Beyond Production

Heidegger and Stiegler on Being in the Face of Technics

Ole Thijs

s4643658

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gert-Jan van der Heiden

Thesis for obtaining a "Master of Arts" degree in Philosophy

Radboud University Nijmegen

June 2019

Abstract

The late Heidegger and Bernard Stiegler both assert that contemporary technics poses a threat to human existence as well as being in general. The present paper asks, in the face of this threat, *how am I to be in order to remedy it?* To answer the question, I compare a) the core assumptions regarding technics that lead both authors to the assertion of a threat, and b) the precise nature of the threat. The results of this comparison inform a Heideggerian critique of Stiegler's account of human/technical being as based on an implicit notion of productivity; but ultimately, both author's proposed remedies are reconciled into a single answer to the threat and a unified answer to the initial question.

See me, feel me

Touch me, heal me

- The Who (1969)

1. Introduction

Present-day technology poses an existential threat. This is to say that, besides its role in several material and political threats to humankind as we know it – including the crises of climate (caused by fossil fuel technologies), biodiversity (via massive-scale agricultural monoculture), and democracy (with the advent of the 'post-truth' era of unchecked online information) – contemporary technology threatens existence, or being, itself.

Both the late Martin Heidegger and Bernard Stiegler agree on this point; they both agree that technics in general (*die Technik, la technique*) has certain ontological[1] characteristics that have enabled contemporary technology to become 'toxic' (Stiegler) or 'the highest danger' (Heidegger). For Stiegler, this is to say that technics has turned from its hitherto 'pharmacological' (curative and toxic at once) role in existence to a primarily toxic mode (2013a); for Heidegger, the danger lies in modern technics' essence – *Gestell* – transforming all beings into resources, and being itself into pure productivity (2000a).

To investigate the whole of the existential threat of technology, and both authors' respective solutions to it, would require a book-length study at least (as demonstrated by Stiegler's extensive bibliography), and therefore, the present article will focus on a smaller sub-question. It stems from the simple fact that if technology threatens existence or being, then it must also threaten *my* being – but

---

[1] It should be noted that Stiegler expressly disavows Heidegger's brand of ontology in favour of an 'ontico-ontological' approach (Lemmens 2018). This mostly means, however, that instead of attempting to think technics' 'essence' as Heidegger does, he analyzes how technical beings in general figure in human existence, and vice versa. The ontological dimension is not at all abandoned, and Stiegler is still talking about the being of technical and human beings: see Section 3.2.

in that case, there must also be a way for *me* to be by which I can counter the threat. If this is so, then the question becomes: *how must I be in order to counter technology's ill existential effects?* – a question which, given technology's threatening of being itself, translates into: *how am I to* be *in the face of contemporary technology*?

The upshot of asking such a 'personal' research question is twofold. For one, it will allow me to boil down Heidegger and Stiegler's dense theories into examples of the role of technics in concrete, particular situations. Secondly, the answer to the research question will be a crucial part of a general strategy to mitigate technology's existential threat: an individual way of being that forms an 'antidote' to technology's ill effects will be the starting point of political and larger-scale action.

In order to answer the research question, I will have to start at a more general level, and first elaborate what both thinkers mean by 'technics'[2] – and in the case of Heidegger, how what he calls 'things' and 'buildings' correspond to Stiegler's 'technics'. I will use the example of a bridge to demonstrate that both thinkers consider such technics to be essential to human being, but also to give a preliminary critique of Stiegler's understanding of technics as based upon a notion of *productivity* (Section 2).

After this, I will move on to the contemporary example of a smartphone offering access to a social network. By means of this example, I will lay out the problematic aspects that both thinkers perceive in contemporary technics; first, Heidegger's *Gestell,* which indicates exactly its generalized productivity, and then Stiegler's *disindividuation,* which indicates its tendency to block humans' as well as things' capacity for being, that is, individuating themselves (Section 3).

---

[2] Like Heidegger, Stiegler and their translators, I will henceforth refrain from using the confusing common English term 'technology', because etymologically, this word suggests either the study of technics, or a technics that is somehow equipped with *logos*. Moreover, Stiegler reserves 'technology' as a specific term for the emergence of what we usually call 'media' technologies after the Industrial Revolution (2014, 2015a).

In the fourth section, I will lay out how Heidegger and Stiegler think we should *be* in the face of technology – through *Gelassenheit* and as *amateurs*, respectively – and re-introduce the Heideggerian critique of productivity to demonstrate what is lacking, existentially speaking, in Stiegler's figure of the 'amateur'. In the same stroke, Stiegler's figure of the amateur will be used to demonstrate what Heidegger's notoriously nebulous philosophical notion of *Gelassenheit* might actually look like in the real world.

Finally, in the fifth and final section, I will briefly re-iterate my most important findings and the emerging Heideggerian critique of Stiegler, and make some concluding remarks on how the present thread of philosophical inquiry may be continued into the future.

A final note regarding the source material for this essay: for the sake of brevity, I have limited myself to two specific clusters of texts that allow for a unified interpretation. In the case of Stiegler, these are *Technics and Time*, *Symbolic Misery* and *What Makes Life Worth Living*, since these works offer a thorough examination of the concepts of 'technics', the underlying mechanism of 'retention', and the concept 'individuation', which will all three inform the notion of the 'amateur'.[3]

---

[3] In the case of Stiegler, I have set myself considerable limitations in the amount of technical terms to copy. This is because Stiegler presents his arguments in what I would call *registers* of self-invented jargon: clusters of neologisms loosely connected to a single theme or angle of analysis, often taken from other authors, and not at all easy to follow without extensive background knowledge. These registers include (but are not limited to) those of technicity and prostheticity (Stiegler and Greek mythology), memory and retentionality (Stiegler, Husserl), *différance* (Derrida), individuation (Simondon), grammatisation (Auroux) and desire and sublimation (Freud, Winnicott, Lacan). Between these registers, it is not always clear how certain terms relate and whether they are synonyms or not; therefore, it seems prudent not to attempt to collect them all into a single reading.

For those interested in a more complete picture, there is no shortage of perspectives in the literature. See, for instance, Miguel de Beistegui's excellent critique of the psychoanalytic register (2013, 188 ff.) and Christina Howells' more friendly interpretation of the concept of desire (2013); reflections on the Stieglerian reconception of Derrida's *différance* in Sinnerbrink (2009), Colony (2011), Ross (2013), and Turner (2016); Haworth (2016) on the notion of origin, and on the fact that Stiegler's Darwinian assumption of a hard break between genetic and epigenetic memory has turned out to be false; important critical notes on Stiegler's adaptation of Heidegger's early notion of facticity in Colony (2010); and finally, a favourable interpretation of Stiegler's creative readings of other philosophers by Ian James (2010).

In the literature, direct comparisons between Stiegler and Heidegger – the latter of whom is critiqued by the former at length, though mostly through readings of 'Der Begriff der Zeit' and *Sein und Zeit* – are rare,

As for Heidegger, I turn to the final published versions of what are usually known as the 'Bremen lectures' – 'Die Frage nach der Technik', 'Bauen, Wohnen, Denken', 'Das Ding', and 'Die Kehre'. These contain his most concrete meditations upon technical beings, clearly delineate modern technics from technics in general, and introduce the key notions of *Ding, Geviert, Gestell* and *Kehre* in a coherent way which also resonates with the final text that I cite extensively – the 1955 lecture *Gelassenheit*.

2. The Bridge – Perspectives on Production

In order to examine wherein the existential threat of technics consists, and how it might be addressed, I must first interpret the relation between their most basic concepts of technics. In the case of Stiegler, these are found in the first volume of his most fundamental series of works, *Technics and Time* (1998). Section 2.1 will draw upon the example of a simple bridge – a 'basic' example of technics – to give an interpretation of Stiegler's notions of 'prosthesis' and 'retention', which are both terms he explicitly equates with 'technics'; I will also give a preliminary critique of these notions as being based on an implicit concept of productivity. Consequently, in Section 2.2, the same example will be used to elucidate Heidegger's notions of 'thing' and 'building', and to delineate how Heidegger explicitly thinks the production of things and buildings as well as their being *beyond* productivity.

2.1 Stiegler – Technics, Prosthesis, Retention

I walk along some backcountry fields and come across a *bridge;* not a modern feat of concrete engineering, but a simple wooden footbridge set over a stream. I

---

except for a remarkable essay by Pieter Lemmens ('From Ontology to Organology', 2018) in which he lays out the entire backbone of Stiegler's thinking against a very complete summary of Heidegger's late writings.

approach it, and within seconds, I am on the other side of the water; it is a crossing which, lacking natural or inborn fording skills, I would not have been able to accomplish without the bridge. The bridge, in Stiegler's vocabulary, is a *prosthesis*: an object set (*thesis*) in front (*pros*) of me, allowing me to do something I could not have done without it (1998, 152). A prosthetic extension of my feet, the bridge lets me walk new terrain, gives me the possibility of crossing.

A *prosthesis* is more than simply a physical object; I am able to understand and use it because it is what Stiegler calls 'tertiary retention'. This term means that the bridge *retains* the experience and knowledge of past humans; it was made by people who knew how to work wood and how to make bridges. Through their manual gestures – woodcutting, joining, hammering, et cetera – that knowledge was recorded in the bridge, so that it is presently offered up to me for use in the form of a prosthesis. The prosthesis, in turn, does not require me to mentally share in said knowledge. Indeed, I can use this prosthetic organ as readily and easily as I use my own feet, even if I have no working knowledge of fording, woodcutting or bridge-building. I simply rely on the skills of its builders as recorded in and made available to me through this tertiary retention – the bridge.[4]

Stiegler calls prostheses *tertiary* retentions because they are the inseparable counterpart to 'primary' and 'secondary' retention, which together make up consciousness. The latter concepts are taken from Husserl's *Internal Consciousness of Time*; 'primary retention' denotes the 'now' of perception, whereas 'secondary retention' denotes 'representations' given from memory. I perceive the bridge as a viable crossing in primary retention, thanks to the secondary retentions with which I can recognize it *as* a crossing, having encountered and used similar objects before (Stiegler 1998, 246-248). Stiegler notes, however, that the whole structure of primary and secondary retention would collapse without what Husserl calls

---

[4] The reader familiar with Derrida will rightly associate Stiegler's 'tertiary retention' with Derrida's notion of the 'trace'. Stiegler himself roughly equates the two terms (1998, 141). There is no room for further discussion of Derrida's considerable influence on Stiegler here. For further comparative reading on Stiegler and Derrida, see Footnote 3 in the introduction of this article (p. 5).

'image-consciousness' (254-255); precisely this is the bridge, not a mental re-presentation (secondary retention) but a physical presentation (tertiary retention, image-consciousness) of a "past I have not lived" (2009a, 7) – that of the bridge-builders.

As a human being, then, I cannot exist without tertiary retentions such as the bridge, as far as Stiegler is concerned. The very structure of my consciousness (my perception and memory) depends on their existence. However, tertiary retention is not limited to physical objects such as bridges; it includes things we usually do not consider to be 'technologies' or 'tools' at all, such as written and even spoken language (1998, 194; 223 ff.) and politics (201).[5] In other words, Stiegler contends in a reading of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, tertiary retentions make up the 'already-there', the *world*, in which *Dasein*, the human being, always already finds itself (1998, 243): they constitute the whole of "the already-there of the world in which [I live], from which [I inherit], to which [I] must answer" (1998, 172). All of this is to say that the meaningful things and structures on which I rely in my existence, but which were *already there* when I was born – language, tradition, tools and objects such as our bridge – are always given *as* tertiary retentions, and that thanks to them, I find myself in an understandable, navigable world.

Consequently, in the same stroke with which it co-constitutes the world, the bridge co-constitutes *me* as an anticipating being, i.e., a being with a 'before' and 'after', both in the spatial and the temporal sense:

> Anticipation is prostheticity (ex-position, temporalization as spacing) …
> It is fulfilled according to the actual conditions of the pros-thesis, of this
> techno-logical pro-position that comes from the past to anticipation and
> goes from the person who anticipates to what he or she anticipates (the

[5] For the interpretation of language and politics as techno-logies, see Nancy (2007), who also interprets them as such, along with philosophy itself (75-90). For Nancy, however, these technologies only appear at the dawn of metaphysics, which decomposes the mythico-religious world of 'prehistory' into 'nature' and the 'human-technical-symbolic'. This is a decidedly different point of view than Stiegler's, in which the emergence of the human being is immediately also the emergence of the technical being.

past, that is prostheticity itself). Anticipation cannot be anything else than prosthetic … Pros-thesis means "placed-there-in-front." Pros-theticity is the being-already-there of the world, and also, consequently, the being-already-there of the past. *Pros-thesis* can be literally translated as pro-position. A prosthesis is what is proposed, placed in front, in advance; technics is what is placed before us *[la technique est ce qui nous est pro-posé]* … . (1998, 235)

Quite concretely, through the mechanism of retentionality, the pros-thesis, as that which is in front of me both physically and in anticipation, *opens* space[6] and time: the bridge constitutes *me* as a here-and-now opposite the there-and-then of the crossing I anticipate, and opposite the there-and-then of the past crossing-experience that the bridge offers up to me.

Assuming, as Stiegler does, that tertiary retentions are always prostheses, and that prostheses are always technics, it is quite clear why there can be no human being without technics. The latter in a single stroke constitutes the 'interior' of my conscious experience as well as the 'exterior' of the world; in other words, it is clear that technics is *essential* to the human.[7] Stiegler quite pointedly fails to explain, however, why 'natural' objects – say, in the example of the bridge, a number of traversable rocks a ways further down the river – should not do precisely the same

---

[6] In a striking corroboration of Stiegler's account, social geographer Nigel Thrift develops a theory of the way in which technologies of logistics have reconfigured the way we experience space, have transformed space itself. Thrift (2004) develops this theory of the 'technological unconscious' entirely without reference to and seemingly without knowledge of Stiegler.

[7] Regarding the concept of essence, Stiegler concludes from the titular reading of the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus in *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* that humans' technicity stems precisely from an essential *lack* or default of essence. After the creation of Earth's mortal species, the Titan Epimetheus was tasked with the furnishing of each species with appropriate skills. He gave each animal an essential trait such as thick fur, flight, the ability to swim, et cetera, so that they might survive in the world. He forgot, however, to equip the human with any essential skill, and so his brother Prometheus had to steal fire (i.e., technics) from the gods to compensate for the *lack* of inborn capabilities caused by Epimetheus. Stiegler calls the *forgetting* of Epimetheus and the *theft* of Prometheus the 'double fault' or 'default' that is the essential characterization of the human, who continually has to compensate for its lack of essence with prostheses taken not from its own being, but from elsewhere; and he equates this *default* explicitly with technicity (1998, 193).

as technics, and constitute world and allow me to anticipate possibilities as well. I posit that this is because in practice, Stiegler understands the pros-thesis not just as 'what is placed before us', but specifically as *what we place before us*, wat we *pro-these,* that is, *pro-duce.* Tertiary retentions, after all, only work as they do because they retain the experience and knowledge involved in their production; this is what is stored for me to pick up in their use as prostheses, and this is why things that were not produced by humans simply do not figure in Stiegler's analyses – Stiegler's thinking cannot apprehend a thing beyond its producedness. Furthermore, the production of prostheses – which include inventions, discoveries and imagination, since even these are examples of setting-in-front-of-me (1998, 193) – also produces *me*. Everything I do, even thinking, is understood by Stiegler as a matter of setting-in-front, i.e., production. Quite literally, Stiegler claims that the essence of the human is defined by technicity, i.e., prostheticity (1998, 193); and this, I add, is nothing beyond productivity, which I define as the sum of the *producedness* and *production* of both the thing and the human.[8]

2.2 – Heidegger – Thing, Building, Being

Regarding the being-essential of technical beings to human being, Heidegger sets out a number of claims that are quite close to Stiegler's when he discusses the actual example of a bridge in 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' (2000b) – the difference being that what Heidegger describes here is what he calls a *thing* and a *building,* and to him, it is not necessarily an example of *technics.* In the following, I will first recapitulate how Heidegger thinks 'thing' and 'building' and then explain that

---

[8] For reasons of brevity, a footnote will have to suffice in acknowledging that Stiegler does *not* think the 'productivity' that I discern here in a classically metaphysical sense; he goes to great lengths to describe the 'mutual invention' of human and technics as a process of *différance* (1998, 134-179). This does not, however, diminish the fact that he still thinks the process as *production* and explicitly names technicity, i.e. prostheticity, as the essential human trait.

although these beings are, of course, *produced*, Heidegger apprehends them precisely in what they are beyond productivity.

According to Heidegger, it is the bridge itself that makes its surroundings appear as a crossable stream with two opposing banks (154); it gathers (*versammelt*) the earth (*Erde*) around it into a landscape of field, waterway, road, crossing; i.e., into a meaningful world for humans. My being able to use the bridge, to cross it, is only due to this gathering 'function', which stretches beyond the bridge itself into its context – a context which is not limited to the earthly landscape, but also includes the *heavens*, me and my fellow humans who are *mortals*, and the *divine* in a broad sense. In allowing us to transcend (the limitations to our freedom of movement posed by) the water, the bridge discloses us humans' tendency to *bridge*, to transcend, to try and reach further and higher, towards the divine. The bridge lifts me closer to the heavens (*Himmel*)[9] and becomes a point of reference for the celestial rhythms as I pass it twice daily, at dawn and at dusk. Yet in crossing it, on my way to carry out my daily business, the bridge only allows myself and my fellow humans to cross as *mortals* (*Sterblichen*): once every while, I linger on the bridge in the sunset and remember that my days of crossing are numbered, and I know that one day I will have to cross the "letzten Brücke" (155).

Thus, the bridge gathers and discloses to us the so-called 'fourfold' (*Geviert*) of mortals, divine, earth and heavens (155) which in turn constitutes the *world* as that wherein we, humans, live (2000c, 181 ff.).[10] The thing is exactly where the unity ('ringing') of the *Geviert* happens: the bridge conducts and orients everyday meanings and concerns as well as larger questions of life and love.

The bridge is a 'thing' (*Ding*), and as such it does all of the above; but it is also a 'building' (*Bau*). As a building, not only does it open the world through a

---

[9] German does not differentiate between 'heaven(s)' and 'sky'; *Himmel* therefore resonates with the divine sphere as well as with earthly orientation and navigation, the weather, and the rhythms of days and seasons.
[10] I must here again refer to Nancy (2007); it is 'world' in this rich, Heideggerian sense that Nancy refers to in *The Creation of the World, or Globalization* – a work that is motivated by a mutation of the same question underlying the present paper: how to reestablish an inhabitable world on today's globalized, technoscientifically governed globe (42 ff.)?

gathering of the *Geviert*, but it also offers the *Geviert* a place (*Ort*), which is to say, it orients the world of nature and things into a navigable constellation of places, it 'spaces space' (*räumt Raum ein*) (2000b, 156 ff.). It does so by transforming what was just one of many locations (*Stellen*) along the stream into a place proper: it is *this* bridge, *this* place, on which I linger in the sunset, thinking of where its roads may lead me next, comparing it figuratively to the 'letzten Brücke'. I am led to contemplation by the view across the river from this place, I compare it to a number of other bridges I have walked; the world opens up to me meaningfully and temporally (I anticipate my future and remember my past)[11] as well as spatially (I comprehend *this* place as *place*, I appreciate its nearness or farness to other places).

The abovementioned gathering of the *Geviert*, then, is not something that happens thanks to any isolated object, but through this bridge as a particular *building* (place) and *thing* connected to the surrounding landscape and world. This is how, in my interaction with the bridge, such a thing as *world* comes to be and comes to be inhabitable for me and us, mortals, without whom the notion of world would be meaningless. Ultimately, it is safe to say that for Heidegger, without *things* such as this bridge, there would be no (access to) world, no meaningful human being at all.

So far, Heidegger's account of the way in which things and buildings are necessary for human being remains rather close to Stiegler's account of the human's essential technicity. Heidegger will also agree that the act of building itself is technical: to build a bridge is to bring forth (*Hervorbringen*) something which, unlike nature (*phusis*), could not have brought forth itself, and thus it is *technè* (2000b, 162). *Technè* (technicity) is that which sets forth (*Herstellen*), that which is productive, which

---

[11] Though unlike 'spacing', temporalization is not specifically mentioned or analyzed by Heidegger in the 'Bauen, Wohnen, Denken' (2000b), it is very much implicit in his discourse. The thing opens the *Geviert*, the four 'poles' of which (divine, *mortal*, heavens, earth) clearly relate me to time.

calls beings into being with an external cause, as opposed to the spontaneous coming forth that is *phusis* (2000a, 12). But whereas for Stiegler, the fact that the bridge was produced by human hands enables it to function as retention, and consequently as pros-thesis, Heidegger contends that its producedness is not, in fact, the most important thing about a thing: "die Hergestelltheit durch den Töpfer macht keineswegs dasjenige aus, was dem Krug eignet, insofern er als Krug ist" (2000c, 169). In fact, the essential trait of a thing is the way in which it gathers the *Geviert* (175 ff.) and, if the thing in question is also a building, the way it spaces space and offers the *Geviert* a place. If this is so, then what is essential about our bridge is *not* its retention of being set-in-front, nor its being set-in-front as a prosthesis for the purpose of crossing; it rather finds its essence in the way it gathers and opens the world *as* habitable, meaningful, temporal and spatial.

Indeed, Heidegger explicitly distinguishes the essence of building from *Herstellen* and calls it *Wohnenlassen*, 'letting-dwell' (2000b, 162), defining 'dwelling' (*Wohnen*) as the essence of human being. Consequently, what a building ultimately *is*, after having been produced, is that which lets us, humans, dwell in this world, not just as a physical or retentional support, but also as that which *offers* (2000c, 174) the possibility of thinking, feeling, moving, being-moved – of existence itself.

Of course, one could argue that in Stiegler's thinking, the prosthesis does much the same, and there is no real difference here: for Stiegler just as much as for Heidegger, I *need* to have some*thing* in front of me, something to think about, move towards, or back away from. Without prostheses (technics) there would be no human being. In fact, Stiegler himself claims, Heidegger never quite managed to think the full extent of technics' essential role in human being. But according to the interpretation developed above, the late Heidegger *did* grasp the full relevance of actual, material things to human being in particular and being in general;[12] he explicitly tried, however, to think things *beyond* their technicity, i.e. their

---

[12] What remains unequivocally true is that Heidegger did not discern the structure of retentionality, which is very much at the background of his analyses of the tool (*Zeug*) and world in *Sein und Zeit* (1977b).

productivity. For Heidegger, it is the bridge that offers me the possibility of crossing and of dwelling; and it is to these ends that it was produced, its builders being aware that more than just a prosthesis, this would be a place of traffic *and* of lingering, a place that should reach out to the divine[13] as much as complement the land. The bridge's prostheticity and the need to produce it are only given out of its essential *letting-dwell*.[14]

In conclusion, according to Stiegler, technicity is prior to all other modes of human being, for humans cannot begin to do anything without prostheses and tertiary retentions. Yet Heidegger, even as he, too, posits that humans cannot *be* without things, does not consider 'technicity' in the sense of productivity (producedness and production) to be the essential characteristic of human being, and he does not consider the productivity of things to be the primary category of their being, either. For Heidegger, production rather follows out of the *offer* of being, of dwelling, given by things; and the use of a thing as pros-thesis is determined precisely not by my setting it in front, but by its offering me a possibility.

3. The Threat – *Gestell* and Disindividuation

Presently, the simple example of the bridge has allowed me to delineate with some clarity the differences between Heidegger's and Stiegler's core notions of technics,

---

[13] If this notion still seems forced, consider how a craftsperson will often attend to executing their craft 'properly'; a bridge, for instance, must be built *in the right way,* and this will go beyond mere functionality. Proper craftsmanship lies in the beauty and sturdiness of the product, its elegance, the care with which each step is executed, the tasteful addition of embellishments, perhaps even of religious symbols; i.e., notions of value implicitly indicating a 'higher', more heavenly standard than that of purely prosthetic function.

[14] Of course, Stiegler will claim that there can be no such thing as anticipation, and thus the understanding of being necessary to want to construct a dwelling, *before* there is technics; but the question is whether chronology is really relevant here, and moreover, why anticipation should not be able to emerge in the handling of purely 'natural' things (before there was technics). Stiegler might argue that the hand-ling of natural things is precisely the organ-isation of in-organic matter, and 'organised inorganic matter' is one of Stiegler's definitions for technics; but why, then, is technics the essence of the *human*, and not of the bird organizing sticks into nests, or even the snail organizing branches into routes towards leaves?

technicity, and things; and though their interpretations differ, both thinkers consider technical things such as bridges a *sine qua non* for human being. This begs the question, however, what is *wrong* with technics two decades into the twenty-first century. Both thinkers, after all, consider contemporary technics an existential threat. In order to understand why this should be so, I will consider another, more contemporary example. An analysis of smartphone and social networking technologies will illustrate Heidegger's notion of *Gestell* (Section 3.1) and Stiegler's notion of *(dis)individuation* (Section 3.2), both used to differentiate the 'threat' (Heidegger) or 'toxicity' (Stiegler) of modern technology from technics in general.

3.1 Heidegger – The Productivity of *Gestell*

In an oft-repeated and much-misunderstood turn of phrase, Heidegger dubs the essence of modern technology *Gestell* ('enframing'). This word is explicitly meant to resonate with *herstellen*, the everyday German word for 'producing' or 'manufacturing', which literally translates as 'setting-forth', and is also the word Heidegger uses for the production of things such as the jar (*Krug*) in the citation on page 13 above. In the simplest of terms, *Gestell* is an intensification of the character of *herstellen*, namely, productivity; what this 'intensification' entails is best shown by means of the eminently modern example of the smartphone in my pocket.

I take my smartphone out of my pocket, open one of my social media feeds, and see a video shared by a friend. The video is a rather typical Internet affair, a scene of a cat and a dog harmoniously playing together. I watch it for half a minute, then skip through the rest, my attention drawn to the item below it in the news feed. I keep scrolling for a few minutes before returning the device to my pocket. In the meantime, the social network's data-collection algorithms register the

degree to which cat/dog videos capture my attention[15] and record the other content I interact with, for the purpose of profiling my tastes more accurately towards advertisers.

An explanation of this example in terms of *Gestell* begins at the beginning – the materials used to manufacture the smartphone. A smartphone's production requires dozens (or even hundreds) of resources, including iron, copper, silver, and gold, a number of elements known as rare earth metals, glass, plastics refined from crude oil, and silicon. Each one of these must be mined, refined, and cast into parts, which are then assembled by robots and humans who each perform a single step of the process in a precalculated manner optimized for efficiency. According to Heidegger, each action in this process has the character of a *bestellen* ('ordering')*. Bestellen* entails the 'setting' (*stellen*) of a resource for the purpose of bringing forth (*Hervorbringen* – cf. p. 12 above) a product. In *bestellen,* this *Hervorbringen* takes the specific form of a 'commandeering forth' (*Herausfordern*) (2000a, 16 ff.). The smartphone is the nexus of many long chains of *bestellen* – from the mountain being ordered to produce copper ore to the truck ordered to transport refined copper to the factory to worker being ordered to perform degradingly simple tasks to produce the finished device. Each instance of *bestellen* is a *herstellen* – but contrary to the way an attentive craftsman would build a bridge, *bestellen* encounters things only as *resources* and *products*, with the object of the former into the latter as efficiently as possible.

Characteristically, the chains of *bestellen* never encounter any final end or goal, other than productivity itself. The chains of *bestellen* that have produced the smartphone combine with those involved in the social network's systems, in the production of the videos I watch, and in the Internet infrastructure delivering the content, to order *me* to produce behavioural data. The social network will sell this

---

[15] Technically, it is very doubtful whether these algorithms define video content semantically at all. It is more likely that they analyse simple factors such as colours, shapes, intensity of movement, accompanying text, original poster, etc.; but since none of the big-name algorithm-driven social networks disclose their methods, we cannot be sure.

information on to advertisers, producing revenue that is ordered to buy new investments (ranging from marketing, research and development to luxury yachts for shareholders), whence the whole process begins anew.

Heidegger calls the being of all of these chains and instances of *bestellen* engendered by technics *Gestell*; *Gestell* is the essence of contemporary technics, and living in the time of *Gestell* means that the mode of *bestellen* now dominates the way we encounter things. This is to say that a smartphone itself hardly – if ever – appears as a *thing,* or any other sort of independent being. Rather, I encounter it only as a means-to…,[16] as *productive*: I order it to go on Facebook to watch a video there, to produce entertainment and distraction; and it in turn orders me to spend my attention on it and produce data. Consequently, caught up in the generalized mode of being of all things as *Gestell,* it becomes very hard to see things such as a bridge *as things*; as long as I am myself ordered to go somewhere for the fulfillment of some task or other, the bridge is nothing more than a means of crossing. Under the dominance of *Gestell,* then, *everything* becomes *no thing*, in that it *is* no longer in the mode of *thing,* but rather in the mode of productivity.

One concrete effect of *Gestell* is that its products – especially when they take the form of 'media' – actively *destroy* place, as they can virtually take me around the globe in an instant (2000c, 167-168).[17.] Physically, *Gestell* pulls together minerals from all across the globe to construct the smartphone; this goes on to show me images, messages and updates from my friends from all over the world. The place (*Ort*) that a building such as our bridge offers *through* its local connections with its particular surroundings is covered over by a flurry of *bestellen* that disregards real space altogether. Thus, *Gestell* is a threat to human being as *Wohnen*; if the essence of modern technology destroys place, and if place is a necessity for dwelling, it will

---

[16] The term that Heidegger uses is *Bestand*, a play on *bestellen* and *Gegenstand* (everyday German for 'thing', 'object'). *Bestand*, usually translated 'standing-reserve', is the mode in which beings are encountered under *Gestell:* as reserves (resources) that must always stand at the ready to produce something else.
[17] Anna Kouppanou (2014) develops an interesting and original account of the implications of Stiegler's thinking of technics and Heidegger's idea of the destruction of nearness and farness for education in 'digital times'.

destroy my ability to dwell as well. When this happens, all that is left for me is to offer myself up to productivity – ordering the smartphone to produce entertainment, being ordered to produce data.

It is this threat – that of the human itself being swept up in the generalized productivity of *Gestell*, leading to the forgetting of being in general and the loss of human being specifically – that Heidegger ultimately and infamously dubs 'the highest danger' (*die höchste Gefahr*). This danger is enacted by my smartphone which, opposed to the bridge that harbours the world, *is* no thing in and of itself, and as such makes me forget being. As things stand, it does not open a world, in fact diminishing the ability of humans and things to do so.

3.2 Stiegler – (Dis)individuation and the Short-Circuit

If Heidegger sees a threat in the generalized productivity that is *Gestell*, Stiegler attempts to come to grips with contemporary technology with the notion of *individuation*, taken from Gilbert Simondon and most clearly elaborated in *What Makes Life Worth Living* (2013a). Individuation is here interpreted by Stiegler as the generalized process of becoming-individual or becoming-different of a) the 'psychic' (the individual human), b) the 'collective' (the societal, political), c) the technical. In other words, individuation is the very process by which the 'I' (self), 'we' (group, meaning), and 'what' (technics) are formed, it is their *being* – Stiegler himself insists that all three only exist as the 'metastable equilibrium' that is individuation (2011a, 94), kept in balance by the constant exchange of retentions.[18]

---

[18] The reader familiar with Stiegler will notice that I am completely sidestepping the psychoanalytical part of his analysis of the circuits of individuation; however, Stiegler's appropriation of the concepts of 'drive' and 'sublimation' is so idiosyncratic that it would require too much space to integrate here. For a critical interpretation, see De Beistegui (2013).

Individuation, furthermore, is a 'pharmacological' process, just as technics itself is 'pharmakon' (2013a, 18):[19] it is toxic and curative at the same time, and thus it is always a compound process of *individuation* and *disindividuation,* or becoming-different and becoming-same, becoming-one.[20] In practice, contemporary technology's problem is that it 'short-circuits' individuation so that it (technology itself) becomes primarily toxic, that is, disindividuating. What this means exactly, and how individuation itself works, is again best illustrated by the example of the smartphone and the social network.

At face value, the social network simply presents a collection of content (text, pictures, videos and combinations thereof) posted by friends and other people I follow. In principle, these retentions should provide *me* as well as *us* opportunities for individuation; we might discuss them, form our own opinions and collective ideas, question them and learn something. In practice, what would happen then is that through the perception of the same tertiary retentions – the content on the social network – each of us would first be *disindividuated*, because each of us would be perceiving the *same* content in primary retention, causing us to form similar secondary retentions in memory. But as we thought about and discussed the content, advancing language and shared concepts that set apart (i.e., individuate) our *collective* identity, each of us would differentiate their own opinion from the rest, re-individuating themselves psychically. Ultimately, this would lead to the formation and thus individuation of new tertiary retentions – I would write a text detailing my opinions, for example, or record a video of my own. Stiegler calls this mutually co-produced[21] process the 'long circuit' of individuation, because retentions pass through all three poles of individuation, moving each forward accordingly (2013a, 19; 105 ff.).

---

[19] Again, the notion of 'pharmakon' is taken from Derrida (and Plato); but a precise explanation of its heritage would be superfluous here.

[20] The ample resonance of these concepts with the analytic of 'the One' (*das Man*) in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is noted by Stiegler and worthy of consideration, but for lack of space, I will not explore it further here.

[21] The term 'co-produced' is not an interpretative gesture of mine: Stiegler himself insists upon it (2013a, 19).

As things stand, however, the above hardly happens, and I merely watch (or even skip through) a video of a cat and a dog, before my attention is immediately absorbed by the next item in the news feed. I do not interact very much, other than the occasional 'like' or short comment – I merely consume the content. This is because the social network's interface is designed not to stimulate discussion or reflection, but to capture my attention with a flurry of notifications, text, images and videos for as long as possible, in order to produce data that can be capitalized upon – in other words, it 'short-circuits' the circuits of individuation.

In this regard, Stiegler himself has never discussed smartphones and social media,[22] but in *Symbolic Misery*, he does detail the toxic effects of phenomena such as hyperactive, attention-grabbing 'reality TV' and other forms of what the media industry calls 'entertainment'. The products of 'entertainment' – of which I presently take the whole interface of the social network to be an example – perform what Stiegler calls 'aesthetic conditioning'. As tertiary retentions, they condition my aesthetic sensibility[23] – i.e., the combined system of primary and secondary retention, of perception and recall, which forms preferences, *sensibility* – by ways of the representations and images they present me with. Recalled through secondary retention, these images in turn determine how and what I perceive in primary retention (Stiegler 2014, 52; cf. Section 2.1 above).[24]

This effect by which the technical (tertiary retention) co-determines its own reception is the 'short-circuit'; and in itself, it would not normally be a problem, but simply a part of a healthy retentional 'circuit' of (dis)individuation as sketched

---

[22] With the exception of the article 'Teleologics of the Snail' (2009b); however, this deals with a pre-'smartphone' generation of Internet-connected device, and social media are not at all discussed.
[23] Of course 'aesthetic sensibility' is a rather tautological expression; but appropriate for the question of aesthetics in Stiegler, who seems to oscillate between 'aesthetics' as being able to "distinguish … between good and bad films" (and other objects of art) (2011a, 6), i.e., as the theory of taste; and aesthetics as a general theory of *aesthesis*, i.e. the sensible per se (2014, 1 ff.). For a critical reading of Stiegler's concept of aesthetics in *Technics and Time*, see Trottein (2013) – this study is especially interesting in that it criticizes Stiegler's reading of Kant, upon whom his theory of aesthetics as retentional selectivity is partially based.
[24] A much more complete reading of Stiegler's notions of individuation, retention, consciousness, as well as the toxic effects of contemporary media technology, may be found in Crogan (2013). This reading explains Stiegler's project and the triple-layered model of attention very well.

above. Through sheer lack of content that will make me think, question and discuss, however, and through the sheer volume of content to watch (and I will usually involuntarily prefer continued feed-scrolling over reflection and discussion, for my consciousness naturally joins in the 'temporal flux' of images it is presented with (Stiegler 2011a, 12 ff.)) technologies such as reality TV and social networks perpetually short out the circuit, preventing the operation of curative long circuits, and thus engendering toxicity. In other words, I am being fed a constant, disindividuating stream of tertiary retentions so dense and internally similar that I am 'aesthetically programmed' to like only things *like* these, and start to fail in perceiving other things, such as literature and art, that would normally engender the individuating phenomena of thinking, questioning and discussion (Stiegler 2014, 1-10).[25]

In the case of the social network's interface, with its notifications and constant feed of new bite-sized content, the effect extends to attention itself: programmed only with the capacity to appreciate flashy, attention-grabbing content, I lose my ability to direct sustained attention at reading, thinking, discussion, and other individuating acts. That is to say, I lose my capacity for individuation, and I am only *disindividuated* by shared tertiary retentions that are *not* formed by collective individuation (the individuation of a *we*), but by technics itself,[26] by its short-circuiting of me and us. This is how *being itself* – which is what the compound, pharmacological process of individuation and disindividuation is to Stiegler – is made toxic by contemporary technics.

In review, in Heidegger's thinking, it is exactly *productivity* that is the problem with today's technics: global technics has become the enactment of being as, and only

---

[25] Content selection algorithms tend to reinforce this effect on contemporary social media; they only show users content that looks similar to what they already like.

[26] Here, mention must be made of Stiegler's finer-grained analyses of this 'technics itself': it is actually capitalist control that determines that we and I should be short-circuited in this way. Besides *Symbolic Misery* (2014, 2015a), see *Disbelief and Discredit* (2011b, 2013b). The fact that it is capitalist-controlled is not directly relevant to the way that the short-circuit must be remedied, so it is left out here.

as, productivity. *Gestell* is an endless ordering-forth that fails to find limits or meaning in anything else, and wherein human, thing and world are all equalized into reservoirs of productivity. Stiegler, sensing the same problematic, cannot wholly agree with this diagnosis, because he has already declared productivity (prostheticity) the essence of both human and technics per se; he therefore develops (through Simondon) the vocabulary of individuation, which is the larger context wherein prostheticity (the setting-in-front of tertiary retention) unfolds, the circuit set in motion by the essential quality of human/technics that is productivity. To Stiegler, the toxicity of contemporary technics is engendered by specific technologies that short-circuit the healthy balance of individuation, that is, of being.

4. Therapies for Being Threatened – *Gelassenheit* and the Amateur

Both Heidegger and Stiegler see in contemporary technics an existential threat, not simply in the sense of it being the catalyst to catastrophes threatening our material and corporeal existence, but in the sense of it directly affecting human existence, threatening the way we are (human). Stiegler, however, convinced as he is that the *existence* of the human consists in the *production* of the thing, differs from Heidegger in the remedy he proposes. In the following, I will very briefly lay out Heidegger and Stiegler's views on how we should respond to the technical threat in general, before focusing on my 'personal' research question – how I and we should *personally* be in the face of contemporary technics, namely, through *Gelassenheit* (Section 4.1) and as *amateurs* (Section 4.2). After that, I will return thematically to the question of productivity and use that concept to demonstrate how *Gelassenheit* and *amateur* can in fact inform each other, forming up into a single, more powerful answer to the question (Section 4.3).

4.1 Gelassenheit – Letting-Be

In the face of the 'highest danger' that is *Gestell,* Heidegger holds out hope for what he calls the *Kehre,* the ontological 'turning' of *Gestell* into an 'other beginning' of being that cannot be brought about, but only prepared for (1989; 2006b).[27] This would mean that being itself, and with it the default way of encountering things, would transform from *Gestell,* from productivity, into something else. In order for the *Kehre* to occur, what is needed of each human is to accept and acknowledge its possibility, and this cannot be done by "mastering" (2006b, 116) technics or "willing" and "doing" things with technics itself (122) – the answer is rather an ontological gesture, encapsulated in the attitude of *Gelassenheit* (usually translated 'releasement')*.* As detailed in the eponymous 1955 lecture, *Gelassenheit* is in turn composed of *Gelassenheit zu den Dingen* and *Offenheit für das Geheimnis* (2000d, 527-528).

    Gelassenheit zu den Dingen – 'releasement towards things' – *lets* (*lassen*) things *be* through consciously thinking them *as* things. In *Gelassenheit*, I use technical beings *thinkingly,* which means that a) I remain separated (*freigehalten*) from them, realizing that they are beings that play a role in my own existence and in being in general (as described in Section 2.2) – as opposed to forgetting their being in favour of their use and using them unquestioningly as means of production (as described in Section 3.1); b) I realize that I should not let technical productivity usurp my world and make up the whole of (my) being, and choose

---

[27] A notoriously difficult notion in Heidegger's thinking, '*Kehre*' is often taken to stand for Heidegger's own 'turn' from the question of the meaning of being, pre-WWII, to the question of the history of being, post-WWII. Here, I am explicitly referring to *the Kehre* as Heidegger himself describes it in *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (1989)*:* a turning of being and thinking *past* the ('metaphysical') history of being that has unfolded from ancient Greece until now. Cf. Heidegger (1997a).

to remain thinkingly attached to earth, heavens, divine and mortality. In practice, *Gelassenheit* is a "simultaneous yes and no" to (technical) beings (2000d, 527): and if this sounds superfluously simple, reconsider the example of the social network and how it is engineered for me to *unthinkingly* open it, how many minutes (hours?) a day they I spend *unthinkingly* scrolling. Heidegger's 'yes' and 'no', on the contrary, are purposefully and consciously, if figuratively, spoken. *Yes* – I should appreciate the social medium's potential as a platform for exchanging ideas and promoting discussion, but *no* – I should not disregard its ordering me to produce attention and data, its ordering a myriad of mines to produce resources. But more importantly, I should attend to its *being*, to how it is and to whether and how it opens world, whether and how it offers me a dwelling-place – because it can only *be* if someone *lets* it through the observance of its being, and that letting-be is what *Ge-lassen-heit* means.

Offenheit für das Geheimnis ('openness to the secret') is based upon another utterly simple realization, namely, that the meaning of technics and its progress (*der Sinn der technischen Welt*) is *not* determined by humans, and thus always remains *hidden* (2000d, 527). Though humans may take credit for individual inventions (and even the amount of agency involved in this is hotly under debate; Stiegler agrees that inventions and individuation simply *happen*), the technical system as a whole cannot rightly be said to progress along lines laid out by us. It evolves according to its own logic, and no 19th-century inventor was consciously working towards smartphones and social media (cf. Basalla 1989). Heidegger takes this point seriously, since he ultimately relegates the reason for being's occurring as *Gestell not to human/technical activity,* but to its being 'sent' by *Geschick,* which itself cannot be predicted or controlled (2000a). *Offenheit* is an attitude of openness towards this 'secret', a continuous awareness of the fact that being's *Sinn* – at present, productivity – is a matter of *Geschick,* of something that we cannot control. It arises of its own accord and, will and act as I might, I cannot change it directly; therefore, I must separate myself from it and attend to it, *let* it 'arrange' (*schicken*)

itself as it does, but make sure that I remain conscious of it. (Of course, in this way, I am directly preventing the 'highest danger' from becoming actual – since the highest danger is for the human itself to become swept up in *Gestell*, reducing it to unthinking productivity.)

Gelassenheit as a whole, then, is a deeply unproductive attitude. It consciously thinks contemporary being (*Gestell*) as productivity, only to separate itself from it in the knowledge that this 'sending' (*Geschick*) of being is contingent and that, as long as we *let* (*lassen*) them, things can still *be*. Concretely, it involves *letting* things *be* by thinking and treating them in their own being – as we did with the example of the bridge, which offers a place for dwelling only if we *let* it, rather than treating it as a pros-thesis for our needs and wants (i.e., a product of the goals we ourselves have pro-duced).

4.2 The Amateur – Loving Production

If individuation is the way human/technical being takes place, and contemporary technics is characterized by its tendency towards disindividuation, then what is needed to curb this tendency, according to Stiegler, is a 'politics of memory' (2009a, 9, 148) or an 'ecological politics of spirit' (2011a, 78) that will politicize the question of retention. This is because the short-circuiting of individuation is exactly that process which *prevents* the retentional exchange that drives individuation from becoming questioned, discussed, politicized. Concretely, this politics should lead to a 'taking care' of each other, of things, of 'the generations' (Stiegler 2010): *care* is a force of individuation par excellence, since it allows its object to come into its own, cares *for it*.[28] The exemplary figure of this taking care, as described in *Symbolic*

---

[28] Stiegler develops the concept of care in dialogue with Plato and Heidegger, and to illustrate its importance, calls democracy "the political organization of care" (2010, 49) – that is to say, the organization of a collective attentiveness to the retentional system, to individuation. I will not develop the concept further here, preferring instead to remain within the discourse of individuation and amateurism as set out in *Symbolic Misery*.

Misery, is the one who personally takes care by individuating themselves, the collective and the technical, the *amateur.*

The figure of the amateur is developed from a passage in *Symbolic Misery* worth citing in full, partially because of its resonance with Heidegger's position regarding the thing:

> Today, we are continually consuming things which, because they are always new, become increasingly difficult to establish as *things*: things never remain the same things, so much so that they are increasingly without place, and less and less do they give place [*donnent lieu*] to that for which things exist, which is to say, a world. (2015a, 86)

Stiegler's proposition here is that *repetition* (of encounters with it) makes a thing a thing; it is only in repetition, after all, that the mechanisms of retentionality begin to operate. Secondary retentions only begin to be formed after the first encounter with a tertiary retention (a thing), and only in the second encounter with the *same* thing, through the lens of other secondary retentions formed through the 'long circuits' of psychic and collective individuation (see Section 3.2), can we re-encounter it differently, i.e., individuate *it.*

Accordingly, Stiegler pleads for the reintroduction of an individuating type of individual called the 'amateur'. As opposed to the disindividuated consumer, who is fed a constant stream of images which are never properly repeated ('properly' meaning through the long circuits of individuation), the amateur is one who practices the 'arts' simply for the love of them.[29] As Martin Crowley neatly summarizes Stiegler's thinking here:

---

[29] To be clear, the amateur does nothing the professional artist cannot do; the point is that as opposed to having a small community of artists and a large community of consumers, the general public must become artistically active, as amateurs.

The alienation of the consumer, de-skilled by the replacement of aesthetic experience with commercially driven conditioning, is here opposed by that knowledgeable practice whose loving repetitions allow the development of processes of individuation characteristic of such experience. (2013, 129)

Artistic repetition of the thing – say, a melody I practise, or a painting I repeatedly scrutinize, enjoy, as an amateur art historian – leads to my psychic individuation through the formation of questions, opinions and skills; it leads to collective individuation through the formation of public opinions, discourse, discussion, as well through the appropriation of this artwork as 'ours', belonging to our culture; and it leads to the individuation of the thing through *its* repetition, its recognition, its establishment in the eye of the beholder, without which it would be no thing. The amateur individuates the thing by taking care of it, by *loving* (*amare*) it and its context.

4.3 Gelassenheit and Amateur: letting-be vs. production

Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and Stiegler's figure of the amateur have one important characteristic in common: mindful of the constitutive role of the *thing* – be it in the sense of Heidegger's 'thing' or Stiegler's 'prosthesis' – in (human) being, they provide a remedy against contemporary technology's toxic effects through a renewed focus on the thing. In both perspectives, I can *be* in the face of technology by *letting the thing be* – so that it in turn will let me be.

This letting-be, however, is literally called 'letting-be' and forcefully distinguished from productivity by Heidegger, whereas by Stiegler, it is not. For Stiegler, the repeated *production* of retentions, of products of art and of discourse, is what reopens the long circuits of individuation; the *production* of retentions is

what lets things be things once again, rather than the disindividuating nothings of contemporary technical production.

Oddly, Stiegler's 'amateur' is an excellent example of someone who is *Gelassen* in Heidegger's sense, and certainly a more concrete illustration of *Gelassenheit* than Heidegger himself has ever given. The amateur *loves* that which they make, they want to *let* it be a thing in and for itself; their product will be full of meaning, related to an entire world of practice, instruments, memories, to the divine pleasure of *getting it right* and the mortal frustration of failure. But it is all of this exactly *beyond* being a product. This amateuristic thing gathers *Geviert*, opens world if we attend to it and let it be *beyond* its production – in its *being.* The amateur's attitude will indeed have to be that of a 'simultaneous yes and no' to technics: yes to the tools or instruments they need for their craft, no to technical distractions and technologies that would 'make their job easier', but make the product less worthwhile. Yes to production as bringing something forth (*herstellen*); no to productivity as the dominant mode under which the product is made (*bestellen*). If performed this way, in *Gelassenheit,* the amateur's activity will almost automatically engender the distancing, the separation from *Gestell* that *Gelassenheit* must entail: compared to a video I have shot and edited myself, a throwaway cat-and-dog video on Facebook or a pulp TV programme feels repulsively un-thingly – unworthy, in its being, of ever having been produced.

All of this notwithstanding, a large part of the amateur's enjoyment will lie in the process of crafting or practicing itself; and furthermore, one might ask how the attitude of *Gelassenheit* should be attained, if it does not lie in a particular activity. Perhaps, then, if we want to learn how to be *Gelassen,* how to *let* things be, the answer lies precisely in consciously practiced amateurism: an amateurism á la Stiegler's, but with an added Heideggerian focus upon the fact that as an amateur, what I am making comes to *be.* In this way, through a loving repetition of letting-be, it will be possible to *learn* how to *be* Gelassen, i.e., amateurism will let me let things be.

5. Conclusion – Things to Remember

How am I to be *in the face of contemporary technology?* If all of the above holds, then the answer is almost, but not quite, as Stiegler envisions – for the answer is not just Stiegler's 'as someone who *makes* things', but must also contain the Heideggerian addendum: 'as someone who makes things *be*' – to sum up, a *Gelassen* amateur. The reason for this is that Stiegler's analysis of technology, though extremely insightful, rests upon the fundamental assumption that the human is essentially technical, and that the technical is essentially productive.

Drawing from the late Heidegger, I have demonstrated why this assumption of productivity should be a problem, and how it can be avoided, as Heidegger himself does in his thinking of 'things'.

If the present paper reads partially as a Heideggerian critique of Stiegler's core assumptions, however, this is only because such a critique is necessary in order to further the line of research that my initial question implies. Having gleaned somewhat of an answer to the question of how *I* should *be* in the face of technics, the next step is to come up with solutions to the question of a *we*: *how to reconstitute a 'we' out of the undifferentiated productivity of contemporary technics?* And more generally, *how to turn generalized productivity into something beyond itself?* For these questions, Stiegler's fine-grained analyses of the peculiarities of contemporary technics may yet prove more valuable than Heidegger's more fundamentally inclined thinking.

At any rate, one thing is clear – if we are to mitigate the technological threat to *being,* there is only one way to do it: through a renewed letting-be of the thing – and the best way to do so is by being producers ourselves.

Literature

Basalla, George (1988). *The Evolution of Technology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beistegui, Miguel de (2013). 'The New Critique of Political Economy'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 181-191. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Colony, Tracy (2010). 'A Matter of Time: Stiegler and Heideger on Being Technological'. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 41:2, pp. 117-131.

———— (2011). 'Epimetheus Bound: Stiegler on Derrida, Life, and the Technological Condition'. *Research in Phenomenology 41,* pp. 72–89.

Crogan, Patrick (2013). 'Experience of the Industrial Temporal Object'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 102-118. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Crowley, Martin (2013). 'The Artist and the Amateur: from Misery to Invention'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 119-134. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Haworth, Michael (2016). 'Bernard Stiegler on Transgenerational Memory and the Dual Origin of the Human'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 33:3, pp. 151-173.

Heidegger, Martin. (1977a). 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes'. In: *Holzwege.* Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 5. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

———— (1977b). *Sein und Zeit.* Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften (1910-1976), Band 72. Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann.

————— (1989). *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Gesamtausgabe, III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen, Band 65. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (1997a). 'Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins'. In: *Nietzsche, zweiter Band*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 6.2. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2000a). 'Die Frage nach der Technik'. In: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 7. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2000b). 'Bauen Wohnen Denken'. In: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 7. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2000c). 'Das Ding'. In: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 7. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2000d). 'Gelassenheit'. In: *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 16. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2006a). 'Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik'. In: *Identität und Differenz*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 11. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

————— (2006b). 'Die Kehre'. In: *Identität und Differenz*. Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976, Band 11. Franktfurt a.M.: Klostermann.

Howells, Christina (2013). ''*Le Défaut d'origine*': The Prosthetic Constitution of Love and Desire'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 87-101. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

James, Ian (2010). 'Bernard Stiegler and the Time of Technics'. *Cultural Politics* 6:2, pp. 207-228.

Kouppannou, Anna (2014). 'Approaching by Digression: Education of Nearness in Digital Times'. *Ethics and Education* 9:2, pp. 234-250.

Lemmens, Pieter (2018). 'From Ontology to Organology. Heidegger and Stiegler on the Danger and Ambiguity of Technology and Technical Media'. In: *We Need to Talk About Martin: 12 Essays Situating Heidegger in Contemporary Media Studies,* Eds. Justin M. Battin & German A. Duarte. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (2007). *The Creation of the World, or Globalization.* Tr. François Raffoul & David Pettigrew. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Roberts, Ben. (2006) 'Cinema as mnemotechnics'. *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 11:1, pp. 55-63.

Rosenberger, Robert and Verbeek, Peter-Paul (2015). 'A Field Guide to Postphenomenology'. In: *Postphenomenological Investigations: Essays on Human-Technology Relations.* Eds. Rosenberger, R. & Verbeek, P.P. Lanham / Boulder / New York / London: Lexington.

Ross, Daniel (2013). 'Pharmacology and Critique after Deconstruction'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 243-258. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Sinnerbrink, Robert (2009). 'Culture Industry *Redux*: Stiegler and Derrida on Technics and Cultural Politics'. *Transformations* 17:1.

Stiegler, Bernard (1998). *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus.* Tr. Richard
Beardsworth & George Collins. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———— (2009a). *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation.* Tr. Stephen Barker.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———— (2009b). 'Teleologics of the Snail. The Errant Self Wired to a WiMax
Network'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 26:2-3, pp. 33-45.

———— (2010). *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations.* Tr. Stephen Barker.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———— (2011a). *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise.*
Tr. Stephen Barker. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———— (2011b). *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies. Disbelief and Discredit,
Volume 1.* Tr. Daniel Ross & Suzanne Arnold. Cambridge / Malden, MA:
Polity Press.

———— (2013a). *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology.* Tr. Daniel
Ross. Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity Press.

———— (2013b). *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals. Disbelief and
Discredit, Volume 2.* Tr. Daniel Ross. Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity
Press.

———— (2014). *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch.* Tr.
Barnaby Norman. Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity Press.

———— (2015a). *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2: The* Katastrophē *of the Sensible.* Tr.
Barnaby Norman. Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity Press.

———— (2015b). *States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the 21st Century.* Tr.
Daniel Ross. Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Thrift (2004). 'Remembering the technological unconscious by foregrounding knowledges of position'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22, pp. 175-190.

Trottein, Serge (2013). 'Technics, or the Fading Away of Aesthetics: The Sensible and the Question of Kant'. In: *Stiegler and Technics,* Eds. Howells, C. & Moore, G., pp. 87-101. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Turner, Ben (2016). 'Life and the Technical Transformation of Différance: Stiegler and the Noopolitics of Becoming Non-Inhuman'. *Derrida Today* 9:2, pp. 177-198.

Who, The (1969). *Christmas.* Composed by Pete Townshend. From: *Tommy,* Track Record 613 013/4.