Between art, philosophy of design and philosophical-hermeneutical design

Entre arte, filosofia do design e design filosófico-hermenêutico

Leonardo Marques Kussler
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8876-8211
Universidade Estadual do Rio Grande do Sul, Pesquisador de Pós-Doutorado, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. Email: leonardo.kussler@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

At first glance, relating philosophy and design does not seem trivial, but there are several elements that make it possible to develop such a hypothesis beyond the context of the philosophy of technology. In this article, the main objective is to explore some aspects of design in the world and in Brazil, emphasizing how much its bases dialogue with the principles of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. To do so, in the first section, I develop a bibliographical analysis of the history of design, exposing its roots in art and architecture, as well as the passage from affirmative design to the philosophy of design. In the second section, I discuss some studies on design and philosophy in order to support the formation of critical-speculative design from contemporary art, and later, to address the main hypothesis of the study, that is, that there is a very interesting gain in relating studies of Gadamerian hermeneutics in what I call *philosophical-hermeneutical design*, which allows thinking about the history, identity and ontological preconceptions of design and expand horizons of philosophical hermeneutics.

Keywords: philosophy of design, philosophical-hermeneutical design, Hans-Georg Gadamer, ontological design, design history.

RESUMO

Em um primeiro momento, relacionar filosofia e design não parece algo muito comum, mas há vários elementos que possibilitam desenvolver tal hipótese para além do contexto da filosofia da técnica. Neste artigo, o objetivo principal é explorar alguns aspectos do design no mundo e no Brasil, enfati-

zando o quanto suas bases dialogam com princípios da hermenêutica filosófica de Gadamer. Para tal, na primeira seção, desenvolvo uma análise bibliográfica da história do design, expondo suas raízes na arte e na arquitetura, assim como a passagem do design afirmativo à filosofia do design. Na segunda seção, abordo alguns estudos sobre design e filosofia no intuito de sustentar a formação do design crítico-especulativo a partir da arte contemporânea para, posteriormente, tratar da hipótese principal do estudo, isto é, de que há um ganho muito interessante ao relacionar estudos da hermenêutica gadameriana no que chamo de *design filosófico-hermenêutico*, que permite pensar a história, identidade e pré-conceitos ontológicos do design e expandir horizontes da hermenêutica filosófica.

Palavras-chave: filosofia do design, design filosófico-hermenêutico, Hans-Georg Gadamer, design ontológico, história do design.

1 Introduction

Historically, philosophy studies rarely deal directly with design, but as other areas of knowledge were derived from the systematization previously carried out by philosophy, there are several themes that transcend the internal field of philosophy, dialoguing and structuring themselves in other areas of knowledge. In this article, my main objective is to explore some elements of the history of design in the world and in Brazil, establishing some of its traditions and inspirations and, in this process, explaining epistemological, ontological, metaphysical, ethical, political and social bases that underlie the practices of contemporary design and how this is related to the principles of Gadamer's *philosophical hermeneutics*.

To do so, in the first section of the text, I will trace a historical bibliographic analysis in the attempt of exposing some bases that boosted the institution of design courses in the world and in Brazil. This will help unfolding some aspects of the important relationship of design with previous arts and architecture courses, as well as establish the roots of positivism and utilitarianism present in the first design courses, which connect the art of designing with production on an industrial scale. Another issue to be addressed is the progress of design discussions, which began to leave the axis of creating product-artifacts, from the 1960s onwards, to foment metaprojects and concept-artifacts, largely influenced by the movements of social criticism of contemporary art in vogue at the time. Finally, I will briefly list some authors whose discussions, especially since the 1990s, are among the most widespread in the field of design philosophy, relating design themes with concepts and discussions historically raised by philosophy, whose impacts are remarkable and show the commitment and dialogue of the two areas of knowledge.

In the second section, I will approach some studies about design and philosophy in which I participated, exposing in more detail some principles of critical-speculative design. The point here will be showing the way in which contemporary art — which was marked by social criticism and the overflow of materials and traditional artistic methods, popularizing modes of cultural manifestations such as performance, installation, happening, etc. — sets the tone for discussions about design itself, which, coming from art/architecture institutes, began incorporating several theoretical paradigms of art as social criticism, applying them in an attempt to overcome some of its historical, economic and functionalist limitations. After that, I will defend the main hypothesis of this study, namely, that there is a very consistent and prolific gain in combining the studies of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics with what is done in philosophy of design or in what I call *philosophical-hermeneutical design*, that allows not only to

conduct a study to think about the history and identity of design and other areas in a critical way, but especially to give visibility to *preconceptions*, the *ontological/metaphysical elements* that underlie them.

2 Notes on art, design and the interactions with contemporary philosophy: from Brazil to the world

An interesting way to start a discussion about the transformation of design as an area of knowledge involved with *projectual activity* in Brazil is to establish some historical parameters of its traditional formalization in the country. Therefore, in this section, I will approach some mo[ve]ments in the history of design and point out how its path begins to converge with that of philosophy, in a more or less direct way, especially with regard to discussions of the great panorama of the *philosophy of design*. Understanding history helps not only to *formulate a face*, to understand a canon, a *mythical-original foundation* from a given theme, but also to reveal the conceptual assumptions that guide and contextualize the *modus operandi* of the subject being talked about — whose clear hermeneutical implications will be addressed in the next section.

2.1 Artistic roots of [one of] the history[/ies] of design

In Brazil, the term *design* is marked by its association with the word *drawing*. Until today, when searching for the area of knowledge on the platforms of CNPq and CAPES, courses throughout Brazil are structured under the nomenclature of *industrial design*. In fact, the relationship between design, art and economic [industrial] activity was and remains a constant in the country and in the world. Since the first professional training courses, still instituted in formally colonial Brazil, at the end of the 18th century, it is possible to notice the relationship between engineering, militarism, architecture and design in the Brazilian royal academy, in Rio de Janeiro. At the beginning of the 19th century, for almost 20 years, Jean-Baptiste Debret — responsible for representing in engravings the reality of colonial-imperial Brazil at the time, which still serve as material for anthropological and historical studies of that period — teaches at the imperial academy, under the guidance of the French art education system, which covered topics such as drawing from copies of classics, history of architecture, construction and perspective, techniques for cutting building materials, scales, composition, among others (Leenhardt, 2013).

During the first half of the 19th century, with the popularization of the already legalized use of the press in Brazil, in addition to the publication of newspapers, the first illustrated magazines appeared, consumed as *popular leisure* especially by the population in the great centers of the country (Cardoso, 2000). From the last quarter of the 19th century, there was a legal need to register trademarks with unique designs to identify products. This requirement generated a large collection of graphic projects with fonts, images, labels, packaging, posters and logos, especially using metal engraving and lithographs, in the registrations in the commercial boards, with emphasis on the representation of Greco-Roman gods, indigenous people amidst nature and sensualized women (Rezende, 2005).

As pointed out above, the first courses that were not specific to design — but that encompassed the notion of designing more broadly — were formed from already established courses in *engineering*, *architecture* and *arts*. At the beginning of the 20th century, images appear on posters and magazine covers in the *art nouveau* style and using realistic painting — which returns with force due to the threatening advent of photography. Influenced by the world art of the time, extensively portrayed in the country by the Semana de Arte Moderna [Modern Art Week], in 1922, the theme of *national identity* comes into play, with geometric representations and solid colors — especially from the effect of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, the German Confederation that promotes design as *applied art* and a fundamental part of the national identity with the industry, notably by the creation of products in a process of mass productivity (Cardoso, 2000).

In Brazil, especially from the 1930s onwards, informal design initiatives began to appear in other higher education courses, such as architecture, engineering, arts, etc. Until the early 1950s, with courses on design themes by the architect Lina Bo Bardi — responsible, among others, for the architectural design of MAM and MASP museums in São Paulo — and other collaborators in the then recently formed Instituto of Contemporary Art at MASP (Niemeyer, 2007). In formal academic terms, the first *industrial design* disciplines were instituted in higher education courses in architecture, as in the case of USP, in 1962, but the formalization of the industrial design course took place at ESDI, in 1963, in Rio de Janeiro.

The course at ESDI, a pioneer in Brazil, is strongly influenced by the Ulm school, known for promoting the ideals of the Bauhaus, especially in the area of design, art and architecture, which, as I like to point out, were developed together and with an ever-present economic and social perspective. Here, I would like to propose a small digression about the Bauhaus, considered by Chilvers and Glaves-Smith (2009) as the most famous art and design school of the 20th century, responsible for rethinking the division between *fine arts* and *applied arts*. The Bauhaus was founded in 1919, with many Russian professors, such as Kandinsky and Malevich, for example, who helped to promote elements of the Vkhutemas (Вхутемас) school — which coexisted with the Bauhaus in the Soviet Union — such as the Constructivism, Rationalism and Suprematism, which excelled in minimalist projects, focused on simple geometric shapes and the utility of what was created (Jallageas, 2015; Miguel, 2019). It is worth noting that, in 1925, Malevich and the poet Mayakovsky formulate a manifesto that defends socialist ideals and the identity of Soviet art, distancing themselves from Eurocentrism, similar to what Oswald de Andrade promotes, in 1928, with his *Manifesto Antropofágico* [Anthropophagic Manifesto]. These schools form the overwhelming majority of foreign and Brazilian teachers who are involved with design in Brazil, including influencing political posters in the advertisements of the newly created press and propaganda department in the Vargas era of the 1940s, which appeals to some aspects of the Soviet aesthetic of the time.

With the digression over, let's get back to design in Brazil. Following what was discussed and done in design in the world, the first Brazilian courses, with professors trained/influenced by European ideas, did not meet the expectation of reflecting on the identity of national concepts and products, especially due to the large number of foreigner professors, who brought a certain tradition to be first assimilated. From the 1960s onwards — first because of the developmental issue and then because of the period of military repression —, Brazil proposed a national project to abolish courses of arts and replace them with design courses, which would be more modern and economically more interesting, given the closer relationship with the economic and industrial aspect. Until the late 1980s, design courses were mirrored in the ESDI curriculum, with qualifications in visual communication (*graphic design*) and *product design* (Niemeyer, 2007). Subsequently, new types emerge, such as *interior design* and *fashion design*, still marked by the industrial and economic logic of *designing objects/artifacts* with certain functions, materials, processes, what is called *functionalist design*.

On a global scale, in the 1960s and 1970s, there were design schools that began to emerge with less functionalist thinking, allowing the exploration of aesthetic and symbolic qualities of the designed artifacts, as in the case of the Italian radical school (Fiell & Fiell, 2005). It is not by chance that the radical school in Italy presents itself with elements of pop art, discussions and exhibitions of super-architecture — architecture of over-production, of hyper-consumption, of the dynamics of mass production — and exhibitions especially in the form of installations. Here, elements of art and architecture are seen again hand in hand with design projects, which advance towards discussing elements of critical theory. Brazilian authors had contact with this school, but due to the period of the military regime, it was difficult to propose criticisms that dealt with utopias in the architectural imagination (Ribeiro, 2018).

As previously stated, design asserts itself together and based on art and architecture. Now, I will talk a little about some aspects that mark the institution of contemporary art to, later, resume the specific discussion of design, which, as I defend, changes from the paradigm of *contemporary art*. As is well known, in the 1960s, the phenomenon of contemporary art became popular — despite the phenom-

enon of Dadaism and the repercussion of Marcel Duchamp before the 1920s, who extemporaneously proposed paradigms that would be consolidated more than 40 years later. Although we can say that Picasso's *Cubism*, Dalí and Miró's *Surrealism* and Munch, Kandinsky, Anita Malfatti and Portinari's *Expressionism* are extremely innovative for art, with these authors, the art paradigm is still strongly anchored to *modern art* — experimentation with new materials, figurative deconstruction, but still with paintings on canvas and other traditional art media. It was only from the 1960s onwards, with pop art popularized by Andy Warhol, that colored silkscreens and the mass production of *repetitive cultural products* reached a more consolidated artistic level.

This is the post-war period, with the growing consumer society, the experimentation with different media and dimensions of artistic works, the erasure of the line that previously defined what was art and what was not in at least three aspects: 1) who made the artistic object, 2) the space occupied by the artistic object and 3) the noble materials used by artists. *Contemporary art* brings what Danto (1981, 1986) formulated as the *transfiguration of the commonplace*, i.e., the elevation of everyday objects to cultural manifestations or works of art that mark this artistic period, which is no longer based on the Greek concept of μίμησις [mímēsis], which limited art as a potential representation of reality.

In contemporary times, art literally unframes itself and leaves the traditional forms of art — painting, sculpture, literature, theater, music, dance —, opening itself to other means of artistic expression, such as installation, happening, readymade, performance, projections and body-art (Alberro & Buchmann, 2006; Stalabrass, 2006).

Other preponderant marks in contemporary art are: 1) the *occupation of spaces*, with a great interaction with architectural projects and large works, allowing people to enter and walk through the work of art and for the artistic object to leave the traditional places of exhibition, providing the exodus of museums and artistic galleries and the decentralization of art; 2) the encouragement of *public interaction* with the work of art, which is experienced and sometimes *used* by the public, who *participate in the work of art* and feel part of that artistic manifestation — especially when art leaves traditional prestigious spaces and becomes popular, democratizes, mixing with everyday life; 3) *the questioning of authorship, originals and artistic schools*, according to Hopkins (2000), since the concept of work of art becomes as or more important than the *signature* of authorship and the right to property of a given artist and the question of *copies* becomes less important, given the technical advent of mass production, especially from the use of photographs and other mechanical, electronic and digital techniques in the formation of *contingent artistic objects*, according to Buskirk (2003); and 4) *social criticism*, which portrays itself as art presents itself as a *cultural manifestation* that promotes *social criticism*, *ethical issues* and *activism*, as stated by Gonzáles and Posner (2006), due to the *conceptual* character it acquires — launching a questioning and causing a *logopathic* impact (rational and emotional impact) is as or more important than the means used to do so (Alberro & Stimson, 2000).[1]

---

[1] I would like to highlight two essential Brazilian figures in contemporary art — perhaps more revered abroad than in Brazil — namely, Hélio Oiticica and Cildo Meireles. Oiticica moves from neomodernist geometric painting to three-dimensional geometric objects that can be handled by the public, such as the *Bólides* series, and then the gigantic sculptures, such as the *Penetráveis* series, the *Parangolés* — the costumes usable by the public —, integrative and experiential spaces, such as the *Cosmococa*, and objects of a political nature, such as the famous *Seja herói, seja marginal* [Be hero, be a marginal]. Cildo, on the other hand, chooses political objects, such as the series *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos*, with soda bottles with a diagram of how to make a Molotov cocktail, a cruise banknote with the phrase *Quem matou Herzog?* [who killed Herzog?] (in the middle of the Brazilian dictatorship) or a *zero real note*, already in the 2000s, with an image of an indigenous face (in clear criticism of the carelessness towards indigenous populations), the *Estojo de geometria*, with two cleavers welded together (a clear criticism of the utilitarianism of objects), and experiential spaces, such as *Desvio para o vermelho*, an installation that simulates an all-red room, with red furniture and gadgets, and *Através*, a penetrable installation (like the works of Oiticica) with shards of glass on the floor and a wire mesh labyrinth with a roller plastic in the center (criticism of the disciplinary/control society). In addition to the artistic works, there are also manifestos and writings by Oiticica and Meireles that are very [in]formative, with criticism of topics such as capitalism, consumer society, the public as a consumer, artistic language, aesthetics, the anti-art movement, artistic media, [inter]national politics, among others. For more details, see Alberro and Stimson (2000), and Basbaum (2001).

2.2 Some philosophical roots of philosophy of design

After the short overview about contemporary art and its peculiarities, let's return to the scope of design after the Italian radical school and amid the effervescence of discussions provoked by art and by design courses that, already established with regard to the logic of *designing artifacts for the industry*, incidentally or not, begin to bring up some social, philosophical, environmental and economic discussions. Although there are already nuclei of studies and discussions of a more speculative nature, formally, it was only in the late 90s that the designation of *critical design* emerged, which proposed to present a deviation from the dogmatic response and problem solving of *affirmative design*, its counterpart that would not have the critical-speculative factor as a main focus in its practice — which, in general, do not necessarily rejects social, economic, cultural and technical values of the world, as it does not want to *create to drastically transform the status quo* (Dunne & Raby, 2001). Dunne and Raby's critical design proposal is to break with the prevailing design paradigm, *the affirmative design of production*, promoting criticism and debates on social, political, and ethical issues (Dunne & Raby, 2013). As part of the theoretical root comes from the *critical theory* of the Frankfurt school, there is a strong influence with regard to thinking about exacerbated consumerism and the practice of design as the production of cultural products without social impact. The process of *design emancipation* from its utilitarian origin, as well as in the movement that took place in art, occurs in the effort to change functions, leaving the mechanical/artisanal sphere and entering that of *liberal art*, which allows itself to create non-utilitarian artifacts (Sauvagnargues, 2015).

According to Franzato (2011a, 2011b), contemporary design is now understood as a *practice* or an *attitude* towards the environment in which it is created, but, formally, a large part of the curricula of design courses until today lack mandatory disciplines of *philosophy and/of design* or *critical design*.[2] But this does not completely prevent research with themes related to philosophy from appearing more and more in the courses, as some elements of *critical design* appear transversally. There are many research centers inside and outside Brazil that bet on the critical approach, with several researchers influenced by authors such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Marcuse, Latour, Deleuze, Heidegger, for example, especially with regard to thinking about the consequences of a created object, in the narrative around the object dealing with technical, cultural and moral values. These themes are usually referred to as *philosophy of design*, that is, discussions around design themes, so that philosophers are listed as part of the theoretical contribution to define, defend and/or problematize a certain point of view. As previously mentioned, due to the proximity of design to courses in art, architecture and engineering, in its origins, it is interesting to notice how the most critical proposals identified as being of design depart from artifacts created with a view to exhibition in museums and art galleries, which is very similar to what artists proposed decades ago, with exhibitions at MoMa and occupation of spaces with large-scale architectural projects and occupation of spaces to provide experiences and questions.

In the scope of the *philosophy of design*, there are some main themes that resonate more than others, especially those related to the *philosophy of technology* (Franssen et al., 2018a). Next, I will list some authors best known for their thematic adherence to the *question concerning technique* and for the expansion of other authors based on these. As it is known, in philosophy, there are several authors who approach the theme of technique, but perhaps one of the water dividers is Heidegger, when he approaches the question of technique and highlights the position of the human being as an existing entity among other entities, the *being-in-the-world mediated by other entities* — whether in *Being and*

---

[2] According to a survey conducted by Sebrae (2014), few curricula offer subjects that deal with philosophy/sociology — and, in most cases, in an optional way. In a wide researched list, none of the universities bets on the direct emphasis of philosophy in a more present way in subjects taught throughout the course. There are, however, some more consolidated initiatives in research groups, as I will show later.

time, in 1927, or resumed and updated in *The question concerning technology*, in 1953 (Heidegger, 1977, 2000). In the same vein, Deleuze can be highlighted as another author who draws the attention of critical designers for some time, especially for his writings on the *philosophy of difference* — which starts from the Heideggerian paradigm of an *ontology of difference*, without metaphysical conditioning — and the notion of potency/virtuality. Still in the French tradition, Derrida (1967) gains space due to his defense of the *philosophy of deconstruction* — which comes from the Heideggerian proposal of *destruction* — as well as his ideas about the internationalization of information and the concentration of its technical means of diffusion.

Still in French lands, another author who enchants and substantiates design philosophy proposals is Latour (1996), whose resumption of Deleuzian *rhizomatic rationality* is evident in his *actor-network theory*, as well as his updating of the Heideggerian theme of the way of life through objects, dealing specifically with the problem of the *technical mediation* of the human being. In the German band, the Frankfurt school imposes itself with great force from its *critical* theory and the unfolding of *technical rationality* and *instruments of ideology*, basing research for decades, both in the arts and in design, with authors such as Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Marcuse and Habermas. In the USA, one of the authors responsible for forming the new generation of researchers involved in design philosophy is Don Ihde (2008), especially for his *philosophy of science/technology* strand guided by a post-phenomenological point of view, which, in addition to Husserl, takes up authors like Heidegger and includes Ricoeur's anthropology.

In recent decades, a group that has stood out is the *Dutch school* — or *atomic philosophy of design*, as I prefer to call it, since its main members have initial training in theoretical or experimental physics. Their discussions, as previously mentioned, revolve around the issue of technique and technology, as shown in the works of Peter Kroes (2009, 2012) and Kroes & Verbeek (2014), which initiate and consolidate, in a way, discussions about *artifacts and morality* in the field of design philosophy. Peter-Paul Verbeek (2008, 2014), a disciple of Ihde, discusses, for example, the morality of objects, technical artifacts, the moral agency and the neutrality of things. Another author in this area is Pieter E. Vermaas (et al., 2008; 2009, 2016), who addresses the issue of philosophy of technology from its application in design, dealing with the discussion about the functions of artifacts and the question of their intentionality. Finally, I would like to highlight Ibo Van de Poel (2016; Poel & Gorp, 2008; Poel & Kroes, 2014), who also deals with the issue of values in engineering design, ethical and evaluative aspects present in technology and the morality of objects and their relationship with the social environment. It is important to emphasize that the concern of these authors is both theoretical, in the sense of making the discussions from a speculative point of view, but also practical, since they think from the paradigm of *design engineering* as well, in which certain decision-making processes apply or not elements that improve the efficiency, safety, sustainability and responsibility of those who design, create and build in design.

From China, there is Yuk Hui (2016), who produces a beautiful philosophical reflection on the concept of technology in the East Asian bands, especially with regard to the type of modernization that China has been going through, which causes some environmental problems, giving a response to the concept of technique as approached by Heidegger. From England, one of the philosophers of design that draws attention is Tony Fry (et al., 2015; 2020), who defends an *ontological* and *metaphysical* perspective of artifacts, as he deals with his discussions from the paradigm of historicity and the elements that underlie some core or some design school and the relationship of this to ways of producing or preventing certain modes of [de]*futuring*. Along with Fry, an American author who is also guided by the motto of the *ontology of objects* — with a strong influence from Heidegger and Latour — and the *speculative realism* that criticizes post-Kantian anthropocentrism is Graham Harman (2017), who starts from the approach of the Heideggerian *instrumental analysis*, but defending that objects have some cognitive aspect, as well as other living beings with his *object-oriented ontology*. In Latin America, I would highlight Arturo Escobar (2018), who proposes a type of *relational, community and ontological*

design, which would encompass the struggle of the various forms of *being-in-the-world* and the cultural and geographical territories of marginalized Latin American populations, such as the peasantry, the indigenous and the Afro-descendant population, as well as the underprivileged in urban areas.

In Brazil, undoubtedly, one of the authors best known for promoting the dialogue between design and philosophy is Vilém Flusser (2007), who, in the 1980s, discussed topics such as photography, technical devices, the mediation of the world from mechanisms, and all with strong influence — often implicit and undeclared — of notions of phenomenology and Heidegger's philosophical paradigm. In contemporary Brazil, I would also highlight the writings of Marcos Beccari, Daniel Portugal and Padovani (2017), who have been dealing with the philosophy of design for more than a decade, with research groups and publications uniting topics such as history, metaproject, metatheory, design and affections, language, culture and epistemology from authors such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Latour. Another Brazilian author with interesting themes in the area of design philosophy is Frederick M.C. van Amstel (et al., 2013), which deals with themes such as the design of experiences, the issue of interaction and the usability of artifacts, expansive and participatory design, and design ideologies.

Having done the overflight on the crisscrossed origins between design and art and the dialogic bridges present between design and philosophy, in the next section, I will try to argue in favor of a perspective still little discussed regarding what I call *philosophical-hermeneutical design*, which starts especially from a discussion that started in 2017 and that echoes to this day, given the importance of rethinking design starting from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and listing some concepts that can help people who are fond of design to recognize the very identity of design and the bases that sustain and guide them to this day.

3 To what extent can we speak of a philosophical-hermeneutical design?

As already exposed in the previous section, traditional (affirmative) design starts from a logic of projecting products on an industrial scale, combining artistic aspects in its creative process, but within the dictates of capitalist logic and the production of mass consumer goods. However, as I have argued elsewhere, in recent decades, design has been incorporating some aspects of contemporary art and philosophy into its practice, in a way that adds the element of *criticism* in the development of artifacts, scenarios and technologies (Kussler & Lorenz, 2018). According to Malpass (2017), design proposals as critical, radical, speculative, contradictory attitudes can be encompassed as *critical practice*, clearly introducing elements of social and political sciences and philosophy. In the wake of Snodgrass and Coyne (1996, 2006) and Jahnke (2012), who explore the possibility of considering *design as a hermeneutical task*, especially from Gadamer and Ricoeur, the hypothesis I would like to defend here concerns the way of understanding *critical-speculative design* as a *philosophical-hermeneutical design*, which perhaps would help to think about the contemporary task of design from the point of view of philosophy, somewhat different from the proposals of *philosophy of design*, which develop problems intrinsic to design and, in general from it.

As I argued in the previous section, design originates, at least from a threefold derivation of areas of knowledge, namely art, architecture and engineering. Thus, from the beginning, design was divided into the tasks of producing something aesthetically pleasing, ergonomic and useful, and *casually*, only from the 1960s onwards — when contemporary art movements emerged and consolidated, whose works became more conceptual and provocative — that the first overtly *radical* proposals emerged, which only took more space in the late 90s, with the formal characterization of *critical design*. My impression is that there is a difficulty for some design authors — in their eagerness to create and defend their own and original identity — in understanding that their critical positions come from discussions

and artifacts carried out decades ago by the arts, especially due to the conflict when it comes to differentiating the paradigms of modern and contemporary art. Malpass (2017) corroborates my hypothesis by stating that critical design is involved both in the work of art and in the artistic discourse, only configuring design practices as objects proper to design — let us remember, for example, the exhibitions of design artifacts in museums. and art galleries and, with a strong appeal to the occupation of space and the appeal to social criticism from a certain object.

Inspired by the motto of the Italian radical school and the concepts of the Frankfurt school, the critical-speculative design of Dunne and Raby (2001, 2013) seek to establish the need for design to be placed as an area that transcends the mere materialization of salable objects, since that the proposal is to overcome *affirmative practice*, which produces useful objects for society, with *critical practice*, which proposes to institute debates, narratives, provocations about the future and social interaction mediated by artifacts. While affirmative practice is concerned with *solving problems* — especially with the diffusion of design thinking models —, critical practice rejects the *status quo* and seeks to promote reflections on the current situation and on the more traditional design itself (Dunne & Raby, 2001). Critical design practice, when placed as an activity of sociopolitical contestation, whose objective becomes to promote reflections in people from artifacts, dialogues in numerous ways with the proposal of philosophical hermeneutics, as I will show below.

I would like to make some characterizations of elements that normally compose philosophy to, later, show how it is possible to relate, in a more comprehensive way, design with philosophical hermeneutics. Briefly, in another text, I highlighted that there are at least five elements that characterize philosophy: 1) to make a speculative reading of the world; 2) to seek knowledge incessantly; 3) to be open to dialogue; 4) to criticize in the social, economic and philosophical scope; and 5) to understand oneself and others (Kussler & Lorenz, 2018). This means that the task of philosophizing encourages an attentive and critical look at things, a taste for the search for [self]knowledge, which allows the removal of ignorance about things, being open to differences and to different minimally tolerant discourses, the construction of criticisms about themes and values that are outdated and/or not consistent with current conventions on dignified ways of life.

Now, I will try to structure and argue the hypothesis that the *hermeneutical* element can be added to the list of philosophical relationships in design. For this, I bring a hypothetical and illustrative example about researchers and design professionals in relation to their training. Let us think, for example, of the creative process as something broader and of the way in which we, as human beings, are bombarded daily by narratives, social values and beliefs about various things that *form our subjectivity*. When we think, for example, about the life and socioeconomic conditions of a designer, we can identify these values in their *way of creation* and in the *artifacts they create*. If someone studies at a university that focuses on *graphic design*, surely their education will be specialized in the ways of creating in this area. The teaching group, research, local market demands and historical events of a given time also mark this formation. This occurrence is normal and expected, but if one does not question the values imbued in this specific training, the tendency is to give more space to designers accommodated in what is familiar to them.

Our history, as human beings, always appears [in]directly in everything we do; thus, *subjectivity* imposes itself, even with the strong belief in the primacy of *objectivity*. This is what allows each work of art, each book written and each graphic project to be unique, but when this characteristic of human action is not perceived, it is difficult to make self-criticisms, to recognize limitations, which makes room for *dogmatic behavior*, therefore, unable to speculate on their own way of doing it, which leads to thoughtless replications of formulas previously instituted. All artifacts produced by individuals are design actions with values, worldviews, so that *there are no neutral objects*, as there is always an efficient intentionality of those who create them, with certain cultural, social, political and economic aspects. Everything that is created brings with it the decisions of those who design, even with regard to a more or less inclusive

design notion from a physical, social or political point of view, so that disregarding such roots in design practice is a poor solution.

These aforementioned aspects converge to what Gadamer (1990) postulated in Truth and Method, back in the 1960s. Specifically on the notion of values imbued in what we do as human beings — including, here, the projecting of artifacts through design — Gadamer deals with of the concept of *tradition*, both from the point of a) something that is bequeathed to us (*Tradition*) and b) the content that is transmitted to us, in relation to *oral tradition*. This takes us to a philosophical, existential, political, historical, social and economic *situation* in which something is taught to us and the concepts and worldviews that we inherit and are part of our personal formation, directly impacting the way we understand ourselves and the world.

But how and why does this relate philosophy to design? In a first instance, when we consider that everything we say, do and propose in the world is within a *context* — or a *tradition*, as already highlighted —, there is not much to escape the historical and conceptual conditioning that we have as human beings, heirs of a culture and a way of thinking that precedes us. Such a notion allows us to revisit the past, based on the records of history, and always based on a knowledge already built and acquired, especially with regard to basic processes without which we would not live qualitatively today — can you imagine if we had to reinvent the wheel, the electric light, the antibiotics every decade or century?

In a second moment, we can consider that such elements of human history do not necessarily represent the *best existential values*, so that, with a more critical view of things, we can try to repair, update or even destroy/rebuild them. Critical behavior, averse to dogmatic behavior, is tacit in philosophy, in general, and particularly dear to the proposal of Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, especially because the author resumes classical philosophy itself, rethinking its methods, the bases of saying, representing and to formulate the world based on the awareness of imperfection and limitations inherent to human beings. Due to the Husserlian-Heideggerian phenomenological heritage, Gadamer (1990) believes that the *experience of hermeneutical-philosophical understanding* a) promotes an analysis that suspends judgments of knowledge historically conceived as true and valid, in addition to b) encouraging an *existential analytic*, in the sense to rethink things based on the critical historical awareness of oneself present in the process of *philosophical understanding* and *design creation*.

Gadamer (1999) starts from the idea that every human being starts from a context — historical, social, economic, political, philosophical — that limits our way of understanding ourselves, others, the world and the things present in it, emphasizing that these elements that go along with the process of understanding are *pre-concepts* or *pre-judgments* [*Vorurteile*], and the critical work of philosophical hermeneutics is precisely to perceive them in order to overcome, redefine and sublimate such conditions. Another important concept for Gadamer is that of *horizon* [*Horizont*], inherited from Husserl (1976), particularly in § 27 and § 44, in which the horizon is highlighted as *aspects that surround an object so that it can be perceived*. More generally, the horizon — which also dialogues with another Husserlian idea, namely, *regional ontology*, which includes precisely the existence of other ontologies that are not necessarily *the ontology* — represents our conceptual basis, our speculative starting point, our existential conditioning as finite beings that we are, with ways of understanding the world that cross us.

The point here is precisely to show how thinking about design from such elements can help to escape from a more dogmatic and utilitarian behavior, promoting a new analysis and/or overcoming preconceptions and an expansion of epistemological and existential horizons. to be implemented in critical design practice. I already advance that this is not compared to a vision of a simple relativism, but a *way of being* that can help to avoid repetitions of outdated values, which, when critically revisited, can be re-signified, creating broader horizons, open to differences, making us more vigilant about the ontological roots that shape us.

The importance of such elements listed here is to allow more criticism in the process of creating artifacts in the world, varying not only in the materials used and making small procedural changes, but seeking new doubts, making more self-criticism, with a more holistic and inviting to different ways of thinking, which, collectively, can give rise to more critical practices in design — similar to what art has

incorporated into its practice over the last century, as shown in the previous section. Those who are not open to criticism — especially those made to themselves and their own positioning in the world — hardly risk filling existential and professional gaps, having difficulty opening themselves to a different way of thinking and acting. Incorporating speculative and [self]critical elements in what I call *hermeneutical-philosophical design* allows one to stop designing only for oneself, to satisfy particular desires, opening oneself to *design practices capable of alterity*, since the principle of better understanding of oneself and the things proposed by hermeneutics provide for the reception of the other, the different, the strange, which must be included in our expanded and responsible experiential horizon (George, 2015; Schmidt, 2012). In this sense, it is worth mentioning what Franssen, Lokhorst and Poel (2018) have to say on that, since traditional design projects hardly start from the other, so that there is a lack of alterity and ethical concerns in design practice, since a utilitarian vision, of a maximin functionalist rationality in design practices, which impacts on the difficulty of thinking about new ontologies, of rethinking values and getting out of the sometimes megalomaniac bias of *trying to solve all the world's problems*.

I would like to emphasize that I recognize that there are critical, speculative and philosophical research centers in design, however, as the aspect of criticism to the bases, recognition of limitations and historical-effectual awareness of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is still not so widespread even in the field of philosophy, it is natural that there is not much interest and research directly related to such topics. It is natural that design, as an area of knowledge that starts from the field of art and architecture — but also has elements of economics, engineering and strategic management —, faces real and material difficulties in escaping the *affirmative/functional* character, not least because it initially consolidated as a course to think about strategies to take artistic and artisanal creation to the industrial scale of artifact production. I also recognize that there are different projects that seek to solve material, social, climatic, political problems, for example, more or less escaping the positivist functionalism bias that normally characterizes the course. In fact, it is worth mentioning that other areas of knowledge have great difficulty in overcoming or softening the reductionist and technopositivist view of the world, which usually boils down to issues of function, performance, optimization for seeing, as Heidegger (2000) attested, the world as an environment of resources [natural or not] to be exploited.

Making use of philosophy beyond a tool or a method to solve problems or argue philosophically about a topic means incorporating elements of philosophical practice into design practices. When proposing metaprojects, approaching themes of ontology and metaphysics, ethics, values, user safety and/or anticipating the impacts of a certain artifact created and placed in the world, the well-established philosophical experience can not only serve as an instrument, but also provoke existential changes in who designs. For this, incorporating philosophers and proposing discursive and conceptual spaces can contribute to both design office environments and research groups in the area, constituting a more pluralistic worldview and a broader horizon. Designing, as already exposed in this text, can also be a practice of proposing reflections, solving [and creating] problems, *doing politics and philosophy through artifacts and discourses*, contributing to changing attitudes, beliefs and social behaviors. The bet here is that design open to the philosophical-hermeneutic element can contribute to the [already] critical practices of design increasingly proposing ways of understanding reality in a more ethical, dynamic and conscious way of the bases that sustain, which would contribute to new research topics and design practices with the aim of provoking more of the social fabric for contemplations based on the experiential aspect, rethinking traditions and values more in keeping with today's world.

4 Final considerations

In the first section, the objective was to analyze some historical aspects of design in Brazil in order to establish a non-absolute, but extensive basis, systematizing aspects of the *ontology of Brazilian design*,

that is, the bases that guide the *modus operandi* of the area in the country. When passing through the institution of the first national design courses, one can see the influence of the Bauhaus and the approximation of architecture, arts and design courses, since the latter is instituted after the first two, entering as an area that initially relates the design aspect to utilitarian production on an industrial scale. As shown, if it is from the 1960s onwards that design formally begins to deal with discussions of a social nature in the world — which, as I have tried to explore, is largely due to the influence of discussions of contemporary art, which begins to produce more conceptual works that raise socioeconomic and philosophical discussions — with *radical design*, it is natural that, in Brazil, this influence arrives a few years later.

And if it is only since the 1990s that *critical/speculative design* has been formally spoken of in the face of the conceptual sovereignty of *affirmative/utilitarian design*, it is also no surprise that studies that understand design as an area capable and responsible for weaving discussions of a social nature — in which the material artifacts produced are not exclusively the preferred *medium* for this — begin to intensify the inclusion of explicitly philosophical elements in studies of what is known as *philosophy of design*. From this new identity, several studies about design emerge that seek to think about design issues related to the problems of the world, but with a more philosophical, conceptual inspiration, especially with regard to concepts such as *technique, technology, metaprojects, morality, intentionality, engineering, history, ontology, interaction, experience*, among others.

In the second section, when opening specifically dealing with *critical-speculative design*, the focus was to show how the project of welcoming the practice of design as something critical had already been approached for some years — especially if we consider the origins of design as an area arising from courses previous art and architecture. However, even after the radical school manifestos in the 1960s, and the emergence of other discourses consonant with a critical stance in design — especially through large-scale artistic and architectural exhibitions, with a strong influence and appeal from contemporary art —, the *functionalist* base, so to speak, still endures and imposes itself in undergraduate and graduate courses in Brazil (and the world).

With regard to the studies of *philosophy of design*, that is, the way of conducting research with a speculative and critical nature, with some traditional elements of philosophy, to solve problems inherent to design, there is not necessarily an expressly critical stance regarding the sources. that border the *modus operandi* of the design itself or of these researches, and it is precisely there that I understand that there is a gain in the reception of the *hermeneutical-philosophical* character of research and critical practices in design. Therefore, the core of the section was to try to explore some aspects that mark Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, in order to expose how they could contribute to a way of proposing design in a more critical way, aware of its *ontological bases*, the roots that form and drive theories and practices in contemporary design, providing design spaces with broader, less functionalist and positivist horizons.

References

ALBERRO, A.; BUCHMANN, S. (Eds.). 2006. *Art after conceptual art*. Cambridge; London, The MIT Press.

ALBERRO, A.; STIMSON, B. (Eds.). 2000. *Conceptual art: a critical anthology*. Cambridge; London, The MIT Press.

AMSTEL, F. M. C. van et al. 2013. The ideology of the future in design fictions. *Digital Creativity*, **24**(1): 36-45. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14626268.2013.772524. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

BASBAUM, R. 2001. *Arte contemporânea brasileira: texturas, dicções, ficções estratégias*. Rio de Janeiro, Rios Ambiciosos.

BECCARI, M.; PORTUGAL, D. B. P.; PADOVANI, S. 2017. Seis eixos para uma filosofia do design. *Estu-

dos em Design, **25**(1): 13-32. Available at: https://estudosemdesign.emnuvens.com.br/design/article/view/432. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

BUSKIRK, M. 2003. *The contingent object of contemporary art*. Cambridge; London, The MIT Press.

CARDOSO, R. 2000. *Uma introdução à história do design*. São Paulo, Edgard Blücher.

CHILVERS, I.; GLAVES-SMITH, J. 2009. *A dictionary of modern and contemporary art*. 2nd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press.

DANTO, A. C. 1981. *The transfiguration of the commonplace: a philosophy of art*. Cambridge; London, Harvard University Press.

DANTO, A. C. 1986. *The philosophical disenfranchisement of art*. New York, Columbia University Press.

DERRIDA, J. (1967). *De la grammatologie*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.

DUNNE, A.; RABY, F. 2001. *Design noir: the secret life of electronic objects*. Basel, Birkhäuser.

DUNNE, A.; RABY, F. 2013. *Speculative everything: design, fiction, and social dreaming*. Cambridge; London, The MIT Press.

ESCOBAR, A. 2018. *Designs for the pluriverse: radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Durham; London, Duke University Press.

FIELL, C.; FIELL, P. 2005. *Design of the 20th century*. Köln, Tascher.

FLUSSER, V. 2007. *O mundo codificado: por uma filosofia do design e da comunicação*. São Paulo, Cosac Naify.

FRANSSEN, M.; LOKHORST, G.-J.; POEL, I. van de. 2018a. Philosophy of technology. *In*: E. N. ZALTA (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/technology. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

FRANSSEN, M.; LOKHORST, G.-J.; POEL, I. van de. 2018b. Philosophy of Technology. In: E. N. ZALTA (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/technology. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

FRANZATO, C. 2011a. *O Processo de criação no design conceitual: explorando o potencial reflexivo e dialético do projeto*. **1**(1): 1-13. Available at: https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/tessituras/article/view/5612. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

FRANZATO, C. 2011b. Design as speculation. *Design Philosophy Papers*, **9**(1): 23-39. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2752/144871311X13968752924392. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

FRY, T. 2020. *Defuturing: a new design philosophy*. London, Bloomsbury.

FRY, T.; DILNOT, C.; STEWART, S. C. 2015. *Design and the question of history*. London, Bloomsbury.

GADAMER, H.-G. 1990. *Gesammelte Werke 1: Hermeneutik I*. Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

GEORGE, T. 2015. The responsibility to understand. *In*: G.-J. HEIDEN (Ed.), *Phenomenological perspectives on plurality*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, p. 103-120).

GONZÁLES, J.; POSNER, A. 2006. Facture for change: US activist art since 1950. *In*: A. JONES (Ed.), *A companion to contemporary art since 1945*. Malden, Blackwell Publishing, p. 212-230.

HARMAN, G. 2017. *Object-oriented ontology: a new theory of everything*. London, Pelican Books.

HEIDEGGER, M. 1977. *Gesamtausgabe, Band 2: Sein und Zeit - I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914-1970*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann.

HEIDEGGER, M. 2000. Die Frage nach der Technik (1953). *Gesamtausgabe, Band 7: Vorträge und Aufsätze - I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichen Schriften 1910-1976*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 5-36.

HOPKINS, D. 2000. *After modern art: 1945-2000*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

HUI, Y. 2016. *The question concerning technology in China: an essay in cosmotechnics*. Falmouth, Urbanomic.

HUSSERL, E. 1976. *Husserliana: Gesammelte Werke, Band III/1 - Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff.

IHDE, D. 2008. The designer fallacy and technological imagination. *In*: VERMAAS, P. E.; et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy and design: from engineering to architecture*. Dordrecht, Springer, p. 51-60.

JAHNKE, M. 2012. Revisiting design as a hermeneutic practice: an investigation of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics. *Design Issues*, **28**(2): 30-40. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00141. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

JALLAGEAS, N. 2015. *Vkhutemas: o ensino das artes sob o signo da revolução russa*. São Paulo, Edições Aurora.

KROES, P. 2009. Technical artifacts, engineering practice, and emergence. *In*: KROHS, U.; KROES, P. (Eds.), *Functions in biological and artificial worlds*. Cambridge; London, The MIT Press, p. 277-292.

KROES, P. 2012. *Technical artefacts: creations of mind and matter: a philosophy of engineering design*. Dordrecht, Springer.

KROES, P.; VERBEEK, P.-P. (Eds.). 2014. *The moral status of technical artefacts*. Dordrecht, Springer.

KUSSLER, L. M.; LORENZ, B. A. 2018. Design como prática crítica e filosófica. *Revista de Design, Tecnologia e Sociedade*, **5**(1): 34-47. Available at: https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/design-tecnologia-sociedade/article/view/12304. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

LATOUR, B. 1996. On actor-network theory: A few clarifications. *Soziale Welt*, **47**(4), 369-381. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40878163. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

LEENHARDT, J. 2013. Jean-Baptiste Debret: um olhar francês sobre os primórdios do império brasileiro. *Sociologia & Antropologia*, **3**(6): 509-523. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1590/2238-38752013v367. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

MALPASS, M. 2017. *Critical design in context: history, theory, and practices*. London, Bloomsbury.

MIGUEL, J. D. 2019. *Arte, ensino, utopia e revolução: os ateliês artísticos VKhUTEMAS/VKhUTEIN (Rússia/URSS, 1920-1930)*. Florianópolis, Editora em Debate/UFSC.

NIEMEYER, L. 2007. *Design no Brasil: origens e instalação*, 4th ed. Rio de Janeiro, 2AB.

POEL, I. van de; GORP, A. van. 2008. Deciding on ethical issues in engineering design. *In*: P. E. VERMAAS et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy and design: from engineering to architecture*. Dordrecht, Springer, p. 77-90.

POEL, I. van de; KROES, P. 2014. Can technology embody values? *In*: KROES, P.; VERBEEK, P.-P. (Eds.), *The moral status of technical artefacts*. Dordrecht, Springer, p. 103-124.

POEL, I. van. 2016. A coherentist view on the relation between social acceptance and moral acceptability of technology. *In*: FRANSSEN, M.; et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy of technology after the empirical turn*. Dordrecht, Springer, p. 177-193.

REZENDE, L. L. 2005. A circulação de imagens no Brasil oitocentista: uma história com marca registrada. *In*: CARDOSO, R. (Ed.), *O design brasileiro antes do design: aspectos da história gráfica, 1870-1960*. São Paulo, Cosac Naify, p. 20-57.

RIBEIRO, D. M. M. 2018. Arquitetura radical em disputa. *Revista Da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*, **24**(1 e 2): 176-203. Available at: https://doi.org/10.35699/2316-770X.2017.12608. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

SAUVAGNARGUES, A. 2015. Design machines and art machines. *In*: MARENKO, B.; BRASSETT, J. (Eds.), *Deleuze and design*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

SCHMIDT, D. J. 2012. On the sources of ethical life. *Research in Phenomenology*, **42**(1): 35-48. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1163/156916412X628739. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

SEBRAE. 2014. *Design no Brasil: relatório 2014 do setor de design.* Available at: https://www.sebrae.com.br/sites/PortalSebrae/artigos/o-design-no-brasil-relatorio-2014,6d818242d5e67410VgnVCM-1000003b74010aRCRD. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

SNODGRASS, A.; COYNE, R. 1996. Is designing hermeneutical? *Architectural Theory Review*, **2**(1): 65-97. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13264829609478304. Accessed on: August 30th, 2022.

SNODGRASS, A.; COYNE, R. 2006. *Interpretation in architecture: design as a way of thinking.* London; New York, Routledge.

STALABRASS, J. 2006. *Contemporary art: a very short introduction.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

VERBEEK, P.-P. 2008. Morality in design: design ethics and the morality of technological artifacts. *In*: P. E. VERMAAS et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy and design: from engineering to architecture.* Dordrecht, Springer, p. 91-104.

VERBEEK, P.-P. 2014. Some misunderstandings about the moral significance of technology. *In*: KROES, P.; VERBEEK, P.-P. (Eds.), *The moral status of technical artefacts.* Dordrecht, Springer, p. 75-88.

VERMAAS, P. E. 2009. On unification: taking technical functions as objective (and biological functions as subjective). *In*: KROHS, U.; KROES, P. (Eds.), *Functions in biological and artificial worlds.* Cambridge; London, The MIT Press, p. 69-87.

VERMAAS, P. E. 2016. An engineering turn in conceptual analysis. *In*: FRANSSEN, M.; et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy of technology after the empirical turn.* Dordrecht, Springer, p. 269-282.

VERMAAS et al. (Eds.). 2008. *Philosophy and design: from engineering to architecture.* Dordrecht, Springer.