

Bedrohte Ordnungen IV / Threatened Orders IV: What Do We Still Know? Knowing and Forgetting in Times of Threat

Veranstalter: Sonderforschungsbereich 923 „Bedrohte Ordnungen“ / Collaborative Research Centre 923 „Threatened Orders – Societies under Stress“, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Datum, Ort: 28.06.2018–30.06.2018, Tübingen

Bericht von: Florian Battistella / Annette Schramm / Marie Schreier, Sonderforschungsbereich 923 „Bedrohte Ordnungen“, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

The Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 923 „Threatened Orders – Societies under Stress“ asks about extreme situations that create change in social and behavioural patterns, and which it describes as ‘threatened orders’. One central criterion for the definition of a ‘threatened order’ is the disruption or failure of established routines. The reordering that follows such a failure of routines is a process of both losing and creating knowledge. The aim of the interdisciplinary conference was to further explore regimes of knowledge and ignorance in times of threat. In her introduction, RENATE DÜRR (Tübingen) raised central questions that illuminated the different functions of knowing and forgetting, such as the interconnection between knowledge and non-knowledge, the function of forgetting as a way of dealing with an overflow of information and as a catalyst for innovation, as well as forgetting as an explicit practice. To mirror the interdisciplinary approach of the CRC’s research interests, the conference included speakers of a variety of disciplines from the humanities and social sciences.

The first keynote by ANTHONY GRAFTON (Princeton) focused on how the opinion on the practice of divination varied from philologist to philologist and also during the early modern period as a whole. Grafton was thereby able to illuminate the dialectic relationship between emendation (as a philological routine) and divination (as inspired textual interferences). Both were different expressions of philological knowledge and authority, but they were not valued

equally. Therefore, each act of divination represented a potential starting point for an attack on the authority of the editor. In addition, Grafton showed how the social, spatial and intellectual conditions under which the philologists lived and worked influenced their opinions on divination and the related practice of emendation.

The first panel „Dealing with (Un-)Certainities: Religious Debates in Late Antiquity“ focused on religious literary production in ‘threatened orders’. SUSANNA ELM (Berkeley) showed how the usual contemporary modes of interpretation and thereby „known truths“ of pagans and Christians alike were challenged by the question of how to interpret the Roman Emperor Julian and the events of his reign. Elm stressed that the different new answers to this lack of certainty often had similarities, but were not necessarily overlapping in the same way. LISA NEUMANN (Tübingen) showed that in the late third and early fourth century dispute between the pagan Sossianus Hierocles and the Christian Eusebius of Caesarea knowledge was a central, but contested category. Sossianus used wise philosophers as references for his argument that Jesus Christ was only a gifted human, just like Apollonius of Tyana. Eusebius, in contrast, used the category of knowledge to show inconsistencies in the portrayal of Apollonius, thereby weakening his opponent’s argument. LUCIA M. TISSI (Paris) asked why the late antique pagan philosopher Porphyry and the early modern bishop and philosopher Augustino Steuco showed a similar interest in oracular texts. In both cases, it was the search for answers in a time of threat that led to the study of the eternal wisdom about mankind, which was preserved in these materials.

The second panel, titled “‘Known and Unknown Unknowns’ / Practices of Knowing and Not-Knowing in Media“ used post-9/11 discourses on terrorism to ask about the relation between mediality and the transmission of knowledge in ‘threatened orders’. VANESSA OSSA and LUKAS R.A. WILDE (both Tübingen) demonstrated the role media played in creating and diagnosing threat scenarios in the context of the ‘war on terror’. Wilde focused on editorial cartoons that used existing knowledge of the intended reader-

ship and thus managed to recast the events of 9/11 in terms of war. Ossa analysed how the TV series *Battlestar Galactica* reflects on the war on terror through the lens of a science fiction setting and plays with various states of knowledge about the show's hidden assailants. MICHAEL C. FRANK (Düsseldorf) added a third perspective by focusing on terrorist communication. He analysed the video testaments of some of the terrorists involved in the 2005 London bombings. Frank argued that terrorism could be understood as a form of communication in which the message is not only encoded in the act of violence itself, but also in the interpretation of the act. This struggle over the meaning of the terrorist act is essential to terrorism.

Panel three, „Too Much to know? Knowledge and Emotions“, combined the study of the time around 1900 as a period of concentrated transformation with the study of knowledge and emotions. It also focused on rationality as an expression of knowledge and thus asked about the subjective and emotional elements of knowledge practices in a period of frightening changes. SUSAN MATT (Ogden) focused on neurasthenia, a form of mental exhaustion that thousands of patients were diagnosed with in late 19th and early 20th century America. Contemporary medical professionals considered neurasthenia a reaction to an increasingly complex and specialised world. The contemporary discourses demonstrated changing attitudes towards work in an increasingly industrialised world, human mental capacities, and human adaptability. JOSEPH BEN PRESTEL (Berlin) compared debates about emotions in the context of two late 19th and early 20th century entertainment districts in Cairo and Berlin. He was able to show remarkable similarities in how the two districts were perceived as threatening in discourses on (ir)rationality and emotionality. The American stock market was the focus of DANIEL MENNING's paper (Tübingen). Menning demonstrated how speculation advice manuals published around 1900 tried to rationalise the highly emotional and risky process of stock trading by combining factual knowledge with ideas about market and mob psychology.

Panel four, „The Power of Knowledge.

Emotional and Humorous Practices in the Context of Protest“, also dealt with emotions and focused on the role of humour in the context of social movements, which usually try to mobilise against a perceived threat. SIMON TEUNE (Berlin) analysed humoristic visual media practices in the German anti-nuclear movement. He showed that humorous images fulfilled three functions: Providing explanations, marking the enemy, and forging the activists' own identity. Thus, images that evoke emotions serve framing processes and confirm existing knowledge in the social movement. CHRISTINA FLESHER FOMINAYA (Loughborough) provided insights into progressive electoral alliances for municipal elections in Barcelona and Madrid. In both cases, grassroots activists used humorous art in their decentralised effort to support their candidates. Despite the unconventional election campaigns, which were marked by creativity, humour, imagination and multiplicity, these candidates won. ERNST HENNING HAHN (Tübingen) combined psychological, linguistic and interaction-based approaches to humour in order to make sense of his observations from the German peace movement. It became clear that humour can serve as a collective action repertoire that contests established knowledge and discourses and can help to avoid censorship. Simultaneously, the audience needs a certain knowledge in order to understand the humour.

The fifth panel „Memory Places and Places of Forgetting“ focused on the ordering and disordering functions of drug discourses and asked questions about the interplay between knowing, forgetting, and identity in view of a perceived threat. DEBORAH TONER (Leicester) showed how Tequila was constructed as the 'national drink' of Mexico during the second half of the 20th century, despite not appearing in 19th century cookbooks. The construction of '*lo mexicano*' around Tequila covered up the identity-threatening complexity of Mexico's history and culture. FERDINAND NYBERG (Tübingen) reflected on the role space played in the display of alcohol use by the temperance movement in the United States in the 19th century. The movement saw alcohol as the ultimate threat to American society. Writings and visualisations published

by the movement show contemporary alcohol use in an assembled order of the bottle, the liquor, the tavern, and the drinking man and therefore have a strong spatial dimension.

The sixth panel „Precarious Knowledge in the Carolingian Empire“ was concerned with knowledge as the basis of order and the role it plays in reordering processes. CARINE VAN RHIJN (Utrecht) asked how prognostic texts were treated in a period seeking intensely for correct knowledge. Her examples showed that the reactions to these texts ranged from benevolent reception to fierce rejection. Initially consulted to find a means for coping with uncertainty, the prognostic texts became themselves the object of discussion and turned into a form of dangerous knowledge. WARREN PEZÉ (Paris-Créteil) also discussed a coping practice that created new threats: The death sentences by the Frankish king Charles the Bald did not create stability, but continuously led to new threats to kingship because not everybody accorded such a right to it. In this context, Hincmar, the archbishop of Reims, recurred to ancient knowledge in order to establish the death penalty as a rightful prerogative of the Frankish kings. The future authoritative position of Hincmar's treatise *De regis persona et regio ministerio* suggests that he was successful.

GABRIELE ALEX and MONIQUE SCHEER (both Tübingen) organised a tour through the University of Tübingen's non-public archives for archaeological and anthropological material, where topographies of knowing and forgetting became visible and experiential. The tour invited to reflect about how to deal with the past of the academic disciplines themselves as well as the objects they study, which were often gathered during colonial missions.

Panel seven, „Memoria and Anti-Memoria in Postcolonial and Postimperial Societies“, examined how knowing and forgetting can become conscious practices and political statements in 'threatened orders'. SEBASTIAN KOCH (Tübingen) looked at Canadian and Australian processes of self-definition and identity-formation in the wake of Britain's withdrawal from its former white settler colonies. Based on examples from the 1967 world exposition, Koch argued

that Canada employed multiculturalism as a unifying concept, while Australia presented a romanticised image of the country that ignored indigenous contributions. JOHN DARWIN (Oxford) took a broad look at British attitudes towards empire, memory, and racism. He highlighted the different kinds of 'empires' in Britain's past and analysed how and by whom they were and are commemorated. He questioned whether there is such a thing as a British collective public memory of empire. According to Darwin, the time of threat which left behind a unifying 'lieu de memoire' in British society was the Second World War.

MARTIN MULSOW's (Erfurt / Gotha) keynote speech centred on the term 'precarious knowledge' as well as the topics of secrecy and alchemy. Starting out with broad considerations about the conditions under which a global history of ideas and of precarious knowledge can be written, Mulsow later narrowed the scope of his presentation down to the study of alchemical knowledge in 17th century Batavia, which he conceptualised as precarious knowledge. It was threatened in several ways: Not only was it often transmitted in code and only alluded to (which complicated decoding it later); the production of texts and objects was also often dependent on unequal power relations and their transmission uncertain.

In his concluding remarks, MISCHA MEIER (Tübingen) reflected on the processes of knowing and forgetting in the specific context of 'threatened orders' and listed seven findings. First, new experiential knowledge is produced in times of threat. Second, in times of threat, knowledge becomes one of the main resources in power and survival struggles. Third, processes of conserving and eliminating knowledge become virulent in threat situations and are marked by power struggles. Fourth, it can be assumed that the amount of precarious knowledge grows in times of threat. Fifth, knowledge itself appears sometimes as a threat. Sixth, knowledge and emotions are closely connected, what questions the usual equation of knowledge and rationality. Seventh, actors have to communicate their knowledge to remain relevant, which leads to the emergence of

new narratives, experts, and expertise in 'threatened orders'.

Meier's final remarks and the subsequent discussion highlighted the potential of focusing on knowledge in 'threatened orders'. This approach can help to improve our understanding of the establishment of social identities through processes of inclusion and exclusion. They are closely linked to power relations and embedded in material circumstances, both of which have to be acknowledged more consciously and analysed more thoroughly in future research on knowledge in 'threatened orders'.

Conference Overview:

Renate Dürr (Tübingen): Introduction

Keynote 1

Anthony Grafton (Princeton): Philology and Divination in Early Modern Scholarship

Panel 1 Dealing with (Un-)certainties: Religious Debates in Late Antiquity

Susanna Elm (Berkeley): Miracles as Evidence in the Writings of Julian the Emperor and his Opponents

Lisa Neumann (Tübingen): Apollonius of Tyana, the Ignorant Omniscient: Eusebius' and Sossianus Hierocles' „Interpretative Dispute“ in the Context of the Conflict between Christian and Platonist Orders

Lucia M. Tissi (Paris): Porphyry, Steuchus and the Journey of Oracles through Symphony and Conflict

Panel 2 „Known and Unknown Unknowns“ / Practices of Knowing and Not-Knowing in Media

Vanessa Ossa / Lukas R. A. Wilde (Tübingen): Reassuring Knowledge and the Thrill of the Unknown

Michael C. Frank (Düsseldorf): Threatening Messages. Terrorist Communication in Public Discourse, Media, and Film

Panel 3 Too Much to know? Knowledge and Emotions

Susan J. Matt (Ogden): Neurasthenia, Emotional Exhaustion, and the Problem of Too Much Knowledge in America

Joseph B. Prestel (Berlin): Dangerous Excitement: Debates about Emotions in the Entertainment Districts of Berlin and Cairo, 1880-1910.

Daniel Menning (Tübingen): Emotions and Crashes. Stock Trading in America around 1900

Panel 4 The Power of Knowledge. Emotional and Humorous Practices in the Context of Protest

Simon Teune (Berlin): Humour and Indignation in Visual Representations of the German Anti-Nuclear Movement

Cristina Flesher Fominaya (Loughborough): How to Win an Election by Throwing out the Handbook: Art, Humour, and Emotions in the 2015 Madrid and Barcelona Elections

E. Henning Hahn (Tübingen): Humour (h)= Epistemic Content (ec) in Affective Politics (ap) of Protest (p): h=ec*ap/p

Panel 5 Memory Places and Places of Forgetting

Deborah Toner (Leicester): Forgetting the Past, Locating *lo mexicano*: Pulque, Tequila and Mexico's National Drink

Ferdinand Nyberg (Tübingen): King Alcohol: Warring Spirits in Early America

Panel 6 Precarious Knowledge in the Carolingian Empire

Carine van Rhijn (Utrecht): Precarious Knowledge in Times of Reform: The Case of Prognostics in the Carolingian Period

Warren Pezé (Paris-Créteil): Knowledge and Violence in the Reign of Charles the Bald (840-877)

Guided Tour

University Collections – Topographies of Knowledge and Forgetting (Gabriele Alex and Monique Scheer)

Panel 7 Memoria and Anti-Memoria in Post-colonial and Postimperial Societies

Sebastian Koch (Tübingen): Biculturalism, Multiculturalism and Indigeneity as a Strategy of Memoria. Canada and Australia Defining Themselves in Times of Threatened Or-

ders

John Darwin (Oxford): Which Empire? Whose Empire? Remembering and Forgetting Britain's Imperial Past

Keynote 2

Martin Mulsow (Erfurt / Gotha): Global Encounters – Precarious Knowledge: Traces of Alchemical Practice in Batavia

Mischa Meier (Tübingen): Comment

Final Discussion

Tagungsbericht *Bedrohte Ordnungen IV / Threatened Orders IV: What Do We Still Know? Knowing and Forgetting in Times of Threat*. 28.06.2018–30.06.2018, Tübingen, in: H-Soz-Kult 20.11.2018.