

- ARTICLE -

## The Threatened End Of Digital Sharing: A Dissociated Milieu?

Simon Ryan

### Abstract

Edward Snowden has revealed the obscene presence in the lives of everyone for whom the free use of the Internet is an essential part of daily life, of an NSA-led global network of extreme mass surveillance. The state, corporate, and self-censorship that such extreme surveillance of public and private communications imposes, constitutes an additional and direct threat to the positive functioning of the libidinal economy. This, in an age in which the desire of individuals and groups is already threatened with commodification through subjection to the demands of the market by those who exploit for profit the technologies of telecommunications, the media, culture and program industries. Through the activities and publications of *Ars Industrialis*—the Paris-based *Association Internationale pour Une Politique Industrielle des Technologies de l'Esprit* – Bernard Stiegler and his co-researchers have analysed the destruction of desire through consumerist exploitation and its negative impact on processes of psychic individuation and social adaptation. They argue that to consign 'technologies of the human spirit' such as digital telecommunications to a control function 'systematically forbids and impedes the development of new and original social practices'. This article examines the ways in which the attack on the open Internet by the corporate, military-industrial state undermines the building of an *economy of contribution* (Ars Industrialis 2010) and the formation of an *associated milieu* (Simondon 1958), which enables a productive economy of desire.

---

Simon Ryan heads the Department of Languages and Cultures at the University of Otago, where he teaches courses on German cinema, digital culture, language and literature. His research focuses on the effects of cultural change and social transformation on the production of meaning in mainly, but not exclusively, German cultural contexts, and draws on the work of European philosophers, sociologists, literary and media theorists, including Flusser, Kluge, Lash, Luhmann, Soja, Lefebvre, Lyotard, Serres and Stiegler. His research on computer games and screen culture raises questions of political economy, the capture of attention, and the relationship between text and image. Recent publications include studies of the construction of neoliberalism in German cinema, the writing of counter-history in recent Austrian fiction, Kluge's film project on Marx's *Capital*, and the international reception of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*.

Two events alerted many New Zealanders, for the first time, to the existence and staggering scale of a global regime of Internet and digital telecommunications surveillance. The first was the release of Edward Snowden's revelations in 2013; the second, the bizarrely executed arrest of Kim Dotcom at his home north of Auckland some months beforehand by the New Zealand Police acting in cooperation with the FBI and with the assistance of the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB). In the wake of Snowden's whistleblowing on the NSA, internet users everywhere have become uncomfortably aware of an obscene intrusion into the privacy of personal data and into what most citizens in liberal democracies take to be their lawful right to engage in legitimate acts of free speech and expression via digital platforms of all kinds. The NSA's covert operations and those of its primary allies, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand through such transnational signals intelligence networks as Echelon, are being progressively revealed. This is by the handful of whistleblowers and investigative journalists worldwide who have not succumbed to state or corporate intimidation. The critical debate about the consequences of mass surveillance must now begin. To observers who have been following closely the investigations of journalists like Glenn Greenwald, formerly of *The Guardian* and now with *The Intercept*, it is becoming clear that the vast digital espionage system coordinated by the NSA is, in considerable measure, intentionally designed to support and expand the hegemony of the United States with the explicit support of the neo-liberal governments of its major economic, political and military allies. The vast expansion of the NSA's surveillance activities in the wake of 9/11, far beyond any reasonable and legitimate levels of concern over generally accepted matters of state security, supports the view that free and open, public and private use of digital communications has, for some time now, been perceived by a majority of US Democrats and Republicans as a serious threat to US control over global resources, territories and, above all, markets. One of the more recent of Snowden's revelations, which reported the syphoning up of personal data by the NSA and GCHQ from leaky mobile entertainment apps like *Angry Birds*, provides evidence of our exposure to hostile acts of surveillance through even the most seemingly harmless of digital pastimes (Ball 2014). In this paper, I address the question as to how we might begin to theorize the presence of mass digital surveillance in ways that will help us lay bare its cultural politics and reveal its negative consequences for the struggle to preserve and grow democratic and fully human societies.

In this context, the work of the French philosopher of technology, Bernard Stiegler, is of immediate relevance to the search for an adequate theoretical model to lay bare the lineaments and psycho-social consequences of mass surveillance of the Internet and digital telecommunications. This is through his engagement in the politics of taking 'care' of humanity and the environment, in both the Foucauldian and Heideggerian sense of 'care', as a legitimate set of concerns over the being of the self and the other. Stiegler's research into technoculture at the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris as the Director of the Department of Cultural Development and of the Institute of Research and Innovation is combined with his work as a political activist in the project *Ars Industrialis*. *Ars*

*Industrialis* is a public sphere association for the critical investigation of digital technoculture founded by Stiegler in Paris in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Stiegler is the author of the series *Technics and Time* (1994-2001), three volumes of which have so far appeared in English translation between 1998 and 2011.<sup>2</sup> He has extended his historically organized examination of technoculture in *Technics and Time* into the zone of political economy and consumer culture in more recent publications such as *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (2010), *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies* (2011) and *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals* (2013). Stiegler's thinking on technology builds on the work of a number of key thinkers including his teacher Jacques Derrida, the philosopher of technics and individuation, Gilbert Simondon, the archaeologist, paleontologist and anthropologist, André Leroi Gourhan, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, and recently, N. Katherine Hayles.

Why is Stiegler's work not just relevant but genuinely helpful to any discussion of concern about the personal, social, economic and political consequences of mass Internet surveillance, particularly in relation to commonly experienced conditions affecting our well-being and that of the Earth?<sup>3</sup> What follows is a brief overview of what I take to be the elements of his thinking that are most pertinent to the question of mass surveillance and its many negative consequences for the well-being of individuals, societies, the domain of politics, and for the planet itself. Stiegler's arguments are packed with subtle philosophical reasoning and are set amidst a dense web of references to the work of other philosophers and social scientists on which he draws; inevitably many pertinent details must be passed over in this essay.

Viewed in the broadest of terms, Stiegler's project critiques the current state of digital technoculture in the context of the planetary crisis of overproduction and overconsumption that arises from the unreflective pursuit of what he and many other critical thinkers now regard as dangerously outmoded forms of hypercapitalism. He locates digital telecommunications among those human inventions, such as writing systems of all kinds, which he identifies as crucial 'technologies of the human spirit' (Stiegler 2013). For Stiegler, any attempt to make digital communications networks subservient to a control function holds dire consequences for the flourishing of human society. He is by no means merely affirmative of technoculture or any other form of technology but neither is he a neo-Luddite. Throughout his work Stiegler constantly reminds us that the tricky thing about prosthetic technologies, including all digital technologies, is that they consistently display the characteristics of the *pharmakon*; following Derrida and the logic of supplementarity, he maintains that like other forms of grammatisation, they can be a cure or a poison. As the 2010 revision of the *Ars Industrialis* Manifesto states: digital technologies require 'the invention, institution and transmission of practices of care which are also techniques of the self and others' (*Ars Industrialis* 2010).

Stiegler provides useful insights into what state and corporate instigators and agents of mass surveillance appear to have forgotten, overlooked or indeed never known in their

care-less and paranoiac invasion of nearly every zone of cyberspace. In *Technics and Time* (1998; 2009), mindful of the principle that the best way to see where you are heading is to look hard at where you have already been, Stiegler directs an historical gaze into the evolution of technical systems and the cultural effects on thinking and being, remembering and forgetting, of the earliest prosthetic technologies. This historical and philosophical trajectory led him to first apprehend and then closely analyse a mythological act of forgetfulness. In *Technics and Time 1, The Fault of Epimetheus*, he revisits the proto-philosophical origins of the West's engagement with technical objects (Stiegler 1998, 185ff.). In Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, he encounters the mythical figure of Epimetheus, an original idiot ancestor of Western culture, about whom we have since sadly been kept very much in the dark. Epimetheus was the twin brother of the much-celebrated Prometheus. In ancient times, Epimetheus was charged with the balanced distribution of essential survival skills to all the creatures of the earth. As his name suggests—in Ancient Greek *epimetheia* connotes *hindsight, knowledge after the event*—he naturally forgot to reserve any of the qualities in his bag for his last and most important charge, the human species. To ameliorate his brother's disastrous oversight, Prometheus, as we know from this more familiar narrative strand of the myth, had to go off and steal fire and the gift of skill in the art of getting things done—*tekne*, know-how, *savoir-faire*—so that as a vulnerable species we might survive at all. Stiegler reads this myth in the form recorded by the pre-Socratic philosopher, Protagoras, as showing that our being—Heidegger's *Dasein*—is the product of a double 'originary fault': 'Fruit of a double fault—an act of forgetting, then of theft—they are naked, like small, premature animals, without fur and means of defense' (Stiegler 1998, 188). Ever since these primordial acts of forgetfulness and illicit appropriation, as creatures that are born naked and lacking something important, we have had to rely for our survival on the prosthetic supports provided by technologies—technics, our technicity. In particular, as the foolish descendants of Epimetheus in the West and increasingly around the world as global technoculture proliferates, we still have trouble remembering vital things and hence throughout history have continued to develop what Stiegler after Plato in his *Phaedrus* called *hypomnemata*, (alphabetical) techniques of memory, the essential elements of a *mnemotechnics*, i.e. technical objects which function as external aids to memory and cultural transmission. Stiegler subscribes to Gilbert Simondon's argument that these technologies co-evolve with the human species (Simondon 1958). They extend from the practical know-how and cultural memory embodied in early tools, cave drawings and writing systems, through the codex and analogue recordings of all kinds, to our contemporary digital technologies, which Stiegler confronts as the current manifestations of the Ancient Greeks' *hypomnemata* (Stiegler 2013, 32-35).

In the context of a burgeoning regime of mass surveillance it is necessary to be able to connect the materiality of digital technologies with the dimension of lived personal and social existence. Stiegler's thinking on technoculture provides a productive conceptual framework that enables this connection to be thought through. In order to demonstrate

the relation between technics, human individuals and the social order, he adopts and modifies Simondon's key concept of 'individuation' (Stiegler 2013, 30-39). Simondon's philosophical method involves an analogical approach to questions of emergence. Individuation is the process whereby both human and technical beings evolve and emerge, like the crystal out of the saturated solution or the foetus out the embryo, from their conditions of possibility through what Simondon characterised in the 1960s as their *associated milieu*.<sup>4</sup> Stiegler then further develops Simondon's concept of the *transindividual* (Barthélémy 2012, 230-231) in the digital era to describe the psychic emergence of individual human beings as singularities into a state of mature social being in which, under optimal conditions, the 'I' becomes balanced by a 'we' and therefore transforms into a mature and responsible member of human society, who is able to take care of the self and others (Stiegler 2011a, 93-103). The associated milieux (plural) operative in the formation of social being in contemporary digital societies are clearly such that the multiple types of external retention of consciousness, the digital *hypomnemata*, made available to us by the Internet and associated technologies, play a significant and by no means unproblematic role in the psycho-social process of transindividuation. In Stiegler's view, the passage of transindividuation is a human potential that in the decaying or dissociated milieux, which are emerging in many societies under the conditions of the pervasive globalization of capital, is increasingly not fully realized or even possible (Stiegler 2013, 80-102). Viewed broadly, through his thinking out from Simondon's work on individuation and the transindividual, and by taking into account Simondon's thinking on the co-evolution of technical objects, Stiegler has produced for the digital age what he regards as a necessary, non-transcendental revision of Kant's Enlightenment, print-culture based concept of the socially and ethically desirable emergence of the individual into a state of maturity through positive social interaction and education (Stiegler 2011a, 80-81).

Under the conditions created by digital hypomnemata in particular, individual memory can now be seen to be located both inside and outside the subject (Crogan 2010, 142). As a 'me', I am constituted in considerable measure outside myself through my exposure to and engagement with such digital technical objects as net communities or social media. As a consequence of the evolution out of last century's Western culture industry, Stiegler identifies the digital programming industries, individual and collective memory, and significant areas of our imagination, as becoming externalized on a hyper-industrial scale. The empirical evidence for this externalization over the last three decades is now abundant in the proliferation and ever-increasing capacity of digital data storage devices. It has led Stiegler to argue, against Kant, that the schemas of imagination cannot be regarded as transcendental but are instead externally and historically conditioned (Crogan 2010, 141). The growing dependence of contemporary psychic individuation on externalized digital and highly programmable types of associated milieux is therefore a matter of real concern. Stiegler devotes considerable attention to an analysis of the ways in which compounding technological rationalization is contributing to the rise of cynicism and loss of hope in hyper-industrial societies. He includes privileged youth, as

well as the growing ranks of the excluded, examining how their behavior is marked by disaffection, social withdrawal and addictive habits of consumption in the midst of a life filled with (or deprived of) the 'industrial temporal objects' with which they are being programmed to identify (Stiegler 2013, 80-102). The fact that the hyper-industrial political economy demands that all value be calculable has its corollary in the progressive devalorisation or disindividuation of the consumer. Concern centers on the radical alteration in these digitally informed milieux of long established behavioral patterns operative in the formation of individual and social being and on shifts like those that that we are now registering with some alarm in the relation between on the one hand, technical rationality and on the other, that form of social rationality we know and value as justice and human rights (Stiegler 2013, 20).

In order to better understand the function of digital technical objects in processes of psychic individuation, in the final chapter of *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation* (2009) Stiegler returns to Husserl's phenomenological studies of primary and secondary retentions and their role in perception and memory. As with the largely neglected figure of Epimetheus in Plato's *Protagoras*, he again finds that something significant has been overlooked. Husserl did not explore tertiary or externalized forms of memory beyond early gramophone recordings and tended to downplay their possible function in the formation of consciousness and consequently in cultural reproduction. Stiegler argues against Husserl that these tertiary retentions have since become the vital supplement of our consciousness in the way that they are fed back to us from the cultural environment to reshape the perceptual set of the brain's secondary retentions (Stiegler 2009, 241-243). The music video I watched the previous evening shapes my next experience of the song when I hear it on the car radio while driving to work. On the privileged side of the digital divide, digital devices are for many now highly active in the shaping of perception in education, in our daily work routines, and in the formation of our social being. Over and above the bottomless reservoir of on-line information and televisual entertainment, email, social media, online-gaming, YouTube, Vimeo, and net forums of all kinds have become a vital part of active and passive social networking. Whether we access these by laptop, desktop, or mobile devices like tablets or smart-phones is largely irrelevant. But in the context of the presence or even the threat of pervasive surveillance, we need to ask 'What happens to our sense of well-being, even our sense of who we are or might become, when we are made aware that a concealed observer is lurking with intent at the windows and back doors of our on-line and off-line lives?' How might we react when we become aware that the dark algorithms of the NSA, GCHQ or the GSCB are trawling daily through our metadata in search of any 'suspicious' material, and worse, causing us to be questioned or even arrested by state or corporate authorities at some regulatory, legal, or geographical border?

Stiegler's project engages in a closely focused analysis of the effects on human attention and the formation of consciousness arising from the omnipresence of the commercially driven, digital programme industries that work day and night to support the goals of members of the corporate, military and administrative elite who are the leading

beneficiaries of hyper-industrial societies. What he refers to, after Freud and Marcuse, as the 'libidinal economy' is being destabilized as a direct consequence of a radical desublimation of desire that results from hyper-industrial modes of consumption. Here we need only think of the emptying out of desire, which comes about when attention is subjected to the endless, audiovisual hyper-solicitation of the digital entertainment and leisure industries. The individual libidinal economy consists of competing behavioural tendencies. Under the current dominance of the North American programme industries, which seek to invent and programme the future, the libidinal economy is subjected to both 'a politics of adoption and a technical politics' (Stiegler 2011b, 9). The categorical imperatives of the US political economy are 'adoption and innovation' (Stiegler 2011b, 9). As Stiegler views its relationship to consumption, 'the libidinal economy is the fundamental mechanism of all adoption' (2011b, 10). He concludes that a hyper-industrial economy, which produces an excess of commodities, is necessarily deeply engaged in the manipulation of the libidinal economy of its individual members. North American public policy aims to shape and control the future of global markets through the manipulation of consumers. The very promulgation of the Internet as a public technology by North America over the past two decades, together with the seemingly endless innovation and proliferation of digital products and services, can be understood as the primary means by which the US has sought to transform the global environment in which it intends to assert supremacy. Now that capitalism has itself become primarily cultural, Stiegler notes that, 'culture itself becomes the key to all industrial policy' (Stiegler 2011, 18). Under these conditions, he contends, consumers together with producers become the new proletariat. This proletarianisation comes about in direct proportion to the consumer's or the producer's loss of knowledge as the result of subordination to the technical objects of consumption.

The digital economy services the promotion of the American way of life through an aesthetic of consumption, which is promulgated on all available digital platforms.<sup>5</sup> In Stiegler's reading of the political economy of hypercapitalist societies, the corresponding loss of collective and individual knowledge as *savoir-faire* (knowing how to do) and *savoir-vivre* (knowing how to live) is the key driver of this new form of proletarianization. The digital programme industries labour to turn consciousness itself into a marketable commodity through the control and harnessing of attention (Stiegler 2013, 23). An associated milieu like that of digital technoculture rapidly becomes a dissociated milieu and consequently loses its capacity to foster the transindividuation of the 'I' to a state of mature and responsible social being, when through their advocacy of narcissistic care-less-ness, the programme industries succeed, as they are so manifestly doing, in substituting addictive forms of consumer behaviour for mature, considered, and care-full decision making. The corporate practice of branding actively seeks to promote and intensify these toxic behaviors. Drives take the place of genuine human desire.<sup>6</sup> Drives operate within compulsive psycho-biological loops and in Stiegler's view can never be satisfied (Stiegler 2013, 18-19; 23-24). The subject and consciousness itself become degraded and nullified through submission to the objects of addiction. As

the consumer is sold progressively to the product, his or her existence is absorbed into a state of subsistence. The disruption of the libidinal economy represented by the reduction of the life-world to an endless virtual shopping mall, marketing goods and services produced by a global labour-force of low-wage workers, operates principally through the daily promotion of consumer anxiety. The subject driven by this anxiety seeks vainly in the objects of addiction but can never find compensation for genuine human desires. The result, as conceived by Stiegler and his co-researchers in *Ars Industrialis*, is the creation of the *addictogenic* society, which they have set out to combat (Ars Industrialis 2010). Following Stiegler and his associates, it appears entirely consistent to conclude that it is this same addictogenic social order that the US-led regime of mass surveillance is in considerable part designed to perpetuate. We might also reasonably conclude that the digital simulation and projection of a regime of apparent total planetary control is aimed precisely at preventing what Stiegler and the contributors to the *Ars Industrialis* collective are seeking as activists to advance, namely the mass de-proletarianization of consumers and producers as subjects who in fact already possess the capacity to realize their own reasons for existence and who, when they are encouraged to, can learn to know how to do things for themselves and others.

Stiegler (2011) goes a step beyond Foucault's concept of *biopower* to consider the emergence in hyper-industrial societies of what he identifies as *psychopower*: 'a control society does not only consist in the installation, throughout society, of social control, but rather penetrates into consciousness, through which it harnesses libidinal energy and thus reinstates corporal control . . .' (Stiegler 2011b, 82). He elaborates:

As for control societies, these are passing into their hyper-industrial epoch, developing into a cultural and service-based capitalism that, via computer technology, fabricates the very element of our ways of living, transforming daily life in the sense of its immediate interests, standardising existences through the means of 'marketing concepts' and doing all of this while pursuing the convergence of the audio-visual, the informational and telecommunications: this is the American multimedia strategy . . . (Stiegler 2011b, 104).

The collective *Ars Industrialis* calls for the re-politicization of society through disengagement of the state from its undemocratic embrace of speculative hypercapitalism and the corresponding reassertion of public power as a system of care that intervenes positively in economic and industrial life. Only this re-politicization, they contend, will encourage 'the development of what, in technics, in general, and in mnemotechnics in particular, leads to the reinforcement of society—to make technical becoming a social future intensifying processes of individuation by inventing forms of life, that is, of *savoir vivre*' (Ars Industrialis 2010). How, if at all, can we reconcile the dark view of increasingly surveilled and policed digital technologies as the site for the unfolding of the 'multimedia strategy' of an American global psychopower with the clearly significant and still largely unexplored role that the free and open use of the



Internet and digital telecommunications has come to play in psychic individuation as the interplay of memory and imagination? For Stiegler and the *Ars Industrialis* collective, the toxic effects of mass surveillance threaten the emergence of a socially positive digital *economy of contribution*, which they are seeking to promote as an alternative to the dominant neo-liberal economies of mass production and consumption.

Without reflection on the matter, we might assume that our personal freedom of thought is unassailable but it quickly becomes apparent that even one's most intimate thoughts are implicitly linked with and informed by others—family members, partners, friends, groups, collectives and communities. Deprived of free expression, open communication and the exchange of ideas, our thoughts subside into solipsism, begin to loop and feed off themselves. It does not seem so long ago that the Shareware and Open Source software movements, and more recently the Creative Commons, reaffirmed the notion that freedom of thought and the willingness to share ideas with others lead to better, more democratic and socially inclusive outcomes. As the hacker ethic put it in the early 1990s, 'information-sharing is a powerful positive good' (Himanen 2001). Inhibiting or prohibiting sharing by enacting legislation which threatens to censor, impose penalties and criminalise positive forms of information-sharing is therefore widely viewed by net communities of all kinds as the hallmark of antidemocratic, closed or control societies. The 2010 Manifesto of *Ars Industrialis* emphasizes the crucial role of sharing knowledge in the digital world:

On the internet, it is clear to everyone that there are no longer producers on one side, and consumers on the other: digital technology opens a reticulated space of contributors, who develop and share knowledge, and who form what one calls an associated milieu—thereby taking up a concept from Gilbert Simondon. This sharing, which reconstitutes processes of sublimation, and which as such reconstructs a productive economy of desire, of engagement and of individual and collective responsibilities socially articulated according to new forms of sociability, opens a space for struggling against dependence, de-sublimation, disgust in oneself and others, and more generally, against speculative intoxication and addiction. (*Ars Industrialis* 2010).

In case academics assume that they are the sole torchbearers of new ideas, Stiegler assigns a central place to the figure of the amateur in the creation of a digital economy of contribution:

The figure of the amateur is the ideal type for the economy of contribution because the amateur is the one who builds him or herself a sustainable libidinal economy and does not expect industrial society to put it in place. In this regard, the hacker is a subversive figure in his or her ability to appropriate the technological and industrial situation without conforming to its requisite prescriptions, from marketing through to plans for industrial development. Hackers are neither consumers nor clients or users: they are

practitioners—that is to say, amateurs of the world in the age of its numeration (Stiegler n.d).

Digital sharing, free of any coercion, is at the heart of what Stiegler and others define as an emerging economy of contribution. The political and corporate forces behind mass surveillance are engaged in the defence of the limitless profit-taking of the few and consider all alternatives to their implied world order inimical. In the nominally democratic states now under the sway of the NSA, to demand openness and transparency, to dissent as a citizen on questions regarding mass surveillance—questions about what New Zealand’s Prime Minister, John Key, when asked, frequently and dismissively labels ‘operational matters’ and therefore not up for public discussion—is to be categorized as a subversive element, a left-wing conspiracy theorist, a (class) enemy or even a potential terrorist. The spectral presence of ubiquitous surveillance is calculated by its perpetrators to discourage, dissuade, intimidate, suppress, shut down and prosecute the free exchange of ideas, on which an alternative political economy of contribution depends. As Stiegler views the present crisis, we now find ourselves in the midst of a severe cultural conflict between opposed models of human behaviour: ‘an unprecedented and merciless global commercial war in which digital networks are already—are at *first* and *increasingly*—weapons in the battle to conquer global commerce—the global commerce of *goods* and *ideas*’ (Stiegler 2011a, 135). The stakes are high. To take the side of those who oppose the commodification and reification of the human spirit is to engage in the battle against the destructive signals intelligence of global surveillance systems to preserve, foster and transmit the human intelligence that we so desperately need to survive by creating together new and sustainable ways of living.

## Notes

1. The Manifesto of *Ars Industrialis* (2005, revised 2010) and other publications of the collective are freely available online in French and to a more limited extent in English as well.
2. In his essay in the issue of Cultural Politics devoted to Stiegler, Patrick Crogan provides a very comprehensive overview of Stiegler’s philosophical approach to technology in *Technics and Time* and locates Stiegler’s project in the context of his cultural and political activism. See Crogan (2010).
3. After the completion of this article, an English translation appeared of a piece by Stiegler written for a blog on the digital revolution for the French newspaper *Le Monde* in which he refers explicitly to the case of Edward Snowden and his revelations concerning the handing over of private data by social media corporations like Facebook and Google to the NSA. In this commentary, Kinsley (2013a) writes that Stiegler claims the ‘secrecy of intimate life is essential and forms the possibility of attaining a dignity of existence’. Stiegler underscores the dual nature of the internet and digital technologies of social engineering as a pharmakon with constructive as well as potentially toxic consequences and also registers a measure of concern that the down-side of the publication of diplomatic cables through Wikileaks may be detrimental to the conduct of international diplomacy. See Kinsley (2013a).
4. Simondon’s work remains largely untranslated into English and in media philosophy has been received outside Europe primarily through Stiegler’s reading of his principal books (1958/1999; 1964; 1989/2007). The concept of the associated milieu is central to

Simondon's construction of processes of individuation and should not be regarded as being coterminous with the notion of an environment. For an explanation of this key term see Jean-Hugues Barthélémy (2012, 207): 'With the living being, the associated milieu becomes the pole of a permanent exchange, whereas for the psycho-social personality [. . .] the collective is no longer even a simple milieu but a group that has its proper unity and its proper personality, with which the personality of the individual is "coextensive" (Arne De Boever's translation of Barthélémy's text)'. Simondon regards the associated milieu as participating in the individuality of living beings as well as in the emergence of technical objects and employs the analogy of theatre to speak of a 'theatre of individuation'.

4. While Stiegler acknowledges that in China, India and Japan and in other non-Western economies new forms of hyperindustrial society with their own technologies of knowledge are developing and whose digital service industries are penetrating the West, his primary concern is 'to know—and by distinguishing within the West, between America and Europe—what a specifically European industrial and political economy of these technologies of the spirit would look like' (Stiegler 2013, 71).
5. Stiegler (2014, 40) follows Freud's concept of libido as the social manifestation of the energy produced by the sexual drive but goes beyond Freud in viewing capitalism as 'a libidinal economy that in generalizing dissociation, destroys desire, that is the energy that is libido'. In his analysis of the present crisis of the consumerist model, Stiegler argues that consumerist exploitation instrumentalises desire to the point where libidinal energy is radically depleted. This leads to forms of psychic and social disinvestment in the long-term engagement of individuals in social, economic and political life. The result is individual and social regression to the 'drive-based stage which animates all living things endowed with a nervous system . . . those drives that are also referred to as the 'instincts'. This crisis 'brings to the forefront a systemic connection between the drive-based behavior of the behavior of the speculator and the equally drive-based behavior of the consumer'. See Stiegler (2013, 18; 2014, 17 and 40).
6. To date there is little by Stiegler on the notion of an economy of contribution that is available in English. Sam Kinsley (2013b) has published an English translation of an interview with Stiegler by the French activist organisation *Fondation Macif*, which includes comments by Stiegler on this concept.

## References

*Ars Industrialis*. 2005. 'Manifesto 2005'. Accessed November 2013.

<http://arsindustrialis.org>

*Ars Industrialis*. 2010. 'Manifesto 2010'. Accessed November 2013.

<http://arsindustrialis.org>

Ball, James. 2014. 'Angry Birds and 'Leaky' Phone Apps Targeted by NSA and GCHQ for User Data'. *The Guardian*, 28 January 2014. Accessed January 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/27/nsa-gchq-smartphone-app-angry-birds-personal-data>

Barthélémy, Jean-Hugues. 2012. 'Fifty Key Terms in the Works of Gilbert Simondon'. In *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology*, edited by Arne De Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward, 203-34. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Crogan, Patrick. 2010. 'Bernard Stiegler: Philosophy, Technics, and Activism'. *Cultural Politics*, 6 (2): 133-56.

Himanen, Pekka. 2001. *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*. London: Secker and Warburg.

Kinsley, Sam. 2013a. 2013. 'Bernard Stiegler, "The Net Blues".' 21 November. <http://www.samkinsley.com/2013/11/21/bernard-stiegler-the-net-blues>

Kinsley, Sam. 2013b. 'Stiegler – Overconsumption and the Economy of Contribution'. 2 January. <http://www.samkinsley.com/2013/01/02/overconsumption-economy-of-contribution>

Simondon, Gilbert. 1958. *Du Mode D'existence des Objets Techniques*. Aubier, Editions Montaigne. A translation of the first part of this thesis by Simondon for the *Docotorat d'Etat* by Ninian Mellamphy, University of Ontario, 1980, is available as a PDF. Accessed 22 January 2015. <http://dephasage.ocular-witness.com/pdf/SimondonGilbert.OnTheModeOfExistence.pdf>

Stiegler, Bernard. 1958/1999. *Du Mode D'existence des Objets Techniques*. Paris: Aubier.

Stiegler, Bernard. 1964. *L'individu et sa Genèse Psycho-Biologique*. Paris: PUF.

Stiegler, Bernard. 1989/2007. *Individuation Psychique et Collective*. Paris: Aubier.

Stiegler, Bernard. 1998. *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by R. Beardsworth and G. Collins. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2009. *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*. Translated by S. Barker. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2010. *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*. Translated by S. Barker. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2011. *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*. Translated by S. Barker. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2011. *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 1*. Translated by D. Ross and S. Arnold. Cambridge (UK)/Malden (MA): Polity Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2013. *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 2*. Translated by D. Ross. Cambridge (UK)/Malden (MA): Polity Press.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2014. *The Re-enchantment of the World: The Value of Spirit Against Industrial Populism*. Translated by T. Arthur. London/New York: Bloomsbury.

Stiegler, Bernard. n.d. 'Amateur'. Accessed November 2013. <http://arsindustrialis.org/amateur-english-version>