

Secomandi, Fernando , and Peter-Paul Verbeek. Design Philosophy after the Technology Turn. London,: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2026. Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 2 Jun. 2026. &lt;<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350494480>&gt;.

Accessed from: [www.bloomsburycollections.com](http://www.bloomsburycollections.com)

Accessed on: Tue Jun 02 2026 13:35:20 Hora padrão de Brasília

Copyright © KusslerLeonardo . BeccariMarcos . Individual chapters, their authors, 2026 Editorial content and introductions, Fernando Secomandi and Peter-Paul Verbeek 2026. This chapter is published open access subject to a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence (CC BY 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). You may re-use, distribute, reproduce, and adapt this work in any medium, including for commercial purposes, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes have been made.

## Chapter 9

### DESIGNING DISOBEDIENT FORMS OF LIFE

Leonardo Marques Kussler and Marcos Namba Beccari

#### *Introduction*

The discussion we propose here addresses the possibilities of disobedient design in the context of the subtle control society we live in. The idea is to start from the premise that a part of design—especially in the sense of what Adam Nocek (2021) called *governmental design*<sup>1</sup>—is thought of from the notion of obedience, which means designing from specific standards and for human beings to act and behave in a certain way. Furthermore, we would like to highlight how this has subtly intensified, reinforcing the motto of design as a tool of problem-solving and not as a way of being and thinking critically, which, as we would consider here, is a disobedient way of designing.

In order to explore this argument, initially, we propose a brief historical-theoretical overview of the discussion from the *philosophy of technology* to the *philosophy of design*, including authors such as Ihde, Heidegger, Feenberg, Latour, and Verbeek. In the following section, we list some examples of what we consider to be practices of disobedient design, highlighting the exhibition *Disobedient Objects*, the project *Arte Útil*, and the artistic posters by Vincent Perrottet, which, in different and complementary ways, address both the concept of disobedience and ways of exercising counter-conduct living in the age of algorithms through art and design. Next, we approach the concept of disobedience from Foucault's notion of counter-conduct, emphasizing that just as power is always relational and not absolute, forms of escape from this power are also built between people who disagree with the established order and governmentality.

Lastly, we end the discussion by proposing some reflective coordinates on the possibility of designing disobedient forms of life in the age of subtle control, proposing that we try to escape the subtle control of this era in which we live through forms of being-in-the-world closer to art and in-person performances. With a focus on corporeality and through what we call a process of re-ritualization of life, this allows us to understand we are in a world that devalues the way of living that thinks differently, and such attitude can help us rebuild a sense of community,

of searching for a way of understanding life together with other beings, which aligns with a way of thinking and being that is situated by definition.

### *Philosophy of Technology, Design, and the Obedience Premise*

Initially, talking about the philosophy of design would make as much sense as the initial proposal of the philosophy of technology, as both areas are concerned with designing objects, artifacts, and/or scenarios so that they function in a specific way. In terms of Western philosophy, we can trace this discussion back to the Greek conceptual division between Φύσις (*physis*) and ποιησις (*poiesis*), which can be translated into *nature* and *creation*, respectively, something that creates itself and something that depends on something else in order to come to being (Feenberg 2006). Another distinction made by ancient philosophy in order to deal with two different activities, namely ἐπιστήμη (*episteme*) and τέχνη (*techne*), that is, what was considered to be the *theoretical knowledge* and the *practical knowledge*, science, and art.

Taking a leap of a few centuries in time, in modern philosophy, there is a completely different way of seeing the capacity of crafting and creating, subsuming the ability to transform essences into existences or ideas into artifacts according to the concept of *technology*.<sup>2</sup> From there, technology began to be seen by philosophy as something purely instrumental, devoid of values, as a means to an end, revealing a vision of dominion over nature. In fact, according to Ihde (2009), technology was a background phenomenon until the middle of the nineteenth century, so it only begins to be treated with due attention in the twentieth century. It is in the historical moment of the aftermath of the First World War that Heidegger's discussions concerning technology in *Being and Time* cause a big upheaval, especially with the idea that the occurrence of *Dasein* in the world implies that we are beings that exist among other beings, human and nonhuman (Heidegger 1977).

As Harman (2010) argues, every single entity gains significance from its full context, for the situation and context change the status and values of things, and every entity is constituted precisely because of this involvement. After the Second World War, in *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger also presents and publishes another reflection on technology, now especially aware of the rapidly developing nature of technology at levels never seen before, in which, more than ever, the environment is seen as a resource to be exploited technologically (Heidegger 2000). Heidegger is one of the first thinkers to consider the fact that *technology is not merely instrumental* but a way of knowing and uncovering the latent truth of things that were hidden—similar to what Aristotle used to say when referring to *techne* as one of the ways humans pursue knowledge. For Heidegger, unlike the *techne* of the ancients, which produces something while bringing it to light and imitating nature, the way in which contemporary technology produces things is like the ancients, but without a pattern defined by nature, since contemporary technology dictates the rules, challenging nature.<sup>3</sup> That is why

Verbeek (2005) affirms Heidegger comprehends technology as a way to approach reality that dominates and controls, considering reality only as something to be manipulated. For Heidegger, a nuclear power plant, for instance, is not something that already exists in nature but a way to *force nature* to deliver something whenever we, as human beings, want it, differently from the way things happen in nature.

An author who intensifies the discussion on the relationship between subject and object is Latour (1994), who is responsible for promoting the idea of *actor-network mediation* to explain agency. For Latour, society is only possible, especially contemporary speaking, because of this mediated relationship with technology, for there is no sense in talking about cause and effect because they are the result of the interaction itself. In this sense, purpose and intentionality, for instance, can only exist *for* and *in* the collective, in such a way that the power provided by something is available only to an association, not to subjects, and responsibilities are shared between several actants, whose actions are involved in different technologies. Once again, the idea of *neutrality* of artifacts comes back to the surface of discussions, especially when considering that studies in the field of philosophy of technology have changed significantly in the last three decades so that the tone of research has turned less to questions related to the concept and impacts of technology on humanity and more to questions about technology itself.

Now, to support our premise that a part of design tends to be *obedient* and/or *for obedience*, we can say that design is defined as a method backed by a very rigid epistemological base, as shown by Pevsner (1960). By following this theoretical framework, the preponderant view for many decades in design came down to just the task of creating artifacts with desirable properties and how to design them (Simon 1996). This is what we understand as *obedient design* or *design for obedience*, as it is based on the view that design should start from supposed certainties and not necessarily speculate about problems but rather solve them and, more than that, instill certain forms of life, ways of using and pre-established and somewhat dogmatic rules for how to create artifacts. In this sense, what we consider as obedient design is this view of design that does not consider preconceptions and worldviews and, consequently, ends up imposing conservative values and forms of life, since it is not open to the different, to changes and criticism.

This is the point where we turn to the study of what started as the *philosophy of technology* and gradually consolidated itself as the *philosophy of design* or *design philosophy*.<sup>4</sup> As we understand, design seems to follow the path of philosophy of technology discussions, as it can also be based on questions related to the creation process, production that, initially, is reduced to artifacts and, later, as we have shown, opens up to scenarios and futures—and this starts from certain parameters and expects certain behaviors, results, and forms of life. Over the last few decades, studies have changed so that they are becoming more related to the speculative than productive aspects of artifacts, and this can be seen in several publications (Franssen and Bucciarelli 2004; Vermaas, Kroes, Light, and Moore 2008; Kroes and Kroes 2009; Kroes 2012; Franssen, Kroes, Reydon, and Vermaas 2014; Kroes and Verbeek 2014; Van den Hoven, Vermaas, and Van de Poel 2015; Vermaas and Vial 2018). In this way, step by step, the field of design shifted from

limited scope, giving a more critical, speculative, and decentralized character to the act of designing objects, encompassing scenarios, ways of thinking, and acting in the world (Willis 2006; 2014; Franzato 2011; Malpass 2017; Fry 2018; Tharp and Tharp 2018). Thus, there are design practices and studies more concerned with the technological aspects and the implication of this in human life, others with ethical elements, in addition to concerns about the climate emergency and the Anthropocene crisis (Michelsen 2021).

From this paradigm shift in design research, the theme of obedience can be highlighted, since, as a rule, artifacts are designed *for* people with a certain function, not for questioning use or how much such things shape human behavior. There are research areas that are tangential to the idea of *obedience design*, such as those concerning *nudging theory*, which, especially in architectural projects, refers to the choice environment to induce better choices within pre-established options (Thaler and Sunstein 2008), as well as *value sensitive design*, which argues that values arise from artifacts and depend on how we use them (Friedman and Hendry 2019). According to Khadilkar and Jagtap (2021), this can be conceptualized as *paternalism*<sup>5</sup> when designing, as it encompasses the notion that whoever designs makes the decision on behalf of the user. We understand that, sometimes, depending on what is being designed (especially in the case of a product that needs to respect safety parameters in usability), there is a design need to do something with the least number of unplanned interactions when using it. However, this is not always true, since, as we show here, for decades, design has not been restricted to just designing products and services. When we talk about subtle control and algorithms in this text, we are also talking about the problem of obedience in design. If we consider that algorithms allow objects to act autonomously and make decisions without the user's direct consent, this directly affects the user's well-being and freedom of choice (Rochi 2023)—we will return to this topic later.

After this historical-theoretical overview, based on the expansion of the concept of design, as the call for this edition is to talk about boundaries and fringe studies regarding design philosophy and disruptive technologies that transform human-world relations, in the section below, we bring some examples of design exhibitions that not only bring the theme of disobedience directly into their creations but also invite people to reflect on the more general context of what it means to (dis)obey.

### *Some Examples of Disobedient Design Exhibitions and Projects*

It is not hard to find more orthodox design manuals or compendiums that focus on teaching object diagrams or the way of thinking for the creation of certain artifacts. There are numerous design projects that are based on User-Centered Design, which, as we know, does not develop something just for a certain ideal user but also conforms this user to a certain type of use, an expected behavior when interacting with such an object (Norman and Draper 1986). This type of design tends to be largely *obedient* or thought in favor of a certain way of being

in the world that is ordered, follower of predefined rules, adequate to the values already categorically expressed in the world (Callén, Morant, and Rispoli 2018). But, at this point, we would like to mention some projects that seem to us to bring exactly the opposite, that is, to make one think beyond previously projected values and without the need to conform an object to a certain expected behavior in the interaction of the subject with a certain artifact.

One such project of disobedience and design can be seen in the exhibition *Disobedient Objects* (2014), at the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 2014–15. This exhibition, which is closer perhaps to what is traditionally expected of a work of contemporary art, is focused on encouraging reflection, making the public question itself about a certain theme, and questioning the function or role of certain objects in movements for social change. In a way, the exhibition showed how political activism is composed of a wealth of design and collective creativity in order to challenge patterns, behaviors, definitions, and ways of being-in-the-world. This becomes even clearer with the publication of Flood and Grindon (2014), which reinforces the Bachelardian idea that disobeying is acting, and it is a Promethean behavior since disobedience is the spark of all knowledge.

In the catalog in question, the disobedient objects tell stories of social struggles, popular revolts, and counterpowers, showing how artifacts—as well as performance, music, and visual arts—played a fundamental role in the social and behavioral change of human beings. Unlike other exhibitions of political art and historical social movements, this one not only included objects but focused specifically on the objects themselves and their production. Disobedient objects can involve DIY hacking—such as teaching how to make graffiti inside a kraft paper bag so as not to be seen by the authorities or diagrams of how to make a tear gas mask with a pet bottle—as well as help to think and develop new ways to disobey, as there is a notion of openness toward the other, of *disobeying-with*.

Another example to think about would be the *Arte Útil* project—roughly translated as *useful art*—which assumes that art or the artifact created is a tool, a device that can help create and implement strategies to change how we act in society. This initiative was proposed by Tania Bruguera (2013), an artist and researcher at the *Queens Museum*, New York, and other art spaces. Instead of proposing objects that are actually utilitarian, the idea is to design new social uses for art, respond to current demands, and make art more interactive, with tangible results and benefits for *initiators* and *users*, in pursuit of sustainability, resuming the transforming aspect of aesthetics. On the museum's website (2013), people are invited to submit their projects and design case studies, as well as download projects already registered—such as the one implemented by *Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée*, in France, which consisted of a temporary garden constructed out of recycled materials, encouraging people to get access to and critically transform temporary misused or underused spaces. The varied projects include, for instance: affordable housing in economically fragile communities, an initiative to facilitate internet access in poor communities and construction of a safe place for different species of bees on a terrace in Amsterdam.

Finally, another example pertinent to this discussion is a series of posters by the French graphic designer Vincent Perrottet (2009). His poster series, entitled *Travaille d'abord, tu t'amuseras ensuite*, sees itself as proposing a range of ideas about a compulsively consumer-oriented society and works as manifestos against disenfranchisement and degradation of the responsible population into an object. These ten posters, which were originally commissioned by the *Centre National des Arts Plastiques* in Paris, are printed on both sides: on one side of each is a full-surface shot by the French photographer Myr Muratet without commentary, which is linked on the opposite side to a dense grid of writing against a brightly colored background. The organization of the latter is graphically clear through the use of different colors and type sizes, taking away the dread of such a mass of text by making it into an image. Check marks in the texts suggest that they have been studied intensely, encouraging reflective readings. The photographs by Muratet, while having no direct reference to the texts but rather an associative connection, complement the complexity of the poster message. Interwoven into a dense fabric with the poster's title, which Perrottet himself formulated and which sums up the interlinking theme, are quotations from writers, philosophers, and sociologists.

Perrottet repeatedly uses his poster series in new ways for a variety of political events and demonstrations: hung temporarily on strings in public spaces, both sides of the poster can be seen. But sometimes only the textual messages are pasted on walls. In addition, the posters are also available in a smaller format so they can be worn in protest marches, where they are transformed into miniature banners. According to Bettina Richter (2018: 259–60), Perrottet described the intention behind this as follows: “The overarching theme is the expression of graphic forms and thoughts that oppose ‘the market,’ which is the sole model of social and economic organization proposed in the overwhelming majority of public or private spaces and in the mass media through advertising and journalists who are remunerated by it more or less directly.”

The high quality of the design and printing of the posters corresponds to the challenging texts. In terms of form and content alike, what is at stake for Perrottet is to challenge the gaze—and as a result to challenge thinking as well. However, this series of posters has already been the target of criticism, regarding its supposedly elitist use of language as a means of excluding and dominating, rather than an instrument of disobedience. In this discussion, maybe other questions are also relevant: In an aggressively visual environment, can a political text-based poster actually be something more than a militant slogan that will soon take on a life of its own on T-shirts, presented as a supposedly individual worldview when it happens to be in line with the marketplace? Is such a poster able to enter into a dialogue with its audience on an equal footing? Can it trigger reflection and emotional response, transforming the subjectivity of the speaker and those to whom it speaks into a political act?

More than fifty years after May 1968, ideological frontlines that were once clearly defined have irretrievably collapsed into a state of utter confusion. Disobedience seems to have been largely appropriated by the economy, becoming a matter of fashion; it is abused by the masses and those in power alike. At the same time,

there is a rich repertoire of creative practices in which disobedience is continually being reinvented in the face of advanced globalization and digitalization. Here, disobedience manifests itself as a cultural achievement that is as vibrant and necessary as ever before. It is precisely for that reason that the question of the relevance and impact of disobedience needs to be posed anew.

In the next section, our intention is to expose the extent to which design can also be considered as a driving force of disobedient forms of life, in addition to predictive or conforming projects of behaviors present in traditional design practices, affirmative and marked by the industrial and capitalist paradigm of modernity. Assuming that design usually tends to organize and formulate projects aimed at obedience, control, and ordering of forms of life, we will reflect on the extent to which we can also subvert it so that it collaborates with the proposition of more poetic, critical forms of life, disobedient and free-spirited among the *technological entities* that permeate our lives.

### *Approaching the Idea of Disobedience: Counter-Conducts and Other Elements*

After outlining the extent to which design can offer and encourage reflections on and beyond its creations and situating how we understand the design obedience paradigm, in this section we would like to propose some arguments about obedience, counter-conduct, and some foundations that guide ways of thinking and acting differently from what is already established or expected. This has to do with the speculative, critical, and propositional capacity already stated above and will allow us to establish some parameters of the discussion about social obedience, especially from Foucault and some authors influenced by him, in order to prepare the ground for the proposal that we will make in the next section, namely, on the issue of communication technologies, subtle control and the aporia in which it daily submits our way of *being-in-the-world*.

Regarding the relationship between subjectivation and governance, Dorrestijn (2012) proposes that the *power of technology* can be recombined with what Foucault proposes in his more mature work, in which he revisits the *aesthetics of existence* present in post-Socratic philosophy. At the end of the 1970s, Foucault began to increasingly adopt the term *technology*, instead of *discourse* or *device*, as practices imbued with strategy that link subjects to certain regimes of truth (Hutton et al. 1988). Thus, it is possible to argue that human subjectivity is formed *under the influence and in mediation with technology*, so that every human being experiences and undergoes transformations in the way of being when coming into contact with such technologies. In this sense, when we talk here about forms of life that are disobedient in relation to design, the objective is to show that unplanned uses and/or refusals of forms of use also make up different ways of being based on interaction with artifacts that modify every form of human existence.

Foucault pays attention to the role of obedience in shaping cenobitic spirituality, that is, in what he calls *pastoral power*. Unlike the Greeks, for whom obedience was

a means to achieve a certain end, in cenobitic spirituality obedience is a virtue, becoming an end in itself. According to Foucault (2001: 146), “Greek Christianity called this state of obedience *apatheia*. [...] In Greek philosophy, *apatheia* designates the empire that the individual exercises over his passions thanks to the exercise of reason. In Christian thought, *pathos* is the will exercised on and for oneself. *Apatheia* frees us from this recalcitrance.” But the notions of conduct and counter-conduct, drawn from Foucault’s studies on Christian pastoral, seem to be more fundamental for the present discussion since they reveal more explicitly the domain of subjectivation and ethics in his thought.

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault (2007a: 201) adopts the notion of *counter-conduct* as a correlate of *conduct*. Thanks to these notions, it is possible to highlight the strategic role played by the relationship with each other in the government of human beings, as well as the possibility of resisting this role. After all, if exercising power means trying to guide the conduct of others, that is, trying to “structure the possible field of action of others,” freedom constitutes the very “condition for the exercise of power,” or rather, that specific form of power Foucault calls *government*: government can only be exercised over free individuals, and only as long as they are confronted with “a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse behaviors may be realized” (1982: 789–90). Therefore, between the governmental mechanisms of power that try to lead the individual in a specific way and the possibility for the individual to behave differently, the field of his freedom is clearly defined by his acceptance or refusal to *be led by that specific mechanism*, to let himself be led *in that particular way*. This possibility of refusal constitutes the first necessary step in a practice of resistance, namely a counter-conduct. In *What Is Critique?*, Foucault elaborates on these ideas and suggests that we should define critique as an ethical-political attitude based on “the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price” (2007b: 75).

During the course *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault (2014: 229) addresses the problem of obedience in the Christian spiritual direction, arguing that the submission of one’s will to the will of the other does not consist in a “transfer of sovereignty,” because in the Christian spiritual direction, “there is no renunciation of will by the individual.” Although in his analysis of the same issue in *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault (2007a: 178) implied that, in order “to act so that one’s will, as one’s own will, is dead, that is to say so that there is no other will but not to have any will,” the disciple must want to *suppress* his own will. It is only in 1980 that Foucault explicitly stated that Christian spiritual direction requires, as a *sine qua non*, the *positive practice* of the disciple’s will. In fact, for the master to govern him, to guide his conduct, the disciple’s will must remain intact because it is essential for the proper functioning of this relationship that the disciple *wants* his will to be entirely submitted to that of his master, and that the latter says, in all circumstances, what must be done (Foucault 2014: 229–30).

As a consequence, the bond that unites disciple and master is free and voluntary, and the direction itself “will last, function and unfold only insofar as the one directed still wants to be directed,” for it is “always free to cease wanting to be directed.” Foucault (2014: 230) argues that this “game of full freedom, in

the acceptance of the bond of direction,” is crucial: Christian spiritual direction is not fundamentally based on constraints, threats, or sanctions. The structure of obedience is, of course, the condition, substrate, and effect of Christian spiritual direction, but we must not regard it as a perfectly oiled “subjection machine.” Its strength lies in the fact that Christian spiritual direction constantly rests on the *free* will of the individuals to be led, but this is also its weak point, because the *I want*, which is essential for the good functioning of pastoral government (and governmentality in general), can never be abolished. Thus, the *I want* can always, at least in principle, be inverted and become *I don’t want anymore*.

Therefore, through the notion of critique, Foucault emphasizes the importance, in every practice of resistance, of the exercise of what he calls *counter-conduct*, since, in order to break the (governmental) relationship of obedience, the individual must withdraw his consent to be led *in a specific way*. To do this, the individual must contest and detach himself from the form of subjectivity that these specific governmental techniques—and this specific regime of truth—aim to constitute and impose on him. However, contesting the form of subjectivity imposed on individuals to construct a different subjectivity is not an easy task: in fact, if the concrete functioning of governmental mechanisms of power rests on the freedom of individuals, it is also essential that such governmentality produce discourses that *neutralize* that freedom, thus giving individuals the impression that there is no real choice to be made. The different forms of governmental power have one crucial characteristic in common: they can operate exclusively on the basis of an original consent (*I want*) to be reiterated at every moment by individuals and which, however, is constantly reinscribed within the framework of a *you must*, whose aim is to convince them that this consent is the only possible path they have access to if they want to achieve salvation, happiness, well-being, and freedom itself.

The possibility of saying *I don’t want* (to be governed, directed, conducted *in a way*), that is, the possibility of withdrawing one’s consent to be governed *in a specific way*, is therefore *masked* from the start, presented as inaccessible, or constructed as something essentially *undesirable*. In Foucault, the history of truth and the genealogy of the modern (Western) subject can help us to *unmask* this governmental *trap*, giving us the chance to *perceive it* and to open space for the practice of a counter-conduct and the experimentation of new ways of being *subjects*. In this sense, our intention here is to show to what extent it is possible to think about design based on these terms of counter-conduct and disobedience, allowing us to stress reflective and critical elements that we consider as good practices of the speculative design to which we approach theoretically.

### *On the Possibility of Designing Disobedient Forms of Life beyond Subtle Control Mechanisms*

After having discussed themes dear to the philosophy of technology, philosophy of design, and counter-conducts, with examples of artistic exhibitions and speculative (and why not *philosophical*) design practices about the concept of disobedience,

we turn to the theme of disobedience as a kind of response to the subtle control society we live in. Next, we will list some clues of possibilities to think about new ways of being-in-the-world from the point of view of disobedience, but via an argument that starts from design as an area capable of philosophizing and transforming modes of being:

1. Our purpose here is to think about the possibility of escaping technological control through practices and/or performances that flirt more with art and, in a special way, that offer the possibility of *re-ritualizing human life*, whose focus is, perhaps, *in activities that emphasize the human body in its presence with others (animated and nonanimated entities)*. In other words, we support that perhaps the most disruptive way of being-in-the-world—or *engage in counter-conduct*, in Foucault's terms—lies in the possibility of being useless to *homo capitalisticus* or the exacerbated *homo oeconomicus*, and this tends to form in a *communitarian relationship* or one that seeks a way of *being-with-others* (Escobar 2016; 2018).

The argument we would like to explore here, based on what we have discussed so far about the possibilities for design to be more *provocative* and less *prescriptive*, is that design can be considered as a way to think and perform in the world in order to circumvent subtle technological *control mechanisms*—to keep in mind the relationship with Foucault's terms.

Obviously, the argument is not to simply ignore them but to understand to what extent we can exist, choose, and deliberate beyond the suggestions of trends and hashtags. This does not mean that we have to become technophobic or Luddite but to be aware of the type of ontological and existential alteration that such mediations provoke in our human intimate, and this is part of the philosophical aspect already imbued in the design.

2. Therefore, to be disobedient, in this scenario, is also being able to consciously identify and reflect on the intrinsic values of such human monitoring and restriction technologies, taking advantage of what is good and facilitating work, but being aware of programming biases, subjectivities imposed on it, and the colonizing tendency of minds and bodies that starts to disregard everything that surrounds such technological advance. In short: one of the greatest disobediences is the ability to be critical of the world mediated by different entities.

According to a good part of the humanist philosophy movement, obeying reason or laws is what differentiates us as human beings, capable of *dominating our inner beasts*. Is the act of disobeying—of being a civil dissident, as Gros (2017) states—so far from an ideal of humanity, or does it simply rival an outdated and Eurocentric notion of rationality that, ultimately, placed us in the climate emergency situation in which we currently live? In a sense, obedience led us to the way we live today: de-ritualized individualist beings (Han 2020). If we understand the ritual as the process of symbolic techniques of feeling at home in the world, it is important to allow one to *inhabit the world* and life to be stabilized through repetitions, especially given

the fact that repetition tends to stabilize and increase and deepen attention. It is in this sense that we have brought examples of artistic exhibitions that imply communal, in-person participation, far from screens and *digital mechanisms* that choose for us. In the disobedient way of designing that we propose here, it is necessary to be fully aware, present, and open to reflections and the ability to ask new questions, and not necessarily have answers or recipes for how to act.

To escape the novelty that becomes routine, we are led to a logic of consumption and production of more things, experiences, and new stimuli, since the intense contemporary life ends up translating into a life of constant consumption. This type of behavior of always waiting for something new is typical of the consumer society and production calculated by algorithms<sup>6</sup> (Nocek 2021), which, as well as forming pockets of content playlists, are also always looking for news to continue generating engagement.

3. In a way, following the trail proposed by Han (2020) in his critique of the neoliberal way of life, which fetishizes and commodifies life into quantifiers and the use of (im)material artifacts, another solution would be to understand rituals in their potential to enable bodily performances in which community values, of common life, are experienced physically and in person, internalizing them and creating a type of knowledge with bodily identity and connection with other beings.

That is why, in Section “Some Examples of Disobedient Design Exhibitions and Projects,” we chose to show some examples of art exhibitions that directly address the issue of disobedience without necessarily providing solutions or demanding specific behavior but rather proposing that the public interact with the work, *reflecting and acting together* and drawing their own conclusions about the topic or simply rethinking their form of life after participating in an artistic performance. One of them shows how political activism is composed through collective creativity so that, through joint counter-conducts, it is possible to change patterns of behavior and ways of being-in-the-world, focusing not on creating useful objects but on the act of designing with other people and reflecting on this in the process. The second example focuses not on proposing utilitarian objects but on designing new social uses for art, considering current demands of society and making art more interactive and performative so that it can include actions in favor of sustainability and rethink elements of transformation of aesthetics. The third and final example shows posters temporarily placed around the city with philosophical phrases and images, which can be read by the public who encounters them and, in smaller versions, used in protests in the context of *artivism*.

These examples show that, in a way, escaping from noncommunal digital communication, as it individualizes and creates bubbles of interests that do not intersect, is also escaping from the mold of life of (self-)productivity or self-exploitation. The self-production of social networks, which requires our full attention and our lack of *showing ourselves*, lacks the symbolic power that unites people, that puts them in communion. While a disobedient form of life may

be able to slow down the productive rush of contemporary neoliberalism—in which the design focused on the production of artifacts also gets lost, the society of AI, of content generators through chats, of compulsion for information and productive communication, goes in the opposite direction. The point is that designing disobedient forms of life involves proposing reflections, inciting critical thinking and communal political actions, unlike the vision of part of design that aims to create products and prescribe specific uses and/or behaviors as the ultimate task of the act of designing. This is why projects like *Arte Útil*, mentioned in the third section, are understood here as disobedient and capable of inspiring disobedient ways of life, as they invite people to think and act on the space where they live, to do manual activities and in groups, not restricting themselves to digital manifestations. Designing outside of algorithmic logic means not having predefined options, expected behaviors, consumption projections, or specific use of a product/service but rather serving as a space to exercise critical thinking, to think for yourself, and not simply join a trend.

Certainly, we agree with the lucid and realistic vision of Bonsiepe (2021), which argues that design needs to rethink its megalomaniac posture that it will solve all the problems of capitalism—design thinking techniques for everything, designing future scenarios, proposing responses to global warming, solving ethical problems of great stature, the question of agency and technical mediations, and so on. In a complementary way, but from a completely different point of view, Nocek (2021) states that design is not part of the solution but part of the creation of the crisis in which we live, since design is immanent to technologies that shape human life and not human. According to the author, automation technologies, in general, are not mere effects of cultural and political systems but pervasive in the material world in which human and nonhuman life coexist in mediation with algorithmic automation.

Based on a critique of Foucault's framework on governmentality, Nocek (2021: 115) states that “governmental design is therefore a first attempt at critiquing the largely unconscious operations of designing that give birth to specific practices of neocolonial subjectivation in the 21st century,” because the *practices of contemporary algorithmic governmental design are ontological*, and this means that *they shape the subjectivations* of the present neocolonial days. For Nocek (2021), algorithmic automation is a way to guide the possibilities of action toward rational ends, which shows that digital devices were designed not only with a view to certain results but rather to *enable certain modes of existence to the detriment of others*. These intelligent subtle control mechanisms structure the field of possible action, fostering *only the most desirable modes of existence* for a given set of rules—in short, they are old control practices redesigned to become more invisible. Algorithmic platforms not only translate data into useful patterns of information but also help predict user behavior and *redirect their actions and decisions*. To put it simply, it seems that Nocek is shifting the discussion from ontological design—which implies thinking that designing is as much or more involved in rethinking why we create values and shape the way we live in the world in interactions with

artifacts than in uncritically creating objects that shape human behavior—and considering the notion of governing by design.

Returning to Foucault's concept of counter-conduct, we can highlight that all conduct is essentially historical and contingent. We are not naturally or necessarily linked to this or that conduct, nor are we obliged to accept it and to mold our subjectivity and our way of living based on it. Analogously, the idea that the algorithm—no matter what kind of algorithm—does not give us a choice, that we are forced to submit to it and build our interactions according to it, turns out to be an ethical-political trap. However, from Foucault onward, a counter-conduct can be directed to the creation of a new ethics and a new politics whose objective is to criticize the regulation of our conduct through algorithms—without necessarily abandoning or avoiding them. Knowing about the existence and functioning of the *black box* of algorithms, as Flusser (2000) would say if he were still alive to discuss this technological unfolding, may be the preponderant aspect for us to seek disobedient and critical forms of life in the face of the logic that tends to dominate and domesticate subjectivities in an increasingly subtle way. It is in this sense that we have brought, in this text, examples of ways of designing that are closer to contemporary art proposals—which include occupation of spaces, sociopolitical demonstrations in the streets, production of a community garden—since, in our understanding, they do not seek to provide ready-made solutions for users but seek to propose themes to be discussed and provoke the people who get involved.

To conclude this section, we would like to mention that, as Judith Butler (2009: 787) correctly observes, there are two interrelated dimensions to Foucault's notion of critique: "On the one hand, it is a way of refusing subordination to an established authority; on the other hand, it is an obligation to produce or elaborate a self." Likewise, the notions of conduct and counter-conduct are like two sides of the same process of constituting subjects. As Lorenzini (2016: 73) argues, "subjectivation too implies a *reactive* moment, which is the moment of de-subjection or counter-conduct, and a *creative* moment, which consists in the invention of a different form of subjectivity." Butler (1997; 2015) also mentions a theory regarding the *performative discourses and actions*, in which (political) power is represented and modes of being are somehow imposed, for there are discourses that order and shape forms of being-in-the-world, modes of obedience, and, consequently, counter-conducts that occur through the bodies of such human beings, constituting themselves as *habitus*.

### *Final Considerations*

When we started writing this text, we thought that the theme of disobedience had everything to do with the notion of *technological turn*, so we started the text talking specifically about classic authors of what was consolidated as the philosophy of technology from neo-Heideggerian studies. The point was precisely to establish this link that, sometimes, does not seem so obvious in the main studies of the

*philosophy of design* or *design philosophy*. In order to show the relationship between designing and creative art, we explored, in the first section, the fact that, since Heidegger, there has been talk of the *technological mediation* of human beings with other nonhuman beings. When this is not taken into account, the tendency is to have courses and discussions in design that reduce themselves to trivial themes within the scope of production, efficiency, and problem-solving, without space for discussions about the ethical consequences and environmental impacts of creation via design.

In the third part of this text, we discussed the *Disobedient Objects* exhibition and the *Arte Útil* project, in addition to the works of Vincent Perrottet, which expose how political activist groups act with collective creativity and design richness expressed in objects and/or environments that challenge values fixed in the society of control. To disobey is to act, and the disobedient objects in the aforementioned exhibition tell stories of social struggles, social movements, and *disobedience-with-others*. In the case of the *Arte Útil* project, our purpose was to highlight how a small temporary collective garden allowed different people to think about the occupation of spaces and climate problems. Finally, Vincent Perrottet's works propose a reflection on the hyperconsumption society in which we live, in which simple questioning, as it is not part of the logic of consumption, already becomes a disobedient micropolitics.

In the fourth part, we decided to discuss the concept of disobedience and we did so based on the countless texts that Michel Foucault wrote about obedience, forms of control, and exercise of power through control mechanisms and/or security devices typical of biopolitical governmentality. From this, we brought up the discussion about the type of design that puts the user at the center of the project and also conforms them to a *correct way* of using something and/or behaving in a certain environment. Summing up our discussion as much as possible, we tried to show how this type of design is totally conservative and obedient since it does not seek to think of new scenarios and different forms of life but only the maintenance of what already exists—which can be very impoverishing and biasing in terms of what can be created and the type of world we want to live in.

At the end of the text, we discussed the relationship with some ways of being disobedient in the society of subtle control ordered by algorithms, especially considering the idea of *governmental design* provided by Nocek. Since we did not opt for a Luddite way of denying technology, our proposal sought to show that some forms of being-in-the-world can be counter-conducts to the age of subtle control. In short, we were talking about *encouraging forms of life closer to art and activism*, since, like the examples analyzed, it is one of the most viable ways to escape the individualistic and obedient logic of algorithms that place us in existential domes or, if we want, *individualistic bubbles*. Our bet is that ways of being-in-the-world that prioritize communal creation, as well as a way of understanding things with-the-other, focusing on the bodily presence of people and without focusing on exclusively digital projects, can disrupt, even if partially,

the paradigm of the obedient way of designing, allowing us to think in a critical way and situated in the social challenges typical of our time.

### *Funding Information*

This text was supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq, Brazil), as part of the research project *Design-Fiction as a Reinterpretation of the Present: Heterotopic Dilemmas in Speculative Studies*, Nº 401586/2023–5, and the PIPD/CAPES research project *Understanding, Inhabiting and Designing: For a More Ethical-Poetic Philosophy in the Anthropocene*.

### *Notes*

- 1 This is certainly related to the well-known User-Centered Design approach, but is not restricted to it—even pointing to what we could call *algorithm-driven design*. However, Nocek (2021: 126) points out that “the agency of governmental designing is not located in a particular body, institution, or subject.” This means that, in our critique, we have in mind a design that is increasingly driven by automation and machine learning, so that, in design, it no longer seems to make sense to think of a *user* beyond these techniques and applications that shape their uses/interactions.
- 2 In German, *Technologie* (technology) is commonly used to refer to “cutting-edge technologies” such as nanotechnologies or artificial intelligence. *Technik* is used to talk about old machinery and well-established fields of engineering. In addition to the linguistic issue, it is worth mentioning that the philosophical discussions of both Heidegger and the countless philosophers who succeeded him start from the concept of technique, not technology.
- 3 For an up-to-date and academically diverse compendium, including design and philosophical studies of technology, see Franssen, Lokhorst, & Van de Poel (2023) and Vallor (2022).
- 4 In Brazil, despite the incipient discussions on design philosophy, we have published articles in order to take a step forward and think about the philosophical/speculative aspect of design for some years now (Beccari, Portugal, and Padovani 2017; Kussler and Lorenz 2018; Kussler 2023).
- 5 As Dworkin (2020) states, in social life there are several moments in which actions are guided by policies and social rules for different reasons, however, when someone is asked to follow a certain order for the simple fact that the person would be better off that way or would be less harmed, and the person does not want to behave in that way, there is a case of paternalism.
- 6 An algorithm is a sequence of pre-programmed instructions or commands with the aim of solving a problem or performing a task. It is currently applied to a large extent in all digital means of production, consumption, interaction, and communication. Despite helping with various tasks and facilitating the current way of life, in general, what we want to point out here is that it is a set of codes and calculations that are formed on a basis that we are unaware of and suggest products, routes, services, relationships, etc., hindering our ability to choose and be critical.

## References

- Beccari, M., D. B. Portugal, and S. Padovani (2017), "Seis eixos para uma filosofia do design," *Estudos em design* 25(1): 13–32, <https://estudosemdesign.emnuvens.com.br/design/article/view/432/262>.
- Bonsiepe, G. (2021), *The Disobedience of Design*, London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.
- Bruguera, T. (2013), *Arte útil*, New York, <https://www.arte-util.org/> (Accessed November 20, 2024).
- Butler, J. (1997), *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, London; New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2009), "Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity," *Critical Inquiry* 35(4): 773–95, <https://doi.org/10.1086/599590>.
- Butler, J. (2015), *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press.
- Callén, B., M. Martínez Morant, and E. R. Rispoli (2018), "Editorial—(Re) diseño desobediente: recrear mundos y abrir posibles," *INMATERIAL: Diseño, Arte y Sociedad* 3(5): 5–19, <https://doi.org/10.46516/inmaterial.v3.44>.
- Dorrestijn, S. (2012), "Technical Mediation and Subjectivation: Tracing and Extending Foucault's Philosophy of Technology," *Philosophy & Technology* 25(2): 221–41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-011-0057-0>.
- Dunne, A., and F. Raby (2013), *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.
- Dworkin, G. (2020), "Paternalism," In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by E. N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/paternalism/>.
- Escobar, A. (2016), *Autonomía y diseño: la realización de lo comunal*, Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca.
- Escobar, A. (2018), *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*, Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press.
- Feenberg, A. (2006), "What Is Philosophy of Technology?," In *Defining Technological Literacy*, edited by J. R. Dakers, 5–16, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Flood, C., and G. Grindon, eds. (2014), *Disobedient Objects*, London: V&A Publishing.
- Flusser, V. (2000), *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, London: Reaktion Books.
- Foucault, M. (1982), "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8(4): 777–95, <https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>.
- Foucault, M. (2001), *Dits et écrits*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, M. (2007a), *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault, M. (2007b), "What Is Critique?," In *The Politics of Truth*, edited by S. Lotringer, 41–81, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. (2014), *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Franssen, M., and L. L. Bucciarelli (2004), "On Rationality in Engineering Design," *Journal of Mechanical Design* 126(6): 945–9, <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.1803850>.
- Franssen, M., G.-J. Lokhorst, and I. van de Poel (2023), "Philosophy of Technology," In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, and Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/technology/>.
- Franssen, M., P. Kroes, T. A. C. Reydon, and P. E. Vermaas, eds. (2014), *Artefact Kinds: Ontology and the Human-Made World*, Cham: Springer International Publishing.

- Franzato, C. (2011), "Design as Speculation," *Design Philosophy Papers* 9(1): 23–39, <https://doi.org/10.2752/144871311X13968752924392>.
- Friedman, B., D. G. Hendry (2019), *Value Sensitive Design: Shaping Technology with Moral Imagination*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.
- Fry, T. (2018), *Defuturing: A New Design Philosophy*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Gros, F. (2017), *Désobéir*, Paris: Albin Miche; Flammarion.
- Han, B.-C. (2020), *The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Harman, G. (2010), "Technology, Objects and Things in Heidegger," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34(1): 17–25, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bep021>.
- Heidegger, M. (1977), *Gesamtausgabe, Band 2: Sein und Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (2000), "Die Frage nach der Technik" (1953), In *Gesamtausgabe, Band 7: Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 5–36, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Hutton, P. H., H., Gutman, and L. H. Martin, eds. (1988), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Anherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Ihde, D. (2009), "Technology and Science," In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, edited by J. K. B. Olsen, S. A. Pedersen, and V. F. Hendricks, 51–60, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Khadilkar, P., and S. Jagtap (2021), "Can Design Be Non-Paternalistic? Conceptualizing Paternalism in the Design Profession," *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation* 7(4): 589–610, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2021.09.001>.
- Kroes, P. (2012), *Technical Artefacts: Creations of Mind and Matter*, Dordrecht: Springer Dordrecht.
- Kroes, P., and P.-P. Verbeek, eds. (2014), *The Moral Status of Technical Artefacts*, Dordrecht: Springer Dordrecht.
- Krohs, U., and P. Kroes, eds. (2009), *Functions in Biological and Artificial Worlds: Comparative Philosophical Perspectives*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kussler, L. M. (2023), "Between Art, Philosophy of Design and Philosophical-Hermeneutical Design," *Unisinos Journal of Philosophy* 24(2): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.4013/fsu.2023.242.09>.
- Kussler, L. M., and B. A. Lorenz (2018), "Design como prática crítica e filosófica," *Revista de design, tecnologia e sociedade* 5(1): 34–47, <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/design-tecnologia-sociedade/article/view/12304/10787>.
- Latour, B. (1994), "On Technical Mediation—Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," *Common Knowledge* 3(2): 29–64, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/54-TECHNIQUES-GB.pdf>.
- Lorenzini, D. (2016), "Foucault, Regimes of Truth and the Making of the Subject," In *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, edited by L. Cremonesi et al., 63–75, London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Malpass, M. (2017), *Critical Design in Context: History, Theory, and Practices*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Michelsen, A. (2021), "Making into Thing—Anthropo-eccene Design: On the Design of Emergence," In *Postphenomenology and Architecture: Human Technology Relations in the Built Environment*, edited by L. Botin, and I. Hyams, 169–92, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Museum of Arte Útil (2013), Museum's webpage, New York, <https://museumarteuil.net/museumarteuil.net/index.html> (Accessed November 20, 2024).

- Nocek, A. (2020), "Governmental Designing: On the Transcendental Mediation of the Algorithm," In *Design in Crisis: New Worlds, Philosophies and Practices*, edited by T. Fry, and A. Nocek, 113–16, London; New York: Routledge.
- Nocek, A. (2021), "Governmental Designing: On the Transcendental Mediation of the Algorithm," In *Design in Crisis: New Worlds, Philosophies and Practices*, edited by T. Fry, and A. Nock, 113–36, London: Routledge.
- Norman, D. A., and S. W. Draper, eds. (1986), *User Centered System Design: New Perspectives on Human-Computer Interaction*, Hillsdale; London: LEA.
- Perrottet, V. (2009), Série travaille d'abord, Paris, <https://vincentperrottet.com/SERIETRAVAILLEDABORD.pdf> (Accessed November 20, 2024).
- Pevsner, N. (1960), *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, London: Penguin Books.
- Richter, B. (2018), "Poster Design as a Political Act: On Vincent Perrotte's Poster Series *Travailleur d'abord, tu t'amuseras ensuite*," In *Protest: The Aesthetics of Resistance*, edited by B. Rogger, J. Voegeli, and R. Widmer, 258–71, Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers; Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK; Museum für Gestaltung Zürich.
- Rochi, M. (2023), "Technology Paternalism and Smart Products: Review, Synthesis, and Research Agenda," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 192: 122557, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122557>.
- Simon, H. A. (1996), *The Sciences of the Artificial*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.
- Thaler, R. H., and C. R. Sunstein (2008), *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Tharp, B. M., and S. M. Tharp (2018), *Discursive Design: Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.
- Vallor, S., ed. (2022), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Technology*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van den Hoven, J., P. E. Vermaas, and I. van de Poel (2015), *Handbook of Ethics, Values, and Technological Design: Sources, Theory, Values and Application Domains*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Verbeek, P.-P. (2005), *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Vermaas, P., P. Kroes, A. Light, and S. A. Moore, eds. (2008), *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, Dordrecht: Springer Dordrecht.
- Vermaas, P. E., and S. Vial, eds. (2018), *Advancements in the Philosophy of Design*, Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Victoria, and Albert Museum (2014), *Disobedient Objects*, London, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/disobedient-objects> (Accessed November 20, 2024).
- Willis, A. (2006), "Ontological Designing," *Design Philosophy Papers* 4(2): 69–92, <https://doi.org/10.2752/144871306X13966268131514>.
- Willis, A. (2014), "Designing Back from the Future," *Design Philosophy Papers* 12(2): 151–60, <https://doi.org/10.2752/144871314X14159818597595>.