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Why Is New Materialism Not the Answer? Approaching Hyper-Matter, Reinventing the Sense of Critique Beyond 'Theory'

The article offers a new model of materialist philosophical critique (general technocritique or digital critique) as a critical response to new materialism(s). Drawing on the reinterpretation of the legacy of European philosophies and works by Bernard Stiegler, the article strives to elaborate authentically new theoretical account of matter, notably in relation to the techno-logical mode of its organisation. The critique of new materialism(s) is positioned within the unprecedented crisis of the theoretical model of knowledge. What it is possible to discover by the end of the second decade of the 21st century is that humanities scholars have not managed to confront the central issue for their viable future: the whole theoretical and methodological model, which has so far provided fuel for the contemporary humanities and shaped our social class, postcolonial, gender, queer and other sensibilities, is plunging into a deep epistemological crisis, for having lost its efficient and final cause. In a nutshell, the model of “doing theory,” is no longer valid, inasmuch as “theory” strangely misrecognized the revolutionary developments in cybernetics, which occurred in the 1950s and radically changed the very nature of knowledge. Therefore, a new *epistēmē* has to be formed in this new digital condition. However, the

formation of this new *epistēmē* requires for us to radically transform what is referred to as “theory” or “critical theory” and to take into account the developments in the sciences and technology (not necessarily in the methodological framework offered by what is defined as STS) in order to lay the foundations under a new critique of political economy in the hyper-material era.

Keywords: entropy, posthumanism, new materialism, technology, inorganic matter, cybernetics, Bernard Stiegler, Yuk, Hui, Gilbert Simondon

“In the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial.” (Valéry 1964, 225, originally published in 1928)

“The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation.” (Lyotard 1984, 4, originally published in 1979)

A ‘left-wing’ thought is what considers in facts that which exceeds them as the laws that they conceal, that they require, and which falls within a function of reason that sets them up as the condition of possibility, *après coup*, of such facts. It is necessary to redress facts with rules of law, so that, indeed, in law and not just in fact, they can *last and intensify the durability of forms of life that emerge therefrom* [...] Of course, there is ‘right-wing’ thought that thinks this way – and it often goes much further than ‘left-wing’ thought.

To admit this does not mean that right and left will thereby be dissolved into one another. It is, again, a matter of doing justice to the quasi-causal logic of the *pharmakon*. In this pharmacology, what continues to distinguish right and left today is the status of calculation, and this is what keeps me firmly anchored to the side of the latter [...].

Nevertheless, calculation here is not what must be rejected or treated pejoratively: it is what, through critique, must be limited by reason.
(Stiegler 2019, 202)

The 1980s was not only a decade in which the free-market shift took place in Europe under American-becoming-planetary capitalism and the neoliberal conservative revolution. That the hegemonic power of the market has consumed all areas of social life and significantly transformed life itself into technologically controlled, massively synchronized and ecologically devastating consumption is a well-known fact (yet constantly repressed by many) whose consequences we are facing now. However, free-market ideology has also made quite an impact on how academic knowledge is *processed*—rather than produced—in the epoch of media and how this processed knowledge circulates both in society and research community, henceforth formed/transformed/deformed by media.

In 1983, when discussing changes in the politics of publishing as one of the effects of the dislocation of the university and an increase in

the number of students and professors who came to constitute a kind of a social mass, Michel Foucault pointed out:

Nowadays entropy sets in at an alarming rate. I could give personal examples. It took fifteen years to convert my book about madness into a slogan: all mad people were confined in the 18th century. But it did not even take 15 months—it only took three weeks—to convert my book on will to knowledge into the slogan “Sexuality has never been repressed.” In my own experience, I have seen this entropy accelerate in a detestable way for philosophical thought. But it should be remembered that this means added responsibility for people who write (1990, 45).¹

Over the past forty years, the alarming rate of entropy, that Foucault denounced in the golden age of television and long before the era of media convergence, has reached a crisis point in the digital age. Doing ‘theory’ systematically, came down to recombining philosophical concepts, decontextualized, diluted and converted into mere metaphors or slogans. In a nutshell, the phenomenon—described by Foucault in its still inchoate, yet already alarming state—took on a systemic character.

What appears today as “new materialism(s)” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012) can be seen as a symptomatic illustration of the phenomenon of generalised entropy. In arguing this, I do not mean particular thinkers who are defined as new materialist by their epigones and the English-American marketing machine of the academic publishing market in the field of the humanities. Criticizing how “new materialism” is explained to me by this machine and, say, discussing Karen Barad’s reinterpretation of Niels Bohr’s quantum physics, as a scientific basis of her approach to matter (2007²) are not the same thing. Rather, my point is

1 I thank Dan Ross for having reminded me of this comment by Foucault.

2 It would be erroneous, however, to take this reinterpretation for granted, that is *uncritically*, and fantasize about the ontological, epistemological or ethical potential of what Barad develops as agential realism. Barad’s development of Bohr’s practice of quantum physics should be positioned within the ongoing debate in contemporary physics. We need to distinguish between the scientific evidence Barad refers to when elaborating Bohr’s account to entanglements and her—extremely problematic—posthumanist attempt to make of them the ontological pivot of what she calls “ethico-onto-epistemology.” In this respect, in order to be able even to critically discuss what Barad terms as “intra-action” and to what extent, *if ever*, intra-action can be translatable into social practices and, more generally, applicable to living organisms, it becomes necessary to confront Bohr’s interpretation of quantum physics with, on the one hand, Erwin Schrödinger’s

that new materialist hype makes this discussion extremely difficult, if not impossible, as it reiterates philosophically biased assumptions and recycles philosophical clichés when it is announced as ‘new.’

However, the theoretical entropy which speaks through “new materialist scholarship” (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277) and the current posthumanist urge, as one of the engines of new materialism(s), goes beyond the field of the humanities. My critique of new materialism(s), as an example of systemic theoretical entropy, is positioned within the unprecedented crisis of the theoretical model of knowledge. This critique aims to show how a new *epistēmē* has to be formed in the digital condition. I argue that the formation of this new *epistēmē* requires a radical transformation of what is referred to as ‘theory’ or ‘critical theory’ and a new philosophical account of the developments in the sciences and technology (not necessarily in the methodological framework offered by what is defined as STS) in order to lay the foundations under a new critique of political economy in the hyper-material era.

My argument consists of three parts. In part I, drawing on Stiegler’s concept of hyper-matter and on what he develops as digital studies, I will take a stance on the *epistemic* crisis of theoretical knowledge in general. This epistemic crisis has to be approached in the context of “the end of theory” resulting from the advent of massive data, which has heavily affected the theoretical model of the rational sciences (Anderson 2008), rather than in the context of the epoch “after theory” (Eagleton 2004). A new sense of critique needs to be elaborated in order to face this planetary end of theory and give to the latter a new lease of critical life in the algorithmic reality. What I define as new digital critique, or a general technocritique, goes in this direction. In part II, I discuss the question of what knowledge is in relation to hyper-matter. Part III is an attempt to reinvent the sense of critique beyond ‘theory,’ this reinvention being based on a different account of the legacy of European philosophies.

Although my reluctance with regard to new materialism(s) comes from personal academic experiences and a philosophical room of my own, so to speak, my stance on the *epistemic* crisis of theoretical knowledge is largely inspired by the “contributory research” carried out within the Internation/Geneva2020 group founded on the initiative of the

account to the arrangements of atoms in living organisms (1967, 4-5) and, on the other hand, what Alfred Lotka termed the exosomatic evolution of the human species (1945, 188).

French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, in September 2018.³ As a scholar, not only do I owe to Stiegler a large part of what I can think today, but also I owe to him an acute awareness of the fact that what remains to be *thought, rethought and done* goes beyond any individual thought and inspires a lot of humility and courage—that is a lot of heart too, as the Latin *cor* always already informs us—at the same time. When Georges Bataille admitted that he hated individual thought, he recalled a spoiled brat [*moustique*] insisting: “That’s not what I think...’.” (1988, 108) What I think does not matter. By contrast, what *we* are discovering today is that thinking is not an individual thing. It never has been—as intelligence, to which thinking is still irreducible. Also, we have to finally *dare to know* and radically rethink what ‘the left’ actually means today, when this term seems to have significantly lost its historical momentum. Thinking means to have always already chosen the left-hand path, according to the very sense of the Latin *sinistra*. Thus, what remains to be *thought, rethought and done* has to go far beyond typical leftist postures, old theoretical reflexes and strategies of resistance without a future, if philosophy on the one hand, and what we call ‘the left’ on the other, still have to make sense today.

I. The Hyper-Material Fact and a New Digital Critique

The Malaise of Theory

What it is possible to discover by the end of the second decade of the 21st century is that humanities scholars—at least those who were formed by what is referred to as ‘theory,’⁴—have not managed to confront the

3 <https://internation.world/>.

4 What I mean by this term here refers to the specific uses of French philosophical texts, which gave birth to what is called poststructuralism or French thought (also referred to as French theory) in America. The global academic success of this theory largely stemmed from the decontextualisation and reorganisation of the original concepts developed in French philosophical texts, notably in relation to German philosophy (Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel, Heidegger, Freud and Marx) and critique, as developed by the Frankfurt school and in the wake of Marx’s legacy (Cusset 2008). In this respect, what I define as “theory” might also be called “postmodern critical theory” which takes French thinkers, from Lacan to Derrida and Deleuze, for cultural theorists and seeks to apply their decontextualized concepts, simplified and often reduced to mere metaphors, for describing social and cultural phenomena in the globalized world. One of the side-effects of

central issue for their viable future: the whole theoretical and methodological model, which has so far provided fuel for the contemporary humanities and shaped our social class, postcolonial, gender, queer and other sensibilities, is plunging into a deep epistemological crisis, for having lost its efficient and final cause. Make no mistake: I am not saying that this or that theory of this or that philosopher who loosely inspired this or that 'turn' in the Globish humanities has become out-dated. Rather, I argue that the model of "doing theory," is no longer valid, inasmuch as 'theory'—as "an unbounded group of writings about everything under the sun," (Culler 1997, 3)—strangely misrecognized the revolutionary developments in cybernetics, which occurred in the 1950s and radically changed the very nature of knowledge.

European leftist intellectuals—with the exception of a few, like André Gorz and, on a different note, Jean-François Lyotard—did not take account of the techno-logical shift, which was made technically possible at the very beginning of the second half of the 20th century, either. However, not only was this techno-logical shift inchoately producing a shocking change in every aspect of social life, relations between labour and knowledge included, but it also made the world move beneath the feet of left critique. "The social foundation of the principle of division, or class struggle, was blurred to the point of losing all of its radicality," Lyotard pointed out in his famous *Postmodern Condition*, which it becomes necessary to read anew, forty years after its publication: both beyond the diluted debates on the postmodern crisis of master narratives and Lyotard's relation to Marxism. Recalling Ernst Bloch's *Principle of Hope*,

this reorganisation of French philosophy, (mis)recognized as "French thought," is that it was artificially released from its German debt and, as a result, became a caricature of itself that many philosophers still unfortunately identify with relativism, defined as postmodern. That the success of "French thought" belongs to a long bygone era is one thing. That this success still has a heavy impact on the way we, "latecomers of the twenty-first century," (Stiegler 2015, 17) understand what critique actually means is another. The *critical* problem of "new materialist" theories is that they often reiterate philosophical shortcuts stemming from this Franco-American adventure of "theory" or reject them as a straw man to be attacked. Saying so does not mean that 'French theory' is a victim of Americanisation. It is rather to argue that French philosophy has to be rediscovered beyond the phenomenon of 'French theory' (which has no equivalent in France, to the same extent as the famous 'French feminism') and in the context of European philosophies in order to reopen materialist thinking in its irreducible relation to technology. What is at stake here is not at all the question of the sociology of knowledge but, rather, the way we have to reinterpret European philosophies in order to give them a new lease of life and override the weak readings typical of the Anglo-American/French theory.

Lyotard continued: “We cannot conceal the fact that the critical model in the end lost its theoretical standing and was reduced to the status of a ‘utopia’ or ‘hope.’” (Lyotard 1984, 13)

This complex transformation in relation to how, where and by whom theoretical knowledge could be produced, translated, edited, commented upon, institutionalized and *mediatized* after WWII, as well as the general misrecognition of the new techno-logical *fact* by post-war intellectuals, is precisely what we—including us, Eastern European scholars formed by this largely atchnological “theory” after 1989—need to understand, belatedly, in order to change our theoretical practices.

What is really at stake here is that “theory”—whose “golden age” (Eagleton 2003, 1) occurred when the neoliberal conservative revolution and the Chicago school of economics were taking over Europe, and when European, namely French, philosophers, (mis)recognized as French poststructuralists, were taking up academic positions at American universities—is incapable of responding to a planetary seismic shift we have all been approaching, in the first two decades of the 21st century, on many levels: physical (the climate crisis) environmental (the 6th mass extinction), technological (disruptive innovations), cognitive (unprecedented neuronal network and AI developments), informational (post-truth), social (the rise of right-wing populisms), economic (the mutation of the neoliberal conservative revolution into an even more radical ultra-libertarianism combined with transhumanist/computationalist irrationality) and geo-political (China to overtake the U.S. as the world’s top economy under planetary capitalism, Europe to become an economic colony of these, a new AI arms race between the U.S., China, and Russia, and rising tensions among major powers in Asia).

Of Spirit

The planetary seismic shift we are living through involves a total disorientation, which is either mutating into a panic or producing a systematic denial, of which the global rise of reactionary movements is a dreary consequence. On the final stage of the global economic war under the conservative revolution, what André Gorz described as “economic reason,” its “irrational motives of rationalisation” (1989, 1) included, turned into the fall of reasonable life. As a phenomenon occurring within what Augustin Berque, drawing on the concept of *Fūdo* introduced by the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro (2011), describes as “human milieus” (1987), reasonable life is always collective and comes to matter

through what is defined in French as *esprit*: spirit and mind (not to be confused with the computational mind discussed—and quite often fetishized—by analytic philosophers). “*Mind [esprit]* is ‘weak’ – it is nearly always falling.” (Valéry 1962, 190)

One of Bernard Stiegler’s crucial hypotheses is that “the very possibility of ‘culture,’ and thus of ‘spirit,’ relies on technics.” (2011, 37) As a result, the question of culture and that of spirit need to be approached as fundamentally material. In a nutshell, the spirit is produced artificially and has no origins: it requires technical prostheses in order to be maintained, which means that the spirit is necessarily collective. The spirit [*esprit*] is weak, as Valéry argues, because it can collapse under its own artificiality. However, with regards to the digital fact, the question of spirit becomes hyper-material. Introduced by Stiegler as a critical response to the concept of the immaterial, notably in relation to the so-called immaterial labour, the concept of hyper-matter primarily stems from an irreducible physical fact: what is not a state of matter simply does not exist. As Stiegler argues in his interview with Vincent Bontemp,

I call hypermatter a complex of energy and information where it is no longer possible to distinguish its matter from its form — what first appears with quantum mechanics, necessitating the abandonment of what Simondon called the hylemorphic scheme. This is the manner of thinking according to a pairing of concepts, form (*morphê*) and matter (*hylê*), that are thought as opposed to each other. I call hypermaterial a process where information — which is presented as a form — is in reality a sequence of states of matter produced by materials and apparatuses, by techno-logical dispositifs in which the separation of form and matter is also totally devoid of meaning (2008, 112⁵).

What constitutes the hyper-material fact of the digital era stems from this material ambiguity going beyond either the dualism of mind-matter or the monism in which mind and matter are one. If the dualism of mind-matter can be seen as what Bergson described as a false problem or a badly stated question, “so defined because their terms represent badly analysed composites,” (Deleuze 1991, 17) monist approaches to matter, that new materialist theories are based upon, cannot say anything about the spirit and the way it is shaped by the organised inorganic matter. In this respect, new materialist theories strangely affirm the same

5 I cite here a fragment of the interview translated and published in Technophilia, “a peripatetic blog of University of the West of England staff and alumni exploring themes within the philosophy of technology.” <https://technophilia.wordpress.com/2012/01/04/on-immateriality/>.

limitations as computational theories of mind (Miłkowski 2013), whereas new materialist accounts of politics are “conceptually arbitrary and voluntarist.” (Rekret 2018, 2) In fact, political life is always a question of the spirit.

In short, what is referred to as organised inorganic matter here are technical objects, which are *constitutive* to human beings as defective and irreducibly unfinished ‘forms’ of organised organic matter (Stiegler 1998, 17). As the Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui points out, “what we are witnessing today is a shift from the *organized inorganic* to the *organizing inorganic*, meaning that machines are no longer simply tools or instruments but rather gigantic organisms in which we live.” (2019, 28).

This *crucial shift of and within hyper-matter* constitutes a great and immediately threatening *unthought* of our times. New materialist thinkers seem to overlook this shift to the same extent as leftist political philosophers, such as Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Alain Badiou and Étienne Balibar. Taking care of this unthought is possible only when one recognizes the *techni-city of the polis* and, consequently, the way the political (the spiritual) is conditioned by the techno-logical. What we are dealing with today is that organised/organising inorganic matter, which constitutes the planetary and more and more self-organised technical system, can destroy the spirit, but it remains the very condition of possibility of what is called spiritual life. Taking account of this hyper-material fact—which means to *adopt* this fact critically instead of *adapting* to it in the name of the deceitful neoliberal logic of adaptation⁶—is a new start for atypical materialist thinking, on the basis of what Stiegler tentatively defines as “a kind of ‘spiritualist’ materialism. This ‘spiritualist’ materialism does not claim that the spirit/mind [*esprit*] is reducible to matter, but that matter is the condition of spirit, in all nuances of the word ‘condition’.” (Stiegler 2017, 46)

Organised Inorganic Matter and the Immaterial Error

This atypical materialist thinking also goes far beyond either what is defined as “new materialism(s)” or the operaist uses of the Marxist legacy—notably the erroneous idea of so-called immaterial labour, taken from a debatable reinterpretation of Marx’s hypothesis of “general intellect.” Genealogically speaking, the misunderstanding which surrounds

6 On Stiegler’s distinction between adoption and adaptation, see *Ars Industrialis’* vocabulary: <http://arsindustrialis.org/adaptation-adoption>

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the very notion of the immaterial seems to stem from the narrative about the advent of the so-called “post-industrial society”—a term introduced by Alain Touraine in 1969 and popularized by Daniel Bell a few years later. This commonly accepted narrative can be seen as false or even taken for “a chimera” (Stiegler 2014a, 46) inasmuch as it tacitly presupposes that what industry is all about refers to coal mines and factory chimneys. However, from the perspective of the evolution of technical objects and the systemic submission of technological innovations, originated in the developments in cybernetics, to the logic of free-market economy, the so-called post-industrial society was nothing but a technological metamorphosis in the long process of “the industrialisation of all things.” (46) Therefore, the industrialised appearances of hyper-matter (Stiegler 2008, 11-112) should be assessed in the context of the hyper-industrial, rather than post-industrial, age, i.e. with regards to a society in which human activities have mainly become industrial activities: from health and education to our free-time. In this respect the hyper-material fact requires to be approached as a new social fact in the sense of Durkheim. Recall the classical definition: “A social [hence hyper-material, MK] fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint or which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations.” (1982, 27) Which crudely means that *no political future is possible without the politics of technology*. And this future can come only as hyper-industrial and can only be grounded on a belief that industry, namely cultural industry as described and criticised by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1944 (2002, 94-136), does not have to be a source of regression and industrially programmable stupidity, provided that we elaborate a different approach to critique and understand the very nature of technical objects.

Indeed, the existence of the hyper-material fact is, hence, articulated with and through what Simondon, in 1958, thoroughly described as “the mode of existence of technical objects” (2017) and what Yuk Hui, developing Simondon’s analyses in the digital era, refers to as “the existence of digital objects.” (2016) However, accounting for this hyper-material fact requires a different approach to matter which, on the one hand, largely exceeds the limits of a sociological inquiry and, on the other hand, cannot be apprehended either in terms of biology or physics. The existence of the hyper-material fact involves a third genre of matter whose organisation is *techno-logical*. “Between the inorganic beings of the physical sciences and the organised beings of biology, there does indeed exist a third genre of ‘being’: ‘inorganic organised beings,’ or

technical objects.” (Stiegler 1998, 17) That this inorganic matter also has organising properties, that is “an existence of its own,” is a hyper-material fact which, on the one hand, constitutes a task for critical thought and, on the other hand, remains the biggest scientific challenge of the digital era.

The development of computational methods requires us to develop a methodical approach to what we rather unthinkingly call “information.” Unlike what the physically untenable idea of “the immaterial” might suggest, information is a state of matter. In the hyper-material era, it is produced by what is defined in French as *le matériel*, that is equipment, in the process that Gilbert Simondon, challenging the hylo-morphic scheme, described as “the taking-form [*la prise de forme*].” (Simondon 2017a, 47) That this materialisation—from the development of the integrated circuit in the 1950s through its industrialisation to date—takes smaller and smaller forms with faster and faster speed does not mean at all that it becomes immaterial but, rather, invisible (Stiegler 2008, 112). Incidentally, this problem of the invisibility of information, as a digital hyper-matter, also requires us to apprehend anew the problem of speed which—with the evolution of technics, much quicker than the evolution of societies—appears as “older than time [...] [and] which remains unthought.” (Stiegler 1998, 15)

However—and here is the crux of hyper-matter in relation to knowledge—invisible hyper-material information therefore conditions what Barad calls “knowledge-making practices,” (2007, 90) without taking into account the hyper-material fact that they do not belong to “other natural-cultural practices” but, rather, they are largely constructed techno-logically and faced with the question of their own credibility. Indeed, with the implementation of deep learning methods and mathematical modelling (Longo, Montévil 2017; Montévil 2019) to biology, the planetary seismic shift which has been hitting social life hard to the point of killing the mind/spirit and producing *pharmakoi*, is also heavily affecting the theoretical model of *all rational* disciplines: knowledge is, hence, constructed by digital information which is far of being neutral. In this respect, what Lyotard discussed as the problem of the legitimation of knowledge forty years ago, pointing out the “doubt on the part of scientists [...] as a major factor in evaluating the present and future status of scientific knowledge [*savoir*],” (1984, 8) is taking an utterly different material character and constitutes a potent social threat for the so-called “knowledge society.”

Towards a General Technocritique and a New Organon

Thus, the general theoretical model which is being called into question becomes first of all a *philosophical question*, rather than a problem, as it requires an authentically philosophical response and a profound reinterpretation of the history of philosophy in the context of the relation between *epistēmē* and *technē*. Taking up this immense and immensely fascinating task might open the door to the authentically new humanities and give a new lease of life to critique as a *common scientific approach* to deal with digital information as hyper-matter. Drawing on what Bernard Stiegler develops as digital studies, whose main objective is to carefully think the digital as “contemporary *pharmakon*” in order to discover its curative properties—that is, to make of the digital a vehicle for new forms of knowledge [*savoirs*], rather than a destructive agent of all forms of reasonable life (Stiegler 2014, 15), both on the social and the scientific scale—I call this critique a new digital critique or a general technocritique.

In order to elaborate this critique, one has to overcome the cultural model of humanistic knowledge—in which “culture has constituted itself as a defense system against technics,” (Simondon 2017, 15)—and go beyond the model of the cultural critique of technology in the wake of Horkheimer and Adorno, or the model of philosophical critique of technicized modernity, as opposed to the spirit, in the wake of Heidegger, Husserl and Patočka. What we need is a *critical* change of settings: “The understanding of technology is no longer a matter of a cultural critique of technology. Indeed, the traditional exclusion of technology from culture must be brought into question. To resolve this conflict we must employ a new *organon*, or a new series of philosophical propositions.” (Hui 2016, 47) Which means that new *conceptual organs* are needed in order to transform what we have meant by critique from Kant on. In fact, what is at stake here is a new system of principles and criteria, that Kant referred to as *organon* when describing how knowledge can be established. That this new *organon* of knowledge can be formed and transformed, constituted and transmitted only by means of inorganic prostheses, i.e. technical objects, is what a new critique has to recognize as its starting point, when redetermining and taking seriously the technical and techno-logical conditions of its possibility⁷.

7 Which requires a modified approach to what Kant defined as reason. Since we know “how the mind works,” were we to believe Steven Pinker, which is necessarily not a good idea, we have to redefine how the reason works in a deli-

Therefore, the constitution of such a new *organon* has to recognize “the necessity for a culture of technics” (Simondon 2017, 81): the necessity for taking account of the irreducibly pharmacological nature of the technical object; which also means the necessity for reading Simondon through the lenses of Stiegler’s pharmacology of technics, in order to be aware of the limits of Simondon’s mechanology and to understand the role of technics in what Simondon thoroughly describes as ontogenesis, in his philosophy of individuation (2017a; 2009, 4-16). This critical cross-reading of Simondon and Stiegler strives for the opening of a much more general approach to technics⁸ than a too facile excitement about transhumanism, robotics and AI—that is, about a very narrow and ideologically-biased range of what technics means and what the philosophers of technology are particularly fond of. It also lets us escape either technophilia or technophobia when discussing the *techno-logical question*: namely, *the fundamental materialist question of our era*, which requires a new sense of critique and a new understanding of what knowledge-making practice actually means in relation to hyper-matter.

berately atranscendental way, that is to say think anew the techno-logical nature of the reason, so to speak, and its dependence on artificial prostheses.

8 As to my understanding of the word technics, I take Susanna Lindberg’s statement for my own, “The English language makes a difference between technology, technique and tech-nics, while the French and the German have a single word—*technique* vs. *Technik*—that includes competences, procedures and equipment (*technologique/Technologie* being a recent import mainly used to designate the latest technological equipment). As a philosopher, I mean to describe the entire phenomenon included in the French *technique* and German *Technik*, and I refer to it by the English word *technics*.” (2010, 27). However, in the wake of this statement, I would add, on the one hand, that technics should be distinguished from technology in the sense of Simondon, whose ambition was to outline technology as a theory of technics or its philosophical *logos* (2017a). On the other hand, with a nod to Stiegler and his seminal triptych *Technics and Time*, I approach technics in an even larger way and argue that technics (*tekhne*) designates all domains of what is referred to as *savoir* in French and what cannot be reduced either to “skills” or “knowledge.” Therefore, as Stiegler suggests, politeness, elegance, rhetoric, philosophy, poetry, dancing, as well as cooking, can be defined as technics, that is particular forms of *savoir* or *savoirs* (not to be confused with what Donna Haraway defines as *knowledges*). “All human action has something to do with *tekhne*,” which means that “delimiting the field of technics” is difficult (Stiegler 1998, 94). In this respect the civilisational challenge is to retrieve the technical dimension of technology and “reopen technodiversity, which is now dominated by the transhumanist imagination of the technological singularity.” (Hui 2019, 27)

II. Hyper-matter and the Question of Knowledge

Think We Must. But How? A New *Episteme*

The “fundamental schemas of causality and regulation that constitute an axiomatic of technology, must be taught in a universal fashion, in the same way the foundations of literary culture are taught.” (Simondon 2017, 19) Leaving this axiomatic in the hands of “technicians” is as erroneous as the very distinction between culture and technics, which is still the crux of our culture and heavily preconditions our daily scientific practices. It is precisely this fateful epistemological error which makes us theoretically unable to efficiently respond to the planetary seismic shift, whose nature is fundamentally techno-logical, and to invent the future.

However, the invention of the future requires more than a collection of ideas and a critique of “folk politics.” (Srnicek, Williams 2015); it requires new concepts and a thorough research work which would make the ideas consistent and apodictic, that is absolutely necessary. This research cannot be conducted only from within philosophy, sociology, political science, political economy, cultural and literary studies—that is, those fields of knowledge which are associated with radical thinking. The new concepts, that we urgently need, have to be forged, on the one hand, on the basis of the findings in quantum physics, mathematics, theoretical biology, neuroscience and AI, and, on the other hand, from within a new technological milieu. The only way to a new political economy—which cannot be either Marxist or anti-Marxist, or “post-Marxist,” whatever this “post” would mean—leads through a scientific dialogue and a worldwide commitment of the scientific community. The planetary seismic shift, which is more and more shaking the biosphere-becoming-technosphere, is first of all *epistemic* in the sense of what Foucault referred to as *episteme*: it requires the mobilisation of *all rational disciplines* in order to define a *new episteme*—that is, “the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice.” (Foucault 1989, 183)

The real revolution is to be made within what Vladimir Vernadsky, called the *noosphere* (1945, 1-13; Levit 2001, 74-79; Trubetskova 2010, 88-100⁹). When introducing the term “biosphere” (1997) almost one hundred years ago, the founder of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences

9 The term noosphere was also used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for whom the noosphere constitutes an “added planetary layer” (2004, 151) and ends by overriding the biosphere.

argued that the noosphere—the sphere of human thought, from the Greek *nous*, commonly referred to as mind or intellect in philosophy after Plato and Aristotle¹⁰—needs to be understood as a stage in the evolution of the biosphere, insofar as science transforms the “natural” processes in the biosphere. The noosphere, emerged as a result of technonatural processes within the biosphere, since the noetic is always already technological. To make a revolution in/of the noosphere means to “challenge [it] for the sake of a noodiversity as an overcoming of the system” and recognize that “noodiversity also demands technodiversity as its material support.” (Hui 2019, 264) Drawing on Jacques Ellul’s approach to the *système technicien* (Ellul 1980, Hui 2019, 21), Hui points out that the system to be overcome is mainly the technical system which operates through two tendencies: totalization and specialization. If these tendencies are difficult to seize, it is because technologies which spread with this seemingly contradictory movement are characterized by diversity. In this regard, revolutionary hyper-materialist thinking goes beyond what new materialist scholarship often refers to “natureculture(s)” and focuses on the vital link between technology and biology in order to better explain the technological condition of noetic life and offer a wider account of what is called thinking.

Therefore to make a noetic revolution means to go even far beyond Virginia Woolf’s elliptic injunction from 1938: “It falls to us now to go on thinking. [...] Think we must.” In fact, if there is something which falls to us, it is what Dominique Lecourt—in 1990, when, on the one hand, the scientific interpretation of progress was already dead with the fall of “real socialism” and, on the other hand, the notion of postmodernity was giving rise to debates on interpretation—referred to as the “capacity to rethink thought, hence without excepting scientific thought [from a new world which is already announced, MK].” (2011, 23) However, to *cultivate* this capacity in the digital era means, on the one hand, to acknowledge that “what is called thinking” can no longer fly without the sciences, yet it *still has to go beyond the objective knowledge of the sciences*; thinking has to compose with objective knowledge rather than be opposed to it. On the other hand, this capacity, which also entails the redefinition of the idea of *Bildung*, means to recognize the

10 As long as this noetic revolution is concerned, it is, however, crucial to remember that *nous* cannot be reduced to what we define as intellect after Kant. Literally speaking, *nous* also refers to flair, wit, intelligence and intention. In this regard, the Latin *sensus* might be considered an equivalent of the Greek *nous* (Cassin 2010, xix and 949). Which means that the noetic revolution must be primarily *sensational*, rather than simply intellectual (Stiegler 2011a, 133).

techno-logical, that is hyper-material condition of every form of thinking and knowledge. This redoubled awareness is the only way to avoid “the return of tragedies and immense miseries.” (Lecourt 2011, 23)

What Does “To Know” Actually Mean?

What is really at stake, in the disorientating context which is ours, is still the question of knowledge. Recall once again Lyotard:

Knowledge [*savoir*] in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even to knowing [*connaissance*]. Knowing is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false. Science is a subset of learning [...]

But what is meant by the term knowledge is not only a set of denotative statements, far from it. It also includes notions of “knowing how to do,” “knowing how to live,” “how to listen” [*savoir-faire, savoir-vivre, savoir-écouter*], etc.” (1984-18. Translation slightly modified)

The English word “knowledge,” as well as the word “mind,” are far too general to let us know that knowledge cannot be limited to cognition. Unexposed to translation, monolingualistic, “knowledge” sets an idiomatic cognitive trap for us. Therefore, thinking has to always already be *thinking in translation* [*penser en traduisant*]—that is, *care-fully thinking or thought-fully caring in translation* [*panser en traduisant*]¹¹ for what Derrida described as the idiocy of the idiom (2009, 237). In French, as well as in Spanish and Italian, the distinction between to know [*connaître*] and to know how to do [*savoir*] is concretised¹². Thus the mental process of acquiring knowledge [*connaissance*] is separated from the

11 “Care-fully thinking/thoughtfully caring” is Dan Ross’ skilful translation of Stiegler’s concept of *panser* from his latest works (2018a, 201). The French verb *panser*, which literally means to *heal* or to *dress* (the wound), is pronounced in the same way as *penser* (to think). In Stiegler’s *idiom*, *panser* refers to the concept of care he developed earlier (2010). Therefore, Stiegler’s question *qu’appelle-t-on panser?* (What is called caring?) (2018) should be read as an update of Heidegger’s question *qu’appelle-t-on penser?* (What is called thinking?), with a clear nod to Derrida’s *différance*.

12 The same concretisation occurs in the Polish language, where *poznać* (to acquire knowledge) needs to be distinguished from *umieć* or *potrafić* (to know how to do), the exact equivalents of the French *savoir*.

theoretical and practical knowledge [*savoir*], which is more than skills and know-how in English, as it recalls the Latin *sapere*: to come to know but also, and first of all, to taste. In a nutshell, one has to know how to do in order to make one's life tasty, that is, "worth living" (Stiegler 2013), no matter what we do and who we are. Incidentally, this is even why the central issue of cognitive capitalism is not only cognitive labour and the reticulated ways in which capitalism expropriates the mental energies of the "cognitariat" (Moulier Boutang 2011, 135), but also and first of all generalized proletarianisation. Not to be confused with the proletariat, this generalized proletarianisation is a loss of different forms of knowledge understood as *savoirs*: "knowledge of how to do, how to live, and how to theorize" (Stiegler 2015, 38) and, with the advent of computational capitalism and "algorithmic governmentality" (Berns, Rouvroy 2013, 163-196), "the knowledge of how to conceptualize." (Stiegler 2016, 44¹³) Therefore it is possible to say, with and against Marx, that this proletarianisation is "recruited from all classes of the population." (Marx, Engels 1848, 18)

The capacity to rethink thought, as a crux of a new digital critique, aims to respond to this proletarianisation and to *adopt* hyper-matter, whose organisation is neither neutral nor natural. However, the fundamental question remains: in which *idiom* shall we respond.

The Globish Impoverishment of Knowledge

The capacity to rethink thought, as a crux of a new digital critique, aims to respond to this proletarianisation and to *adopt* hyper-matter, whose organisation is neither neutral nor natural. However, the fundamental question remains: in which *idiom*¹⁴ shall we respond. In fact, to rethink thought in order to adopt hyper-matter as an instrument for deproletarianisation (Stiegler 2016) requires us to fight against the "everything in English" imperative which has radically changed "philosophical geopolitics" (Cassin 2014). For the two last decades, this imperative has systematically reduced European philosophical languages to dialects for speaking at home. This phenomenon, I argue, is a different facet of what Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz call the "Anglocene." (2016, 116) No matter where we come and speak from, we *all* suffer from this overwhelming *monolingistic dominance* which makes us even incapable of care-fully thinking and thoughtfully caring.

13 The notion of proletarianisation, as developed by Stiegler, was synthetically described in an entry in the Geneva2020 glossary, prepared by Anne Alombert and translated by Dan Ross. <https://internation.world/glossary.html>.

14 The French word *idiome* refers to any instrument of linguistic communication used by a community. Therefore, it can also embrace the term "language," like the Spanish *idioma*.

What is at stake here is not really the question of this or that language one speaks or writes in but, rather, the question of the idiomaticity and the epistemological limitations within the idiomatic, that is idiotic limits of any language (Derrida 2009, 175). Understood as *savoir*, knowledge is always idiomatic, which means that it has to be localised in a singular idiom in order to be practiced. The monolingual dominance of English-becoming-Globish, in the field of producing theory, is dangerous because it systematically destroys these localised forms of knowledge, as monoculture does for biological diversity, and ends up becoming *insipid*, that is devoid of taste and knowledge. The existence of idiomatic limits is necessary, as only idioms make us capable of producing singular, that is, local and idiomatic, differences. Therefore my critique of Anglocentrism has nothing to do with any Anglophobia or Anti-Americanism. It rather advocates for going beyond theoretical monoculture and reopening *idioma-cities*. To think from within the Anthropocene means to fight against the Globish impoverishment. If we urgently need to open a vital and viable alternative *within* the Anthropocene rather than out of it, this (still possible) alternative also entails going beyond Anglocentric theory (and the, largely, Anglocentric university). The digital makes this change techno-logically possible through technocritique at the service of noo- and technodiversity.

III. What Is Critique In the Digital Era?

The Powers and Principles of Reinvention

In order to see why this technocritique is at odds with the theoretical assumptions of new materialism, it is necessary to determine what we actually mean by “theory” and “critique.” There is a difference between how these two terms are understood within what is generally defined as the humanities in the U.S. and European philosophies (referred to as “continental philosophy” in the Anglo-Saxon tradition). In this regard, technocritique is primarily an attempt to retrieve the European sense of critique and redefine the latter as a task. However, drawing on the legacy of European philosophies, reinterpreted beyond the philosophical clichés used and reused by “theory,” this old-new critique is to be reinvented in relation to the crisis of theoretical knowledge related to hyper-matter, which means in relation to the question that these European philosophies largely considered secondary in their history. This question is that of *technē* in its vital relation with *epistēmē*.

As one of the editors of Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, which became *A Philosophical Lexicon* in its English-American version, Emily Apter points out:

“Theory” is an imprecise catchall for a welter of postwar movements in the human sciences—existentialism, structural anthropology, sociolinguistics, semiotics, history of *mentalités*, post-Freudian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, post-structuralism, critical theory, identity politics, postcolonialism, biopolitics, nonphilosophy, speculative materialism—that has no equivalent in European languages. What is often referred to as “theory” in an Anglophone context would simply be called “philosophy” in Europe (2010, viii).

To understand this fundamental divergence means to understand the very conditions of what we refer to as “critique.” Recalling this crucial difference in the context of the feminist critique developed in English-American academia, Karen Barad says: “I am not interested in critique. In my opinion, critique is over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized. [...] Critique is too easy, especially when a commitment to reading with care no longer seems to be a fundamental element of critique.” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 49. Interview with Barad).

However, this too-easy cultural critique, rejected by Barad, has little to do with a philosophical critique as a constitutive element of what Jan Patočka referred to as *Evropský rozum*: European reason (2007, 187-190). At the very beginning of *Plato and Europe*, the Czech philosopher, recalling what “we know well enough” points out that “every truth starts from error or half-error, that truth is always the conquest of progressive criticism of that which we originally thought, criticism of our opinions. Reflection moves along the path of opinion and its critique.” (2002, 2) The question is whether such a critique could ever be “over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized”? I would rather argue that Patočka’s sense of critique is very precisely what is so dramatically missing these days. Indeed, only this critique—from the Greek *krínein* (to discern and judge) to Kant’s three *Kritiken*, Horkheimer, Adorno and *beyond*—gives us “the possibility of rationally distinguishing between *knowledge*, *opinion* and *dogma* (for example, as revelation), against all “argument from authority,” that is, not founded in reason.” (Stiegler 2015, 21) Therefore, what Patočka means by critique is tightly connected to what Stiegler, with a nod to Lyotard, defines as knowledge [*savoir*], notably the knowledge of how to theorize (38), which cannot be reduced either to cognition or to the cultural critique rejected by Barad.

A *critical* distinction between European philosophical critique and

English-American cultural critique is necessary in order to redefine critique in the digital era. Curiously enough, even though English-American cultural critique constantly refers to European philosophers, also referred to as “cultural theorists” (Eagleton 2003, 40), this critical difference stems from the uses of European references within “theory.” As Apter points out,

Anglophone readers [are] accustomed to an eclectic “theory” bibliography that not infrequently places G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Luc Nancy, Antonio Negri, Hélène Cixous, Kojin Karatani, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Rancière, Bruno Latour, and Slavoj Žižek in the same rubric with Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Donna Haraway, Henry Louis Gates, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Friedrich Kittler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, and Paul Gilroy (2010, viii).

This eclecticism takes European philosophers “not so much [for] references as [for] common nouns, a form of discourse’s very breath” (Cusset 2008, 92)¹⁵. New materialism can be seen as an extension of the English-American way of producing “theory” and a consequence of the “eclectic ‘theory’ bibliography.”

New Materialim(s) in the Light of European Critique

According to the entry “Neo/New Materialism” in the *Posthuman Glossary*, the term “neomaterialism” appears in the work of Rosi Braidotti (2000) and Manuel DeLanda (1996) whereas “the new materialisms are mainly a research methodology for the non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us.” (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277) However, in an interview published in a book which is supposed to draw a cartography of these new materialisms, DeLanda himself points out: “I am not convinced that avoiding dualities is the key to a new way of thin-

15 For the sake of this rigour, I am reluctant to agree with Rosi Braidotti’s conviction that “nowadays, there can be no reading of Canguilhem without taking into account Haraway’s work; no Derrida without Butler or Spivak; no Foucault without Stuart Hall and no Deleuze without materialist feminists. This is a point of no return.” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with Braidotti 2012, 49) This is precisely the kind of theory that has hit the wall and requires us to find a bifurcation point.

king.” Also, he clearly suggests that “the idea that matter has morphogenetic capacities of its own and does not need to be commanded into generating form” does not entail “rejecting dualisms.” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with DeLanda 2012, 43–44)

One may ask, then, whether this “non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us” is not just a slogan which sounds attractive but does not offer an insight into the nature of dualisms and the philosophical challenge they represent. After all, the solution is not to reject dualisms but, rather, to apprehend them in a non-substantialist way, which it would be possible to define as metastable (Simondon 2009, 6). That the uses, misuses and abuses of dualistic thinking in culture and society can take the most oppressive and detestable forms is one thing. That dualisms constitute (techno)logical supports in thinking *as* schematizing is another. Separating these two orders would be absurd. However, not discerning them or suggesting that one is a consequence of another makes us dwell in an impotent misunderstanding and produces theoretical disorder, that is entropy.

Besides, it is peculiar that some promoters of new materialist scholarship, in their attempt to reject dualisms, ultimately refer to Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* (Braidotti, Hlavajova 2018, 277). However, since *Matter and Memory*, Bergson clearly maintains the dualistic conception of being (in relation to the reality of spirit [*esprit*] and the reality of matter). By contrast, in relation to the distinction between mind [*esprit*] and body, he rather suggests that to overcome dualisms does not mean to reject them but rather to deal with them differently than in terms of opposition (Bergson 1990, 9). It is, then, rather unclear on what basis new materialism can be defined as a “new metaphysics” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 13) and what is actually new in this affair. After all, Bergson’s main objective was to found a positive metaphysics based on intuition, distinct from but not opposed to intelligence as a capacity of acting on matter by means of tools, typical of the living beings called humans, yet not specifically. That in his approach to intuition Bergson still remained a fierce opponent of the modern concept of intelligence, which was making its appearance in biology and psychology (Malabou 2017, 59-63), makes the new materialist misunderstanding even bigger.

The Misfortunes of Posthumanist Discourses

The question of technical life, discussed both by Bergson and Canguilhem, seems to be one of the most critical misrecognitions of new mate-

rialism. This misrecognition, I argue, is a consequence of posthumanist assumptions, which are focused on the agency of non-human matter and do not pay too much attention to what is human, under the pretext of going beyond anthropocentric limitations. “It has become a veritable doxa in certain circles of the humanities and social sciences today to invoke an appeal to humanity’s ‘entanglement’ with a vast non-human world as the basis for a posthumanist ethics and politics.” (Rekret 2016, 225) If countless discourses produced by this doxa are confusing, it is because, pretending to be an academic avant-garde, they rather foster a political status quo, their solemn political declarations notwithstanding.

However, the overinvestment of the term “posthuman”—which needs to be juxtaposed with a too facile and utterly entropic “postology” of Globish academia (posthuman, postdigital etc.)—goes beyond new materialist circles. In fact, posthumanism appears as a global intellectual *trend* of the first two decades of the 21st century, whose theoretical bases are as imprecise as that of postmodernism, from the last two decades of the previous century. As a result, this term has quickly become a catch-all label which scarcely means anything. Notwithstanding my interest in works by N. Katherine Hayles, Dominic Pettman, Cary Wolfe and, last but not least, Karen Barad, who all describe their respective research as posthumanist and try to define what posthumanism means on their own, I argue that this term is simply too generalist, rather than general, since it can be defined only as opposed to a more or less caricaturized humanism and its Anthropos, who becomes a hollow man to be attacked.

In this respect, recall Foucault who, in 1984, when responding to the neo-humanist reaction and the alleged inhumanism of the so-called postmodern philosophers, pointed out that

Humanism is “a theme or rather a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions over time in European societies; these themes always tied to value judgments have obviously varied greatly in their content as well as in the values they have preserved. Furthermore, they have served as a critical principle of differentiation. In the seventeenth century there was a humanism that presented itself as a critique of Christianity or of religion in general; there was a Christian humanism opposed to an ascetic and much more theocentric humanism. In the nineteenth century there was a suspicious humanism hostile and critical toward science and another that to the contrary placed its hope in that same science. Marxism has been a humanism; so have existentialism and personalism; there was a time when people supported the humanistic values represented by National Socialism and when the Stalinists themselves said they were humani-

The inconsistency of the “humanistic thematic” is precisely what makes posthumanism inconsistent too. In fact, the firm rejection of what cannot “serve as an axis for reflection” can do nothing but make us drift into more and more diluted debates and distract our attention from what actually comes to matter and what doesn’t, to paraphrase Barad (2014, 175), in the critical stage of the Anthropocene.

sts. From this we must not conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected but that the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection.” (1984, 44)

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In fact, fetishizing non-human agencies, new materialist posthumanism overlooks the specificity of how inorganic matter organises—and disorganises—*exosomatic* human organisms, in the process that Alfred Lotka termed “exosomatic evolution,” that is, an “increased adaptation [of the human species] [...] achieved by the incomparably more rapid development of ‘artificial’ aids to our native receptor-effector apparatus.” (1945, 188) What Stiegler, with a nod to Lotka, as well as to Erwin Schrödinger and Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, develops as exosomatization (2018a¹⁶), substantially challenges posthumanism insofar as exosomatization requires us to reconsider anthropology *as* technology and take account of the epistemological limitations of either biology or quantum physics when dealing with the *inhuman* issue (Barad 2012, 206-223).

“The Past Is Never Finished”

My ambivalence with regard to posthumanism, in its inherent relation to new materialism, does not strive to rehabilitate humanism. This is

16 In short, exosomatization is a process in which exosomatic organs (artificial aids developed outside the body)—from knives, arrows, wheels to carts, cars and self-driving cars; from abacus to calculator, computers and clusters—have greater and greater impact on the organization of life on Earth. The Romanian economist Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen argued that the exosomatic evolution is an extension of biological evolution, and the economic process is a continuation of exosomatic evolution (1971). Drawing on Lotka’s observation, Georgescu-Roegen pointed out that “with the exosomatic evolution, the human species became addicted to the comfort provided by detachable limbs, which, in turn, compelled man to become a geological agent who continuously speeds up the entropic degradation of the finite stock of mineral resources.” (1976, xiv) In this regard, exosomatization is an essential process for the development of human material life.

precisely the false alternative produced by posthumanist discourse(s) that I would like to overcome. What posthumanism and new materialism cannot see, in their urge to break with humanism and a caricatured Western philosophy, is the fact that new concepts can only be produced in a constant critical task of rethinking, rereading and rewriting the past, in order to produce a difference in relation to what is happening *now*, which means: to make the future happen. “The past is never finished,” as Karen Barad ingeniously points out from her physicist’s perspective (2007, ix). However, what remains to be rethought, through this unfinished past and largely at odds with Barad’s approach to matter, is the possibility of the future, as the capacity for infinitely transforming the noosphere, repassing through the infinitely long circuits of knowledge as *savoir*.

Therefore, in order to take up this task of rethinking the past in a new material reality, it becomes necessary to retrieve—without the slightest Eurocentric pretention—the European sense of critique and to take ‘theory’ for anything else than a specifically American, historically-conditioned and out-of-date way of approaching European philosophies. It is erroneous to argue that “by the start of the third millennium, ‘French’ theory belongs to the world in a diasporic, not a universalist mode” and posit that “the Frenchness of post-structuralism is lost in translation.” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin. Interview with Braidotti 2012, 26) French theory, identified with French post-structuralism, was a “curious American construction.” (Butler 1999, x) By contrast, it is necessary to acknowledge that French philosophy does not really exist since it “has always been developed in relation to Germany and Germanic countries, with Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Hegel, Husserl, Wittgenstein and Heidegger as the main interlocutors of French philosophers.” (Stiegler 2006)

In fact, what is “lost in translation” is not “the Frenchness of post-structuralism,” which is, after all, a very essentialist category, but what Stiegler defines as the “Franco-European accident of philosophy.” (2006) That this peculiar translation often gave a second life to European philosophies and inspired many ground-breaking methodologies is unquestionable. However, in order to break with theoretical monoculture as an adverse effect of this translation, it becomes urgent and necessary to rediscover what we call French philosophy *as if* poststructuralism/postmodernism, which was largely a phenomenon of reception, had never occurred. Which means, on the one hand, to critically discuss the legacy of Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard etc. in relation to German philosophy and beyond the theoretical clichés and, on the other hand, to

pay attention to those French philosophers who were rather not on a standard poststructuralist agenda: from Bergson, Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, Canguilhem, Leroi-Gourhan and Simondon to André Gorz.

Rediscovering this “Franco-European accident of philosophy” is also the only way to apprehend the newest materialist developments of French philosophy, notably in the works by Catherine Malabou and Bernard Stiegler who, respectively, describe a new material reality and its potent political implications, in relation to neuronal plasticity and the pharmacology of technics, two crucial appearances of material life, to which “new materialism,” mainly focused on the agency of non-human matter, does not pay too much attention, under the pretext of going beyond anthropocentrism. Consequently and critically reinterpreting the “post-structuralist” legacy, beyond the interpretative clichés of French theory, Malabou and Stiegler, independently from each other, do not only show that this legacy has a second materialist life, developed on a much more solid *scientific* basis than “new materialist scholarship” and much more inspiring epistemologically than what Braidotti calls “this [specifically American, MK] second life of post-structuralism, which in the meantime dies away in Europe and disappears especially from the French intellectual scene.” (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 26)

Perhaps, since theory has become Globish, the old-new European critique, speaking from within an already provincialized Europe, should entail provincializing America—that is, getting away from the “clichéd and shorthand forms” (Chakrabarty 2007, 3) of European philosophies that theoretical monoculture is deeply embedded in when (re)producing its allegedly emancipatory discourses against mere slogans such as European universalism.

Perhaps, since theory has become Globish, the old-new European critique, speaking from within an already provincialized Europe, should entail *provincializing America*—that is, getting away from the “clichéd and shorthand forms” (Chakrabarty 2007, 3) of European philosophies that theoretical monoculture is deeply embedded in when (re)producing its allegedly emancipatory discourses against mere slogans such as European universalism¹⁷, Cartesian dualism, the binary character of Western philosophical thinking and other popular culturalisations of philosophy, uncritically used in “critical theory.” What is at stake here is, on the one hand, to criticize—with an acute awareness of how this critique might appear difficult discursively and with a conviction that it is absolutely necessary—this *culturalist* approach to philosophy and, on the other hand, to challenge the too facile “idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason.” (Braidotti 2013, 13) This is the only way to step out of the theoretical stasis of ‘critical theory’ and work for the reopening of what Hui, developing Stiegler’s concept of

17 That universalism is a purely European invention is one thing. That European philosophies cannot be reduced to it is another (Lindberg et al. 2014, 1).

inorganic matter, calls upon as “post-European philosophy.” (2019, 278)

The Weak or misguided reading of European philosophers, which is typical of the dominant Anglo-American theory, cannot make *us* post-European. Indeed, the term “post”—as Patočka argued, with no reference to the postology of post-whatever (2007, 274)—presupposes the very term Europe, insofar as to call upon Europe in the planetary era means to call it into question by means of critique. A much more attentive insight into the legacy of European philosophies is needed in order to reopen an authentically new materialist and post-European epoch. When compared to the burgeoning new materialist theories, Stiegler’s approach to matter, which served me as a starting point to develop my argument in this article, provides much better explanatory power not only because it stems from a heterodox critical reinterpretation of European philosophies from the Greeks to poststructuralism. Stiegler, along with Simondon and Hui, also shows that the planetary—that is post-European—era entails redefining our approach to technology, in order to let us understand what it actually means that matter matters and why we need to go beyond new materialism(s) in order to elaborate this redefinition.

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Tytuł: Dlaczego nowy materializm nie jest odpowiedzią? Hypermateria, krytyka a teoria

Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia nowy model materialistycznej krytyki filozoficznej (technokrytyka ogólna lub krytyka cyfrowa) jako krytycznej odpowiedzi na nowy materializm/nowe materializmy. Bazując na ponownym odczytaniu dziedzictwa europejskich filozofii oraz pracach Bernarda Stieglera, Yuka Hui'ego i Gilberta Simondona, artykuł dąży do wypracowania autentycznie nowego oglądu teoretycznego materii, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem techno-logicznego trybu jej organizacji. Zawarta w artykule krytyka nowego materializmu jest przeprowadzona w odniesieniu do bezprecedensowego kryzysu modelu wiedzy teoretycznej. Otóż końcówka drugiej dekady dwudziestego pierwszego wieku dobitnie pokazuje, że badaczk i badacze pracujący w obrębie nauk humanistycznych nie zdołali stawić czoła kluczowej kwestii decydującej o ich zdanej do życia przyszłości: cały model teoretyczny i metodologiczny, który do tej pory napędzał współczesną humanistykę i kształtował nasze klasowe, postkolonialne, genderowe, queerowe i inne wrażliwości jest pogrążony w głębokim kryzysie epistemologicznym z uwagi na utratę własnej przyczyny sprawczej i celowej. Dotychczasowy model uprawiania teorii jest niewystarczający, o ile nie przestarzały w tym sensie, że rozwijana w drugiej połowie dwudziestego wieku „teoria” nie uwzględniła rewolucyjnych zmian w zakresie cybernetyki, które, począwszy od lat pięćdziesiątych, całkowicie przekształciły naturę wiedzy. Dlatego też kluczowe wyzwanie polega dzisiaj na wypracowaniu nowej *episteme* w nowym uwarunkowaniu cyfrowym. Wypracowanie takiej *episteme* wymaga jednak radykalnego przekształcenia tego, co nazywamy „teorią” lub „teorią krytyczną”, a także uwzględnienia osiągnięć w zakresie rozwoju nauk i technologii (niekoniecznie w ramach nurtu STS), co pozwoli na położenie fundamentów pod nową krytykę ekonomii politycznej w epoce hipermaterialnej.

Słowa kluczowe: entropia, posthumanizm, nowy materializm, technologia, materia nieorganiczna Bernard Stiegler, cybernetyka, Yuk Hui, Gilbert Simondon