

Evil Media

Eristic for Digital Societies

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Digital media after 2001



EVIL MEDIA

- ▶ FULLER, Matthew - GOFFEY, Andrew: **Towards an Evil Media Studies** (2007).
- ▶ FULLER, Matthew - GOFFEY, Andrew: **Evil Media** (MIT Press 2012).



EVIL MEDIA

The Google logo is displayed in its characteristic multi-colored font (blue, red, yellow, green, red). To the right of the logo is a small, light gray share icon.

| „Don't be evil.”

(Amit Patel - 1999?, Paul Buchheit - 2000?)

- ▶ Google's code of conduct can be boiled down to a mere three words:
- ▶ Don't be evil.

EVIL MEDIA



- ▶ „Don't be evil.”
- ▶ Very Star Wars.
- ▶ But what does it mean?

EVIL MEDIA

- ▶ **"Evil",** says Google CEO Eric Schmidt, **"is what Sergey says is evil".**

(McHUGH, Google vs. Evil, Wired 2003)



Don't be evil



EVIL MEDIA

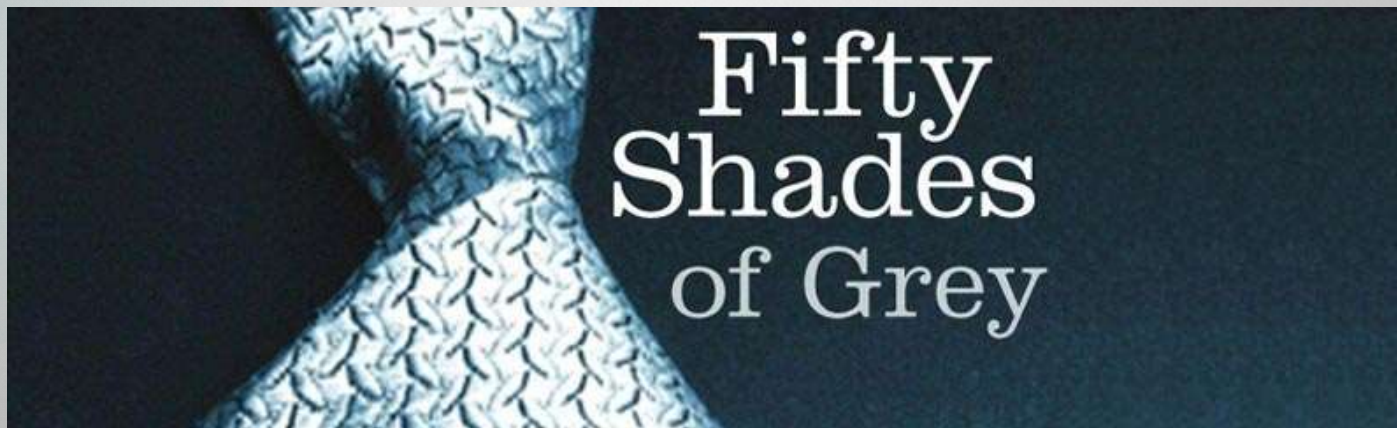
Beyond good & evil

- ▶ **Searching for escape routes, for tactics beyond dichotomies of good/evil** (good/bad media, good/bad applications, processes and activities).



EVIL MEDIA STUDIES AS A THEORY OF GREY MEDIA

- ▶ An interest in ambivalent, liminal, potential and hidden media forms or modes of behavior and their alterations.
 - ▶ **Ubiquity and discreetness of media infrastructures** make them escaping our attention.
 - ▶ **Computer networks constantly operate in the background**, in the shadow of monitor screens, beyond our consciousness.



EVIL MEDIA

(Historical) inspirations

- ▶ Manuals dealing with the operations of power and manipulation. (Philosophy, politology, advertisement, marketing, or Public Relations...)
- ▶ **Niccolò Machiavelli: The Prince** (Il Principe), 1532.
- ▶ **Baltasar Gracian: The Art of Worldly Wisdom** (Oraculo manual y arte de prudencia), 1647.
- ▶ **Arthur Schopenhauer: The Art of Always Being Right: 38 Ways to Win an Argument** (Eristische Dialektik oder Die Kunst Recht zu behalten), 1831.

EVIL MEDIA & Eristic Dialectic

- ▶ **Arthur Schopenhauer:** The Art of Always Being Right: 38 Ways to Win an Argument (**Eristische Dialektik** oder Die Kunst Recht zu behalten), 1831.
- ▶ **Eristic (definition):** In philosophy and rhetoric, eristic (from Eris, the ancient Greek goddess of chaos, strife, and discord) refers to **instrumental usage of reason.**
- ▶ **It study how to construct an argument that aims to successfully dispute another's argument, rather than searching for truth.**

EVIL MEDIA & Eristic Dialectic

Eristik Dialectic: "The art of intellectual fencing"



EVIL MEDIA & Eristic Dialectic

- ▶ Dialectic, then, need have nothing to do with truth, as little as the fencing master considers who is in the right when a dispute leads to a duel. Thrust and parry is the whole business. Dialectic is the art of intellectual fencing: and it is only when we so regard it that we can erect it into a branch of knowledge. For if we take purely objective truth as our aim, we are reduced to mere Logic; if we take the maintenance of false propositions, it is mere Sophistic: and in either case it would have to be assumed that we were aware of what was true and what was false: and it is seldom that we have any clear idea of the truth beforehand. The true conception of Dialectic is, then, that which we have formed: it is the art of intellectual fencing used for the purpose of getting the best of it in a dispute: and, although name Eristic would be more suitable, it is more correct to call it controversial Dialectic, Dialectica eristica.

A. Schopenhauer

EVIL MEDIA & Eristic Dialectic

- ▶ **Eristic Dialectic: "The art of intellectual fencing"**
- ▶ **38 stratagems of argumentation** (based on):
 - ▶ The inner ambivalence
 - ▶ Alogisms
 - ▶ Purposeful generalization
 - ▶ Argumentation acting on emotions
 - ▶ ...

EVIL MEDIA as Digital Eristic

16 stratagems derived from HCI

01. Bypass Representation
02. Exploit Anachronisms
03. Stimulate Malignancy
04. Machine the Commonplace
05. Make the Accidental the Essential
06. Recourse Stratagems
07. Rapture of Capture
08. Sophisticating Machinery
09. What is Good for Natural Language is Good for Formal Language
10. Know your data
11. Liberate Determinism
12. Inattention Economy
13. Brains Beyond Language
14. Keep Your Stratagem Secret As Long as Possible
15. Take Care of the Symbols, The Sense Will Follow
16. The Creativity of Matter

Evil Media as Digital Eristic

“The art of intellectual fencing in cyberspace.”



Stratagem 17

Design for hackability

- ▶ Design for hackability encourages designers and non-designers to critically and creatively explore interactivity, technology and media - to reclaim authorship and ownership of technologies and the social and cultural worlds in which we live.
- ▶ Hackability implies more than customization or adaptation - it calls for redefinition. In a world where technologies are increasingly mobile and invisible, designing for hackability means allowing and encouraging people to make technologies be what they want them to be. It cultivates reciprocity between users and designers and supports transparency and graceful responses to unanticipated uses.
- ▶ [...] Panelists will discuss tensions between people and artifacts, technology and play, the creative use of readily available resources, subverting traditional functions and uses of networks, and the everyday realities of corporate design practice. These discussions will be used to generate a design for hackability manifesto to guide further explorations in designing interactive systems.

Anne Galloway, 2004

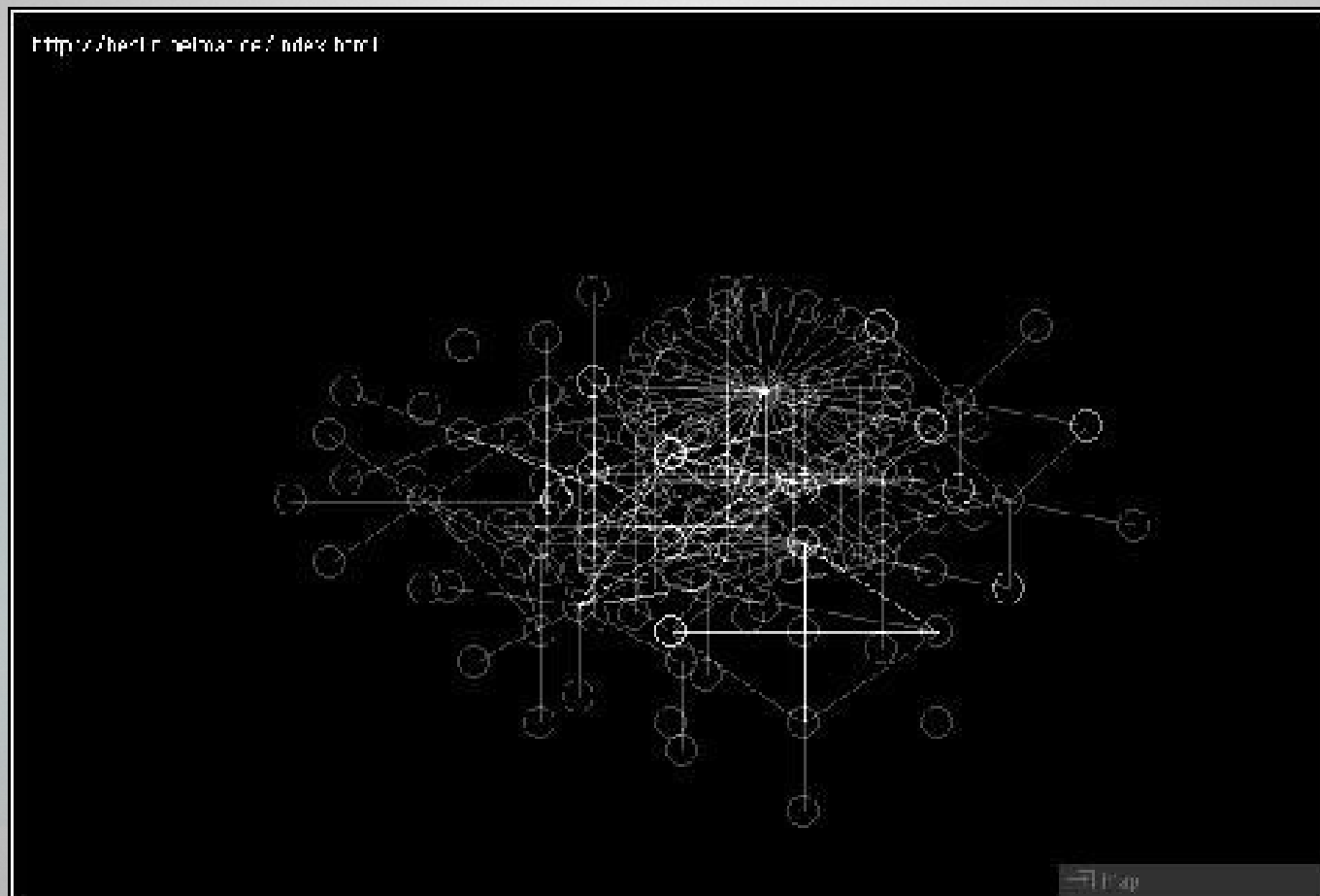
Stratagem 17

Design for hackability

- ▶ Open source software
- ▶ Hacker's ethos
- ▶ Artistic investigation of digital media materiality



I/O/D (Matthew Fuller, Colin Green,
Simon Pope), The Web Stalker, 1997







Thank you for your attention.

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