

Membranic Disjunction: Beyond Digital Parts and Analog Wholes

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HUMAN- TECHNOLOGY RELATIONS

11 – 13 JULY 2018

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artificial lighting technologies on perceptions and evaluations of differing nightscapes. For this, insights are drawn from both philosophy of technology and environmental philosophy to explore the experiences and judgements of urban versus natural nights. It is argued that contrasting notions of the sublime shape our experiences – and resultant moral and aesthetic responses – to differing nightscapes. In cities, the *technological sublime* is manifested through artificial illumination, whereas in wild or rural areas dark skies embody the *astronomical sublime*. It is further argued that these competing experiences reinforce a geographical dualism between cities (as sites of illumination, and light pollution) and wilderness (where dark skies are desired and increasingly protected). This dualism creates conceptual and practical barriers to addressing light pollution, especially in urban centres, and further reinforces a dichotomy of central concern to environmental ethics. To challenge this spatial differentiation, recent work in environmental aesthetics, as well as urban-focused environmental ethics, is utilized to propose a re-envisioned (and morally engaged) urban nocturnal sublime. First steps are taken in articulating the aspirations and constraints of this re-imagined urban nocturnal experience, specifically what this means for the design of nighttime lighting. In doing so, this paper explores human-environment-technology relations at the scale of urban infrastructure, as well as the profound moralizing effects of lighting technologies.

Panel 29 - Book Panel: Rosi Braidotti - Posthuman Glossary Thursday, July 12, 13:15-14:45 (Room Invite)

[Chair: Jonne Hoek]

Participants: Stavros Kousoulas; Andrej Radman; Rosi Braidotti

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TU Delft

Abstract: Membranic Disjunction: Beyond Digital Parts and Analog Wholes

The one becoming two. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this is the oldest and weariest mode of thought. Digitality, the analytical breaking of the world in chunks, is what Laruelle has aptly named as the oldest prejudice. It is a prejudice precisely because it demands a choice, a decision between separate elements which are forever split, albeit never being actually split. One needs to proceed with caution: digitality is never ontological, digitality is epistemology at its best –and most mundane. If one wishes to move beyond the very distinction itself, then one needs to be prepared: both analog synthesis and digital analysis are unappealing. Either in bringing the units together or further splitting them apart, both involve, in the first place, the portioning of the world in pieces. What could be an alternative? I will claim that Simondon can potentially offer a way out.

Moving beyond the digital needs something radically outside modality. While, the recognition of an event's effects might be digital (in the sense of a sensible transformation) the eventuating powers that trigger the encounter and are triggered from it, are neither digital nor analog: they are intensive, a different realm all together. The intensive threshold through which sense is produced and propagated, is no other than the membrane. What is crucial in understanding the membrane, is that it has no specific beginning nor end. In other words, the membrane surpasses the binaries of any digital distinction, since it is not on the boundary or on the limit, but the limit itself. Simondon makes clear that when he speaks of the membrane, he does not do so in spatial terms. He defines it as a regime of energy transfer between individuals, their milieus and territories; not a membrane that separates an interior from an exterior, but one that in its vibrations regulates the affective encounters between individuals.

Therefore, the membrane is not what sets individuals apart or what brings them together. The membrane is the autonomous individuation of all individuals. If it were not, then its intensive manipulation would be impossible; it would be a mere metaphysical curiosity. On the contrary, as the individuation of all individuals, the membrane in its autonomy establishes the possibility for affective encounters between both physical and technical individuals, between the organic and the inorganic. In other words, the folds of the membrane make technicities possible. In this respect, the membranic selection is not that of exclusion but that of inclusion. Membranic disjunction is the most profound form of inclusive disjunction, a continuous 'and...and...and' that never ceases to transduce and modulate itself and its torsions through the propagation of information that spreads on its infinity: shuddering and shivering from a wind that came from your own blow.

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Abstract: Involution: A Mereotopological Perspective

The paper will argue that it is time for the discipline of architecture to awaken from the slumber of anthropo-centrism and shake off the baggage of nature/nurture dichotomies. It will propose that we drop *anthropomorphism* for *geomorphism* and reconfigure ethology so as to become a theory of capacity. Rather than localising it in individuals, behaviour is to be treated epigenetically as a function of *condividuation* by way of traversing phyletic lineages and organismic boundaries. Against a Darwinian nucleocentric view of evolution as a 'struggle for survival', the paper will build on the (still controversial) theories arguing that in most cases an evolutionary novelty arises as a consequence of 'creative' symbiogenesis. The virtually limitless connectivity between heterogeneous beings puts *alliances* before *filiations*, *contingency* before *necessity*, and *contagion* before *heredity*.

The recent interest in the brain is not to be dismissed as neuro-reductionism, but as the locus of the most promising research trajectory that places biology and history - nature and culture - on the same footing. After all, only humans are biologically 'compelled' to modify and redesign their environment in an innovative and historical manner. The (Neo)Lamarckian evolution by other means exposes the vulnerability of exclusively Darwinian explanations. Passive adaptation – evo – is always already complemented by active modulation – evo-devo. While geno-reductionists insist that genes are responsible for our behaviour, it has now become undeniable that the environment itself contributes to the phenotypical expression of genes. The acquired habits may be said to be passed on after all.

The ecological school of perception founded by James Jerome Gibson was ahead of the epigenetic curve by asking not what is inside your head, but what your head is inside of. *Epigenesis* is a theory of development in which forms are influenced and modified by environmental factors. No wonder that it should appeal to architects (as quintessential niche constructionists) who could be said to sculpt brains by way of sculpting neither the genetic, nor the epi-genetic, but the epi-phylo-genetic. The distinction urges us to rethink the long-lasting legacy of