

Bernard Stiegler on Hope After the Foreclosure of the Future

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For Bernard Stiegler, hope is not an affective mood, optimism, personal disposition or a vague attitude. Hope is a question of i) temporality, ii) technics and iii) politics. This paper firstly offers Stiegler's conceptual account of hope as a form of protention, grounded in the temporal relation between memory and future anticipations. It secondly looks at how hyperindustrial technics erode this tension by homogenising secondary retentions and pre-empting protentions, hence producing what Stiegler (2016) calls 'systemic stupidity' and foreclosing the future. It finally considers the latest work of Stiegler - *The Internation Collective* and *Bifurcation* (ed. Stiegler, 2021) - to offer how hope may re-emerge through practices of transindividuation rooted in locality: conceptualised as the dynamic and layered milieus where noetic diversity, *panser* (thinking care-fully) and hence negantrophy may flourish (Alombert, 2022; Bishop, 2022).

In *Technics and Time vol 2* (2008), through Husserl (1991), Stiegler articulates the relationship between secondary retentions (human memory) and protentions (future anticipations). The former give shape and meaning to protentions as the latter are never formed from nothing, but on the basis of the accumulated memory. The future, that is, is structured by the past, but never mechanically determined by it. Hope, as a form of protention, is situated in this relationship of temporality. Hope arises only when the secondary retentions come to signal that 'long-awaited unexpected' (Stiegler, 2017) *might* occur. Hope names then the tension between secondary retentions and protentions: the anticipation of a future that is informed by what has been, while remaining *open* to the new – a tension that may collapse under particular conditions.

Stiegler (2008) goes beyond Husserl (1991) by emphasising the role of what he calls retentional artefacts (technics: exteriorised memory: writing, images, digital traces, archives, algorithms) in the relation between secondary retentions and protentions (see Ross' 2018, 2021 insightful readings of Stiegler). Retentional artefacts shape and select collective secondary retentions whereby collective protentions such as hope takes shape. The memories through which the future is anticipated are always already mediated by technics: which is *pharmakon* (à la Socrates): something that might be either toxic or therapeutic. That is, hope becomes possible when these retentional artefacts/ technics support *differànce* within secondary retentions, when the future remains open to the improbable.

Stiegler's late work revolves around the *toxicity* of what he calls hyperindustrialism and its technics such big-data forecasts, algorithms, digital media, and artificial intelligence etc., driving force of what he calls 'systemic stupidity' (2016), that i) impose repetition and diffusion of the same in secondary retentions across societies, that is, 'an enframing of the collective

imaginary” (Ross, 2021: 122), eroding the horizon of what can be anticipated in the first place (e.g. capitalist realism, Mark Fisher via Fredric Jameson), and ii) foreclose or pre-empt the future through calculative predictions, forecasts, and algorithmic modelling. These two tendencies are inseparable. In other words, if hope is anticipation of improbable, or as-yet-unthinkable, the technics of our hyper-industrialism erodes it by homogenising the secondary retentions, that is, collective memory that shapes what protentions may be *and*, simultaneously, by pre-emptively setting the protentions themselves. Hope disappears when there is nothing left to hope for, when the future is already uniform, predictable and closed (Bishop & Ross, 2021)

Is there any *hope* then?

Initiated by Stiegler a few years before his sudden death, *The Internation Collective*, comprised of scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, artists, business leaders, designers, activists and doctors, proposes a response (see Bifurcation, 2021). It aims to bifurcate, opening a new trajectory, from entropic tendencies by designing negantropic institutions and technologies that revalue knowledge and reactive the processes of transindividuation (à la Gilbert Simondon): the collective production of technics, knowledge(s) / noetic diversity, meanings, and anticipations. Hope is not a psychological refuge but a political and collective “project” (Krzykawski, 2022), rooted in locality. Locality, within the Internation Project (Stiegler et al., 2021), is not a mere geographical region or a socio-economic unit, but a layered and dynamic milieu in which retentional and protentional capacities are distributed. Locality gathers contributory knowledge and produces practices of *panser* (*thinking care-fully*) that resist the homogenising and foreclosing tendencies of today’s technics. For locality offers difference of material and symbolic flows, it offers an antidote to the enclosure of collective memory and imagination. Localities are milieus where the improbable can be protended. They are therefore “sites” in which the relation between retentions and protentions can be re-opened.