

In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt argued that the eruption of violence on campuses in 1968 could be partly understood as a frustrated reaction to the excessive bureaucratic and technological mediation of (then) contemporary society. Arendt described this situation as ‘tyranny without a tyrant’. Compromised by its incapacity to recognize the experience of racially marked subjects and its condemnation of African creolity, the question animating Arendt’s analysis, namely whether bureaucratization and mass mediatization changes the nature of tyranny, nonetheless remains relevant. That question had been posed by Leo Strauss in 1948, in his reading of Xenophon’s *Hiero, or Tyrannicus*, which would later be debated by Alexandre Kojève. There, Strauss asserted the persistence of tyranny, which is nonetheless transformed in modernity by the capacity for totalization inherent in technology. Contemporary political theory, dominated by questions of sovereignty and the question of the decision, now finds itself in need of a theory of tyranny distinct from sovereignty — which is no longer operative. This talk attempts to contribute to that project, drawing on the Strauss-Kojève debate, as well as the anthropological archive, to ask why it is that contemporary tyranny is so obsessed with the question of private life, and especially the sexed and gendered basis of ‘family’, and the norms that might govern it. To explore that issue, it asks: What happens to tyranny in a media context defined by public intimacy, and the collapse of love and recognition? What does technocapitalism want? And how can one think about relation and recognition in a manner that can escape the pitfalls of melancholia for a once and future tyranny?

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**Lecture Series Scale** Scales are used to quantify properties such as length and temperature, or also to measure popularity and affect. But as Alice discovers in *Wonderland*, a change of scale can also have dramatic qualitative consequences. It disrupts customary ways of perceiving, acting, and being — to the point of feeling as ‘queer’ to her as a caterpillar’s metamorphoses. Helped by the arguably inextricable intertwinement of different meanings and aspects of scale, Alice’s experiences continue to provide apt metaphors for the disorienting importance and effects of scale and scaling at a time of hyperglobalization and the so-called anthropocene.

Scale is indeed a highly ambiguous notion, even when one only considers the meanings deriving from the Latin or Italian *scala*, ladder. It simultaneously denotes the whole ladder, one of its steps, and the relation between two steps: The scale of a cartographic map is the ratio between a distance on the map and a distance on the ground, but any particular length also defines a scale, and the range of scales from the subatomic to the planetary scale is part of the spatial scale. Paradoxically recursive, scale combines and helps mediate quantity and quality, as well as subjective perception, objective material properties, and contingent construction.

If different disciplines, discourses, and dispositives each have their privileged scales to which they tend to reduce others, what may be gained by thinking them together, acknowledging both the relative autonomy of particular scales — each with their own affordances, limitations, rules, even laws and ontologies — and their interdependence — each affecting and being affected by other scales? What is the critical purchase of developing multiscale architectures or patchworks of scale-specific, mutually inconsistent and irreducible descriptions, theories, and models? How might the tensions be made productive where they overlap or come into contact? The ICI’s Lecture Series ‘Scale’ will address such questions by reflecting upon the critical role of scale within and across a wide range of different fields.

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## Tyranny Is Dead, Long Live the Tyrant