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Politicising the Epokhé: Bernard Stiegler and the Politics of Epochal Suspension

Ben Turner  
Lecturer in Political Theory  
School of Politics and International Relations  
Rutherford College  
University of Kent  
Canterbury  
CT2 7NX

b.turner@kent.ac.uk

**Abstract** For Husserl, the phenomenological *epoché* is primarily methodological, allowing access to the structures of transcendental consciousness by way of suspending worldly influence. This chapter will demonstrate how this *methodological* principle is rethought as *political* in the work of Bernard Stiegler. For Stiegler the *epokhé* is both the suspension of existing social systems, and a moment of critical *redoubling*, where the source of disruption is integrated into a new ‘epoch’. In particular it will be shown how Stiegler develops this double understanding of the *epokhé* through his reading of retentionality as found in the lectures *On the Consciousness of Internal Time* to develop an understanding of the epochal framing of temporality by technics. By drawing connections between this version of retentionality and the pharmacological character of technics, as simultaneously poisonous and curative, the political stakes of the *epokhé* lie in the need to fight the poisonous aspects of epochal suspension.

**Keywords** Bernard Stiegler; Edmund Husserl; *Epokhé*; Retentions; Technics; *Pharmakon*

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According to Bernard Stiegler we live in ‘the epoch of the absence of epoch’, an epoch characterised by the disruption of the heritage and tradition, that forms epochality (Stiegler 2016, 18). For Stiegler, the agent of this disruption is a poisonous political economy which short-circuits social systems with the aim of replacing them with products and services, subject to the need to calculate profit (Stiegler 2010a). Systems of care, which form the ideas that characterise an epoch, are replaced with mere consumer services. The political response to

these conditions, for Stiegler, requires the re-founding of a political economy and of social systems capable of establishing the conditions of a new ‘epoch’.

To understand Stiegler’s apocalyptic proclamation we must view ‘epochality’ in a double sense, entailing a politicisation of what Edmund Husserl introduced into phenomenology as a methodological principle (Husserl 2002, 51–59). Stiegler rethinks the *epokhé* as part of what he calls an ‘epokhal redoubling’ (Stiegler 2013b, 34–36). On the one hand, this encompasses the suspension of reference to any natural attitude found within Husserl’s original formulation. On the other, it requires us to draw conclusions that are only implicit within Husserl’s *strictly* methodological consideration of the *epokhé*. Not only must we *re-enter* into these worldly conditions, but also engage in their re-constitution and re-invention. Hence, Stiegler develops the notion of suspension to include both the Husserlian *epokhé*, and the reconstitution of an epoch understood as the ideas, institutions and social norms that form a particular period of time. The political challenge of the epoch without epoch, therefore, is to follow suspension with a judgement on what social systems should be implemented in the face of their possible liquidation.

To understand how Stiegler politicises the *epokhé*, we must first come to terms with how his philosophy of technics draws on Husserl to condition his thinking of epochality. Stiegler re-reads Husserl’s understanding of retention from a Heideggerian perspective in order to conceive of technics as the condition of both senses of the epoch. Technical systems support social systems, as epochs, but can also disrupt these established ways of life, suspending them in an *epokhé*. Stiegler’s relationship to Husserl is thus twofold. It is characterised, first, by a philosophical engagement with the phenomenological tradition—particularly the work of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida—in order to situate the conditions of

experience within technical objects. However, this philosophical mediation on the nature of the relationship between technics and experience is subordinate to a broader political project. Thus, the second aspect of Stiegler's relation to Husserl is the development of political consequences from his work regarding the capacity for the manipulation of experience that arises from its external, technical foundations.

Our aim will not be to explore the basis of this argument by reconstructing the former, philosophical aspects of Stiegler's reading of Husserl alone.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it will be to show that it is the politicisation of the *epokhé* that plays a key role in Stiegler's political thought, and that this involves drawing conclusions that are latent within Husserl's own writing. Our methodological approach, then, will not be phenomenological, but instead reconstructive. We will trace how Stiegler's draws political conclusions that are latent but not fully present in Husserl's work. If, according to Stiegler, '[t]he consequences of a thought, if it is genuine thought, which is to say a conceptual invention, always extend beyond the person who thought it', then our approach will be trace how he draws these political conclusions from Husserl's work in this way (Stiegler 2015b, 5). In particular, we will see how this contributes to the pharmacological character of technical objects. As *pharmaka* they are both poisonous and curative, the condition of social systems but also the agents of their destruction. In Stiegler's words: 'the pharmakon is at once what enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken...its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that it is also destructive' (Stiegler 2013b, 4). What this pharmacological condition means for the *epokhé* is that suspension disrupts social systems. But, the exposure to otherness in the suspension of established patterns

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<sup>1</sup> These have been well established by a number of authors (Crogan 2013; Bradley 2011, 132–33; Hansen 2012; James 2010, 210–17; Lechte 2007, 60–70; Ross 2013, 250–52).

of behaviour can lead to the redoubling of the epoch; re-establishing social systems on the basis of the encounter with otherness. Stiegler's politicisation of Husserl founds a politics that is charged with producing social systems that can incorporate the encounter with the otherness that engenders the suspension, the *epokhé*, of existing forms of life. Crucially, it is by developing themes that Husserl left untapped that allows Stiegler to generate such an understanding of epochality.

### *1. From Heidegger to the Theory of Retentions*

The Heideggerian perspective that Stiegler adopts to reconsider Husserl is far from orthodox, taking place through a fundamental reconsideration of the basis of temporality and facticity within the existential analytic. Stiegler's reading can be understood by way of his modification of the central point of the Heidegger of *Being and Time* (Stiegler 1998, 234). The basis of *Dasein* is its facticity, its existence is conditioned by its outside, and as such it only exists outside itself. It experiences temporality through tradition and a system of factual supports of its being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962, 174). For Stiegler this facticity is based upon an originary prostheticity; the factual basis of *Dasein* is found in systems of technical objects which act as external forms of memory through which time is experienced. There is no authentic time outside of the inauthentic time of the factual; the indeterminacy of *Dasein*'s running ahead of itself is conditioned by its situating of itself within the determinate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This exposition of Stiegler's reading of Heidegger is, due to limitations of space, brief. For more extensive and critical engagements, see the work of Richard Beardsworth (1995) and Tracy Colony (2010).

Stiegler re-interprets the exposition of facticity in *Being and Time* through Heidegger's 1924 lecture published as *The Concept of Time*, in which the temporality of *Dasein* is understood in reference to clock-time. In this lecture Heidegger begins the existential analytic of the *who* by reference to the fixing of the now by the *what* of the clock (Heidegger 1992, 2E–5E). While Heidegger eventually separates the authentic temporality of the *who* (*Dasein*) and the inauthentic temporality of the *what* (Heidegger 1992, 21E), Stiegler takes from this that the existential analytic begins from a consideration of the *who* in reference to the *what*. He attempts to fix what he sees as Heidegger's retreat from the ramification that *Dasein* 'can only test its improbability pro-grammatically' (Stiegler 1998, 234). The indeterminacy of temporality is only possible on the condition of determined programs of time, established through technical objects. Through a re-orienting of the basis of the existential analytic, it is not so much the originary temporality of being-in-the-world that is forgotten by *Dasein* (Heidegger 1962, secs. 12-18), but rather the ineliminable technical basis of authenticity (Stiegler 2016, 32). It is this that conditions the existence of the Human for Stiegler: it has no basis outside of these technical supports of time which make possible the periodisation of Being (Stiegler 2014b, 84). In this reading, Heidegger's critique of Husserl, that the reduction led to a subject isolated from its world, is turned back against him (Heidegger 1988, 21). Heidegger does not think that the authentic temporality of *Dasein* is based in technicity, and thus does not think the conditions of being-in-the-world.

Stiegler turns to Husserl's exposition of retentionality, as both a form of memory and the basis of the experience of time, to expand on this position. This allows him to do two things. First, to make technics the condition of memory, marking the impossibility of any full presence of the phenomenological subject to itself. Second, to make technics the basis of any epochality as a particular understanding of time, and therefore the basis of any social system, as

mnemotechnics (Stiegler 2009c, 43). The condition of Stiegler's thought on this matter is what Paul Ricoeur referred to as 'the two great discoveries of the Husserlian phenomenology of time...the phenomenon of retention and its symmetrical counterpart, protention, and the distinction between retention (or primary remembrance) and recollection (or secondary remembrance)' (Ricoeur 1990, 25–26). As such, to understand Stiegler's reading we will focus on Husserl's main exposition of this theme as found in his lectures *On The Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, rather than in his work at large.<sup>3</sup>

In the first of these discoveries, Husserl argues that primary retention refers to the shading into the past of primal impressions. Temporal experience is not a set of connected instants, but rather a large now in which instants become retentions attached to the intuition in the manner of a comet tail. The experience of an intuition is retained in immediate memory:

the primal impression, passes over into retention...[e]very actual present now of consciousness...is subject to the law of modification. It changes into retention of retention, and does so continuously. Accordingly, a fixed continuum of retention arises in such a way that each later point is retention for every earlier point (Husserl 1991, 31).

Primal impressions that have just passed take on the character of primary retentions, receding into a field of temporal perception. This shading of experienced instants constitutes the perception of time as a continuum of receding impressions, retained in the horizon of

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<sup>3</sup> For example, he anticipates this discussion of retentionality in the second volume of *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001, 86).

perception rather than being reproduced by consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Correlative to retentions are protentions. Primal impressions are received only on the condition of an already existing continuum of instants: ‘every process that constitutes its object originally is animated by protentions that emptily constitute what is coming as coming, that catch it and bring it towards fulfillment’ (Husserl 1991, 54). Any intuition is perceived within an anticipation arising from a series of already perceived retentions. As such, the large now is constituted on the basis of the composition of the just-past (primary retention), now (primal impression), and the future (protention) that makes up the experience of temporality.

Husserl’s second discovery is the secondary retention, referring to the reproduction of temporal duration within perception: ‘the phantasied now represents a now but does not give a now itself’ (Husserl 1991, 43). While primary retentions refer to the fading into memory of just past primal impressions, secondary retentions refer to the reproduction of these instants within consciousness. A secondary retention is a reproduction of a particular now-point in the flow of consciousness, with its antecedent primary retentions and protentions adjoined to it. This forms the flow of time, signifying that the unity of the subjects experience of temporality is constituted rather than given (Husserl 1991, 54). The past, as opposed to the just perceived, is reproduced. A secondary retention is the memoration and reproduction of the temporal field that surrounds an intuition, made up of primary retentions and protentions. It is the memory, rather than perception, of an intuition which retains its identity as it sinks into the past (Husserl 1991, 64–65).

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<sup>4</sup> Here Husserl is reacting against Brentano, who are claimed that the experience of temporality arises from the reproduction of past instants in consciousness, rather than a gradual shading into the past (Husserl 1991, 13–20).

2. *Beyond Derrida's Reading of Retentionality*

Stiegler's intention in his reading of Husserl on these points is to establish that this constitution of the temporal flux:

begins with a failure that leads to the draft of an effectively finite conception of retention, introducing passivity into a temporal synthesis, which also becomes transcendental history. Such a constitution is thus always already the already as such: it can only be a (re)constitution (Stiegler 2009b, 191).

There is a finitude at the basis of the experience of temporality; it cannot be self-sufficient and requires something upon which its synthesis is based. Stiegler's key expansion of the work of Husserl, then, is that the synthesis of temporality takes place with reference to a history of technical objects that determine the contents of consciousness and the experience of time; the transcendental conditions of the subject are determined by an empirical history of memory supports. Stiegler's historicisation and de-transcendentalisation of the theory of retentionality relies heavily upon Derrida's reading of Husserl. This will not be reproduced in full, but two pertinent points need to be summarised.<sup>5</sup>

First, Derrida argues that the primacy of the impression and its shading into the past as primary retention is indistinguishable from secondary retention, as the large now of temporal experience is a *re-constitution* of an object which intrudes upon consciousness. Referring to

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<sup>5</sup> I have published a more extensive engagement with Stiegler's relationship to Derrida elsewhere (Turner 2016). For other important work on their relation, see Ben Roberts (2005) and Daniel Ross (2013).

the basis of Husserl's analysis in the hearing of tone and melody, Derrida claims that 'must it not "announce" a real object,' as 'the unreality of the "quasi" sound in retention constitutive of the phenomenological temporality...is in its origin founded on the reality of the real sound' (Derrida 2003, 61–62). As phenomenology studies the intuition rather than the object *in itself*, primal impressions, primary retentions, and secondary retentions are all forms of re-constitution of the intuition in consciousness because objects are not perceived directly. Hence, 'the temporality of immanent lived experience must be the absolute beginning of the appearance of time, but it appears to itself precisely as absolute beginning thanks to a 'retention'...[t]he act of exclusion cannot be pure; it is originally retentional' (Derrida 2003, 64). This leads Derrida to reject in principle the distinction between primary and secondary retentions for they are both forms of reproduction. The second, related point is that this requires something which constitutes the experience of the flow of time. If the difference between primary and secondary retention is merely 'a difference between two modifications of nonperception' (Derrida 1973, 65), then there must be something which is unaffected by these ordinary modifications of perception. This is, on the one hand, the purity of the impression: 'as it sinks into the past maintains its strict identity' (Husserl 1991, 64). On the other, it is the positing of an a-temporal flux which acts as the *constituting* rather than *constituted* basis of the experience of time, and as such cannot be experienced within temporality: 'for all of this we lack names' (Husserl 1991, 79). These are the sources of the metaphysics of presence in Husserl, according to Derrida, to be found in the identity of the instant and the absolute subjectivity which constitutes time.

Derrida's aim is to draw attention to an indistinction between primary and secondary retentions, and Husserl's reliance on the purity of both the impression and the constituting flux. Stiegler takes these points on, but modifies them in crucial manners. First, he agrees with Derrida that

primary and secondary retentions are both forms of reproduction. He achieves this through an analysis of the place of tone within a melody. While for Husserl primal impressions take on a character of objective purity, for Stiegler:

[an] emergent tone...would already be a rereading of all (just-having-been) tones in primary memory, and thus a modification of all past tones—but in such a way that this modification in return retro-acts on the passage of tones actually heard as originary impressions. The originary impression would only have been composed as ‘originary’, then, as a loop, as the *après-coup* of an already-composed, impressional, primarily-retained already-there, itself in perpetual modification (Stiegler 2009b, 203).

Primary retention is not so much the shading into the past of primal, pure impressions, but rather the originary modifications of these impressions on the basis of just-past impressions. No impression is pure, but reproduced on the condition of its insertion within a stream of primary retentions.

Stiegler deviates from Derrida, however, by maintaining the Husserlian distinction between primary and secondary retention. Rather than opposing perception and imaginary reproduction, Stiegler sees them as two forms of reproduction which influence each other:

the difference between primary and secondary retention is not a radical difference insofar as primary retention is unceasingly composed with secondary retention, that is to say, insofar as perception is always projected by, upon, and in imagination (Stiegler 2009d, 105).

Primary retentions are the composition of the experience of the impression with past-impressions, whereas secondary retentions are the reproduced forms of these experiences which impact upon the formation of primary retentions. Primary and secondary retentions differ

insofar as they compose together to receive primal impressions. The forming of a trail of primary retentions that follow primal impressions is composed under the influence of a bank of secondary retentions and their respective protentions. Primary and secondary retentions are distinguished to better understand how they compose to form experience.

As primary retentions are always articulated within these compositions, there is no ‘pure’ instant that sinks back into memory but rather an originary selectivity that constitutes the experience of time. Memory is selection, and, as such, forgetting (Stiegler 2009b, 227). It is this originary finitude that is brought to bear on the second problem of presence in Husserl; the absolute subjectivity of the constituting flux. If forgetting and selectivity are the basis of the experience of time, then a constituting subject or a-temporal flux would break this selectivity. Instead, the commencement of temporal experience is predicated on a *technical support* of memory which supplements this forgetting. Stiegler refers to Husserlian image-consciousness to think this. Tertiary retentions are the exteriorisation of lived experience, which when experienced again, become image-consciousness, something not lived by the subject yet reproduced by it (Stiegler 2001, 244). Image consciousness is the condition of the intersubjective sharing of meaning, for it allows the passing on of experience beyond the limits of perception, something which Derrida will go on to call writing, influenced by Jean Hyppolite’s ‘subjectless transcendental field’ (Derrida 1989, 88–89). For Stiegler, this field is a historical system of technical, tertiary retentions which form the basis for the composition of primary and secondary retentions as an exteriorised set of retentions and protentions (Stiegler 2009b, 222–23). The very possibility of lived experience is not a transcendental flux, but a technical system of sedimented tertiary retentions which compose with primary and secondary retentions to form the subject. The experience of temporality is conditioned by these archi-protentions, technically supported memories which compose with the memories of individuals

(Stiegler 2013b, 62–63). As such, Stiegler takes on Derrida's critique of Husserl by using it to develop two themes that are not drawn to their full conclusion in the lectures on the consciousness of internal time. These are, first, the composition of retentionality in a manner that prevents the purity of impressions. It is only on the basis of the anticipation formed by secondary retentions that primary retentions are formed. Second, that this very field of anticipation is not reliant on a transcendental flux, but rather a materialized set of memories or tertiary retentions arising from collective experience, internalised by individual subjects.

### 3. *Technics, Organology and Pharmacology within the Epoché*

This collective ground of memory means that for Stiegler all *who*'s are conditioned by a system of *what*'s, this system being the sum of externalised retentions of individual *who*'s. The technical default at the basis of memory, that memory is forgetting and needs a support, means the experience of time is communal. Commenting on *The Origin of Geometry*, Stiegler argues that the sedimentation of the experience of individuals is the condition of the disciplinarity of geometry, providing a fund of experience which is transmitted beyond their individual deaths (Stiegler 2001, 246). These memories are in turn intuited by individuals through their own particular experiences (as a bank of primary and secondary retentions), singularising a group memory while contributing to it. Unity, of the *I* and the *We*, is always projected, expected through protentions but never reached, due to this constant process of differentiation in the experience of tertiary memory (Stiegler 2009a, 4–5). Drawing on the work of Gilbert Simondon, Stiegler calls this a process of trans-individuation: that the individual and the collective are constituted in a dynamic relation, a process that takes place upon a fund of technically supported memories (Stiegler 2006; Simondon 2009). This is the significance of epochality for the experience of time; new forms of tertiary retention open up new modalities

of temporal experience, which inform primary and secondary retentions, and the trans-individuations which can occur.

To return to our discussion of epochality, the first sense of the epoch is developed by Stiegler in this adoption of the Husserlian theory of temporal experience. The technical support of finitude makes a history of forms of consciousness possible: ‘memory in general always supposes some technological modalities of its inscription’ (Stiegler 2014b, 77). This default is the condition of law, understood not in purely juridical terms, but rather as the system of retentions that direct collective experience, individualised through differentiation in individual temporal experience (Stiegler 2009a, 35). Technics conditions epochality, making possible, for example, the literal revolution and the legal and historical practice specific to the Western philosophical tradition. Importantly, Stiegler’s understanding of law is of a unity that is always to come, projected into the future, precisely because of the default at the basis of temporal experience (Stiegler 2001, 258–60). Law does not confine individuals to a strict, determined set of conditions within a particular epoch, but instead opens this epoch up to transformation because of the inadequation at the heart of temporal experience.

Here we reach Stiegler’s second understanding of epochality, which is closer to Husserl’s use of the *epokhé*. The *epokhé* refers to the disruption and suspension of established systems of retentions and the social relations that they support. Stiegler describes the *epokhé* as ‘the suspension of the world, of the thesis of the world, that is, of the spontaneous belief in the existence of the world, which constitutes in Husserl’s language the natural attitude’ (Stiegler 2009a, 22). This is not a methodological premise, but rather the *condition of history*: ‘*Epokhé*...is first the very actuality of historical time’ (Stiegler 2014b, 84). It refers to the suspension of established behaviours by some form of disruption by technical innovation which

intervenes within an established epoch. It stems from the encounter between an established technical system, and the disruption of this system:

*epokhé* is always double and always supposes an epokhal techno-logical ground.

*Tekhnē* suspends an epoch from *tekhnē*; *tekhnē* makes *epokhé*, and, in this suspension, there is an improbable response, a linkage, a making of time: it is *epokhé* that makes an epoch (Stiegler 2014b, 85).

There are three key points to be unpacked here. First, the existence of an established ‘technological ground’ upon which all human existence is built, which forms epochs. Second the suspension of *tekhnē* by *tekhnē*, the disruption of these systems by new technical innovation. Third, the ‘improbable response’ or linkage that constitutes an epoch is improbable because the intuition and perception of instants is always within a particular arrangement of primary and secondary retentions, inadequate to themselves. Stiegler utilizes these three claims to argue that the very condition of epochality is a form of prior disruption, debunking any claim to purity or to origins.

This duality of the sense of epochality, as systematicity and suspension, can be expanded upon with reference to two terms integral to Stiegler’s philosophy of technics. The first is that these epochs of technical organisation are understood through a general organology. This is that all human existence is structured by successive, epochal adjustments and disadjustments between biological, social and technical organs (Stiegler 2014c, 5). The memories that structure the experience of temporality are understood in conjunction with an understanding of the biological as a system of traces of memory. Symbolic (social) memory and genetic (biological) memories play out within specific epochs structured by technical systems. Literal tertiary retentions provide a good example of this principle. The invention of writing provides the basis for new forms of social organisation, making possible of social systems grounded in particular

exteriorisations of memory. It also makes possible an alteration of the circuits of the brain which *learns* to read (Stiegler 2014a, 193–94). Circuits of tertiary retention impact upon synaptogenesis, displacing any possibility of a purely cerebral or biological understanding of the human, in favor of one that can only be understood within the context of its technical supports (Stiegler 2013b, 67–70). As such writing (as technique) displaces and suspends existing social systems, making space for new interpretations of the law of inheritance. This is precisely because memory, whether it be genetic or phenomenological, only ever unfolds within the constraints of a technical system (Stiegler 2001, 258–59).

General organology is supplemented with what Stiegler refers to as pharmacology. Each technical object is considered as both a poison and a cure, with each technical system actualising these tendencies in distinct ways. The *pharmakon* refers to the simultaneous possibilities of the *singularisation* of collective funds of memory, or their *homogenisation* (Stiegler 2010a, 29–36). It makes possible long circuits of individuation, where an individual can singularise the collective funds of an epoch, while also providing the conditions for the short circuiting of this possibility, reducing individuals to the conditions of their individuation. Once again referring to the invention of writing, Stiegler cites Plato's struggle against sophistry, where philosophical knowledge (anamnesis) is pitched against writing as a mere aid of memory (hypomnesis) (Stiegler 2012, 6–8; Stiegler 2013b, 2–3).<sup>6</sup> Where Stiegler differs, is that writing in this case is not so much a weak form of memory, but as a tertiary retention, a condition of memory. The *pharmakon* is the condition of knowledge, and of the experience of time (Stiegler 2015a, 29–33). Crucially, this distinction between poisonous and curative aspects of the *pharmakon* means

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<sup>6</sup> Stiegler leans heavily on Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus* in 'Plato's Pharmacy' (Derrida 1981).

that for the unity of an epoch to be upheld it must make possible the singularisation of its ideas rather than their homogenisation. Stiegler calls for a delicate balance between epochal synchrony and individuating diachrony (Stiegler 2009a, 41–42). As such, the unity of the experience of any individual is always fractured, reconstituted through the composition of primary, secondary and tertiary retentions. The unity of the collective is always *projected* through these singular interpretations of a collective fund, and therefore the homogenisation of individual retentions makes this projection impossible.

This condition may seem to be paradoxical insofar as an epoch is only possible on the condition of its openness to transformation. Stiegler's point is, however, that under conditions of homogenisation such *novel* responses to the suspension of the *epokhé* cannot be made. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1983, 105–8; Deleuze 1994, 149–53), he calls the pharmacological tendency towards the inability to singularise a collective fund of retentions 'stupidity.' This is not error, but rather the inability to determine a problem and give it a form within a singular projection into the future (Stiegler 2015a, 45–46). In the absence of such singularity there is a powerlessness to respond to the suspension of the *epokhé*. Where technical objects, as the condition of history can both *suspend*, as *epokhé*, and integrate, as epoch, there is a second duality that Stiegler's conception of the *pharmakon* adds to the Husserlian understanding of the *epokhé*. It can either suspend social systems, making space for novel inventions and new modes of existence, or induce stupidity, the inability to produce this re-integration and invention.

Stupidity occludes the artificial and contingent character of human existence, naturalising and essentialising an organological situation.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. *Conclusion: The Politics of Epochality*

It is the possibility of technical objects to both allow and bar this second moment of re-integration that politicises the *epokhé*. While the suspension of existing social systems is part of the motor of history, the political question is whether these particular suspensions act only to induce stupidity, or whether they make possible the integration and invention of new forms of existence (Stiegler 2015a, 60–61). The *epokhé* must give rise to the institution of a new epoch, which will always be the projection of a unity of individuals who experience it in a particular manner. What Stiegler refers to as the contemporary epoch without epoch is an epoch which homogenises retentions through the spread of marketing and its naturalisation of behaviours. The experience of the impossibility of the unity of consciousness is eradicated by the manipulation of the collective bank of tertiary retentions through the hegemony of the culture industries (Stiegler 2010b; Stiegler 2011, 82–130; Stiegler 2015b, 46–49; Stiegler 2010a, 58–60).<sup>8</sup> The attempt to calculate the experience of individuals, in the name of profit, reduces the projection of law to a naturalised condition of fact, occluding the possible

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<sup>7</sup> Stiegler understands this operation as central to ideology (Stiegler 2013a). I have explored this theme and provided a longer exploration of Stiegler's relation to Deleuze and post-structuralism elsewhere (Turner 2017).

<sup>8</sup> For analyses of Stiegler's critique of consumerism, see the work of Abbinnett (2018), Stephen Barker (2013) Miguel de Beistegui (2013) and Roberts (2013).

singularisation of collective funds of memory.<sup>9</sup> It is this poisonous pharmacological possibility that Stiegler argues we must fight, in order to open up a new future defined by the improbability, and undecidability of the ideas of a particular epoch.

Thus, while Stiegler's reading of Husserl is limited to certain texts and themes (Hansen 2012), this politics is deeply influenced by his development of Husserl's accounts of phenomenological temporality and the *epokhé*. Crucially, Stiegler draws these aspects of Husserl's work to conclusions that he himself does not make. In closing, these influences can be summarised before showing how they contribute to a particular form of politics. First, Stiegler utilises Husserl's phenomenology of time to establish tertiary retentions as the basis of epochs of human existence, and the impossibility of unifying either individual consciousness or the collective. It is this inadequation which makes the incompleteness of ideas originary, and therefore open to transformation. Second, the *epokhé* is understood as the intervention or disruption of an existing state of affairs by technical innovation. This can either make space for the establishment of a new epoch, by keeping ideas open, or homogenise epochal retentions by short-circuiting existing organological systems and positing themselves as natural. Stiegler's position can be seen as a modification of Husserl's in *The Crisis of The European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*: merely fact minded technics make merely fact minded people, rather than opening up the conditions of a new epoch.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The pharmacological analysis of retentions is influenced on this point by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's famous claim that the culture industry turns reason against itself, by externalising and eliminating the powers of reason through the calculation of culture (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972).

<sup>10</sup> 'Merely fact minded sciences make merely fact minded people' (Husserl 1970, 6).

The double use of epochality, as *epokhé* and epoch, politicises it so as to argue for the implementation of new social systems which make space for the indetermination at the heart of temporal experience, rather than exploiting its technical basis to impose the hegemony of marketing. The indetermination of temporal experience means individuals are always in a condition of being ‘myself-an-other,’ finding their subjectivity as a result of a system of tertiary retentions, and contributing to the transformation of this system (Stiegler 2009a, 20). Re-reading Husserl on retentionality as epochality, and on the *political* rather than *methodological* stakes of the *epokhé*, Stiegler claims the heart of the temporal experience is this originary inadequation. This ‘default’ is not a flaw, so much as the very condition of human experience. Temporal experience is always experience of an idiom, a particular expression of epochal conditions (Stiegler 2009b, 149). The epoch without epoch, therefore, is an epoch that has not established a system that responds to disindividuation with an epochality that can make room for this indetermination. It is an epoch without ideas, for ideas are always expressed indeterminately. Making space for this improbability, through the implementation of social systems and programs that encourage both synchrony and diachrony, rather than pure synchrony, is the political challenge that Stiegler’s reading of Husserl poses.

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