

Chapter 87

Ethics, Wearable Technology, and Higher Education: Toward a New Point-of-View Angle on Interactive Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the relationship between ethics, wearable technology, and higher education through the lens of teaching with Google Glass. Beginning with an introduction to Glass and to the contemporary concept of the digital citizen, the chapter traces out a pedagogical framework aimed at preparing learners to embrace their civic duty to contribute to the virtual world responsibly. Continuing with an investigation of ethical obligations, educational concepts, and learning exercises made available by advances in HET, the chapter describes how to use Google Glass as a case study for examining the limits and possibilities of a new point-of-view angle on interactive instruction. To this end, students' project-based and experiential learning about how Glass impacts communication culture and technology, commerce, security, access, etiquette, branding, ethics, and law is described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how technology's ethical consciousness continues to be enacted and embodied via a "collusive" point-of-view angle and third voice that shed light on the ongoing rhetorical and pedagogical processes of expression, experience, and identification in the digital age.

"OK, GLASS... TEACH A CLASS"

On February 24, 2013, I entered a Google Plus contest to pick the first group of Glass Explorers with the following post: "#ifIhadglass you and I could meet +Eminem... maybe." About a month later, Project Glass answered: "Hi Marcia, thanks for applying! We'd like to invite you to join our

#glassexplorers program. We'll be sending you a private message with more details in the coming weeks – keep an eye on our stream at Project Glass." The invite would lead to a payment of \$1,500 plus California State tax a few months later. (Fortunately, my University had agreed to cover the cost of my Glass.)

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My “winning” #ifIhadglass post to Google Plus was based on the book I was in the process of completing, *Eminem: The Real Slim Shady*. *Eminem* is a case study in diversity, technology and creative storytelling in the 21st century. In it I described Eminem as an enraging yet enlightening example of the kinds of personas and stories people are encouraged to create and promote with technology. These digital personas are “truthy” or fact-based fictive identities and can be traced in part to Eminem’s approach to presenting multiple selves in contemporary culture (Nass & Yen, 2010; Pariser, 2011; Dawkins, 2013). As a rhetorical scholar interested in how personas are amplified and reduced by digital communication I became interested in the *techne*, the artistic and scientific communication elements, through which everyday people bring today’s truthy personas to life. Critical components of the *techne* that creates truthy personas are celebrity promotional practice and an ability to create and distribute immersive stories pervasively and persuasively through networked technologies.

Historically, scholars of *techne* have been concerned with the creation of public personas and how, through technology and networks, individuals and publics experience cultural values and describe the world ethically. For example, when the Sophists came to ancient Greece after studying rhetoric in Africa, Asia and the Middle East they brought with them instructions for using language and images as *techne*, tools with which to (re)shape moral consciousness in private and public lives (Fox, 1983). The Sophists’ *techne* included technologies of written culture such as language, symbols, paper, pencils, paint and walls as ways to galvanize audiences. These technologies were seen as ways to produce and organize data that integrated ethics into cultural practice through storytelling. Though portrayed as arthritic for the imagination and as media that produce dangerous virtual realities by the likes of Socrates and Plato, the Sophists’ ideas about technology as a purposeful, persuasive and ethical

element of culture were considered revolutionary. So revolutionary, in fact, that the Sophists’ takes on technology, morality, culture and rhetoric was debated in academies throughout ancient Greece and Rome and hundreds of years later in Europe and North America (Glenn & Carcasson, 2009).

This classical debate continues even today. Up for debate now is technology’s ethical consciousness, or the hidden values that come to light as people communicate who they are and discover what they can do with new tools like wearable technology (Hauser, 2002; Dawkins, 2012). Four propositions add fuel to this debate about technology’s ethical consciousness. First, that technology is never an ideologically neutral tool even though its ideologies often appear invisible (Postman, 1993). Second, that as a result of being ideologically-driven technology privileges certain ethical frameworks that educate us about what is “good” and make some versions of “good” seem more desirable than others (Aristotle, 2012). Third, that new possibilities for human experience and identification made possible by technology require new modes of expression (Dawkins, 2013). Fourth, that the kind of education made possible in the digital age must be of a quality that educators can use to produce meaningful learning (DePietro, 2013). Hence, technology enables a particular kind of human enhancement as it is used to reshape the world and uncover possibilities for human experience, expression and identification—from altruistic community members to autonomous self-interested individuals to, what I am calling, networked digital citizens.

Networked digital citizens are those who use technology ethically and enthusiastically while expressing informed critiques and challenging norms of appropriateness when necessary. I solidified my status as a networked digital citizen when I arrived at the Glass Explorers’ “Basecamp,” at the Google offices in Venice, California on Saturday, June 15, 2013 completely prepared. I did all the reading and watched all the trailers describing the device. I even brought a Web developer

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