Bernard Stiegler

The Age of Disruption

Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism

The Age of Disruption

To the memory of Gérard Granel and Nicolas Auray.
For Thomas Berns.
For Michel Deguy.
For the animals of the forest.

Bernard Stiegler

The Age of Disruption

Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism

followed by

A Conversation about Christianity

with Alain Jugnon, Jean-Luc Nancy and Bernard Stiegler

Translated by Daniel Ross

polity

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Inch'Allah is a French transcription of the Arabic phrase هللا ءاش نإ (In Shaa Allah), which means 'God willing'. In Arab countries this term is used by Christians and Muslims with the same meaning, as inspired by the epistle of James: 'If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that' (James 4:15).

Muslims believe it is obligatory to pronounce this formula when they evoke an action to be realized in the future. This belief is founded on the reading of the Sūrat al-Kahf (The Cave):

23. Do not say of anything: 'I will do it tomorrow.'

24. Without adding: 'If Allah wills.' When you forget, remember your Lord and say: 'May Allah guide me and bring me nearer to the truth.'

The expression is also used more generally to mark the desire and the hope to see realized an event in the future, equivalent to current secular sayings such as 'touch wood' or 'fingers crossed'.

There is also the expression Maa Shaa Allah (هللا ءاش ام), which means approximately, 'as God has willed'.

Finally, another expression, Law Shaa Allah, meaning 'If God wills/ wishes', is used to express a desire or wish that cannot be reached.

The Portuguese word *oxalá* and Castilian *ojalá*, meaning 'Hopefully', are both derived from the Arabic Inshallah.

<div align="right">French Wikipédia</div>

We should […] deny our We and draw from this, not foreseeable disso-
lution, but a burst of refounding lucidity. We need to confront its defeat
because it is formed in exaltation, and, each time, in forgetting that it is
highly perishable, which does not mean that it is illusory. We, here, fall
into silence and contemplate an abyss. We close our eyes and clench our
teeth in order to avoid having to uselessly pronounce: Who am I? We
know that it would destroy that for which it asks. We think that our We
should choose collective union in despair, but can we make despair a
combative bond?

Bernard Noël[1]

And, after Solon's speech denouncing what is taking place and criticizing
his fellow citizens, the Council replies that in fact Solon is going mad
(*mainesthai*). To which Solon retorts: 'You will soon know if I am mad …
when the truth comes to light.'

Michel Foucault[2]

But we are probably speaking at cross purposes and it will take centuries
before our differences are settled.

Sigmund Freud to Ludwig Binswanger[3]

Μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατονσπεῦδε,
τὰν δ᾿ἔμπρακτον ἄντλει μαχανάν.

Pindar[4]

Now you ask nothing more because you have nothing more…
apart from what you remember.

Derya
(at the slam workshop held in the Glacis housing project, Belfort, and led
by Dominique Bourgon)

Part One

The *Epokhē* of My Life

Philosophizing So as Not to Go Mad

1

Disruption: A 'New Form of Barbarism'

1. The loss of reason

At 4:30 p.m. on 11 September 2001, I began delivering a lecture at the Université de technologie de Compiègne in which I introduced the theme of the industry of cultural goods, formulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1944 in a text that, in 1947, became the chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* entitled 'The Culture Industry'.[1] Their chapter described a profound and dangerous transformation of Western societies, and the key part played in it by this new industry. Its rise, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, would be accompanied by a 'new kind of barbarism',[2] caused by the *inversion* of the Enlightenment project that had laid the foundations of modernity.[3]

On 11 September 2001, between 4:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., I began explaining to my students that the world that took shape after the Second World War, a world that took the 'American way of life' as its model, a world globally 'rationalized' and 'Westernized', was, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, actually in the course of losing its reason. I emphasized the remarkable foresight of these two German philosophers: taking refuge from Nazism in the United States, they saw this 'new kind of barbarism' emerging even before the end of the Second World War, first in New York, and then in California.[4] I then drew their attention to the following three points:

- in 1997, fifty years after the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, it was estimated that the world contained one billion television sets;
- on 3 April 1997, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that the federal government would in 2006 shut off the analogue frequencies that were currently being used by 3,800 American radio and television stations, all of whom were advised to switch to digital by 2003;[5]
- in the spring of 1997, Craig Mundie, then a senior vice-president

at Microsoft (a company represented on the board of the FCC), declared during a European visit that his company, which at that time dominated the information industry (now called the digital industry), would launch a bid to dominate the multimedia business, taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the convergence of information, media and telecommunications technologies.

2. From the slums of Temara to the presidency of the Université de technologie de Compiègne

On 11 September 2001, at around 5:30 p.m., I explained to my UTC students that the one billion television sets that existed in 1997 had grown to cover almost the entire population of the planet, and that programmes are often watched by millions of viewers simultaneously. I offered the example that in the late 1980s, in a slum lying between Temara and Skhirat, south of Rabat, I had seen a crowd of parents and children watching, on a big screen, programmes produced by a recently-privatized French network.

I then invited these engineering students to reflect on what might be going on in the minds of these thousands of people dwelling under scraps of cardboard, sheet metal and recycled materials, who had gathered together at primetime to listen to Patrick Sébastien pour forth his nonsense.[6] I asked them what could have been going through the minds of these children and their parents deprived of just about everything, confronted with the images of showbiz politics, with omnipresent advertising and with the rapid rise of 'trash TV'.

It was then that the frightened face of the UTC general secretary appeared at the entrance of the auditorium and shouted to me: 'Come quickly, something unbelievable is happening!' Astonished and annoyed, I broke off my lecture and followed Luc Ziegler into the office of the university president, François Peccoud, who, eyes riveted to the screen, was beholding Manhattan's Twin Towers ablaze.

On 11 September 2001, between 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., we watched these images in the president's office, as people undoubtedly did in Temara – which, since my visit in the late 1980s, had seen the arrival of satellite dishes.

In February 2014, according to the Moroccan newspaper *Le Matin*, this slum was still home to 34,091 people.[7]

3. From Richard Durn to Jean-Marie Le Pen: primordial narcissism of the *I* and reason for living

Six months and sixteen days later, on 27 March 2002, Richard Durn, 'an environmental activist, former member of the Socialist Party before

joining the Greens […], and also an activist in the League of Human Rights',[8] murdered eight members of the Nanterre city council and wounded nineteen others. The following day he committed suicide by leaping from a window at the police station where he was being questioned. Less than a month later, on 21 April, Jean-Marie Le Pen finished ahead of Lionel Jospin in the first round of the presidential election. On 5 May, Jacques Chirac was elected with 82.21 per cent of the vote.

After 11 September 2001 and 21 April 2002, I delivered two lectures at Cerisy-la-Salle, in the framework of two seminars organized by Édith Heurgon and Josée Landrieu.[9] In the first lecture, I tried to understand what was at stake in the 9/11 event, and in the second, to imagine what could have being going through Durn's mind on 27 March 2002. I argued that in our 'epoch', which should be understood as the fulfilment of the new barbarism anticipated by Adorno and Horkheimer, what is occurring amounts to a *murderous dis-articulation* of the *I* and the *we*.

We have now also passed through the crisis of 2008, and this epoch has shown itself for what it is: *the epoch of the absence of epoch*, the meaning of which will be clarified in what follows.

In pointing out, during my second lecture at Cerisy and after 21 April, that, three weeks before the massacre, Durn had written of having 'lost the feeling of existing', I tried to show that the processes of psychic and collective individuation[10] characteristic of the life of the mind and spirit have slowly but surely been wiped out by the culture industries, now exclusively operating in the service of the market and the organization of consumption, and that the export of this state of affairs around the world was clearly one of the key factors lying behind the growth of Al-Qaeda.

In France itself, this situation was firmly entrenched in 1986, when François Mitterrand allowed the privatization of television, giving Silvio Berlusconi and Jérôme Seydoux the licence to operate a network that would be named La Cinq. Jacques Chirac and François Léotard, who would later demand that the Hersant group acquire a stake in La Cinq, would soon after arrange the privatization of TF1.[11] In competition with M6, which also appeared in 1987, TF1 quickly began to enter the path of systematically drive-based television, while La Cinq, which failed, ceased broadcasting in 1992.[12]

In 2003, I turned these two lectures into a book.[13] I dedicated it to those who voted for the National Front, and I argued that Durn had been stripped of his 'primordial narcissism' by a process of the same kind as that implemented by the industry of cultural goods, which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, destroys what, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant called the transcendental imagination.[14]

The destruction of primordial narcissism leads to madness, that is, to the loss of reason, and, more precisely, to the loss of this *reason for living*

that creates and gives the feeling of existing. This is why I stated in the conclusion of that book:

> If we do not enact an *ecological critique* of the technologies and industries of the spirit, if we do not show that the unlimited exploitation of spirits as markets leads to a ruin comparable to that which the Soviet Union and the great capitalist countries have been able to create by exploiting territories or natural resources without any care to preserve their habitability to come – the future – then we move ineluctably toward a global social explosion, that is, toward absolute war.[15]

Today, this explosion is imminent. All of us now know it and fear it, but also repress it and deny it, and we do so in order to continue living with dignity [*dignement*]. This is, however, something that can no longer be repressed: in the stage we have now entered, this becomes, precisely, unworthy [*indigne*], and literally cowardly.

4. A 'new kind of barbarism' and algorithmic governmentality

The FCC's announcement on 3 April 1997, followed by Craig Mundie's European tour, was the beginning of a federal policy that would completely reshape the American audiovisual industry, through a process of digitalization[16] giving a brand new twist to this 'new kind of barbarism'. This FCC policy – coming after the World Wide Web entered the public domain on 30 April 1993 through a decision (made by Europeans) that gave the internet a completely new and revolutionary dimension, and after the Clinton government had granted tax exemptions to a set of businesses that would go on to become the 'giants' of the web – created the conditions for the rise, in the United States, of an industry that would be *fully digital*.

In this way, a path was laid out for what would become a new American hegemony – embodied by the Big Four: Amazon (created in 1993), Google (1997), Facebook (2004) and Apple.[17] Between 2007 and 2015, Apple sold 700 million iPhones, around which 900,000 'apps' were developed for sale on the App Store. In 1996 I was appointed deputy director general of the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA) in charge of the innovation department, that is, of research, production, training and publishing. I closely followed the developments that led to the emergence of Google, and recommended that the government build a new audiovisual policy focused on the web.[18] My recommendation was ignored and I resigned from the INA in 1999.

By completely reconfiguring telecommunications, and thereby constituting reticular society, the integration of the analogue communication industries, journalism and the editorial function in general into the

digital information industries – of which the 1997 FCC decision was the first step[19] – continued and radicalized the process that Adorno and Horkheimer had analysed in 1944. But, at the same, this reconfiguration introduced *absolutely new* factors.

This absolute novelty is what Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy are trying to think today with the concept of *algorithmic governmentality*.[20] What is new is the systematic exploitation and physical reticulation of interindividual and transindividual relations – serving what is referred to today as the 'data economy', itself based on data-intensive computing, or 'big data', which has been presented as the 'end of theory'.[21] This amounts to the full realization of barbarism in Adorno and Horkheimer's sense, but they could surely never have imagined how far this would extend onto the noetic plane.

Reticulated society is based on smartphones and other embedded mobile devices (chips, sensors, GPS tags, cars, televisions,[22] watches, clothing and other prostheses), but also on new fixed and mobile terminals (urban territory becoming the infrastructure and architecture of constant mobility and constant connectivity). As such, it contains unprecedented powers of automation and computation: it is literally *faster than lightning* – digital information circulates on fibre-optic cables at up to two thirds of light speed, quicker, then, than Zeus' lightning bolt, which travels at only 100 million metres per second (one third of the speed of light). Automatic and reticulated society thereby becomes *the global cause of a colossal social disintegration*.

The automatic power of reticulated disintegration extends across the face of the earth through a process that has recently become known as *disruption*. Digital reticulation penetrates, invades, parasitizes and ultimately destroys social relations at lightning speed, and, in so doing, neutralizes and annihilates them from within, by outstripping, overtaking and engulfing them. Systemically exploiting the network effect, this *automatic nihilism* sterilizes and destroys local culture and social life like a neutron bomb: what it dis-integrates,[23] it exploits, not only local equipment, infrastructure and heritage, abstracted from their socio-political regions and enlisted into the business models of the Big Four,[24] but also psychosocial energies – both of individuals and of groups – which, however, are thereby depleted.

These individuals and groups are thus transformed into data-providers, de-formed and re-formed by 'social' networks operating according to new protocols of association. In this way, they find themselves disindividuated: their own data [*données*], which also amounts to what we call (in the language of the Husserlian phenomenology of time) *retentions*,[25] enables them to be dispossessed of their own *protentions*[26] – that is, *their own desires, expectations, volitions, will* and so on.

5. Always too late

'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.[27]

Disruption *moves quicker than any will, whether individual or collective*, from consumers to 'leaders', whether political or economic.[28] Just as it overtakes individuals via digital doubles or profiles on the basis of which it satisfies 'desires' they have most likely never expressed – but which are in reality herd-like substitutes depriving individuals of their own existence by always preceding their will, at the same time emptying them of meaning, while feeding the business models of the data economy – so too disruption outstrips and overtakes social organizations, but the latter recognize this only after the fact: *always too late*.

Disruption renders will, wherever its source, *obsolete in advance*: it always arrives too late. What is thereby attained is an extreme stage of rationalization, forming a threshold, that is, a limit. What lies beyond this limit remains unknown: it destroys reason not only in the sense that rational knowledge finds itself eliminated by proletarianization, 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.

In the epoch of reticulated and automated disruption, the 'new kind of barbarism' induced by the loss of the feeling of existing no longer involves only isolated and suicidal individuals, whether Richard Durn or Andreas Lubitz, who crashed his passenger-laden aircraft into a mountain, or the suicidal perpetrators of 9/11. On 22 December 2014, Sébastien Sarron drove his van into a crowd at the Christmas market in Nantes. When reason is lost, all those technological powers that we hold in our hands as 'civilizational progress' become weapons of destruction through which this 'civilization' reveals the barbarism it contains. This is the key pharmacological question to be addressed in the epoch of disruption.[29]

The loss of the feeling of existing, the loss of the possibility of expressing one's will, the correlative loss of all reason for living and the subsequent loss of *reason as such*, a loss that Chris Anderson glorifies as the 'end of theory', are what now strike entire groups and entire countries – and it is for this reason that the far right is on the rise around the world, and especially in Europe, which, since the tragedy of Greece and the massacres in France, is undergoing significant deterioration.

But these losses also and especially strike *an entire generation*: that of

Florian. Florian is the name of a young man of fifteen, whose statements were published in *L'Effondrement du temps*:

> You really take no account of what happens to us. When I talk to young people of my generation, those within two or three years of my own age, they all say the same thing: we no longer have the dream of starting a family, of having children, or a trade, or ideals, as you yourselves did when you were teenagers. All that is over and done with, because we're sure that we will be the last generation, or one of the last, before the end.[30]

2

The Absence of Epoch

6. Before the end

Florian believes his generation will be the last, 'or one of the last, before the end'. Such is the state of Florian's *morale* [*moral*] – and I will return to this in Chapter 8, on the question of what ties 'thought' to so-called 'morale', which we either 'have' or 'do not have', which equally ties thinking to melancholy, which is also to say, to madness. Hence we will ask what *morale* means (from *moralis*, 'related to mores, manners'), and, more generally, what there is of morality in the fact of 'having [good] morale', and about *demoralization*. The *last* generation, or one of the last, *before the end*: such is the *extreme demoralization* of Florian and his generation.

In the horizon of *becoming* [*devenir*], Florian sees no possible *future* [*avenir*] for his generation – which is also to say, for the human species. He formulates in clear, simple and terrifying terms what everyone thinks, but which everyone represses – except a few who hurtle into the Twin Towers by plane, or into mountains, or into Christmas markets, or through the window of a police station after having killed or injured twenty-seven people (we should also mention Columbine, Breivik and many others – and it will be necessary to discuss the Kouachi brothers).

I will return to this repression, and the denial to which it leads, in Chapter 13.

Expressing this in the language of phenomenology, and returning to questions emerging from Martin Heidegger's existential analytic, we could say that for Florian, no positive collective protention is possible: there is no protention other than *the end of all protention*, that is, *the end of all dreams* and any possibility of realizing them. Florian's vision of the world and of his future is entirely subject to *an absolutely negative protention*: the complete disappearance of humankind.

We can try to imagine what the complete disappearance of humankind means for Florian. It could be envisaged as the self-extermination of humanity through a total and final world war. It could occur through a series of apocalyptic accidents. It could also be the outcome of climate change and its adverse effects on life in general and human life in

particular. The last of these possibilities was the subject of a United Nations conference held in Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015, which everyone knew would achieve next to nothing.

No doubt all these possibilities get mixed together for members of the younger generations, in various ways and with many other factors and causes for despair, in particular on the economic level, and more so still when this level is found to be massively subject to the disruptive madness of full and generalized automation.[1]

In 2015, the accumulation of these disasters that have affected men and women since the beginning of the twenty-first century[2] became conjoined to the attenuation of every form of will, and the result has been the proliferation of barbaric behaviour – all this gives everyone, and not only Florian's generation, every reason to believe that the world is on a path to ruin, and in short order.

It is then a question of understanding how it is possible that, at the very moment it becomes apparent to everyone that humanity and life in general are threatened by the madness that currently governs the world in partnership with systemic stupidity (or 'functional stupidity'[3]), people find themselves seemingly unable to create the conditions for a radical bifurcation – not the disruptive 'radical innovation' of the kind claimed by those startup entrepreneurs who present themselves as '*new barbarians*',[4] but, on the contrary, a bifurcation taking account of the radicality of this disruption from the perspective of a *new public power*, such that it could *once again create an epoch*.

7. Negative teleology and end without purpose

It is impossible to live in a society without positive collective protentions, but the latter are the outcome of intergenerational and transgenerational transmission. Such protentions – which belong to what the Greeks in the age of Hesiod called *elpis* (ἐλπίς), a word that means *expectation* [*attente*], both as hope and as fear,[5] and which is the condition of *attention* – are the boundaries and boundary markers of the care that must be taken of the world (κόσμος).

Inhabited by this 'unsettling' [*inquiétant*] being that is the human,[6] this κόσμος is always exposed to *hubris* (ὕβρις), collective protentions of which open up a 'general economy' – in Georges Bataille's sense of this notion,[7] conceived in a fundamental relationship to sacrifice – through being inscribed into calendarities and cardinalities, each time specific, of one civilization or another.

These cardinalities and calendarities have been not only upset, but literally *overturned* by the advent of the culture industry, and yet more by digitalization as the convergence of telecommunications, the audio-visual and computing, a convergence that leads to reticulated, automatic society.

Today, the Christian calendar has been imposed throughout the entire world by all those clocks that synchronize every digital device – billions of devices, a huge number of which can be found in the pockets of terrestrial inhabitants connected by the industry of 'cloud computing', data centres, geostationary satellites and the algorithms of intensive computing, together forming what Heidegger called *Gestell*.

In so doing, the Christian calendar short-circuits every other form of calendarity, while itself becoming completely secularized as the system becomes purely computational – totally secularized, as Max Weber understood, and which Jacques Derrida described as 'globalatinization' [*mondialatinisation*].[8]

In such a *purely* computational context, individual as well as collective protentions *fade away*. Such is our 'desolate time'.[9] And such is the incommensurable tragedy of Florian and his generation. In the time of this generation, which is also that of 'digital natives',[10] nobody seems capable of producing intergenerational and transgenerational collective protentions, except ones that are purely negative – such a *negative teleology thereby reaches its end without purpose* (and not that purposiveness without end that provides the motives of Kantian reason).[11]

As such, Florian and his generation, and *us* – who are surviving with them, and among them, rather than truly living with them, since to live, for a noetic soul, is to exist by sharing ends, that is, *collectively* projecting dreams, desires and wills – we *all*, as and with Florian, we all, insofar as we *are*, find ourselves *thrown* into and thrown *out by* the epoch of the absence of epoch.

In earlier works (and in my first book[12]), I have tried to understand the meaning of an epoch via what philosophers call the *epokhē*. This Greek word, ἐποχή, refers to both 'a period of time, an era, an epoch', and to an 'arrest', an 'interruption', a 'suspension of judgement', a 'state of doubt'.

It is as such a suspension of judgement that the *epokhē* has become an element of philosophical vocabulary – used in particular by the Stoics and the Sceptics. And it was in these terms that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was revived by Edmund Husserl and placed at the centre of phenomenology – as a noetic method, that is, a path of thinking.

In a singular situation and by a path that I will retrace in summary in Chapter 5, in particular in §§28 and following, I came to the point of myself positing that what the philosophers call the *epokhē* – such that it lies at the origin of a *conversion of the gaze*, of a *change in the way of thinking*, and, through that, of a transformation of what Heidegger called 'the understanding that there-being (*Dasein*) has of its being'[13] (which, as we will see, consists in the individual and collective production of 'circuits of transindividuation') – this philosophical and more generally noetic *epokhē* (produced by a new form of thinking

in general) is *always the outcome of a techno-logical upheaval*, itself derived from what Bertrand Gille described as a change in the technical system.[14]

8. *Epokhē* and disruption

A change of technical system always initially entails a disadjustment between this technical system and what Bertrand Gille called the social systems,[15] which had hitherto been 'adjusted' to the preceding technical system, and which had therein formed, *along with it*, an 'epoch' – but where the technical system as such fades into the background, forgotten as it disappears into everydayness, just as, for a fish, what disappears from view, as its 'element', is water.

Heidegger describes this vanishing of the technical element into everydayness (its forgetting) in §§12–18 of *Being and Time*.[16] What he shows is that the facticity of the world and of the epoch in which it presents itself becomes obvious and inevitable when there is an interruption of the technical element. This occurs, for example, when a tool we are using becomes broken: what is thereby revealed is the *fragility of the technical element*.

Heidegger's analysis must be carried over to another plane: not that of the tool, but of the technical system, which Heidegger himself thought in terms of a 'system of reference' (§17) and as phenomena related to what he calls 'relevance' or 'involvement' (*Bewandtnis*), as a complex of tools or a 'technical ensemble', as Simondon described it, and which, becoming in the twentieth century entirely globalized (as what Jacques Ellul would describe as the 'technological system'[17]), develops into what Heidegger will in 1949 begin to call *Gestell*.[18]

When a change of technical system occurs – in Bertrand Gille's sense – the epoch from which it originated comes to an end: a new epoch emerges, generally at the cost of military, religious, social and political conflicts of all kinds.

But the *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*.

These new kinds of protention are new expressions of will, which we must understand here in the sense of the Greek βουλή (which is both the will of the citizen and that of the city), and constitute new forms of expectation (ἐλπίς) – that is, of desire and of the *economy* from which it stems: the libidinal economy, from which emerges, then, a new epoch. An epoch is always a specific configuration of the libidinal economy,

organized around the ensemble of tertiary retentions (that is, around the technical supports of collective retention) that form, through their arrangement, a new technical system, which is always also a retentional system.

A libidinal economy is an economy of desire insofar as it is always both individual and collective. Desire is structured by a field of protentions that one inherits and then projects in a *singular* way, on the basis of collective retentions transmitted by the intergenerational play that is regulated by models of education at the different stages of life.

When tertiary retentions have adjusted to social systems, they tend always to be forgotten, just as water is forgotten by the fish. Nevertheless, in intergenerational processes of transmission, tertiary retentions radically condition the relationships between psychic individuals, and, through them, between collective individuals – between the mother and the *infans*, between the child and his or her siblings as well as other children, between the adolescent and the social milieu, between adults, between adults and new generations, and hence between generations, and, through the generations, between social groups, and so on.

In the contemporary epoch of the absence of epoch, the role of digital tertiary retentions in the intergenerational (non)relationship, and in the (non)formation of collective retentions and protentions, is both *perfectly obvious and totally escapes* comprehension – because there is no longer any adjustment between the new technical system and the social systems. Far from adjusting the social systems by reshaping them to suit a 'new epoch', the technical system short-circuits them and, ultimately, *destroys them*.

When a technical system engenders a new epoch, the emergence of new forms of thinking is translated into religious, spiritual, artistic, scientific and political movements, manners and styles, new institutions and new social organizations, changes in education, in law, in forms of power, and, of course, changes in the very foundations of knowledge – whether this is conceptual knowledge or work-knowledge [*savoir-faire*] or life-knowledge [*savoir-vivre*]. But this happens only in a second stage, that is, *after* the techno-logical *epokhē* has taken place.

This is why an epoch always occurs through a doubly epokhal redoubling:

- *double* because it always occurs in *two stages* – on the one hand, the technological *epokhē*; on the other hand, the *epokhē* of knowledge as forms of life and thought, that is, the constitution of a new transindividuation (characteristic of a particular time and place);
- *redoubling* because, starting from the *already there* forms of technics and time that are constituted as this or that established epoch, a new technical reality and a new historical reality (or, more precisely, historial[19] – *geschichtlich*) redoubles and through that relegates to the

past that which has engendered it, which seems, therefore, precisely to be *the past*;

- *epokhal* because it is only as an *interruption* inaugurating a *recommencement* and a *new current present* that this double redoubling occurs, eventually by firmly establishing itself as what we call, precisely, an *epoch*.

The *disruption* that is the *digital* technical system is one such *epokhē*: disruption is one such suspension of *all* previous ways of thinking, which were elaborated by appropriating previous changes of technical systems (and of the mnemotechnical and hypomnesic systems[20] that must be understood as processes of grammatization, which I will not discuss here[21]). But this *epokhē* is disruptive precisely in that *it gives absolutely no place to the second moment*, nor therefore to *any thinking*: it gives rise only to an *absolute emptiness of thought*, to a kenosis so radical that Hegel himself would not have been able to anticipate it.[22] It is, however, what Nietzsche would later see coming 'on doves' feet' – as the ordeal of nihilism.

The grotesque dimension of so-called 'intellectual debate', in France especially, which the French media discussed in autumn 2015, is a pathetic symptom of this fact.

In the midst of disruption, the second stage of the doubly epokhal redoubling fails to occur: there is no transindividuation. And hence there arises no new form of thinking capable of being translated into new organizations, new institutions, new behaviours and so on – through which *an epoch properly speaking* could be constituted. Behaviours, as *ways of living*, are being replaced by *automatisms* and *addictions*. At the same time, intergenerational and transgenerational relations are unravelling: transmission of knowledge has been prevented, and there are no protentions of desires that would be capable of bringing about a growth of transgenerational experience – of which ritual, religious or civil calendarities were hitherto the frameworks.

The age of disruption[23] is the epoch of the absence of epoch, announced and foreshadowed not just by Adorno and Horkheimer as the 'new kind of barbarism', but by Heidegger as the 'end of philosophy', by Maurice Blanchot as the advent of 'impersonal forces', by Jacques Derrida as 'monstrosity', and, before all of these, by Nietzsche as nihilism.[24] From around 1990, Deleuze broached this question, along with Guattari, in terms of the question of control societies and the 'dividuation' of individuals. Simondon didn't see it at all.

9. Epochs and collective protention

An epoch is what enables *collective protentions to be established* through the constitution of new circuits of transindividuation. Forms of

thinking and forms of life are thereby metastabilized,[25] transindividuated by the psychic individuals of the epoch, through which new processes of collective individuation form, and thus new social groups and social systems, new social organizations and so on.[26] Circuits emerge through *affective relations* of various kinds – transitional, filial, friendship, familial, cooperative, recreational, religious, relations of power or knowledge – forging dreams, goals, objectives and common horizons, for which *close friends and family* play an *indispensable* role.

There are collective protentions only to the extent that there are collective retentions. The latter constitute forms of knowledge. They are transmitted collectively through educational organizations, and acquired over the course of life in its various stages – as elementary motor and language retentions, then as sayings, representations, formulas, rules, skills, doctrines, dogmas, narratives, ideas and theories. All these are what provide those capabilities by which the past can be interpreted, and it is from such interpretations that psychic and collective projections of the future can arise.

Heidegger transformed Husserlian phenomenology into an existential analytic (presenting itself as a development of phenomenology, one that takes the fundamental axioms of the Husserlian *epokhē* into account, while at the same time reforming them) when he explicitly and absolutely articulated psychic retentions (the mnesic elements forming the *psychē* of this or that individual, the individual being here what Heidegger called Dasein) and collective retentions.

Heidegger thus showed the following:

- All of Dasein's retentional activity is inscribed in the retentional activity of an epoch, which this Dasein inherits as it's already there, and which constitutes what I myself call collective secondary retentions (I will return to this[27]).
- Such an inheritance can occur only in the futural mode of a future [*futurition d'un avenir*]: as Heidegger will later say, 'the human [is] the one who awaits [*der Wartende zu sein*]',[28] this expectant awaiting being that of a future that comes to inscribe a difference in becoming (this difference being a *différance* that, as process of individuation, produces a bifurcation[29]).
- The futurity of the future is primordially constituted in Dasein by an *archi-retention* – 'archi' in the sense that it is always already known and '*remembered*' by Dasein – that is also an archi-protention (which is always already known and *fore-seen* by Dasein), namely, *the death of Dasein*: *Dasein knows first and foremost that it will die*, it knows this singular piece of knowledge [*savoir insigne*]. But this singular and primordial knowledge always conceals itself *through processes of denial of all kinds* belonging to what Heidegger called *Besorgen* ('busyness', 'pre-occupation').[30] It knows its end, most of the time,

only in the mode of this constant denial [*dénégation*].[31] Its whole existence is a *way* of knowing, which is also to say, most of the time (in busyness and preoccupation, *Besorgen*), a way of *refusing* to know. All the knowledge possessed by Dasein amounts to versions of this singular and primordial knowledge – but always in the partial way of a *différance* (a postponement[32]) that can never *quite* be known.

This knowledge is, in other words, the knowledge of a default, and a default of knowledge. It is a knowledge *by default*.

On the basis of these considerations, which emerged from a reading of *Being and Time* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, I have tried to extend the Husserlian concepts of retention and protention, and at the same time the Heideggerian concepts of the *already there*, *epoch*, *historiality* and *spatiality*, by forming the concept of tertiary retention – and, more recently, and in discussion with the work of Yuk Hui, of tertiary protention.[33]

Tertiary retention is, as we shall see, what compensates for the *default* of retention – which is also to say, the loss of both memory and knowledge. But it is also what *accentuates* this loss (this default): it is a *pharmakon*.[34]

Tertiary retentions and protentions allow us to understand what Heidegger investigated under the names of 'datability' and 'utility'.[35] Fields of collective retentions and protentions are thus shaped by the retentional systems of calendarity and cardinality[36] that underpin the epochs and, usually, *traverse* epokhalities – hence many epochs can belong to a single *era*, such as, for example, the epochs of the Christian era.[37]

10. Disruption and sharing

Dasein can receive the retentions that it inherits from an already-there past as its own retentions (by adopting them[38]) only because the latter are inscribed in the factical and technical space of the world (including as language), thereby constituting what, at the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger called Dasein's 'world-historiality' (*Weltgeschichtlichkeit*), that is, the fact that temporality (and its historiality, *Geschichtlichkeit*) is already there before it in the world, as relics, monuments, stories, as *its* past that it nevertheless did not *live*.

This is what Heidegger shows in §76 of *Being and Time* in order to account for the possibility of historiography. But this is, before anything else, what conditions what he describes in §6, namely, that 'the past of Dasein always already precedes it'. This is possible, however, only because:

1. this past is not *only* its own – which means, in my own terminology, that it is formed from collective secondary retentions;[39]

2. it is *inscribed* in this world (which we see, Heidegger tells us, with
    relics, monuments and stories[40]) – which means that these collective
    retentions are made possible by *tertiary* retentions.

Dasein's psychic retentions are made possible by tertiary retentions
that are collective thanks to the very fact that they are exteriorized and
spatialized. Dasein is thus able to share, with other psychic individuals,
collective tertiary retentions that it apprehends as its *own* retentions, and
which belong to *the same epoch* (and to the same 'culture') as those with
whom this Dasein *shares* these retentions. From this it follows, too, that
individuals of the same epoch and the same culture have, if not quite
the same expectations, at least a *common horizon of the convergence
of their expectations*, forming *at infinity* the common protention of a
common future – the undetermined unity of a horizon of expectation
– which is also ultimately the future of humankind, that is, of noesis as
worthy of being lived in a non-inhuman way.

   We have seen, then, that such sharing constitutes the background
or the *funds* [*fonds*] of an epoch (and more precisely what Simondon
called its preindividual funds). *Digital tertiary retention, however, which
constitutes the digital technical system, is disruptive because it takes
control of this sharing*. This is what I have called, in pursuing the reflec-
tions of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, societies of hyper-control.

   These societies, however, are no longer quite societies, if it is true that
a society is constituted only within an epoch: they are aggregations of
individuals who are increasingly disindividuated (disintegrated). More
and more, this is leading to the rise of that new kind of barbarism
glimpsed in 1944, the contemporary realization of which is what we are
here calling disruption.

   The reconstitution of a true automatic *society* can occur only by
establishing a true economy of sharing – whereas what the current
disruption produces is, on the contrary, a *diseconomy* of sharing, that
is, *a destruction of those who share by the means of what they share*.

   Along with Ars Industrialis, I call this true sharing economy the
economy of contribution, which is the subject of the two volumes of
Automatic Society, where what is absolutely shared is knowledge as
negentropic potentiality. And it is shared as work, in the sense that the
father Schaeffer said to his son, Pierre:

   Work at your instrument.[41]

3

Radicalization and Submission

11. Ὕβρις and aboulia

The horizon of expectation common to psychic individuals who live in the same epoch presents itself to them positively as that which contains their future in potential, insofar as this is something constantly renewed, and as such always new, thereby constituting the future properly speaking inasmuch as it is always unlike the present or the past. As such, the future [*avenir*] is unpredictable, bearing the improbable and the unknown that Heraclitus called *anelpiston* – the unexpected, the unhoped-for. And it does not reduce merely to becoming [*devenir*], which today we understand to be the entropic fate of the universe: *anelpiston* is the *différance of a becoming* that is itself entropic,[1] that is, a foregone conclusion, where everything will return to dust, and where 'unto dust shalt thou returne'.[2]

This horizon of expectation common to an epoch and to a generation is that of which Florian's generation has been deprived – 'blank', as the punks already said, presenting themselves as the 'blank generation'[3] – if we believe Florian. For expectation as the projection of a possible common future is always the expectation of an unexpected. Florian expects nothing: he expects nothing but the 'end', that is, the fulfilment of a becoming for which there is, precisely, no longer any future – a negative protention that is the absence of protention within an absence of epoch.

This deprivation of protention comes about from a deprivation of the possibilities of identification and idealization that precede it, and it participates directly in the new kind of barbarism installed by the culture industries. I attempted to analyse this in *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* by showing how Canal J, a television network aimed at children, tries to eject parents and grandparents from the adolescent process of becoming adult, by short-circuiting the id that conditions identification, just as the Baby First channel, and television aimed at very young children, destroys transitional space and the processes of primary identification.[4]

What allows the *interiorization of collective secondary retentions* are primary and secondary identifications. Although collective secondary retentions are not simply 'mine', they *are* mine in the sense that they are *those of my epoch*, because I receive them from *within my intergenerational ancestry or through the friendship of my peers*: friendship is a fundamental vector of secondary identification through which the *philia* characteristic of an epoch is formed.

The new kind of barbarism heralded by Adorno and Horkheimer is characterized by the liquidation of these possibilities of identification and related possibilities of idealization. The liquidation of primordial narcissism – the liquidation of the *I* as well as of the *we* – is possible only on this basis. This deprivation of the possibility of identification and idealization, however, is *radicalized* by disruption: it is carried to its *breaking point* [*point de rupture*].

The radical rupture induced by dis-ruption makes *evident* that the epoch is missing [*fait défaut*], that it is merely the *absence* of epoch: disruption is what, in the geological era of the Anthropocene, and as its very *impasse*, *structurally* prevents the formation of collective protentions bearing a future charged with new potential. And it does so at a moment when the imminent possibility of an *excessively and definitively fatal* ὕβρις is gripping hold of and strangling any projection into the immensity of the improbable, and, in so doing, is sending us mad – mad with *sadness*, mad with *grief*, mad with *rage*.

The liquidation of protentions occurs in a structural way insofar as, as we have already seen,[5] psychic and collective protentions are being replaced by purely computational automatic protentions – eliminating the unhoped-for, essentially destroying every expectation of the unexpected, and thereby attenuating every form of desire (if desire, which is not simply drive, is always desire for the singular, that is, for the unexpected but awaited improbable).

The liquidation of protentions equally attenuates every kind of *will* – that is, all *power to bifurcate on the basis of knowledge derived from previous bifurcations*, knowledge that becomes collective retention through the processes of transindividuation characteristic of epochs. The outcome of this liquidation is abject aboulia.

Inasmuch as it always calls for an inscription into a more broadly shared protention, protention is always *bound* to a structure which is that of a promise, and as such to a mutual engagement that infinitely exceeds the psychic individual. This is what *Being and Time* ultimately fails to take genuinely into account:[6] the brilliant analyses it contains never explain how it is that Dasein always projects itself *beyond* its end,[7] and lives its mortality only in the primordial projection of a continuation of the world after its own end: in its *beyond*.

12. Speed and vanity

Disruption – in an age of ultra-libertarian capitalism where it amounts to a completely original form of ideology, and all the more so in that it states a *reality* that everyone otherwise denies – substitutes a blind becoming for this future desired in common, a future that is as such *wanted, in however small a way*: wanted *by* and *as* this '*in common*'. This is what blinds our fellow men and women today – a blindness wrapped in the highly complex, tortuous and devious 'storytelling'[8] of transhumanism, within which the absence of epoch wallows.

Throughout the epochs of the 'historial' form of life – inasmuch as we can, more or less badly, more or less well, know or deduce it from the documents, relics, monuments and stories received since the Upper Palaeolithic and up until the most recent data from the historiography of the Anthropocene – positive protentional horizons have existed. These horizons were shared as collective protentions across the most varied ways of life – via ritualizations capturing and forming the attention in which retentions and protentions are woven according to the conditions of retentional and protentional systems of all kinds: from Magic to Progress, via messianisms, redemptions, salvations and emancipations to come. Although these have been received from all cultures, those of the tragic Greeks, like *kleos* (κλέος), deserve particular attention.

As attentional formations, these retentional and protentional systems amounted to epochs of care [*soin*], *souci* [*Sorge*], as solicitude for the world, always exposed to the ὕβρις that facticity contains – which is an ὕβρις that can only be *contained* by this facticity, which can itself be factical only by always containing ὕβρις within it, which is also expectation, that is, *elpis* (ἐλπίς), and as such *curiosity*: this is the meaning of the jar of Pandora, woman-becoming-woman *through her being adorned in jewels*.

With disruption, *such systems can no longer be elaborated*: on the contrary, the barbarism specific to the absence of epoch consists in always *outstripping and overtaking* such systems, so that they seem always already futile, *vain*, the ruined remnants of what would have been only *pure vanity*, where care and attention arrive always too late – in vain. (Here we should obviously linger on the vanities that accompany protentions starting from the Baroque age, especially in Flemish painting.)

It is this vanity that haunts nihilism, weaving a dangerous form of contemporary melancholy that particularly strikes the younger generation, who do not deny (but who are confronted with the denials of those belonging to other generations) the radicalization of their discredit (and their 'disbelief'[9]) compared to the previous generation – taking this discredit and disbelief to a breaking point, a *point of rupture* that is the explosive counterpart of 'disruption'.

Hence arises Florian's terribly quiet desperation, *which in truth affects and disaffects all of us*,[10] including and firstly *in the mode of denial*, which here becomes a *modality of cowardice*. It afflicts all of us *so long as we are still capable* – in the abject aboulia that is this disaffection and this withdrawal [*désaffectation*] – of *wanting a future* that could wear away and pierce through the iron wall of becoming and cross the threshold that leads beyond the Anthropocene, in thus becoming the Neganthropocene.[11]

Only the prospect of a Neganthropocene – where one finds no virgins, it being neither the paradise of the desperate nor the brothel of Dominique Strauss-Kahn – can give to life its reasons for living at a moment when, on all sides, scientific reports produced by the international scholarly community make clear the irreversible character of the destructive process that began two centuries ago and that has significantly accelerated with the spread of consumerist capitalism across the whole planet.[12]

This 'planetarization' – which is the concretization of the Anthropocene (of human activity having become a geological factor) heading towards its limit, of which the IPCC report and the 2050 deadline now accepted as a tipping point are aspects – began with the culture industries that bore within them this new kind of barbarism.

13. Retention and disruption

Primary and secondary retentions are psychic realities – the first belonging to the present time of perception and the second to the past time of memory. Tertiary retentions are artificial retentions, not psychic but technical, such as archives, recordings and technical reproductions in general.

Richard Durn lived in the 'epoch' of *industrial temporal objects* produced by the industry of cultural goods, which, *in spreading the quotidian interiorization of analogue tertiary retentions to the whole world*, effected a major transformation of the way retentions and protentions are organized in that 'epoch' – at the cost of the disappearance of the very notion of the epoch as sharing, as heritage, as belonging and so on.

One of the main aspects of this epokhal transformation lies in the way that analogue broadcasting makes it possible to synchronize consciousnesses. With 'broadcast analogue tertiary retention',[13] the *industrial-temporal-object-consciousness* adheres to its object, and is at the same time synchronized with other consciousnesses, who adhere to it from their side[14] – frequently in the millions, sometimes in the tens or hundreds of millions.

Analogue tertiary retentions possess this synchronizing power to such an extent that they end up profoundly modifying the secondary

retentions constituting psychic individuals – who *are* nothing other than their own secondary retentions inasmuch as they *singularly* project secondary protentions. Viewers, who are synchronized with each other by repeatedly watching the same programmes as one another, tend thereby to find their secondary retentions homogenized. In this way, they tend to lose the singularity of the criteria by which they select the primary retentions that they see in the programmes that they interiorize,[15] their protentions being transformed little by little into behavioural stereotypes concretely expressed in the form of purchasing behaviour.

The more viewers see the same thing, the less the criteria with which they are selecting what they retain in what they see varies from those who, together with them, compose the 'audience', that is, the mass of viewers.[16] In 1997, there were one billion televisions in the world, and such industrial tertiary retentions were being interiorized by almost all inhabitants of planet earth, including by Richard Durn.

In this way, it became possible to massify behaviour and to short-circuit the collective protentions constitutive of an epoch – because this retentional interiorization leads to processes (triggered by marketing) of 'identification' with the behaviours, brands and labels that typify this absence of epoch, in so doing ruining processes of psychic and collective individuation.

By massively modifying the processes by which collective secondary retentions are interiorized, where the latter are themselves methodically and industrially produced according to the dictates of the behavioural models conceived by marketing, the industry of cultural goods itself became the prescriber of the circuits of transindividuation constituting the 'second epokhal moment' of the techno-logical *epokhē* produced by the technical system based on analogue tertiary retention.

This prescription of circuits of transindividuation was functionally subject to the media economy, itself subject to the consumerist economy of which it was only a secular function – and was so at the cost of a structural de-symbolization of the mediatized masses, who thereby found themselves subjected to true symbolic poverty. With the analogue 'second epokhal moment', therefore, collective protentions had already been largely ruined, because social systems had been short-circuited along with the relations of primary and secondary identification that condition processes of psychic and collective individuation. And so it is that primordial narcissism suffered and regressed.

And so it is that Richard Durn – deprived of the 'feeling of existing' by the industrial synchronization and standardization of the attentional modes of the psychic secondary retentions that were his own, as well as the collective secondary retentions that bore protentions typical of an epoch – went mad and became homicidal.

Since the publication of 'To Love, to Love Me, to Love Us: From September 11 to April 21', I have described[17] the countless regressive

processes that have been brought about by the massive interiorization of industrial analogue retentions, which has amounted to the destruction of attention by capturing it in the form of audiences subject to the criteriology of ratings. This is what has since come to be known as the attention economy, now 'refined' and radicalized by the data economy, which, as Frédéric Kaplan has shown, is an economy of expression made possible by digital tertiary retention.[18]

I have also argued in the *Symbolic Misery* series and the *Disbelief and Discredit* series that:

1. like any tertiary retention, analogue retention is a *pharmakon* (as Frank Capra insisted with respect to cinema[19]), and that it therefore does not *inevitably* lead to the inversion of the *Aufklärung*; this is why I have tried to show in *Technics and Time, 3* that the analysis of Adorno and Horkheimer was insufficient in the way it took up, without taking a step back from, the Kantian thesis of the schematism;
2. the new *pharmakon* that arose with *digital* tertiary retention brought with it new opportunities, fundamentally transforming analogue tertiary retention itself by integrating it into the process of digitalization, making it possible to go beyond the industrial model founded on the functional opposition between producers and consumers;
3. such opportunities will develop only provided that they are assisted (a) by a *European industrial policy* explicitly oriented in this direction (and where this is something we cannot expect from the United States, which on the contrary saw in the digital the possibility of reviving its own consumerist model) and (b) by implementing a *new macroeconomic organization* serving an economy of contribution capable of overcoming the impasses of consumerism.

This last point was developed collectively and systematically when I, along with George Collins, Marc Crépon, Catherine Perret and Caroline Stiegler, founded Ars Industrialis, positing in principle, in a manifesto published in 2005,[20] that digital tertiary retention is, *like* analogue tertiary retention, a *pharmakon* that must be socialized in Europe (which lay at the origin of the web) through a transformation of those institutions that emerged from literate (lettered) tertiary retention, and that this must be done within a broad European policy of the industrial technologies of the spirit, and so as to constitute *a new form of public power*.

In this lies the future of Europe, we said. And we made clear that unless measures are taken, we should fear the worst. After the crisis of 2008, in 2010 we published a new manifesto that scrutinized this slide towards the worst.[21]

14. Despair and submission

On the basis of the analyses of, on the one hand, Jonathan Crary, and, on the other hand, Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy, I have endeavoured in the first volume of *Automatic Society* to describe the way in which this 'worst' currently underway produces not only, as with analogue tertiary retention, a standardization of psychic secondary retentions and a loss of the primordial narcissism of the *I*s and the *we*s that television aims to tele-vise,[22] but the *elimination of individual and collective protentions*. These are replaced by automatic protentions derived from the automatic analysis of the retentions self-produced by internet users, and decomposed through a process of the automated 'dividuation'[23] of the digital traces produced by everyone. Hence it is that the data economy comes to replace the industry of cultural goods.

This replacement, which is a disruption of what was already disruptive, but by something *much more rapid and violent*, is demanded by those who, through a programme eloquently entitled 'Les barbares attaquent',[24] intend to promote, in France, something that does indeed present itself as the *radicalization* of a 'new kind of barbarism'.

In so doing, the 'disappointment' described by André Comte-Sponville in 1984 has long since given way to despair – and to the extreme violence that is its inevitable accompaniment when it becomes a major social and historical agent.[25] It is in this desperate context that the absence of epoch seems condemned to rush headlong to its end, not as the beginning of a new epoch but as the 'last generation'.

Whereas the industrial production of analogue tertiary retentions 'massified' [*massifiait*] psychic secondary retentions by replacing them with standardized collective secondary retentions, thereby eliminating the dia-chronic play that primary retentions make possible (a play that amounts to primary selections and as such to an interpretation that is each time singular[26]), psychic individuals *themselves* are the producers of digital tertiary retentions.

Psychic individuals therefore find themselves in the position of producing and expressing what amounts to the preindividual funds shared on the web and platforms. Reticulated digital tertiary retention, then, gives the appearance of being essentially participatory, collaborative and contributory. This is why, with Ars Industrialis, we posit that reticulated digital tertiary retention is a techno-logical *epokhē* that amounts to a new organological and pharmacological state of fact on the basis of which it is crucial to form a new macroeconomic and epokhal framework constituting a general economy of contribution.

Europe has failed – politically, economically, scientifically, artistically and socially – to develop an alternative model to the disruption promoted by the Californian model. It thereby utterly *submits* to this disruptive doctrine, and finds itself *overrun* by the pharmacological toxicity of digital tertiary retention.

Digital retention may indeed bring with it new and unprecedented protentional opportunities because it de-massifies the production of traces. Nevertheless, the disruption systematically explored and exploited by the new reticulation industry has in fact created a new, subtler stage of massification – that is, of the absence of epoch, giving rise to a new kind of barbarism, and doing so by creating a point of rupture, a breaking point.

What is massified today is no longer the criteriology by which primary retentions are selected, which was achieved by standardizing secondary retentions: it is the formation of circuits between secondary retentions via intensive computing, capable of treating gigabytes of data simultaneously, so as to extract statistical and entropic patterns that short-circuit all genuine circuits of transindividuation – where the latter would always be negentropic, that is, singular, and as such incalculable: intractable.[27]

15. What we must not lose

It was in 2005 that Florian expressed the statement that in 2006 became the epigraph of *L'Effondrement du temps*.[28] At that stage of the absenting of the epoch, social networks did not yet exist. Since then, we have witnessed the unfolding of countless disasters, including the 2008 crisis, and everything that has led to what is now described as a state of barbarism whose origin, so we are led to believe, is Islam – a description that amounts to a typical *causal inversion*, as is always typical of any ideology.[29]

Islam does not lie at the *origin* of the state of barbarism within which we are ever more obviously living. Rather, it is the spread of a 'new kind of barbarism' that has occurred with the rationalization of the *Aufklärung* – inverting its sense throughout the entire world, in so doing discrediting all Western culture, and at the same time the project of modernity, as well as the affirmation of secular principles, the right to education, economic rights and the protection of fundamental political freedoms – it is *all this* that has generated reactions that are themselves, *indeed, ever more barbaric*, especially in the Near East and the Middle East, where for decades the West has perpetuated a policy that is completely irresponsible.

This new kind of barbarism as generalized consumerism and venality no longer takes *any care* of the world in which consumers and speculators must nevertheless live. It is this blind stupidity leading to the madness of those it strips of the feeling of existing – that is, of being themselves worthy of respect, and of understanding themselves as such – it is this that has provoked the explosion of barbarism amongst those who do not respect life, including those who present themselves as 'Islamists' and who now channel the movement that has proclaimed a caliphate in the Sham region, to which Yassin Salhi, the 'psychiatric case'

who beheaded his employer in Saint-Quentin-Fallavier in June 2015, claimed allegiance.

Before beginning the next chapter, we should try to think, if it is possible to do so (and I posit *in principle* that it *is* possible[30]), what is happening everywhere as so many abominable confirmations of the words spoken by Florian. For this, we must pursue a deeper understanding of what occurs in a general way with the destruction of psychic and collective retentions and protentions – and, along with this destruction, the destruction of all diachronies, all singularities, all desires *inasmuch as they constitute the negentropic capabilities of non-inhuman being qua Neganthropos*. In losing these negentropic capabilities, *non-inhuman being loses* reason insofar as reason is, precisely, always and uniquely *that which must not be lost* in order to live, noetically, the consistence of existence.

16. Neganthropy

We experience the meaning of Schrödinger's negentropy[31] when in a sunbeam we suddenly see, for the first time since the previous year, the explosion of the colours of spring – the fertility of everything that is *renewed again* in the light and heat that we had forgotten. As the release from the colourlessness of winter, spring is the ordinary experience of resurrection.

When we travel, we re-energize ourselves through the diversity of ways of life and the singularity of those cultures – that is, epochs – that *constitute* what we call the world by *cultivating* it. In this way, travel can provide a clear and immediate perception of that in which negentropy consists, which charms us, becoming what it is now a matter of thinking (that is, of thinking care-fully, *panser*[32]) with the name 'neganthropy', and through a neganthropology both philosophical[33] and positive.[34]

When we feel uneasy in front of a wasteland, a room in disarray, a depressed economic zone, what grips hold of us is anthropy. But it is a neganthropic promise that we feel when, crossing the threshold to enter a home, we encounter traces of everydayness unlike any other – which Italo Calvino described as the 'things' of his Reader in *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller*.[35]

A library (including that of the Reader) is a collection of *neganthropic potentialities* awaiting their reading so as to be actualized, noetically singularizing life as the neganthropy constituted by the anamnesis of pre-ceding neganthropies.

When we pay attention to them, and when we experience them, negentropy in general and the neganthropy that bifurcates from it organologically provide us with access to the extra-ordinary, which means not only that we, as Gilles Clément said, *always invent life*[36] – life that is within what we call 'nature' just as it is within what we call

'culture', which stems from what Georges Canguilhem described as a technical form of life – but also that we *discover* a plane of consistences through which the future is projected by *noetically differing from and deferring* [*différant noétiquement*] becoming, whether entropic or negentropic (that is, vital, qua natural selection).

Neganthropological différance, in other words, cannot be reduced to the plane of subsistence that governs life in 'nature'. In technical life – which is Dasein's existence – another kind of bifurcation occurs that is not just vital but, as Simondon said, psychosocial, and such that *the différance in which the vital process of differentiation consists becomes not just anthropic but neganthropic.*

In this way, 'culture' is something *more* than negentropy (in Schrödinger's sense): through exosomatization and the organogenesis in which it fundamentally consists, this neganthropy bears within it the ὕβρις of facticity, that is, a colossal *acceleration* of both the negentropic and entropic possibilities of so-called nature, of which the degraded anthropized milieus that abound in the Anthropocene are as traces left on the landscape.

In their attempts to integrate Schrödinger's ideas, Shannon and Wiener, biologists, and complex systems theorists such as Henri Atlan and Edgar Morin, all end up running into paradoxes. Combined with problems posed by Prigogine's dissipative structures, these paradoxes have led to confusion concerning what opportunities there are for thinking the future by incorporating the notions of entropy and negentropy, a confusion that is broadly reflected in the theoretical models of bioeconomics.

Because it is primordially exosomatic, organological and pharmacological, *Neganthropos* bears within it the *possibility of the inhuman* (which Heraclitus called injustice, Ἀδικία) as the *condition* of its being *non-inhuman* – the condition, in this sense, of its surpassing. To conceive surpassing as transhumanist 'enhancement' or 'augmentation' has nothing to do with neganthropology. Like both negentropy and neganthropy, the extra-ordinary belongs to the consistence towards which noetic existences project themselves and through which they raise themselves above their subsistence.

For many centuries (at least three hundred, at least since the Upper Palaeolithic, and until almost the beginning of the twentieth century), the way to access this plane of consistence offering hospitality to the extra-ordinary, which occurs also in artistic experience (and which is its condition), was via experiences that were either magical, mystagogical, spiritual or religious. Art was able to become detached from these experiences only with the advent of modernity. But once that occurred, it was not long before art was appropriated as 'aesthetic experience' by the industry of cultural goods, as a function of the capture of attention, and by the speculative market of venal collectors and hyper-philistines:[37]

hence begins what in the eyes of Adorno and Horkheimer amounted to a 'new kind of barbarism' (of which 'postmodernity' is one name).

A psychic individual encounters the *necessity* of the extra-ordinary *in and through its very default* (in its radical *absence*, or what theologians call dereliction, which struck Christ himself on the cross), which creates the *negative* experience of the extra-ordinary, or what we also call despair. It is inevitable and therefore necessary (if not very reassuring) that this psychic individual, struck thus by the feeling of abandonment, would be tempted to turn firstly to what humanity has for centuries and millennia proclaimed to be the condition of a *conversion* of the gaze.

In this search for a plane of consistence by overturning a way of life that suddenly seems absolutely vain and futile,[38] the candidate for conversion affirms the necessity of the extra-ordinary by seeking to gain access to it – the extra-ordinary inasmuch as it escapes the ordinary, such as the supernatural, the religious and all forms of spirituality that amount to so many eras in the succession of epochs throughout which collective protentions are formed as the *condition* of psychic protentions.

After the 7 July 2005 attacks by four 'suicide bombers' in London that left fifty-six dead and 700 wounded, I tried in *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals* to show that adolescent youth has a highly specific relationship to the super-ego, of which the tragedy of Antigone is the first formulation, and as a kind of ideal type – where the psychic individual in the course of becoming adult, who is thus said to be adolescent, turns upon his or her ancestors in order to reproach them for their infidelity with respect to the prescriptions that they claim to be transmitting to the next generation.[39]

In such periods, adolescence, which is often a time in which one experiences despair, can also be one of acting out [*passer à l'acte*] in myriad ways – and in particular by practising what I have called negative sublimation. In the epoch of the absence of epoch that is Florian's – it was in 2005 that he declared what Foucault might have called his *parrhēsia* (παρρησία)[40] – such possibilities are literally *exasperated*, and they are bound to proliferate, unless there is a genuine address to the new generations, and through them to us, responding to the *parrhēsia* of Florian with a discourse itself elaborated *on the basis* of this *parrhēsia* as such, that is, recognizing it *as such*.

Social groups struck by collective disindividuation are, and will increasingly be, prone to losing every reason for living, hence to losing the very notion of reason qua *convergence of protentions* – and to losing the notion of the value of life itself, especially when this noetic life, which is thoroughly organological and pharmacological, reveals itself to be such.

This loss of the reason for living, of the 'meaning of life', and therefore of its value, this form of madness, because it is the loss of the reason to *live*, is expressed above all by suicide. Hence we should not

be surprised if the number of deaths by suicide in France soon exceeds the number of car accident fatalities, striking especially young people (10,000 'successful' suicides per year, and 200,000 'attempts', survivors of despair).

These social groups and forms of solidarity are woven, in highly variable ways, through the affective relations in which they consist. Processes that transmit the knowledge accumulated by the generations consolidate the reasons individuals have for living by inscribing these reasons within the horizon of the collective protentions that they engender and that they maintain by cultivating them – it is precisely this that we call 'culture'. Social 'cults' *maintain* neganthropy by cultivating its extra-ordinary variety.

With 'social engineering', or 'social networking', social groups are, as never before, struck by collective disindividuation – the social is being dis-integrated at its very root, that is, starting from *psychic* secondary retentions, which themselves lie at the origin of collective secondary retentions. They do so by depriving them in advance of any opportunity to form psychic and singular protentions, which is also to say of any *projective* capacity within identification processes that would in turn open onto idealization processes.

Just as the *I* is founded on a primordial narcissism that must be maintained and protected, and firstly against the pathological forms of 'secondary narcissism', so too there is a narcissism of the *we* that is formed through processes of collective individuation, stemming from collective protentions without which no psychic protentions could be cultivated. Weakening processes of collective individuation to the point of exhaustion can only have tragic consequences.

The fear of such consequences is what, in 2003, I expressed at the end of 'To Love, to Love Me, to Love Us: From September 11 to April 21'.

17. Identification, idealization and sublimation in the mutual admiration of the *we*

When the narcissism of the *we* is brutally harmed, one can expect only the worst. Like the narcissism of the *I*, it is always possible for the primordial narcissism of the *we* to become pathological, and to generate collective 'neurotic' or 'psychotic' forms of regression or disintegration – of which the *ressentiment of the average man* is often a harbinger. Yet this narcissism of the *we* remains indispensable. *Dangerously* indispensable, given that, in its collective forms (these too being extraordinarily varied), narcissism is *eminently pharmacological*.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud showed that to produce a process of sublimation – itself founded on a process of identification and capable of spreading to all objects of the world the process of idealization that first and foremost characterizes the constitution of the sexuated love object

(this idealization being already a form of desexualization of its object) – it is necessary for the ego to become its own object of love, and for this to establish what I call primordial narcissism:

> [The question arises] whether all sublimation does not take place through the mediation of the ego, which begins by changing sexual object-libido into narcissistic libido and then, perhaps, goes on to give it another aim.[41]

This 'other aim' is one that *sublimates* its objects – and there are such sublimation and idealization processes operating *between* cultures, that is, between social narcissisms, of which the Western anthropology that arose in the nineteenth century is one case.

Even if it is a factor producing the detestable 'narcissism of minor differences'[42] that feeds parochialism and chauvinism, nevertheless only the narcissism of the *we* is capable of providing the feeling of the grandeur of a culture *by projecting itself into other cultures*, conferring their capacity for *mutual admiration* that is also the case for a healthy psychic narcissism constituted in the service of recognition.

Mutual admiration, which is indispensable to civilization, is always founded on this ability to recognize other cultures – which forms the conditions of 'peaceful co-existence' much more profoundly than does the balance of power.

Because it always threatens to turn pathologically into its opposite, the primordial narcissism of the *we* – which never stops transforming – can and even must be disturbing, if not frightening. Yet if we take Simondon seriously when he states that the psychic individual (the *I*) can individuate itself effectively only by participating in collective individu-ation (the *we*), then it is indeed necessary for there to be collective individuation, which can constitute itself only by distinguishing itself from other collective individuations, that is, through this collective identification that a *we* forms. Such collective individuations, however, never achieve completion: they are always metastable, and therefore amount not to an identity but *above all to this alterity to itself that constitutes its future as that which remains to come*, and that is promised to it in the collective protentions it cultivates.

18. Individuation, admiration and insubordination

It becomes a question, therefore, of understanding why it is that social networks have not given rise to other forms of the *we*, or other epochs of the *we*. It is precisely this possibility that we at Ars Industrialis *posit* as a *first* principle, when we say that an industrial politics of technologies of the spirit must constitute a new form of public power, which we further relate to the question of what Marcel Mauss called the 'internation'.[43]

But to reason in this way is precisely *not to submit* to the disruption promoted by Californian 'digital business'. For there is such a *submission*, not yet to come, as the poisonous fantasies distilled by a culture and a *business* of fear would have it, but rather right now, as resignation in the face of the diktat of 'radical innovation' in the service of the 'ecosystem' centred on Californian 'digital business'.

Clearly, a collective individuation constitutes itself (and can *only* do so) by exceeding the *directly closest* collective individuation of the psychic individual who is individuating: I can individuate myself psychically *only* by participating in a collective individuation that is dreamed *beyond the immediate collectivity closest to me* – that into which I was born, my 'family', my 'fraternity', my 'community', my 'country' (in the sense where the country [*pays*] is, for the peasant [*paysan*], the place he knows and where he lives to the extent he is capable of moving), and so on.

The arrangement of tribal relationships in Baruya society, studied by Maurice Godelier, is an example of the way such horizons of psycho-social individuation are embedded.[44]

It is, however, by *starting from* this original proximity of my *maternal (or paternal) facticity*, of which language is the most remarkable mark, it is starting from this original proximity of my local culture, giving rise to the idiom that I embody not only by speaking but in everything, by ek-sisting, and that I try to be as an improbable singularity, it is only by *starting* from this proximity that I can *begin* to encounter this strange and therefore 'foreign' alterity, where I find the other in myself – what I have in the past referred to as myself-an-other [*moi-l'autre*] (beyond myself [*moi-même*]).[45]

To start this way is to traverse the idiom that I embody, and to be traversed by it, which accommodates and enables the encounter with other, just as improbably singular idioms, provided that care has been taken in neganthropology – this care, that is, this culture, never being merely a conservation but always an individuation, in particular under the effect of the epokhal redoubling, irrespective of the pace of its being effected.[46]

It is from this tension between what is closest to me and what is contained there *already* as the most distant (in the experience of what Walter Benjamin called the 'aura'), it is through that which is most *idios* (ἴδιος) in my idiom, that is, most neganthropic, and that I encounter in the idiomaticity of other idioms or other idiosyncrasies, responding in their idiolect[47] to what is *already* contained in my idiom, and as the closest (and which is its *default*[48]), it is only thus that psychic individuation is possible.

Google, inscribing all its projects into the context of transhumanism, which is ὕβρις par excellence, takes the statistical and probabilistic calculation of averages as its standard, and thereby in fact eliminates idiomatic

linguistic difference, that is, diachronic and idiosyncratic variability. The digital reticulation of all noetic life hence becomes the new programme of artificial intelligence whose goal is to eliminate all (de)faults – starting with the (de)faults of language, that is, of speakers.

This project is mad precisely in that it claims to eliminate the (de)fault that is *necessary* for desire to occur – not only as sexual differentiation and libidinal attachment to the sexual object, but as *detachment* of the libido from this sexual object, which instead becomes an object of *admiration*. One who admires becomes capable of spreading his or her admiration to the entire world, which is ultimately the sole protection against despair – against that loss of that reason for hope in which reason always consists.

It is through its intimate, native inscription in these collective individuation processes that are idioms that the psychic individual can participate in collective individuations of every kind, always renewing and individuating themselves – exceeding, altering and othering themselves, even if they need to cultivate the feeling of *existing in the other by identifying with that same* which bears this primordial narcissism that also opens onto the myself-other.

Were there no primordial narcissism of the *we*, there would be no process of identification. Primary identification, for example, presupposes the ego ideal of the parent, which itself presupposes the super-ego – which itself orders and metastabilizes processes of transindividuation. It is identification, *thereby* necessitating the *we* – in the varied affective relations within which it is woven through so many *relays* – that makes individuation possible: the primordial narcissism of the *we* enables individuation to occur because it conceals within it, in the most ambiguous way possible, the principle of admiration.

When I admire another's culture – the beauty of a city, of a landscape, of a country where I go to live, or that I visit, resonant with the specific accents of the idiom that has taken shape through an organogenesis and an exosomatization whose most immediately visible marker is its architecture – something else also takes place. There is an admiration that, within myself, and as myself-other, the idiom within which I am myself *transitionally* individuated has made *necessary*, and has done so as the encounter with the desire of the other (of my mother, of my father, of my parent – the one who takes care of me, who in so doing adopts me).

Any adult, mature admiration involves the resurfacing of this *child's play* [*enfance de l'art*] that was the first access to the consistent,[49] to this *other plane* that arises from what Winnicott called transitional space, from whence return, anamnesically and constantly, phantoms and spirits, or what Freud also called phantasms, dressed in inexhaustibly new attire, like Proteus, and as the genius of distance.

No *desire* for other lands and no possibility of being there (which is not always desire, and is sometimes surprising) would be possible were

it not thus. This is what one can feel by reading Jean-Christophe Bailly's
Le Dépaysement. Voyages en France:

> Whatever it may be, including when it is only furtive, the link an artist or
> a writer has to a land or a city maintains itself in a mysterious way: even
> though, and this is particularly clear for writers, the link may often be the
> result of chance, something incurred more than it was chosen, nevertheless
> something remains, flowing through the air.[50]

In *Ion*, Plato has Socrates say that the rhapsodist is like a current who
magnetizes the audience like the stone of Heraclea[51] – also called a
magnetic stone. This magnetism is that of transitional spaces that are
first and foremost idioms, whose echoes reverberate step by step – each
idiom being the echo chamber of those closest, and, *step by step, of the
most distant*, which is the *originary default of origin*.[52]

A culture *in fact* cultivates its future only provided that it is inhabited
by reflections that do not forget the primordial idiomatic spirit formed
in mutual admiration – mirrors reflecting each other through identifica-
tions that cross borders. Hence Jean Renoir's *La Grande illusion*, where
one feels borders and identifications everywhere, culminating in those
between Boëldieu (Pierre Fresnay) and von Rauffenstein (Erich von
Stroheim).[53]

Through the friends one *makes*, it is possible to exit from the
primordial idiom so as to extend transitional possibilities beyond
childhood, raised in and by the proximity of one's relatives: going above
the primordial narcissisms of the *I* and the *we* into the beyond that is
every consistence – which does not exist, but which, precisely *as such*,
consists.[54]