

Chapter 3: Digital Pharmacology: Stiegler

3.1 Going beyond Rousseau with Rousseau

The reconstruction of Rousseau serves as a useful conceptual framework to interpret Stiegler's conception of pharmacology. On the one hand, some parallels can be found which help to shed light on both Rousseau and Stiegler. On the other hand, against the background of Rousseau's writings we can see more clearly what is specific about a *digital* pharmacology and how Stiegler theoretically goes beyond Rousseau in order to get a view of this current form of techno-cultural evolution.

Four basic similarities stand out: first, there is a certain parallelism in the *basic assumptions* about social development. Both assume a co-evolution of technological, cultural and psychological development. In Rousseau's work, the unstable equilibrium of the state of nature is disturbed by a series of natural disasters, which are necessary for cultural-technological adaptation, and which irreversibly trigger the process of civilization in all its ambivalence.¹ Stiegler conceptualizes this development through the interaction of three levels of organs — technical, social and psychological organs

1 Stiegler himself takes Rousseau as a point of departure in his *Technics and Time*, vol. 1: "Rousseau's narrative of the origin shows us through antithesis how everything of the order of what is usually considered specifically human is immediately and irremediably linked to an absence of property, to a process of 'supplementation', of prosthetisation or exteriorisation, in which nothing is any longer immediately at hand, where everything is instrumentalised, technicised, unbalanced" (p. 133).

— in the development of which the technical organs are something like the pacemaker.²

Every development spurt causes a dis-equilibration of the balance of these three organ levels, which is at the same time the germ of both decay and further development — the basic pharmacological figure. While further development means that the new technical organs are appropriated on the psychological level and embedded on the social level (*adoption*), there is a risk of decay if the psychological and social organ levels merely adapt reactively to technological changes (*adaptation*). Thus for Stiegler, technologies are never ever inherently pathological or harmful, but always only the forms of life in which they are embedded. In view of the profusion of digital technologies that is characteristic of the present, however, it seems as if it were becoming more and more difficult to adopt technology in a productive and appropriate way. In a nutshell, the problem for Bernard Stiegler is that technical inventions which operate at “lightning speed”³ — a phrase he uses repeatedly — outpace cultural adaptation⁴. It seems as if people can do nothing but react to an ever-increasing stream of technical innovations.

A second parallel exists in terms of the *consequences* that this disequilibrating brings about in the respective contemporary societies. Both Rousseau and Stiegler belong to the camp of cultural critics who decipher the epoch-typical suffering of people as social pathologies. The phenomenon of *divertissement*, of confusion caused by an overwhelming amount of input, of a huge variety of stimuli, seems to be a common ground. What vanity is to Rousseau, attention disorders and various forms of addiction are to Stiegler. He characterizes our society as an “addictogenic society”, where the “drive-based tendencies are systematically exploited while its subli-

2 For a detailed reconstruction, see Abbinnett, Ross: *The Thought of Bernard Stiegler. Capitalism, Technology and the Politics of Spirit*, London: Routledge 2017, pp. 37–63.

3 Stiegler, Bernard: *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, Cambridge et al: Polity Press 2019, p. 7.

4 B. Stiegler: *Technics and Time*, p. 15.

matory tendencies are systematically short-circuited”⁵. For Stiegler, these processes culminate in a loss of “attention”, which is not only visible in the literal attention disorders as an individual psychological problem, but also in a loss of civility in social relationships. Attention, i.e. the ability to focus intellectual faculties and to relate them to non-existent objects, counterfactuals, ideas, values, is for Stiegler the central human faculty that enables a productive use of technology as opposed to a merely reactive one.⁶

If social pathology is the object of criticism, a state of health must be conceivable as a normative corrective. This is the case with Stiegler. In line with Rousseau, who does not understand the normal and the pathological as opposites, Stiegler defines health as the creative handling of toxic dispositives:

When experiencing the pathological, life is normative: it invents states of health [...]. Health is characterized by the ability to transcend the norm that defines what is currently normal, the ability to tolerate violations of the usual norm and to introduce new norms in new situations.⁷

Here a third fundamental parallel to Rousseau becomes clear with regard to the characterization of the endangered intellectual capabilities, the *proprium humanum*. For Rousseau social progress threatens the authenticity of the person and their will, i.e. ultimately their ability to desire. Inauthentic forms of sociality and social comparison as the basis for the definition of what is individually desirable lead to the development of false passions based on an unleashed imagination. Stiegler’s criticism aims in a related direction. In a slightly different terminological diction informed by psychoanaly-

5 Stiegler, Bernard: *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology*, Cambridge et al.: Polity Press 2013, p. 27.

6 See in particular: B. Stiegler: *What Makes Life Worth Living*, p. 82.

7 Stiegler, Bernard: “Licht und Schatten im digitalen Zeitalter”, in: Ramón Reichert (Ed.), *Big Data. Analysen zum digitalen Wandel von Wissen, Macht, Ökonomie*, Bielefeld: transcript 2014, pp. 35–46, p. 43.

sis he employs the conception of a “libidinal economy of desire”⁸. For him the ability to pay attention is also part of the ability to desire: it creates desires and enables their sublimation — an ability that is almost completely regressed in addictive behavior.⁹ The conceptual framework of general organology¹⁰ allows Stiegler to place “desire” and the technical environment in a fundamental relationship of co-constitution: desire is created by “tools” with which one constructs a future for oneself¹¹: the plasticity of the drive structure is formed depending on the available tools that enable satisfaction in the near or distant future. Technologies that systematically guarantee short-term satisfaction, as many digital devices do, outsource this to the technical organ: the result is “exteriorization without return — that is, without re-interiorization”¹².

Fourth, both Rousseau and Stiegler alternate between homeopathic and allopathic remedies when they outline *possible solutions* to the pharmacological question. We will describe this difference in more detail later; however, it seems helpful to note that both Rousseau and Stiegler think that the remedy for intoxication could be based on applying either a more skillful dosage or different *pharmaka*. This would, of course, imply that the “loneliness” of the “*promeneur solitaire*” in his last writings could also be read as a *pharmakon*.

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- 8 B. Stiegler: What Makes Life Worth Living, p. 24f.; see also Stiegler, Bernard: “Pharmacology of Desire: Drive-based capitalism and libidinal dis-economy”, in: New Formations 72 (2011), pp. 150–161.
 - 9 “The formation of desire is characterized by addiction when adhesive libido attaches itself to pharmaka that generate rhythms and expectations of such immediate reward that the focus of attention becomes narrowly fixated on the present.” (B. Stiegler: What Makes Life Worth Living: p. 25.).
 - 10 Stiegler, Bernard: “Elements for a General Organology”, in: Derrida Today 13 (2020), pp. 72–94, DOI: 10.3366/drt.2020.0220.
 - 11 B. Stiegler: What Makes Life Worth Living, p. 24–25.
 - 12 Stiegler, Bernard: “Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering”, Computational Culture 2 (2012b), <http://computationalculture.net/die-aufklarung-in-the-age-of-philosophical-engineering/> (01.02.2021), p. 10.

While in the four points mentioned Stiegler's pharmacology can be understood as an update and further development of Rousseau's conception, in two regards he goes well beyond Rousseau. On the one hand, he poses the question of responsibility and asks what kinds of social and political actors benefit from the processes he describes as harmful to society. In the case of Rousseau, "society" seems to be an amorphous agent of alienation; Stiegler names the business-models which monetarize the destruction of human attention. He explicitly criticizes the coalition of the actors of financial market capitalism with the entertainment industries, a form of "globalized psycho-power [which] is the systematic organization of the capture of attention made possible by the psycho-technologies that have developed with radio (1920), television (1950) and digital technologies (1990)"¹³.

The fact that he understands the grievances as the outcome of exploitation is evident in his replacement of the concept of alienation, which was central to Rousseau, by the term "proletarianization", which he adopts from Marx, but which he removes from its social-historical context and generally defines as the loss of knowledge through the delegation of activities to an artificial organ. The proletarianization of the producer, criticized by Marx as a paradigmatic relationship of exploitation of the industrial workers, is only the first stage of an overarching cultural rationalization process, which Stiegler describes as "a process of generalized proletarianization"¹⁴. The first stage of the "proletarianization of the producer", in which only the skill (*savoir-faire*) is outsourced to machines, is followed by two further stages, the proletarianization of the consumer by the entertainment industry, which leads to an outsourcing of *savoir-vivre* and, finally, the delegation of thinking and making decisions (*noesis*) to machines in the present through digital smart technologies.

On the other hand, Stiegler can concretize how the technological media change is altering psychological structures by breaking new

13 B. Stiegler: What Makes Life Worth Living, p. 81.

14 B. Stiegler: What Makes Life Worth Living, p. 27.

ground with the concept of “grammatization”, which raises pharmacological analysis to a new level. The concept stems from the discourse on grammatology and Derrida’s theory on the structuring power of written language,¹⁵ but is expanded by Stiegler in the context of his general organology to an encompassing theory that explains how technological changes reconfigure social and psychological systems: “I have myself extended this concept”, Stiegler writes, “by arguing that grammatisation (*sic*) more generally describes all technical processes that enable behavioral fluxes or flows to be made discrete [...] and to be reproduced, those behavioral flows through which are expressed or imprinted the experiences of human beings (speaking, working, perceiving, interacting and so on). If grammatisation is understood in this way, then the digital is the most recent stage of grammatisation.”¹⁶ Grammatization thus encompasses all “processes by which a material, sensory, or symbolic flux becomes a gramme”¹⁷ — “gramme” being the Greek term for “written mark”.

Elements of grammatization are a *formalization* of hitherto opaque processes by a “spatialization of time” through “materialization”¹⁸; this results in the *reproducibility* of these processes which thus become objects of control and criticism, hence bringing about reflexivity.¹⁹

By moving away from the paradigm of writing, Stiegler can comprehend central technological innovation processes such as

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- 15 On Derrida and Stiegler, see R. Abbinnett: *The Thought of Bernard Stiegler*, ch. 1, p. 11ff; see also Ross, Daniel: “Pharmacology and Critique after Deconstruction”, in: Christina Howells/Gerald Moore (Eds.), *Stiegler and Technics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2013, pp. 243–258.
 - 16 B. Stiegler: *Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering*, p. 5 (English source text in British spelling).
 - 17 Tinnell, John: “Grammatization: Bernard Stiegler’s Theory of Writing and Technology”, in: *Computers and Composition* 37 (2015), pp. 132–146, p. 135.
 - 18 B. Stiegler: *Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering*, p. 5f.
 - 19 Stiegler, Bernard: “The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies”, in: Geert Lovink/Miriam Rasch (Eds.), *Unlike Us Reader. Social Media Monopolies and their Alternatives*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures 2013b, pp. 16–30, p. 25.

the invention of typeface and letterpress printing, but also industrialization, the bio- and nanotechnological revolution²⁰ and digitalization as stages in grammatization. In contrast to both a deterministic and a constructivist understanding of human-techno-relations, Stiegler's perspective allows one to conceive of them as co-constituted through grammatization²¹.

Stiegler's conception of grammatization, together with his critical focus on the economic and political structures in which changes in the technical infrastructure are embedded, provides him with a powerful analytical tool to scrutinize processes of digitalization which are currently unfolding. Three aspects will be reconstructed here in some detail: the grammatization of the "reading brain", the grammatization of social relations and the grammatization of image consciousness.

3.2 Digital Grammatization I or: from the 'reading brain' to the 'twitter brain'

The paradigmatic example of a grammatization process is the series of innovations set in motion by the invention of written language. Stiegler basically distinguishes between two epochs in this overarching process: the introduction of alphabetical writing in ancient Greece, which "opened up the possibility of the *politeia*, of positive law and of isonomy"²². And the spread of the written language through the development of the printing press and the associated literacy, first of the bourgeoisie and then of ever wider sections of the population, which led to the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Enlightenment, opening a critical space for a reading audience.

20 B. Stiegler: *What Makes Life Worth Living*, pp. 116f., 129f.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

22 Stiegler, Bernard: "The Carnival of the New Screen: From Hegemony to Isonomy", in: Pelle Snickars/Patrick Vonderau (Eds.), *The YouTube reader*, Stockholm: National Library of Sweden 2010, pp. 40–59, p. 45.

In order to describe in some detail how the psychological organ level underwent a profound change in the course of this process, he refers to the text “Writing the Self”, in which Foucault introduces writing as a technique of the self, as it was already analyzed by Rousseau as a medium of auto-pharmacological control. However, he does not stop here, but underpins these rather hermeneutic interpretations by hard facts that give empirical evidence to the idea of a “re-writing” of the self.²³ Stiegler takes up Maryanne Wolf’s concept of a “reading brain” — a prerequisite, as it were, for the “writing self”. Wolf’s neuroscientific research has shown that reading changes the neuroplasticity of the brain and enables abstract thinking operations that were previously inaccessible: “In much the way reading reflects the brain’s capacity for going beyond the original design of its structures, it also reflects the reader’s capacity to go beyond what is given by the text and the author”²⁴.

With a view to the human faculty of attention, which is central to Stiegler, reading trains a skill that Stiegler describes as “deep attention”, based on Patricia Hayles’ definition of the term. Hayles describes deep attention as “a precious social achievement that took centuries, even millennia, to cultivate, facilitated by the spread of libraries, better K-12 schools, more access to colleges and universities, and so forth. Indeed, certain complex tasks can be accomplished only with deep attention: it is a heritage we cannot afford to lose”²⁵.

It is precisely the loss of this capacity for deep attention that Hayles fears in the age of digital reading. Key factors here are the serial consumption of digital snippets of text via Twitter, the distraction from the text content on websites through constant cross-references in the form of colored hyperlinks, the impossibility of portioning a screen text in the form of discrete pages and connecting it with haptic impressions. All of this, according to Hayles, promotes a different, less focused form of attention, which she refers

23 B. Stiegler: *Elements for a General Organology*, p. 81ff.

24 M. Wolf: *Proust and the Squid*, p. 15.

25 Hayles, N. Katherine: *How We Think. Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2012, p. 99.

to as “hyper-attention”. More figuratively, but in much in the same vein, Wolf speaks of “twitter brains” that the digital reader is likely to develop.²⁶ Despite their respective critical perspectives, Hayles and Wolf are far from seeing hyper-attention as an inferior or privative cognitive mode. In Hayles’ view, both modes have advantages and disadvantages. “Deep attention is superb for solving complex problems represented in a single medium, but it comes at the price of environmental alertness and flexibility of response. Hyper-attention excels at negotiating rapidly changing environments in which multiple foci compete for attention”²⁷.

However, she delivers a clear warning of the danger that deep attention, which is already less developed in the younger generation, could eventually be completely lost — a problem that she sees as a challenge for pedagogy and the educational system. Wolf also subscribes to this view, recommending that children have no contact with digital screens up to age two, and only limited and supervised access later on, in order to leave room for analogous “slow” reading.²⁸

In the terminology developed by Starobinski, these recommendations seem to suggest an *allopathic* treatment of the pharmacology of digital reading that maintains a reserve of paper-based reading in an otherwise digitalized world.

As much as Stiegler draws on the analyses of Wolf and Hayles regarding the transformation of the cognitive organ level in a digital environment, he distances himself clearly from their pragmatic solution proposals. In his view, pharmacological analysis must take on a political dimension, and in two ways: first, it is a matter of naming who is responsible for and who will benefit from the changes. This is because, in his opinion, the destruction of deep attention is not

26 Cited after an interview with Maryanne Wolf by Haas, Michaela: “Wir bekommen Twitter Gehirne”, NZZ-online, 27.3.2019 <https://www.nzz.ch/fo/olio/wir-bekommen-twitter-gehirne-ld.1622968> (10.9.2021).

27 Hayles, N. Katherine: “Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes”, *Profession* (2007), pp. 187–199, p. 188.

28 Wolf, Maryanne: *Reader, Come Home. The Reading Brain in a Digital World*, New York/London/Toronto/Sydney: Harper, 2019.

an unforeseen side-effect of digitalization. Rather, the audiovisual (i.e. film and television) and programming industries are systematically targeting its erosion out of commercial interest. And secondly, the cognitive changes always also affect the organization of social coexistence — the psychological and social organ levels are interdependent: according to Stiegler, deep attention is coupled with “the lengths of the circuits of transindividuation [...] Each circuit (and its length) consists of many connections that also form a network, as another constituent of depth, a kind of texture”²⁹.

Against this backdrop it becomes clear that the question of the digital transformation of the mind cannot be regarded independently of the question of the digital reconfiguration of social relations.

3.3 Digital Grammatization II or: friendship in the ‘digital anthill’

How fruitful Stiegler’s broad concept of grammatization is for the interpretation of the psycho-social reconfiguration in the digital world can be illustrated by his pharmacological analysis of friendship networks in social media: “[S]ocial networks represent a stage within a process of grammatization, which leads to the grammatization of social relations as such”³⁰, Stiegler claims. The grammatization of friendship, the most prominent example of which is Facebook, comprises the three levels of grammatization differentiated above, i.e. formalization, discretization and reflexivity. First, friendship is formalized on social networks because it can only be concluded after a request and its confirmation by the addressee. It thus becomes the product of an act of mutual explicit consent. At the same time, the implicit logic of friendly connections is made explicit through social networks and made the subject of algorithmic computing processes that search for common ground

29 Stiegler, Bernard: *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, Transl. Stephen Barker, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2010, p. 80.

30 B. Stiegler: *The Most Precious Good in the Era of Social Technologies*, p. 25.

among the users and make suggestions for obvious connections. The pharmacological question is whether these transformations lead to an increase in reflectivity, thus opening up a space for a genuine adoption of friendship in the digital era, or in Stiegler's words: whether "in digital, also known as social, networks [they amount to] a *philia* regressing us to the state of insects", or whether "they constitute a novel opportunity to achieve this elusive *philotès* among humans"³¹.

Much more than in the field of digital reading, Stiegler sees the potential of a positive pharmacology here: The rules of algorithmic selection and the revelation of the "gramme" of social relationships need not lead to an erosion of the idea of friendship, but could also bring about a new reflective quality in social relationships. For Stiegler, the self-profiling and self-indexing required of Facebook users have the potential to foster "auto-ethnography" and "auto-sociography", which can result in an explication of the social rules of relationality on which the 'real' network of social relationships is based. This level of social rules which establish the logic of the formation of friendships, but also the constitution of the individual participant, is what Stiegler calls "transindividuation". Processes of grammaticalization make these rules reflexive.

As a historical example, Stiegler cites the establishment of a legal understanding of citizenship in Greek antiquity, which was nothing other than the expression of the social reality of the polis as coexistence in formalized friendship:

[C]itizenship forming is grounded on the descriptive grammaticalization of social relationships by way of the written script in the service of an intensification of the psychical individuation of each citizen, and through him or her, of the other citizens, leading by progressive extension, to collective individuation³².

Against this background, Stiegler also sees opportunities for further grammaticalization of social relationships through social networks: "I do believe that the reflexivity included in the public declaration of

31 Ibid., p. 20

32 Ibid., p. 24

relationships (friendly and otherwise) could lead [...] to the emergence of a process of psychical, collective and technical individuation, which would indeed make for a relationally peaceful or benevolent 21st century, grounded in — if I dare to say — a new benevolence”³³.

What stands in the way of this positive outlook, however, is the data capitalist organization of social networks. Stiegler brands the machine matching of profiles as a form of “surgical marketing”³⁴, through which friendship loses the status of a relationship that is not subject to utility calculation and falls victim to economic exploitation. The selection rules of digital script mechanisms are anything but transparent: in fact, they disguise themselves so that the networker remains a mere user (subject to rules given by others). In order to unleash the positive potential of the digital in social networking, it would be necessary, according to Stiegler, “[to] reverse the pharmacologic direction of social networks” and “make these networks capable of becoming agents of reflexivity”³⁵. Two changes would be required for this. On a technical level, more transparency would have to be created, with the selection rules being determined and designed by the users themselves, as in open-source software programing. But there is a second, social level that comes into play in diagnosing the structure of needs that makes the groundbreaking success of social networks such as Facebook explicable. Digital networks function for the younger generation as “a ‘cure’ for the lack of social relations, just as games are a relief for the social desert in which young adults live”³⁶. This need is intended to be met by linking digital networks back to established social forms: “I believe that the real issue is about the arrangement of social networks with social groups (since a social network without a social group is equivalent

33 Ibid., p. 22.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., p. 26.

36 Ibid., p. 28.

to a mafia)”³⁷: “we need to create policed, meaning politicized communities of friends in the social networks”³⁸.

3.4 Digital Grammatization III or: the alphabetization of image consciousness

The change in the cognitive apparatus and culture through alphabetic writing is a paradigmatic case of a grammatization process, but only one case in the larger history of the co-evolution of technology and humanity. Digitalization leads to a discretization of other domains like the *visible*, and this in turn opens up the possibility of developing a new visual literacy enabling the observer to critically analyze images and break them down in order to create new ones from their discrete elements — to ‘read’ and ‘(re-)write’ images, as it were.³⁹ In his lecture “The Discrete Image” Stiegler argues that the digitalization of the image, which is resolved by a technical process into a finite number of discrete elements (pixels), in a way yields an ‘alphabet’ of the visible world, which makes new forms of image perception and image construction possible.

Stiegler’s argument is based on the opposition of analog and digital photography, whereby — following Roland Barthes — he ascribes an aura of authenticity to the analog photo, which is evident in the belief “this was ...”⁴⁰. The analog photo nourishes the viewer’s already existing tendency towards everyday Platonism⁴¹. However, moments of discretization are already inherent in analog photography, because in the frame of the photo a specific perspec-

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., p. 29.

39 Stiegler, Bernard: “The Discrete Image”, in: Derrida, Jacques/Stiegler, Bernard (Eds.), *Echographies of television. Filmed Interviews*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2002, pp. 145–163, p. 162f.

40 Ibid., p. 158.

41 Sontag, Susan: *On Photography*, New York: Delta Books 1977, pp. 3–24 (chapter entitled “In Plato’s Cave”).

tive becomes visible⁴², which manifests a difference between “image-object” and “mental-image”⁴³. This difference is reinforced by the digitalization of photography, because the constructional character of the picture is now made explicit on a technical level and — so Stiegler’s hope — is anchored not only on the level of image production, but also on the level of image reception.

Just as reading and writing, i.e. the reception and production of written language, tend to go hand-in-hand, so, according to Stiegler, the alphabetization of the visual domain also offers the opportunity to reduce the structural gap between image producers and image consumers, which is a characteristic of the radio and television program industry.⁴⁴ The grammatization of the visual accelerated in the 1980s with technical innovations such as portable camcorders and home video systems. These technologies, which put the generation and processing of moving images in the hands of amateurs, made the discretization of image streams possible for the first time through functions such as freezing the image, slow motion, rewinding etc. According to Stiegler, all these “deeply modify relations to the audiovisual temporal flux, allowing one to imagine the appearance of a more reflective and less consumerist gaze”⁴⁵.

Stiegler has spelled out this potential for liberation, especially with a view to moving images (which are even more formative

42 B. Stiegler: *The Discrete Image*, p. 155.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

44 The idea of empowering people who have been degraded to consumers through traditional media to self-determined “prosumers” is one of the oldest hopes associated with digitalization. In view of the psycho-technological advancement of digital marketing through innovations aimed at the subtle influencing of users’ psychological processes instigated and controlled by big data analytics, such as “micro-targeting” and “affective computing”, these early hopes, however, have been dampened. On this see Bösel, Bernd: “Der psychotechnologische Komplex — Die Automatisierung mentaler Prozesse als demokratietheoretisches Problem”, in: *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41358-021-00283-2>.

45 B. Stiegler: *The Carnival of the New Screen*, p. 41.

than photographs for our imagination and memories), using the YouTube platform as an example. The positive opportunity associated with a provider like YouTube is that it “breaks, precisely, with the opposition between consumption and production, and therefore constitutes the possibility of implementing a new distributed and decentralized network of renewable energy in which everyone could be both producer and consumer”⁴⁶.

Similar to the grammatization of social relationships in digital social networks, Stiegler sees a potential for reconfiguring the rules of transindividuation here. On the psychological organ level he hopes for the “production of a new kind of deep attention”⁴⁷, while on the social organ level he expects that the “combination of auto-broadcasting, auto-production and auto-indexation can create processes of transindividuation that short-circuit the short circuits engendered by the top-down system of the cultural industries through a bottom-up movement”⁴⁸.

In his 2002 lecture on the “discrete image”, Stiegler takes a rather techno-deterministic view that appears optimistic with regard to the development of the emancipatory potential.⁴⁹ Later, however, he insisted that the liberation could only be the result of a “political battle”⁵⁰ which would lead to a replacement of our careless way of dealing with the collective grammatization by collective care: “The therapeutic question is then to know how the discretization can be curative — i.e. constituting an isonomy supporting autonomy — and what the political, cultural and industrial conditions of such care are.”⁵¹ We would like to propose the term *cura publica* for this collective curative attitude, in order to emphasize its political

46 B. Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, p. 93.

47 B. Stiegler: *The Carnival of the New Screen*, p. 56.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

49 Nathan diagnoses an “overweening optimism about digital technology”, see Nathan, Usha Manaithunai: *On the Possibility of Visual Literacy and New Intentions with Digital Images*, National University of Singapore 2011, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48646006.pdf> (01.02.2022), p. 10.

50 B. Stiegler: *The Carnival of the New Screen*, p. 47.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

dimension: there are not only *Public Things*, but there is also, if things go well, a *cura publica*.