# LOG:: 02 Intense Heaven

… the next thing you know you’re in heaven. You’re surprised to be there. On the other hand, it’s happening …

—Jordan Belson

Cinema is not dead. Just a configuration, remastered.

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‚Wie kann man nur auf den Gedanken kommen, das Menschen durch Briefe miteinander verkehren können! Man kann an einen fernen Menschen denken und man kann einen nahen Menschen fassen, alles andere geht über Menschenkraft‘.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Kafka's note, written in another media world with durations of days to deliver messages, suggests how amazing it is to communicate over a long distance in real time; overcoming distance and being simultaneously at different places is just beyond the capacity and the power of us humans, our bodies, and our physical existence, without any technological assistance.

But, isn’t it wonderful if things far away come so close?

Some hundreds of kilometers away, a swimming pool pump needs to be repaired. On the small screen of the telecommunication device in your hand appears a man in a dark blue jumper suit pointing towards the pump, explaining what has to be done. You are asking a question. The man is listening, then responding to you. He is making a gesture with his hands and his arms, simulating what he will be doing.

On another call on the same device, a two-year-old child sings a little lullaby, smiles, and waves to the sending device's camera. She kisses her screen. Her lips touch the glass. And here, somewhere too far away, the finger of an older woman, her grandmother, gently touches the surface of the transporting device as well, returning the kiss, laughingly, with a child laughing in response. Without changing positions, without moving bodies, the two overcame a distance. They were far away, so close. For a particular duration, it is a very pleasant, enjoyable situation that is emotionally loaded, has a sense of intimacy, and shares happiness for both. It is a moment of heaven—heaven on earth.

## Heaven on Earth

Picturing *Heaven on Earth*, we might point to a concrete location, a place somewhere. This place is often linked to an experience, a situation, or an event—something like a beautiful memory. It is related to a place we have experienced. We know an experience. The memory stays with us as the duration passes, as the event and the place disappear. The place is out of reach. The event might not repeat. But the memory is recalled and repeated in a certain way. The memory is fluid, merged with our imagination.

*Heaven on Earth* might be the most scenic and breathtakingly beautiful location, something outstanding: marvelous food, joyful people, a wonderland, *Schlaraffenland*, paradise, *Eden*, *Land of Milk and Honey*, *Shangri-La*, *Never-Never-Land*, *Zion* and *Elysium*, *Canaan,* only existing on Earth. In other words, a perfect world somewhere, a world that immerses me, a world responsive to everything I feel and want. Easiness and lightness. Quickness and exactitude. Visibility and multitude. It is just what I feel and want here and now: cyber-phantasies of the 1980s, Xanadu of the computer and internet pioneers of the 1960s, the heaven that Jordan Belson and the video artists and experimental filmmakers of the 1970s dreamt of.

A world that I love and want to hold on to: a memory never to leave. I am generating an image out of my imagination, a personal image, explicitly rendered for me, by me, and deciphered by me.

Imagination is the faculty of making and deciphering images, no longer strictly related to objects. The images are mere concepts and, therefore, transparent. We are accustomed to using images, such that these images become invisible for us. The medium of images is of no interest for us, but rather the content conveyed. Vilem Flusser was particularly concerned with technical images (photographs, films, digital images) because of their apparent realism.[[2]](#footnote-3)

My Heaven on Earth, this beautiful location, this extraordinary situation, this moment in my life, recalled as memory, is the imagination of a concept producing meaning for me, and only for me.

However, *concepts* are philosophical terms, or at least follow a philosophical understanding. When, in 1987, Gilles Deleuze asked, in a conference at the French film school *La Femis*, *What do you do when you do cinema?* he formulated concepts as a mode of philosophical practice, an act of creating new ideas. Concepts invent a fresh way of conceiving reality. Concepts are constructed out of other concepts, thus building an infinite chain or interconnected network of ideas.[[3]](#footnote-4)

The place I imagine, then, is not as singular or specific as I believe; the place I see before my inner eye, the place I imagine, is a composite, a construct of many things out of a network of things, layered and multifaceted.

All of a sudden, what appeared to be clear became obscure. My memory, with its clarity and openness, has moved away from the reality of its original experience, from its subjectivity. My memory layers a veil over a surface, generating a lack of depth and giving an opaque or distorted, an incomplete or otherwise unclear representation in an emotional state, mixing with the construction of an individual in a cultural sphere.

What if I did not have this experience? What if I did not live it? But I am confident; I have seen and lived it. I remember. It was a place I could not go. I have seen a movie. One friend shared a video. I read it somewhere.

Charlotte Wells’s 2022 coming-of-age drama *Aftersun* tells the story of Sophie, reflecting via video camcorder footage on her last holiday trip as an 11-year old child with her father on the coast of Turkey. Real and imagined memories fill gaps in a portrait of a father-daughter relationship, a very closely inspected and deeply personal reconciliation.

Sakura, a cherry blossom in Japan seen in a film by Doris Dörrie, is a mass of flowers on a tree, a soft beauty reminding the *Vergänglichkeit* of feelings of us and our world—of ephemerality.

The first images of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* reference an image of happiness, or the *eastern fantasies* of Flaubert according to Alain De Botton's description in his book *The Art of Travel*.

If it was a film or a book, I entered someone else's imagination. Someone else showed me the world through their eyes, transported me to other times, and made me unexpectedly explore new emotions and experiences. What is wonderful about cinema is that it looks so natural, as Melies already stated, shortly after the birth of the medium we call cinema. When Auguste Lumiere and his wife were feeding their baby, it was not the depiction of the happy family that excited Melies, but the movement of the leaves on the trees in the background around the family. They were so real.

The experience of watching moving images on a screen can be deeply personal. Cinema was a dark chamber excluding the outside world. Shopping malls similarly exclude the outside world, removing windows to embed visitors and shoppers in artificial lighting for the whole experience of personal shopping. LG, the television maker and high-tech company, depicted, in an advertisement for their television screens, people carrying LED screens into a train and closing the wagon beyond the windows to open a space for the wonders of the inner worlds of these screens, displayed to the inside, excluding the world outside. And maybe the outside world isn’t worth watching or experiencing. Display technology is taking away, preventing us, from a possible dystopia, from the reality of our existence.

Technology mediates the world we see and imagine with content loaded, attractive images and sounds, giving meaning to while generating tension between the external world, the observable world seen by our eyes and captured by cameras and sensors, and our internal and subjective world of thoughts and feelings smoothes. We enter into a familiar and strange world, enabling us to explore the boundaries between what is real and what is imagined. We have left the dark chamber of the cinema to be exposed to a cinematic world *all-um-fassend* (all around, embedding and immersive), controlled by algorithmic rules in an invisible, surveilling digital environment, not exactly what Jeremy Bentham imagined in his panopticon, but close to the idea, in programmed form.

But Heaven on Earth might not just be the imagination of a place, the memory of an experience. Heaven on Earth can go beyond a feeling or an atmosphere that is difficult to define and describe, which might differ for different people. Heaven on Earth might be the feeling of flow, a state of being fully absorbed and engaged in an activity, where time seems to disappear, and our senses of ourselves merge with the task we dived in. Just the idea of Heaven on Earth can encompass a sense of connection and belonging and community, where we feel grounded and secure in the world.

‘Separation. The cold separation of space, and the wonder and terror of the plain technical fact that a signal can shrink distance, so that people millions of miles apart are able to talk with each other, face to screen, disembodied, versions of themselves hurtling through space in signals and waves.’[[4]](#footnote-5) This is the paradoxical nature of technology and communication. We are far away physically, but experience immediacy in our conversation, seeing each other in virtual environments, and hearing each other. Only touch and the blow of breath remain to be enacted. Modern communication technology has enabled us to connect and communicate across vast distances, in ways unimaginable just a very few decades ago. The pandemic of 2020 has calibrated opportunities for online work, collaborations, distance learning, and video-conferenced social connections. The paradox here is that the same technology creates a deep sense of separation and disconnection. We communicate through screens we view and touch with our fingertips, and listen to disembodied voices rather than in person. The shrinking of physical distance builds a psychological distance through mediated technological channels of audiovisual communication platforms. The ambivalent nature of technology affects our lives and challenges our privacy, security, relationships, and social interactions.

But, …

Still. Wouldn’t it be nice, for example, if you enter a room and the room would understand that it is you who enters? When you sit down, a chair adjusts to you based on knowledge of you and your body. A car you will drive has, at the moment you sit, miraculously adjusted its operating system to your needs and preferences, your average driving style, and comfort. Wouldn’t it be nice if your home knew where you and your children are? What kind of food is in the refrigerator, and whether it’s enough for the kids? Will the kids like it? Actually, what would I want to eat now?

Our spaces, the spaces we live in, are enhanced through technology expanding our everyday spatial experience. Cinema was the space of imagination, narratively and visually. Did the space of our everyday became more cinematic or utopian through these technological enhancements, these mediated extensions of our bodies?

## The ultimate display

By early 1970, Ivan Sutherland had already described the *ultimate* situation:

*The ultimate display would, of course, be a room within which the computer can control the existence of matter. A chair displayed in such a room would be good enough to sit in. Handcuffs displayed in such a room would be confining, and a bullet displayed in such room would be fatal. With appropriate programming such a display could literally be the Wonderland into which Alice walked.[[5]](#footnote-6)*

Amazing. Sutherland’s display still does not *exist*. A fully immersive and interactive environment reproducing our experience of the physical world is a dream yet to have come true. We still can’t *exist* in a virtual world.

Janet H. Murray, in her 1997 *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace,* discusses the influence of digital technology on the development of stories and narrative.[[6]](#footnote-7) She examines the use of the *holodeck* as it first appeared in the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Murray comes to the conclusion that interactive cinema and hypertext fiction of the 1990s are tools or technologies to *explore inner life*. Space has not been taken over or transformed—yet.

Video Vortex XI, held in Kochi in 2017, featured the artist-research Nadav Assor’s *Titchener’s Cage*, a site-specific, mixed reality installation in which the viewer wears a VR headset. Entering the space, the viewer is confronted with an altered physicality of her own body, as well as a cast of former, now ghostly visitors, captured as 3D point clouds. The space turns into a subjective sensory and aesthetic experience of other people. VR technology here leaves the inner life, and confronts us with an already occupied environment of others.[[7]](#footnote-8)

In 2021 Mark Zuckerberg outlined his vision of the future of the mobile internet, in what he called the *metaverse*, a space where digital and physical worlds come together:

*It is a space where digital representations of people – avatars – interact at work and play, meeting in their office, going to concerts and even trying on clothes. At the centre of this universe will be virtual reality, a digital world that you can already enter via Facebook’s Oculus VR headsets. It will also include augmented reality, a sort of step back from VR where elements of the digital world are layered on top of reality – think Pokémon Go or Facebook’s recent smart glasses tie-up with Ray-Ban.[[8]](#footnote-9)*

In June 2023, Apple announced the VR AR headset *Vision Pro*, following Meta, Google, Magic Leap, and Microsoft, each with its foray into this virtual world through various interfacing devices and hypermedia-oriented software. Apple's step seemed, in 2023, to be a starting point for a much broader technological exploration into augmented reality, with new applications and the expansion of spatial video. Spatial video and spatial computing open up vast possibilities for enriching engagement and experience with technology, potentially redefining how we will interact with and shape our new digital and physical worlds. Zuckerberg's Meta and Apple are building a new computing layer with *fantastic world-changing possibilities,* through a commercial vision of re-connecting people through spatial computing that expands from the screen and the headset to the surrounding physical space.

*A few days ago, a contact from across the country was Facetiming with me on the Vision Pro, which felt a bit like being in the same room. It was a mind-melting experience, and it’s pretty clear that in a few years we’ll be able to just feel like we’re physically together. That’s very cool, and could help us stay connected to friends and family in a way we can’t do now.[[9]](#footnote-10)*

Matt Stoller’s testimony sounds like an advertisement. Probably the first telephone conversation gave the people the feeling of being *in the same room* with each other as well.

Still, we have yet to arrive. The internet and smartphones dominate the digital world experience for most of us, a never-ending stream of data, images, and sounds, attractive, distractive, and addictive, much like the real universe or the German *Weltall*.[[10]](#footnote-11) It is the whole as one and the whole as all things, but it appears somehow flat.

In his seminal 1945 essay *As We May Think*, Vanevar Bush envisioned a system of the future called *memex*, where all information could be accessed and organized. AI technology companies must have read the text and embedded this vision in their training sets for the commercial realization of their algorithmic models.[[11]](#footnote-12) Ted Nelson's Project Xanadu, from 1960, proposed a digital repository scheme for worldwide electronic publishing. In Xanadu, all documents are interconnected and seamlessly navigable. Somehow, in its vision, it is still superior to the World Wide Web, which is, as today's joint simulation of paper, a maze of dead ends.[[12]](#footnote-13)

The simple vision of this universe reminds us of the sleeping beauty Snow White, or of Alice's looking-glass: of being simultaneously at different locations on the globe and having entered into a world, an archive of the actual and possible forms of reality.[[13]](#footnote-14) Like Dorothy we are landing in *Munchkinland*, in the *Land of Oz*.[[14]](#footnote-15)

Heaven is not just the technological transfer of an audiovisual signal through a device, a window as a sensible outlook to another known world, an algorithmic translation of seeing in patterns and 8x8 coded squares decoding information in chunks and blocks of the existing physical space in front of a camera eye or in a video recording image, a room continuously computing its interior, a code/space surveilling and directing. Heaven is an expanding universe of incredible possibilities, overcoming the limits of my body and even my imagination, never-ending and always there. Simply, spatial computing and immersive sounds open up a digital universe layered on our physical space, where we are centered, each of us, individually and customized.

## Passages

Once, the closest thing to heaven was a place of worship where people would go, centered and visible from afar in a landscape, thanks to its architectural structure. In a world where windows of buildings turn inside like those of shopping malls, and glass high-rises mirror the glass mirrors of other surrounding high-rises as the light changes and the clouds move, heaven's architectural focus flattened and multiplied, now shrunk to the surfaces of devices or perceptible. Sensitive human perception assists glass-like thin objects, carried very close to or even directly on the human body, in generating their spherical enclosure. We carry these devices with us every day. They are a central part of our lives; through them, we explore never-seen new worlds and shopping heavens previously impossible; we disconnect from the physical world and lose ourselves in the space between.

Devices function as passages.[[15]](#footnote-16) They are not substitutes for telephones, television, or tele-action. They are assisting in the realization, the coming into being, of at least two bodies, two of us, generating a digital double. Devices assist in realizing the presence of the two of us. This is the transformative potential of digital technology. We are becoming present in a place different from where we are physically, through a digital object, which could be called an *image*, a vehicle, or a visualization of a touchable transfer port. This object passes from us to anywhere and anytime. Maybe we have an expected duration where we match in realization, or a kind of creative actualization, but it is not necessary to match with the *virtual*.[[16]](#footnote-17)

This kind of *image* is not a flat plane of visual information. Here, *image* denotes a block, a pattern, or an amount of data related to a physical appearance, a body appearing in a diverse range of forms, and not only visually on the surface of a screen or display.

Visual information, temperature, experiences and actions from past and present, different locations, and references of any kind that could have been sensed, registered, translated, stored, and accessed in non-linear ways are building a multiplicity in a singular digital object, like cells of a non-physical body in endless realizations.[[17]](#footnote-18) For digital *images* or images alike, imagery objects are not static or flat, but dynamic and multi-dimensional. They are constantly evolving and adapting to different contexts and interactions.

Our technology transforms us as digital objects in data entities, life-like performing beings, enabled to produce high-resolution fiction, or, in practice and training, responsive, creating or consuming, working. Another us or I, a double, comes into existence, a copy in the form of a digital or mathematical entity, an object seemingly us. We are still determining if this double is truly us or merely an approximation of who we are in our physical world. How do we reconcile our physical existence with our digital presence?

The smartphone device combined and merged telephony, as an attachment to our physical body. It transforms us into screen, into skin, into this other entity as sums, or sums of data, the result of an operation, a calculation. We, thereby, are the world, or we become complex in this specific world, or *with* the world.

As no longer just physical beings, we can constantly connect to a vast other world with new frontiers and significant challenges, navigating a complex and ever-changing landscape. We have overcome Gaia's limits, won the fight for a seat on the starship Earth, and exhausted its physical presence.

Our ability to act somewhere other than where we are physically still follows a 19th-century urge, a wish to overcome distance and proximity, to bring things, or consumable goods, to us from far away. It appears to be a follow-up of the railway as a mechanical transport technology. Mechanics are replaced, and former industrial processes are extended and transformed with electronics, wireless circuits, microcontrollers, and the digitization of information. Video is a method of transporting containers, a packaging for data across time. Temporality creates density of information.

Essentially, embedded is the aim not to transport us, but rather to transport to us things of interest conquered or acquired outside of our immediate environment. Rather than transporting our bodies in situations where physical presence might be necessary, these bodies are substituted, even replaced, by lightweight or non-weight, real or virtual objects. New bodies are remotely enabled to act in our physical stead.

Through telepresence, we become present with two bodies. The energy consumption of the transport is reduced to nearly nothing, so as to enable multiple, endless transportation and actions in a more complex, automated, and multiplied world and environment. The motivations of modernity, the 19th century of discoveries and inventions, continues to be the determined path we still follow and to which were are still exposed in our technical development. We just no longer need to transport physical bodies and objects.

In the 19th century, panorama, daguerreotype, and photography, the technological precursors of film, cinema and moving image culture, were inspired by the paradigms of simulation, substitution, and reproduction; dynamics and kinetics inspired the movement of images, the creation of movement, transport, and the transport of objects. The projection of moving pictures was based on the inspiration of energy transformation—fairs, exhibitions, and world market-inspired public and collective screening. All the inspirations and inventions of the 19th century have this in common: they simulate and substitute. They simulate materials, activities, attributes, and functions. The idea of substitution guided inventors, who aimed to create a replacement for everything imaginable and practical. The purpose of a majority of these substitutes was to allow one to overcome distances, to move things, reduce things, create simultaneity and immediacy, leading, at the same time, to multiplications or multiples of any object or thing, to variations and operations.

Finally, all modern technological developments have a specific narrative form. An aesthetic of transparency characterizes this last element, adopted by films in the 1910s, particularly in US American film production. The desire to *travel without having to move* inherent to this aesthetic can be traced back to the nineteenth century in phantasmagoria, immersive *dispositifs* such as panoramas and stereoscopic photography, and, principally, in the novels of Balzac and Dickens, which make use of new techniques to sketch out characters, actions, space and time.[[18]](#footnote-19)

The ability to be absolutely mobile, flexible, and dynamic anytime and anywhere: this dream ends up in stillness, surrounded by things in autoplay, and by infinite scrolling. Traveling in space beyond our planet, or traveling outside of our spans and durations, along a scale of time we now have learned, must be related to the death of our body. To travel, we have to perform suicide. Only if we are convinced that body and mind are separated and can exist independently can the body be replaced like a car or a phone, like any object of use, or a thing: the Golem. Biologically, cells are always dying and renewed in our body. The whole actually needs to be accepted as renewable. Wasn’t it the breath of God that blew the spirit into the body of clay, linking these until the end of the human day?

As parts of our bodies become replaceable and possibly generated anew, we can't replace their whole entity, which would be a unity of another object and mind—or not yet. This is what we are not certain about. The other entities are still connected and interwoven with the existing version of the body 1.0, the replacement, mediating our identity, and building a system of social interactions, webs, and networks, and air-conditioned spheres.

We are taught that we can only leave our limits, can leave Earth only if we produce a moving image or a life-like image of us. We are still embedded in the modernist approach to technology, within 19th-century modes of invention. Beaming as molecular deconstruction is only possible in the form of a video stream, only that video is not an image but rather a body; this sounds like a conclusion found in another cyberpunk novel, but reality has become a mode of scanning and printing. The post-human body will be printed not with plastic but with cells and growing information written in or on them. Images would be the carriers of information. The motion of the moving image would also be the freeing act of human consciousness, neglecting the single individual but selecting one subject, the entity described just before, an entity worth leaving, or, as we said, the amount of noise creates this single human entity, a different kind of Golem, with a blown-in spirit built of our moving images.

‘What Blake found in the Bible is the priority of Inspiration over Memory, of the visionary and the imaginative over the traditional and conventional. In these words there is a manifesto for the thesis of this book. They culminate with the stirring stanzas to encourage people to build the New Jerusalem.’[[19]](#footnote-20) We can't take technology for granted, or at least we shouldn't. Technology will change and transform rapidly, but what will we become? We become material, substance, the universe, gods, the singularity, and the world, everything, including religious utopia, the new utopia, an unlimited body for an unlimited mind built out of millions and millions. We are the world...Ultimately, we have never traveled; we have always been in one place. Where do we go if we can't go? We are moving, spinning like atoms, electrons, that we already know. The outcome of all the technological advances we already know and have in our genetic code. The end of grand narratives is the upcoming of the oldest.

We have to overcome our natural—that is, our body. This will be painful. But having pain is what makes us human. The new entity is not human, if human is what we are, so it becomes alien. The alternative will be impossible not to change. It always does.

Heaven is any world you can be as you. Maybe the world is you. You or the I, the subject, is what is constant. We are constantly documenting ourselves in moving images as proof of our being. We repeatedly demonstrate to ourselves the mode of our existence in the world. This world summarizes all possible worlds: the inner us turned outwards. In our selfies, we are real.

## All and Nothing - Immortality

Our digital world consists of information, zeros and ones, infinite chains of combinations and infinite replication. We can achieve immortality through turning into a pure sign.[[20]](#footnote-21)

The passages, screens, and devices are not simple interface images but movements, objects in movement, and changing *things*. Movement and change present a reality of the digital mirroring double. God has not just been removed from the church tower and the town clock and replaced by himself as a programmer; God has become a VJ, making us dance with ABBAtars.[[21]](#footnote-22)

We want to imagine that things are fixed: plain objects and clear structures. The world we live in is messy. We imagine stability while the surrounding circumstances are unstable. Science has taught us that the world is not composed of fixed and tangible things. The world is a continuous process of fleeting entities and vibrations, particles coming to light and disappearing, a swarm of ephemeral quanta of space and matter, a great jigsaw puzzle of space and elementary particles constantly appearing and disappearing. Fluid. A world of events and happenings. Humans, *we*, are the subjects who observe the world: *nodes in a network of exchanges through which we pass images, tools, information and knowledge.*[[22]](#footnote-23)

We invent stories and follow traces in this world to find or uncover something. The world we perceive is something we are situated within, and which is shaped by our interactions.

In *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things), the Roman philosopher Lucretius already spoke about our demanding appetite for life and experience. We can never experience enough of life to satisfy our desire for it. The desire for life is the desire for the world. Pleasure is the highest good. The pursuit of pleasure should be the ultimate goal of our human life. Of course, Lucretius warns us to be cautious against excess and the pursuit of pleasure at the expense of one's well-being, emphasizing the importance of moderation and balance. Ulus Baker, reading Spinoza, reminds us that the affections that a body can experience are not only limited to joy, but also sadness, and this range of affections *empowers* the body.[[23]](#footnote-24)

Seeing things moving, recording them, and replaying them endlessly generate pleasure, excitement, and well-being, satisfying curiosity and stabilizing the world through repetition, forgetting the fluidness and instability of being inside a simulated stream. The world coded from the world in writing turns back to the world in writing to become a world in video streaming. The pleasure of video is its fluidity combined with its sense of touch overcoming the skin and the frame blended in. Everything turning into writing became everything turning into video. It is more immersive and vivid, but seems faster and more complex overall. Its duration allows complexity.

On the other hand, everything video turns into writing. A prompt for generative AI is a text, a code, an image, or a video, but it is then again a code and a text. Writing and text are fundamental to understanding human culture.[[24]](#footnote-25) Writing plays a crucial role in the shaping of our imagination. Video is replacing writing as a dominant communication form; it reorganizes our hand's functions and the message's tactility; the spoken word, when spoken, forms communication with a home bot or any form of chatbot. Digitization has reconfigured every element, object, and thing, making it available and transformable, fluid, and fast. A written prompt is a slow form of a word uttered to create a world and to communicate with my double, my other in the virtual. The tools to do so are not dominated by hand or body movement to transform, but by delegation, through language acts, to a system of tools and utilities, through communication with objects. Human and non-human actors are involved in a creative process that generates new forms and structures. What feels strange disrupts our habitual understanding and perception of the world. It breaks with established forms and structures to engage with the virtual, or, we could say, with the potential realm of ideas and concepts, in order to open something up for creativity and innovation, as the continuing driving forces of human culture and of we humans ourselves.

Suppose we can imagine a world with our double. In that case, imagination can transform our perception of reality and, therefore, our actions in the physical world. Imagination is the active force that shapes and reshapes our understanding and acting.

Suppose the world is a fixed image on a flat surface, frozen death for eternity. In that case, our imagination will be limited, and it will be impossible to see beyond what is given. The image framed is a barrier to the free play needed to imagine.

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Understanding the social and technological factors that shape our experience of the world is essential. Cinema as a medium or/and media in general have shaped this experience for the last centuries. Now, the way we access and consume media has dramatically changed. The development of the internet and digital technologies, as well as platforms and modes of media production, have set in motion certain socio-technical changes. We need to look beyond the surface level of the image and around it.

Gene Youngblood argued that cinema, at its most expanded form, was both a model of consciousness and the medium that could transform it. Referring to Jordan Belson, Youngblood believed that artists and scientists working together could create a utopian vision of the world. The artist is a *design scientist,* *because in their broadest implications, art and science are the same*.[[25]](#footnote-26) Gene Youngblood's influence in the 1970s and 1980s was much more attuned—more than those who were widely expected to lead an ongoing and independent avant-garde culture—to the future development or destiny of contemporary experimental film and video and to the digital future of the avant-garde's formal impulses. Youngblood was the opposite of Jonas Mekas, who increasingly prioritized the radical amateur. He saw the possibility of artists and scientists working together to make a *high-tech end run* around Hollywood, which, as it happens, may be occurring now in the 2020s. Still, Youngblood failed to see the administration of the integration of art and science by corporate capital.

## everyone cinema

The 2020s have witnessed a dramatic shift in how we consume movies. Cinema has shrunk to fit our screens and pockets, readily available on streaming platforms. However, these platforms go beyond the mere presentation of content. They employ design tricks like infinite scrolling and autoplay to keep us glued to the screen, potentially fostering addiction for revenue gains. This cycle creates a loop: the more engaged users become, the more platforms design features to exploit that engagement, leading to a relentless data harvest.

While convenient, concerns are mounting about the potential downsides of these *pocket cinemas*. Studies suggest a link between excessive platform use and negative impacts on mental health and social well-being. Platforms are deliberately designed to keep users hooked, even at the cost of user misery. While the severity of these effects remains debated, the potential for social isolation and depression is a growing worry. The convenience of digital platforms is undeniable, but concerns are rising about their potential negative impacts. We need a more critical eye towards the role of companies like Facebook and TikTok in shaping our society.[[26]](#footnote-27)

But isn't it nice to feel present, receiving a signal of presence, an indicator of existence, or at least an indicator that suggests the existence or proximity of someone or something? Online status indicators, activity feeds, notifications, and then live video as the proof of being, adding visual and auditory cues. Footprints, shadows, temperature changes, or air currents are missing. But it is there. There is something. Angels or ghosts interacting with us. It is this heavenly smile, which we once tried to remember, but now have stored forever in a vast cloud not to be forgotten.

Can online video help us to understand the complexities of our world? Video in digital environments is not just a form of entertainment, a carrier for pleasure, but also a source of information and insight into our world. Of course, navigating and making sense of the vast amount of visual content and the multitude of available moving images seems beyond human reach. Nam June Park already made fun of academic research on video art as a whole, questioning the possibility at all because of the simply massive amount of artistic production already implied in his days.[[27]](#footnote-28)

There are certain visible operations that underlie online video and device culture. How can we understand the mechanics of online video platforms and the behavior of their users so that we can critically assess their impact on society and our world? Consequently, how can we re-engage with the structure of these assemblages, which surround us, embed us, and are built of a complex and dynamic network of actors, technologies, and practices?

Harun Farocki and his conceptualization of operational images or the *operative* might offer a framework for understanding how audiovisual media are used to shape our perception of our world. According to Farocki, operational images are created for a specific function or purpose, such as surveillance footage, military targeting systems, or medical imaging. They are very often produced and circulated within closed systems or specialized industries. They are intended to facilitate a particular type of action or decision-making process. Farocki was interested in how these images operate within more significant social and political systems and how they can be used to shape and control human behavior. He was particularly critical of how these images are used in the military and surveillance industries, where they are often used to justify violence or control populations. The study of operational images could help us gain insights into broader social and political contexts and the structures of power and control within contemporary society.[[28]](#footnote-29)

Video has transformed our understanding of reality. It is alive and gives us never-ending pleasures. The power of video lies in its ability to create immersive experiences that engage our senses and emotions. Video is giving data a face; through changing and moving micro-gestures, it humanizes our interaction with our digital double and naturalizes the strangeness of the underlying operation. Just as we need a face to identify a person (a subject, the other), we need visual clues, certain sensual experiences, to collaborate and engage with the world. And, there, video generates memory. Chunks of data are opportunities for engagement. The interface for engagement with the world is video as a temporary coded signal of images and sounds.

Is our brain recording our experiences? How do we recall our experiences? Are the memories faulty or incomplete? Can video replace or fulfill this task as a memory technique? Are we delegating the task of remembering? Is this interpassivity?[[29]](#footnote-30)

The technique of instant replay is added to our human abilities and to the storage of audiovisual sense or sensation equal experience, aiming to hold the moment in flow and to stop forgetting. With endless resolution and endless looks and views, memory machines assist the brain, or create intelligence, through the ability of memory devices. Video is a memory machine.

Cameras are body assets, modifications, and storage devices of experiences. Body and camera merge as technology, as device and spirit. Lens and sensor collapse with physical appearance and presence in multi-focality.

With computing and generative algorithmic processing, a device becomes self-reflective.

Cinematic is a reading, a temporal structure of simulation that constructs instant experiences and automated replies.

Engagement is random, instant, and simultaneous. No delay.

Video makes our images visible. As Ulus Baker noted, *Video* gives us our thinking back, which means video gives us our images back. We cite ready items of thought through a replay of video-like data and instantaneous sharing.

Yet, we are delegating our abilities to devices and machines. These devices and machines give us the safety of our stored memories and lives. They convince us that none of our moments is lost. The ocean guarantees us what our own body and soul only blurs. We can carry our youth and our beauty, our pleasures and desires for every instant of our lives, fighting to stop the irreversible, the aging, and the loss.

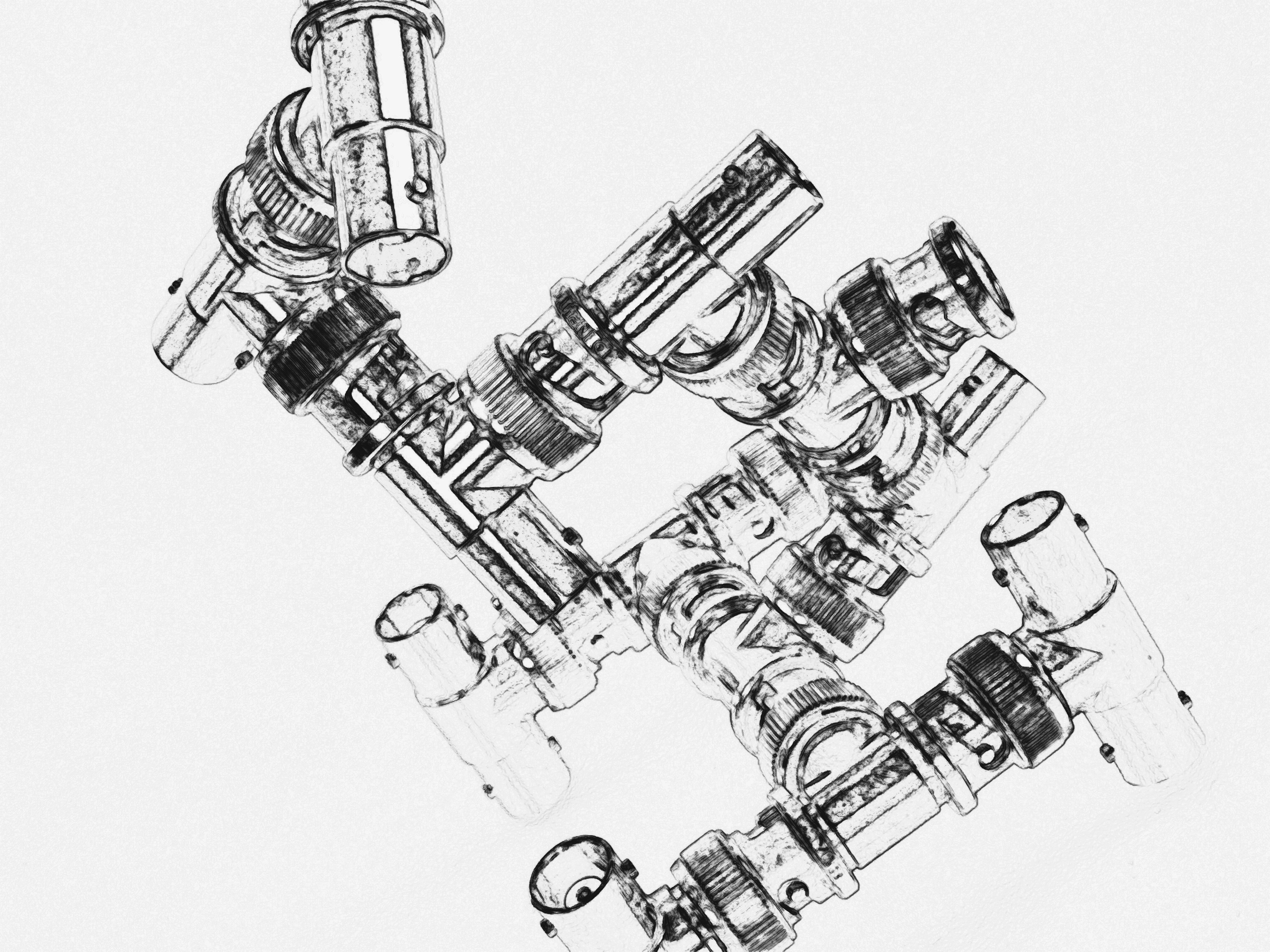
We need to know the stamp, the code, the time, the address to be able to replay. In the ocean of video data, everything can be recalled, but only a little, only the tip of the iceberg, of the near-lost moments and perhaps the just-present is available, fostering a continuous presence through mechanic imagination of a memory that algorithmic decisions foreground for us in our inability to keep track of and differentiate our self. Isn’t that past always a wish, as with what is now and what will come?

Fig. 3. NEILL-CONCELMAN-SALATI

Paul Neill was an American electrical engineer at Bell Labs in the 1940s. He is credited with helping to invent the BNC, TNC and Type N connectors used for microwave and RF communications. He joined Bell in 1916 after spending 12 years at the Westinghouse Electric Company. He retired from Bell on September 30, 1947.

Carl Concelman (December 23, 1912 – August 1975) was an electrical engineer who, while working for Amphenol, invented the C connector and teamed up with Paul Neill of Bell Labs to invent the BNC connector. (Foto: Carl Concelman, 1929)

Octavio M. "Tav" Salati was an American engineer, academic and educator. He served as Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania in the field of Electromagnetic Compatibility.

As the name suggests, the connector was designed collaboratively by Paul Neill from Bell Labs and Carl Concelman from Amphenol. The development, however, was based on an earlier design by Octavio M. Salati, who filed for a design patent in 1945, with patent #2,540,012 being granted in 1951. Accordingly, the BNC connector is considered an iterative improvement of Octavio's design, rather than an entirely new invention.[[30]](#footnote-31)

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