

Call for Papers: Design, Mediation, and the Posthuman (500 words)

The Will to Posthumanism: Designed Technological Mediation, Post-scarcity Economics, and Philosophical Advance

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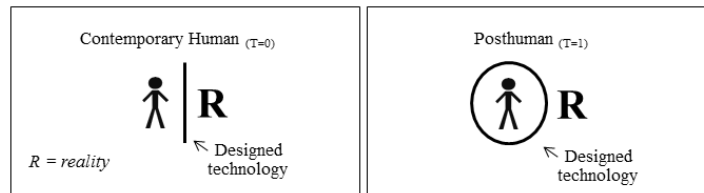
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Life is increasingly a designed mediation between biology and technology, one ultimate end of which is the posthuman. The accelerating pace of technological change and its deep and pervasive influence has caused a shift such that technology can no longer be seen as merely an external object but rather must be apprehended as an integrated biological presence. While this deepening integration could be perceived as a surrender and loss of humanness, the opposite case can be made more strongly that it is specifically in this enframing of biology by technology (Figure 1) that the transition to posthumanity can occur, expanding the freedom, experience, and consciousness of the contemporary human.

Figure 1. Designed technology mediates and increasingly encircles human interaction with reality.



Design is a key lever in facilitating the posthuman transition. One way is through the heterogeneity of technological objects, and self-design, a DIY (do-it-yourself) attitude and culture that relates to objects, creative arts, and science. The new conceptualization and expectation of interaction with technological objects, physical or digital, is that they are malleable, not static. Anyone may edit, mash-up, re-print, re-form, re-envision, re-interpret, excerpt, and abstract any object. The effect of this assumed interactability with technological objects and the ensuing interplay has served to increase expression, imagination, engagement, and participation, thereby shifting values towards personal empowerment. The notion of changeability and interactability as core properties of technological objects is a key intermediate node on the roadmap to posthumanism as recursively self-edited utility functions are an expected capability, presumably with inputs related to volition, creativity, utility, and aesthetics. The design of objects and matter is also being extended to biology, as the transistor of the 21st century may be the ability to read and write DNA (sequencing and synthesizing). At its natural end, the design and management of all biology could further enable the posthuman through embodiment choices and additional parameters for utility function manipulation.

Design applies to concepts as well. Economics 2.0, the attention economy, can be seen as a design endeavor, with the gamefication of behavior, elicitation of preferences, and attribution of

value through reputation and intention. The application of market principles in economic design is a potential enabler of posthumanism, helping to push late-stage Marxist capitalism into the post-labor, post-scarcity economy of the future. Constructing society is also within design's purview. Social design principles may help to direct the development of future societies into new incarnations of technology-mediated experience, improvements to Foucault's disciplinary societies, Deleuze's control societies, and Žižek's cultural transgression societies. As technological objects mediate human interaction with reality, they also become the tools for a greater introspection and investigation of reality, for example, through computational philosophical methods. New philosophies that extend ancient philosophy, theology, and existentialism can help to guide the epistemology and metaphysics of the posthuman. Key contemporary philosophical concepts like language, the self, and subject-object differences may be quite different in a post-lingual, post-self, and post-subject object world. Philosophical advance could be the capstone in the designed technologically mediated transition to posthumanism.

Biography

Melanie Swan is a Scholar in Residence at the MS Futures Group in Palo Alto, California. She is a science and technology research generalist, futurist, and applied philosopher. She founded the participatory medicine research organization DIYgenomics in 2010. Her educational background includes an MBA in Finance and Accounting from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a BA in French and Economics from Georgetown University, and recent coursework in philosophy, biology, physics, and nanotechnology. She is an Instructor at Singularity University and an Affiliate Scholar at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies. Melanie speaks French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and enjoys reading and international travel. Publication history:

- Swan, M. Biotechnicity 2.0: Computation-enabled Philosophical Advance in the Epistemology of Human Biology and the Ontology of Bioidentity. **2012**. Submitted.
- Swan, M. Being and Subjectivity: the Fragments and Postscript of a Conceptual Application of Kierkegaard and the Quest for Subjective Truth. **2012**. In preparation.
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