# On the Imaginal Edge of Technologies
Introduction to *Imagining Technologies / Technologizing Imagination(s) – Vol. 1*

## Agostino Cera, Annabelle Dufourcq, Andrea Zoppis

**Agostino Cera** is an Associate Professor of Theoretical Philosophy in the Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici at the University of Ferrara (Italy). His research focuses on German thought between the 19th and 20th centuries (Löwith, Heidegger, Anders, Nietzsche), philosophical anthropology, philosophy of technology, philosophy of cinema, and, more recently, the Anthropocene.
**Email:** agostino.cera@unife.it

**Annabelle Dufourcq** is Professor of Philosophical Anthropology, chair of the department of metaphysics and philosophical anthropology, and coordinator of the CCEP (Center for Contemporary European Philosophy) at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies, Radboud University. Her areas of expertise are phenomenology, existentialism, contemporary continental philosophy, philosophy of imagination and the imagination, ontology, eco-phenomenology, and animal studies. In 2022, She received the Radboud Science Award for her research on the relationship between the human imagination and the imaginative capacities of non-human animals.
**Email:** annabelle.dufourcq@ru.nl

**Andrea Zoppis** is a PhD Candidate in the Joint PhD Programme in Transcendental Philosophy and Reflexive Society at the University of Ferrara (Italy) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (Brazil). His current research focuses on Gilbert Simondon's concept of techno-aesthetics, examined through the phenomenological perspective of Mikel Dufrenne's philosophy. He recently completed a research period abroad at Radboud University in Nijmegen (Netherlands). His main interests lie in contemporary French philosophy, philosophy of technology, and aesthetics.
**Email:** andrea.zoppis@unife.it

We find it appropriate to begin this introduction by explaining a variation from our initial project. The quantity and quality of the proposals we received convinced us to double this issue of *I Castelli di Yale*, dividing it into two volumes: the first – titled *On the Imaginal Edge of Technologies* – is the one introduced by these lines, while the next will be published by spring of next year. This change in plans represents the best acknowledgment of the value of our proposal to dedicate an *ad hoc* investigation to *the intimate relationship between imagination and technology*. More specifically, *the role that imagination plays in understanding our involvement in an increasingly technological world*, namely in a context where the *technisches Zeitalter* theorized by philosophical reflection nearly a century ago has since taken on the guise of a "techno-sphere," "techno-cosm," or even "techno-cene": the brand new *oikos* or living space within which the *conditio humana* must find its place.

The main common thread that emerges from the contributions hosted here, despite their diversity, confirms what was suggested by the CfA: *the relationship between technology and imagination is undergoing a substantial reconfiguration*, in the sense and direction of an *osmosis* or *chiasm*. That is to say, not only is imagination increasingly conditioned and «challenged forth» (in the Heideggerian sense) by the unstoppable technological development called to adapt to it (this is the most immediate evidence), but technology itself finds – or could/should find – in the efforts of imagination to keep pace with it, indications to guide its future evolution (this is the less immediate but likely more urgent evidence). As a

result, *finding new ways of thinking, investigating, and articulating our imaginative involvement in the technological (neo)environment* is becoming increasingly urgent.

Actually, it was precisely on this osmotic/chiasmatic outcome of the relationship between technology and imagination that we had placed our bet from the very beginning, titling the issue *Imagining Technologies / Technologizing Imagination(s)*, and it is precisely on such an aspect that this first volume already presents inspiring exemplifications at different levels. Hence, a possible "ideal index" for it would involve dividing it into three sections, that is, *scenarios* (Guchet, Dalmasso & Pirandello, Scotti), *cases* (Gerola & Robaey, Pezzano), and *authors* (Malaspina, Oraldi, Valenti).

With regard to the *scenarios*, Xavier Guchet's essay (*The Imaginary of the Transplanted Organ*) proposes a comprehensive rethinking of the epistemology and even the ontology of *organ transplantation*, opposing the remnants of Cartesianism that still persist in the medical(ized) conception of the body. The author aims to demonstrate how the imaginary associated with this field can «*benefit from being examined in the light of the premodern Greek concept of organon*».

Anna Caterina Dalmasso and Sofia Pirandello (*Augmented Imagination. Thinking Technology Beyond Externalisation*) focus on the dialectic between «*prosthesis*» and «*epithesis*», namely the «*two-fold dynamic*» between externalization and internalization, aiming to establish «how technologies produce an amplification of the powers of imagination». In other words, whether and how «*augmented reality*» can also give rise to an «*augmented imagination*».

Alessandra Scotti's essay (*Technological Imaginaries: What Images for AI?*), on the other hand, deals with the *connection between images and imagination* in the face of that cutting-edge phenomenon of current technological development: *AI*. Drawing on insights from visual culture, the author examines the «*agentive*» and even «*thoughtful nature of AI images*», conceiving – following Castoriadis – the AI imaginary as «*both instituted and instituting*».

More generally, in the face of scenarios that are largely still taking shape, the authors featured in both volumes – and this is one of the reasons we are particularly grateful to them – have chosen to "accept the challenge", setting aside many of the prejudicial cautions and/or fears typical of the first generation of philosophers (and philosophies) of technology.

Concerning the proposed *concrete cases*, consider the challenge of a strong contamination/hybridization presented in Giacomo Pezzano's essay (*Comic Ideas. Reimaging Philosophical Practice in the Digital Age*), where philosophy agrees to renegotiate its basic rules of engagement. Our «increasingly visual mediascape» opens up the possibility of «imagining new ways of doing philosophy» by situating it in «*a new epistemic environment*». This is the essence of the project of a "comic-philosophy", based on the idea of «*comicepts*»: philosophical concepts «created and communicated by leveraging the specific features of comics as a medium».

Starting from the idea of imagination as «a collective capacity that supports forms of resistance and resilience», Alessio Gerola and Zoë Robaey (*Capturing Sustainable Imaginaries: Solarpunk as an Exercise in Radical Imagination*) emphasize the contribution that the «*radical imagination*», or the «*subversive imaginary*», of Climate Fiction and particularly *solar punk*, could offer to philosophical reflection at both an aesthetic-theoretical and a political level. However, this unprecedented "imaginative tank" must be safeguarded against the risk of «*elite capture*», which represents the dark side of its very success.

However, within a landscape characterized by «total (and perpetual) mobilization», some fixed points, some philosophical compasses, become a necessary support. It is impossible to face the challenge that technology poses to imagination today "bare-handed", that is, without equipping oneself with an adequate toolbox. In the *authors/currents* section,

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Vol. XII, n. 2, 2024 – ISSN 2282-5460

the volume therefore includes contributions dedicated to figures who are increasingly gaining the status of "classics" in the field of the most recent philosophy of technology and STS studies, after the so-called "empirical turn". This is the case, for instance, with authors like Gilbert Simondon, Bernard Stiegler, and Don Ihde.

Cecile Malaspina's essay (*Imagination and Invention: Rethinking AI as 'Automated Optimization' (AO) with Yagmur Denizhan and Gilbert Simondon*) addresses the issue of AI through the lens of Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of technology and the more recent reflections of Yagmur Denizhan. Highlighting the role of «*dedifferentiation*» and «*metamorphosis*» in the constitution of imaginative processes – namely, the value of technological invention in living beings – the author suggests to rethink (i.e., re-imagine) AI no longer as «artificial *intelligence*» but as «*Automated Optimization*».

Antonio Oraldi (*Phantasy, Technology, Critique: On Bernard Stiegler's Pharmakology of the Imagination*) deals with the relationship between imagination and technology through the lens of Stiegler's philosophical *Pharmakology*. Specifically, the author highlights the necessity of a «*politics of the technologized imagination*», emphasizing how Stiegler's notion of «*exteriorized imagination*» offers a critical framework for *theorizing how the human subject is* «*co-constituted with technical prostheses* in the context of high-technology societies*», making it «*a vital tool for social critique in the digital age*».

Riccardo Valenti (*Imagi(ni)ng technologies: On Don Ihde Post-Phenomenological Account of Technoscience: What is Really Made of?*) engages with Ihde, particularly with the *"techno-scientific side" of postphenomenology*. By reinterpreting Husserl's legacy, Ihde redefines the relationship between perception and technological tools, arguing that *technologies allow us to* «*detect unseen phenomena*», thus "tilting" both our perception of the world and our imaginative capability. The chiasm between technology and imagination thus becomes a compass capable of guiding us through a future and a past that are mysterious and distant, but at the same time crucial, for understanding «The Human Place in the Cosmos».

On the other hand – and we add *"fortunately"* – the establishment of this "new pantheon of classics" does not translate into an iconoclastic operation against the previous pantheon, namely a *damnatio memoriae* toward the «*founding fathers of the philosophy of technology*», who instead remain valuable, and in certain aspects indispensable, points of reference. In this sense, Guchet's work is particularly emblematic, as he takes a stance on a highly current debate, that of organ transplantation, arguing that «*viewing the organ as an instrument does not necessarily imply subscribing to the conception of an organ as a tool*». For such a purpose he makes use of a classical lexical and conceptual toolkit, ranging from Whitehead's concept of «*bifurcation of nature*», to Merleau-Ponty's distinction between «*Leib*» and «*Körper*», to Heidegger's distinction between «*Fertigkeit*» and «*Fähigkeit*», and even to Aristotle's distinction between «*organon poietikon*» and «*organon praktikon*». But the same could be said, for example, for the presence of Ernst Kapp and André Leroi-Gourhan in Dalmasso & Pirandello's essay, or of Cornelius Castoriadis in Scotti's pages.

Finally, another reason why we can be satisfied with the outcome of this project is that it reflects a *philosophical biodiversity* that mirrors the differences that exist, first and foremost, between the editors themselves and, more generally, does justice to the variety of approaches currently present in the field of philosophical reflection on technology. This means that the criterion for selecting the proposals was not their "ideological orthodoxy" – in the sense of "fidelity" to an assumed editorial line – but only their intrinsic value, their "*scientific quality*", understood in terms of competence, rigor, and the commitment that is evident in the various essays. Such a result would not have been possible without the invaluable and generous help of the reviewers and the editorial team of *I Castelli di Yale*

I castelli di Yale online. ANNALI DI FILOSOFIA
Vol. XII, n. 2, 2024 – ISSN 2282-5460

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(especially Dr. Maurizio Trudu), to whom we take this opportunity to sincerely express our gratitude.

That said, as is only right, *habent sua fata libelli*. We therefore entrust the pages of this first volume to the readers, with the firm hope that they will be able to stimulate further reflections and imaginations (both in terms of proximity and agreement, as well as distance and critique), which our *techno-Lebenswelt* increasingly and urgently needs.

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Vol. XII, n. 2, 2024 – ISSN 2282-5460