Editorial

Jeremy Gilbert and Ben Roberts

This issue is devoted to the work of the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler. Stiegler is a prolific writer who has published over twelve books in the last three years alone. Despite the fact that only a relatively small portion of this is translated, works such as the three translated volumes of *Technics and Time* (1998-2010), *Acting Out* (2009), *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (2010) and (with Jacques Derrida) *Echographies of Television* (2002) have already created significant interest in his work in Anglophone cultural studies, media studies and philosophy. This collection appears ten years after *new formations* published one of the first of Stiegler's essays to be translated into English.[1]

Although Stiegler takes his distance from the work of writers such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas, in many ways his approach shares with critical theory an emphasis on the 'politics' of technology[2] and on the industrialisation of culture. However, Stiegler differs sharply from that tradition by situating technology in the context of a long history of what he calls 'technics', the constitutive exteriorisation or prosthesis of the human. Stiegler uses the term technics to describe what he calls 'organised inorganic matter', which refers here not just to technology in the modern sense of the word, but also tools, writing and even culture in the broadest sense. As Stiegler puts it in the general introduction to *Technics and Time*: 'As a 'process of exteriorisation', technics is the pursuit of life by means other than life'.[3]

In his work Stiegler explicitly links the question of technics, memory and modern tele-technologies to the fate of *individuation*, a term he derives from Gilbert Simondon. Simondon's work, which is enjoying something of a renaissance in cultural and media studies,[4] differs from classical models of individuation, or 'what makes a thing what it is', for example, the individual as a substantive or hylemorphic entity. Simondon argues rather that we must, 'understand the individual from the perspective of the process of individuation rather than the process of individuation by means of the individual'. For Simondon the individual, be it biological, psychic, technical or collective, can only be understood as a metastable entity and he emphasises instead the underlying process or relations. Simondon's centrality to Stiegler's project cannot be overstated; however Stiegler argues Simondon did not fully apprehend the role that technics play in psychic and collective individuation and that 'psychic, social and technical individuation are inseparable'.[5] From Stiegler's perspective, technics provides the milieu or environment in which individuation takes place and the industrialisation of memory through modern tele-technologies leads to a loss of individuation.[6]

Stiegler is a founder of the *Ars Industrialis* group which advocates 'an industrial ecology of spirit' to counter what Stiegler sees as the

1. Bernard Stiegler, 'Transcendental Imagination in a Thousand Points' in *new formations* 46, pp7-22, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2002.

2. 'Critical theories of technology argue that technologies are not separate from society but are adapted to particular social and political systems. Technologies are thus not neutral tools, because they are implicated in the socio-political order they serve and contribute to shaping, nor can they be characterised by a singular "essence of technology" because they evolve historically along with other aspects of society'. Andrew Feenberg, 'Critical Theory of Technology,' in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F Hendricks (eds), Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p146.

3. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: 1. The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (trans.), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p17.

4. See, for example: Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, University of Minnesota Press, 2007; Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies*,

Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2005; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2002; Adrian Mackenzie, *Transductions: Bodies and Machines at Speed*, Continuum, 2002; Alberto Toscano, 'La disparation: politique et sujet chez Simondon', *Multitudes*, 18 (Autumn 2004), http://multitudes. samizdat.net/ article.php3?id_ article=1576; Mark B.N. Hansen, *Bodies in code*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

5. Bernard Stiegler, 'Temps et individuation technique, psychique, et collective dans l'oeuvre de Simondon', *Futur Antérieur*, 19-20 (1993), http:// multitudes.samizdat. net/Temps-et-individuation-technique.html.

6. Bernard Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident: Entretiens avec Élie During*, Paris, Galilée, 2004, pp90-1.

7. Ars Industrialis, 'Ars Industrialis: Le Manifeste,' http:// arsindustrialis.org/ le-manifeste.

8. Bernard Stiegler, *Aimer, s'aimer, nous aimer: Du 11 septembre au 21 avril*, Paris, Editions Galilée, 2003; Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, David Barison, Daniel Ross, and Patrick

'hyperindustrialisation' of cultural memory.[7] His work engages with contemporary European political issues, including apathy and alienation from political institutions and, in the French context, the rise of the Front National, especially their success in the 2002 French presidential elections.[8] He has also written critically on the rhetoric around participatory democracy that formed part of Ségolène Royal's 2007 presidential campaign.[9] Thus Stiegler is best understood not simply as a philosopher of technics (a role which in any case he explicitly rejects).[10] Rather he sees himself as promoting, as Stephen Barker puts it, 'a critical politics vital to the twenty-first century'. In the interview included here Stiegler outlines the concerns of his work from the early ideas from which *Technics and Time* emerged to his most recent work on 'pharmacological critique'.

Stiegler is without doubt a controversial figure, both in his native France and further afield. What is not in doubt, however, is that the scope of his intellectual ambition, and his determination to bring philosophy and cultural theory to bear on immediate social and political problems, makes him an unusual figure on the current international scene, one whose interests coincide very closely with those of *new formations*. A legatee, in different senses, of both Derridean deconstruction and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Stiegler's work represents a challenging and stimulating synthesis for sympathisers and critics alike.

This issue embraces a variety of perspectives on Stiegler's theoretical project, both critical and supportive. Stephen Barker's essay explores the political implications of more recent work such as *Taking Care 1: of Youth and the Generations* and *Réenchanter le monde* [*Re-enchanting the world*]. Judith Wambacq and Bart Buseyne examine Stiegler's argument that real-time technologies erase the *différance* of time. Bram Ieven discusses the relationship between aesthetics and the 'hyperindustrial' understanding of capitalism. Mark Hansen explains the influence of Stiegler on his own work while asserting the limits of memory as a way of understanding technics and technological change. John Hutnyk examines critically Stiegler's adoption of Marx's concept of proletarianisation in relation to technology. Patrick Crogan argues that Stiegler's work on cinema allows a substantial rethinking of film theory. Marcel Swiboda discusses these ideas around cinema, technics and memory in relation to the film *Memento*. Oliver Marchart contends that Stiegler's formulation of technics is ultimately inadequate for thinking the antagonistic nature of the political. Ben Roberts's essay seeks to locate Stiegler's work in the wider context of critical theory of technology. The volume also includes an innovative glossary of key terms from Stiegler's work and an extended interview with Stiegler and Ben Roberts, Mark Hayward and Jeremy Gilbert for *new formations*.

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the interview with Stiegler proved invaluable, as did his advice over its translation and editing, to which Jeremy Gilbert also contributed. Stephen Barker undertook a thorough final edit of the interview as well. All of these contributions built on the meticulous labour of Ben Roberts, who did the vast bulk of the editorial work for the issue.

Crogan (trans), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009.

9. Marc Crépon and Bernard Stiegler, *De la démocratie participative*, Paris, Mille et une nuits, 2007.

10. Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident*, op. cit., p14.