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– *first draft translation* –

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Filters of Perception

1. Intro

Google filters the information available on the Internet, and every database query involves applying a filter; Instagram offers filters for image optimization, and finally, there is the notorious filter bubble – in the field of computing, the concept of the filter has gained considerable prominence.

At the same time, psychologists agree that human perception itself acts as a filter. In everyday life, we speak of ‘selective perception’ when we – for example, due to prejudices – block out the obvious.

But what do these two types of filters have to do with each other? Are there overlaps between the realm of media and the peculiarities of human nature? The thesis that media are ‘extensions of the body’² is hardly considered plausible anymore. How, then, should this connection be understood? Does our concept of media filters change when we incorporate phenomena of perception? In what follows, I will attempt to discuss the question of filters with regard to the so-called ‘media of perception.’ Glasses, telescopes, and microscopes are cited as examples; however, the media of perception have generally been treated as a marginal topic in media studies..

Nevertheless, I find them interesting; above all because – as their name suggests – they mark precisely the interface that concerns me: The inadequately defined realm that connects “natural” perception with media technology. So what can we learn from the media of perception about filters, and what can we learn from the filters about the media of perception?

¹ The issue features articles on the history, aesthetics, and practical applications of media filters.

² ‘The Extensions of Men’ is the subtitle of McLuhan’s classic ‘Understanding Media’ [1964]. McLuhan draws this thesis from 19th-century theory of technology.

2. Preliminary Consideration

‘Filter’ is a term from the field of technology; and literally, filtration means “the process in which solid particles in a liquid or gaseous fluid are removed by the use of a filter medium that permits the fluid to pass through but retains the solid particles.”³ “Filtration is one of the *mechanical separation processes* that are based exclusively on physical principles.”⁴

So, at a basic level, ‘filter’ means that something passes through and something else does not; the Encyclopedia Britannica says that – depending on the application – the focus is either on the filtrate or on what is filtered out: “Either the clarified fluid or the solid particles removed from the fluid may be the desired product,” and adds: “Other media, such as electricity, light, and sound, also can be filtered.”⁵

So, firstly, filtration means a mechanical separation, a selection. And this also applies to the computer examples: here, too, ‘filter’ means a selection, strictly according to the logic of set theory: in or out, yes or no. But even when filtering sound, this changes. Even if the intervention is a technical-mechanical one, the result – the altered sound – can no longer be described as a part or component of an original set. Here, it is undoubtedly a *qualitative* change that the filter brings about.

And it is to be expected that this is the case with most media. One will have to reckon with the fact that the term ‘filter’ is used more or less metaphorically and is gradually moving away from mechanical concepts. It is necessary to take this fact into account so that quantitative-mechanical connotations do not creep in where quantities or mechanics are not at issue.

3. Perception

When psychologists discuss perception, the metaphor of the filter is ubiquitous. “On the path between the physical sense organ and mental cognition”, German Wikipedia explains succinctly, “information is filtered, summarized, divided into categories, and ranked by importance. This complex process is called perception and is one of the subjects of study in the psychology of perception.”⁶ And further:

“Perception [...] is the process and the result of gathering and processing information from stimuli in the environment and within the living being’s body. This occurs through unconscious (and, in humans, sometimes conscious) filtering and integration of partial information into subjectively meaningful overall impressions. These are called ‘percepts’ and are continuously compared with stored concepts (constructs and schemas).”⁷

“Extensive preprocessing of the received signals often takes place within the sensory organ itself, but especially in all subsequent core regions of the brain, including through

³ Encyclopedia Britannica (online): Filtration Chemistry;
<https://www.britannica.com/science/filtration-chemistry>, last accessed on 07-08-26.

⁴ Wikipedia (German): Filtration;
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filtration_\(Trennverfahren\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filtration_(Trennverfahren)), 01-07-20 (transl. and emph. H. W.)

⁵ Encyclopedia Brit., op. cit.

⁶ Wikipedia (German): Wahrnehmungspsychologie;
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahrnehmungspsychologie>, 01-07-20 (transl. H. W.).

⁷ Wikipedia (German): Wahrnehmung,
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahrnehmung>, 01-07-20 (transl. H. W.).

filtering, inhibition, convergence, divergence, integration, summation, and numerous top-down processes.”⁸

What immediately stands out in the quoted passage is that filtering is only one of several functions within perception. The most basic filter is provided by the physiology of the sensory organs, in that each responds only to specific stimuli – the ears to vibrations in the air and the eyes to light. From the chaotic mix of materials that the world offers, the senses thus filter out only certain stimuli, so that one can already refer to the individual senses as ‘channels.’ The media follow this logic and connect – visually, audio-visually, or in whatever other way – to the sensory channels.

In his popular science account, Bucher provides the following illustration of the filters of perception:⁹

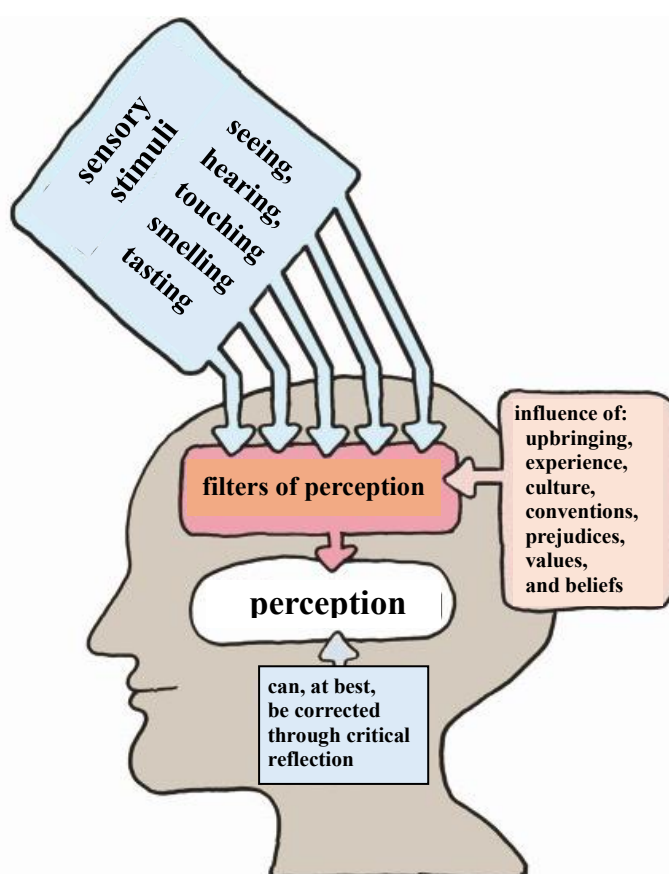


Fig. 1: Bucher: Filters of Perception

In addition to the array of sensory stimuli – as the sketch makes clear – “upbringing, experience, culture, conventions, prejudices, values, and beliefs” also feed into the filters of perception. Other authors refer more generally to the “body of knowledge” that the perceiver already possesses.¹⁰

And this completely changes our view of the filters of perception: for *this body of knowledge is not, in fact, part of the current perceptual situation*, but rather a product of the past. A long

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bucher, Otmar: Kopfwelten. Was ist wahr an unserer Wahrnehmung? Zürich: NZZ 2010; <http://www.otmarbucher.ch/Kopfwelten.html> (transl. H. W.; many thanks for the permission to reproduce).

¹⁰ See: Goldstein, Bruce E.: Wahrnehmungspsychologie. Der Grundkurs. Berlin/Heidelberg 2015, p. 7.

process of upbringing, experience, culture, and conventions has become embedded in the subject and has given it the very structure with which it now confronts the current perception.

In essence, this means that two streams intersect in perception: From the outside comes the stream of sensory ‘stimuli.’ But in order to deal with them, perception produces a second stream of interpretations, fantasies, or meanings that organizes what is perceived, structures it, and assigns it to patterns. Without this, we could neither identify objects nor understand connections. Perception consists of a constant balancing act between the external and the internal, sensory data and existing knowledge, expectation and ‘information’; perception, then, is essentially *recognition*; and it is this overall process that constitutes the ‘filter of perception.’

But isn’t this simply psychology? Wasn’t the question what role media play in these processes? If so, I think we should first ask about the ‘media of perception.’

4. Media of Perception

Media of perception have not yet been adequately conceptualized by media studies. Hickethier distinguishes between 1.) “media of observation (and, more generally, of perception),” 2.) “media of storage and processing,” and 3.) “media of transmission,” and then describes the former as follows:

“Media of observation [and, more generally, of perception] are media that serve to extend and enhance the human sense organs; for the eye (visual perception), these include glasses, binoculars, telescopes, microscopes, and others; for the ear [auditory perception] the ear trumpet and the megaphone, among others – media of acoustic amplification. These media are generally used instrumentally and individually, mostly to expand the perception of individual people. They are only marginally institutionalized in society because they generally do not generate, store, or convey specific content. It is striking that these media are primarily concerned with visual and auditory perception (distal senses), but hardly at all with tactile, olfactory, and gustatory perception (touch, smell, and taste) – that is, the proximal senses.”¹¹

Hickethier does not mention the movie camera – which is certainly also a “medium of observation” and, historically, as Benjamin already observed, has profoundly restructured and transformed human perception – because he classifies it as a storage medium.¹² Sandbothe and Nagl – if we stay within the realm of German media theory – would include among the “media of sensory perception”, quite surprisingly, sound waves, light, space, and time.¹³ Schweppenhäuser contrasts the media of perception with “media of action and media of representation” as well as “media of production and media of communication.”¹⁴ Luhmann discusses “media of

¹¹ Hickethier, Knut: Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 2003, p. 21 (translation and add. H. W.).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Sandbothe, Mike; Nagl, Ludwig (eds.): Systematische Medienphilosophie. Berlin: 2005, pp. 3–82; Sandbothe and Nagl propose 1.) “media of sensory perception,” 2.) “semiotic media of transformation and communication” and 3.) “technical media of dissemination, processing, and storage” as distinct categories (ibid., transl. H. W.).

¹⁴ Schweppenhäuser, Gerhard: Einleitung. In: Schw., G. (ed.): Handbuch der Medienphilosophie. Darmstadt 2018, p. 16.

perception” in the context of art;¹⁵ Vogl chooses the telescope as an example for general questions of media theory.¹⁶

The fact that the definitions vary shows that the theoretical basis is uncertain. Moreover, limiting the discussion to just a few examples oversimplifies the concept of media of perception. After all, what matters most of all is the influence that media of perception have on perception itself and on what is perceived. And this brings us back to the filter function, because if there is anything interesting about the media of perception, it is precisely the way in which they shape what is perceived; what they contribute to our understanding of the world, how they alter our access to the world and, by extension, our worldview as a whole.

5. Metaxy / In Between

A second line of theory relevant to my question is more elaborate; and here the authors draw either on Fritz Heider or on sources from Antiquity. Heider had written in 1926:

“We are aware of our environment, but not everything that surrounds us is of equal value for the processes of perception or cognition involved in this awareness. We perceive things that are in immediate contact with our skins and we are often aware of one thing through something else. For instance, we see stars through empty space; we hear the sound of a bell through the air; we measure the pressure of air by means of a barometer [...]. These cases are not entirely equivalent, but what they have in common is that the object of perception or cognition *does not affect the sense organ directly but by means of some kind of mediation.*”¹⁷

Here, too, the focus is on perception and cognition; Heider draws attention to the fact that perception is *mediated*. And with this mediation (even in Heider’s own work), the media come into play.¹⁸ However, these are very specific media; Heider first mentions the ether or air. He is concerned with the space that opens up between the object of perception and the organs of perception; he asks what fills this space and what makes perception possible in the first place. The ear can only receive sound if there is air to carry the sound waves; and from here, one can go on to ask about other remote senses as well. With the barometer, Heider moves on to media that are technical in the narrower sense; and later in his text, he will also address measuring instruments¹⁹ and the functioning of signs.²⁰ The fact that Heider places perception at the center opens up a new perspective on media as a whole.

Other authors point out that Aristotle – also in his attempt to clarify the mechanisms of human perception – already dealt with the ‘in-between’; Aristotle calls this ‘in-between’ ‘metaxy’; and Stefan Hoffmann, who has developed an etymology of the concept of ‘media,’ is able to show that one of the roots of the modern concept of ‘media’ lies in Aristotle’s conception of this

¹⁵ Luhmann, Niklas: Art as a Social System [1995]. Stanford: Stanford UP 2000, pp. 109, 132, 231; Luhmann distinguishes between “media of perception”, “technologies of dissemination“, and ”symbolically generalized communication media”.

¹⁶ Vogl, Joseph: Medien-Werden. Galileis Fernrohr. In: Archiv für Mediengeschichte, Nr. 1, 2001, pp. 115-123.

¹⁷ Heider, Fritz: Thing and Medium [1926]. In: H., F.: On Perception, Event Structure and Psychological Environment. Selected Papers. (Psychological Issues, Vol. I, No. 3, 1959, Monograph 3), NY: Internat. UP 1967, pp. 1-34, here: p. 1 (emph. H. W.).

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 3ff.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 20ff.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 6ff.

intermediary sphere.²¹ Aristotle advocated a new theory of perception. In antiquity, the established view was that rays emanate from the eye and scan the object; “Aristotle,” writes Hoffmann:

“in contrast, sets forth three conditions for vision that are independent of the subject: a colored object, a mediating medium, and light. Color is therefore the quality of an object to which the sense of sight specifically responds. Color envelops the surface of visible objects and brings about qualitative changes in the transparent medium. According to this model, the mediating medium must be as transparent (diaphanous) and colorless as possible – and thus invisible – in order to make color visible.”²²

The medium is conceived as a mediator – but one that, as Hoffmann explicitly emphasizes, separates just as much as it connects.²³ Peter Mahr,²⁴ Wolfgang Hagen,²⁵ and Dieter Mersch²⁶ have each drawn their own media-theoretical conclusions from ‘metaxy’; and they all stress the fact that media imply mediation and refute any notion of immediacy.

6. Media of Perception Reconsidered

But how do perceptual media and metaxy, the telescope and the diaphanum, fit together? I would like to propose an approach that moves beyond the aforementioned examples of media and asks, more generally, what role media play in perceiving and making sense of the world. Rather than focusing on a subset of media, the focus is thus on a media *function*.

This shift in perspective is facilitated by the fact that the philosophy of science and epistemology are playing an increasingly important role within media studies. As a result, the range of media under consideration is expanding to include, for example, sensors, measuring devices, and, more generally, ‘sensing media’;²⁷ and from there, potentially all other media, insofar as they serve the function of perceiving and making sense of the world.²⁸

As a second consequence of this, the positioning of the media as a whole is changing. The aspect of ‘communication,’ which remains at the center of many media concepts, is receding into the background; and if media are mediators and intermediaries, they no longer act between

²¹ Hoffmann, Stefan: *Geschichte des Medienbegriffs*. Hamburg: Meiner 2002. Hoffmann draws on Spitzer: *Milieu and Ambiance*, for example.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 31 (transl. H. W.).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 49.

²⁴ Mahr, Peter: *Das Metaxy der Aisthesis. Aristoteles’ »De Anima« als eine Ästhetik mit Bezug zu den Medien*. In: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie*, Bd. XXXV, 2003, pp. 25-58.

²⁵ Hagen, Wolfgang: *Metaxy. Eine historisemantische Fußnote zum Medienbegriff*. In: Münker, Stefan/Roesler, Alexander (Hrsg.): *Was ist ein Medium?* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2008, pp. 13-29.

²⁶ Mersch, Dieter: *Meta/Dia. Zwei unterschiedliche Zugänge zum Medialen*. In: *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung*, Nr. 2, 2010, pp. 185-208.

²⁷ ‘Sensing: Zum Wissen sensibler Medien’ [Sensing: On the Knowledge of Sensitive Media] is the title of a current research project at the University of Potsdam; <http://www.zem-brandenburg.de/de/sensing.html>.

²⁸ Schweppenhäuser defines media philosophy as a whole as the clarification of this dimension: “Media philosophy differs from media studies in that it seeks to clarify conceptually what media accomplish as means of accessing and making sense of the world.” (Schweppenhäuser, *Systematic Media Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 14 (transl. H. W.)).

sender and receiver, but between us and the world. Elsewhere, I have suggested using Bühler's sign model to illustrate this point:²⁹

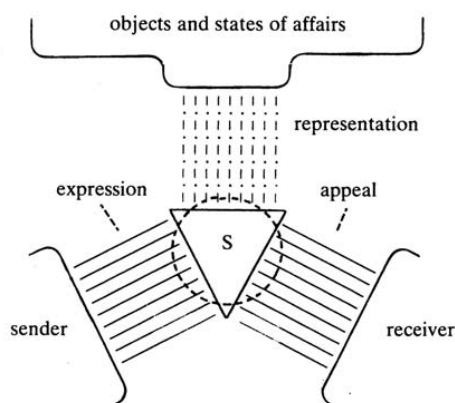


Fig. 2: Bühler's sign model ³⁰

In Bühler's diagram, the axis of communication would run horizontally from the sender to the receiver, while the axis of 'representation' – perpendicular to it – would be directed toward 'objects and state of affairs.'

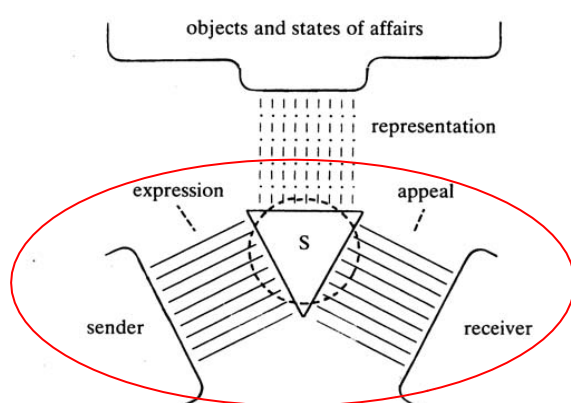


Fig. 3: Axis of communication

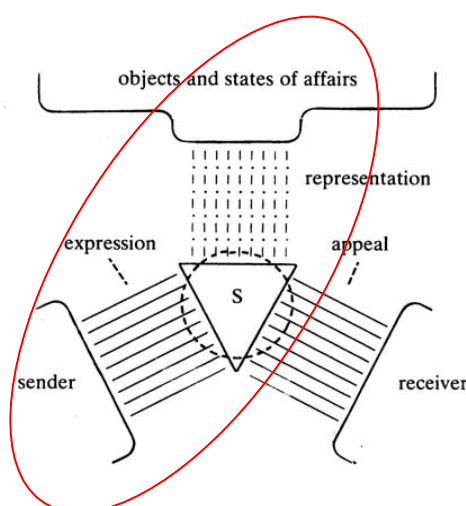


Fig. 4: Axis of perception/world understanding ³¹

Perception and the understanding of the world would be situated on this vertical axis. And if perception now takes center stage, this signifies a fundamental reorientation. Furthermore, the diagram makes it clear that this involves much more than just perception. The vertical axis addresses what is arguably the most difficult question in the realm of media: the question of the factual relevance of signs and media; the question of reference and relation to the world; and the precarious problem of how signs acquire their meaning.

²⁹ Winkler, Hartmut: Prozessieren. Die dritte, vernachlässigte Medienfunktion. Paderborn: Fink 2015, pp.122ff., the book is in German, but an abridged version in English is available online: W., H. : Processing. The third and neglected media function. In: W., H.: Condensation. Essays on media theory and the logistics of signs. Web publication 2024, pp. 99-110, here: pp. 102ff.; <https://digital.ub.uni-paderborn.de/hs/download/pdf/7704207>.

³⁰ Bühler, Karl: Theory of Language [1934]. Amsterdam 1990, p. 35.

³¹ My own illustration based on Bühler's model.

And the question of ‘filters’ also takes on a new context. It is no longer merely a matter of choice and selection; for factual relevance, relation to the world, and meaning are clearly not a matter solely of the material signifiers.

7. Language

One medium that is rarely mentioned among the media of perception, even though it shapes our perception like no other, is language. At least since the ‘Linguistic Turn,’ there has been a consensus that our access to the world is mediated by language and that our linguistically and semantically structured knowledge provides the framework through which we encounter the world. Thus, to give one example, it is completely impossible to see a striped horse without thinking ‘zebra’ at the same moment.



Fig.5: Khaled Hourani: The Zebra Copy Card ³²

And this is linked to all the knowledge that language provides through the concept of ‘zebra’: the outward appearance of zebras, their way of life, and movement patterns; a rough geographical classification, and associations with the lions’ diet. The entire scope of this semantics pops into our minds the moment our gaze falls on the image. And the semantics are so dominant, the automatic response so pronounced, and the set of our visual stereotypes so reliable that our perception itself is misled: For the image does not in fact depict two zebras at all, but rather a makeshift solution by a Palestinian zoo, which – because actual zebras were not available – repainted two donkeys.

With a little care, one could certainly have noticed the difference; in most cases, however, perceptual stereotypes prevail; the photo is viewed through the lens of our knowledge of the world, and that knowledge has placed a filter over the sensory data.

And at the same time, it becomes clear how closely our linguistically organized knowledge (‘zebra’) interacts with our visual knowledge; our knowledge of the world – a comprehensive ‘semantics’ – has the ability to effortlessly bridge media boundaries and bring together material from a wide variety of individual media.

³² Foto: Majed Shala/ Khaled Hourani, c/o Berlin.

8. Language and Worldview

Bucher summarized the relationship between world knowledge/worldview, perception, and perceptual filters in the following sketch:

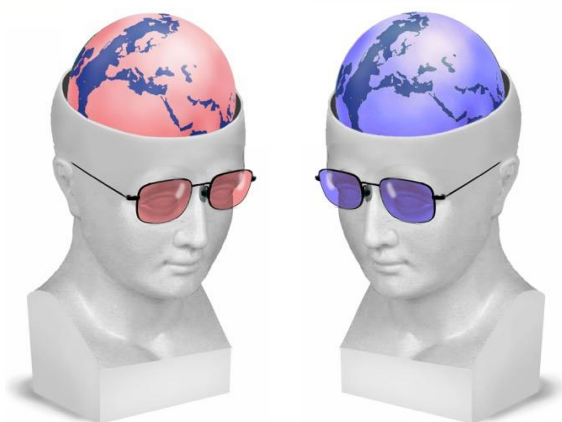


Fig. 6: Bucher: worlds in the mind

The sketch posits a double causality: A particular perceptual filter (a particular ‘set of glasses’) will – in the long run – lead to a corresponding body of knowledge (worldview), and conversely, the body of knowledge will influence specific perceptions. The relationship between the two is circular; the worldview is both a product of the perceptual filters and their producer. But what does ‘worldview’ mean in this context? Why does Bucher draw an entire globe inside the skulls? Does this simply mean that the worldviews of individuals differ?

In 1940, Benjamin Whorf introduced the striking thesis into the debate that language and thought are systematically interrelated, that language organizes our thinking; and, furthermore, that the semantic system of language itself contains a worldview:³³

“It was found that the background linguistic system [...] of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity, for his analysis of impressions [i.e. perception], for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. [...]. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. *We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language.* The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely *obligatory*; we cannot talk [or even just perceive] at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees.”³⁴

Whorf once again shifts the focus away from individual psychology and into the realm of language and media; for him, it is a *shared* world that language provides; and at the same time, this world is particular, insofar as language could – hence the keyword ‘convention’ – structure

³³ Whorf, Benjamin Lee: Science and Linguistics [1940]. In: W., B.: Language, Thought, and Reality. Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. NY/London: MIT press 1959, pp. 207-219.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 213f. (add. and emph. H. W.).

the world differently as well. The demonstration that different national languages indeed conceive of the world differently is one of the pillars on which Whorf bases his argument.³⁵

In doing so – and this is the truly important point – Whorf contradicts the assumption that language is a neutral and ‘transparent’ instrument. As self-evident as language may seem,³⁶ embedded within its structure is a system of particular beliefs and presuppositions that coalesces into a worldview that transcends the individual. If even the concept of a zebra is *composed* of semantic components, then it becomes clear just how fundamentally problematic and perspective-dependent terms such as ‘freedom’ are. Language thus comes close to *ideology*, which is, after all, particularly effective when it is naturalized and appears to be self-evident and without alternative. Whorf seems to me to be well-suited to bridge the gap between the psychology of perception and media studies. And he seems to me to provide an illustration of how language – and possibly the media in general – function as ‘filters.’

9. Discourse and System

But how does the particular system that filters perception find its way into people’s minds? This seems to me to be the fundamental question of media studies; after all, one of the key points of the discipline is that media studies – at least where it makes sense – always views the media from a dual perspective: on the one hand, as a stabilized system (a set of techniques, languages, texts, monuments, and institutions that serves to ensure cultural continuity), and at the same time as *discourse*, a bustle of symbolic practices that represent the fluid, dynamic side of the media. Between discourse and system – and this seems to me to be a fundamental insight – there is a systematic interrelationship; and media are social machines that organize this interplay.³⁷

In Bucher’s sketch, this has already taken place; the worldview in the mind is firmly established. And at the same time, it is connected to the external world through the ‘glasses’ (perception); the flow of practices and discourses subjects the worldview (the body of knowledge) to a – however slow and barely noticeable – change.

Discourse and system, exterior and interior, solid and fluid are interrelated; and when it comes to ‘filters,’ they are situated precisely at the interface in question. ‘Perception’ represents the path into people’s minds, the transition from material discourse to the mental system. And this is where the filters of perception come into play. At the same time, the worldview already established in the mind functions as a filter of perception. The media, then, are involved insofar as they provide the stage on which the interaction between discourse and system takes place.

By hearing language from childhood onward, by witnessing utterances and linguistic events, we build our semantic system – our linguistically organized knowledge of the world; language (as a system) can only enter our minds in this way and can only organize our world in this

³⁵ „When Semitic, Chinese, Tibetan, or African languages are contrasted with our own, the divergence in analysis of the world become apparent.“ (Ibid., p. 214).

³⁶ Whorf opens his text with a reflection on the “background character” of linguistic phenomena: “Every normal person in the world, past infancy in years, can and does talk. By virtue of that fact, every person – civilized or uncivilized – carries through life certain naive but deeply rooted ideas about talking and its relation to thinking. Because of their firm connection with speech habits that have become unconscious and automatic, these notions tend to be rather intolerant of opposition. They are by no means entirely personal and haphazard; their basis is definitely systematic, so that we are justified in calling them a system of natural logic – a term that seems to me preferable to the term common sense, often used for the same thing. [...] Natural logic says that talking is merely an incidental process concerned strictly with communication, not with formulation of ideas.” (Ibid., p. 211, 207).

³⁷ See: Winkler, Hartmut: Discourses, Schemata, Technology, Monuments. Outline for a theory of cultural continuity. In: W., Condensation, op. cit., pp. 5-17; <https://digital.ub.uni-paderborn.de/hs/download/pdf/7704207>.

manner. And the same – of course – applies to other media as well: By engaging with images and movies, we acquire our visual competence, our knowledge of images, and our treasure trove of visual stereotypes. And in the same way, numbers, sounds/music, smells, tastes, and tactile experiences/touch become part of the symbolic order in our minds.

Equipped with this apparatus, we face the world. Every new perception must pass through its filter; it provides the framework of expectations with which we encounter the new. And the fact that the world appears at least somewhat ordered to us is not due to the world itself but to this symbolic apparatus.

10. Schematization

Regarding the role of the media, it also seems important to me that media and discourses do not provide arbitrary material for perception, but rather material that is, to a large extent, already selected and pre-structured. Whenever the passage cited above mentions schemas and schematization, this aspect comes to the fore:³⁸ If perception depends on bodies of knowledge and is always a form of *recognition*, then it is schemas that ensure this recognition. And on the part of the media, this is even clearer: All semiotic systems have in common that they schematize; language reduces the teeming complexity of the world to a limited set of words/concepts; visual discourse follows stereotypes; and signs are fundamentally more abstract than what is to be comprehended.

Overall, then, it is a matter of reducing complexity; perception and media have in common that they rely on schematization in order to cope with the overwhelmingly complex external world. Media and discourses provide material that is pre-schematized in a specific way, making it easier for perception to process what is perceived; and in this way, they construct a collectively binding system of pre-schematized knowledge of the world. This set of schemata is the main ‘filter’ to which I wish to draw attention.

11. Filters, Embedded in our Subject Structure

The conclusion of my research is that, when considering the question of ‘filters,’ one should look beyond mere selection and operations on signifiers. If a meaningful media concept always encompasses both the external sphere of the discourses and the internal processes in people’s minds that – in whatever form – are connected to these discourses, and if media theory aims to take into account the actual, practical interaction between the two, then this certainly has implications for the concept of filters as well.

Everything suggests that some media filters have been incarnated, becoming flesh and blood within the subjects. If humans are symbolically organized animals, if we cannot even say ‘I’ without invoking a linguistic concept, then it becomes clear just how profoundly deep this question reaches.

³⁸ See footnote 7.