

PREFACE

Although widely debated and sometimes even overthrown, the question of future remains popular in political, social, technological, and artistic fields on both theoretical and practical levels. As soon as it enters the theoretical field, the question of future becomes a question of the future of philosophy, to the point that it has been said that the future of philosophy itself might be the philosophy of technology (Joseph C. Pitt). There exists a prominent idea that the technological future will cause a revolution in interpersonal relations: the increasingly frequent interaction with AI (vocal assistants, chatbots, etc.) is generating new relationships between human beings and robots, causing problems that are still unclear, but are starting to attract the attention of scholars and researchers.

The omnipresence of digital objects, especially within social networks, has often determined a pathological nostalgia for the past: when past tends to overlap with present, making itself indistinguishable from the latter, we tend to look back instead of looking ahead of us. The inability to distinguish the present from the past is also connected to the *modus essendi* of contemporary neoliberalism, which — in the name of “there is no alternative” — forces us to devote all our energy to recovering the past to the point that we seem to be unable to build a new future anymore, as it appears to be *a priori* impossible.

In the context of Cultural Studies, the tendency to refuse the unusual in support of the usual has been described as retromania (S. Reynolds), or as the slow cancellation of the future (Mark Fisher, Franco “Bifo” Berardi). The

overall pessimism regarding the future also relates to the inescapable feeling that we are approaching the end of the world. The economic and the environmental crisis, combined with eternal and suffocating presence of the past, are fueling the emergence of apocalyptic philosophies which vary from the cosmic pessimism (Günther Anders) to the declaration of the approaching end of humanity (Deborah Danowski; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro; Eugene Thacker; James Bridle), or even the doomsaying of the end of the Earth itself to the point that the even the bringing a new life to the world becomes questionable from the moral standpoint (David Benatar; Thomas Ligotti).

On the side of the debate one can encounter a more optimistic view of our technological future. The present age, focused on the technological and digital enhancement, has resulted in the diffusion of *transhumanist ideas*, revolving around the hope for the humanity gaining access to the eternal life, sometimes in the form of digital immortality resulting in replacement of human beings by their digital identities ranging from avatars to holograms. In other words, there is a hope for death to be defeated.

From a more general point of view, future is a challenging philosophical problem, engaging discourses in the realms ranging from metaphysics and ontology to politics and ethics. After the spectrality of Jacques Derrida and virtuality of Gilles Deleuze, that have marked the discourse of the XX century, new ontologies are being formed as either a direct response to the limits of deconstruction, a continuation of non-essence based ontology or an attempt to make a significant conceptual shift in contemporary metaphysics. With the rise of different versions of speculative realism (Quentin Meillassoux; Graham Harman; Ray Brassier; Iain Hamilton Grant) and new materialisms (Karen Barad; Rosi Braidotti; Elisabeth Grosz), classical philosophical notions of virtuality, potentiality, matter, technology, human and many others are being reshaped and rearticulated not without an attempt at building bridges with other discourses such as science, feminism, science fiction, visual arts, etc. The vast array of different takes on classic philosophical problems shares a similar urge for reshaping philosophical discourse as such and very often re-conceptualizing the question of the future turns out to be also an attempt at reimagining the future of philosophy itself.

The topics briefly presented above are reflected in the contributions to this special issue and can be divided into several categories. The ontological problematics of the question of the future in contemporary philosophy is covered the Nicolai Krejberg Knudsen's paper *The Ontological Problem of Futurity: Temporality and Possibility in Phenomenology* where the author departs

from the ontological problem of futurity in Derrida, Levinas, and Meillassoux in order to propose rereading Heidegger's ontology as a possible alternative to the post-phenomenological conceptions of temporality and possibility. Heidegger's thought is a departing point also for Kristupas Sabolius who in his paper *Beyond One Image of Future* is raising a question on the kind of imagination needed to see the future. The Heideggerian interpretation of the transcendental power of imagination serves for the author of the paper as an inspiration to critically rethink Berardi's conception of *futurability*, Derrida's *futurity* and Malabou's *voir venir*. The Kantian legacy of transcendentalism is reimagined in Daina Habdankaitė's paper *Rethinking Human: Transcendental Idealism Technologized* where the relationship between human and machine is conceptualized by reading Quentin Meillassoux, Bernard Stiegler and Catherine Malabou. The paper traces their debt to Kantian transcendentalism and exposes their differences in treating the relationship between subject and its surroundings.

Another group of contributions to the special issue is focused on the technological aspect of the question of the future which can be seen as balancing between ontological and cultural problematics. Through the discussion of the studies by Douglas Rushkoff and Mark Fisher, Davide Sisto's paper *Le tecnologie digitali e i future perduti: flussi di dati come archive* showcases how the current use of digital technologies results in the transformation of the relationship between past and future. The complexity of the relationship between technology and time is at heart of Alessandro de Cesaris paper *Tempi tecnici. Il problema del future tra dynamis e techne* where the author, departing from Plato's *Protagoras* as well as Aristotle's theory of *techne* and *episteme*, showcases in what way our individual and social experience of time is shaped technologically. The current state and organization of human society is analyzed in Joaquin Mutchinick's paper *Un rischio calcolato: le ICT digitali e la trasformazione dello spazio umano*. The author exposes how the digital technologies of information and communication have become the crucial social and economic factor urging us to rethink and act upon the possible dangers posed for both us and the future generation. The inevitable tension between the individual and the societal is also reflected by Denis Petrina in his paper *De/syn/chronol/biopolitics: Precarious Present, (un)Certain Future(s)* where the author claims the current neoliberal regime to be primarily characterized by synchronicity as its main mode of temporality. He showcases that despite the apparent impression that the imperative of synchronicity enhances the subject's capacity to act in time and therefore shape her future, it instead hinders

it. Finally, the problem of *the self* is once again echoed in the special issue — this time in Chiara Montalti's paper *Futuri crip: aggiornamenti dell'immaginario*. In her paper, the author presents a thorough analysis of a few different narratives to illustrate her claim that disability and futurity, although taking rather different paths, can sometimes come together in such cases as science fiction, especially utopian and feminist texts.

Pushing further into the field of cultural and societal studies is the next category of contributions all of which deal with the question of religion and faith in the context of future studies or the problem of the future. Roberto Paura, in his paper *Sperare o aspirare? Divergenze e convergenze tra Futures Studies e concezione teologica del future*, addresses the different conceptions about “the future” shared by Christian theology and futures studies by discussing the conceptual tension between the ideal of plurality of possible futures and the theological assertion of the predetermined future. Vaida Baranovė's contribution to the special issue titled *The future of secularism: Paul Kahn's political theology and its potential in redefining the boundaries between Church and State* deals with a future state of secularism by addressing it as an ideology and reading Paul Kahn's political theology against the ideas of proponents of secularism, J. Rawls and J. Habermas. The future of humanity as such is questioned in Daniela Raimondo's paper *Between Humans* where she is analyzing the fundamental characteristics of humanity by exploring the notion of the soul starting from Aristotle and continuing to a more contemporary discourse, comprised of biology, sensitivity, intellect and other aspects of the complex human structure.

Finally, there are the contributions using the concept of the future to rethink the traditional philosophical movements from a new angle. Ignas Šatkauskas in his paper *Virtuality of Myth and Ontology of the Future: Harman, Viveiros de Castro* juxtaposes the object-oriented ontology of Harman with Danowski and Viveiros de Castro's ideas in the context of the notion of virtuality in the Amerindian perspectivism. Virtuality is essential to Stefano Maioli's paper *Pensare sull'orlo del collaso. Temporalità e filosofia in Nick Land* where he raises the question of the destiny of philosophy by analysing Land's idea of “anomalous theory of time”. Another hermeneutic attempt at rethinking the classic paradigms is Alessio Rotundo's paper *Elements of the Future in Gadamer's Conception of Understanding* where the author analyses futural elements in Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in order to prove the existence of a theory of the future in Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Although different in their topics, objects, and methodology, the contri-

Contributions to this special issue prove once again that raising the question of the future in philosophy leads to rethinking the future of philosophy itself, be it in the form of novel philosophical movements or in reconceptualizing the traditional ones.

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