

Weapon-Being: Weaponized Design and Object-Oriented Ontology in Hypermodern Times

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Abstract : This proposal attempts a refabrication of Heidegger's classic thing-being and object-being analysis in order to provide better ontological tools for understanding contemporary culture, technology, and society. In his work, Heidegger sought to understand and comment on the problem of technology in an era of rampant innovation and increased perils for society and the planet. Today we seem to be at another crossroads in this course, coming after postmodernity, during which dreams and dangers of modernity augmented with critical speculations of the post-war era take shape. The new era which we are now living in, referred to as hypermodernity by researchers in various fields such as architecture and cultural theory, is defined by the horizontal implementation of digital technologies, cybernetic networks, and mixed reality. Technology today is rapidly approaching a turning point, namely the point of no return for humanity's supervision over its creations. The techno-scientific civilization of the 21st century creates a series of problems, progressively more difficult and complex to solve and impossible to ignore, climate change, data safety, cyber depression, and digital stress being some of the most prevalent. Humans often have no other option than to address technology-induced problems with even more technology, as in the case of neuron networks, machine learning, and AI, thus widening the gap between creating technological artifacts and understanding their broad impact and possible future development. As all technical disciplines and particularly design, become enmeshed in a matrix of digital hyper-objects, a conceptual toolbox that allows us to handle the new reality becomes more and more necessary. Weaponized design, prevalent in many fields, such as social and traditional media, urban planning, industrial design, advertising, and the internet in general, hints towards an increase in conflicts. These conflicts between tech companies, stakeholders, and users with implications in politics, work, education, and production as apparent in the cases of Amazon workers' strikes, Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, Facebook and Microsoft data scandals, and more are often non-transparent to the wide public's eye, thus consolidating new elites and technocratic classes and making the public scene less and less democratic. The new category proposed, weapon-being, is outlined in respect to the basic function of reducing complexity, subtracting materials, actants, and parameters, not strictly in favor of a humanistic re-orientation but in a more inclusive ontology of objects and subjects. Utilizing insights of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) and its schematization of technological objects, an outline for a radical ontology of technology is approached.

Keywords : design, hypermodernity, object-oriented ontology, weapon-being

Conference Title : ICOI 2022 : International Conference on Ontology and Ideology

Conference Location : Istanbul, Türkiye

Conference Dates : May 05-06, 2022