Introduction

The Twentieth International Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Media took place at the University of Akureyri (*Háskólinn á Akureyri*) in Akureyri, Iceland.

Akureyri, a small city in the north of the country located on a beautiful Fjord, is graced by spectacular landscape and stunning *Aurora borealis,* and it is these Northern Lights that may serve as the motif of the conference: night light that illuminates the dark with unusual brilliance.

Though the climate was exceptionally cold to those who attended the conference, the university greeted participants with warmth and hospitality. Our host, Professor Lars Lundsten, brought together a diverse group of speakers from around the world as well as affording the opportunity for the free expression of widespread philosophical approaches. The theme of the conference, "'Global Media Literacy in the Digital Age," drew a variety of approaches to the topic, often sharply contrasting, always collegial. If a division of thought was apparent, it may be summarized as a difference between traditional epistemological and contemporary socio-economic approaches. This dialectic provided the conference with lively exchanges during ample panel follow-up discussion.

The essays included in this edition of *Glimpse* have been selected by a process of double-blind review. A first screening of all papers submitted for publication reduces the number to fifteen. This process includes three reviewers. A second screening takes place, narrowing the selection further. In addition, papers received by an open call for papers for publication—aimed at those not attending the SPM conference and not SPM members—are reviewed. In this edition of *Glimpse,* three such papers are included. While every participant in the conference is entitled to submit for publication in *Glimpse,* they all undergo the same selection process. Those not selected for inclusion in *Glimpse* are published in a separate SPM journal, *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual International Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Media.* The essays in both publications are arranged in alphabetical order.

In a sense, the tone of the conference was set by the keynote speaker, Professor Nyasha Mboti, of the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. His current research, framing the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm for Apartheid Studies, set the intellectual parameters for all that followed.

As you read Prof. Mboti's keynote, "Circuits of Apartheid: A Plea for Apartheid Studies," you will note his highly systematic style of thought that, again and again, "returns to the things themselves" in a manner not unfamiliar to phenomenologists. His use of historical data serves as a ground for his overall theory. Close observation of details brings his

thought back to that ground. Often, he disabuses his audience of preconceived and uncritical assumptions. For example, in countering the reactionary attitude towards the poor that suggests that they need to understand the importance of a planned budget, he removes the ideological blindfold that often keeps philosophers from seeing "things in themselves," replying that the have-nots of the world do not need lectures from the haves on family budgeting. The poor are expert at budgeting, a necessity for daily survival. Indeed, it is the rich who need lessons on justice and a "balanced budget."

In the following pages, the division between socio-econo-political thought and epistemological attitudes towards global media literacy can be seen in two groups of essays. It should be pointed out, however, that the tradition in SPM is that participants are free to write on *any* aspect of media. SPM conference participants are free to ignore conference themes—as long as their papers are concerned with media in a broad sense.

If, for convenience, we may divide the papers in this volume into two groups, we find the following in what we may call the "epistemological group":

- José Luis Carrillo Canán: "We Are Our Mobile Screen … 'We Wear All Mankind as Our Skin': The Mobile Phone and the Structure of Experience."
- Ulaş Başar Gezgin: "Global Media Literacy: A Conceptual Error and Eight Typologies."
- Stacey O'Neal Irwin: "Exploring the Digital Attitude: Where Form and Content Blur."
- Yoni Van Den Eede: "The Mold Is the Message: Media Literacy vs. Media Health."

The other grouping, the socio-econo-political, contains the remaining essays:

- Nyasha Mboti: "Circuits of Apartheid: A Plea for Apartheid Studies."
- João Carlos Correia: "Data Is Mine: What Is the Meaning of Participation in Data Capitalism?"
- Olga Kudina: "Alexa Does Not Care. Should You? Media Literacy in the Age of Digital Voice Assistants."
- Paul Majkut: "Media Literacy and Illiteracy."
- Rianka Roy: "Digital Dissent on WikiLeaks: Anonymous Whistleblowers in the Shadow of Julian Assange."

Professors Canán and van den Eede both take up epistemological questions of just how the user is subsumed by digital media, how digital technology shapes experience, and the relationship of iPhone and Internet devices and their users. Both essays show the influence of Marshall McLuhan. We are reminded that McLuhan, speaking of television, held that *the viewer is the screen,* and that the medium itself is the message that shape the user.

While Ulaş Başar Gezgin's essay is placed here in the epistemological group, the thrust of his argument is to critique the theme of the conference, global media literacy. Diving deeply into the topic, he finds eight forms of conceptual error underlying the framing of the theme. In this, he shares a similar position to Majkut,

who is easily identified in the socio-econo-political group.

Stacey Irwin returns us to solid epistemological media concerns. In the fashion of Husserl's phenomenological understanding of the natural attitude, Irwin considers the age-old problem of the inseparable relationship of content and form. She speaks of a "blur" line between the two. Since the separation of content and form is done purely for purposes of theoretical analysis and an impossibility in practice, her argument reminds us that the two categories are solely attitudes towards something, not a division that exists in the thing itself.

Each of the essays in the socio-econo-political group contains, either by suggestion or overtly, advocacy of a position towards digital media. And each inherently asks questions of value, not only epistemological mechanics. The underlying sentiment of these essays is ethical and political, assuming that politics is ethics writ large. The essays in this group implicitly and explicitly argue that social action cannot be separated from theorizing—that praxis precedes theory, that all knowledge arises from the senses.

The call for Apartheid Studies made by Prof. Nyasha Mboti takes two forms. First, it uncovers and dismisses long-held misconceptions concerning questions of racial injustices and the residue of colonial oppression. Second, it proposes a concrete plan for developing an academic discipline. It was greeted enthusiastically by Majkut, who saw parallels to his own call for studies of the internal colony.

João Carlos Correia cuts to the root of the problem of digital media by placing it in the context of history and contemporary capitalism in "Data Is Mine: What Is the Meaning of Participation in Data Capitalism?" Here, we learn that the digital consumer is the first consumed.

The potential dangers of digital communications are considered in Olga Kudina's "Alexa Does Not Care. Should You? Media Literacy in the Age of Digital Voice Assistants." The ethical undertones inherent in technology are faced, the question of just what "literacy" means is posed, and the distinction between the AI transhuman and the human delved by implication.

Paul Majkut believes that media "literacy" alone cannot explain digital practice because its unspoken opposite, illiteracy, is ignored, making for prejudice against those who cannot "read" and "write" in digital media.

Rianka Roy brings discussion of media literacy back to earth in his discussion of WikiLeaks and the significance of anonymous whistleblowers made possible by Julian Assange.

The counter-positioning of fundamental differences on how media should be approached not only made for a lively conference but widened the intellectual grasp of the Society.

SPM has always been a unique combination of philosophers and media theorists. What philosophers could not explain in terms of concrete practice, media theorists made clear. When media theorists neglected placing their theories in a larger context, philosophers took up the challenge.

The conference at the University of Akureyri was a test of the resiliency of SPM. The Twentieth International Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Media in 2018 was planned for Winnipeg, Canada, but unforeseen problems meant a last-minute change. Prof. Lars Lundsten, an original founding member of SPM, stepped into the void and volunteered to host the conference. The policy of SPM is that our conferences rotate: Europe, North America, and Latin America. 2018 was set for the North American conference and, since Iceland is neither a part of Europe nor North America, it was a happy coincidence for which the Society is deeply indebted to Professor Lundsten and the University of Akureyri.

—Paul Majkut