

Call for papers

19th-20th of February 2021

Online

The WiGiP/GiP

Conference on Intercultural Philosophy

*Demarginalising Futures:
rethinking embodiment, community, and culture*

Abstract:

Techno-utopias, dystopias, climatic eschatologies, and various other representations of possible futures entangle themselves in the different imaginaries which surround us in our day to day lives and are generated by politics, media, or philosophy. Such narratives about the future are more than often centred on European concepts of technological progress and ignore representations of future stemming from marginalised political or societal actors. We wish therefore to promote an increase of philosophical and multidisciplinary attention to the above marginalised narratives of the future. To this scope, we invite proposals from a broad horizon of backgrounds on the main topic of ways to represent future societies in a demarginalising way. We will refer to all such mechanisms as ‘futurisms’, thus aligning ourselves with postcolonial trends in aesthetics that reframe the ‘eurocentric’ term futurism in a demarginalising, decolonial way.

The term ‘futurism’ is usually used in post-colonial contexts to refer to certain sets of aesthetic practices that aim to re-appropriate the discourses of science fiction and technology from the point of view of those who were historically excluded from the narratives of civilizational progress (see Dillon 2012; Newman Fricke 2019). Examples of such movements are ‘afro-futurism’, ‘chicanx-futurism’, ‘Asia-futurism’ (including the so-called ‘sino-futurism’), ‘gulf-futurism’, etc.¹

Hence, although the term ‘futurism’ in all its variants has been employed mostly in the field of cultural studies, we think that philosophy should also take this opportunity to reflect on the way in which the narratives of future and progress can be re-thought from other perspectives. Our representations of the future are usually accompanied by certain notions of technological growth, political participation, and cultural internationalization. These types of representations lead however to dichotomies in the way we envision futures: our imaginaries are populated with AI-human interactions, cybernetic gadgets, experiences of augmented reality, but also environmental catastrophes, mass-surveillance anxieties and new forms of migration and ethnical persecution, among others. We find ourselves therefore in front of increasingly conflicting representations of the future which pressingly challenge us to critically evaluate and re-appropriate these imaginaries.

¹ When thinking of traditional works of science fiction, the agency of people of colour and other minorities was introduced only in the later stages of mainstream Sci-Fi, namely, during the 1980's. As Alondra Nelson puts it: “In popular mythology, the early years of the late-1990s digital boom were characterized by the rags-to-riches stories of dot-com millionaires and the promise of a placeless, raceless, bodiless near future enabled by technological progress” (Nelson 2002, 1). The film *Black Panther* (2018) is just one paradigmatic example that shows how recently the awareness of this phenomenon acquired a broader range. While mainstream science fiction painted a representation of a neutral post-cultural and post-racial future, the subaltern futurisms are contextual and situational. They take the present as their departure point. In this sense, unlike the Italian futurism from Marinetti, subaltern futurisms do not vindicate a blind accelerationist faith in technology, but rather a critical understanding of it. The subaltern societies do not only take part in the hegemonic discourse, but they also have their own discourses that impact and shape a possible, alternative future.

Subaltern cultures have been systematically excluded from the 'future', being instead portrayed as technologically and socially underdeveloped. Something similar happens with their philosophies, which usually appear as taxonomical oddities classified as 'wisdom', 'sageness', 'thought', 'popular culture' or 'religion', and often play a marginal role in the mainstream representation of future societies. This seems paradoxical since it is precisely in places like the global south where we find political initiatives that try to marry ecological sustainability with political and economic solidarity in creative and innovative ways. For this reason, we would like to address these problems from the expanded perspective of these marginalised futurisms, but also engage in a critical assessment of futurism and all representations of future - does it do justice to subaltern voices or does it promote a dichotomy-laden politics of identity?

Given that we understand futurism in an expanded way that includes a large variety of thinking about the future, we invite proposals that investigate and highlight the diversity of thinking and representing future societies. As a guide for possible topics please refer to the following list:

Topic suggestions

- Non-western representations of the future
- Embodiment and subjectivity (the future of the body)
- Political imagination (utopias, dystopias, etc.)
- Social economy, popular emancipatory initiatives for the future
- Art and design for future
- Post-colonial pop and urban culture
- Cosmotechnics, new media and technology
- Ecological thinking, Anthropocene
- Indigenous worldviews and science
- The future of intercultural philosophy and intercultural aesthetics
- Animism, panpsychism, shamanism as tools for visions about the future, etc.

Applications

We invite all those interested - especially young scholars - to submit their talk proposals on the topics described above until **31.12.2020** at the following e-mail address events@int-gip.de.

Submissions should include:

- An abstract between 300 and 500 words
- A short academic profile including contact information and institutional affiliation
- All talks and discussions will be in *English*

While the conference is focused on philosophical inquiries of futurism we welcome and encourage submissions from all disciplines.

Conference structure

In order to take away from the strain of online presence the conference will be structured in two parts. An asynchronous part will give all participants the chance to hear all talks in advance during a two-week period. This will act as a base for discussion for the second synchronous part of the conference which will consist of zoom meetings.

Organization

This conference is a joint effort by the *Wiener Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Philosophie (WiGiP)* and the *Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Philosophie (GiP)*.

Dr. Fernando Wirtz -CIIS Postdoctoral Fellow and Treasurer of GiP

Dr. Adrian Razvan Sandru - Postdoctoral Researcher at the Champalimaud Center for the Research of the Unknown, Lisbon

Univ.-Doz. DDr. Mădălina Diaconu, University of Vienna, editor-in-chief of “polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren”

For any questions, please direct your inquiries at the following address: events@int-gip.de

Bibliographical notes

Fricke, S. N. (2019) "Introduction: Indigenous Futurisms in the hyperpresent now," *World Art*. Routledge, 9(2), pp. 107–121. doi: 10.1080/21500894.2019.1627674.

Nelson, A. (2002) "Introduction: Future Texts," *Social Text*, 20(2 (71)), pp. 1–15. doi: 10.1215/01642472-20-2_71-1.

Pirker, E. U. and Rahn, J. (2020) "Afrofuturist trajectories across time, space and media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. Routledge, pp. 1–15. doi: 10.1080/15295036.2020.1820542.