



# Non-dualistische Medientheorie by Stefan Weber

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How phenomena arise not by themselves (“reality”) but by interference of spectators (“interpretation”), is a well-known question that is almost trivial for everybody involved in constructivism. But it is not so common for every discipline. Therefore, Stefan Weber, bridging the gap between advanced communication theory and practical journalism, disseminates a concept rather unknown to media philosophy. His new book, *Non-dualistische Medientheorie* bears a modest title for the task of the published “habilitation” (postdoctoral thesis), which offers an exciting new framework for media studies.

Non-dualism, the pillar of Weber’s study, was established by Josef Mitterer as an attempt to overcome the comparison between reality and interpretation (or narrative) as basis of most western truth concepts. Rethinking this spatial interpretation model (in Wittgensteinian terms: carrying around small world objects, fitting or unfitting the “world”), Mitterer proposed a sequence of world conceptions that are always based on already-existing descriptions, and not on the common concept of objects as something categorically different from our descriptions. The consequence of distinguishing descriptions “so far” from descriptions “from now on” is an epistemic concept rooted in time. For that reason it allows cultural diversity as well as changes of semiotic traditions or subcultural interpretation of (media) information.

Nevertheless, Weber is well aware that he first has to give a sound analysis of the difficulty in western truth concepts in order to establish the seemingly revolutionary switch from spatial to temporal explanation. Not only in a theological framework did the “katabasis” style form the classical way of thinking of a gain in knowledge: gradually we step up to the higher, the only, the mere, the better, the “truer” truth. A dualism nearly always involves a kind of superiority in time

and/or place, differs action from reaction, and subjects from objects. To name just a few of the topics hinted at for media philosophy are the question of reliability (e.g., eye witnesses/foreign correspondents/talk show hosts) and cultural hegemony as well as the “markers of truth.” Referring to often-used phrases in discussions (like “the truth is...”, “in fact...”, “that’s your opinion, but...”, “more likely” and so on), the ideological use and the adherence to a traditional concept of fixed, knowable truth is unmasked. This also leads to a reframing of the questions of gatekeepers of information, manipulation in TV formats such as “reality shows” and different media literacy. A digital immigrant, as media tycoon Rupert Murdoch called the illiterates of the computer age, is not “farther away” from the possible knowledge in networks; he simply relies on other world descriptions, which are sufficient for his understanding.

To be precise, *Non-dualistische Medientheorie* raises a lot of questions known to constructivists, but not to communication theory (which often enough still sticks to Shannon/Weaver or McLuhan), before arriving at the final chapters 5 and 6, which are dedicated to practical analysis of media. Truth and fiction, reality and simulation, *esse* and *percipi*, discourse and meaning are all rooted in a dualistic worldview, which limits the possibility of global communication. As in Nietzsche’s problem with the “grammar” of metaphysics, the media “grammar” is hard to get rid of. A helping hand in doing so – at least in my opinion – is offered by Weber’s book, which does away with the overcome, but seemingly indispensable truth concept behind every medium. Reporting reality does not mean rigidity but accepting changing (the) realities by reporting. The new “basis theory in media studies” (p. 351), which is the aim of the author, is due to find a widespread field for practical use – or at least it should, in a world not biased by dualistic thinking.