



The Life of a New Word, Audism: Practices, Areas of Knowledge, and Social Change

July 9-10, 2019, Paris

Conference organized by Tom Humphries, Carol Padden, and Sabine Arnaud in collaboration with the University of California San Diego, Humboldt Universität, College International de Philosophie, Centre Alexandre Koyré CNRS

The term **audism** first entered a general dictionary in 2008 with the fifth edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*. At the time, this insertion generated both excitement and uproar in the deaf community; excitement because the word, first used in 1977 and disseminated more widely in the 1990s, was part of the emerging sphere of deaf studies; uproar because “audism” was defined in the dictionary as follows: “discrimination or prejudice against people based on the fact that their ability to hear is impaired or absent.” It presented deafness as a deficit, thereby justifying the construction of deaf people as inferior—a construction the word was actually intended to denounce. Instead of describing the audist perspective, the dictionary definition illustrated it and confirmed the need for such a critical category.

Following a number of letters sent to the editors of the dictionary and a lively debate hosted in part on the internet, the editors contacted Tom Humphries and John Lee Clark and together they agreed on a new “two-sense” definition, which is available in the 2014 online edition:

- 1- The belief that people with hearing are superior to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- 2- Discrimination or prejudice against people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

This exercise in writing the meaning of the word attests to how problematic our understanding of audism remains, and how the context of the term has changed in the fifty years since it first appeared.

Whereas the study of deafness has increasingly been segmented in different disciplines over the last decades, it is by developing a dialogue between deaf and hearing scholars in the fields most focused on deafness today that we can best stimulate a reflection on audism. This conference aims to offer an opportunity for a reflective analysis, particularly by deaf and hearing scientists and scholars working on the history of science of and about deaf people and their language

experiences. The initiative to gather this group comes from the conviction that we are now at a time when dialogue between these different approaches can be both cathartic and enlightening in science studies.

Examples of topics for proposed talks in the context of audism could be:

1. *Deaf studies and the emergence of deaf “voice”*
2. *Perspectives on cochlear implants*
3. *Human rights, including the right to language*
4. *Articulation of history (history of Deaf writings, history of disability, history of education, history of technology, etc...)*
5. *Language and Linguistics studies*
6. *Social and psychological developmental studies*
7. *Assistive technologies theory and practices*
8. *Bilingualism as a framing concept*
9. *What do we need for audism to become an obsolete category? What would be the marker of its obsolescence?*

This conference will be in ASL, LSF, spoken English and spoken French with interpreters, and we're working towards possibly having IS as well. While we may not be able to provide interpreters for other sign languages, you're welcome to come with your own interpreter. If you wish to do so, please contact us in advance so that we can best plan for them. We will ask participants to provide their papers to interpreters one week beforehand. The conference will be held Amphithéâtre François Furet, EHESS, 105 bd Raspail, 75006, Paris venue. The conference will be free to all those who want to attend, whether they present a talk or not.

Please send an abstract of between 200 and 300 words in French or English to sabine.arnaud@cnrs.fr by **February 28, 2019**. Notification of acceptance will be sent in March. The scientific committee to review abstracts will include Carol Padden, Tom Humphries, Sabine Arnaud, Peter Hauser, Christian Rathmann, Olivier Schetrit, Soline Vennetier.

Our call for paper is available online in IS

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=audismparis

For practical questions, please first check our webpage <http://koyre.ehess.fr/index.php?2897> which will be regularly updated. Address additional questions to Sabine Arnaud at: sabine.arnaud@cnrs.fr or Olivier Schetrit olivier.schetrit@ehess.fr

