The Theory of Originary Technicity in Bernard Stiegler's Philosophy

-Synopsis-

The main objective of the present work entitled *The Theory of Originary Technicity in Bernard Stiegler's Philosophy* corresponds to a critical analysis of what could be gathered generically under the title of *theory of originary technicity*. In the first chapter, we have mapped the sinuous genealogy which corresponds to such a theory. Even if the technological turn is as old as philosophy itself, however, in rare occasions technicity together with the technical object enjoyed true visibility. Such an event is not accidental, because Plato and nonetheless Aristotle, are those who seem to fix once and for all *the secondary position* subscribed to the technical object. *Anamnesis* and *hypomnesis*, together with the hylomorphic scheme of the four causes, represented the law after which, for two millennia, philosophy judged the technological realm. But, this is just half of the story, because how it goes, the technological condition is something which can be denied, but not neutralized. The technical object is nothing less than a *pharmakon* and because of this, every philosophical oeuvre that arrogates its task of condemning our technological condition comprises the necessary elements for a *reversed reading*. Following such a special technique of reading it becomes possible to detect why the technical object is nothing less than the starting point from which, all the structures subsumed under the title of *human interiority* (*anamnesis*, soul, consciousness, *ego cogito*) are just effects created by retroactivity and difference. Such a thing was highlighted by the reading of Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler of Plato's *Meno* and *Phaidros*. Another hypothesis was that philosophy is caught in a historical negotiation with the epochs of the mechanism. Because of this, technical individuals – result of technical evolution – historically assured a kind of metaphorical background form which, philosophy could afterward construed its own concepts of interiority and corporality – Aristotle and the catapult, Descartes and the clock, La Mettrie and the machine, Kant and the technique of nature etc. The ninetieth century corresponds with the appearance of both thermodynamic and Industrial Revolution, events which make possible for the first time, the construction of an incipient theory of originary technicity. In Kostas Axelos's vision, Karl Marx is nothing less than the first thinker of technique. For the first time in the history of philosophy, the labour process becomes a vantage point in the understanding of human's ontological constitution. Moreover, the labour process is the thing which makes possible, both the transformation of man and nature. In the same time, labour has no sense outside its own

couple with the working instruments, Marx being the first one who expressed the intuition regarding the originary status of technicity. For Marx, this is the principle of synchronicity between modes of production's epochs and those comprising the evolution of society. However, as we saw in the last part of the chapter dedicated to the Marxian theory of originary technicity, the structure of human emancipation from the working process is nothing less than a denial of the role played by technicity in human's self-definition. More than Marx even, Heidegger is the author who, in the twentieths century empathies the danger subscribed to the technical industrial complex. From the analysis of the instrument as *ready-to-hand*, up to *das Ge-stell*, Martin Heidegger build a theory of originary technicity conjugated with the famous problem of Being. Departing from the old Greeks, the German philosopher designated the strong bound between *physis* and *tekhnē*. Moreover, the bound would be impossible outside another process, called *poiēsis*. Despite the fact that *tekhnē* is *poiēsis* in the highest sense, the rough distinction between technology and technology's essence is just another way of producing the well-known polarization between a transcendental condition and those subsequent empirical effects. If the main hypothesis that we follow, claims that originary technicity presuppose a (necessary) contamination between the empirical and transcendental, such a rough distinction is inacceptable. Only with the publication of Derrida's *Grammatology*, do we really assist to an explicit annunciation of *our technological condition*. In this sense, Derrida's quasi-concepts of *differance* (*différance*), *arche-writing* (*arche-écriture*) and *supplement* (*supplement*) are designed from the beginning to articulate under the sign of a dynamic process the *matter* repressed in the case of *ānāmnesis/hypomnēsis* aporia. In the beginning, Derrida follows the principle of necessary contamination between oppositional terms, showing the way in which technicity is disavowed in Husserl's analysis on the temporality of consciousness. The same move repeats in the case of Heidegger's complete distinction between technology and the essence of technology. However, in *Echographies of Television* when Derrida is confronted with the task of describing the fundamental specificity of contemporary Media – the total synchronicity under *event* between capture and transmission – the French philosopher is calling for an immemorial process of *differance* (*différance*). This critic is addressed in different ways by John Protevi, Mark. B. N. Hansen and Bernard Stiegler. Derrida in *Faith and Knowledge* argues that both knowledge and faith take part to an immemorial messianic faith. As we had shown, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* and *Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction* are the texts where Bernard Stiegler proves both the existence of an

indecision regarding *differance* (*différance*) and a surprising independence of messianicity from the technicity.

Until this point, all the authors we have mentioned articulated the theory of originary technicity as a new relation between the empirical and the transcendental, but, in our vision, Bernard Stiegler is the philosopher who brings in the most radical version of technicity. Thereat, our hypothesis is that the ultimate merit of Bernard Stiegler's originary technicity consists in a precise reinvention of philosophical anthropology. If all philosophical systems - even more in the analysis of technology - deal with an implicit anthropology, Bernard Stiegler takes in an explicit manner the problem of *human origin*. As we saw in the second chapter of the present thesis, until the appearance of *Technics and Time*, the question of human origin had been investigated in two opposed manners. For Stiegler, Rousseau with his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* is nothing less than the father of anthropology. In Rousseau's *Discourse*, the human origin is fixated in a *retroactive* manner, after the fall of human from nature to culture. If the last merit of Rousseau's anthropology consists in the fact that in whatever way we search for the human origin, it will always be caught in a *necessary fiction*, nonetheless, the father of anthropology is still caught in the aporia of origin. To recapitulate, transcendental anthropology seeks the human origin *after* it already disappeared. In an opposed way, for André Leroi-Gourhan's *Gesture and Speech*, the human origin should be searched until it happened. This is the reason why empirical anthropology is a *prospective* manner of searching for the human origin; mode of anthropology which is sensible to all tendencies which already exists in the zoological world and which find their resolution only within the structural redistribution of the inferior member and locomotion; the superior member and technicity and between the facial apparatus and its liberation for the use of language. In the same time, we should not forget the fact that for Leroi-Gourhan, all those anatomical transformations coincide with the moment when, the human animal abandons the quadruple locomotion for the biped one. To maintain the co-originarity between the appearance of both human and technicity, Bernard Stiegler borrows from André Leroi-Gourhan's anthropology, the process called *exteriorization*. In such a case, the specificity of the human is understood from the role played by the technical object in the formation of a new type of memory – the *epiphylogenetic* one. Beyond all those philosophical innovations, the most important aspect of Stiegler's originary technicity consists in the mandatory duplication of transcendental investigation of human origin with an empirical enquiry around the appearance of technicity. Because we assist to such a methodological move, the third chapter of our thesis tried to prove that technicity subscribe to

specific evolutionary laws and to a proper ontology. In this case, technicity is the expression of a tendency which is quasi-autonomic from the zoological realm. As we proved in both subchapter one, two and three, this empirical autonomy – in the sense that it would be impossible to be deduced in a transcendental way – is followed in a historical manner by using the structural notion of technical system (Bertrand Gille) and from an ontological perspective, by using the *process of technical concretization* (Gilbert Simondon). This radical empiricity of the technical object could be expressed in a mythical from coupling with both the figures of Prometheus and Epimetheus. Because temporality is the true principle of human self-individuation, Stiegler is compelled to prove that philosophy of time is incomplete outside an investigation of technical memory supports (epiphylogenesis). Moreover, this is main motive why for Bernard Stiegler the technical object becomes the privileged task of any philosophical inquiry to come. In the same time, the theory of originary technicity corresponds to an abolition of the instrumental function of technical objects – which means in the same time, bypassing any kind of biologism. All those methodological moves assure the originality of Bernard Stiegler's philosophy, because in the end, technicity is nothing else than *a new type of memory*.

To conclude, our hypothesis which also in the end confirmed itself was that Bernard Stiegler escapes from anthropocentrism by the mythical figures of Prometheus and Epimetheus. From a philosophical perspective, such a move expresses the simultaneity between humanity's *default* (*défaut*) of origin and the supplementation of this fundamental lack by another kind of origin, that of technical exteriorization.