

Call for Papers

“Technically Yours”: Technicity, Mediality, and the Stakes of Experience

An international conference organized by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, to be held October 18-20, 2019

Abstracts submission deadline: February 22, 2019

Conference website: <<https://ntuyours.wordpress.com>>

Keynote Speaker:

Martin E. Jay (Emeritus Professor, Department of History, University of California, Berkeley, USA)

Plenary Speakers:

Eyal Amiran (Professor, Department of Comparative Literature + Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Irvine, USA)

Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan (Senior Lecturer, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London, UK)

Kate Marshall (Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Notre Dame, USA)

I.

In a co-authored monograph, media theorist Alexander Galloway retells the story of how Hermes kills the hundred-eyed, all-vigilant Argus: the arch-messenger just keeps talking and talking on end, about the invention of the reed pipe, and slowly the giant's eyes close out of fatigue. "Argus," as Galloway has it, "was bored to death by the most boring thing of all, tales about technology."^[1]

For better or worse, at this juncture in history we need no reminder as to the centrality of technology: technology easily stands as the paramount medium relaying tales about the contemporary world; or, according to many, technology *is* the very story that now textures our times.

Inquiries into technology and media—and, perhaps more importantly, their conceptual cognates—have significantly shifted the grounds of debate in the humanities. Up to today, however, they have each developed on their own terms. Presumably bound up closely, queries about technology, technics or technicity and those about media, mediation or mediality do not always engage with the critical vocabulary of the other strand. To make matters thornier, the relation among the concepts within each set is never one of congruity.

This conference proposes to bring these lines of investigation together and examine their shared agendas or the tensions between them. More specifically, we are interested in the

critical and theoretical ramifications revolving around these concept clusters and, further, in the configurations of experience thus emerging. For postlapsarian creatures like ourselves, stories about experience always seem to come *in medias res*, with the cause proper withheld from us. To what extent, then, can a joint consideration of technicity and mediality help to advance our thinking of the human condition?

II.

If earlier studies of technology approached technologies mostly from a cultural-history perspective, propositions on technicity and technical object have come to reframe the terms of debate. They bring to light the possibility that the human encounter with technology may very well be an experience that is not thoroughly lived and internalized. Thinkers in this stream have also opened up space to address the human-technology relation in light of potentiality, virtuality, and processes of concretization. On the other hand, the “originary technicity” thesis pushes the envelope by understanding technics as “the pursuit of life by means other than life,”^[2] and human experience as an exteriority, posing a powerful countervailing force to anthropocentric assumptions.

In a related light, media theorists have written extensively about how technical media punctuate human experience by instances of exteriorization. Others probe into the ways in which a human practice turns into a cultural technique, that is, the ways in which a technique mediates collective forms of life. While their foci may vary, these theorists are concerned with how a material object or process becomes “medial.” This postulate has inspired literary scholars and cultural critics alike to construe *medium* broadly, and what may be considered medial now include not only artefacts, technologies, and infrastructures, but also natural forces.

At the same time, scholars in new media studies have contributed important insights. Critics have suggested considering the intersection of different bodies (biochemical, technological, etc.) in terms of intermediation. Others have sought to bring to the fore the emancipatory dynamic of digital technology by philosophizing its expansion of human experience. There are also scholars who call attention to the ways in which the logic of digitality and coding has become the cultural (and epistemological) dominant of today.

Looming behind all this is the age-old question regarding experience mediated vs. experience unmediated. While conversations about this contrariety have never been confined merely to the technological, digital technology is here to complicate the whole scenario thanks to its tricky mediality: its capacity to produce other realities, and to simulate the very reality that many of us take to be the grounding of our experience.

This conference proposes to think progressively about the mediation of experience in relation to technology or technics widely defined. We invite refreshing theoretical interventions, as well as innovative takes on specific examples. Discussion of any period and any cultural, historico-technical situation is welcome.

III.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Mediation of experience (temporal, spatial, affective, aesthetic, cognitive, libidinal or epistemological) via a specific technical medium
- Technically mediated experience presented in a literary work, film, or art work
- Realities that appear un-mediated (e.g., literary inspiration, virtual reality, etc.)
- Technicity and embodiment; techniques of the body
- Technicity and the issue of cultural practice and formation of a collective
- Mediation and the question of representability, figurability
- Mnemotechnology
- Media technologies and experience of the yet-to-come
- Media technologies and nature; media technologies and second nature
- The economy of desire or economy of need—or economy per se—in conjunction with a technical medium
- Revisit to theses of technical object and technicity
- Question of mediality in philosophy and critical theory
- Critical reflections on the state of current media theory, including new media studies, media archaeology, history of culture techniques, among others
- Contemporary humanistic fields attentive to the question of mediated or immediate experience, including affect theory, image studies, feminist and queer theories of the body
- Approaches to the issue of mediation in theories that are also centered on material objects and materiality, such as thing theory and new materialism
- With more and more possibilities of “human experience” being churned out, amid a range of life forms and material entities that the humans must coexist with, does the human/nonhuman divide still serve as an effective analytical tool? (Critics have, for instance, put forth the cognizer/noncognizer alternative, with intelligent machines included in the cognizer category.)
- Does thought, as media theorist Adiran MacKenzie suggests, have a technicity?^[3] Is the thinkability of experience always already a question of technicity?

Notes:

^[1] Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 36.

^[2] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 17.

^[3] Adrian MacKenzie, *Transductions: Bodies and Machines at Speed* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 10.

To be considered for inclusion in the conference program, please send an abstract of 300-500 words and a brief curriculum vitae (which should include contact information, education, current institutional affiliation and position, and select publications if available) as separate Word attachments (not PDF) to the email address <ntuconf@hotmail.com> no later than **February 22, 2019**. Please do not include the author's personal identity in the abstract proper.

Conference Proceedings

To facilitate the audience's engagement in the talks and presentations, we will provide a collection of the speakers' and presenters' papers at the conference. (This is a common practice for international conferences held in the country; the collection is *not* to be considered formal publication.) Presenters' papers, to be prepared for a 20-minute presentation, are due three weeks prior to the conference. Those who can't submit their papers in time are expected to prepare hard copies for the attendees at their own cost.

Publication Project

To bring the conversation generated at the conference to fruition, the organizers plan to put together two special issues on the conference theme in the open-access journal published by the department, ***Ex-position***. All the invited speakers' papers will be included. Presenters are cordially invited to participate in the project. Manuscripts submitted to the journal are to undergo peer review.

Website of journal: <<http://ex-position.org>>

Due dates:

- To be considered for the June 2020 issue, submissions are due December 31, 2019.
- To be considered for the December 2020 issue, submissions are due March 31, 2020.