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‘THIS SYSTEM DOES NOT PRODUCE PLEASURE ANYMORE’

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD STIEGLER

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Although the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler (1952) is still largely unknown in the Netherlands, he is without doubt one of the most important continental thinkers of today. His voluminous and rapidly expanding oeuvre is gaining increased attention within academia and his three volume magnum opus *Technics and Time* has become available recently in English and German translations. The central idea guiding his work is that the human being is marked by an ‘originary absence of origin’ [*défaut d’origine*], a fundamental lack of qualities that makes him into an accidental being originally in need of technical prostheses and therefore fundamentally constituted and conditioned by technics. For Stiegler, humanity is co-extensive with technics.

Stiegler is in many respects a fairly traditional continental philosopher, a heir to Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida and deeply affiliated with the traditions of phenomenology, psychoanalysis and deconstruction. The originality of his work resides first of all in a Heideggerian-like rethinking of the entire Western philosophical tradition on the basis of its systematically forgotten *technical* condition. Whereas Heidegger criticized metaphysics for its forgetfulness of being, Stiegler charges philosophy, including Heidegger himself, with forgetting its technical condition of possibility and that means its irretrievable accidentality.

One the other hand, however, Stiegler’s philosophical enterprise can also be seen as a continuation of the project of critical theory, of its social critique, its critique of political economy and its critique of the culture industry. This can be identified as the ‘Marxist’ strand of his work. Most remarkably, it is on the basis of his techno-critical project that Stiegler provides a sociopolitical critique of contemporary capitalist and postmodern society. This society suffers from what he calls a state of *generalized proletarianization*.

Proletarianization, Stiegler argues with Gilbert Simondon and Karl Marx, consists essentially in the loss of knowledge and know-how (*savoir-faire*) in individuals and collectives. Whereas nineteenth-century capitalism proletarianized workers by delegating their knowledge and know-how to machines, reducing them to labor power, twentieth-century capitalism has proletarianized consumers by depriving them of their own ways of life and massively replacing them with preformatted and standardized ‘lifestyles’ fabricated and marketed on a worldwide scale by global corporations exclusively driven by profit. In today’s service economies, consumers are ‘discharged’ of the burden as well as the responsibility of shaping their own lives and are reduced to units of buying power controlled by marketing techniques. They have lost their ‘knowledge-how-to-live’ (*savoir-vivre*) and become ultimately deprived of the joy of life (*joie de vivre*). The much-heard slogan that our contemporary societies are ‘knowledge societies’ is a patent lie, according to Stiegler. In fact, today’s cognitive capitalism implies the systematic destruction of knowledge and the knowing subject.

The phenomenon of proletarianization, that is put on the agenda of philosophical reflection again by Stiegler, is not something that came up first with the Industrial Revolution. In fact, it forms a constant threat to the human as a being that continuously evolves through processes of technical exteriorization that must necessarily be accompanied by processes of interiorization and appropriation of technical prostheses and procedures. This is particularly true since the exteriorization of memory and cognition in so-called mnemotechnologies like writing and printing. What is characteristic of our contemporary age, according to Stiegler, is the systematic *industrialization* of human memory and cognition through digi-

tal technologies, a process with dramatic implications for individual human psyches as well as collectives. In our hyperindustrial societies, even the life of the mind is thoroughly technicized and industrialized and this happens in the context of an increasingly totalitarian capitalism.

It is the systematic annexation of the new technical milieus of the mind (first of all the network of digital information and communication technologies: Internet) by capitalism that is the principal cause of the cognitive and emotional proletarianization that affects all strata of contemporary society. Capitalism today exploits the mnemotechnical milieu for capturing the attention and desires of populations for the purpose of promoting consumption and creating consumer subjects. This phenomenon is called *psychopower* by Stiegler, in analogy to Michel Foucault's notion of biopower. Its ultimate result is the destruction of the libido and with it the sublimatory capacities of humanity, which lie at the basis of every civilization. Today's cognitive and consumer capitalism is first of all a capitalism focused on the control of libidinal energy – of consumers and employees as well as financiers. Criticizing it presupposes the development of a critique of libidinal economy.

In this interview, Stiegler talks about today's processes of proletarianization and addresses some of the pernicious consequences of capital's exploitation of the technical milieu of the mind, among them the many psychopathologies and addictive behavior patterns that agonize ever more people, especially since the rise of the purely speculative, short-term based finance capitalism invented by the neoliberals and the neoconservatives. By subjecting technological innovation completely to the logic of the market, the so called 'conservative revolution' led by Thatcher and Reagan has engendered a cultural and spiritual regression of unprecedented magnitude, transforming the whole of society into a machine for profit maximization and creating a state of 'systemic carelessness' and 'systemic stupidity' on a global scale.

Notwithstanding his rather bleak diagnosis of contemporary society, Stiegler is not pessimistic with regard to the future. Whereas today's capitalism is headed for destruction, it is precisely in the digitalized networks through which it tries to control the populations that a new kind of

economy is emerging, one that is not only inventing new modes of production like open source and peer-to-peer, but that is also slowly creating a new economy of desire that could lead to the invention of new ways of life, new modes of individual and collective existence. A new society could arise on the same technological base that is now still predominantly destroying the social bonds. The digital networks might be the prime catalysts in the transformation from today's consumer society into what he calls a 'society of contribution'. In this context he talks in this interview about technologies in terms of *pharmaka* (a term derived from Plato and from his teacher Derrida) that can act both as a poison, destroying sociality and proletarianizing human existence, as well as a medicine, producing social ties and deproletarianizing human existence.

'My books want to *serve struggles* [*servir des luttes*]', Stiegler writes in one of his prefaces. The struggles he refers to are struggles in the context of a 'battle for the mind', a battle in which the forces of a capitalism that has become nihilistic stand opposed to a humanity that needs to develop a new, global consciousness and collectivity in order to challenge the global multicrisis that is closing in upon it. Philosophy, according to Stiegler, should engage itself in the global struggle for the mind against a capitalist system that is systematically degrading and brutalizing human existence, destroying desire, intelligence and the *joie de vivre*. And philosophers should focus their attention on the digital network technologies, which are still predominantly factors of the erosion of consciousness and sociality but which could – and should – become a new technical milieu for the life of the mind, for a renewed spiritual and intellectual culture (in Stiegler's terms: a libidinal economy). With this enormous task in mind, Stiegler and some colleagues have established *Ars Industrialis*, an international association for the promotion of an industrial politics of spirit, based in Paris. Existing since 2005, it organizes conferences, debates, seminars and international meetings and it has published two manifestos and two books as well.¹

BS: Bernard Stiegler

PL: Pieter Lemmens

PL: *Let's start with your general position within the larger field of philosophy of technology, notwithstanding the fact that you don't consider yourself a philosopher of technology in the strict sense of the term. In the philosophy of technology one distinguishes roughly between two opposing views about the relationship between technology and society: on the one hand technological determinism, the thesis that it is technology and technological change which determines the structure of society and/or culture, and on the other hand social or cultural determinism, the thesis that it is society and/or culture that determines the shape and character of technologies and technological change. This last view, which is held by the many Latour- and Callon-inspired social-constructivists in the Netherlands, is also referred to as the 'social shaping of technology' thesis. The first view is held for instance by Jacques Ellul but is also attributed sometimes to Marx.*

Another broad opposition is that between the so-called autonomy theory of technology (also known as technological substantivism), and the instrumentalist view of technology. The first holds to the idea that technology and technological change have a logic of their own and are outside of human control and decision, the second claims that technology is a neutral means used by autonomously acting human beings for a variety of ends, to which technologies are indifferent. This view is also sometimes referred to as the humanist view. Substantivism is most often associated with Heidegger and Ellul, whereas liberal conceptions of technology are generally perceived as being instrumental and typically subscribing to social and/or economic determinism. How would you characterize your view with respect to these two schematic oppositions?

BS: Well, in fact my principal sources here are André Leroi-Gourhan, a paleoanthropologist, Gilbert Simondon, a philosopher of technology and Bertrand Gille, a historian of technology. My point of view is that the separation between the human and technics, and between society and technics or the technical system is completely artificial.

It is important to understand that technology is a *process*, an evolutionary process. What *is* technics, or technology, or technicity? It is a new *form of life*. A very specific form of life, for until the onset of anthropo-

genesis, forms of life were transformed exclusively through a *genetic* process of transformation, that is to say through sexual differentiation and the relationship between sexualized organisms, which is the case for plants and animals. But about three million years ago there occurred a fundamental change in this process of transformation within the human species, due to the appearance of a new system of inheritance based not on the transmission of genes but of technical artefacts. So with respect to anthropogenesis, we are not talking about a Darwinist situation anymore. But neither is it a Lamarckist situation. It is something completely different, due to this apparition of a *third memory*².

Now to answer your question, it is completely artificial to ask, what is the relationship of the human to technics? Because the human *is* technics. Humanity cannot even be understood without technics. Take the example of the ant in the anthill. It is impossible to understand the ant without the anthill. If you don't *see it within* the anthill, it is impossible to understand it. And you need to consider the relationship with the other ants as well, because it is a social animal. And it is the same when you have, for example, a savage child which has not learned to speak and to walk, etcetera. Such a child is not really human. It is a *potentiality* of humanity, but it's not human. It is a very strange being between animality and humanity. So, it is artificial to ask, for example, what is determining human life: is it the psychic apparatus of the individual, is it the social organization or is it the technical organization? It is completely artificial because you don't have a psychic individual without a society, and you don't have a society without technics.

PL: *Ok, but you also claim that there is a primacy of technology.*

BS: It is not exactly a primacy. It must be understood as a 'disadjustment' [*desajustement*] between the social system and the technical system, because you are in a process. What is a process? It is a dynamic system. You don't have a process without a dynamic system. And in a dynamic system you have phases, and when you have a phase, you always have a counter phase. That is necessary. If not, then you don't have a dynamic system. Now, it is true that technics is always in excess with respect to the society in which it appears. This is the reason I said that technics is always *phar-*

macological. It is always a *pharmakon*, because it is always creating a disequilibrium in the society in which it is developed and by which it is developed.

PL: *And the creation of this disequilibrium, is that what you call the poisoning character of the pharmakon? Could you elaborate upon this notion of the pharmakon, which has become one of the key concepts of your work, and could you explain what you mean with the pharmacological nature of technology?*

BS: The pharmacological nature of technology means both its poisoning and its curative character. It is *both* poisoning and curing. At its first appearance, however, it is poisoning. It *becomes* curative when you have what I call the second moment of epochality of technics, *le redoublement epochale* [the process of appropriation of a new technical system by society and the development of new modes of psychic and collective individuation based on this technical system; PL]. So, the problem of disadjustment is what was called by Shakespeare ‘the time is out of joint’. What is creating this being out of joint? That is the question. And my answer is: the process of *technical exteriorization*.

For instance: at this very moment I am exteriorizing myself. Speaking with you, I am exteriorizing myself. And that means: I am technicizing myself. If I talk with you, I create new words. I very much like to create new words [laughter]. A word is also a new technical object. The opposition between technics and speech for me is completely artificial.

Now, for a human being, to live is to individuate oneself. How am I individuating myself? By exteriorizing myself. And in the same way, I am interiorizing myself, because when I speak to you, I am listening to what I say, so I interiorize myself. Now this process of exteriorization-interiorization is the originary process of psychic and social individuation. So you can see very clearly that at the beginning of psychic activity you always already have technics, i.e., technical individuation. Now, you might not be a professional speaker, like me, but you might for instance produce flint stones. Suppose you are a prehistoric man and you are producing stone tools. It is exactly the same thing. That is what I try to describe in my first book

Technics and Time. The Fault of Epimetheus. When pre-historic man is producing flint stones, thereby exteriorizing his experience, he is in fact transforming his brain, his psyche.

PL: *So the stone is reflecting what he has exteriorized back to himself, acting like a kind of idea or a model?*

BS: Yes, *and* it is a concept. In paleoanthropology we call that a concept, precisely. Because we say: there is a *concept* of the flint stone. Now your question was technological determinism or not. Well, there is no technological determinism. What there is is a technological *condition*. There is a conditional situation in which you have what I call a *general organology*: there are always three terms involved in the transformation of the human, which are the psychic, the technical and the social. And you have a *tendency* of the technics to change always beyond the barriers, beyond the limits of the social group.

This has always been the case. When you read for example what was written by Leroi-Gourhan about the Amer-Indian people when they use, for example, a racket for clearing snow. He talks about the ‘technical group’, because in a small tribe like the Amer-Indian people you have a small group within the larger group, which is the group of technicians. And he writes that the technicians of this group of Indians tend to make connections with other technicians of other groups, to create new techniques together, which then disturb and sometimes even destroy their own groups. So they have a problem of disequilibrium. And then the society produces an *immune system* as response, in the sense of a *countertendency*. But whether the countertendency is after it or before it, is not the right question. You *have* the tendency at the very moment *when* you have the countertendency. Because, as Nietzsche said, you cannot have a force without a counterforce. So it is absolutely not interesting to ask: where is the beginning, what is the first moment? There is no first moment.

PL: *So there is no determinism by either society or technics...*

BS: Indeed. And here Gilbert Simondon is extremely fruitful, because he furnished a very interesting concept which is the ‘pre-individual’. In the pre-individual, you don’t have the separation between the technical, the psychic and the social. But this argument also appears in Aristotle. When he said – I think at the beginning of *Peri psycheos*, or *De Anima* – that a dialectician separates form and matter, but that it’s in fact impossible to separate them in reality, he saw this already. So I think it is an artefact to try to find the causal origin. We must think from the very first beginning in terms of a dynamic system, in which you have phases, and what is important – but very *difficult* – is to describe the *relationships* between the different instances of the phases.

PL: *That is what you intend with a general organology?*

BS: Yes, and it is very difficult to describe, because it is always changing.

PL: *Ok, thank you. I would like to ask you now about the relationship between the process of technical exteriorization and what you call proletarianization in your latest books. I find that a very interesting concept, as well as the opposing concept of deproletarianization. You kind of rehabilitate this originally Marxian concept. Our postmodern societies, you claim, are characterized by a state of generalized proletarianization and so the most important political and cultural project of the future will be a process of deproletarianization. In this respect you refer to phenomena like Open Source and Free Software as prefigurations of this process.*

Now, returning to the relationship of proletarianization with the process of technical exteriorization: in your diagnosis something goes wrong today with the ‘adjustment’ [ajustement] of society to technological change, that is to say with the societal appropriation of technological innovations. First of all, probably, because innovation is speeding up every day, second, because it is completely dominated and exploited by capitalism, by the economic system. Can you explain that a bit? What is really causing this chronic disadjustment and disorientation? Is it capital (capitalism), or is it technics? In short, can you elaborate a bit upon the connection between technical exteriorization and proletarianization, and that in relationship to capitalism and the current disorientation?

BS: Firstly, the process of proletarianization didn’t begin with the Industrial Revolution. That is the reason why I try to show that the first thinker of proletarianization is in fact Plato. More strongly even, the process of proletarianization marks the beginning of humankind. Because, what is proletarianization? It is first of all the *exteriorization* of knowledge in technics. It begins *with* technics. Now the problem is, what is the gain of the process of exteriorization for humanity? Is it creating heteronomy or autonomy? For example: if you are using a technique which is producing free time for you to do another thing, for instance developing your skills and individuating yourself, then the result of this exteriorization is an intensification of your individuation. If you use the technique of writing for example, not for creating a dependency and heteronomy in the youth of Athens, like the Sophists did who appear in Plato’s dialogues, but on the contrary for taking care of one’s self³, for creating the academy, for producing philosophy books, etcetera, then one individuates oneself *with* and through those books. Plato never says that, of course, but that is what he means.

PL: *Plato did not like books.*

BS: No he didn’t like books but he produced books! [laughter] And all the people of the academy produced books. Aristotle produced books as well. *All* the scholars of the academy were producers of books. Léon Robin, a French specialist of Greek philosophy, said that the academy produced only small books for explaining what the philosophy of Plato was which was heard everywhere in Athens. So Plato was doing exactly the same thing as the Sophists. He argues exactly like Immanuel Kant did in *Was ist Aufklärung?* Kant wrote: you can read my books, but only if you don’t use them for proletarianizing yourself. He doesn’t say it like that of course, but that is what he had in mind when he said: if you read my books in order to avoid thinking for yourself, out of laziness for instance, you are proletarianizing yourself. He does not use the word ‘proletarianize’, he says ‘minorize’ [*mineur*], but he means the same. Reading books without reflecting upon them and critically engaging with them leads to minority, not to maturity.

This question of proletarianization is in fact at the origin of philosophy and it is a question of autonomization versus heteronomization. Now, my point of view is that pure autonomy does not exist. My own position – and it is very close to Derrida's – is that there is never an autonomy without a link to a heteronomy, i.e., with a link to technics. Because for example, in Greek society people were creating their autonomy through a therapeutic use of the *pharmakon* of writing, i.e., of the technique of writing. So, autonomy is always a *limited* autonomy, never a pure autonomy. Now, all my questions are extremely classical in fact. *But*, with a very small change, in that it is impossible to *oppose* autonomy and heteronomy.

Now, in coming back to your question, what is happening *today*, to us? Well, it is the consequence of what started at the end of the Seventies in England with Margaret Thatcher, who proclaimed that from now on, we don't need the state anymore. Instead we let the market organize the appropriation of technologies. And why was this extremely *toxic* and negative for the future of humanity? Because it was the *whole planet* which transformed the policies and the economy after that. It is not so much catastrophic because of the end of the welfare state, which is a question that is very important for me, but not the main question.

The main question is that the state has been for a very long time – already at the time of the Greek *polis* – an organization for the appropriation of technical exteriorization, i.e., for the *adoption* of new technologies in a way that was producing what I call a *libidinal economy*, i.e., a collective libidinal economy producing a superego, an ego ideal, etcetera. It created a kind of equilibrium, a psychic equilibrium, in which you had, for example, the Greek people inventing the *skholeion*, that is a place for teaching. It was the same with the schools of the Romans. And in Christian society it was the organization of the Vatican, the Papists. And after that it was Luther who explained that laymen can read the Bible, *but* they need an organization as well, which was the Reformation of Christianity. Later, after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, you had the organization of the public sphere, of the lay sphere, of teaching and public education, etcetera. And it was always agreed upon that it was *impossible* to submit this activity to the economy. But in 1979 in Great Britain, Ms.

Thatcher said: now we will submit all these things to the economy. And at the same moment Reagan did the same in America. And after that Mitterand in his way, in social democracy. But everybody did in fact, the whole world did the same. Even in Soviet and Chinese society.

PL: *Why was that? And why was it so successful?*

BS: There are a lot of reasons. The first one is that American and English capitalism seemed extremely strong at that moment. Nevertheless, Thatcher and Reagan knew already that it was finished with controlling production. You know that in 1979 Liverpool was in ruins. The whole of the economy in England was a catastrophe. It was also very bad in America. It was the beginning of the exportation of the production of, for example, the electronic industries to Japan and Korea, and after that to Thailand, then to China. This was the deindustrialization of the West. And the strategy of Thatcher and Reagan was: we now need to produce a new type of capitalism, which was a financialized capitalism, being *purely* speculative. Not a capitalism of investment, but a capitalism of speculation. It was the creation of what led, in the end, to people like Bernie Madoff... as the *norm* of capitalism. Before that, Madoff would be considered a gangster. But after that he was not a gangster, he was a policeman, because he was the chairman of the Nasdaq!

PL: *You speak about the 'mafiazation' of capitalism.*

BS: It *is* a mafiazation. Now this 'conservative revolution' was changing something extremely important, which is the socialization of technics. Because, formerly, the socialization of technics was not done by marketing. It was carried out by a lot of different organizations, in general public organizations, but also religious organizations. Religion has been extremely important in the history of the West but at the beginning of the Eighties it was gone. And we *now* say that the state is what has been...

PL: *Well, the neoliberal state is a strong state, one could argue, in certain respects at least.*

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BS: Yes, but it is a state *only* for security and for controlling the pathological behavior of people. It is only military and police.

PL: *Yes, but for instance, it is also involved in the disciplining of the population to adapt to the market, in encouraging citizens to become self-entrepreneurs, in installing competition everywhere, in turning the whole of society into a market, etcetera. It is in a sense a strong state, not a state that is withdrawing itself.*

BS: Yes. But my problem is not to qualify the traits of the state; it is to qualify the goals of the state. What is a strong state? At the moment here in France there is a proposal for privatizing the police. And you might know for instance that there is also a project, I think in Germany, for privatizing the military, like in America. The Iraq war was already a war fought with private armies. It is a return to the situation of the seventeenth century, to the age of mercenaries. Now, are we talking about the state here? When you say that the state is very strong, what if the state is only one man, for example Sarkozy or Berlusconi, who gives money to a privatized police? Is that really a state? No, it is *mafia*. The *mafia* is very strong, *not* the state. What is the state? Here I have a problem with Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, and all those French philosophers, who are always criticizing the state.

PL: *Marx did too.*

BS: And Marx too, yes. But they do not see what the state today really is. When Foucault criticized the state and the preparation of neoliberal ideology, at that moment functioning in France, he was in fact completely forgetting *another role* of the state, which is precisely how to deal with the technological *pharmakon*. How to transform the *pharmakon*, which is poisonous, in a practice of education, etcetera. This used to be a state policy. And this is extremely important.

The question today for me is not the end of capitalism or the return of the communist horizon. Today we have to create a new industrial model. This new industrial model will possibly produce a new political organization, and an economical organization which may not be capitalist. But it is

not at all sure, and it is not my problem today. It is possible for example to produce a *cooperative* capitalism. I know of people exploiting capital in a cooperative way. It still is capitalism, because you have ownership of the means of production by a collective, but this collective is proprietary. It is not a collectivization in the communist sense. It is capitalist. But it is a *new form* of capitalism.

The question of capitalism is the opposition between capital and work. And this opposition between capital and work is an opposition through property. Now if we change the law of property, for example by sharing the sources of software code in Free Software, we are changing something very crucial. Is it capitalism or not? I don't know... and I don't care. I prefer to *do* it, and to ask *only afterwards*. When I say I don't care, I don't say it is not a very important question, but we are in a situation of emergency today. We have to *do* things, not only to think. We have to *propose* things. We don't have time for discussions about whether it will be capitalism or not. We need to create a new situation. The question, for instance, is to go to the investment banks and ask them in what they want to invest. Not to speculate but to invest. And to tell them: you have a lot of money, you don't know what to do with this money, you must invest in *this* new system, the future is *there*. If I say to them it is the end of capitalism [BS laughs], they will not invest. The question today is: what is the new industrial model?

PL: *You argue that the open source and free software movements in the software industry are a kind of harbinger of this new model, i.e., prefigurations of what you also call an 'economy of contribution'. And you suggest that these movements must be understood as engaged in a process of deproletarianization. Could you explain that a bit more. And could you also explain why you have put your hopes so much in these, in my view still pretty marginal practices, especially Free Software. Open source is big nowadays of course, at least in the software sector, but it represents a kind of pragmatization, even capitalization and thereby a betrayal of the principles of Free Software. And as such it remains immanent to capitalism. What is your 'pharmacological hope', so to speak, with respect to these practices?*

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BS: That is a very important question, but difficult, very difficult. Firstly, I think it's not hope. Well, it *is* hope, that's clear, but it is also a *rationality*. Now, today capitalism has become irrational, *completely* irrational. There is a discussion now going on in Switzerland – that was said this morning on the radio in France – about the regulation of the irrationality of the financialized market. We have had a discourse from Thatcher and Reagan up until Chirac and Sarkozy, that talked about the 'rationality of market'. Everybody agreed that market rationality was the ultimate rationality. But what is this market rationality? The market is rational because it is all about calculation, computation. But that is a completely stupid understanding of what rationality is, because rationality is precisely, to speak with Kant, that which is *not* calculable. *Understanding* is calculation, but rationality isn't. Rationality, on the contrary, is *infinitezation*. So it is completely stupid to say that the market is rational. But those people who hailed the rationality of the market are completely incompetent. They know nothing about the history of thought.

Now, here is a new rationality for me. Why? Well, for example, if you talk with a manager of a human resources department in a company today. If the person with whom you talk is honest, he will say to you: I have a big problem: the workers do not want to work, the consumers do not want to consume [BS laughs], the managers do not want to manage, etcetera. Why? Because there is no pleasure produced anymore by the system. I've thought a lot about consumption and I claim that consumers today are *addicted*. When you ask them: what do you think about consumption, they say it is very bad. There was an inquiry published two or three days ago in the USA by Juliet Schorr, who asked the American people: what do you think about consumption? Well, they said it is bad for us and for America. Eighty-one percent of the people said that – in America!

PL: *But they are nevertheless doing it.*

BS: Yes, and that is because they are *intoxicated*. They are *addicts*. If you ask a junkie, one who has been a junkie for ten years: what do you think of heroin, he or she will say that it is extremely bad. It is that which is explained at the beginning of *Naked Lunch*, the famous book by William Burroughs, why you must *not* use heroin. The author says: I use it, but it

is because I cannot stop anymore. I would like to stop but it is impossible. Now capitalism is confronted with a very similar problem. It has a lot of intoxicated people to manage and it is impossible to manage intoxicated people. When Burroughs says, I could kill my mother for my heroin, it is the same question now for example in France with Sarkozy when he says with respect to the young people of the poor, in the Banlieus, that it is impossible to control them. Yes, it is impossible. And at the moment it is only in the Banlieus, but within five or ten years from now, it will be everybody who is uncontrollable ...

PL: *You talk about today's control societies (Deleuze) becoming uncontrollable societies in the second volume of Mécéance et Discrédit. Les sociétés incontrôlables. Could you say more about that? You see that really coming?*

BS: I think so. If you look at China for example, or in Japan, there are a lot of problems now with the youth. And the only way it is being fought is by producing a hyperproletarianization and a *chemical* one, through drugs. You know that in America fifteen percent of the youth is using Ritalin, Prozac, etcetera. And we have the same problem with respect to work. Hyperactivity of workers for example. I was a manager of a big company once. For five years I had one-thousand people to manage. And I saw very well how they were in fact not at all happy with their work, but were only producing a kind of hyperactivity... creating a kind of hypnosis, in order to forget to think, to forget their concerns, their problems. And they had a lot of problems. Maybe you have read the book *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello. They say that the final result of the development of this new type of capitalism is to destroy the couples, the family. Because when the husband needs to go to work in this factory and the wife in another, you destroy the family. But if you destroy the family, you destroy 'labor power'. Because what is 'labor power'? It is the children. If children are not brought up and educated anymore, what will become of the future? There will be: No future. This is what the young people say: there is no future. And now capitalism begins to understand this.

PL: *You think so?*

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BS: I think so, yes. Of course it is not possible for them to tell that in the public sphere. But I have experienced it myself, when I created Ars Industrialis. Everybody in the establishment said: they are completely silly, Neo-Marxist, Neo-Freudian crackpots. But now, with the crisis, in particular of General Motors, they came to us and said: ‘oh, that is interesting what you said, could you tell us what you mean precisely’? So there *is* a change going on. Now, about software, Free Software. There are different levels of free organizations. There are the radically free organizations like The Free Software Foundation founded by Stallman...

PL: *You think Richard Stallman is a radical?*

BS: Maybe not so radical, but there are different types of organization. When Google works with Free Software, of course it is not really a Free Software organization, it is an Open Source organization, which is capturing the sources of profit produced by the people. But *nevertheless* it is a change. It is a change which is very interesting. Maybe the main question about the future today is: what will be the next ‘historical compromise’? Maybe there will be one between radical Free Software activities and the Open Source economy. Because I think that even if you don’t have a generalization of Free Software production *now* already, it is clear that it points toward the future. Last year for example, Microsoft opened its sources to the software community. And this change was decided by Microsoft because it was clear for them that it was impossible to remain inscribed in the new culture of software without opening their platform to the Free Software Foundation.

PL: *Like IBM already did earlier.*

BS: Like IBM, yes. And here it is extremely important to be pragmatic. You need to have principles of course, very strong principles, but you need to allow for compromises as well.

PL: *You refer to a kind of peer-to-peer production model here?*

BS: Yes, it is a peer-to-peer production model. And this is extremely important, because it is a complete change of the industrial model. The in-

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dustrial model of the twentieth century was based on an opposition between production and consumption. And the whole organization of marketing was based on this opposition. If you change this opposition, you change the whole system. And this is extremely interesting. Now you have a social democratic theory of this change, a capitalist theory, a Marxist theory, a Post-Marxist theory, etcetera, but *this* is what is changing.

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¹ See for more information Ars Industrialis’ website: <http://arsindustrialis.org/>.

² For Stiegler, technology has to be understood first of all in terms of a memory, i.e., as a supplemental memory system unique to humans. Besides an individual neural and a specific (species) genetic memory, common to all sexualized living organisms, humans possess a third, technological memory or inheritance system which has enabled the transmission of individual experience over the generations, i.e., the possibility of individual experience becoming available for the species at large thanks to its inscription in technical artefacts (opening the historical mode of being Heidegger called ‘existence’). Humanity has evolved on the basis of this technological inheritance system. This means that human evolution cannot be understood anymore in Darwinist terms, since Darwinian evolution presupposes that individual experience – ‘acquired characteristics’ – cannot be transmitted to the species.

³ Stiegler uses this expression here in its Foucaultian sense of ‘care of the self’ [*souci de soi*] via technologies of the self [*techniques de soi*].