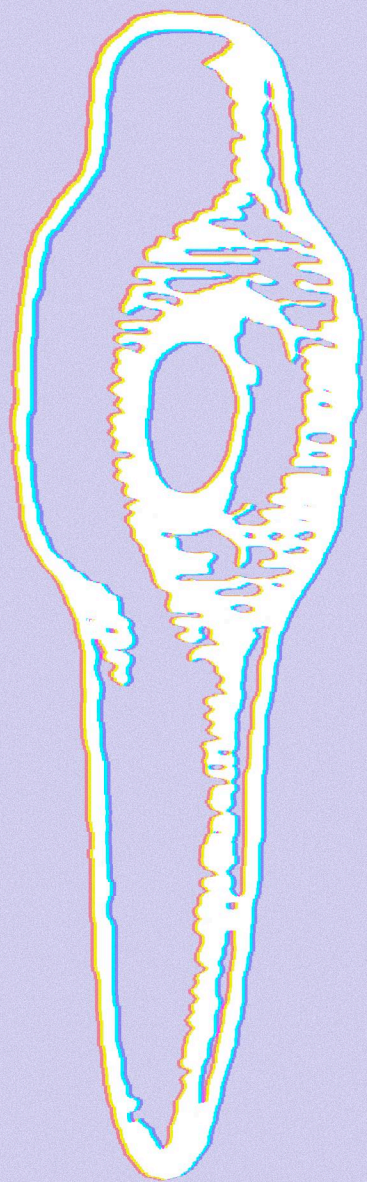


MODELING VALUE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE



an introduction

A Prefatory Remark

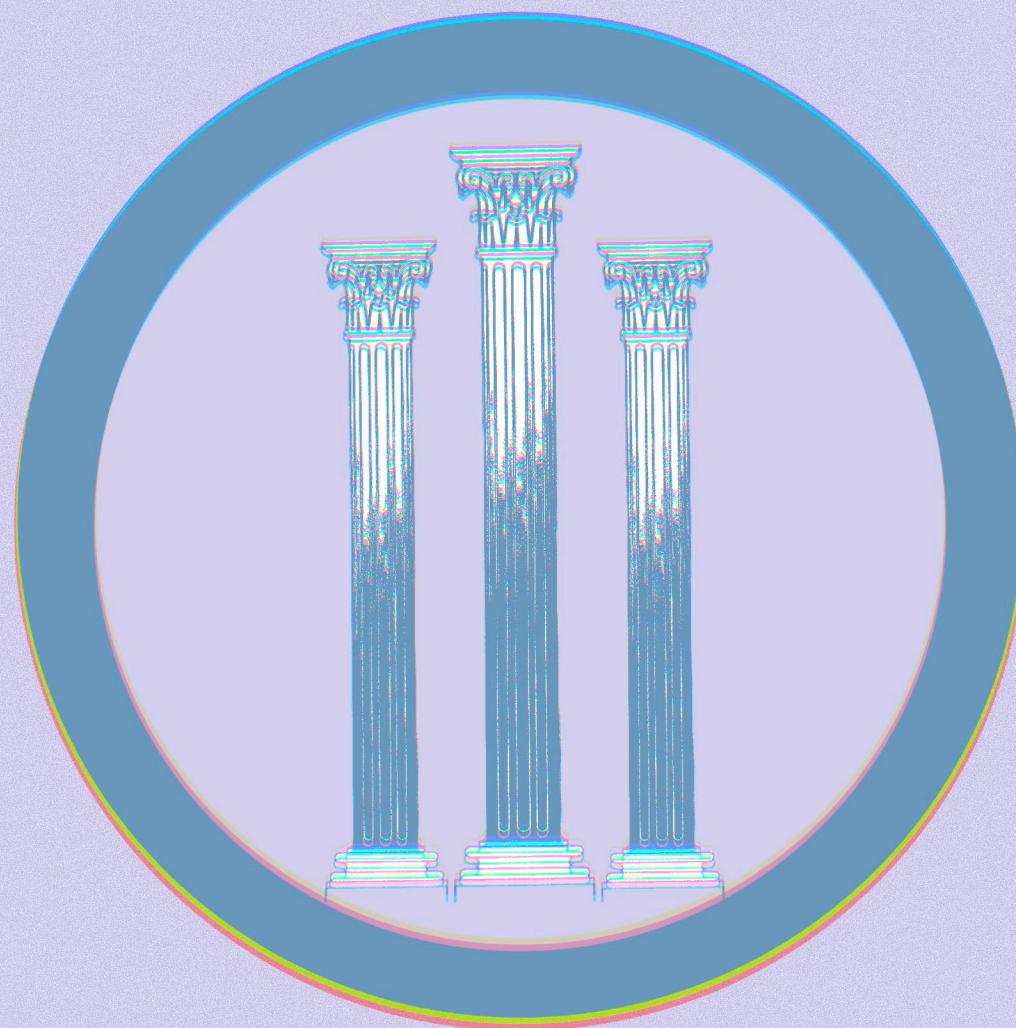
As I sit down at my computer, right now, to compose this piece of writing that I hope you will someday read, as I address you as a dear friend, I address you as someone who is afraid. I spend most of my time denying the realities I am going to be writing about, made numb by habits of consumption which amount to irresponsibility and disavowal. This does not mean I am not haunted. It just means that I am not always able to bear witness.

However, there are moments of rupture in my psychic experience, in which it is no longer possible to ignore these realities, when I feel an interminable urgency to act, hearing the commands of specters, re-remembering memories in which I can hear the messianic voices of those who may never be born. In these moments, I adopt my fear as my own, my fear that it is no longer possible to care in the Anthropocene. I adopt it as necessary for this situation over which I am not the master, but in the face of which I nevertheless feel the responsibility to act. Not to re-act, but to pass to the act, to make a decision.

Early on in his philosophical career, Bernard Stiegler wrote that "*Ressentiment* and denegation are factors of ruin as well as irreducible tendencies" (Technics & Time, 1, p. X). In the temporary suspension of these tendencies, I address you in writing in the hopes that a space may be generated between us in which a future could be made possible. In this writing, I hope to introduce you to a thinker whose work interrupted my life at its most self-destructive point, several years ago, at a time when I needed this interruption the most. The work of Bernard Stiegler, as well as of Daniel Ross and the rest of the Internation Collective, has initiated within me hope that a future is still possible.

Thank you for time, which is now more valuable than ever before.

Your friend,
Brian



Bernard Stiegler



Bernard Stiegler began to philosophize in a way most improbable; in a cell at Saint Michel Prison in Toulouse, following an armed bank robbery in 1978. While confined to a prison cell, with the whole world suspended for him as an individual, in his failed attempts to write poetry and literature, he writes that “I had nothing whatsoever to say, nothing to tell or write to anyone else — not even to myself” (Age of Disruption, 206). This led to a transformation of his reading, discovering linguistics and philosophy in a more active way, which “changed his mind”, so to speak, and led to the passage to the act that is writing. During this time, until his release in 1983, Bernard studied at the Université de Toulouse-Le-Mirail via correspondence with Gérard Granel, eventually leading him to develop a relationship with Jacques Derrida that facilitated his becoming as a professional philosopher. These experiences of reading, writing, and thinking would lead him to discover the essential technical principle at the heart of humanity, a line of thought he lays out in his Technics and Time series, beginning in 1994. What makes Stiegler revolutionary is his positioning the human default of origin as a technical condition, suggesting that humankind is inseparable from technics and critiquing the opposition between *epistēmē* and *tekhnē* that has characterized the entire history of philosophy since its beginning. For him, technics is not secondary or accidental to rational knowledge, but is rather its necessary condition of possibility, through what he calls exosomatization.

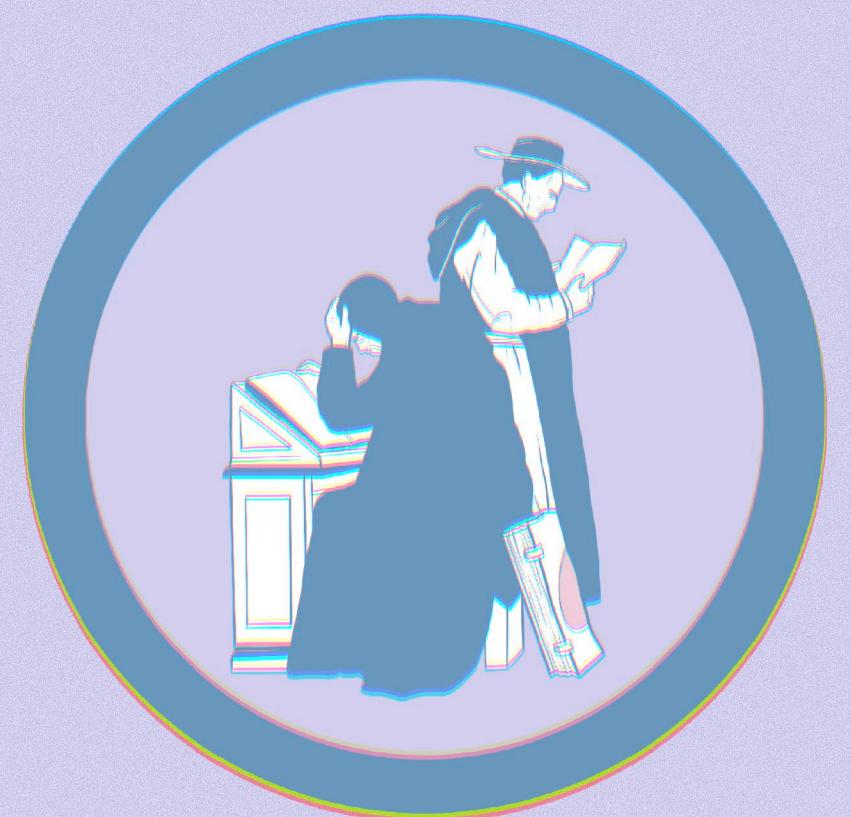
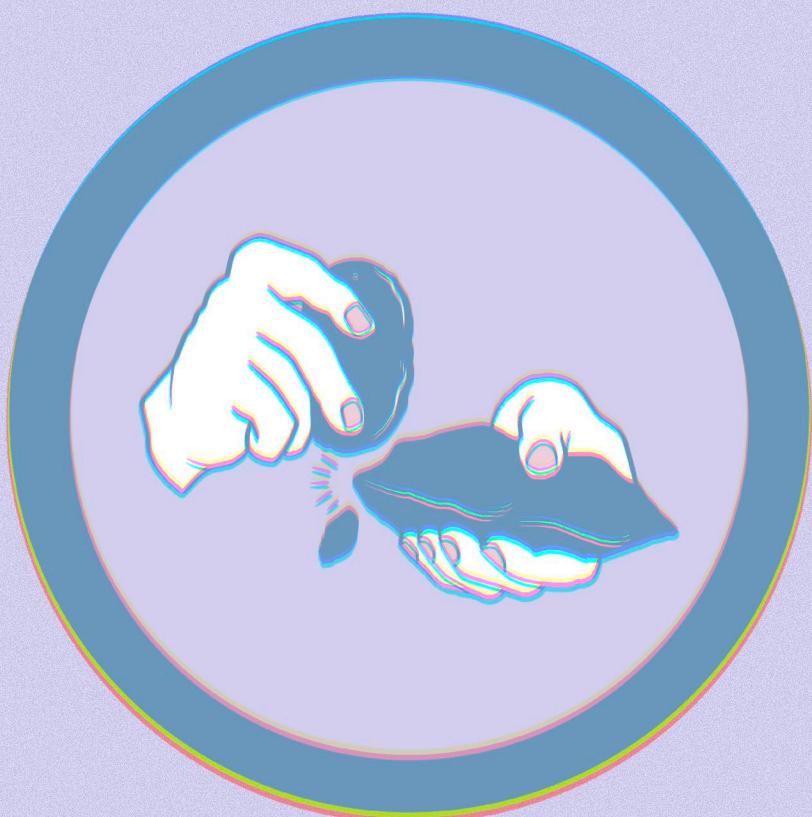
Originary Technicity



Stiegler's first book, echoing the title of Martin Heidegger's magnum opus, melds a critique of Heidegger's account of temporality, Derrida's notion of *différance*, Gilbert Simondon's anti-Aristotelian concept of individuation, Bertrand Gille's history of technology, the anthropotechnic anthropology of André Leroi-Gouhan, and the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus to construct a theory of hominization and technicization (hominization as technicization).

In this volume, through a reading of Heidegger, Stiegler establishes the idea that the temporality of human existence is irreducibly technical. For Heidegger's *Dasein*, temporality is a question of inheritance, drawing upon a past one has not lived oneself that casts one into an indeterminate future. For Stiegler, one's access to this non-lived past (and thus this future) is always technical. Following the work of Gille, Leroi-Gourhan, and Simondon, he elaborates the historical dynamic by which initial shocks coming from the innovation of the technical system must be adjusted to and socialized by the "other" systems (the psychic system as well as the social systems of the political economy).

Stiegler teaches us that the concurrence of technics and time, though traditionally repressed, is today made undeniable by the accelerating speed of innovation of contemporary technology, causing ever-increasing disadjustments in hyper-industrial society, disadjustments that are increasingly more difficult to overcome, difficulties that call for a new consideration of technicity. He thus advances the notion that technical objects are inorganic organized beings and technics, as a process of exteriorization, is the pursuit of life by means other than life.



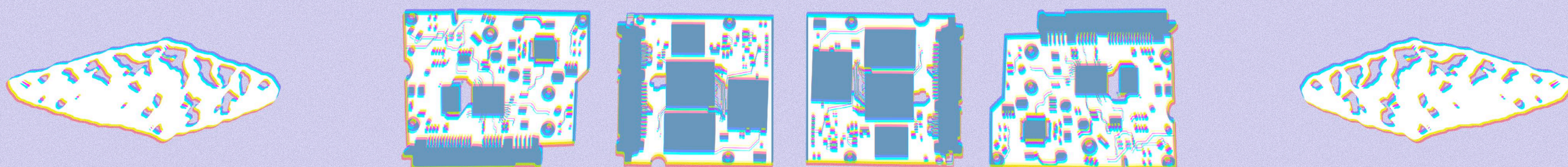
Retention & Protention

It is his conclusions in *Technics and Time, Vol. 1* that will lead him to deconstruct Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's account of primary and secondary retention as well as protention. This extends and elaborates on the idea that time and consciousness are thoroughly technical. For Stiegler, memory and attention must be understood as part of a tripartite process:

1. *Primary retention* is what is often referred to as perception. It is the retaining of the "now" in the "now" of sensory perception. It is a retaining of the world we are part of, a world that is made sensible to us by the possibility of primary retention. Our stream of attention, or consciousness, is composed of a series of "now's" of primary retention.

2. *Secondary retentions* are what are often referred to as memory as such. They are primary retentions that have been retained in the psyche of the individual. They are primary retentions that have become secondary, that is, past. Secondary retentions contain secondary protentions, which are anticipations of the future based on what is past. This arrangement of secondary retention and protention form the criteria for primary retention, which is thus a primary selection. Our psyches "select" what we are to perceive in the moment of primary retention based on these anticipations of the future which are based on memories of the past. Our attention or consciousness is thus this play between secondary retention, secondary protention, and primary retention.

3. *Tertiary retentions* are exteriorizations of streams of attention, exteriorizations of memory such as music, writing, painting, machines, computers, etc. Some tertiary retentions are intended to be used as memory supports, such as calendars and books, while some are not, such as hammers and toys. However, all artifacts are non-organic organized matter, and they are all tertiary retention as exteriorizations of mental phenomena, and thus they are all exteriorizations of memory. It is crucial for Stiegler to understand that primary and secondary retention are conditioned by tertiary retention. The criteria of primary selection is formed socially through retentions that are shared, and these require the world of tertiary retentions they are embedded in in order to transmit them, starting with transitional objects and speech, and passing through cultural objects of all kinds.



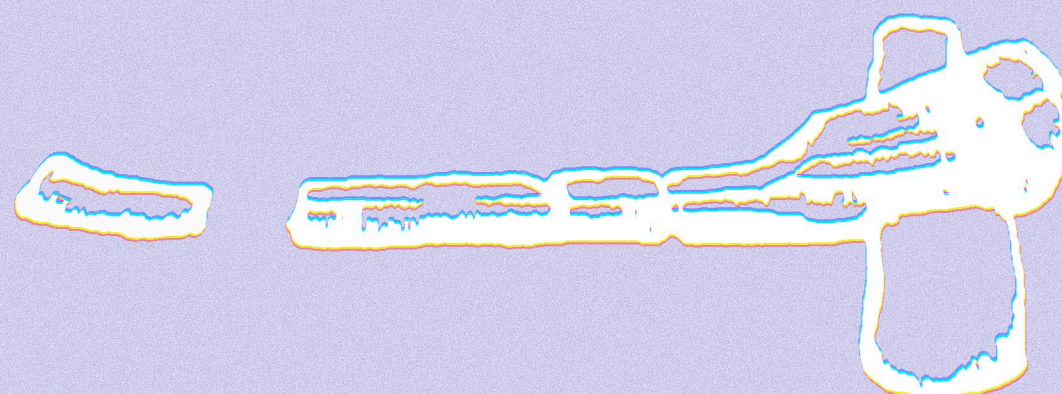


Organology & Pharmacology



What brought Stiegler to the lines of thought by which he discovered the irreducible technicity of the human was initially a reflection on how and why human beings seem to behave with a tension between the tendency to regress (into forgetting or barbarism) and the counter-tendency to elevate (to new truth, beauty, or justice). He concluded that it was because the milieu of our noetic souls is technical, and that, since our souls depend on this technical milieu to live, this milieu has the capacity to either disadjust our souls or provide supports for new ways of living. This essential relation between our souls and our exterior milieu will go on to be called organological, designating the transductive resonance between and the inseparability of the technical organs, psychosomatic organs, and social organizations that together govern human experience. The science of this situation will be called general organology, and requires a new relationship between the disciplines.

This practical and scientific framework is necessary because this situation which is called organological is also pharmacological. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates designates alphabetic writing as a *pharmakon*, at once a poison and a remedy which simultaneously aids memory by providing a support for it and atrophies memory by becoming a crutch. Stiegler expands the notion of *pharmakon* to all objects of technics, inscribing writing within a history of technics that precedes it with fire and other tools, and surpasses it with the printing press, industrial machinery, and digital technology as a new technology of writing, among other technical artifacts of all kinds. What all of these technical objects share in common is the tendency to disrupt current ways of being and the potential counter-tendency they make possible through new ways of making/doing, living, and thinking. Socrates denounced the sophists for their instrumental use of writing to short-circuit productive thinking. What he repressed, and what was continued to be more or less repressed until Stiegler was that this instrumentality is essential to thought and cannot be scapegoated or denounced. This *pharmakon* must be cared for. This care entails the production of new knowledge based on the new *pharmakon*. This knowledge must be a toxicology, an understanding the poisonous effects of the *pharmakon*, and a therapeutics containing prescriptions for new ways of making/doing, living, and thinking. This is the task of general organology, which is thus at its core a pharmacology.



The Anthropocene

Stiegler's intensified focus on the pharmacological dimension of organological life, starting in 2001, was a response to what he saw as "signs of a precipitation towards the worst" appearing in the political sphere. The events of September 11, 2001 as well as the rise of far-right political movements in France led him to decide to "write only in an absolutely direct, visible, legible and primary relation to questions of political economy" (Age of Disruption, 76). At that time, he put his *Technics and Time* series on hold in order to write more directly political texts like *For A New Critique of Political Economy* and *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (although the question of the political was already a central issue before, in the necessity of the political to individuate the shocks of the technical). He saw that the limits of the social and political systems were reaching a limit threshold, a breaking point, and that the necessity of political action was becoming more and more urgent.

At stake for Bernard was the possibility of understanding the tensions and problems of the current global economic system, and the possibility of overcoming the tensions of this system, a system that he would begin to call the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is a geological term for the current epoch of planet Earth which is supposed to have begun after the end of the Holocene, this epoch marked by the effect that human behavior begins to have on the biosphere itself. For him, though, this epoch cannot be simply understood as geological, environmental, or even meteorological, but simultaneously technical, economic, political, as well as bearing an essential relationship to the psychic systems of individuals.

The Anthropocene must be inscribed within the history of technics, within which it begins with the advent of the industrial revolution and the social, economic, and political effects which follow it. This industrial revolution, which is an organological revolution, generates a process of proletarianization (which, for Karl Marx is his *Grundrisse* and for Stiegler always, is the destruction of knowledge), first with the advent of industrial machinery and the concurrent destruction of work-knowledge, then with the advent of the audiovisual technologies of the mass media and the concurrent destruction of life-knowledge, and lastly with the advent of digital technology and its concurrent destruction of theoretical knowledge, or knowledge of how to think. To think capitalism is to think the way that it appropriates each subsequent technical innovation to transform itself, destroy knowledge, and establish hegemony over the entire world. The epistemological framework of capitalism is calculation (which is explicitly not knowledge for Stiegler), and this framework because fully installed in the digital reticulation of the world, thus also establishing generalized proletarianization. In the Anthropocene, industrialization threatens not only the biodiversity of the biosphere as the condition of possibility of life through the toxic effects of carbonization, but also the faculties of knowing and desiring that would make a solution to such destruction possible through its destruction of libidinal desire and knowledge. If we do not address the destruction of thinking and care that digital technology and consumerism initiates, that leads to the destruction of any political will, the project of decarbonization will be likely impossible.

In order to understand the Anthropocene and the necessity and possibility of overcoming it, one must understand the last theoretical turn Bernard made before the end of his life, which was a placing of the physics concepts of entropy and negentropy at the heart of his reflections.





Our concluding remarks regarding Stiegler's discussion of entropy and the Neganthropocene will be included in the coming days

Brian & Hampton

