

Living Thoughtfully in a Digital Milieu. A Conjunction of Stiegler and Benjamin

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
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Connecting Benjamin and Stiegler

(1) can be beneficial for further developing their philosophies, and especially for us wanting to understand our current condition

(2) Stiegler's concepts are more up-to-date, yet Benjamin's general framework can improve Stiegler's approach

(3) linking Stiegler's general organology with Benjamin's concept of technology as an organ of humankind enables us to understand technology as an existential milieu of humans



Benjamin on Technology

Non-instrumental, non-imperious, educational purpose of technology

In contrast to the “imperialist” concept, the purpose of technology is **the mastery of the relation** between humans and nature

“The mastery of nature [Naturbeherrschung] (so the imperialists teach) is the purpose of all technology. But who would trust a cane wielder who proclaimed the mastery of children by adults to be the purpose of education?”
(Benjamin)

Technological excellence consists in being good at, and taking care of, the human-nature relation



Cosmological dimension of technology

Technology is a way of “mankind’s contact with the cosmos”

“In technology, a *physis* is being organized through which mankind’s contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families.”
(Benjamin)

Trans-national unity of humankind



Technology calls for war or revolution

the WWI was a failed “attempt at new and unprecedented commingling [of humankind] with the cosmic powers”

“any future war will also be a slave revolt on the part of” technology

the WWI was a “clear evidence that social reality was not ready to make technology its own organ”

the revolts following the war were “the first attempt[s] of mankind to bring the new body under its control”





Technology must be innervated

Technology should be incorporated, or else it will assert itself as an nature independent on humans and “revolting” against them


Revolutions as “efforts at innervation on the part of the new, historically unique collective which has its organs in the new technology”

“the historical task” of **film**:

making “the enormous technological apparatus of our time an object of human innervation”

adjusting the human apparatus of perception

Connecting Stiegler with Benjamin



Technology as a pharmacological organ of cognition

(1) While underlining the planetary impact of technology, both focus on how technology changes human cognition of, and thus relating to, the world

(2) Technology, as an organ of humankind, have an organological function

a general organology as a theory of how life becomes modified by a “*technical and technological supplement*”

“a *theory of technical life* ... as a process whose evolution is *indissolubly psycho-socio-techno-logical*”

(3) For both B. and S., technology is a *pharmakon*: can be both a poison and a remedy, and must be properly “used”, or rather taken care of

Understanding technology as a medium

No Technology to be mastered by Humankind

No objective Humankind, no objective Technology

Yet the real processes we are witnessing (captured by the Anthropocene concept) points to a unitary power of “humankind”, or of its “globalized” organ of technology,

of technology as a currently ill-functioning medium of the human-nature relation





Technology as an organ(olog)ical milieu

Technology as a new organ cannot be reduced to objective means

As an organ, it is not (merely) an object to be handled, manipulated, or even dominated

It as a “life-sustaining” medium of human, i.e. noetic, existence

When something is an organ, it is closer to us than any object: it makes us, partially, who we are

The “technological supplement” is no addendum or mere extension



Technology must be innervated both individually and collectively

Technology functions, physically or “naturally”, irrespective of whether humankind brings this new “body” under its control or not

Benjamin urges us to ask how an *individual* can adapt to this non-individual organ that affects every individual

and to find out what we can do *collectively*, as a (global) society, to be(come) able to live with, and through, this organ

Making possible a caring, or thoughtful,
relation to the world

Adjusting human apperception

the “fully automated informational fixed capital” leads to “the annihilation of living **knowledge**” (Stiegler)

“[t]he way in which human **perception** is organized – the medium in which it occurs – is conditioned not only by nature but by history” (Benjamin)

we must “learn” to understand, i.e.
to “apperceive” (Benjamin)
to really “know” (Stiegler)

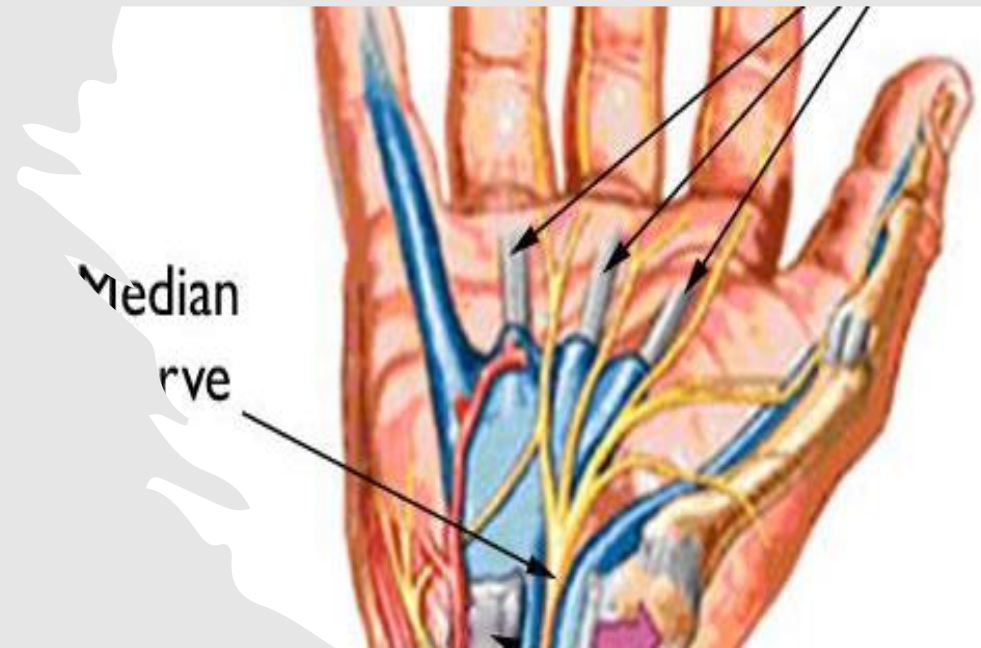
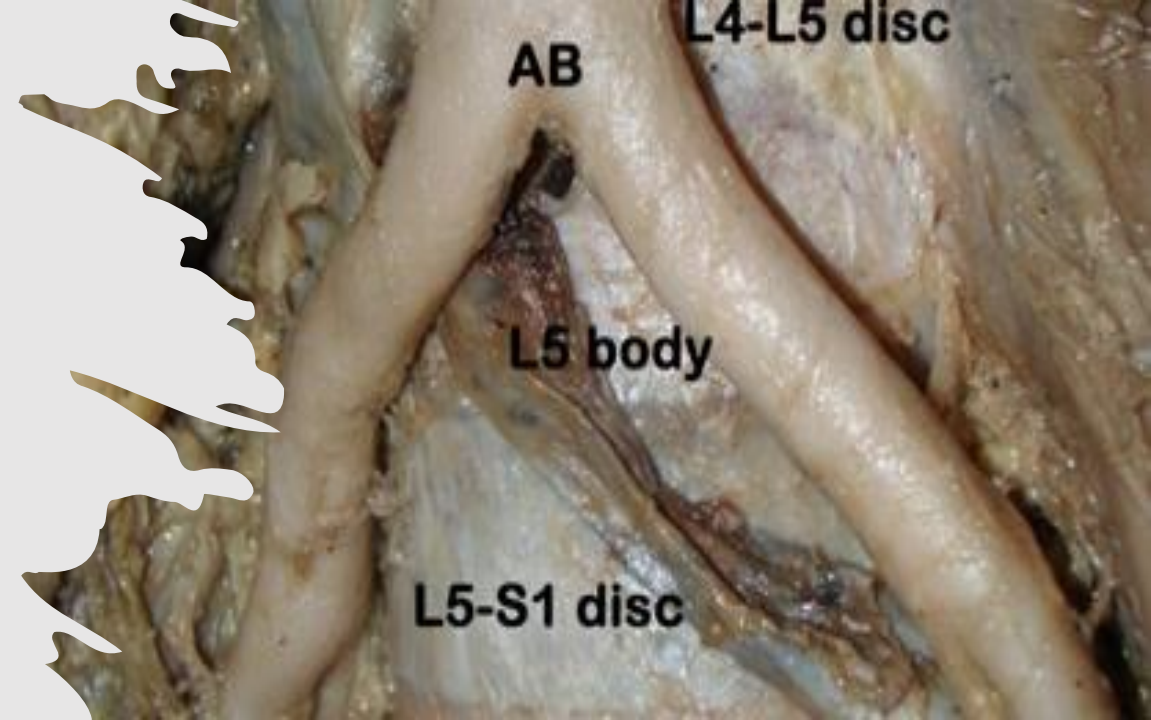


Bifurcation and Innervation

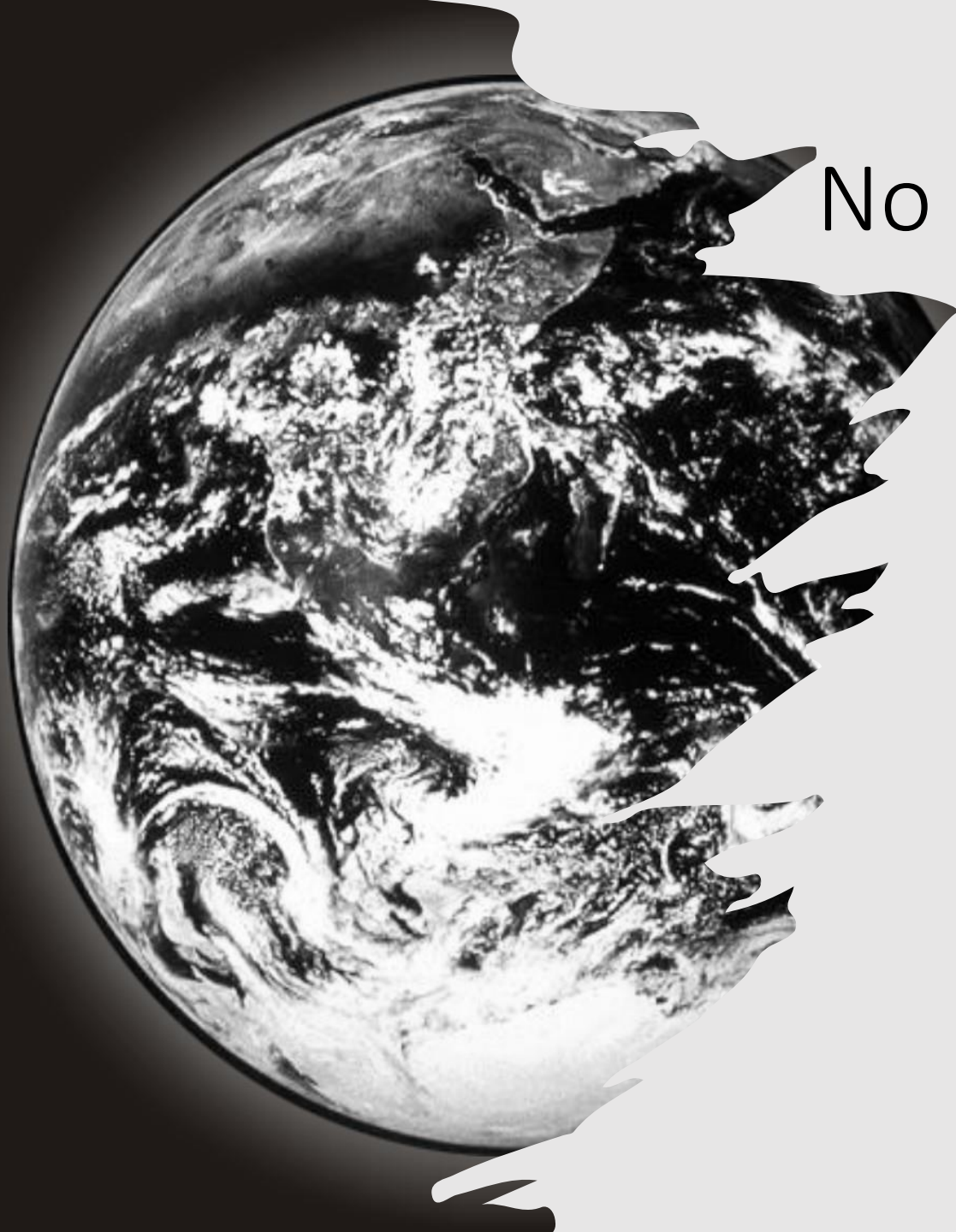
“In creating social cohesion, the exosomatic body ... produces bifurcations in knowledge that dis-organize it in order to re-organize it anew.” (Stiegler)

The process of bifurcation creates new “nerves” while the process of innervation realizes the task of connecting these connections, or of taking care of them as new possibilities of living

no actually realized bifurcation without innervation, and no innervation without bifurcation



Conclusion



No Caring without Innervating

Since our technological becoming is “*indissolubly techno-socio-psychological*” (Stiegler), technology not only constitutes and sustains the human but always requires its own creative *incorporation by humankind itself*

We cannot deny this pharmacological body but must overcome its toxicity using the sources, and hence the possibilities of care, made possible by this *pharmakon* itself

and we must **never think technology irrespective of our relation to nature**

Thanks for your attention.

Critical comments or suggestions are very welcome!