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DELIVERED WORLD. THE ONTOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE EVENT IN GÜNTHER ANDERS' CRITIQUE OF TELEVISION*

Abstract: As one of the earliest theorists of television, Günther Anders postulated a so-called 'co-substantiality' of man, technology and media almost ten years before Marshall McLuhan did. According to Anders, television has remodelled human's *way of being (Seinsweise)* and established new modes of experience, unfolding far-reaching consequences for the degrees of reality of different spheres of being itself. These effects result from the characteristics of broadcast TV images, which are simultaneously present and absent and can therefore be described as phantoms. Hence, they are characterized by a peculiar 'ontological ambiguity', which also concerns the metaphysical, ontological, phenomenological, and socio-critical dimensions of the event. In Anders' understanding, television as a media technology plays a key role in the transformation of the lifeworld *(Lebenswelt)* and the formation of a cultural environment that he labels as a post-ideological land of milk and honey *(post-ideologisches Schlaraffenland)*, an argument that is quite prophetic considering subsequent media-historical developments. When Anders argues that events only become socially significant in their form of reproduction, this points to a change in the dynamics of the cultural-technical production and distribution of events. Furthermore, this very change points to an equally worth investigating coupling of a certain mediality with the criterion of eventfulness, whereby conventional forms of being of the event are displaced. This is because the matrix performance *(Matrizenleistung)* of broadcast events has comprehensive anthropological consequences. This article intends to shed light on the formation of Anders' concept of the event in its relation to that of *media-events* in its media-historical and philosophical contexts.

Keywords: *Günther Anders, media-event, television, 1950s, ontology*

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1.

Theoretical discourse on *media events* begins with Daniel J. Boorstin's *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, first published in 1962.[1] Its main argument revolves around the concept of the 'pseudo-event', which is not a sudden and unforeseen occurrence, but something planned, planted, or incited: "Its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media",[2] making 'pseudo-events' self-fulfilling prophecies.[3] Due to these characteristics their newsworthiness and eventfulness is already inscribed in their pre-planned appearance. They have a template-like character that determines their reception in advance.[4] Exactly this character makes their reality value become ambiguous,[5] leading Boorstin to describe the emerging difference between pseudo-events and 'real' events as sudden occurrences as a "tantalizing difference between man-made and God-made events".[6]

His remarks refer to a specific historical context, namely, early American television. In the United States, television had been commercially significant since 1941 and established itself as the new main medium during the 1950s.[7] By the mid-1950s, half of all US households owned a television set.[8] Although Boorstin's analysis covers various mass media and formats such as newspaper reporting on celebrities, TV debates and the broadcast of MacArthur Day, as well as the abridgement practices of Reader's Digest, television is the central media-historical reference for his theorisation of media events. The so called "flood of pseudo-events"[9] got significantly boosted by the real-time medium of television, which delivered a continuous stream of images into people's living rooms.[10] Evidently, staged events have always existed historically, but in the context of television, they are designed to address an audience that is physically absent. This highlights the key difference between televised events and those attended in person. Given the growing focus on planning events for television broadcast, Boorstin argues that television

1 Cf. Christina Bartz, *Handbuch der Mediologie: Signaturen des Medialen* (München: Fink, 2012), 176–177.
2 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 11.
3 Cf. Ibid., 12.
4 Cf. Ibid., 19.
5 Cf. Ibid., 10–13.
6 Ibid., 11.
7 Cf. Ibid., 13.
8 Cf. Steve Allen and Robert J. Thompson, "Television in the United States," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified July 21, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/art/television-in-the-United-States/additional-info.
9 Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, ix.
10 Cf. Bartz, *Handbuch der Mediologie*, 177.

should be regarded rather as a co-organiser of events than as a neutral communication channel. Based on this premise, he poses the question whether events as unforeseen and unplanned occurrences can even continue to exist in a culture formed by widespread television-use.[11] It is then exactly this question, which links Boorstin's reflections on pseudo-events in the context of early American television with Günther Anders' media theory and the concept of event developed therein.

Anders fled Germany of the National Socialists in 1933 and after three years in Paris he emigrated to the USA and lived in New York, California, and again New York from 1936 to 1950. In 1950 he returned to Europe and settled in Vienna. In 1956, six years before Boorstin's *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream* appeared in the USA, the first volume of Anders' magnum opus, *The Obsolescence of the Human*, was published by the German publishing house C.H. Beck Verlag. It was received mainly in German-speaking Europe and, therefore, historically became situated mainly in contexts of European intellectual history: For example, his relations to critical theory, phenomenology, Heidegger, or philosophical anthropology.[12] Moreover, his thinking has been connected to other media theories, but only on a general theoretical level and without much consideration of the historical context of early American TV and its American critique. Since the establishment of TV as the main medium took longer to catch on in Europe than in the USA, in 1956, when the first volume of *The Obsolescence of the Human* appeared and at a time where half of all US households owned a television set, in West Germany only 4 percent of the population would have access to a television set. However, this percentage would dramatically increase over just a couple of years to 24 percent in 1960.[13] Anders' theses and diagnoses imply a much higher level of

[11] Cf. Lorenz Engell, *Fernsehtheorie zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2012), 68.

[12] For example, cf. Christian Dries, *ad Günther Anders. Exerzitien für die Endzeit* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2023); cf. Christian Dries, 'Von der Weltfremdheit zur Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Günther Anders' negative Anthropologie,' in *Günther Anders. Die Weltfremdheit des Menschen*, ed Christian Dries (München: C.H. Beck, 2018), 437–535; cf. Babette Babich, *Günther Anders' Philosophy of Technology. From Phenomenology to Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); cf. Babette Babich, 'Geworfenheit und prometheische Scham im Zeitalter der transhumanen Kybernetik. Technik und Machenschaft bei Martin Heidegger, Fritz Lang und Günther Anders,' in *Die Neugier des Glücklichen*, ed. Christoph Streeckhardt (Weimar: Bauhaus Universitätsverlag 2013), 63–91; cf. Marcel Müller, *Von der Weltfremdheit zur Antiquiertheit. Philosophische Anthropologie bei Günther Anders* (Marburg: Tectum, 2012); cf. Werner Reimann, *Verweigerte Versöhnung. Zur Philosophie von Günther Anders* (Wien: Passagen, 1990); cf. Peter Schmitt, *Medienkritik zwischen Anthropologie und Gesellschaftstheorie. Zur Aktualität von Günther Anders und Theodor W. Adorno* (Paderborn: Fink, 2020).

[13] Cf. 'Verbreitung der Fernsehnutzung,' *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, last modified November 22, 2016, https://www.bpb.de/themen/medien-journalismus/medien politik/190492/ver breitung-der-fernsehnutzung/.

medialization than the existing one in the German-speaking parts of Europe in the 1950s. This points to the fact that Anders' media theory refers primarily to American circumstances, trying to make a prediction on future medial historical developments in Europe. He experienced the American media environments that his media theory dealt with during his exile in the USA and continued to follow them from afar after returning to Europe. Therefore, early American television culture should be treated as an important historical context of Anders' thinking.

Adorno and Horkheimer, in their chapter on the so-called culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, discuss a 'cultural lag' between Europe and the USA. They argue that the commercialisation of society and the resulting 'tendency towards cultural monopoly' was much more advanced in the USA than in Europe.[14] This 'cultural lag' also shapes the perspective of exiled Weimar intellectuals, such as Anders and representatives of critical theory, on the US media environment. This lag can therefore be seen as one of the reasons for the media-theoretical convergences between Anders and the Frankfurt School. In addition to this historical factor, Anders' philosophical methodology necessitates situating him within the context of early American television and comparing his reflections on the subject with US television criticism. He refers to the philosophical method he has pursued since the early 1940s as *philosophy of occasion (Gelegenheitsphilosophie)*. Anders states that Philosophy is an act of orientation and that the concept of orientation refers as much to the position of a subject within a domain as to the domain itself. As a consequence, he considers the positions within a domain, from which questions are being asked as the occasions of philosophical thinking.[15] His reflections are sparked by objects and phenomena in their contingent historical context as they are encountered in everyday life. These occasions serve him then as starting points for further philosophical considerations. Therefore, it is necessary to consider US television and related contemporary studies of the 1950s and 1960s like the book of Boorstin as such occasions. It is the same occasion that connects them, although Anders' thinking stems

[14] Cf. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006), 140.

[15] Cf. ÖLA 237/04/W116. On the method of Anders' philosophy of occasion, cf. also Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* (München: C.H. Beck, 1987), 8–12; Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution* (München: C.H. Beck, 1980), 411–429; cf. Christian Dries, 'Günther Anders' philosophischer Okkasionalismus: Methoden, Voraussetzungen, Ziele,' *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 72, no. 4 (2024): 543–563; cf. Max Beck, *Günther Anders' Gelegenheitsphilosophie. Exilerfahrung – Begriff – Form* (Wien: Klever, 2017), 45–88.

from a predominantly European genealogy, and due to biographical circumstances it is highly unlikely that he and Boorstin were aware of each other's work.

2.

However Anders and Boorstin discuss the same forms of media-usage and even cite some of the same examples, such as the use of make-up in the 1960 television debate between Nixon and Kennedy.[16] Unlike the historian Boorstin, Anders focuses on the cultural-practical consequences of watching television on a philosophical level, making him one of only few philosophers of television:[17]

> And with this, we have arrived at our topic. Besides creating the mass-hermit and transforming the family into a miniature audience, *the truly revolutionary effect of radio and television lies in their capacity to bring the mountain to the prophet and the world to the human. Events* — be they football matches, church services, nuclear explosions — now *come to us;* and they do not just reach us as reports or in the form of news — we are visited by the real thing.[18]

Following this line of thought, the defining feature of broadcast images is that they are delivered to people's homes just like commodities, and the most significant consequence of this feature is the effect it has on the way humans relate to the world. Anders states that television images amputate the reciprocity of this relationship and make it unilateral instead:

> Hasn't this relation been severed? Hasn't it become *unilateral,* in other words — transformed into a situation in which *one listens to the world while remaining imperceptible to it*? "Don't talk back" — isn't this what the listener has been categorically condemned to? Does such inability to speak not equate to powerlessness? Hasn't the omnipresence we have been gifted with installed a state of unfreedom? The unfree — those without a voice, those treated as nothing but air — aren't they absent?[19]

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16 Cf. Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, 42–43; cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*, 252.

17 Cf. Engell, *Fernsehtheorie zur Einführung*, 210.

18 Günther Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, transl. Christopher John Müller (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2025), 98 [Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* (München: C.H. Beck, 1986), 110].

19 Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, 114–115 [Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 130].

According to Anders the immersion in such a world, a being-in-the-broadcast-world so to speak, makes it impossible to actively relate to the world in the way Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world assumes.[20] Television images are merely presented for passive consumption – any other form of participation is rendered impossible. Anders states that this transformation is happening, or will happen, everywhere since the same media technology is, or will be, used nearly everywhere.

The motive of passivation links the media-theoretical passages of Anders' *The Obsolescence of the Human* to the philosophy of technology also developed therein and with Anders' criticism of his former teacher Martin Heidegger. This includes the accusation that Heidegger's thinking did not take into account the workings of modern machines and their effects on humans and society, but merely remained within an archaic world of craftsmanship, drawing all its examples from the rural cobbler's workshop.[21] Some of this criticism would eventually be invalidated by Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*, which deals primarily with modern technology. However, the text does not address television, even though shaping opinions through media *(Meinungsherrichtung*[22]*)* is explicitly discussed there and radio broadcasting is also mentioned. This omission would certainly be a target for Anders, even though there are otherwise clear convergences in their philosophical and critical reflections on technology, such as the idea that technology cannot be understood as a merely neutral means.[23] According to Heidegger, technology is a predetermined way of interpreting the world.[24] This points to a tendency towards passivity,[25] which is also inherent in Anders' concept of technical predetermination *(technische Vorentscheidung)*. This means that users are determined to certain uses and denied of others simply due to the way devices are constructed and designed.[26] This danger of passivity through technically implemented preliminary decisions still resonates in Heidegger's thoughts on an essential, meaningful and situation-appropriate approach to technology: "For man becomes truly free only insofar as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one

[20] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006), 41–63; cf. Engell, *Fernsehtheorie zur Einführung*, 211.

[21] Cf. Günther Anders, *Über Heidegger*, ed. Gerhard Oberschlick (München: C.H. Beck, 2001), 80.

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 19.

[23] Cf. Peter Schmitt, "Vom Wesen der Technik. Eine kritische Analyse des technischen Denkens im Anschluss an Martin Heidegger und Günther Anders," *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 3, (2024): 32–50.

[24] Cf. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 17.

[25] Cf. Florian Grosser, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Heidegger–Handbuch*, ed. Dieter Thomä (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), 239.

[26] Cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 2.

who listens and hears *[Hörender]*, and not one who is simply constrained to obey *[Höriger]*."[27] Anders employs a similar play of words between *'Hörend'* and *'Hörig'* when characterizing the television viewer as a completely passive figure. The television viewer of the future must be "a type of human who no longer has a say, since it no longer speaks; a type who does nothing but listens and is merely a *'serf' [Höriger]*, always obedient, always at the call of another".[28] Accordingly, Anders considers television to be a technical prefiguration, the effects of which form the focus of his media theory.

One of these effects of passive television consumption would be an impoverishment of language and a reluctance to use it. With a distinctly cultural pessimistic undertone Anders ascribes this impossibility of talking back to an impoverishment of experience, interrelating the richness and subtlety of inner life to the richness and subtlety of speech.[29] He attributes this loss to the media technical feature of television as a real-time medium. While it can broadcast real events, it is technically impossible to actively react to such events while watching television. According to Anders, the decisive novelty of the television-image arises exactly from this aspect: Its ontological status, which is made possible by its characteristics as a real-time medium:

> The world is delivered home to us; events are paraded in front of us. But *what* are they paraded as? *As* events? Or just as representations of events? Or as news reports about them? To answer this question, the guiding question of this section, we will first translate it into a slightly different language and ask: In what way are broadcast events *present with* their recipients? In what way is their recipient *present at* them? Is the recipient actually present? Seemingly present? Absent? Present or absent in what way?[30]

These questions illustrate the importance of ontological argumentation in Anders' media theory. He states that broadcast events are neither present nor absent, and therefore phantom-like. Following this thought, it is then precisely this indecisiveness between absence and presence that distinguishes TV-images from other types of images. Broadcasts of parades, football matches and political debates in fact do not provide images of these events, nor news about them. What gets transmitted to the

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27 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, transl. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 25.

28 Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, 97 [Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 109].

29 Cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 109.

30 Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, 114 [Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 129].

living room happens simultaneously. There is no time lag between the image and its motif; the degree of football-fan's involvement and party-supporters watching television is a different one from that of the observer of a painting. For this reason, according to Anders, television images cannot be considered aesthetic appearances, because it is the real events, which are presented for viewing. Therefore, they are truly present. But since there is no potential interaction in the situation of watching television, they can also be regarded as absent.[31] This leads Anders to characterize TV images as "pure synchrony" on the one hand and active interaction with the living-environment as "living presence" on the other hand.[32]

3.

In his characterization of television images Anders differs from Adorno's thoughts in *Prolog zum Fernsehen* and *Fernsehen als Ideologie*. Anders does not consider television images to be aesthetic appearances due to their peculiar ontological status. Adorno highlights the illusory nature of television images and their ideological function as their central characteristics. He describes the effects of television images with psychoanalytical vocabulary, stating that their circulation within the mechanisms of the cultural-industry is a process of repression. The 'real' world is repressed and prevented from showing itself by the circulation of TV images that fulfil an ideological purpose.[33] Anders adopts a different stance on the argument of repression. He states that television images, due to their real-time nature and unilateralism, open up a new ontological dimension that could not exist without television's media technology. According to him, the 'real' world is not therefore repressed by a system of delusion *(Verblendungszusammenhang)*; rather, the broadcast world becomes real due to its media format, rendering ideology obsolescent as television images have become the world itself.[34]

Furthermore, the supply of real events through television results in an effect, which blurs the boundaries between different spheres of reality. Anders argues that said effect makes the real seem phantom-like and the fictional seem real. Since broadcasts of real events and fictional shows are being delivered in exactly the same form, namely as TV images, both have the same reality index. According to him this

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31 Cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 142–144.

32 Cf. Ibid., 132–134.

33 Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Eingriffe: neun kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 69–80.

34 Cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 195–196.

eliminates the difference between being and appearance and between reality and image.[35] As examples of such blurring, Anders cites the mass panic triggered by Orson Welles' radio play *War of the Worlds*, the case of a housewife who falls in love with a character in a TV series — whose actor received death threats from the housewife's husband — and the case of grandmothers who knitted jackets for a baby that existed only in a television series and sent them to the production company.[36] Apart from such drastic and comical examples, the blurring of reality and the phantom-world of TV has another effect that is much more consequential in everyday life. Said effect can be tied with Boorstin's observations, who writes:

> Vivid image came to overshadow pale reality. Sound motion pictures in color led a whole generation of pioneering American movie-goers to think of Benjamin Disraeli as an earlier imitation of George Arliss, just as television has led a later generation of television watchers to see the Western cowboy as an inferior replica of John Wayne. The Grand Canyon itself became a disappointing reproduction of the Kodachrome original.[37]

Where Boorstin, like Adorno, argues that film and television images overlap the real world, Anders takes it a step further. Following his thesis, TV-images do not only overshadow reality, but rather serve as its model. Reality itself would therefore comply with its televisual reproduction, a process which results in a congruence of the real world and the model. This constellation produces the effect that the world is being shaped by its own reproductions and the reproductions come to precede their originals,[38] unfolding imprinting forces which constitute the lifeworld *(Lebenswelt)*. Anders calls this development matrix-performance *(Matrizenleistung)*: "If an event is socially more significant in its reproduced form than in its original occurrence, the original must adjust itself to suit its reproduction. The event must turn into a matrix, a mere template for its own reproduction."[39] The centrality and prevalence of the concept of reproduction in Anders' work highlights a close relationship between his reflections and Walter Benjamin's text *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. In relation to film, Benjamin writes that those artworks could not be adequately described using traditional aesthetic categories, as they were unable to

35 Cf. Ibid., 111.
36 Cf. Ibid., 165.
37 Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, 13–14.
38 Cf. Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 165. Here, Anders anticipates many aspects of Baudrillards concept of simulation. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).
39 Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, 99 [Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 111].

capture the effects of increasingly perfected technical reproducibility. He also discusses the incomparably greater reach of new technical reproduction processes[40] and historical changes in human perception grounded in media-technical developments of new reproduction techniques.[41] Coming from and thinking through the same premises, Anders interprets the advent of television as a permanent turning point in the history of human perception. The ability to reproduce real events and transmit them simultaneously raises questions about the relationship between the original and its reproduction that Benjamin could not have anticipated, as the intrusion of the apparatus into reality[42] has reached a completely new level through television's distribution capabilities. This is also the reason why Anders argues that traditional aesthetic categories cannot grasp television images and broadcast events in their ontological specificity, since no aesthetic appearance is processed in television viewing situations. In order to function, it's required that the broadcast matrix appears plausible and realistic: "The highest level of pseudorealism is, of course, reserved for TV-phantoms, which can convince their consumers that they aren't representations of reality but reality itself. How could reality itself, or so the consumer mindlessly believes, ever be unrealistic? How could it ever testify against itself?"[43] Six years later, Boorstin expresses a very similar thought, stating that "we have become so accustomed to our illusions that we mistake them for reality. We demand them. And we demand that there be always more of them, bigger and better and more vivid. They are the world of our making: the world of the image."[44] According to Anders and Boorstin the world presented on television screens is therefore always a pre-shaped one. Broadcast events are for example always prefigured in advance by the selectivity of the camera that produces TV-programmes, including live broadcasts. As pseudo-events they would then remodel the everyday lifeworld *(Lebenswelt)*.

4.

What kind of television did Boorstin and Anders had in mind can be exemplified by an empirical sociological study conducted by Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang that was published in the *American Sociological Review* in 1953. It examined how participants

40 Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1989), 38–40; 42–45; 49–52.

41 Cf. Ibid., 16.

42 Cf. Ibid., 38.

43 Anders, *The Obsolesence of the Human*, 148 [Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 168].

44 Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, 5–6.

experienced and perceived the MacArthur Day parade in Chicago as physical attendees in comparison to its televised version. Present attendees complained, for instance, that they were missing out on the event precisely because of their physical presence, like Observer 30, who noted: "This turned out to be a lousy spot. I should have gone home. I bet my wife saw it much better over television."[45] This implicates that the best spot to perceive the event is at home in front of the television, leading the study to relate television-watching habits directly to the disappointment that participants reported in relation to their physical attendance:

> 'We should have stayed home and watched it on TV', was the almost universal form that the dissatisfaction took. In relation to the spectatorship experience of extended boredom and sore feet, alleviated only by a brief glimpse of the hero of the day, previous and similar experiences over television had been truly exciting ones […].[46]

Expectations shaped by television-watching were disappointed by the live attendance of the event and favourable allusions to television, according to Lang and Lang, were frequent in this respect. Therefore, the study links the sentiment of missing out by being physically present to the "technical possibilities of the medium",[47] a formulation,that can be tied to Anders' concept of technical predetermination *(technische Vorentscheidung)*. The broadcast event can become more real than reality itself because of certain technical means which prestructure the perceptionial possibilities: "The television perspective was different from that of any spectator in the crowd. Relatively unlimited in its mobility, it could order events in its own way by using close-ups for what was deemed important and leaving the apparently unimportant for the background."[48] It seems rather striking that the conclusion of the empirical study by Lang and Lang shares the premises of Anders' and Boorstin's findings: "It has been claimed for television that it brings the truth directly into the home: the 'camera does not lie'. Analysis of the above data shows that this assumed reportorial accuracy is far from automatic."[49] Exactly the same insight can be found in Boorstins book:

> An innocent observer might have expected that the rise of television and on-the-spot telecasting of the news would produce a pressure to report authentic spontaneous events exactly as they occur. But, ironically, these, like earlier

45 Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "The Unique Perspective of Television and Its Effect," *American Sociological Review* 18, no. 1 (1953): 9.
46 Ibid., 6.
47 Ibid., 7.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 10.

> improvements in the techniques of precise representation, have simply created more and better pseudo-events.[50]

Said flooding of the living environment with pseudo-events and their formative effects on everyday life was precisely the occasion that sparked Anders' philosophical thought in his US exile. Also, the methodical approach of his *philosophy of occasion* explains the synergies with Boorstin's reflections, despite that they apparently did not take note of each other's research. Following their shared lines of thought, television images blur representation and original, highlighting the enduring effects in the tangible world of televisions' production of pseudo-events. Since representations precede the original, the lifeworld *(Lebenswelt)* is modelled by the so-called matrix performance *(Matrizenleistung)* according to broadcast events and images, making them more real than reality itself.

One can evaluate this phenomenon with cultural pessimism, like Anders and Boorstin, or rather benevolently, like the best-renowned book about media events.[51] But regarding the conceptual logic of the event in Anders' media theory, this question of evaluation is rather secondary. In view of the ontological ambiguity of broadcast events in their form of television images, it is crucial that they render all previously known aesthetic concepts of images obsolete. Dealing with a historically new cultural phenomenon, Anders was one of the first thinkers to claim that these images demand new categories for their description and critical analysis. Not only has television changed the perception of events and the reception of what is perceived as eventful permanently. Its form of mediation changed the ontological status of broadcast events, introducing a new category of events, which have become 'more real' than reality itself due to their specific way of mediation. Viewing habits shaped by the technical possibilities of television will then also determine the perception of events in the lifeworld, reshaping it in accordance with the delivered phantom world.

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[50] Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, 26.

[51] Cf. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press, 1994).

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