Touch/Screen

by DANIEL ROSS[1]

Abstract

In 2004 Bernard Stiegler posed "the tragic question of cinema" as that of the germ of regression to television and pornography it has always contained, just as in 1944 Adorno and Horkheimer argued that Enlightenment reason has always contained a germ of regression making possible a prostitution of theory leading only to the threat of fascism. If comparable threats attend Stiegler's cinematic question, then this implies the need for an account of this potential for regression, that is, an account of the relationship between desire, technology and knowledge. Tracing the aporias of the origin of desire and trauma in psychoanalysis is one crucial way to pursue this account. Exiting these aporias depends on recognizing that the origin of desire has for human beings always been technical, and hence that the instruments of desire form its conditions and condition its forms. By thus analysing the staging of desire and the setting of fantasy it becomes possible to reflect, for example, on what it means that for Genet fascism was theatre, that for Syberberg Hitler was cinema, and that for Stiegler the new prostitution of the tele-visual graphic is digital and algorithmic. Hence arises the potentially tragic question of the possibility or otherwise, in the age of the ubiquitous screen, of a new cinematic invention and a new cinematic practice.

> Fragments of an inner projection. Memories of our old universe in the black studio of our imagination, full of lonely marionettes of human beings, changing figurines of the ego, endless material for monologues, monoplays, and tragedies on celluloid. Dances of death, dialogues of death, dialogues in the land of the dead, a hundred years afterwards, a thousand years, millions, passion plays, oratories, who knows?
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> H.-J. Syberberg

At the end of the last chapter of the first volume of *Symbolic Misery*, published in French in 2004, Bernard Stiegler poses, through a reflection on the films of Bertrand

Bonello, what he calls "the tragic question of cinema" (Stiegler 2014: 93). According to Stiegler this is in fact the question of "tele-vision that has become pre-vision", by which fact "cinema", understood in a broad sense, becomes "tragically porno-graphic". One cannot but notice the three hyphens in Stiegler's sentence, which serve as an invitation to interpretation: *tele-vision*, the transmission of vision, that is, of views, of images, across a distance, becomes a *pre-vision*, a showing-before that is a seeing-before, a *prévision*, hence a kind of projection. But this projection implies a performativity whereby *showing* proves to be a kind of *doing*, doing something to, and hence looking *at*, those to whom these visions at a distance are shown, disordering and reordering their desire, and indeed inducing a *regression* of desire. Hence this would be *porno-graphic* less in the sense that it implies a writing or drawing (*graphein*) *of* prostitution (*porne*), about prostitution, about the prostitute, than in the sense that it involves a prostitution *of* the "graphic" itself. And to prostitute the graphic, or rather to exploit the germ of regression *inherent* to it and that makes possible the prostitution of the graphic taking place everywhere today, would be to *make it do*, to reduce this instrument to a means from which to draw profit, and to draw this profit by drawing in a performative way directly on the drives, by providing images to the drives *in advance* of desire in order to *re-stage* desire.

But on the other hand this pre-visionary supply of images, insofar as it directly targets the drives, ends up not just re-staging but short-circuiting desire. In this way it denies that seeing *is* a question of desire, that perception is always already a projection and a production conducted on the basis of desire: to bypass desire through a performative image-supplying-prosthesis such as a televisual or network-connected screen would in this way be to *deprive* the viewer of sight. And at the same time it is to deny that desire is a question of sight, that is, that it involves the opening of a gap between oneself and the object, a gap into which one peers, or from out of which one looks, and within which desire for the object is staged, as a dream or a fantasy.

Hence this contemporary situation, rooted in the fact that screens (of all kinds) are "*supports of projections* that *conceal*" (Stiegler 2015b), is also a screen *of* vision, a kind of blindness, a paradoxical pornography in which nothing comes to visibility, if not *the* nothing: "We have been destroyed and blinded – *all of us*, for what we are – by this becoming-regressive of our ever-narrowing gaze" (Stiegler 2011b: 229). But insofar as there is a possibility that we can become aware that we have been blinded, insofar as our deprivation of vision is something capable of being *noticed*, this raises the "question of vision as pre-vision pre-monitory of the blind" (Stiegler 2014: 93), this fourth hyphen indicating that Stiegler sees the Tiresian cinema of Bonello as a kind of projective early warning sign. But even if this premonitory character affords the possibility of "monitoring" a situation, nevertheless such a sign can function only if it is able to come to our attention, only if we come to see this blindness, so to speak, hence the condition of apprehending this warning must be to have already been blinded, so that one may *see* one's blindness.

For the noetic beings that we are, all vision is both edited (selected) and post-produced (fictioned, fashioned and fantasised), in such a way that it is always already conditioned and over-determined by prosthetic and instrumental mediations. These mediations thus both *open up* vision – which is the *work* of the work of art insofar as it educates us to the possibility of opening our eyes in a new way – and introduce *into* vision a blindspot, or rather, they can always lead to the becoming invisible of the visible. Given that this disappearing of what appears is always already part of our prosthetic field of vision, opening our eyes to the premonitory warning exposed by our blindness must always also be inevitably belated and intermittent: stretched between earliness and lateness, this would be its tragic condition.

Stiegler's critique of Adorno and Horkheimer notwithstanding (to the effect that their Kantian inheritance blinded them to the fact that the conditions of imagination are always technical), we might compare this to the way that for the latter the tragic regression of reason that has occurred since the Enlightenment is based on a rationalizing evacuation of critique that amounts to a *prostitution of theory*. This is a prostitution founded on the fact, they say, that "motorized history is rushing ahead of [...] intellectual developments" (Horkheimer, Adorno 2002: xv), *weakening* theoretical understanding through this *outpacing* of the intellect, as "the flood of precise information and brand-new amusements make people smarter and more stupid at once" (xvii). As is well-known, they argue that "the very concept of [Enlightenment] thinking, no less than the concrete historical forms, [...] *already contains the germ of the regression* which is taking place everywhere today" (xvi), suggesting the "necessity for enlightenment to reflect on itself", failing which the mind will be held "captive in ever deeper blindness" (xvii). And in the same way, we too may well conclude that the cinematic has always already contained the germ that made possible its televisualization and pornographization. Stiegler:

> The question of the pornographic film is the question of cinema such that the possibility of the porno-graphic is at the heart of *all* cinema, and so it is never a case of simply *opposing* cinema and television, but of criticizing television *through cinema*, which is always already inhabited by television as *power*. (Stiegler 2014: 93)

For Adorno and Horkheimer, the fact that "progress is reverting to regression", thanks to a "motorization" operating more quickly than the speed of intellect, amounted to the industrial production of "the international threat of fascism" (Horkheimer, Adorno 2002: xviii). The mechanism of this motorization, they argued, consists in a "regression of enlightenment to ideology which is graphically expressed in film and radio" and that "consists primarily in the calculation of effects and in the technology of production and dissemination" (xviii).

The preface to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* from which these words were taken was signed by the authors in "Los Angeles, California, May 1944" (xix). Seventy years later, this very location is the worldwide capital, not just of those culture industries that for

Adorno and Horkheimer were exemplified by film and radio, but of television and pornography. And the calculation of effects (that is, the performative pre-vision) graphically expressed through technologies of production and dissemination, technologies that are now not just audiovisual but digital and algorithmic, is leading to a new kind of regression of enlightenment to ideology, at the level of desire, where among other things desire must be understood *as* a kind of knowledge and as the *foundation* of knowledge. The result is new international threats, one of which could be called *systemic stupidity* and another of which could be called *sexual fascism*, processes that occur "by way of a disordering of the aesthetic" (Stiegler 2011b: 227) Understanding the threats such processes represent means reflecting on the relationship between *desire and its technologies* and, correlatively, between *technology and its desires*.

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The Stieglerian concept of desire, which makes the above account possible, is on the one hand rooted in Freud, and on the other hand deracinates the Freudian understanding of desire, which is itself less *an* understanding than a constantly mutating process of ablaqueation that Freud himself undertook in an almost compulsive way. For Stiegler, and not only for Stiegler, this repetition compulsion *of* Freud is symptomatic of what Freud *knows* – that the traumatic origin of disorders of desire is a *problem*, specifically a problem of the infinite regress of the origin, since for the formation of desire to be distorted or diverted by an encounter with what it did not expect means that desire must *always already have known what to expect*, for otherwise the unexpected would not have been traumatic. But at the same time this is what Freud knows only in the mode of not knowing: hence all of the twists and turns, both theoretical and rhetorical, all the topological schemas and temporal feedback loops, by which Freud constantly strives to resolve or to deny there *is* any problem with desire at all, none of which succeed in closing the system. This conscious and repressed "desire to reach the bedrock of the event" (Laplanche, Pontalis 1968: 9) is in turn the very mechanism that drives on, and that *produces*, Freud's own theoretical quest.

The many stages of this Freudian quest to locate the diversionary origin of disorders of desire are well-known, and need not be rehearsed here, even if the torturous twists and turns do indeed require meticulous attention, for they continue to return like the repressed in the more recent history of psychoanalysis itself, as we shall see. Hence it *is* worth restaging, at least a little, the way this aporia continues to haunt more recent incarnations of psychoanalysis. Jean Laplanche, for example, one of Freud's most careful readers, in his attempt to pursue a further step in what he sees as a still incomplete Copernican revolution, and "in accordance with the Freudian theory of afterwardsness [*Nachträglichkeit*], [takes] primal repression to have at least two phases", one in which

what he terms "enigmatic signifiers" are implanted in the infant without being re-pressed, and a second in which they are reactivated, and "which the infant must endeav-our to bind" (Laplanche 1999: 132). Laplanche in this way attempts to eliminate the traces of Freudian biologism by postulating a dual origin:

> on the one hand, the presupposition of an organism devoted to homeostasis and self-preservation and, on the other, that of an adult cultural world in which the child is totally immersed from the outset. (129)

In this schema, the initial "signifiers" "implanted" into the infant are all those "mes-sages" he or she receives, consisting not just of language but of any gestures whatsoever, and they are enigmatic not just because "the infant does not know the code" but because "*adults themselves* do not have the code" (130), or in other words because language and gestures are themselves a composition of conscious and unconscious motivations, sexual or otherwise, or again, because the condition of the apparently autonomous function of mature human beings is in fact the existence of automatisms of which they remain unaware.

On the one hand, then, Laplanche's account of the possibility of trauma and repres-sion is founded on an admirable attempt to describe a complex double origin through the space opened up between the inauguration into the reception of signifiers, and the traumatic moment when these signifiers can begin to have *significance*. And the enig-matic character of these initial signifiers, lying not just in the infant's ignorance of the code but the adult's as well, suggests that what is being referred to is the process of inheriting a kind of cultural, because transgenerational, unconscious – or, in other words, a process of the inheritance of cultural automatisms. It is the process by which cultural différance opens up, through these enigmatic signifiers entering into a process of circulation with the infant's own "homeostatic" automatisms, the space of the drives as psychic différance. Laplanche himself does not use such terms, but he does see that the notion of circulation, and hence the economic model in general, could be "concept-ualized according to a non-physicalist model, based on what may be called the circulation of meaning or information in communication circuits". But if Laplanche sees an at least metaphorical relation to information theory here, he knows very well that a cognitivist conception of psychic circulation could be valid *only if* we understand this not just in terms of the circulation of meaning but also "the circulation of non-meaning, i.e. the non-symbolised" (133).[2] To this extent one could justifiably see Laplanche's model of the

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[2] A full consideration of what Laplanche says here would also require a careful reading of the seventh session, entitled "The Circuit", of Jacques Lacan's second seminar (from 1954–55). In this remarkable session, which we can only begin to touch upon here, Lacan examines the question of the pleasure and reality principles, and the death and life drives, as they appear in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, not only from the perspective of the question of entropy, but from the question of entropy *also* understood in terms of information theory. And just as Laplanche refers to the need to include the circulation of non-meaning, so too Lacan, in describing the codification of the *quantity* of information, immediately

drives as a general economic model in the Bataillean sense.

On the other hand, however, Laplanche is not himself concerned with the cultural un-conscious that we are suggesting necessarily lies behind the fact that, as he himself acknowledges, the reason the enigmatic signifiers received by the infant *are* enigmatic is because they remain unknown to the *adults themselves*. One might ask: so who does know? These codes are all those idioms (that is, milieus) all of which consist in the history of *usage* by individuals employing them and setting them to *work*, but which escape and exceed individuals themselves. And this usage and this working of codes is at the same time their transformation, but a transformation that (for instance, in the case of the evolution of language) occurs outside the realm of, and at a pace generally imper-ceptible to, blind to (but in *this* case because the pace is too *slow*), human consciousness and understanding. But concern with the *conditions* of the transmission of codes is precisely what is required to escape the Freudian aporia, for unless there is an under-standing of the origin of codes themselves, how can one begin to understand how the psychic unconscious can be *affected* by a cultural unconscious, or how biological autom-atisms can begin to interact with and circulate among cultural automatisms?

That this exceeds the scope of Laplanche's concerns, but in such a way that it risks thrusting Laplanche back into the very paradox from which he wishes to escape, can be indicated by a brief reading of an earlier text on the same question, co-authored by Laplanche and Pontalis. In "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality" the two authors note that Freud, asking himself whether there is in human beings something equivalent to animal "instinct", found it not in the drives but in "primal fantasies" (or phantasms) (Laplanche, Pontalis 1968: 14). Laplanche and Pontalis take this as evidence of Freud's desire to avoid biological explanation (from which he never fully escapes), because it demonstrates that for Freud fantasy, as the more primordial concept, cannot be derived from the drives, nor constitute their representation. Instead, they argue, fantasy begins with auto-erotism, where it is crucial to remember, contrary to common misunderstand-ing, that auto-erotism is not some world "enclosed within itself" (16) and prior to any objecthood which the infant must learn to leave in order to enter the world of reality

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highlights the need to reflect on what it means "when it deteriorates, when it is no longer communication. This what is called, in psychology, the jam, an American word. It is the first time that confusion as such – this tendency there is in communication to cease being a communication, that is to say, of no longer communicating anything at all – appears as a fundamental concept" (Lacan 1988: 83). In this same session, Lacan reflects on the way the source of our images lies in machines in general and the adding machine in particular. He argues that "the unconscious is the discourse of the other", and that this must be understood not as some abstract other but rather as "the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated" (89), and on this basis he reaches a crucial conclusion: "The human being himself is in part outside life, he partakes of the death instinct. Only from there can he engage in the register of life" (90). How all these elements can be composed is precisely the question of how, for us, life is constituted on the basis of something that is dead, as we shall see. But Lacan is explicit: what Hegel could not think was the coming of the steam engine, and how Freud differs from Hegel is in terms of the question of *energy*, a question that arises, he says, thanks to "the advent of the world of the machine" (74).

(and its principle): on the contrary, the drive *becomes* auto-erotic only *after* the loss of the object (the breast), and the world of auto-erotism is the one the infant *makes*, that is, *fantasises*. The infant makes in fantasy what it no longer has in actuality, in a process of the *disengagement* of sexuality from its object, which they also describe as the opening of the "disjunction of sexuality and need" (16). In this way we can see how the opening of the (human) drives is *conditional* upon an opening of fantasy that also amounts to a breaking away from homoestatic, finite needs, an opening of the sexual drives the binding of which will then constitute human desire insofar as it is no longer *just* sexual.

But as Laplanche and Pontalis conclude, in breaking away into fantasy the infant does not thereby make fantasy into the *object* of the drives. When it comes to desire, fantasy is not the object "but the setting", and the individual does not pursue an object in fantasy, or even the sign of an object, but "appears caught up himself in the sequence of images" (17). Fantasy is in this way the opening up of a world within which one wanders about from image to image, so to speak, images which need no longer be only sexual and which are progressively discovered, that is, *fashioned*, *screened*, with which one can become so entangled as to be threatened with "turning against oneself" (17), that is, at risk of becoming homeostatically neglectful, unregulated, ungoverned and blinded to the world by one's own projections. It is for this reason that the drives must be bound to objects, that is, reconnected through *prohibition* to objects of desire that amount to a homeostatic reorientation or transformation, a governance no longer based on the finitude of need but the infinitude of desire. But just as Laplanche in 1992 did not address the code itself, and so could not say how there can be something like a code in the first place, and therefore could not address how there can be something like an individual who *comes to know* the code, that is, affected by it traumatically, so too Laplanche and Pontalis already recognized, but avoided answering, the question of how, if fantasy arises from the loss of an originary object, fantasy *takes shape*, what determines its contours. "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality" concludes with the following lines:

> But as for knowing who is responsible for the setting, it is not enough for the psychoanalyst to rely on the resources of his science, nor on the support of myth. He must also become a philosopher. (17)

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On the one hand, we have the question of the origin of codes. On the other hand, we have the question of the origin of the "setting" consisting of "sequences of images" that is fantasy. These amount to the question of the historicity of knowledge and the question of the historicity of aesthetics, and we can conclude: there is no libido without aesthetics, and there is no libido without knowledge; yet, there can have been no aesthetics or knowledge without desire.

In relation to the co-compositional historicity of libido and aesthetics, Stiegler draws attention to the way that Freud affirms that we learn the meaning of dream symbols, that is, the images of fantasy, from myths, fairy-tales, folklore, and from jokes, colloquialisms, and so on, that is, from an unconscious that even in Freud, as Pontalis admits, must be related "to a trans-individual reality" (Pontalis, cited in Stiegler 1996: 109). And yet, as Stiegler notes, Freud ultimately does not adequately distinguish the questions of inheritance as heredity and inheritance as heritage, even though this distinction "is crucial to the fact that it is also a matter of *contents*, not only of *drives*" (Stiegler 1996: 108).

Ultimately, looking towards the historicity of language and culture is not enough to resolve the question of the relation between (image) contents and drives: if the origin of repression is identified in the conquest of the upright stance, and if in this repression of the olfactory organ we can see the beginning of the defunctionalization and refunctionalization of the senses through which desire and aesthetics are constituted in relation to a libidinal economy as such (Stiegler 2011a: 153–4), nevertheless only if we also identify the connection between this conquest and the origin of technicity can we resolve the relation between image and drive, because the evolution of the prostheticity of the human being is precisely the evolution of the possibility of *realizing images*, which also crystallizes these images and, indeed, the *idea* of the image, and the image of the idea, itself. Laplanche's question, delegated to the philosopher, about "who" is responsible for the "setting" in which desire plays out through images, is for Stiegler inseparable from the "what", precisely because the "who" and the "what", which really name the *processes* of hominization and technicization, wherein "*techno*genesis is *anthropo*genesis *qua* the opening of ecstatic temporality" (Stiegler 1996: 110), are themselves inextricably intertwined at both an evolutionary and a psychic level.

In relation to the co-compositional historicity of libido and knowledge, Stiegler draws attention to the way that the Freudian aporia (how can something affect me traumatically unless I can already recognize it, which means it was expected, which means the contents that it delivers to me must already be known?) mirrors the aporia of Meno, according to which it is impossible to look for what you do not already know, precisely because you would not be able to recognize it and would not know you if you had found it. For Socrates, as we remember (even though we were not there), the answer was that we *do* already know, and hence that all knowledge is in fact re-collection, and for Socrates, as for Freud, the mode of discovering this is through the dream-like language of myth. But again, for us it is only by considering the prostheticity of knowledge that this aporia can be resolved: if knowledge is indeed memory, it is because all those cultural artifacts, including the language of myth, are indeed *artifacts*, supported by milieus that are always technical and material. Hence the signifier, however enigmatic it may be for the infant, "functions as an *organon* which is not a living organism, an organism of experience, but one that is 'dead'" (109). And this is in fact ultimately *why* it is enigmatic:

because in its being entwined with what is not living, with the inanimate, with the past that came before mine, there is always something dark and ghostlike, something we cannot see, contained within what it says, yet which is the sole basis on which it *can* say what it contains.

This darkness within knowledge lies in the fact that there is always some kind of association with the dead: there is an opacity of the dead material through which alone we can know, something in the object that always escapes the subject, and amounts as well to the possibility of killing knowledge, or of making it inaccessible, or again the possibility for it to fail. All of that trans-individual reality of the unconscious that Pontalis identifies by reading Freud, all of those enigmatic signifiers that according to Laplanche derive from the fact that the code escapes adults themselves, all of these linguistic and cultural enigmas, which we ordinarily do not notice, that is, whose knowledge is ordinarily not recognized – all this stems from the fact that these cultural and linguistic automatisms are also, and essentially, technical automatisms. And the first sign of this is perhaps that Heidegger's analysis of the tool applies equally well in these "cultural" instances: it is when they fail that we do notice them, and hence this is when they open up the possibility of a new experience of knowledge or aesthetics. When we go to another country and are unsure what greeting to give, for example, a handshake or a kiss or something other, and when we make the wrong decision, we experience the trauma of the collapse and exposure of an automatism, which opens the possibility for something new, for an-other autonomy. Hence even for Heidegger *tekhne*, ultimately, means knowing, where this is not reducible to technology or art, but where it must be understood by *us* as implying the irreducible co-involvement of knowledge, technics and aesthetics, because knowing is understood as a kind of *seeing* that looks out past mere information, and as what puts Being to work, to speak the language of Heidegger, including (and perhaps especially) in the work of art (Heidegger 2000: 169–70). This is why, for example, Stanley Cavell could refer to "the work art does" forging the pathway of philosophers to their philosophy, referring specifically to the relationship of Hölderlin to Heidegger, among others (Cavell 2005: 61). In this work of looking out beyond, knowledge is always also a question of desire, as Plato said.

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Lacan argues that Freud's great insight occurred when he ceased thinking of the brain physiologically, as a "homeostat organ" governing the relation between the individual and reality, the inside and the outside, and instead understood the brain psychologically, as a "dream machine" operating through the composition of the symbolic and the energetic (Lacan 1988: 76). But Freud's problem of locating the origin of trauma stems from the fact that he *never* stopped seeing psychic trauma in terms of an analogy with physi-

cal trauma, as the action of a force strong enough to break through the psychic barrier and flood conscious and unconscious experience with sensations too intense to quickly master. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, for example:

> We describe as "traumatic" any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise effica-cious barrier against stimuli. [...] There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead—the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of. (Freud 1920: 29–30)

Thinking in terms of a physical and spatial metaphor, Freud gets caught up in trying to explain the source of this intensity: if it is not *physically* traumatic, then it must be *semantically* traumatic, so to speak, a problem that immediately raises the problem of the relationship between "primal fantasy" and "contents". I have previously discussed this problem in another text, and therefore will not return to it in detail here: in short, what Freud lacks in this instance is Husserl's account of temporality, which he thinks on the basis of the temporal object. Avoiding such spatial metaphors is made possible for Stiegler ultimately because, unlike Freud, he possesses the Husserlian apparatus with which to describe the way in which the experience of the present moment is already a temporal process involving the interaction of past, present and future (Ross 2007: 235).

What Husserl makes clear is how the present moment is always already *produced* (in the cinematic sense) by consciousness (in the phenomenological rather than psychoana-lytic sense), produced on the basis of previous present experience that has become past, and on the basis of anticipations arising from that experience (to give a very simple example: I listen to a song I have heard before, and as I listen to each note I already anticipate the following note, and hence I hear the present note "in the direction of" the next note, the next phrase, and so on). Hence Husserl refers not to the "present moment" at all, but to "primary retention" (where secondary retention is past memory that is called up in present experience and determines it) (Husserl 1991).

From this account, Stiegler can construct an understanding of trauma based not on spatial metaphors but on the temporality of expectation. Traumatic experience is not a question of breaking through a (psychic, but somehow spatial) barrier (that could only be a "homeostat organ"), but a question of how *any* new primary retention either tends to conform to the existing psychic arrangement of secondary retentions, or tends to disrupt such arrangements. Whereas *stereotypical* primary retentions tend to reinforce existing expectations, and hence to *insert* themselves into existing arrangements, and so to strengthen the synchronic character of experience, *traumatypical* primary retentions run counter to expectations, and act diachronically: this is the rising of an experience of

significance from out of the general becoming-insignificant into which most perception sinks. But this experience of significance cannot be simply an experience of the unexpected, as Stiegler says:

> Now, the organism cannot be affected by an exterior traumatism except when it is expected, except when, being protentially charged, it is touchable, affectable by this exterior traumatism that is already within it, and that is thus not totally exterior. Otherwise, either it would not be affected by it, or it would be simply destroyed. (Stiegler n.d.)

A traumatypical primary retention is partly expected and partly unexpected. And this means: it is on the one hand unexpected, and hence disruptive of psychic arrangements; and yet on the other hand it is *recognizable*, not because it is consciously expected but rather because it conforms to a *repressed* expectation. Hence we can refer not just to primary retentions and protentions as stereotypical or traumatypical, but to secondary retentions and protentions, that is, to psychic contents and images.

Whereas stereotypical retentions and protentions support my "identity", that is, my synchrony, traumatypical retentions and protentions are those repressed memories and expectations that form the basis of the possibility of my diachrony, an experience of significance inaugurating my individuation. A traumatic experience is in this sense one that succeeds in freeing the potential contained in my traumatypical retentions and protentions, initiating a change in the organization of my psychic apparatus, which is to say, precisely, in the way in which, for me, the stereotypical and the traumatypical compose (Ross 2007: 237).

This protentional charge capable of unleashing a diachronic potential thus amounts to an energy capable of opening or reopening libidinal circuits, an energy contained in *images* that are not stereotypes but *traumatypes*. It is for this reason that I recently proposed that Stiegler's stereotypes and traumatypes could also be called *entropes* and *negentropes*: an entrope would be a protentional image that tends to reinforce and rigidify existing libidinal circuits in a conservative, entropic way, whereas a negentrope rearranges circuits and opens new circuits in a complexifying, negentropic way (Ross 2015).

But by composing the Husserlian account of primary and secondary retention with the Freudian account of the genesis of psychic trauma, have we really escaped the aporia of Meno: what is the original source of the repression of the repressed expectation? Only if we add to this account that secondary retention is itself overdetermined by tertiary retention, that is, by all the artifacts and mnemotechnics that support the finitude of human memory, can we begin to think primal fantasies and enigmatic signifiers in terms of heritage rather than heredity. We must say, *with* Freud, that if the repressed is not the expected, but rather the repression of the expected, it is because, as protentional, the repressed is still a question of *desire*, and precisely of *unconscious* desire. But Stiegler

asks: *where is* the unconscious? And, *contra* Freud, he answers: it is a network, not a biological apparatus but a retentional apparatus:

> it is a retentional apparatus, one part of which is living (the brain), but this part is, however, nothing without the dead part – which Lacan names the name of the father, killed by the knife of the primal horde risen up against him, so that he may then return as a spirit. (Stiegler n.d.)

For the philosopher, the source of the "setting" of fantasy and repression, of the theatre of desire, which is also the theatre of individuation, lies precisely in this retentional network, and in this arrangement of the living and the dead, operating between the psychic, the collective and the technical.

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If, as the playwright Jean Genet believed, fascism is theatre, then we immediately want to add: yes, but only as a theatre of disindividuation. Susan Sontag noted the link between fascism and sadomasochism, describing the latter as a "sexual theater, a staging of sexuality" (Sontag 1981: 103). The "perennial Englishman in a brothel being whipped" is "paying a whore to act out a piece of theatre with him, to reenact or reevoke the past" that for him possesses "a huge reserve of sexual energy" (104). And she immediately tied this to the germ of regression inherent to civilization, and to consumerism:

> Sadomasochism is to sex what war is to civil life: the magnificent experience. [...] To be 'nice', as to be civilized, means being alienated from [...] savage experience – which is entirely staged. [...] The rituals of domination and enslavement being more and more practiced, the art that is more and more devoted to rendering their themes, are perhaps only a logical extension of an affluent society's tendency to turn every part of people's lives into a taste, a choice; to invite them to regard their very lives as a (life) style. [...] But once sex becomes a taste, it is perhaps already on its way to becoming a self-conscious form of theater. (103–5)

Sontag was describing a pornographization that arises in response to the hyper-synchronization of contemporary life that in turn gives rise to a yearning for the diachronic, that is, for traumatypical imagery that gives again, for a while, the feeling of existing. One thinks as well of the Czechoslovakian film, *The Cremator* (Herz 1969), in which the minor satisfactions of the petit bourgeois life of the protagonist, essentially familial and a compensatory and predictable monthly visit to a local brothel, come increasingly to be seen as dissatisfactions as he falls under the influence of the ideology of National Socialism, which promises a new magnificent experience, both militarily and

sexually (in what seems less a brothel, exactly, than a kind of sex club), drawing the regressive germ represented by his thanatological desires back towards the drives, and "conformistly" so.

And one thinks as well of Syberberg's *Hitler* (Syberberg 1978), and its thesis that for Hitler war, and the Third Reich, *was cinema*, or rather, a cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk* played out proto-tele-visually in the form of movie newsreels, materializing a pre-vision coming not just from Hitler's ungoverned brain, but as *a film from Germany* itself. Syberberg reverses the notion of a theatricalization of sex that would mirror the relationship of war to civil life: in *Hitler*, Hitler's film projectionist argues that it is not that Gröfaz [*Größter Feldherr aller Zeiten*] was the greatest general of all time; what he was, in fact, was the greatest filmmaker. What war is to civil life would then be the effect of a staging of existence that today would be, not its theatricalization, but its cinematization.

Syberberg's exploration of Hitlerian cinema is a response to Germany's alleged inability to mourn the loss of its own culture, and hence its blindness to the narrowed gaze resulting from the replacement of a cultural milieu with consumerist nihilism: as Sontag says, "what Syberberg loathes most, […] pornography and the commercialization of culture" (Sontag 1981: 161). As a work of mourning, Syberberg's is no doubt open to the charge of nostalgia (and yet, we should not be too quick to think we know what that means, Sontag noting that "for all his attraction to the credo of romantic genius, what he really believes in is Goethe and a thorough Gymnasium education" [162]). Nevertheless, he does anything but simply recreate the cinematic forms of the past in order to "reenact or reevoke the past" (104). Rather, he invents new cinematic means, with new cinematic instruments.

Sontag notes that in his quest for the complete work of art, Wagner invented the invisible orchestra and that he once quipped that he "wished he could invent the invisible stage", that is, a setting in which events could be "restaged in the ideal theater of the mind […], withdrawn from reality" (157–8). She credits Syberberg with the insight that the realization of this possibility lies not in theatre or opera but in cinema, and that the confrontation with Nazism makes it an absolute necessity, since to choose *either* to simulate it as fiction *or* to document it as reality, to make a "display of atrocity in the form of photographic evidence", is to risk being "tacitly pornographic" (139). Hence:

> He construes cinema as a kind of ideal mental activity, being both sensuous and reflective, which takes up where reality leaves off: cinema not as the fabrication of reality but as "a continuation of reality by other means". In Syberberg's meditation on history in a sound studio, events are visualized […] while remaining in a deeper sense invisible. (158)

About this we would say only two things: everything hangs on the balance of understanding between the two senses of the word "fabrication"; and, rather than "reality", we would prefer "life".

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Just as there is no perception of an instant, but only the "large now" of primary reten-tion, so too no camera is truly "instamatic": every photograph that seems to depict a frozen "snapshot" is an illusion concealing the passage of time that was required, how-ever brief it may have been, for a frame of celluloid or an image sensor to chemically or digitally register and record the light that touches it. A little over a century ago, it was discovered that this illusion of the instantaneous could be combined with another illusion, the optical automatism that is the persistence of vision: by correctly timing the projection of a sequence of such technologically-created instants, it is possible to create so-called motion pictures. This combination of technical and biological illusions and automatisms was soon found to possess an uncanny potential to synchronize the rhythms of conscious *and unconscious* perception with the rhythms of the projector, and thereby to provide the setting, and co-ordinate the *settings*, of desire itself, at the level of the individual and at the level of the "mass", whether the mass market or the Nurember-gian crowd. Hence the twentieth century became the century both of the mass and of the cinema, and hence in Syberberg's film, Hitler's projectionist claims that "there is only one future, the future of the cinema", and that "the man who controls the cinema con-trols the future". But in the twenty-first century, does this pronouncement seem presci-ent or obsolete?

If cinema was, in the twentieth century, a pursuit and continuation of life by means other than life through which the twentieth century itself was fabricated, then *contem-porary* life has become that of pure pornography, and remains that of television, and threatens to continue to be so, if at least we believe Hossein Derakhshan when he argues that the age of Facebook, which is not exactly the age of the internet, should be under-stood as fundamentally characterized by what he calls the Stream, the (now algorithmic) network *as* television (Derakhshan 2015). The screens that are the interfaces of this new television are increasingly not just visual but touchable, and they continue to make everything, *everything*, more and more visible, and, more and more, to view *us*. And yet, in this now-achieved "conquest of ubiquity" (Valéry 1964: 226), the ubiquitous screen "disappears", woven "into the fabric of everyday life" (Weiser 1991: 94): screens with-draw from perceptibility as they become the very milieu we live *within* (Ross 2015; Stiegler 2015b). *Everything*: not on film, but onscreen.

This new touchability threatens to no longer touch *us*, and the risk becomes that we are no longer "touchable, affectable by this exterior traumatism" that is the encounter with the living-dead images of the tele-visual-porno-graphic, pre-visionary screen, and that, no matter how seemingly traumatic or affecting the images we are shown, we will find ourselves both impotent and powerless, either "not [...] affected by it, or [...] simply destroyed" (Stiegler n.d.). This mortified untouchability *is* the threat of a *screen of fas-cism*, the contemporary question of the death drive as the danger of finding ourselves

overtaken in advance and consumed by a regressive cinema of entropes, whose algorithms *look at us* with an ever-narrowing gaze. For Susan Sontag, thirty-five years ago, the cinema of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg functioned as a warning sign, but it already did so in the mode of deferred significance, of *Nachträglichkeit*, less in the form of a pre-vision than of a post-mortem:

> For whatever Syberberg says, cinema is now another lost paradise. In the era of cinema's unprecedented mediocrity, his masterpiece has something of the character of a posthumous event. (Sontag 1981: 163)

Stiegler, too, sees the regression of the cinematic milieu, and the mortiferous character of the destruction of cinematic power:

> By constantly reinforcing these stereotypes, and by taking them to the extreme, the consumerist capitalist economy, which is initially cinematic and then becomes televisual, in the end destroys the libido, which decomposes into the drives. This proves deadly for the power of cinema to dream: aside from some very remarkable exceptions, cinematic dreams become drive-based nightmares, i.e., horror movies. (Stiegler 2013)

Horror movies: the dream machine at the heart both of the theatre of fascism and the cinema of Hitler, and now of today's nightmare factory. At the same time, it is Stiegler himself who reminds us of Valéry's observation, immediately after the First World War (in 1919), about a crisis of spirit, but one in which "so many horrors could not have been possible without so many virtues" (Valéry 1989: 24, translation modified; cited in Stiegler 2015a: 155). And we might also consider it our knowledge and duty to recall, however suspect these may have become, Heidegger's question precisely thirty years later, after the Second World War: "If the oblivion of Being that has been described here should be our situation, would there not be occasion enough for a thinking that recalls Being to experience a genuine horror?" (Heidegger 1998: 281).

We might see this as a call for a work of art capable of putting what Heidegger called Being to work in such a way as to expose the horror that is so close to us as to be almost imperceptible. Nietzsche argued that "the high points of culture and civilization do not coincide", that there is even an "abysmal antagonism" between them (Nietzsche 1968: 75), and also that a new code, fashioning new facts into a new law, is possible only on the basis of the "profound instinct that only automatism makes possible perfection in life and creation" (44). Today, then, when civilization seems to be "sinking into a new kind of barbarism" (Horkheimer & Adorno: xiv), and if it truly is a matter of "criticizing television *through cinema*" (Stiegler 2014: 93), what we need may well be a new, civilized, cinematic culture that *knows how* to take advantage of new digital automatisms in order to foster some new cinematic rationality, to educate a new eye and hence make

possible a new enlightenment. But this means that what we *also* require is, in our blindness to the light and in the darkness of our automatisms, to be touched, so that, affected, we might yet begin to think, which is to say, to become autonomous, and through that begin to see the malaise of what may no longer be a cinematic time (but this is far from certain). And so we need a new stage (in both senses), a new set providing a new setting through which desire could be *reset*. This would be a cinema of negentropes that could only be, not a horror movie exactly but, rather, a cinema *of* horror. To screen our nightmares so that we might no longer need to screen our nightmares: a tragic dream, perhaps, but also work to be done.

> But how shall one, how shall I, how shall we, who am I, who are we, who acts us, and for whom are we acting and what for? What remains? Everything again, all together, the remnants of a lost culture and of a lost life, of our Europe before its collapse. A farewell to the Occident. Sub specie aeternitatis and everything on film: our new chance. The story of the death of the old lights from which we lived, and our culture a distant song, an artificial light now in the black inside of our film fantasies before our inner eye, the echo of music in our ear, growing more and more distant. (Syberberg 1978)

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