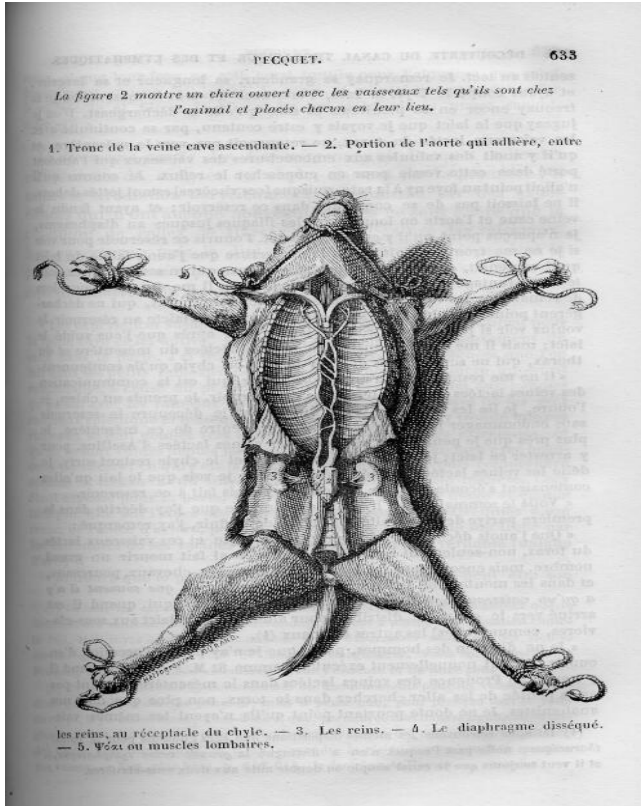


INTRODUCTION: LIFE AND METHOD

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*Dissected dog for the purpose of vessel investigations. Charles Daremberg.
Histoire des Sciences Médicales. 1870. Vol. 2: 633.*

“[...] a reasonable rationalism must know to recognize its limits and to incorporate the conditions of its practice. Intelligence can apply itself to life only if it recognizes the originality of life”

Georges Canguilhem. “Introduction: Thought and the Living.” In *Knowledge of Life*. 2008. Ed. P. Marrati & T. Meyers. Trans. S. Geroulanos & D. Ginsburg. NY: Fordham University Press. pp. xx.

As the above illustration, included in Charles Daremberg's positivist history of medicine *Histoire des Sciences Médicales, Comprenant l'Anatomie, la Physiologie, la Médecine, la Chirurgie et les Doctrines de Pathologie Générale* (Paris, 1870), and accompanying 17th-century anatomist and physician Jean Pecquet's animal experiments promptly yet eloquently reveals, the gradual historical contouring of the organism as a conceptual repository and a methodological attitude, instrumental in non-reductionist approaches to the study of life and of the living, stands in the “foreground” of history and epistemology of the life sciences, and of biophilosophy, as a kind of (re)solution, precisely against a “background” of scientific and technological solidification, fixation, corseting, and eventual dismemberment of the precarious object of study. Is a crucified dog, transfixed onto the experimental setting and minimized into one element of the knowledge apparatus, next to the anatomist's hands, the moving scalpel, and the prestigious scientific journal, and whose “significance” is thus yet to be circumstantially determined, the same as the living, barking dog?

Neurologist Kurt Goldstein (1878 – 1965) advances, in his most representative work *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*, what Oliver Sacks terms an “existential neurology” (1995: 12), and what I interpret as a preoccupation with epistemologically instrumentalizing a particular mystico-ontological conception of “life,” namely the irruption into the everyday technicalities of scientific conceptual frameworks and ways of practice of an intuitive grasping of the evidence of existence as a “meaningful” phenomenological totality: “We stand in the presence of a multiformity of material that is scientifically undefined. This material is simply the world around us, in which certain phenomena immediately stand out as “living,” without revealing to us the why and wherefore of this characteristic, or even challenging an inquiry concerning it. *Life confronts us in the living being*” (Goldstein 1995: 26). The project is not so much invested in offering a more correct scientific description of life, but in instrumentalizing a specific philosophy of the living for the purpose of vitalizing science.

Following in Goldstein's footsteps, historian and epistemologist of the life sciences Georges Canguilhem announces, on the one hand, the inextricable and irreversible intimacy between life and knowledge, and on the other hand, the possibility of an

epistemography (Peter Dear 2001) self-attuning to the conceptual and material dynamisms of its objects. “In biology [...] the issue is not using experimental concepts but experimentally constituting authentically biological concepts” (Canguilhem 2008: 6). “Biology must first hold the living to be a significative being, and it must treat individuality not as an object but as an attribute within the order of values” (Canguilhem 2008: 113).

The second volume of *Pulse: A Journal in History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science* (2014) has been dedicated to such a careful consideration of the ways in which historically and socially situated practices, discourses, imaginaries, individuals and communities, and tools and objects of research constitutive of “sanctioned” or “to-be-sanctioned” forms of knowledge (particularly “science”) can be seen to have transformed our understandings of and interactions with the “living.” Moreover, in the process of reconceptualizing “life” in different contexts, at different levels, and from different perspectives, such epistemic enterprises find themselves profoundly transformed. The title of the volume is meant to capture this tensioned proximity between the “living” as both subject and object of knowledge, as a potentially inherent characteristic of knowledge processes: the “organicity” of knowledge revealed through a(n) (inter)disciplinary biography (an *epistemography*) centered on the problematics of the “nature,” and of the conditions of possibility, of analysis and of manipulability of the “living.” We have been interested in a genealogy of concepts of “life” (organic, socio-political, informational, technological, aesthetic etc.), and in how such inter/ disciplinary genealogies have contributed in turn to the emergence, erasure, preeminence or fading-into-the-background of specific disciplines, modes of inquiry, tools and habits of analysis, procedures of legitimization and invalidation characteristic of specific epistemic fields, either separately from each other or in functional congruence with each other.

Our new issue opens with a section on Literature, Science and Media. The articles share an approach to mediation as a technology of life, albeit from three very different angles. While the name of Bernard Stiegler is not mentioned explicitly in any of the articles, in a way they all pay homage to his understanding of technics and technology, as domains that can never be separated from life and humanity (or indeed its reverse, inhumanity). “All human action...is after a fashion *tekhne*” (Stiegler 1998, 94). All human life and ways of living are technologies, and all technology is mediation. In Keogh’s article, mediation comes into discussion as a traversal of discourse across disciplines, a flight of psychoanalytic discourse from its own niche into the midst of literary theory. But on a different level, it is about literature and the discourse of psychoanalysis as mediators of lived experience, as a technology of making sense of the self and others. Đurović shows how the scientific knowledge mediated by various instruments in the past has been *r*mediated through the lens of situated feminist epistemology, so as to produce an account of subject/object ontology that seems to prefigure Karen Barad’s agential realism – a performative account of lively and life-ly processes that transgress the boundaries between organic and inorganic, observer

and observed, life and technics. In Zekany's article, mediation signifies both a process of coemergence of user and technical medium, as well as a method of philosophical inquiry into discourses on media addiction.

The second section of the journal, "Medical Life Worlds", is dedicated to texts that consider how medical science and society interact. Both Kormos's article "The Homosexual as a Metaphor in Early AIDS Discourses" and Long's essay "The Biopolitics of Smallpox Vaccine Stockpiling and Distribution" raise important issues of how scientific research and social hierarchies based on, for instance, sexuality, race and gender can affect the ways in which scientific research is performed, monitored and understood in public discussion. Kormos's article offers an elaborative analysis on early AIDS discourse and how it changed the ways in which gay culture was approached. Long's essay, on the other hand, analyses how past medical experiments in the USA (such as the well known Tuskegee Syphilis experiment) have affected the vaccination policies that are planned in a fear of bioterrorism. Temmes' article "Systems Medicine and the War on Cancer – New Materialist Analysis," offers a slightly different viewpoint by focusing on examining how cultural metaphors, in this case the "war on cancer" discourse, can overrun the complexities of contemporary cancer research and treatment. While all these articles cover different cases, of different times and contexts, they all help to open up discussion around the intertwined existence of medical science and the world.

A third section is concerned with the converge of politics, life, and the technologies thereof, via classical theorists like Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. Kulgbauer and Geisler's intensely theoretical piece covers the question of freedom and subjectivity as normative categories in Foucault's work, juxtaposing it with Agamben's distinction between bios and zoé. Cettl examines the metafictional setup of a biopolitical regime, and the way in which technologies of media are (or can be imagined to be) an essential and sustaining part of the apparatus that produces both grievable life and bare life.

We hope that the second issue of Pulse with its multiplicity in different approaches and viewpoints will help to unveil the diverse ways in which our theme "Life as Method" can be understood. Moreover, we hope that this versatility of topics will help you to get excited about different cases as well as the ways in which they raise up the interlinks between science and society. Finally, we would like to warmly thank all of our contributors that have made Pulse so vibrant this year.

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