



Professional Ethics in Industrial Design

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Abstract

This study explains about the role of culture and ethics in art especially in industrial design. Because the art is like a super-science it can be said that what it shows in its content will mostly be affected with culture and Ethics which is like an infra-science. Because of grate use of industrial design in production and its near connection with art, industrial design as a practical art is affected with this content. Like handicrafts, as roots of industrial design, reflects this influence in different nations and cultures. It is clear that the impact can be positive or negative, so that today many designers during the designing neglect these points and it's while the ergonomics principles and international standards related to safety because of their sensitivity have a special place and are considered. That is why understanding the impact on cultural products and the contrast should be characteristics of designers and the design principles of professional ethics should be respected.

Keywords: professional Ethics, industrial design, culture, ethics, human factors



Introduction

It must be certainly acknowledged that the human nature is naturally based on his humanity (humanistic behavior). This nature of man can be stabilized by his faculties of speech and meditation; to wit, we ought to cast a doubt on a man's or woman's humanity if he (she) has not the capability to think and feel. Indeed, what differentiates man from other animals and develops him into a lord of creation is his inborn capability to think and rationalize such that he has been nominated as a speaking creature thanks to these characteristics. Man's use of logic in both his speech and behavior is construed to be as an added value superior to that a creature may have. In this process, man's performance, emergence of more thinking people and transcendental notions can testify our allegations as mentioned.

Now it should be considered that all thought in human is due to this order:

1. Roots: that is related to substances and tendencies which are with him during being born.
2. Mental infra-structure: It is a period of time when all man's mental principles are developed based on his attitude to God, man and being.
3. Mental superstructures: These superstructures are created based on the fact that what mental infra-structure was adopted in the previous period.
4. Performances: They consist of thoughts that lead to practices and turn into a final part of mind that is to say a practical science.

As noted above, it is clear that art is ensued from mental supra-structures and, as some argues part of performances and is categorized as a tool. It is mere form, without any potentiality by itself. Art is a form for any positive and negative content to be included and accommodated within it. However, based on the fact that ethics is founded infra-structurally on mind, it can be construed as a factor influencing the art. Ethics has a long history with dating back to 2500 years ago. Over centuries, BC Greek and Roman cultures, as influenced by Iranian culture and eastern civilization had been overwhelmingly spread in the west. In modern world, it is commonly assumed that art, whatever it may be, is self-arbitrary to some degree and expands in its special way. It must be judged based on its own values and criteria.

In ancient world this assumption-art self-arbitrariness- was not well received but it was postulated that from artistic point of view, poets are like teachers and art has ethical effects on its audiences. Plato, in his "Republic" II & III, expresses his opinion on the role an art can play and discusses specifically the role the literature plays on the indoctrination of upcoming leaders in his idealized state. Plato believes that there is an immediate and simplistic correlation between ethical contents of a work and its ethical effect. For example, cantos of Homer's works where heroes are described as cowards or reckless people should be deleted because their readers are commonly impressed by emotions of mythical or mythological characters and they themselves degenerate into reckless and cowardly people. In contrast, Plato affirms cantos of Homer where heroes manifest from them self-restraint, self-control and courage because these cantos nurture such traits. According to him, on no account can we control our responses to arts. The effect of art is immediate and highly potent and cannot be oriented to anywhere by reason and mind. For that reason, Plato conceives the



art definitely as a dangerous thing and recommends that art should be dramatically liable to an active censor in his utopia state (Ferrari & Griffith, 2000).

Plato's opinion on the effects of art is, in some respects, close to that expressed by the contemporaneous writer, Tolstoy. As Tolstoy approaches the art, as does Plato, he alleges that art has an immediate effect on the sentiments of its audiences and this effect has an ethical important behind it. As Plato, Tolstoy conceives the large number of arts that were well applauded and appreciated in his time as harmful things.

Now the relation between ethics and industrial design that is one of the most useful arts most be considered. Is industrial design drawn from this order? First handicrafts that are found, which can be called pioneer industrial designers' work, was influenced by their culture and this effect of culture on artistic and industrial products is going on till today. But unfortunately, what has been forgotten here is paying attention to ethical merits and considering them during designing.

Place of Ethics in Industrial Design

Given the nature of industrial design and its extended links to four original categories of art, technology, communication and industry and its twelve secondary categories, it can be both impressed and impresses in different respects and from different angles of view, to wit, in human communities, the industrial designing career is of special importance, involved in interacting with man in a wide range and enjoys highly special position in different sciences. Now, it is necessary to raise this question whether there is a typical relationship between ethics and industrial design taking into consideration the ethical importance as a mental infra-structure. When an art is taken into account in this career from different points of view and is also regarded in materialistic and intellectual accounts, either the industry with all its greatness will preserve its position in designing. Why there is no point and mention of ethical parameters and their effects here?

When marketing process to develop into one professional element in industrial designing or also technology and producing strategies play undeniable roles in this enterprise. So, how on earth human relationship and above all, intellectual relations are ignored? Ergonomic -"Human factors" deals with a matter in which man's dimensions are calculated and to a very weak sense tackles with the concept of relationships but in a less degree it handles the ethical and humane relationships. If we take a look at the history of ergonomic and learn about how and why it has been appeared, we understand this field of science way seeking to find more remedies to look after one's physical health. Development of it as an independent science was initiated from 1880s by Taylor and Gilbert but interestingly this was not noticed so considerably by the turn of WWII and until that time was not usual to consider human abilities and its limits of performing acts easily and safe. This policy of ignoring it continued until such time as U.S Air force during the said war set about manufacturing a typical advanced fighter.

The story goes that the fighter manufactured at that time was more sophisticated than other available fighters because it used many of up-to-date technological achievements and advanced equipment. It, however, failed at the earlier tests because most of them crashed when they began to land. It was after this incident that the air experts found why plan tended to crash when it approaches the land-strip to land. They found that physical limitations of pilot and inadequateness of positions of levers and control switches accounted for the accident. All these weaknesses made the navigator make mistakes and fail to land the plane safe and sound. (According to official statistics published by ICAO still the errors committed by human account for two third



of universal air accidents.) Thus, in this way researchers found out very soon that in designing and locating control instruments used by man, his traits and characteristics should be borne in mind. All instruments and machineries must be aligned with the physical, mental and psychological capabilities. But why on earth, they did not seek to revive man's values in the interim and what role an industrial designer can play for it? In which terms things must be changed and in what cost? Can changes be made in a positive or negative way? And what parameters are determinant? Can industrial designing as a very extensive career contain values or just in the other way round? These questions as well as thousands of others cause us to look at this issue more attentively.

Even some analyses show that the emergence of some styles is to appreciate the position of a customer. It is interesting to note and know that Mahatma Gandhi, the late leader of India has some famous assertions to describe a customer: "customer is our master of beneficence. It is he who allows us to address ourselves to constructive tasks including production. Customer is the best supervisor over our activities. Customer is the most important observer in our domains. He is not depended on as but we are. A customer isn't a transient goal "but he is the ultimate goal of our actions". A customer is not considered an outsider or an exotic to our business operations but he is an integral part of our organization. We don't do any favor to a customer by doing him a service but it is he who provides us this opportunity with his call to us". Gandhi portrays the role, position and the importance a customer has in the society. In this drawing he follows the example of what is commonly applied in the society. Truly, who is our customer in our country? Is he the same man or woman who grins and bears with our monopolistic functions and always keep silent? While what we serve him is never agreeable to him. Or is he whom we are vigilant over him when he would change his tastes and try to attract his attention to us any how and some way or the other? How and with what language and with what instrument do we try to understand what he wants? And aren't the customers' mental and emotional needs more important than his physical needs? And how much do we pay attention to support him by his spiritual needs and not to harm them? By exploring the methods and styles we find that their emerge has a relation with their inventors' point of view to human relationships.

Let us for example, point to Bauhaus's school of art. Bauhaus is an architectural school that has been derived from Bauhaus art and architecture school, Germany. This school that was in session from 1919 to 1933, pioneered modernism in architecture and all its findings and explorations on architecture and other artistic genres are taught to students and scholars. The primary target to establish this school was to develop a place where a conglomeration of architectural, handicraft and academic arts could be founded. Gropius held that a new era in history had appeared towards the end of WW1. He intended to create a modern architectural style in Bauhaus to reflect this era. According to him this new architectural design, as can be generalized to all consumer's goods, must have been in cost effective way, tended to functionalism and agreed to mass production. He aimed to ultimately unite all forces that fought reactionaries and traditional thoughts to promote the progressively modern art. To achieve this goal, Gropius wanted to unite the artists and artisans with their artworks in order to obtain a product extra ordinarily efficient, usable and at the same time artistically valuable. This idea has been made clear in the inauguration statement of Bauhaus school, "we are determined to create and establish a new society and circle of artists with no professional bias that acts as a wall to segregate artists from artisans and indeed one can admit that this, in turn, an ethical approach to careers with having anything to run with art. This typical approach expressed by him contributed considerably to the development of such a style in architecture and industrial designing (Droste, 2002).



One more characteristic feature of Bauhaus style was productionism, to wit, optimal utilization of material properties and industrial material, avoidance of luxury decorations mounted on the facades of buildings and industrial products. The master there taught their disciples to design everything based on needs and never use anything lacking productive potentiality but use those which possess aesthetic features in order to meet the requirement of community.

Similarly, in periods some more tensions developed in the society out of some meditations one example of which was the "concept" of Fordism called after Henry Ford. By rationalizing the management processes in his motor manufacture (Factory), Henry Ford initiated to segment the work (Functions and Tasks) within a very limited extent such that a worker happened to always face a recursive task: Repetition of monotonous operation for a good pay based on work hour. It was in this way he enhanced the production level. But in flaw was that, man, at that time was transfigured into a machine one syndrome of which was that all his human dignities and positions were overshadowed by his profession and he was always construed and regarded a production tool not a mankind (Matthews, 1996).

Professional principles

In 1981, 114 people lost their lives and 200 were hurt in an accident when one walkway (Corridor) of Hyatt Regency hotel in Kansas City had collapsed. James B. Deutsch, the state judge proclaimed and prescribed that the head engineer who had designed the corridor structure, was acknowledged guilty. The judge also pointed out to the engineer's professional functions, to wit, engineers, as being professional in their careers, have special ethical responsibilities. It is commonly known that if we accept to play a specialized role, we are laid heavy responsibilities on shoulders and it'll be a great burden. Parents are responsible for their children but otherwise than the way if they have not got married and have not possessed any issue. Physicians and Jurists also have special responsibilities such as those of keeping secretive information and not to disclose confidentialities. If they were not jurists or physicians by profession, the case was as otherwise (Robbins, 1985). One major professional function is to protect the society against unsound and unethical application of professional knowledge.

Following an ethical rule and regulation

There is an implicit or tacit agreement (pact) between a career and community. It is also referred to as a reciprocal or bilateral relationship. In their efforts to gain some advantages, the designers try to bind themselves to commendable trustworthiness, honesty, integrity and custody by offering desirable services to the community. This is an important thing in particular but in general it entirely has anything to do with the connection between community and industrial designing career rather than that between community and individual designers. In an attempt to improve the relationship between the individual designers and community, they must stick to the ethical regulations of their communities. Alternatively, we can construe an ethical regulation as a concordat or treaty between professional designers proper rather than this or that career or community. Perhaps, designers may not apparently be able to reach this agreement with others but anyhow they prefer to get specialized and accept merits from this tread of specialization.

In summing up this approach, Michael Davis adduces four reasons why the specialists must agree to support only a single engineering ethical regulation as follows:



1. Help support the specialists and those who are supported by these specialists. Helps not to be harmed by other specialists.
2. Help create a good work environment and this, in turn, increases the strength of a specialist against pressure that forces one to commit guilt because he may say he has been prohibited by regulation.
3. Help the specialty change into a piece of job for the sake of which one may feel shame, sin and harassment.
4. Help establish a sense of commitment and honesty in doing one's function hypothesizing that others follow this example (Davis, 1991).

Victor Papanek claims in his book "The Green Imperative" that:

"Before we can honestly address this question, we must first eliminate the red herring of 'professional ethics' or 'professional codes of conduct'. These are generally rules that some trade group or professional organization has drowned up to further its own fortunes and eliminate competition between members. They also usually protect the group, or its members, from public scrutiny and criticism. To evaluate whether the ethical rules of a group are really more than a self-protection racket is fairly easy. All we have to do is ask some simple questions:

- 1- Is the code of ethics simply self-serving?
- 2- Does the 'code of conduct' really protect the public?
- 3- Is this code truly regulative, that is, do the members comply with it, and can the public make its own judgments about the compliance of the members?
- 4- Are these rules clear and specific about the possible pitfalls inherent in the particular profession or work performed by its members?
- 5- Can non-members observe and judge compliance with the rules by members, and is it enforceable?
- 6- Is this code of ethics, as well as the group or association, so constructed as to anticipate future changes, and therefore willing to teach, learn and inform its membership as well as the public?
- 7- Can the professional leadership of such professional organizations be made aware that, due to the modern media, we are living in an increasingly transparent society, in which secret deals, whitewashing and stone walling will no longer work?" (Papanek, 1995). Given the comments expressed by Papanek, it is evident that the intents to impose professional ethical rules or laws can be sometimes unethical the above seven questions on which can reveal their nature.

Responsibility assuming barriers

What our attitudes towards responsible experts are, in most cases, they face with barriers. These obstacles stop being onus to professional regulations despite how exact the regulations are. Barriers are as following:



- 1- Self-interest: Self-interest causes our judgments to be influenced by our wishes and demands.
- 2- Self-deceit: We deceive ourselves when we tackle with our real stimulus or our ethical responsibilities.
- 3- Weak will: We know what the right thing is to do but we don't have courage, resolution or commitment to do it.
- 4- Self-centeredness: We do not count other peoples' outlooks that may differ largely from ours.
- 5- Reductionism: We note one important aspect of situation such as technical problems over achingly such that we omit others.
- 6- Blind obedience: We folded blindly do every thing that is referred down to us.

Professional ethics

Doctors sign Hippocratic Oath note when they become graduated from medical college. By this they bind themselves to obey rules concerning their field of study and guarantee to use any means available to carry out their commitment and respect the rights of their patients.

Hippocrates was the first author who mixed ethical foundations as an oath text with medicine (Schiefky, 2005). In other words, he took the lion's share in medicine by formulating ethical the crystallized example of which was his oath text. This contains the oldest medical ethical rules and is still followed by many nations to make their medical academists administer oaths by it. Of course, certain regulations and requirements preceded it one example of which was Hammurabi (flourished 18th century BC) legislation on medicine based on which the guilty or wrongdoing doctors have been noted to undergo some punishments. This legislation, however, does not point to any ethical principles whatsoever. Hippocrates's oath is, indeed, an ethical and moral commitment to accept and apply ethical rules in medical science. Civil & Development Engineers bind themselves to an engineering system by which they undertake to respect the professional rules of his career and feel obliged to follow them. Lawyers have the same positions. But such a thing is nowhere to be seen in industrial design. However, what is this professional ethics in our discipline of education?

Professional ethics in Industrial Design

- 1- Respect copyrights of designers and the laws there of: It implies that we must consider ourselves responsible not to copy others' designs without their prior written consents, as we do not like them to do the same to us.
- 2- Avoid using special and specialized tools to create sabotages: As an industrial designer must work to provide welfare and comfort for community, do his best to create necessary reforms and betterments and employ his specialized experience to provide all facilities to people, he must, therefore, avoid designing anything unethical, destructive and not valuable.



- 3- Keeping information confidential and obeying its privacy doctrine: Any designer who works in a firm is bound to both keep customers' information confidential and prevent those from being disclosed in a firm where he works. He also respects their rights in this context and avoids disclosing any information of it and carrying any of its tools. We must know all information we have available is confidential and avoid disclosing them to others, especially to competitors. This subject has been explicitly emphasized in this adage, "Information Is Power".
- 4- Entirely executing one's commitment: In some cases where the qualitative cornerstones are not well established, we can implement some sections of a plan otherwise than by primary commitment with difficulty hoping that both the client and principle do not find it out! The reason is that many specialized parameters intermediate while accomplishing of plans such that nobody but the designer can be come aware of different angles so simply. Because of this the designer himself must be bound to complement the plan. Otherwise he will remove public confidence toward designers' society the outcomes of which are losses brought to customers.
- 5- Failing to let malignant people have available one's knowledge: A designer must not let malignant people or groups and fraudulent people have access to his specialty and misuse them on no account.
- 6- Obey civil laws and social systems: A designer must be responsible about laws and regulations of his society and avoid acting otherwise.
- 7- A design must have positive values: A designer must consider the design to have positive values such as durability, cheapness, beauty, quality, easy efficiency, succulence, enthusiasm and etc.
- 8- A design must be void of any adverse effect: A designer must not cause any indecent willingness or desires such as extravagance, vying, falsehood, promotion of ribaldry and scurrility, violence, and etc to develop in user because of his connection with the product.
- 9- Designing based on vernacular culture: In some cases a designer tends to design a product based on a foreign culture the outcome of which either gets nowhere or creates a culture far from the vernacular one.
- 10- Reduced cost and more facilitated performance
- 11- Observing individual and social rights of people: Most products that are designed drastically and dramatically fail if this doctrine is not pursued. That is, these rights are sometimes depreciated or disregarded and the products proper give rise to disrespect of others culturally, religiously and sometimes socially. For example, a digitalized camera on a mobile receiver may provide social insecurity and transgression to others' privacy or even provide someone a temptation to this social abnormality. It may be said that we must provide any interdiction or prohibition to it but we must promote the consciousness of people. But in response to it must be said that although it is true that we must step up man's consciousness but can this judgment be passed to mass destruction weapons; that is to say, we put kinds of weapons available to people and then ask them to observe ethical rules and act by consciousness. The answer is quite clear.
- 12- Products with short life cycle: Some companies follow a policy in which they design products in such a way as the lives of them come to an end at a very short time and the buyer may be forced to repair or replace them. This is considered a typical short sale and is judged to be a kind of adulteration.



13- Keeping unsuppressed the extravagance or ambitious morale: Sometimes a designer brings about with his design a luxury tendency and fashion following. By this he removes the sense of contentedness from people and not only develops different designs, different products and diversified modes to increase the senses of vying and ambition but also brings about the sense of extravagance. Many times we have witnessed individuals who change chattels because they have been outmoded and out-fashioned and discard their previously used products while many other people need the same products. And many other commitments.

Conclusion

This must be, meanwhile, noted that merely reading an ethical commitment note is insufficient to get it executed. Rather, it is necessary to find an authority to pursue it and it may be protected by sanction in order to tell responsible feeling employees from the otherwise. To achieve this purpose, it is recommended that "International Industrial Designers Union "(IIDU) be established with specific goals.

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