

Propositions

To accompany the thesis of Johannes von Engelhardt

Regarding Distant Suffering

Audience engagement with representations of humanitarian disaster

1. Emotional apathy and cynicism in the face of distant suffering is a natural reflex only for a marginal minority among Dutch media audiences.
2. The media studies literature is characterized by a hegemonic negativity towards practices of production and reception of media texts of distant suffering. This has substantially limited and stifled academic debate in the field.
3. Humanitarian organizations that continue to rely primarily on images of passive victimhood in their campaigns are doing a considerable disservice to the future of the sector.
4. Media scholars of distant suffering have not yet sufficiently come to terms with the simple yet disconcerting fact that we tend to feel considerably less for those who appear more different to ourselves.
5. The Compassion Fatigue thesis that blames the rise of 24-7 live television news for a supposed decline in public engagement with distant suffering is based not so much on actual observation, but more on a nostalgic longing for a fictional past.
6. The opposition between qualitative and quantitative research that continues to divide much of social sciences, remains intact primarily because of individual differences in talents, personalities and socialization, rather than in strongly-held ontological and epistemological beliefs.
7. The daily weather forecast, with its array of maps and diagrams that detail the behaviour of various low and high pressure fronts, is the one element in the evening news that offers more, not less, context than people need or care to understand.
8. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will at some point find itself under vicious attack from the very people it aims to protect, once online services that primarily relied on gathering detailed user data for generating revenue stop to be 'free' for European citizens.
9. The long overdue move towards open access publishing in the social sciences can be achieved most effectively by sidestepping – rather than negotiating with – the established publishing companies.
10. Even though FM synthesis is capable of generating sounds that excel in weirdness and unpredictability, the immediacy and relative simplicity of subtractive synthesis makes it the more intuitive and rewarding form of audio synthesis.
11. „Ach allzu oft strahlt das Erdachte viel schöner als das draus Gemachte.“