

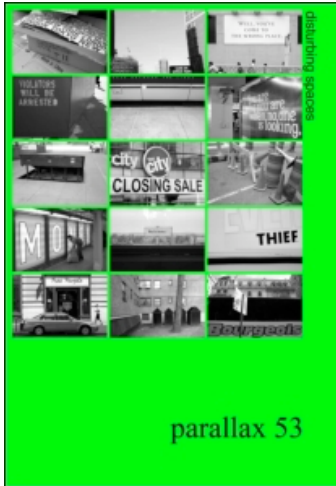
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## Biopolitics and the Homonormative Subject; Epistemic Values and Epistemologies of the Eye; Individualization and the Play of Memories

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<sup>10</sup> David Baird, 'Scientific Instrument Making, Epistemology and the Conflict Between Gift and Commodity Economics', *Philosophy and Technology* 2, 3-4 (1997), pp.25-45. Baird makes a related argument regarding scientific instrument making as a gift economy thriving in a small, collaborative techno-scientific collective.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Hyde cited in Mark Osteen, 'Introduction', in *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines*, ed. Mark Osteen (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.28-29. Osteen also suggests

that Foucault's 'author-function' may operate as a gift in the same way when an 'appreciative reader increases the value of a text by exposing what wasn't previously apparent in it' (p.29).

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## Individualization and the Play of Memories

Bernard Stiegler. *Acting Out*.  
Trans. David Barison, Daniel Ross and Patrick Crogan.  
(Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008)

What is Husserlian phenomenology today? Heidegger answered in his 1963 essay, 'My Way to Phenomenology', that 'the age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over'.<sup>1</sup> One may suspect that this is Heidegger's bias, since the master to whom once he dedicated his *Sein und Zeit*, refused to continue the friendship since 1933.<sup>2</sup> But following Heidegger's death, the naturalizing phenomenology movement led by the cognitive scientists in the 1980s, also put an end to Husserlian phenomenology.<sup>3</sup> Today there are still journals dedicated to phenomenology, but the name Husserl either remains a target of attack by postmodern thinkers or the source of historical studies of a movement once called phenomenology.

Bernard Stiegler is probably one of today's most innovative philosophers whose work reinvents Husserl's theory of memories to demonstrate an urgency of the re-appropriation of technology. Stiegler explores in Husserl the interaction of the primary retention (impression), secondary retention (recollection), tertiary retention (image) and protention (anticipation). Stiegler, however, adds with Freudian psychoanalysis another dimension – a thought that Husserl tried to avoid, that is, a psychologized phenomenology, if not psychologism. This contradiction and intimacy (phenomenology vs. psychology), which haunted Husserl until his death, is also the boundary which once stopped his successors from entering. In Stiegler's invention this boundary becomes a necessity, which reflects our existence qua reality of the technological world. In *Acting Out*, a small volume of a collection of two lectures by Stiegler, he

presents to us two Husserls: first, there is the philosopher of phenomenological *epokhe*; and second, there is the philosopher of memory. But Husserl nevertheless only appears as a mask in this book, a mask shared by two actors who 'act out'. One is Stiegler himself who demonstrates a successful individuation;<sup>4</sup> the other is Richard Durn who presents a failure qua the urgency of a battle against a technological hegemony.

The first lecture is the confession of Stiegler's personal experience of becoming a philosopher, a secret that belongs to the most intimate memory of a philosopher. It is a legend of a young man named Bernard Stiegler who did not even finish secondary school, of a one-time member of the French Communist Party, and of a bank robber who was sentenced to five years in prison, and finally of a world-known philosopher. How did this happen? When one confesses, how can the audience know that the confessor is faithful to his words? Stiegler was aware of this problem of recollection, as he uses the term *après-coup*, a French translation of Freud's '*Nachträglichkeit*'. The word has a double meaning. It can be understood as a recursive temporality in which the present also conditions the past, especially when Freud refers to trauma; it also refers to primal fantasies, the imagination that never happened nor is happening.<sup>5</sup> To recall how to philosophize in the language of philosophy is precisely the *après-coup*, the recollection of a traumatic memory from the present, which also demands a manifestation of a style of narration.

But Stiegler is a philosopher of time, of memory, or more precisely, of hypomnesia.<sup>6</sup> A philosopher of time has to be faithful to time (otherwise he becomes a sci-fi writer), in terms of both secondary retention – his memory of the prison – and his tertiary retention – the story told and published under his name. What does it mean to philosophize? Modern philosophers philosophize in the system of philosophical knowledge inside the department of philosophy, setting up connections of thoughts and arguments in academic papers,

while forgetting that philosophy is not only about theories, but also practices, or in Bernard Stiegler's term, 'acts'. Philosophy as a practice or spiritual practice is Pierre Hadot's exploration of ancient philosophy. Ancient philosophers attempted to attain the tranquillity of the mind and the harmony of the self and the universe through philosophical practice.<sup>7</sup> A philosopher always starts philosophizing from the basic motif 'know thyself'.

Five years of incarceration gave Stiegler a particular milieu in which the external milieu was suspended, while the internal milieu was reduced to the secondary retention of the world before his incarceration. Stiegler acts by reading and writing. He read Mallarmé every morning as soon as he awoke 'to avoid those uncontrollable protentions that would occur as the waking reveries of the morning'.<sup>8</sup> He read Plato, but developed his own concept of 'by default', which 'against Plato's phantasm of pure liberty, opposed to all alienation and all default, to all default posed as alienation'.<sup>9</sup> It is through reading and writing that Stiegler philosophized as well as survived in prison. He recalls, 'if this had not happened I would have become insane or totally asocial'.<sup>10</sup>

The suspension of the world also allowed Stiegler to discover the *phenomenological epokhe* long before he encountered the work of Husserl.<sup>11</sup> It means to suspend the natural attitude of seeing the world as it is, and to attain an apodictic understanding through reduction. This reduction not only works on the objects of observation, but also on the subject, by suspending his world, which is in this case the experience in prison. He tried to love this freedom. The occasional visits from friends (which he calls micro-interruptions<sup>12</sup>) remind him not only of the world of which he is suspended from, but also of the freedom and peace granted by the prison that was shattered from time to time by these visits.

But the freedom in the prison is after all not *die Freiheit* (freedom), but a fragile *eigentliche Existenz* (authentic existence), a Heideggerian approach to the transcendental reduction in which the They (*das Man*) are excluded in the reduction.<sup>13</sup> But Stiegler is sceptical of this authenticity, renouncing it at the end of the book by saying 'six years after having announced the danger of *das Man* he wore the swastika'.<sup>14</sup>

How does one, excited by discovering the 'phenomenological epokhe' in practice, finally reject the authentic self, which is such a logical

consequence? This break between Stiegler and Heidegger is fundamental in that he ceased to call himself a Heideggerian. Heidegger finds the default of being-with (*Mitsein*), but he could not think from the default, he took the default as a fault. A fault has to be corrected, but a default has to be transformed in favour of becoming. A default may have to be understood in a double sense: firstly, default as a beginning in the sense that an origin is unthinkable; and secondly, default as a method to affirm the necessity of the already-there as the possibility of all discourse.

The default is the pre-individual milieu of Gilbert Simondon, who Stiegler encountered later. To philosophize is to singularize with the default of the milieu, to identify the significance of the world by transforming with the world. This is precisely Simondon's idea of psychic and collective individuation, the asymptotic relation between the *I* and the *We*. The 'phenomenological epokhe' is not the end, but the end of the beginning. The authenticity of the self is not outside the default, but always within the default, the default is always a necessity, a necessity of *philia* (love).

Compared with Stiegler, Richard Durn is the one who failed to singularize himself. Durn, the local activist from the city of Nanterre in France, who stormed the city's town hall, shooting and killing eight people before he committed suicide. According to Stiegler, this 'act' suffered from the problem of primordial narcissism. When one does not love oneself, one is not able to love the world, there is no 'we' but they, or what Nietzsche calls the herd. The destruction of the primordial narcissism is the pharmacological effect of modern technology. This is another break from Heidegger; the modern technology is not a fault but a default as Platonic *pharmakon*, which is at the same time good and bad. The calendarity and cardinality are systems, which basically facilitate the becoming of the 'we' by opening up the commonality of *philia*, love and desire.<sup>15</sup> But the problem we face today is the control of calendarity and cardinality by capitalism.

In his investigation of the TV industry, Stiegler showed from a research on the relation between the public and their media an interesting phenomenon. In this study, the publics' response to TV was 'I don't believe it anymore. I watch it but I hate it'. This reaction is the loss of libido, where one is not able to signify from watching TV, that is to say, there is no desire, but only drives, or, in Stiegler's term, an 'ill-being'. How did this happen? Stiegler demonstrates a new order of the

play of the Husserlian primary, secondary and tertiary attentions. Stiegler identified that in Husserl's 1905 lectures on 'Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness' he is not able to fully explore the relation between these three memories, since to Husserl the temporal object, for example, a melody, is nothing but a homogeneous flow of consciousness.<sup>16</sup> In his later work, 'On the Origin of Geometry', Husserl took a different approach to ideality, which is concretized in writing, drawing or, generally, making. It grants a new status to technics in phenomenology since the eidetic of objective knowledge is now not in the speculation of the mind (e.g. the phenomenological reduction) but in making, while at the same time these two do not coherently connect with each other. Stiegler radicalizes the play of retentions by saying that the tertiary memory actually conditions the primary and secondary memory, hence protention. These memories are always in a circuit. Stiegler's critique of Husserl coincides with the critique of Paul Ricœur that Husserl's inner time-consciousness did not explore the dynamics of the circuit, as well as the critique from Michel Henry that the given is taken for granted in Husserl, which can be said in general: the object is always indifferent to the subject.<sup>17</sup>

Stiegler's move is to bring Freudian psychoanalysis into the circuit. This is an innovative move, at the same time as being a de-phenomenologization or psychoanalyzation of Husserl's philosophy. Stiegler suggests that the hypersynchronization of TV programs constitutes a homogenous secondary retention.<sup>18</sup> For example, watching the same commercial broadcast of the World Cup finals – this synchronization of time – synchronizes not only a common time (consciousness of time), but also the time of consciousness (*Zeitbewusstsein*).<sup>19</sup> The secondary retention conditions the primary retention as selection criteria, they then together condition the protention, which is also imagination. The synchronization leads to the loss of diachrony, which is *différance* or singularity. Because of this hypersynchronization, one is not able to signify anymore, which is thus similar to what Richard Durn wrote in his diary that 'everything seems insignificant to him, and he himself cannot signify'<sup>20</sup> – in the words of a psychoanalytical language: the loss of libido, of philia.

Stiegler attempts to demonstrate that technology actually conditions our consciousness, hence the psychical power to singularize, and once this hypersynchronization is at work, it destroys the diachrony as well as the primordial narcissism and

leads to the disaster of asignification. If this logic is true, there are still some important questions that remain unexplored. First at issue is what kind of technology shall we have at the age of globalization when the calendarity not only conditions a common time, but also a common retention and protention? Is the analysis only applicable to temporal objects or further? Does the move from TV to video sharing websites, or further to social networking websites in general make any difference? Second, if this logic is true, it is not the libido that conditions consciousness, but the reversed order. Then what kind of consciousness will be able to activate the libido if it is already lost? Third, if technology is the source of hypersynchronization, where are the places for other technics like customs, idioms intrinsic to specific ethnicity or class? Are they not able to make difference in the process of individuation?

These are questions that perhaps cannot be covered in a book of this length. However, Stiegler raises questions that point to the problem of the self, the necessity of taking care of oneself. Taking care is not simply a personal practice, but is also a strategy against the hegemony of the industrial control of memory, that is, the evil. Stiegler suggests that the future does not lay in the negation of the evil, but the transformation of the evil, since the evil (the technology) is also *pharmacological*. The affirmation of the contingency of modern technology is another break from Heidegger, who proposed a retreat to poetic thinking or *Gelassenheit*, or living in a hut in the Black Forest, while for Stiegler it is a battle, or as he puts it at the end of his text, '[w]hat is evil is the we, disquieted about the future of the we, that renounces *critique* and *invention* or, in other words, *combat*'.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* [1969], trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1972), p.82.

<sup>2</sup> See the interview with Martin Heidegger by Maria Alter and John D. Caputo conducted on 23 September 1966 and published in *Der Spiegel* on 31 May 1976 under the title 'Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten'.

<sup>3</sup> See *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Jean Petitot et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Individuation and individualization are two different concepts. For Simondon and Stiegler,

individualization is the product or end result, while individuation is always a process or becoming in which the subject tends to achieve the in-divisibility of the self which could never be realized.

<sup>5</sup> For the concept of *après-coup*, see Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* [1967], trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 1988. pp.111-14.

<sup>6</sup> For the concept of hyponemesis and its relation to technology, see Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* [1994], trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* [1981], ed. and intr. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Malden: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.20.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.24.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.19.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.22.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.19.

<sup>13</sup> See Martin Heidegger, 'Das Problem der Bezeugung einer eigentlichen existenziellen Möglichkeit', §54, in *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), pp.267-70.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.80.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.49.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed critique on Husserl's phenomenology of Time-Consciousness, please see Stiegler's chapter 'Temporal Object and Retentional Finitude' in his *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation* [1996], trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp.188-243.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology* [1990], trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Following Stiegler, synchronization also implies diachronization, which is to say *différance*, but hypersynchronization means synchronization without diachrony.

<sup>19</sup> According to Husserl, these are two different concepts; the former is the subject of psychology, and the latter is the subject of phenomenology. See Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1964).

<sup>20</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, p.56.

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