A Dialogical-Self Narrative:
Meanings of Inclusiveness between Disability, Design and Theology

by
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Abstract

The impact of self in design processes, particularly in the context of Inclusive Design is the prime focus of my MRP. Inclusive Design aims to implement and foster inclusive practices via Human-Centred Design principles. However, there is no study in the field examining how designers internalize inclusive principles and philosophy. My project investigates how meanings of inclusion might take form at the level of the self before being translated into design outcomes. Through Dialogical Self-Narrative informed by Reflective Practice, Self-Study, Self-Ethnography and Dialogical Self Theory (DST), I examine: (a) what is the role of self and identity in respect to design, (b) how can self & identity positions be described, distinguished and reconciled and (c) how self-positions participate in the construction of inclusive meaning. The project exhibits a strong personal component and motivation being appraised by tensions and negotiations of three stances of my self: Disabled, Designer and Theologian. However, this self-study is not constructed as a narcissistic exercise: it aims to provide instructive knowledge for designers who take an interest in inclusive practices and eventually to spur some awareness within the design culture. Ultimately, the project infers that the success of inclusive products, services, systems or policies might be dependent on how inclusion is constructed and internalized by designers at the level of their self and identity.

Acknowledgements

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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My deep gratitude to my beloved wife Elina and my son Silouan, for their love, patience and support. Without you, I would not be made it.

Dedication

To Holy Trinity.

To Elina, my beloved wife and to Silouan, our wonderful son.

To Elena and Ion, my supportive parents.

To Gabriel, my brother.

To my fellow disabled.

Table of Contents

Summary

Under the chapter "WHY THIS?" the topic is introduced and contextualized. Purpose, research questions, rational, theoretical framework, literature review and boundaries of the project are drafted.

"THE ANATOMY OF A METHOD" describes what research paradigm and methodologies inform my project and how they do so. Thus, in terms of research paradigm, interpretive and critical frameworks are employed while I do a Dialogical Self-Narrative informed by Reflective Practice, Self-Study, Self-Ethnography and Dialogical Self Theory.

"THE SELF-DIALOG" chapter is the Self-Narrative itself and comprises a fictional discussion between three stances of my self (Disabled, Designer and Theologian) around meanings of inclusiveness in the context of disability and sufferance, and meanings of inclusiveness in the context of creativity and design.

In the "SO WHAT?" chapter a summary of the self-dialog is provided and a conclusive section that examines how the research questions have been answered, implications are suggested and limitations are acknowledged.

WHY THIS?

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT,

PURPOSE, QUESTIONS AND RATIONALE

READER

What is the topic of your Major Research Project (MRP)?

STUDENT LT

The topic of my MRP is concerned with the impact of self and identity in the context of Inclusive Design. Specifically, I examine how the self and identity of designers might participate in the creation of inclusive meanings that would be translated into design outcomes. My assumption is that the ways how inclusive meanings are constructed and internalized at the level of self and identity of designers might determine the success or failures of inclusive design outcomes.

READER

What has led you to examine this particular subject matter?

STUDENT LT

My MRP is largely the result of three personal identity tensions. As Disabled, Designer and Theologian, I have intersected with the notions of inclusion/exclusion. Each of these self-positions holds a particular experience and understanding of inclusiveness.

As a person with a permanent physical disability, inclusion generally means to experience and negotiate a challenging medical condition, to understand and accept the limitations resulting from that and survive the day. That requires a lot

of inner power and courage therefore inclusion is primarily about finding them. Also, it means to reach out and confront the difficulties presented by the physical environment and social stigma. To do that, quite often I rely on people's support, products and services. They all expose issues of inclusion. People get busy with their own survival, they become too self-absorbed and ultimately become disjointed from one other. This is how technology and services usually takeover. However these services do not come without flaws. Access buttons are missing when needed or someone can't reach them because they are not located in the proximity of someone's mobility. Automatic doors are missing or they are designed to open against those who activate them. Some mobility devices continue to not be compliant with the customer needs or safety transportation policies. Attendant service agencies continue to provide unprofessional personal support workers. On public transportation, many workers continue to dismiss regulations with regards to boarding people in wheelchairs in their busses. At certain public hospitals, assistive devices for non-transferable patients are missing. Bad signage designs are used at subways and broken elevators frustrate people when already there are too few elevators. Weak disability services continue to be offered in airports when boarding airplanes: no disability spots designed in airplanes, miscarriage of mobility devices on flight traveling. These access problems raise questions about assumptions that designers bring into their work and how successfully we as a society, deal with issues of inclusion.

As Designer, I was taught that design is foremost a creative endeavor in the service of specific needs of individuals or communities, regardless of their nature or object of activity.[1] Imagination is emphasized as a key factor by most of the creative people and most of the art & design schools.[2] If so, how comes designers continue to create products, services or systems that harm people and the environment? I have been taught that people for whom I design are users, consumers, and markets. Their humanity seems to be understood in terms such as *behaviors*, *functionality*, *usability* and *consumption*. Thus people tend to become abstractions and empirical data for designing, in fact designers objectify them to manage and justify design.[3] In general, audiences are not actively involved in design processes. Perhaps that might explain some design failures. Participatory Design was created to improve design. Yet if the audience becomes the master of its own needs, what would be the role of a trained designer in this equation? Is it possible to identity and develop a mutual empathy? Design is fundamentally described as a problem-solving activity.[4] Designers generally have a strong faith

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[1] In 2010, as part of a school project, social responsible oriented, I did an interview with Geoffrey Shea, a media artist and instructor at OCAD University of Toronto. I asked him if Art & Design could provide solutions for social challenges. He answered that designing for a social responsible cause is not different than designing better running shoes for basketball players or for a more emotionally stimulating film or poetry.

[2] For instance, OCAD University of Toronto, the oldest and perhaps the most prestigious school of Art and Design in Canada holds the motto "Imagination is Everything", http://www.ocadu.ca/Assets/pdf_media/ocad/about/Stategic+Planning/OCAD-University-Strategic-Plan-2012-2017.pdf

[3] Marc Steen, 'Human-Centered Design as a Fragile Encounter', *Design Issues*, vol. 28, issue 1, 2012, p. 75. See an evaluation of this article under the "Theoretical framework, literature review and boundaries" section of this study, pp. 23-24.

[4] HA Simon, *The Science of the Artificial, Structure of Ill-structured Problems*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 3rd edition, 1996.

in rational tools in design processes.[5] Design methods are generally conceived in rationalistic terms thus the outcomes must show in the same terms.[6] On the other side of the coin, advocacy in design education for design processes beyond-rational or intuitive tools is scarce.[7] How much reflective skill is invested in designers' works? How do designers make meanings of design? Are all these practices inclusive?

As a Theologian, quite often, my religious values found themselves in opposition to the secular society. Since the Enlightenment, secularism has dismissed theocentric epistemology and has replaced it with the epistemology of human senses and reason. Positivism, science, materialism, instrumentalism,

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[5] This assumption is in part based on the fact that "Our education system and the culture as a whole have emphasized rational and linear approaches to problems. A more holistic approach calls for a merging of reason and intuition. When these two elements are connected, student thinking is enriched". JP Miller, *The holistic curriculum*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, CA, 2007, p. 8.

[6] Design is ideologically linked to Modernity. Freya Mathews asserts that Modernity emphasizes materialism and empiricism, a philosophy evidence-based and focused on observable phenomenon. This led to instrumentalization of reason in Modernity and it provided arguments for utilitarian perspective. However, Mathews suggests that the instrumental function of reason can be released and repurposed if the assumptions of materialism are challenged. Freya Mathews, 'Beyond modernity and tradition. A third way for development', *Ethics & the Environment,* vol. 11, issue 2, 2006, pp. 85-113.

[7] This is not only suggested by personal experience as design student but also by some design educators and thinkers concerned with the creation and development of holistic creative tools. For instance Stuart Walker notes: "If design research, and thence design, is to effectively address issues of environment, social concern and meaning, it has to move beyond the evidence-based methods and intellectual arguments so favoured by policy-makers and researches. Cognitive knowledge takes us only part of the way. Design's contribution has to go further than analysis and rational methodologies because a large part of it is about creativity and expression. These intrinsic features of designing involve the imagination, emotion and aesthetic experience. Therefore, it isn't only entirely appropriate that these aspects be embraced, their inclusion is absolutely vital for developing what might be termed a 'designerly' approach to research, sustainability and the making of a meaningful material culture. Such developments will not result simply from instrumental reasoning and single-minded purposefulness, but enfolding factors that have no such ambitions –beauty and aesthetic experience, appropriateness within a place and culture, and correlation with understandings of goodness and truth." Stuart Walker, *Spirit of Design: Objects, Environments and Meaning*, VA: EarthScan, London & Sterling, 2011, pp. 83-84.

individualism and progress through technology resulted.[8] These constitute

interrelated landmarks of Modernity and continue to be to a large extent within

Postmodernism. Design is both part and a result of Modernity. Technological

progress came with tremendous power and benefits but the costs are incalculable.

We deplete natural resources, destroy eco-systems and create and social

inequities. Global warming suggests that our systems of designing, producing,

marketing and discharging goods have reached the point of non-sustainability.

Polarization of capital created wealth for some and poverty for the rest.

Individuals and communities experience and manifest a profound sense of

fragmentation, meaning crisis and ethical apathy. We have lost compassion and

the sense of interconnectedness.[9] We could blow up and extinguish life on Earth

in minutes due to atomic power. We have created a non-inclusive and an

unsustainable world, resembling our image and likeness.

Therefore, important questions have emerged due to the interaction of these

selves and identities. How can design practices be more driven by a sense of

compassion? What's the relationship between ethics/morals and design? How can

a spiritual practice inform design practices? What are the influence, impact and

the benefits of a spiritual-self in design? How can intuitive/beyond-rational tools

inform creativity in a design context? How can spirituality shape meanings of

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[8] Charles Taylor, *The malaise of modernity*, Anansi Press, Concord, Ontario, 1991, pp. 2-5.
[9] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Society*, Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, pp. 715-716.

design outcomes? Does Spirituality empower Inclusive Design's pro-social agenda?

Initially, I decided to focus on contemplative practices and their potential benefits for designers and design: they have been successfully articulated with secular fields such as healthcare, education, psychology and the fine arts, but discourse around such practice is limited in all but a few fields within design. However, due in part to some practical issues and acquiring the awareness that 'contemplative practices' are just theme that connect with and point toward a more profound topic such as the impact of a spiritual identity on someone, I decided to shift the topic and rather explore how meanings of inclusion might be negotiated and internalized by designers, particularly in the case of designers who experience simultaneously different identities.

READER

Would you like to describe the problem you want to investigate and the cogent objectives?

STUDENT LT

Inclusive Design aims to implement and foster inclusive practices via Human-Centered Design. However, there is no study in the field examining how designers internalize inclusive principles and philosophy.[10] My project investigates the role and the impact of self and identity in the design field and how those participate in

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[10] A similar or cogent study was not identified by the time of making this project.

the construction of inclusive meanings. Through narrative informed by Reflective Practice, Self-Study, Self-Ethnography and the framework of Dialogical Self Theory (DST), three particular questions are investigated: (a) what is role of self and identity in respect to design? (b) how can self/identity positions be described, distinguished and reconciled? and (c) how do self-positions participate in the construction of inclusive meaning?

READER

What would be the significance of your project?

STUDENT LT

The success of inclusive products, services, systems or policies might be dependent on how inclusion is constructed and internalized by designers at the level of self and identity. As designer, I would not have had a solid understanding over the issue of inclusion without a direct experience of disability and without a spiritual perspective on it. However, this might not be a path for all designers in order to design inclusively. This is a self-study that exposes a way of internalizing meanings of inclusiveness. Designers may find different ways to construct inclusive meanings. In any case, the underling assumption is that failures of design with regards to issues of inclusion are definitely reflected by the lack of the designer's self-internalization. What I employ through my project is a way that makes possible and induces such awareness.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK,

LITERATURE REVIEW

AND BOUNDARIES

READER

What theoretical framework do you employ?

STUDENT LT

The impact of self in design processes, particularly in the context of Inclusive

Design, is the prime focus of my MRP. I am interested in how designers

internalize meanings of inclusion before being translated into design outcomes. A

variety of theories and approaches about self and identity have emerged over the

millennia. An in depth review of them is not the scope of my project. However,

for practical reasons, I will appropriate the view of the self and identity

operationalized by the Dialogical Self Theory (DST)[11] as it is described and

situated by its authors in contrast to pre-modern, modern and post-modern

paradigms. According to this view, the self is important because it helps human

subjects to make sense of themselves, others and the world; it is a motivational

factor for action, thinking, feeling, knowing, reflecting and control/regulation.[12]

Theories of self consist of various approaches and perspectives: individualistic

(separate from others), collectivistic (similar to others and connected through

relationships), immersed (focus on the self from within), distal (how others look

from outside over one's self), dialogical (self as multiple, others and collectives

are internalized by the self), temporally near (now), temporally distal (future),

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[11] HJM Hermans & A Hermans-Konopka, *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.
[12] Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, George Smith. 'Self, Self-Concept, and Identity' in *Handbook of self and Identity*, Guilford Press, New York, 2012, p. 70.

cultural (Westerners emphasize "me", Easterners focus on "us").[13] Sometimes synonymous with the term of *self*, *identities* constitute the self and they determine people considering them when making choices because identities "are situated, pragmatic, and attuned to the affordances and constraints of the immediate context."[14] Identity theorists suggest a strong social component in identities, one that is located at the intersection of position and role-playing in social networks and personal traits or characteristics[15] or more precisely a psychological construction that represents continuity through time as opposed to a discontinuity.[16] Given the contextual diversity that a human subject might experience, multiple identities could be formed based on that.

In the light of DST, I will look at how the self constructs and expresses inclusive meanings through and between its own polyphonic voices. I choose DST as a theoretical framework because it addresses simultaneously *self* and *dialog*. DST is mainly informed by two thinking traditions: American Pragmatism and Russian Dialogism. Part of the first, William James brings in psychology the idea of Self's multiplicity.[17] Selfhood is conceptualized as a dynamic between "I", the self-as-knower, and "Me", the self-as-known. The "I" is the stable agent of the self that constructs, organizes and interprets the variety of experiences of "Me" (bodily/material, social or spiritual). The "I" exhibits three features that provide a

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[13] Oyserman et al., *ibid*., p. 71.

[14] Oyserman et al., *ibid*., p. 70.

[15] Oyserman et al., *ibid*., p. 74.

[16] HJM Hermans, 'Conceptions of Self and Identity: towards a dialogical view', *International Journal of Education and Religion*, vol. 2, issue 1, 2001, p. 44.

[17] S. Rosenberg, S, 'Multiplicity of Selves', in RD Ashmore & L Jussim (eds.), *Self and Identity Fundamental Issues*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 23-45.

sense of identity: continuity (a sense of sameness through the activity of thinker), distinctness (self as distinct entity from others) and volition (processing experience through appropriation or rejection). The social experiences of "Me" situate the "other" in the personal self as "Mine". Mickhail Bakhtin, a literary theorist under the Dialogism tradition, identifies multiplicity of selves in the polyphonic novels of Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky withholds authorship in his novels and allows his characters to express an interactive, non-unified plurality of worldviews. Therefore, DST aims to balance a centralized with decentralized vision of the self. DST is conceptualized as a synthesis between the pre-modern (traditional), modern and postmodern views of the self.[18] The traditional self is defined by and is part of a cosmic order. It transcends the ordinary life through moral commitment, self-restrain and self-discipline. The modern is the Cartesian self: self-contained, autonomous, centralized, rational, instrumental, individualistic, disembodied, world disengaged and value-neutral. The postmodern self is relational, linguistic constructed, multifaceted, fragmented and agency-less. The dialogical self aims to encompass moral responsibility (traditional), agency (modern) and power relations (postmodern). DST applications are currently used in areas such as psychotherapy, counseling, coaching and education. DST practice claims the capacity to overcome the dichotomy between self and society, which has been a hallmark in psychology and social sciences. In this view, self is not separated from social context and a

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[18] HJM Hermans & A Hermans-Konopka, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-119.

society that disregards the selfhood of its members misses the chance to value their creative potential for the benefit of community. Furthermore, such a society would miss the opportunity for self-understanding and self-improvement because self does not simply share vicinity with society, it encompasses features of society: it is the society in miniature to a large extent.[19]

DTS defines selfhood as a society of mind where a continuous real or imagined dialog in time and space between unlimited numbers of *internal* I-positions (with reference to parts of oneself: I as disabled, I as designer, I as theologian) and/or *external* I-positions (with reference to others yet internalized: my parents, my colleagues, my community, my culture/s) takes place through the processes of positioning, counter-positioning, repositioning, meta-positioning or depositioning. Each I-position enables a particular voice that shares a specific story about its own experience. Voices interact with each other like characters and exchange knowledge about themselves through questioning and answering, agreeing or disagreeing, conflicting or cooperating, negotiating and integrating. In this way meaning is generated. The mechanism of this process was described in a study where subjects engaged in an imagined dialog with a woman figure from a painting.[20] Three steps are implied in the dialogical process: the subject makes a meaningful statement toward the woman (A-B), the subject imagines the woman's response (B-A) and the subject responds to the imagined response (A-B).

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[19] HJM Hermans, 'The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural Positioning', *Culture and Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 243–281.
[20] HJM Hermans, 'Voicing the self: From information processing to dialogical interchange', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 119, no. 1, 1996, pp. 31-50.

DST asserts a relational[21] and narratively[22] structured self. *Internal* and *external* positions are relational and shape each other (I am a father because I have children). All these positions can be experienced as I-positions due to the intrinsic extension of the self in the environment that perceives domains of the environment as "mine" (my school, my teacher). The presence of "others" in the form of I-positions within a multi-voiced self, gives to the dialogical self the characteristic of "social". In this way, interpersonal and intrapersonal conjoin. The "other" as I-position may not necessarily be an identical appropriation of the actual "other" but an imaginative construction to various degrees. Some positions would become stronger while others would be suppressed or dissociated.[23] Thus dialogical relationships in DST imply "inter-subjective exchange" and relative "dominance". An optimal or integrative organization of selves occurs when dialogical skills allow the emergence of either a new I-position, a background position move to foreground or a meta-position unifies a coalition of positions.[24] In this sense, dialogical self exhibits a capacity for innovation.[25] DST suggests an integrative vision on identity. As selves do, identities bounce between continuity and fragmentation, unity and multiplicity, centering and decentering.

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[21] James M Day, & Paulo Jesus, 'Epistemic Subjects, Discursive Selves, and Dialogical Self Theory', in the Psychology of Moral and Religious Development: Mapping Gaps and Bridges, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, vol. 26, issue 2, 2013, p. 143.

[22] HJM Hermans, 'Introduction: The Dialogical Self in a Global and Digital Age', *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2004, p. 303.

[23] HJM Hermans & HJG Kempen, *The Dialogical Self*, Academic Press Inc, San Diego, 1993, p. 78.

[24] HJM Hermans, 'The Dialogical self. Between exchange and power', in HJM Hermans & G. Dimaggio (eds.), *The dialogical self in psychotherapy* (pp. 13-28), Brunner-Routledge, Hove, 2004, pp. 13-28.

[25] HJM Hermans, 'Dialogical Thinking and Self-Innovation', *Culture & Psychology*, vol. 5, issue 1, 1999, pp. 67-87.

The framework of DST allows me to employ three internal I-positions: I as Disabled, I as Designer and I as Theologian. Each of these endows a distinct identity, voice and discourse. And each one enables specific theoretical frameworks: the Disabled-I is an insider of disability culture, the Designer-I is troubled by ethical and social responsible issues in design practices, the Theologian-I voices the Christian Orthodox neo-patristic theology. They will be briefly described under the literature review section.

READER

Therefore, what literature informs your project?

STUDENT LT

Before answering that, some clarifications are needed. I did not use literature review as a starting point to select my topic or to identify a knowledge gap. In the context of my project, the literature review rather is a useful auxiliary tool in supporting my lived experiences and the objectives of the project. One of its main features is multi-angularity. It comprises ideas from three fields: Disability Studies, Design and Theology. Even though my literature review exhibits mainly a triadic structure, it goes beyond that in accordance to other cogent themes employed in the dialog. Given the fact that I cover particular concepts and ideas from literature in-depth under the self-dialog section, here I only and briefly outline them with the hope you will read them more extensively in the dialog. As

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for the methodological literature review, this will be approached under the

methodological section of my project.

So, I would start the 'disability' cluster by reviewing the *UPIAS*

Fundamental Principles of Disability,[26] a document that holds a great significance

in the history of disability movement in the UK. Two factions of disability rights

created it in 1975: Union of The Physically Impaired Against Segregation and

The Disability Alliance. Key members of UPIAS, Vic Finklenstein, Paul Hunt

and Ken Davis and of Alliance, Paul Lewis, Bent Stueland, Charles Taylor wrote

the Fundamental Principles of Disability as a response to the segregated societal

model for disabled in areas such as education, work, mobility, housing, income. In

fact, the document suggests a new definition of disability, a shift from the

personal and the medical view toward the social conditions. The latter creates

disability therefore inclusion is achieved only when society creates equal access

and empowers persons with disabilities to control their own lives. This view has

become the Social Model of disability. Within *Vulnerable communion: a theology

of disability and hospitality*[27] Thomas E. Reynolds shows the limits of the Social

Model of disability and unfolds meanings of disability from the perspective of a

father having a boy with Tourette's syndrome and Asperger syndrome and from

the perspective of Presbyterian theologian as well. He critiques both western

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[26] UPIAS, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability', in Centre for Disability Studies – University of
Leeds, 2013, viewed on 7 April 2013, http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/files/library/UPIAS-
fundamental-principles.pdf>.
[27] Thomas E Reynolds, *Vulnerable communion: a theology of disability and hospitality*. Brazos
Press, Michigan, 2008.

theodicy[28] and the medical model that both demeans disability and exults what he

calls the "cult of normalcy". This cult sees the person with disability as

"abnormal" and "outsider" and projects over the abled people unrealistic abilities.

Personhood is not determined by the state of health but rather constitutes a

horizon where vulnerability and uniqueness coexist and get shared and

furthermore is a place where human being reconnects with God. Thus, in

Reynolds' view, the relational character of personhood is the base of building

inclusive communities: wholeness can be achieved only when persons share

mutual vulnerability and love in the light of God's grace. Through *The Theology*

of Illness,[29] Jean-Claude Larchet reveals a Christian Orthodox perspective on the

experience of sufferance, particularly the view of Fathers of the Orthodox Church.

In line with their perspective, Larchet identifies the roots of suffering in the

Original Fall. Through the disobedience Adam and Eve, our ancestors, was

brought into human nature frailty, illness and death. A shift from spiritual to

material, and from purity to passions took place through the Original Fall.

However, illness might be experienced positively: through patience and prayer it

`can become a spiritual springboard and path to connect with God. In this way,

spiritual healing as a different kind of health can be achieved: a spiritualized soul

transgresses bodily limitations. Health is a relative condition in this world,

Larchet suggests in consensus with Thomas Reynolds. Healing comes only in

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[28] "The vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil", Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 30 July 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/theodicy?q=theodicy>.
[29] Jean Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, St. Vladimir Seminary Press, New York, 2002.

connection with Christ, who as God and Man is the healer and the archetype of human nature restoration.

The 'design and creativity' cluster comprises several important writings. Kenneth Robinson holds expertise in the development of creativity, innovation and human resource. In his book *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*[30] he focuses on creativity from an educational standpoint. In the attempt to answer why creativity is important, how it is experienced in our society and what can be improved, Robinson explains that the current and global educational systems impose constrains in terms of creativity, a phenomenon with negative effects for societies. So, education needs to be reformed, as well organizations should be concerned with the design of more creative environments in the context of a competitive world. Robinson developed nine principles to encourage imagination, creativity and innovation. Robinson asserts that our creative intelligence is beyond what the educational system can tell us; it requires a more relaxed medium to expand and is always shaped in relation to the vicinity of people who followed the same path. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*[31] by Donald Schön also explores the boundaries of academic thinking and those between 'hard' and 'soft' thinking, and the function of reflection and observation in design practices. Through specific examples, Schön exposes the limits of academic knowledge and technical rationality and advocates for concepts such as

[30] K Robinson, K, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, Capstone Publishing Ltd, Chichester, 2011.
[31] Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Ashgate, London, 1983/1991.

tacit knowledge and reflection-in-action. Tacit knowledge is internalized

knowledge through experience. Reflection-in-action is a process that comprises

uncertainty and personal ways of knowing, subverting the traditional view over

technical expertise. These ideas have been an inspiration for Action Research. In

the article *Design Problems and Design Paradoxes*,[32] Kees Dorst is concerned

with revisiting the traditional understanding of problem-solving concepts in

design. He asserts that design problems are always situational, subjective and

evolving. In his view, "paradox" is a better description of design problems

because it reveals the multi dimensional discourses informing design. With

Design for Inclusivity: A Practical Guide to Accessible, Innovative and User-

Centred Design[33] edited by four leaders in Inclusive Design (Roger Coleman,

Julia Cassim, John Clarkson and Hua Dong) designers get information about

inclusive approaches to design. The book provides a background for Inclusive

Design, case studies, tools & techniques and resources for inclusive design

projects. The focus of the book is the idea that design can empower or exclude

people therefore designers hold responsibility in addressing a wide spectrum of

society's needs. Participatory design is emphasized and social and economic

benefits resulting from social inclusion are suggested. However, the authors seem

to overestimate design as vector of social change while systemic factors

(government, politics, culture, economic) that contribute to discrimination are

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[32] Kees Dorst, 'Design Problems and Design Paradoxes', *Design Issues*, vol. 22, issue 3, 2006, pp. 4-18.
[33] Roger Coleman, Julia Cassim, John Clarkson and Hua Dong, *Design for Inclusivity: A Practical Guide to Accessible, Innovative and User-Centred Design*, Gower Publishing, Aldershot-Hampshire, 2007.

omitted. Stuart Walker takes seriously the systemic problems in *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning.*[34] He is an academic writer and industrial designer who has developed a theory of sustainability in design by assessing among other things the concepts of value and meaning of design products (technology). He asserts that the current materialistic culture has restrained the meanings of physical objects to instrumental and utility, which according to him are a cessation of true innovation and a symptom of an unsustainable system. The aesthetic values of design products became too secondary (form follows function) and a spiritual dimension is completely missing from the current design products. Functional design products with low quality and questionable aesthetic are introduced, exchanged and discharged by markets at unimaginable speed in the name of innovation and progress when in fact the entire system that creates this loop is driven by profit and is unsustainable by all means. To Walker, the solution is to make space for experimental design that goes beyond instrumental values (form follows meaning) and pay attention to values discarded by secularism. He offers examples of design objects across history that interplay altogether functional, aesthetical and spiritual functions and he provides many project examples done by him & students under university settings that in his opinion manifest the characteristics of design he advocates for. Marc Steen reveals in the article *Human-Centered Design as a Fragile*

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[34] Stuart Walker, *Spirit of Design: Objects, Environments and Meaning*, VA: EarthScan, London & Sterling, 2011.

Encounter[35] how designers committed to Human-Centred Design (HCD) quite often elude one of the its core principles: participation of audiences in design processes. Not only might they privilege their own agenda and subject matter while doing participatory research but also the audience may be objectified and constrained by a self-closure mentality. In this way, innovative creative work can't occur. This is a paradoxical example of a non-empathic approach to design where empathy/compassion are needed the most. Furthermore, in the context of HCD, Erin Friess argues in her article *The Sword of Data: Does Human-Centered Design Fulfill Its Rhetorical Responsibility?*[36] that a data-centred practice in Human-Centred Design objectifies audiences and weakens the agency of designers in design processes. Giving the example of a lead visual designer who left Google due to impositions to follow data-centered design, Friess shows how the rhetoric nature of design (a combination of reasoning, emotion and character of designer) is reduced to the element of reasoning. This HCD practice is not necessarily at fault since it proves to work efficiently for companies such as Google however, it cannot be considered rhetorical (persuasive) and really human centred. *A framework for empathy in design: stepping into and out of the user's life*[37] by Merljin Kouprie and Froukje Sleeswijk Visser is an article that focuses on the empathic framework in the attempt to improve design outcomes. Specific

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[35] Marc Steen, 'Human-Centered Design as a Fragile Encounter', *Design Issues*, vol. 28, issue 1, 2012, pp. 72-80.

[36] Erin Friess, 'The Sword of Data: Does Human-Centered Design Fulfill Its Rhetorical Responsibility?' *Design Issues*, vol. 26, issue 3, 2010, pp. 40-50.

[37] Merljin Kouprie and Froukje Sleeswijk Visser, 'A framework for empathy in design: stepping into and out of the user's life', *Journal of Engineering Design*, vol. 20, issue 5, 2009, pp. 437-448.

empathic techniques are explored: direct interactions and observations, forms of data representation and communication, indirect or simulated experiences. Distinction between affective and cognitive empathy is made and how they can be employed with specific design steps (Discovery, Connection, Detachment). In the case of affective empathy, the observer identifies with the observed. In the case of cognitive empathy the observer experiences the observed from beside and from his/her own perspective. In this way, designers are capable of adopting and understanding the audience's perspective and making their own perspective in order to ideate. *Design through contemplation*[38] by Gregory Splinter is a master dissertation that prompts alternative creative tools. Splinter is an architect who interplays a contemplative (intuitive) practice with creative processes. He gets into the ideation phase and drawing by exposing the right brain hemisphere to a consciousness stream through contemplative prayer. His practice shows that amazing design solutions can be identified without the interference of rational tools. Cogently, Susanne R. Cook-Greuter and co. provides through *Creativity, Spirituality, and Transcendence: Paths to Integrity and Wisdom in the Mature Self*[39] a compelling interdisciplinary collection of studies and writings done by psychologists, scientists, artists, writers and educators. Moving away from biological and cognitive approaches to creativity, this book proposes an insight over creativity based on extraordinary sources of inspiration.

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[38] Gregory Splinter, *Design through contemplation*. M of Arch, thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1992.
[39] Melvin E Miller, Susanne R. Cook-Greuter. Creativity, *Spirituality, and Transcendence: Paths to Integrity and Wisdom in the Mature Self*, Ablex Publishing, Stamford CT, 2000.

Under the 'theology' cluster I place first of all some narratives from the Bible, tangent to disability discourse. I use the Book of Job (Old Testament) and the story of man born blind at the Pool of Siloam presented in the Gospel of John, chapter 9 (New Testament), to support the description of a theological model of disability. A major theological source to me is Fr. Dumitru Staniloae who is considered perhaps the most important Christian Orthodox theologian of the 20th Century.[40] He was Romanian and his work spans over a monumental collection of articles and books and represents a synthesis of Eastern Fathers[41] thinking and experience. *Orthodox Spirituality: a practical guide for the faithful and a definitive manual for the scholar*[42] is a hallmark of his work and emphasize the concept and the experience of *deification*. The Christian Orthodox spirituality contends the possibility of union between man and God, in Christ who deified the human nature through his Incarnation and Salvation Acts. Fr. Staniloae relies in this matter on the thought of St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Symeon the New Theologian and the French existentialist philosopher Maurice

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[40] Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1999.

[41] From an Orthodox perspective, the term refers to "Fathers of the Church" of Greek language and of other eastern languages (Syrian, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic). They were influential Christian theologians who were involved in the formulation of the core teachings and practices of Christian Church across centuries. Some of them were eminent teachers and great bishops. Many but not all are honored as saints by Orthodox Church. The orthodoxy of their doctrines was clarified through seven Councils based on consensus principle. Most known Easter Fathers are: St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215), St. Athanasius of Alexandria (293-373), St. Basil the Great (330-379), St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), St. Gregory Nazianzus (329-389), St. John Chrysostom (347-407), St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662), St. John of Damascus (647-749), St. Isaac the Syrian (+700), St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) and St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359).

[42] Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Dumitru, *Orthodox Spirituality: a practical guide for the faithful and a definitive manual for the scholar*, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, New York, 2001.

Blondel. The path of deification implies three spiritual stages: Purification, Illumination and Perfection. Purification requires dispassion or replacement of passions with their opposable virtues. Dispassion in conjunction with ascetic practice and unceased prayer lead to Illumination stage that is about acquiring the gifts of Holy Spirit. Through them, the orthodox believer understands the rationalities of the Cosmos as meanings to connect with God. Moreover God can be experienced as divine uncreated light and perfect love in the Perfection stage that is synonymous to deification. The *Theology of the Icon*[43] by Leonid Ouspensky is a relevant work from both theological and creative perspectives. It is perhaps the best available study about Byzantine Iconography. The book unfolds the mystery of sacred image of Eastern Christianity from catacomb period through the iconoclastic controversy (eighth and ninth century AD). Ouspensky analyses the historical and theological contexts that inform the canons of representation in Byzantine Iconography. The Iconoclasm rejected any visual representation of Christ and saints based on the literal interpretation of the 2nd commandment from the Old Testament that forbids the making and worshipping of "graven images". The iconodules, the defenders of icons asserted that God's representation is possible since God reveled Himself as man through Christ. Icons depict real persons while idols depict realities without substance. Their veneration was explained as not to the physical image but toward the holy prototype. I found interesting theological insights in the book of Parker Palmer: *A Hidden*

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[43] Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1992.

Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life.[44] He is a renowned author

and Quaker practitioner and in his book he deals with the issue of inner and outer

fragmentation. He contends that North American society distracts people from

building healthy identities and forces them to assume unhealthy masks and tragic

roles for themselves and their communities. To overcome this, Palmer proposes

"circles of trust" which are small communities where people can learn to

strengthen their inner life so that they might serve as agents of change in society.

An important theme in my project is empathy and compassion. I mentioned

already how Merljin Kouprie and Froukje Sleeswijk Visser drafted an empathic

framework for design. Besides this, two important authors inform my theme. One

is Tania Singer, a German Social Neuroscientist. In the article *The Social*

Neuroscience of Empathy[45] she is concerned with issues of empathy and

compassion from a social neuroscientific perspective. Through experiments she

drafts helpful definitions of empathy, sympathy, compassion and pity. Singer

contends that empathy itself though a necessary precursor of compassion, doesn't

exhibit pro-social motivations, as sympathy and compassion comprise. The

second author is Karen Armstrong, a former catholic nun and a religious scholar

who takes an interest in interfaith dialog.[46] She is the creator of Charter for

Compassion initiative for which she was rewarded with TED Prize in 2008. This

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[44] Parker J Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life*, Jossey-Bass, San-Franciso, 2004.
[45] Tania Singer and Claus Lamm, 'The Social Neuroscience of Empathy', *Annual New York Academy of Science*, vol. 1156, 2009, pp. 81-96.
[46] Sally Quinn, *Sally Quinn on Author Karen Armstrong*, The Washington Post, 29 March 2009, viewed on 17 July 2013, <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0911/20th-anniversary-the-fall-of-the-iron-curtain.html>.

initiative wants to restore Compassion or the Golden Rule as a common platform shared both by the religious and the secular world. This Rule asserts, "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself". Armstrong extensively unfolds the origins, history and application of this rule in her book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life.*[47]

Lastly, I make brief references to Modernity and progress from a critical perspective. In this regard, I use two closest sources. One is *An Illustrated short history of progress* [48] that had an important impact on me. The major insight of Wright's book: there is no future of *homo sapiens* if *homo sapiens* don't acknowledge and learn from their own errors. With the rise of tools and technologies, *homo sapiens* took great advantages over environment and competitors. From Stone Age to Postmodernity great civilizations were built on progress however progress brought along with benefits horrendous effects such as depletion and destruction of Earth's resources. In this way Neanderthals and megafauna became extinct, great civilizations of Sumer, Egypt, China, Easter Island, Mayan empire and Roman empire collapsed due to soil and water depletion. Contemporary man has not learnt the lessons of the past: the technological progress driven by a corporatist world has led to global crisis we all witness today. Could *homo sapiens* overcome greed and arrogance to survive in the future? The second source is *Monoculture: How One Story is Changing*

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[47] Karen Amstrong, *Twelve steps to a compassionate life*, Random House Digital, New York, 2010.
[48] Ronald Wright, *An Illustrated short history of progress*, Anansi, Toronto, 2005.

Everything[49] by F.S. Michaels who exposes how a monoculture shapes a society and devalues diversity in different areas of life (work, interpersonal relationships, nature, community, health, food, religion, education, creativity, arts, business and governments). Taking the North American culture as a unit of analysis, she reveals how economic values and assumptions affect our ways of thinking, acting and living. Everything can be reduced to market value and markets dictate the wealth and happiness of individuals. In fact, a world driven by money and rational tools is created, where people lose the sense of their interconnectedness and sink into self-interest.

READER

In what ways does your literature review does serve the objectives of your project?

STUDENT LT

I already mentioned the multi-angular character of the literature review employed through this study and its role in meaning-making in conjunction with personal experiences. My literature review is not designed to support exhaustive claims; it is a tool that provides to the I-Designer, I-Disabled and I-Theologian some arguments for their claims and ideas. A major claim is that designers need to get closer to the phenomenon of disability and sufferance when designing for disabled subjects. Disabled individuals experience and feel excluded from the design processes and consider themselves the experts on their needs (UPIAS). Therefore

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[49] F S Michaels, *Monoculture: How One Story is Changing Everything*. Red Clover, 2011.

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designers, abled or disabled, may need to learn from disability theories how the disabled people are perceived by others (e.g. the medical model which emphasizes ableism and exclude the disabled) or perceive themselves (e.g. social model which emphasizes the rights of the disabled to the point of excluding the abled (Guy Dewsbury et al)). Other theories to better understand the experience and perception of subjects of disabilities are found in theology. For example, an integrative model, based on the universal character of personhood as image of God, which allows mutual vulnerability and uniqueness to co-exist, is useful (Thomas E. Reynolds). Moreover, the Christian Orthodox view points toward the spiritual potential of sufferance for the soul, as a way to transgress the bodily limitations resulted from the Original Fall (J. C. Larchet). According to this view, humans can achieve their full potential through deification, body and soul, Christ-like, the God and Man, considered the archetype and the healer of human nature (D. Staniloae). Such theories might infuse or complement empathic and compassionate skills onto designers. A model of a disabled designer is also examined. This model implies a personal and direct experience of disability however this is not emphasized as a pre-requisite. The literature I reviewed exposes that even though participatory principles are not fully exercised by design fields committed to inclusive practices such us Human-Centred Design (M. Steen) and even though audiences tend to become abstract data for designers (Erin Fries), empathy and compassion is not a one-way road, designers and audiences need to learn form each other and cooperate based on a more humane framework.

Empathic and compassionate framework may apply to all: disabled or non-disabled designers. What is important is to understand the necessity of empathic & compassionate framework in design as a pre-requisite for designing inclusively. This claim is supported in my literature review through research from several fields. One is religious-based and it suggests that compassion emerges where a sense of interconnectedness and sacredness is restored (D. Staniloae, T. E. Reynolds, P. Palmer). Theistic perspectives contend that such perspective is lost due to secular conditions (C. Taylor). A higher power is needed to transcend human nature's limitations, is a key claim of any theistic framework. Some critique of Modernity and progress is exposed through the literature review (C. Taylor, S. Stuart, FS Michael, D. Wright). There are voices (K. Armstrong) suggesting compassion that is understood, as "one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself" and this approach can be a framework for both Religion and Secularism. An interesting direction that emphasizes compassion as a signifier of a pro-social behavior comes from social neuroscience (Tania Singer). Empathy does not lead to a pro-social behavior but it is a necessarily a precursor of compassion. A direction supporting an empathetic framework is suggested by some designers too (Kouprie & Visser). Designers (disabled or not) may understand the audience's eye through affective empathy and develop their own perspective through cognitive empathy. An important idea that is suggested by this study via literature review is the necessity to open design towards more holistic & inclusive approaches. The concept of problem-solving is reviewed and

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critiqued (K. Dorst). Design problems are always situational, subjective and evolving. Unsustainable design practices are identified and reviewed, the need for really meaningful design is underlined and a framework of "form follows meaning" vs. "form follows function" is proposed (S. Walker). Limits of academic knowledge and technical rationality are exposed and concepts "tacit knowledge" and "refection-in-action" are described and advocated (D. Schön, K. Robinson). Furthermore, a case of creative processes based on an intuitive & contemplative practice is presented (G. Splinter).

Therefore, my literature review provides some background for three major claims that can be identified in the Self-Dialog: (1) the necessity for designers to submerse into the phenomenon of disability in order to gain a better understanding of disabled audiences, (2) the necessity of empathy & compassion for designers and audiences as a more human designing framework and (3) the necessity to open design toward holistic & inclusive approaches. All of them are ultimately employed to make a case study around how designers internalize inclusive meaning and how their self and identity might impact their work, in inclusive or non-inclusive ways.

READER

What are the boundaries of your inquiry?

STUDENT LT

The boundaries can be traced from the objectives and the design research underling my project. This work is not an empirical/positivist study: it doesn't propose and test a new hypothesis. Moreover, it does not take the form of a specific design outcome even though the topic is tangent to design. It raises major questions and attempts to answer them from a subjective and reflective perspective without claiming exhaustive truth. Using qualitative research situated at the confluence of interpretive and critical research paradigms, my project attempts to make sense of complex and multilayered experiences through a self-study. Psychological, ethical and spiritual dimensions are revealed and an integrative framework is suggested. It examines issues of inclusion from different perspectives while seeking awareness and transformation, at both a personal and social level. I believe such elements should be of concern for designers engaged in inclusive practices. Design is a pragmatic field however what empowers designers to enable pro-social behavior and how that takes form or becomes internalized is a huge unknown that constitutes a direction worth exploring for future designers and researchers, a deep reservoir of knowledge. Also, it is necessary to underline that given the personal nature of this project, the dialog employed by it is consciously written from a particular faith perspective (Christian Orthodox) and other theistic or non-theistic views are not incorporated.

THE ANATOMY OF A METHOD

READER

How have you chosen your research tools?

STUDENT LT

Landing my project onto a research methodology has proven to be a challenging endeavor. My topic is about the impact of the self on designers and on their work. It aims to open a discourse rather than establish a new design practice, to explore and expand theoretical design frameworks rather than suggesting an innovative design solution in response to a wicked design problem. Therefore the project naturally and largely positions itself outside of design methodologies and seeks connections with research methodologies from humanistic traditions and social sciences. I was reviewing research inquiries such as organic, intuitive, hermeneutics, phenomenology, heuristics, ethnography and narratives. In the end, methodologies that consider the self, identity and reflectivity in research such as Reflective Practice, Self-Study and narratives of the self (Self-Ethnography, Dialogical Self Theory and Creative Writing Practice) were selected to inform my project, in particular for their ability to integrate and to value personal stories.[50] I provide a brief evaluation of them and in the end I explain how I will be using them in the context of my project.

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[50] M Hamilton, L Smith & K Worthington, 'Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography', *Studying Teacher Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 17-28.

Before moving to that, perhaps it would be helpful to define more clearly what is or rather what is not this project from a methodological standpoint. Few important criteria suggested by literature[51] [52] situate my project as qualitative research: a) goals aligned with depth versus breadth approach: attempt to understand complex and multilayered experiences shared by subjects who lived them; b) the topic is committed to explore closely spiritual and psychological dimensions in relation to its research participants; c) the researcher assumes a participative role in his/her research and is committed to emerge into his/her inner world or of co-researchers in order to reveal specific issues, identify and integrate cross cultural solutions; d) data may contribute to defining and developing integrative-transformative frameworks. My project does not rely on quantitative research tools.

READER

Where is your methodology located in terms of research a paradigm?

STUDENT LT

My study is located at the intersection of an interpretive paradigm and a critical paradigm.[53] Under the interpretive paradigm, the researcher attempts to

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[51] JW Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, CA: Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2007.

[52] MQ Patton, *Qualitative evaluation and research methods,* (2nd ed.), CA: Sage, Newbury Park, 1990.

[53] Peter C Taylor, 'Educational Research Paradigms: From Positivism to Multiparadigmatic', in *Journal of Institute for Meaning-Centered Education*, vol. 1, 2013, viewed on 7 March 2013 <http://www.meaningcentered.org/journal/volume-01/educational-research-paradigms-from-positivism-to-multiparadigmatic/>.

understand the researched by immersing into it and by questioning her/his own assumptions when interpreting it. The resultant knowledge is always subjective, situated and constructed. The researcher might employ methodological tools such as narrative inquiry, writing as inquiry or self-ethnography in order to gain insights of the researched worlds. The notions of trustworthiness and authenticity are used to establish the "truth" of research. The assumptions of researcher operating under the critical paradigm are congruent with those of the interpretive paradigm. What differs is the emphasis on issues of injustice happening within the social structures, beliefs, and practices. Such research is concerned not only with examining critically issues of injustices but also with facilitating change and manifests as an agent of social change. With the critique, she/he provides a transformative vision over the world as well.

READER

What research methodologies do you use specifically?

STUDENT LT

Reflective Practice. Reflection is an important skill that designers need to acquire. As Designer, it allows me to examine my assumptions, values and practices in order to become a better practitioner and develop the field of activity.[54] It is important to me as disabled and human when I have to deal with

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[54] Donald Schön, *op. cit.*

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different kinds of constrains resulting from my disability: it helps me to evaluate

my struggles and my options from different angles. Reflection is essential as well

as a Theologian: it allows me to balance my thinking and acting from a moral and

spiritual perspective. Ultimately I embrace reflection as a researcher: it empowers

me to see beyond the division of researcher-researched as well as, reasoning

capacities versus emotional/intuitive insights and to gain and manifest a holistic

approach for research, its methodologies and the underpinning paradigm.

Self-Study research examines one's self, thinking and practices in order to

achieve generalizable knowledge for specific communities. This view aligns with

the reflective practice. The use of self in research has earned value and importance

in the context of postmodernity due to developments of counseling practices and

narrative practices. [55] Self-Study is considered to have autobiographical,

historical, cultural, and political dimensions.[56]

A narrative of the self may take the form of **self-ethnography** or auto-

ethnography, which is considered "an autobiographical genre of writing and

research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to

the cultural."[57] It contends that by understanding one's life, a generalizable and

meaningful way of life is revealed.[58] Self-ethnography zooms backward, forward,

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[55] K Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, 2004.

[56] M Hamilton & S Pinnegar, 'Conclusion: the value and the promise of self- study', in M. Hamilton (ed.), *Reconceptualizing teaching practice: Self-study in teacher education*, Falmer Press, London, 1998, pp. 235-246.

[57] C Ellis & AP Bochner, 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity', in *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.,), CA: Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2002, p. 739.

[58] Ellis & Bochner, *ibid.,* p. 737.

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inward and outward "between personal and social and cultural aspects until they blur."[59] Self-ethnography might be used to critique "the situatedness of self and others in social context"[60] or to gain theoretical understandings through analytic reflexivity.[61] Bringing into research social, political or ethical issues self-ethnography positions itself across the traditional research and ways of representing the others.[62] The concept was coined in the late 1970's in anthropological studies[63] and became an iconic manifestation of reform in social sciences. In the context of postmodernism, a number of scholars[64] across a wide range of fields started to question ontological, epistemological and axiological bases in social sciences.[65] Notions such as facts, truth, authority, authorship, identity, cultural colonialism were deconstructed or contested: morals, ethics, subjectivity, self-consciousness, polyphonic ways of thinking, speaking, writing, valuing and believing were advocated in academic research. Self-ethnography was perceived as a research method that addresses many of these concepts and issues the they raise; it constitutes a form of representation that produces a dialogical relationship between researcher-researched-reader; renders meanings of

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[59] Ellis & Bochner, *ibid.*, p. 739.

[60] Tami Spry, 'Performing autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 7, 2001, p. 710.

[61] Leon Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* vol. 35, issue 4, 2006, pp. 373-395.

[62] Tami Spry, *op. cit.*

[63] Ellis & Bochner, *op. cit.*, p. 739.

[64] Among those are: Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, Laurel Richardson, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel de Certeau, John Van Maanen, Norman Denzin and many more.

[65] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E Adams & Arthur Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', [40 paragraphs], in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2010, viewed on 7 February 2013, <http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>.

compassion and difference through evocative research which resembles literature

and counseling rather than mathematics, which is story-centered rather than

theory-driven, personal and experiential, self-consciously and ideologically

charged. The method has been appropriated by a wide range of cultural fields and

comprises diverse theoretical and methodological forms: it is considered both

process and *product*. As process, self-ethnography is a blend of *autobiography*

and *ethnography*. Through *autobiography* the researcher recalls, selects and

narrates retrospectively personal experiences, quite often epiphanic life events[66],

which hold an impact and significance within the landscape of his/her identity and

determine the researcher to reflect upon and analyze those experiences.[67] Texts,

images, journals, recordings might be used in the process. Through *ethnography*

the personal narratives get situated and analyzed in a cultural context thus insiders

and outsiders might form a better understanding of that culture.[68] In order to

achieve this, personal narratives might be contrasted and compared with similar

narratives and research; interviewing cultural insiders, scrutinizing existing

cultural artifacts might be employed by self-ethnographers. Patterns of personal

and cultural experience are identified, connected and represented using

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[66] Arthur P Bochner & Carolyn Ellis, 'Personal narrative as a social approach to interpersonal communication', *Communication Theory*, vol. 2, issue 2, 1992, 165-172.
[67] Richard M Zaner, *Conversations on the edge: Narratives of ethics and illness*, Georgetown University Press, Washington DC, 2004.
[68] Ilja Maso, 'Phenomenology and ethnography', in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland & Lyn Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography*, CA: Sage. Thousand Oaks, 2001, pp. 136-144.

storytelling conventions (character, scene, plot, progression, themes, dialog),[69] showing and telling (close view vs. contextual view) and authorial voice shifting (first-person voice – eyewitness suggestion; second-person voice – participative reader; third-person voice – others inference).[70] These make from self-ethnography a product not only concerned with meaning-creation but also with the design of aesthetic-pleasing and evocative narratives more capable to impact and move a wider range of audiences than the traditional research. Self-ethnography might take the form of indigenous/native ethnography, narrative ethnography, reflexive/dyadic interviews, reflexive ethnographies, layered accounts, interactive interviews, community autoethnographies, co-constructed narratives and/or personal narratives.[71] For the purpose of this project, only 'layered accounts' and 'personal narrative' are relevant therefore I provide a brief note on them. 'Layered accounts' is a multilayered narrative that integrates various forms of consciousness, knowing and approaches,[72] data collection and analysis simultaneously and frames research as a context of employing major questions rather than providing definitive answers.[73] 'Personal narratives' are controversial in the context of the traditional social sciences due to issues of

[69] Carolyn Ellis & Laura Ellingson, Laura, 'Qualitative methods', in Edgar Borgatta & Rhonda Montgomery (Eds.), Encyclopedia of sociology, Macmillan, New York, 2000, pp. 2287-2296.

[70] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E Adams & Arthur Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', [40 paragraphs], in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2010, viewed on 7 February 2013, <http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>. [11], [12].

[71] Carolyn Ellis et al, *op. cit.*, [15-24].

[72] Ronai C Rambo, 'Multiple reflections of childhood sex abuse: An argument for a layered account', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 23, 1995, pp. 395-426.

[73] Kathy Charmaz, 'The grounded theory method: An explication and interpretation, in Robert M. Emerson (ed.), *Contemporary field research: A collection of readings*, IL: Waveland, Prospect Heights, 1983, pp.109-125.

validity. Through them, researchers invite readers into their personal world to reflect upon issues of self or aspects of life that might have general and cultural significance and/or impact.[74] In general, self-ethnography relies on writing practices. Writing is a method of inquiry and personal narratives encompass important functions or benefits for researchers-researched-readers: make sense of personal and collective experiences, provide people a voice and advocate for personal agency and responsibility, promote personal & collective consciousness and change.[75] Thus personal stories might have therapeutic value for researchers, researched and readers. Self-ethnography is also considered a Creative Analytical Practice, a category of writing that is characterized by reflective, aesthetic, personal and social accounts.[76] Since self-ethnography values the interpersonal exchange in research, issues of privacy and safety for others must be addressed. In self-ethnography the terms of truth, reliability, validity and generalizability hold particular understandings. Self-ethnographers believe that "truth" is always subjective and circumscribed to the underpinning paradigm of each research methodology. Truth for them is not about accuracy of data and facts but it is revealed by "what a story of experience does— how it is used, understood, and responded to for and by us and others as writers, participants, audiences, and humans".[77] Reliability and validity are conceived in terms of verisimilitude,

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[74] Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 2004, p. 46.
[75] Carolyn Ellis et al, *op. cit.*, [25].
[76] Laurel Richardson, 'Writing: A method of inquiry', in Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, CA: Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2000, pp. 923-948.
[77] Carolyn Ellis et al, *op. cit.*, [32].

believable or possible. What matters is the ability of researcher to make the personal experience believable for the reader: being factual-based or fictional-based is secondary.[78] Also, a self-narrative can be evaluated in the light of usefulness for the researchers and/or the readers.[79] Generalizability is determined by the ability of self-ethnographer to lighten unknown cultural processes with general character thus the reader might resonate with the narratives at personal level or find them useful.[80] Criticism of self-ethnography comes both from social sciences and humanities. Self-ethnography is criticized as lacking rigor, theory, analysis, as being overly aesthetic, emotional and therapeutic or even self-indulgent and narcissistic. Others do not find it aesthetical, literary or artful enough. Defenders assert an inclusive view of self-ethnography. They believe that research can be altogether rigorous, theoretical, analytical, emotional, therapeutic, personal and social.[81] Self-ethnographers simply believe in a different approach: accuracy is less important; the objective is "to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better."[82] Narratives might take the form of real or imaginary dialog.[83]

[78] Ken Plummer, 'The call of life stories in ethnographic research', in Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland & Lyn Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography*, CA: Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2001, p. 401.
[79] Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about* autoethnography, p. 124.
[80] Ellis & Bochner, *op. cit.*, p. 751.
[81] Carolyn Ellis et al, *op. cit.*, [39].
[82] Carolyn Ellis et al, *ibid.*, [40].
[83] HJM Hermans, 'The Dialogical self as a Society of Mind: Introduction', *Theory and Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2002, pp. 147-160.

Moreover the Dialogical Self Theory[84] suggests that narratives happens at the level of self in a dialogical form. Personal narrative comprise a multitude of narratives enacted by a diversity of I-positions within the person, each one holding a distinctive voice. These voices express different perspectives over the world, some would collide and other would collaborate. Dialog in this context serves as a platform of meaning integration and negotiation. DST has developed few methodological tools to identity the I-positions and to examine their relationships: Self-Confrontation Method (allows construction of personal valuations and identify the affective components associated with it),[85] Personal Position Repertoire (identifies the internal and external I-positions and examines their relationships in terms of power and dominance),[86] Composition Work (the I-positions are identified and explored through artistic composition of stones),[87] Emotional Coaching (a method to balance emotions) and Personification.[88] Relevant to my study is Personification. It allows me to enable directly I-positions in contrast with the rest of methods that are inherently conditioned by collaboration with a trained outsider. Personification can be used as a tool to embody an I-position and allows dialog between positions to occur. Personification enables exploration of positions "from within" which ultimately

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[84] Hermans & Kempen, *op. cit.*
[85] HJM Hermans & E Hermans-Jansen, *Self-narratives: The construction of meaning in psychotherapy*. Guilford Press, New York, 2001.
[86] HJM Hermans, 'The construction of a personal position repertoire: Method and practice', *Culture & Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 323-365.
[87] Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-320.
[88] John Rowan, *Personification: Using the Dialogical Self in Psychotherapy and Counseling*, Routledge, London, 2010.

signifies a refusal of over-intellectualization and objectification of knowledge. A dialogical self-narrative holds four differences in relation to "inner speech":[89] a) polyphonic voice vs. mono voice and mediation of voices with different social/cultural backgrounds; b) an individual speaker might enact not only private yet collective voices; c) self and other are interconnected, the other is intimately part of the self and the self is a manifestation of social environment; d) the self comprises both verbal and non-verbal means. From the perspective of representing knowledge and writing I have been also inspired by *Imaginary Conversations* of Walter Savage Landor and by *Éloge de la faiblesse* of Alexandre Jollien. The first work comprises five volumes of fictional conversations between prominent or controversial cultural and political figures across history. Poets and authors, statesmen and women, fortunate and unfortunate figures are imaginatively enacted in conversations. The second work also uses fictional dialog and autobiography; the author who converses with a fictional Socrates, the ancient philosopher, explores issues of disability.

Last but not least, **prayer** informs my project. Prayer plays a central role for someone who assumes a theistic worldview. Connection to a higher power might help to transcend human limitations. I experienced a variety of turns and quirks until the project settled down. A lot of clarity stemmed from the interaction with my supervisors however epiphanies came through prayer.

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[89] Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

READER

How do you use and integrate these methodological tools?

STUDENT LT

I ended up constructing a Dialogical Self-Narrative. It is informed by the

Reflective Practice because it allows me to examine my own thinking and

practices and to go beyond the division between the researcher-researched. It is a

self-study since my own self is the object of research however is not a narcissistic

exercise. The experience of self is used as a source of knowledge that can be

located and become relevant to specific communities. It is a representational and a

discursive form that connects the personal with the social. In fact this is the

function of self-ethnography that also informs my project. Through

autobiography, personal and meaningful experiences are narrated and brought into

study. Through ethnography, these stories get in dialog with the culture and are

analyzed synchronously along with their production: new meaning occurs.

Besides that, self-ethnography integrates diverse forms of consciousness and

multiple perspectives through 'layered accounts' and Dialogical Self Theory

framework. The latter underlines the narrative character of the self and allows me

to enact three major voices within my self: I as Disabled, I as Designer and I as

Theologian. They are selected for this project purposefully as is due to their

relevancy toward the notion of inclusiveness. The selection did not require

particular DST tools since my familiarity with them. They get heart, names, voice

and relative autonomy through Personification: Wheely LT, Designer LT and Brother LT. They speak fictionally from their own perspective, they communicate and shape each other. Aside from them, I assigned a voice that sustains a meta-dialog with the hypothetical reader: Student LT guides the reader through the 'mysteries' of the project. This is an intriguing but helpful representational and discursive form to embody observations, ideas, questions and motivations that might have cultural relevancy. It is in the same time a challenging creative analytical practice for a researcher: bouncing between characters requires empathic skills, focus and mastery. The writing requires beauty and mastery as well. Such mastery might create verisimilitude and resonance for the reader. These are criteria for "truth" in self-ethnography. Also, it unfolds profound meanings that might be found useful by the readers. In this way, generalizability might be achieved. This methodological framework is a great choice for researchers who aim to connect their personal experiences with the collective, to find a voice and spur personal, collective consciousness, awareness and change.

THE SELF-DIALOG

STEPPING INTO

WHEELY LT (My Disability-Self)

On an evening of August 2009, my unshakable trust on Canadian accessibility was seriously challenged. I was proceeding to cross the street at the intersection of Bloor Street and Bridgewood Drive in Mississauga. I was traveling in my power chair and I had my infant son strapped to me in a body harness. I looked frustrated at the pedestrian light activation button, located above the ground at 52 inches, impossible to reach due to my arms limitation. I was waiting for someone around. One, two, three, four, five minutes: nobody was showing. Suddenly, a car activated the green light Northbound. I decided to cross along with it. Unwise decision. I looked up in the middle of intersection: the traffic light was changing to orange. As I continued to cross, a vehicle travelling Eastbound on Bloor Street proceeded to accelerate through intersection before I could get to the other side. I didn't see the car; the car didn't see me either. The car struck the right side of my body/power chair. I was sliding with the car few meters in the intersection but neither the baby, the chair nor I fell on the roadway. Only my glasses were knocked down. Still, I suffered minor injuries to the right side of my body, particularly my ribs and ankle. The baby crying was taken from me and given to his mom who was called by a neighbor. The power chair was damaged but still functional to get home. The lady driver at fault went hysterical. Poor woman. Street people gathered. One has wondered what on Earth a cripple was doing crossing streets holding a baby in his lap. Police, firefighters and ambulance came. I refused to go with the ambulance. Too complicated for a disabled to be

transferred and operated in such conditions. Not a wise decision on my side. After a while, the police gathered us and gave us the verdict: both at fault plus ticket versus no fault to both. They asked us to choose one. I couldn't believe my ears. We chose no fault in the vacuum of options. I asked them how did they come to this conclusion. They heard two witnesses: one was favoring me saying that the lady was proceeding on her red (he was behind her). The other one was favoring the lady saying that I proceeded when the traffic light was orange. Because the last guy coincidently worked in police, the officers gave credit to his testimony. Surprising judgment, strange policemen. They never asked me what happened and probably they wouldn't understand why I wasn't able to activate the pedestrian lights. Neither did Mississauga City Hall understand what happened when staff evaluated the intersection after the accident. For them, everything worked perfectly. However, after four years, I still wonder how this accident happened. Who is responsible for it? People? Machines? Why haven't I been able to access by myself the pedestrian light on that intersection which actually is very common in Great Toronto Area?[90] Are these systems inclusive enough? Do they work for all disabled? If they don't, why not? Why hadn't the police asked me what happened? Why didn't I sense any inclusive sensitiveness in the situation? Why did some people question the simple act of walking together with my son? If I had not been disabled, would the accident have happened? What is the meaning of this event? What do you think my friends?

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[90] Great Toronto Area is the largest metropolitan zone in Canada, situated in the Ontario province.

BROTHER LT (My Theological-Self)

Dear friend Wheely LT, thank God you survived the accident and you were not seriously injured. There is nothing honourable in such events and here we have the confirmation that such events can happen even within communities that have consistent experience in regards to inclusion. Accidents could happen to anyone, people are fallible. However controllable factors participate in such events and someone or something is always accountable. Your story talks about people, mentalities, technologies, design, systems and policies that are questionable in terms of inclusion. It's a snapshot of how disability is experienced and understood at both personal and community level, in a particular moment and geography. Issues of agency and voicing of subjects of disability could be traced here. It reflects also how people internalize inclusion and how they translate it into solutions. Issues of empathy and compassion can be referenced.[91][92] Perhaps a meaning of the event is to speak out and to create awareness around all these issues, relationships and implications.

DESIGNER LT (My Designer-Self)

My friend Wheely LT, your story is not insular. I recently read a report suggesting that people with disabilities continue to be among the most marginalized group in

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[91] Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.
[92] Huston Smith, *Why Religions Matter: The Fate of Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, Harper Collins, New York, 2001.

the world.[93] Featured by the World Health Organization and the World Bank and published in 2011, the report shares some significant and alarming data on disability worldwide: 15% of the global population[94] or more than 1 billion people experience a form disability; around 200 million face severe disability (quadriplegia, blindness, or chronic depression), nearly half of them are children; with the advent of an ageing population the number of people with disabilities is expected to grow; in developed countries, healthcare is three times more likely to be denied for the disabled, 20% to 40% of disabled people do not have access to daily assistance due to inadequate funding; dropping out of school is higher for children with disabilities than other children worldwide; in OECD countries[95] the employment rate of disabled people is 44%, compared to 75% for people without disabilities; on average, the rates of poverty are higher for disabled people than non-disabled people; food insecurity, poor housing, unsafe water and sanitation, improper access to healthcare and assistive devices are specific deprivations that people without disability do not usually face; in develop countries all these challenges are even more complex. As a designer concerned with social issues, your story as well as many of these facts make me wonder what is the contribution of design to this picture; why does design continue to fail in addressing issues of inclusion and how can my design practice be more effective in relation to those issues?

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[93] World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability*, WHO, 2011, viewed on 3 December 2012, <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf>, <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO_NMH_VIP_11.01_eng.pdf>.
[94] Data is according to 2010 global population estimation.
[95] It is about countries aligned with "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development".

WHEELY LT

Thank you both for your insight. I recognize myself in some of the facts you summarized Designer LT. Like many people with disabilities, my life can be characterized as well a battle for inclusiveness. Due to my disability, I experienced across my life a variety of challenges both at a personal and society level. I can share other stories. I think one way to address the concern about why design still continues to fail in terms of inclusiveness and how that could be surpassed is if you designers get closer to persons with disability and their community and listen to their stories. It's great to know that people with disabilities can have allies in the design world and I am very happy to be connected with you.

BROTHER LT

To me, as theologian, answers to your concerns, my dear Designer LT, are potentially connected with the religious and the spiritual understandings over our world. To get closer to disabled community and to hear their stories implies experiencing to certain degree sufferance and getting a sense of what is. I believe that 'abledeness' versus 'disability' is an artificial dichotomy.[96] Many people believe that sufferance is something outside of them. However, since we share the same humanity along with its virtues and flaws, sufferance is a universal and an

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[96] Thomas E Reynolds, *op. cit*.

inevitable experience, health is a relative condition.[97] Early or later, every human being experiences disability and sufferance in certain degree. Someone suggested the idea that actually we all are "temporarily able bodied".[98] What is the cause of this, from a theological perspective, we could explore it further however, I would not be so concerned with identifying ways to escape sufferance, which I think is possible in limited degree in our world, rather to see how someone could work with it, befriend it, transforming it into something meaningful and powerful. For Christians, in the person of Jesus Christ is given the possibility of such reconciliation. Orthodox Christianity holds that "God had become man so that man might become a God."[99] God became flesh in the person of Christ. He experienced all boundaries of human nature. Through Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, Christ, God and man, expelled sin, sufferance and death from the human nature. For Eastern Orthodox Christianity, to which I belong, participation to the deified human nature of Christ is the source and the power of transgressing all human limitations. Sufferance is not only a personal matter but also a collective one since we share the same humanity given to us by God and we were designed to experience and realize the full potential of our humanity collectively, in communion, as the Trinity model, not aside of it.

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[97] Jean Claude Larchet,, *op. cit.*
[98] Deborah Marks, *Disability: Controversial Debates and Psychological Perspectives*, Routledge, New York, 1999. p. 18.
[99] St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione or On the Incarnation*, 54:3, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, July 2005, viewed on 5 January 2012, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.vii.ii.liv.html>.

Therefore, invisible wires connect all of us and I believe if one wants to make a change in this world, acquiring such awareness is a must.

DESIGNER LT

Dear Wheely LT, I find very helpful your suggestion that alliance between designers and people with disability could be a key in developing inclusive design practices. In fact, fields such as Assistive/Adaptive technologies, Universal Design (UD), Inclusive Design (ID), UX Design, Human Centered Design (HCD) and Empathic Design (ED) all address in certain ways issues of inclusion. There is an increasing awareness in these fields around participation of what we, designers call 'users' or 'audience' in the design processes. This is one of the four principles of HCD[100] and a fundamental element in Empathic Design Strategies.[101] How efficient are they in the context of the ongoing global non-inclusivity still stands as a legitimate concern. Brother LT has connected the notion of disability with the notion of sufferance. It might be the case that having a better sense of what inclusion is would be to understand the phenomenon of disability by exploring what sufferance is and how is experienced. Also, Brother LT has employed the notion of interconnectedness, which I find it intriguing and extremely relevant to designers and their practice. Therefore, I would be honored to hear both of you wrapping up these notions and share your perspectives. Aside

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[100] Marc Steen, *op. cit.*

[101] Deana McDonagh and Joyce Thomas, 'Disability + Relevant Design: Empathic Design Strategies Supporting More Effective New Product Design Outcomes', *The Design Journal*, vol. 13, issue 2, 2010, pp. 180-198.

from this, I thank you both for your kind words. Your insights and comments are great and announce an awesome and fruitful dialog.

THE SELF-DIALOG

MEANINGS OF INCLUSION IN THE CONTEXT OF DISABILITY AND SUFFERANCE

WHEELY LT

Brother LT was mentioning the inescapable character of sufferance. I can't agree
more. Nobody would have anticipated this fact on my birth, in 1975. Around the
age of two and a half I was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA).[102]
Considered one of the commonest causes for disability in children,[103] SMA is a
genetic condition resulting in the degeneration of motor neurons and progressive
weakness of voluntary muscles. It is yet incurable. Due to it, I lost my ability to
walk progressively: at the age of ten I started to use a wheelchair for outdoors. At
the age of fourteen, the use of wheelchair became permanent, indoor and outdoor.
Since then I have become dependent on personal assistance in relation to basic
needs such us transferring from wheelchair to bed and reverse, clothing and
unclothing, using the washroom for bowel movements, personal hygiene and
bathing, preparing the meal, opening and closing doors, lifting and catching
things, pressing on and off buttons. When I moved to Canada (2006), my second
family doctor 'sympathetically' summarized my condition: "You are screwed
man! You are a pain in the ass for the healthcare and social assistance system".

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[102] Muscular Dystrophy Canada, *Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA),* Muscular Dystrophy Canada,
September 2007, viewed on 7 September 2012,
<http://www.muscle.ca/fileadmin/National/Muscular_Dystrophy/Disorders/402E_Spinal_Muscula
r_Atrophy_2007.pdf>.
[103] SMA Trust, *SMA Fact Sheet.What is SMA?,* The SMA Trust, September 2007, viewed on 7
September 2012, < http://www.smatrust.org/factsheet >.

DESIGNER LT

I find the comment of your family doctor being scandalous, yet might be representative for non-inclusive voices in our society. Could you provide some details about your background Wheely LT?

WHEELY LT

Like you both, I was born in Romania, Eastern Europe. Before 1989, Romania was part of the Communist Iron Curtain that divided Europe after the World War II.[104] Moreover, Romania experienced the terrible dictatorship of Ceaușescu. The lives of several generations have been destroyed or compromised there. The status and the life conditions for disabled have reached unimaginable deterioration. In general, chronically ill were marginalized or institutionalized in inhumane conditions. Programs or services for disabled were missing. Assistive devices such as wheelchairs could be obtained only through the Red Cross or brought from abroad by known people or friends. Public accessibility was completely blank. My parents recalled the hardship they have encountered in my enrolment in kindergarten and elementary school. They struggled to convince committees of enrolment that I am not retarded and I do not need to attend a school for people with mental impairments. The lack of information and prejudgments on disabled were deeply rooted inside the peoples' mind and they still continue to be to some

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[104] Peter Turnley, *20th Anniversary: The Fall of the Iron Curtain*, The Digital Journalist, November 2009, viewed on 3 November 2012, <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0911/20th-anniversary-the-fall-of-the-iron-curtain.html>.

extent. In 1989, the wind of change blew over USSR and Eastern Europe. USSR

was fragmented, East and West Germany reunited and Ceaușescu was captured

alive and executed in Romania on the Christmas Day as a result of a popular,

bloody revolt that killed 1000 people,[105] [106] mostly young. I was witnessing a

Revolution.

BROTHER LT

Indeed dear Wheely LT, we went through difficult times. Under Communist

regime, human rights, free speaking & writing and religious liberty were brutally

restricted. The elites were sent to the Romanian's gulag and very few returned

alive.[107]

DESIGNER LT

That time is familiar to me too. My first creative experiences started there. In fact,

my beginning in Art education was possible after the fall of Ceaușescu's regime.

The activity of local Art High school was prohibited for a period of 20 years. Art

education was generally considered subversive by the regime. The school opened

again in 1990 when I joined as student.

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[105] Mort Rosenblum, *The bloody week Ceaușescu's Romania fell*, Global Post, 21 December 2009, viewed on 7 December 2012, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/worldview/091217/nicolae-ceausescu-romania>.

[106] Walter Mayr, *'A mission of Honor': Key Players Recall Romania's Bloody Revolution*, Spiegel Online International, 20 October 2009, viewed on 7 December 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/a-mission-of-honor-key-players-recall-romania-s-bloody-revolution-a-655557.html>.

[107] Sorin Iliesu, *The Pitesti Phenomenon (1949-1951)*, The Genocide of The Soul, The Pitesti Experiment – Re-education through torture, October 2005, viewed on 7 December, <http://www.thegenocideofthesouls.org/public/english/the-pitesti-experiment/>.

WHEELY LT

Maybe you could share some of your stories about that, Designer LT.

DESIGNER LT

Perhaps later on Wheely LT. Please continue your thoughts.

WHEELY LT

So, the time for democracy had come for Romanians yet with a price and nobody was prepared for the painful transition that followed: from Communism to Capitalism. Public institutions have been restored; a new, democratic Constitution was adopted in 1991. Free elections took place. Social assistance had been rebuilt from the ground and it is still under construction. Today, the legislation in Romania is generally inclusive and protective, however not easy to put it into practice by people who continue to manifest discriminative mentalities and without solid funding.

DESIGNER LT

Therefore, even if inclusive policies do exist now, discriminative mentalities and poor funding could undermine the inclusion of people with disabilities?

WHEELY LT

I think there is just one answer to your question: yes. And that happens even in

societies that hold some tradition of accessibility and inclusion. Let me share a

story. I use TTC[108] on a regular basis. Sometimes it is better than Wheeltrans.[109]

In order to get Kipling subway station I need to take a bus. The same bus takes me

from the subway into my neighborhood. The bus is accessible, having a ramp that

is functional most of the time. But the ramp is not the a problem. When someone

in wheelchair needs to take an accessible bus, the routine is that the bus driver has

to assure priority of wheelchairs embarking. In this case, the bus driver asks the

other waiting people to use the middle door for boarding, not the front door. After

boarding, the wheelchair needs to be secured by the driver on its designated spot

but this is up to the wheelchair person' decision. But not all bus drivers ask

persons in wheelchair if they want to be secured. Two bus drivers have explained

to me this routine over 5 years of using TTC. What happens in reality? In my

experience, nine times out of ten (quite often going 10 out of 10) regular people

don't give any attention to someone in wheelchair when it comes to board TTC

buses. Even though there is a wheelchair sitting close to the bus front door, people

board the bus without remorse and without waiting for the bus driver to fold out

the accessible ramp. More surprisingly, the bus drivers don't stop people's

boarding and don't give priority to wheelchairs. So, people go in and occupy seats

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[108] Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is the public transport agency in Toronto.
[109] Wheeltrans is a division of TTC that provides accessible transportation for wheelchair users. They take people from point-to-point based on a previous schedule registration.

and after that the bus drivers fold out the ramp and ask people to make free the wheelchair spot. Imagine this entire happening during rush hours. Because of this priority failure, sometimes, there is no free space left inside for wheelchairs thus the bus drivers don't have anything left to do than suggesting to take the next bus. Rarely I have seen a bus driver applying TTC regulations in this matter and only two times in 6 years. Some Torontonians exhibited disapproval for this non-inclusive general attitude observed on public transportation. Even though policies are clear and specific, even though accessible infrastructure is implemented, such failure happens regularly. Is this just an accident, an isolated attitude? For me, this example along with other examples indicates that the real challenge when we talk about acquiring inclusiveness is always the human factor: how inclusiveness is constructed in the minds of people?

BROTHER LT

I think your story illustrates the idea that people need to internalize things before accepting change. Inclusion has to happen inwardly first and then is possible outwardly. I think this change should come first before even considering economic or funding aspects of inclusion. Money might support inclusion to take concrete forms and inclusion could involve economic benefits however I am strongly convinced that money alone does not change mentalities. As for impositions, could laws and policies be internalized by force? Could they trigger

consistent, long term, empathic response? Personally, I doubt this would be effective. Anything forcibly imposed encounters resistance and frustration.

WHEELY LT

What if someone internalizes the policies yet disagrees and decides to violate them?

BROTHER LT

Maybe in this case we can't talk about a true internalization. I think internalization is not only about an intellectual acknowledgement of what seems logical or reasonable. It also requires a compassionate consciousness, which is fundamentally an act of freedom: someone freely restrains herself/himself in order to make necessary space for the other. Of course, one can observe a law because it has negative consequences but that's not a true internalization, in my opinion.

WHEELY LT

I understand your perspective Brother LT however I think that those who decide to dismiss inclusive policies have to take responsibility for their act. If a law can sanction and limit discrimination I can only applaud and encourage that.

BROTHER LT

Dear Wheely LT, this sounds to me like an example of justice driven by mind. I would be concerned with making such people to really acknowledge the effects on themselves and around them of their bad decisions. To not be able to develop self-awareness is a manifestation of sufferance too. Yes, the laws can limit ill behaviors yet I am not convinced they could heal them. A justice-based heart seeks transformation and healing of the unjust and the abuser. But you were just to the point of sharing your story about sufferance and transformation.

WHEELY LT

Indeed. Between the age of 9 and 14 my physical condition was deteriorating dramatically: from the upright position and relatively stable mobility to wheelchair bound condition and personal assistance dependency. My walking has never been normal. I was exhibiting the myopathic or waddling gait,[110] a duck like tiptoeing walking, a clear symptom of my diagnosis. There was no joy hearing labels about my gait but worse than that was to loose the gait and to realize its irreversibility. The degradation of my gait didn't come alone: my arms were weakening too and a deep sense of limitation and dependency brought me to the brink of depression. I remember one morning I was awakened by an urgent washroom need. It happened that nobody was home at that moment: my parents went to their jobs, my brother was doing school, an aunt was going to visit me and

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[110] *Gait Abnormalities*, Stanford School of Medicine, viewed on 13 January 2013, <http://stanfordmedicine25.stanford.edu/the25/gait.html>.

help me a bit later at a certain hour. A diarrhea doesn't know that. Defeating my panic, I recalled my limited powers and slid on the floor, with no underwear. I thought it's much easer the floor to be clean than the bed mattress. My aunt found me 'contemplating' my own misery. There were not many events such this in my life however I have been deeply impacted by them. I felt imprisoned by my disobeying body and I wondered if there could be anything worse than that. Life showed me that there are people experiencing worse conditions than mine. Also, it made me questioning why is this, what purpose does have it, how am I going to adapt and survive?

DESIGNER LT

It must have been a very painful transition and adaptation. What made you move forward?

WHEELY LT

It was really a difficult time. Yet there was a more frightening thought than the fierce physical limitation: the spectrum of dying. I was ruminating on this thought many years before getting much accurate medical information. Somehow, my parents got confused with the prognosis of my diagnosis and they were expecting and projecting the worst scenario. I suspect they mixed up stories of parents having kids with Muscular Dystrophy, Duchene form. Duchene and SMA belong to the same category of neuromuscular diseases and despite the fact that they share pretty similar symptoms, they have different pathogenesis and the

prognostic of Duchene is worst. Generally, those affected by Duchene die in their twenties due to the collapse of the respiratory system. Such patients can survive in Canada, today, due to ventilating machines, yet in developing countries such Romania this affordance is not yet possible. Under Ceaușescu's regime, such perspective could not be even imagined. Therefore, the prospective shadow of death has shaken all my being and has determined me to discover and reflect on basic questions: what is a human being? What is sufferance and why does it happen? What is life? What is death? Is there anything after death? All of those frightening experiences acquired a meaning when I met you both. Brother LT has become my theological alter ego and you the Designer LT were my artistic alter ego. When I met you my friend Designer LT you were not a designer, you were more engaged with the visual arts.

DESIGNER LT

Indeed my dear friend Wheely LT and you have influenced my life more than you can imagine.

BROTHER LT

Just as you did influence my life my dear friend Wheely LT.

WHEELY LT

Do you remember Brother LT how we met and what discussions we developed?

BROTHER LT

Of course: quite clear my dear friend Wheely LT. In the fall of 1988, I saw you during the Liturgy at Cernica Monastery, near Bucharest.

WHEELY LT

You have a very good memory Brother LT! My parents tried everything possible to restore my health. One thing they never tried up to that moment: to ask prayers of the Church for me. Formally, my parents were affiliated to the Romanian Orthodox Church yet they did not practice their faith at all. I had been baptized in my early childhood according to Christian Orthodox tradition but I had not been raised in religious teachings or practices. Remember, we lived under communist atheist regime. Moreover, in my teens I became rather atheist under the influence of propaganda's literature that was concerned to demystify and discredit the religion. Anyhow, one of my father's co-worker was practicing his Orthodox faith. He advised my father to take me to Cernica Monastery, where was living a monk-priest renowned for his saintly life. When we got there, we discovered that the monk-priest was removed temporarily by the communist secret services. They used to do that on Church's feast days to discourage people gathering in the public space. However, we attended the Liturgy in the Church and venerated the relics of a local saint. At that time, I was not able to get up by myself so when I had venerate the holy relics my father and an unknown man helped me to rise up from the wheelchair and venerate the relics. That helping man was you Brother

LT. On that day, somehow, I believe that God touched my heart and planted the seed of faith. We became friends and we exchanged a lot of thoughts and reflected on faith issues and personal issues, particularly on sufferance. That has strengthened my religious faith.

DESIGNER LT

What perspective on sufferance did you gain from your encounter Wheely LT?

WHEELY LT

Perhaps before going into that I should share few thoughts on my prior perception on my sufferance/disability. Overall, that was a negative one. I was seeing it as a steep cleavage from normality, unjust and absurd, that keeps me trapped out of my will, exterior to me, inescapable, uncontrollable and hopeless. I have been fortunate to be raised by parents who assumed my situation and all challenges implied by it and they did all their best to cover my special needs, to have a happy childhood and to access the natural stream of education. They never exhibited a blind optimism and they always were concerned about my future and perspectives. Also, I have been surrounded by the warmth and the support of my brother, a healthy and handsome man now, relatives, schoolmates some of who became life friends, teachers, church people. However, I did consider these people as exceptions, not the norm. The public mentality was not inclusive and I saw that manifested in the mimic of some people, in the words and labeling of others, in

attitudes of rejection here and there and largely in the architectural barriers.

Therefore, to sum up, the personal perception on sufferance is inevitably shaped

by the perception of family and the perception of community where subjects of

disability live. When all of three get manifested in negative ways, the life of a

person with disability could be really hard.

DESIGNER LT

Is disability for you a personal trait or a relative condition?

WHEELY LT

I think it is both. My medical condition is a fact, I can't pretend doesn't exist. It's

real, it's tangible and definitive. But my personhood and agency is not limited to

that. I was finding myself wiggling quite often back and forth between the notions

of normality – abnormality, acceptance – denial (by myself or by others), standard

– diversity, regular – exceptional and many other. It took some time for me to

realize that concepts such as 'health', 'ability' or 'normality' are so relative in

regards to human beings. As Brother LT has suggested: we all are disabled to a

certain degree. Is disability a relative condition? The social model of disability

discharges the medical model suggesting that disability is a social construct and

occurs when the social environment does not meet the needs of disabled subjects.

While the value of this model resides in the creation of awareness around issues

of exclusion and human rights,[111] by privileging one version of disability

discourse vs. other and moving the focus from individual to society, a new

position of exclusion is suggested: disableism vs. ableism.[112] How can the social

model of disability be translated into workable solutions for disabled community

when the medical dimension of disability is eluded and ableism is viewed as

inherently oppressive? Co-operation between each view is needed and a more

inclusive theory of disability has to be defined.

DESIGNER LT

You mention the two models of disability and I find them relevant to me as

designer concerned with issues of inclusion. The rhetoric of the Social Model is

great but it doesn't come without flaws for designers. The definition of disability

provided by the Social Model doesn't suggest how it could be translated into

appropriate design. [113] In real life, designing for disability has to go beyond such a

definition in order to understand the magnitude of disability and to come with

suitable solutions. The Social Model operates on the assumption that disabled

hold expertise of their own issues while 'ableist' expertise is faulty. Perhaps this

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[111] UPIAS, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability', in Centre for Disability Studies – University of Leeds, 2013, viewed on 7 April 2013, <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/files/library/UPIAS-fundamental-principles.pdf>.
[112] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Beyond Inclusion: Rethinking Normalcy, Identity, and Disability in Theological Terms*, Vanderbilt University, 1 March 2010, viewed on 7 February 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgMGxJr5JuQ>.
[113] Guy Dewsbury, Karen Clark, Dave Randall, Mark Rouncefield and Ina Sommerville, 'The anti-social model of disability', *Disability & Society*, vol. 19, issue 2, 2004, pp. 145-158.

is more an a priori assumption than a research-based finding.[114] We have now

Participative Design that has created room for the audience in design processes.

However, I believe that as designers are not experts in disability, persons with

disabilities are not experts in design. We could learn from each other, share

commonalities and define clear boundaries. An empathetic approach is required

yet this must be mutual. Ultimately, we may want to acknowledge our

interconnectedness and interdependency that was suggested by Brother LT.

BROTHER LT

I think you both are correct in your observations, in that we all get shaped when

we interact with others. As I said, we share the same humanity therefore we are

inherently interconnected. We are not so different as we might believe:

boundaries between 'the other' and me are very shallow in reality. We give and

take but also, we have the ability to filter what is exchanged and we can choose

what to give and what to receive. From a theological perspective, this flux could

be regulated through discernment and wisdom. So a spiritual self who acquires

them is capable to deal with potential conflicts between the self and the others.

This is one way to talk about interconnectedness.

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[114] Guy Dewsbury et al, *ibid.*, p. 154.

WHEELY LT

I agree with you both. So, I experienced negative feelings about my disability as a result of dealing with physical limits and the perception of others on my limits. If I continued in this way I would probably have arrived at the decision to kill myself. A vacuum of meaning was happening. This vacuum was filled by the faith in God and God's presence. It's very difficult to describe how that happened. I think it was both a rational and a grace-mediated process. I said to myself, "if Jesus Christ, the Son of God came into the world taking human form, tasted suffering to death and rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, it means suffering and death can be defeated. And though many of the miracles that He did are true, and some of them are about overcoming illness and death, it means suffering must have a purpose and an end." If they were defeated, it means that He knows how to transcend them. Therefore, all that I remained to do was to know how He defeated them and through this way I would be healed. And I found that He could do it because He was God. I realized then that if He was God, the power to overcome suffering could only come from Him. I was willing to search and get that power: I started to attend Church services, to pray and fast, to take Confession and Communion, to read theological books, to exchange thoughts with and get advice and insight from priests and confessors, to communicate with Brother LT. The healing of my physical condition didn't come as I expected however I was surprised to notice inward transformation of myself. I learned that there is other worth in taking perspectives on sufferance rather than succumbing

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to fatalism and depression. I started to think of my disability as a tool of self-knowledge, accepted my limitations became and willing to identify and develop different skills. The lack of mobility would be compensated by the freedom of spirit, thinking and creativity. Ultimately, I got to the point of realizing that sufferance can be a path to spiritual awakening, an opportunity to purify body and soul in order to encounter God, a path of love, compassion and hope for those who experience all kinds of needs, afflictions, pain, disappointments and despair.

DESIGNER LT

This is impressive! Did you encounter God?

WHEELY LT

Yes, yet not in the sense that perhaps many would expect. I felt His support during difficult moments of my life when I was experiencing despair. The support came unexpectedly through people who helped me in various ways, through circumstances that suddenly changed from negative to positive. I saw God in the gift of my disability: without it I think I would not be committed to a spiritual journey and probably I would not have understood the struggles of people with disabilities. And I experienced the grace of God in His Church, through the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments), through holy people and through my unworthy prayers.

DESIGNER LT

What did you find in terms of the origins of sufferance?

WHEELY LT

Brother LT has more expertise than me about this. Would you like to share some thoughts about this Brother LT?

BROTHER LT

Certainly, my friends. From the medical perspective, which operates on a scientific paradigm, the illness and disability occur when mechanisms of the body get dysfunctional. Physicians tend to treat illnesses as phenomena separated from the afflicted person. Therefore illness is objectified and circumscribed to the human physiology while the medical act becomes a depersonalized practice. This dichotomy introduces a fallacy that was called by a theologian "the cult of normalcy".[115] According to this, health is considered the norm and illness is deviation from the norm. Wheely LT has quoted his family doctor. It illustrates a mindset aligned to this fallacy. I think our society is characterized by an obsessive preoccupation with the welfare of our bodies while suffering is rejected and understood as having negative value. Perhaps this explains in part the non-inclusive attitudes toward people with disabilities. At the same time, to physicians are given power to hold life and death. This view makes possible abortion, genetic

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[115] Thomas E Reynolds, *op. cit.*

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engineering, eugenics, and euthanasia: profound ethical and moral concerns are the result. Although Eastern Fathers generally recognize the benefits of medicine, they perceive the physician as a simple mediator between God and the afflicted person. According to them, the knowledge, the power and the means of healing come from God. Also, some Fathers such St. Isaac of Syria give a limited credit to any knowledge or science governed by the body that is in his opinion exclusively concerned with this world, and gives a high credit to a 'science' that is concerned with the healing and the salvation of the soul. This is not akin to the Gnostic view that exalts the incorruptibility of the soul given its spiritual nature and dooms the body based on the assumption that matter is evil. Even though Eastern Christianity recognizes the relative nature of bodily health in this world, the matter is not considered inherently evil but permeated by divine energies and object of sanctification: in wo/man the presence of divine energies is conditioned by the level of dispassion which is the first stage of deification from orthodox theology perspective and consists in replacing personal afflictions and vices with their counterpart: virtues. From a spiritual perspective, a healthy and sanctified soul is a condition for the deification or incorruptibility of the body. The bodily illness cannot harm a person. It's only bad in appearance.

DESIGNER LT

What makes the bodily health relative?

BROTHER LT

In general, Christianity explains the frailty of the human condition through the concept of original Sin. According to the Book of Genesis chapters 2 and 3, Adam and Eve brought into human nature mortality and decay and were both banished from Paradise as a result of their disobedience over God's advertisement to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This act is known also as "the Fall" and its impact over human nature and all creation is a subject of dispute between branches of Christianity. Eastern Orthodox Theology distinguishes between prelapsarian[116] and postlapsarian[117] state of wo/men. Prelapsarian refers to the trans-historical and spiritual state in which Adam and Eve have experienced incorruptibility and immortality due solely to divine grace, a state to be consolidated and made permanent in conjunction with human free will. Postalapsarian describes the historical state of human being and creation after the original Fall. This state is characterized by frailty and corruptibility.

DESIGNER LT

Did God test Adam and Eve? Was this necessarily? Why God did not grant full *apriori* perfection to them?

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[116] The term comes from Latin and means "before (pre)" + "fall (lapsus)", according to Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 17 March 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/prelapsarian?q=prelapsarian>.
[117] Dialectical term with "prelapsarian". In the context of Christian theologies, it means after the Fall.

BROTHER LT

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae sums up Eastern Fathers consensus:[118] human being is able

to acknowledge and achieve perfection in freedom only, which is a fundamental

attribute of persona. Human persona is a created replication of divine uncreated

personas and the relationships between them are characterized by dialog and the

exercise of freedom. When freedom is suspended, persona is suspended and

objectified. Only persona can manifest consciousness and agency. Out of love,

God brings to existence personas and assumes the risk to be accepted or rejected

by them. The Fall was the result of the unwise use of human free will. Persona's

agency comes along with responsibility. By disobeying God, Adam and Eve lost

God's grace and brought into human nature and creation illness, infirmities,

sufferings, corruption and death.

DESIGNER LT

Did God 'punish' Adam and Eve for their error?

BROTHER LT

The effects of the Fall are understood by Orthodox Theology ontologically, not

being juridical.[119] According to this view, God did not punish our forefathers for

disobeying His law but the changes triggered by Adam and Eve over human

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[118] Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Theology*, 2nd edition, three volumes, EIMBOR, Bucharest, 1996-97.

[119] Valerie A Karras, *Beyond Justification: an Orthodox perspective*, St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church, Irvine, California, viewed on 3 February 2013, < http://www.stpaulsirvine.org/html/Justification.htm#_ftn1>.

nature through their disobedience was not compatible anymore with the state of

grace from Paradise. Grace and sin are not compatible because an exterior,

authoritative voice declaims so but because at the ontological level they belong to

different and opposable realities. Where sin occurs then communion fails. There is

no evil, punishment or death in God. God is Life. Evil is outside God and an

accident on creation. Even though this is a different story; it is tangent to human

Fall narrative. The voice of the serpent was the voice of evil. The occurrence of

evil followed the same path of disobedience that I am going to describe. The

scriptural formulation around the forbidden tree is rather a manifestation of God's

omniscience and a friendly advertisement rather than a law with retributive

effects. The original sin consists not in the fact of violating a law but in the fact

that our forefathers engaged with a knowledge and subsistence aside God and

through false promises lost the grace of God and brought death into human nature.

Eastern theological tradition suggests that the same path was taken before our

forefathers by few angels. Angels are personas too and manifest free will. When

few angels wanted to be God, they automatically fell from their state. Not God

banished them from Paradise but only for their sin of pride. Good vs. evil is a

complex topic and I am not sure if we need to unfold here. However, I would like

to ad very brief thoughts on this. From an Orthodox theological perspective, evil

is real, it interferes with humans and even though it undermines their thoughts and

actions it has no power without the concourse of human free will. In Christ is

given the way to fight against them and their action will be permanently limited with the second advent of Christ.

DESIGNER LT

Brother LT, you have stated that the fall of Adam and Eve brought into human nature and creation illness, infirmities, sufferings, corruption and death. Is their 'fault' transferring to all and if yes, in which ways? Am I responsible for something I did not commit?

BROTHER LT

God created the world good however, because in human being the all creation is recapitulated, the effects of human agency propagate into the creation. This is this how all human beings share the state of Adam and Eve: not because we hold an individual responsibility for what our forefathers did yet because we share their human nature which had fallen under the law of sin.[120] Even though we share the same human nature of our forefathers, we are accountable for our individual sins. In this sense, we multiply the consequences of our forefathers Fall. According to Orthodox Theology, despite the effects of original Fall, human beings continue to hold free will and agency. We could reconnect with God if we want however we can't hold balance and perfectibility outside God. Also, because we all share the same nature and its limitations as our forefathers, we must be aware of the

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[120] Cyril of Alexandria as quoted by Jean Claude Larchet, *op. cit.*

collective responsibility that we also share in regards to alleviation and support of sufferance in us and around us. So, the postlapsarian state corresponds with the Fall of our forefathers and their expulsion from Paradise. This state is merely characterized by Orthodox Theology as a shift from the spiritual view to the senses and the world, more broadly faith in God was shifted to faith in the power of material world. Eastern Fathers suggests that this state is associated with the beginning of human history as temporal reality and will end with the second coming of Christ. This explains in part why we continue to experience afflictions, sufferance and death. Yet, there is another way to approach sufferance, Wheely LT touched it a bit: ambivalence of health and illness. I would continue with the spiritual aspects of sufferance and how can be transcended.

DESIGNER LT

Feel free to expand that Brother LT.

BROTHER LT

The first example I have in mind is the Book of Job. The narrative informs us that God gave permission to Satan to test Job's righteousness. Satan argued that Job wouldn't stay faithful to God if his wonderful family (ten children) and tremendous possessions were destroyed. God took them all with the exception of Job's wife. Job's response was: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return: Lord has given, and Lord has taken away; blessed be the

name of Lord."[121] Even though Job gets dreadful boils and set in ashes scraping his skin with broken pottery his stillness remains unshakable. Neither when his wife prompted him to curse God and die, neither when his friends discredited his innocence. But every human has a limit: Job cursed the day he was born. Then God spoke to Job: everything fades before His sovereignty. God returned His mercy to the faithful Job: a new family and twice as much possession. Here sufferance was given not for retribution purpose yet for spiritual benefit and beyond. Faith, endurance and patience could open such perspective.

WHEELY LT

Impressive story each time I hear it.

DESIGNER LT

A great story about faith and patience in difficult circumstances.

BROTHER LT

Indeed. The second example that I have in mind is the miracle with the man born blind, found in the Gospel of John, chapter 9. The story says that in a day of Sabbath, near to the Temple of Jerusalem, at the Pool of Siloam,[122] a born blind man was perhaps begging for alms. While Jesus and the disciples were passing

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[121] Job 1,15-22.
[122] The Pool of Siloam was a *mikva*h, a ritual bath for cleansing and purification. This was supplied by running water and a person would fully immerse to accomplish the Jewish purification as an exigency to enter into the Temple.

they observed the man and asked Jesus "who did sin, this man or his parents?"[123]

Jesus remarkably answered: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"[124] Jesus spat on the ground, made clay from mud and saliva and anointed the man's eyes then He sent the man to wash himself in the Pool of Siloam. The poor man entered the pool, washed his eyes and received his sight. People around him started to mumble and to question if the man was the same they knew and who was the healer. Having no reasonable answer the mob brought the man before Pharisees to be questioned. The man explained to Pharisees several times the same thing: being born blind, he was healed by a man named he did not know named Jesus, a man who had anointed his eyes with clay and sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam and as a result he got sight. It's interesting he did not mention how Jesus made the clay, which gives a sense of credibility to the man's testimony: he could not see that detail since he was blind. The Pharisees turned blind in the face of the evidence which ultimately points to the mesianity of Christ: they question the man's parents about his disability and sanity; they adjudged Jesus a sinner and a false prophet because he practiced healing on Sabbath day. After all nobody has ever healed a blind man and how could a sinner and a Sabbath breaker be the subjects of such wonderful God's work! Abandoned by his parents and bullied by his community, the man

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[123] John 9, 2.
[124] John 9, 3-5.

continues to witness his transformation and defends his benefactor. Ultimately, Jesus reveals again to the man and augments his faith: "Lord, I believe"[125] said the man and worshiped Jesus. The end of the narrative leaves us with Jesus words: "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."[126] Therefore, the miracle with the man born blind reveals two lines of understanding: an extensive perspective on what is the source of sufferance and how sufferance can be transcended. The Pharisees identify bodily blindness with sin. I have talked already about the concept of original Fall and its connections to human nature. Sin impacts soul and body: illness of the soul is more severe than the illness of the body. The narrative suggests that sufferance could befall for other reasons than sin: illness can have a spiritual dimension. God can manifest in sufferance and man transcends sufferance in synergy with God.

WHEELY LT

It's interesting to observe disability as social stigma within a community 2000 years ago. Disability as abnormality and faulty, disability and beggary, questioning the judgment of the disabled still is familiar to our world. Christ was exposing the hypocrisy behind such mindsets and questioned the authority of those: what is health, who is really healthy and out of sin? Who is entitled to judge the sins of others? What and who can heal within our world? The discovery

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[125] John 9, 38.
[126] John 9, 39.

of the spiritual dimension of disability gave to me hope and meaning. And how couldn't I be captivated by Christ's perspective on sufferance since he not only identified Himself with those who suffer and He experienced human sufferance in all its dimensions but He transcended all human limitations?

BROTHER LT

Dear Wheely LT, you are right: sufferance has not only a personal dimension yet social and spiritual. Discriminating those in need and sufferance is an expression of social fragmentation and lack of awareness that we all could exchange status and end up being vulnerable anytime. Vulnerability requires solidarity thus one sense of illness might be to steer community cohesion. It makes community's members overcome inertia and selfishness. But fragmentation and solidarity as well happen first inwardly.[127] How can solidarity be spurred? Religions believe that no matter how wonderful and capable beings we find ourselves and whatever social cohesion we achieve if we circumvent the spiritual dimension of life; we produce limited effects on ourselves and around us. Suffering, afflictions, troubles, errors and crisis remind us how vulnerable we are. We need a higher power to transcend our limits. The miracle of the man born blind presents a situation where the restoration of health is sometimes given yet for the spiritual benefit. Quite often recovery from illness is not granted and that is also to be for spiritual benefit, as the story of Job suggests. In such situation, the human subject

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[127] Parker J Palmer, *op. cit.*

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has only two choices: to quit and despair or to embrace the challenge and find resources to balance it. Orthodox Christianity holds the conception that illness can be experienced as an ascetic practice, a path to overcome sin and passions and acquire the virtues contrary to them. Patience and thanksgiving particularly could emerge from sufferance. However, the human subject exhibits limited power to assume such practice and view. God's grace is needed therefore the improvement of the self is fundamentally a synergic process: man climbs the ladder of salvation while God descends to man. For the Orthodox Church the archetype of this process is Jesus Christ. Two concepts interplay in understanding this process: 'hypostatic union'[128] and 'theosis' or deification.[129] "Hypostatic' means 'personal' in Greek. 'Hypostatic union' refers to the union of two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ without mixture, change, division or separation. Through incarnation Christ includes in His unique person two complete natures, inseparably united, without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or mixing of attributes however in communion. Two wills, two energies and two natural activities are communicated synergistically inside of Christ's person. Christ identifies Himself fully with the human nature with the exception of sin and human nature receives back the grace of God, or divine uncreated energies that were lost through the original Fall. Therefore, in the person of Christ and along with His acts of Salvation within the history (Incarnation, Crucifixion,

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[128] Clarified in the context of the 4th Ecumenical Council, Chalcedon 451.
[129] The best writing on orthodox deification that I recommend is "Orthodox Spirituality: a practical guide for the faithful and a definitive manual for the scholar" by Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, printed in English at St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2001.

Resurrection and Ascension), human nature is deified, rendered godlike, restored to the original design, not in the meaning of being absorbed by divine nature but through the participation to the divine life. It had been restored to its perfections to the highest degree for humanity without cessation of its attributes and also it had been elevated to the maximum intimacy of God. Deification is actualized through the struggle to conform to the image of Christ. Without struggle, the praxis, there is no real faith; faith leads to action, without which it is dead. One must unite will, thought and action to God's will, His thoughts and His actions. A person must fashion his life to be a mirror, a true likeness of God. Thus deification is achievable through a synergy between humans' activities and God's grace. The journey towards 'theosis' includes three major stages and many forms of praxis. Purification or dispassion is the first stage, it emphases the control over passions and implies ascetic practices such us faith, prayer, self-control and fasting, repentance, mindfulness and watchfulness of the mind and sufferance. Dispassion prepares us for the stage of illumination, in which wo/man receives the gifts of Holy Spirit: fear of God, fortitude, counsel, understanding, knowledge, piety and wisdom.[130] Thus human consciousness is filled with a different perspective over the world. Through the light of these gifts all things become transparent and their meaning and relationship with God are revealed. As man purifies, the Holy Spirit illuminates senses and reason and the divine rationalities inferred to the Cosmos are revealed. This is called positive knowledge, however

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[130] Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

the progress in positive knowledge about God leads to the conclusion that human

concepts are too limited to describe the experience of God. Now, positive

concepts are replaced by negative concepts to describe the mystery of God: what

is God is replaced by what God is not. Negating what is known about God

expands the knowledge about God. This experience is in part conceptual activity

and essentially intuitive and mystical. This is considered a peak experience by

Christian western mysticism. Orthodox Christianity understands this just as the

first degree of apophatism.[131] What is beyond? The second degree of apophatism:

pure prayer crosses the abyss between God and mental concepts. Man may

experience a void, silence, darkness, a state of intense prayer or a total quietness

of his mind. Orthodoxy has developed a particular prayer form that facilitates pure

prayer. It's called Jesus Prayer or prayer of the heart. Mind must withdraw from

things outside and focus on what is within, to its heart. It is in this place called the

heart, the center of our soul where man finds God. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of

God, have mercy on me, a sinner" is the prayer form. The last step is 'theosis' or

deification and is experienced as union in love and flood of uncreated divine

energies. Union in love is a free act of egos substitution and mutual penetration of

energies. Love is ecstatic. According to orthodox perspective there is no

absorption of the other but a going out of oneself. The other becomes ones center

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[131] Dialectical term with "cataphatism". Catapathic theology is about what can be known and expressed about God while apophatic theology is concerned with mystery of God, what is incomprehensible for human being yet experiment able. See Stefan Buchiu, 'The Monarchy of the Father. Cataphatic and apophatic dimensions', *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, vol 1, issue 1, 2010, pp. 98-110, viewed on 13 March 2013, < http://orthodox-theology.com/media/PDF/IJOT1-2010/18-buchiu-monarchy.pdf

of life. This is the nature of our union with God. Saint Paul describes this adequately when he states, "I live, and yet not I but Christ lives in me." When we love God man no longer possess his own life but now possess God's life. Love that never fails, described by Saint Paul cannot be reached without prayer and asceticism. The divine love is also experienced as uncreated light. The light that is seen at the peak of pure prayer is rather spiritual than physical. It radiates from the presence of Jesus Christ and enlightens human souls with His truth. This light is similar to the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai or the Apostles at the Transfiguration of Christ. The light, which is seen in pure prayer, is beyond all that can be known through human senses and reason. In effect it surpasses what is called knowledge. It is a super-knowledge based on a relationship with God. The deification process is infinite. Only man, as image of God is capable to experience it. It is the result of a growth of human receptive powers to receive and use the divine energies. Through deification humanity reaches its full potential. Some theologians consider the defied human nature as the true humanism. Eastern Fathers recognize deification as synergic act. However, deification is essentially the result of grace's work. Man does not become a source of divine energy, like God. His nature is transformed but it remains in its created limitations. Man only reflects God's energies. He has become a Christophorus, a mirror of Christ. Man never receives the totality of God's energies. Through his efforts in preparation he makes an ascent and as he grows spiritually God's energies descend on him granting us increased powers. The process is reversible; deification can be lost,

accordingly to the movement of free will. It's worthwhile to mention that 'theosis' is both a personal and communitarian endeavor: it does not happen outside of the Church. Grace of God is also present through the Holy Sacraments, particularly in the Eucharist. The members of the Church need this source of grace to assist them in the process of 'theosis'.

MEANINGS OF INCLUSION IN THE

CONTEXT OF CREATIVITY AND DESIGN

DESIGNER LT

Brother LT, you have described a very complex perspective and thank you for sharing it. I wonder what could be carried out into secular context. Concepts such God, sin, self-sacrifice, prayer or mysticism have none all or little relevancy for the secular mind. The idea that we all experience inwardly and outwardly a sense of brokenness is an interesting line of explaining diverse tensions, failures and crisis in our world. The notion of attaining inner inclusiveness as a prerequisite of drafting inclusive solutions for the outside world is powerful and worth exploring. This idea raises questions on how the self-construction and identity interfere with design and it makes me wonder if either a self informed by sufferance or a spiritual self are an advantage and to what extent. Reflecting on the meanings of sufferance, connecting with or simulating the experience of sufferance might prove very helpful for designing inclusively. It makes me wonder if the current model in which designers relate to their audience should be reconsidered, in the sense of re-humanizing it. In this context the notion of synergy as collaboration can be important as well the awareness on the notions of interconnectedness and empathy/compassion. Also, it makes me wonder if the experience of sufferance plays a role in the creative processes in terms of motivation and innovation. Your perspective makes me wonder if design could interplay other meanings than those circumscribed to functionality and immediacy. Definitely, a spiritual component is generally missing to designers and design.

BROTHER LT

Thank you Designer LT. You shared a lot of interesting points to be explored. I sense in their formulation perhaps some of your personal tensions. Perhaps you are right in stating the lack of relevancy in the secular world of concepts such as God, sin, self-sacrifice, prayer or mysticism. The Enlightenment project was intended to arbitrate religious divisions but it ended up relativizing the religious values and imposing a monoculture based on economics that along with the material benefits produced social injustice and environmental crisis.[132] Many of the inclusive issues that were mentioned in the beginning of our dialog are tied to that kind of monoculture. Therefore I wouldn't be so concerned with the lack of relevancy of religious concepts and values in secular context that could be clarified by dialog and research. What would worry me is a missing of discourse around them within public space, secular or not. The secular world is not so homogenous as it sounds even in communist atheist regimes. Inevitably, people bring their identity in their professions and I think it's healthy not only for them but for the society to allow them expressing their identity and cogent values in public space. In design this could translate into creativity. I think the success or failure in addressing inclusive issues through design is dependent on the cultural paradigm where design is employed and how a cultural paradigm impacts the identity of designers. I would be very interested to hear what motivates and informs you as designer, what kind of design you do or attempt to achieve.

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[132] FS Michaels, *op. cit.*

DESIGNER LT

My story as designer can be traced back into middle school. I discovered I have art skills during the drawing & painting classes. Due to them I was winning in school some creative awards. Yet my enrolment with local Art High School was not planned at all. As I mentioned already, the local Art High School was prohibited under Communist regime and its reopening in 1990 coincided with the completion of my grade 8. I took advantage of this opportunity and followed four exciting years where I have learned drawing, painting, sculpting, ceramics, printmaking, engraving, etching and some graphic design. To me, this experience was both positive and negative. The positive resides in the fact that creativity and imagination are channeled and educated; self-expression through art tools seems unlimited. The negative consists in inflating the ego: too much self-expression leads to individualism and isolation. Imagination is not everything, it depends on the that force drives it. Perhaps more important than just imagining possibilities is to render possibilities for the challenges of our world.[133] Spirituality helped me to balance a bit both sides. I had been interested in Religion during high school due to my grandparents heritage yet not constantly and consistently. I was attending Church invariably on Christmas and Easter yet I hadn't been a practitioner. I was attending spiritual-based conferences organized by youth organizations of Orthodox Church. There I met Wheely LT and inevitably I was impressed by his struggles and optimism. We exchanged significant thoughts on disability issues

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[133] Stuart Walker, *Sustainable by Design: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, Earthscan, London, 2006, p. 37.

and even on religious matters. Due to premature loss of dear friends during my life and due to effects of the oppressive atmosphere manifested by the communist regime before 1989 in Romania, sufferance and alienation were recurrent themes in my student artwork. I found them inspirational when doing Arts. Through Art History classes I also found that disability interplayed in the life of great artists such as Henri Touluse-Lautrec, Vincent Van Gogh or Frida Kalo. Moreover, while doing a class project for Bloorview Kids Hospital of Toronto, it was confirmed to me that art could assume a therapeutic function for subjects or communities of disability.[134] But this project is circumscribed to my design education experience, a further step into my development as creative individual.

WHEELY LT

Consensually with Brother LT, I would be happy to hear your story further.

DESIGNER LT

I moved to Canada in 2006. Lack of employability led me to subscribe to the Graphic Design program at OCAD University of Toronto. It was a natural fit. I was doing some freelancing work as self-trained web designer before yet this

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[134] Within Interactive Communication Beyond The Screen course taught by Geoffrey Shea, I had the opportunity and the privilege to be part of a team that produced an interactive installation for Holland Bloorview Children's Rehab of Toronto. The specific objective was to create an interactive display for the main clinic waiting area. Children with diverse abilities could create a collective artwork on a wall screen projector while they step in and out of a floor filled with sensors. I have made contributions to the ideation stage and I have designed the process book of the project. Geoffrey strongly encouraged me to apply for MDes in Inclusive Design. Thanks Geoffrey.

proved not to be sufficient to grant a job. At OCADU I became proficient with

design processes and I have become familiar to a wide range of media from print

to digital. I have investigated areas such as typography, branding, editorial, web,

motion graphics, interactive design, universal design and inclusive design. In the

same time, I have discovered several tensions within the field. One refers to the

dichotomy between Art and Design. I found that, Art and Design were profoundly

inter-related before the Enlightenment.[135] After that, Arts engaged with criticizing

Modernity, which is known as the age of machine and utilitarianism for its

emphasis on progress through technology, On its own Design had participated in

shaping the landscape of Modernity.[136] Specifically, design put itself in the

service of mass production, distribution and consumption. The philosophy of such

design is "form follows function".[137] Due to design and technological

development, we all access today a multitude of goods and services unthinkable

perhaps 5 years ago and certainly 200 years ago. In the same time, how these

goods and services are produced and replaced lead to unprecedented

environmental disruption and social polarization.[138] These problems have

suggested that designers hold accountability for their work and alternative design

practices are required. Therefore, new branches of design emerged and they

embraced social responsible agenda: Sustainable Design, Universal or Inclusive

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[135] Philip B Meggs and Purvis, Alston W, *A History of Graphic Design*, 4th edition, John Wiley & Sons Inc, NJ, 1998.

[136] "Design is a dislocated art form born out of Industrialization". Kenneth Fitzgerald, 'I Come To Bury Graphic Design, Not To Praise It', *Émigré*, vol. 66, 2004, p. 39.

[137] Stuart Walker, *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning*, p. 4.

[138] Stuart Walker, *ibid.*, p. 2.

Design. Fortunately they are part of design curricula in Canada and meeting with them in my design education produced an effect on my training. Their impact was so profound that it made me wonder in the service of whom I will put my skills as graphic designer after graduating. It has made me determined to pursue a master degree in Inclusive Design and get closer to the problems of disable community. Dichotomy could be traced also at the level of Art and Design's methodologies: the former seems to be more intuitive-based while the latter appears more rational-based. I was very surprised when I heard first time design being defined as problem-solving task.[139] Holding the argument that design can exhaustively represent and rationally solve problems in the world, by virtue of designer's expertise, the concept of problem-solving was promoted by Herbert Simon in the '60s-'70s in the context of artificial intelligence field[140] and had become a dominant paradigm in the design field.[141] Kees Dorst argues that design problems and solutions are a moving target in design: they co-evolve along design processes[142] due to the constant repositioning of designer in relation to diverse, unpredictable factors. Therefore, design problems are always situational, subjective, evolving and connotations of its very concepts are shifting within the

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[139] "Graphic Design is an interdisciplinary, problem-solving activity that combines visual sensitivity with skill and knowledge in areas of communications, technology and business." RGD Ontario, *The business of Graphic Design, A professional's handbook*, Hilary Ashworth Editor, Toronto, 2004, p. 3.

[140] HA Simon, 'The Structure of Ill-structured Problems', *Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 4, 1973, pp. 181–201.

[141] CH Dorst, *Describing Design: A Comparison of Paradigms*. thesis TUDelft, 1997.

[142] Kees Dorst, 'Design Problems and Design Paradoxes', *Design Issues*, vol. 22, issue 3. 2006, pp. 4-18.

process.[143] Dorst proposes the concept of "paradox" as better describing the "design problem" which is being made up by the clash of conflicting discourses. Thus, the nature of creative design is to accommodate diverse discourses. This means implicitly to open a dialog between the rational knowing paradigm that characterizes our society, including design field and education, and holistic, beyond-rational knowing approaches.[144] This hope is in consensus with thinkers who warn that the current model of education kills creativity worldwide.[145]

BROTHER LT

To me as Theologian is clear that with the rise of secularism, the paradigm of Christianity was replaced with the paradigm of Modernity.[146] The latter had postulated that scientific knowledge based on empiric evidence is the only objective and therefore acceptable source of knowledge. [147] However, this proved to be a reductive and exclusivist view over the world.[148] The scientific progress has enabled us to travel faster, communicate in real time anywhere in the world, and easily acquire unthinkable goods compared to previous generations, raise up our life expectancy and many, many other important achievements. Yet, across

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[143] Kees Dorst, *ibid.*, p. 13.
[144] JP Miller states: "Our education system and the culture as a whole have emphasized rational and linear approaches to problems. A more holistic approach calls for a merging of reason and intuition. When these two elements are connected, student thinking is enriched". JP Miller, *The holistic curriculum*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, CA, 2007, p. 8.
[145] Ken Robinson, How Schools kill creativity, TED, February 2006, viewed on 15 November 2012, <http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html>.
[146] HR Roomaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of the Culture*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois,1994.
[147] Donald Schön, *op. cit*.
[148] HR Roomaaker, *op.* cit., pp. 46-47.

the 20th Century, through the participation of technologies, approximately 231 million people died in wars and conflicts,[149] more than half of the Earth's mature tropical forests have been cleared between the Industrial Revolution and 1950s: at this rate, by 2030 only 10% would be left[150] and by 2050 they all would be gone[151]; temperature is expected to rise with more than 2 Celsius globally next period due to CO2 emissions,[152] 1.29 billion people continue to live on less than $1.25 a day[153] and in 2010 around 22,400 nuclear weapons were maintained globally of which 7,700 were operational.[154] We already have identified issues of designing inclusively. Humanity seems trapped by its own progress.[155] These facts raise serious questions about the notion of progress through technology and perhaps they suggest we got to the point of recognizing that we need to reconsider how we treat ourselves, our fellow human beings and our environment and all living forms. We must redefine our material culture in more inclusive and sustainable terms.[156] We must re-examine the notion of progress and rebuild it on a different foundation: from outer to inner, from object to subject, from having to

[149] Milton Leitenberg, *Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century*, Cornel University Peace Studies Program, 3rd edition, August 2003, 2005, 2006. p. 1.

[150] Ron Nielsen, *The Little Green Handbook: Seven Trends Shaping the Future of Our Planet*, Picador, New York, 2006.

[151] John F. Mongillo and Linda Zierdt-Warshaw, *Encyclopedia of environmental science*, University of Rochester Press, 2000, p. 104.

[152] John Vidal, *Large rise in CO2 emissions sounds climate change alarm*, The Guardian, 8 March 2013, viewed on 27 March 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/mar/08/hawaii-climate-change-second-greatest-annual-rise-emissions>.

[153] *Poverty*, The World Bank – Poverty Reduction & Equity, April 2013, viewed on 3 April 2013, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,,contentMDK:20040961~menuPK:435040~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367~isCURL:Y,00.html>.

[154] S Robert S, Norris Hristensen, M Hans, 'Global nuclear weapons inventory, 1945-2010', *Buletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2010, p. 78.

[155] Ronald Wright, *op. ci*.

[156] Stuart Walker, *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning*, p. 110.

being. Perhaps design needs to be informed by a thinking that reconciles instrumental values (rational, intellect, cognition, analysis, descriptive, global, function) with intrinsic values (synthesis, intuition, subjectivity, expressive, imaginative, beauty, local, emotional, contemplative, meaningful, ethics, morals).[157] This task requires a shift in perspective away from individualism and functionalism, an inner transformation as the base for wise agency. This aspect used to be the domain of religion and philosophy. We must recall the values they talk about, examine their success and see to what extent they might respond to the problems of secular societies. In my faith, the positive knowledge and the mystic knowledge are not at odds. In fact, within the process of deification that was already mentioned, positive knowledge is the first step of mystic knowledge. On micro and macro-level, the seen world is a rendition of God's presence. However, God is also beyond them and to experience the mystery of God, one must transcend positive knowledge and its instrument: reason. If God is mystery, human beings are a mystery too due to their personalist foundations designed by God. Humans are not objects, numbers in statistics or abstract entities. They are images of God. Every human being is unique and unrepeatable rendition of humanity. Every human being leaves a unique trail in the world and is valuable by simple the fact that she/he exists. Thus working for people implies a huge responsibility because it means to participate to the mystery of humanity that is connected to the mystery of God. Ultimately, those who serve others, serve

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[157] Stuart Walker, *ibid.*, p. 84.

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themselves because everyone is in reality the extension of everyone in the body of

humanity. And vice versa: by hurting the other, it means hurting oneself, the body

of humanity and ultimately God. Therefore, technologies that serve and augment

awareness around empathy/compassion, ethic responsibility and inward balance

are desirable and welcomed and those contrary must be discouraged and

rejected.[158] [159]

DESIGNER LT

Dear Brother LT your insights may have deep impact for designers.

Accountability and impact of design out here in the world is a heavy subject

matter. I can only examine my own design thinking and practice and as I

suggested earlier similar observations led me to the decision to put my skills into

the service of a social agenda. By doing that, a step toward examining the

'traditional' way of designing based on "problem solving" and "form follows

function" was made, however I feel there is a long way to define and embark with

new, radical design practices that would serve better the social environment. Even

working under the emerging disciplines concerned with environmental and social

issues, pragmatic accountings and utopian assumptions interplay. Towing the

social design with market or governmental interests that still are tributary to

positivist/utilitarian assumptions has the ability to slow down or kill the

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[158] Archimandrite Aimilianos, *Orthodox Spirituality and the Technological Revolution*, OrthodoxyToday.org, 28 November 2005, viewed on 14 November 2011, <http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles5/AimilianosTechnology.php>.
[159] Stuart Walker gives the example of electronic goods in detrimental to compassionate, ethic and emotional balance through information overload and multitasking they exert on those who use them. Stuart Walker. *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning*, p. 126.

occurrence of radical design practices.[160] Perhaps, in order to occur, design

practices that go beyond utilitarian assumptions and integrate the intrinsic values

that you suggested, must happen within independent settings, such as academia

where fundamental research usually takes place.[161] The philosophy of such design

might be summarized as "form follows meaning".[162] Its processes might be

described as reflective and practice-based,[163] integrative of intellect and intuition,

aesthetic and ergonomics, form and function, productivity and meaning.[164] First

instance, outcomes of such design might take the form of conceptual explorative

objects[165] and hybrids.[166] Also, as Brother LT suggested, such design must

question the status quo of the current technologies and advocate for new ways to

deal with them, which are considerate toward the human well-being[167] and to the

environment.[168] I would be very interested to hear Brother LT, if examples of

such design could be traced within your faith or other religious traditions.

BROTHER LT

Such examples exist indeed. Creativity meaning-based is cogent to religious

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[160] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 19-20.
[161] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 26.
[162] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 4.
[163] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 157.
[164] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 89.
[165] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 129.
[166] Stuart Walker, *ibid*., p. 204-205.
[167] John Thackara, *In the Buble: Designing for a Complex World*, MA: MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005.
[168] Stuart Walker, *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning*, p. 113.

traditions. The closest example to me is the Byzantine Iconography.[169] In Greek, icon means likeness. Icons have a long history within Christianity. To the Evangelist Luke is attributed the icon called "Aheiropoieta" (in Greek "made without hands), a representation of the Virgin Mary. But during the iconoclastic period (8th and 9th centuries AD) icons were on the verge of extinction. The iconoclast controversy, which manifested sometimes in dramatic and violent forms, was based on the assumption that deity can't be represented and any representation does not mediate the presence of prototype because they don't share the same substance. The iconodules, the defenders of icons, argued that the base of icon resides in Christ's Incarnation. Since God took human form, this could be represented. To reject the image of Christ is the equivalent of rejecting His historical presence. Icons do not depict imaginary realities therefore idols: they represent real persons and events. Veneration of icons does not refer to their materiality but to the holy prototypes they represent. Thus, the main function of icons is sacramental: they mediate a holy presence that lives in a spiritual dimension.[170] This makes the icon an object of veneration, worship and contemplation. A second function is didactic. Icons are visual narratives about holy persons and events. In ancient times, icons were considered a form of literacy. A third function is aesthetic. Their particular conventions of representation (unnatural, frontal or axial view of figures, elongated and ascetic,

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[169] The best study about Byzantine Icon is: Ouspensky, Leonid, *Theology of the Icon*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1992.
[170] Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *A Theology of Icon/Studies*, p. 25.

a-temporal and a-spatial suggestion, use of inverse perspective, light and color

emanates exclusively from the objects/subjects, golden monochrome background)

fascinate religious and non-religious viewers. In reality, these conventions are just

visual translations of the doctrine of *theosis* (deification) which I made reference

of already. The saints depicted by icons are persons who achieved deification.

Therefore, icons as design/creative artifacts embed multiple levels of meaning,

which explain fascination they exert on people over centuries. Also, they point out

toward a vision on creativity that is not informed exclusively by human factors.[171]

Other objects with similar meaning in Christianity are the illuminated manuscripts

designed in medieval period and the religious architecture. Churches and

cathedrals are excellent examples of design that goes beyond utility and mundane,

their intent is to depict, convey and mediate sacred realities. Examples of design

objects that share synchronously different levers of meaning could be found in

other religious traditions too. Prayer beads[172] are present in all religions. The Zen

tradition produced Shakuhachi flute[173] and Wabi Sabi.[174] How these examples can

inform design today is a fascinating story to be written. Perhaps, such endeavor

shouldn't be so difficult if designers assume a holistic vision over the world. All

depends on how each person, including designers, receive, create or negotiate

meanings about the world. Thus, "personal meaning" is an important driven force

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[171] Miller & Cook-Greuter, *op. cit.*
[172] Stuart Walker, *Sustainable by Design: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, p. 115.
[173] Stuart Walker, *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning*, p. 111.
[174] Stuart Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

of creative processes.[175] In the construction of the self seems to reside the key

factor of enabling or disabling good out there in the world.

DESIGNER LT

A contemporary example of beyond functional and meaning-based design is the

conceptual objects created by Stuart Walker and his students. By incorporating

reused materials, mass produced parts, new tech devices, locally acquired hand

crafts parts from natural environment, or even raw natural objects, their design

proposals are meant to disrupt the traditional design assumptions. They are not

driven by pragmatic factors such us functionality and economics yet emerge into

aesthetic dimension and invite to reflection and empathy.[176] Walker asserts that

such proposals might be the base for further development and acquiring profound

sustainability, more considerate toward natural, social and cultural environment.

The architect Gregory Splinter provides a cogent example yet more tangent with

the interplay of beyond-rational/intuitive tools in design processes.[177] His design

practice involves as stage of 20 minutes silent contemplation, right away after

collecting info from his clients and before engaging with ideation. Basically he

exposes the right brain hemisphere (responsible for emotion, feeling, intuition) to

consciousness stream through contemplative prayer. This process is intentional

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[175] In Wrapped Attention – designing products for evolving permanence and enduring meaning. *Design Issues*, vol. 26, issue 4, 2010, p. 126, Stuart Walker infuses the "personal meaning" into triple bottom line of sustainability (economic, environmental, social).
[176] Stuart Walker, *The Spirit of Design: objects, environment and meaning,* pp. 204-205.
[177] Gregory Splinter, *Design through contemplation*, M of Arch, thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1992.

yet characterized by stillness of the mind. Whatever occurs after that is being part of ideation and goes on paper in the form of drawing. Nothing on this stage is rational driven. Splinter revisits the contemplative drawing after 1-2 days. Based on rational eye this time, he identifies patterns and unexpected meaning embedded to shapes, lines and angles. According to him, there is not much to chisel: the design intention and solution are fully there. Now, the question is how such practices might be relevant to inclusive design. What I get from all these examples is that they exhibit a sense of inclusiveness and integration: utility and aesthetic/spiritual, intellect and intuition, form and function, technology and environment, local and universal. From this perspective, inclusive design has things to balance: digital with physical, ableism with disability, technology with environment & sustainability, utility with trans-utility, rational-based processes with intuitive-based processes, users with designers via empathy/compassion framework. Any thoughts on these Wheely LT?

WHEELY LT

What can I say after so complex thoughts being said already?

BROTHER LT

Anything you feel to share is valuable and welcome dear Wheely LT. As a matter of fact, there was my intention to ask you: what's your perception on the assistive devices you use? How are they meaningful to you?

WHEELY LT

My relation with assistive technologies is ambiguous. I use them and I enjoy them because I have to. They enable me to do things such walking or transferring which normally I can't. In this regard, I see them as extensions of me and most of the time as reliable helpers. However, they are signifiers of my disability too: silently and innocently, they remind what I can't fully perform. When they break or exhibit limitations, I hate being dependent and circumscribed to them. Also, I never forget that they can't replace human support and presence. Could they have other than utilitarian meaning? Certainly yes. They enable and connect. Therefore they can participate in the construction of positive self, sustain a sense of human dignity, belonging to a community and actively shaping a community. I could define them as vectors of connectivity with the self and the others. Due to this impact, it exemplifies how important is to design them at the highest quality and with maximum consideration. These products are going to help people on a daily basis, perhaps over many years. So reliability is a key factor. Basically, they enable or disable human beings within their environment. They impact the physical and psychological well-being of those who use them. Therefore, their success or failure is ultimately the reflection of empathy/compassion, care and inclusive thinking & attitudes of those who design and manufacture them. In this context, participation of disabled people in the design processes is important. Disabled are not abstract entities, nor just users that exhibit particular and predictable behaviors. They are human beings, all with wonders and quirks that

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can't be translated into design without direct exchange between designers and people of disability. The aesthetic dimension is important too. Quite often, people of disability confront with the notion of "ugliness". Good-looking products may lead to psychological comfort of those who use them. Although assistive or inclusive technologies come in good faith and intentions and exhibit many advantages, these alone do not exhaust meanings of inclusion. They also must intersect with ethical dimension. Are they considerate toward a healthy personal, natural, social and cultural environment through their design, manufacturing and distribution? Are they environmentally friendly? Do they foster inner and outer change or do they enforce status quo within the system they work in? Do they offer equitable acquirement? Do they leverage human happiness and interconnectedness?

DESIGNER LT

Definitely, these are profound and legitimate questions, clearly aligned with the concerns and insights already expressed by all. I do not hold all answers for them yet I have acquired by now enough awareness that allows me to navigate mindfully and meaningfully within my field. The notions of human interconnectedness, empathy/compassion were constantly employed through our dialog. Perhaps it's the right time to unfold them more and see how they could be inferred to designers and translated into better design outcomes. But first, what is empathy/compassion?

BROTHER LT

In general, empathy is defined as the capacity to share and understand what others think and feel.[178] [179] According to vernacular language, empathy is the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes". However, the notion is disputed between a variety of fields, from neuroscience to religion and there is no a general agreement in defining the term. Each researcher holds a particular definition.[180] The social-neuroscientist Tania Singer describes few components associated with the broad notion of empathy and their relationships and entails that some of them play a role in prosocial behaviour.[181] The neuroscientific model of empathy asserts that particular neuronal paths located into the anterior insular cortex are activated when empathic activities take place. This activity can be measured through Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (FMRI). Mimicry and emotional contagion are the little sisters of empathy while sympathy and compassion are the big sisters. Mimicry is the capacity to copy automatically another's affective expressions, voice shifts, postures and movements of body. Emotional contagion is mimicry-based but occurs outside of awareness in groups: if a baby is crying, all get crying. Yawning, laughing are another examples of emotional contagion. Both are not a sufficient process to experience empathy, Singer suggests. Empathy requires the ability to make distinction between the

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[178] F Ioannidou, 'Empathy and emotional intelligence: What is it really about?', *International Journal of Caring Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2008, pp. 118-123.
[179] *Empathy*, Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 15 February 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/empathy?q=empathy>.
[180] Singer & Lamm, *op. cit.,* p. 82.
[181] Singer et all, *op. cit*.

own self and the self of other. Thus, empathy is the ability to share what the other

thinks and feels while being aware of the source: I recognize in me what others

feel and think, I share them, I get in resonance with the other's mind and affective

state. Too much empathy can lead to distress. There are two types of empathy:

affective and cognitive.[182] Affective empathy refers to the immediate emotional

response of the observer in relation to what the observed experiences. The

cognitive empathy is more concerned with cognitive perspective taking of the

other, imagining the situation of the other from their perspective and less with

sharing feelings with the other. Thus a difference between two of them results: in

the case of affective empathy, the observer identifies with the observed. In the

case of cognitive empathy the observer experiences the observed from beside,

from his/her own perspective. Empathy is a necessary step towards sympathy and

compassion but does not necessarily carry prosocial motivations.[183] A criminal

might have empathy for victims in the sense he/she knows exactly what they feel

however compassion for them might be missing. Sympathy and compassion

implies emotional detachment yet concern for the other. Sympathy is a form of

compassion but more passive, suggesting a general kinship and sometimes

condescendence for the other. Compassion is a deep awareness of the suffering of

another coupled with the urge to alleviate it. Etymologically, compassion means,

"to suffer with".[184] Empathy and compassion are innate and can be trained but

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[182] Kouprie & Visser, *op. cit.*, p. 443.
[183] Singer & Lamm, *op. cit.,* p. 84.
[184] *Compassion*, Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 15 February 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/compassion>.

only compassion might lead to pro-social/altruistic behavior. Being

compassionate might reduce physiological stress and reap the benefits of social

support.[185] New research shows that compassion can be fostered by contemplative

practices.[186] These studies seem to be congruent with the ethics of religious

traditions and even secular ethics where compassion is known as a Golden

Rule.[187] "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself" sounds

in its statement. In Christianity, the foundation of compassion resides both in the

love of/for God and the love of the neighbor.[188] Furthermore, Christ commands

His followers to love their enemies and persecutors.[189] Nobody can claim to love

God if he/she hates the neighbor.[190] Thus the true love and compassion have

unconditional character. Is it possible? What's the foundation for that? I

mentioned already God became flesh to unite with humanity and restore it from

brokenness. God became man so man can become God, asserts Orthodox

Christianity. This is an act out of love. He empties Himself and makes space for

human contingency. God becomes solidary with people and serves them. He is

one of/with them and experiences human limitations within his body. Particularly

He connects with the sinners, the poor, the disabled and the oppressed and

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[185] BJ Cosley, Shannon K McCoy, Laura R Saslow, Elissa S Epel. 'Is compassion for others stress buffering? Consequences of compassion and social support for physiological reactivity to stress', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 46, 2010, pp. 816–823.
[186] Anna, Mikulak, *Can Meditation Make You a More Compassionate Person?*, Association for Psychological Science, 1 April 2013, viewed on 13 April 2013, <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/can-meditation-make-you-a-more-compassionate-person.html>.
[187] Karen Amstrong, *op. cit.*
[188] Luke 10, 27.
[189] Matthew 5, 44.
[190] John 4, 20.

restores their brokenness. This has happened by subverting human competition and shifting the identity of people and their mentalities, opening them to the grace of God. He reveals Himself as the source and the power of such transformation. Therefore, the true compassion must grow in connection with God, not just in the human desire to accomplish social justice or change. As it was suggested that assessing and assisting human brokenness is both personal and communitarian endeavor so do love and compassion. We all share the same humanity and when one gets affected the whole is affected. We all are interdependent whether we are aware or not. Interconnectedness becomes more evident when put in the perspective of salvation. Christianity is clear in this regard: nobody gets into Heaven by making bad things onto people. Thus, for Christians, the community of the Church is the place where human brokenness is assisted and healed through love and compassion, which are acquired and developed by human subjects in the presence of God's grace and the practice of virtues.

WHEELY LT

Thank you Brother LT. Could you relate the notions of empathy and compassion with pity? I think a lot of people, particularly people of disability, may find uncomfortable the notion of compassion because they equal compassion with pity. What's pity?

BROTHER LT

This is an interesting question. Actually, the term is intriguing because in its Latin roots "pieta" (piety) means "dutifulness" in religion[191] or "devotion and reverence to religious practices and God."[192] Pity is defined as "the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others."[193] So, the term genuinely has sympathetic connotation and I suspect only through disingenuous usage can get unsympathetic connotation in the sense of superior condescendence. Now, we have seen that compassion is about experiencing sameness and an urge to alleviate sufferance. Definitely I understand the reserve and frustration of those who might be labeled with 'pitifulness' in the negative sense: it can really hurt and offend. Perhaps the practice of compassion might be helpful in this case for the offended side.

DESIGNER LT

As designer I find very helpful these definitions and distinctions. I think both notions of empathy and compassion is helpful in creating more inclusive attitudes and practices for designers and design. They remind us that audiences are not abstractions but real people, disjunction from and non-direct interaction of designers with their audience is artificial and damaging for themselves, design practices and design outcomes, we don't only have cognitive capacities but

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[191] *Piety*, Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 15 February 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/piety?q=piety>.
[192] Piety, Your Dictionary, viewed on 15 February 2013, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/piety>.
[193] Pity, Oxford Dictionaries, viewed on 15 February 2013, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pity?q=pity>.

affective too and they need to be balanced when understanding audiences and designing, we all are interdependent and interconnected and any time life can put each one of us in the position of those whom we despise, offend, judge or oppress. Personally, I find the notion of "user" reductive even though I understand its practicality in the context of design. Surely, designers address specific needs and they have to narrow down things about the audience in order to come up with quick and concrete solutions. However, understanding and addressing audience' needs that happens in disjunction to multiple personal factors (psychological, ethical, spiritual, social, environmental or even economic) might be problematic. It is so because their profound relationships would not be translated into design practices and outcomes. A blind and reductive line of utilitarianism is in general pursued in design. Fortunately, alternatives do exist: they try to solve many of the problems faced by the communities of disabled to which Wheely LT made reference through his stories. But even they are far from being effective and balanced. I am going to employ here two antagonist practices suggested by Human-Centred Design literature. Inclusive Design is committed to Human-Centred Design's (HCD) principles: participative audience to understand their practices, needs and preferences; multi-disciplinary work-team; iteration of design solutions, testing and evaluation; "appropriate allocation of functions between people and technology."[194] Very generous in theory, these principles generate a few practical concerns. The Social Model of disability posits that people of

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[194] Marc Steen, *op.* cit., p. 72.

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disability become the experts of their needs.[195] Therefore it is suggested that only

people who hold the experience of disability or related framework of meaning

could adequately research disability.[196] How can this view be translated into

design? Is this a valid assumption? In general, within HCD practice, audience's

participation is circumscribed to the research phase. People get interviewed, they

fill questionnaires, participate in focus groups or ethnography. Thus empirical

data is collected and this becomes the main driver of design solutions. One idea is

favored and then gets into prototyping. Evaluation is made with audience that

justify the design solution.[197] Some argue that this HCD practice is no more

human-centred since is data-centered.[198] In 2009, a lead visual designer left

Google due to its dependency on data-centered design.[199] He was required to

justify empirically all his design decisions even for the most banal.[200] 41

gradations of blue were designed for a test user in order to decide the best

between two shadows of blue.[201] Such view tends to weaken the agency of

designers, reducing them to performing role in line with data.[202] Design is

rhetorical in its nature and processes through 'ethos' (character of manufacturer

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[195] Guy Dewsbury et al, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
[196] Guy Dewsbury et al, *ibid.*, p. 154.
[197] Erin Friess, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[198] Erin Friess, *ibid.*, p. 40.
[199] Miguel Helft, *Data, Not Design, Is King in the Age of Google*, The New York Times, 9 May 2009, viewed on 17 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/10/business/10ping.html>.
[200] Randall Stross, *The Auteur vs. the Committee*, The New York Times, 23 July 2011, viewed on 17 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/technology/what-apple-has-that-google-doesnt-an-auteur.html>.
[201] Laura Holson, *Puttting a Bolder Face on Google*, The New York Times, 28 February 2009, viewed on 18 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/business/01marissa.html?pagewanted=all>.
[202] Erin Friess, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

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embedded into a design product, 'logos' (argumentation behind the design solution) and 'pathos' (fit of the design outcome with the audience).[203] Designers make use of their intuitions and conscience in taking design decisions (ethos), manifest their own empathic/emotional understanding of audience experience (pathos) and provide their own reasoning of data through reflection (logos).[204] A design exclusively data-centred augments the logo-centric element (reasoning) of its rhetoric yet neglects or dismisses the other elements: emotion (pathos) and character (ethos) of designers.[205] This HCD practice is not necessarily at fault since it proves to work efficiently for companies as Google however, it cannot be considered rhetorical (persuasive) and really human-centred. In the context of Inclusive Design such practice may appear as empowering the audience since its participation is encouraged and employed. However, the quality, efficiency and its relation with designers raise legitimate concerns. The second example that I am recalling here is about how in good faith, HCD designers end up eluding or betraying the principles of audience's participation and multiple-disciplinary approach. Quite often, in an HCD project, designers & team bring their own agenda and subject matter while doing research and employing participatory design.[206] This means that relevant topic or questions of a project might prove irrelevant for the audience while relevant experiences of audience might be found

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[203] R Buchanan, 'Declaration by Design: rhetoric, Argument, and Demonstration In Design Practice', *Design Issues*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1985, pp. 4–22.
[204] Erin Friess, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
[205] M. Leff, 'Rhetoric and Dialectic in the Twenty-first Century', *Argumentation*, vol. 14, 2000, p. 244.
[206] Marc Steen, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

off-topic by designers and therefore omitted and unmet. The designer Marc Steen describes how in the context of a HCD project for police application, the design team privileged its ideas and ambition over the police.[207] During the research workshops four areas of problems were discovered and police suggested a need for a laptop in their cars to access information remotely. The design team decided to address just one area dismissed the need for laptop and instead advanced & pursued the idea of a telecom application instead. This is another example of a non-empathic approach of designers in relation to their audience. The audience is objectified and melted into a self-closure thinking.[208] While designers would believe in such cases they do creative and innovative work, in reality they manifest a tendency to program innovation and to embrace closure over openness.[209] When designers rely on and manifest closured expertise and drive projects based on that expertise without a real exchange and negotiation with the audience, fresh and effective design can't happen. A balance between audience' needs & concerns and designers ambitions & skills must interplay.

WHEELY LT

How can such a balance be achieved?

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[207] Marc Steen, *ibid.*, p. 76.
[208] Marc Steen, *ibid.*, p. 75.
[209] Marc Steen, *ibid.*, p. 78.

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DESIGNER LT

I do not hold a definitive answer since I haven't seen yet an ideal design model for attaining inclusivity. We all converge to the conclusion that inadequate design might reflect issues of empathy and compassion between designers and audiences. Also, we know already that pro-social behavior is based on the degrees of acquiring compassion. The traditional design model, which is designer-centred, empowers excessively designers and exhibits limited empathy in relation to audiences. Participatory design was developed to balance such deficiency by moving audiences into design processes. However, in practice, both designers and audiences continue to exert control over the other. An empathic/compassionate approach is needed yet questions such as "what makes designers/audiences more empathic and compassionate to one another?" and "how should we delineate their roles and attributes within the design processes?" need to be properly explored. In the late '90s, the design field started to focus on empathic concerns in the attempt to develop better and more efficient design outcomes.[210] Certain empathic techniques were explored and developed: research through direct interactions and observations done by designers for understanding similarities and differences; empathic communication of the audience's world through photos, audience's quotes and handwriting, descriptions of audience, storytelling techniques (personas, scenarios, storyboards and role-playing); and indirect or imaginative experience of audience through simulations and role-playing techniques

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[210] Kouprie & Visser, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

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(theatrical props, suggestive environmental atmosphere, experience prototyping).[211] Specific design steps, which employ both affective and cognitive empathy, were proposed as a result of this focus on empathic techniques: discovery, immersion, connection and detachment.[212] In the 'Discovery' step willingness to emerge into the audience's world determines the level of empathy to be exhibited. The 'Immersion' step corresponds to the initial research phase where designers experience directly the audience's world and take its perspective as it is. The 'Connection' step helps designers to find meaning by getting into emotional resonance with the audience based on in recalling the audience's own experiences and emotional response to them. In the 'Detachment' step, designers step out of the audience's world through use of cognitive empathy and practice of compassion in order to ideate. Therefore, a form of empathy and full compassion not only could drive ideation but both cognitive and intuitive reasoning could interplay. The user-testing phase can involve again affective and cognitive empathy in combination and it is truly a context where both designers and audience might manifest mutual empathy. If a designer is not expert of the audience's needs, audience is not a design expert, they both might learn from each other. All these techniques and steps that attempt to infuse empathy into design do not explain what would determine designers and audiences to manifest and to develop empathy & compassion in a design context. So far, our dialog has suggested that developing awareness on what divides us inwardly is a key factor

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[211] Kouprie & Visser, *ibid*., pp. 439-441.
[212] Kouprie & Visser, *ibid*., p. 446.

in acquiring positive/right thinking and positive/right action. Therefore, the presence or lack of empathy & compassion might be dependent on how each human subject receives and makes meaning of the world. These are inevitably translated into design decisions through designers' or audience's mindset. Interconnectedness and inclusion are inherently empathic and compassionate. Divisiveness and exclusion is alien to empathy and compassion. A view over the world that encourages them to occur and manifest would have a positive impact on the field of design. Such vision has made a deep impact onto me as designer. **Being aware that I design for people with whom I share the same human nature given by God, to whom I am not superior in any sense (on the contrary) and to whose' condition I could potentially switch anytime, makes a big difference and leads me to manifest empathic & compassionate attitude & thinking when designing.** Also it determines me to develop a wise stewardship of my creative skills and helps me to consider the impact of my design towards human subjects and surrounding world. Hopefully, such awareness would be more and more discovered and shared by creative people in the field of design so that non-inclusive attitudes, products, services and systems such as those experienced by Wheely LT and people of disability worldwide would happen more rarely and finally be completely eradicated.

WHEELY LT

Thank you both for this great discussion.

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BROTHER LT

I have been honoured to be part of it.

DESIGNER LT

It has been a great joy for me too.

SO WHAT?

WHAT THE DIALOG HAS COVERED

READER

Interesting journey, isn't it? How do you feel?

STUDENT LT

Exhausted! I am kidding. I think I have drafted a meaningful and mindful work.

READER

Would you be so kind as to provide a summary of the dialog between the selves?

STUDENT LT

My first impulse is not to do that. I hope my readers would fully cover the dialog

instead of reading an outline. However, I will provide a brief summary for

practical reason. So, the dialog starts with a personal story that reveals issues of

inclusion on several levels. An accident while crossing an intersection in Canada

exposes non-inclusive attitudes of people, mentalities, technologies, design,

systems and policies. This incident is located in a larger worldwide picture where

people of disabilities continue to be among the most marginalized group in the

world. Broadly, the motives behind this state of affairs relate to the ways in which

inclusiveness is constructed in the minds of people. So, it is learned the

assumption that Inclusion has to happen inwardly first and then is possible

outwardly. Specifically, it is examined how Lucian as Disabled, Designer and

Theologian (Christian Orthodox) creates meaning of inclusiveness in the context

of disability and sufferance, creativity and design. Thus firstly, disability and sufferance are examined from medical, social and theological perspective. A basic question in this regard is whether disability comprises a personal trait or a relative condition. The medical model traces a sharp distinction: disability and sufferance are deviations from normality therefore the traits apply here. The Social model rejects the medical model and defines disability as a relative condition and a social construct. While this creates awareness around issues of exclusion and human rights, this model ends up privileging a version of disability against the others 'abled'. Also, it asserts full expertise of the disabled in regards to disability domain that might be problematic in design practices. The Christian Orthodox model of disability integrates the both views and goes beyond them: sufferance has not only a personal and social dimension, yet a spiritual one. This model views illness as separation from God through sin and wellbeing as reconnection with God through grace. Health is a relative condition according to this model and soul exhibits the capacity to transgress bodily limitations when they occur. Otherwise, body and soul form a whole, designed by God for sanctification. Discrimination of those in need and sufferance is an expression of a social fragmentation and lack of awareness that we all share the same features of human nature. Anytime, anyone can experience its limitations. The theological model asserts that a higher power is needed to transcend human nature's limitations. In relation to this idea is asserted conception that illness can be an ascetic practice, a springboard to God. Through Christ, God came to the proximity of humans and

experienced its limitations. In the person of Christ, who is both God and man, healing and restoration of human nature are possible. This model holds that human nature can be deified: God became man that man might become God. The theological bases of such views are discussed. The dialog moves further toward meanings of inclusion in the context of creativity and design. A background is created: how secularism, as monoculture based on economic interest has devaluated relationships between humans and between humans and their environment. Scientific progress brought positive and negative things: technologies help humans to travel faster, to communicate in real time wherever on the globe, to acquire a tremendous material life comfort and to live more and better at the expense of environmental decline and social inequities. Our material culture has become unsustainable; our interrelationships became fragmented and driven by individualism and greed. We lost our true humanity; we forgot how to manifest empathically and compassionately. This tension is easily recognizable in the corporate design, which itself is the result of secularism and the arm of it. Such design is guided by notions such as "form follows function", problem-solving, technology, utility, instrumentality, rationality, analytically, user, agency and individualism. It needs to be balanced by the opposite notions: "form follows meaning", problem-balancing, natural and social environments, aesthetics and ethics, subjectivity and holism, intuition, synthesis, responsibility and inter-subjectivity. In the past, religious forms of creativity and design embodied such notions: Byzantine Iconography, Shakuhachi flute and Wabi Sabi. In the present,

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social responsible design aims for them: Human Centred Design (Mark Steen), Sustainable Design (Stuart Walker), Contemplative-based Design (Gregory Splinter). An assumption voiced by the three selves is that non-inclusive practices in design reflect lack of empathy & compassion internalization within designers. So, based on the studies of Tania Singer, a social neuroscientist, definitions of empathy, sympathy, compassion and pity are drafted. Empathy is the ability to share what the other think and feel being aware of an external source. Sympathy and compassion grow from empathy however they imply emotional detachment. Sympathy is a passive form of compassion while compassion takes an active stance: it aims to alleviate. Both lead to pro-social behavior in contrast to empathy. Pity in its original meaning has a sympathetic connotation however it is currently operationalized as superior condescendence. Compassion is a common principal in all religions and even it could be embraced by non-religious philosophies based on the universality of its message: "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself". In Christianity, compassion emerges from love for God and neighbour; furthermore Christ sets its boundaries in the love of enemies. Therefore, for Christians, God nourishes the true compassion. Empathy and compassion are essential in social responsible design and particularly in the case of Human-Centred Design and Inclusive Design. Even though Empathic Design developed some techniques to infuse empathy, it does not explain what would determine designers and audiences to acquire them. Their necessity and value must be based on the notion of interconnectedness and sharing of the same

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humanity. Such awareness needs to be internalized by designers. Also, a problem

in Human Centered Design is to create a bi-directional compassionate framework:

designers and audiences need each other in order to overcome design challenges.

If designer is not expert of audience's needs, audience is not a design expert. They

both might learn from each other.

SO WHAT?

SOME ANSWERS,

IMPLICATIONS,

LIMITATIONS AND

FUTURE WORK

READER

Have you achieved the goals of the project? How have the research questions
been addressed?

STUDENT LT

I leave open these questions to the readers. However here is my perspective. The
first question was, "What is the role of self and identity in respect to design?"
This self-study suggests that self and identity might play a fundamental role in
design. In general, design emphasizes the creative skills of designers however
designing for people also requires skills such as empathy and even more so,
compassion, in order to fully understand the complexity of and responsibility
toward people for whom designers are designing. In order to understand why self
and identity might hold great significance for designers and their field, some
subsidiary questions may need to be addressed: what would motivate a designers
to consider inclusive practices and what would make them exclude them? What
would lead a designer to question unethical practices in design or to engage with
ethical ones? My study attempts to provide an answer to these questions. Inclusive
or exclusive attitudes do not emerge from nowhere and do not happen randomly:
they seem dependent on each one's configuration of the self/selves and
identity/identities. This dependence could mean that people, including designers,
manifest outwardly and make exclusive or inclusive choices based on their inward
human profile. Such meanings get internalized; they take form first at the level of
the self through experience and interaction, empathy and compassion. In the case

of Designer LT, inclusive accounts and development have come through interactions with I-positions of Disabled (Wheely LT) and Theologian (Brother LT). Remember, this exchange happens between three instances of the self of the same person, in the context of Dialogical Self Theory framework which is a helpful a way of negotiation and representation of internal/self-processes. Wheely LT allows the Designer LT to have a direct experience of disability and sufferance. It is an experience *from within* about what a disability might be, what challenges it posits. This truly can be a great advantage for a disabled-designer who designs for a niche-audience but cannot be a panacea for all designing inclusively. Wheely LT might know a lot about wheelchair-bound persons however he might need to learn many things about mentally challenged people when he would design, for instance, online interfaces for them. Therefore, is it important for an inclusive designer to experience a disability? Does he/she need to have a disability in order to design inclusively? This study suggests that the experience of disability, direct or simulated is important for an inclusive designer. A major difference between a disabled-designer and a non-disabled-designer resides in the experience of disability: a disabled-designer is much aware of the disability phenomenon.

However, valuation of such experience relies on empathic & compassionate capacities and what nurtures them. Disability can be experienced directly or through simulation. Simulation of disability involves empathy. But wanting to alleviate disability requires a much stronger force: compassion. The social

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neuroscientist Tania Singer asserts that empathy is needed to understand other people but only compassion can trigger a pro-social behavior. Singer provides an intriguing example: an abuser might exhibit empathy for the victims in the sense that he/she understands what the victims feel however the abuser may not feel compassion for them. This might have important implications for design and explain perhaps why designers embrace or discharge ethical choices in design. It is not inferred suggestion that designers are unkind however they might use empathy for any kind of design but for inclusive design they might need to appropriate an ethical/compassionate framework. Empathy does not necessarily involve an ethical component. Compassion is linked to the notions of ethics, interconnectedness and interdependency.

Brother LT exposes how his religious view encompasses and nurtures these notions. According to this view, sufferance is a universal and inevitable experience while health is a relative condition. Every human being experience disability in certain forms: we all share the virtues and the deficiencies of the same humanity. Thus disability-based discrimination has no justification and it appears unethical when awareness of interconnectedness and solidarity are eluded. Compassion becomes a natural result when the awareness around human interconnectedness and solidarity gets restored. Some would note the sameness between such perspective and a secular perspective and would question the difference between them. Brother LT would circumscribe the possibility of such

awareness to arise, to a theistic framework while a secular voice would base such possibility on a non-theistic and humanistic framework.

Also, I fully understand that a claim about creativity informed by a supernatural force, as Brother LT suggests, is problematic from a non-religious perspective. In this regard, my study does not make such full claim. However, based on personal observations and scarce literature, this project just underlines the necessity to open an inclusive dialog between the rational knowing paradigm specific to our society and holistic, beyond-rational knowing paradigm, specific to the religious world. Contemplative practices from religions, due to their holistic approach, have the potential to enhance different human skills, including creativity and compassion. Such approaches might prove useful to design and it is an area that is worthy of future study. However, this project drafts some contemporary examples in this regard. Stuart Walker provides interesting design projects that expose the limitations of rational and utilitarian approaches to design while the architect Gregory Splinter goes much further and exposes a creative method contemplative-based.

Last but not least, secular voices may contest the ethical qualities of theistic frameworks and provide certain examples of exclusion from the religious world. It is not the purpose of this study to make such inventory and to open a debate around them. This project focuses on the positive aspects of such a framework. It consciously incorporates a particular faith perspective in regards to human nature, disability, creativity and ethics, not to be imposed to the readers but to expose

certain helpful and insightful elements that have made, for instance, the Designer LT to acquire a pro-social behavior and to embrace inclusive practices in his design. Brother LT offers to Designer LT not only a theological perspective that engenders an introspective attitude that enables self-exploration but also an ethical and spiritual framework on human nature, disability and creativity that makes the Designer LT navigate inclusively in the context of design. With regards to the first research question, I may conclude that inclusive design cannot happen without inclusive designers who internalize inclusive meanings. This may seem obvious but the true challenge is understanding what makes a designer embrace inclusive practices.

The second research question is "How can self/identity positions can be described, distinguished and reconciled?" The framework of Dialogical Self Theory (DST) asserts that each person holds a plurality of I-positions that function as members in the society of mind. Such selves arise from our past into our present and could be transformed for next future through internal dialog, awareness and nourishment. DST allows the identification, description, distinctiveness, and reconciliation or emergency of selves lacking inclusiveness or committed to it. Details of this process were described extensively under the methodology chapter.[213] In terms of identification tools were mentioned Self-Confrontation Method, Personal Position Repertoire, Composition Work, Emotional Coaching and Personification. In the context of psychotherapy,

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[213] This study, pp. 13-18 and 46-47.

counseling, coaching and education, a trained partner is generally involved in the stage of identification. However, for the purpose of this study, I did not require such support: the I-positions I proposed were familiar to me and relevant to the notion of inclusiveness. Personification was selected and used more as a tool of representation and communication. Three I-positions were employed: I as Disabled (Wheely LT), I as Designer (Designer LT) and I as Theologian (Brother LT). They each have 'heart', names, specific voices and quite large autonomy. Through dialog each of them exposes a distinct identity and different worldview. Under DST framework, meaning is generated through questioning and answering, agreeing or disagreeing, conflicting or cooperating, negotiation and integration. The dialog between Designer LT, Wheely LT and Brother LT reflects cooperation and agreement rather than conflict and disagreement. This approach is compliant with DST framework that considers for instance, the emergence of a new I-position, a hidden voice moved to foreground or a meta-position that unifies a coalition of positions, as signifiers of optimal or integrative organization of selves. Brother LT tends to act as a meta-position voice in relation to the rest in the sense that infuses a meaningful linkage between Designer LT and Wheely LT. Designer LT can be considered a meta-position too depending on the time and situation within the dialog. He exhibits the ability to connect design to the experience of disability of Wheely LT and the spiritual framework of Brother LT. This study focuses on a situation of a disabled-designer. A question arises: is the DST framework informative to a non-disabled-designer as well? Certainly. In the case

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of a non-disabled-designer it might happen to emerge an inclusive position by foregrounding a hidden position that is connected to an experience of sufferance. For example, the illness of a parent, a grandparent, a friend or even a pet narrated by an I-child position might lead through dialog, empathy and compassion to an inclusive insight needed for a I-designer self. In the same way, inclusive positions could emerge or develop between conflicting self-positions. For instance, Wheely LT is concerned why many design outcomes fail in terms of inclusiveness. He has experienced a hostile world that points toward a hostile design. On his turn, Designer LT wonders what would determine designers to embrace inclusive practices and how. Brother LT reconciles these perspectives by emphasizing the necessity of a compassionate framework.

The third research question is concerned how self-positions participate in the construction of inclusive meaning. It was already suggested that under the DST framework meaning is generated through dialog. The Designer LT, Wheely LT and Brother LT embody different concerns and different world perspectives. Through questioning and answering, specific concerns get unfolded and creative and innovative thoughts are drafted. Internalized multiple perspectives might foster creative thinking. Translation into action would be the next step. This may appear as a too obvious conclusion: design requires thought and introspection. The question is, how much ethical or even spiritual thought do designers encompass through design? This study suggests that those might exhibit inclusive features useful to designers and designing.

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READER

What implications can be drawn?

STUDENT LT

Navigated by DST framework as a method of representation and meaning-making, this study exposes how one disabled-designer (Designer LT) has internalized inclusive meanings. Specifically, his engagement with inclusive practices in design is informed by the personal experience of a physical disability (Wheely LT voice) and a theological perspective (Brother LT voice). Wheely LT brings disability phenomenon in the heart of the Designer LT and Brother LT comes with an ethical and spiritual perspective over the human nature, disability and creativity. Even though a firsthand experience of disability as an important advantage for designing inclusively is emphasized through this self-study, this does not limit the possibility for non-disabled designers to design for the disabled. The study suggests such possibility through embracing an empathic & compassionate framework by both sides: designers and receivers of design. Also, it makes an important distinction between empathy and compassion: only the last one infuses a pro-social behavior that is linked to the notions of ethics and interconnectedness. This suggests that all designers uses empathy in design processes however designing inclusively might require a compassionate framework. This framework provides a holistic and more humane approach over the human subjects that is lacking within the design models. Even though this

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study emphasizes compassion based on a religious framework, it is suggested that DST methodology exhibits the capacity to infer compassion by employing different thinking frameworks, religious and non-religious. Also, religious frameworks may suggest an interesting subject of future inquiry for design: enhancing intuitive and creative skills through contemplative practices. In conclusion, DST framework provides a way to identify and develop compassionate and inclusive voices at the level of the self. This study suggests that without the occurrence of such position/s, inclusive understandings and practices are not possible. The ultimate implication would be that the success of inclusive products, services, systems or policies might be dependent on how inclusion is constructed and internalized by designers at the level of their self and identity.

READER

What limitations of the project are acknowledged?

STUDENT LT

First of all limitations are linked to the methodological framework. This study is qualitative research situated at the intersection of interpretive and critical research paradigm. This is not an empirical study. It is written from a subjective and reflective perspective: it does not claim an exhaustive truth. Even though self-study is considered a type of research that connects the personal to the cultural

and it contends that by studying one's life, generalizable conclusions can be drawn, in the context of design such perspective might exhibit limitations. The methodology employed here, particularly the DST framework, can be tested by designers in future research and then the assumptions which were made here would have much weight. For instance an educational module that trains students to employ a DST framework could be designed. As noted earlier it is worth exploring through further study a spiritual approach to creativity and of enhancing intuitive and creative skills through contemplative practices. In any case, a spiritual approach exposes the merit of underlining the necessity of inward dialog that is missing from contemporary design and other fields. Also, limitations of an ethical framework religious-based are acknowledged but this study emphasizes the benefits of such approach. Compassion is welcomed from whatever direction it can come. It is a necessity of our world. Ultimately, a limitation of this project might be the fact it is written consciously from a particular faith perspective that is not counterpointed by other theistic or non-theistic perspectives. Given the self-exploratory nature of this MRP, other perspectives were outside the scope.

READER

Any final thoughts?

STUDENT LT

I would reinforce the idea there is no inclusive design outside of inclusive thinkers

or designers and what Brother LT asserted in the dialog: Inclusion has to happen

inwardly first and then is possible out in the world.

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