

Peter Kastberg

Editor's preface

In 'Ethics without Ontology' Putnam develops the contours for a 'history of knowledge'. In his book Putnam divides the history of knowledge into – so far – three 'enlightenments'; each enlightenment is centred around knowledge (knowledge being the common denominator) but each 'enlightenment' differs when it comes to how knowledge is perceived, how knowledge is utilized and by whom and – last but not least – to whom knowledge belongs. The first 'enlightenment' is to be found in ancient Greece, triggered by and spurred on by Plato's ideas of democracy and of the state. The second 'enlightenment' coincides with the classical European Enlightenment (with a capital E) in the 17th and 18th century. Putnam sees a direct link between the main project of the classical Enlightenment (i.e. to put reason before anything else and set man free) to a third 'enlightenment', namely that of our day and age. A post-modern 'enlightenment', better known as the knowledge society or the knowledge economy, which is characterized by being 'deliberative' and (individually) 'participative' and therefore an 'enlightenment' whose primary concerns are not those of producing or storing information, but that of putting information into productive use, i.e. turning information into knowledge.

And it is within the third 'enlightenment' that this thematic section of Hermes 'Mediating Specialized Knowledge' should be seen. Within this overall framework the thematic section of Hermes looks upon four different perspectives of 'mediating specialized knowledge'. In the first article **Constance Kampf** compares and discusses a number of different new theoretical paradigms through which we may look upon the mediation of specialized knowledge. **Dale Sullivan** presents a real-life case of how specialized knowledge was indeed mediated and uses this case as a point of departure for pointing to wide-ranging theoretical consequences for our field. In his article **Kirk St.Amant** takes into account the cultural aspects of knowledge mediation and how culture is reflected in rhetoric and vice versa. Ending this thematic section, **Su-**

sanne Göpferich deals with how specialized knowledge is comprehended and by doing so she points to maybe the most important aspect of mediating specialized knowledge in the third ‘enlightenment’.

As the reading of the four articles will show, mediating specialized knowledge is not only a simple (journalistic) ‘techne’ but indeed a highly complex and – in the true sense of the word – a transdisciplinary communicative effort.

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