

Today's Class:

1. Review: universal essences → situated practices
2. Schutz: bio, phenomenology, The Stranger
3. Experience of being the stranger
4. Discussion

Review of Week 1: monkeys, machines and “Man”

1. Concerns with personhood as we understand it today arise in Age of Enlightenment.

- part and parcel of reconceptualizing political systems (divine → rational) and the revolutions to actualize these.

- lead to concepts of human rights, public education, rise of experimental science, & expertise *enmeshed with* and *naturalizing* concepts of social supremacy in the era of massive colonialization and enslavement

- strategy of the “boundary case” to carve out a space for legitimate personhood (“universal man”): orangutan, robot, child, (women, the insane, the feeble-minded, the destitute, the criminal, the disabled)

2. Rationality and its development (in individuals and institutions) tied to notions of progress, moving from savagery to civilization, and “the greater good.”

3. Enlightenment valorizes experiment, science, and universal categorization in the interests of objectivity, mastery, and administration. We contrast with situated practices.

Review of Week 1: monkeys, machines and “Man”

4. Situated practices:

- specific practices: actual doings whose meanings are shaped by their particular history, culture and occasion
- as opposed to universal laws or categorical essences
(Haraway's Koko & “universal man”, Schutz on disinterested vs. engaged view of cultural patterns p.92)
- attention to SPs shifts perspective of inquiry: bird's eye view to the first-person POV. Suddenly, experience becomes important (*umwelt*, or life-world). How to explore life-world?

5. Moving to Week 2: How to consider personhood from the perspective of first-person experience, both the experience of cultivating personhood (**Schutz**) and the experience of being ‘typed’ (**Fanon**)

Alfred Schutz (1899-1959)



- Austrian sociologist & phenomenologist, lawyer
- escapes Vienna as Nazis annex Austria (1938)
- Vienna → France → USA (1939)
- experience of being a “stranger” in the WWII context of forced migration, seeking asylum, etc.

Phenomenology

-- Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger

-- study of the perception/realization of phenomena, focusing on the experience and emergence of meaning

-- phenomenology is proposed as a science (and as necessary complement for science)

-- method: phenomenological reduction

1. bracket the natural attitude

2. reduction, or meditate on apperception of phenomenal world

3. sharing to identify patterns, invariants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h95vUgnFdbk>

“Life-world” (umwelt) vs. the “natural world” (or objective world)

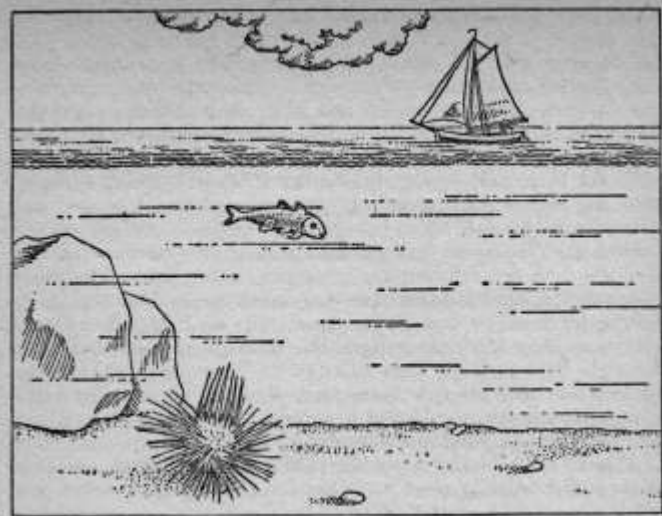


Abb. 19 a. Umgebung des Seeigels

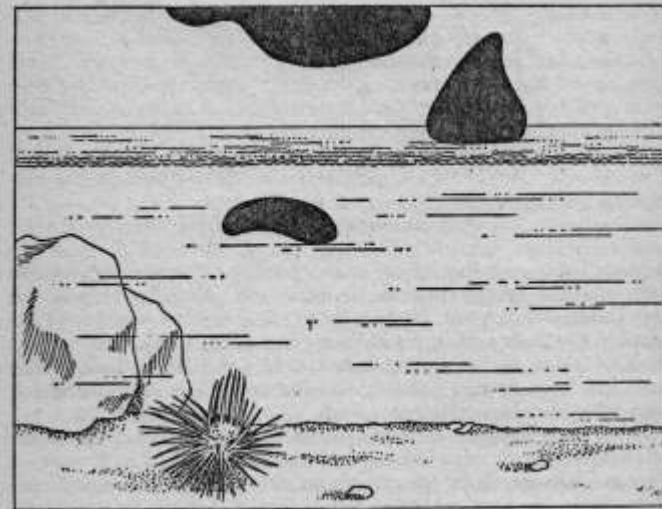
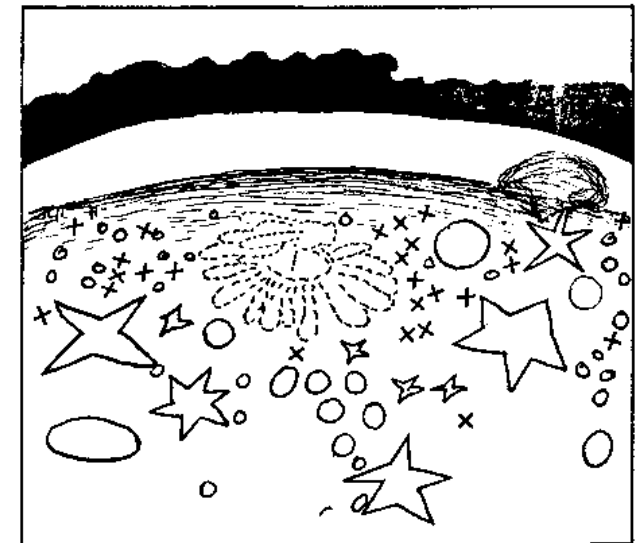


Abb. 19 b. Umwelt des Seeigels



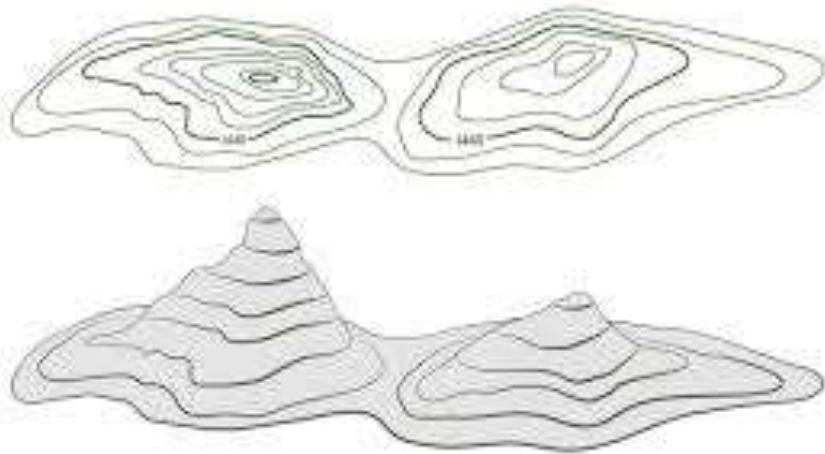
FIG. 1
Tick



Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944)

Concept of **umwelt** (life-world):
environment is defined through
agent's perception & action

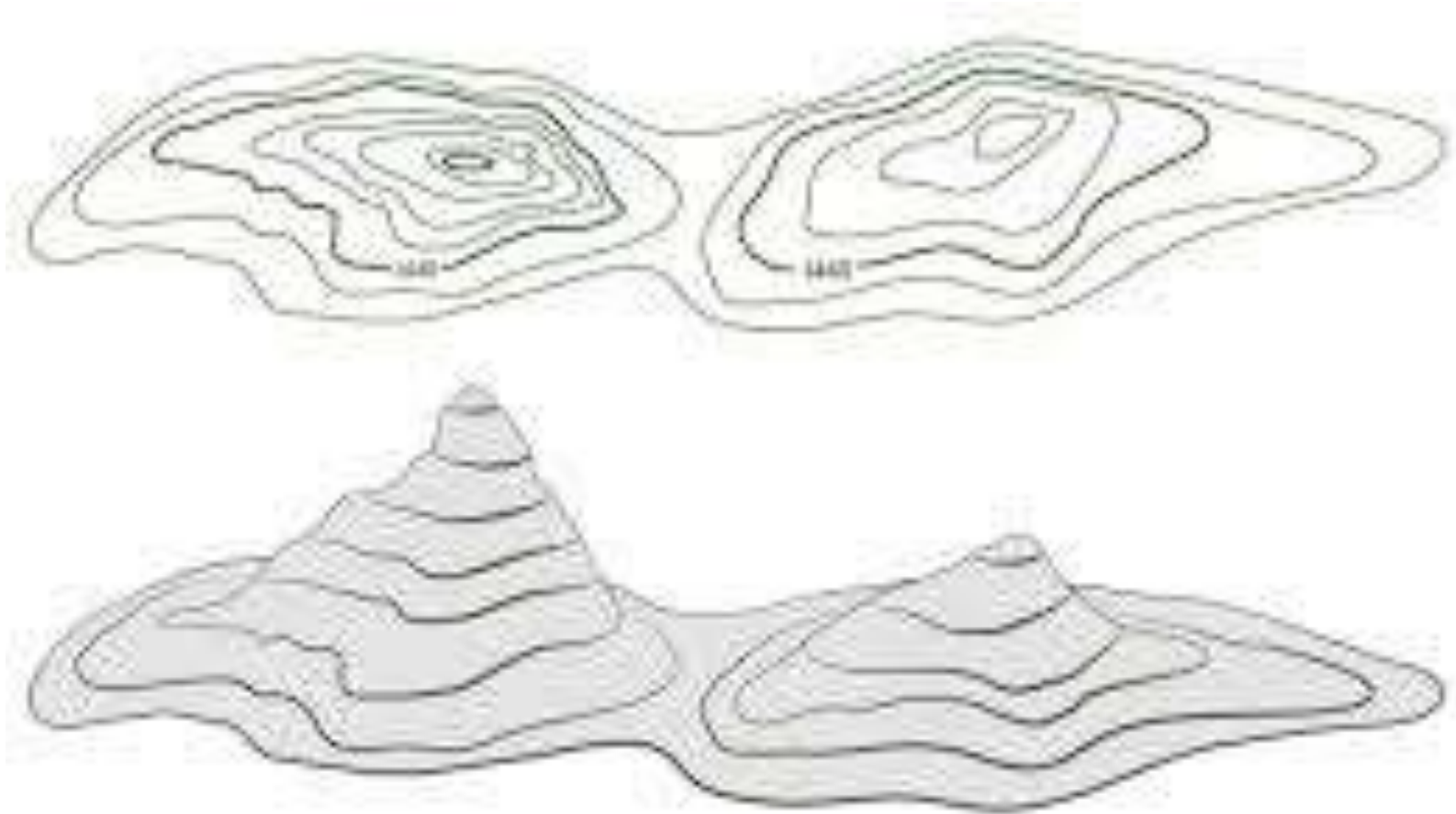
Alfred Schutz: The Stranger



“Language as a scheme of interpretation and expression does not merely consist of the linguistic symbols catalogued in the dictionary and of the syntactical rules enumerated in an ideal grammar (p.100) ... In order to command a language freely as a scheme of expression, one must have written love letters in it; one has to know how to pray and curse in it and how to say things with every shade appropriate to the addressee and the situation. Only members of the in-group have the scheme of expression as a genuine one in hand and command it freely within their thinking as usual.”

(The Stranger, p.101)

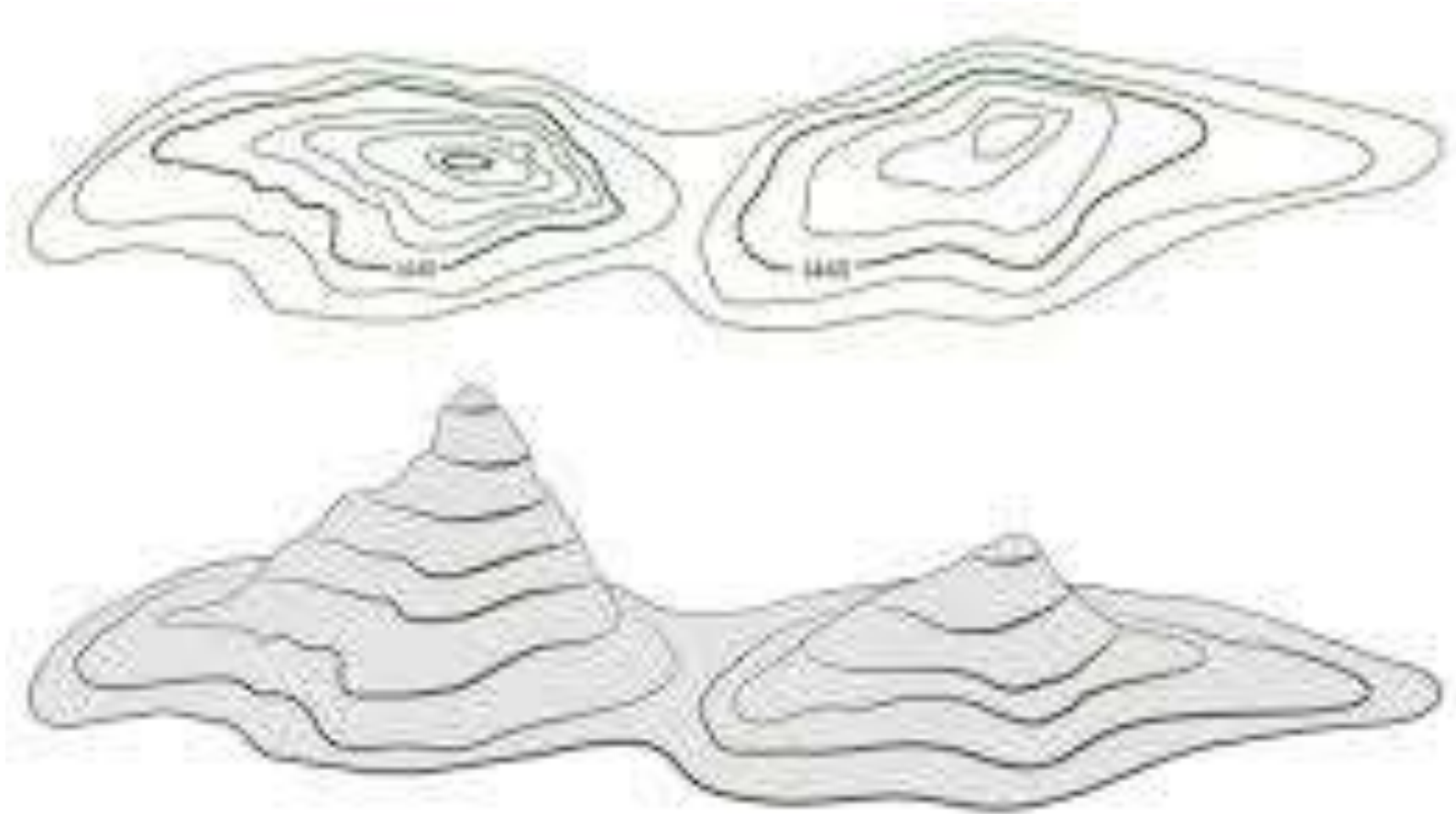
Schutz' model of situated knowledge



KNOWLEDGE OF
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT
EXPECTATIONS (TRUST)
HOPES & ASSUMPTIONS
IGNORANCE

“...the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogenous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) partially clear, and (3) not free from contradictions” (p. 93)
yet in practice takes on a “*sufficient* coherence, clarity & consistency” (p.95)

“thinking as usual”



Examples of recipes for managing & interpreting the social world of surfing:

Incoherent knowledge gains *sufficient coherence* in practice, thanks to “recipes” for expression & interpretation (see discussion p.95-96)

Displaced “thinking as usual” for the stranger

- stranger doesn't know the recipes and must therefore question each element
- interprets new situation in terms of old “thinking as usual”, an inadequate approach
- stranger struggles to re-orient, but orientation requires self-centering

“He who wants to use a map successfully has first of all to know his standpoint in two respects: its location on the ground and its representation on the map. Applied to the social world this means that only members of the in-group, having a definite status in its hierarchy and also being aware of it, can use its cultural pattern as natural and trustworthy scheme of orientation. The stranger...is therefore unable to get a starting-point to take his bearings...and this fact causes again a dislocation of his contour lines of relevance.” (p.99)

Without access to “knowledge about,” stranger relies on “knowledge of”

- must define the situation and all its elements → hesitation, uncertainty, risk

- mistakes typicality & anonymity for individuality & intimacy

- thus stranger has a peculiar “objectivity” (p. 104) in the absence of “thinking as usual”

“The deeper reason for his objectivity, however, lies in his own bitter experience of the limits of the "thinking as usual," which has taught him that a man may lose his status, his rules of guidance, and even his history and that the normal way of life is always far less guaranteed than it seems. Therefore, the stranger discerns, frequently with a grievous clear-sightedness, the rising of a crisis which may menace the whole foundation of the "relatively natural conception of the world," while all those symptoms pass unnoticed by the members of the in-group, who rely on the continuance of their customary way of life.” (p.104)

Announcements / changes

- Yelena's office hours now on THURSDAYS from 10am-11am
- Weekly Discussion Essay will now be due by 11:59pm on Friday
- This week's prompt for the Discussion Essay will be something like:
"How would Schutz analyze the experience of a Black man, as described by Fanon? How does Fanon's own analysis differ from or extend Schutz' analysis?"

Theme and objectives of the course

Communication, **the Person**, and Everyday Life

- what does it mean to be a person?
- to whom does it mean?
- to what effect does it mean? (what is the work being done?)

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Communication, the Person, and Everyday Life

- what does it mean to be a person?
- to whom does it mean?
- to what effect does it mean? (what is the work being done?)

- why do we look at the person "in everyday life" and not "in essence"?
- are we seeking the Truth of personhood?

- we are less interested in finding categorical truth to assign to a "person" than in considering the **practices & experiences that shape and sustain the recognition of a "person"**

This week's theme: Monkeys, Machines and "Man"

Communication, the Person, and Everyday Life

- we are less interested in finding categorical truth to assign to a "person" than in considering the practices & experiences that shape and sustain the recognition of a "person"
- **This week's lectures and readings are meant to set up the reasons for this move away from essences (including biological essence, human nature, ideal types, etc.) and toward situated practices that mediate the recognition of personhood. The two texts this week show:**
 - the instability of such categories
 - categories and essences shaped by & uphold status quo of power
 - categories & essences are presented as neutral & factual
 - extensive work done by these categories and essences

This week's theme: Monkeys, Machines and "Man"

The limits of personhood: the cases of animals, (children), machines

- test cases, boundary making to carve out what is "essentially" human
- category of "savage", "primitive", "undeveloped" naturalize supremacy of some
- sites of simulation, modeling and experimentation (rise of science)

Sebastiani's "A Monster with a Human 'Visage'"

How did the question of the "nature of the orangutan" redefine Man's separation from beasts in the 17th & 18th centuries?



Sebastiani's "A Monster with a Human 'Visage'"

How did the question of the “nature of the orangutan” redefine Man’s separation from beasts in the 17th & 18th centuries?

- from divine to materialist / physicalist attributes
- entangled with colonial encounters, slave trade
- reinforcing hierarchy of “civilization” in which European men are the telos, pinnacle
- naturalizing social roles of peasants and slaves as less civilized (developed) and in need of tutelage through service; women as needing protection or as moral threats; white European upper- and middle-class men as more evolved, civilized, and suited to take charge of Others.

“...the humanization of the orangutan went hand in hand with the animalization of the ‘savage’.” (Sebastiani p.2)

Sebastiani's "A Monster with a Human 'Visage'"

How did the question of the "nature of the orangutan" redefine Man's separation from beasts in the 17th & 18th centuries? *With what effects on global history?*

- political economy: rise of European liberal government, colonialism, markets
- epistemics (knowledge): scientific revolution; rise of disciplines, public education
- metaphysics: human nature & sovereignty of reason; evolution, progress, *perfectibilité* (p.12) & teleology

"The intellectual history of Europe is comprehensible only within a global history of colonial encounters. These encounters were asymmetrical insofar as vernacular knowledge was disqualified, while European knowledge became 'universal'."

(p.14) *how does this play out in terms of science, knowledge, & the university?*

Kant: “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)

*“Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. This immaturity is *self-imposed* when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. **Sapere aude!** "Have courage to use your own reason"! -- that is the motto of enlightenment.”*

-- Addressing Frederick II, King of Prussia .

-- Rise of Liberalism, seeking gradual conversion of monarchical absolutism into self-government by educated and propertied classes (developed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, & John Stuart Mill, with great attention to “human nature”)

<http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/KantOnElighthenment.htm>

Kant: "What is Enlightenment?" (1784)

"But only one who is himself enlightened, is not afraid of shadows, and has a numerous and well-disciplined army to assure public peace, can say: "*Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!*" A republic could not dare say such a thing. Here is shown a strange and unexpected trend in human affairs in which almost everything, looked at in the large, is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom appears advantageous to the freedom *of mind* of the people, and yet it places inescapable limitations upon it. A lower degree of civil freedom, on the contrary, provides the mind with room for each man to extend himself to his full capacity. *As nature has uncovered from under this hard shell the seed for which she most tenderly cares -- the propensity and vocation to free thinking -- this gradually works back upon the character of the people, who thereby gradually become capable of acting freely;* finally, it affects the principles of *government*, which finds it to its advantage to treat men, *who are now more than machines*, in accordance with their dignity."

(Kant, 1784, final paragraph).

Kant: “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)

Notice how children, animals, and machines are used to shape the entanglement of political, personal, and natural discourses:

The head of state and the body politic

The mind/brain as ruling over the brute body

The intellect/reason as the engine of human civilization

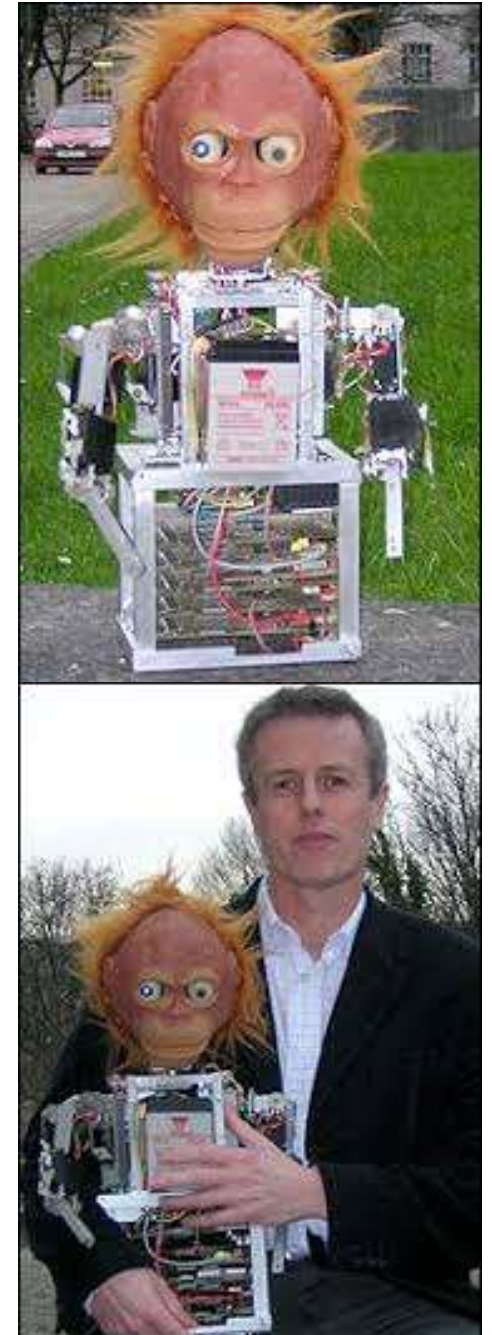
Castañeda & Suchman's *Robot Visions*:

“Children, artificial intelligence (AI) computer programs, and nonhuman primates all here embody ‘almost minds’. Who or what has fully human status?...What is the end, or telos, of this discourse of approximation, reproduction, and communication, in which the boundaries among and within machines, animals, and humans are exceedingly permeable? Where will this evolutionary, developmental, and historical communicative commerce take us in the techno-bio-politics of difference?”

(Haraway, *Primate Visions*, quoted in Castañeda & Suchman, p.316)



Three Lucys. (L-R) Lucy *Australopithecus*, Lucy the Chimp (aka Lucy Temerlin), and Lucy the Orangutan Robot.



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“Donna Haraway reads national geographic on primates”

New York: Paper Tiger TV, 1987

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLN2ToEllwM>

Castañeda & Suchman's *Robot Visions*:

C & S read *situated robotics* (or social robotics) through Haraway's *Primate Visions*

Situated robots (social robots): are “situated” in particular social spaces of human interaction; they are designed to engage people in their own language and registers of sociality, to inspire intimacy & comfort, and to give the sense of an inner state/mind in interaction.

How do the ‘almost minds’ of children, AI and non-human primates participate in the project of approximating (or becoming) an ‘actual’ mind in situated robotics?

Castañeda & Suchman's *Robot Visions*:

How is Lucy the Robot corporealized or “figured”?

(what kind of body is she, what values does she embody)

This is significant *“insofar as it contributes to establishing the pasts that inform contemporary imaginaries, as well as future worlds that we (humans and humanoids?) might come to inhabit.”* (p.318)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1WfwD7r_rl

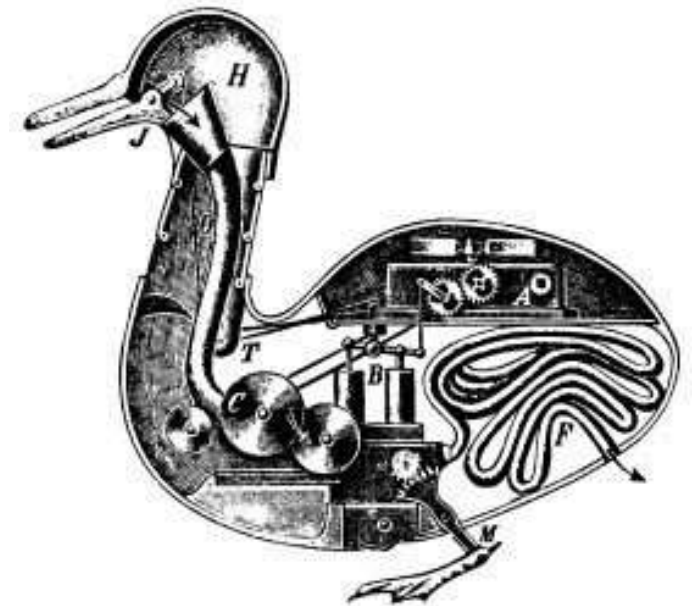
History of AI Research: Artificial intelligence → AUTOMOTA

(footnote 1: Jessica Riskin on Jacques Vaucanson's 1738 defecating duck, flutist)

Automota: self-moving machines, representation of life
verisimilitude (so realistic!)

Simulation: Experimental models from which one can
discover properties of the natural (distant) subject

Android is humanly figured, performing human functions



History of AI Research: Children

In 1950, Alan Turing asks,
“Can machines think?”

Turing (1950) Computing Machinery and Intelligence,
p.454-60

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A. M. TURING :

Instead of trying to produce a programme to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child's? If this were then subjected to an appropriate course of education one would obtain the adult brain. Presumably the child-brain is something like a note-book as one buys it from the stationers. Rather little mechanism, and lots of blank sheets. (Mechanism and writing are from our point of view almost synonymous.) Our hope is that there is so little mechanism in the child-brain that something like it can be easily programmed. The amount of work in the education we can assume, as a first approximation, to be much the same as for the human child.

We have thus divided our problem into two parts. The child-programme and the education process. These two remain very closely connected. We cannot expect to find a good child-machine at the first attempt. One must experiment with teaching one such machine and see how well it learns. One can then try another and see if it is better or worse. There is an obvious connection between this process and evolution, by the identifications

Structure of the child machine	=	Hereditary material
Changes	„ „	= Mutations
Natural selection		= Judgment of the experimenter

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Today's Class:

1. "What does it mean to be a person?" – monkeys, machines and "Man"
2. Revisiting Sebastiani's "monster with a human visage"
3. From monkeys to children to robots
4. Housekeeping: apologies for lateness & Ted, changing discussion sections, FTT check in
5. Essay question, due Friday at 5pm

Discussion Essay Question:

Using arguments and *at least* one example from *both* Sebastiani (2019) and Castaneda & Suchman (2013), explain why these authors believe that the histories of primatology and situated robotics are important for considering the question of human personhood as a situated practice.

2-3 pages, double spaced, not including reference section

In essay form (sentences & paragraphs, no bullet points, lists, etc.)

Due Friday at 5pm