

Michi Knecht: Reproductive Technologies and the Biomedicalisation of Kinship: Remarks from an Ethnographic Perspective

Assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) are often seen as contributing to the geneticisation and biomedicalisation of Western kinship concepts. Against the intuitive plausibility of this claim, the article outlines a different view of the everyday practices involved in socializing these technologies. The text starts with a critique of the concepts »geneticisation« and »biomedicalisation«, their implicit top-down dynamic, diffusionism and persistent reliance on a binary logic. It then goes on to use the dense and detailed descriptions provided by recent ethnographies of reproductive technologies to complicate the empirical and theoretical analysis of kinship in the realm of ARTs. In both making and legitimating kinship today, genetic substance and biomedical knowledge – in all their heterogenous meanings – are only one among other legal, social and cultural resources used strategically, relationally and flexibly to co-produce ARTs as »lived facts in the world« and kinship as »extended nature-cultures«.

Sarah Sexton: Cloning research and the need for egg cells

Experimental stem cell and cloning research uses thousands of human eggs from young healthy women as its basic research material. Yet, these are difficult to obtain for laboratory research due to the many social, biological, practical, ethical and economic reasons. This article takes cloning scandals in South Korea as well as legislative developments in the UK as examples of how debates and decisions on cloning research have changed notions of women's agency, freedom and duty.

Mona Singer: Cyborg Visions. The Controversies about Reproductive Technologies in Feminist Intention

Reproductive technologies are today at the centre of scientific, political, and cultural webs of contestation. They go along with cyborg-visions that differ crucially in terms of the meaning of progress and freedom, as well as asking for whom and why. In this article I argue for feminist interventions in techno-science to broaden agency in the arena of reproduction. Such interventions should engage with the entangled political, economical and cultural dimensions of techno-science in the form of cyborg-technologies, and thus unfold current terms and conditions for rethinking what might count as reproductive freedom.

Britta Cacioppo, Eva Geber: Fantasies of omnipotence and utopias

The desire to create human beings through technologies is old and persistent. Mythical figures of past centuries are nowadays represented by clones and cyborgs. The article gives a short review of fantasies of omnipotence found in mythologies, exemplified by some works of science fiction. This discussion is followed by a feminist critique of these techniques.

Claudia Schumann: Experience with Prenatal-Diagnostics in Gynaecological Surgery. An Interview by Sigrid Graumann

As a gynecologist, Claudia Schumann has been using prenatal diagnostics for 30 years. She reports daily problems regarding the permanent lack of time for counseling as well as the increasing requests for such diagnostics by pregnant women. The conflictive situations in which the women get into by using prenatal diagnostics cannot be resolved by practitioners. Schumann argues that there is need for an active support system in which counselors allow clients the possibility to discuss the issues at hand.

Silja Samerski: Empty Choices. Prenatal Diagnostics and the Fiction of Choice

Today, pregnant women have a new duty: They are supposed to make »autonomous decisions«. Gynecologists, geneticists and prenatal counselors prepare mothers-to-be for this new task: In the name of »self-determination«, women are enlightened about the many risks they have taken by becoming pregnant and are taught to feel responsible for risk management. They are confronted with a menu of prenatal tests, each calibrated by its risk, and with the demand to make a choice on their own. Taking the example of prenatal genetic counseling, this paper argues that this professionally imposed self-determination is to be understood as a new technique of social engineering: Pregnant women are expected to mistrust their senses and to rely on nothing but on risk calculations and laboratory results. Furthermore, to choose is compulsory because even the rejection of testing is interpreted as the choice for a »no-test« option, with its associated risks. This »decision trap« turns expectant mothers into fetal risk managers and holds them responsible for the outcome of their pregnancies.

Vanessa Lux: Handling the Risks

The observed problems of women who try to understand risk calculations on prenatal diagnostics are a sign of uncertainty regarding a potentially disabled newborn child. This uncertainty is not produced by the discourse in counseling situations but anchored in the lack of social support for a life with disabled children and the poverty their mothers risk. The author argues that locating the source of uncertainty in the discursive practice of genetic counselors, as argued in the work of Silja Samerski, distorts this relationship. The practices of genetic counselors support uncertainty but are not their source.

José María Ripalda: Adorno and the Impossible Political

Theodor W. Adorno's last political position after returning from his exile in the USA was determined by his intervention in the German student movement of the 1960s. Despite his sympathy, he was not attuned to the political temperament of this movement. Today, it is Adorno's theoretical philosophy that seems distanced and thus to have to be read from a past perspective. However, an historical revisiting of Adorno work may yet discover unexpected hints for a post-philosophical era.

Ingrid Galster: Origin, Theory and Praxis of Engagement in Sartre and Beauvoir

How did a Theory of Engagement come about? Was Sartre responsible for its founding? What circumstances were responsible for its success? What kind of practices did it entail? The change from an apolitical individualism towards socially conscious thinking happened in the context of war and thus in a situation entailing clear obstacles between friends and foes, supported by comradeship amongst men – or at least, this is the canonical interpretation. However, it was Beauvoir who introduced Sartre to the idea that they not only had individual responsibilities vis à vis »the other«: Why should the shepherds of the foothills of the Alps risk their lives at the war front in order to defend her and Sartre’s freedom as writers? Those who stay out of the conflict also take a position. This lesson, which today yet marks an uncrossable horizon is still an uncomfortable one when thought about in the context of its protagonists. The insensitivity for the fate of the persecuted Jews is discussed as well as Sartre’s inability to embrace self-critical reflection.

Sinan Özbek: »Tradesmen’s Morality« in Turkish Policy

»Tradesman’s morality«, a determining and prevailing one in Turkey, is considered from the perspective of moral degeneration. Moral degeneration refers to distance as well as nonconformity with respect to moral principles. The article considers critically the nature of such supposed principles, degenerated through becoming distant to oneself. The impossibility of unchangeable morality, its interdependence with material relations of human beings and their recognition as a result of historical development, as analyzed in Engels’ *Anti-Dühring* are the basis of this discussion. The article deals with the determining roles of tradesmen and housewives in moral norms with regard to their dominance in distribution of population. This is a sect whose stream of life is determined by tradesmanlike accounts creates morality according to their own structure of thinking. Lastly the article argues that the difference between (Islamic) capital from Anatolia and capital from Istanbul is the source of reflections on the debate of tradesman’s morality.

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