

Cologne/Lisbon Philosophy of Technology LAB 2017

24.11.2017

9h30-18h

Anfiteatro da FCiências.ID, Building C1, 3rd floor

Faculdade das Ciências Universidade de Lisboa, Campo Grande

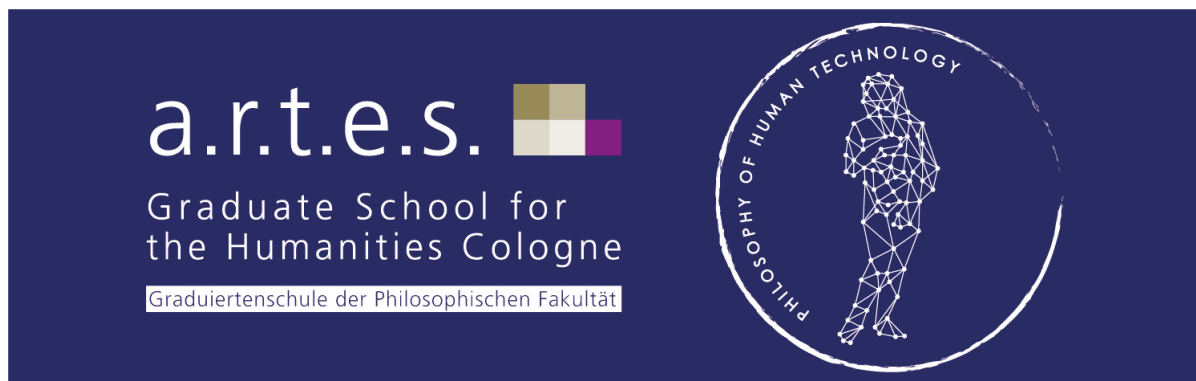
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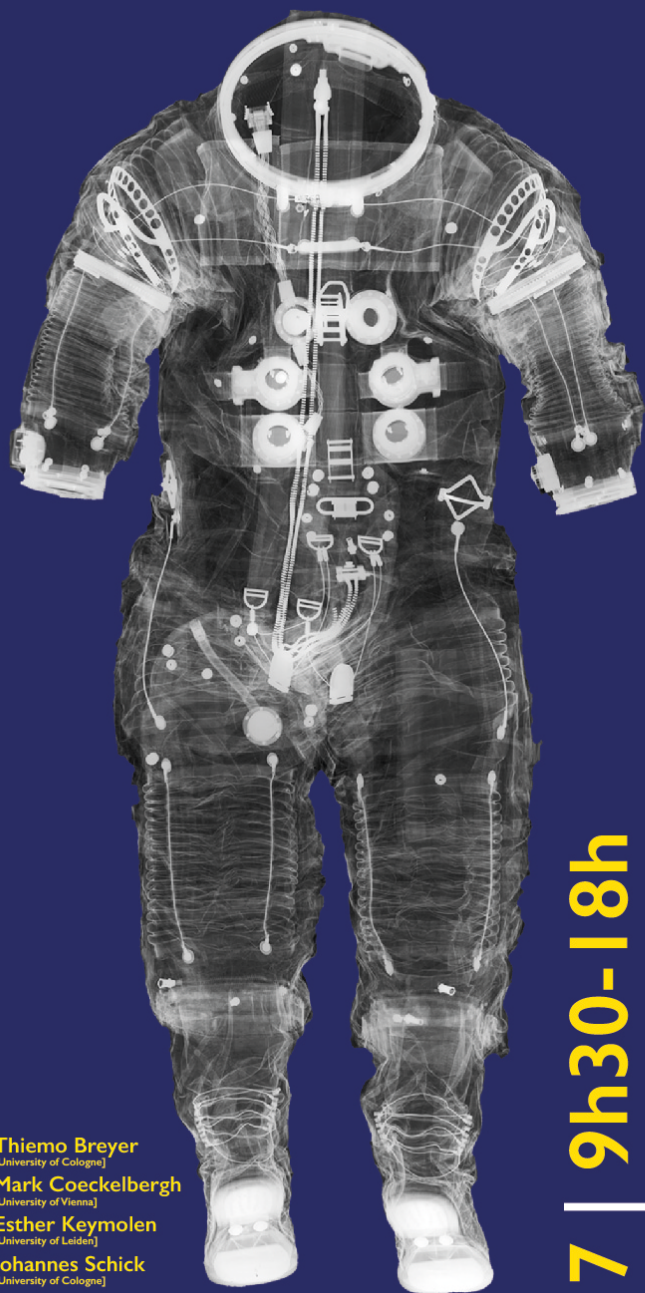
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#01_ Technologies of Alterity



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Graduate School for
the Humanities Cologne
Institute for Philosophy Education



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Anfiteatro da FCIências.ID Building CI 3 floor,
Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa

Cologne/Lisbon Philosophy of Technology LAB #01 Technologies of Alterity

on digital alterity, “digital humans 2.0”,
human artifacts and technological interfaces
virtual doubles and artificial agents:
social change and transformation of human experience in techno-digital culture

PROGRAM

9h30-9h45h Arrival/Welcome

9h45-10h Introduction (Alexander Gerner, Johannes Schick, Thiemo Breyer)

10h-11h Thiemo Breyer (University of Cologne, a.r.t.e.s.)

Techniques of Visibility as Techniques of Alterity

Humans are visible. They are visible in virtue of their embodied nature and their upright carriage. In a more pregnant sense, they are visible as seeing beings and as social persons. Seeing and being seen constitute the sphere of human visibility and produce various types of gazes in which perception and recognition overlap. Among the different forms of visibility, a *physical* and a *social* one can be distinguished as very basic modes. Humans are characterised by their physical visibility as any other object that has at least one opaque layer. In this mode of visibility, humans are perceptually identified. Social visibility transcends this *identification*, because it calls for a *recognition* of the other person (in a more moral sense). In recognising the other, one confirms their “value” as a person and as an interaction partner. Recognition can, however, be absent in various ways, when one does not consider the other. This implies a lack of empathic expressions and shows the boundedness of social visibility to embodied *expressivity*. The talk aims at systematising different types of social gazes as techniques of visibility and alterity.

KEYWORDS: Visibility, self-awareness, expressivity, embodiment, gaze

11h-12h

Mark Coeckelbergh (University of Vienna)

Performances of Artificial and Human Alterity: Politics and Technologies of Domestication and Alienation

In the use of digital technologies, alterity is produced and performed in various ways. This talk focuses on two kinds of human-technology relations in which alterity plays a role in different ways. One is that technology itself appears as a quasi-other, which often takes on an alien yet familiar –in other words, uncanny – dimension. Here, like in the case of other non-humans, there are political processes of domestication that try to de-alienate, to include in the household. The question then is if the alien is not excluded, or indeed if the alien is allowed to appear at all, when all otherness is reduced to sameness. Another relation is one in which technology is used to produce and perform the alterity of humans, for instance in social media and in surveillance. Here some humans are included as “same others” that are fixed on their (data) identity, whereas others are constructed as different and even alien others, which are excluded from the household but in this way still managed, domesticated. Again, this technological construction of aliens is a politically problematic performance, not because it excludes the alien but because it produces it (in order to then manage it). In both kinds of relations and performances, the main ethical and political problem concerns the violence of categorisation, which keeps both machines and humans within or outside specific boundaries and borders. Border crossings are not only forbidden; technologies are actively used in ways that create and maintain existing ontological and political boundaries. How can we deal with this problem? What different kind of political-technological performances and promiscuities could destabilise and resist this?

KEYWORDS: artificial agents; alterity; politics; domestication; alienation

12h-12h15 Coffee Break

12h15-13h00

Esther Keymolen (University of Leiden)

Trust in the networked era: a functional fiction.

Trust is a robust strategy to reduce complexity in social interaction. When we trust we have positive expectations about the actions of others. Although we are not sure what the future brings or how others are going to behave, when we have trust we can bridge this gap of uncertainty. Trust can be seen as a “functional fiction”. By acting ‘as if’ we know for sure what will happen in the future, social interaction is made possible.

It is not to be expected that in our networked societies, trust will soon become redundant and substituted by technology. On the contrary, in order to endure the complexity that technology inherently brings forth, trust will only be more in demand. However, how trust and the shaping of trust are impacted by the use of technologies is an open question.

The focus of this talk will therefore be on the intersubjective character of trust and how this intersubjective character might be under siege by the development of automated and pro-active others. Both public and private actors invest in algorithmic decision-making systems that crunch huge amounts of data in order to predict the behaviour of their citizens and customers. Based on these data-driven decision-making tools, interactions with citizens and customers increasingly become automated. Generally, citizens and customers have however no way of guessing how they are being read by these systems. They are in a relation of “invisible visibility”. Citizens and customers become visible in a way that is invisible to them. Although trust is always to a certain extent blind, is there a moment where it becomes too blind and transforms in sheer hope? Can our pro-active, personalized and automated environment still function as a familiar world, a “lifeworld” in which shared perceptions and beliefs can be presupposed? Finally, some preliminary ideas are shared on trust as a central part of interface ethics.

KEYWORDS: trust, complexity, postphenomenology, mediation theory, interface ethics.

13h00-14h15 Lunch Break

14h15-14h45 Alexander Gerner

Hacking, messing around, enhancing, flattening or resisting the *embodied alien*? Probing Dramaturgies and Technologies of xenoresonance.

Enhancing 4E (embodied, extended, embedded, enactive) techniques of cognition should be put into perspective in their alien dimension. Humans as liminal being, are described as “not entirely at home with ourselves” (Waldenfels 2011,76). By “pan experiential meshes” of object-oriented equally existing flat ontology Bogost’s (2014) *Alien Phenomenology or what it is like to be a thing* hacks into and messes with Waldenfels’s alien human sense and experience-centred account by an -what I call- post-experience and post-personal dramaturgy. In my view Bogost’s *projective alien* excludes body-centeredness in democracy of objects in which he messes around: “a mess is what is not graspable by *human* actors, unable to be ordered into a network. But who’s to say that my mess is not the volcano’s network? Whose conception of reality gets to frame that of everything else’s?” Bogost 2014,21) This position I want to problematize as a theme derived from a cybernetic “common

collective” and flat networks research program that leads to network-based “ecologies” of ubiquitous and totalizing connectedness by computation of a *programmed digitalized alien*: “the alien is not limited to another *person*, or even another *creature*. The alien is anything—and everything—to everything else.” (Bogost). For me this dramaturgy of total mobilisation and messing around with the alien leads to a disembodied projective conceptions of alterity that has to be confronted with the fact of a general technicity of embodied human experience: Within polycentric positionalities (Plessner), we are defined by paradoxes of border-crossing experiences and deviations, in which we not only constantly cross experiential thresholds, update, re-embody and tinker with new tools, self-images and have encounters and confront ourselves with another and thus become defined within a praxis of *bodies in technologies*. Moreover, when becoming transformed by technological tools such digital Avatars, body doubles and enactive interaction schemata (body technologies), or embedded and extended body-techno interfaces- projective aliens are created within different dramaturgies. In these dramaturgies, plural roles based on the possibility of „poly(ec)centric positionalities “(Gualeni 2015) create fictions and hallucinations that often appear more „real” than our views on our spectator’s bodies. Hacking and tinkering with the ex-bodied or re-embodyed alien is guided by the meaning of hacking as initially presented in 1959 by Peter Samson. Recently created VR Avatar Therapies stage Virtual Body doubles and by that hack, tinker, enhance or empower resistance against projected aliens, such as acousmatic voices in the head. In my reading of techno-alien phenomenology the embodied alien is put into perspective as technically out-of-sync, or desynchronised and in dramaturgies of xenoresonance. Xeno-resonance deals with unidirectional entrainments on a pre-given or stabilized rhythm by one of the communicators/ sonance sources that cannot be influenced consciously (on a pre-personal level), or are imposed on the other. Xeno-resonance deal with altered states of selves as directly induced by technology as for example in a) proposed future medical treatment of paralysis in which interrupted, inner-bodily resonances between nervous and motor-system are envisioned to be restored with brain implants by brain-spine-interfaces that have already been tested in monkeys. Another example of xenoresonance would be b) Avatar interfaces c) genetic editing and interspecies plant-animal-human interfaces or d) direct brain-to-brain interfaces (Grau et al 2014; Yoo et al., 2013). Since 2013 it is possible to transmit sensory-motor “information” commands in between animal brains mediated via the internet (Pais-Vieira et al., 2013) -, examples of a digital embodied alien when “I” become “we” (Trimper et al., 2014). These interfaces can be interpreted from a directed or imposed resonance position, which rise ethical, social, economic and political/policy issues: for example issues of “brain privacy” (Alpert, 2007) pose the question, if we are actually experiencing a suspension of resonance or a new category of technologically induced resonance in which the “sound-source” takes over and entrains onto the receiving body a disciplinary regime of slave-resonance controlled by an uncontrollable or transcending (acousmatic) master-other. Should there be of a fundamental human right to resist messing around with “you” “me” and “we” in xeno-resonance?

KEYWORDS embodied alien phenomenology, hacking, technical Interfaces of Cognitive enhancement, xenoresonance

14h45-15h15: Johannes Schick (University of Cologne, a.r.t.e.s.)

“The Other Side of Intelligence”: Techniques, Alterity and the Homo Faber

At the beginning of the 20th century, Henri Bergson introduced the concept of the Homo faber in his famous book *Creative Evolution*. Although the idea of man being a tool making animal was far from being new, the concept of the *homo faber* ignited a vibrant discussion of the genesis of intelligence: while Bergson claimed that human intelligence is generated in exchange with materiality, Durkheim and his school argued for the social origin of human intelligence. These positions constituted the poles of the highly charged field of controversy, which was held by anthropologists, philosophers, sociologists and archaeologists. One of the prominent figures was the nowadays almost forgotten, yet influential philosopher Louis Weber, who provides, according to François Sigaut, an important link in the philosophy of technology in France between Alfred Espinas and Gilbert Simondon. For Weber, the *homo faber* reveals a different, pre-social and pre-linguistic side of intelligence which works rather with schemata and images than with verbal expressions. This specific operational mode of intelligence is generated out of a recursive relationship with matter and corresponds to the specific mode of existence of technical objects. Technical operations necessitate a different form of representation in order to be comprehended. This mode of thought, the other side of intelligence, manifests itself in the understanding of technology as human science in the French tradition, which ultimately leads to Simondon's project to search for a “new encyclopedic spirit” allowing for a symmetrical, ethical relationship with the technical world. In following this trajectory, I ask for the ontological and epistemological conditions of possibility to conceive of the technical object as other.

KEYWORDS: Technology, homo faber, Gilbert Simondon, technical object, ethics of alterity

15h15-15h45 Anne Lefebvre, ENS (Paris-Saclay (Cachan))/CIPh

'The robot does not exist' (Gilbert Simondon): one more reason to rethink its design.

Although the last decade new technologies clearly relaunched it, the question of the existence of ‘artificial others’ or ‘artefacts as others’, might have nothing fundamentally new. In a way, the complementary thesis Gilbert Simondon wrote in 1958[2017], *On The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, can be read as an early critical answer to the already expanding representations in the 1950's, of machines as *alter egos* that would threaten or save humanity. Our first goal in this paper will be to enlighten the very meaning and issues of this striking— but no less serious — statement Simondon came to make then: ‘the robot does not exist’ (Simondon 2017, p.16), and to understand why he nevertheless calls in his all works for treating technical objects differently than sole means, even for developing emotion for them. In the second part of this paper, one will show that — far from being disqualified by today emergence of new technologies like AI, deep learning, etc. — Simondon's philosophy of individuation allows us to entirely reformulate and clear the problem of the ontological difference between humans/artefacts, that many contemporary authors keep struggling with in vain, by bringing us back to the true criteria of life as anticipation and invention. At last, one will show that, in doing so, Simondon does not only help us to distinguish simulation processes from life's invention, but also lead us to rethink the ontological status of artefacts: their median role within our relational process of individuation in which emotion is involved. One will claim that it is why we need to take seriously the question of their design. I will invite the designer Olivier Hirt (ENSCI – les

ateliers) to join and discuss about the relevancy to explore design projects able to take care of these relational crucial issues, far from staying prisoners of the sole logics of imitation and interaction that robotics mostly develops today.

KEYWORDS: Simondon, anticipation, simulation, emotion, relation, design

15h45-16h00 Coffee Break

16h00-16h30 Nuno Nabais

Animal and machine: Could they be similar forms of estrangement?

16h30-17h10 *Roundtable 1_ Technologies of Alterity_Performance, Robots, AI*

with Mark Coeckelbergh, Thiemo Breyer, Graça Corrêa,(Robots and performance aesthetics and ethical considerations), Anne Lefebvre, Johannes Schick, Vinícius Jonas (CFCUL)

17h10- 17h50 Roundtable 2: Digital Alterity (data protection, policy, law issues trust, Biobanks)

Esther Keymolen, Mara Almeida (CFCUL), Alexander Gerner, Mark Coeckelbergh, Johannes Schick, Alexander Gerner

Pieter Vermaas (TU Delft) _Notes/comments

17h50-18h00 Resume and end notes: Thiemo Breyer, Johannes Schick, Alexander Gerner