

MAIN SECTION

Aesthetics and Dreams in the Absence of Epoch. Bernard Stiegler's Bifurcation of the Anthropocene

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we analyze the concept of Anthropocene in Bernard Stiegler's work through the cross-reading of the possibility of aesthetic experience and of what Stiegler calls a war against this experience and the function of dreams. The aesthetic experience as the experience of the exosomatization is addressed in the books concerning *The Symbolic Misery*; the function of dreams is addressed in the book *The Age of Disruption*, in which the Anthropocene appears to be "an absence of epoch". For Stiegler, this concept implies the consideration of a catastrophe that is not only ecological but also psychic and collective, that is, the impossibility of thinking of an alternative present to the one imposed by the capitalist economy. At the center of Stiegler's analysis is the intertwining of aesthetics and technics as what allows individuation and the political-philosophical reflection on technics as what is necessary for human life but that also consists in a risk, the one of losing the possibility of cultivating reason as what allows to live a life worth living, to cultivate the singularity and the unexpected as the ability to bifurcate the paths of the possible.

KEYWORDS

Aesthetics; Technics; Stiegler; Anthropocene; Dreams

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Introduction

Since the dawn of the millennium, the Anthropocene has been a central facet of intellectual, political and scientific debate. This timing is significant, as the concept, first posited by Paul Crutzen, concerns the acknowledgment of a new moment in the history of Earth beginning in the eighteenth century with the emergence of the fossil fuel energy regime and the exponential growth in both energy use and population.¹ This is the critical moment in which human impact transforms the biosphere, and humankind emerges as the most powerful influence on global ecology. As a wake-up call, the Anthropocene tells the story of a planet in deep distress: an atmosphere that has been damaged by tons of carbon dioxide, the impoverishment and artificializing of the Earth's living tissue, a warmer world with a higher risk of catastrophes, diminishing ice cover, higher sea levels and a climate that is generally out of control,² all because of the activity of a single species, precisely the one who is now "waking up". However, this version of a homogenous humanity equally responsible for the destruction of earthly living conditions has been criticized as being anti-political in that it effaces the responsibility of the capitalist world-ecology for the present planetary crisis.³ The green variant of this construct hands the keys to saving the Earth over to techno-optimistic engineers, crediting our own excellence⁴ as humans who are now a titanic force, ruling over the ruins that we ourselves have produced.⁵

As the Anthropocene Working Group⁶ states on its website, one can consider the Anthropocene from the point of view of a "geological signal" that needs to be scientifically justified in order to demonstrate that it is a precise geological time unit; one can also refer to it as a more informal term (a quasi-empty signifier, as argued by Jason Moore)⁷ to denote a broader

1 John R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration. An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*, (Cambridge– London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

2 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene. The Earth, History and Us* (London: Verso, 2016).

3 Jason Moore, "Introduction" in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM press, 2016), 1-11.

4 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

5 For a discussion on the Anthropocene as an aesthetics of the sublime see Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "L'Anthropocène et l'esthétique du sublime" (2016) online at <https://mouvements.info/sublime-anthropocene/> [accessed on 5/5/2022].

6 "Phenomena associated with the Anthropocene include: an order-of-magnitude increase in erosion and sediment transport associated with urbanization and agriculture; marked and abrupt anthropogenic perturbations of the cycles of elements such as carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and various metals together with new chemical compounds; environmental changes generated by these perturbations, including global warming, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and spreading oceanic 'dead zones'; rapid changes in the biosphere both on land and in the sea, as a result of habitat loss, predation, explosion of domestic animal populations and species invasions; and the proliferation and global dispersion of many new 'minerals' and 'rocks' including concrete, fly ash and plastics, and the myriad 'technofossils' produced from these and other materials". Online at: <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/> [accessed on 5/5/2022]

7 Jason Moore, "Name the System! Anthropocenes & the Capitalocene Alternative" (2016), online at <https://jasonwmoore.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/name-the-system-anthropocenes-the-capitalocene-alternative/> [accessed on 5/5/2022].

interpretation of the anthropogenic impact on the planet. This second approach is permeated with a certain fascination and negative pleasure in witnessing destruction: but if the world is burning, the first question one might ask is who is this *Anthropos*⁸ that set the fire? If this ambiguous fascination emerges primarily from the phenomenal quantities of matter mobilized and emitted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁹—that is, an obsession with humanity becoming a natural force, and of quantity as being central to understanding modernity in terms of a technical-technological acceleration that is “an increase in *quantity* per unit of time”¹⁰—the Anthropocene appears more to be the age of capital than of humanity,¹¹ something that its narrative tends to naturalize. For this reason, other stories have been told about “how” the world has become less habitable, about “how” the theoretical separation between nature and culture, an endless series of human and extra-human exclusions and oppressions, that is fundamentally linked to the capitalist political economy has reached its limit of ecological and social affordability. One might thus be tempted to substitute the “anthropogenic” impact with the “capitalogenic” one and replace the term Anthropocene with Capitalocene¹²

8 “Tool, weapon, word: that is the word made flesh in the image of the sky god; that is the *Anthropos*. In a tragic story with only one real actor, one real world-maker, the hero, this is the Man-making tale of the hunter on a quest to kill and bring back the terrible bounty. This is the cutting, sharp, combative tale of action that defers the suffering of glutinous, earth-rotted passivity beyond bearing. All others in the prick tale are props, ground, plot space, or prey. They don’t matter; their job is to be in the way, to be overcome, to be the road, the conduit, but not the traveler, not the begetter” in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 39-40. See also Jason Moore, “Who is responsible for the climate crisis?” (2019), online at <https://www.maize.io/magazine/what-is-capitalocene/>: “Historically, most human beings have been practically excluded from membership in Humanity. In the history of capitalism, there has been little room in the *Anthropos* for anyone not white, male and bourgeois. From 1492, the super-rich and their imperial allies dispossessed peoples of color, Indigenous Peoples, and virtually all women of their Humanity, and assigned to Nature – the better they could be transformed into profit-making opportunities. The upshot is that the cosmology of Man and Nature in the Popular Anthropocene is not only a faulty analytic, but implicated in practical histories of domination. When the Popular Anthropocene refuses name capitalogenic climate change, it fails to see that the problem is not Man and Nature, but certain men committed to the profitable domination and destruction of most humans and the rest of nature”.

9 Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, “L’Anthropocène et l’esthétique du sublime”.

10 Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration. A New Theory of Modernity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

11 “It became common at the end of the twentieth century to speak of humanity as though those making up this we were all, more or less, in an equal condition. This so-called equality points to an absolute fiction, and the growth of inequality in living conditions is such that the groups making up different communities and social groups often have very little in common” in Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1. The Hyper-industrial Epoch*, (Cambridge – Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 79.

12 Following Moore, “Who is responsible for the climate crisis?”: “*Capitalogenic*: “made by capital.” Like its sibling, Capitalocene, it can sound awkward when spoken. That doesn’t have much to do with the word, however – it’s because under bourgeois hegemony we are taught to view with suspicion any language that names the system. But naming the system, the form of oppression, and logic of exploitation is what emancipatory social movements always do. Justice movements unfold through new ideas and new languages. The power to name an injustice channels thought and strategy, something dramatically underscored by labor, anti-colonial, and feminist movements across the long twentieth century. In this respect, mainstream environmentalism since 1968 – the “environmentalism of the rich” (Peter Dauvergne) – has been a complete disaster. The “ecological footprint” directs our attention to individual, market-oriented consumption. The Anthropocene (and before that, Spaceship Earth) tells us that planetary crisis is more or less a natural consequence of human nature – as if today’s climate crisis is a matter of humans being humans, just as snakes will be snakes and zebras will be zebras. The truth is

as a “geopoetics”¹³ in which capitalism is what precedes and precipitates the Anthropocene as a geological era.¹⁴ For those authors who are trying to challenge the narrative of the destructive impact of humans on Earth in general in order to illustrate the disaster perpetuated by capitalism in particular, the political acknowledgment of the Anthropocene as a *boundary event* is fundamental. Doing so marks severe discontinuities: a highly unsustainable, massive and high-speed process of destruction operating on a planetary scale whose direction must be reversed in order to escape from it,¹⁵ in order to make it as short as possible,¹⁶ in order to inhabit the Earth less frightfully.¹⁷ Potential solutions radically challenge the idea of redemption by science alone.¹⁸ As Donna Haraway says, “the task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places, learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.”¹⁹ But can we?

In this regard, one of the merits of Bernard Stiegler’s philosophical reflection is to raise the question concerning the Anthropocene from the point of view of the relationship between the physiological-psychical, the collective and the technical individuals. His work aims to show that ecological destruction is also the destruction of the faculty of thinking, of producing symbols, of imagining and dealing with our times; that is, to act and to make sense. For Stiegler, the reason why we find it difficult to imagine that another world is even possible is another “symptom”²⁰ of the disaster perpetuated through a precise mode of technical (re-)production. It urgently calls for us to re-think the particular relationships between bodies, techniques and societies in order to conceive a possible bifurcation of what is yet to come.

more nuanced, identifiable, and actionable: we are living in the Capitalocene, the Age of Capital. We know – historically and in the present crisis – who is responsible for the climate crisis. They have names and addresses, starting with the eight richest men in the world with more wealth than the bottom 3.6 billion humans.”

13 For the term ‘geopoetics’ see Kenneth White “Elements of geopoetics” in *Edinburgh Review* 88 (1992): 163-178. Jason Moore refers to Angela Last, “We Are the World? Anthropocene Cultural Production between Geopoetics and Geopolitics” in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34(2-3) (2017): 147-168.

14 Jason Moore, “Name the System! Anthropocenes & the Capitalocene Alternative”.

15 Bernard Stiegler, “Escaping the Anthropocene” in Mauro Magatti (eds.), *The Crisis Conundrum*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2017).

16 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

17 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

18 *ibid.*

19 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.

20 See Paolo Vignola, “Symptomatology of Desire Between XX^e and XXI^e Century” (2014), online at: <http://www.ladeleuziana.org/2014/06/01/symptomatology-of-desire-between-xx-et-xxi-siecle-par-paolo-vignola/>. See also Sara Baranzoni and Paolo Vignola, “L’hiver de la pensée. Symptomatology of stupidity at the age of the default grec” in *La Deleuziana – Rivista online di filosofia*, n.0/2014, 229-239.

Anthropocene as the absence of epoch

As Bernard Stiegler discusses in *Automatic Society*, the Anthropocene presents itself as a process that developed within the context of the Industrial Revolution. It is marked by a growing self-consciousness of its own geological impact and of itself as the collective cause of massive and accelerated environmental and social destruction;²¹ it is “a geological era without epoch, and [...] the end of an historical era, if not of History – [that] seems, in the very course of this thematization, to amount to an *unbearable, unlivable* and *unviable* episode, from which we must find an exit by all means possible [...]”.²² The term ‘epoch’ requires specific definition and unpacking. In order to understand its meaning, which is central to the first volume of *Technics and Time*, Stiegler refers to the concept of *epokhe* as both a ‘period of time’, an ‘era’, and an ‘arrest’, an ‘interruption’, a ‘suspension of judgment’: what the philosophers call the *epokhe*, he says, is a *conversion of the gaze* and a *change in the way of thinking* as the outcome of a technological upheaval derived from a change in the technical system. The *epokhe* concerns the transformation of “the understanding that there-being (*Dasein*) has of its being”,²³ it is thus both noetic and technological and occurs as a disadjustment between the technical system and the social system that generates conflicts: religious, spiritual, political and so on. Conflicts generate new ways of thinking, doing and living, that is, *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*, through a reconfiguration of the relationship with the past into new desires and will (protentions),²⁴ which are both collective and individual:

[a] new epoch emerges only when—on the occasion of these conflicts, and due to the loss of the salience of the preceding epoch’s knowledge and powers of living, doing and conceiving—new ways of thinking, new ways of doing and new ways of living take shape, which are ‘new forms of life’ in Georges Canguilhem’s sense, on the basis of precursors *reconfiguring the retentions inherited from the earlier epoch into so many new kinds of protention*.²⁵

According to Stiegler’s philosophy, technics are the conditions by which it becomes possible to articulate the past and projections of the future. In fact, the sedimentation of memory onto material supports (the spatialization of temporality) lies at the origin of humanization, comprising the formation of an environment constituted by artifacts; this is the third type of

21 Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society. Volume 1. The Future of Work* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 8.

22 Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 186.

23 Ibid., 12–13.

24 Protentions are wills, desires and expectations, in all of their various forms, that depend on retentions (primary, secondary and tertiary), that is, what is retained: perceptions (primary retentions), memory (secondary retentions) and sedimentations of memory that are spatialized on material supports (tertiary retentions).

25 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 13.

memory (Stiegler calls this “tertiary retentions”) that is added to the genetic memory as well as that of the nervous system. Tertiary retentions are historical and environmental and constitute the bridge between the collective and the individual; transmitted collectively and acquired individually over the course of life, they create the possibility of interpreting and reconfiguring the past in a different way each time. This process of externalizing and then re-internalizing memory is fundamental for understanding not only the relationship between humans and technics as co-original, but also the inextricability between the individual and the collective through the participation in a technical milieu that consists of formalization and spatialization of human gestures that can thus be reproduced, inherited and interpreted perpetually, forming a culture. Autonomy and heteronomy are thus entangled and must be adopted as a necessary default that “makes the individual feel that life is worth living,”²⁶ but they also reveal the risk inherent to technics as both curative and potentially toxic.²⁷ In Stiegler’s words, technics are a *pharmakon*: “[it is] at once what enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken – in the sense that it is necessary to pay attention: its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that it is also destructive”.²⁸ In this view, “taking care” means the possibility of developing “a process of apprenticeship through which an art of internalization is developed”, an art that Stiegler calls “creativity.” It also means the possibility to bifurcate (instead of a relation of adaptation to technics that would result in total dependence, and repetition without difference). To interrogate the curative and toxic dimension of technics is the “primary question” for a world experiencing a planetary crisis that is both economic and spiritual.²⁹

What Stiegler calls the “contemporary epoch of the absence of epoch” is marked by the fact that this technological change is not followed by the emergence of new forms of thinking, by the adjustment of the social system and by the arising of projections of the future. In fact, the technical system permanently changing beyond its limits destroys in advance any capacity to be adopted by the social body. In the Anthropocene, adaptation substitutes the process of adoption:³⁰ permanent and unlimited innova-

26 Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2013), 21. If the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy has been demonstrated by Derrida in his commentary on the Phaedrus in ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’, the pharmacological perspective as a discourse on the *pharmakon* understood in both its curative and toxic dimensions is, in Stiegler’s view, missing. For Stiegler, this is the “primary question” for the world as a whole, haunting “planetary consciousness and the planetary unconscious”, the loss of trust and the economic and spiritual crisis in which we are living. It is the question of care, and of its condition. See the Introduction to *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology*, 1-5.

27 See Paolo Vignola, “Il *pharmakon* di Stiegler. Dall’archi-cinema alla società automatica”, pre-printed paper now published in Vincenzo Cuomo (eds.), *Medium. Dispositivi, ambienti, psicotecnologie* (Tricase: Kalak Edizioni, 2015).

28 Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology*, 14.

29 Ibid., 4–5.

30 From the *Ars Industrialis* vocabulary by Victor Petit: “Adaptation est un terme qui dérive d’*ad-aptare*” qui signifie *rendre apte à* ou *ajuster à*; *joindre* ou *conformer*. C’est une idée banalement darwinienne que d’affirmer que plus un vivant est adapté moins il est adaptable,

tion proceeds much faster than social systems and is undergone by them. Despite sharing the same technical system, people cannot participate in it because the system proceeds from the top to the bottom, bringing an “industrialization of schematism” conceived of as the capacity for imaginative projection to synthesize the data of intuition with the analysis of understanding,³¹ and whose aim is to anticipate, form and inform people’s desires. The result is standardization of retentions and an elimination of individual and collective protentions, which are replaced in the new data economy by automatic ones. Collective retentions or forms of knowledge, which are transmitted collectively and shared through educational organizations allowing for the interpretation of the past, are standardized by cultural industries through audiovisual objects: if, as Stiegler considers, consciousness consists of the flow of its passing (that is, it is a temporal object in which I give myself my own time that is different from other times), people watching, for example, the same event at the same time on television interiorizes, adopts and lives the time of this other temporal object that is television, thus synchronizing the time of their consciousness with the time of television, which responds to an economy of consumption.³² The problem is not the synchronic process in itself, since every mode of collective and individual life implies the sharing of calendarity and cardinality in which synchronic and diachronic processes compose together.³³ What is at stake in what Stiegler calls the “hypersynchronization” is precisely the erosion of diachrony through the standardization of memories and experiences (people watching the same programs every day) and the homogenization of time (from the imposition of the Christian calendar of a global scale to 24/7 capitalism) and space.

This becomes even more clear and radical in the digital economy of computational capitalism creating an all-pervasive reticulation through smartphones and other mobile devices and terminals. Here, information circulates at up to two-thirds the speed of light, transforming individuals

moins il peut adopter un nouveau milieu. Quant à l'humain, il ne s'adapte pas tant à son milieu, qu'il adapte son milieu, qui, de ce fait, n'est plus seulement un milieu de besoin mais *milieu de désir*. Adoption est un terme qui dérive d'“*ad-optare*” qui signifie opter ou choisir, greffer ou *acquérir*. Toute individuation humaine est un processus d'adoption, et la santé d'une individuation se mesure à sa possibilité d'adoption – d'un mode de vie, d'une technique, d'une idée, d'un étranger, etc. Le “faire sien” qu'est l'adoption suppose une participation de ce qui adopte à ce qui est adopté”. <https://arsindustrialis.org/adaptation-adoption> [accessed on 5/5/2022]

31 Daniel Ross, “Introduction” in Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene*, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 18.

32 “When ten million people watch the same broadcast [...] they synchronize their flux. Of course, their criteria for selecting retentions vary, and, therefore, they do not perceive the same phenomenon: they don't all think the same thing about what they watch. But if it is true that *secondary retentions* form the *selection criteria in primary retentions*, then the fact that the same people watch the same programs every day necessarily leads each “consciousness” into sharing *more and more identical secondary retentions*, and thus to selecting the same primary retentions. They end up being so well synchronized that they have lost their *diachrony*, that is, their singularity, which is to say their liberty, which always means the liberty to *think*”. Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 55.

33 As Stiegler says, “a calendar is a system of synchronization [that] makes possible [...] diachronic possibilities” *Acting Out*, 50 where “*I, we, diachrony, synchrony*— designate entities one must distinguish without opposing, and which are always in the process of composing”. *Acting Out*, 52.

and groups into data providers and overtaking their faculty of reason via digital doubles or profiles that anticipate desires and wills that people themselves never express. This is what Stiegler defines as the accomplishment and perfect completion of nihilism—or disenchantment—and is the final stage of the Anthropocene:

Nihilism is the process that solidifies what is now called the Anthropocene. In the epoch of disruption proclaimed by the new barbarians, the Anthropocene is reaching its final stage – what, in an article published in *Nature* entitled ‘Approaching a State Shift in Earth’s Biosphere’, twenty-two scientists have called the ‘shift’. It is this state of affairs that constitutes [...] [a] horizon without expectations.³⁴

The hypersynchronization of memories and the automation of projections lead to a loss of individuation—or a loss of *capabilities* or freedom as a form of agency and power to act,³⁵—which constitutes a limit to both the consumerist model of the already analogic industrialism and to the new data economy. The latter, following Antoinette Rouvroy’s article to which Stiegler refers,³⁶ works through “operations of collection, processing and structuration of data for purposes of datamining and profiling, helping individuals and organizations to cope with circumstances of uncertainty or relieving them from the burden of interpreting events and taking decision in routine, trivial situations.”³⁷ As a result, “the constant ‘adaptation’ of environments to individual and collective ‘profiles’ produced by ‘data intelligence’—be it called ‘personalization’ or ‘technology of security’—is an unprecedented mode of government”³⁸ that through datamining and profiling produces a new ‘truth regime’. Rouvroy calls this ‘data-behaviourism’, in which the ‘unknown part of radical uncertainty’, as both a challenge for institutions and a precondition for the possibility of critique, is eroded: knowledge does not appear as a production of the mind but as something that is always present and immanent in the digital world, in which it is discovered or from which it flourishes due to algorithmic operations.³⁹

Contrary to Rouvroy, Stiegler posits that the disruptive force of the automatic society operates precisely against the constitution of a new truth regime⁴⁰ through a systemic *impediment of thinking*. Retentions and pro-

34 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 38.

35 Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 4.

36 Antoinette Rouvroy, “The End(s) of Critique: Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process” in Mireille Hildebrand & Katja de Vries (eds), *Privacy, Due Process and The Computational Turn: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology*, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 143-168. Stiegler refers also to Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy, “Gouvernementalité algorithmique et perspectives d’émancipation” in *Réseaux* 177 (2013): 163-196.

37 Antoinette Rouvroy, “The End(s) of Critique: Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process”.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 See Patrick Crogan, “Bernard Stiegler on Algorithmic Governmentality: A New Regimen of Truth?” in *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics* 98 (2020): 48-67: “The opportunistic realization of digital technology in the extension of a capitalist, neoliberal exercise of power – a global, 24/7 ‘neoliberal jihad’ in Stiegler’s terms – threatens the maintenance not only of the

tentions are standardized and produced by algorithmic operations, and are thus short-circuited:

This short-circuiting of psychic and collective protentions, replaced by automatically generated protentions, impedes dreaming, wanting, reflecting and deciding, that is, the collective realization of dreams. And these obstructions are ultimately a *systemic impediment to thinking*, which then constitutes the basis of algorithmic governmentality as the power structure of computationally generated integrated 24/7 capitalism.⁴¹

From the Middle Ages until today, a progressive affirmation of an economy of disinhibition⁴² and calculability, during which the Cartesian discourse of the *mathesis universalis* comes into effect, has led to the emergence of a new madness formed by the rationalization and normalization of the risk posed to humanity by discoveries (at the foundation of globalization and capitalism) and the development of new technologies. The Anthropocene arises as the extreme stage of this process in which reason has produced its own destruction:

What lies beyond this limit remains unknown: it destroys reason not only in the sense that rational knowledge finds itself eliminated by proletarianization,⁴³ but in the sense that individuals and groups, losing the very possibility of existing (for their existence depends on being able to express their will), losing therefore all reason for living, become literally mad, and tend to despise life – their own and that of others. The result is the risk of a global social explosion consigning humanity to a nameless barbarism.⁴⁴

From this point of view, modernity appears to be a progressive process of denegation of the limits of reason itself, where what had previously been denied re-emerges in the Anthropocene as the risk of losing the very

regime of truth, but of what might be called the very idea of truth [...]. This neoliberal opportunism could be thought of as promulgating a war on truth, and on governance, even as it seeks to guarantee a new form of control and a new mode of performative legitimation on realtime". Regarding Stiegler's idea of truth, this author agrees with the position that "Stiegler argues that truth (along with the just and the beautiful) consist as a desired horizon across the technical evolution of the human being, while also altering significantly in the character and potential of what can be materialized as truthful (or just or beautiful). Historically and technically – that is, in the reality of what comes to actually exist – these 'variants' of the truth differ. They are not just variations on one transcendent truthfulness, but evolving projections of what consistently animates human psychic and social becoming, so long as there is a being (or a becoming) worthy of the name".

41 Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 46.

42 See Chapter 8. Morality and Disinhibition in Modern Times, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 108-131.

43 See *The Age of Disruption*, 243 for the discussion with Marx and Engels: 1. Proletarianization is the loss of knowledge that comes from the exteriorization of knowledge in the means of production, what Marx and Engels described (loss of *savoir-faire*); 2. During the 20th century, proletarianization has been generalized: it occurs on the side of the means of production but also on the side of lifestyles, that are produced by the economic system (loss of *savoir-vivre*); 3. With intensive compute and 'deep learning' it also extends to intellectual and scientific work and to conception in general (*savoir concevoir et theorizer*). In the automatic society it extends to all classes. It produces entropy.

44 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 8.

possibility of existence, both on a psychic and collective level, but also on an ecological level as well. This passage from reason to unreason is possible precisely because reason “is not an impersonal power: it is a noetic possibility within each of us, and as such it constitutes, as a potential shared by everyone but one that must be actualized, a responsibility that is always both individual and collective”;⁴⁵ thus it is political and dependent on technics. Reason forms itself because it deforms itself,⁴⁶ it is essentially precarious and must always be maintained anew through a struggle against its reversal⁴⁷. In this way it is a *passage à l’acte* that “*must not be lost* in order to live, noetically, the consistence of existence”.⁴⁸ Stiegler’s reflection can be read as a matter of *honing weapons* that are intended to assist in this struggle, weapons whose primary aim is to identify the forces, tendencies, processes and energies against which it is pertinent to fight⁴⁹ and to highlight the political and existential importance of taking time to reflect and critique in order to reverse the overwhelming tendency of the day: think we must.⁵⁰ Because his philosophy proceeds as an unsettled network (*réseau d’inquiétudes*)⁵¹ that from one question keeps bifurcating and deepening into new questions, our ambition here will be to focus on only two bifurcations: the one concerning the possibility of aesthetic experience and the contemporary “nightmare aesthetic”, and the one concerning the place of dreams in the Anthropocene. In so doing, the possibility emerges of reading the books concerning *The Symbolic Misery* (ed. or. 2004 & 2005) as a necessary compendium to *The Age of Disruption* (ed. or. 2016)—that is, the Anthropocene—in that they highlight the centrality of aesthetics for human life as being artifactual and the existence of a war against aesthetic experience whose consequences might be disastrous for the whole planet.

2. Aesthetic experience and the nightmare aesthetic

In Stiegler’s thought, aesthetic experience implies the relationship between the sensible organs of the body, the artificial organs of technics and the social organizations resulting from the articulation of both artifacts and

45 Bernard Stiegler, *States of Shock. Stupidity and Knowledge in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 16.

46 *Ibid.*, 17.

47 “[...] this ‘conquest’ we make remains always radically to be re-made and defended. What Adorno and Horkheimer added to the Kantian definition of the *Aufklärung* as conquest is that it must always be defended *against itself*, since it constantly tends, in becoming rationalization (that is, reification), to turn against itself as knowledge becomes stupidity – this dialecticization of the *Aufklärung* occurring after Weber’s discovery that rationalization is characteristic of capitalist becoming. Presenting itself in this way in the garb of rationalization, reason cannot avoid engendering the temptation of irrationality” (States of Shock, 17).

48 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 27.

49 Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2015).

50 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

51 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 2.

bodies: a lack of foundations, a default of origin (*défaut d'origine*). The reciprocal series of disadjustments between these three dimensions of human aesthetics can be read as a history of de-functionalizations and re-functionalizations of organs:

[...] prostheticity grounds human aesthetics as a prosthesis, which can only take shape following the achievement of the upright stance as the inaugural moment of a process in which the hand, relinquishing its motor function, invents a fabricating function. The defunctionalization of the paw, which in this way becomes a hand or a foot, is the very opening of technicity, and represents a refunctionalization [...]: the hand produces signs, objects, artefacts, prostheses, and work. And the foot gets dancing. This handiwork [*main ouvrière*] opens [*ouvre*] a world. This is what it does: it produces non-living technical organs, or 'inorganic organized matter'.⁵²

Hominization is this pursuit of life by means other than life,⁵³ the artifactualization of organs, which begins with the upright stance and the constitution of a socio-technical milieu in which time is spatialized and space is temporalized (what Stiegler calls the epiphilogenetic memory). Everyone participates in this milieu and contributes to its production, and through participation everyone experiences the fiction of a unity, that is, society, supported by the transmission of past experience and knowledge through things that constitute the human world. Thus, artifactual aesthetics has a formative function;⁵⁴ it is both a deviation from and a pursuit of animal aesthetics and erotics:⁵⁵

Leroi-Gourhan speaks of the affect⁵⁶ as the first condition – the deepest and least controllable because the most unconscious – of the unity of human groups, as the essential factor in psychic and collective individuation. Human individuation is characterized by the fact that 'socio-ethnic memory' is artefactual. But it is the affects contained in this memory that constitute the most powerful social bond: the affective stratum of memory is rooted in an aesthetic, and it is both possible and necessary to compare animal aesthetics with the artefactual aesthetics that unfold with the process 'as a mark of group belonging,

52 Ibid., 120.

53 Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 6.

54 Stiegler quotes Lacan and the "formative and endogenous function of beauty" (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 122; 126; 127; 128), but he puts it in relation to Freud, Darwin, Leroi-Gourhan and the question of individuation with and beyond Simondon.

55 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 126.

56 In the following lines we will use the concept of "affect" without a proper definition, which is in fact missing from Stiegler's books concerning the symbolic misery and similarly absent in the rest of his work as well. Nevertheless, what is fundamental is the qualification of affects as a circuit (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 42; 55) related to desire and forming the feeling of a we from which the feeling of an I depends. Stiegler's theory of affects refers to Leroi-Gourhan, for sure, but also to Deleuze. See the intervention of Paolo Vignola at the Mousikè seminar organized by Edoardo Toffoletto, mins. 38.27-41.12: <https://mousike.world/2022/03/31/registrazione-sessione-i-29-gennaio-2022/> [accessed on 5/5/2022]

a mark of power, a mark of war, and a mark of seduction'[...] But, on the other hand, they are to be differentiated at an ethnic level and according to criteria that are not, therefore, biological.⁵⁷

An organism can be affected by what Stiegler calls an “external traumatism” to the extent that it expects it, that it is protentionally charged and already projected towards the exterior. Therefore, the “exterior traumatism” is already contained in the organism’s potential, otherwise the organism would be destroyed by it.⁵⁸ In the case of humans, what is expected is channeled through what informs expectations and sensorimotor functions; that is, retentions as they depend on memory externalized and re-internalized in the technics of language, writing, tools and gestures, if we follow the interpretation of Yuk Hui.⁵⁹ Consciousness consists, in fact, of a temporal flux of primary retentions (perceptions that are selections or choices) that pass through the filter of secondary retentions (memory) oriented by tertiary retentions. A primary retention is in a way a repetition of the secondary retention, but this repetition never happens in the same way as before, precisely because this experience has already been experienced in the past. In this way the relationship is not linear, but rather it has the form of a spiral. Differences occur on an individual level but also on a collective level: for example, even though we watch the same film in front of the same screen, our individual experiences are different from one another because we filter the material presented by the film through our own specific memories. *Singularity* is precisely this endless novelty of the sensible,⁶⁰ the undetermined and unexpected, the difference in repetition, the transformation of what affects and who is affected:⁶¹

When the soul is noetic in act, its perception of the sensible is not that of a simple reception but always of an ex-ception: it only takes place as the *individuation* of the one who senses [...]. To sense noetically is to produce *oneself* through what is sensed, and in this production-of-self is the encounter of the singularity of the self in the singularity of the sensed in which it is reflected.⁶²

By highlighting the evolution of the relationships between technics, bodies and societies, Stiegler’s general organology and genealogical approach to

57 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 130.

58 Ibid., 151–52.

59 Yuk Hui, *On the Existence of Digital Objects*, (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 147.

60 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 18.

61 “Affected, I affect in turn, and in this way I give back and put into circulation the affect that is transformed in circulation. But this transformation, which is a *trans-figuration*, goes by way of forms which are the matrices that inform both my expectations, as retentional and protentional horizons, and my sensorimotor functions. And at the end of this transfigured transformation, there is the *unexpected*, which is to say, the surprise that exceeds any understanding. There is emotion in its exclamation. This is psychosocial individuation thought through and in the sensational experience of the sensible” (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 109).

62 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 48.

aesthetics inscribes politics at the very core of sensibility, in what it deems to be the possibility of producing singularity through participation and adoption of a technical milieu:⁶³ "politics is the art of securing the unity of the state in its desire for a common future, in its in-dividuation, its singularity as becoming-one. Such a desire assumes a common aesthetic ground: being together is feeling together."⁶⁴ Thus, the problem resides not in technics in general, but rather in their particular use and control, which opens up an avenue for a particular mode of individual and collective existence and can thus lead to singularity and individuation, or not. Aesthetics participation is this adoption of a technical milieu, which is political because it concerns a sharing of the sensible that allows something to be possible at the expense of something else. To sense something is to be able to express it, to transform it and to make it sensible for another: the sensible is technical and symbolic.⁶⁵ The latter function concerns the production and discovery of traces in collective time⁶⁶ through synchrony and diachrony: in the case of language, for example, I can speak to someone else because I am not in absolute synchrony with her; but if I can speak to her, it is because my diachrony tends to synchronize with her.⁶⁷ This articulation and composition of two forces generates symbols as dynamic processes that root in aesthetic experience. But in order for this experience to be one—in order for it to make sense—it must be expressed and sensed by another through shared technics and knowledge, and their transmission and implementation:

The possibility of sensing, as perception and not only as sensation (Husserl would say as intentionality), is also, and to begin with, a possibility of *making* sense: it is a production. But such a capacity for producing sense, which is to say, *sensing commensurately with the sense one makes* for the other (including oneself as an other), presupposes a *know-how* where sensing, as the excitation of a sense by way of an organ—sight, for example—confers its sense on the sensed by inscribing *aisthesis* in a *semeiosis*, in a logical and symbolic horizon where the noetic soul in potential can act out, and where reception and production are inseparable. This logical and semiotic horizon, which I

63 "The question of politics is a question of aesthetics and, vice versa, the question of aesthetics is a question of politics. I use the word aesthetics here in its widest sense, where aesthesis means sensory perception, and where the question of aesthetics is, therefore, that of feeling and sensibility in general" (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 1).

64 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 2.

65 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 33. "The noetic soul is characterized by the perception in act of a sense formed in this way (which, as sensible, is also symbolic and technical). So this kind of perception is never a simple reception: it is always already a production that is returned. When I sense something, one way or another I express it, sooner or later I make it sensible for another – insofar as I sense it noetically. This is why the exits of concert halls, cinemas and theatres are always so verbal, chatty even: the emotion received calls for its urgent verbalization. In order to form itself, judgment requires that it be realized as quickly as possible on the scene of symbolization [...]. I only REALLY sense, which is to say in REALITY, that which I am able to RENDER sensible" (33-34).

66 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 6.

67 Stiegler, *Acting Out*, 52.

have also just called symbolic, is, however, originally a technical horizon: noetic acting out is *technical*, a *tekhne*, which is to say, an art.⁶⁸

Sensibility, technicity and simbolicity entwined one another and found the possibility of reason. But, following Stiegler, since the First Industrial Revolution we can distinguish three transformations of sensibility that are “machinic”: the first one is the passage from artisan work to industrial production; the second one concerns the transformation of lifestyles in the consumerist economy; the last one concerns the digital age. As the example of music shows, with the development of recording machines it became possible to listen to music without knowing how to make it (to listen privately), which means the separation between producers and consumers. ‘Cultural capitalism’ is precisely the exploitation of this potential under an economy of consumption “capturing the attention of souls so as to control the behavior of bodies”;⁶⁹ this is what Stiegler calls “a nightmare aesthetic”.⁷⁰ It is thus a matter of attention, a war against aesthetic experience⁷¹ through aesthetic conditioning, the homogenization of memories, desires and behaviors through industrial temporal objects (see §1). Despite that, in *Symbolic Misery 1* Stiegler demonstrates that cinema occupies a unique position in this war because, as both industrial technology and art, it is an object that can combat aesthetic conditioning on its own territory⁷² by producing a difference in the repetition. Again, the question of the unexpected and of singularity is at stake:

Art in general in that which seeks to temporalize differently, so that the time of consciousness of the I, supported by the unconscious ground of its incarnated memory, is always diachronic. It liberates through its affirmation the narcissistic unexpected of consciousness’s singularity, which can be projected in a we through the intermediary of the *screen that every work of art represents*. This is an experience. But television, on the contrary, seeks to synchronize consciousness, to neutralize them as consciousnesses, confining them in the most impoverished modality of the repetition compulsion.⁷³

This battle against aesthetic experience is a battle for time as the attention, availability and disposition needed for this experience to be made. This leads to the destruction of the circuit of desire that is no longer structured as a gift,⁷⁴ as an exchange; that is, as a production of symbols. It is a loss of primordial narcissism. The control of affects through temporal objects, eliminating diachrony and singularity of the objects themselves,

68 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 31.

69 Ibid., 12.

70 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 84.

71 That is, a war against noetic experience in general since “[...] all thought is aesthetic, and always, at the origin of a concept you will find an affect” (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 1*, 82).

72 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*. viii

73 Ibid., 91.

74 Ibid., 9.

does not generate desires but a repetition compulsion that results in the explosion of drives—what happened, for example, on September 11.

3. Dreaming in the Anthropocene

To understand this loss of reason, that is, the loss of reason for living that creates and gives the feeling of existing,⁷⁵ becomes even more fundamental in the passage out of the analog audiovisual industry into the digital one. The reconfiguration of telecommunications through the internet was the beginning of the constitution of what Stiegler calls a 'reticular society', based on technologies that house enormous amounts of computational and automated power and run at extremely fast paces, thus destroying social relations, local cultures and psychosocial energies:

'Desires, expectations, volitions, will and so on': everything that for individuals forms the horizon of *their* future, constituted by *their* protentions, is outstripped, overtaken and progressively replaced by *automatic* protentions that are produced by intensive computing systems operating between one and four million times quicker than the nervous systems of psychic individuals.⁷⁶

The problem of algorithmic governmentality, discussed in the opening paragraph of this article, is that it moves more quickly than any individual or collective will. This is the absence of epoch that is the Anthropocene, an epoch in which wills are obsolete in advance, in which the system of references and significances that is fundamental for individuation is submitted to the digital industry in the absence of a politics worthy of the name.⁷⁷ Retentions are standardized; protentions are progressively replaced by automatic ones.

If the relationship of consciousness to an object is the projection of an arrangement between primary and secondary retentions and protentions, the same object will generate different phenomena for different consciousnesses, but also for the same consciousness at different times, because the consciousness has previously encountered that particular object. This encounter, therefore, is made up of stereotypes: what has become a habitude (and thus the ordinary), and traumatypes, the production of differences (thus the extraordinary). The intertwining between these two is conditioned by memories and technics, which are organized around a culture, a collective individuation in which stereotypes form significations as common usages, and traumatypes form sense as object investments disrupting common usage.⁷⁸ A culture is precisely that which

75 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 9.

76 Ibid., 8.

77 Ibid., 75.

78 Bernard Stiegler, "Organology of Dreams and Archi-Cinema," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 24, no. 47 (2014): 10.

fosters this relationship between the ordinary and the extraordinary, but it is also a thing of which care needs to be taken.⁷⁹ The relation to the extra-ordinary and enchantment is a fundamental function of the faculty of reason⁸⁰, its relation to fiction, delirium—*delirare* means to deviate from the furrow—and madness. It is the question of the dream, too, that is at stake. But it is also the question of the abandonment of the natural attitude, a suspension and a conversion that are central to the *epokhe*, as has been argued:

We cannot go to the extra-ordinary—turn towards it, modify the gaze in its direction, abandon the ‘natural attitude’, make a ‘conversion’—without leaving the path, the furrow, of oneself, in order to enter into the self-an-other [*soi-l’autre*]. It is precisely in this way that it is other—and that there is the other [...]. This *going to the other* that is the extra-ordinary [...] [is that] without which life would not be worth the *pain and effort* of being lived.⁸¹

But to abandon the ‘natural attitude’ is also to become human (or, as Stiegler says, non-inhuman) through the artifactualization of organs, the fact of exosomatization. So, if realizing a dream is to go beyond oneself, technics as prosthesis are precisely this dream essential to human life. Realizing a dream is thus a condition of humanity and consists of an artificialization of reality, a transformation that first requires a de-realization, a de-naturalization of reality. But a dream can be realized only if, after a de-realization, a new reality emerges, a new epoch of individuation occurs. To protest that which is not yet means to take one’s dreams for realities, to hallucinate, and hallucination can lead to invention and innovation in the event that it is socialized or adopted, that it becomes reasonable. The future—as a consequence of exosomatization—consists of the realization of a delirium that becomes real. But this is also what happens within the process of disinhibition, where risk-taking and disruption are systematized and accepted as normal, leading to the Anthropocene as the age of madness, the absence of epoch; that is, the absence of transindividuation, the impossible constitution of a we and an I.

Computational capitalism and algorithmic governmentality impede dreaming as the improbable and unexpected through rationalization, calculability and automation. What in the analog cultural industry was a standardization of aesthetic experience, where the production of symbols pertains only to producers and not to consumers (resulting in diabolos more than symbols), is with the advent of digital reticulation a complete “domestication of time and space”.⁸² Despite being exalted as the triumph

79 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 82.

80 Bernard Stiegler, “The New Conflict of the Faculties and Functions,” trans. Daniel Ross, *Qui Parle* 26, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 79–99, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-3822421>.

81 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 85.

82 *Ibid.*, 49.

of individual freedom, it is one that transforms freedom—as the possibility to extra-vaguer—into the possibility of producing clicks. The final stage of grammatization is attained, the type of tertiary retention that appeared in the Western world that consists in a spatialization of time that enables control.⁸³ As “a war waged on spirits via the technical development”, grammatization allows for the constitution of homogeneity and political power understood as the control of psychic and collective individuation. In the hyperindustrial age, this extends to “the discretization of gestures, behavior and movement in general [...] going well beyond the linguistic horizon”⁸⁴ until the exploitation of dreams, which means the prevention of dreaming⁸⁵ in the 24/7 context of capitalism. Through complete reticulation, platforms like Google seek to eliminate defaults, but also to eliminate differences and variabilities that are necessary for desire to occur, desire being “a dream capable of realizing itself.”⁸⁶ But if the digital, through the speed at which it functions, destroys the improbable, that is, “desire, affection, attachment, identification, singularity, individuation and the feeling of existing psychically and thus collectively, which are [...] the conditions of any positively protentional hallucination”, it is also “the bearer of a new epoch of psychic and collective individuation,”⁸⁷ thus a *pharmakon*.

The denial of madness from reason, of uncertainty from calculability, of dream from reality in order to control the latter and program it, leads to a point where “the laws of the improbable and the unpredictable assert themselves but in negative fashion.”⁸⁸ This point of absolute madness is self-destruction through a disruption that becomes absolutely and irreversibly entropic. For this reason, Stiegler’s approach to the Anthropocene aims to conceive it not just as an environmental crisis but also to see it in relation to the conditions and consequences of exosomatization as fundamental to psychic and collective individuation. Nevertheless, if techniques are a *pharmakon*, rethinking the disruption that the digital provokes means to pose the question of who controls it, why and how, and to recognize the importance of forming a new public power that allows for individuations to be possible, a ‘good-enough’ power that takes care instead of leading to self-destruction. Dreams return as political: for this improbable bifurcation to come, hallucination is fundamental as that which does not yet exist but can be realized from a field of consistent possibilities. Hallucination is what founds fabrication and is founded in an aesthetic participation to the shared techno-symbolic milieu. In Stiegler’s terms this fabrication—and hallucination—is pharmacological because it is both necessary and haunted by its failure, because it could destroy the one who

83 Bernard Stiegler, “Foreword” in Yuk Hui, *On the Existence of Digital Objects*, 256.

84 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 56–57.

85 Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 287.

86 *Ibid.*, 54.

87 *Ibid.*, 42.

88 *Ibid.*, 96.

has fabricated it and the world in which it is fabricated; it contains the possibility of losing reason. The task is then to reinforce the preservation, cultivation and development⁸⁹ of reason as that which must dream – and realize its dreams:

We must, then, be *much crazier* than these disruptors—whether they are so unconsciously or deliberately—who provoke an outburst of barbaric violence without precedent. We must realize a ‘madness’ of another kind—by provoking a much *more unexpected and unanticipated* bifurcation than those anticipated by all these madmen.⁹⁰

Finally, to escape the Anthropocene means to cultivate the possibility of human beings to produce differences in their encounters with the environment, and to do this specifically through exosomatizations. If *pharmaka* are what render human life possible but also what potentially lead to destruction and toxicity, to escape from the Anthropocene means to cultivate a relationship with them that allows reason to bifurcate, given that reason depends on the dream of exosomatization, and to pose a constant critique of the limits of exosomatization itself.⁹¹

Conclusions

The problem of the aesthetic experience and of the artifactual foundation of human aesthetics as posed by Bernard Stiegler allows for the centrality of aesthetics to be conceived as exosomatization—that is, technics—for human life and its transformation into the field of an everyday war. The singularity of aesthetic experience is central to individuation conceived as the possibility to act, transforming the world, and to make sense, a possibility that is threatened by the consumerist economy and the all-pervasive reticulation and automation of the digital economy, resulting in the emergence of madness on an individual and a collective level, but also on an ecological level, as the concept of the Anthropocene expresses. Stiegler shows that the ecological destruction is also a psychosocial one. It is the destruction of aesthetic experience, of the faculty of dreaming and of the faculty of reason that allows not only for survival, but also for living well.⁹² In Stiegler’s view, these functions produce the unexpected, the extraordinary, the enchantment without which life would not be worth the pain and the effort of being lived. Despite from the differences between *The Symbolic Misery* and *The Age of Disruption*, the second being charged with concepts such as the pharmakon, it can be read as a further step in the critique of the articulation between sensibility and technics in the present

89 Ibid., 103.

90 Ibid., 104.

91 Bernard Stiegler, “The New Conflict of the Faculties and Functions,” trans. Daniel Ross, *Qui Parle* 26, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 79–99, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-3822421>.

92 Sara Baranzoni, “La funzione della ragione. Per non divenire folli nella società automatica” in VV.AA., aut aut n. 371, *Bernard Stiegler. Per una farmacologia della tecnica*, (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2016).

time, moving from retentions to protentions. The theory of the three types of organs (bodies, technics and societies) constituting human aesthetics is fundamental for the conception of a possible alternative that stays within these three dimensions, that is, another use of technics itself as the *défaut, qu'il faut*.

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