

Editor's Notes

Time, Tenacity and Technophobia

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There are many obvious benefits to publishing our journal in an online format. It is less costly, the publishing process has fewer moving pieces, it uses fewer natural resources and it can be made immediately accessible to anyone in the world with a decent, non-censored internet connection. We do not have to put a strict cap on article length (though practical wisdom recommends *some* measure!), and we do not have a maximum number of articles we can publish in each volume.

A perhaps less obvious benefit is that we do not have a *minimum* number of articles that we need to publish. And although the number of published articles at the launch of volume 2 was comparatively underwhelming (just two articles, compared with five at the launch of volume 1, and none of the two on the Yearly Theme), this means we do not have to compromise on the quality of the articles we publish. We can continue adding articles after the launch of an issue, and continue building patiently towards our goal: the appreciation of science fiction as a medium for philosophical reflection. Every article (painstakingly rewritten and revised in the light of long and detailed commentary from our reviewers) contributes to this goal. We are enormously thankful for the work put in by authors and reviewers, and we must honor it by continuing to work towards higher and higher standards of scholarship in science fiction and philosophy.

To the articles, then: one of the particularly rewarding things about the articles addressing our Yearly Theme (*Dystopian Caves and Galactic Empires: Social and Political Philosophy in SF Stories*) is that both connect this theme with two of the most revered SF authors: Ursula K. Le Guin and Isaac Asimov. And thus some of the long-standing debt that philosophy owes to SF begins to be repaid.

In "[Living in a Marxist Sci-Fi World: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Power of Science Fiction](#)," Matías Graffigna (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) takes on Le Guin's enormously influential novel *The Dispossessed*. Karl Marx, it is well known, intentionally left the concept of communism rather undetermined. Graffigna asks, is it possible to somehow "furnish" this concept with content, so that at least one potential realization of this ideal could be presented to our imagination? If so, SF seems to be the ideal medium for such a

project. Graffigna's article can thus be read at two levels. At one level, his article is a discussion of the possibilities of SF for fleshing out and making present to our imagination philosophical ideas and concepts—what we call in the Journal the “narrative modeling” of philosophical ideas. These possibilities are discussed using the technical tools provided by Edmund Husserl's phenomenological theory. At a complementary level, Graffigna tries out his model by examining how the “life-world” imagined by Le Guin can be used to expand the discussion on the ways in which Marx's communism could be actualized.

In “Political Myths in Plato and Asimov,” Nathaniel Goldberg (Washington and Lee University) examines the connections between the two titular giants, in the context of Asimov's celebrated *Foundation Trilogy* and Plato's *Republic*. After outlining some interesting parallels between the science of the Psychohistorians and the Theory of Forms, and between the class systems described in both works, Goldberg focuses his analysis on the use of myths or “noble lies” employed by Plato's Guardians and the Foundation engineers. Is it desirable to plant a lie at the basis of the creation of the Republic in order to safeguard its order, its safety and its wellbeing? Is it ethical? What about using such lies to ensure that humanity, now at a galactic empire scale, will not suffer thirty millennia of chaos and civil war?

Introducing our General Articles, I should mention that we had somewhat of a wrench thrown in our works halfway through the year; an update to the software running the journal made things so impossibly complicated that we ended up running the journal around the software rather than with it—and so, *technophobia*. Which is what Stefano Bigliardi (Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco) discusses in “We Don't Know Exactly How They Work,” his in-depth review of the literature analyzing the original *Westworld* (1973) and its sequels. What *is* technophobia, and how do these stories help understand it? Moving beyond the extant literature, Bigliardi grounds his definition of technophobia in *epistemic hubris*: the realization that the limitations of technology are the consequence of its creation and usage on behalf of an epistemically limited humanity.

I felt very epistemically limited this year, I so can relate fully.

But ultimately, it takes time to build good things. Some will recall the story of a visitor to the British Isles commenting on the quality of British lawns. “Well,” his host was reported to say, “we've been cutting the grass for hundreds of years.” The moral of the story applies to the (also British) reportedly longest running SF series, *Doctor Who*, a show that (thanks to the ingenious device of “regeneration”) can continuously recreate itself, together with its titular time traveler. But is there a consistent philosophy of time underscoring the show's twists and turns? Because of the show's duration and its sometimes loose scripting, an answer for the positive would seem improbable. And yet in “Gallifrey Falls No More: Doctor Who's Ontology of Time,” Kevin Decker (Eastern Washington University) undertakes precisely this monumental task, tracing the views on time through the length of the show in the light of competing philosophies, and establishing a (not unproblematic) four-dimensional realism at the basis of *Doctor Who's* fictive timeline.

Interestingly, our Yearly Theme authors both undertake some explicit discussion of the possible role for science fiction in philosophy in their articles. This seems to be a rising trend, as evidenced by some articles in preparation for volume 3. If there were to be any doubts still, we can defer to the *solvitur ambulando* argument of our General Article authors, who have in fact surveyed a *staggering* amount of material, to foster not just our appreciation but also our delight in science fiction as a medium for philosophical reflection.

Enjoy, and thank you for reading!

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