. Under this name we can gather all the approaches, practices and voices multimedial discourses will be produced by in the upcoming years. The future of rhetoric is dependent on technicity entailing simulated communicators and virtual interactions. The disciplinary future can either be explained as something radically different from what has been taught and practiced as rhetoric so far, or as a mode of social existence that fights against technocracy. This first, futuristic view conceives of rhetoric as a tool to simulate a human-centred environment without humans involved. The second, future-proof alternative combats algorithm with critical thought, formation with creation, data with meaning and intelligence with wisdom.

What a World! The Pluralistic Universe of Innocent Realism

1. The method of metaphysics; the meaning of “real”. 2. Why “Innocent” Realism? 3. The one real world: physical stuff and things, physical kinds and laws, physical phenomena; and (in “our” corner of this universe), the vast array of human artifacts – physical, social, intellectual, imaginative – all intimately entangled. 4. Human mindedness. 5. “Virtual” reality – where does that fit in?

Algorithmic Nudging: A Site of Social Control, Resistance and Conflict

Algorithmically generated nudges are seemingly omnipresent whenever we engage with the digital world. They are becoming increasingly personalized as they build on user experience databases. For philosophers and social scientists alike these processes raise questions about the deeper significance of algorithmic nudging and its consequences for human conduct and the meaning of life.

The Preservation of Self in the Zoom Age: Insights from Pragmatics, Gesture Semiotics and Diary Studies

Face-to-face communication is fraught with paradox and contradictions: it is spontaneous and controlled, free and ritualized, personal and patterned, subject to the “traffic rules of social interaction” yet shaped by particular “social situations”. The proliferation of new social media and the multiplication of communicative channels has increased the diversity and complexity of how we interact with fellow humans.

Does Democracy Need a Digital Council of Trent?

The main idea behind this paper is that transitions in the flow of information result in the ebb and flow of social institutions. The point here is to look at the historical example of printing and the printing press to see how that development played out in society. Which institutions waxed and which ones waned? While there are wildly different contexts, the same question can be applied to the development of digital communication. We are in the middle of the transition from the pre-digital to whatever the digital era will bring. Thus, it is interesting to speculate as to how the current array of social institutions will weather this new transition.

The Right Not to Be Exposed to Pornography

It appears increasingly apt to describe our era as “post-liberal”. An illustration of this comes in the form of the Online Safety Bill, a proposed law which had its second reading in the UK Parliament in April 2022 and is likely to come into effect in 2023. Its stated goal is to “make the UK the safest place in the world to be online”, and this involves, among other things, imposing duties on online platforms to “protect” users by removing “harmful” content. Most controversially, “harmful” content in this context will include “misinformation and disinformation”. The Bill also, much less controversially, will require any platform hosting pornographic material to mandate age verification for users.

Speleology in the Metaverse: From Plato’s Cave to Zuckerberg’s

Plato contrasted the benighted dwellers in the cave whose reality was circumscribed by flickering shadows with those who had received illumination from the sun, to express the intellectual liberation provided by the Forms. In Zuckerberg’s cave, physical

reality is still imperfect, restrained and uncertain, but now the sun illuminates with big data and AI, whether implemented via surveillance capitalism's exploitation machines, the Chinese surveillance state, or the data-driven policy/nudging of welfare democracies, while the individual is reduced to data to be manipulated. Are such narratives sustainable, can they be resisted, and what counternarratives are available?

Seeing through Letterforms – Typography Past and Future

Our place in the world is established by the act of seeing images which Berger saw as catalysts for social representations. This act of seeing images, as opposed to looking at images, permeated electronic and digital realms throughout their stages of development and maturity. However, in the postdigital realm typography came to experience a remarkable shift. The participatory and inclusive nature of postdigital space enables transcultural interaction where multiculturalism, hence multi-script typography, is positioned as a norm for information exchange. In this light, I envision to build a case for typography as a means of socio-cultural representation and speculate possible futures for typographic theory expansion.

Model-induced Escape

A spam filter works like this. Your email provider collects data pertaining to how you deal with incoming emails. Each email is stored in the email system as a long string (call it "s") of 0s and 1s. Depending on whether you press "spam", the email system creates for each email a tuple of the form $\langle s, 0 \rangle$ for "no spam", and $\langle s, 1 \rangle$ for "spam". The resultant gigantic set of tuples (call it "tup"), collected from all users of the email system, then allows the email provider to block those future emails which are like the emails which users earlier identified as spam. It can do this because it can use tup to learn the patterns characteristic of spam, and reject those emails which use these patterns.

The Digital World of Manipulated Experience

The basis character of propaganda, censorship, advertising, religious ritual, education, and similar social technologies is that they are ways of changing something internal,

the way people think, or think in relation to a voluntary action, by something external. We have a long list of inherited experiences with such processes, some of which have been very effective. But we know from this experience that the actual effects of these social technologies are unpredictable, and that they can produce resistance as well as acquiescence. I will specifically focus on the puzzling idea of “curation”. Curation is a form of censorship, with conscious or unconscious propagandistic intent, and operates at least in part as a form of subconscious manipulation.

‘Don’t Think, but Look!’ Perceptual Experience, Metaphysics, and Common Sense

The way the world is visually presented to us is as parsed into individual objects, for example middle-sized dry goods such as tables and chairs, and other persons standing in some spatial relations. The world, as we encounter it in experience, does not appear as parsed into tropes, facts, or properties. Such issues are properly framed as attempts to provide a metaphysical explanation of appearances’ structure, not as descriptions of the phenomenal world. Taking clue from Wittgenstein’s intimation to look at the world, I maintain that philosophers of perception should pay more attention to the structure of the phenomenal world and common sense.