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Body, mind and wearables

How technology alters the conception of the body

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[Abstract]

In this article I argue that whereas quantified technologies that measure physical functioning and worn on the body encourage a mind-body dualism, affective experiences caused by haptic devices emphasize a unity of the two. I turn to French ontologist Gilles Deleuze's concept of immediate encounters that precede subject-object relations and contrast these encounters and their productive character with mediated experiences to illustrate the fundamental differences between the two wearable technologies. I furthermore argue that our experience with, and understanding of, wearing textile integrated haptic technologies can be enriched by applying the concepts of the 'extended felt-body', 'felt-body islands', and 'corporeal communication' as coined by German phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz. The case study used throughout this article is based on an auto-ethnographic, first person research project into a heartbeat monitor worn attached to a sports bra and a posture corrector worn just under the collar bone. In combination with the philosophical perspective suggested, the results from this project open up a plethora of potential new ways of creating and experiencing future fashions.

[Keywords]

Wearables, fashion, felt-body experiences