

Upcoming Presentations Abstracts (Dr. phil. Alexander I. Stingl)

The Technoscientific State Through the Heteroscope: State Displaced or Misplaced?

“How to govern?”, is a question that not only fazes governments, politicians and political parties but an increasing number of (world-)societal actors, enmeshed in the making of science policy and politics of science itself. They are subject to government while licensed to usurp governing positions over disbanded and unevenly organized societal collectivities, imbricated in regimes of governance that are post-legitimized, post-transparent, post-democratic procedures.

As STS scholars, we must critique the acceleration in dependence on techno-scientific practices of knowledge and management beyond the State: Citizens of nation-states and post-national conglomerates, and producers of techno-scientific knowledge demand legitimated representation, representative participation, and transparency, where post-democratic society and techno-scientific embeddedness of decision-making processes on the trans-local scale (trans-local meaning, broadly, that stake-holders and stock-holders do not share the same space of causes and effects) seem to suggest that people paradoxically proliferate and govern their existences in abandonment of the State, while transnational corporate entities rematerialize as quasi-state entities. STS critique demands suggestions for alternative forms of governance and novel conceptualizations of statehood: Does the techno-scientific state emerge naturally from the actual governance practices of actors such as corporations, NGOs and collective actors formed by interested private citizens as stakeholders? Will it redefine the boundaries of empirical and theoretical concepts in displacing or misplacing the State, and how does the state so placed *see* people and how do they *look* back? The new State is, I argue, a nomadic entity that gazes at us just as heteroscopically as we gaze back at it.

Styles of Suffering and Spaces of Pain: Somatic, Semantic, Narrative Sites of Empathy and Agency

Pain and suffering, despite being often used interchangeably, are not the same thing and should be kept analytically and conceptually separate. Pain describes a sensory-based perception, perhaps it even has emergent properties towards a mental state, but that still has little or nothing to do with sentience nor does it constitute emotionality; in principle, any brainless thing with a rudimentary nervous system can feel pain whereas suffering is intrinsic to sentient and emotional beings: *Real* suffering is something else and something worse than mere pain, to paraphrase I. M. Banks, the creature 'undergoing the experience could appreciate it fully, could think back when it had not suffered so, look forward to when it might stop (or despair of it ever stopping – despair was a large component of this) and know that if things had been different it might not be suffering now.' It requires both imagination and intelligence.

It is an open question if people with ADHD or who are deaf 'feel pain' as a mental state – not physically, for sure – when confronted with the effects of their 'disorders' (and I mean disorder here in the sense of experiencing oneself in interaction as 'out of the social order with what one's society fant'sies is normal'). Surely, we can imagine a parent may say something like “it must be painful not be able to hear the voice of a bird” or “it is painful to watch my son not making friends at school”, or “my daughter is in pain over the fact that no matter what, she can't get a good grade in maths”, etc.

Of course, nobody would confuse this to mean the same as “he feels the pain of the needle in his arm” or “she is in pain from the cramps”, and, of course, no philosopher, sociologist or psychologist would blindly assign the same spatio-temporal properties to these different conceptualizations of pain; however, it shows, at the same time, that a folk psychological point of view constructs the experience of what is more generally suffering on the basis of the experience of physical, somatic pain. In this paper, I suggest that suffering has not a mere perceptual/physical but a genuinely a *somatic* aspect (for example, we often let our head hang when suffering grief or stress) that encodes, enacts and embodies emotions, while we should also strictly differentiate between pain as part of the somatic site and only part of this site, whereas suffering exists in different sites altogether (semantic and/or narrative), even if it can be founded in somatic states or be expressed somatically.

This issue, the connection of pain, (human) agency and narrative, is also not a novelty in the history of science, philosophy and political thought. As political, I understand any action that refers to states of

others and interfering in those states, which requires that a politics of suffering obtains to emotional kinds and cultures of empathy culminating in styles of narrative. Narrativity is a basic condition of human experience that ranges from psychology to architecture and ICT design, because “people live their lives as a narrative”. *Narrative* can mean a number of things here. Narrative sites (the spaces that narratives both construct and inhabit, that they occupy and furnish) entail “possible worlds” because the problem of transforming pain into suffering re-describes a 'perceptual world' as a sequence of events that 'comes into place' through organization. How this organization is facilitated is problematic from a theoretical point of view. The traditional point of view shared by such diverse writers as from Habermas to Bakhtin is by way of 'textual organisation', whether by logos or dia-logos. Of course, this account is right in so far that there is a deeper root that *also* leads toward textual practices and “*a beginning in Kant' categories of the mind organizing sensory experience to produce meaning*” (Millar). This is not just true for dialogos/logos-based aka textual practices, but for the practices that are Real as Grosz, Barad or LaRuelle argue, textual and non-textual, discursive and non-discursive, dia-logical and dia-physical. And they are narrative and semantic, not because or when they are textual, but in all cases it is true that: They are semantic because they have meaning, and because they have meaning they are events and they are sequential, and the order of the sequence is narrative because a minimalist account of narrative suggest it to refer to a representation of at least two events with a temporal ordering between them.

Digitalized Humans in the Human Ecology

Dogs and cats don't normally yodel, in fact, dogs and cats cannot yodel. In part, because such a fad is human equipment. Yodeling is defined by a succession of pitch changes between chest register and head register that are constituted by excessive intervals in the changes of registers, so to speak. Yodeling was, originally, a form of communication, a mediation that was created by intervals, in other words, in-between spaces to cover spaces. And at some point in human culture, yodeling became music, therefore an acoustic furnishment. Respectively, dogs do not yodel, not generally, not normally. Not even as companions in a human environment. But what is normal about furniture these days? The in-between spaces of humans and their environment is constituted by a strange parallax view in a triplet of dialectics: A dialectical biology, the dialectical habitation of ecologies (humans occupying a natural environment as their ecology and humans as ecology for natures that occupy them), and a narrative dialectics of seeing. This parallax human condition is complicated through processes of digitalization and virtualization, which are irrevocably changing how these in-between spaces are furnished. From a human and, therefore, scientific point of view, the one dialectical relation that has been effectively changed is the latter, which is reconceptualized into a narrative dialectics of technoscientific seeing. But with one perspective, one axis, one distinct style of furnishment changing, so does the color, the temperament, the attunement, the climate of the spaces in-between, shifting and creating boundaries and thresholds that we just cannot sit just as comfortably in.

Over the course of this paper, I will unfold the issue from the displaced human view in the three dialectical relations and a) show that they can be conceptualized generally as somatic, semantic, and narrative styles and spaces, and b) how a shift in style by way of digitalization will lead to the reconceptualization of the spaces in a human ecology, argued on the example of medical ecology and anthropology. Finally, c) I will argue, that in digitalizing humans, we are imposing a new governmental regime upon human ecology to the point where the question, “Are you sitting comfortably?” is followed by a “revenge of the sit” because the new truth about cats and dogs is that, indeed, they do yodel.