



CALL FOR PAPERS

Azimuth. Philosophical Coordinates in Modern and Contemporary Age
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Immersivity. Philosophical Perspectives on Technologically Mediated Experience //

Immersività Prospettiva filosofiche sulla mediazione tecnologica dell'esperienza

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The notion of “immersivity” is a pivotal element in the description of technologically mediated experience, designating an inherent quality of objects, spaces and experiences able to produce an impression of immersion. The term has become very widespread in the context of the analysis of VR technologies and of digital images in general, but it has become a keyword for the analysis of human experience as a whole. As Andrea Pinotti points out, «in some way or another, we find ourselves always immersed in a situation: in learning, in the fruition of a medium or a technology, in a power practice, in the experience of reading or of theatre, of visual arts or of videogames» (Pinotti 2018, our translation).

While the debate on immersivity is largely focused on the contemporary technological environments, however, this notion does refer to a core aspect – at least implicitly – of the way Western culture has understood the effects of technology since the Antiquity. Already Gorgias, for instance, described language as the magic power of forcing the listener to experience something else from what she actually sees. R.J. Allan has argued that the Greek notion of *enargeia*, a technical term of ancient rhetorics, can be regarded as the precursor of immersivity. In turn, Plato’s Allegory of the Cave – one of the most important *tòpoi* of philosophical literature – not only describes with abundance of details an immersive dispositive (Baudry 1970, Carbone 2016, Chateau 2016), but points out also the powers as well as the ethical and political issues inherent to immersive experiences. In this way, we could argue that the term “immersivity” does represent a new word for an ancient concept, or rather for an ancient conception of the way we interact through technology. Precisely for this reason, conceptual models based on the notion of immersion have been proposed to analyse all kinds of technologically mediated experience, from reading (Ryan 2001) to cinema (Carbone 2016).

This special issue of *Azimuth* will focus on the theoretical issues that are still open in the debate on immersive experience in the digital environments, as well as in other contexts. It will collect contribution devoted to the problematic aspects of this notion from the point of view of different disciplines and methodological approaches (media theory, history of ideas, aesthetics, cinema studies, game studies, philosophical anthropology, cognitive sciences, experimental psychology).

While its fortune in the current debate is undeniable, in fact, the notion of immersivity does still present many theoretical and practical challenges. As Jael-Noel Thon highlights how the use of this term has been «rather contested», and «the questions of what is and of whether it makes sense at all to speak of immersion with regard to computer and other digital media have been hotly debated» (2014, 269).

In fact, Immersivity is a multifaceted and sometimes ambiguous notion. Mostly identified with the impression of immediacy, it is viewed as a form of aesthetic illusion, able to give to the subject the impression of being elsewhere. However, this conception of immersive experience is eminently visual,

whereas it is possible to understand it by referencing different sensorial dimensions. This special issue of *Azimuth* will investigate, among other topics, the possibility to analyse immersivity as an acoustic (Dyson 2009) or haptic form of embodied experience.

A central aspect of the debate on the nature of digital media is the economy of attention. Many scholars, such as Yves Citton or Nicholas Carr, have highlighted how our experience of digital devices entails a different distribution of the subject's attention, and many critics of the digital turn refer to multitasking as one of the main issues in the new technological environments. The connection between immersivity and attention, and in particular the role of technological change in the development of this relationship, is one of the key issues in the current debate on the nature of immersivity.

Considering this vast variety of open questions, this issue of *Azimuth* will explore some important aspects of the current debate on the notion of immersivity by promoting a multidisciplinary approach to the problem, and by giving relevance both to the theoretical and to the applicative side of the topic. For this reason, the issue will try to create a dialogue between philosophy and other disciplines.

A first selection of contribution will be devoted to the development of the notion of immersivity through the history of culture.

A second series of articles will focus on some core theoretical issues related to the debate on this notion.

Finally, a third section will feature contributions that analyse some specific forms of immersive experience.

Considering the breadth of this Issue's proposal the theme calls for the prioritization of the following subjects and research areas:

- The history of the notion of immersivity, or the conceptual analysis of historical debates that can be connected to the current debate on immersive experience.
- The critical analysis of a specific part of the scientific debate on immersivity (media theory; VR studies; theory of literature; post-phenomenology; philosophy of technology; psychology etc.).
- The theoretical analysis of the notion of immersivity, with particular reference to its sensory background (visual, acoustic, haptic immersivity; the role of synaesthesia in the formation of immersive experience).
- The relationship between immersivity and mediation. Immersivity as a form of mediated immediacy.
- The role of immersivity in the description of the human-environment interaction.
- The use of immersive metaphors in philosophy, in literature and in the human sciences.
- The analysis of specific forms of immersive experience, such as reading, VR, digitally augmented environments, cinema etc.
- The analysis of immersive artistic installations.
- The analysis of dreams in terms of immersive experiences.
- Ethical and political issues connected to the notion of immersivity.

Papers providing original contributions on these and similar topics are welcomed.

Azimuth invites contributions in English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Authors, whose papers will be accepted, are kindly asked to edit their contributions according to the editorial rules of the journal (available at: <http://www.azimuthjournal.com/call-for-papers/>).

Please send your complete papers to: editorial@azimuthjournal.com by **April 30th, 2022**.

Contribution length: Contributions should not exceed 34.000 characters (spaces and footnotes included).

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