

2009 Vol 9 Issue No. 1 — Bernard Stiegler and the Question of Technics

> EDITORIAL

Bernard Stiegler and the Question of Technics

Bernard Stiegler's concept of technics has emerged recently as an important contribution to studies of the relation between technology, time and the human. Technics, or the prosthetic supplementation of the human in "default" of the origin, is the condition of "life that knows." In *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, drawing from and critiquing various sources, including the work on evolutionary biology by Gilbert Simondon, on palaeoanthropology by Andre Leroi-Gourhan, on Martin Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein and Jacques Derrida's *différance* as the logic of the supplement, Stiegler has proposed arguments about technology and its relation to the human that suggest a formulation of human life as "epiphylogenetic," that is, evolving according to the logic of prosthetic supplementation. In later works, such as the subsequent volumes of *Technics and Time*, and works such as *Taking Care*, he explores the role of hyper-capitalism and cinematographic technologies in contemporary consciousness and becoming. This issue of Transformations features articles that address these themes and others in the work of Bernard Stiegler.

The first paper in this issue is Stephen Barker's "Transformation as an Ontological Imperative: The [Human] Future According to Bernard Stiegler." In an informed and wide-ranging discussion, Stephen Barker, the translator of Volumes 2 and 3 of *Technics and Time*, explores a number of Stiegler's key themes, in particular, the battle for intelligence and attention that is conducted by contemporary hyper-capitalism and entertainment media, and Stiegler's desire for a transformation and re-enchantment of the psychic and collective "transindividual."

Continuing the exploration of the influence of technical formations on consciousness, in "The Duck and the Philosopher: Rhythms of Editing and Thinking between Bernard Stiegler and The Ister," Patrick Crogan analyses the essay-film *The Ister* by David Barrison and Daniel Ross in terms of Stiegler's contribution to the film and its construction within a non-linear editing software application. In an intentional mis-reading of the film, Crogan reads the opening and closing images of the film, of a duck waddling along a river bank, as the "primary" timeline of

the film, with all that happens inbetween these sequences – extended philosophical meditation on Heidegger, Holderlin, technics etc. – becoming merely an “insert edit” in a film about a duckwalk. Crogan does this as a provocation to explore the “cinemato-graphic carto-graphy” both of montage and modern consciousness.

Taking quite a different approach to the applicability of Stiegler’s thought to contemporary experience, in “The Cosmeceutical Face: Time-Fighting Technologies and the Archive,” Grayson Cooke discusses the cosmeceutical industry’s construction of the face as a kind of “archive,” using Stiegler’s discussion of real-time technologies and Derrida’s analysis of the archive to reflect on cosmetic products marketed as “time-fighting” technologies.

Returning to explore other facets of the programming of desire and consciousness in the contemporary world, Daniel Ross’s paper, “Politics and Aesthetics, or, Transformations of Aristotle in Bernard Stiegler,” analyses Aristotle’s account of the three kinds of soul – the vegetative, the sensitive, and the noetic. With the contemporary world enmeshed in processes of “grammatisation” – speech, writing, cinema and television, industrial production, and most recently digitality and biotechnology – Ross charts Stiegler’s call for a focus on the possibility of singularity, and on a re-aestheticized “noopolitics.”

In a similar vein but across different critical traditions, in “Culture Industry Reloaded? Stiegler and Derrida on Technics and Cultural Politics,” Robert Sinnerbrink explores Stiegler’s relation to the culture industry critique of the Frankfurt School, and Heidegger and Habermas’s understanding of technics. In Sinnerbrink’s account, Stiegler’s founding recognition of the codetermination of technics and the human is used to update the Frankfurt School’s critique, with Stiegler calling for a new cultural politics of memory to address the dangers posed to processes of individuation by the “programming industries.”

In “Animality, Humanity, and Technicity,” the codetermination of technics and the human is taken up by Nathan van Camp to address what Giorgio Agamben has called the “anthropological machine”; the incessant and politicized separation of human from animal life. In van Camp’s account, the anthropocentrism underpinning the anthropological machine, and its attendant ideologies and patterns of othering, is problematised by Stiegler’s epiphylogenesis, wherein the genetic and the non-genetic codetermine.

In “Stiegler and Marx for a Question Concerning Technology,” Irmak Ertuna reads Marx through Stiegler, arguing Stiegler does Marx a disservice when he critiques him for seeing technology only as means. In updating Marx as a thinker of the determination of the human via its exteriorization in the technical, Ertuna gives an account of Bernard Stiegler’s thinking

on technics as providing a way out of the deadening positions of technophobic and technophilic responses to the world.

As a contrast to many of the other papers in this issue, Andres Vaccari's "Unweaving the Program: Stiegler and the Hegemony of Technics" is a complex and systematic critique of Stiegler's characterization of technics. Vaccari unpacks Stiegler's theology of technics as technological determinism, and offers an alternative myth of the "origins" of technics.

The final paper in this issue is entitled "Prolegomena to a Future Robot History: Stiegler, Epiphylogenesis and Technical Evolution." This paper, a joint paper by Belinda Barnet and Andrés Vaccari, explores the notion of "technical evolution." Via the fiction of a future "robot historian" (borrowed from Manuel de Landa), Barnet and Vaccari explore the usefulness of Stiegler's epiphylogenetic codetermination of the human and the technical, for an understanding of technological development and a thinking of the future of Life.