


THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 'REAL' AND THE 'VIRTUAL'

A brief Phenomenology of Digital Revolution

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[@svial](#) #TtW13 #d2

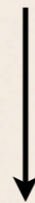


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SOMETHING HAS CHANGED

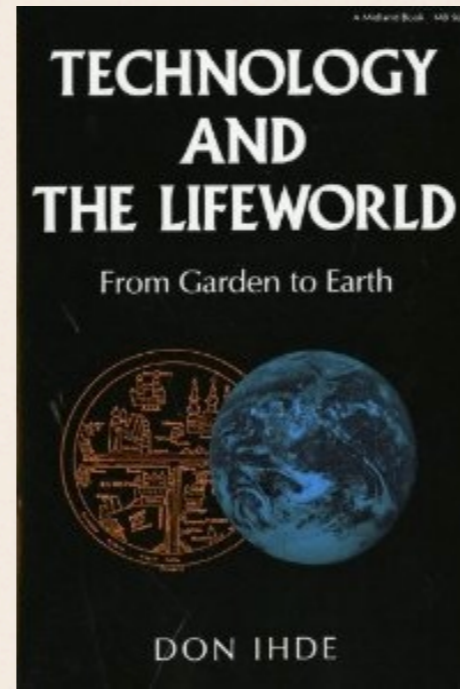
1998

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2013

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Don IHDE (1990)

“OUR EXISTENCE IS
TECHNOLOGY TEXTURED”

True. But even more...

I would say...

OUR *BEING-IN-THE-WORLD* IS
TECHNOLOGY SENSITIVE

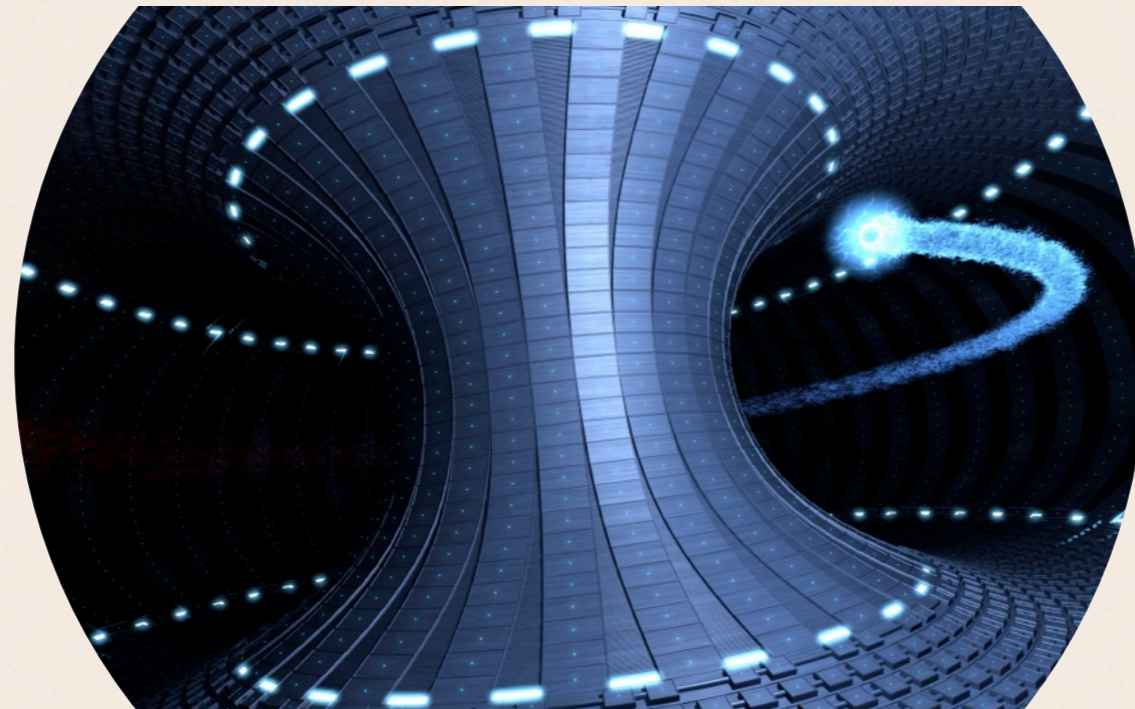
Let me try to explain.

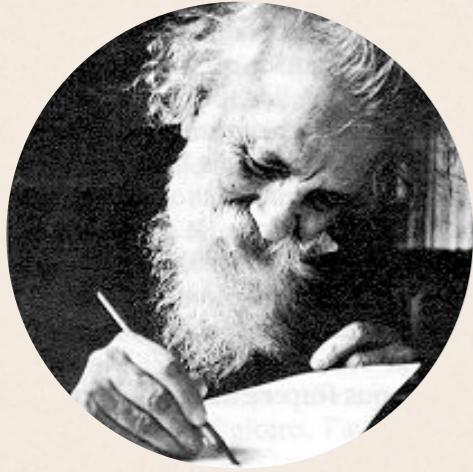
BEING AND DEVICES

Phenomenology of technology is a philosophical approach to devices considered as 'phenomena', i.e. as they appear to us or manifest themselves to us or influence us through Perception in a broad sense.

ATOMS AND ACCELERATORS

In modern physics, the atomic nucleus first existed as a hypothesis before existing as a phenomenon. Scientists needed to build particle accelerators in order to turn the theory into 'reality'. Without them, the atomic nucleus could not become a 'phenomenon'.





BACHELARD'S LECTURE

French philosopher of science

Gaston Bachelard argued early on that
*'Modern atomic science is more than a description
of phenomena, it is a production of phenomena.'*

Scientific phenomena are no longer provided by
Nature, they are constructed by technology.
Science *'is therefore mostly a phenomenotechnique.'*

FOCUS ON 'APPEARANCE'

I call it 'ontophany': the process through which the being (ontos) appears (phaino) to us, in the sense that it involves a particular quality of 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger) or, I would say, 'feeling-in-the-world'.

MAJOR RESULT

Technology has the power to generate ontophany or 'phenomenality'. The power to generate what can appear as 'real', through Perception. Astonishing.

EXTENDING PHENOMENOTECHNIQUE

All phenomena, and not only scientific phenomena, are constructed or co-constructed by technical factors. The fact of appearing (as a human or a non-human) is in itself a phenomenotechnical process.

There are technical structures of perception.

Any 'ontophany' is conditioned by technique.

DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES
DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS
DIFFERENT FEELING-IN-THE-WORLD



ONTOPHANY SHIFT

Through the ages, new technologies have generated an 'ontophany shift', that is to say a shaking of the dominant (technical) structures of perception and, consequently, a change of the very idea that we have of 'reality'.

Each time, it requires from us to re-learn the whole perception process and to extend our idea of the 'real'.



**IS THE INTERNET
A SEPARATE REALITY?**



PHENOMENOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Digital technology has introduced an 'ontophanic trauma' in our being-in-the-world experience. Culture of simulation, virtual worlds, avatars, video games, internet relationships, social profiles, all those new 'beings', unknown from our perception, have created a phenomenological shock in our existence.

THE NEED OF AN ILLUSION

In order to absorb the shock, we needed to believe in two separated worlds. We needed to believe that this new world was a 'second' world. We needed to believe in a 'Second Self' (Turkle, 1984) or in a 'Second Life' (1999). So we re-activated our old outdated Platonic metaphysics. We have re-activated the Allegory of the Cave. As a refuge for our troubled minds.

The Matrix (1999)



IRL OUT OF THE URL (1990s)

'Digital Dualism' (@nathanjurgenson) is actually a very old way of thinking. I call it Neo-Platonic Dualism.

THE VIRTUAL (in the url)

computer-simulated world
based on software and abstraction
cut off from the Body
far from the Truth
red pill / inside-the-Cave
SIMULACRUM OR COPY
Cyberspace

THE REAL (out of the url)

physical-processed world
based on concrete objects
Body-grounded
considered as the True world
blue pill / out-of-the-Cave
GENUINE OR ORIGINAL
Real Life (IRL)

WHAT'S CHANGED? ONTOPHANY!

Since the early 1990s, we have learned to live within cyberspace, the Web and social networks. We have learned new phenomenological habits and we have acquired new perceptive structures. Today, we are very used to simulated beings and online interactions. We don't feel inside-the-Cave anymore when online.

'We have learned to take things at interface value.'
(Turkle, 1995, p. 23). Such a great sentence. This is exactly what 'ontophany shift' means. We have learned to consider what is displayed on the screen as real. We have extended our sense of the real.

1998

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ANONYMITY AND DUAL IDENTITY:

avatar, nickname... (forums, IRC)

*We interacted online with people we didn't know IRL
and from whom we didn't know anything.*

SECOND SELF

2013

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TRANSPARENCY AND SINGLE IDENTITY:

profile picture, firstname, lastname... (social networks)

*We interact online mostly with people we meet everyday
and/or whom we know a lot about (data).*

'SINGLE SELF'



Alain Darte
2 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Valerie Morignat
28 mutual friends

✓ Friends



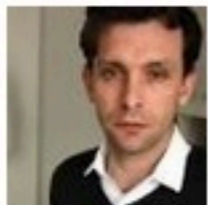
Ludivine Allix
2 mutual friends

✓ Friends



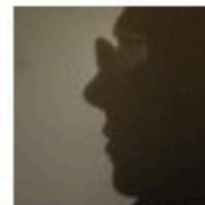
Frédéric Tordo
51 mutual friends

✓ Friends



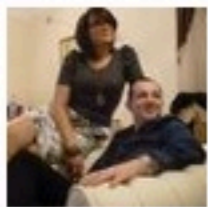
Benoît Drouillat
87 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Etienne Armand Amato
75 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Ameni Feki
59 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Margherita Balzerani
99 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Benjamin Servet
8 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Gaëlle Kikteff
18 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Stéphanie Cardoso
32 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Roland Lemoine
22 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Patricia Ide-Beretti
14 mutual friends

✓ Friends



Claudie Vial
3 mutual friends

✓ Friends

IRL IN THE URL (2000s +)

Welcome to Digital Monism.

We now live in a hybrid environment made of intertwined systems, constantly interlinked, both digital and non-digital ^(a), online and offline. We now live in the 'digital ontophany' as a digital-centered unique environment providing new kinds of perception.

(a) I prefer to say 'non-digital' instead of 'physical' because all that is digital is also physical (electronics)

THE SHIFT

VIRTUAL (in the url)

computer-simulated world
based on software and abstraction
cut off from the Body
far from the Truth
red pill / inside-the-Cave
SIMULACRUM OR COPY
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REAL (out of the url)

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DIGITAL ONTOPHANY (irl in the url)

digital-centered global environment
based on pervasive computing
online and offline mix of everything
the Truth is no more a problem
impossible to separate the 2 aspects
REAL WORLD
Augmented Reality

NO DIFFERENCE?

There is no difference between the Real and the Virtual considered as *Essences* (against Neo-Platonic Idealism). But the Digital and the Physical remain different as *Materials* (Rational Realism). I agree with the '*Mild Augmented Reality*' position as defined by @nathanjurgenson: one reality, different properties. My goal is to get rid of the myth of two realities, which is a major metaphysical fantasy.

THE PROOF BY DESIGN

Theorizing Technology through Design is the way I undertake research on Technology. I love designers. They have the greatest awareness regarding the future. They can feel what's happening before everybody else. They are not afraid of new technology. They are working with it in order to improve the “habitability” of the world (A. Findeli, 2010). Because *‘Design is the central factor of innovative humanisation of technologies’* (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design).

HYBRID EXPERIENCES

As has stated French designer Remy Bourganel (@epourkoapa), designers work on '*the user experience qualities*' (WIF, 2012). What kind of 'user experience qualities' are digital designers working on today? They are working on **hybrid experiences.**

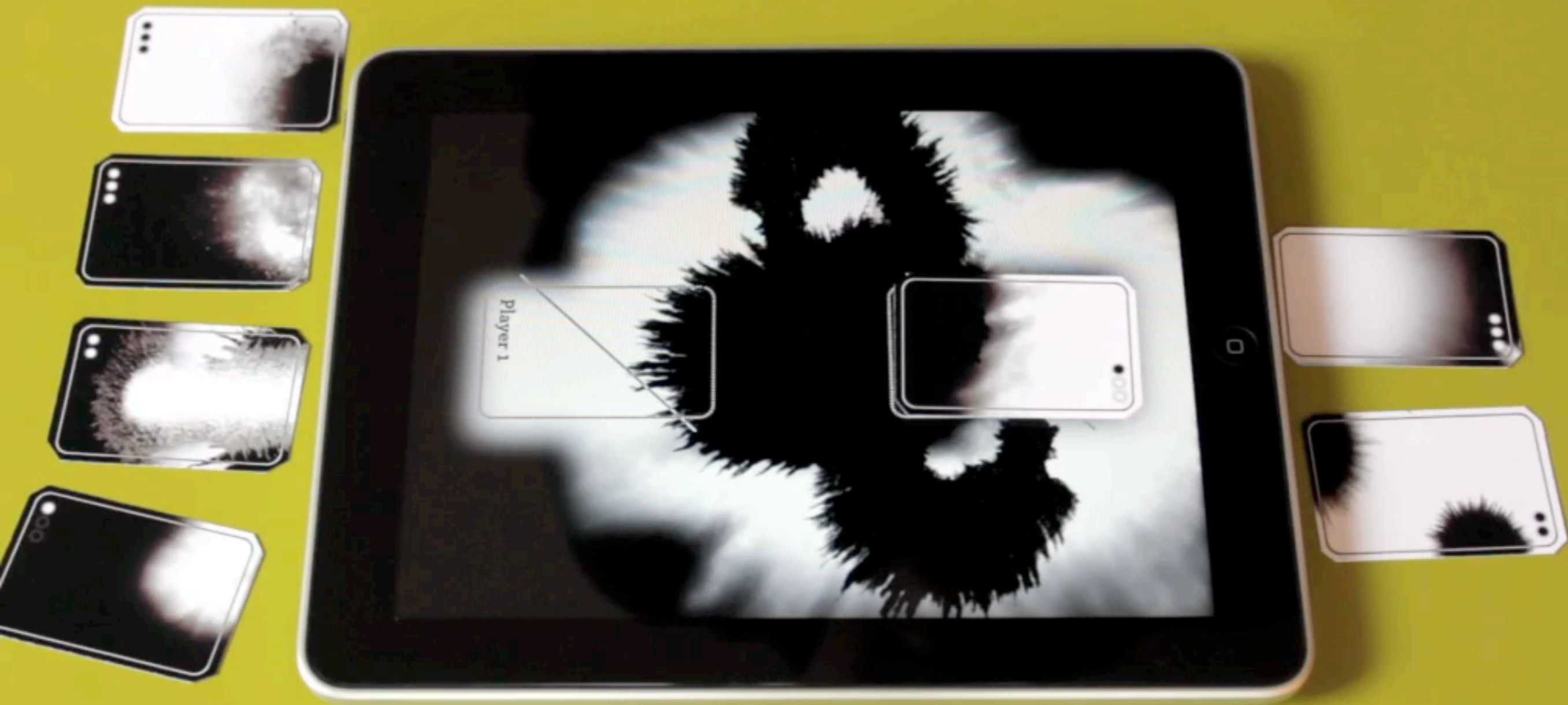


@volumique

Etienne Mineur is a creative director at 'Les éditions volumiques', a French design studio inventing new Games and Toys, *'focusing on the relationship between the tangible and the digital.'*



(i)Pirate, your smart phone is the pawn
étienne mineur | @volumique | volumique.com/v2/en



a new kind of hybrid board game

étienne mineur | @volumique | volumique.com/v2/en



SpellShot (official video published by Hasbro)

étienne mineur | @volumique | volumique.com/v2/en

CONCLUSION

Digital Revolution is not only a technical event. It is a philosophical circumstance that affects our being-in-the-world experience. It is bringing us into the 'digital ontophany' era where the 'real' and the 'virtual' are no longer separated and, in a sense, no longer exist.

Welcome to the (new) real world.

"We don't like that expression: IRL -- In Real Life.
We say AFK -- Away From Keyboard. We think that the internet is for real."

Peter Sunde, *ThePirateBay*.
(via @CleoCollomb)

ONE MORE THING...

I just finished writing a book in French about this subject.
Being and Screens: how technology affects the way we perceive.

If you're interested in publishing it in English,
feel free to contact me ;-)



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