

BERNARD STIEGLER AND THE FATE OF AESTHETIC PERFORMANCE  
IN THE TIME OF DIGITAL MEDIA

by

TAI LING

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Political Science and International Studies

School of Government and Society

College of Social Sciences

University of Birmingham

June 2020

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

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## **Abstract**

My thesis concerns the fate of the spiritual capacities of human beings in the time of digital media systems in relation to the work of Bernard Stiegler. Stiegler's framing of the problem is situated within his ambiguous, or *pharmacological*, approach to technology, in which it is simultaneously poison *and* cure. It is also founded on his notion of 'originary technicity', in which humanity and technology 'invent' each other. Both avoid a reductive reading of human-technological relations.

Stiegler's account of subjectivity is one founded on the linguistic, philosophical and sociological notions of agency whereby the self is conceived as a performance within the symbolic and aesthetic order of culture. This performance necessitates a public stage akin to that of the Greek tragic age that allows its audience to reflect upon and question their society in order for the society to remain ethically reflexive. Yet, the growth of mass culture and global consumerism threatens this reflexivity and must be recovered. The generalized proletarianization of the consumer age is one that compromises the acting out of spirit due to the exhaustion of human drives. Furthermore, the social fabric, as with the fabric of the self, is a composition of tendencies, a 'weaving' of social bonds that is created by society and its individuals. Therefore, as with the reflexive public stage, society must have the requisite knowledge and ability to interpret and create this production of the social. In a digital age, this must now be a society of 'image-readers'.

By looking at Stiegler's theorizing of a new contributive economy, I examine the elevating possibilities that can come out of the disindividuating processes of hyper-industrial, consumer-driven technology, and, therefore, what spiritually expressive and transformative performances of self, and society, digital media enable. I argue the aesthetic performance of the self must be one in which the individual is an amateur artist aware of the reflexive social stage that digital platforms provide.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly I would like to thank Dr. Ross Abbinnett for his expert guidance and tireless support throughout this process. Thanks also to Dr. Justin Cruickshank for his valuable input and feedback. And thank you to Tricia Thomas for her calm, reassuring presence.

Thank you to Professor Peter McDonald for supporting the proposal and for his advice along the way. I would also like to thank Dr. Sacha Golob for giving his support to the application and his help with the references to Kant.

I want to also thank the following: Dr. Eirini Konstantinidou for sharing her thoughts on the doctoral process; Professor Michael Scott for his feedback on the classical references; Dr. Sharine Barth and Dr. James Barth for their personal insights into the process; Stephanie Byrne for her continued support and discussions on spirituality and the fictive nature of reality; Gary Leboff for our discussions on art, creativity, the media and the self, as well as his useful guidance about the writing process; Martin Kibler for our discussions about Nietzsche and Bowie; Alexander Chard for his support and our conversations about technology and films; Nicole Cannon for her invaluable training and her enthusiastic support; Poppy Burton-Morgan for dedicating time and energy to offer feedback in the final stages; and Kelly Burke for her support and encouragement in applying.

Lastly, thank you to my parents for their love and support.

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# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

'Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in'

- Leonard Cohen, "Anthem", from *The Future*<sup>1</sup>

### 1) Lost in Performance: Sartre and Ziggy Stardust

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1973, David Bowie took to the stage of London's Hammersmith Odeon for what would be his final performance as Ziggy Stardust. The audience present was not aware of this fact; and neither was his band. Forty years later, my watching of a documentary about the end of Ziggy Stardust would become the beginning of this thesis.

Bowie's decision to stop performing as Ziggy Stardust was due to the increasing lack of separation between himself and his performance. As Ziggy Stardust, he was mobbed by fans and cheered at by audiences who no longer saw David

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Leibovitz, 2014: 159.

<sup>2</sup> For Stiegler this is 'one's historicality' so that Stiegler's tertiary retention is 'Heidegger's *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* (world-historicality)' (Stiegler, 2011a: 37).

Bowie behind the mask. Of course, 'David Bowie' was already a persona for David Jones. Yet, the reason Bowie stopped was not that his audience had forgotten 'David Bowie' but more crucially because *he* was beginning to become lost in his own performance.

My master's dissertation in philosophy on Sartre's account of 'Bad Faith' concerned authenticity, freedom, and the self, and I had concluded with an interpretation of the self as being a creative act. Having previously trained as an actor, this made me wonder about the question of this creation of self and the nature of mask and performance in an age of digital social media. Actors are trained to know the difference between the self, the mask and the performance. Yet, in the age of digital media, there is an increasing potential for people to become lost in their own creation and performance of self, and increasingly unable to control it.

Nearing the end of the thesis, I read the following from an interview with David Bowie in 2003, in which he remarked,

I think now, we don't have a God. We don't have really a trust in any kind of politics. We are completely and totally at sea, philosophically. And I don't think we want new things. I think we're kind of scrounging around among the things we know to see if we can salvage some kind of civilization which will help us endure and survive into the future. [And then emphatically] We are fucked. We've got enough new. Enough! [He yelled into the ceiling].

(Bowie, 2017: 393)

These, as it turns out, are the very issues that this thesis explores in relation to the performance of self within digital media. More precisely, as I will now show, they are also central themes in the philosophy and sociology of the late Bernard Stiegler (1952-2020), on whose work this thesis is based.

Stiegler's work is concerned with our ability to salvage a form of civilizing politics out of a society saturated by excessive consumerism, driven by marketing and within a culture of permanent innovation. For Stiegler, this new ethical economy must not only be able to 'endure and survive a future', it must first salvage the means and recover the spiritual philosophy to *create* one.

## 2) Thesis Outline: Bernard Stiegler and Aesthetic Performance in the Time of Digital Media

Stiegler's account of modernity is that, following Nietzsche's 'death of God' and Freud's psychoanalysis, consumerism and marketing have appropriated the drives of humanity; and, in exhausting these drives, empties the human being of any spiritual desire. Furthermore, the programming and culture industries have created the state of 'general proletarianization' of cognitive capitalism that has captured our attention, inhibiting our knowledge and abilities of how to do, live and think.

My thesis concerns the fate of the spiritual capacities of human beings in the time of digital media systems. Stiegler's framing of this problem is situated within his

ambiguous, or *pharmacological*, approach to technology (taken from the Plato's idea of the 'pharmakon' via Derrida) in which it is simultaneously poison *and* cure (Stiegler, 2013b); and is founded on his notion of 'originary technicity', in which humanity and technology 'invent' each other (Stiegler, 2008). His work on the spirit of humanity within a techno-scientific, hyper-industrialized cultural economy focuses on the following themes: time, aesthetics, symbolic signification, attention, drives and desires, and knowledge.

My reasons for focusing on Stiegler's work are that firstly, he avoids the binary opposition between humanity and technology that leads to either technological or anthropological determinism and is more nuanced as a result. Secondly, his approach, as with this thesis, is interdisciplinary: Stiegler references not only philosophy and sociology but also anthropology, psychology and literary theory.

However, there are several significant problems with Stiegler's approach.

Firstly, while his 'pharmacological' theory diagnoses the 'toxicity' of technology, his work remains largely conceptual with a high degree of theorizing and with very few practical examples of how these concepts and theories can be applied to provide the necessary, practical 'cure'. Secondly, influenced as it is by the work of Derrida, Heidegger, Simondon, as well as many others, these thinkers all fall within a narrow scope of diversity in terms race, gender and culture, that is: white, male and Western European. Thirdly, his ethical and economic theory relies heavily on the notion of the Greek *polis* or city-state as a model of democratic society, yet such a democratic model excluded minorities including

women and slaves, which further add to the limitations concerning the inclusiveness of his theory.

This thesis attempts to provide the reader with a comprehensive grounding in Stiegler's work and its key concepts, as well as to make up for some of its shortcomings. Namely, the absence of a practical model to accompany his highly theorized concepts. In this way, I explicate and expand upon Stiegler's notion of the amateur artist (influenced by Joseph Beuys), and attempt to provide a model of the individual as an amateur artist in the time of digital media.

Throughout the thesis, as with Stiegler's work, it must be born in mind that the use of words such as 'we', 'our' and 'culture' represent a specific set of individuals, namely, those in Western, transatlantic and developed countries with access to the type of digital technology and digitized society that Stiegler's work addresses. The scope of this work is something I wish to diversify and broaden in the future.

My thesis is in two parts: 'Part One: Culture, Time and Disindividuation' (chapters four and five) addresses the disindividuating tendencies; whilst 'Part Two: Art, Politics and Individuation' (chapters six and seven) examines the elevating possibility that is sustained within this process of disindividuation, and what self-expressive forms of acting out digital media can enable. I will now outline each chapter addressing the key terms and the trajectory of the thesis as a whole.

In chapter two, the 'Literature Review', I trace Stiegler's work back to Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), all of whom form a fundamental part of his theory in relation to my thesis, and examine in what ways Stiegler developed their respective theories. This chapter looks at the performance of self as phenomenological, that is, as an experience of consciousness in relation to time. First, I address Stiegler's account of consciousness in relation to temporal objects founded on Husserl's phenomenology of intentionality, as being conscious *of* a person or thing. Stiegler develops Husserl's theory of primary and secondary retentions towards temporal objects to include a 'tertiary' retention. This becomes the selection of retentions that are available to us from a culture which is passed down to us as, in Stiegler's terms, an 'epiphylogenetic' milieu. So, for Stiegler, primary retentions are our experience of consciousness in time as a selection of a collective cultural memory of secondary retentions; these are both in turn selected from a 'tertiary' terrain that we are born into.

Next, I address Hegel's notion of the progressive movement of spirit (*Geist*) and his ethical philosophy of civil society (*Sittlichkeit*), looking at the classical polis in which the citizen was a constituent part of the city-state; as well as examining his philosophy of recognition, in his 'master-slave' dialectic, and his account of technology and the exteriorization of labour. Stiegler concurs with much of Hegel's account but his contentions are firstly, that Hegel misses the disruptive influence of the evolution of technology and does not remain exterior, and,

secondly, that he fails to recognize the possibility for technology to act as a liberating force.

I then examine Stiegler's use of Heidegger's *Dasein*, that is, as an experience of the self as one 'thrown' into a world that is 'already-there' (Heidegger, 1962). I briefly look at Heidegger's account of the typewriter that he sees as removing individual identity, before addressing his central ideas of *Being and Time* (1927) that we have 'forgotten' the 'fundamental' question of our existence, as mortal, as one orientated, a 'being-towards-death', and explicate *Dasein* as 'already there' and *mit-sein* as 'being with' (Heidegger, 1999; Heidegger, 1962). Furthermore, Heidegger's problem of the 'They' is directly related to Stiegler's concerns over mass consumer culture, that is, of the individual 'lost' in the public 'they'.

Heidegger's account of how we relate to objects (equipment) as being either ready to use (ready-to-hand) or in a state of objectification (present-at-hand) is briefly addressed, before explicating his account of technology in his 'question concerning technology' (Heidegger, 1962; Heidegger, 2011). Enlightenment thought has emphasized 'means-end' causality but missed a sense of the original, or origin of, meaning. Furthermore, technology orientates humanity in a particular way towards the world, viewing nature as a 'storehouse' of resources to be used. This Heidegger terms *Gestell*, that is, an 'enframing' (Heidegger, 2011: 227). For Stiegler, Heidegger gives a powerful account of everyday, lived experience within mass culture, but fails to take account of the exteriorization process on reflective-reflexivity and spiritual (noetic) activity.

Lastly, I look at Adorno's work with Horkheimer on the 'culture industries' that

they saw emerging out of America during the middle of the twentieth century (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997; Adorno, 2001). I briefly address Adorno's criticisms of the 'jargon of authenticity' as used by Heidegger and other phenomenological philosophers (Adorno, 2003). For Adorno, this terminology misses the socio-economic context and the *structuring* of experience and becomes nothing more than a 'signless cloud'. I then examine notions of reification, value and commodification that come out of the culture industry thesis, that is, how the commercialization of culture has changed our notions of objects as well as their use or usefulness. Lastly, I address Adorno's notion that the experience of culture, following the culture industry thesis, becomes that of a 'damaged life' as parts of the industrial-capitalist, commercial machine (Adorno, 2005). Adorno's work provides the framework for Stiegler's account of mass culture and consumerism, as well as his aesthetic theory whereby the individual's sensibilities are diminished and individual agency limited (Stiegler, 2014b; Stiegler, 2015b).

Finally, this chapter explains Stiegler's pharmacological approach, that is, of technics and technology as being both toxic and poisonous, *and*, therapeutic and curative (Stiegler, 2013b). This is vitally important to Stiegler's account of the possible recovery of spirit in the hyper-industrial age which is found in his theorizing of a new ethical-economic version of society, which he terms an 'economy of contribution'.

In chapter three, my 'Theoretical Framework', I address the notion of performance and performativity. I begin with explicating Stiegler's theory of

'originary technicity' developed from the work of André Leroi-Gourhan, that is, the mutual evolution of humanity and technology whereby each 'invents' the other (Stiegler, 2008). I then address the concept of the Anthropocene age as arising out of the 'inward turn' of the individual from external sources of power and control towards individual agency and rationality (Lyons, 1978; Taylor, 1989). This history of this autonomous, self-expressive individual within society becomes the modern problem of the possibility for a societal cohesion and reflexivity based on individual participation. For Stiegler, society and the individual 'invent' each other; this process is always technologically staged (Stiegler, 2008).

Stiegler's account of subjectivity is founded on linguistic, philosophical and sociological notions of agency and I trace the notion of performativity back to the work of J. L. Austin (Austin, 1979; Austin, 1975). The modern problem, for Stiegler, becomes the possibility of the 'acting out' of the spiritual (noetic) soul within the symbolic and aesthetic order of culture.

I address the public stage in relation to Stiegler's account of the 'theatre of individuation' the process of psychosocial individuation by which the 'I' and the 'we' of the individual and society compose the social totality (Stiegler, 2009b: 66-70). I look at classical tragedy as a form of reflexive staging of the social, a collective psychosocial individuation. For Stiegler, what the current age loses is the balance between the 'specular' and the 'spectacular' which allows for this collective individuation of each member of the audience (Stiegler, 2015b: 169).

In today's image culture we are left with the 'spectacular' alone, which threatens the reflexivity of the public stage since we are no longer fully active participants.

Next, I explicate the performative theory of Roland Barthes' 'death of the author' that becomes the 'birth of the reader' and how Stiegler develops this further to become the 'author-reader' (Barthes, 2000; Stiegler, 2015a: 113). This linguistic theory, I argue, is fundamental to Stiegler's idea of our 'fabrication of culture' in which we create meaning and significance by fashioning it and producing it. I draw parallels with the writing of Jonathan Swift who also used the clothing metaphor to explore the idea of the maintenance of the social fabric. Stiegler's aesthetic theory about 'symbolic misery', that is the loss of participation in the aesthetic sphere, is paralleled with Swift's 'Abyss of Things' in which culture becomes meaningless in the inability to interpret it. The transition from interpretative, performative text to algorithmic, functional hyper-text has eliminated the necessary hermeneutic gap between what Ferdinand de Saussure termed the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. This is creative space, as I show in chapter seven, essential for the survival and evolution of human spirit and the expressive 'acting out' of the individual.

In chapter four, 'Symbolic Order and Culture', I address Stiegler's account of 'symbolic misery' in more detail, that is, the consumer's inability to participate in the process of symbolic exchange (Stiegler, 2014b; 2015b). I look at his use of Sylvain Auroux to develop a theory of successive phases of grammatization from citizen, to believer, to worker, to today's consumer that, for Stiegler, represent successive losses of individuation (Stiegler, 2014b: 53-59).

This leads to the current state of generalized proletarianization in which the individual is de-humanized through a loss of knowledge, capacities and abilities of how to do, live and think. Stiegler's central premise is that with 'sensitivity's machinic turn', that is, the schematization of the aesthetic realm, we no longer have a sensible experience but have become aesthetically conditioned and programmed by the culture and programming industries.

The central part of this chapter looks at Stiegler's 'allegory of the anthill' in order to describe the stimulus-response behaviour that he sees in the consumer age of cognitive capitalism, before I address Stiegler's account of America as the birthplace of this cognitive capitalism (Stiegler, 2014b: 76; Stiegler, 2011b: 1-36). This is due both to its own projected identity epitomized by the 'American way of life' which it has invented as well as the central place that Hollywood and cinema play in this process (Stiegler, 2011a: 79-130). I compare Stiegler's account of aesthetic production to Marshall McLuhan's account of the Roman way of life, showing how both empires gain dominance not only through military might but as importantly through their cultural, technical and psychic power (McLuhan, 2001). Yet, the same technology that helps these identities, cultures and futures, are also always the same technology that threatens to destroy them.

In this context, I look at how Nietzsche's 'death of God' has become an existence of meaningless consumers and how Stiegler's account of industrial temporal objects in a consumer hyper-industrial age explicates a disposable culture of both disposable objects *and* consumers (Stiegler, 2013b). Capitalism exploits the suffering caused by the lack of participation brought about by the successive

phases of grammatization. For Stiegler, it empties and exhausts the drives and desires of the consumers tasked with sustaining this libidinal economy.

Consumerism has now appropriated all areas of life, affecting both interaction with objects and people, and leading to a decomposition of the self. For Stiegler, this is the dissolution of the difference between the realm of *otium*, that is the reflexive, creative and artistic sphere that enables individuation, and the realm of *neg-otium*, the sphere of business, of means-end calculation and ratio.

Lastly, I look at the 'myth of interiority', and Rowan Williams' account of subjectivity in which there is no private or hidden self, but that both the private and public self are the 'chaos of passing emotions' (Williams, 1988: 43). I address 'otium' in more detail in relation to artistic time and show how the sphere of otium as a creative sphere enables the time for leisure. This time enables recreation, that is, a *re*-creation of self that is necessary for transformative, noetic individuation.

Chapter five is concerned with, 'The Sociology of Speed and Time'. I look at the effect of the speeding up of the cultural production of modernity. I introduce the chapter with a brief history of this speed and time tracing the origins of our modern sense of time both to Einstein's 1905 theory of relativity and to the standardization of time brought about by industrialization. The paradox, as Harmut Rosa argues, is that what was meant to bring about more leisure time has created a culture with an ever greater 'to-do' list, with less time in which to do it (Rosa, 2017).

I then engage with Stiegler's contention there has been a shift from the time of carbon to the time of light (Stiegler, 2013b: 37). The effect on modernity has been twofold. The first is the speed up of industrial production as well as distribution and consumption. The second is that, as Harmut Rosa suggests, through the exponential rise of digital inter-connected communication technology there has been a diminishing of available time in which to get things done.

Next, I address Stiegler's theory of the disorientation of the individual that is brought about by a culture of permanent innovation (cf. *Technics and Time*). This traces Stiegler's theory back to Heidegger, and the question of thanatology, that is, the question of lived experience in relation to our being-towards-death – our sense of mortality within time. The industrialization of time begins with the clock, as Heidegger showed, but Stiegler's critique is that he fails to take into account the originary technicity of *Dasein*. In other words, that our lived experience through and in relation to time is always one that has always been technologically staged. The danger, as Stiegler sees it, is that since technics are always pro-thetic, they are a 'putting before', they think *before* we do (Stiegler, 2009a: 32). So, we not only inherit an unlived past (epiphylogenetically) but also inherit an 'unthought' technics. I then address the notion of 'real time', showing how, for Stiegler, time is always necessarily deferred, yet in the age of digital media 'live' events there is a sense that the future *precedes* the present (Stiegler, 2009a: 63). This is made more evident in a computational culture of predictive, algorithms.

I look at the work of Paul Virilio, and his notion of ‘picnolepsy’ as a lived experience through consciousness that creates a montage of fragmentary experiences, and I relate this to Stiegler’s account of the cinematographic nature of consciousness (Virilio, 2009; Stiegler, 2011a).

Next I give a detailed account of Harmut Rosa’s work on alienation and acceleration (Rosa, 2014). Based on Marx’s theory, Rosa identifies five areas of alienation: space, things, actions, time, self and other. He traces the trajectory of this alienation from pre-modern feudal societies through to the modern age arguing that the individual has gradually occupied a less stable and coherent sense of place within society. Today, Rosa suggests, our culture has created a society in which the individual must continually prove their value through successful performance that achieves society goals. Although there are parallels between Rosa’s position and Stiegler’s work, I argue that Stiegler’s account is the more nuanced. Stiegler’s concern is that modern technics and technology brings about the prosthetic exteriorization of all knowledge and ability, both individually and collectively.

Finally, I look at Stiegler’s use of the classical notions of *aidō* and *dikē*, that is, of shame and justice (Stiegler, 2008: 199-200). These are vital in the formation of political communities since they help fashion or create a community which is always necessarily a fiction founded upon agreed laws as well as inherited laws. This feeling of community, where none exists, is directly related to notions of temporality. The digitization of time poses profound questions for our anticipation of a future and therefore our ability to create it.

In chapter six, 'The History of Analogue Technology and Mass Culture', I address the historically successive 'stages' for the performance of self. This charts the development of analogue technology from print, to radio, to cinema, through to the birth of television and shows how this is simultaneously the formation of mass culture. These analogue technologies and the audiences that they created are the foundation for our current culture of digital audiovisual media.

In the first part, I look at the orthographic age and the work of Marshall McLuhan and John B. Thompson on the development of the printing press, print culture and the birth of a mass readership (McLuhan, 2014; McLuhan, 2001; Thompson, 1995). For Stiegler, the epiphylogenetic milieu we inherit is that of the symbolic order of society, so the orthographic regime is crucial not only in our representation of our self and our society, but in our creation and interpretation of them. This develops McLuhan's contention that media technology affects not only who we are but also how we perceive the world. For McLuhan, there is a loss of magic when the aural culture becomes the written alphabet. John B. Thompson's work links the development of media directly to its democratizing effects, so with mass printing there is the possibility for the dissemination of dissenting ideas, as exemplified by the Protestant Reformation. The critical moment in print media came about with the intrusion of the photographic image.

Next, I show how cinema developed out of both the mass audience developed by print and the shift towards an image culture that, with cinema, becomes kinaesthetic, that is, moving images and sound. I look at Walter Benjamin's account of auratic art and apperception (Benjamin, 2007). For Benjamin, the

developed of cinema introduces an 'unconscious optics' to our field of perception. This, for Stiegler, becomes the cinematographic nature of consciousness and our becoming lost 'in the screen'.

The temporal nature of the audiovisual image shifts again with the advent of television. Time becomes synchronized so that increasingly large audiences are able to watch the same event at the same time. I address the question of agency and ethical concerns that this brings about, and trace the history of television back to its origins in radio. I show how television developed out of the ethics of the radio industry, both in the UK and in the US.

I start with the notion of 'broadcasting' and public service, of an ethical culture of 'Auntie Beeb and Uncle Sam', before charting the growth in television audiences in the UK, and looking at a new model of public service promised by Channel Four. I then address the notion of 'narrowcasting' as more channels are introduced partly out of technological change and partly as a result of political-economic imperatives. I look at how deregulation influenced this process before addressing the fragmentation of television in a multi-channel age in relation to individual agency and choice.

Lastly, I show how this paved the way for the emergence of digital media, which for Stiegler, creates a milieu saturated and conditioned by media technology. This both threatens the formation of a functioning ethical society, whilst simultaneously providing the digital platforms through which it can be re-invented.

In chapter seven, “The Digital Media and the ‘Economy of Contribution’”, I address what possible forms of spiritual ‘acting out’ is possible from the account of humanity and technology which Stiegler’s work presents. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first addresses spiritual, noetic individuation whilst the second looks at how the dissatisfaction brought about by the disindividuating tendencies Stiegler theorizes can motivate a re-spiriting of the individual and society. Following Stiegler’s account, I argue that it is in the individual as an amateur artist that can create possible futures and maintain the elevating tendency of spirit.

I begin by examining Stiegler’s use of the word spirit and ‘noesis’ in relation to Aristotle, its metaphysical implications (Stiegler, 2009b: 13). His use is of spirit as both transcendent as well as sublimated within our technological environment (Stiegler, 2014a: 87-88). This poses the problem of the means to enable spiritual self-expression.

I look at his account of technical individuation, which develops the work of Heidegger’s ‘They’ within a world that is ‘already-there’ and Simondon’s ‘we’ situated within a ‘pre-individual fund’ (Stiegler, 2013c). For Stiegler, they both miss important aspects of the other’s theory, so combining the two he argues for a psychosocial individuation this is a ‘disjunctive conjunctive’, as that which simultaneously separates-apart and joins-together. To this, Stiegler adds that this individual and collective individuation is situated within an ethical/cultural collective memory that has been hyper-industrialized: that is commodified, synchronized and schematized.

I address his concept of the 'double epokhal redoubling', a process that sees societies successively *adopt* new technics and technology as opposed to merely *adapting* to them (Stiegler, 2013b: 34-36). This involves the notion of technologies that disrupt current systems, through a 'primary suspension'. For Stiegler, a 'secondary suspension' is always necessary for new technology to be properly adopted by societies, yet his concern is that with the current state of permanent innovation there is perpetual disruption; and so, we are continually adapting to, rather than adopting, these technologies. Stiegler's 'economy of contribution' offers a model founded on this idea of a secondary suspension in which society can successfully adopt technological disruptive innovation and create a society of care instead of carelessness (Stiegler, 2011c). I then briefly look at this contributive model in relation to 'otium' and Stiegler's 'art of living' (Stiegler, 2011c). The question remains as to how this economy of contribution will offer a spiritual individuation.

I address the solution in Stiegler's work on traumatology, that is, the unexpected shocks or traumas that open up new possibilities (Stiegler, 2015b). These experiences provide the foundation for self-expressive, singular, spiritual individuation, which in their transformation of the individual offer the possibility of transforming collective culture, and further, passing this transformation on as a new cultural memory or inheritance. I look at how the notion of traumatology comes out of the notion of the sublime, tracing this from Edmund Burke, through to Kant and on to Lyotard (Allison, 2001; Kant, 1911; Lyotard, 1997); and furthermore show how it is interrelated to the tragic and the uncanny. All three

offer duplicitous, ambiguous and antithetical qualities that unsettle, interrogate and, can ultimately, transform.

In the second part of the chapter, I begin by showing how Stiegler's key existential concern has become that of marketing. I explain how Stiegler's theory sees art as the guardian of spirit, and that we are all 'artists in potential'.

Following this, I argue that the next stage of Stiegler's grammatization will be one in which individual as artist reconciles the previous phases.

I ground this with a comparison to the work of Joseph Campbell on myth and the symbolic loss he saw in a culture in which ritual, morality and art were in 'full decay' (Campbell, 1993: 387-388). For Campbell, it is the individual as a creative hero who will save society. Campbell's notions of ritual, morality and art I transpose to the conditions of care, civility and creativity that I identify in Steigler's work, and, from this, I highlight key themes of time, attention, knowledge, signification, participation, recognition. I look at the 'slow science' movement as an example of how care might operate within the digital media age, as well as how the work of Purpose, founded by Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans, demonstrates a possible digital model for civility (Pels, 2003; Timms and Heimans, 2018). I then briefly detail the main themes for creativity as being spontaneity, imperfection and imagination.

From this foundation, and following Stiegler's stages of grammatization, I look at the individual as artist as: (i) citizen of public craft, (ii) believer and interrogator of fantasy, (iii) worker of spirit as a maker of signs, (iv) a self-publisher of

unreasonable dreams. I argue that it is in the individual as an amateur artist, using the possibilities that are opened up by digital media, that allows for the re-appropriation of the process of aesthetic and symbolic exchange from the market, thereby enabling individuals to transform not only themselves but society as a whole.

Finally, in my conclusion, I give some examples of what form this self-expressive evolution of spirit in the digital media age can take. Firstly, Netflix and Youtube, and the individual transformative performance they enable on these digital platforms. Secondly, by addressing an example of collective transformation through digital media with the recent Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd. Lastly, I draw comparisons with the 'lockdown' during the coronavirus pandemic and of the key elements of 'otium' that Stiegler's work theorizes.

As a final remark, the front cover of the English publication of Stiegler's *Lost Spirit of Capitalism* is a photograph of a dark, dingy and disused industrial warehouse. From the long, narrow, rectangular windows, placed high up on the wall to the right, shafts of light stream in. It is this light, as spirit, and as the hope against the perfecting tendency of the hyper-industrialized age, that Stiegler's work attempts to recover and to 'take care of'.

## Chapter Two:

### Literature Review

'What are days for?  
Days are where we live.  
They come, they wake us  
Time and time over.  
They are to be happy in:  
Where can we live but days?'

- Philip Larkin, from 'Days'

### Introduction

We can only understand the human condition as it is situated in a certain temporal framework. We are situated in time. This would seem a reasonable starting point for understanding what it is to be human in the modern world. It frames our interaction with others, and our engagement with the world. It is the crucial step that Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*, we can only understand being, and becoming, in relation to, and as situated within, time – it is being human as existence on the 'horizon of time'.

Yet it is fraught with problems. The notion of 'we', founded on a notion of 'I' as subject, is complex and is constituted by (notions of) time. So: we think of time as linear and that we travel along 'time's arrow', it is from this that we construct

a notion of a continuous self. Equally, since Einstein's theory of relativity at the beginning of the twentieth-century refuted Newton's paradigmatic notion of absolute time, this everyday notion of sequential, linear time is one that is constructed (or perceived) by us: it is, in some senses, a 'convenient' framework that we impose upon the world we inhabit.

Yet this 'convenience' is also entangled with industrialization and socio-economic concerns, time *enables* profit-creating efficiency - or spirit-destroying exploitation. This first stage of the industrialization of time happened with the clock, in this way, trains were timetabled, and factory workers 'clocked-in' and 'clocked-out'. The timeframe of the modern world then was born with this standardization of time. The recent digitization of time, however, presents a radically new version of 'time': firstly, in the (increased) acceleration of time and, secondly, with the manipulation of time. In this way, we now live in an age of compressed, accelerated and in some sense detached time. We can accelerate our world as we wish 'on-demand' and we can manipulate it by 'catching-up', 'rewinding', 'replaying'. I use these televisual terms deliberately since the more audio-visual the world becomes the more this manipulation of time is possible. Stiegler addresses this problem of consciousness, time and audio-visual digitization head-on in his analysis of the industrialization of memory, consciousness and cinematic time (Stiegler, 2011a).

Heidegger's phenomenological approach usefully grounds the notion of being human as *consciousness* experiencing everyday existence within time; it is from this point of consciousness that we perceive, interpret, understand and project

upon the world. Yet if time and being are linked by and through consciousness then this manipulation and acceleration of time affects our sense of being in a fundamental and profound way. The question changes from questioning the fundamental notion of Being, as Heidegger does in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962), to questioning the basis for our becoming, our coming-into-existence, or ek-sisting – standing-out from and within - the world. The problem, as Stiegler addresses, is the disappearance of the ability to question this notion of Being *at all* combined with the inability to project any trajectory or anticipate a future becoming of ourselves. So, through technological prostheses, that is, the industrialization of memory and exteriorization of knowledge by the culture and programming industries, we are at risk of being unable to have the requisite understanding and know-how to think for ourselves.

In order to understand how Stiegler arrives at this position I will first outline the link between consciousness and time before retracing his theoretical framework from Hegel, to Heidegger and finally Adorno. The key move that Stiegler makes is to argue for the danger of the exteriorization process of technology, one that disenables and *disindividuates* the individual.

## 1) Stiegler: Consciousness, Time and Epiphylogenesis

(i) Consciousness with(in) time: retentional apparatuses, epiphylogenesis and selection

(a) Husserl's primary and secondary retentions

Stiegler's work on consciousness and temporal objects begins with Husserl's phenomenological approach (cf. Husserl, 1931). Husserl's approach was one of intentionality: so that consciousness is always conscious *of* someone or something. In order to analyze consciousness with the structure of flux, Husserl needed to find a temporal object of consciousness that was not only *in* time but was constituted, as with the stream of consciousness, *by* time (Husserl, 2019: 57-58). This ideal temporal object was melody.

Melody, then, represents *primary retention*. Primary retentions equate to the *perception* of things in the present *now*. Primary retention,

is what the *now* of an unfolding temporal object retains in itself from all its previous *nows*. Even though they have passed, these preceding *nows* are maintained within the temporal object's current *now*...[it] is an originary association between the *now* and what Husserl calls the "just-past," which remains present in the now

(Stiegler, 2011a: 14-15; emphasis in original)

So, primary retention '*belongs to the present of perception*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 34; emphasis in original).

Yet melody can *also* represent Husserl's notion of *secondary retention*, not to be confused with *primary retention*, whereby we re-play in our memory a melody that we have heard in the past. This then is consciousness as *past* consciousness and equates to the consciousness of things through *imagination*. To these two retentional apparatuses Stiegler modifies Husserl's terminology and adds a third: *tertiary retention*.

#### (b) Tertiary retention, protentions and epiphylogenesis

Tertiary retention is a memory involving 'all forms of recording' and equates to what Husserl termed the '*consciousness of image*' (Stiegler, 2011a: 16-17; emphasis in original). With the advent of the phonogram, which Stiegler terms a 'tertiary retention', 'the identical repetition of the same temporal object has become possible' (Stiegler, 2014b: 34).

However, this 'identical repetition' is ambiguous since it can both create an intensification of the *difference* between the repetitions (the 'two *different* temporal *phenomena*') - so that in listening to a melody a second time the listener hears new things; it can *also* create *indifference* in the listener since the melody has been heard already and so the 'difference can be annulled by tertiary retentions just as much as it can be intensified by them' (Stiegler, 2014b: 34-35).

With tertiary (and equally with secondary) retentions there are *protentions* involved – anticipations of what will be repeated or re-imagined/re-membered. In order to hear the melody a second time, one must anticipate the next note. These protentions constitute ‘the expectation that animate the consciousness – built on archi-protentions: death, desire for reproduction and expenditure – whose core is the unconscious’ (Stiegler, 2011a: 17).

This then brings us to epiphylogenesis, which is the ‘*process of production*’ of tertiary retentions and is the ‘*sedimentary deposit* left by the process of production of tertiary retentions of all kinds’ (Stiegler, 2014b: 34-35; emphasis in original). It is the past that is handed down to so as to become the past contained within the present: an inherited past. So, epiphylogenesis contains the ‘technical traces constructing [one’s] artificial past that is not “one’s own” but that must become one’s own, must be “inherited” as one’s own history, becoming accessible to *Dasein*<sup>2</sup> (Stiegler, 2011a: 37). Epiphylogenesis then represents the cultural milieu into which an individual is born and from which the process of individuation begins. It is in Heideggerian terms the ‘thrownness’ of one’s *Dasein*; *Dasein* as the ‘*already-there*’ (which I will address in the next section).

And yet, with hyper-modernity and the hyper-industrial age tertiary retentions represent a *threat* to the sensibilities of the individual, to the ability for the individual to individuate him/herself from within the pre-individual, cultural milieu.

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<sup>2</sup> For Stiegler this is ‘one’s historicality’ so that Stiegler’s tertiary retention is ‘Heidegger’s *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* (world-historicity)’ (Stiegler, 2011a: 37).

### (c) Retentional selection

The reason for this threat is that the process of individuation is predicated upon the selection of retentions based on already-existing retentions that filter the temporal flux of primary retentions that forms an individual's lived experience. So an *I* is a 'consciousness consisting of a temporal *flux of primary retentions*' but, crucially, '*these retentions are selections*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 52; emphasis in original). What Stiegler is arguing for is a model of consciousness whereby each memory is dependent in turn upon a pre-existing selection by *another* retention. So, primary retentions are filtered by secondary retentions, and both primary and secondary retentions determined by the filter of tertiary retentions. In this way we return to epiphylogenesis as a pre-determining factor in one's lived conscious experience, since one's primary retentions are predicated upon the tertiary terrain through which they are filtered, and by which they are constituted.

The extent of the threat of this form of this exteriorization of memory can be understood by Hegel's notion of *Geist* and *Sittlichkeit*. It is from this that we can understand the loss of enchantment that Stiegler theorizes. It is, at its core, an argument for a Faustian pact of profound and potentially catastrophic proportions.

## 2) Hegel: *Geist* and the Machine

Stiegler, following Paul Valery, is concerned with the 'loss of spirit value' and hence with the 're-enchantment of the world'. For Hegel, the spirit of the world is *Geist*, and it is the development of *Geist* that provides ultimate meaning. Yet, as Stiegler has shown, what Hegel fails to 'think' (Hegel's *unthought*) is that the exteriorization process brought about by digitization and machines (first analogue then digital) changes the orthography and inscription of the world to the extent that exteriority is no longer *outside*, and becomes interiority itself. 'Exteriority is sublatale' (Stiegler, 2015a: 123) and as a result it threatens to devalue, and collapse, spirit from *within*. What Hegel mistakenly theorises as the progression of *Geist* is for Stiegler in fact the opposite: it is the rupturing of *noesis* and noetic activity. This critique of Hegel is crucial, since in theorizing the rupture, Stiegler allows for the possibility of new forms of noetic activity within the technological and technical culture.

### (i) *Geist* and *Sittlichkeit*

Hegel's conception of *Sittlichkeit* – or 'ethical life' is key to understanding the ethical concerns brought about by the emergence of the hyper-industrial society. From his critique of the Enlightenment age, and the rise of individualism, Hegel pre-empted the central issue of techno-economic industrialization: the unity of ethical life in the modern epoch.

Hegel's position is in part a reaction to Kant (Hegel, 2012; Kant, 2005). Kant's deontological moral philosophy represents the ultimate conception of rational autonomy. Morality founded upon pure practical reason ensures right action. So, Kant's morality is founded upon his 'categorical imperative': we *know* what is right if this action can be made into a universal maxim for the good of all (Kant, 2005: 74). Hegel's famous criticism is that this is 'empty formalism' because in abstracting to the universal Kant has divested his theory of any workable practical content (Hegel, 2012: 162).

So, in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that Kant's 'moral point of view' is 'a *formal identity* which necessarily excludes every content and determination' (Freyenhagen, 2011: 96-97; Hegel, 2012: 162). By fixing the individual will to a moral framework, to a 'formal identity', Kant has divested the form of any content. So although it possesses theoretical, conceptual form, it lacks any real, substantive content.

As Fabian Freyenhagen has shown, there are three objections (Freyenhagen, 2011: 97). They can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the objection of 'no immanent doctrine' denies Kant's a priori claim for dutiful, moral action, since it is not possible to know the 'doctrine of duty' even if we can analytically and reasonably understand the duty itself (Freyenhagen, 2011: 97). Secondly, the objection of 'no criterion for testing potential duties' attacks Kant's premise of the categorical imperative, the idea of the *universal law* (Freyenhagen, 2011: 97). The universal claim leaves out the particular detail to carry out the law. Thirdly, Kant's formalism can yield 'false positives' where we can rationally partake in a

morally wrong action by denying the evidence and appropriating our own set of beliefs; and even, 'false negatives' where a short-term wrong is carried out for a long-term good (Freyenhagen, 2011: 97).

For Hegel, ultimate meaning stems from his conception of 'absolute spirit' or *Geist*. Human beings, on this view, come to realize the ideal nature of humanity through speculative rational thought. It is their ability for self-reflection and reflexive thought that raises them above animal existence, and since pure rational thought is intimately connected to *Geist*, they continue to develop over time and across different ages of history, progressively realizing the Idea, *Geist* or 'absolute spirit'. Yet, human beings can only do this within a society that enables them to take the right actions in the right way, in other words: they are dependent upon their family, civil society and government. It is this that ensures Hegel's formulation *has* content and it is this added safeguard that Kant's 'empty' formalism lacks. Ultimately, the realization of *Geist* is possible, for Hegel, because of his conception of the *Sittlichkeit* or 'ethical life' as the historical realization of the Good.

At the heart of this is 'civil society', in which Hegel dismisses the dichotomy normally set up between the individual and society. In a 'civil society' each individual through self-actualization contributes to society as a whole, but they are only able to achieve this self-development through the society – one connected to *Geist* - in which they live. Each is necessary for the realization of the other and neither has abstract priority since both are the actualization of *Geist*.

There are three stages of development of the individual will for Hegel. Firstly, the stage of 'pure indeterminacy' (Hegel, 2012: 37-39); secondly, the stage of determinacy or 'particularity' – whereby the "I" steps into existence' (Hegel, 2012: 39-40); lastly, is the stage of individuality or self-determination whereby 'the will is the unity of both these moments – *particularity* reflected into *itself* thereby restored to *universality*' (Hegel, 2012: 41-42). This last stage is key to understanding civil society since it is in the recognition of *itself* in the external world that restores the individual to the level of the universal, the absolute spirit or *Geist*.

For Stiegler, however, Hegel's position rests on a false assumption that fails to account for the true trajectory of technological-noetic development. Hegel's *Geist* is identical to the orthographic culture since it is this orthographic culture that is the development and expression of *Geist*.

As Charles Taylor has shown, Hegel's model for *Sittlichkeit* is the Greek *polis* in which the individual and society were one (Taylor, 1979: 89-92). In other words, the citizen's actions and responsibilities were clearly delineated in relation to the needs of the *polis*. So, for instance, each citizen was also a soldier and expected to fight in defence of not only their own *polis* but also any other *poleis* with which they had an alliance.<sup>3</sup> Each citizen, and the *polis* as a whole, was dependent on the commitment of *each* individual within the social fabric. So, "The whole is a stable equilibrium of all the parts, and each part is a Spirit at

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<sup>3</sup> Prof. Michael Scott, 'Who were the Greeks?' (BBC documentary, 27/06/2013)

home in this whole, a Spirit which does not seek its satisfaction outside of itself but finds it within itself' (Hegel, 1977: 277).

However, with the Enlightenment and the modern age comes the rise of individualism. With the modern form of individualism the part and the whole of the *polis* are separated. One reason for this, as Taylor argues, is that the modern state is much larger than the Greek *polis* (Taylor, 1979: 116). The smaller *polis* was able to stay united but with greater expansion the social bonds are strained or broken. Yet there are also two other major factors involved in this separation. Firstly, there is the philosophical/cultural shift that alters the concept of the individual – so, with Socratic thought comes a questioning of authority and assumptions upon which the *polis* is founded, compounded later by the Cartesian 'I'. Secondly, with the Industrial Revolution, there is a technological shift with the separation of the individual from his work – as Hegel shows in the separateness and externality of the machine, something that is then developed and modified by Marx into his theory of alienation (which I will address in the next section). Both these factors find their apotheosis in the current age of hyper-industrial society: the first in the questioning of expert opinion and the second in the alienating affects of modern technologically mediated social interaction. In this way, the individual finds him/herself like the Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic: 'the consciousness of self as dual-natured, merely contradictory being' which is 'not yet in its unity' and therefore without recognition (Hegel, 1977: 126).

Here, the Slave is unable to deny his existence but cannot risk his life in confrontation with the Master; it becomes, in Alexandre Kojève's reading, a position of self-reflection without action that would provide meaningful existence to the Slave – so the Slave must look to a transcendent 'beyond' offered by Christianity as a way out (Kojève, 1980). Similarly, the self-interest of radical individualism divests individuals of meaningful, ethical action (Kojève, 1980). The atomistic, self-interest of radical individualism is consequently unable to actualize a sense of self that connects to a deeper meaning - and find recognition – and it is this combined failure that threatens the intrinsic unity of *Sittlichkeit*.

What Hegel discovers in modernity is the contradiction of radical individualism. Whilst the individual is free to do as they please – Hegel's definition of 'arbitrary' freedom (Hegel, 2012: 48-49) – this is an immature freedom since it is divorced from the greater whole, the larger meaning within which the individual is self-actualized. This then creates a separation for the (for-it)self *from* the (in-it)self since it is unable to recognize itself in, and reflected back from, the external world.

For Stiegler, the problem Hegel faces is that in his historical development of 'the constitution of spirit' Hegel 'grants no status to technicity itself in the dialectical process that is exteriorization internalizing itself' (Stiegler, 2015a: 117).

Therefore, Hegel's dialectic is described as a 'logic, but not as a techno-logic, a mechano-logic or an organo-logic, and still less as a pharmaco-logic' (Stiegler, 2015a: 117). This means for Hegel that technology is seen only as exteriorization that realizes cultural progression through the 'logic' of *Geist*,

through a spiritual process, and results in Hegel making orthographic inscription *identical* to the culture it 'writes'. In the Hegelian worldview (and via Hegel's teleological view of history) culture is inevitably a *positive* progression.<sup>4</sup>

For Stiegler, this is simply an inadequate framing of orthography and culture, since it fails to encompass the technological-noetic dynamic that underpins them, failing to see technology as something separate from *Sittlichkeit*. The Hegelian notion is flawed since in viewing orthographic technology as spiritual and identical to culture, whilst viewing the machine as outside of this process, Hegel ignores (or is unable to conceive) the *evolution* of technology that disrupts spirit, *Geist* or noesis. The positive progression in Hegel's grand narrative veils an increasing *rupture*, for Stiegler, so that technology and technicity in fact threaten noetic activity and humanity's 'spirit value'. So, it is the *pharmacological* nature of technology that we should recognize: it is both cure *and* poison. Paradoxically, it is by theorizing the sickness of technology that allows Stiegler to suggest a possible remedy.

(ii) From Tool to Machine

In his *System of Ethical Life* Hegel lays the foundation for his theory of *Sittlichkeit* that he then develops in various ways in the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1979; Hegel, 2012; Hegel, 1977). Here, as H. S.

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<sup>4</sup> Hegel would view 'disastrous' periods of history, such as war, as an unfolding of the development *Geist* and therefore not 'negative'.

Harris has shown, Hegel distinguishes between the stage of 'feeling' and the stage of 'thought in relation to 'concept' and 'intuition' (Hegel, 1979).

So, following Harris, in the first stage of 'feeling' the inner intuition is dominant. Here, man is seen as a 'subject' with a singular feeling of subjective need, a sentient organism connected to the finite and real. Whereas, in the second stage of 'thought' it is the inner concept which is dominant. The individual is now a 'person' who owns property, finds an objective task, is connected to 'social relations', and to ideas that are infinite and ideal. The key move between these two stages is in the transition from the 'tool' to the 'machine' – from enjoyment as 'finite' to the notion of 'continuous' 'transformation'.

What occurs with the Enlightenment's industrial process is the division of (an individual's) labour that leads to surplus production. The affects of this are twofold. Firstly, the labourer is alienated from the process of production, from the satisfaction of the work that is connected to a singular self. Secondly, with the surplus of supply comes a transformation of the mode of satisfaction of needs. So,

The particular, into which the universal is transferred, therefore becomes ideal and the ideality is a partition of it. The entire object in its determinate character is not annihilated altogether, but this labor, applied to the object as an entirety, is partitioned in itself and becomes a single laboring; and this single laboring becomes for this very reason more mechanical, because variety is excluded from it and so it becomes itself something more universal, more foreign to [the living] whole. This sort of laboring, thus divided, presupposes at the same time that the remaining needs are provided for in another way, for this way too has to be labored on, i.e., by the labor of other men. But this deadening [characteristic] of mechanical labor directly implies the possibility of cutting oneself off from it altogether; for the labor here is wholly quantitative without variety, and since its subsumption in intelligence is

self-cancelling, something absolutely external, a thing, can then be used owing to its self-sameness both in respect of its labor and its movement. It is only a question of finding for it an equally dead principle of movement, a self-differentiating power of nature like the movement of water, wind, stream, etc., and the tool passes over into the machine, since the restlessness of the subject, the concept, is itself posited outside the subject [in the energy source].

(Hegel, 1979: 117-118)

Stiegler, however, critiques the idea that 'the concept, is itself posited *outside* the subject' (my emphasis). In fact, it is the very milieu of the subject that *creates* and *precedes* the individual, so that Hegel's master/slave dialectic is now 'reversed' and 'debilitated' (Stiegler, 2014c: 31). For Stiegler, it is impossible to 'cut oneself off from it altogether' as technology – in particular image technology - has evolved to constitute our world. So, the way we *think* culture is founded upon the culture that we inherit via epiphylogenesis, and technicity, is the framework within which we have access to this culture. It is no longer simply a case of industrial machinery, but a technological and technical culture that precedes, creates and increasingly provides the means for human agency and further for human consciousness. It is for this reason that the machine can no longer remain outside of this dynamic since it becomes central to it. So, for Stiegler, far from being a development of *Geist*, the evolution of technology threatens noesis and forces us to modify ourselves in order to integrate and adapt to technology. I will address Stiegler's notion of 'adaptation' versus 'adoption' in the next section.

The beginnings of Marx's theory of alienated labour are evident in the above passage whereby, due to the industrial division of labour, the labour is

'partitioned in itself' and the process of the 'deadening [characteristic] of mechanical labor' can lead to 'cutting oneself off from it altogether'. However, for Marx, the key departure is from Hegel's idealism (in his formulation of *Geist*) to materialism (in the means of production and the proletarianization of the worker). As Jonathan Wolff has written, 'In Marx's view the institutions of capitalism – themselves the consequences of human behaviour – come back to structure our future behaviour, determining the possibilities of our action' (Wolff, 2017). Whereas for Hegel the worker and the machine remain completely separate, for Marx – although alienated from the machine – the worker is tied to the institutional and economic apparatuses of capitalism, within which the machine operates. It is this that deadens the lives of the workers for Marx, divesting them of their agency.

For Stiegler, one of Marx's central errors is that he misunderstands machine technology and 'turns the negativity of the universal subject of history...into the revolutionary principle' (Stiegler, 2015a: 127). Instead, Stiegler continues, 'it is in fact the curative positivity of the pharmacological supplement deriving from work that inverts the logic of disindividuation...that must make possible a new age of individuation' (Stiegler, 2015a: 127). Unlike Stiegler's critique of Hegel, who misses the toxicity of technology, Marx has the opposite problem of missing the curative potential. So, Marx has 'misunderstood his own theory of exteriorization as leading to proletarianization' since he 'was incapable of thinking this hyper-material materiality that is knowledge as fixed capital, and he failed to think and to critique the technicity of capitalism as pharmacological revolution as well as therapeutic revolution' (Stiegler, 2015a: 140). In other

words, it is precisely the institutional and organizational apparatuses (especially in the form of digitization) that open up the possibility of and create new forms of agency.

- (iii) Ends without knowledge: Grammatization as the 'new individuation' leading to *disindividuation*

Following Simondon, Stiegler frames the development of individuals as a process of 'individuation'. This process of individuation is one of transformation, so that 'to individuate oneself is to transform oneself' (Stiegler, 2014c: 30). It is both psychic and collective, and therefore affected by the milieu in which the individual finds him/herself, 'the *I*, as a *psychic individual*, can only be thought to the extent that it is part of a *we*, which is a *collective individual*' (Stiegler, 2014c: 83; emphasis in original).

For Stiegler, with digitization this process becomes 'at once psychic, collective and *technical*' (Stiegler, 2015a: 120; emphasis in original). And it is therefore the *transductive* relationship of the psychic, collective and the technical in the process of transindividuation - between R (relational) technologies and the individuals - that Hegel fails to take account of, conceiving of it as a 'purely spiritual process' (Stiegler, 2015a: 117). So, for Stiegler, individuation is 'essentially a process of adoption' (Stiegler, 2014c: 31; emphasis in original), one of long-circuits, anamnesis ('thinking for oneself' – Stiegler, 2013b: 18) and noetic activity, whereby the individual 'adopts' the technology. However, with

digitization, informatics, 'language machines' and programme industries, these long-circuits of adoption are bypassed and short-circuited. This then represents a process of *adaptation*, whereby the knowledge and understanding is threatened by or lost through its exteriorization to digital, computational technology. This distinction between adoption and adaptation is crucial to understanding Stiegler's 'double epochal re-doubling', which I address in detail in chapter seven.

At the root of this change in the individuation process then is the *exteriorization* of knowledge. There have been three key stages in this exteriorization process, each increasingly leading to a *greater*, more complex, level of exteriorization. First, is the exteriority of knowledge in the act of writing, a form of *hypomnesis* 'artificial memory' (Stiegler, 2013b: 18). This allows information to be passed between generations, yet it also allows for the control of societies (Deleuze) in organization and tradition, a form of knowledge that allows for the continuation of faults, the Epimethean 'fault as de-fault' (Stiegler). Second, with industrial revolution and the machine, know-how, craft and skill (*savoir-faire*) become exteriorized via the division of labour, and by extension the act of writing proliferates in the printing press. Lastly, digital and relational (R) technologies bring about the *absolute* exteriority of knowledge leading to *disindividuation* and the *loss* of knowledge. This combined with a capitalism driven by consumerism and service economies leads to a loss of knowing how to live (*savoir-vivre*).

Hegel misses the fact that individuation is entangled with technicity since technology in its exteriorization of interiority *in turn* subsumes the exterior as

the *interior*. Rather than a Hegelian dialectical development of *Geist*, Stiegler states that: 'Humanity, as a process of individuation whose dynamism is to be found in the process of exteriorization, is an *accidental* becoming, and not the fulfillment of an essence' (Stiegler, 2015b: 41; emphasis in original). Indeed for Stiegler, '*adaptationist cognitive capitalism*' means there is an '*absence of thought*' and '*an absence of consciousness that constitutes the abandonment of any capacity to decide that it is possible to think otherwise*' (Stiegler, 2014c: 68; emphasis in original), and the individual is no longer a 'knowing subject' (Stiegler, 2014c: 72). Hegel's error is that an 'absolute knowledge...flavourless, without savour, is for Hegel inconceivable' (Stiegler, 2015a: 117). Stiegler moves the debate from a 'phenomenology of spirit' to a '*pharmacology*' (at once cure and poison) of spirit, where the *toxicity* of this process is revealed. I will address this in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Emptied of rational, autonomous, anamnestic knowledge where one can think for oneself and 'critique' the information that proliferates in the 'information society', Hegel's dialectical development of *Geist* collapses. If individuation is also increasingly *dis*-individuation, then the philosophy of recognition (which is the Hegelian counterpart to Simondon's psychic and collective individuation) is also nullified. Hegel's conception of *Sittlichkeit*, in Stieglerian terms, becomes threatened not simply by Hegel's radical individualism but by the *technical* milieu that creates *dis*-sociation, '*the destruction of the social*' and which is also 'ANTISOCIAL' and can become 'asocial' (Stiegler, 2014c: 35-37). This leads to irrational, disaffected individuals living within 'systems of stupidity', something that is both '*dangerous and explosive*' (Stiegler, 2014c: 35; emphasis in original).

### 3) Heidegger: Technics and *Dasein*

Stiegler's *Technics and Time* develops Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*. Heidegger's fundamental ontology marries both an ontological approach of what it is to live authentically with a phenomenological approach concerning the problems of inauthenticity within a society of others and the dominance of 'They'.

Heidegger's philosophical concerns then help to ground notions of performativity in everyday, lived experience, as well as laying the groundwork for an understanding of being in a technological environment. The problem Stiegler identifies, however, is that as with Hegel, he fails to fully take account of the effect of the exteriorization process on reflective-reflexivity and noetic activity.

#### (i) The Typewriter and The Hand

Heidegger's philosophy concerning both Being and technology can be approached from a section of *Parmenides* about the typewriter and the hand. For Heidegger the typewriter is an exemplum of the problem of technological progress and the hand encapsulates the relationship between the individual and his/her environment. In creating such mediation between the act of writing and the hand, humanity began to cover and conceal being so that a 'transformation occurred in the relation of Being to man'.

The hand is the locus of action for the human, so that 'Man himself acts [*handelt*] through the hand [*Hand*]; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man' (Heidegger, 1999: 198). The hand is how humans create,

relate to and even destroy their world, its functions include 'prayer and murder', 'greeting and thanks', and importantly 'the "hand-work", and the tool' (Heidegger, 1999: 198). The hand then is central to the performative act in that it enables human beings' performance of actions in relation to their environment.

It is also the expression of language through the act of writing, so that:

The hand sprang forth only out of the word and together with the word. Man does not "have" hands, but the hand holds the essence of man, because the word as the essential realm of the hand is the ground of the essence of man. The word as what is inscribed and what appears to the regard is the written word, i.e., script. And the word as script is handwriting.

(Heidegger, 1999: 198)

So in the act of writing, the individual expresses him/herself and inscribes him/herself in word, and into a his/her-story that can then be inherited and read. And yet, the mechanical writing of the typewriter removes individual identity – a form of leveling - and therefore, 'The typewriter is a signless cloud, i.e., a withdrawing concealment in the midst of its very obtrusiveness, and through it the relation of Being to man is transformed' (Heidegger, 1999: 199). In exteriorizing individual handwriting then, mechanical writing becomes nameless and anonymous.

## (ii) The Origin of the Question

Heidegger's starting point in *Being and Time* is that we have forgotten to ask the central question concerning existence, that of 'Being'. In the pull of the day-to-

day it is not merely the question of what things 'are' in the world as entities or beings - that is, the *ontic* sense of beings – it is the *ontology* of being that has been forgotten. It is the question of Being, the foundation, hence fundamental ontology of being.

Heidegger objects to the traditional metaphysics upon which much philosophy is founded. In other words, he questions whether there *is* an 'essence', an 'in-itself', which must be discovered, which one 'is' and that we must find in order to live authentically. For Heidegger this mistakenly follows a long line of traditional Western philosophy from Plato's 'forms', through to Descartes' dualism and Kant's idealism, which seek to explain an underlying, transcendental, metaphysical 'meaning' of being. So, Heidegger roots his philosophy firmly in the existence that we experience: the everyday, being-in-the-world.

### (iii) *Da-sein, Mitsein, Authenticity and Anxiety*

Heidegger's fundamental ontology of 'being' posits an understanding of being that is a 'being *there*': a *Da-sein*. This version of how we exist in the world starts with us *in media res*: we are already *thrown* into the midst-of-the-world. In short, Heidegger focuses solely on the 'being' of human being: we are and an understanding of that 'being' is what is at stake, not a mystical, transcendental 'entity' yet-to-be-discovered behind this being.

Similar to Hegel's philosophy of recognition of the self and the other, our reality of being is *revealed* not only in *Dasein* but *Mitsein*, being-with. Yet for Heidegger,

being-with entails that, in the 'everyday', the self can become absorbed in the 'publicness' of the 'other', lost in the 'they-self': where 'Dasein has been dispersed into the "they"' (Heidegger, 1962: 167). So, we are thrown into the 'everyday' reality of being in which there is a "levelling down" [Einebnung] of all possibilities of Being' (Heidegger, 1962: 165). The "'they" [das Man]' is revealed as a 'dictatorship' that 'concerns itself as such with averageness' so that, 'Everyone is the other, and no one is himself' (Heidegger, 1962: 163-165).

Heidegger's focus is on our ability to become 'lost' in a reality that is the 'everydayness' of the 'they'. So, Heidegger accepts, rather than denies<sup>5</sup>, the 'what is' of the everyday. He accepts this ability to be 'lost' as part of what it is to be. In this way, Heidegger's use of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' are accommodated equally in his philosophy of Dasein. To be authentically oneself, for Heidegger, is to have a sense of possession, of mine-ness, to the possibilities that are available to one's being. Dasein discovers itself in a process of 'clearing-away of concealments...as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way' (Heidegger, 1962: 167). The danger is that freedom of expression of 'self' in a media-technological age can then become a process of creating layer upon layer of 'concealments' and 'disguises', of performances that hide (rather than reveal) the Self, in the public arena of the 'they-self', which is:

...insensitive to every difference of level and of genuineness and thus never gets to the 'heart of the matter'. By publicness everything gets obscured, and what has thus been covered up gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone.

(Heidegger, 1962: 165)

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<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Sartre's phenomenological ontology that focuses on a human reality that is in a pervasive *denial* – in 'bad faith' - of its authenticity,

What is the motivating force behind this process? The key here is in the use of 'familiar' and its implications of feeling 'at home', since for Heidegger the driving force is *anxiety*, and in 'anxiety one feels *uncanny*' where "uncanniness" also means "not-being-at-home" (Heidegger, 1962: 233). This is intimately related to our 'Being-towards-death' since 'Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety' since in 'anticipating [zum] the indefinite certainty of death, Dasein opens itself to a constant *threat* arising out of its own "there"' (Heidegger, 1962: 310). It is this 'anticipation' that:

*reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself...in an impassioned **freedom towards death** – a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the "they", and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.*

(Heidegger, 1962: 311; emphasis and bold in original)

So in contrast to Sartre who conceived our realization of freedom in moments of anguish, when a 'rupture' in our world appears, for Heidegger we are *always* motivated by an underlying 'anxiety', not in a specific, identifiable sense of anxiousness about something in particular but an anxiousness which stems from a being that is, as part of its ontological structure, a 'being-towards-death'.

Dasein 'exists as thrown Being *towards* its end' and, crucially, Dasein 'covers up its ownmost Being-towards-death, fleeing *in the face* of it' (Heidegger, 1962: 295; emphasis in original). In this flight, Dasein seeks the familiarity, the 'at-homeness' of the 'everyday', yet the 'everyday' is not Dasein's 'ownmost possibility', which is death (Heidegger, 1962: 303).

(iv) The problem of 'They'

Performance of the self is ontologically part of this covering up of the certain uncertainty towards death. The 'everydayness' and 'they' are complicit in the concealment of this fact: 'Everydayness confines itself to conceding the 'certainty' of death in [an] ambiguous manner just in order to weaken that certainty by covering up dying still more' so that 'the evasive concealment in the face of death dominates everydayness', and because 'the Self of everydayness is the "they"', the "'they"' 'aggravates the *temptation* to cover up from oneself one's ownmost Being-towards-death' (Heidegger, 1962: 297; emphasis in original). This is an '*inauthentic* Being-towards-death' - it is a *diversion* - 'but Dasein does not necessarily and constantly have to divert itself into this kind of Being' (Heidegger, 1962: 303).

Authenticity, today, has come to equate to the notion of being oneself. Yet, of course, what this entails is highly problematic – and I address Adorno's own critique later in this chapter (Adorno, 2003). As Somogy Varga and Charles Guignon have shown, Heidegger's use of 'authenticity' implies a relation to our own being, so that 'we exist *for the sake of* ourselves: enacting roles and expressing character traits contribute to realizing some image of what it is to be human in our own cases' (Varga and Guignon, 2020: 16).

The consumer media-technological environment is the epitome of concealment and diversion away from authenticity and, moreover, late capitalist modernity has within its own make up, the 'progressive' motor of socio-economic 'growth'

that seeks to perpetuate a deferral of death and a plunging *into* the 'everydayness' of the 'they-self'. This version of modernity is not interested in that which is infinite or indefinite, only in the means-ends calculations of the finite and definite, in Heidegger's graspable world picture. So, the awareness of a self in *this* environment is an awareness of performance *in relation to* the 'they-self' of 'publicness', yet authenticity arises ultimately in '*death, as the end of Dasein, [which] is Dasein's ownmost possibility – non-relational, certain and as such indefinite*' (Heidegger, 1962: 303; emphasis in original).

As George Steiner has commented, Heidegger's framing of inauthenticity is that it is a necessary condition to discover authenticity (Steiner, 1989: 98). We become 'lost' and then, as it were, 'found'. Yet Stiegler's primary concern with this framing is that the process of exteriorization means that such reflective-reflexive understanding is made impossible. Again this is due in part to the manipulation and acceleration of time. To understand what 'has been' it is necessary to be able to have a reference point that within the temporal flux recognizes something as past, present or future. Yet, the synchronization of time across media and technology radically alters this consciousness of time to the extent that we are constantly confronted with an immanent sense of the 'present'. This necessarily covers up and conceals the origin of the present from the past, and becomes handed down (through epiphylogenesis) as the already-there. The origin of the present handed down from the past is concealed and forgotten.

(v) Equipment – performativity as a mode of encounter with entities

As the language of the essay on the typewriter and the hand shows the idea of the hand is central to Heidegger's philosophy, and the world we encounter for Heidegger can be divided into two types of encounter with entities or objects. The first is the 'ready-to-hand' and the second is the 'present-at-hand'. Objects in our environment are proximally present-at-hand in that they appear to us as things. Yet they become 'ready-to-hand' in their 'equimentality' (Heidegger, 1962: 97-98), in their usefulness *for* some task. The famous example he uses is that of the hammer. When the hammer is merely at rest in the room it is an object 'present-at-hand', yet in use it reveals itself to us as 'ready-to-hand'. If whilst in the act of using the hammer it breaks, it returns itself to present-at-hand. The world then is constantly revealing or concealing itself from us in our performative encounter with it. In other words, the available choices allow for different performances or roles of the self.

This section of *Being and Time* is noticeable for the use of the craftsman reference. This is a direct link to the notion of revealing being through the creative act, *poesis*, which Heidegger views as the 'saving power' for an increasingly technological framing and engagement with the world, and this brings us to his work on technology.

(vi) The Question Concerning Technology

How then does the being of Dasein relate to a being-in-the-world towards or with technology? The question Heidegger asks is ostensibly one concerning the 'essence' of technology or an investigation into the 'thing' that we call technology. So, 'We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is' (Heidegger, 2011: 218). For Heidegger, the answer lies in our modern day conception that it is both 'instrumental' and 'anthropological', that it is a 'means to an end' and 'a human activity' and for him these two definitions belong together.

If one predominant conception of technology is as a means to an end then, Heidegger argues, we must investigate what our notion of 'causality' is, since 'Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed...there reigns causality' (Heidegger, 2011: 219). For Heidegger, this causality goes back to the ancient Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes: (i) *causa materialis*, the material; (ii) *causa formalis*, the form; (iii) *causa finalis*, the end; and (iv) *causa efficiens*, that which brings about that which is finished. Yet the Enlightenment scientific rationalization of causality has meant that we have emphasized the importance of the fourth cause, *causa efficiens*, and have 'been accustomed to representing cause as that which brings something about' which misses the original Greek conception of cause which 'had nothing at all to do with bringing about and effecting' but rather meant 'that to which something else is indebted' and consequently, the four causes together are 'the ways...of being responsible for something else' (Heidegger, 2011: 219-220). Here then, Heidegger seems to

suggest that we have missed the sense of cause as an origin, not in the sense of a prior causal (mechanical) event – a ‘what’, but an origin in the sense of ‘why’, of why something has come about in the first place; that the physical chain-like linking of ‘means-end’ causality misses a sense that includes an original (or origin of) meaning.

For Heidegger, ‘The four ways of being responsible bring something into appearance’ leading us to a definition of the Greek *aitia* as ‘to occasion’, in turn bringing us to a key term for Heidegger: *poiesis* (Heidegger, 2011: 221).

Following Plato, “Every occasion for whatever passes beyond the nonpresent and goes forward into presencing is *poiesis*, bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*]” (Heidegger, 2011: 221). Not only are artistic crafts such as ‘handicraft manufacture’ instances of *poiesis*, but *physis* – the physical world or nature – is ‘*poiesis* in the highest sense’. In the arts and crafts the ‘irruption belonging to a bringing-forth’ occurs in another – in the artist or craftsman – whereas in *physis*, the irruption occurs in itself, such as in the ‘bursting of a blossom into bloom’.

How then does this ‘bringing-forth’ happen? Heidegger continues,

Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing-forth propriates only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *aletheia* for revealing...We say “truth” and usually understand it as correctness of representation.

(Heidegger, 2011: 222)

Heidegger’s key claim, then, is that we have misappropriated “truth” as ‘correctness of representation’ rather than unconcealment or ‘revealing’.

In this way 'revealing' or 'bringing-forth', not means-ends instrumentality, is the *real* mode of technology, 'Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing' (Heidegger, 2011: 222). Heidegger traces the root of the word 'technology' (*technikon*) from *techne*, which also belongs to *poiesis*. So, 'this *techne* is a bringing-forth': 'Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens' (Heidegger, 2011: 223).

Yet modern technology is not a bringing-forth in the same sense of *poiesis*. For Heidegger, the 'revealing' of modern technology is a 'challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that be extracted and stored as such' (Heidegger, 2011: 223). So, the world as construed by this technology is one of 'standing-reserve' that can be mined, and stored, for later use; here nature is 'on call', it is challenged and 'set upon'.

Humans are central to this process. It is 'man' that 'accomplishes the challenging setting-upon through which what we call the actual is revealed as standing-reserve'. Yet, importantly man does not instigate this process, since man does not have 'control over unconcealment itself' but 'finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed', and so 'has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve' (Heidegger, 2011: 225-226).

Technology, then, is not merely some instrument(s) or apparatus that is used *within* the world. Modern technology ‘challenges’ the human to relate to, use and create the world in a particular way, in a way that reveals the ‘actual’ as ‘standing-reserve’. The bringing-forth into appearance of modern technology paradoxically creates an environment (or distorts the human’s relationship to his/her environment) in such a way as to conceal the world, until the ‘object disappears’ into the ‘objectlessness of standing-reserve’ (Heidegger, 2011: 226).

Modern technology has the force of a ‘revealing that orders’, and the name that Heidegger gives to ‘the challenging claim that gathers man with a view to ordering’ is *Ge-stell* [enframing] (Heidegger, 2011: 227). The ‘enframing’ of *Gestell* ‘means the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e. challenges forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering as standing-reserve’ (Heidegger, 2011: 227).

The revealing of the ‘actual’ as ‘standing-reserve’ occurs in the modern age in a way that ‘nature’ is viewed as the ‘chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve’ (Heidegger, 2011: 228). This is driven by ‘the rise of modern physics as an exact science’ which ‘entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces’ (Heidegger, 2011: 228). The ‘illusion’ and ‘deceptive appearance’ that this ultimately creates is that ‘modern technology is applied physical science’ (Heidegger, 2011: 229).

*Gestell* and *techne* conspire together to create an illusion of reality that is in fact a distortion of what ‘true’ revelation is. The ‘revealing’ of technology is in fact as

much a concealment of the very process of 'bringing-forth' as it is a bringing to presence in appearance. The modern age has become blinded by this *appearance* of the world, the presencing of the world and nature as 'standing-reserve', and has become saturated by this 'revealing' to the point of non-seeing and concealment. Modern science's confidence in the revelation of 'truth', of nature as a set of 'calculable', discoverable 'laws' and 'forces', has led to technology as 'proof' of the ability to 'apply' these laws.

So what Heidegger provides is an important phenomenological and ontological approach to the question of lived experience – of what it is to be in the world, and what it is to be in relation to technology. However, it is here that Heidegger's metaphysical claims come under most pressure and the tensions between theory and practice become most evident. The 'truth' that is revealed through unconcealment and presencing for Heidegger is protected by the purity of the revelatory power. Yet, for Adorno, in dismissing the metaphysical premise of the absolute nature of this truth, the revelation of 'truth' comes under threat. For Adorno, as I will now show, eventually the revelatory power cannot remain uncontaminated by the calculative techno-scientific process which Heidegger views as bringing-forth this truth. This is due to Adorno's concerns about the techno-scientific reification of the cognitive-aesthetic practical life of late modern capitalism.

What is at stake in modernity is our ability to understand ourselves, our sense of 'being' and our ability to live authentically. Media-saturation and the appropriation of desires (to which I will say more in relation to Adorno and

Stiegler) has meant a filling up of the 'clearing' needed for Heidegger's revelation of Dasein, and this fleeing from our 'being-towards-death' has equally been encouraged by advertising and consumerism in order to increase the appetite to 'consume' the present – to live for 'the now'. Our ability to live authentically is perpetually threatened by the pull towards the 'They-self' and inauthenticity whereby the true possibilities of one's being are concealed. This then leads us to Adorno's work on the schematization of culture and the birth of the consumer society.

#### 4) Adorno: Performance as Iterative Repetition

The problem of the 'They', and the pull of the 'publicness' of the 'everyday', is developed by Adorno and Horkheimer in their work on the 'culture industry'. Their criticism of Heidegger, however, is that the capitalist infrastructure determines and limits 'being'. So, for them the individual becomes lost in the administrative infrastructure of a burgeoning cultural environment. This infrastructure is founded upon Enlightenment notions of rationality, and driven by capitalist concerns for production, consumption, and profit. This leads to a performativity that is merely repetition and for Adorno to a lack of autonomy that results in a 'micrology'. For Stiegler, what Adorno misses is the curative aspect of this process, and the possibility for new types of performativity.

(i) Smoke and Mirrors: The Jargon of Authenticity

In *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Adorno dismantles the language that Heidegger and his contemporary existentialist philosophers employ in their work, echoing a similar concern of Walter Benjamin's who termed it their 'aura' (Adorno, 2003).

Adorno's argument is that the language they use empties itself of the content it is trying to define by becoming trapped in solipsistic, self-referential terminology that obfuscates the inherent ambiguity of the claims being made. Far from grounding the transcendental metaphysics that Heidegger claims he has, Adorno argues that he has simply created yet more ideal abstractions in his 'jargon' of 'authenticity'. They are nothing but linguistic smokescreens that masquerade for a signified existence where none in fact exists. At the crux of this is the tendency for statements to become valid. It is too easy Adorno argues for truth statements to be made as if they are inherently valid by simply stating that in their utterance they become valid. He argues they have reified their own use of language such that all true Hegelian dialectic and dynamic thought is lost.

Most importantly, what the 'jargon of authenticity' does is to extract and isolate 'being' out of the socio-economic context within which Adorno, following Marx, sees as *structuring* that experience. The capitalist environment of 'being' is ignored and the ability to uncover 'authenticity' therefore becomes, to use Heidegger's own terminology, a 'signless cloud'. It has become no more than the empty promise of advertising language (Adorno, 2003: 35).

## (ii) The Culture Industry: Reification, Value and Commodification

For Adorno and Horkheimer, reification is the result of the techno-scientific process of reduction and rationalization that has taken place in advanced capital societies. So, 'Bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence' so that the 'multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter' and the 'same equations dominate bourgeois justice and commodity exchange' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 7). This 'equivalence' and the 'same equations' are a result of the reified thinking of identity thinking and, for Adorno, a false belief in logical positivism.

The individual 'is reduced to the nodal point of the conventional responses and modes of operation expected of him', and further, through the 'countless agencies of mass production and its culture the conventionalized modes of behavior are impressed on the individual as the only natural, respectable, and rational ones' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 28). Part of the cause of this is that with instrumental reason, '[m]athematical procedure became...the ritual of thinking' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 22) and as a consequence 'qualities' are converted into 'functions' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 36). In this way, 'Factuality wins the day; cognition is restricted to its repetition; and thought itself becomes mere tautology' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 27). This factuality of modern science is 'tied to blind economic tendency' and the real casualty of this leveling thought is 'truth' which is 'neutralized as a cultural commodity' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 40-41).

Reification as 'a social category' is then an ethical concern (Rose, 2014). The issue for culture and society is that the schema of ratio-capitalist commodification becomes universally pervasive. This not only threatens the autonomy of art, due to the fetishistic commodification of the aesthetic, it is even more dangerous since it threatens the entire affective life of humanity. As Rose suggests, then, the way to understand Adorno's theory is in its grounding in a 'highly selective' reading of Marx's theory of value (Rose, 2014: 47). For Rose, the important idea from Marx is that, 'The idea of value appears to be the property of the commodity, or the idea that the object is thought to fulfil its concept when in fact only use-values are properties, or the concept has a different object' (Rose, 2014: 47).

The key development from Marx to Adorno and Horkheimer is in the development of this notion of 'use-value' and 'exchange value'. For Adorno and Horkheimer, what 'might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value...No object has an inherent value; it is only valuable to the extent to which it can be exchanged' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 158). Here then, use-value and exchange value become equivalent terms; the use-value of cultural commodities combines and becomes their exchange value. So, for the ticket holder to a classical concert, the 'consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert. He has literally 'made' the success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognizing himself in it' (Adorno, 2001: 38). With the result that, the 'more inexorably the principle of exchange value destroys use values for human beings, the more deeply does exchange

value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment' (Adorno, 2001: 39). The 'object of enjoyment' as 'disguise' gives the false impression of a use value to the consumer, and the original notion of use value in the cultural commodity disappears as a consequence.

Lambert Zuidervaart has argued that Adorno agreed 'with Marx's analysis of the commodity' but thought 'his critique of commodity fetishism' did not go far enough due to the changes that had occurred since Marx's time (Zuidervaart, 2015). Adorno's modifications come from the theory of reification based on Lukacs, influenced himself by Weber's theory of rationalization. For Lukacs, 'Reification [is] the structural process whereby the commodity form permeates life in capitalist society' (Zuidervaart, 1991: 76). However, as Gillian Rose has commented, Adorno thought his notion of reification too general (Rose, 2014: 42), and 'Adorno feared that the work was haunted by the old ambition of philosophy...the will to identity' (Rose, 2014: 41).

This returns us to the issues of consciousness, intentionality and - ultimately - meaning. It is how we experience the art that is at stake and this brings us to the commodification of culture and, more importantly, of the aesthetic. For Adorno,

The commercial character of culture causes the difference between culture and practical life to disappear. Aesthetic semblance [Schein] turns into the sheen which commercial advertising lends to the commodities which absorb it in turn. But the moment of independence which philosophy specifically grasped under the idea of the aesthetic semblance is lost in the process.

(Adorno, 2001: 61)

How we experience art is through the feeling-sensation of the aesthetic, yet this too has become appropriated by the late-capitalist economic tendency, it has become commodified and schematized. So, for Adorno,

Reduced as it is to the pursuit of cultural goods, the spirit demands that these goods themselves are not genuinely experienced. The consumer must only know how to deal with them to justify his claim of being a cultivated person.

(Adorno, 2001: 81)

The intended object of mass cultural consciousness is no longer the meaning of being that was previously found in experiencing the feeling-sensation aesthetic of autonomous art. It has now become, self-referentially, the meaning of being found in being 'cultivated' and cultured, an intentionality of consciousness that aims not at an independent object but at itself, at culture. The intended object of Heidegger's 'realm' of art is entirely lost, as indeed is his 'meaning of being'. Heidegger's 'thrownness' of experience becomes in Adorno an 'open-air prison' (Adorno, 1967: 34) of cultured society, from which escape is possible but increasingly difficult.

(iii) The damaged life: human freedom, 'subjective' autonomy and 'micrology'

For Adorno the life of the individual 'subject' in late capitalist society is

'damaged'. So, he begins his dedication in *Minima Moralia: Reflections From*

*Damaged Life* (1951) with,

What the philosophers once knew as life has become the sphere of private existence and now of mere consumption, dragged along as an appendage of the process of material production, without autonomy or substance of its own.

(Adorno, 2005: 15)

Our ability to think ourselves free is no more than thought, an illusion or part of

the capitalist 'spell', rather than a genuine practical theory of action. For Adorno,

people have become,

...no more than component parts of machinery [who] act as if they still had the capacity to act as subjects, and as if something depended on their actions. Our perspective of life has passed into an ideology which conceals the fact there is life no longer.

(Adorno, 2005: 15)

Here, the effects of the industrial-capitalist environment compromise true

freedom whilst at the same time promoting the very 'promise' of it. The subject's

ability to act has been nullified by the techno-scientific apparatus that has

surrounded and appropriated human action. This drive towards the 'integration

of society' has simultaneously led to the 'indifference to freedom' so that people's

'interest in being provided for has paralyzed the interest in a freedom which they

fear would leave them unprotected' (Adorno, 2014: 216).

The problem with the Western philosophical tradition, grounded in 'first'

philosophy, was the fallacious tendency to hypostatize the subject to a

transcendental essence, thereby *reducing* it to a ‘fallacy of absolute, pure being-in-itself’ (Adorno, 2014: 213). For Adorno, this was evident in Hegel whose abstraction to the absolute of a ‘grand narrative’ of history ignored the individual particulars that constitute that ‘history’. Equally, for Adorno, Kantian pure formalism gives the ‘empirical subject’ more causal weight than it warrants, since it is merely a ‘moment of the spatial-temporal “external” world’ and therefore ‘has no ontological priority before that world’ (Adorno, 2014: 213). Adorno continues, ‘freedom grows obsolete without having been realized’ in part because ‘the idea of freedom lost its power over people’ due to the fact ‘it was conceived so abstractly and subjectively that the objective social trends found it easy to bury’ (Adorno, 2014: 215).

For Adorno, we should consider that ‘countless moments of external – notably social – reality invade the decisions designated by the words “will” and “freedom” (Adorno, 2014: 213). Freedom is ‘a moment’, ‘a historical node’ and it is society that,

...destines the individuals to be what they are, even by their immanent genesis. Their freedom or unfreedom is not primary, as it would seem under the veil of the *principium individuationis*.

(Adorno, 2014: 219; emphasis in original)

This then leads us back to identity, since Adorno views *identity* as the ‘condition of freedom’, and that the ‘identity of the self and its alienation are companions from the beginning’ (Adorno, 2014: 216). Free will manifests itself ‘insofar as man objectified himself into a character’ so that ‘[t]oward himself...he thus becomes something external, after the model of the outward world of things that

is subjected to causality' (Adorno, 2014: 217). This leads to freedom as a delusion since, in 'the abstract universal concept of things "beyond nature", freedom is spiritualized into freedom from the realm of causality. With that, however, it becomes a self-deception' (Adorno, 2014: 220).

Both individual freedom and the identity of the subject are deceptions hidden behind the 'individualistic veil'. 'Philosophical nominalism' is so popular because it perpetuates this spell that 'selfhood' exists when in fact, like freedom, it is 'an illusion' and 'nonexistent' (Adorno, 2014: 312). Its apparent existence, however, is socially 'necessary' since for 'an individualistic society' to function the individuals within it must consider themselves as 'substance'; yet these illusions are 'objectively caused' (Adorno, 2014: 312). So, for Adorno, reification not only happens at the level of society, but also in the very conception of the 'self', of the 'individuals' within this individualistic society.

This ideology of the self, which has created an object out of the subject, has led to the damaged life, a life of 'private existence' and 'mere consumption' lived as 'an appendage' to 'material production'. It is in fact the very illusion and promise of 'autonomy' – 'inappropriately stressed by liberal ideology' (Adorno, 2014: 219) - and a subject's 'substance' that has concealed the fact that individuals possess *neither*.

Here then we can see that individual performativity is a constant acting out of actions, but actions without consequence, *without* inherent autonomy or substance. It is an integrated 'society' comprised of 'component', isolated

individuals. The danger is that the implementation of instrumental causality in a mechanized-industrial technological world has simultaneously divested the individual with the very causality needed for a genuine theory of action, and causality is reduced to an “if-then” relation’ (Adorno, 2014: 269), which is not genuine causality at all. This “if-then” relation becomes, after Adorno’s time, the foundation for the binary, algorithmic calculations found in the digital age – something that is elaborated upon by Stiegler in relation to ‘short-circuits’.

What is left for Adorno is a ‘micrology’, ‘Enlightenment leaves practically nothing of the metaphysical content of truth...metaphysics immigrates into micrology’. This micrology is where ‘metaphysics finds a haven from totality’, and where the ‘absolute’ can only be expressed in ‘topics and categories of immanence’ (Adorno, 2014: 407) so that ‘the smallest intra-mundane traits would be of relevance to the absolute’ (Adorno, 2014: 408).

For this reason, the effect of the drive towards the integration of society, and the ever-sameness of the individuals and things within it, leads to a narrowing of the possibility of the spontaneous, *free* moment of true autonomy. For Adorno, such hegemony means that ‘the universal liquidates the particular from above, by identification’ (Adorno, 2014: 265). What is stifled is the very otherness needed in order to free the particular moment from the universal, since the ‘individual is both more and less than his general definition’ (Adorno, 2014: 151). What results is a reproduction of the conditions that engendered the ‘autonomous’ moment thereby highlighting the very limits of this ‘freedom’. The effects of this total reification is exemplified in the term ‘free time’ itself, and what should be

'unmediated life' has become part of a 'completely mediated total system', so that 'the irony in the expression 'leisure industry' has been quite forgotten' (Adorno, 2001: 189).

Since Adorno's time this expansion of industry has proliferated to an even greater extent. Nearly every sphere of lived experience is now affected by the appropriation of capitalist concerns for profit. Adorno's use of 'forgotten' then returns us to the forgetting of the question of the being with which Heidegger's early work was so concerned. This forgetting is now tied to the economic model and asks of the consumer to consume in order to forget. Adorno's terminology of 'mediated total system' also now takes on a new meaning with the increase in the media-saturation of everyday, practical life. Such media-saturation allows and promotes an individuality that acts out 'isolated moments' of free time, suited to the 'needs' of the subject. This in turn, as Stiegler has shown, leads to a disindividuation of the individual and therefore an inability for the subject to enact Heidegger's possibilities of being-towards-death, something that for a subject living an 'authentic existence' is 'freely chosen'. Here, as we have seen, such 'free choice' is under considerable threat from the total reification (and expansion) of the cultural aesthetic and the programming industries. The more the individual subject is disinvested, the more the reaction of the subject is towards appropriating an affirmative 'I am' within the world – the more the subject desires to cultivate identity, a sense of the world as a 'graspable' 'mine'. This is then the reaction to the 'damage' done that turns metaphysics towards a 'micrology'. The consumerist model then allows the late capitalist age to 'sell' back a renewed 'liberty' and 'freedom' to choose, but this choice is entirely

illusory. This can be linked, from the 1970s onwards, to the growth of neoliberalism, which, whilst founded on the notion of 'freeing' the markets, simultaneously imposes its own economic logic and biases and, as David Harvey has argued, become 'hegemonic as a mode of discourse' (Harvey, 2007: 3).

This means that the appearance of freedom is always on show and continually demonstrated to us by the multiplicity of 'choice'. As J. M. Bernstein has put it, 'through the culture industry capital has co-opted the dynamic of negation both diachronically in its restless production of new and 'different' commodities and synchronically in its promotion of alternative 'life-styles' (Adorno, 2001: 23). So, what is offered is a level of choice *within* the *same* integrated cultural model. Or, in Heideggerian terms, the immanence of this freedom – the 'readiness-to-hand' of this autonomous choice conceals any actual presence of authentic, freely chosen, existence. The difference then that is promoted within this model is minimal and represents Adorno's 'universalization' and his 'micrology'. What occurs for Adorno in consumer culture is a dulling of the aesthetic sensibilities. The environment of techno-scientific modernity becomes one of repetition in which true Hegelian differentiation is lost and Heideggerian leveling occurs. Adorno's 'micrology' is a pessimistic conclusion to the problems of a technological modernity without recovery. For a framing that encompasses a way out we must turn to Stiegler, his 'pharmacology' and his 'economy of contribution'.

## 5) Stiegler: Pharmacology and the *Pharmakon*

Stiegler is more hopeful than Adorno's 'micrology', and the co-existence of both the positive and negative aspects of technological development are explicated in his account of the *pharmakon*, which Stiegler takes from Plato via Derrida (Stiegler, 2013b). This links to the myth of Prometheus who stole fire from the Gods in order to provide for the lack which was caused by Epimetheus' forgetting of the distribution of powers to humans (Stiegler, 2008: 187-88). For Stiegler, the fire of Prometheus symbolizes both 'desire and technics', fire being 'the *pharmakon* par excellence' (Stiegler, 2013b: 24).

### (i) *Pharmakon* – the 'Poison' and the 'Cure'

For Stiegler what was revealed by the First World War (as shown in the thought of Valery, Husserl and others) was that, 'spirit is always composed of two contrary sides: it is a kind of *pharmakon* – *at once* a good *and* an evil, *at once* a remedy *and* a poison' (Stiegler, 2013b: 10). This then provides the foundation for understanding and, in the Heideggerian sense, questioning technology in the modern age. What Stiegler sees as the problem or poison concerning technology – its toxic effects and by-products – also *provides* a 'therapeutic' 'cure' that will provide humanity with its salvation, elevating mankind from a technologically induced malaise.

Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer only focused on the poisonous aspect and failed 'to understand technics pharmacologically', Stiegler argues that, 'what is at stake' is 'the *relation* to the *pharmakon*, that is, to technics' (Stiegler, 2013b: 18). In accepting the dual nature of the *pharmakon*, and understanding, both the 'good' and the 'evil', lies the possibility of a new way of living, a way of re-vitalizing – through *pharmacology* and a new political economy - the human spirit *within* and *through* technological *organology*.

(ii) The 'Poison' and its Sickness – the toxic effects of progress and technology

The epitome of a *pharmakon* is that of fire which, as a 'civilizing process', is 'constantly at risk of setting fire to civilization' (Stiegler, 2013b: 24). This demonstrates the '*dual logic of the necessary default*': that 'interminably *displaces* organic and organological default' and which is at the same time '*necessary*: the stoic quasi-cause' (Stiegler, 2013b: 24). Importantly, these two tendencies are '*the two tendencies of libidinal economy*' (Stiegler, 2013b: 25; emphasis in original).

'Libidinal economy' refers to the appropriation of unconscious drives channeled into the economic model of production and consumption. This economic model begins during the twentieth-century, and represents the first crucial turn in modern economic history (the second being the "conservative revolution"). This was in part made possible by Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, considered the originator of public relations, who directed these unconscious drives and desires

towards consumption through the power of marketing (Stiegler, 2011c: 28; cf. Adam Curtis' *The Century of the Self*).

In order to compensate for the 'tendential fall of the rate of profit' (Stiegler, 2013b: 23) - brought about by the systemic tendency in the capitalist model of *over*-production - and therefore *surplus* of supply and a *shortage* of demand - individuals needed to be incentivized towards *consumption*.

So, on the one hand technics have a 'perfecting' tendency that displaces the default and, on the other, consumers are driven (necessarily) towards the 'lack' of that which they do not possess. This 'perfecting' tendency leads to melancholy since,

technics constantly compensates for a *default of being...by constantly bringing about a new default - always greater...and always less manageable* than the one that preceded it. This constant disadjustment induces frustrations, narcissistic wounds, and melancholy.

(Stiegler, 2013b: 15; emphasis in original)

This reflects another key concept, that of 'long circuits' and 'short-circuits' of individuation. The two tendencies of libidinal economy can produce long circuits, where 'it becomes care' and 'enters into the service of the libido orientated through sublimation', or it can produce 'short-circuits' in which it is 'submitted to the drives' (Stiegler, 2013b: 25). Long circuits produce a level of development that is based on 'taking care of oneself'. It is the therapeutic level of the pharmacology of spirit. Whereas short-circuits engender an infantilized development, that leads to *disindividuation* that, in turn, leads to the destruction of libidinal economy.

What Marx viewed as the industrialized tendency towards the alienation of the worker from the mode of production, Stiegler argues, is made worse by the age of digitization that has been appropriated by capitalist economy. This not only leads to a loss of *savoir-faire* for the producer in the process of production, in the age of libidinal economy of consumption, this also leads to a loss of *savoir-vivre* for the consumer. It leads to a 'disinvestment' in activity resulting in 'disaffected individuals', a '*consumerist libidinal diseconomy*' (Stiegler, 2011c: 73-4; emphasis in original) because 'the *consumerist* market presupposes the liquidation of both *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*' (Stiegler, 2011c: 16; emphasis in original). This process has led to:

a global loss of knowledge of all kinds: a massive process of *disapprenticeship* or *unlearning*...imposing an adaptive society that is inevitably becoming addictive...and thus annihilating 'spirit value'.

(Stiegler, 2013b: 30; emphasis in original)

In the twentieth-century, when technics has been 'industrialized', what Plato termed *anamnesis*, 'the pure autonomy of thinking for oneself', is replaced by *hypomnesis* or 'artificial memory' (Stiegler, 2013b: 18). What this leads to is a society that is 'adaptive' of techno-scientific environment and apparatuses, instead of being 'adoptive'. The first sees individuals passively being used by technics, and being disinvested of capacity and knowledge, the second views individuals as active agents using technics and being enriched by it. The first leads to 'systemic stupidity' and the second to *noetic* activity.

What is at stake is our relation to the world, since what is engendered by the libidinal economy of consumerism and excessiveness leads to an 'installation of a

system tending to produce *chronic and structural obsolescence*, a system to which the *normal* relation to objects becomes *disposability*' (Stiegler, 2011c: 83; emphasis in original). The constant short-circuiting of individuation, coupled with 'structural obsolescence', leads to systemic stupidity and a systemic *carelessness*, epitomized in the financial markets, and predicated on 'short-termism' and 'speculation'. What has been lost is *fidelity*, which has been replaced by *unfaithfulness* (Stiegler, 2011c: 81-4). The danger is that, with the fault of Epimetheus, this systemic carelessness will be inherited and passed down via epiphylogenesis.

### (iii) The Cure – an 'economy of contribution' and the fate of performativity

For Stiegler, the solution is in the pharmacological nature of technology as not only destructive tendencies but also elevating ones. So the solution comes in using modern technics to create a new economy, one that is re-enchanted, and reinvested with 'spirit value', and one that produces long circuits of individuation – a system of care. This economy is the 'economy of contribution' in which what is needed is to 'develop forms of knowledge' then value them economically, to 'cause a new economic system to emerge from the heart of the social systems' (Stiegler, 2011c: 129).

What Stiegler's theory provides is a challenge to Adornian reification that implies a minimal level of autonomous self-reflection. Stiegler argues that the speeding up of the stimulus-response of needs and drives has gone *beyond* individual participation or 'acting out' – it is a complete loss of aesthetic sensibility and consequently noetic activity; it is 'symbolic misery'. In the digital

age of globalized technology we find a 'short-circuiting' of individuation and consequently a form of hyper-performativity that is continually finding (and being driven towards) new objects of desire – but objects desired by subjects that have both, in equal measure, forgotten (and been disinherited of) their meaning. In other words, it is an economy of informational transaction without a coherent sense of 'gift' or 'counter-gift' (Stiegler, 2015b: 33-35) whereby tradition as knowledge is conveyed and *understood*.

It is upon this that the fate of performativity rests, and returns us to the *relational* aspect of the individual in a hyper-industrialized society. The individual must *utilise* and appropriate the modern techno-industrialized environment to disseminate new expertise, new knowledge that is rooted in a re-enchanted spirit of spontaneity, and to re-channel the libidinal energy that has been misdirected and desensitized by consumerist culture. For Stiegler, technology that cuts across geo-political and geo-physical boundaries provides means to that goal of re-enchancement, that is, the notion that human beings can rediscover the spirit, and spiritual capacities, that are threatened by or even lost with cognitive and consumer capitalism (cf. Stiegler 2014c; Stiegler 2014a). This re-enchancement, founded on an economy of contribution, would allow for a 'system of care' to re-appropriate a world organized on the principle of 'carelessness', one that re-inspires the human spirit via *meaningful* agency, *autonomous* individuation and new forms of performativity.

## Chapter 3:

### Theoretical Framework

‘Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known.’

‘The public should try to make itself artistic.’<sup>6</sup>

- Oscar Wilde

#### Introduction: Philosophy and Technology – Stiegler’s Originary Technicity

In order to understand the fate of the reflective and spiritual capacities of human beings in techno-scientific societies, it is first necessary to understand how the relationship between human beings and technology has evolved historically. Both philosophy and the social sciences have tended to treat the relationship between human beings and their technological apparatus as one in which each remains external to the other. In the Greek world, the use of technological instruments for the inscription of writing and the production of images was seen as producing a sphere of artificiality that was profoundly threatening to the pure movement of thought that is the true province of philosophical reflection, or *noesis*. Even in the work of such ‘worldly philosophers’ as Adam Smith and Karl Marx, the machine appears as a source of power that, in the end, is alien to the true creativity of human labour (Smith, 1999a: 109-116; Marx, 1993: 690-

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<sup>6</sup> (Wilde, 2001: 142).

699). More recently however, the relationship between human beings and their technological systems has taken a different turn: philosophers and social scientists have begun to speculate about the shape of a supplementary relationship between human beings and technology, and particularly the ways in which media and aesthetic technologies have transformed the nature of agency and experience (cf. Ellul, 1964; Bell, 1974; Negri, 2003; Haraway, 2016). My thesis, as I have said, is essentially concerned with fate of the spiritual capacities of human beings in the time of digital media systems. And so I have used Bernard Stiegler's work on the ambiguous, or *pharmacological*, nature of technology, as a theoretical framework within which to understand the fate of self-creativity within the expanded systems of virtual life.

Stiegler's work crucially avoids any reductive binary reading of the human and the technological, 'human' versus 'machine'. Instead, what Stiegler's work provides is a framework within which both are equally weighted. Furthermore, Stiegler questions the premise that humanity and technology are as distinct and separate as many would believe, and certainly, as the popular discourse would have it – a discourse which more often than not is founded upon either anthropological or technological determinism, whereby one or the other is always dominant. Instead, Stiegler argues that humanity and technology have co-evolved and are therefore equally responsible for the other's development.

So, influenced as it is by his reading of both Derrida and Nietzsche (cf. Stiegler, 2011b: 155), Stiegler's work is founded upon the complex and dynamic interplay between metaphysical opposites in a composition of tendencies. Central to his

analysis are the Cartesian mind/body and material/immaterial dualities, Freud's Eros/Thanatos and pleasure/reality principles, and Stiegler's use of Plato's concept of the *pharmakon* as both poison and cure. He is also concerned with a version of psychosocial individuation based on Heidegger and Simondon's work and with the classical distinction between *otium* and *negotium*. Underlying this is a concern for the spiritual individuation of the human subject, as an Aristotelian movement of soul as a desire for the infinite. Furthermore, there is an attempt in Stiegler's work to rehabilitate a certain 'Hegelian' version of progress that is based on a certain technological reproduction of spirit.

Stiegler reframes the question concerning technology as one of 'originary technicity' via the work of the anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan. Here the human-technology opposition is itself questioned and reframed in such a way as to pose the alternative, dialectical question – who invented the human? (Stiegler, 2008: 134-179). Central to this is the evolutionary moment of the freeing of the hands. It is this the differentiation of the hands from the process of walking that led to the ability to create gesture and so was consequently the beginning of prostheticity. The 'upright stance' in this way represents the beginning of technicity, and the invention of the tool, a moment that is simultaneously the beginning or 'invention' of the human. So, Stiegler argues,

Humanization is for Leroi-Gourhan a rupture in the movement of freeing (or mobilization) characteristic of life. This rupture happens suddenly, in the form of a process of exteriorization which, from the point of view of paleontology, means that the appearance of the human is the appearance of the technical...the human invents himself in the technical by inventing the tool – by becoming exteriorized techno-logically.

(Stiegler, 2008: 141)

This then is the “paradox of exteriorization”: that ‘the human and the tool invent each other’ (Stiegler, 2008: 175). The key tool being ‘flint’: the ‘vector of epiphylogenetics, at the dawn of hominization’ (Stiegler, 2008: 175).

The reason for the ‘originary forgetting’ of the fact of this relation is, for Stiegler, ‘the fault of Epimetheus’ which must be understood alongside his mythological counterpart Prometheus who embodies the ‘anticipation of death’. These figures are antithetical. Prometheus anticipates and remembers everything, whereas Epimetheus never stops forgetting; he never anticipates the next day and only learns from his mistakes that are ‘entirely set in a techno-logical condition which is the lack [*défaut*] of a given quality, the lack of the origin, where the succession (of mistakes) is a succession of experience’. These experiences are then ‘sedimented and transmitted as imprints of these experiences’ which ‘constitutes *culture as the organo-logical genealogy of the sensible*’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 69; emphasis in original).

For Stiegler, then, we must expand our view of ‘organs’ since for Stiegler organology represents *three* interconnected categories: ‘the sensible organs of the body, the artificial organs of technics, and the social organization that structure them’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 45). The nexus of this organological model is preserved not simply by genetics, but by epigenetics (of nonorganic organized matter) and epiphylogenetics - where ‘the *epiphylogenesis* of man’ is the ‘conservation, accumulation, and sedimentation of successive epigeneses, mutually articulated’ (Stiegler, 2008: 140). In other words, we do not just evolve through a biological, genetic inheritance of the bodily memory that define our

species, but also through a collective cultural memory which is inherited both through the technical tools of previous generations as well as also the technological and social systems which organize and govern humanity and technics.

This returns us to Heidegger's *Dasein* as an *already-there*, and the notion of 'equipment' that is either 'ready-to-hand' or 'present-at-hand'. The world we have inherited in this way represents the 'epiphylogenesis of man' as tradition, which is 'one name for knowledge' (Stiegler, 2008: 210). Every tradition we inherit is therefore 'the *knowledge of the de-fault as a history of mistakes...that had to be, or that will have had to be*' (Stiegler, 2008: 210). . This represents the tradition of late modernity, tradition as cultural inheritance and 'knowledge' – paradoxically what is being passed on is also a *disinvesting* of knowledge via new forms of 'short-circuiting' technology, it is the inheritance of Epitmethean 'fault' as 'de-fault'. It is a forgetting of the mutual evolution of humanity and technology, the 'who' and the 'what'.

So, *tekhnē*, is also a 'skill' or 'art', and therefore it is in technicity that the human finds a form of self-expression. Technology represents the exteriorization of the human's interiority – which in turn, becomes re-interiorized as part of that human sense of 'self'. In this way, reflexive activity is intimately connected to technicity: 'noetic acting out is technical, *tekhnē*, which is to say, an art...[n]oēsis, in other words, proves to be a *tekhnēsis*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 31). In this light, when someone today loses their phone, the ensuing anxiety and disorientation is not merely histrionic. It is a profound sense of losing a part of oneself, a sense of

losing a part of one's body or mind – or both – that has been exteriorized. The phone is neither merely an object nor a technical tool but an extension of the human mind and body. It is both representative of the lived experience of the human being within the technological world and their access to it. The same is also true of other digital devices (such as laptops and tablets) that increasingly structure and enable social interaction and communication.

### 1) Towards the Anthropocene: The Rise and Fall of Individualism

Whilst modern capitalist consumer society is founded upon notions of the 'individual' and the 'self', these are relatively recent concepts, ones that continue to change with time. They have developed through a culmination of interrelated events in philosophy, politics, science and culture, and their use, as well as the concepts and events that engendered them, have been increasingly questioned and deconstructed through equally recent disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, literary criticism and linguistics. So, the appearance of 'the self' has simultaneously become a disappearance, a search that often proves elusive. In conjunction with this has been the rise of the anthropocentric view of the world and consequently the increasing dominance of the human over nature whose ultimate expression is the idea of the Anthropocene epoch. For Stiegler, within this epoch, the vital question of the individual within society becomes that of 'technics and time' and the threat posed to human flourishing and noetic individuation by the over-determination of technics. That is, of a technical *dasein* of consumers within a hyper-industrial, techno-scientific society of cultural and

cognitive capitalism that eliminates the elevating tendency, leaving only the tendency to regression and 'stupidity' (cf. Stiegler, 2015b: 165 and Stiegler, 2013b: 132-133). The self-destructive tendency of this age requires the founding of the Neganthropocene, that is, a culture based on negentropy as opposed to the negative entropy of the Anthropocene (Stiegler, 2018). For Stiegler, the Neganthropocene is a way of reviving, re-enchanting and re-spiriting the elevating tendency to ensure it always overcomes the baser drives upon which it is necessarily conditioned in the interplay of these two tendencies.

There are many ways to frame the development of the self as an individual, but the following interrelated moments are central to the modern conception of self and subjectivity as found in European philosophy. The first is the Cartesian *cogito*, the 'I think' that establishes the rational subject further developed by Kant's autonomous subject, and upon which much of metaphysical and Western thought is founded. The second is the Enlightenment conception of progress, founded upon the scientific revolution that is made possible by the centrality of the rational subject in relation to the world and nature (this as Heidegger pointed out in his essay on technology was the foundation of Copernican, Darwinian and Newtonian science). The third is the free individual of democratic liberty engendered by the French and American Revolutions. In both instances, the people revolted against being subjects to an absolute monarch in order to form democratic Republics made up of autonomous, free individual citizens able to choose by whom, and how, they were governed. Lastly, the Romantic Movement that developed following the French Revolution, sought to establish the essence of the individual as free self-expression. Yet, this stable,

autonomous, coherent version of the individual subject becomes problematized in modernity. The self becomes fragmentary, multiple and elusive. Einstein challenges Newton's absolute notion of time and Nietzsche interrogates Western metaphysics and morality. The self becomes subject to outside and structural forces in Marxist theory and the site of internal, uncontrollable and unconscious drives in Freud's psychoanalysis. Kevin Vanhoozer neatly summarizes the human story as follows:

...traditional Christianity was a divine comedy...Enlightenment thinkers transformed [it] into a secular romance... existentialist stories...were largely tragic...postmodern accounts are mainly ironic: the modern subject has been exposed as a fiction, its self-congratulatory story undone.

(Vanhoozer, 1997: 170-1)

As John O. Lyons has argued that whether the self exists or not is irrelevant since it has been treated as existing (Lyons, 1978: 16). Lyons traces the key decade as being the 1760s in which there were 'significant turns of form and mind in history, politics, education and biography' (Lyons, 1978: 8), noting it was this decade that forms R. R. Palmer's 'Age of Democratic Revolution' and Northrop Frye's 'Age of Sensibility' (Lyons, 1978: 6). What was previously external to the subject of state or Church authority - in terms of property, the soul, reasoning and agency - became internal to the individual, and the 'soul' was replaced by the 'self' (Lyons, 1978: 4). Whereas, for Lyons, Samuel Johnson would have viewed man as 'the leaky vessel of the soul', his biographer James Boswell would have viewed him as 'an organic complex of the self' (Lyons, 1978: 6). Charles Taylor, in *Sources of the Self*, makes a similar point highlighting this 'turning inward' as a key feature of the self-expressive, Romantic notion of the individual. Yet Lyons is suspicious of the Romantics' reverence of this expressive self as an 'alternative to

the dead soul' (Lyons, 1978: 16), suggesting it may have been just as much of an illusion; consequently, 'the psychoanalytic version of man may often end in fictions because it begins with a fiction' (Lyons, 1978:16). This lack of interiority and the self as a fiction is central to Stiegler's account of subjectivity. I will address Stiegler's compositional interplay between interior and exterior in the next section and address the 'myth of interiority' in chapter four.

Stiegler's approach is phenomenological, influenced by the philosophy of Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger. For Stiegler, the human subject is one of consciousness situated within and through its relation to time, as well as one that is, or at least should be, capable of posing questions, both of which are explicitly founded on his reading of Heidegger.

Furthermore, Stiegler argues that 'the [technological] exteriorization of memory is the very origin of man' (Stiegler, 2014c: 79), and so he frames the development of the individual subject through his theory of successive phases of grammatization, itself founded on his reading of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, alongside his reading and development of Husserl's theory of retentions and Plato's *pharmakon*. The modern individual begins with the Greek citizen as part of the *polis* in conjunction with the Socratic questioning that established Plato's Academy. Here the individual is a constitutive part of the city, both its culture and in its democratic governance. For Stiegler, this relies on Greek citizens being educated, knowledgeable and able to participate in the affairs of the city-state. This is crucial to understanding Greek tragedy, and therefore Stiegler's 'theatre of individuation' that I address later in this chapter. This first stage of

grammatization gives way to the second age of belief within the divine logos, Judeo-Christian theological thought and practice. Here, the individual is part of a larger system of the Church as State, governing both the culture and practice of belief, and so the individual loses some of the participatory agency found in the Greek *polis*. Yet, both for Stiegler and Hartmut Rosa, there was an important aspect of taking care of individuals within this religious culture, so that it was not only a 'cult' but also provided cultivation. So, for Rosa, the act of confession allowed the alleviation of the guilt that was induced by notions of 'sin' (Rosa, 2014: 76). Similarly, for Stiegler, religion provided 'maintenance and care' within the cult (Stiegler, 2011b: 75) and Christianity a 'cradle' for its images that became Western art (Stiegler, 2015b: 95). This was succeeded by the third age of the worker following the Industrial Revolution and a transition to secular ratio. Here the worker is proletarianized and loses the level of care found in the age of the citizen and believer, and therefore starts to become alienated from his or her existence. Last, is the current age of the consumer, where there has been an appropriation of drives towards a hyper-industrialized model of consumption, which is founded upon computational calculation within digital programming and culture industries. This creates, for Stiegler, a state of generalized proletarianization, in which the individual suffers from a complete exteriorization of bodily, cognitive and practical abilities: how to live, do and think.

Yet, as well as a phenomenological approach, Stiegler's account of subjectivity is deeply rooted in linguistic theory, notably Derrida's deconstructionism, but also influenced by Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure. The alphabet represents the founding of the Greek *polis* in conjunction with the Greek citizen.

The laws of the city were made by the citizens through and by their active use of language and, importantly, their knowledge, understanding and ability to interpret it. This concern for the literary aspect of the self is emphasized in *The Re-Enchantment of the World*:

Language is a symbolic and *intrinsically* participatory social milieu...The *psychic* individuation of the speaker is here just as well the *collective* individuation that constitutes the common language for speakers, who constitute themselves insofar as they speak it...One neither employs nor uses his language: he is *constituted* by it and, at the same time, *constituting* of it.

(Stiegler, 2014c: 34)

This then picks up on Foucault's notion of the subject as both being subjected to external forces and tied to an internal sense of individuality (Bennett and Royle, 1999: 123), so that 'subjectivation' is equivalent to Stiegler's individuation (Stiegler, 2011b: 76). For Stiegler, language is a technique of the self, a form of technics, which, with the advent of the orthographic age (which I discuss in detail in chapter six), becomes an organized system for cultural memory, understanding and inheritance. So, as with all technics, as supports (prosthesis) to the human Epimethean default, it is what both constitutes individual and collective engagement in the symbolic order of ethical life, *and*, crucially, helps to transform and evolve it. So, following Marx's appeal to transform the world, Nietzsche saw this transformation as a question of interpretation, which becomes for Derrida the question of generalized performativity (Stiegler, 2011b: 148). Yet, the critical factor is the grammatization, the *grammatical* element to language. In other words, the grammar of language not only creates rules internal to each language but also, by extension, the formulation of the rules of the society that are constituted by written law. After all, as Stiegler repeatedly

emphasizes, the law is a fiction, it is 'made' (Stiegler, 2011b: 139). For Stiegler, in order for it to remain ethically sound, language as with *any* form of technicity, must always remain participatory and questionable, that is, able to be interrogated.

In the freeing of the subject from absolute monarchic or church rule, the central problem for modernity arises in the fulfillment of individual self-expressive freedom in conjunction with the unity of a collective, universal society involving individual participation. Charles Taylor summarizes Hegel's assessment of this problem as follows: 'the modern ideology of equality and of total participation leads to a homogenization of society' (Taylor, 1979: 116). Lyons offers a similar assessment of the problems posed by liberty, equality and fraternity promised by the French Revolution, arguing that although liberty gives the self free access to 'find Truth in its own memories, experiences, and reason', yet equality means 'our Truth is conditional', and furthermore, fraternity asks we 'merge our unique self with that of others' thereby denying 'ourselves uniqueness – perhaps the self itself' (Lyons, 1978: 3). The shared symbolic order relies on the ability for each member to participate in it, yet the larger the society and the greater the individual freedom the harder those two things are to reconcile in a practical ethics. For Stiegler, hyper-industrialization poses a specific threat to this form of participation causing 'symbolic misery' which I will address briefly later in this chapter and in detail chapter four.

Adorno and Horkheimer, therefore, saw the Enlightenment not as an unambiguous evolution of civilization but a dissent into a kind of 'barbarism', a

massification of individual experience brought about by the schematization of the culture industries. Influenced by the Frankfurt School critique, Hartmut Rosa, in *Alienation and Acceleration*, has diagnosed the acceleration of society as the cause for the 'broken promise' of modernity, the promise of self-actualizing, self-determining desires (Rosa, 2014: 77-83). For Rosa, in technologically saturated societies, the individual often struggles to realize or fulfill his or her dreams and is made instead to achieve competitive performance-driven goals that will feed the 'acceleration-machine' of modern society.

For Stiegler, whose work is also indebted to the Frankfurt School, the problem is the opposition of the individual against society within a commercialized, mass culture. Individualism, as true individuation, should see the flourishing of the 'I' of the individual in composition with the 'we' of others and of society. It is this co-composition that is the psychosocial individuation to which Stiegler repeatedly refers. Yet consumerism has created individuals that fail to co-compose with each other, creating 'social atomization' (Stiegler, 2009b: 48). So, he argues,

To say we live in an individualistic society is a patent lie, an extraordinary delusion...extraordinary because no one seems conscious of it...We live in a herd-society, as comprehended and anticipated by Nietzsche.

(Stiegler, 2009b: 48)

For Stiegler, this form of consumerist individualism is related genealogically to Descartes' *cogito* and Kant's autonomous, rational self. Both neglect the existential question, which was later formulated by Heidegger, of humanity's being 'thrown' into the world. Stiegler's contention is that the apparent self-reliance of self-conscious reason is founded on the fact of the technological

supplement, and this primordial relation has led to the technocratic tendencies of the Anthropocene age.

So, Stiegler's critique of individualistic cultural society is akin to Gilbert Ryle's attack on Descartes' dualism. In *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle famously uses the analogy of a tour of the colleges of Oxford or Cambridge University to illustrate that Descartes' mind/body problem stems from a 'category mistake'. In being shown the individual colleges one might wonder where the University actually is, yet the University is composed of its colleges (Ryle, 2000: 17-18). Similarly, Stiegler sees the individual 'I', as composed with and by a society of 'we', of other 'I's, and to separate one from the other is akin to separating the University's colleges from the University. In other words, the totality 'invents' its individual parts; and that totality, as we have seen in Stiegler's originary technicity thesis, is always technologically staged.

So, in the following section, I will examine the way in which Stiegler characterizes the relationship between technological organization of the social totality and the ways in which this is related to the possibility of performative agency and artistic creativity that are the focus of my thesis. As I argue in chapter seven, it is Stiegler's notion of an amateur artist, founded on his theory of performativity or 'acting out' - that is, as a writing and fictioning of the self - that allows for the transformative possibilities of digital technologies to create an expressive, spiritual performance of the self that transforms both the individual and society.

## 2) 'Acting Out': Performance and Performativity

In *As You Like It*, Jacques - echoing the tradition of *theatrum mundi* - famously says: 'All the world's a stage,/And all the men and women merely players' (Act 2.vii). If time is one way of understanding the 'self', then another way we make sense of our 'selves' is through narrative and story and by how we stage the drama of our lives. This 'desire for stories' (and 'stories of desire') forms the opening chapter of Stiegler's third volume of *Technics and Time* on cinema (Stiegler, 2011a). We construct and re-construct narratives of our lives and of those around us. This is partly why the Jacques quotation is so often referred to since it captures the sense we have of ourselves as actors and performers in our own lives. Yet given the environment that we inhabit has changed so much since these lines were written, it begs the question what is the 'stage' upon which modern performativity is enacted? The more digitized and virtual our world becomes the more 'stages' we can enter or exit at will. If the world is something that is defined as that which we inhabit, is there really only *one* world in a digital age where we can 'multi-platform'?

A second issue then becomes the notion of 'players', the autonomy with which we have to inhabit this world. Is it possible to be 'players', i.e. to play, in the modern world? Or is modern performativity coming increasingly close to extinguishing the necessary level of spontaneity needed to *create*? Equally, does the ability to take on different roles so readily in the modern world undermine a coherent sense of 'self'?

In the more 'concrete' world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was arguably easier to distinguish between the concepts of physical reality and imaginary representation than it is today. In the digital age, as Stiegler is at pains to point out, it has become increasingly difficult to make a distinction between the two *at all*. As Sherry Turkle has argued, 'Involvement with simulated worlds can affect relationships in the real one' (Turkle, 2005: 81). In Heideggerian-Stieglerian terms, it is the *forgetting* of the question of origin that is the fundamental issue: the very ability to think for ourselves and to *critique* what is presented to us. So, Stiegler argues, it is not simply the manual worker who is disinvested through his or her proletarianization. It is also the 'intellectual workers of cognitive capitalism' since '*what is lost is that which constitutes the life of spirit as a critical, that is rational instance, capable of theoretical self-formalizing, and therefore of self-critique*' (Stiegler, 2014c: 24; emphasis in original).

One of Stiegler's central arguments is that hyper-industrial society and consumer-based cultural capitalism have created an aesthetic environment that lacks meaning because it short-circuits the noetic and sensible development necessary for true individual development. The aesthetic sphere, including art itself, has been appropriated by the logic of the market. This has occurred to such an extent that aesthetic conditioning now creates behaviour that is reactive and non-reflexive, and a retroactive loop reinforces this conditioning, thereby closing the circuit. True art, as with true individuation, is an incomplete process that is spontaneous, active and exceptional – it stands out from the crowd in its ex-sistence. It is the *acting out* of potentiality. So, for example, at the end of the

film *The Truman Show*, the central character having discovered he has been living on a television set since his birth ruptures the cyclorama and escapes. Stiegler's concern is that we *all* need to rupture the aesthetic conditioning that we have inherited *from birth* to create new creative, artistic, noetic circuits that support the acting out of individual potentialities.

The notion of performativity originates in the work of the philosopher and linguist J L Austin (Austin, 1975; Austin, 1979), who distinguished between 'performative utterances' and 'constative utterances'. Whereas a constative utterance makes a descriptive statement about something, a performative utterance enacts or performs what it is announcing. So, the marriage vow 'I do' performs the act of marriage. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler went on to develop Austin's concept to argue that gender itself is performative: that one is gendered through the actions one performs not through any intrinsic quality (Butler, 2007). Sartre's famous example of the waiter is another instance of this notion of performativity: through enacting the part of the waiter, the mannerisms and the expectations of being a waiter, the individual becomes the waiter, although this performance is unable to realize any essential intrinsic quality (Sartre, 2003). The waiter is only the waiter in performance. So, whereas constative utterances describe events, identities and situations, performative utterances create and constitute them. Performativity encapsulates the idea that we are what we do, put simply: being is doing.

Within sociology, Erving Goffman, referring to Sartre's example of the waiter, uses the theatrical metaphor in his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* to frame these performances and roles of the self as staged within theatrical 'front' and

'back' regions (Goffman, 1959). And John S. Thompson's work on our experience of mediated modernity presents a theory of the self as 'a symbolic project which the individual actively constructs' (Thompson, 1995: 210).

For Stiegler, performativity is the 'acting out' or 'passage to act' of Aristotle's noetic soul, achieved by the dynamic movement of desire for the divine between the vegetative, sensitive and noetic souls. We do not intrinsically have 'an essence', an essential self. Furthermore, following Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Stiegler argues the ego does not exist but is a 'necessary illusion' (Stiegler, 2015b: 171). We are a composition of tendencies that produce the passage to act within the noetic soul. So, individuation, as the unity of consciousness, is 'not a given', but the outcome of the process of acting out (Stiegler, 2015b: 170).

Stiegler references Louis Jouvét, in a context that echoes Jacques' contemplation of the 'seven ages of man', commenting that for Jouvét 'it is the very nature of the human soul to project itself in a variety of characters' (Stiegler, 2015b: 172).

And so, in his essay 'How I Became a Philosopher', Stiegler concludes,

My life will have been a succession of lives, as if I have had several lives, a multiplicity of stories and roles. I have not ceased to have changes of life. I have never philosophized, if I have ever philosophized, other than through the ordeal of this succession of roles I have been able to occupy – and the vertiginous variety of viewpoints that *remain* within me. I carry this succession as the very mark of the default of origin – which is necessary – of which these successive and accidental roles are masks, *persona* that have been *needed*, that I became as necessary, and that were only justified, if they ever were, in the *après-coup* of my fragile liberty, in my fallible fidelity to the default of origin – *to the law*.

(Stiegler, 2009b: 35; emphasis in original)

The noetic soul then finds expression in different roles, in the acting out of successive lives. These are, as with becoming itself, 'accidental' rather than essential; and yet their particularity is necessary to the formation of the self. For Stiegler, there is no privileged interiority to the self. The performativity of the self is a compositional interplay of tendencies between the interior and the exterior. This lack of interiority, the necessary default of origin, is therefore the motor for the acting out of noetic spirit and for noetic individuation.

### 3) The Public Stage and the 'Theatre of Individuation'

Stiegler frames the psychosocial individuation of the 'I' and the 'we' as a 'theatre of individuation' (Stiegler, 2009b: 66-70). The staging of the performance of the self is, for Stiegler, an aesthetic space of lived experience that has been appropriated in the hyper-industrial age by marketing and the culture and programming industries. For Stiegler, these industries now control not only the technical machinery of this aesthetic staging but also condition the behaviour and performance of the self as consumer. To understand the origins of Stiegler's thought we must return to the Greek *polis* that gave rise to modern drama in the form of Greek tragedy. For Stiegler, tragedy enabled a transformative space of psychic and collective individuation due to its active and participatory aesthetic culture. This transformative staging of culture created the ability to pass on this transformation of the city and its citizens ensuring the elevating tendency of ethical and cultural life was maintained.

As I have established, the Greek citizen was a constitutive part of the city. This is due both to the nature of the democratic politics in the Greek city-state and the use of the alphabet. So, as Stiegler remarks, Greek citizens would be 'technically qualified' (Stiegler, 2015b: 168) for the theatre they were watching.

Importantly, what Greek theatre provided was a public staging of the concerns of the city and its citizens. Tragedy provided a public space in which questions could be posed, and theatre represented the 'production of the *question*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 167; emphasis in original), that is an interrogation of the '*the tragic age of society*' which is simultaneously the '*political age*' which forms the

'public space of the city' (Stiegler, 2015b: 167; emphasis in original). Greek tragedy was not merely entertainment. It was an arena for the collective psychosocial individuation of the city and its citizens. The dramas they staged enabled the decisions, tensions, fears and civil wars of the city to be played out in order that the actions and outcomes of these personal, familial and political situations could be reflexively reflected back to its citizens. Therefore, tragedy was not simply just a '*ritual*' it was more importantly a '*practice*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 167; emphasis in original).

As Victor Turner argues in *From Ritual to Theatre*, quoting the work of Clifford Geertz<sup>7</sup>, tragedies were 'social metacommentaries' that functioned as reflexive 'mirrors' (Turner, 1982: 104). So, Turner continues, these 'active' mirrors questioned and analyzed the values and beliefs of society, identifying the constituent elements of culture, and often enabled new forms of social structure to be built (Turner, 1982: 104). As Turner points out the plots of the plays would have been extremely familiar to the audience and forming its religious and cultural heritage (Turner, 1982: 103). Similarly, for Stiegler, Greek theatre 'staged the mythological and heroic *already-there*' in which the ancient world could view its own past (Stiegler, 2015b: 167; emphasis in original). In this way, tragedy is the outplaying of compositional forces, so that this 'composition constitutes their *play*', the tragedy lying in the '*decomposition*' of these forces, the 'struggle' against which is '*katharsis*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 167; emphasis in original). The 'I' is created upon the theatrical social stage of the 'we', hence why the role of

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<sup>7</sup> Geertz, Clifford. "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought." *American Scholar*, pp. 165-179, Spring, 1980.

the collective chorus as representative of the citizens *as* the city was so fundamental to Greek tragedy. So, with regard to the social space as a public stage, Stiegler argues,

There is no social space that does not open as a scene: the social *stages* – it introduces what *can* appear as social. The theatrical social, as a staging of what is social, is the presentation of what may come on scene as the projection and realization of an individuation that is simultaneously *psychic* (the hero's) and *collective* (the city's)...But the condition of this individuation...in the theatre and the *res publica* alike - are founded on the literalization of the word common to right and tragedy.

(Stiegler, 2015b: 168; emphasis in original)

In other words, tragedy was an active, participatory and collective psychosocial individuation whereby the city and its citizens posed questions through the staging of reflective-reflexive drama. Tragedy provided a public space in which this collective cultural memory, that was 'already-there', could be interrogated. In this way, this past, as a cultural heritage that they had not lived but which had been inherited could be understood, assimilated, and either avoided or adopted. This reflective public space is then aligned with Stiegler's use of the Roman concept of *otium*. That is, the sphere of spirit, in which human flourishing and noetic individuation can occur, as distinguished from *neg-otium*, as the sphere of business, politics and public affairs.

Although Greek tragedy originated in this reflexive drama, it is not the only example of this individuating form. As Pamela M. King has noted, English medieval 'morality plays' would make the audience participants of the play (King, 2001: 262), even making the continuation of the drama dependent on their interaction (King, 2001: 251). Furthermore, Stephen Orgel has written that

Renaissance masques were 'essential to the life of the Renaissance court...[as] their fictions created heroic roles for the leaders of society' (Orgel, 1991: 38) and were 'an extension of the royal mind' (Orgel, 1991: 43). The Renaissance age 'believed in the *power* of art – to persuade, transform, preserve – and masques can no more dismissed as flattery than portraits can' (Orgel, 1991: 40; emphasis in original). This link to Greek tragedy is unsurprising given that the Renaissance age was itself founded on a 're-birth' and re-discovery of classical culture, but nevertheless important. So, as with classical tragedy, the court masque provided a public stage (within a private court) for individuation so that, 'What the noble spectator watched he ultimately became' (Orgel, 1991: 39).

Richard Sennett, in *The Fall of Public Man*, argues the disappearance between the public and private realms has been caused by 'a contradiction in culture' that of revealing one's personality in public. In previous centuries the public sphere maintained a necessary notion of role-playing, persona and mask. Yet, with the turn towards the need for public figures, such as artists or politicians, to display personality, emotions and feelings, 'the mask one wore in the world' has been lost. Instead of connecting people, Sennett argues that it has had the opposite effect and that people 'withdraw from contact' afraid 'of betraying their emotions'. Crucially, he argues, 'The audience thus lost a sense of itself as an active force, as a "public"', and so, losing its ability to 'judge' these public personalities 'it became a spectator rather than a witness' (Sennett, 1977: 261). Now, forty years later, Sennett's concern has been fully realized by a culture in which celebrities must reveal their ordinary lives, their personalities, whilst 'ordinary' people, displaying personality, become stars of 'reality' television.

There has also been a significant turn towards naturalism in modern acting, influenced in large part by the 'Method' school of acting in America, and based on the work of Stanislavski and famously used by Marlon Brando. This has also changed the aesthetic of both theatrical and cinematic performance. For Stiegler, the crucial distinction between this early theatrical public space and the current aesthetic space of the hyper-industrial epoch is in the loss of the difference between the 'spectacular' and the 'specular'. He argues that '*Every aesthetic practice is a putting into doubt*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 161; emphasis in original), so that all art should be the site of the questioning of culture and society as exemplified by the form of Greek tragedy. Yet this relies on the 'specular' being maintained alongside the 'spectacular', in order that the 'spectator maintains and establishes itself' (Stiegler, 2015b: 169) or, in other words, so that every member of the audience can individuate him or herself. And, echoing Sennett's wording, Stiegler argues that in a world of industrial objects, we are confronted with markers 'without witness: a *brand* [*marque*]' (Stiegler, 2015b: 165; emphasis in original).

Following Horkeimer and Adorno, Stiegler maintains that this balance is lost, along with the specular aspect itself, with the controlling schematization of the culture industries that emerge with the kinaesthetic regime of cinema. In the modern digital, audiovisual age we are confronted with the spectacular *alone*. As David Harvey has argued, postmodernity's 'preoccupation with instaneity' has led to 'the contemporary emphasis in culture production on events, spectacles, happenings and media images' (Harvey, 1990: 59). Yet this merely reinforces the 'fleeting qualities' of modernity (Harvey, 1990: 59) which, as Fredric Jameson

argues, creates 'depthlessness' and 'superficiality' (Jameson, 1991: 9) due to the integration of aesthetic and commodity production (Jameson, 1991: 4). Or, to put it in Stiegler's terms, the 'audiovisual media pool' to which he refers is an increasingly shallow one (Stiegler, 2013b: 66).

Unlike, the Greek citizens therefore, we are no longer fully active participants. For Stiegler, the spectator is no longer in their audience but 'in the screen' (Stiegler, 2009b: 60). The implications of the phrase 'being lost' in what one is watching then are profound. Stiegler's primary concern is the loss of spiritual (noetic) individuation, leaving only the tendency towards disindividuation. This disindividuation, which is, without an elevating tendency, a process of spiritual 'emptying' that leaves the individual bereft of the possibility of self-creation (Stiegler, 2013b: 59).

#### 4) The Fabrication of Culture: Stiegler's 'Symbolic Misery' and Swift's 'Abyss of Things'

As important as Nietzsche's 'death of God' is to Stiegler's work (as evidenced, for example, by the title of Part II of *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 'The Pharmacology of Nihilism'), of equal significance is Roland Barthes's influential 1968 essay 'The death of the author' (Barthes, 2000). Influenced by Proust, to whom Stiegler explicitly refers (cf. Stiegler, 2015b: 164; Stiegler, 2015a: 114), Barthes' essay marks a seminal moment in literary theory's shifting of attention away from the author as 'Author-God', and notions of authorial intentionality, towards the reader and the cultural reception and interpretation of the work. In Barthes' work, the act of reading is not passive but active: it is performative.

Barthes argues that the 'author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*' (Barthes, 2000: 148; emphasis in original), so writing is not 'an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction'' but 'performative...in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered' (Barthes, 2000: 149). This is encapsulated in his witty title since the reader must know of the reference to Nietzsche to fully understand it. Barthes' intention cannot be guaranteed by the act of writing alone; it must be recovered and recreated in its reception, in the act of reading. His version of Leroi-Gourhan's 'freeing of the hand' is that the hand has been 'cut off from any voice' and become 'pure gesture of inscription' so that language 'ceaselessly calls into question all origins' (Barthes, 2000: 149). The book is a 'tissue of signs' where imitation is 'lost' and

'infinitely deferred' (Barthes, 2000: 149), so that writing becomes a site of 'multiple writings' drawing on 'many cultures' entering 'into mutual relations' (Barthes, 2000: 150). The destination rather than origin is the reader, where 'the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost' (Barthes, 2000: 150). Importantly this reader is not personal; he or she is a '*someone*' who 'holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted'. In this way, the death of the author becomes the 'birth of the reader' (Barthes, 2000: 150; emphasis in original).

Stiegler takes this further so that the reader as 'the subject of the enunciation by reading' becomes 'the author of that which is read' (Stiegler, 2015a: 113). For Stiegler, what he writes is produced by his readers, '[t]hey are the ones who say what I say. What I say myself is nothing but an interpretation among others' (Stiegler, 2015b: 172). In this way reading is a 'pro-duction' since it involves 'a kind of writing' through selections made from primary and secondary retentions (Stiegler, 2015a: 113). These retentions belong only to '*this* reader' and 'not as another' (Stiegler, 2015a: 113; emphasis in original) and therefore, the reader is 'reading themselves through what they read (which is the Proustian definition of reading)' (Stiegler, 2015a: 114). And so, quoting Proust directly, 'without the book, he may never have perceived himself'<sup>8</sup> (Stiegler, 2015b: 164). In this way, reading is for Stiegler more accurately always a *re*-reading and a continual composition of the self, since no single act of reading can be repeated in the

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<sup>8</sup> Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, trans C. K. Scott Moncrieff, D. J. Ennght and Terence Kilmastin (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 272-3.

sense that the reader's primary and secondary retentions are not fixed or stable but are, ideally, transformed by what they read. The reader is individuated in the act of reading. For Stiegler, following Foucault, it becomes 'self-writing'. So, contrary to Barthes, Stiegler's reader-as-author sees the individual subject as always simultaneously both the destination and the origin of the work, both the subject and object of the text, and, both the ends and the means of its production.

Stiegler's account is founded on his reading of Hegel's 'predicative' and 'speculative' propositions. A predicative proposition always remains '*exterior*' so that 'the subject of the statement' is separated from 'the subject of the enunciation' and therefore 'disindividuating' (Stiegler, 2015a: 114-5; emphasis in original). Whereas, the speculative proposition triggers 'an active selection' whereby the reader is 'trans-formed, individuated and, ultimately, transindividuated' (Stiegler, 2015a: 114). Stiegler therefore makes the distinction between works that allow this active participation, which remain open to interpretative re-production by the reader as an individuating act, and those that remain closed, and therefore, disindividuating. The exteriorization of knowledge and know-how that leads to the proletarianization of labour is a concretization of the 'formal Understanding' that short-circuits the speculative proposition that leads to noetic individuation and new possibilities (Stiegler, 2015a: 116). Stiegler's urgent appeal is that culture recovers, maintains and safeguards its cultivating practices so that the aesthetic sphere retains its psychic and collective individuating potentialities. The question I will pursue is whether this is possible in the age of digital-virtual-aesthetic technologies.

For Stiegler, following this linguistic and philosophical approach to subjectivity, meaning and signification are created and produced. As with authorial intention there is no essential meaning to be uncovered other than those created in the act of reading, as *this* reader of *that* text. So, he argues,

[S]ignifying practices constitute frameworks, repetitions which I called texts in the sense of fabrics [*tissus*], a sense that is thus not only linguistic but grammatical, that is, *retentional*, and they are the *supports* of making-world. The fabric of signifying practices that forms the material of the world, which organizes and programs social behavior, can obviously weaken, rip, decay: I can perfectly well enter into an attitude of inattention to the world, and thus of insignificance...

(Stiegler, 2009: 29; emphasis in original)

A central concern, for Stiegler, is our ‘inattention’ in a digital world, one in which, with the dominance of the audiovisual culture and programming industries, we become lost ‘in the screen’ (Stiegler, 2009b: 60). The danger of this inattentive reception is, I would suggest, similar to that of the ritual of rote learning. Such inattentive recitation of facts can carry no significance, no knowledge as understanding, unless it is accompanied and cultivated by attentive practice. The danger with the algorithmic computational calculation is that it abstracts the form but leaves no content. We are bombarded with information and facts but are left clueless as to how to interpret or make any significant meaning from them. This lack of participation in the aesthetic sphere leads to disindividuation, the central contention of Stiegler’s account of symbolic misery, which I focus on in chapter four.

Furthermore, Stiegler’s use of clothing metaphors such as ‘fabrics [*tissus*]’, which in itself picks up Barthes’ ‘tissues of signs’, as well as ‘material’ and ‘rip’ are

important and are found elsewhere in his writing, such as ‘weaving therapeutic multiples’ (Stiegler, 2011c: 126), ‘fabricated’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 96), ‘fabrication’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 133). The clearest link, however, concerns the problem of marketing that for Stiegler, as I explain in chapter seven, has replaced the question of God as the fundamental existential question. The prevalence of marketing and brands and their absorption of the aesthetic sphere threaten the ability for these signifying practices to act as supports for the noetic activity of constituting the symbolic order of the world. Fashion ‘brands’ are perhaps the most common instance of commercial branding, so that an actor at an awards ceremony will be asked *who* they are wearing rather than *what*, but such branding is now all-pervasive. For Stiegler, this branding, combined with the permanent innovation of industrial objects, causes an internalization of the representation of the world that is a ‘pale imitation’ which systematically organizes a kind of ‘fashioning’ of the key events of their ‘existence’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 105). In this light, an interesting comparison can be made with the work of Jonathan Swift. Signification is not only a creation and production of meaning but also a fabrication and fashioning of it. On this reading the invention of the loom is as important as the printing press, text and textiles are not only etymologically but also symbolically related.

As Ann Cline Kelly has argued, Swift saw language ‘as a fabric woven through the history of usage in which certain patterns are established’, thereby ‘binding society together’ and, following a classical theme found in Cicero’s *De Inventione*, ‘cloaking underlying animalism with civilization’. Yet in his *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift imagines the dangers of the unraveling of this social fabric and depicts a world

'controlled by radical amnesiacs' who have forgotten 'cultural forms' and without 'a stable cultural context, Swift implies, no lasting meaning is possible' (Kelly, 1988: 28). This becomes, as Kelly points out (in his "Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity") the narrator's imagining of 'Modern productions' as the 'Abyss of Things' (Kelly, 1988: 28). Similarly, in *Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word*, Deborah Baker Wyrick's reference to the allegory of the three coats in *A Tale of a Tub*, suggests, 'original meaning cannot be completely uncovered through hermeneutic discoverings and recoverings. Once it is uttered, it is lost' (Wyrick, 1988: 20).

Here, then, in the 'Abyss of Things' and the allegory of the coats, Swift imagines a complete separation between what de Saussure would later term the 'signifier' and the 'signified', thereby leading to a production of objects that become meaningless signifiers. Such a concern is voiced by Jameson who argues there has been a 'corrosive dissolution of older forms of magical language' since the 'autonomy of culture...penetrates the sign itself and disjoins the signifier and the signified' (Jameson, 1991: 96). 'Meaning' as that which is signified is therefore 'problematized' and we are left with the 'pure and random play of signifiers' (Jameson, 1991: 96).

Swift's 'Abyss of Things', and Jameson's 'random' 'signifiers' are reconfigured in Stiegler's work as the 'symbolic misery' of the hyper-industrial aesthetic sphere. This condition occurs as a result of an aesthetic culture that presupposes a lack of knowledge or the ability to fully engage with the constitution of a collective sensibility. The branding of the consumer and the permanent innovation and

presence of industrial objects are deeply disindividuating as they cause ‘an *interruption* of making-world – of the psychic and collective individuation that the world is’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 105; emphasis in original). So, for Stiegler, culture is the fabrication of a collective memory of secondary retentions, which is always ‘already-there’ as a cultural heritage of tertiary retentions. Our own fabrications are necessarily always based on already-made, previously produced material from a heritage (an epiphylogenetic milieu) that we inherit. Stiegler’s framing of modernity as one of permanent innovation means that both the technological speed at which, and technological methods by which, this invention takes place, have separated the individual from the making of the world around them. So, as with Swift’s allegory of the coats, we are always re-fashioning culture, and we need to have the knowledge and ability to be good tailors to maintain the social fabric. As Kelly notes, ‘The Drapier’s language does explicitly what Swift believes all language ought to do: it improves human society’ (Kelly, 1988: 32). For Stiegler, since meaning is always a fabrication imposed on the world by our signifying practices, it is not that there was ever an essential meaning to lose, but that the meaning we find, or rather ‘search for’<sup>9</sup>, is our creation. Hence, why Stiegler’s references to apprenticeships and *dis*apprenticeships of knowledge, in all forms, are so crucial to his work. Stiegler’s work on the technological industrialization of time, the effects of an accelerated culture and the disindividuation that these produce are treated in detail in chapter five.

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<sup>9</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search For Meaning*, Rider (1959; 2004)

Wyrick also suggests a 'textocentric' approach to Swift's language theory<sup>10</sup> whereby 'words mean whatever the texts allow them to mean, and their purpose is to control signficatory and interpretative potential by either holding it open or forcing it to a close' (Wyrick, 1988: 3). Stiegler makes a similar distinction in his theory of 'traumatology' between 'traumatypes' which open up potentialities and possibilities, and 'stereotypes' which create barriers. Stiegler's traumatological approach, which combines elements of the sublime, the tragic and the uncanny, is central to my thesis concerning the importance of art in creating and opening up possibilities for the future. The significance of this for new modes of social and economic 'performance' will be addressed in chapter seven.

As author-readers and tailors of the world around us, the creation of the world we inhabit and our performativity within it is, for Stiegler, our responsibility, hence, 'my pure responsibility' (Stiegler, 2009b: 31). Sartre's existential freedom demanded a similar responsibility; however, his phenomenology leaves the technological matrix of human life in an external relationship to fundamental questions of hyperindustrial modernity. Today, the schematization of technology, and specifically that of digital, computational audiovisual media, threaten our fabrication of culture and our aesthetic judgment both through a capturing of attention and the appeal to our unconscious drives from marketing. The aesthetic becomes a form of conditioning in which the technological reproduction of sensibility is designed to form the individual an acquisitive

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<sup>10</sup> Wyrick notes that Swift wrote in a letter to Alexander Pope that, "I write Pamphlets...chiefly because I know they will signify nothing." (Wyrick, 1988: 18).

egoistic 'self'. In chapter six I will address the successive development of media from the printing press, to radio and cinema, and on to the birth of television. As I will show, this history of analogue media is simultaneously the history of mass culture, and the development of the foundation of our current digital audiovisual media age.

Our knowledge, ability and capacities for going further than the restricted life of the drives are what Stiegler's work explores through his reformulation of Freud's concept of generational inheritance (Stiegler, 2015b: 111-153). Our capacities are not as a single memory or a memory amongst others but it is constituted by dead memories in the form of technics (Stiegler, 2015b: 134). Technics in this way support the fallibility of the human brain, which is in a state of 'permanent destruction' (Stiegler, 2015b: 134). The danger of the current aesthetic audiovisual sphere is akin to finding ourselves stuck in a language that we are unable to develop or evolve within, since we no longer engage actively in its constitution.

The excessiveness of the text must remain speculative (Hegel), performative (Austin) and traumatypical (Stiegler), rather than predicative, constantive and stereotypical, if there is to be a new sphere of individual freedom that exceeds the neoliberal version that has become hegemonic. Thus, Stiegler's criticism of Hegel is that he wrongly claims that exteriorization remains a process that is subsequently interiorized by the subject in the historical movement of spirit. For Stiegler, following his originary technicity thesis, there is no opposition between exterior and interior; they are in constant composition, and therefore must be

situated in a *transitional space* (Stiegler, 2015a: 121). So, reflecting on his time in prison, Stiegler argues:

*[T]here was no inside...I had to find in myself in altering myself through those practices by which I grasped, little by little, that others in the world are there to give me access, through them, to my alterity, to my future. To my individuation.*

(Stiegler, 2009b: 30; emphasis in original)

What began as the literal textualisation of myth and Homeric tradition (Stiegler, 2015b: 170) becomes a *hyper*-textualisation. For Stiegler, the mythogram becomes the orthogram, and now the algorithm. As Charles Taylor has noted, the age of political theory and utilitarianism founded on notions of instrumental reason removed myth and fable (Taylor, 1979: 112). The twenty-six letters of the alphabet, as signifying practices that create meaning and fabricate culture, maintained a degree of autonomy, creative, transitional space enabling performative individuation and transformation. For Stiegler, there remained a hermeneutic gap between the reader and the author allowing the reader to become the author of the work through his or her reading of it, and importantly there remained a balance between the known and the unknown, between what was read and *how* to read. Yet the evolution of hypertext has become a calculated, algorithmic code, reducing this system of interpretative signs and symbolic exchange to a binary, all or nothing techno-logic of '1s' and '0s', eliminating any uncertainty through predictive calculation of the unknown. This is an elimination of creative space, what Turner would term a 'liminoid' space (equivalent to Stiegler's use of *otium*): a space in which the established order is

suspended and opens up new possibilities.<sup>11</sup> What is required is a compositional oscillating interplay between these two extremes to be maintained. This is why the role of the individual as artist is so crucial to avoid becoming stuck, stereotyped or mummified, in our own fabricated culture: a memory that is a pre-individual milieu and ‘weave of secondary retentions supported by tertiary retentions’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 107). It is through art and the individual as artist that culture and the individuals within it are transformed, providing new alternatives. For Stiegler, the hyper-industrial epoch and political economy is founded on the TINA premise that ‘there is no alternative’, and what is needed is for the elevating tendency of therapeutic systems, such as art, to provide ‘lots of alternatives’ (Stiegler, 2011c: 120-123). So it is in the ‘social sculpture’ (cf. Stiegler, 2015b) that we create collective memory, and find ourselves through others, through our ‘alterity’, thereby establishing alternative possibilities, fabricating new cultures and producing a future. I will examine the social, economic and political implications of this formulation of art in chapter seven.

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<sup>11</sup> Here I am influenced by Marvin Carlson’s reading of Turner (Carlson, 2018: 17-18)

## 5) Artistic Acting Out: The Self as Fiction and The Individual as Artist

The opening to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*<sup>12</sup>, written during the first industrial age of the nineteenth-century, encapsulates many of Stiegler's own concerns that are central to his critique of the current hyperindustrial age. Through their juxtaposition of opposites, Dickens' antithetical pairings set up what for Stiegler would represent a series of compositional tendencies. So, for Dickens' narrator, it is simultaneously the best of times and the worst of times, the age of wisdom and the age of foolishness, the epoch of belief and the epoch of incredulity, the spring of hope and winter of despair. All of these form a fundamental part of Stiegler's work as compositional rather than oppositional tendencies. For Stiegler, we must urgently overcome our metaphysical blockage caused by oppositional thought and practices in order to cultivate compositional tendencies. Our culture of calculated credit has redirected infinite and incalculable consistence of belief to the calculable and finite, leading to a culture of discredit and disbelief (*cf.* Stiegler's three-volume *Disbelief and Discredit*). The situation is now critical since the digitization of a culture, consisting of mass marketing and consumerism, has led to the loss of knowledge and to an endemic stupidity, without an elevating tendency to overcome it. The 'spring of hope' lies on a horizon of expectations, that is, of *elpis*: as expectation bearing both hope and fear (Stiegler, 2013a: 6). For Stiegler, the future is an opening up, a yet to come; hence *avenir*, rather than a predictable becoming as *devenir*. This future lies in art's ability to create works that can be 'put to work'. Yet it is in the life and work of another famous nineteenth-century cultural figure, Oscar Wilde, that Stiegler's

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<sup>12</sup> Dickens, 2003: 5.

theorizing of the artistic life of every individual finds its closest parallel. Defining himself as, 'a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age' (Wilde, 1986: 151), Wilde is, I would suggest, a proto-type or archetype of the industrial age that provides an interesting foundation for Stiegler's artistic 'acting out' within the hyper-industrial age.

Wilde was an Oxford classicist and his version of individualism is explicitly an aspiration to Hellenistic culture, ending his essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, with: 'The new Individualism as the new Hellenism' (Wilde, 2001: 160). Art, as Individualism, Wilde argues, must be a 'disturbing and disintegrating force' that disrupts the 'monotony of type, tyranny of habit...and the reduction of man to the level of a machine' (Wilde, 2001: 144). So his aesthetic sensibility is one that has an aversion to repetitive culture of reproduction in which industrialization has made 'gain not growth its aim' (Wilde, 2001: 132) and one in which the public 'swallow their classics whole, and never taste them' (Wilde, 2001: 144). The spectator must not dominate the work of art but be receptive to it (Wilde, 2001: 150), the beauty of art being found in what 'Art has never been' (Wilde, 2001: 151). Furthermore, as the critic Vivian, in *The Decay of Living*, Wilde critiques 'Facts...usurping the domain of Fancy' which vulgarize mankind and the 'crude commercialism of America, its materializing spirit, its indifference to the poetical side of things, and its lack of imagination' (Wilde, 2001: 176).

It is the schematization of the imagination through cultural commercialism, born out of both the American psyche, itself a process of collective invention and

adoption, and its predominant place in cinematic and commercial culture, that provide the foundation for the Frankfurt School critique of culture. In Stiegler's thought this becomes a concern for the impact of virtual-aesthetic conditioning on the symbolic order of the social, which requires a new critique of the 'materiality of spirit and of the techno-logical and retentional conditions of sublimation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 60). This is the premise of the account of symbolic misery that Stiegler develops in relation to the pharmacological effects of technology, that is, the chance that endemic dissatisfaction will produce a transformation of spirit (cf. Stiegler, 2013b).

For Stiegler, following Beuys, '*all human existence is intrinsically artistic*' since 'every man is an artist' and '*artistic acting out*' is a 'privileged modality' (Stiegler, 2015b: 61; emphasis in original). So, Stiegler argues,

Artists in act are distinguished from the artists in potential that we all are in that they endlessly and essentially dedicate the time of their existence to *cultivating* and *practicing*, in a singular and *privileged sphere* of noetic sensibility, the conditions of noetic acting out as social sculpture.

(Stiegler, 2015b: 66; emphasis in original)

What the artist ruptures is the aesthetic conditioning and repetitive, re-production of industrialization and the hyper-synchronization of digital time. The problem with the repetitive commercial cultural aesthetic is that, in phrasing that echoes Derrida's 'nothing outside the text': 'There is no thing that, as figure, can materialize outside...of this *already*. This already is structured by practices, and these are repetitions' (Stiegler, 2015b: 86; emphasis in original). Furthermore, in an age of predictive algorithms based on digitized computer time, there is the danger that the future arrives to us already-made *before* the

present. I will examine this aspect of Stiegler's critique of the programming industries in chapter five.

The artist occupies the time of exceptionality, that is, the time of the infinite and the incalculable, and is able therefore to intervene in the stimulus-response relations of commercialized culture and the aesthetic programming of behaviour. The noetic, and therefore artistic, soul does not merely respond to its environment, but 'acts on it, creating desire with respect to it' (Stiegler, 2015b: 138). Central to artistic acting out is the composition of the real and the fictional that is the foundation of the making-world that Stiegler theorizes. The metaphysical opposition between the real and imaginary, the true and the fictive, is a misconception: all true art depicts the 'compositional' relationship between the two. The playwright Harold Pinter, in an article he wrote in 1958 for the *Cambridge University Magazine*, stated that there are 'no hard distinctions' between the real and unreal, the true and the false, and that something can be 'both true and false'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in conversation with Mel Gussow, he remarked that: 'imagining is *as true as real*' (Gussow, 1994: 17; emphasis in original). Plays, as with lives, are realized in their performance. Pinter's fictional characters became part of his life (Gussow, 1994, 53), and the same is true for the audiences who see his plays. Yet, as with Stiegler's account of subjectivity and performativity, there is no essential meaning behind Pinter's plays. The confusion caused by those who search for it within his plays results from a misunderstanding of the composition of truth, fiction, and the performativity of

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<sup>13</sup> Billington, 1997: 94.

art and life. For Stiegler, noetic life is '*intrinsically fictive*' and crucially therefore '*to be decided...to realize a fiction*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 147; emphasis in original).

In this way, technics constitutes the '*power of fiction*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 148; emphasis in original) in the same way that language is the '*power to determine*' (Stiegler, 2015a: 108; emphasis in original): and so the central question, for Stiegler, becomes that of '*distinguishing* between 'good and bad fictions'' (Stiegler, 2015b: 148; emphasis in original). The meanings we attribute to ourselves and to the world are acts of creation: meaning is what we collectively and individually make of it. The essence of the aesthetic conditioning of symbolic misery is that we are no longer responsible for creating that meaning; the process of spiritual fabrication, is essentially bound up with a consumerist marketing of brands that has progressively excluded symbolic exchange. What are at stake are our abilities and capacities to decide, choose or realize these fictions. For Stiegler, we must retain the ability to inscribe our will, in Nietzsche's use of the term, on the world: to imprint 'on becoming the character of being' (Stiegler, 2013b: 133).

Wilde also self-consciously played upon the metaphysical misconceptions between reality and fiction both in his work and life. As Linda Dowling has commented of his classical education at Oxford, 'the Greats' examinations encouraged arriving at a 'new truth through a transposition of established truths' (Wilde, 2001: xxiv-v). Writing about his own life of artistic individualism in *De Profundis*, Wilde stated:

I made art a philosophy and philosophy an art... and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated art as the supreme reality and life as a mere mode of fiction. I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me.

(Wilde, 1986: 151)

Stiegler's formulation of humanity and technology has four central claims that are important to my thesis. Firstly, his account is one of human-technology relations as situated within an originary technicity. Secondly, his approach is pharmacological, treating technics and technology as simultaneously both poison *and* cure. Thirdly, his account of performative subjectivity is one in which there is a composition of tendencies between interior and exterior, between subject and object, which results in an 'acting out' of self. Finally, this performance of the self is one that is an expressive acting out of the spirit: a spiritual, noetic individuation. Yet, arguably the biggest problem with Stiegler's work is that whilst he returns to and elaborates on the same theoretical concepts, he fails to provide adequate formulations or examples of how these theories might work in practice and it is this failing which this thesis attempts to address.

This chapter has given an account of performativity as one that needs to address the central problem of modernity: that is, the reconciling of the free, autonomous individual within a participatory, universal society. It has shown that Stiegler's account of subjectivity is one founded on the linguistic, philosophical and sociological notions of agency whereby the self is conceived as a performance within the symbolic and aesthetic order of culture. This performance

necessitates a public stage akin to that of the Greek tragic age that allows its audience to reflect upon and question their society in order for the society to remain ethically reflexive. Yet, the growth of mass culture and global consumerism threatens this reflexivity and must be recovered. The generalized proletarianization of the consumer age is one that compromises the acting out of spirit due to the exhaustion of human drives. Furthermore, the social fabric, as with the fabric of the self, is a composition of tendencies, a 'weaving' of social bonds that is created by society and its individuals, and as with the reflexive public stage, society must have the requisite knowledge and ability to interpret and create this production of the social. Lastly, I argued that the performance of the self must be one in which the individual is an amateur artist in the hyper-industrial age, in a way which develops the archetype exhibited by Wilde during the industrial age. What this model of the individual as amateur artist looks like I will develop more fully in chapter seven in relation to the use of digital media. I will now explain how each of the chapters develops the framework I have developed here.

As I have outlined in my introduction, my thesis will address the potential for the aesthetic performance of self in the time of digital media in two parts. The first part 'Culture, Time and Disindividuation' (chapters four and five) focuses on the disindividuating tendencies whilst the second part, 'Art, Politics and Individuation' (chapters six and seven) looks at the elevating possibility that is sustained within this process of disindividuation, and what self-expressive forms of acting out digital media can enable.

Chapter four, 'Symbolic Order & Culture', addresses Stiegler's account of symbolic misery. As I have discussed, one of the central problems with the aesthetic sphere of consumerism is the inability of consumers to participate in the process of symbolic exchange. This participation is vital for individual spiritual development as well as the constitution of a reflexively engaged society. This chapter develops the ideas of symbolic interactionism in relation to Stiegler's concept of the epiphylogenetic milieu before outlining in more detail the successive phases of grammatization from the previous ages of citizen, to believer, to worker that have led to the current state of generalized proletarianization. This represents a de-humanization of the individual and a de-skilling of the individual's abilities to live, do and think. The loss of participation that results from this generalized proletarianization threatens the unity of society by emptying the individual of the requisite skills and the ability to participate fully in it.

The central part of this chapter addresses the stimulus-response relations that have developed in the consumerist stimulation of drives as well as looking at America as the birthplace of the consumerism and cinematic culture that formed the template of cognitive capitalism. Nietzsche's 'death of God', that becomes Barthes' 'death of the author', is addressed as the foundation for a de-symbolized aesthetic sphere of disposable objects, that results in disposable consumers. I examine the lack of interiority that is the counterpart of this proletarianized culture. I discuss Rowan Williams framing of subjectivity in which the idea of a 'private self' is equally as constructed out of the 'the chaos of passing emotions' as the public self. Yet consumerist marketing seeks to target consumers by

selling the notion of particular identities that threaten the process of psychosocial individuation. Finally, I address the notion of 'otium' that Stiegler argues is necessary for the reflexive flourishing of the individual and, as I argue, is closely linked with the artistic sphere.

Chapter five, 'The Sociology of Speed and Time', addresses the development of time as technics and the hyper-synchronization of this time by the culture and programming industries. The individual must remain in co-composition with the technics it invents and by which it is invented, the 'who' and the 'what' of originary technicity. For Stiegler, technics invents time, and in the age of digital time that operates at the speed of light, the technical world continually escapes us. It is a prosthesis, in the sense that it is continual in front of us. If the self is constituted in relation to time then digital time and its technics provides a fundamental problem to the reflexive performance of the self. Furthermore, Stiegler's concern is that algorithmic programming combined with the schematization of culture has resulted in a digital media time that 'thinks before us' and even more profoundly, as I will argue, creates the future *in advance* of the present.

Chapter six, 'The History of Analogue Technology and Mass Culture', analyzes the simultaneous development of digital media and mass culture out of the analogue age of print, radio, cinema and the birth of television. This chapter addresses the different technological 'stages' in which the performance of self occurs – and particularly the transition from analogue to digital media. Media is not, as I argue, simply that which we use to reflect society, it is also fundamental to the

formation of mass culture and how society is able to stage itself. This, then, provokes the question posed in this chapter concerning the staging of the self within modern media regimes. The orthographic age of print developed both a standardization of language and the first mass culture in the form of a reading public. The advent of cinema grew out of this mass audience but the introduction of the kinaesthetic regime, as both moving image and sound, transformed the nature of representation. Furthermore, the cinematographic nature of consciousness, central to Stiegler's account of audiovisual media and mass marketing, formed the first distracted audience lost 'in the screen'. This is heightened in the age of television with the synchronization of programming. Yet, as I will argue, the notion of television as a passive, receptive medium is a reductive reading of the relationship between the televisual screen and the viewer. Looking in detail at the history of television in relation to its ethical concerns and the economic structure, I will show how the digital age comes out of the 'narrowcasting' of diverse multi-channel programming, as well providing the foundation for the media corporations that constitute the modern media market. However, digital media, are also what Stiegler calls *pharmaka*, providing a possible therapeutic to previous ages of mass culture, one in which the individual can be transformed and society can be projected onto a reflexive public stage.

Chapter seven, "The Digital Media and the 'Economy of Contribution'", forms the key chapter of my thesis and looks at how spiritual acting out can take place in a digital media age. The first part of the chapter examines Stiegler's conception of spirit and technical individuation, addressing his development of both Heidegger

and Simondon's theories. The chapter then returns briefly to the notion of otium, the sphere of individual flourishing, in relation what Stiegler terms the 'art of living', that is, an economy of contribution which takes care of the individual to counter the tendency to carelessness and disposability. I then analyze Stiegler's theory of traumatology, as being composed of the tragic, the uncanny, and the sublime, and which provides the central theory to Stiegler's account of art as providing the possibility of creating a future out of disindividuating symbolic misery and destructive carelessness. Finally, I return to the notion of the individual as artist that I have provided the foundation for in this chapter. I argue that the next stage of grammatization will need to be one in which the individual as an amateur artist reconciles all the other stages of grammatization (citizen, believer, worker, and consumer), in order to create a society that develops a reflexively aware and artistically autonomous performance of the self within the time of digital media. It requires a new hermeneutic age, a culture of image-conscious readers to rival the community of readers engendered by the printed word. Such a hermeneutics is, as I have shown in relation to the performativity of reading and the fabrication of culture, fundamental to both the expressive performance and spiritual evolution of both the individual and society.

## **PART ONE: CULTURE, TIME AND DISINDIVIDUATION**

### **Chapter 4:**

#### **Symbolic Order & Culture**

‘Like so many Americans, she was trying to construct a life that made sense from things she found in gift shops’

- *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut

‘We accept the reality of the world with which we’re presented.’

- Christof, *The Truman Show*

‘Man hands on misery to man.  
It deepens like a coastal shelf.’

- Philip Larkin, from ‘This Be The Verse’

‘I believe the present state of generalized loss of individuation can only lead to symbolic collapse’

- Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery*, vol. 1

## Introduction:

### Symbolic Interactionism and Stiegler's Epiphylogenetic Milieu

The central aspect of performativity is that performance of the self is the freely chosen construction and 'acting out' of the self, as opposed to the notion of performativity itself, which is the often unconscious or prescriptive performance of identity. Underlying this is the means through which one understands that self as situated within society and culture. Subjectivity formation is dependent not only upon the interpretation that individuals have of themselves but also their interpretation of, perception of and engagement with their social environment – their milieu - and the symbolic order. This aspect of individuation, as connected to the symbolic order, involves both hermeneutics and the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism. So, for Erving Goffman the self is a presentation or performance that is dependent on an interaction with our world as a theatre of stages and audiences (Goffman, 1959); and, more recently, in John B. Thompson's account of the self, it is a 'symbolic project' which we actively construct (Thompson, 1995: 210).

Yet, for Stiegler, as with Vonnegut's character in his novella who tries to construct a life that 'made sense from things she found in gift shops', the modern world's consumerist culture leads to individuals who are profoundly 'disorientated' and who lack the ability to effectively, and *affectively*, individuate themselves. The problem with these 'gifts', in Stiegler's terms, is that they lack a symbolic *circuit* of exchange, a gift and counter-gift that is *returned*. It is this

symbolic circuit that creates noetic individuation. In terms of performativity, individual actors are no longer active agents but *reactive* ones.

This chapter will focus on this aspect of Stiegler's work and his concept of 'symbolic misery', that is, the loss of individuation due to the loss of participation within the hyperindustrial age that causes 'disorientation' and leads to existential suffering. This modern malaise, for Stiegler, is due to 'sensitivity's machinic turn' and the appropriation of attention, drives and desires by cultural, cognitive capitalism through the media and marketing. Stiegler argues that this loss of aesthetic participation leads to an aesthetic conditioning - an 'aesthetic war' - in which the figure of the individual '*finds itself disfigured*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 48; emphasis in original). This aesthetic war is linked to Stiegler's underlying concern throughout his work that the modern world is experiencing a 'war of spirits'. In other words, his concern is the survival, or even resurrection, of noetic individuation. To fight this situation Stiegler promotes his idea of the 'Economy of Contribution' and the importance of art, 'In this struggle, the art world, and spirit-workers [*travailleurs de l'esprit*] more generally, must form elite troops' (Stiegler, 2015b: 49). This will be the focus of chapter seven.

As discussed in chapter two, for Stiegler, each milieu is *epiphylogenetic*: our lived experience of the world into which we are born is inherited through the traces of the past - a 'sedimentary store of events' (Stiegler, 2014b: 33) - as an *already*-there, a facticity, which 'we live without knowing it' (Stiegler, 2014b: 33; emphasis in original), and it is from this that we construct our world. So, we are born into a world with a pre-individual milieu that has already been created by those before - past cultures, institutions, systems, structures, thinkers and so on

– these form and define the lived present and out of these create the present milieu and shape individuation.

This experience of the world relies on Stiegler's framing of consciousness and experience as one of retentional selections that builds on Husserl's theory of primary and secondary retentions and temporal flux. So, our interpretation of the world relies on a process of selection through primary, secondary and tertiary retentions. Epiphylogenesis is the '*process of production*' of tertiary retentions (Stiegler, 2014b: 34; emphasis in original) and individuation involves 'selection' from these personal retentions (Stiegler, 2014b: 52-3). So, for Stiegler, the epiphylogenetic milieu, 'as the *gathering of tertiary retentions*, constitutes the *support* of the pre-individual milieu allowing for the individuation of the genre. The tertiary retentions form *retentional apparatuses* that define different epochs of epiphylogenesis' (Stiegler, 2014b: 53; emphasis in original).

The modern epiphylogenetic milieu is significantly different to previous ones due to the development of digital technics and technology, specifically the digital age. The technology shifts have produced a radical new 'hyper-modern stage of grammatization' (Stiegler, 2014b: 69-71), a new way in which the world is staged and through which we create, construct, understand and perceive the world. The hyper-industrial age is dominated by both the programming industries and the culture industries, the latter of which are 'the vehicles for all symbolic exchanges' (Stiegler, 2011b: 17). The key focus of this chapter is the engagement that individuals have to the symbolic order and to symbolic

exchanges in the digitized, hyper-modern age since it is this that both shapes and creates the individual, their society and each successive milieu.

The shift that occurs with 'sensitivity's machinic turn' is the extent to which the individual relates to, engages with, modifies and even transforms their *pre-individual* milieu – the 'sedimentary store of events'. For Stiegler, the limit of Western individuation is that we no longer have access to this archive of stored events in the same way that early civilizations did. Our relationship to the past has radically shifted, and inevitably, this has profound implications for our relationship to the present and the projection of our future. The dominance of both the programming and the culture industries have changed the systems and structures of the modern milieu to such an extent that we are effectively denied access. The distinctive aspect of Stiegler's approach is that it is organological and looks at psychic organs, social organs and technical organs, and how all three create (or stifle) the conditions for individuation and each successive epiphylogenetic milieu.

Part One of my thesis will focus on how culture (concerning the symbolic order and consumerism) and time (concerning technology and experience) leads, for Stiegler, to disindividuation. This chapter will focus on the current culture of consumerism and Stiegler's thesis on 'symbolic misery' by: (1) outlining his theory of grammatization, following Sylvain Auroux; (2) showing how the loss of participation is central to symbolic misery; (3) assessing the implication of the symbolic 'collapse' that Stiegler envisages by looking at the allegory of the 'anthill' and symbolic projection of culture and society; (4) linking this to his

notion of existential suffering in relation to cultural capitalism, consumerism and marketing; and finally, (5) addressing the potential and possibilities of this disindividuation leading towards a re-composition of the self in *otium*.

### 1) Grammatization: From Valued Citizen to Disposable Consumer

Stiegler's aesthetic theory is founded upon and develops Sylvain Auroux's concept of 'grammatization'. Grammatization deconstructs the way in which structures and systems are constructed by isolating their constituent parts or 'grammes'. So, as Stiegler puts it, 'For Auroux, to grammatize means to discretize in order to isolate grammes, or the finite number of components forming a system' (Stiegler, 2014b: 54). For Auroux, this begins with the alphabet as the first revolution, the printing press as the second, and the third is the 'generalization of informational technologies and the resulting redefinition of knowledge' (Stiegler, 2014b: 54). Stiegler extends Auroux's language-based theory to include bodies, gesture and movements. So, '*The hyper-industrial age is characterized by the development of a new stage in the process of grammatization, now extended, in the discretization of gesture, behaviour and movement in general, to all kinds of spheres, going well beyond the linguistic horizon*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 57; emphasis in original). Going on to say in *Symbolic Misery, volume 2*:

*Grammatization is in general the production of tertiary retentions permitting symbolic fluxes and flows to be discretized and deposited, that is, permitting the spatialization of their temporality, notably in orthothetic forms, that is, permitting the re-accessing of engrammed fluxes without the loss of content, and constituting therefore a surety and security of the archive, that is, also, a belief in the archive, which then supports the *arkhè*, that principle of hypomnesic practice that aims at*

maintenance and care and, as such, the cult. In this regard, the religions of the Book are such practices brought to the social level, and these religious practices have a history, of which the advent of Luther would constitute one crucial moment.

The discretization of fluxes in which grammatization consists as a weaving of tertiary retentions is always also inevitably the invention of new fluxes, and the transformation of the temporality of engrammed fluxes. It is in this way that the technique of the self that hypomnesis constitutes can, as practice, *transform* the self.

(Stiegler, 2014b: 75; emphasis in original)

Grammatization sets down in orthographic form the ideas, thoughts, structures etc. of a particular civilization and epoch. It is how these 'temporal fluxes', the immaterial psychic and collective consciousness of each milieu, that would remain elusive are 'spatialized' in material, physical form. It is how each previous generation passes down the 'store of events' to the following generation (although this is a gradual not distinct process), and how the 'sedimentary store of events' that represent a past lived by each subsequent present is set down or 'deposited'.

However, what is at stake in the hyper-industrial age is the ability for this information to be accessible – to be 're-accessed' – and to be passed down 'without loss of content'. In other words, for it to be understood *noetically* as knowledge with *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*, as a form of hypomnesis that allows for a new form of anamnesis. This is another paradox, since it would seem that we now have infinite capacity to store information and data, in an increasingly diverse number of ways. Yet, it is precisely this digital turn that creates increasing amounts of information that impart less and less; as Baudrillard wrote, we have more and more information but less and less meaning

(Baudrillard, 1994: 79). We are unable to decipher the information since we no longer have access to the archive in the same way, nor the skills to comprehend it.

For Stiegler, grammatization 'has passed through various epochs, the latest being commensurate with digitalization' (Stiegler, 2014b: viii). There are four distinct stages that appear in Stiegler's work. The first is the age of the citizen that comes out of the Greek *polis*, since grammatization 'lies at the origin of the invention of the figure of the citizen' (Stiegler, 2011b: 39). Here the alphabet enabled the pre-individual milieu to become 'structurally interpretable' allowing for the birth of the citizen and political debate. The individual, by being able to interpret the inherited pre-individual past, can help shape the present conditions of their epoch's individuation – as both an individual citizen and as constituent part of the collective *polis*. So, 'Greece saw the emergence of logic as politics' (Stiegler, 2014b: 57).

The second is the age of the believer in the age of Christianity, and subsequently the Enlightenment. Here then, the logos as the Book or the word of God instantiates a structure and system of fidelity, faith and trust in the Church and God which governs psychic and collective individuation, and forms the controlling structures and retentional and protentional systems of society. The Protestant revolution represents a specific case of grammatization in its links with the development of the printing press, which I address in chapter six. And this religious belief is then transformed by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution 'into *political and social* belief, that is, into belief in *progress*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 42).

The third stage is that of the worker in the industrial age of the nineteenth century whereby 'this worker is *progressively dis-individuated by the machine*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 59; emphasis in original). This is the exteriorization of manual labour and skills to machines and factory work. This is what Marx's theories on the worker, the proletariat and alienation were concerned with. Here the worker is de-skilled and proletarianized.

In the fourth, present, hyper-modern/hyper-industrial age the worker becomes a *consumer* (Stiegler, 2014b: 59), and here Stiegler argues, far from the Greek 'logic as politics', we 'are living through the absorption of logic into logistics' (Stiegler, 2014b: 57). Stiegler defines the current age of capitalism as 'hyper-industrial' because it 'enabled the functional and mechanical integration of production and consumption' (Stiegler, 2011b: 150). So it is for this reason that his critique of Marx is that with hyper-industrial capitalism there is the '*impossibility of distinguishing* infrastructure from superstructure'. Stiegler argues the hyper-industrial epoch is 'essentially constituted by the control of all retentional processes' (Stiegler, 2014b: 59; emphasis in original), and that as a result, 'consumer behaviour...is a matter of desubjectivation, that is, a programmed destruction of the singularity of *savoir-vivre*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 81). With the modern hyper-industrial age we have reached the 'limit to the process of Western individuation' (Stiegler, 2014b: 56). Here, it is not only the worker but now also the producer *and* the consumer who have become de-skilled and proletarianized. This is the generalized proletarianization to which Stiegler refers.

Yet, this limit to the process of individuation, for Stiegler, is not the end point but the end of a *cycle*, and therefore the beginning of a 'revolution' in grammatization and individuation and Stiegler views this 'latest manifestation' of the loss of individuation engendered by the hyper-modern stage of grammatization as 'a *transitional stage*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 41; emphasis in original). Since the decomposition of self occurs as both the conjunction and disjunction of tendencies there is still the possibility for *composition* (or re-composition) of the self through noetic individuation. How this might occur as Stiegler envisages it in the form of the 'economy of contribution' will be the focus of chapter seven.

For Stiegler, the history of grammatization is '*that of a succession of losses of individuation*' (Stiegler's emphasis), since, at each stage the nature and means of the engagement that the individual has with the systems and structures that create and shape their milieu, diminishes; they lose their participatory capacities. In this way, grammatization is also the history of '*displacements of the capacity for individuation as a negentropic and idiomatic power*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 56; emphasis in original) caused by the successive and increased exteriorization of the body, gesture, thought and knowledge (*savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*) from individuals, first, to machines and, then, to computers. Grammatization in the hyper-industrial age leads therefore to the loss of individuation as a loss of participation, dramatically shifting our engagement with our milieu.

## 2) Loss of Participation: From Aesthetic Sensibility to Aesthetic Conditioning

At the crux of Stiegler's 'symbolic misery' thesis is the concept of the loss of participation in the production of symbols (Stiegler, 2014b: 10). Noetic individuation is founded upon an aesthetic participatory and sensory lived experience that operates within a transductive relationship – a loop or circuit of both the senses and desires. So Stiegler defines the 'noetico-aesthetic situation' as 'the realization of a circuit (of the sensible and of desire) in the form of an exclamation that brings about a symbolic exchange – an exchange that *is* the carrying out of individuation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 62). The loss of participation causes the loss of individuation through a short-circuiting of symbolic exchanges (of gift and counter-gift) between the individual and their milieu.

Stiegler follows Simondon's use of individuation in that it is always both *psychic* and *collective*, it involves both *I* and *we*, and these are 'two aspects of the same process, where the *difference* between them is also the *dynamic* of the process' (Stiegler, 2014b: 45). This, as Stiegler makes clear, is a performative discourse more than it is a cognitive one, '*saying* (philosophically) individuation, I *individuate* it, or I *singularize* it – necessarily singularizing *myself* at the same time. Saying it is *doing* it. It is essentially a kind of performativity, in Austin's sense, where I *am involved with the object* I describe: I am *engaged*. The individuation in which I participate in this way is not therefore mine alone...all this means that what I have to say will be *political*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 46; emphasis in original).

Concerning the loss of participation, Stiegler modifies two discourses. Firstly, Aristotle's three souls (nutritive, sensitive and noetic) and their movements as 'modes of participation' towards the divine, as 'forms of *desire* for the divine'. Secondly, Stiegler develops Leroi-Gourhan's 'hypothesis that one must *participate* in order to sense' (Stiegler, 2015b: 26). So, Stiegler writes,

close...to what Simondon characterized as the worker's loss of individuation...Leroi-Gourhan described a new and massive process of *loss of aesthetic and symbolic participation*, which was without historical precedent and which came about with the appearance of *cognitive and cultural industries and technologies*

(Stiegler, 2015b: 25; emphasis in original)

As with much of Stiegler's work – although often made more explicit by him than is the case here – there is a *pharmacological* paradox at play. What can compose can also de-compose in the transductive relationship between tendencies and counter-tendencies. The advent of the culture industries, which developed out of successive phases of analogue technology (which I address in chapter six), although making mass culture possible, also created a diminishing ability to participate *affectively* (and effectively), in a sensory and sensible way, in this culture. The common example here is social media and the ability to technologically connect to increasing numbers of people but with diminishing degrees of human connection, which is the subject of Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together*. It is partly the herdish tendency, the Heideggerian problem of the 'They', that threatens affective, noetic, psychic and collective individuation and creates disaffected individuals and 'uncontrollable societies' (Stiegler, 2013a); so, the paradox of being more 'connected' is the inability to distinguish the difference in the type of connection.

This loss of social unity and cohesion is related to the loss of individual participation and individuation. What Stiegler terms the 'ill-being' of hyper-modernity is due to the 'fact that *I can less and less, I can with more and more difficulty, nay, I cannot at all, project myself into a we* – neither more nor less than the other *Is* in general' (Stiegler, 2014b: 60; emphasis in original). The citizen in the Greek *polis* was a constituent part of the city-state. Both the individual and state created the conditions for the psychic and collective individuation of the city, a psychosocial individuation (Stiegler, 2014b: 56). The Greek citizens were participants, and as with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*, the whole was the sum of its parts. Sensibility is key to collective unity. So, Stiegler highlights Leroi-Gourhan's argument that 'sensibility is the primary unifying factor amongst human groups, which is to say, the a priori condition for all psychosocial individuation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 1).

The consumer, however, faces de-humanization as part of a capitalist economy in that they become statistical, algorithmic data as consumers who work and live to consume. They consist, subsist and consume – but they do not *exist*.

Consumers are still part of the system, but devalued. Unification happens not at the micro level of individuals, but the macro level of networks and data, and in the process individuals are atomized and alienated. So, Stiegler writes, 'in our own epoch, defunctionalization involves a *dequalification of the recipient*, who has become a simple consumer' (Stiegler, 2015b: 56; emphasis in original). It is for this reason Stiegler emphasises Leroi-Gourhan's argument that 'the loss of aesthetic participation represents a total threat to the future of humanity as a

life-form capable of making sense of the sensible' (Stiegler, 2015b: 56). So, for Stiegler,

The *technical* loss of individuation affects the producer: deprived of his working knowledge, he loses his technical skills. The *aesthetic* loss of individuation affects the consumer: deprived of the opportunity of participating in the aesthetic occurrence, he loses his sensibility. He sinks into anaesthesia, indifference and apathy.

(Stiegler, 2015b: 23; emphasis in original)

It is important to note that Stiegler emphasises defunctionalizations are *part of* the process of grammatization but what marks the modern digital epoch as unique, and therefore dangerous for humanity, is that unlike previous epochs there is no *refunctionalization*. There is no stage at which the dramatic shifts and developments become properly assimilated and adopted, and understood in terms of an apprenticeship, by society and individuals. Instead, due to the speed of modern invention, there is a continual adaptation but no readjustment and the 'archive' becomes inaccessible. It is for this reason that the modern epoch needs a 'double *epokhal* redoubling'.

Defunctionalizations and refunctionalizations are part of the process of grammatization in the same way that tendencies and counter-tendencies are part of noetic individuation. They are not in an oppositional relationship but a reciprocal, dynamic, symbiotic and *transductive* one. They represent a necessary de-fault, a lack, which instantiates processes of individuation as transformation towards completion.

This 'lack', however, has been appropriated by capitalist consumerism as an implicit part of the capturing and channelling of the libidinal drives which fuels,

for Stiegler, the cultural and cognitive libidinal economy. It is the appropriation of the *necessary default or lack* – necessary because individuation is an infinite process of ‘accidental becoming’ and therefore always incomplete - which marketing has used to sell products that target buyers and create *aesthetically conditioned* consumers.

### 3) Symbolic Collapse: From the Symbolic to the Diabolic

The effect of the loss of participation of the production of symbols brought about by industrialization threatens both individual, psychic individuation and communal, collective individuation. For Stiegler, symbolic exchanges that are engrammed in temporal fluxes by tertiary retentions create the social, cultural fabric – the epiphylogenetic milieu. These tertiary retentions should aid and support individuation, yet with the systemic loss of participation within the hyper-industrial age that leads to symbolic misery, the social fabric is threatened by symbolic collapse. Two major causes of this threat are the invention of modern marketing techniques, aimed at the libidinal drives and founded upon Freud’s work, in conjunction with the increasing dominance of audiovisual technologies, aimed at the capturing of attention and consciousness.

Stiegler (following Adam Curtis) cites Edward Barnays – Freud’s nephew – who is considered the founding father of modern marketing and public relations (cf. Stiegler, 2014b: p.5). The libidinal drives Freud identified as a psychologist were used by Barnays to promote products - notably the groundbreaking promotion of cigarettes to women which used sexually suggestive marketing and the

coupling of the idea of the cigarette as a 'torch for freedom' with women's empowerment. As Stiegler notes (and Adam Curtis makes central to *The Century of the Self*) this type of psychological marketing has become increasingly sophisticated over the past century at targeting unconscious drives and desires.

The rise in audiovisual technologies, digital networks and computational systems, in addition to the increasing sophistication of modern psychological marketing techniques, creates a cultural milieu in which symbolic exchange is dominated by branding, products and consumerism. This radically changes the aesthetic environment and creates the apparatuses for systemic aesthetic conditioning. So, the culture industries and in particular the *industrial temporal objects*, 'made it possible to *intimately* control individual behaviour, transforming it into mass behaviour' (Stiegler, 2011b: 109).

(i) Aesthetic Conditioning and The Allegory of the Anthill

Inspired by the work of Dominique Fresneau and Jean-Paul Lachaud, Stiegler uses the 'Allegory of the Anthill' to illustrate his point concerning collective community, individual agency within 'multi-agent systems' and behavioural aesthetic conditioning (Stiegler, 2014b: 76; Stiegler, 2009a: 167).

In an anthill each class of ant has a specific role based on 'behaviours for 'task-completion'', such as reproduction or food gathering, and each class carries out a specific task for the efficient and effective functioning of the whole. Yet if a class is removed other classes of ant adapt and swap roles to make up for the loss, ensuring the anthill continues to work in equilibrium, as a collective whole. The

hypothesis is based on the notion that ants acting within a multi-agent system emit chemical messages (pheromones) which condition their behaviour 'confirming the anthill's informatics modelling'.

So, Stiegler continues,

There are effectively two models of multi-agent systems: one in which the agents are called 'cognitive', having an explicit awareness [*représentation*] of their behaviours and their past behavioural experiences, and the other consisting of 'reactive' agents, without self-awareness or memory, responding to a stimulus/response schema. The behaviours of the individual agent in the anthill clearly follow the latter model. But if agents have no memory of previous behaviours; if their specialized behaviours are determined by other agent's behaviours, there must be a model of collective behaviour inscribed somewhere, at least temporarily. In the case of ants, pheromones are the chemical traces inscribed on the ants' habitat as support – the anthill and the surrounding pathways marked by individual hunters – and as a mapping of the collective.

(Stiegler, 2014b: 76)

Applied to the digital, hyper-industrial age it is consumers that become like 'reactive' ants, reacting to 'stimulus/response schema' of cultural capitalism, and all driven by the libidinal economy aided by modern marketing. The 'mapping of the collective' of the 'chemical traces' is achieved through global digital networks of computers, the internet and what Stiegler therefore terms 'digital pheromones' (Stiegler, 2014b: 72-4). Thus, digital 'users' (consumers and producers) are farmed for their digital data and this then feeds back into the system of digital networks and systems, which drive the libidinal, capitalist economy. However, users are no longer active participants but become entry points in a system of algorithmic data, they are reduced from the 'singular' to the 'particular' (which I address later in this chapter), since 'the current stage of capitalism...is capable of transforming *everything* into numbers' (Stiegler, 2011b: 46) representing the 'digital and computational stage of control technologies'

(Stiegler, 2011b: 57). In this way, *'the user becomes a function of the system he is using'* (Stiegler, 2014b: 67).

Crucially, a cognitive multi-agent system is possible; one with 'explicit awareness' of behaviours (and this is what Stiegler is attempting with the 'Economy of Contribution' and *Ars Industrialis*<sup>14</sup>; cf. chapter seven), but this awareness is precisely what is threatened or lost within the consumer-driven, libidinal economy. So, Stiegler comments, *'aesthetic conditioning in its essence constitutes an obstacle to aesthetic experience, whether or not that be artistic. It is in this way that tourism, now that it has become industrial, ruins the viewpoint of the traveller who has become the consumer of a washed-out time'* (Stiegler, 2014b: 83). In the same vein, the compulsive use of phones as recording devices at live music events have dramatically shifted – or split – the attention of audiences, so that live time is also simultaneously a recorded time in the act of viewing.

The 'anthill' represents how industrialization, and subsequent hyper-industrialization, has liquidated the difference between diachronic and synchronic time, and therefore changed 'singularities' (of noetic individuation) into 'particularities' (of functional/dis-individuation). So, Stiegler argues, referring to Freud, 'The 'anthill' is an allegory of the de-composition of the diachronic and the syn-chronic, which cannot establish themselves except in their

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<sup>14</sup> *Ars Industrialis* is a political group co-founded by Stiegler, along with George Collins, Marc Crépon, Catherine Perret and Caroline Stiegler in 2005, its primary purpose being to further an 'industrial politics of spirit'. Both the 2005 and updated 2010 manifestos can be found in *The Re-Enchantment of the World* (Stiegler, 2014c: 11-16; Stiegler 2014c: 17-28).

*composition, except in the tense, transductive, relationship where the tensors of singularities, constituting the 'libidinal economy' as discussed in Civilisation and its Discontents, are formed' (Stiegler, 2014b: 97).*

(ii) The Symbolic Projection of Society and Culture: 'The Birth of a Nation', Consumerism, Hollywood and the American Dream

Consumerism is at the heart of the American culture, which has now spread to become the epitome of global cultural capitalism, driven by American cultural capitalism, and by the American culture, programming and marketing industries. This relies on the dissemination of brands, brand messages, lifestyles and so on to create not only goods and services but also consumers themselves. Part of the reason that America has become so successful at these strategies, and become so dominant, as Stiegler argues, is that America *itself* is the projection of an identity necessitated by the need for a population made up of immigrants to create a shared cultural, national identity and heritage that *never* existed but has been invented. This 'America' has been the foundation for a global consumerism engendered and epitomized by the 'American way of life'.

Following the Second World War, the newly created field of 'public relations' helped industrialists account for the over-production of their goods by persuading (and creating) the consumer to purchase them and adopt them. So, Stiegler writes:

It was a matter of provoking Americans to adopt new products, just as it was necessary to forge a culture of adoption of immigrants and by immigrants. These *two* processes of adoption had to be reinforced and even integrated, with the objective of consuming constituting the binding

between diverse communities, and brands themselves becoming supports for identificatory and community projection in this sense: the concept of the brand as social marker was without doubt elaborated within the context of this dual dynamic

(Stiegler, 2011b: 109)

In *Technics and Time* Stiegler analyses the importance of the programming industries to create, produce and maintain the idea of America and the American national identity (cf. Stiegler, 2011a: 79-130 and Stiegler, 2011b: 1-36). For Stiegler, the birth of America is the epitome of a collective, identity narrative and form of cultural storytelling, synchronizing a 'United' and collective, (un)conscious to create a nation out of the individual consciousness of disparate, immigrant cultures and separate, independent states. What American history becomes is the creation of a shared past, that for Stiegler, *never was* but which appears (following Heideggerian *Dasein*) as an *already-there*.

This adoption process becomes not just a local American politics but a global, geopolitics, so that, 'A process of global unification has taken place *through cinema*' (Stiegler, 2011a: 87). It is, for Stiegler, inextricably linked with America's dominance as a superpower, so that it is not merely the military-industrial complex which provides this power, but even more the *cultural-industrial complex* that facilitates its standing. This cultural-industrial complex enables America to control and market American culture and values through the export and dissemination of information and programming industries (from IBM, Microsoft, Facebook, Google, Netflix and so on). In other words, it isn't merely the capital accumulation involved in global brands such as Starbucks, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, but the cultural clout that is enabled through the

combination of both the creative, audiovisual industries (from Hollywood to Netflix) with the technology and programming industries (such as Microsoft, Apple and Google). By this line of argument, the (in)famous strategy to ‘win hearts and minds’ promoted during the Iraq war in 2003 is not merely a strategy in times of war, it runs deep within the very structure of American politics, identity, economics and power. So, Stiegler writes in *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies*:

America adopted an industrial politics projecting the image of the *American ‘we’*, which was also a commercial politics projecting the image of the *I as a consumer* – the *model of the consumer thus being invented by America*. So more than its money or its military might, American power consists in the force of Hollywood images and of the computer programs which it has *conceived* – in its industrial capacity to *produce new symbols* around which models of life are formed.

(Stiegler, 2011b: 23; emphasis in original)

This process then is tied to the birth of Hollywood (*The Birth of a Nation* – to which my heading alludes - being a controversial but important example of this process of national identity adoption) – to the production of images and symbolic references - that is itself founded upon the theory of the cinematographic nature of consciousness (see chapter six). So, ‘the American geopolitics of “Hollywood missionaries” exploits a dimension that constitutes politics throughout the cinema industry, constitutes a *We: adoption*, whose radical nature has been discovered and developed in the United States’ (Stiegler, 2011a: 87).

Stiegler here is indebted to McLuhan’s work on the media and its effect on our sensory and psychological experience of the world. In his chapter on ‘The

Medium is the Message' in *Understanding Media*, McLuhan concludes with the following:

That our human senses, of which all media are extensions are also fixed charges on our personal energies, and that they also configure the awareness and experience of each one of us, may be perceived in another connection mentioned by the psychologist C. G. Jung:

Every Roman was surrounded by slaves. The slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy, and every Roman became inwardly, and of course unwittingly, a slave. Because living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious with their psychology. No one can shield himself from such an influence (*Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, London, 1928).

(McLuhan, 2001: 23)

America, as is often noted, is the nearest modern equivalent to the Roman Empire: a vast superpower that governs at a distance through its cultural, economic and political infrastructures. What McLuhan highlights here from Jung is the subtle 'infection' of 'unwitting' 'unconscious' servitude, and adoption of a collective political-societal unconscious: a Roman identity. Furthermore, it is useful to note here the link to Stiegler's argument concerning America, since Rome's power - as with America's - came as much from its psychological power exerted through its cultural dissemination - the Roman way of life - as from its military might. So although noted for its military organization, the number of soldiers would have been insufficient alone to effectively govern such a vast Empire - the underlying power came not from military might but from the cultural, technical and psychic power.

Jung's argument about the unconscious's vulnerability to systemic, cultural influence finds resonances with Sartre's phenomenological-existentialist theory

of 'bad faith', in Marx's social-political-economic theory of 'false consciousness', and most importantly (regarding Stiegler) with Heidegger's forgetting of the question of Being and the existential anxiety of *Dasein*. As Stiegler notes, the 'adoption process works only if it is concealed' (Stiegler, 2011a: 89).

In the same vein, no one is immune to the influence of marketing and systemic cultural capitalism and many of the strategies and processes, in order for them to be effective, are necessarily hidden from the consumer. Even in the cases they are not, when the transparency of such marketing strategies involves a seemingly ironic collusion with their audience, the effect of this often playful-knowingness paradoxically distracts from the underlying intention of persuasion.

It is important to note, however, that America exemplifies how for Stiegler *all* society is a fiction and a form of theatre, in that,

...the collective individuation constitutive of a society has presupposed the *participation* of the all in the production of the *one*, or the whole. This is the fantasy and fiction necessary for establishing the theatre of supposed unity we call 'society' ...society, as such, does not exist...It is nothing but the arrangement of apparatuses or systems...These arrangements are supported by what I have called *epiphylogenetic* strata or tertiary retentions.

(Stiegler, 2014b: 7; emphasis in original)

And elsewhere, Stiegler argues that,

The power of belonging to a group requires the projection of an always fictive unity of this group, and this is always a fiction that narrates an exception. The power of saying *we* requires that I "fiction" a past that is not mine, and this allows me to fiction a future that I hope will belong to us...

(Stiegler, 2009b: 46-7)

The 'American way of life' and 'America' itself gives its citizens a shared, projected, collective identity. The destruction through the synchronization of the diachronic times of singularities in hyper-industrial society, which destroys desire, leads to an inability to project a future: 'Now, without desire, there is no longer desire for the *future*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 23; emphasis in original) – there is for Stiegler no 'archi-protention', no overarching 'fiction' or 'fantasy' in which psycho-social individuation can take place.

#### 4) Existential Suffering: from the 'Death of God' to Meaningless Consumption

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche famously heralded the 'death of God' warning that the realization of falsehoods inherent in Christian belief would bring about a nihilistic, existential crisis for humanity. It is against this Nietzschean claim that the later inter-war and post-war thinkers developed various theoretical frameworks, works of art, movements and positions; from modernism to postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism, formalism and deconstruction, to various 'existential' philosophies (notably Heidegger's fundamental ontology and Sartre's phenomenological ontology). Crudely, all these theories, movements and '-isms' are broadly on a spectrum between an interpretation of the world, text and ideas as ordered on the one hand (in which case order is found or 'imposed' upon seeming disorder) or as inherently unstable or without meaning on the other (in which case the chaos is unveiled beneath seeming order). It is this aspect of Nietzsche to which Joseph Campbell

refers when diagnosing a universal collapse of symbols within society (Campbell, 1993). Similarly, Stiegler argues,

perhaps fundamentally since the 'death of God', our society has been based on developing infidelity: the systematic organization of consumption presupposes *abandonment*; it presupposes abandoning objects, institutions, relations, places and everything it is possible for markets to control, all of which must be abandoned by the symbolic dimension [*le symbolique*], that is, de-symbolized

(Stiegler, 2013b: 64; emphasis in original)

For Stiegler this results in '*addicted consumers without objects*' allowing the 'nihilistic destiny of rationalization' to 'begin to impose itself' (Stiegler, 2013b: 64-65; emphasis in original). Consequently, 'capitalism began to believe it could replace faith with trust...and invent a new form of credit' (Stiegler, 2015b: 95), yet in fact it 'presupposes *abandonment*' and establishes a culture that is 'disposable'. So, one pharmacological 'poison' of modernity that Stiegler identifies is 'anaesthesia' - caused by loss of participation and symbolic misery (Stiegler, 2015b: 64-5). Related to this is Stiegler's use of the terms 'ill-being', 'suffering', 'malaise', 'dis-ease', 'disindividuation', 'disorientation' and 'disfigured'. This, then, is the result of a state of generalized proletarianization.

For Stiegler, our interaction with, and relation to, the objects and devices around us has profoundly changed and, in contrast to previous epochs, has become deeply disorientating. So, our age 'is that of the epoch of *industrial* temporal objects that come to haunt our ears and eyes so that we no longer really know what to think about *who* we are – or *if we are*' (Stiegler, 2014b: 29; emphasis in original).

Paradoxically, consumerism heightens the sense of 'self' since it is predicated on furthering individualism and notions of separate 'identities'; yet, founded on a libidinal economy which is exhausting itself, it also creates for Stiegler 'disbelief', 'discredit', 'infidelity' and 'de-symboliz[ation]' and loss of self. The void left by the disappearance of a faith in 'God' that Nietzsche foresaw is filled by the 'self', the individual's search for meaning and identity; and, when this proves difficult, it is covered over, escaped from or given 'meaning' and 'identity' through the addictive consumption of being a consumer who works in order to consume. As the novelist Jeanette Winterson has written, 'When we come home exhausted from the inanities of our jobs we can relax in front of the inanities of the TV screen. This pattern, punctuated by birth, death and marriage and a new car, is offered to us as real life' (Winterson, 1996: 135).

So, modern capitalism exploits the existential suffering caused by this loss of participation and promotes the cultural experiences and products as a remedy to its own toxicity – to make consumers happy, to create/emulate aspirational lifestyles and so on, all to 'cure' the consumer of feeling of lack. In this way, consumerism empties and exhausts the drives and desires of consumers to both sustain the libidinal economy, whilst simultaneously destroying it, since 'consumption destroys its object' whereas 'libido *takes care* of its object' (Stiegler, 2013b: 92). So, the libidinal economy is both self-destructive - consumption consuming itself - and all pervasive, spreading *dis*-ease to all areas of lived experience. This situation is brought about by the lack of trust, credit and belief that the processes of capitalism and hyper-industrialization engender

(cf. *Disbelief and Discredit*, volumes 1 – 3), all of which leads to a feeling of ‘disorientation’ (Stiegler, 2009a), ‘dis-ease’ and ‘ill-being’ (Stiegler, 2014b).

This disbelief follows on from Nietzsche’s death of God, which occurs simultaneously with the rise in the belief in progress and the Enlightenment philosophy. Following Adorno and Horkheimer’s culture industry thesis, this belief in ‘progress’ via industrial and capitalist processes causes not progression but *regression* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997; Adorno, 2001).

Stiegler argues Adorno and Horkheimer were ‘the first to understand that culture industries form a system with industry in general, the function of which consists in fabricating and controlling consumer behaviour through massifying ways of life’ amounting to a ‘*total power* over existence’ meaning the question posed by Stalinism, fascism or Nazism is now that of capitalism (Stiegler, 2011b: 108-109). So, ‘the hyper-industrial sphere extends to all human activities the compulsive and mimetic behaviour of the consumer, including all those activities that can be subsumed under the heading ‘free time’. Everything must become consumable – education, culture and health, as well as washing powder and chewing gum’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 109).

Developing Adorno and Horkheimer’s work, the hyper-industrial age of cultural - and computational - capitalism, leads, for Stiegler to *disbelief* and *discredit* due to trust and belief becoming ‘*calculated trust*’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 44). And in this way, ‘the *current* system of calculating devices, as it is hegemonically configured according to the standards and objectives of control societies, is, for the first time, structurally organized to make the incalculable calculable, which is to say, so as to *eliminate* it’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 51; emphasis in original).

The current age then is all consuming, it seeks to appropriate *all* things, even the incalculable or infinite – aspects that are the domain of the noetic, spiritual and divine. This relates back to Stiegler's use of Aristotle and his notion of the three souls as a movement towards the divine, as '*desire* for the divine'. To appropriate *desire* is also to appropriate the incalculable and the infinite, since these are what desire is founded upon. It is in this way that desire is also destroyed. So, for Stiegler, the 'capturing of libido...through the standardization of libidinal fluxes and flows...is necessarily a *destruction* of these flows' (Stiegler, 2011b: 150; emphasis in original). This 'standardization' of hyper-industrial capitalism, which is also the standardization of the 'behavioural models of consumption', follows on from the 'process of proletarianization that had begun in the nineteenth century with modes of production' (Stiegler, 2011b: 35).

Adding to this sense of existential dis-ease brought about by the lack of belief, fidelity and credit, is the systemic use of designed obsolescence – whereby products are produced with deliberately short life-spans in order to drive consumption for new products to replace them – which leads to a culture of disposability. If we are used to disposing with the objects around us then, for Stiegler, this creates a society of disposable consumers, effecting not just relation to objects – object interaction, but to people – social interaction. This leads to a 'disbanding' of social relations.

Yet, from this decomposition of the self, is always the potential of the transformation of the self and therefore of the composition of self, the ability to 'act out' potentialities. This leads us to Stiegler's conception of *negotium* and

*otium* as the key to noetic individuation from our current state of disindividuation.

5) The Myth of 'Interiority': From Disindividuation towards the Re-Creation of Self in *Otium*

The version of consumerism outlined above has at its core the atomistic, individualistic world-view that has become prevalent since the Enlightenment. In this way, the rise of consumerism is also the result of an economy based on attention and libido. This leads to the rise of individualism and the demise of enchanted belief. It is an ongoing struggle between negotium (calculation/ratio), which leads to disindividuation, and otium (noesis/spirit), which leads to individuation.

The search for the 'true' 'self' then has developed in relation to the rise of scientific discovery, and the questions this engenders are reflected repeatedly in nineteenth-century Gothic literature, most famously Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. As John O. Lyons has argued in *The Invention of the Self*,

the modern scientific "conquest" of nature is rooted in our faith in a unique self. To see, so as to describe and test the material fact, requires a belief in the truth of private investigation, and that in turn is based on the belief in a self from which experience *can* be observed

(Lyons, 1978: 219)

For Lyons, the faith in God has been replaced by a faith in science and a 'unique self' but (as certain nineteenth-century literature demonstrates) this sense of a stable or know-able self proves another ontological puzzle.

The importance of the individual becomes central to the organization of society; and simultaneously those institutions and structures that are responsible for creating, maintaining and controlling society come under increasing scrutiny. The 'hermeneutics of suspicion' of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud represent the apparatus and theoretical framework for such scrutiny (allied with Darwin's theory of evolution and Einstein's theory of relativity), and this 'suspicion' is furthered by the 'deconstruction' of Derrida and the dissection of power and knowledge by Foucault.

Yet as Rowan Williams has written, in his essay on the 'The Suspicion of Suspicion: Wittgenstein and Bonhoeffer', in which he compares the work of Bonhoeffer and Wittgenstein, the uncovering of hidden meanings and 'interior' self can itself be a mistaken and an elusive enterprise. What the hermeneutics of suspicion and Paul Ricoeur's "masters of suspicion" (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud) promote is an intellectual, epistemological inquiry into what lies beneath the appearance, interactions and behaviour of individuals. So Freud is concerned with an 'unconscious' self beneath the 'conscious' one, Nietzsche exposes the mechanics beneath our normative notions of morality by uncovering its complex master-slave 'genealogy', and Marx expounds the 'false consciousness' of the proletariat that hides and maintains the 'real' dynamics of the powerful bourgeoisie.

However, Williams argues that both Bonhoeffer and Wittgenstein show the suspicion that nothing is as it seems is a mirage that diverts us from the conclusion that sometimes things *are* as they seem, that there is a metaphysical finitude to things even though we might often suspect otherwise. It is then a Heideggerian notion of accepting 'authenticity' as that which 'is' rather than the Sartrean suspicion of constantly living in the inauthentic denial of being - of 'bad faith'. As Williams (quoting from Stanley Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*) puts it, 'we are tempted always to "the conversion of metaphysical finitude into intellectual lack"' (Williams, 1988: 42). It is the epistemological doubt that haunts us, along with the idea of an interior self. So, Williams remarks,

Bonhoeffer is alerting us to the fact, familiar enough now, rather less so in 1944, that the notion of an essential private self is a sociohistorical construct, and that hermeneutical suspicion arises from the universal "modern" (post-Enlightenment or post-Renaissance) experience of cultural fragmentation and consequent mistrust. We constantly feel we need to know more of the other because some directness, some presence or certainty eludes us.

(Williams, 1988: 42; quotations in original)

When applied to today, this 'cultural fragmentation' (Williams/Bonhoeffer) and loss of fidelity (Stiegler) has been heightened in the consumerist, digital age and, as a consequence, there appears the need for continual *reassurance* of presence in direct communication via various digital media (text, email, Skype, social media etc.).

Bonhoeffer, who served time in jail and wrote from prison, grapples with the two different 'selves' he presents: outwardly he is 'calm and cheerful' whereas 'within' there lurks 'anger and impotence'. This notion of the split self, of outer

and inner, follows the binary tradition from Descartes' mind/body dualism onwards to Freud's conscious/unconscious and Jung's extrovert/introvert, and indeed Stevenson's Jekyll/Hyde. So, Williams comments on Bonhoeffer that,

the question "Who am I?" is not about "an intellectual lack", to be filled by an account of the real (hidden) self: the private sense of self, in this case, humiliating and wretched, may represent another kind of fiction or evasion, a construct out of the chaos of passing emotions.

(Williams, 1988: 43; quotations in original)

The 'construct' of the interior self then is 'another kind of fiction' – it is an illusion, as much as the exterior self can prove a sociohistorical construct or evasive mask. In other words, the search for 'self' is as misguided as finding the 'real' impostor behind the disguise: the impostor's disguise defines and *is* the experience of someone who dissembles and misleads. In this way, the 'chaos of passing emotions' *is* the experience of self-consciousness, both as interior *and* exterior.

The key terms in the above passage are 'real' and 'fiction'. As with Baudrillard's use of 'real' and 'imaginary', there is an assumption that they are necessarily opposites. Yet, as Stiegler argues, they can only exist together in composition *with* one another, each is necessary for the other. So,

reality and fiction only *exist* – which is to say, *give rise to an existence* and not only a subsistence – on condition that they distinguish themselves in composition: on condition that they are co-positing, the one in the other and the one by the other. In other words, they are in a transductive relationship.

(Stiegler, 2015b: 108; emphasis in original)

The 'composition' of 'reality and fiction' formed in a 'transductive relationship' is central to Stiegler's theory of individuation and follows the same *compositional*, rather than *oppositional* framing, of the psychic and collective individuation of the 'I' and the 'we/us'.

It is also intimately linked to Stiegler's concern for *otium* over *negotium*. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is central to Stiegler's 're-enchantment' of the world and of *Ars Industrialis*. *Otium* represents the time of leisure and play, whereas *negotium* is the exchangeable time of work. With cultural capitalism, algorithmic calculation and digital media saturation *otium* has become *negotium*. So, as Adorno argued, our 'free' time is part of the culture industry as the business of 'leisure' so that 'Organized freedom is compulsory' (Adorno, 2001: 190). In other words, recreational 'leisure' time - that which is iterative, habitual routine - has replaced the spontaneous, autonomous freedom of re-*creational* time - that which can re-invigorate and *produce new compositions* and extensions of individuation.

For Stiegler, this threatens the noetic spirit of individuation since it is in the free play of *otium* that psychic and collective individuation can occur. The repetitive culture of consumerism and the always 'new' threatens the noetic spirit since 'the noetic soul is only intermittently in act, and it is in this way that I can believe I see and yet *not see in act*: I must *ceaselessly* (re)learn to see, and see again, because I forget' (Stiegler, 2015b: 109-110; emphasis in original). *Otium* is central to individuation because it allows for this re-learning, this re-creation, as '*Otium* is self-moulding by way of self-discipline and self-practise, it is a *self-*

*production as self-other* through the techniques of individuation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 110; emphasis in original).

Cultural capitalism wants to produce an 'I' that it can shape and control, so as to *target* and produce behaviours, and create individuals *as consumers*. *Otium* is key to individuation since it disrupts this repetitive process. It is where invention can take place – it is a Heideggerian 'clearing of being', combatting the Heideggerian 'forgetting' of being, that allows becoming, and self-moulding; it allows self-creation as *re-creation*. It is for this reason that Stiegler argues throughout his work that we are all 'artists in potential' (Stiegler, 2015b: p.110).

The dissolution of the opposition between 'reality' and 'imagination', between the real and imaginary, is central to the artist's work and use of time. This is at the heart of Stiegler's economy of contribution: time as *otium* enables the individual to mould, create, invent and therefore engage in an economy of gift and counter-gift. As Jeanette Winterson has commented, 'By dreaming and idleness and then by intense self-discipline does the artist live...The artist cannot perform between 9 and 6...The time that art needs...which has to be its own time, is anathema to money culture' (Winterson, 1996: 138-139). The artistic soul is the noetic soul, so Winterson's artistic time that is 'its own time' is Stiegler's 'noetic soul intermittently in act' (Stiegler, 2015b: 109).

For Stiegler, the time of Winterson's 'money culture' represents *negotium*, reducing time to accounting, calculation and measurable time (Stiegler, 2011c: 54). As Stiegler (following Lazzarato) puts it, the 'question of time working

cannot be reduced...to time in employment' which is why Lazzarato's studies on 'intermittent performing arts workers...have an importance extending beyond that of the artistic professions' (Stiegler, 2011c: 51-52). *Otium* is 'artistic' time, expansive and extensive time, that allows for invention and creation. So, for Stiegler, the 'time of the passage to the noetic act is that of *otium*, which does not at all mean idle time, yet does mean the time of leisure, that is of freedom and of "care of the self"' (Stiegler, 2011c: 52-53; emphasis and quotation in original).

In comparing Winterson's use of 'idleness' and Stiegler's dismissal of *otium* as 'idle time', there seems initially to be a slight discrepancy in the comparison. However, I would argue Winterson's use has the same force here of wanting to show an idleness that is in some sense productive or active– in the sense of allowing for contemplative reflection or unconscious creativity. On this reading both Winterson and Stiegler use 'idle' in the sense of spontaneous freedom that is opposed to the calculative restraints of economic demands which requires accountable, measurable, means-end action.

The taking care of the self of *otium* is also then a composition of the self, a creation or renewed re-creation of the self. It is the time of individuation. Art and artistic time as the time of '*otium*' is in this sense radically transformative. The potential and possibilities for this type of *otium* within the hyper-industrial, digital age will be the focus of chapter seven.

## Chapter 5:

### The Sociology of Speed and Time

'I can't believe how fast things move on the outside. I saw an automobile once when I was a kid, but now they're everywhere. The world went and got itself in a big damn hurry.'

– Brooks Hatlen in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)

'*Tekhnē* produces time...(a computer is a clock)'

- Stiegler, *Technics and Time*

#### Introduction: A Brief History of Speed and Time

Having finally been released from prison, the character of Brooks Hatlen in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) commits suicide unable to cope with the rate of change and the speed of the modern world in which he finds himself. And like Brooks Hatlen, many would characterize modernity as the speeding up of the world. Modernity itself is often framed or even defined in terms of the speeding up of our society, and its apparatuses, due to ever increasing technological

developments – most notably in Anthony Giddens' *Runaway World* (Giddens, 2002; Wajcman and Dodd, 2017: 1).

How we are in the world is partly a consequence of how we experience the world. This experience is affected by both the time and the speed of the world in which (and the speed *at which*) we live. Time has formed the framework of some of the most important philosophical works for this reason, notably Heidegger's phenomenological *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962), a response to which forms the basis for Stiegler's own *Technics and Time* (Stiegler, 2008; Stiegler 2009a; Stiegler 2011a). So, our understanding of our own existence and of the concept and experience of time are, as Heidegger's title suggest, intertwined.

The standardization of time (which was introduced to help the railways operate on an agreed time) is crucial to understanding the impact of the industrial revolution on society and our experience of the world since then. This standardized time is one of the motors for the industrial and commercial revolutions, introducing the notions of timed working hours and 'clocking-on' and 'clocking-off'.

Yet, our normative everyday notion of time – a time that is linear and travelling like an 'arrow' – has been radically changed following Einstein's 1905 theory of relativity which argued against Newton's notion of an independent, 'absolute' time and for a space-time that was conjoined and co-dependent so that *where* we are affects, what time we experience (Einstein, 1905). So, our natural view of time is that it is dynamic - it seems to possess a sense of flow (Dainton, 2010: 7).

Hence, phrases such as ‘time flies’ and – conversely – to denote *abnormal*, out of the ordinary events - ‘time just seemed to stand still’. Time also seems constant, in the sense that it is used as an absolute reference frame to divide our everyday time. Both these claims fit well with Newtonian mechanics, where time is independent and absolute, and can accommodate this everyday sense of flow.

However, Einstein’s theory of special relativity (founded on the relativity postulate *and* the light postulate) has *no* such absolute notion of time.

Consequently, and following Minkowski’s ‘union’ of space *and* time, time is no longer independent but *reference-frame* dependent. In other words, there is no privileged, objective, and/or absolute time. Such scientific debate also had its impact on literature with the explosion of modernist writers in the 1920s who all framed their narratives in new, radical ways either directly or indirectly influenced by such concerns over the question of time. Notable examples from this period include James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, both published in 1922, and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, first published in 1925 (Joyce, 1998; Eliot, 1961; Woolf, 2000).

Today, notions of time – and the fluidity of it – are made manifest in the contradictions brought about by digital media, and so we find ourselves in a world of both ‘real time’ and ‘catch-up’/‘on-demand’, as well as modern working conditions which involve ‘zero hour’ contracts. The shift has been from the carbon time of the industrial revolution to the light time of the fibre-optic, digital revolution.

The paradox of the 'speeding up' of modern society, however, is that although technology continually creates apparatuses and systems to make processes quicker (communications, laundry, modes of travel and so on) in order to 'save time', the consequence is that there is an equal (if not exponential) increase in the demands made on people's time. As Harmut Rosa argues the 'to-do list' has increased but there are no more hours in the day. So, far from making the experience of the world less complex, issues concerning speed and time are now more layered than ever (Rosa, 2017). Indeed, as some sociologists have shown, there is also still a large amount of 'slow', manual hours needed to ensure that the speed of modern digital technology is maintained.

For Stiegler, contemporary technology is also defined by speed, speed's acceleration and 'permanent invention', and contemporary society can be defined in part by *disorientation* which is linked to speed (Stiegler, 2009a: 7; emphasis in original). So, in Stieglerian terms, what Brooks Hatlen encounters with the rate of change and the accelerated pace of the world he witnesses is a level of disorientation that he is fundamentally unable to comprehend and, more importantly, feels unable to adapt to. As I will show, Hatlen's fate is in many ways Stiegler's concern for the potential fate of a hyper-industrial age in which technology is developing beyond the rate at which humanity – both individually and collectively - can adapt to. It is therefore deeply disturbing, disfiguring and *disorientating*. Brooks Hatlen feels unable to 'perform' in the world and his moment of crisis concerns his agency and autonomy. Brooks Hatlen fails to achieve the equivalent of an *epokhal redoubling*, to re-appropriate the shock

brought about by the experience of a world of speeding cars, his inability to absorb this change and to adopt it.

This chapter will look at how current theories about speed and time are linked to Stiegler's notion of disindividuation by (1) looking at the shift from carbon time to light time, (2) outlining Stiegler's concerns and approach to time – with particular reference to *Technics and Time* (3) looking at the work of Paul Virilio and his notion of 'picnolepsy' – that is of consciousness construed as the frequent absences of attention; (4) explicating Harmut Rosa's work – following on from the Frankfurt School critique - on alienation and acceleration; and finally (5), looking at how the malleability of time, and time use, in modernity can open up possibilities as opposed to exhausting them.

### 1) From Carbon Time to Light Time

The time of the world has changed profoundly from the beginning of tools and technics that operate within the human capability and perception of time, through to the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which began utilising the power of carbon and steam, and latterly from the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the use of light-time, specifically in digital and fibre-optic technology. The use of this technology has broadly been two-fold, the first is economic and material: to increase productivity and the second concerns the quality of life, to 'save' time by speeding up the rate of work and communication, supposedly to increase leisure time.

The first is a clearer narrative in the globalized, hyper-industrial age. So, the rate at which products are produced have been increasing since the industrial revolution and now with light-time technology the rate of expectation on delivery has changed, the general trend therefore being to towards quick – as near instantaneous ('just-in' time) – deliveries. This has significantly transformed retail and high street shopping (specifically driven by the influence of Amazon), transport (e.g. Uber) and food service economies (e.g. Deliveroo).

The second is more complex since, as sociologists such as Harmut Rosa have noted, the speeding up of society has in fact increased the time pressure on individuals. The expectation now is rather than there being more available leisure time, there are now more demands made on people's time both from work and home-life, thereby diminishing free time; this is driven in particular by the speeding up of telecommunications, notably mobile phones and email. Stiegler's concern is that with the computational, digitized time of the culture and programming industries it is our ability to create a future for ourselves that becomes threatened. This is something I develop in chapter seven.

So, there are in fact two times that we might look at modernity with. The first follows that of rationalization and commercial productivity imperatives, in the vein of Max Weber and Karl Marx. This then would cover the changes to shopping and retail, and the demands made on employees to be quick in responding or at least contactable in out-of-office hours. The second, following the work of Adorno and Horkheimer (Adorno, 2001: 187-197), looks at the appropriation of leisure time by capitalism and the creation of the 'leisure

industries'. Both concerns are found in Stiegler's work and contribute to his theory of how individuals are becoming *disindividuated* in the hyper-industrial age. What marks out Stiegler's work in particular in this area, as I introduced at the end of the last chapter in relation to artistic time, is the notion of *otium* - the time of reflection, noesis and individuation - and the time of *negotium* - the time of business and economic imperatives. In previous epochs these two areas of human life were more clearly demarcated, but one of the crucial effects of the speeding up of society (since the industrial revolution and then the digital revolution) and the way modern society frames time is in the disappearance of the difference between the two. *Otium*, the time of individuation, is, according to Stiegler, threatened by the time of the libidinal economy, cultural and cognitive capitalism and hyper-industrialisation. For Stiegler, 'the essentially technological dimension of temporality can no longer be ignored' (Stiegler, 2009a: 63).

## 2) Stiegler's *Technics and Time: 'Real time', Event-ization and Temporal Objects*

In his *Technics and Time, volume 2: Disorientation*, Stiegler focuses on the aspect of modern technology that he sees as contributing to the disindividuation of individuals (and therefore an undermining of social bonds, community and politics) namely, the affect of temporal objects on consciousness and the industrialization of memory.

In line with a phenomenological approach, the question Stiegler is concerned with is how technics affect the lived experience of individuals. Engaging with and critiquing both Heidegger and Husserl, Stiegler argues that with the exteriorization of consciousness and memory to the culture and programming industries, human experience is profoundly changed and individuation threatened. This is due to the affect of industrialized temporal objects and the algorithmic, calculative appropriation, instantiation and production of time in the hyper-industrial age. So, 'Time is the unity of the moving flux of experiences and the ego's phenomenological reduction' (Stiegler, 2009a: 198) and 'Technics is a formidable acceleration of the production of the new' (Stiegler, 2009a: 160).

So, whereas in the last chapter I focused on Stiegler's theory of disindividuation by looking at his work on symbolic misery and aesthetic conditioning, here I will address disindividuation in relation to his work on time, speed, being and becoming. Here again, as with the work on symbolic order, this aspect of Stiegler's work is founded upon the notion of the programming and culture industries creating a mediated epiphylogenetic milieu.

(i) Ordinary technicity and Time: *Dasein*, the clock and Thanatology

As I have already discussed in Chapter 2, Stiegler's framing of human experience and his three-volume *Technics and Time* is founded upon Heidegger's *Being and Time* (which itself is the focus of *Technics and Time, vol. 1*) central to which is the notion of *Dasein*. Heidegger's central question is about humanity's forgetting of 'Being', that is, not the 'being' of everyday existence, but the foundation of this

'being' in the first place. Central to his analysis is the notion of *Dasein* ('being-there') as partly a 'being-toward-death', that is: our lived experience concerns our awareness (and forgetting) of being as both a becoming and an approaching-toward death, it is fundamental to the structure of human existence so that – in Stieglerian terms – life and death form a 'transductive relationship'. This then is the question of thanatology.

Yet, with the industrialized temporal objects of the hyper-industrial age, and the appropriation of attention, consciousness and memory by the culture and programming industries, human experience is unable to face (or 'be-towards') death since it is in a constant state of distraction, inattention, escapism and a temporal framework which attempts to conceal or even deny death. The focus of consumerism is the consumption of 'now'; and the hyper-industrial, speculative economy and politics is geared towards short-termism and immediate outcomes rather than long-term trajectories. This is a Heideggerian forgetting of the question of being and, specifically, of being-toward-death – the 'anxiety' of which is the motor of Heideggerian becoming and therefore of Steiglerian individuation.

But, before the digital, hyper-industrialized age, this industrialization of time begins with the clock. So, "To think time is to think it *first* in terms of the clock" (Stiegler, 2008: 212). The clock attempts to 'fix' the 'now' and so the Heideggerian question of *Dasein* – as Stiegler shows in reference to Heidegger's 1924 lecture "The Concept of Time" which preceded *Being and Time* (1927) - becomes an enquiry into the nature of this 'fixing of the now'. So, Stiegler writes

that Heidegger asks “Am I the now?” since the central thesis of the lecture is ‘*time is Dasein*’ (Stiegler, 2008: 213).

Stiegler’s critique of Heidegger, however, is that he misses the technological aspect of humanity’s becoming, that humans and technics *co-individuate* each other. So Heidegger’s *already-there* of *Dasein* is, for Stiegler, a technological, prosthetic *Dasein*. Whereas Heidegger sees *Dasein* as trying to determine the indeterminate future of its being-toward-death through technicity as calculation, as a measurement in which ‘*Dasein* thus works to “calculate” the future; to determine the indeterminate’, Stiegler argues that technics as prosthesis in fact opens up the indeterminate (Stiegler, 2009a: 6).

This returns us to Stiegler’s originary technicity and the ‘the invention of the human’, the notion that humanity and technics are in a transductive relationship. The normative conception that the human invents the tool (and technics) is in fact as much *the opposite*: that technics invents the human. So, ‘the *what* invents the *who* just as much as it is invented by it’ (Stiegler, 2008: 177). So,

That which anticipates, desires, has agency, thinks, and understands, I have called the *who*. The supplement to the *who*, its prosthesis, is its *what*. The *who* is *nothing* without the *what*, since they are in a *transductive* relation during the process of exteriorization that characterizes life; that is, a process of differentiation by which life proceeds by other means than life...The anticipatory power of the *who*, however, presupposes the already-there of the *what* that gives it access to the non-lived past...The dynamic of the *who* itself redoubles that of the *what*: conditioned by the *what*, it is equally conditional *for* it: within the transductive negotiation of terms, the issue is always one of co-individuation.

(Stiegler, 2009a: 6-7; emphasis in original)

With the rise in the media saturation and the globalized nature of programming and culture industries forming the current epiphylogenetic milieu, the '*what*' of technics has become, according to Stiegler, a threat to the agency of the *who*. The premise for Stiegler's argument (influenced by Leroi-Gourhan) is that, 'Technics does not aid memory: it *is* memory, originally *assisted* "retentional finitude" (Stiegler, 2009a: 65; emphasis in original).

This then returns us to Stiegler's work on Husserl, consciousness and temporal objects, as for Stiegler tertiary retention, which has always been the domain of technics since 'tertiary memories already inhabit my secondary memories' (Stiegler, 2009a: 42), is now governed and created by the programming and culture industries. Our access to the world, to our lived experienced, is not merely filtered by this multia-media stage but in many ways created *for us by it*.

This, for Stiegler, is 'event-ization' which is '*selection*' so that, 'All events are inscribed in a memory, and event-ization is memory's functioning. The issue, then, has to do with the 'criteria of selection' and the 'industrialization of memory' (Stiegler, 2009a: 97-187). In the media age it is the programming and culture industries that are responsible for such 'selection'. This means that they create the grounds upon which 'individual', *autonomous* memory (if it exists – since Stiegler sees it as compromised and threatened by the fusing of media and memory) takes place.

The reason for this is the relation between technics and time, and the transductive, co-individuation of the *who* and the *what* provided by Stiegler's

originary technicity. Technical *prosthesis*, is a *pros*-thesis – a putting before (Stiegler, 2008: 152). So, Stiegler argues,

Technics thinks, and must not the connection to the future be redoubled, as the thought of technics, as what thinks technics? Isn't it necessary to think what we think as technics, as it thinks? **It thinks before us**, being always already there before us, insofar as there is a being before us; the *what* precedes the premature *who*, has always already pre-ceded it. The future – which is “the task of thinking” – is in the thinking of (by) technics. We must understand this “of” in two senses that, taken together, produce time: to think technics as the thought of time (re-doubled).

(Stiegler, 2009a: 32; emphasis in original - my bold)

So, in this way, Stiegler asks the question of technics and time in terms of who precedes what, or rather *what* precedes *who*. Since, in the Heideggerian sense of *Dasein*, we are ‘thrown’ into the ‘already-there’ of a world which is a past we have not lived, and yet it becomes our past – the technical transformations in the past century, specifically the shift to light-time technology, radically alters what we understand by this notion of ‘past’ and ‘present’. So if, *epiphylogenetically*, we inherit an *unlived* past, then we also inherit, *technologically*, an *unthought* technics.

(ii) The manufacturing of time: industrial time and ‘Real time’

The foundation of ‘being’ is linked to ‘time’, and yet ‘*Tekhnē* produces time’ (Stiegler, 2009a: 18). And if today’s time is digital – in that it is governed by computers, networks and fibre-optics, and since ‘a computer is a clock’ (Stiegler, 2009a: 241) – then it is digital technology that creates the time of the world. So, for Stiegler, the exteriorization of skills, faculties, the nervous system and

memory by technics mean that *'Today is thus an other time'* (Stiegler, 2009a: 61). This 'other' time then is linked to the industrialization of time and the manufacturing, 'fabrication' (Stiegler) or creation of time. At the heart of this idea is Stiegler's analysis of the modern use in technics and technology, and therefore also in culture and media, of 'real time'. This notion of 'real time' is directly linked to epiphylogenesis, tertiary retention and event-ization (selection).

So, Stiegler writes, 'Current events, transmitted live, are an immediate past making the present pass and are therefore an already-there; as Raymond Queneau says somewhere, television is "current events frozen in history"' (Stiegler, 2009a: 118-119). Here, then Stiegler highlights the contradictory nature of 'real time', the idea that it is being transmitted 'live' in the 'present' can never be the case because as he argues earlier, 'Time can only be deferred' (Stiegler, 2009a: 63). What we witness as 'live' when transmitted has *already* gone. Or, in other words, 'breaking news' has *already* broken. In this sense we experience a present that is in some sense 'delayed' or deferred.

This touches upon the possible contradictions in the work of the philosopher William James and his concept of the 'specious present': the notion that at the subjective level of consciousness the present moment is in some sense permanent and continuous, whilst its contents operate in a constant, temporal flux of a passing-into the past and a becoming-of the future.

As Barry Dainton has written, 'while James certainly believed in the continuity of consciousness and the immediate experience of change and persistence...[i]n his

later writings...he embraced a neo-Bergsonian position, according to which the flux of experience cannot be fully captured conceptually' (Dainton, 2018).

The notion that there are two different modalities of time is crucial in understanding the problem of technics and time. Our subjective experience is governed by the normative notion that time is linear so that we pass from the past to the present to the future. Yet, our objective experience in a media saturated age is increasingly that of montage. But the implication of this montaged, 'cinematic' time is profound. For Stiegler,

What we today call "real time" is industrial time, the industrial production of time by the programming industries whose products suspend all traditional programs. This means provisionally linking the expression "real time" to cybernetic jargon...Thus so-called real time is not time; it is perhaps even the de-temporalization of time, or at least its occultation; yet it is still nonetheless time, industrially "won", and thus also lost – which is to say radically understood as apart from the *clock*, as *capital*, the extreme modality of "preoccupation". If... the already-there is nothing beyond its effective conditions of inheritance, of transmission, while anticipation is nothing but delayed appropriation...of "what has passed", a radical reconfiguration of transmission techniques will have a radical effect on temporalization

(Stiegler, 2009a: 63; emphasis and quotations in original)

Here Stiegler poses the question as to what the time we experience in modern technics actual is, and if it is 'time' or 'perhaps even the de-temporalization of time'. If programming industries control the networks and operational devices of information, media and digital technics then the time that these operate on is, as Stiegler argues, 'industrial time'. In an Adornian debunking of 'jargon', Stiegler argues therefore that 'real time is not time' and links it not to the clock but to '*capital*' as 'the extreme modality of "preoccupation"'.

There is then a performative aspect to time: time affects, or potentially, determines our mode of 'being'. The conclusion that Stiegler reaches is that the modes of transmission in the digital, media, and informatics age means that what we anticipate is nothing but 'delayed appropriation...of "what has passed"' (Stiegler, 2009a: 63; quotations in original). This begs the question as to what time is that we experience, are we always catching up with time – rather than as 'real time' would suggest experiencing it in the instantaneous now? Even more radically, taking Stiegler's argument further, there is in some sense the idea the future *precedes* the present.

(iii) Back to the Future: Epiphylogenesis, aesthetic conditioning, anticipation and the time of experience

As discussed in the last chapter, Stiegler's key concern around aesthetic conditioning is that we are susceptible to environmental, situational (epiphylogenetic) influences that shape behaviour and create 'consumers'. In the hyper-industrial age of digital networks this creates algorithmic tracking, predicting, and even *shaping*, of behaviour. Stiegler's theory, founded on Husserl, of retentions, protentions and archi-protentions is in some sense about our ability to think about and create and anticipate the future based upon our 'horizon of expectations'. What we 'anticipate' - and how we experience the process of anticipating the future - has changed in the modern technological age.

If our tertiary intentions are governed and saturated by programming and culture industries then we are no longer in control of our thinking within, and about, our milieu in the same way. The exteriorization process means that if we are no longer doing the thinking (due to the exteriorization of *savoir-faire*, *savoir-vivre*, memory and knowledge), the future is in some sense being thought *for* us. This is the force of the quotation mentioned earlier, that, ‘The future – which is “the task of thinking” – is in the thinking of (by) technics’ (Stiegler, 2009a: 32).

Stiegler sees this as an integral part of technics, since he argues for an originary technicity starting with the age of flint. However, the radical shift in the digital age is the extent to which we are guided towards choices *algorithmically*. This is due to the global networks involved in cultural capitalism, economic imperatives, the influence of psychological marketing strategies, as well as various theories of behavioural economics that drive and instigate the libidinal economy. Within this new form of ‘platform capitalism’, Nick Srnicek has identified five types of platforms: ‘advertising’, such as Google and Facebook; ‘cloud’, such as AWS and Salesforce; ‘industrial’ such as GE and Siemens; ‘product’, such as Rolls Royce and Spotify; and ‘lean’, such as Uber and Airbnb (Srnicek, 2017: 49). Such platforms increasingly structure the operations and decisions of both individuals and institutions. This form of ‘platform capitalism’ then is also linked to an increasing ‘algorithmic culture’ that collect and use the data extracted from online user interaction. In relation to this, Dominique Cardon has identified four forms of calculation that are used for online digital data: voting, classification and ranking, benchmarks, and machine learning (Cardon, 2016: 97). These are, for Cardon, guided by four different principles: popularity, authority, reputation

and prediction (Cardon, 2016: 97). For Stiegler, it is this combination of platform capitalism and algorithmic culture, as the data economy of cognitive and cultural capitalism, that leads to the stimulus-response programming of behaviour outlined in his theorizing of digital pheromones in his 'allegory of the anthill' (Stiegler, 2014b: 72-78; Stiegler, 2018: 36-7).

This is not to say that Stiegler is technologically deterministic, his argument is much more nuanced and is founded on transductive relations; but it is to say that our field of choice is in some sense presented to us as 'already-there' without us participating in the process of that creation, due both to the loss of participation through aesthetic conditioning and the inherent structure and temporality of predictive algorithmic-based capital consumerism in conjunction with the appropriation of the libidinal drives.

This returns us to Stiegler's use of Heidegger's theory of tools, his famous example of the hammer and his differentiation between 'present-at-hand' and 'ready-at-hand' (cf. chapter two). Stiegler's concern is the predictive shaping of our technological and cultural environment means the future is being programmed *before* the present, and that we encounter it already made. In Heideggerian terms, it is 'present-at-hand' and effectively reified (the fixing of 'now'), rather than 'ready-at-hand' and therefore retaining its relational aspect to us and to our autonomy.

### 3) Picnolepsy: Speed, Light, Cinema and Consciousness as Absence

#### (i) Picnolepsy

In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, Virilio examines the notion that consciousness is not the knitting together of continuous experience but is in fact more accurately the montage of frequent absences (Virilio, 2009). This resonates with Stiegler's framing of consciousness as cinematographic in nature, the notion of montage, and the 'editing' of the temporal flux of lived experience. In many ways, Virilio's theory is that of modernity as a montage of fragmentary experiences of time, saturated with images and illusions. Virilio writes,

The absence lasts a few seconds; its beginning and its end are sudden. The senses function, but are nevertheless closed to external impressions...Conscious time comes together again automatically, forming a continuous time without apparent breaks.

(Virilio, 2009: 19)

For this he coins the word "picnolepsy" (from the Greek, *picnos*: frequent)' (Virilio, 2009: 19). During these absences 'nothing really has happened, the missing time never existed. At each crisis, without realizing it, a little of his or her life simply escaped' (Virilio, 2009: 19). For Virilio, just as we have '*paradoxical sleeping*' of rapid-eye movement in which we dream most deeply, the 'mass phenomenon' of picnolepsy creates a '*state of paradoxical waking* (rapid waking)' which 'our conscious life...is just as difficult to imagine without' (Virilio, 2009: 24-5).

This state of picnolepsy is made most evident for Virilio during childhood. So, childhood games that involve spinning around; or grandmother's footsteps where someone stands facing a wall whilst the others approach slowly towards them, the aim being to catch someone moving on turning around suddenly. All display this picnoleptic affect.

Yet these 'picnoleptic crises' disappear at the 'end of childhood' meaning that adult consciousness is very different and the 'desynchronization effect stops being mastered and enacted' and the 'relation to dimensions changes drastically' (Virilio, 2009: 29). Virilio likens it to Rilke's phrase "What happens is so far ahead of what we think, of our intentions, that we can never catch up with it and never really know its true appearance" (Virilio, 2009: 29).

The consequence of this is that during adolescence, there is a sense of disorientation, and the adolescent discovers his/her body as 'strange and estranged' so that "bad habits" are therefore attempts at 'reconciliation with yourself' (Virilio, 2009: 29). Even more tellingly, Virilio writes of the current age of the 'intemperate utilization of technical prostheses of mediatization (radio, motorcycle, photo, hi-fi etc.)' meaning that:

The settled man seems to forget entirely the child he was and *believed eternal* (E.A. Poe); he's entered, in fact, as Rilke suggests, another kind of absence to the world. "The luxuriance and illusion of instant paradises, based on roads, cities, the sword,"<sup>15</sup>

(Virilio, 2009: 30; emphasis and quotations in original)

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<sup>15</sup> See Shmuel Trigano. "Midbar, Chemana." *Traverses* 19 (June 1980). See also Paul Virilio. *L'Insécurité du territoire (The Insecurity of Territory)*. Paris: Stock, 1975. "The State is always the court, the city (Urstaat)..."

What Virilio addresses here then is the childhood imagination that has not yet assimilated or absorbed the milieu, so that it operates freely and spontaneously, as the artist's imagination. In this way, Virilio argues, 'The world is an illusion, and art is the presentation of the illusion of the world' and for the child the world is a game of illusion and imagination (Virilio, 2009: 46). Art, like the child's *picnolesy*, operates in the absences and the gaps of the world, constructing a reality out of fragments. Whereas Rilke's 'settled man' is absent in a different way he is seduced by 'luxuriance and illusion of instant paradises' akin to the modern, consumerist world of lifestyle and immediate consumption that Stiegler (following Adorno and Horkheimer) is concerned with. The 'bad habits' of the adolescent become the inauthentic, distracted modality of the adult. Crucially, what the 'settled man' misses that the child possesses is the sense of the '*eternal*' that quality that art, and *otium*, possess.

As discussed at the end of the last chapter, art operates on a different time than the time of capital and consumption; it operates on time of the infinite and the eternal, just like the child who is absorbed by the eternal present and not yet susceptible to adolescent or adult drives and desires upon which, for Stiegler, the libidinal, consumerist culture is based, itself founded on notions of instrumental reason and calculation.

In fact, this scientific foundation of the modern world for Virilio argues the scientific quest for knowledge merely uncovers the expanse of the unknown so that 'the more information flashes by the more aware we are of its incomplete fragmentary nature' (Virilio, 2009: 55). It is this 'scientific impassibility that

makes it so that the more informed man is the more the desert of the world expands around him' (Virilio, 2009: 56). As with Stiegler's aesthetic conditioning, man has the 'information but not the sensation' and, in a passage that echoes Jean Baudrillard's statement that we now have more and more information but less and less meaning, 'from now on it's the speed of light itself which limits the reading of information and the important thing in electronic information is no longer the storage but the display' (Virilio, 2009: 56). Since we cannot apprehend, comprehend or perceive information at the speed of light, we are left behind and are no longer connected to our surroundings in the same way (something I will address more in the next section on Harmut Rosa). We must therefore rely on technical prosthesis and supports to keep up with our surroundings that operate on the speed of light and fibre-optics. We are in Stiegler's terms 'disorientated'.

(ii) Speed, light and inertia: the disappearance of Howard Hughes

For Virilio, the danger of humanity's relation to speed and light is epitomized by the life of the aviator and film producer Howard Hughes. Virilio notes that Hughes' life can be divided into two halves, up to the age of 47 and the subsequent 24 years until his death. In the first he was constantly on show, ubiquitous and saturating the press with images of himself and stories from his life; the second he disappears and goes into hiding in a hotel room. So, Virilio writes,

The first part of Hughes' life could pass for a **programming of behavior by dream and desire**: he wanted to become the richest, the greatest aviator, the most important producer in the world, and he succeeded everywhere ostentatiously; overexposing his person...Then, Howard Hughes disappears. He is in hiding until his death.

(Virilio, 2009: 34, my bold)

The 'programming of behavior by dream and desire' is precisely the aspirational, lifestyle culture prevalent in modern consumerism. It is, for Stiegler, the aesthetic conditioning of the consumer based on a libidinal economy that in appropriating the drives ends up exhausting them. So, Hughes' chasing of the control of both speed and light is represented by his obsession to succeed in the areas of aviation and cinema that leads to 'overexposure', followed by his subsequent 'disappearance', acts as a warning as to the fate of humanity within a hyper-industrial culture founded upon such 'programming of behavior'.

For Virilio, Hughes' life is akin to the scientific quest for control and dominance over the natural world. Hughes, in retreating from the world, becomes for Virilio a 'a kind of *technological monk*', the Desert Inn in Las Vegas becomes the desert, and as with the scientific quest, he himself reaches a point of 'impassibility', a state of *apatheia* (Virilio, 2009: 37-8; emphasis in original). In chasing speed and light Hughes 'could believe himself everywhere and nowhere' and in his attempts to catch up with both, in seeking the appropriation of both, he ends up at a stand still. So, Virilio argues, 'Hughes recognizes *his desire for movement is only desire of inertia, desire to see arrive what is left behind*' (Virilio, 2009: 35-36; emphasis in original).

#### 4) The Paradox of Modernity: Autonomy and Alienation

##### (i) The 'broken promise' of modernity

For Harmut Rosa one of the central issues of the sociology of speed and time is the effect it has on our relation to our self, to others and to our environment. At the heart of his work is the question of what makes a 'good life'. In his essay *Alienation and Acceleration*, as with Stiegler, Rosa develops the Frankfurt School's Critique of modernity, following Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as drawing on Marx's original theory of alienation and 'false needs'. Rosa theory is founded upon a view of the individual as self-determining and free to do as they wish.

Drawing on Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment and progress, his concern is that modernity presents a paradox in which technology and technological apparatuses that promise autonomy and freedom in fact create structures in which we are less free and less able to do as we want or desire. One way of encapsulating this is in the notion greater speed and technology allow the freeing up of time for leisure, whereas the actual effect becomes an increase of time pressure and a larger 'to-do' list. And for Rosa a modern critical theory of acceleration and modernity needs to address the various alienating effects that are a consequence of our accelerated culture.

Rosa argues that initially modernization allowed for a balance between competitive, acceleration of society and the ability for the individual to remain

autonomous and self-actualizing. So, the early ideal of capitalism, founded on the economic models of Adam Smith and the neoliberal 'free'-marketeer Milton Friedman, were a means to an 'end of self-determination' that enabled individuals to pursue their 'life-plans, dreams, values and goals' (Rosa, 2014: 80).

However, the problem (as Adorno and Horkheimer foresaw) is that 'social acceleration is stronger than modernity's project: It keeps going unaltered as its logics now turns against the promise of autonomy' (Rosa, 2014: 80).

Consequently individual dreams and desires were appropriated to fuel 'the acceleration-machine' (Rosa, 2014: 81). The challenge becomes that of being able to 'stay in the race' and keep on the 'hamster-wheel' (Rosa, 2014: 81).

Furthermore, this is driven by a form of politics focused on increased social competition, acceleration and growth (Rosa, 2014: 82). For Rosa, as for Stiegler, this results in the exhaustion of the very energies social acceleration and competition is founded upon leading to 'total heteronomy' (Rosa, 2014: 82). This, then, is the 'broken promise' of modernity.

#### (ii) Rosa's 'Critical Theory' and phenomenology of social alienation

Rosa's theory on alienation is a development and revision of early Marx's theory of alienation whereby capitalism caused five forms of alienation: from actions, things, nature, others and ourselves. In this way, Marx theorized that we 'would be alienated from the subjective, the objective and the social worlds' (Rosa, 2014: 83).

Rosa 's contention is that the modern condition of acceleration is about to cross 'certain thresholds' which will not only alienate us from the subjective, objective and social worlds, but from 'time and space themselves' (Rosa, 2014: 83). In this way, Rosa proposes his own fivefold theory of alienation in which he takes as his premise the definition of alienation as 'the feeling of 'not really wanting what you do' even though you act from your own, free decision and will' (AA, p. 89). His argument can be summarized as follows:

(a) Alienation from Space

In modernity, physical and social space are now no longer linked so we may now socialize at great distances meaning that 'social relevance' is becomes separated from 'spatial proximity' (Rosa, 2014: 84). So, following Anthony Giddens, this means that time and space are 'disembedded' (Rosa, 2014: 84). However, since 'forms of intimacy and acquaintance take time to develop' (Rosa, 2014: 84), the rate of change in modernity, and the change in how we are 'located' in the world, mean that this social acceleration allows not only for increased social mobility as well as a disengagement from physical space, it also causes us to become alienated 'from our physical and material surrounding' (Rosa, 2014: 85).

## (b) Alienation from Things

There are two types of things: things 'we produce' and things 'we use or consume', and these things in many ways constitute our identity (Rosa, 2014: 85). Yet, 'the speed of exchange-rates' means that there is a greater turnover of things (material goods such as clothes, cars, computers and so on) in our lives (which links to Stiegler's concerns over permanent innovation and disposability) and because they become part of our everyday lives, forming not only our identity but also our history, when we throw these objects away or replace them it is 'an act that touches on your identity' (Rosa, 2014: 85-86). The rate of change in our thing/object world, and the fact we now rarely know how these things work (Stiegler's 'symbolic misery') means 'we live, move and work in surroundings that become alien to us' (Rosa, 2014: 87).

## (c) Alienation from our Actions

Modernity has caused us to feel out of place and dislocated by the things we do, so that we, for Rosa, we no longer feel 'at home' (Rosa, 2014: 88). In part this is due to the alienation caused by technology, but for Rosa, we no longer have the time to be properly informed about the world in which we live (Rosa, 2014: 88). In this way, with 'the self-propelling logics of competition and acceleration' our choices and capabilities continually increase, yet our ability to 'realize' these 'suffer progressively' (Rosa, 2014: 91). As a result, we become so obsessed in finishing our 'to-do list' whilst pursuing 'instant-

gratification-consumer-activities' that a sense of authenticity about our lives is lost (Rosa, 2014: 92).

#### (d) Alienation from Time

Since consciousness is subjective and consciousness is temporal, 'the subjective paradox of time' is that 'the *time of experience* and the time of *remembrance* bear inverse qualities' (Rosa, 2014: 92; emphasis in original).

In other words, what we enjoy seems short in experience but long in memory and vice versa. Yet, in our modern media world this 'long/short- or short/long-' experience of time becomes a 'short/short-pattern' so that 'Time goes by quickly in experience but shrinks in memory' (Rosa, 2014: 93).

Typical examples of this are watching television or using the Internet, and, for Rosa, we 'increasingly engage in activities and contexts that are quite rigorously isolated against each other' meaning that we no longer form social relations 'in an integrated or meaningful way' (Rosa, 2014: 94). So, Rosa uses Walter Benjamin's terminology, to argue that we have become 'rich with *Erlebnissen*', that is 'episodes of experience', but 'poor on *Erfahrungen*' which is 'experiences which leave a mark' connecting us to our identity and our history, more importantly, 'touch or change who we are' (Rosa, 2014: 95; emphasis in original). Consequently, we lack an 'appropriation of time' that makes these experiences ours, as being 'our' time, and therefore, they 'remain *alien* to us' (Rosa, 2014: 95; emphasis in original).

### (e) Alienation from Self and Others

For Rosa, we have become 'detached' and 'disengaged' due to our inability to 'integrate' what we do and how we experience our lives. That is, we fail to integrate both our 'times and spaces' and 'actions and experiences', the latter including the 'commodities' we buy (Rosa, 2014: 96). This is also true of our social relations and so, following Kenneth Gergen, Rosa argues that in our social world in which we increasingly meet more people in shorter amounts of time, our experience of other people becomes 'fully-saturated'. The speed of modernity, then, makes social connection more difficult as 'deep relations' are 'time-consuming to build and painful to dissolve', both of which are problematic in a modern society of 'fast-changing encounters' (Rosa, 2014: 96).

### (iii) From alienation to 'responsivity' and 'resonance'

Rosa's proposed solution to this problem of alienation is what he considers the opposite of alienation, that is: 'responsivity', in conjunction with 'alienation's other': 'resonance' – borrowing the term from Charles Taylor's 'axes of resonance'. This line of Rosa's argument concerns the philosophy of recognition, beginning with the changing social infrastructure that we inhabit and the subsequent 'struggle for recognition' that we encounter.

The 'pre-modern age' was a 'stratificatory, estate-based society' and as such a person's role in society was fixed within an ordered form of recognition, meaning that individual's status and position was conferred on them at birth (Rosa, 2014: 58). In this way, the structures and institutions of pre-modern society provided a certain amount of stability and continuity, as well as an inheritance 'of cultural norms and knowledge' to be passed on to future generations (Rosa, 2014: 73). Whereas, in the early, 'classical' modern society, the individual's recognition becomes dependent on a position which they 'earn', so that 'status' and 'privileges' are a consequence of one's success and 'Fears of misrecognition, therefore, centered on failure to reach the position sought' (Rosa, 2014: 59). However, today, in 'late modernity', there is a shift from status connected to one's position in society, whether through birth or achievements, to a status that is a consequence of one's *'performance'*, meaning this recognition has to be achieved daily rather than built up over a life-time. (Rosa, 2014: 59-60). Furthermore, the pre-modern institutions such as the church, although creating 'feelings of guilt and shame' had an in-built remedy so that, as Weber noted, 'in the institution of confession and absolution, the catholic church at least provided its flock with a means of relief from feelings of guilt' (Rosa, 2014: 76); modern society, 'produces guilty subjects without relent or forgiveness' (Rosa, 2014: 76). So, 'the late-modern setting does not provide ideas or institutions of potential 'reconciliation': All failures and shortcomings directly fall back on the individuals' (Rosa, 2014: 99). For Rosa, the danger of modernity lies in 'the silencing' of the world' and 'the 'deafness' in the relationship between self and world': 'The idea we cannot but *call out* into the world and wait for a response we might never get' (Rosa, 2014: 100). This he cites as central to all 'diagnoses

of ‘pathology’’: existentialism, Weber’s disenchantment, Durkheim’s anomia, Lukacs’ reification and Adorno and Horkheimer’s instrumental reason (Rosa, 2014: 100).

So, the answer lies in the much-needed ‘responsivity’, which has historically been found in ‘two great cultural forms, or systems’ (Rosa, 2014: 100): ‘*Religion*, which allows for one or many responsive Gods out there, and *Art* – poetry, and first of all, music – which, as the Romantics put it, awakens the world to respond to song’ (Rosa, 2014: 100). This links to ‘resonance’ as ‘alienation’s other’ (Rosa, 2014: 101). Since it is our world-view and beliefs that will affect in what way we respond to the world. So, instead of our ‘cognitive *content*’ determining our relation to the world, it is rather ‘our pre-cognitive ‘being-in-the-world’ that affects ‘whether or not we find stories about a benign God or an enchanted ‘deeper’ nature plausible or attractive’ (Rosa, 2014: 101).

Whilst Rosa’s theory resonates with Stiegler’s work, as I will show, Stiegler’s position is much more nuanced. Stiegler’s concern about modern technics and technology is the prosthetic exteriorization of our faculties, senses, abilities, knowledge, and, ultimately, our being – both individually and collectively.

## 5) Speed, Technics and Disindividuation: Stiegler's Sensorium and Societal Collapse

...our most profound question is that of the technological rooting of all relation to time – a rooting that quite singularly plays itself against the horizon of our most contemporary technology: speed.

(Stiegler, 2008: 135)

One key aspect of modernity that Rosa's theory addresses is that our sense of community – politics and political life - is made increasingly difficult due to the alienating affects of modernity's acceleration. Understanding, social bonds and community take time to establish yet the nature of modern society makes such interaction difficult. Rosa's work on recognition and tradition is also a useful counterpoint to Stiegler's work on inheritance. Stiegler's own analysis is founded upon Heideggerian notions of *Dasein*, time, facticity and tradition, and his own theory concerning epiphylogenesis and exteriorization.

The crucial distinction to Rosa's work, however, is that for Stiegler, as shown by his originary technicity thesis discussed above, we have always been technological and supported by technics. The dynamic between humanity and technology is not one of opposition but of composition - a transductive one. So, 'the *who* and the *what* are constituted as the *twin faces of the same phenomenon*' (Stiegler, 2008: 178), what Stiegler terms the '*complex of Epimetheus*' (Stiegler, 2008: 152). Founded on this more nuanced distinction, the disindividuation and disorientation as effects of acceleration and alienation that Stiegler explores are much more complex and more profound than Rosa's analysis.

Technics, whose significance as humanity's co-individuating relation, as well as its support and supplement, is represented by the myth of Prometheus (along with Epimetheus) and his stealing of fire, which represents the first *pharmakon*; if technics have always been a part of humanity's being due to humanity's originary de-fault and lack, then the exteriorization of humanity due to technics and technical prosthesis represents a much more profound form of alienation than the one Rosa suggests. It represents an emptying of being, a profound disindividuating process. If everything – our faculties, skills, ways of sensing etc. – is exteriorized to technics then what is left of the being of humanity?

So, in the final section of this chapter I will address Stiegler's concerns with reference to Rosa's own position that I have already outlined, and in so doing demonstrate how Stiegler's framework provides a more satisfactory foundation for the question of technics, time and humanity, whilst addressing the problems that Stiegler's own account encounters. Stiegler's pharmacological framework - in which technics are both a poison and a cure - wants to suggest that there is a remedy to this toxicity, and a way in which we can overcome (continually) the dangers posed. The possibilities of this I will look at more fully in chapter seven.

(i) Political community: Time, tradition and recognition

Rosa's outline of the changes in social structure, the ability to pass on cultural practices and the individual's position and recognition within society, is one that Stiegler addresses in his theory of grammatization and the successive epochs that he views as representing the increasing loss of participation (and increasing

disindividuation) from ‘citizen’ to ‘believer’ to ‘consumer’ (cf. chapter four). For both Stiegler and Rosa, the atomization of the individual within society poses profound problems for society’s ability to function as a whole, to shape its politics and to create community.

Part of Stiegler’s concern stems from his analysis of the formation of the Greek *polis* founded upon notions of *aido* and *dikē*. So, Stiegler cites the following from Plato’s *Protagoras*:

Zeus therefore, fearing the total destruction of our race, sent Hermes to impart to men the qualities of respect for others {*aido*: modesty, respect, shame; perhaps today one might say the feeling of finitude} and a sense of justice {*dikē*}, so as to bring order into our cities {*poleon kosmoi*} and create a bond of friendship and union {*philia sunagogoī*}.

(Stiegler, 2008: 200; emphasis in original)

Stiegler goes on to comment,

The meaning of *dikē* and *aido* is not given, is lacking – because the community of mortals is “the community of those who have no community,” no essence, no quality. To have to partake of or share in *dikē* or *aido*, in knowledge of the de-fault, is not an “ought” and can only have meaning for whom one has to [*il faut*] decide, immersed as they are in activity...

In other words, *aido* and *dikē*, feelings that guarantee the safety of the gathering of mortals, are the very feelings of mortality that alone mortal beings have in common from default of quality, mortality itself ensuing from this de-fault from their technicity. This gathering, which means here for Plato the city (*polis*), implies decision, and decision implies anticipation: *promētheia*, advance, whose truth is the return after the event, the delay, *ēpimētheia*;...*promētheia* as advance presupposes hermeneutics (relate itself to the technics of writing), which lies at the very basis of temporality.

(Stiegler, 2008: 199-200; emphasis in original)

So, the originary de-fault and lack, which is central to the mortal condition, is precisely what Rosa's analysis misses. For Stiegler, this is crucially why there is a transductive dynamic between humanity and technics since technics as prosthesis accounts for humanity's original de-fault. At the societal level, *aido* and *dikē* are essential to create community where none exists: community has necessarily always to be fashioned or created, so society is always a necessary illusion or fabrication (cf. chapter four; Stiegler, 2014b: 7), founded upon agreed and inherited laws, ethics and forms of recognition.

Where Rosa argues that modern society 'produces guilty subjects without relent or forgiveness' (Rosa, 2014: 76), Stiegler's analysis would agree but Stiegler also suggests a more profound, originary feeling of 'lack' and guilt, one which successive phases of grammatization have tried to account for, but with diminishing effectiveness. This feeling of community is directly related to notions of temporality - of *Dasein* as technics - through the need to *anticipate* a future.

Societies, as well as the experience of the individuals that form them, are founded upon such notions of anticipation and expectation, central to our experience of time and temporality. It is this experience of time that modern digital and programming industries disrupt; specifically, it disrupts the time of being-toward-the-end (the question of thanatology), that is the quality that individuals share: their everyday awareness of their own mortality and their anticipation of the future. The implications of this disruption, for Stiegler, are the erosion of community and the disintegration of society and social bonds.

(ii) Technics as Prosthesis: Spatialization, Temporalization and Anticipation

Central to Stiegler's analysis is the notion of technics as prosthesis. So, for Stiegler,

A "prosthesis" does not supplement something, does not replace what would have been there before it and would have been lost: it is added. By pro-thesis, we understand (1) set in front, or spatialization...;(2) set in advance, already there (past) and anticipation (foresight), that is, temporalization.

The prosthesis is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body *qua* "human" ...It is not a "means" for the human but its end..."

(Stiegler, 2008: 152-3; emphasis and quotations in original)

Technics as prosthesis therefore is rooted in notions of space (spatialization) and time (temporalization). Whereas Heidegger viewed technology as an instrumental 'means', Stiegler argues for the composition of the dynamic between the *who* and the *what* so that technics as prosthesis is the 'end', it is the 'constitution' not just an 'extension of the human body'. As 'means' it would have a different position within spatialization and temporalization, yet as something that is both necessarily both 'in front' and 'in advance' it is not part of the process, it is rather the end results of a process that has *preceded* its/our prostheticity. The implications of this framing, based on Stiegler's composition of humanity and technics, is that humanity is in many ways trapped within a system that is being pre-programmed and therefore in some sense determining notions of 'autonomy', behaviour and choice, since prosthesis is *in advance* of the present.

Unlike Rosa, for Stiegler, since the age of flint - which is 'the first reflective memory, the first mirror' (Stiegler, 2008: 142) - there has never been a separation between human beings and their tools and technics but they have remained in a balanced composition of tendencies and a 'double movement' (Stiegler, 2008: 178). His development of Leroi-Gourhan's work is that whereas Leroi-Gourhan considers an opposition between the interior and the exterior, Stiegler sees that there is a complex interplay and composition between them (Stiegler, 2008: 135-179). This then is also the question of exteriorization in conjunction with epiphylogenesis, the 'epigenetic sedimentation' of the past and previous epochs of exteriorizations (Stiegler, 2008: 140).

Since, 'Epiphylogenesis bestows its identity upon the human individual: the accents of his speech, the style of his approach, the force of his gesture, the unity of his world', it therefore represents 'an archaeology of reflexivity' (Stiegler, 2008: 140). However, the current hyper-industrial age of digital technology and programming industries threatens the trajectory for this reflexivity, for humans to be reflexively aware of this process, and to remain a co-composing force within the transductive dynamic: the human *who* is in danger of being subsumed entirely by the technical *what*. For those living within consumerist cultural capitalism, their whole sense of being within time and space is threatened by the ubiquity, infrastructure, exteriorizing effects and predictive premise of modern technics in relation to time.

## **PART TWO: ART, POLITICS AND INDIVIDUATION**

### **Chapter 6:**

#### **The History of Analogue Technology and Mass Culture**

‘Television is our culture’s principal mode of knowing itself. Therefore – and this is the critical point - how television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged.’

- Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

‘Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theater of illusion, leaves no room for the imagination or reflection on the part of the audience.’

- Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

‘[T]he new age of unbelief strengthened the allegiance to images’.

- Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

‘...I began to notice all kinds of other things the veteran couples had taken from TV programmes: the way they gestured to each other, sat together on sofas, even the way they argued and stormed out of rooms.’

- Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

‘It is the synaptogenesis of the child that is structurally altered by the immersion of its brain in the mediatized milieu’

- Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*

#### **Introduction: Television, Morality and the Masses**

What this chapter will provide is a foundation for understanding how the world has been ‘staged’ differently in different epochs. So, from an initially oral-aural (phonetic) culture, there have been profound shifts towards successive image-

text (alphabetic then kinaesthetic) cultures – first through the printed word, then through cinema and finally through television. This chapter addresses the implications this has for the psychic, social and organic life of human beings in relation to performativity and agency.

The central question of this and the following chapter is one concerning Stiegler's notion of noetic individuation that takes place in the modern age in relation to audiovisual technologies. That is, in what way does this technological environment shape, influence or even determine an individual's experience of, and 'being' in, the world? In Heideggerian terms, if we are addressing lived experience as a succession of '*being theres*', what is distinctive about the experience of being *there* in the modern digital age? How is the sense of 'self' affected? How does it affect the individual's experience of the world? And to what degree do the new technologies enable or prohibit individual agency?

The next chapter will focus on the noetic potential of the individual within the contemporary digital technological environment; and, specifically, what form(s) Stiegler's 'economy of contribution' might take to realize this noetic potential. However, before addressing this, it is first necessary to look at the earlier development of analogue audiovisual technologies and how this relates to notions of 'mass' culture.

Stiegler's work in relation to analogue technologies is focused mainly on cinema (cf. Stiegler, 2011a), and in particular - as I have addressed in earlier chapters - the link between the flux of cinematic time (in relation to Husserl's temporal objects, and primary and secondary retentions) and the cinematographic nature of consciousness. On this model, human consciousness filters, focuses and edits

the experience in a similar way to film and it is for this reason, Stiegler argues, that audiovisual technology has such a potent affect on consciousness.

Yet, although Stiegler does address television<sup>16</sup>, he does so less often, and there is a danger in his approach that he frames television as merely an extension of the cinematic form: 'television is, from a technical perspective, a simple electronic development of cinematic technology' (Stiegler, 2014b: 83), going on to say, 'Cinema is also, however, an art'. Of course, there are many similarities between the two media but there are also substantial differences that have significant implications for our understanding of their effect. It is with this in mind that I will address the history of analogue technology by focusing on the evolution of the televisual age and its links with the development of mass culture.

The status of television studies is still contested in academia. Television studies are less advanced, less established and generally less respected than, say, cinematic studies. The fact they are less advanced and less established is unsurprising given that television developed later than cinema. Yet, from the perspective of Stiegler's general organology, the status of television studies should be taken more seriously given the dominant place the televisual medium has in everyday life, its importance as a precursor to the digital and virtual technology that succeeded it, and the increasing influence and dialogue it has with other media. So, although the content produced and broadcast may often

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<sup>16</sup> Notably in his discussion of live, 'real' time (Stiegler, 2011a: 32-24), as well as his critique of Bourdieu (Stiegler, 2011a: 82-87).

be trivial, the wider social implications are more urgent and should not be readily dismissed.

The history of television has been reflective of concerns about technological innovation and its impact on the psychic and organic life of human beings. A central issue has been that of agency: to what degree the viewer is a passive or active agent in the televisual process. The fear being that human agency is reduced and even nullified by the seductive power of the television screen, the viewer becoming a 'couch potato'. As with other media and technology, however, such a framing is a gross simplification of the complex dynamics involved in the production, distribution and reception of televisual media. Another issue is the cultural status of such technology and its ability to influence the morality of society, so just as the novel before it gave rise to moral panics (Spigel, 2004) so too did the television (and subsequently the video game, the computer and the Internet). This then is linked to the democratization of society, collective moral duty, public service and national identity.

I will address the history of television by placing it in the context of the orthographic regime, the text-image economy and the development of cinema.

(1) I will look at the printing press and the text-image economy in relation to Stiegler's concept of *otium*, asking how does McLuhan's 'Gutenberg galaxy' transform reflection and individuation; (2) I will then address the transition from text-image economy to the moving/kinaesthetic economy of cinema and Benjamin's work on film; (3) I will address Baudrillard's theory of simulacra in relation to television, televisual time and 'the masses'; (4) lastly, I will address

how the final stages of analogue development, as a specific kind of text-image economy, anticipate the emergence of digital media.

1) Stage One: The Orthographic Regime, The Gutenberg Galaxy and *Otium*

According to Bernard Stiegler, how we experience and understand the symbolic order of society, our selves, and each other is dependent on the technics and technology available to us. In other words technics and technology is not merely praxis, not merely fundamental to what we do and how we do it, it intimately affects our reflexivity, our sense of who we are and our reflective capacities. Technics is not merely a bodily experience, it affects the mind and the soul; how we think, feel and act. It affects, for Stiegler, noetic individuation. This is central to Stiegler's originary technicity (cf. chapter two) and the transductive relationship between the '*who*' and the '*what*'. Stiegler's work on the orthographic regime is an explication of how technics shapes individuation, and is linked to his work on the orthographic age, epiphylogenesis, tertiary retentions, and *otium* (cf. Stiegler, 2009a).

Stiegler's contention is that our access to the past, and therefore epiphylogenetic present – the present passed down from the past via traces – is dependent on the technical and technological modes of tertiary retentions (such as writing, computers and so on) within each given epoch. Tertiary supports - the technical apparatuses and technology that aid memory, knowledge and thought – become something *more than* supports or aids, they become subjective, systemic and/or structural. So they become the means by which one forms his/her subjectivity.

The crux to this is the notion of interiority and exteriority. Orthographic regimes such as writing become techniques to exteriorize and memorise knowledge, and as such are forms of *hypomnesis* or memory aids. Yet, this becomes through modern technology (the printing press, computers, phones) an industrialization of memory. True understanding occurs through *anamnesis* where knowledge is processed and understood at a deeper level (in an interplay between exteriorization and interiorization), not merely reiterated or repeated without *savoir-faire* or *savoir-vivre*. So, the industrialization of memory becomes both the 'disorganization of the organic in order to reorganize it' and 'a re-interiorization of human being's technical exteriority' (Stiegler, 2009a: 99).

In addition, in Stiegler's notion of epiphylogenesis, technology is already inscribed with the milieu (the knowledge, conventions, praxis) within which it was created, as well as the traces of *its* previous milieus. This, then, is much of the force of the 'already-there' in Stiegler's use of Heidegger. In this sense, we don't experience the world as it is but as it is in the wake of the past traces that have *already* been; it is the past of others we never knew and a past we have forgotten.

Stiegler is indebted (as is Neil Postman, which I will discuss later) to Marshall McLuhan's work on the typographic world in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan 2014; McLuhan, 2001: 185-194). McLuhan's contention, as with Stiegler, is that technology not only enables what we do but also affects who we are and how we perceive the world. One of McLuhan's concerns is how it affects the structuring of society and the individuals within it, so, regarding the shift from oral to visual culture, 'The interiorization of technology of the phonetic alphabet translates

man from the magical world of the ear to the neutral visual world' (McLuhan 2014: p.18). There is then, in Stiegler's terms, a disenchantment of the world that takes place.

The concept of the 'orthographic regime' comes from the Greek, '*orthotes*' meaning correctness or exactitude (Stiegler, 2009a: 32), and '*grapho*' meaning 'to write'. Orthographic writing is how we come to memorize, engage with the past and, therefore, think in the present. The term captures the precision (addressed by McLuhan and Stiegler) that is brought about with the introduction of the printed word and, as importantly, the repeatability of iterations of this 'precise' form of writing. For Stiegler, the paradox is that both allow for critically reflective thought within the numerous iterations of its repetition in different contexts by different readers and also a 'reifying of the readable' (Stiegler, 2009a: 56). So, although orthography tries to set down in the printed word a text, this text in being set down in iterative fashion is opened up to new possibilities of interpretation and re-contextualisation (Stiegler, 2009a: 56).

The Gutenberg revolution also concerns the formation of a collective audience and the notion of the 'masses'. So, as McLuhan has written, 'Print released great psychic and social energies in the Renaissance...by breaking the individual out of the traditional group while providing a model of how to add individual to individual in massive agglomeration of power' (McLuhan, 2001: 188). Although the first printing press in England was that of William Caxton in 1476 – following Gutenberg's in 1454 in Germany - it wasn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the printed word began to spread towards a more modern conception of a 'mass' audience. The rise in the printed word was a major cause of the Reformation as

well as the rediscovery and distribution of ancient classical texts during the Renaissance. The key development in relation to modern media was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the beginning of the newspaper trade, linked in England to the industrial revolution and the printing press, the Education Act of 1870 and the subsequent growth in literacy among the population. In relation to modern culture, what printing generated was the first *community* of readers and this collective identity can be linked to the rise of the nation states (Thompson, 1995; McLuhan, 2001).

The development of printing can be divided into two separate spheres. The first sphere is the material conditions of its production and distribution; the second sphere is the reception of the work by those who had the access or ability to read and understand it.

John B. Thompson's theory of modern culture and media (which, like Stiegler's, is indebted to McLuhan's) is concerned with the entangled nature of the economic, material conditions of the production and exchange of symbolic forms and their relation to power, individuals and social transformation. So as Thompson has argued of the printing presses in early modern Europe, 'Both Church and state sought to use this nascent industry for their own purposes' and despite 'numerous attempts...to suppress printed material' the proliferation of printing firms were so great that, '[p]rinters found countless way to evade the censors' (Thompson, 1995: 56-7) . What printing represents then is in this way a *pharmakon* (Stiegler) for the Church authorities. On the one hand, it can be used to spread the accepted doctrine and practice of the Church by its authorities; and yet, on the other hand, it can be used by those that want to dissent, separate from

and create alternative doctrines and religions. Like fire, those that create it can easily lose control of it. So, as Thompson also points out, 'That the new techniques of printing played a fundamental role in diffusing the ideas of Luther and other reformers cannot be doubted' (Thompson, 1995: 57). Here then the community of readers is that of the Protestant reformers. The rise in mass printing of the written word took the religious power away from centralized control. Dissenting ideas, just as orthodox ones, could be disseminated equally quickly. This links the development of media directly to its democratizing effects.

Yet, as can be seen with the development of the scholarly tradition that stemmed from religious devotion and theological study (such as in the religious communities of early universities such as Oxford and Cambridge), there was for many centuries a divide between those that were literate and had access to the written word and those that were not. So, literacy, education and the growth of both must also be factored in to the democratization of culture through the history of printing. Furthermore, the notion of readership is a complex one and must be situated within specific historical and material contexts. So, the 'metaphysical' poets of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (such as John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell) wrote poetry that was intended for an elite, small and selective readership.

This protection of literacy and education by the elite, the ruling classes and those in power is fundamental to understanding the ability that new media (in different eras) have in transforming culture and politics. Underpinning this framing of the power structure of media is the idea of 'mass' culture. So, before I

address the rise of the cinema in the next section I want to briefly outline a few issues concerning the notion of mass culture and its relation to 'high' and 'low' art. These issues are crucial for effectively critiquing the history of television in relation to its wider cultural context and audience.

Firstly, the generalization of individuals and groups of individuals with the words 'mass' or 'masses' is hugely problematic. Reference to 'mass' in this way can lead to overstating trends, patterns and values within the reception of media.

Secondly, there is, as John Carey has noted, the pejorative sense of the word 'mass' that implies an elitist perspective. So, in his book *The Intellectual and the Masses*, Carey argues that the elitist community of writers sought to protect this literary culture by creating work that was in some sense inaccessible to a wider audience (Carey, 1992).

Thirdly, in relation to this pejorative use of the 'masses', there is a notion of mass culture that is often connected to a sense of popularism and 'low' art. Television, I will argue, suffers from this very pejorative association as a 'mass' medium. In regards to the 'masses', Lynn Spigel has noted the shift in television studies occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, when leading theorists such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and Stuart Hall, 'Instead of thinking of television as an ultimate source of power that affected audience behavior and consciousness "en masse" ....insisted on looking at what audiences did with the media – how media formed the means through which people (especially in the British context, the working classes) expressed their culture' (Spigel, 2004: 8).

Perhaps the clearest example of the relationship between the power, class and the democratising effects of the orthographic regime is in the formation and foundation of America. For Neil Postman, the typographic mind (analogous to the orthographic regime) represents the founding of American thought, politics and public discourse; and, moreover, it represents the founding of America itself, a political democracy built upon the written word in the form of the constitution. As Postman has argued, of early America in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'the printed word had a monopoly on both attention and intellect' (Postman, 1987: 61). This shifts for Postman in the middle of the nineteenth century (following Daniel Boorstin's conception of "the graphic revolution" in *The Image*) due to the 'massive intrusion of the photograph and other iconographs into the symbolic environment...[t]he new imagery, with photography at its forefront, did not merely function as a supplement to language, but bid to replace it as our dominant means of construing, understanding and testing reality' (Postman, 1987: 75).

This moment, the intrusion of the photographic on the orthographic regime, most notably in newspapers, marks the beginning of the contemporary audiovisual media environment, one that has now become digitized. The photograph, for Stiegler (following Barthes) represents the epiphylogenetic trace of the past (that one may or may not have lived) experienced in the present. The next shift is that of the cinematic age, where this intrusion of photographic becomes kinaesthetic.

## 2) Stage Two: Cinema - A Revolution in Representation, Consciousness and Distraction

The second major transformation occurred with the advent of cinema. Here, image and text become kinaesthetic, *moving* images. Moreover, the apparatuses that separate the reader or viewer in other media become invisible and, as Stiegler puts it, we are no longer in the cinema but 'in the screen' because we have 'adopted the time of the film' (Stiegler, 2014b: 19). The reason for this transformation is that there is an inherent cinematographic nature to consciousness to which film corresponds and so that consequently, 'Cinema weaves itself into our time' (Stiegler, 2011a: 11).

### (i) The mass, cinematic audience

The rise of the cinema audiences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was anticipated by the birth of the newspaper trade. The development of the newspaper industry began the process of connecting people with increasing speed to events far from where they lived and outside of their own personal experiences, and, it created a sense of a 'mass' community of readers that would receive this news.

As John B. Thompson has shown, there had been newspapers as early as the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, first in Germany as weekly journals, then in Amsterdam at the time of the Thirty Years' War and notably in England during the English Civil War. According to Thompson, the growth in the news trade between the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 17<sup>th</sup> century occurred through two main factors, firstly the introduction of postal services, and secondly, 'the application

of printing to the production and dissemination of news' (Thompson, 1995: 64-67).

Yet this was still a different environment to the mass news trade we would recognise today. The modern mass newspaper industry arose out of the increased expansion of the industrial conditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this time the combination of the developments in printing and education, the rise in urban populations, and the birth of the modern transport systems (first railways in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and then cars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) allowed the spread of information to a mass public in a far more expansive way than had been possible before. It is against this backdrop, and that of the developing radio audiences, that cinema audiences took shape during the early decades of the twentieth century.

As many scholars such as John Caldwell (Caldwell, 2004) and John B. Thompson have argued, each new medium represents an extension of the previous and pre-existing medium. In this light, cinema can be viewed as the bridge between radio and television in the development of mass media and audiences. And the invention of cinema and the transformative effect this had on media, culture and audiences has – due to the combination of both the audio and the visual - been the most profound. It is for this reason that Stiegler, following on from the Culture Industry thesis presented by Adorno and Horkheimer, puts it at the heart of his theory concerning *Technics and Time*.

So, before I focus on television in the latter half of this chapter, I want to outline some of the significant transformation on culture that cinema has had in relation

to representation, consciousness and distraction; in particular, the size of the shift from the orthographic regime to the moving/kinaesthetic images of cinema.

(ii) Benjamin: From the auratic to the kinaesthetic

In his essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin identifies the importance of film as the 'most powerful agent' for 'contemporary mass movements' (Benjamin, 2007: 221). Its power for Benjamin lies in its ability to affect perception in a way in which no other medium of art can, since,

for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment

(Benjamin, 2007: 234)

The difference in the development of the artist's equipment from the painter's to the filmmaker's is, for Benjamin, the difference between a (medical) 'magician' and 'surgeon'. Whereas the magician 'heals a sick person by the laying on of hands' thereby keeping 'the natural distance between the patient and himself', the surgeon 'cuts into the patient's body' and 'through the operation...penetrates into him'. So, the 'painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality' whereas the 'cameraman penetrates deeply into its web' (Benjamin, 2007: 233).

It is then the virtualizing capability of film that Benjamin highlights as its source of 'power'. The distance between the perceiver of the artwork and the art itself

has been radically diminished, even erased. Watching a film we can 'calmly and adventurously go traveling' since 'With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended' (Benjamin, 2007: 236). Benjamin argues that in a similar way as Freudian psychoanalysis heightened our awareness and analysis of a previously unnoticed 'slip of the tongue', 'For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a deepening of our apperception' (Benjamin, 2007: 235). For Benjamin, this is due to the fact that 'a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye' (Benjamin, 2007: 236).

For Benjamin, the modern art movements of Surrealism, Cubism and Dadaism anticipate the change in perception and apperception that occur with the camera. So, 'Dadaism attempted to create by pictorial – and literary – means the effects which the public today seeks in the film' (Benjamin, 2007: 237).

Benjamin's framing of our perception of film is key since it avoids entanglement in the metaphysical problems of *what* is being perceived and Baudrillard's misleading binary categorization of 'real' / 'imaginary', 'true' / 'false'. By focusing on *how* we perceive film - on film's ability to penetrate, feed and expand the viewer's imagination - Benjamin highlights that film's power lies in its appropriation of consciousness, so that the 'camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses' (Benjamin, 2007: 237). And as I have already discussed in chapter two, it is the co-incidence of the temporal flux of film and consciousness that Stiegler (following Husserl's theory of consciousness and melody) also emphasises and makes central to his work.

For Benjamin the cinema is unique from the stage since we are continually aware of the apparatus of theatrical production, whereas with film, as Stiegler puts it, 'At the cinema I am not in my chair – I am in the screen' (Stiegler, 2009b: 60).

The danger of the power of film for Benjamin is that it puts the public in the 'position of critic' but does so whilst requiring 'no attention' of them. One can be in a habitual state of 'distraction' so, 'The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one' (Benjamin, 2007: 241). The ultimate danger of this type of absent-minded distraction is that, for Benjamin, it leads to Fascism, and the logical result of this is that it leads to 'the introduction of aesthetics into political life' (Benjamin, 2007: 241). So, for Benjamin the toxicity of film is in its simultaneous stimulation of the aesthetic appetite and its concurrent desensitization and distraction. The culmination of these factors for Benjamin is that mankind's 'self alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure' (Benjamin, 2007: 242). This then is precisely Stiegler's concern regarding the capturing of attention due to the coincidence of the temporal flux of consciousness and cinematic time, that individuals become so disaffected that they lack the *savoir-vivre* and *savoir-faire* to act.

For Stiegler, the importance of cinema is that it extends the power of the photographic image to connect the viewer to a past (as that which has already been) to the present and combines this with temporal flux of sound and *moving* image to coincide with the viewer's consciousness (Stiegler, 2011a: 11-12). The temporal nature of cinema is transformed by the transference of these audiovisual techniques to television.

### 3) Stage Three: Television – Capturing the Public’s Imagination

#### (i) Introduction:

At the heart of the notion of performativity is agency: the idea that individual actors can perform freely chosen actions, thereby reinforcing and creating their own agency and their own being in the world. This then reinforces the distinction between the idea of performance of self as being something that is chosen and performativity being something that is imposed, over-determined or inscribed. The crux of the problem of performativity in the hyperindustrial age of multi-media is whether the very technology that enables one’s actions in the world simultaneously endangers a more authentic, more spontaneous response and sense of being in the world. Stiegler’s concern is the intuitive one shared by many that the audiovisual age and ‘mediatized milieu’ alters our being – psychologically, psychosomatically and somatically – on a profound level.

After the printed word and cinema, television represents the most recent transformation of the image-text economy. For Stiegler, the danger lies in the aesthetic conditioning that it enables via the appropriation of consciousness within an economy fuelled by attention, libidinal drives and psycho-power. Stiegler’s theorizing of the issue is founded upon his critique of both Kant’s transcendental imagination and Adorno and Horkheimer’s thesis on the culture industries, specifically Hollywood. What is at stake, to use a popular contemporary journalistic phrase, is the ability for television to ‘capture the public’s imagination’, both in its ability to influence not only our imaginative faculties but also our thought and behaviour.

In Stiegler's terms, this is the 'capturing of attentional fluxes by the tertiary retentions that *pharmaka* constitute' (Stiegler, 2013b: 52) so that the consumer undergoes the 'capturing, diverting and distracting of attention' (Stiegler, 2013b: p.52). For Stiegler,

the cinematographic nature of consciousness, which is what makes television possible (in the sense of thinkable), yet which necessarily leads to (though this remains unthought) consciousness's paralysis in the face of television.

(Stiegler, 2011a: 84-85)

Stiegler's contention, then, is that the danger of addictogenetic (and increasingly audiovisual) technology creates a stimulus-response version of individual choice, one prompted by underlying market forces, so that what should be being human comes close to being robotic. On this model, consumer-driven cultural capitalism creates lifestyles that coerce or 'nudge' people to reactively perform and act out lifestyles *without* reflective, noetic thought in a perpetual state of unconscious distraction. In this way, we are in danger of being programmed into algorithmic-driven choices, behaviours and lifestyles. Underlying this is the cinematographic capturing of consciousness and imagination within this 'audiovisual media pool' (Stiegler, 2013b: 66) which advertisers and market forces have increasingly used to drive consumerism.

The struggle for Stiegler is between 'two inseparable yet contradictory economies' (Stiegler, 2013b: 13): the 'spiritual economy' of *otium* on the one hand, whereby true individuation and 'anamnesic transindividuation' ((Stiegler, 2013b: 31) takes place within reflective tertiary supports; and, the commercial-capitalist-driven 'material economy' of *negotium* on the other, where

consciousness faces paralysis and attentional fluxes have been captured (Stiegler, 2013b: 13).

Television was the first major conduit of the mass, audiovisual message, broadcasting *directly* into the home and family. In this way, television intervenes in a symbolic order already established by cinema (which itself built on the mass formation of audience through the printing press and newspapers), and represents a radically new way of forming audiences.

Television's initial dominance in reaching mass audiences - as shown by the 28 million watching the *Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special* in the UK in 1977 - has now seen a fragmentation of this audience towards niche and targeted demographics (initially: The History Channel, MTV, HBO, Sky Sports and so on; and more recently: Netflix, YouTube and other online-streaming services). Yet, the infrastructure behind this fragmentation shows that this increased 'choice' is now driven by market and not moral forces - this shift was greater for the UK than the US, which was already more commercially driven. Whereas the UK had begun with the licence-fee model of the BBC before introducing the commercial model of ITV, in the US, television began with single-sponsorship programming and 'owned and operated' stations that incorporated advertising from the start (Murray, 2003; cf. O'Sullivan, 2003 and Hilmes, 2003a). Whilst early television may have been constrained by paternalistic and moralizing overtones, later television under commercial pressures was equally constrained although in different, more complex ways which ultimately compromised the quality and access to this choice (Hobson, 2010). The changing landscape of digital media poses new questions to this dynamic - due to the new 'modes of diffusion' that

digitization allows (Stiegler 2011a: 119) - which I will address in the next chapter.

This model of 'broadcasting' views the audience as a *receiver of* information being *broadcast to* them and this is amplified by the small number of networks offering limited channels. So, in the US there was originally an oligopoly comprising of three major networks and in the UK a monopoly of the BBC with initially just one, then two channels, before the duopoly structure of the BBC and ITV allowed for three.

However, this unifying tendency of early television changes over time with the emergence of new industrial infrastructure (or 'schema'), new channels and the development of new technologies. These shifts can be viewed in three key stages. The first is that of the early decades of television where 'broadcasting', public service and network control dominates. This gives way to the second stage, with the introduction of multi-channel cable and satellite leading to a culture of greater fragmentation and 'narrowcasting'. The last, most radical, and as yet incomplete stage is the current and continuing expansion of the digital media into television.

The first and second stages will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter; the third I will explore as the focus of my next chapter in relation to Stiegler's ideas concerning 'contemporary *pharmaka*' and his 'economy of contribution'. All of these changes can be viewed within Stiegler's tri-partite, organological framework of individuation involving social organs, technical organs and psychic organs. As John Caldwell has written, 'Studying television's "production of

culture” is simply no longer entirely convincing if one does not also talk about television’s “culture of production” (Caldwell, 2004: 45).

Broadly, what these shifts in television technology and infrastructure represent are the transfer of power and agency away from the transmission, production and distribution of television towards that of reception, the viewer and the audience. However, this infrastructure is now more complex and layered than ever before with the growth of independent production, distribution and platforms in conjunction with the major mergers of television and other media. The question remains whether the new televisual-digital platforms that are emerging will enable or inhibit *otium*, *noesis* and reflection.

Before addressing television and the specific shift in the image-text economy that this represents, I will look at Baudrillard’s theory of simulation and simulacra since this anticipates the dominance of the image within an image culture society, and provides a crucial framework for understanding the modern audiovisual media environment.

## (ii) Baudrillard and Virtuality

Baudrillard’s work on simulation and simulacra show how the image has come to dominate culture via cinema, and this cinematic domination of the image precedes and anticipates the emergence of television. Stiegler’s work follows on from Baudrillard and explicitly links this domination of the image to the

paralysis of consciousness and the loss of orthographic reflection, the formation of subjectivity through noetic individuation, and *otium*.

His work theorizing simulacra, simulation and hyperreality addresses the concern that the world we inhabit has become (following de Saussure's linguistic theory) merely the 'signifier' without the 'signified' – a world of signs or images without referents. In his key essay 'The Precession of Simulacra', Baudrillard argues 'simulation threatens the difference between "true" and "false", the "real" and the "imaginary"' (Baudrillard, 1994: 3). Later, he outlines the four successive phases of the image (orders of simulation) as:

it is the reflection of a profound reality  
it masks and denatures a profound reality  
it masks the *absence* of a profound reality  
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

(Baudrillard, 1994: 6)<sup>17</sup>

This state of affairs for Baudrillard leads to the 'hyperreal': 'the generation by models of a real without reality' (Stiegler, 2015a: 1); in hyperreality there is no longer a 'real' signified behind the image or sign, no referentials only mediations of things represented ('the liquidation of all referentials' (Stiegler, 2015a: 2)), and a 'question of substituting the sign of the real for the real' (Stiegler, 2015a: 2). So, the fictional realm of Disneyland represents the problem of third-order simulation, 'mask[ing] the *absence* of a profound reality'. Disneyland acts as a veil for the unreality that surrounds it in Los Angeles, this, in turn, acting as a veil

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<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Abbinnett, 2003: 36.

for American life and culture as a whole. With the increase in digitization and the exponential rise of screen interaction, this sense of hyperreality seems particularly pertinent to today's culture of laptops, tablets, and phones in which we are now surrounded by digitally produced, simulated, or modified images.

Yet as useful as Baudrillard's theory is as a framework, there are significant problems that make it inadequate. Firstly, it relies as an underlying foundation on a notion of 'reality' as being consistent, persistent and verifiable. This presents an epistemological challenge and begs the question how we distinguish between such notions of 'real' and 'imaginary', 'true' and 'false'. It also falls into the metaphysical trap of binary opposition that goes against the more nuanced and complex position on such conceptual pairing of opposites which philosophers such as Nietzsche, Derrida and Stiegler all attempt.

The key notion underlying their renunciation of the binary framework is that 'either/or' is an inadequate explication of the inter-relatedness of thought, ideas, language, gesture, signs, speech and writing. So, for instance, the crux of Derrida's notion of 'différance' is that the meanings of words are never (again following Saussure's theory) fully present but function somewhere *between* absence and presence; they are as much what they are *not*, as much as what they *are*. In other words, their meaning and value are *relational* and operate within a system of signs (Deutscher, 2005: 28-29). So, Stiegler - who is heavily indebted to Derrida's work - frames his pharmacological thesis upon the relational aspect of the two contrary but co-dependent tendencies of 'poison' and 'cure'.

Secondly, and related to the first metaphysical problem, it also suggests there is an 'essence' that can be found in a 'profound reality'. This again is problematic and question-begging. On what basis do we measure a 'profound reality' that is then considered to be 'masked', 'denatured' or deemed 'absent'? It is surely more convincing to see a complex interplay between the 'subjective' and the 'objective', between the 'real' and the 'imaginary'. Given these objections, Baudrillard is best read as being provocative in his extreme position in order to highlight his key concerns.

However, there is an alternative reading to the use of binary opposites as presented in Baudrillard. Slater and Tonkiss have argued, in *Market Society*, that Baudrillard demonstrates how important 'sign value' has become in the aestheticization of modern culture showing that 'the commodity, freed from its use value and hence from the concrete particularity of needs, labour and real material properties, is able to take on a different kind of value, a 'sign value' which derives its value from 'its position within codes of meaning and semiotic processes' (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001: 181-182). What Baudrillard's work encapsulates on this reading is similar to Stiegler's relational aspect of his pharmacology. So, as with Stiegler's pharmacological approach, it is not a question of 'either/or' but rather 'both/and'. So, for Stiegler, the 'human situation is *essentially* relational, and the psyche is formed relationally' (Stiegler 2013b: 71).

As I have addressed in chapter four, Stiegler argues that in previous stages of development, technics and technology have allowed for a second stage (a 'double

*epokhal* re-doubling', cf. Stiegler 2013b: 34-36) whereby after the first, initial 'suspension' produced by new technics they are then integrated into society; for Stiegler, hyperindustrialisation has no such second stage of integration. This leads to 'disorientation', existential suffering and symbolic misery (cf. Stiegler 2009a; Stiegler 2014b; Stiegler 2015b). This absence of a second stage of integration is the point at which the metacognitive, reflective thought is compromised, or worse, lost.

So, far from the Kantian view of the self as a rational, self-determining agent, Stiegler frames the modern technical self as Freudian, driven by unconscious desires, affects and not fully conscious. The Kantian concept of self is critiqued by Stiegler, in the same vein as Hegel and Derrida before him, as ignoring the environment (or milieu) that the self finds itself situated within, i.e. the cultural, orthographic regimes that are (epiphylogenetically) *already-there*. Both Hegel and Derrida take the societal and cultural conditions seriously whereas the weakness of Kant's position is his emphasis on individual autonomy.

For Stiegler, this autonomy is severely limited (or even absent) in a cultural environment of techno-scientific systems, the domination of the 'audiovisual media pool' and cultural capitalism. This then is Stiegler's 'mediatized milieu'. Television is fundamental to the transformation of subjectivity formation within a radically new social time, a new temporal fabric in which Baudrillard's vision of the dominance of the image prevails.

### (iii) Televisual time: Milieu, Massification, and Ethics

For Stiegler, television's importance is its creation of a 'new social time, a new temporal orientation' (Stiegler 2011a: 33). Stiegler identifies the following as the two significant televisual additions to cinema. Firstly, 'television enables a mass public simultaneously to watch the same temporal object from any location' making 'the construction of temporal mega-objects' forming a "television network". Secondly, it 'enables this public collectively and universally to live *through* any event at the moment it is occurring, and thus the diffusion of a live temporal object'. The result of these two factors is that television 'transform[s] the nature of the event itself and the most intimate life of the population' (Stiegler 2011a: 33-34). The implications for this are that human beings operate very differently within this new social time of television, and this leaves us with profound ethical questions.

This mass synchronization of televisual time poses a profound existential problem for the 'I' – and an ethical problem for the 'we' – since the time of the individual is *diachronic* and *symbolic*, yet the radical shift to synchronize this time in the new televisual temporal/social fabric means that this time becomes *synchronic* and potentially *diabolic* (Stiegler 2011a: 93). Within *diachronic* time the individual is able to individuate him/herself, to stand out – to *ex-sist*; yet the synchronization of others' time means a loss of this standing out, a lack of reflective (self)-knowledge and, consequently, existential suffering.

One significant shift from cinema is that the viewer no longer needs to leave their house (the digital shift I discuss in the next chapter is the significance of not being able to leave the screen). Viewing is a 'passive', '*pastime*' – a passing of

time in which the viewer is 'captured' and 'captivated', where one 'need only look' (Stiegler 2011a: 10). For the time of the televisual experience the viewer adopts the time of the story and characters that they are watching. They lose themselves in the screen, and in the process lose all sense of time (Stiegler 2011a: 10).

It is in part because of this synchronizing power of televisual time and its place in the home that television is linked to the growth of mass culture, national identity and concerns around moral agency, choice and control in the public sphere. As Roger Silverstone has written,

...what is at stake is the moral integrity both of the home and the nation, in its citizens' capacity to exercise, both privately and publicly, meaningful choices (a precondition for a moral life) as well as a perceived need to protect that same citizen from the immorality of meaningless or threatening choices that unregulated commerce might be expected to bring in its train...

(Silverstone, 2007: 657)

The ethical concerns, then, run parallel with televisual discourse.

#### (v) Broadcasting: Public Service and Control

##### (a) Auntie Beeb and Uncle Sam

The relationship between television as public moral educator and guardian of national values can be seen clearly in the foundation of the BBC. The BBC's famous edict from its founder and first Director-General, John Reith, to 'inspire',

'educate' and 'entertain' encapsulates this dominant public service broadcasting ethos. This philosophy was inherited from 'Radio Reith' that, according to Glen Creeber, 'had been shaped in his image, an authoritarian, paternalistic and innately highbrow institution that tended to promote the interests of and the tastes of the *English* upper middle class' (Creeber, 2003: 24). This, as Creeber points out, was also reflected in the banning of regional, working-class accents.

This early view of television's relationship with the public 'masses' is directly linked to the infrastructure of the television industry during the 1940s and 1950s that came out of the telecommunications of radio in the 1920s and 30s, as well as the elitist, establishment (notably Oxford- and Cambridge-educated) atmosphere of the BBC in these founding years. The editorial ethos was that television would broadcast programmes that would shape the nation's collective values, culture, tastes and behaviour - that 'Auntie knew best'. This public service culture was reinforced firstly by the fact that UK television began as an extension of the BBC as a public radio broadcaster, and that secondly - and more importantly - that due to the license - fee funding, the BBC was free from the demands of advertising and commerce.

American television, too, was initially an extension of its existing radio stations system so that, 'In structure and operation, the network television system that emerged in the United States after World War II closely resembled the network radio system that preceded it...a system based around centrally produced, live, single-sponsorship programming' (Murray, 2003; 35). However, the critical difference is that unlike the BBC - but in keeping with the pre-existent American

radio system and America's burgeoning consumer culture witnessed by Adorno and Horkheimer - it was 'commercially driven' (Murray, 2003: 35).

So, as Michele Hilmes has commented 'general public service' in America became 'defined generally as commercial stations willing to sell their time to anyone with a programme to air (Hilmes, 2003a: 29). The Radio Act of 1927 sought to distinguish 'propaganda' versus 'general public service stations', revoking licences for many of the former, and, 'Since *every* group could not get a licence, then *no* group should be shown unfair preference' driving 'non-profit-making stations off the air in unprecedented numbers' (Hilmes, 2003a: 29). This centralizing of control laid the foundations for the 'classic network system' that would shape the American television landscape of the 1960s and 1970s.

The three major radio networks that formed and benefited from this regulation were the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) established in 1926 - as the Red and Blue networks, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1927, and later, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) founded in 1943 (taking on NBC's Blue network due to anti-monopoly legislation) (Hilmes, 2003a: 29). As Matthew Murray notes of the 'big three', 'By the end of the 1950s...Each network was committed to maximizing advertising revenues, and contracted with Hollywood studios for marketable programmes appealing to attractive mass consumer demographics' (Murray, 2003: 39).

With limited channels this was a media of reception. So, in terms of agency, the ability for the viewer to control what they were watching was extremely limited. Early television in the UK only broadcast at certain times of the day - an hour in the morning, one hour in the afternoon and a few hours in the evening

(O'Sullivan, 2003: 31). Added to this with earlier television the broadcast schedule of programmes was fixed, rather than the flexible (on-demand/catch-up) viewing that audiences can engage in today.

### (b) The growth of television and audiences in the UK

At the same time that the 'classic network system' of the oligopoly of NBC, CBS and ABC dominated through centralized control during the 1960s and 70s in the US (Mittell, 2003: 44), in the UK there occurred what many consider to be its 'Golden Age' of television 'roughly 1964-79' (Medhurst, 2003: 42). This was in large part due to the change from the BBC monopoly to the BBC/ITV duopoly.

The BBC with its single channel had been the only broadcaster in the UK until the Television Act of 1954 paved the way for the first commercial channel, ITV, which began broadcasting in 1955 (although initially only in London). Yet this too was established with a Reith-ian ethos in mind. As Tim O'Sullivan has commented, channels were required 'to adhere to a strong public service remit in their provision of information, education and entertainment programmes that had to be balanced, of suitable quality and variety' (O'Sullivan, 2003: 33).

The 1960s saw the development of successful British made sitcoms, such as *Dad's Army* and *Steptoe and Son*, as well as BBC's *Play for Today* - originally *Wednesday's Play* - that helped nurture writers and directors such as Dennis Potter and Ken Loach. Significant programmes were *Cathy Come Home* by Jeremy Sandford (directed by Loach) as well as satirical shows such as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *That Was the Week That Was* (Medhurst, 2003: 40-41;

O'Malley, 2003: 87). These shows reflected the social often class-based concerns and changes that were taking place during this period and the cultural shift against the default deference towards paternalistic, elitist, upper class authority. So, as Tom O'Malley has written, 'In the 1960s there occurred a creative surge in BBC programme-making, echoing the general liberalization of cultural values in society which developed in those years' (O'Malley, 2003: 87). This was also the period of greatest audiences, and 'event' television. The most notable being Morecambe and Wise's Christmas Special in 1977 which generated an audience of over 28 million, over half the population of the UK at the time.

Whilst still operating on a broadcast (rather than narrowcast) model of programming, this period of television with the introduction of ITV can be seen to offer audiences a richer and wider choice of less elite content than in the early more formal years of public service focused BBC programming. Yet, the concerns over the 'quality' of programmes (in particular regarding variety-style, light entertainment) and what constituted this 'quality' regarding television (an ongoing issue in relation to television studies – for example, Jaramillo, 2007: 584-586) meant it took a fourth channel to challenge the trend towards conservative, 'safe' moral content and Reith-ian values.

### (c) A new model of UK public service broadcasting: Channel Four

A significant shift in UK television occurred after the 1980 Broadcasting Act. Whereas Reith's model had been to offer the public a moral and 'safe' form of television driven by conservative values, the new public service sought to offer

greater diversity and more innovative programming reflecting both a general dissatisfaction with the content on offer from existing channels and also the cultural shifts that were instantiated in the liberal ideologies of the 1960s.

The early output of Channel Four - launched in 1982 - saw 'a range of new voices, experiences and attitudes' introduced in programmes such as *Eleventh Hour*, *People to People* and *Right to Reply*, an edgier soap opera in *Brookside*, as well as innovative scheduling such as an hour-long primetime news and Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour Holocaust documentary *Shoah* broadcast over two nights without commercial breaks (Harvey, 2003: 54). Other key developments have been the 'innovative film policy wholly or partially' financing movies - and latterly showing them on a dedicated channel FilmFour along with other films not shown by the BBC and ITV (Ellis, 2003: 96-7).

Perhaps most significantly Channel Four can be seen as one of the key channels in paving the way for the narrowcasting culture that would develop with the multi-channel and digital age. Both John Ellis and Sarah Harvey point out that its strength was to argue for 'balance' across its output rather than within individual programmes allowing for greater expression of individual viewpoints and attitudes (Harvey, 2003: 54; Ellis, 2003:96). This allowed for an understanding of a fragmented television landscape, which meant, as John Ellis has written, 'It was the crucible in which programme-makers haltingly learned how to address niche or targeted audiences rather than use the universalizing forms of address developed for a mass audience' (Ellis, 2003: 96). So, Channel Four (in particular during its first decade) represents the provocative - *protestant* - form of television. Channel Four was the first major democratizing channel

that attempted to reflect a more diverse and accurate reflection of life in Britain as well as provoke and disrupt the previous 'safe' moral tone of the BBC that ITV had been made to follow. In this way, it can be seen to usher in the new era of television that followed, that of 'narrowcasting' to specific, niche audience demographics within the new multi-channel era.

However, the early decade of Channel Four represents a unique period of UK broadcasting, one that challenged the conservative, Reith-ian model of previous decades but which was in its turn threatened by the commercial pressures of market competition following deregulation.

(v) Narrowcasting: Agency and Choice

Writing about the future of the television industry in 1974, Raymond Williams stated,

[U]nder the cover of talk about choice and competition, a few par-national corporations, with their attendant states and agencies, could reach farther into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problem became almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities

(Williams, 2003: 157)

His warning comes in the context of his hope for the role of television in 'an educated and participatory democracy' - something which the introduction of Channel Four in 1982 hoped to address in its diversity of content and its broadcasting of strong opinions. Yet, Williams' warning tempers this hope and

echoes the 'culture industry' thesis concerning the economic imperatives of mass culture (here, specifically global media corporations) to subsume different areas of culture so that heterogeneous diversity quickly becomes homogenized under over-arching monopolies. So, individual agency and choice is restricted by external market forces that shape the structural landscape within which such 'choices' are made.

The development of television can be viewed in the broader economic and social context of the 1980s and 1990s, and in particular the neo-liberal, "conservative revolution" of Thatcher and Reagan, which Stiegler makes a central part of his critique of hyperindustrial cultural capitalism (Stiegler 2011c: 96-98). It is this deregulation that allowed for the expansion of the television industry beyond the limits of the established broadcasters and paved the way for the layered infrastructure between producers, distributors and broadcast platforms found today. Yet, there are nuances to this version of market forces, particularly in America, where some have argued regulation can be seen to play just as important part as de-regulation in the opening up of the television landscape. The contradiction within this 'opening up' is that this may only be a 'seeming' choice at the micro level, since it also simultaneously represents a 'closing down' at a macro level. This contradiction epitomizes the hyperindustrial model of cultural capitalism.

#### (a) Deregulation

The transition to the multi-channel age was brought about with the 1990 Broadcasting Act. As Dorothy Hobson has written, 'While being designated as the legislation which brought in deregulation and offered extended choice to

viewers, in fact, the Act's effect was crucial in stifling the expansion of the creative development of existing channels...[leading to] the race towards commercially driven ratings-seeking programmes became the dominant trend of television' (Hobson, 2010: 178).

Writing about the US deregulation and protectionism in the 1990s, Michele Hilmes has argued 'The Telecommunications Act of 1996 marks a high-point of industry protectionism under another name' since the 'last thing media industries want is deregulation, which might undermine their privileged position on the spectrum'. As Hilmes points out, the 'Passage of the Act sparked a tsunami of corporate mergers, raising station values to extraordinary heights and 'Consolidations pulled many of the hundreds of 'diverse' new media under the same corporate ownership' (Hilmes, 2003b: 66). This would seem then to be the manifestation of Williams' warning of a limitation of choice, under the guise of 'choice and competition'.

So, there seems to be a fundamental paradox at work in the structuring of television (in keeping with the paradox inherent in capitalism and market forces) – that diversity is, or becomes at least, homogeneity in disguise - and yet in many ways this is simply an example of a repeating pattern of divergence, convergence and control within cultural capitalism. Counter-culture is subsumed within mainstream culture until a new 'counter' can be found. The notion that deregulation simply opens the market up is a reductive reading of the dynamics at play. Certainly, deregulation allowed for the expansion of the television industry – allowing the introduction of cable and satellite into the UK market – but (echoing Stiegler's organological approach) the expansion was as

much due to technological invention as social regulation. A similar pattern can be seen online with the merging of successful media platforms under even larger companies, such as YouTube to Google and Instagram to Facebook to create 'tech giants' (Amazon, Google, Apple and Facebook). This domination by such vast corporations was already occurring in television on a smaller but significant scale during the 1990s.

#### (b) 'Fragmentation' versus Control: Cable, Satellite and Multi-channel

One of Stiegler's criticisms of Horkheimer and Adorno's 'Culture Industry' thesis is that culture industries 'comprise an industrial, and thus systematic, implementation of new, technological tertiary retentions and through them, criteria of selection of a new kind...totally subjected to the logic of the marketplace, and thus to shareholders' (Stiegler, 2011a: 39). The multi-channel era of television that new cable and satellite technology had introduced can be seen to adhere to this 'logic of the marketplace'. So, fragmentation of the marketplace veils a deeper (or meta) level of corporate homogenization. This means that the more that 'free market' competition is introduced, the greater the tendency towards the centralizing control of dominant companies through corporate mergers.

One of the best examples of this type of marketplace logic that concerns Stiegler in relation to the media is that of NewsCorp. Its media domination was strategically and systematically implemented by its CEO, Rupert Murdoch, who built his media empire in large part by supporting the Thatcher government in

deregulating the market. Murdoch's global media empire in the US, UK and Asia encompasses: newspapers with *The Times* and *Sunday Times*; film studios - notably 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fox; television - Fox in the US, BSkyB in the UK, Star in Asia; and publishing with HarperCollins (O'Malley, 2003a: 61). There are two crucial aspects of Murdoch's strategic manipulation of his influence within the market, which highlight Stiegler's concerns about a multi-media landscape that provides an *already* selective, commercially-driven content as 'tertiary retentions'.

Firstly, as Tom O'Malley has shown (O'Malley, 2003a), Murdoch used his newspapers to attack trade unions to increase the power of newspaper employers, and having already attacked the BBC persistently in 1984 and 1985 then used his newspaper empire to help break into broadcasting by showing unbiased support towards Sky television. For O'Malley, 'His career exemplified the tendencies in the late twentieth century for media ownership to become concentrated and global in reach. It also provoked concerns about the way in which the cultural and social power of the media could be used by one person to promote his particular economic and political agenda' (Winston, 2003: 11).

Secondly, in order to establish the Fox Network in America Murdoch cynically capitalized on regulation in favour of diverse programming with popular African-American audiences but this 'early attention...faded as finances and rates rose' (Hilmes, 2003b: 64; cf. Spigel, 2004: 16). Unlike Channel Four's early years of increased diversity (for example, the comedy *Desmonds*, set in a Brixton barber shop), Fox's strategy towards presenting diverse and minority cultures were driven by *commercial* rather than social concerns.

There was also a broader trend for the multi-channel media to become concentrated around a new oligopoly. As both Jason Mittell and John Caldwell have written significant mergers during this period were Viacom's purchase of Paramount and subsequently CBS, and, Time Warner with AOL (Mittell, 2003: 49; Caldwell, 2004: 66-7). As Caldwell notes, whilst it was intended to break the 'top-down model of American broadcasting...After the multichannel market model rose to prominence and regulatory policy withered, merger mania caught up with those in the expanding cable TV entertainment industries' which meant that 'media conglomerates like AOL Time Warner reestablished and legitimized vertical integration with a vengeance' (Caldwell, 2004: 66-7).

So, the era of multi-channel, cable and satellite television marked a new age of television not just in terms of technological advances but, more importantly, in terms of the economic imperatives and infrastructure that governed it. In America, far from breaking down the network oligopoly of the 'big three' networks a new oligopoly of media giants was created.

#### 4) Stage Four: The Emergence of the Digital Media

What analogue technology ultimately anticipates is the emergence of the digital media age, which transforms the technological infrastructure and mass culture of television, and therefore, now, of everyday life. It has become, for Stiegler, a 'mediatized milieu' (Stiegler 2013b: 66).

The audiences that were established first through newspapers, then through radio, cinema and then television created a cultural lifestyle that is now more than simply a pastime within, or adjunct to, everyday experience - it has *become* everyday experience, it has *become* people's lifestyles. Furthermore, the transition from ubiquitous television screens to ubiquitous telephone and computer screens marks the most recent stage of the dominance of the image, as Baudrillard conceived it, in everyday life.

For Stiegler, our inability to separate our time with that of this mediatized culture threatens our ability to develop and individuate as individuals and create a functioning ethical society. The appropriation of consciousness by media and advertising through audiovisual devices means we are unable to understand ourselves in a meaningful and reflective way.

The question remains then whether the digital pharmaka that have emerged, and are continuing to develop, can still open up the possibility of rediscovering *otium* and noetic individuation.

## **Chapter 7:**

### **The Digital Media and the Economy of Contribution**

‘The future is what artists are.’<sup>18</sup>

- Oscar Wilde

‘We could be Heroes.’

- David Bowie

#### **Introduction: Aesthetic Performance in the Time of Digital Media**

Stiegler’s work on the spirit of humanity within a techno-scientific, hyper-industrialized cultural economy focuses on the following theme: time, aesthetics, symbolic signification, attention, drives and desires, and knowledge. His pharmacological framing of technics and technology as both therapeutic and toxic avoids the reductive position of technological determinism in which humanity will simply be destroyed or saved by the ‘machine’. Stiegler’s theory of originary technicity provides a much more nuanced account that places humanity and technics in a reciprocal relationship whereby each ‘invents’, develops and is affected by the other, thus avoiding a simplistic, binary approach. So, Stiegler’s interest is in the composition of forces and tendencies rather than

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<sup>18</sup> (Wilde, 2001: 155).

in their opposition. For Stiegler, the positive development of the individual, and therefore the future of autonomous performativity, lies in continually overcoming the toxic tendency towards processes and technics that disindividuate the individual. To do this, a stronger, counter tendency towards elevation and creativity must be formed that establishes a cure, that is: an unfolding destiny, and not an inevitable fate.

The weakness of Stiegler's work, however, is that it continually explicates, refers back to or reiterates the toxic fate: there are far fewer attempts to provide an equally strong narrative concerning the therapeutic destiny, even in works in which he explicitly sets out to do this. So, although the strength of his theoretical framing of the situation is nuanced and balanced, his work as a whole becomes rather one-sided. For different reasons, one might argue that Stiegler's work suffers the same 'empty formalism' objection that Hegel leveled at Kant. In short, although the theory is convincing in abstraction, it is unclear how it works in practice.

It is important to acknowledge that the strength of Stiegler's position is that whilst he is critical of the conditions of the current hyper-industrial age, he accepts that there can be no dismantling or reversing of these conditions. They must, in other words, form the basis out of which a new, positive pharmacological model must develop. In his more recent work, Stiegler has also begun to be more expansive on this positive pharmacology, and there is a noticeable shift in this direction in his collection of essays contained in *The Neganthropocene* (Stiegler, 2018).

This chapter attempts to further redress the balance by suggesting what Stiegler's model of a positive pharmacology founded on noesis and *otium* might be, and how the economy of contribution might work within the culture and time of digital media. The key features that Stiegler's model of the economy of contribution include are:

- Establishing an economic model within which long-term protentions are given priority over short-term anticipations, thereby providing the foundation for long-circuits of individuation to develop.
- Developing individuals' creative potential to innovate in ways that contribute to sustainable (long-term) means rather than disposable (short-term) ones that lead to carelessness and systemic stupidity.
- Re-appropriating the potential to use time as *otium* rather than *negotium*. (Reestablishing the distinction between the two creates a gap within which individuation can actively resist the pull of the "They").
- Establishing a symbolic environment that connects to desire and meaning, by means of re-enchantment.
- Re-establishing fidelity and trust by nurturing an economy based on care rather than disposability.
- Resisting the mutual exhaustion of humanity and nature that is performed in hyperindustrial societies.

These are highly abstract notions, however, and the purpose of the chapter is to address this weakness in Stiegler's work by providing some practical examples by using and extending Stiegler's notion of the individual as an amateur artist. There are, of course, many other avenues that such an investigation into Stiegler's model could take, including the emergence of biotechnologies, environmental considerations, and the impact of the global economy. My choice of digital media and culture, however, reflects my concern with the performative process of individuation, and with Stiegler's account of the way in which audiovisual media affect the consciousness of individual, and therefore social, becoming.

In a discussion entitled 'Why We Are Not Christians', Stiegler replied to his interviewer that 'even if, in fact, I am not a Christian, I did not want to respond to *this* question', going on to say, 'the challenge today is not to emancipate ourselves from the question of God...it is much more *trivial* than that. The big question today is that of marketing' (Stiegler, 2019: 315-6).

In the light of these remarks, this chapter will address Stiegler's economy of contribution within an age of digital media in two ways. Firstly, by posing the question of God by explicating what Stiegler means by spirit and noetic individuation. Secondly, by posing the question of marketing, and positing that the next stage of grammatization must be one in which the individual is an artist who is concerned with remaking both him or her self and 'society'.

## 1. The Question of God: Spirit and Noetic Individuation

### 1) Spirit and *Noesis*

Although wary of defining himself as a Christian, Stiegler is still concerned with the fate of spirit in modern times. As such, his work is concerned with the impact of technology, prosthetics and programming on the practical process of individuation, and with developing a new economy of free creative work and social contribution. His thought attempts a restoration of 'noesis', or critical self-reflection and recreation, within systems that currently threaten its existence.

In 'How I Became a Philosopher' (Stiegler, 2009b: 1-36), Stiegler describes his use of 'noesis' as deriving from Aristotle's *On the Soul*. Aristotle wrote about three types of soul: 'vegetative' or 'nutritive', 'sensory' and 'intellective' or 'noetic'. These are 'three relations to the "immovable prime mover," to God as the desirable par excellence, as the *motive* and in that sense the *reason* of everything that moves' (Stiegler, 2009b: 13). The noetic soul remains 'in potential' and is only 'in action' when 'participating in the divine, it *reproduces* the *truth*' (Stiegler, 2009b: 13).

This formation of the concept of noesis does, of course, raise the question of the possibility of Stiegler's salvaging the essence of spirit from the Aristotelian economy of truth and the divine. Their presence in Aristotle's thought denotes something beyond the sensory world. They are in this sense in keeping with the traditional mind/body dualism of immaterial/material, divine/human. They therefore imply something transcendent and metaphysical. They are linked to the eternal and infinite (cf. my previous discussions on artistic time and

interiority at the end of chapter four) and they reference that which cannot be calculated, measured or predicted. In this sense they are strongly linked to art, imagination and creativity. These escape rigid definition, categorization and are therefore unpredictable.

In other words, these terms imply that which is unexpected and therefore something beyond the 'horizon of expectations' forming a key part of the retentive model of memory and consciousness that Stiegler, following Husserl, employs. This notion of the unexpected in turn is the foundation of Stiegler's 'traumatology' that I shall address later. The problem with technologically induced expectation and familiarity is that it can efface being; it ceases to appear significant, is forgotten or becomes 'oppressive, disgusting, eclipsed – nothing' (Stiegler, 2009b: 26-7).

If the first key aspect to 'spirit' is the transcendent, then the second key aspect is the notion of sublimation (as distinguished from the sublime which I address later in this chapter). With digital programming industries, 'what is at stake is not simply information, cognition, or culture: it is *spirit understood as the power to sublimate*' (Stiegler, 2014c: 65). It is precisely the subliminal, subconscious aspects of culture industries and marketing that make digital technology so dangerous. The libidinal economy sublimates drives and desires, and it is 'libido *as the power of trans-formation* that makes capital function' (Stiegler, 2014c: 41). Yet, libido also 'articulates, composes, balances and metastabilizes opposed tendencies (Stiegler, 2014c: 41). It is precisely this capacity for sublimation that

makes technology - and digital media in particular - powerful means to create therapeutic modes of noetic individuation.

In the *Lost Spirit of Capitalism*, Stiegler writes that:

Spirit is therefore also: (1) what haunts this condition, as that which incessantly returns, in a thousand ways, but firstly as fantasy, as attachment, as various viscosities, and diverse sublimable objects, through all kinds of supplements, that is, *hypomnemata*; and (2) what constitutes the *technical system of cares* of this haunting and the pathology that it is and that forms a socio-logy, being both the conjunction *and* the disjunction that is the '*and*' of psychic *and* collective individuation

(Stiegler, 2014a: 87-88; emphasis in original)

So, Stiegler's 'spirit' is both transcendent and sublimated within our technological environment. Yet in order to individuate noetically, to create, we must also be able to operate beyond the expected. What Stiegler's work attempts to trace is a struggle between humanity, as spirit, and the techno-scientific, hyper-industrial environment; a struggle in which it is access to the means of spiritual self-expression that is at stake.

## 2) Stiegler's Technological Individuation: The Ambiguity of the Paradox

Stiegler's pharmacological framing of technology gives rise to a certain ambiguity. If technology is *neither* good *nor* bad but has the potential to be *simultaneously* good *and* bad, then despite the increasingly toxic technological environment that Stiegler describes, there remains a *perpetual* potential for *good* – however slight this is. It is in this ambiguity then that technology can be seen to *open up* rather than completely shut off or close down possibilities for individuation.

In his essay 'The Theatre of Individuation', Stiegler identifies the similarities and differences between Simondon and Heidegger's versions of individuation. The 'striking' similarity Stiegler draws out, is between Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* as a being-in-the-world that is 'already-there' as a 'historical past' and Simondon's notion of the pre-individual milieu 'which proceeds' individuation (Stiegler, 2013c: 188-9). In both cases the individual subject is already pre-conditioned. So, we are born either into a historical past (Heidegger) or pre-individual milieu (Simondon) which we have not lived but which we inherit as the collective conditions, memories and modalities upon which our individuation takes place.

Yet, despite this similarity, the crucial difference between the two, for Stiegler, is in Heidegger's use of 'They' and Simondon's use of 'we'. As we will see, the *relationship* between these two concepts is crucial to understanding Stiegler's account of the paradox of technology. Heidegger's 'They' is related to this notion of 'falling' (*Verfallen*), which is central to *Dasein*. The individual can become 'lost' in the 'they' and in the abstraction of daily life (although 'falling' can also have the more positive meaning of *mit-sein*, or 'being with'). As George Steiner has commented, Heidegger's "'Fallenness" is the inevitable quality which characterizes an individual's involvement with others and with the phenomenal world' (Steiner, 1989: 98). Yet, for Stiegler, in Heidegger's 'existential ipseity', 'there is neither difference nor the tension *in Dasein* between the *I* and the *we*; *Dasein* is not an *I* nor is it 'properly speaking, a *we*' (Stiegler, 2013c: 188-189; emphasis in original). So, Stiegler maintains that Heidegger misses Simondon's key point that there is a '*primordial conjunction*' and tension between the psychic 'I' and the collective 'we' that is the motor for Simondon's individuation as a

process. However, for Stiegler, with the loss of *Dasein* in the 'they', Heidegger 'denigrat[es] the psychic-collective duality by collapsing in to the fall' (Stiegler, 2013c: 193).

Simondon's fault, on the other hand, is that he misses Heidegger's sense of 'solitude' found in *Dasein*, and therefore ignores the opposite, the '*primordial disjunction*', the separating-apart of the psychic and the collective. Thus, Simondon misses the '*essential fragility* of individuation', and the '*necessity of Verfallen*', by confusing the 'two poles in the *they*' (Stiegler, 2013c: 193; emphasis in original). The importance of the distinction between 'psychic' and 'collective' tendencies, and the 'struggling, *between* these two tendencies' that enables the 'dynamic' of individuation in a 'com-position of forces' therefore, is absent from Simondon's philosophy (Stiegler, 2013c: 193).

Consequently, Stiegler argues there be a '*transductive relation*' between the 'they' and the 'we'. That is, a relationship that composes rather than opposes two antithetical concepts, dispositions or tendencies so that each fashions, enables and defines the other. Such a relationship is therefore both conjunctive and disjunctive, it both joins-together and separates-apart. In this way, Stiegler argues, both supplement the fault in each other's theory. He concludes,

their conjunction renders thinkable a disjunction as a possibility of the opening of a new theatre of individuation: the conjunction between the Heideggerian question of the *they* and the Simondonian question of the *we* would be this composition that disjoins.

(Stiegler, 2013c: 201; emphasis in original)

Thus, what Stiegler's work adds to the framing of this transductive dynamic (between Heidegger and Simondon as 'the disjunctive conjunctive') is his theory

of tertiary retention. Specifically, the notion of tertiary retention as epiphylogenetic milieu, the precondition of individuation that equates to Heidegger's 'already-there' and Simondon's 'pre-individual fund'. For Stiegler, this ethnic/cultural technics of collective memory (mnemotechnicity) has been hyper-industrialized, that is: commodified, synchronized, and schematized.

So, what Stiegler presents is a model of media and communications technology that is continually providing opportunities for escaping and *shaping* rather than being totally controlled by the effects of its Adornian 'schema'. These possibilities allow for the re-shaping of the environment that formed each individual subject, and it is this perpetual potential that keeps open the hope of preventing the completion of the technological subsumption of humanity. Of course, the problem remains that the ground for such individuation as a negentropic opening up of the future that enables flourishing and progressive growth, is also the ground of a technological dis-individuation that reproduces 'the self' as lifeless repetition. It is, in other words, not a question of reinventing the structure from without, but enacting mutational changes from within; of realizing the unforeseen.

### 3) Technical fact, technical tendency and the double epochal re-doubling

As I have established, the starting point for the potential restoration of spirit is in the idea of technology as a *pharmakon*: it is always both 'cure' and 'poison'. Yet, Stiegler suggests that the time for a 'cure' is limited and that the poisonous effects of hyperindustrialism, consumer capitalism and speculative investment are reaching a point from which there will be no return. It is with this sense of urgency that his *New Critique of Political Economy* begins with a 'Call to Arms'. There are two key parts to Stiegler's theory that provide the framework for routes out of the problem of technological disenchantment.

The first is the notion of what Stiegler terms the 'double epochal re-doubling', a concept that recurs throughout his work (*Technics and Time*, vol. 1 and vol. 2) and concerns the way that technical systems affect individual and social becoming. This then is the distinction between the process of *adoption of* and *adaptation to* technology, and specifically, in the current age, *digital* grammaticization and dissemination.

Stiegler argues that with every *pharmacological* event there has been a period of adjustment such that – after an initial disruption – the new technology has been integrated and 'adopted' by society. So, the introduction of new techniques or technology initially disrupts society and 'suspends' the existing 'dominant state of fact' (Stiegler, 2011b: 12) in a '*primary suspension*' (Stiegler, 2013b: 35). This *primary suspension* is one of short-circuiting the existing techniques of individuation and becoming.

There then follows a second redoubling (a *secondary suspension*) where the technology is 'adopted' and, through the process of psychic, collective and technical individuation, new modalities are created. It is this second redoubling that is so crucial, since it is this stage that 'intervenes as a therapeutic, a technics of self and others, a normativity established through a process of adoption, a new form of affection' (Stiegler, 2013b: 35). This then is a process of transindividuation.

However, Stiegler's contention is that in the age of hyper-industrialism, which is an age of '*permanent innovation*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 13), new technology is systematically disruptive and therefore 'disorientating' (cf. Stiegler, 2009a). This is due both to the exponential speeding up of the rate of technological invention and production, the recent rise of cognitive capitalism and the industrialization of memory, and the structures of technical systems (Stiegler, 2009a: p.7). The result of this is a continual primary suspension of existing social structures, organizations and modalities *without* the necessary second stage of integrating through the intensification of these technics - the '*secondary suspension*' that creates a 'second redoubling' (Stiegler, 2013b: 35).

For Stiegler, without this 'second redoubling', we are increasingly unable to adequately adjust to and then *adopt* the new technics and technology to create new modalities, 'new programmatics' (Stiegler, 2009a: 7), or 'to elaborate a *new thought* that translates into *new ways of life*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 12). Instead, we are continually in a state of *adapting*, which is a state of disindividuation, since 'The *enemy of individuation...is adaption*' (Stiegler, 2013b: 120). What the

modern digital, hyperindustrial age lacks then is a 'second suspension', a moment of 'double epokhal redoubling'. This then is what Stiegler's 'economy of contribution' aims at providing, a stage of individuation whereby new *pharmaka* are properly adopted as a therapeutic.

The second key idea is the difference between the technical fact and technical tendency. Stiegler's argument (following Leroi-Gourhan) is that:

it is entirely possible to anticipate technical becoming, on the condition that we understand that becoming, oriented, encouraged and moved by technical tendencies, is "diffracted" and deflected into technical facts, which in the short term, can seem perfectly clearly to totally contradict this tendency...indeed to durably block it. Such apparent contradictions are possible because technical facts are compromises between technical tendencies and social systems, which are themselves organizations resulting from tendencies and counter-tendencies constituting them as metastable systems

(Stiegler, 2011c: 124-5; emphasis in original)

So what becomes technical fact may not be as 'fixed' as it appears and belies the possibility of an underlying, contradictory tendency. Stiegler's fear, is that the contradictory tendency (that is, that contradictory tendency to becoming) is systematically anticipated in the algorithmic functions of new digital media technologies, and that this constant blocking of the second stage of cultural composition will lead to an entirely automatic, functionalized form of 'society' in which the individual never has time to 'compose' itself.

#### 4) 'The Art of Living', *Otium* and the Economy of Contribution

Stiegler's contention is that within the destructive, toxic tendency of disindividuation there is *simultaneously* the potential '*tendency toward elevation*' that enables individuation (Stiegler, 2011c: 120; emphasis in original). This is at the very heart of his notion of the economy of contribution that Stiegler has defined as,

the stimulation of desire through the reconstitution of systems of care founded on contemporary *pharmaka* and constituting a new commerce of subsistences in the service of a new existence.

(Stiegler, 2011c: 121; emphasis in original)

Consumer culture leads to a constant intensification of drives rather than an 'acting out' of desire. It leads not to an *ex-sistence*, a sense of individuation that is a standing out from the crowd, but a Heideggerian 'leveling' of 'being' amongst the 'they'. This new model returns to the question of recovering the distinction between *otium* and *negotium*, which hyper-industrialism makes indistinguishable. What modern technology must enable is the development of associated milieux that allow for a form of *otium* (that which allows for reflection, flourishing, existence and individuation) that is distinct from *negotium* (that which becomes in the consumer age purely calculable, accounted-for and drive-based).

Stiegler is not arguing for a 'dis-assembling' of the current techno-economic apparatus. However, he does use its key problems, namely, a culture of *negotium* made up of short-term speculative investment and consumerism, based on a libidinal economy that provokes and exhausts drives, to gesture towards the

necessity of a model that does the opposite. This would be a libidinal economy which cultivates desire in such a way as to be self-sustaining and self-‘caring’ in a culture of *otium*, and which generates an economic-political cultural philosophy of long-term investment. In Stiegler’s terms, this is a ‘*contrary arrangement*’ to the current speculative economy of disposability and carelessness, and combines ‘*tendencies to investment*’ with ‘*sublimatory tendencies*’ (Stiegler, 2011c: 122). In other words, it is the current ‘economy of carelessness’ that must be the starting point for this transformation into a new model, since it has become the inherent structure of sociality. This must be achieved by recognizing the pharmacological situation of the composition of tendencies of *otium/negotium* and desire/drives. So, it is for this reason that Stiegler argues that,

...it is necessary to organize an economy of carelessness by cultivating systems of care which presuppose a pharmacological intelligence, concretely expressing in this way an art of living, weaving therapeutic multiples.

(Stiegler, 2011c: 126)

So, how does noetic individuation occur within this new economy of contribution? The answer lies in Steigler’s notion of traumatology. Although, again this is a highly conceptualized theory, and the second half of this chapter will look to combine this theory with practical examples.

## 5) Traumatology: the Sublime, the Tragic and the Uncanny

For Stiegler, the only way that noetic individuation can be brought about is by the *traumatypical* event. By *traumatype* Stiegler is referring to the *unexpected* that shocks or *sur-prises* (in the sense of a *surprehension* rather than a *comprehension*) the horizon of expectations formed from the pre-individual milieu of secondary and tertiary retentions. These *traumas* represent the rupturing of the aesthetic conditioning that reinforces (by the short-circuiting of individuation) the loss of the participation in the sensory-aesthetic sphere. Thus, 'a traumatype, for which a work of art may be a projection support, does not simply belong to a single noetic soul: it belongs to the pre-individual ground of all noetic souls' (Stiegler, 2015b: 152). This traumatypical experience lays the foundation for the pre-individual ground of exclamation; the expression of the singularity of the *individuating* individual, by binding and socializing. In other words, it gives rise to an 'I', that is immediately connected to the collective life of the 'we': it is an except-ional performativity that both gives and receives meaning from the whole (Stiegler, 2015b: 108-109).

The traumatype, as a part of the process of individuation, is directly linked to the sublime. For Stiegler, 'the sublime can only be sensational: as incomparable, incalculable, improbable, indeterminable (the basis of Kantian reflective judgement), and interminable, it is the experience as such of the incompleteness of individuation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 127). So, the sublime is a part of the infinite, incalculable, unexpected nature of the spontaneous noetic spirit. As the experience of incalculable and unexpected sensation, it is also part of the

traumatypical ground, the lack, the origin of default *upon* which individuation takes place. In this way, the metaphysical duality found in the sublime is an important part of transductive individuation. It is, in its own way, pharmacological – both cure and poison. This also relates to Stiegler’s tri-partite general organology (the psychic, social and technical organs) that forms society and part of the volatile interplay between the individual and the collective.

To understand Stiegler’s use of the sublime it is useful to briefly sketch the notion of the sublime with reference to Burke, Kant and Lyotard. The sublime is most associated with the Romantic movement, and poets such as Wordsworth, who were influenced by Edmund Burke’s famous *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. As Henry E. Allison has written in *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, the ‘modern interest in the sublime is generally thought’ to originate from Longinus’s *Peri Hypsous (On the Sublime)* and Nicolas Boileau’s subsequent 1674 translation and commentary (Allison, 2001: 302).

Burke’s notion encapsulates the idea that something gives both ‘delight’ and ‘terror’. As Allison notes, Burke makes ‘a radical distinction’ between the sublime and the beautiful concluding that with the sublime, ‘the feeling cannot consist in an actual terror...but rather in one that is felt...at a distance and in safety. And from this connection of the sublime with terror...it must not be described as a pleasure, but should instead be viewed as a “*delight*”.’ (Allison, 2001: 302). Burke’s sublime is something that is unsettling but safe.

In Kant’s *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (1790), the sublime is something that challenges our power of judgement showing it ‘ill-adapted to our faculty of presentation’ and ‘an outrage to the imagination’ (Kant, 1911: 91). There are

two types of sublime for Kant: the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime. In the mathematically sublime, the magnitude and limitless quantity of the '*absolutely great*', means that whilst we are able to apprehend its idea, the further towards the infinite the object reaches the more difficult our comprehension of it is (Kant, 1911: 99). Whilst our imagination strives 'towards progress *ad infinitum*', 'reason demands absolute totality' (Kant, 1911: 97). For this reason, '*The sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending of sense*' (Kant, 1911: 98; emphasis in original). In this way, there is both 'displeasure' from 'the inadequacy of the imagination' as well as pleasure in the awareness of this inadequacy which 'makes us alive to the feeling of the supersensible side of our being' (Kant, 1911: 106). So, in contrast with the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful in which the mind is in '*restful contemplation*', with the sublime it is '*set in motion*' (Kant, 1911: 107; emphasis in original). In the dynamically sublime, on the other hand, the 'might' of nature provokes a fear that, 'provided our own position is secure' (Kant, 1911: 110), 'raise the forces of the soul above the vulgar commonplace' (Kant, 1911: 111). In the discovery of 'our own limitation' it 'raises the imagination' giving us courage that we are 'able to measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature' (Kant, 1911: 111). So, as Geoffrey Bennington has commented,

...the imagination struggles and fails to find a direct presentation for the Idea: that failure produces the pain, but the pleasure comes from the realization of a capacity to conceive of ideas precisely beyond any intuitive presentation. Any phenomenon, however large, seems small in comparison with the Ideas of Reason

(Bennington, 1988: 166)

In 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', Lyotard interrogates Burke and Kant's notions of the sublime in reference to Barnett Baruch Newman's essay *The Sublime is Now* (Lyotard, 1997). Lyotard emphasises how the sublime is an experience within time, and as such it is linked to Husserl's notion of consciousness as a temporal experience. Lyotard notes that Newman's 'now' is 'what dismantles consciousness, what deposes consciousness, it is what consciousness cannot formulate, and even what consciousness forgets in order to constitute itself' (Lyotard, 1997: 90). As Lyotard notes, Kant's sublime is one that is a mixture of pleasure and pain, a pleasure that comes from pain (Bennington, 1988: 166). The reason for this pain is the gap between what is sensed or experienced as the Idea, a part of the faculty of reason, and the imagination's 'striving to figure that which cannot be figured', and therefore a failure of representation and also comprehension. Consequently, there is an 'extreme tension', which Kant calls 'agitation', 'that characterizes the pathos of the sublime, as opposed to the calm feeling of beauty' (Lyotard, 1997: 98). However, for Lyotard, Kant misses what he considers the 'major stake' in Burke's aesthetic: 'to show that the sublime is kindled by the threat of nothing further happening' (Lyotard, 1997: 99).

The sublime, for Lyotard, is found in the capitalist economy which is 'regulated by an Idea – infinite wealth or power', but one which does not 'present any example from reality to verify this Idea' (Lyotard, 1997: 105). Thus, 'In making science subordinate to itself through technologies, especially those of language, [technological capitalism] only succeeds...in making reality increasingly ungraspable, subject to doubt, unsteady' (Lyotard, 1997: 105). Within the

incessant innovation of capitalism - where 'innovating means to behave as though lots of things happened, and to make them happen' – there is an endemic sense that there is only repetition; that 'the event' has been absorbed. Lyotard argues that it is this sublime tension between the certainty of making things happen through innovation and the despair of nothing happening, the absence of signification, which lies at the heart of the modern experience.

This is related to Stiegler's account of the modern, hyper-industrial age as being defined by permanent innovation and a profound sense of disorientation (cf. Stiegler, 2009a). Yet, there is also a sense that a certain disorientation will necessarily arise from the incomplete nature of individuation; it is a necessary part of the process of individuation, as an evolving process, that encompasses different epochs (for Stiegler, these are the stages of grammatization) that have to break from the familiar and transition towards the new, unfamiliar, exceptional and extra-ordinary. However, as discussed above in reference to the second epochal re-doubling, Stiegler argues there needs to be a second stage of adoption that must be achieved for the new to be assimilated by individuals and society in order for true, compositional, constructive psychosocial individuation to take place. Without this second stage the disorientation becomes destructive. The individual becomes fundamentally distanced from his or her environment, and worse, shut off from noetic spirit, due to the hegemony produced by mass industrial innovation, capitalist calculation, and the loss of participation that leads to symbolic misery (cf. chapter four).

This is why art is so central to Stiegler's work, as the noetic soul is only ever intermittently 'in act' and otherwise remains 'in potential', it can act as a form of epokhal re-doubling. He remarks that:

Art and its works support me as I fall apart....As conjunctions of the disjoined *I* and *we*, works support psychic and collective individuation as noēsis, which is to say, as the sublime act. We need this support because the sensationally intellectual noetic soul is only sometimes like this: when it experiences the extraordinary.

(Stiegler, 2015b: 165; emphasis in original)

For Stiegler then, the 'sublime act' is an artistic and noetic moment in which the tensions inherent in experience of the technological totality are revealed through the expression of an extraordinary conjunction between the 'I' and the 'we', the particular and the universal. The sublime tension between terror/pain and delight/pleasure is put in play. It is a moment of shock, surprise or *surprehension* that can then become assimilated, processed and adopted. The subjective reflexivity of noetic individuation, therefore, is a question of representation, reflection and recognition. Aesthetic conditioning and the hegemony of industrialization create stereotypes that are a 'defensive barrier' (Stiegler, 2015b: 152); they are opaque to the needs of true reflexivity, there is no reciprocal exchange between the subject/individual and others/society, no exchange of gift and counter-gift. This notion of the sublime is encapsulated in Wordsworth's 'Poetic spirit of our human life' found in the *Prelude* (line 276), whereby our mind, 'Creates, creator and receiver both,/Working but in alliance with the works/Which it beholds' (lines 273-275).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wordsworth, 1970: 27.

Traumatology is also tragic. Firstly, the word *trauma*, the Greek for wound, can be linked to *hamartia*, the tragic flaw of the hero, which is the Promethean wound of the protagonist's human condition. Secondly, the sublime tension between pleasure and pain is also found in the tragic conditions of being both attractive and shocking. Aristotle's 'pity' is brought about by the audience's pathos towards the tragic hero in conjunction with the 'fear' of the protagonist's fate; and, as with the sublime, it is deeply unsettling.

So, as Sir Philip Sidney wrote in *An Apology to Poetry* (1595), tragedy 'openeth the greatest wounds', stirs 'the affects of admiration and commiseration' and 'teacheth the uncertainty of this world'.<sup>20</sup> And as Howard Barker emphasized, in 'Asides for a Tragic Theatre' (1986), the uncertainty is not just about the world, but also about our sense of self and our identity, 'It drags the unconscious into the public place...After the carnival, after the removal of the masks, you are precisely who you were before. After the tragedy, you are not certain who you are'<sup>21</sup>.

This psychoanalytic reference also bridges the tragic and the sublime with Stiegler's use of Freud's 'The Uncanny'. In *What Makes Life Worth Living*, he states that, 'Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite *unheimlich*' (Stiegler, 2013b: 101). For Stiegler, the pharmacological nature of technics mean that they both provide the supplementary support to the originary lack, as well

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<sup>20</sup> Bennett and Royle, 1999: 99.

<sup>21</sup> Bennett and Royle, 1999: 101.

as providing a reminder of that instance of lack which they aid; this 'prostheticity' in its duplicitous ambivalence is uncanny, Freud's *unheimlich* (Stiegler, 2013b: 108). So, our originary technicity, our prostheticity, is a state subject to Freud's 'ambivalence', that which is familiar, known, or homely: what is 'ours' is continually put into question, tragically unsettled, by the unhomely, the unfamiliar.

For Stiegler, objects either activate stereotypes or traumatypes. With stereotypes: 'the phenomenon of the object is its impoverishment, and that the attention that consciousness has for this object fades away, disindividuating itself by reinforcing these stereotypes' (Stiegler, 2018: 155). Whereas, with traumatypes: 'the phenomenon that it engenders constantly differentiates itself by intensifying itself, and that consciousness projects itself into the object by *individuating itself with it*' (Stiegler, 2018: 155; emphasis in original). Here, the link with the sublime and traumatypical events is made clear. The latter are creative events that produce co-individuation between the individual/subject and the object, as opposed to diminishing or even destroying it. In this way, traumatypes act like portals or thresholds to individuation, opening up the noetic potentialities to act; whereas stereotypes form walls or barriers barring the way and closing off those potentials. The traumatological shock (which is connected to the *infinite*) transcends tertiary retention, allowing for transindividuation as the creation and transmission of new individual and collective memories.

## 2. The Question of Marketing: The Individual as Amateur Artist

Stiegler's concern over the question of marketing is a question of noetic spirit. Desire, as that which moves towards the infinite, has, in the epoch of technological modernity, been wrenched out of the symbolic order of social, religious, and cultural life. Following the 'death of God', human desire has become bewitched by the bad infinity of the commodity form, manufactured object, and the culture industries. In this way, due to marketing's appeal to the necessary consistence of the infinite as the motor of spirit, through its appropriation of Freudian unconscious drives that are being exhausted, spirit is disappearing. This situation means that the 'unconscious constitutes the preindividual funds of all motives to act...that is...the passage into action, acting out' (Stiegler 2015a: 185). For Stiegler, this happens regardless of whether we are capable of thinking about these motives, as being therefore 'reason-able', or unable to think about them, and therefore 'unreason-able' (Stiegler 2015a: 185).

Yet it would be wrong to claim that Stiegler is anti-capitalist and this, I would suggest, is in the same vein as why he is uncomfortable with being posed the question of whether he is un-Christian. The reason being that Christianity *took care* of spirit as movement towards the ungraspable within what became a dogmatic doctrine. Christianity reified spirit in the figure of Jesus as *man*, whilst exteriorizing spirit to the transcendent figure of God, thereby losing its power to mediate between the finite and the infinite, the secular and the divine. This, I would suggest, is the force of the '*metaphysical blockage*' of oppositions caused by Western philosophy to which Stiegler refers (Stiegler, 2011b: 44). Capitalism,

as with Christianity, was initially able to maintain a therapeutic dynamic within itself, 'between calculation and the incalculable' (Stiegler, 2014a: 36). Yet with the replacement of trade with the 'market' and the subsequent development of computational and cognitive capitalism within consumerist marketing founded on Freudian drives, the incalculable and infinite is lost due to the predictive calculations and modeling of consumer behaviour.

So, Stiegler is 'not at all condemning calculation' (Stiegler, 2011b: 44), arguing,

...capital and its calculation as accumulation are needed in order that what surpasses these as the experience of the incalculable can arise, that experience of the incalculable that I here call 'singularity' insofar as existence is only conferred as the experience of a consistence.

(Stiegler, 2011b: 123)

*Negotium* as business founded on the false consistences of advertising and marketing is *necessary* as the foundation from which an *otium* based on spirit, and ideal consistences that exceed this *negotium*, can be formed.

This 'experience of the incalculable' that can arise is found in art, as that which exceeds and 'surpasses' subsistence-existence. Therefore, I would argue that for the 'economy of contribution' to function there has to be a form of *otium* based on an artistic foundation, echoing Heidegger's belief in the 'saving power' of art from technological enframing (*Gestell*). Art, as Stiegler highlights, is a custodian of spirit and therefore provides a counter tendency to the exhaustion and destruction of spirit by capitalist consumerism. The 'death of art' is a real possibility for Stiegler due to the replacement of art's 'sensible experience' by consumerism's 'aesthetic conditioning' (Stiegler, 2015b: 90-91). Stiegler's work

on the artist Joseph Beuys emphasises the importance of art as ‘self-writing as social sculpture’ as ‘a process of psychosocial individuation’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 106-110). So, not only is art as a public profession a vital part of a contributive economy, but each individual within such an economy must also be considered as an artist, as a ‘true amateur’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 95), rather than as a consumer. Art is a creative and transformative process. To be an artist is to create and in this way individuation becomes an act of self-creation, re-creation and transformation – as shown by Stiegler’s term ‘art of living’ (Stiegler, 2011c: 126) when referring to practices of care. I will argue that Stiegler’s next stage of grammatization (following on from citizen, believer, worker and consumer – cf. chapter six) must be the individual as ‘artist’. Furthermore, I will argue that this individual as an amateur artist must also contain all Stiegler’s previous stages of grammatization. This form of noetic individuation, then, reconciles all the other aspects of individuation over time, from citizen, believer, worker and consumer, in the performativity of an amateur artist.

#### 6) Joseph Campbell’s ‘Creative Hero’ and Stiegler’s ‘true amateur’

In naming the introduction to his second volume of *Symbolic Misery* ‘Call to Adventure’, Stiegler seems to be referencing the first stage of the ‘Hero’s Journey’ from Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) in which Campbell conceived of a universal ‘monomyth’ that lay behind all stories and myths found in different religions and cultures. There is a similar theme in Campbell’s conclusion to Stiegler’s own concern that the contemporary loss of

symbolic signification, following Nietzsche's 'death of God', needs to be addressed.

Campbell argued that in the wake of the 'self-determining individual', the machine, and science, the 'timeless universe of symbols has collapsed'. Consequently, 'every last vestige of the ancient human heritage of ritual, morality and art is in full decay' (Campbell, 1993: 387-8). Whereas previously 'all meaning was in the group', now all meaning is in the individual, yet here this meaning is unconscious creating a sense of being spiritually lost (Campbell, 1993: 388). The problem becomes a lack spiritual direction and guidance. This symbolic loss has occurred since,

It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back.

(Campbell, 1993: 11)

The modern individual then has become directionless, disorientated and - unlike the hero of the monomyth - without a mentor-figure to act as a spiritual guide. For Campbell, the answer lies in the potential power within the individual as a 'creative hero', since 'It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse' (Campbell, 1993: 391); and so, the 'modern hero-deed must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the coordinated soul' (Campbell, 1993: 388).

In an analogous manner to Campbell's 'creative hero', Stiegler conceives of individual artistic and noetic potential as being a 'true amateur' (Stiegler, 2015b:

95), since the artist is ‘an exemplary figure of psychic *and* collective *individuation*’ in which sense the artist ‘intensifies the conjunction’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 154-155).

Since culture is ‘the transmission of collective secondary retentions’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 111), artists not only inherit the collective memory and symbolic signification of the past, they intervene in the process of the creation of this symbolic exchange. They do so by uncovering, interpreting, inventing, producing, provoking and transforming the symbolic culture they inherit, and by passing on that transformation to future generations. So, the artist has a ‘preparatory task’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 155) in which they,

creates works, or artefacts...which open up the future [*l’ à-venir*] as the singularity of the indeterminate by accessing the repressed that incubates the potential of what Aristotle calls the noetic soul – as its intermittent possibility of acting out...the opening [*ouverture*] of the work [*oeuvre*] involves binding as it socializes the traumatypical ground that is buried not only as individual or collective traumatypical secondary retentions...but also as archi-retentions and archi-protentions

(Stiegler, 2015b: 155; emphasis in original)

This traumatological process allows access to Campbell’s ‘lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul’, which, for Stiegler, is Aristotle’s noetic soul co-ordinated both in potential and in act. This then is the ‘remarkable modality’ of the artist (Stiegler, 2015b: 162) that involves the transformation of the ‘pre-individual ground’ (Stiegler, 2015b: 155), or, in other words, Simondon’s pre-individual milieu, Heidegger’s ‘already-there’ of *Dasein*, and Stiegler’s own epiphylogenetic milieu.

For me, there are three key inter-related Stieglerian conditions that echo Campbell's concern for the decay of 'ritual, morality and art'; these I have termed care, civility and creativity. For the purposes of clarity, I have also further subdivided these terms into a few key constituent parts. In each section, I will briefly address the toxic tendency before explicating a model of a positive pharmacology that would provide the therapeutic counter tendency.

## 7) Care, Civility and Creativity

### 1) Ritual as Care

The first key condition to a new contributive economy is that it 'takes care' of the individual, society and the environment. The problem with the current speculative, short-term economy of the market and marketing is that it establishes destructive tendencies, calculated imperatives and a disposable culture. Central to this is the disappearance in the distinction between the related but separate spheres of *otium* and *negotium*, brought about by the conflation of production, distribution and consumption, and marketing. Out of the current state of *negotium*, which has subsumed *otium*, new modalities of *otium* must be recovered and instantiated that establish 'care'. Previous techniques of expression and representation (what Derrida calls grammatization) maintained the metastable balance between the pharmacological therapeutic and toxic tendencies through a distinction between *otium* and *negotium*, yet now the 'sphere of clerics' has been absorbed into the

‘sphere of production’ (Stiegler, 2011b: 107). As Daniel Ross has written, Stieglerian ‘practices of care’ are ‘culture, education and knowledge’ (Stiegler, 2018: 24). Central to these are time, attention and knowledge.

(i) Time

To take care positively requires investing time and, in Stiegler’s words, ‘infiniteizing’ time. This recovers the temporal aspect of *otium* that is independent of the market conditions, projecting itself unconditionally into an infinite future. It is therefore ‘artistic time’ (cf. Stiegler, 2015b) and not *negotium* - the time of business and the market. In this way, modes of living and working must be recovered that counter the acceleration of society and in which time is freed from purely economic imperatives. One aspect of this would involve the slow culture (of slow science, slow food, slow cinema and so on) that works against the acceleration of modern society allowing for error, learning, re-learning and growth.

(ii) Attention

This use of time also develops a form of focus that works against the distracted culture of diverted attention (provoked by audiovisual mass media, situated within the ‘attention economy’, that marketing encourages). This would then be an attention of focus, engagement and absorption, what Katherine Hayles, who Stiegler references (Stiegler, 2018: 176), calls ‘deep attention’. This form of time and attention allow for reflexive-reflective thought, learning, re-learning and the

appropriation of long-term knowledge. Following Hayles' 'deep attention', this might be termed 'deep knowledge' countering any short-term superficiality.

(iii) Knowledge

For Stiegler, 'Knowledge of all kinds is always a pharmacology' (Stiegler, 2015a: 165) and its history is one of being 'inscribed, written, exteriorized and tertiarized' (Stiegler, 2015a: 165). Thus, Stiegler argues that knowledge must begin with the universities as centres for a positive pharmacology of knowledge, founded upon a pharmacological intelligence and awareness, of digitized knowledge. This in turn would be passed down to school education and to society as a whole. Digital technologies, and the modes of instantaneous transmission they have produced, both undermine the symbolic order of analogue representation, *and* offer the chance of new forms of global recognition. Ultimately, therefore, Stiegler's philosophy is dedicated to the labour of tracing what those forms of recognition might be, and how they are formed within the established networks of the culture and programming industries.

This form of knowledge must now be one in which digital media, as the latest form of mass information, publication and interaction, becomes a focus for research, study and learning – something which Stiegler's *Ars Industrialis* promotes. In this way, methods of adopting digital technology with an awareness of its pharmacological nature can be investigated and then cultivated. This would highlight issues concerning information and misinformation, attention and distraction, as well as providing a critical hermeneutics of digital

imagery that is aware of its 'symbolic' and 'diabolic' potential. Education and knowledge provide the foundation for a contributive economy that can actively adopt technology, with critical awareness and active agency, rather than passively adapting to it. Yet this is not just academic knowledge but practical knowledge which is why Stiegler frequently refers to three forms of knowing: *savoir vivre*, *savoir faire* and *savoir conceptualiser*; that is: how to live, do and think (Stiegler, 2018: 51; emphasis in original). The exteriorization process of digital media threatens to liquidate all three; and so all three must therefore be re-cultivated within an institutional regime of pharmacological intelligence (which includes the university as a non-marketized space of reflection). Thus, although digital *pharmaka* enable the loss of attention through an economy of diversion, they also help form 'attention, reforming and trans-forming by *elevating* (by educating)' (Stiegler, 2014a: 90; emphasis in original).

So, if one major criticism of Stiegler's work is that like Kant he is susceptible to Hegel's accusation of 'empty formalism', then the counter-objection is that following Hegel's ethics he attempts to put his theory into a practice of care. So, Kant's rational autonomy must have a cultural foundation in the family and civil life. Stiegler focuses on an education of critical and practical knowledge (starting in universities freed from internal/external conditions) that will cultivate a self-sustaining and self-nurturing ethics of civil society. So, 'Education...the first question posed by philosophy...is not just a theoretical question: it is practical, political and institutional' (Stiegler, 2015a: 159).

## 'Risk Society' and 'Slow Science'

Stiegler's version of critical theory works between two absolutes, one of which is the impending exhaustion of the human capacity for attention, the other is the impending exhaustion of nature. In this section I will consider how the formation of 'science' as an instrument of technological exploitation has impacted on the organic body of nature, and how this instrumental organization of science might be transformed.

Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society* (1986) is an influential work that deals with the dangers to human existence in the light of modern technological, industrial and scientific change, and the risks that this combination in modernity engenders. For Beck, modernization becomes defined by its reflexivity, by 'becoming its own theme' (Beck, 2009: 19) and his notion of risk is 'directly bound' to this reflexivity since, '*Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself*' (Beck, 2009: 21; emphasis in original). Due to these hazards and insecurities he views modern humanity as 'living on the volcano of civilization' (Beck, 2009: Part 1).

One of Beck's central concerns is the convergence of science, technology and capitalism. As Abbinnett has argued, for Beck, 'the relationship between science and the economy marks the emergence of a transactional logic, in which science...is forced to present its findings as infallible knowledge that awaits conversion into increased productivity' (Abbinnett, 2003: 26). Yet this forces a contradiction between 'the 'method' of science, that is 'the self-critical, self-

reflective procedures through which empirical testing of hypotheses was carried out', and 'the 'ideology' of science', that becomes 'the rhetoric of certainty through which results were presented to the 'consumers' of scientific knowledge' (Abbinnett, 2003: 26). In this way, 'science entered into a dangerous complicity with the mechanisms of capital accumulation' (Abbinnett, 2003: 26).

With science becoming subsumed in the political-cultural-capitalist sphere of acceleration, accumulation and productivity, it becomes part of the sociological problem of speed in modernity (cf. chapter five). This is the logic of calculation and instrumental reason that predominates in the economy of *negotium*. What is needed then is a version that recovers *otium*, reflective-reflexive thought that is unconstrained by the market pressures of accelerated political-economic imperatives and therefore operates on a different theoretical and temporal framework.

The 'Slow Science Academy' founded in 2010 is representative of the slow science movement that sets out to counter the 'accelerated science' of modernity which Beck is concerned with. Their manifesto urges that: '...scientists must *take* their time. We do need time to think. We do need time to digest. We do need time to misunderstand each other, especially when fostering lost dialogue between humanities and natural sciences. We cannot continuously tell you what our science means; what it will be good for; because we simply don't know yet' (slow-science.org). Similarly, Dick Pels argues for a model of 'unhastening science'. In contrast to the economic and political spheres of 'quicker returns' in a 'shorter time-span', this 'slow', unhastened science allows for the time needed

for the 'intellectual mode': the 'sustained effort of re-reading, rethinking and sense-making – a technique of deceleration' (Pels, 2003b: 213).

This mode of science, as with the time of the artist that Jeanette Winterson has written about, works against *negotium*, the calculative time of business, commerce and economic imperatives (cf. chapter four), and creates the time that is needed for noesis. It allows for thought and reflection, self-reflection, and re-thinking. In other words, it is focused on the process of thought, rather than the endpoint of this thinking, the results. This, in Stieglerian terms, is an attempt to retrieve and reinvigorate a science in the careful concern (Heidegger's *sorge*) of *otium* that allows for the noetic modality of reflective-reflexive thought, as distinct from the industrial-techno-scientific business of *negotium* driven by the preoccupation (Heidegger's *besorgen*) of the market. Such a science cannot emerge without a transformation of public culture; and so in the following sections I will examine the potential for a new public morality and aesthetics.

## 2) Morality as Civility

Civility returns to the notion of the individual as citizen, as a constituent part of social totality. The economy of contribution that Stiegler envisages must establish itself upon the Hegelian notion of the *Sittlichkeit* (cf. chapter two) whereby the part functions as constituent of the whole, as well as a multi-agent system whereby individual actors are cognitive and explicitly aware of their behaviour. This requires working against what Stiegler, following Adorno and Horkheimer, terms 'barbarism' to form a society that is both meaningful and

sustainable. However, whereas for Hegel, the technological apparatus (the machine) remains exterior to the substance of ethical life, for Stiegler, due to the originary technicity of human beings, the condition for individuation is *always already* technological. The problem becomes how to retrieve agency, freedom and spontaneity from within the already technological conditions of hyper-industrial consumerism. Central to this are signification, participation and recognition.

(i) Signification

In a digital media environment, the power of images proliferates so we need a '*new hermeneutic epoch*' (Stiegler, 2018: 174). A positive pharmacology would allow the individual to be the active participant in the creation of these symbols as well as merely being the passive receiver of them. This would allow an active engagement in the aesthetic milieu of culture to counter Stiegler's concern about symbolic misery brought about by the loss of participation. The French term '*signification*' can be translated as 'meaning' (Stiegler, 2015a: 188). In our perception and interpretation of signs and symbols we construct our worldview, filtering what is significant or insignificant, thus giving it meaning. So, signification also retains the sense of the symbolic as being hermeneutic. It is why the new power of images becomes the newest form of writing since the same hermeneutic gap that exists between text and reader must continue to exist between image and viewer. Meaning is formed in this hermeneutic gap, between the 'signified' and the 'signifier'.

(ii) Participation

Uses of technology can help to foster the participation of individuals within communities. The speed and ubiquity of digital platforms (such as Facebook, Airbnb and YouTube) thus helps to foster a new form of digital, global citizenship. This would build on an education based on the '*academic internation*' as a 'new process of collective individuation' (Stiegler, 2015a: 180). An 'internation', following Marcel Mauss' idea, that would oppose nationalism as isolation and would produce a new mode of digital cosmopolitanism, based on the mutual recognition of the limits of techno-industrialization (Stiegler, 2015a: 179). So, through the 'digital system of publication', 'proposals in law (that are curative)' can be made based on the expanded networks of the global economy (Stiegler, 2015a: 181).

(iii) Recognition

Hegel's philosophy of recognition, founded on his master-slave dialectic, successfully identifies, for Stiegler, the self-actualising potential found in work. In this way, 'by putting technics to work – the worker (who is a slave) gives himself an art' so that bourgeois capitalism is 'not a question of the *worker becoming proletarian*' as in Marxism but rather the '*artisan becoming an entrepreneur*' (Stiegler, 2015a: 125-126; emphasis in original). Yet, for Stiegler, Hegel failed to see that although the machine deprives the worker of his 'singularity' it also has an incipient liberating potential (Stiegler, 2015a: 126). The history of industrial modernity has shown that the very same systems that destroy co-individuation

(digital tertiary systems, virtual aesthetic programmes, etc.) can also help produce and nurture 'singularity' and, therefore, global communities founded on recognition.

### The Internet and Public Power

Central to the aesthetics of community in the digital media age is the Internet. This is the successor to analogue media (the printing press, radio, cinema and television – cf. chapter six) and has exponentially increased the speed at which large amounts of data can be disseminated to corporations, mass audiences, and educational institutions. Since the invention of smart phones, the connectivity of audiences now come to include the transmission and retrieval of images that constantly interrupt real-time experience. For this reason, 'the mobile' has become the epitome of the new digital pharmaka. As Castells has written,

The interactive capacity of the new communication system ushers in a new form of communication...which multiplies and diversifies the entry points in the communication process...Yet, this potential for autonomy is shaped, controlled, and curtailed by the growing concentration and interlocking of corporate media and network operators around the world.

(Castells, 2013: 135)

So, as Stiegler states in *The Re-Enchantment of the World*, although the Internet can be put 'in the service of control' and used for 'dissociation', it can also be used for association since what distinguishes it from previous analogue technologies is the fact that 'the internet network, as an industrial technical milieu, *structurally* constitutes an associated milieu' (Steigler, 2014c: 37;

emphasis in original). It is in this way that the current technological apparatuses can be used to support and further an economy of contribution. One example of the use of the Internet for creating such an associated milieu is the work of Purpose, founded by Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans, whose core values are ‘common humanity’, ‘participation’ and ‘pragmatic idealism’. In their book *New Power* (2018), Timms and Heimans look at how new digital and technological platforms have shifted the way that power operates. They distinguish between two types of power: old and new. So, whereas old power ‘works like a currency’ that is ‘held by the few’, ‘jealousy guarded’ and ‘closed’, new power is ‘like a current’ (such as ‘water or electricity’) ‘made by many’, ‘open, participatory, and peer-driven’ and the ‘goal with new power is not to hoard it but channel it’ (Timms and Heimans, 2018: 2; emphasis in original). In this way, the organization’s website states that it ‘builds and supports movements to advance the fight for an open, just and habitable world’. Their projects include Peers, which focuses on ‘building a sharing economy’ using peer-to-peer sharing such as ‘ridesharing and apartment sharing’.

These types of projects that operate within the technology that digital platforms provide can be seen, in Stieglerian terms, as an attempt to re-enchant and re-invigorate a public spirit – here analogous to the ‘current’ or energy which Heimans and Timms identify. The energy put into the apparatus is rewarded with the momentum and ‘new power’ that this generates, one in which individual-collective agency is made possible upon technological grounds, and so there is a sense of reciprocal gift and counter-gift. Such power then is not outside of Heidegger’s technological enframing or *Gestell*; it is not only contained

within it but also made possible, channeled, and supported *by* it. Here, then, public power is shown to derive from the plurality of argument enabled by technology and the multiplicity of platforms upon which such freedoms can be enacted. Far from being subsumed by the technological apparatus, this form of public power and freedom is created by it; but its creation is only possible alongside the destructive and disruptive forces with which it coexists. In this way, these groups aim to use digital, social media platforms to undermine powerful elites by disrupting control and disseminating constructive dissent. In this way, digital, social media both enables rapid anti-establishment and counter-cultural movements whilst simultaneously amplifying such voices of dissent.

### 3) Art as Creativity

Before I address the issue of art I will first outline three aspects of creativity that stand out as most relevant to forming a positive pharmacology of noetic individuation on artistic foundations. I will focus on three central aspects: spontaneity, imperfection and imagination.

#### (i) Spontaneity

Spontaneity is closely aligned with agency and autonomy. A spontaneity that recaptures the autonomy of the individual must therefore be present within the hyper-industrial age's increasingly automated and reifying processes. For without it, such systems could not continue to evolve. Spontaneous action

contains qualities of playfulness and difference. In this way, it represents unique, singular heteronomy as opposed to mass, particular hegemony. Importantly, spontaneity is exceptional in the sense that it is not continuous, so it is diachronic rather than synchronic. As with Stiegler's noetic being and artistic 'acting out', it is intermittent. It is therefore unpredictable, and surpasses what Stiegler terms 'the horizon of expectations' and cannot be 'calculated' in the Weberian sense.

(ii) Imperfection

The founder of the Royal Academy of Art, John Ruskin, wrote in his essay 'On Art and Life', '*the demand for perfection is always a sign of the misunderstanding of the ends of art*' (Ruskin, 2004: 26). Writing at a time of rapid industrialization he recognized the dangers of the perfecting tendency of mass, utilitarian production in contrast to the necessary role of imperfection found in art. It is the same perfecting tendency that Stiegler cites as his main objection to transhumanism. So,

The claim of transhumanism, that it makes up for a noetic flaw, resembles a discourse on the *perfect* human, that is, a project to *eliminate that flaw, that default, which is noesis*.

(Stiegler, 2018: 84; emphasis in original)

In its attempt to eradicate human fallibility it also destroys the lack and default that is the necessary motor for human drives, desire and creativity. It is for this reason that 'to want' means *both* 'to lack' *and* 'wish to have'. This lack is Stiegler's Epimethean default of being; we desire because we are lacking and

human becoming is a means towards an end that will, until death, remain incomplete and unperfected. The *pharmakon* (as fire) is what Prometheus used to compensate for this fault and, since ‘every *pharmakon* in prosthetic (that is, automatic and *unheimlich*’ (Stiegler, 2013b: 108; emphasis in original), it is ‘as the incessant compensation of the default of origin through prostheses that constantly revive and deepen this wound’ (Stiegler, 2013b: 109). Imperfection and wanting are pharmacological and noetic.

They are also profoundly necessary. This original lack, default, defect or imperfection is a traumatypical ‘wound’, one which provokes true individuation as a singular (rather than particular) becoming. This wounded-ness, this vulnerability (from the Latin *vulnus* for wound), is what we strive to heal; this wound is also what defines us. So, Stiegler argues,

Singularity, which is also called *idios*, is first of all a wound. It is a wound of the flesh that forms a defect [*qui se fait défaut*]. But one that is necessary.

(Stiegler, 2013a: 160; emphasis in original)

Genuine art, as with true individuation, is idiomatic in that there can be no copy, no reproduction. In its imperfection it stands out (ex-sists) as a singular exception. Imperfection makes us human; idiomatic imperfection is what makes us *uniquely* human. Imperfection is incomplete, and it is this that defines human being as human becoming. As Sartre argues in *Being and Nothingness* (whose premise is founded on Hegel’s dialectical logic of opposites): ‘I am not what I am’ (Sartre, 2003: 80). For this reason, I would suggest Stiegler’s use of the term

'metastable' is indebted to Sartre.<sup>22</sup> For Stiegler, metastability is '*at the limit of equilibrium and disequilibrium...potentially in movement, a potential movement*' (Stiegler, 2015b: 40; emphasis in original). This is the being in potential of the noetic soul; a metastable state that, for Stiegler, is 'the dynamism of individuation' (Stiegler, 2015b: 41). Such a state is always capable of self-destruction if the conjunction of compositional forces of society begin to come apart and decompose.

The tragedy of humanity is in the original default, found in the Christian notion of original sin, and any attempt to eradicate this tragic flaw is the ultimate act of hubris. It is also the Heideggerian forgetting of the question of Being, the questioning of our existence and the forgetting of our existence as a being-toward-death. There can be no completion of this process of becoming since the only completion of human becoming is death. Perfection and immortality are in the realm of the Gods and the divine. In the transhumanist ideal of perfection there can be no transcendence within the human condition. In eradicating our mortality they will have already eliminated that which makes us human. Humanity will already be dead: 'our being-there may become a *no-longer-being-there*' (Stiegler, 2013b: 111; emphasis in original).

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<sup>22</sup> Stiegler explicitly references Simondon's concept of 'individuation as a *metastable equilibrium*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 38), but I would suggest both Simondon and Stiegler are influenced by Sartre's use.

### (iii) Imagination

Nearly two decades ago, Jonathan E. Schroeder defined modern consumerism as the 'image economy' (Schroeder, J. E., 2002) arguing that, 'Personal as well as product identity...are constructed largely via information technologies of photography and mass media' (Schroeder, J. E., 2002: 234). With the current proliferation of digital devices, images and screens this is more apt now than it was then. For Stiegler, capitalist consumerism is now both calculative and cognitive, founded on 'attention' and 'libidinal' economies. For Stiegler, the danger is not the exteriorization of the transcendental imagination by the culture industries that Adorno and Horkheimer critiqued, but rather the short-circuiting of knowledge and behaviour. Cultural consumerism, in Stiegler's idiom, is 'de-symbolizing, disindividuating and imagination-destroying...because it reinforces stereotypes and represses traumatypes' (Stiegler, 2018: 166). It is the total capturing of the imagination by programming and culture that Stiegler fears. For these reasons, the formation of today's image culture – as the ability to dream, create and perceive the self, others and society - is arguably the central issue in the forming of a positive pharmacology.

For Stiegler, art is the sphere of human existence that can help to recover spirit and to create an expressive, spiritual performance of self that transforms both the individual and society. Art, for Stiegler, as I have shown, is the site of 'traumatypical events' and so it is on this basis that art can disrupt the disindividuating tendencies of consumerism in the hyper-industrial age, thereby creating new possibilities within a contributive economy. The creation of this

future, however, relies on a performance of the self, in Stiegler's terms, an 'acting out', of the individual as an amateur artist.

### The Individual as Amateur Artist

As we have seen, the noetic soul is a 'being-in-intermittence' (Stiegler, 2011c: 53). For this reason, the 'occasional workers' in film, television and theatre are what Stiegler terms 'intermittents' (Stiegler, 2011c: 53). Whilst their role is in the service of *otium*, (the sphere of artistic, infinite time), they operate within a culture industry founded on commodified *neg-otium* (the accounted-for, calculated time of employment). In this way artists, for Stiegler, are 'spirit labourers' (Stiegler, 2015b: 79) and 'spirit-workers' (Stiegler, 2015b: 49). Yet because noetic individuation is linked to the artistic aspects of spirit and *noesis*, we are *all* 'artists in potential' (Stiegler, 2015b: 110) and, therefore, it follows that we are all 'spirit workers'.

It is for this reason that I argue, following Stiegler, that the next stage of grammatization within the digital age requires the individual to be an amateur artist. This form of individuation would be a life-long process of digital apprenticeship and re-apprenticeship: one that encompasses all the previous forms of grammatization of citizen, believer and worker, as well as contemporary consumer, but one in which desire has the power to motivate, elevate and transform. It is this that enables a noetic individuation within the economy of contribution, in which the individual is an attentive artist

participating in a society aware of its own art as artefact and artifice. I will develop this idea by exploring four themes: (i) citizen of public craft; (ii) believer and interrogator of fantasy; (iii) worker of spirit as a maker of signs; and, finally, (iv) consumer as self-publisher of unreasonable dreams.

i) Citizen of Public Craft

For Stiegler, the concept of civil society is essentially bound to an idea of public good in which the reflexivity of each individual is given time to contemplate and express its relationship to the social totality (Stiegler, 2014c: 53). Therefore the use of digital public space, and time, necessitates a new form of economy - of taking care - where 'care cultivates associated milieus' (Stiegler, 2011c: 108). Today, public space is saturated with digital and virtual media structured by the culture and programming industries. If a modern role of participatory citizen is to be formed within this space, one that is equivalent to that found in the Greek *polis*, then the culture (and laws) of this digital space must be created through the participation of its users. In this way, for Stiegler, digital *pharmaka* such as *blogs* can be simultaneously 'symptoms of symbolic misery' and the site of a 'possible new future' (Stiegler, 2015b: 27). So, particularly in this digitized age, the 'press and program industries' occupy 'a functional and primordial role in the formation of public space' (Stiegler, 2014c: 27-8).

In *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett writes about the ancient Greek role occupied by craftsmen in the classical *polis*; which was equivalent to today's middle class. The Greek word used for craftsman in the hymn to the God Hephaestus was

*demioergos*, from ‘demios’: public and ‘ergon’: productive (Sennett, 2009: 21-22). In ancient Greece ‘craft and community’ were ‘indissociable’ (Sennett, 2009: 22), and Sennett argues that the modern equivalent to this culture is “open source” software. In this way, the ‘Linux operating system’ is a ‘public craft’ (Sennett, 2009: 24), the most famous example of which is Wikipedia as a platform where users contribute to the expansion of public knowledge.

Similarly, in 1990, Stiegler and Philippe Aigrin proposed the digital software industry could form an ‘associated milieu’, that is, sites of global, technologically-connected networks (Stiegler, 2011c: 128). They argued that, ‘collaborative technologies and free license software rest precisely on the valorization of such associated human milieus, which also constitute techno-geographical spaces for the formation of positive externalities’ (Stiegler, 2011c: 128-9). As with Stiegler’s framing of transitional space (Stiegler, 2013b: 116) this digital forum must be seen as neither inside nor outside conventional codes; and they must be co-created by the users and their pharmaka. These sites must also represent spaces for transgression, for the breaking of the laws of this digital *polis* since it is in this transgression that civilizations evolve. The laws of the city, just as the rules of art, are made to be broken in order to be made anew. It is for this reason that Stiegler sees the citizen (as with the artist) as existing in a metastable condition of being: he or she has the potential to act as *fiction* that both encourages and intensifies the idiomatic difference within the sphere of law (Stiegler, 2011b: 142). The tendencies of difference/repetition, making/breaking, and creation/destruction, are the compositional forces by which laws, cities and civilizations evolve. Acts of transgression are also acts of

transindividuation, that is, of overcoming the present state (of the city/of being) and creating new futures.

ii) Believer and Interrogator of Fantasy

For Stiegler, God '*though not existing, consists*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 90; emphasis in original) and does so as a *necessary* fiction (Stiegler, 2015b: 95). Furthermore, reality, as with God and with ideas in general (such as truth, justice and beauty) consist as that 'which [do] not yet exist' (Stiegler, 2015b: 104-5). So, reality and fiction do not exist but consist in a transductive relationship as a pair of compositional tendencies (Stiegler, 2015b: 105). Belief is not about belief in that which exists but a faith, a faith in the unseen, in that which does not yet exist and therefore consists as an idea. The Biblical reference is found in Hebrews 11:1, 'Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see' (*New Living Translation*).

This is a metastable condition since this not being able to see can lead to despair, to a state of being without hope (from the Latin *spero*: I hope). This condition is composed of faith's counter-tendency: doubt. Belief, I would also argue, is a composition of tendencies, that of faith and doubt. So, it can create futures and it can destroy them. The privilege for the human conceived as *Dasein* is that of posing questions (Stiegler, 2013b: 105; Stiegler, 2018: 259). So, the phenomenological problem is not only the forgetting of being but also the forgetting of posing the question of being, which for Stiegler is also the question

of time (Stiegler, 2013b: Chapter 6). The philosophy of the sixth and fifth centuries BC turns faith's counter-tendency, doubt, into a philosophical (Socratic) questioning (Stiegler, 2015b: 160), which means we must not only be believers but also interrogators and philosophers. This is a direct result of the alphabet (Stiegler, 2015b: 160) as *pharmakon*, and a specific stage of grammatization that instantiated the law (of the city) and *logos* (of God), as representations of the *consistence* of justice and truth, but which must be interpreted and continually re-created in order to exist. For this reason, '*I believe* must only and can only be called pharma-cological' (Stiegler, 2013b: 110; emphasis in original).

Existence is about a belief in the consistence of oneself, of 'one' 'self' as consisting in a 'unique' 'self', as a singularity that does not yet exist. This self is a state of being in existence, which *becomes*. This is a becoming of that 'which is not yet', motivated by a belief (a 'desire for the divine') in consistencies toward an unseen future, towards something which exceeds its own existence both in time and in space. In this way, 'Singularity is of course nothing but fantasy' (Stiegler, 2014c: 58). Existence becomes about a belief and an interrogation of this singularity *as* fantasy, of a composition of the world that appears to us (through Freud's perception-consciousness system) as a disposition of desires projected onto (and perceived through) an inherited 'already-there' of previous projections. The pharmacological question becomes an interrogation of these fantasies of 'I', 'we' and the 'world'. It is a matter of questioning these perceptions and projections, 'to identify the role of [technological] *pharmaka* in the formation of desire' and of 'the *pharmakon* as a transitional object'. Since,

'the *pharmakon*, in all its forms, is above all a support for the projection of fantasies' (Stiegler, 2013b: 23).

This world as it appears is an inter-play between the technologies of reality and fiction that compose each other, between the singularity of the 'I' as individual fantasy and the collective 'we' as social dreams. This is epitomized in the American way of life, the American Dream and American cinema - which represent a 'We of an identifactory cinema' (Stiegler, 2011a: 60).

So, Stiegler argues, the 'coherence' of self is 'nothing but a unity promised like a future seeking its necessity'. And following Deleuze (Deleuze, 2016: 112), and echoing Sartre's performance of the waiter (cf. Webber, 2009: 76-79) and 'I am not what I am' (Sartre, 2003: 80), Stiegler continues:

traversed and "cracked" by the irreducible fact that the same gives way to different and the diverse, and that my performance of myself lets me know myself as an other – that I am myself that/an other; i.e., that "I" am perhaps *not*; that I am not, perhaps an "I"; but only a fiction, a projection, a phantasm of me, a me adopting personae; that I negate myself in making myself cinematic...This fault, this crack, is the *default* of the *I* - a necessary default [*un défaut qu'il faut*]: I can be an other only insofar as I am incomplete. This incompleteness is a function of an inadequation at the heart of my myself, of my flux as not finished, terminated (which would be the flux that had become adequate to itself, for example, as a finished melody, completely extended, having found its unity): I never cease to become myself as the retentional medium of myself; I never cease to interpret myself – and to write/interpret what is still to come, what is still unfolding of what has already occurred.

(Stiegler, 2011a: 61)

The individual as believer concerns the reinvention of the plane of consistencies (cf. Stiegler, 2014c) that 'enchant' or re-enchant the world through fantasy and faith thereby creating a future. Yet this can only come about if the world as it appears to us, and our own notion of ourselves, is interrogated and recognized as a complex composition and inter-play between reality and fiction; and in the digital age, between the real and the virtual. In this way, there must a critical awareness of Stiegler's definition of the 'fantastic' as the "fictioning' of the real' (Stiegler, 2014a: 44).

### iii) Worker of Spirit as a Maker of Signs

The central problem with capitalism, for Stiegler, is *not* that it is materialistic but that the current age of capitalism has lost its spirit *within* that materialism (cf. Stiegler, 2014a). The Cartesian separation of mind and body, through the *cogito*, is the epitome of the metaphysical opposition which instantiates the misunderstood and misleading opposition of the material and immaterial. Stiegler argues that this metaphysical philosophy must be replaced by one that traces the composition and decomposition of spirit through the technological pharmakon. This would then return us to Aristotle's contention that '*noesis is before anything else the mode of the mobility of souls through their bodies*' (Stiegler, 2011b: 149-150; emphasis in original). So, Stiegler believes that spirit cannot be reduced to matter, but that spirit does not 'deny it' and is 'conditioned by it' (Stiegler, 2009b: 32). Spirit is a process that returns (Stiegler, 2009b: 32), incessantly, as fantasy (Stiegler, 2014a: 87) and as the incalculable (Stiegler, 2018: 69).

Cartesian dualism and secular calculation has meant that capitalism (from Latin *capitus*: head) has placed the mind (the individual) in opposition to the rest of the body politic (the collective). In this way, the 'post-industrial fable' has seen the individual and the group opposed within an 'individualistic society' (Stiegler, 2011b: 110). In this way, the materialization of spirit has become reification, destroying the circuit of noetic individuation as a process of desire as gift and counter-gift. It is this that has blocked the Aristotelian movement of the noetic soul and return to spirit that is essential to Stiegler's account of the economy of contribution. As Weber's disenchantment thesis diagnosed, spirit as the incalculable has become calculable (Stiegler, 2014c: 55). Consequently, the spiritual realm of *otium* has been subsumed and become indistinguishable to the material realm of *negotium* (Stiegler, 2013b: 83). The haunting of spirit's return as fantasy, as an *artifice*, threatens to turn into reified, objectified artefacts. For Stiegler, since Freud's pleasure principle and reality principle construct reality through a series of compositions, today the reality principle threatens to become the performative principle (Stiegler, 2014a: 52).

The market operates on the political, the symbolic and the libidinal economies of existence (Stiegler, 2015b: 117), and so the solution to the blockage of noesis is a recovery of the practical spirit that has been lost through the total domination of the economy of individual drives. The means of intervening in the process of symbolic exchange so that spirit can be revitalized (as gift and counter-gift) are the digital networks that have, as a matter of fact, been subsumed under the demand for the capitalization of desire. Such a recovery of spirit requires a self-cultivating performance within the economy of objectified desire which amounts

to the transformation of 'the *technical system of cares*' that have been produced by the programming industries (Stiegler, 2014a: 87; emphasis in original).

The individual as a potential 'spirit worker' transforms the symbolic culture of technological society. This transformation is founded on the notion of expectation, of *elpis*, as both hope and fear (Stiegler, 2013a: 6). The symbolic production of *elpis* as hope/fear, is a creation of sublime delight/terror within the system of proletarianized desire. Through the exchange of symbols (as the sublime, tragic and traumatypical) individuals can transform society's collective consciousness, memory and understanding by producing the unexpected and unforeseen 'signi-ficance' that allows for individuation (Stiegler, 2015b: 146). In this way, the 'shared signification forms...become the supports of interpretation' (Stiegler, 2013b: 67) so that collective secondary retentions (which form and transmit culture) are continually transformed. This enables a psychosocial individuation that becomes transindividuation, thereby establishing new forms of technological performance that transform the horizon of expectation into a sublime horizon of hope and fear. This future is an opening up of unexpected possibilities rather than a completion of predictable processes of becoming, and this is why Stiegler distinguishes between the negentropic future as *avenir* and entropic becoming as *devenir* (Stiegler, 2018: 75). It is in this way, in this opening up of the future through the traumtypical experience of technological repetition, that Stiegler's sign-makers can become Campbell's 'symbol carriers' who 'carry the human spirit forward' (Campbell, 1993: 11).

iv) Consumer as Self-Publisher of Unreasonable Dreams\

The market, founded on the desire of singularity, is also a fantasy (Stiegler, 2014a: 36). Singularity as the 'oscillating play' between the incalculable and the calculable (Stiegler, 2014a: 36) is 'the life of capitalism and its spirit'. Yet modern marketing has turned the singular individual into a particular consumer by appropriating this desire in a way that destroys it. This economy is founded on the channeling of desire and drives towards the consumption of excessive needs and the promotion of aspirational lifestyle behaviours. The necessary fiction of God as a consistence, as a mode of becoming which is beyond the immediate, has been turned into a performativity towards the consistence of the product, of aspiration, and of perfection. The 'not yet' existing of God's consistence has become the not yet having of the product's promise of perfection; the excessiveness of God has been replaced by the excessive productivity of the market as surplus. In this way, the notion of the 'satisfied customer' highlights a consumerist culture that attempts to fill the original default, as imperfect lack with a sense of completion. The word 'satisfied' derives from the Latin *satis* for 'enough', and consumer deriving from the French *consummare*, originally meaning 'to complete' (Stiegler, 2013b: 91). In this way, consumerism purports to make the consumer 'whole' through a satisfaction of needs. Yet this goes against the metastable condition of singularity 'which always remains to come' and is therefore 'inconsumable' (Stiegler, 2015b: 162). So, the current branding of consumerist culture (in the sense of marking as identification) of both products and consumers turns the singular individual into the particular consumer. The opposition of production and consumption, as with

the opposition of material and immaterial, blocks the noetic circuit of spirit. In addition, the appropriation by marketing of humanity's perfecting tendency threatens the spiritual drives.

For Stiegler, 'Every artist takes his desires and therefore his dreams as realities, as does every scholar, every citizen, every lover and all those who desire – every non-inhuman being' (Stiegler, 2019: 92). Hence, one of Stiegler's central themes is the danger posed to the fate of humanity by the exhaustion of desire to the ability to dream. The 'audiovisual media pool' of culture industries structured by digital programming, has captured the imagination in algorithmic schema that in their appropriation of drives and desires within a libidinal economy, control our fantasies, not only affecting our imagination but our ability to dream. For Stiegler, this pharmacological situation is between the realization of dreams and the creation of nightmares. The ultimate threat is the ability to have these dreams - or nightmares - *at all*, which is why Stiegler in *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* quotes Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* as defining disruption as the '*prevention of dreaming*' (Stiegler, 2019: 287). It is also why he sees the imagination and dreaming as a potential hope for the future and a way of reversing the entropy of the Anthropocene age, ending *The Age of Disruption* with a quotation from Pierre Jacquemain, a columnist for *Le Monde*, 'In order to do politics, we must dream' (Stiegler, 2019: 312).

Digital *pharmaka* create the possibility of a new modality of dreaming and desiring. In 'Digital Play and the Actualization of the Consumer Imagination'

(*Games and Culture*, Vol. 2, no. 2, 2007), Mike Molesworth and Janice Denegri-Knott argue for the transformative potential and beneficial effects of aesthetic performances in digital space. So, in their view, the exponential rise of digital media and the virtual spaces it opens up have created new sites of transformative possibility for the consumer, of 'fantasies' rather than 'mundane' 'daydreams' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 123-124). In this way, they consider modern digital consumption as a sphere of increasing aesthetic reflection that not only provide pleasure but also instigate individual and collective social change (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 117-118). Furthermore, online websites, such as eBay, provide stages with 'elaborate props' for 'creative, reflective, performance' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 126). Today, online platforms that focus on digital images (such as Instagram and Pinterest) also allow a similarly reflective aesthetic performance of the self by enabling the individual to explore, create and transform their own aesthetic digital stage and environment, not only choosing what they present or post but also the digital images (or aesthetic 'props') they are influenced by.

Importantly, they also warn against the fallacy of opposing notions of the virtual and real, and therefore of dismissing these virtual experiences as in some sense diminished experience, or as illusory. They argue that the real covers both 'the material (or concrete) *and* the virtual (the imagination, dreams, or memory) and opposed to the abstract and probable as possible' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 119). So, they continue, to equate the real as 'akin to what is natural' and the virtual 'as an illusion or the copy' is too reductive.

So, rather than viewing digital virtual spaces as an example of Baudrillard's hypereality 'in terms of some loss to or copy of reality', they 'conceptualize' them 'as spaces that emanate from and realize the imagination' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 120). In this way, they argue that 'Driving a virtual car or using a magic staff are significant not because they are phantasmagoric copies of the real but because there is a performance element that concretizes that event as something that is no longer just imagined but *actually* happened' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 120). This, in Stieglerian terms, can be seen to represent the opening up of traumatypical experiences that take the subject out of their normal milieu, transporting and transforming them in a digital virtual space, the experience of which, according to Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, they can then 'feed back into their everyday life' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 124).

However, much of this argument rests on issues of individual agency, reflection and awareness, and the modality of performance between the individual and their milieu. This is one of the central differences between *otium* and *negotium*, the former allows for reflection and agency and a transformation of behaviour in ways that the latter does not. So, returning to Stiegler's concern over the question of marketing, there are important distinctions between his position and Molesworth and Denegri-Knott. For the latter, the market is 'trying to "keep up" with consumers' imagination' and consumers produce desires 'thus encouraging development in market offering' (Molesworth and Denegri-Knott, 2007: 18). In other words, consumers are driving the market conditions that are then fed back to the consumer. This puts agency back on the side of the consumer. Stiegler,

however, would argue that those desires are already being produced and affected by the existing market conditions and in this way the novelty of these desires is highly questionable. This returns us to the spontaneity of the creative condition that, as with the noetic soul, is an intermittent process.

The ability to dream, and the potential to realize these dreams, is fundamental to the new contributive political economy. Combined with the other artistic modes of citizen, believer, and spirit worker I have outlined above, the consumer in a digital age (founded on an image economy of audiovisual media) must become a creator, interpreter and self-publisher of dreams that are *singularly* their own, but realized within an aesthetic sphere created through the participatory production of symbolic exchange.

Digital pharmaka allow for the re-appropriation of this process from the market to transform individuals and therefore the process of psychosocial individuation. However, it necessitates a new hermeneutic of the image, of the consumer-consciousness as image-reader, to rival the community of readers brought about by the printed word. This singularity would represent a noetic individuation in the time of digital media.

In my concluding remarks, I will offer a few examples of the types of self-expressive, transformative, spiritual acting out that this chapter has provided the foundation for. I will look at an example of individual (psychic) individuation as well as an example of collective (social) individuation.

## **Chapter 8:**

### **Conclusion**

I've seen nations rise and fall  
I've heard their stories, heard them all  
But love's the only engine of survival'

- Leonard Cohen, "The Future", from *The Future*<sup>23</sup>

My thesis has shown that Stiegler's fundamental concern is for the cultivation of spirit within the hyperindustrial age, and that what he calls for is a 're-enchantment of the world' to combat the tendency towards the total proletarianization of life. I have argued in my final chapter that this requires a version of Stiegler's economy of contribution in which the individual becomes an amateur artist. The main conditions for this contributory model of society were care and civility, within which I identified the following essential factors: time and attention as modes of subjective development, knowledge and signification as modes of participation, recognition and spontaneity as aims of ethics, and imperfection and imagination as conditions of creativity. This would then help to overcome the increasing loss of spiritual individuation caused by successive phases of technological grammatization. In this way, the individual as amateur artist would be a citizen of public craft, a believer and interrogator of fantasy, a worker of spirit as a maker of signs, and a self-publisher of unreasonable dreams. Individual self-expression on these terms would create an 'acting out' of spirit

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Leibovitz, 2014: 159.

that would establish an elevating tendency in society as a whole, thereby creating a new form of digital social fabric.

More broadly, I have argued that the age of digital media requires an understanding and cultivation of a hermeneutics of the image that creates a community of 'image readers'. In conclusion, therefore, I will give two examples of how I think this can occur in the time of digital media. The first focuses on how digital media can be used to transform individuals, thereby, in Stiegler's terms, 'transindividuating' them so that their singular transformation becomes universal. The second example focuses on how digital media can transform social structures, institutions and culture. So, to borrow Stiegler's reference to the film director Renoir, this would change the 'rules of the game'. Lastly, I will make a few remarks concerning the coronavirus pandemic and Stiegler's use of 'otium'.

### 1) Individual (Psychic) Individuation: The Age of Netflix and YouTube

Stiegler's contention, following the Frankfurt School critique, is that our thoughts and behaviour are increasingly influenced and controlled by the digital media and programming industries. Yet, at the same time, the very processes that these industries employ are increasingly being made available to use by individuals. In other words, we are also able to take control of how we are being 'programmed' and 'aesthetically conditioned'.

Netflix is a good example of this. As I have shown, the history of television is both a history of analogue technology (from the printing press, to radio, to cinema, then television) as well as, simultaneously, the formation of mass culture. With the development of digital television, which has developed in conjunction with the telecommunications industries and the Internet, we are now able to select and control our viewing habits far more. This means that we can influence our own aesthetic environment, thereby selecting what, in Stiegler's terms, our 'secondary retentions' are. This, of course, relies on our being aware of what the good and bad fictions are, but with greater agency we are able to switch off as well as tune in. The notion of television as simply a passive medium, as I have argued in chapter six, is a reductive reading of the dynamic between the television screen and the viewer. The guitarist John Mayer became a Grammy award-winning songwriter because as a child he watched Michael J Fox's character in *Back to the Future* play the guitar. It would be hard to argue that this was not a transformative experience for the young John Mayer.

Added to this is that in the current age, such viewing can happen on digital devices in a variety of places. The down side to this is, of course, a public whose attention span has, from the beginning of their lives, been captured by digital media, and is perpetually lost in their screen. Yet, with a critical awareness of this process, the benefit is that we can alter the aesthetic environment we are in *by* becoming lost in the screen. The sense of trauma that comes with total attention capture is, perhaps, traced in the demand for a more responsive media, and for the opportunity to express oneself through those media.

Being lost in the screen can be transformative, as well as potentially destructive. The question is not the medium nor the method but the content. It concerns the quality of the digital content one is consuming. So, the other benefit to the current age is the plethora of choice that is available. There is both more financial and distribution capacity to produce programming on the Netflix model. Inevitably this leads to an increase in mediocre programming, yet it also means there is greater capacity for high quality programming (for example, television series such as *Orange is the New Black*, *The Crown*, *Stranger Things*, *Mindhunter*, *Black Mirror*, and documentaries such as *Making a Murderer* and *13th*) and furthermore that this programming will be, to use the industry term, 'readily available'. The moral concern regarding the quality of 'good' television (in both substantive and ethical content) has always been there, as it was with the advent of print, radio, and cinema before; but, again, the notion of a viewing public that passively consumes mediocre programming without question is to simplify a complex issue bound up in debates and value judgements concerning 'high' and 'low' art.<sup>24</sup>

The advent of sites such as YouTube also enables individuals to produce content that changes and contributes to the digital aesthetic culture. This allows people to self-publish, to add self-expressive content to the culture of their immediate and their wider society. Again, this relies on a level of know-how and knowledge, but again the Internet is also a site, when used well, for such learning.

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<sup>24</sup> Oscar Wilde knew this debate well and consciously played upon it in subverting the conventional drawing-room comedy with duplicitous dialogue that was both elusive and critical in its ambiguity.

In this way, we have the 'power to determine' our aesthetic performance, providing we engage critically with digital media, so that we know how, and are aware of, the choices we make, thus enabling us to create aesthetic environments around us that allow for elevating self-expression of spirit.

## 2) Social (Collective) Individuation: George Floyd and Black Lives Matter

The second example shows how dramatically and quickly culture can change in the age of digital media, precisely because of its operating speed and connectivity. The shocking footage of the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, sparked international protests supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

Firstly, both the speed at which these images were shared and the protests were organized, as well the international global reach of the incident, were due to the technical capabilities and cinematic power of digital social media. In Stiegler's terms, this 'technical milieu' allows for the 'associated milieu'.

Secondly, this horrific event demonstrates how the virtual public stage of digital media is the modern equivalent to the reflexivity of Greek drama. Digital media provides a now globally connected society to reflect on its culture, its conditions and its values. It is the contemporary equivalent to 'the active mirror' (Turner) of classical tragedy that allows for an interrogation, a now global questioning, of

the world in which we live and the manner in which we are able to live it. This is shown by the subsequent debates and action taken over the statues of public figures that either directly benefited from slavery or were enablers and supporters of its practice.

This is a collective and global cultural questioning of what society chooses to value and the changes it wishes to make. It is the solution provided by digital media to the ethical problem of modernity: that is with greater individual freedom comes a diminishing of social bonds.

#### A final remark concerning coronavirus and Stiegler's *otium*

The final months of this thesis coincided with the coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19. Consequently, these concluding remarks are being written as the many parts of the world have experienced, are still experiencing, or re-entering various forms of 'lockdown'.

In Stiegler's terms, this period has been a 'state of shock', one which the international community has had to absorb. Lockdown itself enforced a form of 'otium', a suspension of the current state of accelerated economic business and activity, meaning a slowing down of culture. Whilst it highlighted many underlying socio-economic problems (such as the disproportionate deaths within the black, often poorer, communities; as well as the increase in domestic violence), it also forced a reflection and re-appraisal of individual and social

values, such as, which professions we value and what new models of business practice are possible in the digital age that allow for a balance between the professional, familial and the personal. This makes a possible a reframing of discussions concerning the culture of work and employment, as well as provoking thought about what new modes digital technology enable. Out of this temporary suspension of accelerated activity it is likely, then, that new 'therapeutic' working practices will emerge.

The pandemic was pharmacological in that global capitalism both contributed to the conditions for the spread of the disease (through a culture of accelerated global business and travel) as well as providing possible solutions for a form of continuation of society through the use of digital media. It also forced many individuals and companies to properly 'adopt' the capabilities of digital technology, something that is often difficult due, as Stiegler argues, to the exponential rate of permanent innovation.

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