Power and the Medium
Munich as a Paradigm for an Analysis of Current Power Structures?

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Abstract—The question is, how far in the context of printing there may still happen presence-phenomena taking back the human body? Bavarian printing seems to make it possible, to give an answer. Therefore theoretical explanations on the value of re-updating and re-personalising as the basic techniques as well as re-presence as the basic intention of media-communicated political behaviour aiming at power or its retention are important. The given model itself is fruitful for processes and shifts of current politics. The 16th and the 21st century may be reasonably compared to each other, as both then and now radical changes of the media (human body or physical communication and printing on the one hand, printing and the new media on the other hand) can be observed as the communications-theoretical signature of the time. The claim of media then and now is to generate re-presence of the human body, which has consequences on the power and its production. (Abstract)

Keywords – Analysis of power, 16th century Munich as a paradigm, current power structures (21th century), book-printing, Instagram, Facebook, performative content, Avatar, re-presence.

I. INTRODUCTION

The following considerations originate from an extensive study on printing in Munich in the Early Modern Age (1486-1651). There the question is pursued, among others, of in how far in the context of printing there may still happen presence-phenomena taking back the human bo-dy – in particular, however, the body of the sovereign as a precondition for worldly power – from its repression.[1] For this purpose, by way of a text example, at first the most important features of this relation are worked out. Then there follow theoretical explanations on the value of re-updating and re-personalising as the basic techniques as well as re-presence as the basic intention of media-communicated political behaviour aiming at power or its retention. Finally the third section attempts to make this model fruitful for processes and shifts of current politics. Both periods of time (16th century/21st century) may be reasonably compared to each other, as both then and now radical changes of the media (human body or physical communication and printing on the one hand, printing and the new media on the other hand) can be observed as the communications-theoretical signature of the time.

II. THE „TROPHAEA BAVARICA" (1597)

The "Trophaea bavarica" (BSB: Res/2 Bavare. 836), written by the two Jesuits Jakob Gretser /second half of 16th century) and Matthäus Rader (1561-1634) and printed in Munich in 1597, is a work where not only the boundaries between politics and theology become blurred. Despite the media-induced radical change – as it results from printing and is marked e. g. by the change from a ruler´s physical appearance on the one hand and the dynastic claims to power communicated by way of a printed work on the other – from the point of view of relating to the ruler´s body it seems to allow for statements which might themselves be helpful for an analysis of power (structures) in the Early Modern Age.

Historically seen, the "Trophaea bavarica", a compilation of panegyric poems in Latin, are topically connected to all those works printed on the occasion of the official opening of the Michaelskirche (St. Michael´s Church) in 1597. After all, they aim at the institutionalisation of the Saint, circling around the Michaelskirche as the core of the Wittelsbach family´s theological-political claim to power.

For an example, let us have a look at the third honorific poem ("Trophaeum"), titled "Dedicatio templi" (fol. F2verso-I4verso). As already its title tells, the poem is on the building of the Michaelskirche under Wilhelm V. (1579-1597). Between the building of the church as a centre of dynastic power and the ruling Wittelsbach family there is an area of specific knowledge which itself functions as an operator of (claims to) power; for on this the poem says:

In sacras reliquas omnium pene apostolorum. / O templi decus, o imago coeli, / Hic praesens chorus est apostolorum, / Quos mundi statuit deus magistros, / Immo clavigeros Olympi et Orci. / Mirum, quos Maria et remota regna / Distraxere vel ultimos ad axes; / Nunc terris pariter poloque juncti, / Sacra non sine numine hac in aede / Convenere simul, simul coluntur: / O templi decus, o imago coeli. (fol. I2recto)

"Hic praesens chorus est apostolorum": The relics are connected to an idea of presence which is itself of crucial significance for the Michaelskirche, as in the eyes of

Wilhelm V. the saints or their relics are the necessary, re-updated knowledge which itself, by the prince´s claim to power, only makes the Michaelskirche possible as the core of dynastic claims to power.   The aspect of knowledge is particularly made obvious by the concept of the teachers ("deus magistros"). The consequence of the initially purely material collection of relics of saints is the idea that Wilhelm V., due his activities as a collector, shares the Divine knowledge. This again works only if the bones and remains of the saints are considered to be re-updated divine knowledge; re-updated because – both here and in the case of printing – a medial shift may be assumed which in the here presented case refers to changing from the living to the dead body of the saint. Indispensable for this, however, is the Divine stimulation. In the final three lines of the excerpt it says: "Sacra non sine numine hac in aede / Convenere simul, simul coluntur: / O templi decus, o imago coeli." Only God´s intervention, institutionally prepared by Wil- helm V.´s enterprises (the building of the Michaelskirche, the founding of the Jesuit college, and the collection of the treasure of relics), makes the Michaelskirche the focus of an analysis of power at all. Furthermore, God seems to trigger a mechanism which itself re-personalises, by the representatives of the dynasty and by way of the interaction of power and knowledge, individual action patterns such as theologically grounded rule; thus, after all it serves for the extension of the prince´s power.[2]

III. MUNICH AS A PARADIGM

The analysis of power, as it has essentially been influenced by the works of Michel Foucault, is not only tied to the discourse as well as to those institutions as essentially influencing the discourse; furthermore it is connected to the human body as the older medium (of communication). In "Discipline and Punish" (1994) Michel Foucault makes illustratively   clear in which ways the body makes specific ideas of power evident, not only because the body provides the matrix of disciplining but also because the body is the anthropologically supreme authority of (human) insight at all. Thus, on the one hand the human body demonstrates the power of a ruler (discipline) whose body is, in a way, imprinted on the sub-ject´s body. On the other hand, the power to enforce and make rule visible e. g. in the form of discipline is realized by the body of the currently ruling prince who himself may be described as a focus of dynastic ideas of rule. If a concept of rule or power is presented by the prince´s body, it is personalised. But how could power and rule or their enforcement be described in times of printing or other media such as Facebook or Instagram? Is it not that inevitably these media make the body dissolve? For, at about 1500 the body of the ruler or the subject as well as that of an EU citizen in the 21st century is no longer inevitably tied to physical presence, and in most cases this at first refers to presence focusing on the body as an object. For a start, one will have to note that media-historical changes, such as the invention of printing, result in judging differently on, and making different use of, previously predominant media. This becomes particularly obvious in the course of

the 15th century: the human body, or more precisely: the epistemological features of the human body (communication of information by messengers, the [oral] message, the conservation of knowledge stocks e. g. in the form of the medieval *memoria*) and the thus connected communications services and expectations change.[3] In this context, at first we must accept the fact that at about the year 1500 media such as printing move between sender and receiver. Once again, we must not imagine the sender to be standardized: a printed mandate of a duke, for example, requires differentiation, as an originator (duke), an author (scribe) and finally a printer together with his staff as well as finally a publisher contribute to its making and publishing. The receiver, again, may be a listener and/or a reader. At first this multiple eclipsing seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to the development of presence and personalization as it existed before the invention of printing. The cause is serial production and the thus connected, non-standardised (V. Flusser), i. e. interchangeable, appearance of the printed work. In terms of media theory, however, the thus created synthetic structuring into phases again dissolves into two fields: the field of body-centred communication prior to the invention or use of writing provides different tools for the communication of statements (news, knowledge etc.) – such as the messenger and his oral report – than the field of handwritten communication (the letter), even if handing over a letter to its receiver is tied to the activity of a body (the courier carrying the letter). The printed work, on the other hand, breaks up this exclusive connection between sender and receiver, as the amount of potential receivers must in principle be imagined as being infinite and anonymous,[4] even if the finiteness of financial or time resources as well as the lifting of anonymity in the form of appropriations must be pointed out to, according to which there still results a limited and even partly known amount of recipients, after all.

Nevertheless, if strategies of power and rule as well as their effectiveness shall be completely grasped from media-theoretical points of view, from heuristic points of view sender and receiver must at first be dealt with as being present. This shall be illustrated by an example from the field of printing. In the year 1515 Hans Schobser in Munich published a printed publication dealing with the marriage of Sabine of Wittelsbach and Albrecht IV. as agreed by the latter and Duke Ulrich I. (BSB: 2 Bavar. 960, I,3 e). The printed document starts with a formula derived from medieval documents (Intitulatio) which gives the name of the client or originator: *Von gottes genaden Wilhelm vnd Ludwig Gebrüder Pfaltzgraven bei Rein. Hertzogen in Obern vnd Nidern Bairn etc.* ([fol. 1recto]). Also the then following statements are based on the basic pattern of announcements by a ruler. In terms of language, this original scene of a ruler´s announcement is created by reaching back to oral tradition and the thus connected orientation at conversation, by the formula *unsernn günstlichen Grüs*. Thus, one wants to make the impression that the printed document itself starts speaking or that the prince himself is immediately communicating by way of what has been printed. This linguistic gesture, aiming at presence, is underlined by

the use of the possessive pronoun for expressions such as *unser allergenedigster Herr* or *unser fründtlichen lieben Schwester*, perpetuating the dialogue starting by the greeting. If this text was dictated by Wilhelm V. himself or if the words were just put into his mouth is of minor interest, as after all only the kind of presence is crucial which is created by the performative content of the first words. Accordingly, printing is capable of continuing a ruler´s presence in time and space, thus extending it precisely into spaces which are rather not subject to the presence of the sovereign; this phenomenon of medially producing the presence of an actor while at the same time medially communicating it shall in the following be called *re-presence*.

After all, these considerations are, among others, the result of reading individual positions as we encounter them in media-scientific research.[5] Horst Wenzel makes impressively clear that in times of radically changing media earlier media continue to exist within newly developed forms, that they are incorporated and, in a way, perpetuate their lives, which finally finds semiotic expression and can be grasped not only this way.[6] The body of the scribe, for example, is represented by the layout of a book and this way re-updated, such as in the form of initials recreating handwriting or in the form of passages in italics. It really seems as if the radical change of media in the late 15th century (handwriting – printed book) could be described as a mutual influencing of "the typical and the de-standardised" (V. Flusser)[7], of handwriting as a part of the scribe´s body on the one hand and the printed book on the other. That these re-updates are not to be understood symbolically but must be considered a reality of their own, this is pointed out to by Barbara Stollberg-Riling and Tim Neu in the introduction to the compilation „Alles nur symbolisch? Bilanz und Perspektiven der Erforschung symbolischer Kommunikation" (2013):

„Whereas abstract-conceptual communication happens by a chronological sequence of statements, that is it is of a literally procedural nature, allows for highly complex and abstract statements, due to rules of syntactic connection, and in principle aims at clarity, symbolic communication condenses everything to the moment, is both obvious and ambiguous as well as unclear, thus leaves more leeway for ambiguity, for various associations and attributions of meaning."[8]

And some lines later:

"The specific ambiguity of symbolic communication needs not necessarily to be understood as a disadvantage. (…) Its greater blurredness and ambiguity, if compared to conceptual-abstract communication, allows interpretations by participants to stay invisible, although they may be considerably different from each other. This is a specific achievement of symbolic communication which is indispensable for the creation of stable social order structures."[9]

Thus, at the heart of such a creation there is communication as well as those actors as contributing to communication. What is special now, as pointed out to by Stolberg-Riling and Neu, is that the meaning of sentences or, quite generally, of sequences of signs, is not self-exhausting but refers to a greater community to which, vice versa, the individual participants are referred, the latter becoming at the same time integrated and possibly established as an interest group. This is exactly from where the here presented contribution starts out: striving for power, as it can be grasped by way of a printed document, can be correlated to the controllable body of a representative of power, in so far as striving for power and the representative´s will can be described analogously.

However, to have such a de-personalising effect, a special disposition of sender and receiver is necessary. In this context, the intention of the sender is not insignificant, as suggested by Stollberg-Riling and Neu in their introduction[10] and as it is also often found in Foucault[11] – on the contrary: in a way, the intention works as a regulative force at which the recipient orientates his/her own inner attitude and actions. Thus, re-personalisations seem to depend on the "reality function of institutions" (U. Schimanek), in so far as decision-making patterns of previously active individual actors are institutionalised, that is they are presented as official action patterns and can be appropriately copied.[12] The events by way of which e. g. Wilhelm V. represents precisely this regulative force and, based on his power, institutionalises it are the numerous feasts, also religious feasts, or indeed individual printed documents. For they work like arguments in the context of an image of the sovereign which is medially communicated to the public.

Thus, as we may summarise, re-presence is a (derived) 2nd order procedure. It is tied to re-updating, re-personalisation and representation. The goal of re-personalisation and re-updating, again, is to dissolve the anonymity and complexity of institutionalised action patterns in favour of representation by one person and to this way increase the effectiveness of enforcing action patterns, which is why they are particularly suitable for an analysis of power against the background of printing and the thus connected radical changes of media. As re-personalisation and re-updating are situatively connected, they are thus methods of selectively producing meaning; they result in 2nd order experiences of presence (re-presence).

IV. AN EXAMPLE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT POWER STRUCTURES

If the above sketched model is transferred to the field of current politics, what will be the answers? That a transfer seems to be basically justified is due to the fact that in both periods – at about 1500 or in the 16th century and in the 21st century – marked changes in respect of media theory can be observed: on the one hand there is printing

which appears as a competitor of the human hand (writing) and raises the question of credibility;[13] on the other hand there are the so called new media (the Internet, Facebook, Instagram etc.) which also make the structure of reality, virtuality and authenticity more dynamic, thus resulting in significant change.[14] Now, how are, in such periods of a radical change of media, power and rule enforced? Which strategies can be identified? And how can they be judged on against the background of a medial concept of power and rule aiming at re-presence as it has been developed by the example of printing in Munich in the 16th century?

In her commentary *Die Entzauberte*, published in DIE ZEIT (No. 38, 8. 9. 2016, p. 1), the author Tina Hildebrandt discusses the political appearance of German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU). The appearance of the Federal Chancellor, she writes, has reached an impasse from which there is only one way out: "Stop moaning, instead from now on make the best of a difficult situation (…)." This is the beginning of Tina Hildebrandt´s advice for the Chancellor. The author´s starting point is the statement that the Chancellor, despite or precisely because of her public appearance, has moved astonishingly far away from the base of her party, and the gives the hint that "She (Angela Merkel, the author) could be heard but not felt. Present yet far away", as Hildebrandt quotes comments by participants in a meeting of the CDU board. This somewhat negative case of a kind of performance which aims at presence is significant for the considerations to be made here: physical pre-sence cannot be equated with a person´s pre-sence, probably it does not even sufficiently meet the preconditions for the latter. After all, the criterion of `sensing´ is of essential significance, as it is immediately connected to ways of imaginarily communicated consistency: for if, despite spatial separation, a participant in a board meeting is capable of creating something like a diffuse sensual stimulation of the physical kind (sensing) and the occasion for this (here: the Chancellor) is one out of several preconditions for experiencing presence, then it seems that the realisation of further features is necessary for creating presence.

In the commentary titled *Die Tyrannei der Massen* by Omri Boehm (translated from the English language by Michael Adrian), once again published in DIE ZEIT (No. 39, 15. 9. 2016, p. 44), the author deals with Donald Trump´s election campaign, thus pursuing the question of what are the consequences if the triad of political functions – reality, object, language – is suspended. In his commentary Boehm pursues the guiding idea that by the American election campaign it becomes obvious how the tyranny of the masses and the de-objectification of speech, that is deleting the reference frame (denotatum), become mutually related; both – ochlocracy and making speech empty or suspending any objectively guaranteed facticity of speech – are mutually related.[15] They seem to be analogous to staging and to the imaginary, as it can be observed with Facebook or Instagram; furthermore they lead to changes of previously known situations of communication such as political speech.

Now, it is precisely the "agony of the real" (J.

Boudrillard)[16] which is of interest for the here presented considerations, and it is the value of Donald Trump´s physique and his strategy of manipulation, aiming at presence. Similar to Merkel, also with Trump it is not that his presence is sufficient for creating presence, for not even his voice ("At the peak of his speech, Trump points directly at the audience and shouts: `I – am – your – voice!´") may simply be understood as indicating his presence, a fact which also in Merkel´s case led to an ambivalent experience ("present yet far away"). With Trump the case is more complicated. It seems to be precisely as if his physique absorbs the bodies of his voters like a container. In a way, it is the projection surface for the most different longings and desires of the citizens. The gesture of pointing ("[…] Trump points directly at the audience […]") has a crucial function in this context: in a way, his pointing at the audience makes the latter an imaginarily created, re-personalised and re-updated presidential candidate. The reason for this is the ambiguity of the gesture: it runs from the speaker to the audience, from the string of a musical instrument to its resonating body. In so far, the voters are the precondition for Trump´s voice vocality. Here, different from the 16th century, re-updating and re-personalisation are not the result of a shift of printing technology. But still, the traditional performative structure, which requires an audience and a speaker who accepts the ambiguity of speech and factual reality, is turned upside down. The Trump voter re-personalises and re-updates him/herself by Trump. This way Trump becomes the avatar of an electorate of several millions. This is also the reason why his speech is empty, why his words lack any connection to any kind of a priorily assumed factual reality. As the avatar is only capable of representing what it is presented with, it is really completely dependent on the audience. The indifference of illusion and reality ("He [Trump, the author] presents both (illusion and reality, the author) as the same, by no longer distinguishing between reality and reality TV") as suggested by Boehm ignores the following: no longer is there any need for Trump to do so. All those differences and their deleting, all those boundaries between illusion and reality as well as their transgression are no longer valid criteria for an analysis. Boehm, to have it in his own words, ignores that the illusion collapses there where it itself, as a result of specific interventions which may be understood as being derived from post-factual media (Facebook, Instagram), becomes a kind of reality with specific features of presence (real virtuality) such as an election speech. Thus the analytical triad, consisting of re-personalisation, re-updating and re-presence, allows for a much more precise description and definition of the media-theoretical status of experiences of presence also in the 21st century.

REFERENCES

[1] Printing resulted in a shift away from communication and its features – the human body (voice, hand) – to typed texts (printing) and thus in a suppression of immediacy. On this see Horst Wenzel: History of the media before and after Gutenberg. Darmstadt 2008, pp. 18-20. Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg. Darmstadt 2008, p. 18-20.

[2] The idea of a conjunction of the sacral and the dynastic will to representation, as it was developed by Sabine M. Schneider: Bayerisch-römisches Siegeszeichen. München 1997, pp. 176-186, is basically correct, however it deals only insufficiently with the thus connected consequences when it comes to the claim to power or the possibility to institutionalise action patterns.

[3] Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg (2008), p. 54-56.

[4] Ibid., p. 19-20.

[5] The following list makes no claim to completeness. Apart from the bibliography in Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg (2008), p. 306-310, I refer to: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: Beginn von 'Literatur'/Abschied vom Körper? München 1988, p. 15-50, Christian Kiening: Zwischen Körper und Schrift. Frankfurt/Main 2003, Albrecht Koschorke: Körperströme und Schriftverkehr. München 1999, Jan-Dirk Müller: Der Körper des Buches. München 1993.

[6] Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg (2008), p. 18-23.

[7] Vilém Flusser: Die Schrift. Göttingen 1992, p. 49-56.

[8] Barbara Stollberg-Riling, Tim Neu: Einleitung. Köln 2013, p. 17.

[9] Ebd., p. 17f.

[10] Contradicting Barbara Stollberg-Riling, Tim Neu: Einleitung. Köln 2013, p. 19: „The point is: the intention, the inner attitude and conviction of those acting are irrelevant at first. Valid is what is publicly displayed and not what one may think inwardly."

[11] Achim Landwehr: Historische Diskursanalyse. Frankfurt/Main 2009, p. 70.

[12] Uwe Schimanek: Handeln in Institutionen und handelnde Institutionen. Stuttgart 2004, p. 299.

[13] As it can be observed already with the transition from physical language (voice) to (hand-) writing, see Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg. Darmstadt 2008, p. 53-61. On this see also: Vilém Flusser: Die Schrift. Göttingen 1992, p. 35-39, who calls the invention of the alphabet the threshold between prehistorical and historical consciousness (ibid., p. 39).

[14] See Horst Wenzel: Mediengeschichte vor und nach Gutenberg. Darmstadt 2008, p. 254-284.

[15] A statement gained in this way is congruent with what Vilém Flusser calls "puree information", see Vilém Flusser: Die Schrift. Göttingen 1992, p. 54.

[16] Jean Boudrillard: Die Agonie des Realen. Berlin 1978.

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