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On the History of Television as a History of Viewing in Germany Preliminary Thoughts

1. Introductory Remark

My thoughts on television history and on the changes in viewing come from my work in the special research unit *History, Aesthetic and Pragmatics of the Small Screen Media* at the Universities of Siegen and Marburg. They are the first reflections on a history of the viewer as seen from the perspective of the development of programming, and look at how it should be historically founded in the concept of active roles.¹

Viewing as a particular form of the active use of the medium, of television as social action, as Will Teichert defined it at the beginning of the 70s,² cannot be dismissed as being merely a process of reception, as a factor of television communication which is basically unchanged. Viewing is a process which is constantly changing and redefining itself — within, on the one hand, the historical process of the development of television and, on the other hand, within the biographical developments of the individual viewers. Different variations of viewing defined by socialisation, education, individual preferences, social relations and living conditions, can be ascertained in this process. In addition, different modes of reception can be observed at different stages in people's lives. The diversity in the individual variants has led audience research to concentrate predominantly on quantifiable data about television consumption.

1) A more detailed portrayal of: History of Viewing (Zwischen Einschalten und Ausschalten) is published by the author in: *Vom Autor zum Nutzer. Handlungsrollen im Fernsehen* (From Author to User). Ed. by: Werner Faulstich, Volume 5 of Helmut Kreuzer and Christian Thomsen's five-volume *Geschichte und Ästhetik des bundesdeutschen Fernsehens* (History and Aesthetics of Federal German Television). Munich, Fink Verlag 1994.

2) Will Teichert: "Fernsehen als soziales Handeln". *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 1973, Heft 4.

However, viewing as a cultural activity is subject to long-term changes. If one compares accounts of viewing from various time periods, it changes on the collective level on the basis of media experiences made by society.

Viewing has largely escaped being given the historically descriptive approach until now. If one nevertheless makes the attempt to determine some of the changes in viewing on the level of collective change within the historic process, this can only be a first rough sketch to provoke a critical debate and thus to promote reflection on one of the most important forms of medial activity. The attempt is directed at a description of the collective reception of television, which typifies the decades of television's development and is seen as closely bound up with the programming structure. The individual peculiarities, including the class- and group-specific characteristics, will have to be disregarded here unless they represent examples of general tendencies.

2. On the Concept of the "Dispositif" (Apparatus)

For the analysis of the historical development of viewing, I will make use of the term of the "dispositif" (apparatus) as developed by Michel Foucault to describe the network of social conditions, institutions, laws, rules, public opinions and architecture; a network which, as a structure of orders, determines the social perception and social behaviour.³ Gilles Deleuze speaks in his explanation of Foucault's term "dispositif" of "machines" "to make one see and let one see" and "to make one speak and let one speak".⁴ In the same way as Foucault and Deleuze thus describe social institutions as structures regulating communication, the term "dispositif" can be applied, conversely, for those mass media specially created for social communication as well as for their structures. In doing so, the term "dispositif" as a theoretical category inevitably changes its character: while in Foucault's case (taking the example of the prison and psychiatry) it revealed implied communication of regulating structural elements which were otherwise hidden, its application for the mass media reveals an object whose communicatory moment actually constitutes this object. The revelatory character of the term "dispositif" may appear to be vanishing into thin air here; however, it can make aspects of communication visible beyond the obvious structures of communication — aspects which had received little attention until now.

In the analysis of the media the term becomes particularly productive where it can make structures of perception visible which had been previously ignored in the discussion of individual films and television programmes: in the history of traditions of visual reproduction and mediation; in the genesis of "the look" as a cultural phenomenon; in greater consideration of environmental

and social aspects which were, at best, usually brought together under the rubric of "context", but did not otherwise play a role in the theoretical discussion.⁵ In fact, here it is a question of the particular multidimensional character of viewing between the acquisition of knowledge and daydreams, between participation and partaking of an event, as well as of identification with and the creation of distance from the people shown.

The "dispositif" as the framework for perception, and thus for this structural moment, cannot be seen as a structure that is unconditionally imposed on the individual. The subjects have an influence on the "dispositif": as producers and media products, as individuals taking part in the discourses with and about the media; and, above all, as viewers through their viewing behaviour. One could posit the thesis that, throughout the history of television and despite acceptance of the medium, it could be observed that there has always been a hidden tendency to turn away, to evade and refuse.

Jean Louis Baudry used the term of the "dispositif" for the description of a medium — for the analysis of cinema — to examine the construction of reality, and he drew some parallels to Plato's cave allegory and Freud's interpretation of dreams. He connected the idea of the "dispositif" (in English: apparatus) with the problem of understanding the world itself and with the imagination of the subconscious.⁶

These theoretical beginnings were taken up and developed further in Germany by some film and television academics.⁷ The "dispositif" has recently played an important role, particularly in the construction of media history. Together with works on the history and prehistory of cinema,⁸ studies have appeared on the comparative history of cinema and television (or on a history that creates a union of the two), e.g. the study on *Audiovision* by Siegfried Zielinski.⁹ In the field of television history Monika Elsner, Thomas Müller and Peter M. Spangenberg have dealt with the early history,¹⁰ and there are also

5) Cf. the paper by Thomas Elsaesser: "Trouble with Reality", given at the *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual Conference*, Amsterdam, March 20/21, 1992.

6) Jean-Louis Baudry: "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema". In: Rosen, Philip (Ed.): *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*. New York 1976, pp. 299-318.

7) The most detailed is Hartmut Winkler: *Der filmische Raum und der Zuschauer. 'Apparatus' — Semantik — 'Ideology'*. Heidelberg 1992.

8) Joachim Paech: "Eine Dame verschwindet. Zur dispositiven Struktur apparativer Erscheinungen". Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht / K. Ludwig Pfeiffer (Eds.): *Paradoxien, Dissonanzen, Zusammenbrüche*. Frankfurt/M. 1991; Ulrike Hick: "Kinoapparat und Zuschauer". *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 1993, Heft 80.

9) Siegfried Zielinski: *Audiovisionen*. Reinbek 1989.

10) Monika Elsner / Thomas Müller / Peter M. Spangenberg: "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Dispositivs in der Bundesrepublik der fünfziger Jahre". Knut Hickethier (Ed.): *Institution, Technik und Programm. Rahmenaspekte der Programmgeschichte des Fernsehens*. Munich 1993 (Geschichte und Ästhetik des bundesdeutschen Fernsehens, ed. by Helmut Kreuzer and Christian Thomsen, Vol. I).

3) Cf. Michel Foucault: *Dispositive der Macht*. Berlin 1978; also: *Die Ordnung der Dinge*. Frankfurt/M. 1971, *Archäologie des Wissens*. Frankfurt/M. 1973.

4) Gilles Deleuze: "Was ist ein Dispositiv?" In: François Ewald/Bernhard Wadenfels (Eds.): *Spiele der Wahrheit. Michel Foucaults Denken*. Frankfurt/M. 1991, p. 154.

studies on the history of programming in West German television.¹¹

The range of these works from the last few years shows the productive nature of the term "dispositif". This is a result of the term's seemingly diffuse character: the framework for a medial product can no longer be adequately explained merely by aspects related to the institutional history or to communicatory elements. Aspects of mentality, ritualised and habitualised forms of use, ideological moments as well as contexts such as those relating to cultural community and national identity can be employed with the "dispositif" in an analytical way to write media history.

However, the term "dispositif" must be specified and developed further in its application for medially transferred communication. The principle of order in the "dispositif" should not only be understood as a framework of the communication situation and/or the media institutions in their relationship to the viewer. One can also describe the programme schedule structure as the inside of the "dispositif" and thus create a link between the technical-organisational apparatus and the programmes — thereby creating, on the one hand, a link to the social concepts of order recorded in these programmes, and, on the other, to the viewer.

3. "Dispositif" and Programme

We can adopt the approach of a pragmatism of audiovision and speak of a horizon of experience before which the individual programmes should be seen with their contents. Similarly, we can have in mind connections between genres or intertextual structures of film history, and thereby, be thinking of the totality of films from film history to which the single film refers. If we do all of this, then these traditions of genre and form can naturally also have validity for television. But, at the same time, television is such that the schedule, or the totality of the programmes broadcast each day in a transmission area as a real existing programme context, can be regarded as a horizon to which the individual programme refers and before which the single work is viewed. Here, we are talking, firstly, of the self-referential programmes which have appeared more frequently in the schedules in recent years and where television is itself the subject; and, secondly, we are talking about the numerous internal references within the schedules which are incomprehensible without the viewers having an intimate knowledge of the schedules.

It is, after all, the real sequence of the programmes which also has a part in influencing the viewing: that the viewer knows that there was a programme

with this or that content beforehand in the schedule; that this is being followed by the one that is currently being broadcast; and that there are various other programmes in this schedule, all of which the viewer could see if he just leaves his set switched to this channel. Now, with the existence of several channels, there is the knowledge of the possibility to be able to change channels and dip, at any time and without any trouble, into this or that programme on another channel, into a programme which the viewer perhaps already knows or where he can at least appreciate their basic forms because it is part of a serial or series.

The schedule is experienced by the audience as the real context of the individual programme. It is a specific reference quantity, which, moreover, exists in a real and material way in the flow of the schedule as experienced each day. And it is something that is verifiable. Thus, the schedule is more than the sum of the individual programmes. The characteristic element of television is the seemingly endless flow of single programmes, the permanent narration of the world, the constant depiction and representation of people, things, relationships. It is very instructive for the relationship between film and television that similar formulations can also be found in Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film* when he speaks of the "flow of life" and the affinity of film to it.¹² The tendency of this flowing schedule leads to a point where one can no longer recognise the distinction between the individual works; where they still exist, there is a tendency for them to be done away with or blurred, for new ones to be drawn up and new "markings" established. Hans Jürgen Wulff has spoken in this context of "marginal texts": of the channel logos, announcements, programme trailers and other "markings".¹³ The "flow of broadcasting" is a major narrative link where, if one follows Raymond Williams¹⁴ and John Fiske,¹⁵ the existence of single segments nonetheless appear as a structure.

One can take the view that this is a double structure: both a river as well as bars.¹⁶ The "dispositif" produces this river, it channels it and sorts out what is allowed to move within this river. It thus also regulates what we see and how we see it. The schedule thus has "dispositif"-like characteristics when it creates new modes of perception or at least makes them possible and then promotes them. There is something fascinating about the hold on viewers for them to keep watching after a programme has finished because the schedule continues — and for them to do this incessantly until physical and mental exhaustion or until the daily schedule is over. The schedule thereby provokes a perception that is different from that for a self-contained event which has a clear beginning and end and which itself gives this dramaturgical form.

12) Siegfried Kracauer: *Theorie des Films*. Frankfurt/M. 1973, p. 109 ff., 348 ff.

13) In this publication.

14) Raymond Williams: *Television as Technology and Culture*. London 1974.

15) Cf. John Fiske: *Television Culture*. London 1987.

16) Cf. K. Hickethier, see note 11.

11) Knut Hickethier: "Apparat-Dispositiv-Programm. Skizze einer Programmentheorie am Beispiel des Fernsehens", K. Hickethier / S. Zielinski (Eds.): *Medien/Kultur*. Berlin 1991, pp. 421-447; Ibid.: "Aspekte der Programmentheorie des Fernsehens". *Communications* Vol. 16 (1991) No. 3, pp. 329-346; Ibid.: "Dispositiv Fernsehen. Programm und Programmstrukturen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", Ibid. (Ed.): *Institution, Technik und Programm*. ... (see note 10).

The "dispositif" of television has been influenced by history rather than invariables in its development. Despite all the tendencies toward fascination and habituation the viewer is not fatalistically at its mercy. He can escape these demands on his viewing; he can — even unconsciously — refuse to have anything to do with it; he can also influence the "dispositif" himself and change it in the long term. However, such opportunities for the viewer to influence are selective and seldom comprehensible. They are socially less capable of being articulated or accomplished. However, seen in the long term, they determine the television apparatus as collective behaviour. For the single phases of television history one can thus determine various forms of the television apparatus which influence the context of particular programmes, and thus, via the order structure, viewing itself.

4. The Order Structure of Television

Starting with television: taking the model of television communication, viewing takes place in the private, home environment — except for some special cases and the early phases in the history of television. "Intimacy" of reception is the special quality of viewing as opposed to the public reception of theatre, cinema and other staged media. The linking together here of the private and public — something that is inscribed in the structures of the viewers' daily lives and also changes them — is one of the basic conditions of television viewing. The viewer sits in front of a set with a screen; this screen has an unchanging format. Images, programmes can be seen on this screen. They are received via aerial or cable and have been broadcast beforehand by a station which remains invisible for the viewer and thus remains largely unknown. The television set mediates in the form of moving photographic images on the screen an event that can be staged or be genuine. These pictures and the accompanying information, entertainment, ideas are the actual reason for reception, they are the reason for the consumption of television.

The permanent, unshakeable apparatus stands in contrast to the fleetingness of the images. The permanence of the frame prompts the concept of a "window on the world", mediates within one's perception of the certainty of the unchangeable nature of this distance between the viewer and what is shown him on the screen. This permanence also encourages the certainty that watching television is of scant consequence.

To be able to see optimally the viewer has to sit at a particular angle to the set. The resulting view of the picture is, in turn, part of a great tradition of the Western development of images and of a tradition of cultural perception, which is part of this order structure. There are more than mere analogies between television viewers and believers in the church, in the prayers before the altar. Television is in the great tradition of the secularisation of religious apparatuses and, clearly, only represents a developmental stage that is building on another

one. This incorporation of television in the familial context overlies and conceals this great link with tradition. However, it is still apparent in the journalistic discourse about television during the beginnings of TV. Thus, in the fifties in Germany there was often talk about a special liturgy of television and how this stood in relation to church traditions.¹⁷

The producer, who is part of this process of communication, disappears behind this receiver. He and the whole of his institutionalised organisation are not visible, with the exception of the announcers, presenters and continuity announcers, who represent a higher institution in the same way as the priests do in the church. Or with the exception of the station logos which stand for institutions like magical representatives. But it seems problematic to call them communicators in the same way as one is used to from the process of direct communication.

This seems to be a particularly important element of television that this institutional power is not really apparent to the viewer, and nor is the interconnection of the stations and media concerns with other social groups of power. At the end of the sixties and during the seventies, attempts were made to bring these structures into the public consciousness. This did not have any permanence because the "dispositif" structure was in fact more for concealing and letting this institutional context disappear behind the apparatus as receiver.

The viewer is alone with his "Bildschirmmaschine" in his private sphere, and what he sees on the screen is like an illumination from another world which becomes visible behind his own reality. The way he uses the set seems to be quite an individual and personal relationship. And its effectiveness is shown by the fact that a new kind of public sphere is created here.

The following descriptions of the individual constellations of this television apparatus as it moulded perceptions over the decades of federal German television are, of necessity, narrowed down to characteristics that are typical of an ideal or epoch.

5. The 1950s and the 1930s: Admiration of the New

The fifties mark the decisive phase in the installation of the apparatus of television in the Federal Republic. Although there had already been a regularly broadcast schedule in Germany between 1933 and 1943, its introduction as a mass medium did not in fact come about until the fifties. Looking at the thirties, one can understand why television was not yet able to establish itself at that time.

The television of the thirties, i.e. under National Socialism, was restricted to a few receivers. In addition to little more than a few hundred television sets installed for individual use by party members, politicians, managers, pro-

17) Cf. Heinz Schwitzke: "Endlos in der rinnenden Zeit". *epd/Kirche und Rundfunk* 1950, Heft 1.

gramme makers and one television critic, there was a collective reception in so-called public "television rooms" ("Fernsehtuben"). Most of these "rooms" were located in post offices and, as a rule, could usually seat between 20 and 30 viewers. Furthermore, there were one or two large-screen projectors for around 300 viewers. The schedule was correspondingly organised like a cinema performance, weekdays from 8-10 p.m.; sometimes, programmes were only broadcast between 8-9 p.m. and then repeated between 9-10 p.m. Single programmes, particularly television plays, were frequently repeated. It was evidently assumed that the individual viewer only saw the television service once a week rather than on a daily basis.

Thus, television tried out various structures of different media apparatuses. While theatre served as an orientation for the drama production, radio was the model for the reporting of current affairs and cinema (initially) for the schedule structure. The nearness of the reception situation to that for cinema was also evident: a dark auditorium, a common viewing of the programmes, and a structural order in which the viewer's attention was directed to an picture in the centre. However, the television picture could not compete with cinema's visual persuasiveness. The programme structure also followed that of the cinema: the programme sequence of newsreel, documentary or cultural film, and feature film was adopted; however, only short versions of feature films by Ufa and Tobis were shown in this television cinema: they lasted twenty minutes as a rule.

This early phase can be regarded as an experimental phase for the new medium when seen in the larger context of cultural-industrial production, broadcasting system, television structure, and viewers as subjects of perception. Knowledge about the new medium was, in the nature of things, limited both among the programme makers and the audience. With the adaptation of various structures there was, simultaneously, an activating of the various cultural "stocks of knowledge" and a testing of their usefulness for the new medium. However, the trial-like character was greatly limited by the ideological circumstances and material restrictions.

As in the cinema, the early television service's audience watched the whole programme schedule from beginning to end. At the start, one even made do without giving the precise starting times of individual programmes in the published schedules. However, television as a reduced form of cinema gradually lost its attraction for many viewers. Kurt Wagenführ, one of two early critics, wrote in 1937 that the television's specialness would "fizzle out" all too quickly. One could not constantly be astounded just by the technological "miracle". Another communicative use was therefore needed.

It can be clearly shown how the presentation modes for the new medium adopted traditions from other media. And how, particularly in connection with television, there was constant reference to elements of television that were independent of these other media. According to the television discourse in the listing magazines, daily newspapers and specialist magazines of the thirties,

the television viewer was to be always made conscious of the fact that television was a different medium from cinema and radio; and that the expectations made of television, which came from these existing media, were frequently unjust because television still had to find its way.¹⁸ One therefore had to "adapt oneself" as far as television was concerned, and that meant coming to other forms of perception and scales of judgement. But these could not be decreed, they had come about by making use of the medium.

This concept of the television service also determined the beginnings of television in the 1950s. On the one hand, a basic change in the order of things occurs in that television becomes a medium like radio and is established in people's individual lives and private sphere. However, the schedule structure on the lines of the cinema programme is retained, at least at the beginning with the NWDR station in Berlin. It is only with the amalgamation of the NWDR schedules from Hamburg, Berlin and Cologne that a programme structure is established, which, while retaining the two-hour framework of a cinema performance, is more oriented in its internal structure to the variety and mixture of the radio schedules.

The audience interest is determined, on the one hand, by its curiosity in a new technological medium. Even after this curiosity had been soon satisfied, it was constantly triggered off again by technological developments as new technological events were constantly being created by the television service: live technology played a central role here (the broadcasting of the coronation of Elizabeth II, World Cup). And then the ever increasing pressure to achieve the gathering of news meant that there was an increasing acceleration in the best performances — right through to the "direct" transmission of the Moon landing in 1969. The simultaneity of event, medial transmission and audience experience has a particular fascination, yet this "live" experience — frequently regarded as specific to television — was a product of the apparatus.

For the viewer had to *know* that a television programme was a live broadcast. He could not tell from the images in themselves whether this was a live transmission or a recording. The televisual "partaking" of an event as an audience event was and is bound up with the knowledge that the event is actually taking place somewhere else at this very moment. This knowledge comes together from information which is given from outside of the frame. Any time-delayed transmission of a recording cannot be identified by the viewer as such without such supplementary information or other auxiliary constructions (clock in frame etc.).

In the beginning, the audience mainly saw the programmes one after another and in their entirety. It was still a time when one didn't want to miss anything — it was only once people had got used to this new piece of living room furniture and what it had to offer that there was a slow drifting away, and the viewers' interest began to fall off more rapidly, something that the pro-

¹⁸ Cf. Kurt Wagenführ in *Berliner Tageblatt*, 1937 and 1938, especially 11.9.1937.

gramme makers tried to work against with ever newer innovations. Thus, in the fifties, television developed new subjects and programme forms so that there was always something new for the audience to discover. The reporters went out into the world, reported about world events, about the lands and peoples of foreign regions, and tried out new forms of entertainment. The schedule's variety was promoted by the fact that there were short intermissions which occurred as the channel passed from one broadcasting station involved in the schedule to the next. It was not until 1956/57 — with the multiple provision of decimetre lines between the stations — that these intermissions were then superseded by the so-called "flash switch-overs".

However, the main interest in television was stimulated by the programme flow with its promise of constantly new images and information, and by the changes in forms, contents and audience gratification. The blend of different things and the participation in events was part of the attempt to represent the whole of the world in television. But the structure of the schedule also orientated itself to the model of a concentric arrangement in whose middle a television play would ideally be located as the artistic heightening of the world. Both elements — a programme mix of wildly different things and a concentric arrangement — represented the typical schedule concept for the television of the fifties. Television thus claimed to organise and harmonise the world on the screen — and thereby to make it consumable for people.

The audience moved relatively swiftly from its initial social composition of a majority of viewers coming from the ranks of the self-employed and higher-earners to an audience that corresponded more with the general social stratum. This situation was already reached by the beginning of the sixties; only the rural population formed an exception that diverged from this. But this divergence disappeared in the sixties. And this consequently encouraged social integration. This development reached its zenith at the beginning of the sixties: television became the "road sweeper" ("Straßenfeger") of the nation with major series running for several episodes: the majority of the population gathered in front of its television sets in the evenings to see one and the same programme. Thus, television created — at least in certain specific areas — a community which was also gladly accepted by the majority of the population. The range of programmes — and particular programmes in it — provided a common communicative basis for society, the like of which had never existed beforehand (not even with radio). Television thus established itself as the dominant social discourse.

6. Viewing in the Sixties

In the sixties there was a caesura in this development with the introduction, firstly, of a second channel (ZDF) and, later, of the Third Programmes. Although the discourse about the medium and its contents or occasions for

communication were not abandoned, the juxtaposition of channels meant that television had lost its compulsory nature as a communication occasion. This resulted in the public venue of television being restricted once again. One of the reasons can be seen in the fact that television as an apparatus of social perception was regarded as having become too powerful by the politically influential powers-that-be. A possible competitive situation between the two channels was defused, however, as both public-law channels were committed to providing a "contrast", i.e. to a demarcation and coordination of the competing schedules. The schedules now also began to grow in size, extend into the afternoons and run until later in the evenings. The schedules of the two main channels now ran in total to around 12 hours a day.

However, in 1964 the average daily television consumption was only 1 hour 10 minutes. The length of the schedules and the time spent viewing were clearly drifting apart. This gap, already discernible here, would become even more apparent in the following decades. Thus, selection from the schedule was made a principle as far as the viewer was concerned: he had to decide between the channels. The range of programmes on offer exceeded the amount of time which the viewer could devote, on average, to television. This then led to an increased preference among viewers for particular genres and forms. At the same time, the integrative function of the medium disappeared, both in the family as well as in society in general.

To be true, there was the developing of a "channel loyalty" where viewers decided for various reasons to make use of only one channel, but this remained the exception in the long term. The development of channel preferences led to a situation where, in addition to having favourite programmes, viewers would begin to switch through the various channels — and, in doing so, take part in an "entertainment slalom". There will most certainly have also been an "information slalom" — only, this was, typically, not a topic for the social discourse. Instead of there being a discussion on desirable patterns of use, it was the less desirable ones that were analysed and thus also promulgated. However, the concept of the reproduction of the totality of the world in television stayed in the audience's consciousness as a context and standard to be achieved.

Viewing developed subsequently in two directions: on the one hand, there was the orientation to the topicality of reporting as mediation of the world in the interest of being informed; and, on the other hand, the development of audience interests which were expressed in entertainment programmes in the widest sense, but also specialised in the requirements for entertainment by cultural sophistication, interactivity, competitive orientation, sportiness etc., and thus corresponded to the pursuit of a particular element of the "flow of broadcasting".

Another use of television was established and directed against the growing range of programmes, it becoming an issue particularly in the Seventies: ritualised television. Television as ritual is less to do with communication about the particular contents of a programme than with how far television as a social

activity lets itself be linked up to other social processes within the contexts of the viewers' lives. The incorporation of television in the sphere of intrafamilial communication led to an emphasis on ritual forms of use which were promoted by the regular reappearance of the same programme elements (the beginning of the main news, the weekly Friday night detective series, the Saturday evening light entertainment show, perhaps even the weekly *Kleines Fernsehspiel* (small TV-play) on Tuesday evenings).

The ritualisation of television, often also through the linking of television with previously existing rituals of everyday life (e.g. common meal times), led, at least partially, to a shift in meaning: regular television viewing itself acquired an independent function within the individual, interactive household; the very fact of the regular reappearance of the same or similarly structured programme became more important than the contents being conveyed. Rituals involving television had come into being since the end of the fifties with the *Tagesschau*, which one was not allowed to disturb, with the consumer series, the first series (*Unsere Nachbarn heute abend* with 111 episodes) etc. The ritualisation can be seen particularly clearly in the reception of the *Tagesschau*. For many viewers the most important thing is the feeling of being informed and it is less a real examination of world affairs. The interest in information frequently amounts to nothing more than wanting to know "that nothing significant has happened". The strikingly pronounced tendency for people to forget the items in the *Tagesschau* immediately after the programme — something that has been established on several occasions by reception studies — is indicative of this form of ritualised perception.

Rituals of viewing are, however, also bound to a constant schedule or to one that is recurrent in its important elements. Such ritualisation was constantly broken down or put into question by the shifting of series within the schedules. The ritualisation of viewing in the Federal Republic has thus always been broken down by a de-ritualising on the part of the programme makers when they stopped series, reorganised them or changed their slot in the schedules. The ARD's Friday night detective series slot was established in the sixties and was perceived as a ritual slot; despite this situation, it was dropped in the seventies, only to be reinstated anew as a ritual slot by ZDF. The consistently high ratings for the ZDF detective series through to the nineties (together with the long life of *Derrick* and *Der Alte*) are connected with this.

7. Viewing in the Seventies

There was an expansion of the medium in the sixties, which ran parallel to the ritualisation of viewing: Television had largely reached its saturation point at the end of the sixties and 90% of the population had become television viewers. Thus, television had not only established itself as a "leading medium" but also as the central media apparatus. The seventies are a time of continuation and

interruption. In the radical cultural changes of the late sixties in the Federal Republic, many long-running programmes in television are dropped, and there is a change in contextual emphases. Although the cornerstones of ritualised television are retained, numerous programmes are now considered "out of date" and thus removed from the schedules; this development is more pronounced at ARD than at ZDF. A new ritualisation of television is more pronounced at ARD than at ZDF. A new ritualisation of television may constantly appear and be subjectively different, yet other types of viewer behaviour are now being propagated: the television of the critical and aware citizen requires concentrated attention, demands a greater involvement, at a point where viewing "at the same time as other things" had already developed into a new form of distancing from the schedules.

During the seventies in the Federal Republic it was basically a question of, on the one hand, increasing the political influence on television (for the politicians) and, on the other, keeping this influence to a minimum (for the programme makers). The political power struggle for influence took place between the social groups. A structural change and further expansion of the medium were always being widely debated, but, in the end, were blocked by politics. However, one can see in this period how the greater social context led to a new, conflict-oriented concept of television and how this also influenced the schedule structure and viewing; one can also see how, as a consequence of this, one was able to achieve a withdrawal of this conflict-related concept, at first on the political level and then on the programme level. For the audience, the issue of television thus developed, above all, into one about the contents of the television programmes, whereby the limitations of television as a socially powerful institution was discussed in the cultural discourse.

The politicisation of television in the early seventies is followed by a depoliticisation in the late seventies. Put another way: in the specific private-public construction of the communication venue of television, this venue shifted more towards the public sphere at the beginning of the seventies: the private sphere became the venue for public conflicts (through the greater representation of these conflicts in the media), and this private sphere itself also became more publicly discussed — in the medium that stood in this private sphere: i.e. discussion of education, relationships, sexuality under the subheadings of emancipation, equal opportunities, and the removal of sexual taboos. At the end of the seventies, the public topics of conflict disappeared from the schedules (especially after the terrorism debate from 1977 onwards). The aspect of "retreat" into the private sphere, a pronounced new "inwardness", had become established.

I would like to keep this section brief so that I still have some time to go into the important aspects of change in the eighties.

8. The Eighties: Reconstruction of the Apparatus

Two elements of change stand out in particular in the television of the eighties: the introduction of the commercial channels and the hesitant reaction of the audience. What is particularly noticeable in the long runup to the introduction of the commercial channels (there was debate about this from the mid-seventies onwards) is that the majority of the audience was not interested in this discussion at all. In fact, a growing indifference to the range of programmes on offer could be observed following the politicisation and depoliticisation of the schedules. This is clear from the fact that the statistical viewing time even dropped slightly in the mid-eighties. This was far from being a sign of disinterest to the public-law channels; even the readiness to be cabled and linked up to the new channels lagged drastically behind the anticipated figures. The necessity for new channels was not appreciated by large sections of the television audience.

The introduction of commercial channels in the Federal Republic was a result of the political will of a group in society, here that of the CDU/CSU and the FDP as well as capital investors sympathetic to them, because they, variously, had hopes of political as well as commercial benefits from these channels. But it was also a result of the international pressure of developments in the media and of increasing internationalisation (as well as integration into a common European economic sphere). For this group, it was interesting that the political benefits did not appear in the desired form; in fact, another and not entirely unwelcome effect came about, which I would regard as being a further depoliticisation of the schedules. The stepping up of competition with light entertainment resulted in the disappearance of educational programmes and political background features programmes; they then reappeared in number again at the end of the decade when the medium had learnt how to stage political events as major media spectacles, e.g. the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Gulf War.

The introduction of new channels triggered off a new surge in popularity for the television medium — particularly towards the end of the decade — because the innovations in programme-making and specifically targeted advertising campaigns made the audience curious about these other programmes, and so the viewers simply wanted to make their own minds up. At the same time, there were more pronounced tendencies towards refusal of and withdrawal from television communication. The remote control — available since the seventies — assumed a new function with the growing number of channels: the viewers could now move easily out of a programme if they so wished; they could move through the channels, independent of the attractions and events on offer, or of the programme-makers' intentions, the dramaturgies or refined political constructions. The viewer thus became a "tele-stroller" with his remote control,¹⁹ someone who strolled through the television worlds, looking for

events, specific programmes. But he was also bored and only had the desire for piecemeal observation of longer programmes or of the connecting of diverging sensory impressions which came about by zapping between channels: crossreading, as a search for meaning in the montage of the coincidental, as a conceivable new form of perception. The zapper breaks the ritual of his viewing in a radical manner because he gets avoids the routine habits, the ties to particular series and times and is always on the look out, right across the board, for new attractions. The deritualisation does not signify an increased attention, there is no return to increased concentration as was characteristic for the early period. This new deritualisation meant that the numbers of the habitual audience began to fall off, and that the programmemeakers could no longer rely on continuity. The zapping itself can, however, become a new form of television ritual where the wandering to-and-fro is itself held up as "television as it really is".

With the seemingly explosive increase in channels the viewer was now able to select much more than beforehand. At the same time, the programmes of the various channels appeared to be interchangeable. The viewer was offered more and more entertainment and fiction, the character of the representation of the world changed: the world mediated by television increasingly assumed the character of a spectacularly staged production, a big show. Thus, there was an increase in the distance between the television world and the viewers' reality.

This resulted in new changes to the television apparatus. It developed from a public forum, a "flow of broadcasting" regulated by public-law institutions, to a market. The market also regulated the flow of televisual images, but its regulatory mechanisms are now different ones, those of the market and profit. They are not expressed for the viewers in a basic change in the apparatus, but rather in criteria, mechanisms and regulations.

The multiplication of the programmes on offer has led to a devaluation of the individual programmes for television. The individual programme preferences are now more important; the viewer has now made new use of one of television's accessories, the remote control: he zaps happily between the channels, calmly leaves the programme when he expects to see something more to his liking somewhere else. Not only are all scheduling plans largely thrown out of the window, the same goes for all forms of narrative and performance dramaturgy. A television viewer — according to a short study in 1991 — often zaps more than a hundred times through the channels during four hours of an evening.

Warren Buckland speaks of the model of the incomplete film which is completed by the viewer.²⁰ By this he means a form of cognition which is only

19) Claus Dieter Rath: "Fernseh-Realität im Alltag: Metamorphosen der Heimat". Harry Pross / Claus Dieter Rath (Eds.): *Rituale der Massenkommunikation*. Berlin 1982, p. 137.

20) Warren Buckland: "Relevance and cognition: Towards a pragmatics of unreliable filmic narration" (in this publication).

made possible by the viewer decoding the filmic symbols and supplementing them through his knowledge of film and understanding of the world. With multi-channel remote-controlled television, the zapper, though, draws his enjoyment of viewing from the incomplete completion on the dramaturgical level. He is no longer interested in seeing a film in its entirety. Thus, the changes to the apparatus result in the establishment of another perception with which another understanding of the structure of the world as mediated by the medium can be conveyed. We still know too little about the structures of zapping, but the idea that they represent a wild, "unconscious" switching to-and-fro seems rather unlikely.

In addition, one must not forget the establishment of the videorecorder in the family home: more than 40 per cent of all households now have one: here, time-shifted programmes can be seen that were recorded beforehand, and other films can be seen in the private sphere. Mainly those which television doesn't show: violent, horror and pornographic films. Thus cinema is also included, in certain cases, in the changes to the apparatus.

At the same time, there is a tendency for the viewer to try to evade the unreasonable demands of the television apparatus with its gigantic expansion, and to refuse to have anything to do with it in its various forms. In the fifties the schedule lasted on average approx. 3 hours, viewing was approx. one hour each day on average. In the sixties, the schedules in the three channels increased to approx. 12 hours each day, viewing to about two hours. At the beginning of the nineties we have channels in Germany (here I am talking in particular of Berlin) offering a total of approx. 350 hours each day, and viewing is, on average, of 2 hours 40 minutes. The influencing of the structure of perception has changed with the multiplication of channels. The apparatus is losing its influence, but it has been regenerated through the creation of new structures. In our minds, we still have the image of a schedule structure conceived as aiming at a totality of the world in the schedules. But this structure will also change.

Film und Medien in der Diskussion

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Band 5

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