

Editorial

In so far as ours is a history of mediation it begins with Plato's allegory of the cave, continues as a distinction between the incomprehensible Thing-in-itself and its innumerable appearances, and culminates in disparate notions of mediatisation, outsourcing and *Homo generator*.

What these approaches have in common is that they all acknowledge our inability to directly comprehend and relate to truth, being and ethics. While Plato imagined that the fully-fledged philosopher had been granted the promise of eventually breaking free of mediation, Kant's phenomenology held that we are forever limited by the phenomena as they appear to us; the primordial, generative Thing remains out of reach.

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After Martin Heidegger's final renunciation of metaphysics from the field of philosophy – or thought, as he preferred – any reference to the mediated being as something divine, absolute or wholly Other became untenable. In the psycho-analysis of Jacques Lacan mediatisation is the work of language and symbolisation: it is what makes it possible for desire to operate within a biological frame governed by drive. Essentially our entry into language – the order of the Father – is what guarantees our non-pathological desiring relations. Our desire is mediatised through the father and language itself, and our symbolic servitude is what enables us to recognise and become recognised as sexuated beings.

Slavoj Žižek, Lacan's most well-known interpreter today, adds another twist to the drama with his notion of interpassivity. While interactivity designates our activity together interpassivity situates us as actively passive, or, to put it in Žižek's own words, when "I am active so that you can be passive." Here it is the passive subject's desire that is outsourced, and the notion of mediatisation reveals both mediator and mediatised. No longer making any reference to a domain of metaphysics mediatisation has become a substantive phenomenon that shows the structure of desire as it is revealed in social constellations.

In the philosophy of Wolfgang Schirmacher the term medium should be taken quite literally. His is first and foremost a philosophy of the modern mass media and it should be approached as an attempt to understand how a host of novel communicative technologies work in

our lives. His notion of *Homo generator* conceptualises our engagement with a wealth of contemporary channels of communication. To Schirmacher *Homo generator* is a figure who allows the media to generate entire life worlds, and in this precise sense it is a logic that conforms to Žižek's idea of interpassivity: our relatively passive complicity in mass mediation allows the mediated world to actively conjure truth, being and an ethical stance in our place. In a word our world and our ethical being is outsourced: we find anchorage in mediated images and it is no longer required of us that we shoulder our being-in-the-world ourselves, as this is a work taken over and actively regenerated by our mediatised figure.

If there is any remnant of Plato in phenomenology after Heidegger it is as a form of consolation. While Plato absorbed the defeat of his city with a call to elevate the philosophers to governors of the state on the grounds that it was the current rulers' inability to see the truth that had led to Athen's loss, Schirmacher extends Heidegger's logic of care to philosophy itself. It is no longer required that the philosopher shoulder the burden of political governance, since the figure of the governor in either case is mediatised and thus returns to us as an image in the media. The philosopher can relax and meditate: we can remain calm and take up a truly Epicurean attitude. Life is there to be lived and finding a way to live a life that is pleasing is part of our constitution in the world.

When Schirmacher interrogates our interaction with contemporary media he inscribes his thought into a tradition begun by Heidegger: in this view we live in an epoch characterised by technology, and the end point of this

epoch can only be conceived as a full incorporation of the epochal logic. Subsequently Schirmacher holds that history cannot fulfil itself in a classless society. At most, he says, our dreams of such a utopian egalitarianism can be achieved as a temporary solution to the logic of technicity. Finally whatever obstructs a full implementation of computers and their instrumental logic will have to stand aside. Human beings exist only for as long as it is more costly for the computers to dismantle our being than it is to simply allow things to keep going as they are.

This is why the true essence of our being cannot be found in any simple recourse to humanism and what Schirmacher refers to as the anthropocentrism of our present age. We should rather acknowledge that our being is everywhere. As Schirmacher says, why should we be restricted to the small, human subject with a limited lease on life and being? “I am everything,” Schirmacher says in an interview with *Inscriptions*. “I am the stars! It all has to be me.” Even as computers obliterate every last obstacle to their continued operation this antropomorph sense of the human will continue: our being has finally become fully mediated by technology itself.

This first issue of *Inscriptions* is dedicated to the philosophy of Wolfgang Schirmacher, featuring three previously unpublished translations of his work. In these texts Schirmacher discusses notions such as artificiality, technoculture and the event (*Ereignis*) of technology. In our interview with him Schirmacher points out that while Heidegger stopped at considering technology as fixation (*Gestell*) Schirmacher began by asking if such a conception was sufficient. Is there not something more than the technological fix that we live in? The answer was technology as event, and there is a sense in which the entire thought of Schirmacher revolves around the shift from fixation to event in our approach to technology.

As Schirmacher notes in the introduction to his essay on technoculture his is a philosophy that stands firmly in the phenomenological tradition from Hegel via Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer. The contribution from Daniel Fraser in this issue takes up the phenomenological mantel to consider what it means to no longer read. What is it that happens when we let go of a text and once again become aware of the world around us? In a fine twist to approaches to reading that we find in Walter Benjamin and Maurice Blanchot Fraser suggests a view of meaning that is at once complex and finely tuned to philosophical debates of our time: “Writing is a dying art form. In fact it is the dying art form par excellence. It is only through its continual death, its death sentence, that it can be said to be truly alive.”

Inscriptions is a journal that in addition to scholarship features literature and art, and in this issue we are happy to introduce three literary contributions. Alice Mills’ “Bringing Arthur back” is a bitter-sweet rendition of a potential second coming of King Arthur, mobilising scholastic knowledges and generic references in a closely knit narrative. “The white feather” by Jeffrey Norman Lewis is a romance set in the knowledge economy, bringing up echoes of David Lodge’s *Small World*, although with a very different inflection. It is a story that asks about the possibilities and limitations of love and sexuality in a world of competition and scholastic rivalry, marked as it is by a brutal craving for the ends of violence. In contrast Simon Andrew Orpana’s “Two poems on the plasticity of memory” delicately and subtly enquires into what it is like to confront our being after loss: vaudeville clowns, a shirt that smells of you, a polished crown of glass; they all conjure images of the one who has departed. A restless memory is what remains when our guest has left.

This inaugural issue of *Inscriptions* is made entirely by volunteers. We do not have the backing of a scholarly society, an academic institution, or a large publishing house. However, even a not-for-profit enterprise incurs certain unavoidable expenses. Therefore we ask of you who find our approach interesting to consider subscribing to our printed edition, which will be sent out by mail later this year. A sign-up form is available from our online platform, where you will also find downloadable audio files of unpublished excerpts from our interview with Wolfgang Schirmacher. Find us at <http://inscriptions.tankebanen.no/>

Happy reading!