

## Automatic society, Londres février 2015\*

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### ABSTRACT

The control societies analysed by Deleuze are becoming societies of hyper-control, where supercomputing is applied to massive data-sets, with the ultimate goal of controlling behaviour. This control, however, is destroying all forms of knowledge, whether skills, capacities or theories, and undermining all social systems, including the economic foundations of consumerism itself. Although this situation can seem unstoppable, transformations of the technical system always have harmful effects on existing social systems, and thus require the invention of new knowledge and practices. Art has a crucial if not sufficient role to play in creating a new therapeutics for the twenty-first century.

### KEYWORDS

Hyper-control; consumerism; technical system; knowledge; therapeutics

I argued 10 years ago that we have entered the hyper-industrial age, that ours is an epoch of great symbolic misery and that this leads to the structural destruction of desire, that is, it ruins the libidinal economy: speculative marketing, having become hegemonic, systematically exploits the drives, which are divested of every attachment (Stiegler 2004)

Symbolic misery derives from what, with Nicolas Donin, we call the mechanical turn of sensibility, which places the sensory life of the individual under the permanent control of the mass media. The causes of symbolic misery and the destruction of desire are both economic and organological<sup>1</sup>: it is a matter both of the consumerist model, and of those instruments that capture and harness consumer attention, implemented by the culture industries and the mass media at the beginning of the twentieth century. These instruments, controlled by marketing, bypass and short-circuit the *savoir-vivre* of consumers, their knowledge of how to live. Consumers are thereby proletarianized, just as producers had been proletarianized in the nineteenth century by instruments that short-circuited their *savoir-faire*, their knowledge of how to make and do.

This industrial capture of attention also deforms this attention:

1. Attention is formed through education, via processes of identification (primary and secondary), which constitute intergenerational relations at the core of which the knowledge of how to live is elaborated;
2. To raise a child is to singularly transmit *savoir-vivre*, which they will singularly transmit in their turn – to his or her comrades, friends, family and peers, both near and distant;

3. What is formed through all the pathways of education – including teaching – is that which the industrial capture of attention systematically deforms.

The economy of desire is formed through processes of identification and transindividuation, woven in the course of intergenerational relations as the set of capacities to bind the drives by diverting their aims towards social investments. The industrial deformation and diversion of attention short-circuits and bypasses processes of identification and transindividuation. As such, the symbolic misery imposed by consumer capitalism, which amounts to de-symbolization, leads *inevitably* to the destruction of the libidinal economy.

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a continual decrease of the age at which attention was captured in an industrial way: in the 1960s, *juvenile* ‘available brain time’ constituted the prime target of the audiovisual mass media – in France via so-called ‘peripheral’ radio stations – but by the end of the century, it was *infantile* brain time that was being targeted and diverted from its affective and social environment, via all manner of programmes and specialized channels.

The object of desire is *desired* to the point of inverting the goals of the drives that support it,<sup>2</sup> but this is so only because it does *more than just exist*: it *consists*, and as such *infinitezes itself*, that is, *exceeds all calculation* (Stiegler 2011). To desire is to invest in an object and experience its consistence, and hence to destroy desire is to liquidate all attachment and all fidelity, that is, all confidence – without which no economy is possible – and, ultimately, it is to liquidate *all belief*, and therefore all *credit*.

The object of desire gives rise to a spontaneous belief in life that presents itself through this object as its *extra-ordinary* power. All love is phantasmal in the sense that it gives life to that which is not – to that which is ordinarily not. But because the fantasy of love, and of what Abdelkebir Khatibi called ‘*aimance*’<sup>3</sup> (translated by George Collins as ‘*lovence*’ in his translation of Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*), is that which grants to civilizations their most durable forms, the literally *fantastic* sentiment in which love *consists* is the incarnation of a knowledge of the *extra-ordinariness of life* that constantly *surpasses* life – whereby life *invents*<sup>4</sup> by going *beyond* life, and as the pursuit of life by means other than life, through the incessant and ever-increasing profusion and evolution of artifices.

This is how I have interpreted the movement of exteriorization described by André Leroi-Gourhan in order to analyse the process of hominization as an invention of life by means other than life – that is, as a technological, organological and pharmacological evolution that constitutes the human problem of life on earth, and the responsibility that we have not to evade this problem, which is constantly being remade by technical invention.

Love, as we all know, is strictly speaking the experience of artifice: it is essential to fetishize the one we love, and when we *stop* loving them, we are confronted with the artificiality of the amorous situation, as we are brought brutally back to the ordinariness of quotidian life.

Two or three million years ago, life began to pass through the non-living artifice – there first appears what Aristotle referred to as the noetic soul, that is, the soul that loves (as we learn from Diotima) – the non-living artifice conserves *for* life a trace of what, in the biological economy that Simondon called *vital individuation*, would previously have been lost forever in death. The *inventive power* of life that amazed Gilles Clément thus becomes

what Paul Valéry described as the *life of the mind (or spirit)* – which with modernity and capitalism itself becomes the *political economy of spirit*, founded on industrial technology that has today become essential to an *industry of traces*.

The proletarianization of consumers, their de-symbolization, their dis-identification and their confinement within drive-based misery, subjects all singularities to the calculability that turns the contemporary world into a desert in which one feels, paradoxically and increasingly, that as industry innovates more and more, it somehow turns out that life is being invented less and less – a situation that takes to the extreme what Valéry described in 1939 as the fall in ‘spirit value’.

The decline of the state, and the hegemony of strategic marketing and financialization were imposed throughout the entire world, and in every part of society, beginning in the 1980s. Along with these changes came drive-based misery and disinvestment, ruining desire and introducing forms of disbelief, miscreance and discredit that continue to afflict every form of authority, every institution and every business, eventually leading to the insolvency that the collapse of 2008 exposed for all to see.

The current and much more recent hegemony of the industry of traces tries to take control of the drives, through automation and automatisms founded on social networks. The drives are, however, ultimately uncontrollable, and hence to try and channel the drives in this way, by mathematical algorithms to exert an automated form of social control, will in the end do nothing but carry the drives to an extremely dangerous level, by *dis-integrating* them, turning them into ‘dividuals.’<sup>5</sup>

With the advent of reticular reading and writing (Herrenschmidt 2007), via globally accessible networks that use those web technologies that began to be implemented around 1993, digital technologies have led hyper-industrial societies towards a *new stage of proletarianization*. In this new stage, the hyper-industrial age is turned into an era of systemic stupidity.

Across networks of tele-action (and *tele-objectivity*), production centres can be de-localized, huge markets can be formed and then remotely controlled, industrial capitalism and financial capitalism can be structurally separated, electronic financial markets can be continuously interconnected, directing in real time the automatisms that are derived from the application of mathematics to the ‘finance industry’. *Processes of automated decision-making* can then be functionally tied to the *drive-based automatisms* that control consumer markets – initially through the mediation of the mass media, and, today, through the industry of traces that is also known as the data economy (i.e. the economy of *personal data*).

Digital automata have succeeded in bypassing the deliberative functions of the mind, and a systemic stupidity has been established between consumers and speculators, *functionally based in the drives*, and pitting each against the other (this goes well beyond what Mats Alvesson and André Spicer have called ‘functional stupidity’). In the last few years, however, and specifically after 2008, a state of *generalized stupefaction*<sup>6</sup> seems to have arisen that accompanies this systemic *bêtise*, this functional stupidity.

The resulting stupor is caused by the most recent *series of technological shocks* that emerged from the digital turn of 1993. The revelation of these shocks, and of their major features and consequences, has brought about a state that is almost literally that of being stunned – in particular in the face of the ‘four horsemen of the Apocalypse’ (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon), and *who appear literally to be dis-integrating*

*those industrial societies* that emerged from the *Aufklärung*. The result has been what, at a public meeting of *Ars Industrialis*, we have referred to as ‘net blues’, suffered by those who had believed or do believe in the promises of the digital era (including my friends at *Ars Industrialis* and myself, among many others).

The hyper-industrial societies that have grown out of the ruins of the industrial democracies constitute the third stage of completed proletarianization: in the nineteenth century we saw the loss of *savoir-faire*, and the loss of *savoir-vivre* in the twentieth, and in the twenty-first century we are witnessing the dawn of the age of the loss of *savoirs théoriques*, of theoretical knowledge – as if the cause of our being stunned was an *absolutely unthinkable development*.

With the *total automatization* made possible by digital technology, theories, those most sublime fruits of idealization and identification, are deemed obsolete – and along with them, scientific method itself. So at least we are told by Chris Anderson, in ‘The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete’ (Anderson 2008).<sup>7</sup>

Founded on the *self-and-auto-production* of digital traces, and *dominated by automatisms* that exploit these traces, hyper-industrial societies are undergoing the proletarianization of theoretical knowledge, just as broadcasting analogue traces via television resulted in the proletarianization of *savoir-vivre*, and just as the submission of the body of the labourer to mechanical traces inscribed in machines resulted in the proletarianization of *savoir-faire*.

Just like the written traces in which Socrates already saw the threat of proletarianization that any exteriorization of knowledge brings with it<sup>8</sup> – the *apparent paradox* being that *the constitution of knowledge depends on the exteriorization of knowledge* – so too digital, analogue and mechanical traces are tertiary retentions.

When Gilles Deleuze referred to what he called ‘control societies’, he was already heralding the arrival of the hyper-industrial age. The destructive capture of attention and desire is what occurs in and through those control societies that Deleuze described in terms of the non-coercive modulation exercised by television on consumers at the end of the twentieth century. These societies of control appear at the end of the consumerist epoch, and what they do is make way for the transition to the hyper-industrial epoch.

In the automated society of which Deleuze could hardly have been aware, but which he and Félix Guattari anticipated (in particular when they referred to *dividuals*), control undertakes the mechanical liquidation of discernment, *to krinon* – from *krinein*, a verb that has the same root as *krisis*, decision. Discernment, which Kant called understanding (*Verstand*), has been automated and automatized as *analytical* power that has been delegated to algorithms, algorithms that convey formalized instructions through sensors and actuators but outside of any intuition in the Kantian sense, that is, outside of any experience (this being the situation that occupies Chris Anderson).

Six years after the collapse of 2008, it is still not clear how best to characterize this *event*: *crisis*, *mutation*, *metamorphosis*? All these terms are *metaphors* – they still fall short of actual thinking. *Krisis*, which has a long history – in Hippocrates it refers to a decisive turning point in the course of an illness – is also the origin of all critique, of all decision exercised by *to krinon* as the power to judge on the basis of criteria. *Mutation* is understood today primarily in relation to biology – even if, in French, to be ‘*muté*’ generally refers in everyday life to being transferred to another posting. *Metamorphosis* is a zoological term that comes from the Greek – by way of Ovid.

Six years after this event, it seems that the *proletarianization of minds* and, more precisely, the *proletarianization of the noetic faculties of theorization and in this sense of scientific, moral, aesthetic and political deliberation* – combined with the proletarianization of sensibility and affect in the twentieth century, and with the proletarianization of the gestures of the worker in the nineteenth century – is both the *trigger for* and the *result of* this continuing ‘crisis’. As a result, no decisions are taken, nor do we arrive at any turning point, any ‘bifurcation’ for speaking with Deleuze’s words – whereas all of the toxic aspects that lie at the origins of this crisis continue to be consolidated.

When a triggering factor is also an outcome, we find ourselves in a spiral. This spiral can be very fruitful and worthwhile, or it can enclose us – *absent new criteria* – in a vicious circle that we describe as a ‘downward spiral’, a ‘spirale du pire’, that takes us from bad to worse.

I believe with Francis Jutand et al. (2013) that the *post-larval state* in which we have left the crisis of 2008 means we should refer to it in terms of metamorphosis (rather than mutation: what is going on here is not biological, even if biology comes into play via biotechnology, and, in certain respects, in a quasi-proletarianized way<sup>9</sup>). This does not mean that there is no *krisis*, or that we need not take account of the critical labour for which it calls. It means that *this critical labour is precisely what this metamorphosis seems to render impossible*, thanks precisely to the fact that it consists *above all* in the proletarianization of theoretical knowledge, which is critical knowledge. It is for this reason that I propose understanding the enduring nature of this crisis on the basis of the metaphor of the chrysalis.

The *stupefying situation* in which the current experience of automatic society consists establishes a new mental context (stupefaction) within which systemic stupidity undoubtedly proliferates (as *functional stupidity*, drive-based capitalism, and industrial populism), but which can also be viewed in relation to a *new concern* – which, *if it is not turned into panic*, and instead becomes a fertile *skepsis*, could turn out to be the *beginning of a new understanding of the situation* – and the genesis of new criteria, or categories: this is the question of what I will at the end of this course call *categorical invention*.

This new understanding or intelligence would be that which, inverting the toxic logic of the *pharmakon*, would give rise to a *new hyper-industrial age constituting an automatic society founded on de-proletarianization*<sup>10</sup> – and which would provide an exit from the chrysalis of *noetic hymenoptera*<sup>11</sup> – that is: based on the valorization of positive externalities and capacities (in Sens’ sense), that is: on a contributive economy of pollination.

The proletarianization of the gestures of work amounts to the proletarianization of the conditions of the worker’s *sub-sistence*. The proletarianization of sensibility, of sensory life, and the proletarianization of social relations, all of which are replaced by conditioning, amounts to the proletarianization of the conditions of the citizen’s *ex-sistence*. The proletarianization of minds or spirits, that is, of the noetic faculties enabling theorization and deliberation, is the proletarianization of the conditions of scientific *con-sistence* (including the human and social sciences).

In the hyper-industrial stage, *hyper-control* is established through a process of generalized automatization. It thus represents a step beyond the control-through-modulation discovered and analysed by Deleuze: now, the noetic faculties of theorization and deliberation are short circuited by the *current operator of proletarianization*, which is *digital tertiary retention* – just as analogue tertiary retention was in the twentieth century the operator

of the proletarianization of *savoir-vivre*, and just as mechanical tertiary retention was in the nineteenth century the operator of the proletarianization of *savoir-faire*.

By *artificially retaining something through the material and spatial copying of a mnemonic and temporal element*, tertiary retention modifies the relations between the psychic retentions of *perception* that Husserl referred to as *primary* retentions, and the psychic retentions of *memory* that he called *secondary* retentions.

Over time, tertiary retention evolves, and this leads to modifications of the *play* between primary retentions and secondary retentions, resulting in *processes of transindividuation* that are each time specific, that is, specific epochs of what Simondon called the *transindividual*.

In the course of processes of transindividuation, founded on successive epochs of tertiary retention, shared meanings are formed by psychic individuals who thereby constitute collective individuals, and what we call ‘societies’. The meanings formed during transindividuation processes, and shared by psychic individuals within collective individuals of all kinds, constitute the transindividual as the set of collective secondary retentions through which collective protentions are formed – that is, the *expectations* that typify that epoch.

If, according to the Chris Anderson article previously referred to, so-called ‘big data’ heralds the ‘end of theory’ – big data technology designating what is also called ‘high-performance computing’ carried out on massive amounts of data, whereby the treatment of data in the form of digital tertiary retentions occurs *in real time* (at the speed of light) and on a *global scale* and at the level of billions of gigabytes of data, operating through data-capture systems that are located everywhere around the planet and in almost every relational system that constitutes a society – it is because digital tertiary retention and the algorithms that allow it to be both produced and exploited thereby also make it possible for *reason as a synthetic faculty to be short-circuited* thanks to the *extremely high speeds* at which this automated analytical faculty of *understanding* is capable of operating.

Proletarianization is a *fact*. Is it inevitable and unavoidable? Anderson claims it is (like Nicholas Carr, who suggests in less joyful terms that the destruction of attention is fatal (Carr 2016)). I hold a contrary position: the *fact of proletarianization* is *caused* by the digital, which, like *every* new form of tertiary retention, constitutes a new age of the *pharmakon*. It is inevitable that this *pharmakon* will have toxic effects if new therapies, new therapeutics, are not prescribed.

Such prescriptions are the responsibility of the scientific world, the artistic world, the legal world, the world of the life of the spirit in general and the world of citizens – and, in the first place, of those who claim to represent them. Much courage is required: it is a struggle that must face up against countless interests, including those who partly suffer from this toxicity and partly feed off it. It is this period of suffering that constitutes the stage of the chrysalis.

All tertiary retention is a *pharmakon* in that, instead of creating *new transindividual arrangements* between psychic and collective primary retentions and secondary retentions, and therefore between retentions and protentions (expectations, through which objects of attention appear, and as such sources of desire) – which constitute new attentional forms, new circuits of transindividuation, new meanings and new capabilities of bringing about the horizons of meaning that are consistences – instead of that, this *pharmakon* can on the contrary *substitute itself* for psychic and collective retentions insofar as the latter can

produce significance and meaning only insofar as they are *individuated by all and shared* on the basis of psychic individuation processes through processes of social transindividuation that create relationships of solidarity on which can be built, durably and intergenerationally, *social systems*.<sup>12</sup>

It is always possible for a *pharmakon* to short-circuit the circuits of transindividuation of which it is nevertheless the condition, and even though it is this *pharmakon* that makes it possible for psychic individuals, through their psychic retentions, to express themselves, to form collective individuals founded on these traces and these facilitations, that is, on the secondary retentions and collective protentions emerging from this pharmacology.

Generally, however, a new *pharmakon* may start out by short-circuiting the psychosocial process. But the short-circuiting of psychic and collective individuation that is being caused today by automatized transindividuation processes, based on automation in real time and occurring on an immense scale, requires detailed analyses capable of taking account of the *remarkable novelty* of the digital *pharmakon*.

To achieve socialization, that is, a collective individuation, every new *pharmakon* – in this instance a new form of tertiary retention – always requires the formation of *new knowledge*, which always means new therapies or therapeutics for this new *pharmakon*, through which are constituted new ways of doing things and reasons to do things, to live and to think, that is, to project consistences, which constitute at the same time new forms of existence and, ultimately, new conditions of subsistence. This new knowledge is the result of what I call the second moment of the epokhal redoubling – that is, the *second moment of the technological shock* that is always provoked whenever a new form of tertiary retention appears.

If Chris Anderson can claim that the contemporary fact of proletarianization is insurmountable, which is to claim that there is *therefore no way* to bring about its *second moment*, the reason lies in another fact: he himself happens to be a businessman who defends an ultra-liberal, ultralibertarian perspective.<sup>13</sup> He remains faithful to the ultra-liberalism implemented in all industrial democracies after the conservative revolution that occurred at the beginning of the 1980s, a ‘revolution’ that short-circuited processes of transindividuation via the analogue mass media, creating what Deleuze described as societies of control.<sup>14</sup>

For Chris Anderson, as for us, and as for the global economy, the problem is that the development, or rather the becoming, that leads to this stage of proletarianization is *inherently entropic*: it *depletes* the resources that it exploits – which in this case are psychic individuals and collective individuals: it leads, in the strict sense of the term, to their *disintegration*.

In automatic society, those digital networks that are referred to as ‘social’ networks channel such expressions by submitting them to mandatory protocols to which psychic individuals bend because they are drawn to do so by the so-called *network effect*, which with the addition of social networking becomes an *automated herd effect*, that is, a highly mimetic situation – and one that constitutes a new form of *artificial group* in the sense given to this phrase by Freud (2001, 124).

Ten years ago, I compared TV or radio programmes and channels to the constitution of artificial and conventional crowds such as they are analysed by Freud – for which he gives the examples of Army and Church.

The constitution of crowds, and the conditions under which they can take shape, are the subjects of analyses by Gustave Le Bon, on which Freud commented at length:

The most striking peculiarity presented by a psychological crowd (in German: *masse*) is the following. Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation. There are certain ideas and feelings which do not come into being, or do not transform themselves into acts except in the case of individuals forming a crowd. The psychological group is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements, which for a moment are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly.<sup>15</sup>

On the basis of the analyses by Le Bon, Freud showed that there are also ‘artificial’ crowds, which he analyses through the examples of the Church and the Army.

The programme industries too, however, also form, every single day, and specifically through the mass broadcast of programmes, such ‘artificial groups’. The latter become, as masses (and Freud refers precisely to *Massenpsychologie*: the psychology of masses), the permanent, everyday mode of being of the industrial democracies, which are at the same time what I call industrial tele-cracies.

Generated by digital tertiary retention, net-connected artificial groups constitute an economy of ‘crowd sourcing’ that must be understood in manifold ways – of which the so-called ‘cognitariat’ would be one dimension. Big data is one very large component of those technologies that exploit the potential of crowd sourcing in its various forms, of which social engineering is a major element.

Through the network effect, through artificial groups that the network effect allows to be created (such as the billions of psychic individuals who are now on Facebook), and through crowd sourcing that allows these groups to be exploited, including through the use of big data, it is possible:

- to stimulate the production and auto-capture by individuals of those tertiary retentions we call *personal data*, which spatialize their psychosocial temporalities;
- to intervene, by circulating this personal data at the speed of light, in the processes of transindividuation that are woven through circuits which are formed automatically and *performatively*;
- through these circuits, and through the collective secondary retentions that form automatically, and no longer transindividually, to intervene in return, almost immediately, in psychic secondary retentions, which is also to say, in protentions, expectations and, ultimately, in *personal behaviour*: it becomes possible to *remotely control*, to *tele-guide*, *one by one*, each of the members of a network – this is what is referred to as ‘personalization’.

The Internet is a *pharmakon* that can thus become a technique for hyper-control and social dis-integration. Unless there is a new politics of individuation, that is, unless attention is formed through the specific tertiary retentions that make possible a new technical



milieu (and every associated milieu, beginning with language), it will inevitably become a cause of dissociation.

The hyper-industrial situation takes what Deleuze called societies of control, founded on modulation by the mass media, to a stage of hyper-control generated by self-produced personal data, self-collected and self-published by people themselves – whether knowingly or otherwise – and exploited by applying high-performance computing to these massive data-sets. This *automatized modulation* establishes what Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy have called algorithmic governmentality (Rouvroy and Berns 2013).

The digital allows all technological automatisms to be unified (mechanical, electromechanical, photo-electrical, electronic and so on), by implanting the producer into the consumer and through the production of all manner of sensors, actuators and related software. But the truly unprecedented aspect of digital unification is that it allows articulations *between all these automatisms*: technological, social, psychic and biological – and this is the main point of neuro-marketing and neuro-economics. This integration, however, leads inevitably to *total robotization*, but it is not just public authority, social and educational systems, intergenerational relations and psychic structures that find themselves disintegrated: for mass markets to be formed, and for all the *commodities* secreted by the consumerist system to be absorbed, wages needed to be distributed so as to supply purchasing power, but it is this very economic system that has disintegrated and that is becoming *functionally insolvent*.

All of this can seem utterly overwhelming and hopeless. Is it nevertheless possible to invent, from out of this *state of fact* that is *total disintegration*, an ‘ars of hyper-control’ – for example, by reactualizing Deleuze’s support (‘almost’) in his letter to Serge Daney (the title of which was ‘Optimism, pessimism, and travel’) for the possibility and necessity of an ‘art of control’?

Television is the form in which the new powers of ‘control’ become immediate and direct. To get to the heart of the confrontation you’d almost have to ask whether this control might be inverted, harnessed by the supplementary function opposed to power: to *invent* an art of control that would be like a new form of *resistance*. (Deleuze 1997, 89)

*To invent or to resist?* I will return to this hesitation.

(... ) It is thus a matter of knowing where such a therapeutic might come from and *how* it might be quasi-causal. I argue that if this quasi-causality is indeed what can and must emerge from a *new history of art* (from, in other words, a *new individuation of art*), *such that art should again become an ars*, this would be possible only if this *ars* were *also and immediately an invention in the juridical field (which is also to say, the political field), the philosophical field, and the scientific and economic fields*. No doubt the question did not arise in these terms in the age of the letter to Serge Daney – no doubt *not in these terms*. Nevertheless, the question being posed here is that of the relations between micro-politics and macro-politics – to put it in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari.

Art has a distinct role to play with respect to invention in relation to the organological in general. But this is far from clear in Deleuze, who thinks this art of control much more in terms of resistance than of invention – presuming that invention is always in some way or another organological, that is, always consists in inventing technically or technologically, and not just artistically.

An ‘art of control’ of the kind envisaged by Deleuze, or of ‘hyper-control’, which I attempt to describe, would not be self-sufficient – except by hearing, and making heard or reheard, the *ars* in art: as in the great epochs of artistic or spiritual art, an ‘art of hyper-control’ would need to be inseparable from a juridical, philosophical, scientific, political and economic inventiveness.

The question of such an art is that of a *therapeutic* – for which art would be a primary, obviously inaugurating element, yet *inherently insufficient*, and where it would need to invent *along with all other forms of knowledge*, including those techno-logical forms of knowledge that make theoretical knowledge possible, forming, designing and inventing, therefore, the *ars* of a positive pharmacology – but this requires organological invention.

The pharmacological character of the digital age has become more or less clear to those who belong to it, resulting in what I am calling ‘net blues’: the state of fact constituted by this new age of tertiary retention *has failed to provide a new state of law*. *On the contrary*, it has liquidated the rule of law as produced by the retentional systems of the bygone epoch. Property law, for example, has been directly challenged by activists through their practices in relation to free software, and through reflecting on the ‘commons’ – including some young artists who are attempting to devise a new economic and political framework for their thinking.

These questions must, however, be seen as part of an *epistemic* and *epistemological* transition from fact to law, and by canonical reference to apodictic experience – projecting law beyond fact. The passage from fact to law is firstly a matter of discovering *in facts* the *necessity of interpreting them*, that is, of projecting *beyond the facts* themselves, but also *on the basis of facts* that are not themselves self-sufficient – onto another plane towards which they beckon: that of a consistence through which and in which we must ‘believe’.

The *context* of this task of thinking conceived as therapeutic is one in which automatisms of all kinds are being technologically integrated by digital automatisms. The unique and very specific aspect of this situation is the way that digital tertiary retention succeeds in totally rearranging assemblages or montages of psychic and collective retentions and protentions. The challenge is to invert this situation by having an *ars* of hyper-control instead reach towards a new idea of dis-automatization that would arise from out of today’s dis-integrating automatization.

## Notes

1. On the concept of organology, see: Stiegler (2005).
2. See Sigmund Freud (1962), *The Ego and the Id*.
3. Beyond what separates love and friendship.
4. See Gilles Clément (2008), *Toujours la vie invente*.
5. See Deleuze (1992).
6. Stupor, which is not merely stupidity but which is in general its cause, is the typical modality of our age, in the epoch of *disorientation* (in *Technics and Time*, 2).
7. I argued in *What Makes Life Worth Living* that Alan Greenspan’s defence system was already based on the argument that in an automated financial economy, it is no longer possible to theorize, and that from this it followed that he had no responsibility to act after the series of economic catastrophes that were caused by the dogmas that he applied during the sub-prime era, from making Madoff chairman of NASDAQ, the stock exchange for ‘technology stocks’, to the non-rescue of Lehman Brothers.
8. See Plato, *Phaedrus*.

9. On this topic, cf. Stiegler (2013), Chapter 7.
10. This refers to the possibility of de-proletarianization through the socialization of factors that produce proletarianization, and is the hypothesis that governs the new critique of political economy advocated by *Ars Industrialis*.
11. French Wikipedia entry on hymenoptera: ‘The order hymenoptera includes herbivores, pollinators, and a wide range of entomophagous insects that play a central role in maintaining natural equilibrium. The entomophagous insects comprise the majority of parasitoids (43% of hymenoptera species that have been described) but also predators. The actual number of hymenoptera is estimated at somewhere between one and three million species, divided into a hundred families. Many species have not yet been described, or even discovered.’
12. The social systems that structure collective individuals are formed on the basis of circuits of transindividuation themselves founded on knowledges and disciplines.
13. See Harrod (2012): ‘As it happens, Anderson’s great-grandfather, Jo Labadie, was one of the founding members of the American Anarchist movement, and Anderson himself was a punk in his twenties. (“We definitely drew lots of circles with As in them,” he says. “I’m not sure we could spell anarchy.”) There’s certainly a libertarian flavour to his conversation, although he doesn’t like to be pigeonholed. [...] Anderson’s vision is unsparing: it’s a world of perfect competition and pure capitalism. [...] “I think infinite competition has made us better,” he says. “We’ve all found ways to add value in a world of infinite competition.” It’s a grandiose vision, too. “I’m motivated primarily by social change, and my preferred tool is business.”’
14. I have proposed an analysis of this calamitous becoming, that runs from the conservative revolution to the events of 2008, in Stiegler (2013). Nevertheless, digital tertiary retention brings into this ultra-liberal against the state, against the public thing, new weapons that are yet to be criticized – and this work is a contribution to such a critique.
15. Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules* (cited in Freud 2001, 72–73).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Bernard Stiegler* is a philosopher. He is doctor of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, head of the Institut de Recherche et d’Innovation (IRI), which he founded in 2006 at the Centre Georges-Pompidou. He is President and co-founder in 2005 of the political and cultural group, *Ars Industrialis*, the founder in 2010 of the philosophy school, Ecole de Philosophie d’Épineuil-le-Fleuriel, Associate Professor at the University of Technology of Compiègne and teaches at Brown University, Providence, United States and Nanjing University, China. In 1987–88, with Catherine Counot, Stiegler commissioned an exhibition at the Centre Georges-Pompidou, entitled *Mémoires du futur: bibliothèques et technologies*. Stiegler’s work has philosophically explored questions of technology and knowledge approaching this through the lens of the phenomenological tradition, evolutionary biology, political economy and the critique of consumer capitalism. He is a prolific writer whose best-known works are the three part volumes of *Technics and Time* (1994) and *Disbelief and Discredit* (2004).

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