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INTRODUCTION
DIGITAL IDENTITIES, DIGITAL WAYS OF LIVING: PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSES[1]

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CC BY 4.0 Rosenberg & Sellier
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This special issue seeks to problematize the role of digital technologies in the constitution of the self, taking up the phenomenological premise that experiential structures are shaped and renegotiated through interactions between subjects, environments, and the manipulation of both real and fictional objects. The articles herein address the *effects* of digital technologies on the human self and, conversely, the active, open, and plastic ways that the self experiences and shapes the digital world. Within contemporary phenomenological debate, macro questions concerning digital technology and identity constitution are increasingly popular topics, soliciting different approaches and theoretical perspectives. With this special issue, we hope to further contribute to this flourishing debate through its three main lines of investigations – corresponding to the three sections into which this issue is organized. We aim primarily to show how digital technologies are re-defining our activities and lives, while also affecting our senses of our identity and selfhood. Each of the three sections analyses interaction between digital technologies and the many layers of self constitution.
Section one interrogates the role played by digital technologies in shaping identity. The second section investigates how digital technologies shape our use of language, enabling new forms of communication and social struggle. Finally, the third section explores different ways in which new technologies might affect change in our socio-political world. In this way, the articles collected in this special issue offer an extensive overview of the implications of new technologies in our everyday experience, from the formation of our personal identities to their potential institutional impact.

Section 1. Personal Identities – Digital Minds, Bodies and Persons

In this section, the authors engage with many ways that technology modifies our being in the world and the experiential structures of selfhood.
In the opening paper *Virtual Limitations of the Flesh: Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Technological Determinism*, the authors Jean Du Toit and Gregory Morgan Swer offer a theoretical reflection on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in order to reconsider the technological determinist outlook alternately in phenomenological terms, as an experiential response to the encounter with modern technology. They advocate recasting the instrumentalist-determinist debate in a phenomenological manner, since this makes possible a reconciliation between the apparent dualism of instrumentalist and determinist positions through Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the *flesh*. This ontology has recently been used to ground accounts of virtual embodiment. The authors argue that, in addition to moving beyond the classical form of technological determinism, it can also phenomenologically ground a novel

understanding of technological determinism—namely, a technological determinism of virtual embodiment.

Verbena Giambastiani's paper *The Asymmetrical Relation between Humans And Technologies* addresses the retroactive effects of technologies on the human self. By engaging with post-phenomenological thought (in particular in the works of Don Ihde, Peter Paul Verbeek and Evan Selinger), she addresses the question: "How does the experience of interacting with a specific technology mediate our experience of the world?". She examines the idea that technologies mediate the world such that perception of the self, world, and environment changes. As a case study, she extensively considers the phubbing phenomenon and its technological effects on social interaction.

In *Three Bodies: Problems for Video-conferencing*, Sarah Pawlett Jackson takes into account the specific way in which video-conferencing modifies structures of intersubjective awareness and interaction. In her paper, she focuses in particular on cases of multi-person interactions (involving more than two people) via video-call, arguing that this kind of interaction should not simply be conceived as "a mere linear extensions or additions of these dyadic interactions", and instead that the self is embodied and enactive. By unpacking some of the key features of multi-person intersubjectivity in cases of embodied co-presence, she shows where and how certain social affordances are strained or lost when multi-person interactions are transferred to the screen.

Lorenzo Olivieri's *Persuasive Technologies and Self-awareness: A Discussion of Screen-time Management Applications* considers persuasive technologies—namely, interactive systems designed to change and shape users' behaviour according to specific goals. By discussing the case of screen-time management applications, this paper explores how persuasive systems transform self-awareness and the self's cognitive architecture. Drawing on the notion of *tectonoetic awareness*, Olivieri illustrates how artefacts enable the transition from temporally bounded experience characterizing first-person perspective (*noetic awareness*) to the ability to self-reflect from a temporally extended third-person perspective (*autonoetic awareness*). He then argues that persuasive systems make possible new modalities of self-recognition and self-projection, while they simultaneously affect senses of agency by interfering with users' actions and intentions.

Section 2. Language and Mind – Social Media and Identity Construction

In their paper *Social Acts in Digital Environments*, Andrea Addis, Olimpia Loddo and Massimiliano Saba offer us a systematic analysis of the performance of social acts in digital environments, considering both fictional and real digital environments. They employ the notion of "organograms" as a key tool for unpacking the user's ability to perform different forms of social acts in digital environments. Interestingly, their analysis is premised on a new reinterpretation of Adolf Reinach's theory of social acts and its ideal development, as well as Czesław Znamierowski theory of the environment. By relying on such a theoretical framework, Addis, Loddo and Saba show how AI might be responsible for affecting both the performance and the perception of social acts in digital environments.

The papers by Silvia Donzelli and Henk Jasper van Gils-Schmidt also provide us with insightful analysis into how new forms of communication in digital environments can have a social impact. By doing so, Donzelli's and van Gils-Schmidt's papers set themselves on the boundary between the analysis of language and the philosophy of politics.

In *Countering Harmful Speech Online. (In)effective Strategies and the Duty to Counter-speak*, Donzelli's topic of analysis is counterspeech, which she defines as "a non-coercive and non-censoring method for reacting to harmful speech, with the aim of impeding or at least diminishing its damaging effects". Donzelli provides a novel philosophical examination into how counterspeech ought to be conducted, such that it might serve as an effective tool in

countering harmful speech and take full advantage of the communicative opportunities online speech dynamics make available.

Similarly, van Gils-Schmidt recalls, in his paper *Hilde Lindemann's Counterstories: A Framework for Understanding The #MeToo Social Resistance Movement on Twitter,* Hilde Lindemann's concept of "counterstories" to describe and assess online social resistance movements. Van Gils-Schmidt proposes a framework according to which we shape our identities in shared social spaces, structured around "master narratives" – narratives that "define the 'realm of possible identities' that we can assume, and form the basis for either recognizing or denying recognition to various social groups in specific roles that they might occupy". By relying on the notion of the "master narrative", van Gils-Schmidt explains that social oppression occurs every time a narrative forbids specific behaviours to their members, or determines the societal roles they might play. Paralleling Donzelli's argument concerning counterspeech, van Gils-Schmidt explains that counterstories are a powerful tool for fighting oppressive narratives. To this purpose, as a case-study, van Gils-Schmidt examines the #MeToo movement as an example of counterstory aimed at countering patriarchal narratives.

Section 3. Ethical and Political Implications of Digital Technologies

The papers by Helena de Preester, Natalia Satokhina, and Yulia Razmetaeva, and by Francesco Tava, further shed light on the political implications of new digital technologies. Helena de Preester examines, in *Life is what You Fill Your Attention with – the War for Attention and the Role of Digital Technology in the Work of Bernard Stiegler*, how marketized digital technologies are responsible for affecting and destructing attention. In support of such a thesis, de Preester draws from Bernard Stiegler's observations on the relationship between capitalism and the destruction of attention. In her contribution, de Preester identifies, and argues for, two possible counterforces for reinforcing attention: education and meditation. As de Preester compellingly argues, education and meditation are two powerful remedies to the detrimental effects of neoliberal capitalism: "if life is what you fill your attention with", de Preester claims, "then focusing or directing attention is one of the most valuable abilities for knowing how to live".

Francesco Tava offers a solidarity-based approach to data access and governance in his paper *Solidarity and Data Access: Challenges and Potentialities*. As Tava explains, discussions around the governance of data access fall within the boundaries of what has been defined as "infrastructure ethics"—namely, recalling a definition provided by Luciano Floridi, ethics which is focussed on analysing the "first-order framework of implicit expectations, attitudes, and practices that can facilitate and promote morally good decisions and actions". In his paper, Tava argues that solidarity ought to be included among "infraethical" practices, since solidarity stimulates "longer-term and risk-laden collective action aimed at addressing perceived injustices". By being so characterised, Tava argues that solidarity could be a useful tool for addressing the problem of digital data use and property. Indeed, analysing the issue of data access through the concept of solidarity allows us to grasp the collective interests that are involved in such practices and to develop new tools for their governance. Tava insightfully concludes his paper by applying his analysis to the pressing case of health data access.

Finally, Natalia Satokhina and Yulia Razmetaeva take inspiration from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* in order to analyse what they define as the "loss of experience" in the digital age and its replacement with technology. Particularly, Satokhina and Razmetaeva reflect on our experience of the law, which they define as one of our modes of being-in-the-world, characterised by the experience of the mutual recognition of people's dignity. In their paper "*The Loss of Experience" in Digital Age: Legal Implications*, Satokhina and Razmetaeva offer an understanding of the legal aspects of experience through phenomenological hermeneutics, analysing their transformation in the digital age.

The symposium on Luciano Floridi's *Pensare l'infosfera. La filosofia come design concettuale*

In addition to the articles so far presented, this special issue includes a symposium on Luciano Floridi's *Pensare l'infosfera. La filosofia come design concettuale*—the Italian translation of an excerpt from *The Logic of Information. A Theory of Philosophy as Conceptual Design*. As Carlo Crosato explains in his introduction to the symposium, Luciano Floridi's *Pensare l'infosfera* offers a pivotal contribution to understanding how new digital means of communication have radically changed the forms of interaction between individuals. Floridi describes the rise of new information technologies as a 'revolution'; new technologies of information and communication have shaped human interactions in such a way as to structure them around communicative relationships, rather than political or economic relationships. How can philosophy contribute to the understanding of such a revolution? As Crosato clearly explains, Floridi's main interest is methodological—Floridi's proposal consists in an attempt to rethink philosophical practices and make them suitable for analysing, and possibly offering guidance on, the current transformation of communication. The contributions of Maurizio Ferraris, Leonardo Manna, Roberto Mordacci, and Luigi Vero Tarca included in this symposium critically examine the tenability and persuasiveness of Floridi's analysis. By considering the practical role of philosophy in contemporary times, the political implications of the Web, and the impact of computational technologies on individuals, Ferraris, Manna, Mordacci, and Tarca provide further enlightening insights into how the effects of new digital technologies upon everyday life ought to be understood and possibly governed.