

Internationale Günther Anders Gesellschaft



9 FEBRUARY 2022

The plasticity of emotions

Günther Anders's contribution to the history of feelings

Conference in collaboration with the International Günther Anders Society, University of Copenhagen, 29/30 June 2023.

Organised by Christian Dries (Freiburg) and Alexander Knopf (Copenhagen).

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In the first volume of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* ("The Obsolescence of Man"), Günther Anders states that the lack of a history of emotions might be considered "the biggest desideratum of any philosophy of history and historical science". This claim represents an example of Anders's astonishing clairvoyance. Already in 1956, he pointed to a field of research which has received full attention only during the last thirty years. Anders himself very early provided several fragments for such a history. Thus, in *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* he speaks of an emotional 'gap'. The "slowness of the transformation of emotions" results, as he thinks, in a 'discrepancy' between the human capacity of feeling and the challenges of an environment produced mainly by men. Therefore, according to Anders, the capacity of feeling has to be modelled in order to adjust it to a very different reality. Adopting a word from Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (1922), Anders demands an 'effort' of feeling, "*a voluntary expansion of our emotional comprehension faculty*". His book *Love Yesterday* (1986) was also intended to present—as the subtitle suggests—*Notes on the History of Feelings*. It is concerned with the transformation of love at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth

century. Taking into consideration the experiences of two wars, emigration, but also the impact of psychoanalysis, Anders points out, love can no longer be regarded as the same.

With the conference at the University of Copenhagen, organised in collaboration with the International Günther Anders Society, this very independent contribution to a field which nowadays is known as 'emotion research' will receive due critical appraisal. We are looking for contributions which

- bring Anders's dispersed thoughts on a history of feelings together and (partially) reconstruct his theory/theories of emotion,
- investigate his philosophy of emotions in terms of both the corpus of his works and the scientific context of his time (philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, psychology, sociology, aesthetics),
- compare his ideas with the results of contemporary research and enquire about the extent to which his theory has proved its worth.

Confirmed speakers: Ute Frevert (Berlin), Bernhard Fetz (Vienna), Bernd Bösel (Potsdam), Reinhard Ellensohn (Vienna).

We try to reimburse all participants their expenses for travel and accommodation as far as possible. At this point of time, however, we cannot give any guarantees for this.

The conference will be held in English and German. Applicants are invited to submit a proposal (250 words) and a short CV to alexander.knopf@hum.ku.dk by May 31, 2022.

The conference is part of the VELUX project *Where Love Happens: Topographies of Emotions in Nineteenth-Century European Literature*, hosted by the University of Copenhagen (https://engerom.ku.dk/english/research/centres_projects/where-love-happens/).

Kind regards,

Christian Dries and Alexander Knopf