

Wednesday, 25 June 2025 // filmosofia 10 at Rozz-Tox // *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982 Reggio, dir.) & “The Extended Mind” (Clark & Chalmers 1998)¹

Agenda:

- pre-screening discussion (about 6:30pm)
- film starts 7:00pm
- 10 minute break
- post-screening discussion of Clark & Chalmers reading selection and film from 8:45pm to 9:45pm

Pre-screening discussion (6:30pm)

- general remarks about filmosofia series:
 - roughly every other month we screen a film and we pair it with a famous philosophical text that examines themes related to that film
 - the 2025 filmosofia schedule is up on instagram (@rozztox_qc & @casuallyinefficacious) and on the Rozz-Tox website; stay tuned for updates about the 2025 philosophy events
 - the fourth filmosofia 2025 screening will be the Wachowski’s (2005) *V for Vendetta*, and the reading will be Huemer’s (2013) “The Problem of Political Authority”: Wednesday 27 August
 - free print articles for filmosofia will be in the front of the café
- More details on the four main branches of philosophy:
 - metaphysics: the theory of reality
 - notable sub-fields: ontology (the study of what exists), philosophy of mind (theory of the nature of consciousness)
 - epistemology: the theory of knowledge
 - notable sub-fields: analysis of ‘knowledge’ (challenges to the “Justified True Belief” model), debates over the a priori vs. a posteriori justification (whether there is justification independent of experience)
 - axiology: the theory of value
 - notable sub-fields: normative ethics (theory of right/wrong), aesthetics (theory of good/bad art)
 - logic: the theory of right reasoning
 - notable sub-fields: classical logic (modern formal theory of entailment), non-classical logics (formal theories that reject assumptions in classical logic, such as the principle of explosion (*ex falso quodlibet*) in paraconsistent logics)

¹ Clark, Andy & Chalmers, David. (January 1998) “The Extended Mind.” *Analysis* 58.1: 7-19.

- tonight's topic: philosophy of mind and technology (metaphysics and axiology)
 - philosophy of mind
 - is the mind wholly contained within the “skin/skull boundary”, or is the mind extended outside of the body?
 - what is the nature of the relationship between our minds and technology?
 - philosophy of technology
 - what does flourishing look like in our technological world?
 - what are some ways that technology has impeded/is impeding/will impede our collective flourishing?

Post-Screening Discussion (8:45pm)

- tonight's topic: metaphysics and axiology (philosophy of mind and technology)
 - two general questions:
 - what is the nature of our relationship with technology?
 - what is a “life in balance” supposed to look like?
- the film: some general remarks
 - “Koyaanisqatsi” is a Hopi term that is often translated as “life out of balance”
 - Reggio is on the record (Foster 2024) as saying that the film is “radically against technology”, but at the same time “we can’t live without it” and “technology is the environment we live in” and it has “become a necessity”.
- What is the nature of our relationship with technology?
 - the common-sense view: technology is a product of human beings, and is something distinct from human nature
 - the common-sense view is **WRONG**
 - Clark & Chalmers: technology is part of our minds
 1. The use of information technology (writing, calendar or notes function on digital computers) plays a role that involves “a high degree of trust, reliance, and accessibility”. (17)
 2. If that’s so, then there is no relevant difference between the use of that technology and the function of memory inside the brain. (13)
 3. If there is no relevant difference between those two things, then we should abandon the “skin/skull boundary” and accept that cognition and the mind extends outside of our bodies. (7; also cf. Clark 2004 and Dennett 1996)
 4. Thus, cognition and the mind extends outside of our bodies.
 5. If that’s right, then technology is not just a product of our nature, but is part of our nature.
 6. Therefore, technology is part of our nature. (cf. Coeckelbergh 2011)

- What is a “life in balance” supposed to look like?
 - it’s clear that some of our technological efforts are (and have been for quite some time) putting our lives out of balance:
 - human effects on global climate change appear to be irreversible and are leading to consequences that will make the planet uninhabitable for us
 - Silicon Valley companies appear to be driving trends that are fragmenting our attention spans, ruining our sleep habits, and causing the dissolution of communities (see Thompson 2025)
 - Reggio’s film seems to be worried about both of these things: do you think things have gotten better or worse since 1982?
 - What’s the antidote? Should we abandon all technology altogether and just “go back to nature”?
 - I maintain that it’s a false dilemma fallacy: the choices are simply to be doomed to our present state (or worse) or “go back to nature”
 - I’m skeptical of a romanticized idea of “nature” in the first place: it’s not as easy to distinguish “natural” from “artificial” as it seems.
 - Perhaps Aristotle’s (335BCE/2019) notion of “eudaimonia” can help: a life of flourishing is one that aims to fulfill our nature, which for us is contemplation
 - human beings by nature want to know: we seek understanding, and it’s one of the things we’re good at, just as a bird is good at flying or a fish is good at swimming
 - this suggests that the use of technologies that enhance or assist in our contemplative lives are good, while those that hinder those things are bad—using AI to write things for you, to think for you, to create for you is bad, but using AI to help you get better at those things doesn’t have to be
 - it’s trite to say “everything in moderation”, but some sort of balance seems best—what if we can’t be trusted to seek balance? what if we are addicted to social media, algorithms, LLMs, etc?
 - it seems that we’ve had a lack of discipline with our use of technology...
 - Further: our concerns often lack proper humility and respect for non-human interests; we should consider non-anthropocentric, “post-human” approaches (Coeckelbergh 2022)

- An argument for a disciplined use of technology:
 1. Technological efforts are part of human nature, not just a product of human nature.
 2. With regard to character, there are two sorts of vices: of excess and of deficiency; the virtue is the mean between the two, the balance.
 3. Whereas technological effort harms our own interests or the interests of non-humans, its use represents the vice of excess.
 4. Thus, we should pursue a life with a radically scaled-back use of technology: we should use technology cautiously, only when we're sure it will help us. (cf. Scheider 2019 & Danaher 2019)

Recommended Further Reading/References:

1. Aristotle. (335BCE/2019) *Nicomachean Ethics*, Third Edition. Irwin, trans. Hackett Publishing.
2. Bostrom, Nick. (2005) “A History of Transhumanist Thought.” *Journal of Evolution and Technology*. 14.1: 1-25.
3. Clarke, Andy. (2004) *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford University Press.
4. Coeckelbergh, Mark. (2011) “Human development or human enhancement? A methodological reflection on capabilities and the evaluation of information technologies.” *Ethics and Information Technology*. 13: 81-92.
5. Coeckelbergh, Mark. (2022) “What About Non-Humans? Environmental Politics and Posthumanism.” *The Political Philosophy of AI*. Polity. 123-148.
6. Danaher, John. (2019) *Automation and Utopia: Human Flourishing in a World Without Work*. Harvard University Press.
7. Dennett, Daniel. (1996) “Chapter 5: The Creation of Thinking.” *Kinds of Minds: Toward an Understanding of Consciousness*. BasicBooks. 119-147.
8. Foster, Kmele. (2024) “Why creating is crucial to human existence | Godfrey Reggio, Steve Albini, and Fred Armisen.” *YouTube, uploaded by Big Think*.
URL=<https://youtu.be/5U4S4ki4YZs?si=cvIPuwwad4mrNgEH>
9. Fricke, Ron. (2012) “Ron Fricke on Koyaanisqatsi.” *Qatsi Trilogy (Blu-Ray Box Set)*. Janus Films/Criterion Collection. ISBN: 9781604656701.
10. Gould, Deke. (2021) “Future Minds and a New Challenge to Anti-Natalism.” *Bioethics*. 35: 793-800.
11. Lynch, Michael P. (2017) *The Internet of Us : Knowing More and Understanding Less in the Age of Big Data*. Liveright Publishing.
12. Schneider, Susan. (2019) *Artificial You: AI and the Future of Your Mind*. Princeton University Press.
13. Thomas, Brian. (2024) “40 Years of Koyaanisqatsi: the Greatest Experimental Film Ever Made.” *Augustana Digital Commons*. Honors Senior Thesis.
URL=<https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/honrstudent/12/>
14. Thompson, Derek. (2025) “‘The Anti-Social Century’: Inside America’s Epidemic of Solitude.” *YouTube, uploaded by PBS Amanpour & Co.*
URL=<https://youtu.be/wz8KrZFhaxU?si=n53OCzP1mFncYZB5>