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Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age: From Method to Metaphor (Leonardo Books)

Richard Coyne

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Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age puts the theoretical discussion of computer systems and information technology on a new footing. Shifting the discourse from its usual rationalistic framework, Richard Coyne shows how the conception, development, and application of computer systems is challenged and enhanced by postmodern philosophical thought. He places particular emphasis on the theory of metaphor, showing how it has more to offer than notions of method and models appropriated from science.

Coyne examines the entire range of contemporary philosophical thinking—including logical positivism, analytic philosophy, pragmatism, phenomenology, critical theory, hermeneutics, and deconstruction—comparing them and showing how they differ in their consequences for design and development issues in electronic communications, computer representation, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and multimedia. He also probes the claims made of information technology, including its presumptions of control, its so-called radicality, even its ability to make virtual worlds, and shows that many of these claims are poorly founded.

Among the writings Coyne visits are works by Heidegger, Adorno, Benjamin, Gadamer, Derrida, Habermas, Rorty, and Foucault. He relates their views to information technology designers and critics such as Herbert Simon, Alan Kay, Terry Winograd, Hubert Dreyfus, and Joseph Weizenbaum. In particular, Coyne draws extensively from the writing of Martin Heidegger, who has presented one of the most radical critiques of technology to date.

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