

‘Subreal and Superreal: Scientific Modelling and the Rise of a Communal Digital Imagination’ – Abstract Submission

Dr Daniel O’Shiel (daniel.oshiel@mail.udp.cl; www.danieloshiel.com)
Postdoctoral Researcher (FONDECYT) and Teacher in Philosophy,
Instituto de Filosofía, Universidad Diego Portales,
Santiago, Chile.

14th June 2020.

Abstract: Humans have always wondered what is beyond their immediate senses. Fortunately we have an inherent capacity for this: imagination. This can occur purely through the mind, or also through external means (e.g. a screen). As human knowledge and technology have developed over the years, so has the capacity to capture ultimate realities more accurately through digital and virtual models and simulations that are now reaching high levels of complexity, sophistication and interactivity. The rise of a communal digital imagination gives both scientists and non- vivid and detailed access to our latest and most accurate representations of the smallest (sub-) and biggest (super-) realities. I will argue that it is becoming increasingly important to explicitly recognize the basic categories of real (perceptions), unreal (images), subreal (e.g. atoms) and superreal (e.g. a galaxy) with which human investigation is always working, in order to combat an increasing tendency for the fake and illusory to invade and masquerade in the place of other phenomena and categories. There are four main steps to the presentation. First I outline some key philosophy of science points regarding modelling and simulation. Second I supplement this with a succinct phenomenology of subreal and superreal, departing from observations regarding perception and imagination. Third I show how new technology has given rise to a communal digital imagination. Finally I highlight the increasing dangers of the illusory and misleading hijacking and masquerading as other phenomena in various categories and domains, concluding with recommendations as to what might be done about this.

Key terms: imagination, modelling, philosophy of technology, subreal, superreal.