

# MARSHALL MCLUHAN IN A NEW LIGHT

Old or New Methods of Influencing Emotions  
in Communities of the Electronic Age

*Martina Sauer*

## ABSTRACT

How is it possible that emotions in the community can be influenced by media? According to the paper's concept, this is only understandable if we accept with Marshall McLuhan that media and the human body are not separable. There is no divide. The medium is the message expressed through the body/human being. This has preconditions, because the connection must be based on an analog principle that serves as the transmitter. This lies in non-discursive affectively relevant forms and an equally affectively evaluative mode of perception, as empirical research now confirms. On this basis, as Daniel N. Stern shows, people operate "with vigorous goal-directedness to assure social interactions." This points to the second premise, that every body/human being – infallibly – perceives a promise in communion with others, namely that of happiness, security, and community. This concept has far-reaching implications for how communities understand themselves, as the research of poststructuralists and frame theorists demonstrates, and as the trial and death of Socrates in ancient Athens attests.

## KEYWORDS

McLuhan, Media, Embodiment Theory, Community, Rhetoric, Emotions, Transmitter, Socrates

# 1

## PREMISE: MCLUHAN'S CONCEPT OF MEDIA AS A THEORY OF EMBODIMENT

Theories of embodiment have a long tradition in aesthetics. They go back to the middle of the 19th century, when metaphysical and empirically based concepts were irreconcilably opposed. The importance of feeling for perceiving, acting, and analogously for forming took a central position from the beginning. Accordingly, the question of the status of aesthetics played a central role and led to a heated debate in the German-speaking world about the primacy of speculative aesthetics or aesthetics as a science of form as a metascience (Sauer 2023a, forthc.). The approaches, originally considered incompatible, dissolved toward the end of the 19th century with the focus on the body-bound, also expressive abilities of humans themselves and their possibility for symbolic and thus meaning-giving activity (Sauer 2020). It is worth noting, and this is the point of departure for the thesis pursued here, that Marshall McLuhan's media theory is also at its core a theory of embodiment and thus stands in this tradition and will therefore be considered in relation to some of its protagonists. In McLuhan's concept itself, this connection is evident in his assumption that media are extensions of the body, and this applies to all media. Only because of this assumption is it possible for him to speak of "the medium is the message" (McLuhan 1964, 24). For communication with others is only possible for humans if they can extend their physical-organic bondage with the help of media. With them, people can convey any messages and – by being bound to the body, according to the extended thesis pursued here – thus also their feelings. The fact that we usually do not see this and, conversely, assume that there is only factually neutral communication via media is a myth, as already McLuhan stated.

However, if one assumes that feelings play a role in this misunderstanding, another aspect comes into play, which is again inspired and thus supported by McLuhan's approach. For these feelings are not only individual but are shaped by the community to which the sender feels he or she belongs. It is McLuhan's

reference to the specific possibilities of electronic media that provides the insight for this extension. For beyond the telephone and television in the 20th century as McLuhan still knew them, today in the 21st century with the worldwide Internet all the consequences that he already derived from human interaction in distinction to the mechanical media age are turned even more upside down. Indeed, distance becomes proximity. Time and space almost melt into a moment. Action and reaction to action happen nearly simultaneously. Everyone is touched by everyone. The differences between the knowledge and skill levels of the groups tend to dissolve. Through the network, they are “instantly” accessible to all. The relationship between those who act and those who react changes as social classes converge. Teenagers, women, men, white and colored people “are now involved in our lives, as we are in theirs, thanks to the electronic media.” The new media compel “commitment and participation, quite regardless of any “point of view” (ibid., 20). Thus, it is the developments of the new age that help to open eyes, as they show that every action and reaction is triggered by feeling. People are actively demanding that they not only be noticed, but also taken seriously and seen as equals, as McLuhan’s statement makes clear. This supports the thesis that every medium conveys a message to a person/body that has – and has always had – its premises in the community and is charged with feelings. The message is a point of view that the sender/body follows. It is an expressive message and therefore not neutral. Conversely, this means: The more the subliminally effective feelings that guide one’s own actions/media are faded out and not consciously reflected, the greater the potential of influencing the behavior, decisions, and actions of the recipient through deliberate communication that addresses precisely this emotional level. The conclusion from this extended McLuhan-inspired approach is that the medium as a message is at the same time subliminally, or intentional, rhetorically effective, and thus can influence decisions, actions and the feelings of the counterpart.

This gives rise to two strands of argumentation that build on McLuhan’s approach and thus cast it in a new light. One

is based on the supposedly neutral content and functions of the media, the other on the supposedly neutral emotionality of communication via media. Both assumptions turn out to be fallacies, which becomes clear by linking them to research from the tradition of embodiment theory within post-structuralist philosophy, frame theory, developmental psychology, and neuroscience from the publication of McLuhan's approach in the 1960s until today.

## **2 FALLACY: NEUTRAL CONTENT AND FUNCTIONS OF MEDIA**

If media, as McLuhan emphasizes, must be understood as bound to the body and thus as a message to others, social processes between bodies/people are negotiated through them. Knowledge and services are not independent components of togetherness, but standpoints represented by groups and messages charged with feelings. Feeling and acting or receiving and feeling (and again acting) are the central parameters here. This connection is much more obvious in the philosophy of poststructuralism or postmodernism to this day than it is in McLuhan, even if it is not explicitly addressed. Rather, the poststructuralism has been instrumental in deconstructing the fallacy that knowledge, skill, and media service are neutral. On the contrary, they were explicitly emphasized as a means of communicating one's position in order to consolidate one's social position in the community. However, the fact that dealing with emotions plays a central role in this is not explicitly addressed.

Roland Barthes is the one among them who shows how social group interests can be convincingly conveyed not only through language but also through the effect of images. What is interesting about this is that his findings also make it clear that images imperceptibly influence the feelings or self-esteem of the viewers. In his *Mythologies*, published in 1957, he uses numerous examples to show how images work in each case and what

they are intended to trigger in the viewer. An important example is the cover of *Paris Match* magazine, No. 326 of June 25 and 26, 1955, which shows one of the three stars of the third festival *Nuits de l'Armée* in Paris<sup>1</sup>, a young black from Africa in the clothes of a soldier (Le Tac, 1955, 84)<sup>2</sup> saluting against a neutral, almost white background (fig. 1).

Barthes uses this example to illustrate his poststructuralist semiological system (theory of signs). He is concerned with deconstructing the various levels of the picture in order to distinguish signifier, signified, and the myth it represents. In this way, he methodically approaches the phenomenon of deception to which the viewer is exposed in three steps:

1. What do I see? (signifier)
2. What does it mean? (signified)
3. What does it tell me? (myth).

The first question is answered right at the beginning. The second question also seems easy to answer. We find that a young black man sees himself as part of the Grande Nation of France (Barthes 1991, 115–119). Methodologically, this impression is created, as Barthes calls it, through naturalization (ibid., 129). In doing so, the individual history of the black man, his life as a black man alongside whites in French society, which is by no means equal or equivalent, is cleverly left out. This is done, as Barthes summarizes, by reducing a previously valid, rich, and diverse sense of black life to a mere form that gives way to a powerful new myth. The sense is impoverished and lives on only as a stereotype. The inner sense is still there, but the simplified composition can no longer represent it.

<sup>1</sup> This is a popular, very “Bric” festival with a peaceful and colorful military “parade” of the French army in Paris with 150,000 visitors, cf. for this the archives of Nato Otan (Director of Information, 1955, 1) about the “North Atlantic festival on the lines of the “NUITS DE L'ARMÉE FRANCAISE”.

<sup>2</sup> Cover text: “The nights of the army. The little Diouf came from Ouagadougou with his comrades, children of the A.O.F. (i.e. African Army) troops, to open the fantastic show that the French army presents at the Palais des Sports this week (translated from French by the author).”



Figure 1: Cover, *Paris Match*, No. 326, 25th–26th June 1955. Photo: Willy Rizzo, Source: Martina Sauer.

The picture is now only a shell of it. It functions as a placeholder. In this respect, it is a form that, because of its openness, can speak of something entirely different.

However, if we analyze the effect of naturalization against the background of art historical methods and include the affective effects of the photographer's formal choices (cf. Sauer 2018, 159–163, 181–190), Barthes' result can be specified in terms of the sense of belonging to a community. According to the art analytic extension, naturalization is a procedure in which, as this example shows, the motif is placed in front of a predominantly white background with some blue, a placeless but sunny day. In parallel, the motif itself is also reduced to a few aspects: These are limited to a part of the torso of a boyish black male, slightly turned towards the viewer, looking straight ahead, and leading his right hand to his cap in military salute. Like the neutral white and somewhat blue background, the color spectrum of the subject itself is reduced to a few achromatic, dark shades of black and brown. The few but striking primary colors of blue (in the sky), red and yellow (the cap's band and collar) stand out and create a link to the magazine's logo in red and thus to its affiliation with Paris, the center of the French empire. The neutralization of place and time in the context of youth and the military leaves no doubt about what is being conveyed in this way: On a blue, sunny day, the wish or feeling that black people are part of the Grande Nation is created and comes true.

This, however, is a myth, as Barthes notes, created by naturalization and, it has to be added here, by the triggering of feelings. The French elite, the bourgeoisie, knows this very well. Because for them, according to Barthes, the cover expresses the opposite. It speaks of French imperialism and colonialism. Liberty, equality, and fraternity for all, black and white – the credo of France – turns out to be a deception. Through naturalization, Barthes argues, and, it must be added, through the awakening of a sense of community, a new hidden meaning can emerge that can take on the force of a truly great and enduring mythology (Barthes 1991, 118).

Parallel to the poststructuralist insights of Barthes', a second strand can be discerned in previous research, in that an expansion of what constitutes media can be discerned without this being addressed by McLuhan. For the connection of the medium with the body can be seen not only in mechanical and electronic media, but also in rituals, traditions, and role models. They also convey a message. Specifically, they reflect the social rules of togetherness or the respective ideas of a community about them. In addition to poststructuralist philosophy, which addresses this connection subliminally through the concept of discourse it introduces, it is frame theory that deals specifically with the interrelationships of effects of the rules of social togetherness. However, the concept of the medium and its connection to the body is not specifically addressed in its research either. But the fact that this connection also exists in relation to frames is shown by the ways in which they, like all media of the body, reflect both content and functional meanings. In this case, they are manifested in the rules of togetherness as expressed in procedural agreements. Through them, the respective points of view are communicated.

It was Gregory Bateson who focused on the function of play in the frame in his first seminal essay on the subject in 1955 (Bateson 2006, 314–328). This idea was taken up by Erving Goffman 1974. He focused specifically on frames themselves, presenting them for the first time as vehicles of communities (Goffman 1975, 21–26). Indirectly, it is the cultural scientist Hartmut Böhme in *Fetischismus und Kultur* from 2006 who provides an answer to the question of the emotionally relevant function of frames. It is expressed in the charging of meaning, keyword 'fetishization', of objects and persons in rituals (Böhme 2006, 230–364; see review Sauer 2007; cf. also Sauer 2018, 213–225). That the function is not only – as already pointed out by poststructuralist philosophy – in social protection and demarcation from others and thus in order to maintain power (cf. Barthes 2013, 269), but serves generally human needs of all of us, is a consequence that can be drawn from Böhme's approach.

Accordingly, Böhme's concept differs from both discourse and frame theory. In his view, it is objects, persons or ideas that are charged with meaning in rituals in a special setting such as a museum or a church (Böhme 2006, 287). These circumstances make them "things" of the first order. Thus, they can provide a constant or genuine sense of security, belonging, and community across all leaps in time. They enable a connection to the "chain of life" (ibid., translation by me). Everyday objects, "things" of second order, on the other hand, he presumes, lose this meaning because they can be alienated. This is because they can be sold or thrown in the trash (ibid., 298–307; 330–371). However, if one detaches oneself from Böhme's concept that it is only objects or also persons and ideas that are the carriers of meaning and includes the rituals themselves – these are the frames – a new picture emerges.

Then it is the rituals and traditions, as they are lived in families, acted out between generations and genders, practiced in the village community up to the nation, and even observed among people of different skin color, that create identification or, moreover, give this promise of happiness and security in community. Furthermore, the charging of the meaning of objects, clothing, language, and gestures also plays an important role beyond Boehme's approach, namely for social bonding in the rituals of the respective community. Only against this background it opens up that deviations from the rituals and their functionaries are carefully observed, as they tend to pose a threat to the deeply felt promise of happiness and belonging in community. Therefore, their idiosyncrasies are usually held on to with extreme tenacity and defended against deviant impulses, whether from within or without. Exclusion, bullying and even physical assault are then possible. And all this in order to maintain – even against all reason – the respective promise of happiness and, security in community. This is the general principle which is to be regarded as central for the order of social togetherness.

In essence, it is this situation that McLuhan describes when he brings electronic media into play by extending the radius of action of one's body/human beyond mechanical media.

For with them, communication within groupings and to others changes. Their respective status can no longer be maintained as easily as it was still possible through the distance between them built up with mechanical media. This is because the affected group can react directly to their stances via the electronic media. The former can no longer distance themselves from the latter but can be directly challenged. Social classes are moving closer together. Against this backdrop, I assume that the promise of happiness, security, and community alluded to in Böhme's approach and only vaguely echoed in frame theory (sets of rules) and post-structuralist theory (discourses) is to be understood as a central function of media – in McLuhan's sense – as extensions of the body. This is consistent with the assumption that media are neither neutral in terms of what (content and function), nor in terms of how (mode of communication). Rather, as has been shown, it is their emotional parts that are subliminally grasped by the counterpart and elicit a reaction. Fundamental and far-reaching is that this connection between medium and body, media, and embodiment theory in the history of science, which I see as central in McLuhan, is confirmed by empirical research in child psychology and neuroscience.

### **3 FALLACY: EMOTIONALLY NEUTRAL COMMUNICATION**

McLuhan's thesis that media are extensions of the body/humans already makes it clear that the medium itself is the message. Consequently, a neutral exchange between sender and receiver via media, neither mechanical nor electronic, cannot be assumed at any time. On the contrary, recent research by infant psychologist Daniel N. Stern, published in 1985 in *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*, shows that any communication or interaction between people is highly determined by impressions and feelings, and also operates

„with vigorous goal-directedness to secure social interactions” (Stern 1985, 28). But to what does this type of interaction refer? If one agrees with both Stern’s findings and McLuhan’s conception, this presupposes a number of issues. For McLuhan, human and medium are inseparable. Conversely, this means that every medium is perceived in the same way and thus, must have been designed as such by the body/human for others, so that it can be perceived or interpreted as meaningful in the interaction. This assumption is consistent with my own research. It also draws attention to the fact that the mode of appearance and perception of medium and body/human, which is ultimately based on analog principles, can by no means be oriented to contents and performances, because otherwise no coherent interaction of the levels would be possible (Sauer 2018, 7–9; 35–106). Exactly this assumption is also confirmed by Stern’s research. Because the perception of three-week-old infants is based on the evaluation of formal, abstract elements. That is, the infant does not orient itself in the interaction and thus in its perception and reaction to its reference persons, to communicated contents, since these are not understandable for it. Against this background, the infant’s innate ability to develop abstract representations of perceptual properties is the focus of Stern’s research.

“These abstract representations that the infant experiences are not sights and sounds and touches and nameable objects, but rather shapes, intensities, and temporal patterns – the more ‘global’ qualities of experience (*ibid.*, 51, 47–68, see 51).”

According to this, it is non-discursive representations, concrete forms, degrees of intensity, and temporal patterns that are considered essential for perception as such as well as for the perception of media – in this case of art – as Stern himself points out in a separate contribution following his first remarks on this (*ibid.*, 157–161; cf. Stern 2010)<sup>3</sup>. Extending his approach, the researcher refers to the specific quality of this experience, which tends to

<sup>3</sup> Cf. on the predecessors of these findings his colleague Heinz Werner and the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, both of whom he cites (Stern 1985, 15–7161). Cf. on the scientific context of this approach Sauer 2023b (forthc.).

translate perceptual qualities into emotional ones. Stern characterizes these as vitality affects. These are best described in dynamic, kinetic terms such as “surging,” “fading away,” “fleeting,” “explosive,” “crescendo,” “decrescendo,” “bursting,” “drawn out,” and so on (ibid., 53–61, see 54). According to Stern, it is self-reflection and language that lead to forgetting or detachment from this global mode of experience between the 15th and 18th month of human life (ibid., 47–68, see 51). Particularly his conception of activation contours (intensity in time), perceived in the overt behavior of another, and becoming a virtual vitality affect when experienced by an observer (within the self), coincides with the research questions of a group of Italian neuroscientists led by Giacomo Rizzolatti, who in 1996 linked their discovery of mirror neurons to the human capacity for empathy (Rizzolatti et al. 1996). In a joint research group with Stern, the results were published in 2013 (Rizzolatti et al. 2013). More recent research from 2020 and 2021 again follows Stern (Di Cesare, Gerbella, and Rizzolatti 2020, Rizzolatti et al. 2021). In this most recently published research, they assume that it is forms of vitality of the body – and thus, with McLuhan, of the human being – that are mediated not only by gestures and actions but also by words, that “characterize social interactions by providing information about affective states of the actors involved,” and in this way convey their mood (Di Cesare, Gerbella, and Rizzolatti 2020, 202). The connection to extended media such as art and design is the subject of a current joint research project between the author and the neuroscience team on “art and multimodality” and on “art and atmosphere and mood” (see Lombardi and Di Cesare, 2022; Lombardi, Sauer, and Di Cesare, 2023).

This means, in direct contact the evaluation of what is said depends on the evaluation of the how it is said. This process of evaluation depends on non-discursive forms and is connected with feelings. Thus, communication functions by processing and responding to feelings. Remarkably, this process of communication is not only relevant for social interaction, but even more – and this is relevant as a basis for the thesis pursued here – to securing social interaction through the transmission of the mood of the

body/human as well as its medium. The innate operations of the body/human can thus be seen as the basis for ensuring survival and thus happiness in the community. In direct interaction, as also made possible by electronic media, it enables immediate reactions which, in the case of media at a distance, can only reach the sender with a delay, thus placing him or her in a position of defense and subordination, as McLuhan makes clear. However, the expanded possibilities of the electronic medium also reveal how quickly and easily the feelings of others can be influenced by it. It depends on the intentions of the communities/institutions what their message is and how it is conveyed.

In a final chapter, the connection shown so far will be illustrated. For this purpose, the fate of Socrates in ancient Athens around 400 BC will be used. It was chosen because Plato, as Socrates' spokesman, reflects in his writings the connection between the social rules of the community and their defense by addressing the feelings with rhetorical means.

## **4 ATTEST: THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF SOCRATES**

Although the relevant sources themselves, as well as the research of philosophers and ancient historians, provide "only" an indirect picture of the situation in ancient Athens and the circumstances that led to Socrates' death sentence in 399 BC, it becomes clear, with reference to philosopher and ancient Greek scholar Debra Nails, that both Socrates' attitude and behavior were judged to be serious violations of the unspoken traditions not of the laws of the time but of the "social contract" of the members of the polis (Nails 2006, 15). In terms of the concept presented here, Socrates' behavior can be seen as a threat to the promise of happiness and security in community contained therein. Thus, it is Socrates' futile struggle for the "right" understanding of values, as Socrates demanded in terms of the possibilities of criticism and the rejection of

persuasive techniques of the rhetors, that ultimately led to his death sentence. The fact that he nevertheless rejected more or less legal ways of circumventing the sentence shows that he finally accepted the unspoken rules and the withdrawal from the community (ibid.), thus remaining true to his understanding at the same time. What this conviction is based on can be seen from Plato's early writings in *Gorgias* (380 BC) and *Phaedrus* (370 BC). In them it becomes clear that the possibility of seduction by means of rhetoric as the arousal of "musical enthusiasm" ultimately serves the rhetor's own interests rather than the common good. Thus, already in this early writing, he complains that the rhetor is instead:

... always to aim at what is best ... bent upon giving them pleasure, forgetting the public good in the thought of their own interest, playing with the people as with children, and trying to amuse them, but never considering whether they are better or worse for this. (Plato 380 BC, 501b3, see as well Plato 370 BC, 260b, cf. on the aspect of "musical enthusiasm" Grassi 1970, 159–168 and also Sauer 2018, 202–212)

To describe this socially relevant background for the polis in ancient Athens in more detail, it is significant that it was Metellus and two witnesses, Anytus and Lykon, who accused Socrates of an offense that was such a moment that it violated the community's sense of togetherness. For it is impiety and the seduction of youth that Metellus accused him of in his indictment. Both aspects reflect the threat of the sense of community and religious values of the polis. They accused Socrates of not showing humility and respect for the community. Specifically, they said that he lacked dutiful behavior both toward parents, whose children he urged to disagree, and toward the gods of the polis, since he was following a new god, his personal daimonion as spiritual guardian (Nails 2006, 8). The indictment thus refers to the common values of a community or frame, in this case the community of the polis in Athens around 400 BC. The importance of these unwritten, yet valid, socially accepted rules is also shown by the fact that Socrates did not violate the laws that had been carved in stone at the wall

of King-archon's court since 410 BC.<sup>4</sup> They did place religion under law as public matter, as Nails makes clear, but prescribed dogmas or articles of faith were unknown. Thus, adherence was measured by behavior. According to Nails, however, there is little evidence of misconduct on this point; on the contrary, "it is very unlikely, based on extant Socratic works, that there would have been behavior to offer in evidence Socrates' beliefs, e.g., neglecting of sacrifice or prayers, for Socrates continues his religious observance through his dying day (*ibid.*, 12)."

The case of Socrates thus also shows that the novelty and otherness that characterized his behavior did not, at least in this particular case, create a new frame or socially relevant rules in which his understanding of values had positive connotations and, to that extent, could grant the promise of happiness, security and belonging in a new way. On the contrary, years earlier, around 429 BC, his nonconformist behavior already met with rejection and became the subject of several comedies. The most famous and mentioned by Plato in the *Apology* (Plato around 399 BC, 23c2–d2) is Aristophanes' *Clouds* (423 BC, revised 418 BC). New attacks came from the same author in *Birds* (414 BC) and *Frogs* (405 BC) (*cf.* Nails 2006, 11, 13, *cf.* also Monoson and Nails 2022). This rejection finally became evident in the trial of Socrates. Once again, his behavior provoked ridicule and incomprehension. In contrast to the Sophists' well-known and accepted methods of defense and persuasion (Robling 2020, 31–35), he did not try to win over and convince the audience. Thus, his honesty was clearly out of the ordinary and accordingly provoked laughter.

As if that were not enough, the reactions to him turned into open rejection, because his behavior could not be explained in any other way than that he probably thought he was something better. Thus, he was considered as a big mouth and hair-splitter, and was seen as one of those who taught logic haggling in order to "make the weaker argument the stronger" as Plato puts it in reference to Socrates' speech in legal self-defense in the *Apology*

---

<sup>4</sup> Since 403 BC the laws were deposited in the archive on papyrus, *cf.* Nails 2006, 16.

(Plato around 399 BC, 19b5–c1). This aroused increasing suspicion because he based his judgments on natural science, the novelty of which met with general rejection at the time (Nails 2006, 10). Even Socrates himself admitted that he was considered strange. For example, his habit of asking others questions caused trouble because he made them look stupid without lecturing them. This, he said, set an example for the young and led them to ask inappropriate questions of their elders, thus angering them (ibid., 8). Finally, Socrates' behavior in court transferred this anger to the leaders of the polis themselves. The main reason for this was that he portrayed the leaders as cattlemen and thus did not give credit to property, wealth, or noble lineage. This, in turn, caused complete incomprehension among the 500 or so jurors and was perceived as silly and ridiculous, and his sincere amusement is taken as inanity. Thus, he left the impression of being arrogant, ignorant, and incompetent, as Plato puts it in *Theaetetus* (Plato around 369 BC, 174c–175b, cf. Nails 2006, 9–13). Accordingly, the verdict was given, and he was sentenced to death. Socrates himself accepted it. Not because it was in accordance with the law, that could not be proved in detail, but because it was just, and he admitted to having erred, which was really in the interest of the city, as Plato testifies in the *Theaetetus* (Plato 369 BC, 77d–e)<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, he was not condemned by laws, but by the people, as Plato summarizes in *Crito* (Plato around 399 BC, 54c1, cf. Nails 2006, 14).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the interpretation of the philosopher Hegel, who regards Socrates as the founder of moral philosophy and in this respect differs from the Athenian understanding of morality as a custom ('Sittlichkeit', MS): "Moral heißt, daß das Subjekt aus sich in seiner Freiheit die Bestimmungen des Guten, Sittlichen, Rechtlichen setzt und, indem es diese Bestimmungen aus sich setzt, diese Bestimmung des Aussichtssetzens auch aufhebt, so daß sie ewig, an und für sich seiend sind. Die Sittlichkeit als solche besteht mehr in dem, daß das an und für sich Gute gewußt und getan wurde. Die Athenienser vor Sokrates waren sittliche, nicht moralische Menschen; sie haben das Vernünftige ihrer Verhältnisse getan, ohne Reflexion, ohne zu wissen, daß sie vortreffliche Menschen waren. Die Moralität verbindet damit die Reflexion, zu wissen, daß auch dieses das Gute sei, nicht das andere. Die Sittlichkeit ist unbefangen, die mit Reflexion verbundene Sittlichkeit ist Moralität; dieser Unterschied ist durch die Kantische Philosophie erregt, sie ist moralisch (Hegel 1979, 441–456, see 444)."

## 5 CONCLUSION

In summary, this means that the inclusion of non-discursively expressed feelings, as introduced by the child psychologist Stern in line with neuroscience as a central category of communication, opens up a new understanding of our togetherness and coexistence in the world and thus of the formation of frames or socially relevant rules. In this context, not only the poststructuralist philosophy of Barthes and the frame theory of Böhme, but above all the media theory of Marshall McLuhan appear in a new light. For McLuhan's approach already makes it evident that at the core it is feelings that are addressed as extensions of the human body through the mechanical and through the direct wire by the electronic media. It is their binding power and commitment, or with Stern, "their social capacities," that "are operating with vigorous goal-directedness to assure social interactions" (Stern 1985, 28). Remarkably, it is they who end up essentially working against progress and thus innovation in societies, as the case of Socrates shows. This is because they encourage adherence to traditional and thus successful values that grant happiness, security, and community within the frame. This is due to the function of frames or socially relevant rules to ward off dangers from all sides. Put positively, their rules grant a promise of happiness, security, and community, which Socrates already confirms by acknowledging the charges. This conclusion, however, has far-reaching consequences. For it makes clear that by referring to the "social contract" and its promise of happiness, security, and community, the door is opened for this contract itself to be influenced by individual or group interests. This means that accordingly "only" the feelings of the members of the community have to be addressed by rhetorical means or by arousing "musical enthusiasm" for one's own purposes. A danger that Plato already saw (cf. Grassi 1970, 159–168; Sauer 2018, 202–212) and whose effects he experienced first-hand.

## REFERENCES

- Bateson, Gregory. 2006. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." 1955. In *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, edited by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, 314–28. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.
- Barthes, Roland. 1991. *Mythologies*, from French by Annette Lavers, 25th edn. 1957. New York: Noonday Press. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://www.studocu.com/row/document/hazara-university/english-grammar/roland-barthes-mythologies/28977669>.
- Böhme, Hartmut. 2006. *Fetischismus und Kultur: Eine andere Theorie der Moderne*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Di Cesare, Giuseppe, Marzio Gerbella, and Giacomo Rizzolatti. 2020. "The neural bases of vitality forms." *National Science Review* 7: 202–13.
- Goffman, Erving. 1975. *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. 1974. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Grassi, Ernesto. 1970. *Macht des Bildes: Ohnmacht der rationalen Sprache: Zur Rettung des Rhetorischen*. 1968. Köln: DuMont.
- Hegel, Georg W. Friedrich. 1979. Werke in zwanzig Bänden, neu edierte Ausgabe, 1832–1845, Redaktion Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, Bd. 18. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Le Tac, Joel. 1955. "Les vedettes de la semaine." In *Paris Match*, 326, June: 84.
- Lombardi, Giada, and Giuseppe Di Cesare. 2022. "From Neuroscience to Art: The Role of 'Vitality Forms' in the Investigation of Multimodality." In *Multimodality: On the sensually organized and at the same time meaningful and socio-culturally relevant potential of artistic works*, edited by Martina Sauer and Christiane Wagner. *Art Style* 10: 11–23. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://artstyle-editions.org/10-no-1/>.
- Lombardi, Giada, Martina Sauer, and Giuseppe Di Cesare. 2023. "An Affective Perception: How 'Vitality Forms' Influence Our Mood." In *Atmosphere and Mood. Two Sides of The Same Phenomenon*, edited by Martina Sauer and Zhuofez Wang, *Art Style* 11: 127–39. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://artstyle-editions.org/11-no-1/>.
- McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 2nd edn. New York: The New York American Library.
- Nails, Debra. 2006. "The Trial and Death of Socrates." In *A Companion to Socrates*, edited by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, 5–20. Malden, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell.
- Nails Debra, and S. Sara Monoson. 2022. "Socrates." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socrates/>.

Director of Information. 1955. "North Atlantic festival on the lines of the "NUITS DE L'ARMÉE FRANÇAISE". *Nato Otan. Archives*, Item AC/52-D/131, November 18: 1–5. Accessed January 4, 2023. [https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/6/16044/AC\\_52-D\\_131\\_ENG.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/6/16044/AC_52-D_131_ENG.pdf).

Rizzolatti, Giacomo et. al. 1996. "Action recognition in the premotor cortex." *Brain* 119: 593–609.

Rizzolatti, Giacomo et al. 2013. "The Neural Correlates of 'Vitality form' Recognition: An fMRI Study." *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 9: 951–60.

Rizzolatti, Giacomo et al. 2021. "The neural bases of tactile vitality forms and their modulation by social context." *Scientific Reports* 11, 1. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8079712/>.

Robling, Franz-Hubert. 2020. *Rhetorische Ethik*. Hamburg: Meiner.

Sauer, Martina. 2007. "Review: Hartmut Böhme, Fetischismus und Kultur: Eine andere Theorie der Moderne." 2006. In *Kunstchronik*, 07, 2007: 282–85. Reinbek: Rowohlt. Accessed November 15, 2022. doi: 10.11588/artdok.00000948.

Sauer, Martina. 2018. *Faszination – Schrecken: Zur Handlungsrelevanz ästhetischer Erfahrung anhand Anselm Kiefers Deutschlandbilder*. 2012. Heidelberg: arthistoricum. Accessed November 15, 2022. doi: 10.11588/arthistoricum.344.471.

Sauer, Martina. 2020. "Panofsky – Warburg – Cassirer: From Iconology to Image Science." In *Homo Pictor: Image Studies and Archaeology in Dialogue*, edited by Jacobus Bracker, 159–71. Heidelberg: Propylaeum 2020. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.709>.

Sauer, Martina. 2023a (forthc.). "Spekulative Ästhetik versus Ästhetik als Formwissenschaft [1830-1870]." In *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. 1/1–3, Die Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts: Deutschland, edited by Gerald Hartung. Basel: Schwalbe.

Sauer, Martina. 2023b (forthc.). "Towards Vitality Semiotics and a New Understanding of the *Conditio Humana* in Susanne K. Langer." In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Susanne K. Langer*, edited by Lona Gaikis, 285–309. Bloomsbury: New York and London.

Stern, Daniel M. 1985. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. New York: Basic Books.

Stern, Daniel M. 2010. *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology and the Arts*. Oxford. University Press.