FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World

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Humanity is the client – an argument for a hermeneutical approach in design education

Abstract

Whilst the world is indeed in flux, the purpose of design – to address human needs – remains constant. The concept 'Human needs' is multifaceted, and needs clarification, This paper is concerned with the relationship between 'human needs' and design education.

Firstly, to be a good designer is to be an aware designer. Awareness improves the end product and feeds the process of concept generation. But awareness also engenders positive outcomes beyond the scope of objects. Design informed by awareness enriches the user, as well as the designer and maker.

In order to contextualise design education and practice in terms of awareness, R. Keith Sawyer and Phillip McIntyre's 'sociocultural model' of creativity is useful. The model consists of three central elements necessary for the creative process. These are the Individual, the Domain (briefly definable as the technical aspects of one's discipline, such as techniques and tacit knowledge), and, lastly, the Field, which can be described as the sum total of the body of knowledge, consensus and consumer demand 'out there', at any given point in time.

Knowledge of the Domain is essential for awareness, and I wish to broaden the notion of the Domain – design's 'Domain' cannot be relegated to knowledge of successive historical design movements, of techniques and methods, nor to knowledge of current trends and theory, but must be conceived in terms of 'being human'. Thus, knowledge of the design Domain entails knowledge of what it means to be human, how humanity lives, what people believe and experience.

In this argument I am lead by the 2005 Ahmedabad Declaration (Tradition and Modernity, 2005) which defines design as the creation of 'holistic experiences ... for the quality of life and environment', and which furthermore states that design education should 'promote value based design ... prepare students to be culturally sensitive ... [and] draw upon multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural sources'. The multi-disciplinary approach I am arguing for involves knowledge of being in an ontological sense, and in the Heideggerian sense that understanding 'pertains to the entirety of being-in-the-world', to 'solicitude for Others' and 'concern with the world'. In this sense, to be aware of design in terms of objects only, is not to be aware at all.

To summarise, I wish to argue that design education should foster awareness of the Field, and that awareness of the Field entails 'knowledge of being' on an ontological level. Thus ergonomics and techniques, whilst important, are never enough. The 'x-factor' in design is awareness of what it means to be human.

Introduction: 'I' becomes 'all of us'

In order to address 'Design education in a changing world', a fair amount of circumspection is required. In which way is the world changing, and why, and how does this impact on design education. The definition of design I wish to focus on here, namely design as the creation of "holistic experiences" is taken form the 2005 Ahmedabad Declaration (Tradition and Modernity, 2005). This definition seems to be a valuable approach to the discipline, an approach to counter the reductive view of design as merely the manipulative creation of exploitive commodities. The definition of design as the creation of holistic experiences furthermore gives an indication as to how one might answer the question as to the way in which the world is changing. In this paper I wish to argue that at least one of the many ways in which the world is changing, is the way in it is no longer seen as adequate to view people, disciplines, nations, and thought systems in isolation. Ken Wilber (2006:ix, 18), author of *A brief history of everything* (1996), states: "In the past two decades [1986-2006], a radically new theoretical framework for organizing the world and activities in it has started to achieve prominence … Known as the Integral Approach, it has been used in everything from business to medicine … to … art to education [and] claims to be comprehensive and inclusive … Discovering the profound *patterns that connect* is a major accomplishment of the Integral Approach". One of these 'patterns that connect' is a global recognition of the benefits of moving away from focus on the 'I' (egocentric), or even the 'us' (ethnocentric) to 'all of us' (worldcentric) (Wilber, 2006:6). In other words, we as designers are inextricably caught up in a *world system* and hegemony, power relations and exclusionary practices no longer suffice if we wish to make a meaningful contribution in any field, including that of design, and design education.

A worldcentric approach in design education can be contextualised in terms of current redefinition of 'creativity' as such. One such redefinition entails moving from a psychological, individual-centred explanation of the notion of creativity, to a sociocultural approach. A psychological approach to the definition of creativity entails the listing of individual traits in the person seen to be creative. Sawyer (2006:113) points out that this approach (the individualist approach to creativity) is dominant in western discourse, and that the approach is also fairly recent (having gained common currency in the west some 500 years ago). Counter to this, current research on creativity takes into account the contexts of creativity, which include history, society and culture. Thus the "I" approach to defining and understanding creativity (and design activity) shifts toward the 'all of us' approach. In other words, each 'creative' person is part of a society as well as a culture and, furthermore, acts as a "representative of a certain historical period" (Sawyer, 2006: 114). The point is that the notion of what creativity entails is determined socially, culturally, historically – for a product to be regarded as creative it needs to be *deemed as such* socially and culturally. Furthermore, in terms of the sociocultural definition of creativity, for a product to be regarded as creative, it must be perceived to be novel, and *appropriate*, (further indicating the consensual nature of creativity definition (Sawyer 2006:121-122).

There are thus more components to determining the nature and scope of creativity than the listing of individual attributes, and Sawyer uses the trilateral model, consisting of Individual, Domain and Field, to further contextualise the consensual definition of creativity. Briefly explained, the Individual creates a product (design), which might or might not be novel and/or appropriate. The consensus on whether a product or design is novel and/or appropriate lies with the experts in a given discipline – the Field. If the product meets these criteria, and is given the nod by the Field, it enters the Domain, "where it's preserved and disseminated to other members of the field" (Sawyer, 2006:123). In this paper I wish to focus on the notion of the Domain, and how a broadening of the notion (as defined by Sawyer), might be applied to design and design education. Sawyer (2006:125) defines the Domain as consisting of "all of the created products that have been accepted by the field in the past, and all of the conventions that are shared by members of the field: the languages, symbols, and notations".

In my attempt to broaden the notion of what the Domain of design might entail, I refer again to the Ahmedabad Declaration of 2005, and its directive to design educationists to "promote value

based design ... prepare students to be culturally sensitive ... [and] draw upon multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural sources" (Tradition and Modernity, 2005). The cross-cultural emphasis is a step in the direction of worldcentric design, in sympathy with the way in which our views might presently, collectively be shaped by a world in flux.

World and being in non-dualist terms

Whilst there are doubtlessly many ways in which to approach the notion of worldcentric design and design education, I wish to focus here on a hermeneutic[1] reading of what 'worldcentrism' might entail. In the act of moving from the egocentric approach to the ethnocentric approach and beyond it to the worldcentric approach, the 'problem' of the 'other' immediately appears. Hermeneutics, and in particular notions on Dasein (being human) as postulated by twentieth century philosopher Martin Heidegger, and the hermeneutic phenomenology[2] of his follower Hans-George Gadamer are helpful in confronting the problem of the 'other', and in trying to flesh out the notion of 'all of us' as it pertains to design praxis. Othering entails not only the chauvinist practice of distinguishing between one's own group, nation, society, and customs and those of the 'other', with the concomitant denigration of that which doesn't conform to one's own notions of how things 'ought' to be. Othering is also subtle and ubiquitous, the bedrock of western culture, and, in particular, of the pervasive scientistic[3] way of viewing, and being in, the world. It is the distinction between subject and object which leads to othering, and it is exactly this dualist model that Heidegger and Gadamer wish to dismantle in their attempts to create an alternative way to be in the world.

Gadamer wishes to overcome what is for him the hegemony of science, and his *Truth and method* (1960), expressly rejects method (any method, as method is the handmaiden of science) as a means by which to come to a clearer understanding of the 'truth'. Furthermore, Gadamer harks back to a pre-Cartesian time when "subject and object, being and thinking, were not radically severed" (Holub, 1984:37). Here, Gadamer is referring to Descartes' "*cogito ergo sum;* I think, therefore I am" (Mautner, 2000:135), which concisely expresses the view of man as, essentially, intellectual consciousness. Through this statement, mind and matter were irrevocably sundered. Gadamer posits that

> with the advent of Cartesian dualism the alienation of western human beings … became the corner-stone of western philosophy [whose task it] has been to conceal and justify the alienation of mind and matter, subject and object, by providing a philosophical basis for the scientific method (Holub, 1984:37).

Showing his skepticism of scientific method, Gadamer (1998:238) states "Scientific certainty always has something Cartesian about it. It is the result of a critical method that admits only the validity of what cannot be doubted".

One could argue for design with less 'method' – as 'method' is, for Gadamer, "something that a subject applies to an object to yield a specific result" (Holub, 1984:36). Rather than such a mechanistic (and hegemonic) approach to design, one might envisage design as an act of interpretation, application, mediation, making present for the client, a conversation with the client in which there is give and take, questioning and answering, openness. In this way, design might be seen as "mediating between then and now, between the 'Thou' and the 'I'" (Gadamer in Holub, 1984:44). In this sense, design can be seen as significant dialogue.

Richard E. Palmer also notes this aversion to scientific method in later hermeneutical writers. Palmer discusses this phenomenological hermeneutical slant within the context of literary theory, but the approach is applicable to design practice and education. Palmer (1982:6) notes:

A study of phenomenology makes especially apparent the … extent to which literary interpretation [or 'design'] has fallen into the scientist's way of thinking: his down-to-business objectivity, his static

conceptualizing, his lack of an historical sense, his love of analysis … the image of a scientist taking an object apart to see how it is made has become the prevailing model.

Contrary to this, designed artefacts might better be regarded "not primarily as objects of analysis but as humanly created texts which speak" (Palmer, 1982:7). Palmer's statement conjures up the notion of dialogue once more, a notion worth scrutinising. Before doing so, it is also worth analysing the idea of what an object is, or rather what the human relation to objects might be. The way in which objects, including designed objects, are viewed also currently falls within the dualist subject/object paradigm. There are, however, alternatives to this model, as hermeneutic philosophy points out. The idea of 'objecthood' is central to the extent that Heidegger devotes an entire study to it in *What is a thing?* (1962). Heidegger argues that the answer to what a 'thing' might be, reveals the way in which humans view their own being. With this approach Heidegger expressly rejects a positivist framing of the question, and rejects science as the measure of all knowledge. Heidegger (1985:10) states: "With our question we stand outside the sciences, and the knowledge for which our question strives is neither better nor worse [than scientific inquiry] but totally different". Thus, the question as to what a 'thing' is, is raised not for the sake of quantitively establishing an answer, but because it throws light on the way in which being, or *Dasein* (existence, being-there) is defined. In this lies the merit and value of asking 'what is a thing?'. For Heidegger (1985:24) "the question concerning the character of the being of things … is completely and entirely hung up in the question concerning being … does being no longer mean anything at all to us, so that we are only staggering around in a confusion? Who can decide how it stands with being and its determination?". Thus, in designing an object, in taking up a position in relation to the object, "what is called into play is a personal knowledge of what being human means" (Palmer, 1982:41).

Human being (*Dasein*) is also entangled with the way in which we view the world (how we view the world shows our worldview, bur also our conception of being). Palmer (1982:132) explains that for Heidegger, 'world' is not a composite of innumerable beings, but "the whole in which human being always finds himself already immersed". In this way, it is not possible to separate being and world (once again negating the subject/object schism), and they are part of the same matrix. Palmer (1982:132) continues: "World is prior to any separation of self and world in the objective sense. It is prior to all 'objectivity', all conceptualizing; it is therefore also prior to subjectivity, since both objectivity and subjectivity are conceived within the subject-object schema".

Heidegger's thought is clearly in opposition to the dualist construct common to science, positivism and materialism. In pointing towards the holistic, or monist superstructure from which dualism emerges, Heidegger is closer to oriental thought, as well as occidental and oriental mystic systems. In Hinduism, for instance, dualism is described as the schism between the masculine and feminine aspects of the cosmos, and the object of meditational practice and right living is the final dissolution of this duality. Thus, the union of the female element, or Shakti, symbolic of wisdom, with the male element, or Shiva, symbolic of compassion, constitute the negation of dualism, or enlightenment (Cross, 1994:113). Enlightenment is also viewed as the nullification of the mind/matter schism.

Similarly, the Zen notion of beauty is predicated on the notion of non-duality. Beauty in this sense is not the antithesis of that which is ugly, but the negation of the objectivising gaze and critical thought which classifies things as ugly or beautiful. The truly beautiful falls outside the dualist framework, is non-hierarchical, and has "[n]o rule; no complexity; no rank; no mind; no bottom; no hindrance (free of attachments to things and of expec-tations of others or of oneself) … [and] no stirring" (Hisamatsu in Beittel, 1989:11). Explaining the Zen notion of non-dualist beauty, Japanese philosopher Sōetsu Yanagi (1972:109-112) (father of the Japanese Craft Movement), states: "to know the facts about an object of beauty is to go around the periphery … beauty is a kind of mystery … put aside the desire to judge immediately; acquire the habit of just looking … be ready to receive passively … void your mind of all intellectualization, like a clear mirror that

simply reflects. This non-conceptualization – [is] the Zen state of *mushin* ('no mind') [and] from it springs the true ability to contact things directly and positively".

Twentieth century Russian mystic philosopher PD Ouspensky, in his aversion to positivism invokes *Daoist* writings on order to circumvent the *cull de sac* of dualist scientific thought. Ouspensky (1981:7) rejects positivism on the basis that no amount of objective knowledge about phenomena can bring us closer to understanding either world or being. Acceding that positivism was refreshing and progressive in its time, Ouspensky (1981:290) regrets the fact that it inevitably led to materialism, and feels that positivism has become conservative and reactionary, arresting rather than benefiting thought. In firm opposition to positivist method Ouspensky (1981:290) inveighs:

> [W]e do not realise that we rob ourselves … of all beauty, all mystery, all meaning, and then wonder why we are so bored and disgusted … we do not see that we understand nothing around us; that brute force or deceit and falsification always win, and we have nothing with which to oppose them. THE METHOD IS NO GOOD … positivism wears a uniform … It rules over thought … and struggle against it is already declared a crime.

Ouspensky (1981:42) argues that "[m]ensurability is too crude a criterion for existence". Expressly because of this, it is expedient, when looking for the 'real amid the unreal', or in seeking to understand world and being, to 'look away' from the commonly held view of reality, and to embrace that which seems mysterious, infinite or inexpressible. For Ouspensky (1981:117), a positivist is like a savage for whom a book is a 'thing', and who will forever interpret it by carefully taking measurements of its appearance. Whilst contemplating the outer representation of the book, the positivist savage will never fathom its content, or *noumena*, nor even acknowledge that this content exists. Similarly Heidegger (1985:51) comments:

> [T]his reign of the material thing (*Stoffdinges*), as the genuine substructure of all things, reaches altogether beyond the sphere of the things into the sphere of the 'spiritual' (*Geistigen*) … the sphere of the signification of language, of history, of the work of art … Why, for example, has the … interpretation of the poets been so dreary? … Because the readers do not know the difference between a thing and a poem.

Of the occidental mystic writings, it is especially Jacob Böhme's (1575-1624) recounting of his visions and the writings of Plotinus which for Ouspensky epitomise a non-dualist experience of being and world. Böhme, in his visions, felt himself gazing "into the very heart of things … the innermost foundation of nature … [seeing] henceforth with the eyes of the soul" (Bucke in Ouspensky, 1981:237). In Plotinus Ouspensky finds a proximation between Western mysticism and the radical monism of the *Upanishadic*[4] 'Thou art That', and through Plotinus Ouspensky puts a spin on Immanuel Kant's subjective idealism,[5] in that the distinction between the subject's consciousness, and that which is being perceived, falls away. Plotinus (in Ouspensky, 1981:203) contends that we should cease to distinguish between the sought and the seeker and states:

> External objects present us only with appearances … [but] How does the mind perceive … the ideal reality that exists behind appearance … this region of truth is not to be investigated as a thing external to us, and so only imperfectly known. It is within us. Here the objects we contemplate and that which contemplates are identical … Reason sees in itself that which is above itself … and again, that which is below itself as still itself once more.

In the *Dao de jing*, Lao Tzu (1997:43) remarks: "Without going outside his door, one understands all that takes place ... The farther that one goes out from himself, the less he knows".

In his essay *Heidegger and Taoism* (19) Shi-Ying Zhang elaborates on the Daoist slant to Heidegger's notions on being and world. Zhang (19:310) equates Daoist thought, where "the universe and I came into being together; and I, and everything therein, are One", with the Heideggerian notion that "only when one has realized the union of subject and object … and

made himself the place where beings disclose themselves, can he return to authenticity and 'become One with all things' ".

The subject/object schism, solidified in the west in post-Cartesian philosophy as well as in scientific thought, is critiqued by Heidegger and Gadamer in a way similar to Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist and western mystic constructs. An alternative to the dualist subject/object orientation is addressed by twentieth century religious existentialist Martin Buber (whose circle includes Paul Tillich, Karl Barth and Gabriel Marcel). Buber raises the possibility of replacing the I-it relationship, or approach to the world, with an I-Thou awareness in a dialogic model which focuses on the 'in between'. What this might entail is explored below.

Dialogue of the between

In *I and Thou* (1922), Buber distinguishes between two approaches to being, defined as either 'I-Thou' or 'I-it'. I-it refers to the relation between subject and object, "involving some form of utilization or control, the object being wholly passive" (Flew, 1984:50). Hegemonic othering is the result of an I-it approach to relations between humans. I-Thou, on the other hand, designates the relation between subject and subject, characterised by reciprocity and mutuality. Furthermore I-Thou "appears only within the context of the relationship and cannot be viewed independently, whereas in the I-it situation the I is an observer and only partly involved" (Flew, 1984:50). The I-it relationship, Theunissen (1986:273) elaborates, "is a relationship of mastery and slavery, of *sub*- and *super*-ordination … Mastery in this sense is any kind of objectification. Modern science, which carries the objectification of beings to its furthest extreme, also possesses … the most radical will to mastery". Here, the I is implicated in a "*world project* in which it ensnares things" (Theunissen, 1984:274). Contrary to this, Buber (in Theunissen, 1984:274-5), in a way redolent of the Zen notion of non-dualist beauty, posits: "The relation to the Thou is immediate. Between I and Thou there is no conceptuality, no foreknowledge, and no fantasy … Between I and Thou there is no end, no greed, and no anticipation … Every means is an impediment. Only where all means have fallen away can the meeting come about". Recall also Gadamer's critique of method in his *Truth and Method*.

Of import to Buber is not only the distinction between these forms of relationship, but exploration of relationship as grounded in the 'between'. In the concept of the between, significance is vested neither in the I, nor in the Other, nor in a possible 'third' which stands in relation to the I or the Other. Buber (in Theunissen, 1984:277) states: A real conversation … is carried out not in one or the other participant, or in a neutral world that encompasses both and all other things, but in the most precise sense between both". Thus, significance is vested precisely in the between, which is expressly not defined as 'union', but as nothingness, a gap.

Zhang (1993:310) elaborates on the notion that being cannot be separated from nothingness, that being, in actuality, is "a nothingness, a gap, an in-between, a place of revelation". Being thrown into the world (Heidegger) and being aware of one's 'throwness', (the actuality and inescapability of one's *Dasein*), makes it possible for being to be recast as the between, as a hermeneutic (translatory, revelatory) entity. Here the reference to Hermes, as the messenger of the gods, is summoned, so that being is the true hermeneutic state.

Conclusion

How might one relate hermeneutic thought to design praxis and design education. The current tendency to toward integral thinking relates to the need for a non-parochial approach to design education, and a move away form an emphasis on "us and them", whoever 'we' and 'they' may be. The roles become immaterial, and it is the construct itself that is problematic. A workable alternative to the mutual othering that results form the dualist 'us and them' construct, is the notion of worldcentric design. The term worldcentric is intended here to mean more than a potentially endless list of world cultures, world mores, world practices. Knowledge of world culture

is already more readily and widely accessible than at any previous time in our respective histories. This 'knowledge' has not ameliorated the occurrence, scale or intensity of global othering as much as might be expected. It might be proposed, therefore, that knowledge of the other, whilst valuable, is not sufficient, and what is needed is a way of looking at and being in the world which might dispense with awareness of 'otherness' as foreignness. Hermeneutic thought might be a point of access in this process. What Heidegger and Gadamer stress in their writings are a non-mechanistic approach to both world and being (in other words to 'things', to fellow human beings and also to awareness of ones own being in the world). Furthermore the hermaneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer point out the potentially brutal (and brutalising) outcome of dualist presupposition. The correlation between hermeneutic and oriental and mystic thought is clear.

Furthermore, the importance, and nature, of dialogue when conceived as reciprocal and solicitous, informs a radical worldcentrism, conceived in terms of the absence of the will to master, on a personal, local and global scale. Thus, designing, far from consisting of the first step toward the manufacturing of things for others, might be recontextulaised as an act of bringing to light of the reality of being in the world. Design becomes a hermeneutic activity and design education broadens the learners understanding of the impact, purpose and meaning of design.

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Notes

[1] The term 'hermeneutic' is used here in its existential application, as inquiry into the *purpose* of existence (Flew 1984:146), as well as in an ontological sense, as inquiry into the *nature* of existence (Mautner, 2000:249).

[2] The term 'phenomenology' has several applications, but is used here to indicate the description or analysis of phenomena, i.e. that which is given to our experience, how things appear to us, and how they seem to be (Mautner, 2000:421).

[3] Scientism is defined as the belief that "the methods of the natural sciences are applicable in all inquiry, especially in the human and social sciences" (Mautner, 2000:511).

[4] The *Upanishads* (also called the *Vedanta*) date from 800 B.C.E and follow upon and comment on the Vedas (which date back to 1400 B.C.E.). From the *Upanishads* spring the Buddhist view that "our ordinary picture of the universe and of ourselves is a kind of illusion" (Solomon & Higgins, 1996:2, 8).

[5] Kant's romantic subjective idealism led to his assertion of the subjective nature of knowledge and perception. In Kantian terms this 'Copernican revolution' posits the wholly subjective nature of human perception of phenomena, and consciousness is cast as an illuminating lamp (creating 'reality'), rather than as a mirror truthfully reflecting an externally existent reality.

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Papers presented at conferences/seminars/workshops

Art, men and madness – Modernist art as the chrysalis of internal male struggle – Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, 2007.

Unity in diversity: art as the temporal reflection of the universal – Common Ground/ Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2007.

Art in the fourth dimension: giving form to Form – the abstract paintings of Piet Mondrian – Plymouth University, UK, 2007.

Writing for publishing qualitative research including action research: feedback on a workshop by Prof Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit – Tshwane University of Technology, SA, 2007.

Delft in the fourth dimension – a series of works (a presentation on my recent ceramic work) – Ceramics Southern Africa, SA, 2007.

The classic/romantic dichotomy in De Stijl theory (M Tech FA Colloquium) – Tshwane University of Technology, SA, 2006.

Publications

Giving form to thought – Delft in the fourth dimension, National Ceramics Quarterly, 2007.

The romantic elements in De Stijl theory, De Arte (peer reviewed/scholarly) 2007.

Exhibitions/awards (shortlist)

Ubuntu: *an exhibition of South African art*, ABC Treehouse Gallery, Amsterdam, 2007.

Selector for CSA Exhibition, Decorex JHB 2007 Gallagher Estate, (Johannesburg), 2007.

Corrobric Permanent Collection, Pretoria Art Museum, SA. Acquired 2006.

Invited guest exhibitor and selector, CSA regional exhibition, Pretoria, 2005.

*Decorex JHB 2005***,** Gallagher Estate, (Johannesburg), 2005.

*National Ceramic Exhibition***,** First Prize, ceramic sculpture, Pretoria Art Museum, 2004.

*Altech Ceramics Triennial***,** Artscape, Cape Town, 2003.

First National Ceramics Biennale**,** Sandton Civic Gallery, 1996.

Ahmedabad Declaration – 2005

• "Design as creation of **holistic** experiences".

• Indicates one of the ways in which the world is in **Flux** -

There are alternatives to the construct of viewing people, disciplines, nations and thought systems in isolation.

Tshwane University
of Technology

We empower people

Integral Approach

- Discovering the *patterns that connect*.

- Not 'I' – (egocentric approach).

- Not 'us' – (ethnocentric approach).

- 'All of us' – (worldcentric approach).

Definitions of creativity

• Individual-centered notion of creativity –

  - listing of individual traits.
  - dominant in the west for some 500 years.

• Socio-cultural notion of creativity –

  - the creative person is part of a community, a society and a culture (and, ultimately, the world).
  - the creative person is representative of an historical period.
  - creativity is **deemed as such** socially and culturally (Sawyer, 2006:121-122).

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We empower people

Socio-cultural model of creativity (Sawyer)

• Model consists of Individual, Domain and Field:

- **Individual**: creates a product/design.

- **Field**: the sum total of the body of knowledge, consensus and demand within a discipline.

- **Domain**: "…all of the created products that have been accepted by the field … shared … languages, symbols, …" conventions and tacit knowledge (Sawyer, 2006:125).

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Broadening of Sawyer's notion of the Domain

• Ahmedabad directive for design education: to –

  - "promote value based design".

  - "prepare students to be culturally sensitive".

  - "draw upon multidisciplinary and cross cultural sources".

   The Domain is 'all of us'.

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We empower people

The 'problem' of the 'other'

- Proposing a hermeneutic reading of 'worldcentrism' in order to address the notion of the 'other'.

- Hermeneutic phenomenology: Martin Heidegger; Hans-George Gadamer.

Othering

- Chauvinist.

- Also subtle and ubiquitous: the bedrock of western culture.

- Based on a scientistic and dualist world-view.

- **the distinction between subject and object.**

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We empower people

Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960)

• Scientific method: a "method that admits only the validity of what cannot be doubted" (Gadamer, 1998:238).

versus

• Design as an act of interpretation (hence hermeneutic); design as mediation, openness, significant dialogue.

Heidegger, *What is a thing?* (1962)

- Anti-positivist framing of the question.

- "… the question concerning … things … is completely … hung up in the question concerning being" (Heidegger,1985:24).

- *Dasein* – 'being-there': one's mode of being **in/with** the world. It is not possible to separate subject and object in this mode of 'being-there'.

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Negation of dualism

- Hinduism – i.e. union of Shiva and Shakti.

- Zen Buddhism – enlightenment as dissolution of all notion of duality.

- Daoism – monist construct.

- Western mysticism – PD Ouspensky; Jacob Böhme; Martin Buber.

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Buber, *I and Thou* (1922)

- Two modes of being: I-It & I-Thou:

  - I-It: utilisation; control; passive object.
  - I-Thou: subject-subject relationship; reciprocity; mutuality.

- Notion of the **between:**

  - Not conceived of as union (a closing of the gap between I and Thou), but as a **bridge** between I and Thou.

Being-there is the true hermeneutic state: the dissolution of the gap between subject and object.

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Conclusion

- Knowledge of the 'other' – valuable but not sufficient.

- An hermeneutic way of thinking about and being in the world might be helpful in overcoming a mechanistic approach.

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Design

- Not as the making of *things* for *others*.

- As reciprocal dialogue, as an act of solicitude.

- As hermeneutic (interpretive, communicative) activity.

A fostering of the awareness in the learner of such a worldcentric, hermeneutic approach to design broadens the learner's understanding of the potential impact, purpose and meaning of design.

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Thank you.

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