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RETHINKING *PHÝSIS* AND *TÉCHNE*: TOWARD A TECHNICAL ONTOLOGY OF THE EVENT*

Abstract: This paper traces a set of connections between Martin Heidegger and Bernard Stiegler around the conceptual nexus of event and technology. It proceeds in three steps. First, it examines what is at stake in these themes within Heidegger's thought, showing how the notion of the event represents the culmination of his effort to move beyond metaphysical foundations. Second, it highlights certain critical elements in Heidegger's treatment of the relation between τέχνη and φύσις, which risk constraining his account of technicity within residual metaphysical structures. Finally, drawing on Aristotle's notion of the "accidental cause", the paper outlines the space for a singularity that can be described as the technical event. This is further clarified through Stiegler's concept of the "invention of the human", which theorizes the co-emergence of human being and technology. In this way, the paper argues that Stiegler both fulfils and develops beyond Heidegger's project of rethinking the relation between human being, technology, and event.

Keywords: *Heidegger, Stiegler, Aristotle, event, technics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century was marked by the radicality with which philosophical thought confronted itself, questioning its own status of validity and truth, as well as its claim to engage with reality in a depth arguably unprecedented. Among the figures who made it possible to characterize the century in this way, Martin Heidegger is arguably the first to be mentioned. While *Being and Time* had already provoked a genuine philosophical upheaval — whose effects remain clearly visible in contemporary

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Pietro Prunotto (2026). "Rethinking *Phýsis* and *Téchne*: Toward a Technical Ontology of the Event." In M. Nyírő, Zs. Lurcza, P. Makai (eds.): *EVENT and Its Mediation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Philosophy, Religious Studies, Literary Studies, and Cultural Theory* (142–158). Miskolc: Miskolc University Press, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
https://doi.org/10.70832/EVENTanditsMediation.06

thought — it was only with the later publication of his second great work devoted to the concept of the event[1] that the definitive scope and depth of his thinking could be fully appreciated.

From its emergence, the concept of the event has not only enabled a deeper understanding of Heidegger's thought,[2] but has also fostered the development of this orientation beyond Heidegger's own formulations. In doing so, it has opened a space of dialogue among different philosophical perspectives[3] and revealed the richness of the concept itself. Given the considerable body of scholarship on this topic, the present article takes a different, parallel direction. Its aim is to show how certain aspects make it possible to speak of a technical event, thereby underscoring the crucial importance of thinking the correlation between technics and event. To this end, I will begin with Heidegger's thought, highlighting some central elements — well established in existing studies — that are directly relevant to the argument developed here. I will then point to certain critical issues concerning the relation between τέχνη and φύσις as taken up by Heidegger from Aristotle, which prevent a fully affirmative account of the connection between technicity and event. Finally, through Aristotle it becomes possible to lay the foundations for a relation between event and technics that moves beyond the metaphysical residues still present in Heidegger, residues for example described by Don Ihde as "romantic".[4] More specifically, by drawing on Aristotle's notion of the "quasi-cause", introduced in the chapters following those discussed by Heidegger,[5] I will show the opening of a space that can be described as the technical event. To give content to this formal structure, I will turn to Bernard Stiegler's concept of the "invention of the human".

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1 Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012). On this regard, see Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

2 For example, Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Poietic Writings: From Contributions to Philosophy to The Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

3 On this regard, numerous examples could be provided; let us consider at least the following: François Raffoul, *Thinking the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Claude Romano, *Event and Time*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Claude Romano, *There Is: The Event and the Finitude of Appearing*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

4 Don Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), chap. III, "Deromanticizing Heidegger", 74–91. On this topic, see also Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

5 Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence and Concept of Physis in Aristotle's *Physics* B, I," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 183–230.

The content of this structure will form the conclusion of the inquiry, allowing us to show that it is precisely through this Stieglerian concept that Heidegger's objectives are fully achieved in rethinking the relation between human being, technics, and event.

2. HEIDEGGER AND THE EVENT

Based on what has been said so far, it may seem superfluous to stress that turning to Heidegger is unavoidable when addressing the question of the event. Nevertheless, certain elements must be established to proceed. In brief, the event for Heidegger represents the *coherent outcome* of his entire philosophical trajectory: it is his attempt to leap away from onto-theology,[6] that is, from the metaphysical framework that thinks in terms of ultimate foundation and culminates in the technical domain. At the outset, it should be noted that the event — the event of appropriation — is defined by Heidegger as "the guiding word of my thinking since 1936",[7] and that it designates the space, the *Spiel-Raum*, in which the epochs of the history of Being unfold. The event is the consistent result of his thinking precisely because if Being is no longer to be understood as the cause or foundation of beings, then *Being is the event of their coming into presence*: the temporal and manifestative unfolding of their being. To think Being and the appearing of beings in terms of this dynamic is to renounce thinking in categories of domination, ultimate foundation, or substance. The coming into presence of beings is a dynamic irreducible to the being posited as an object before a subject — as Heidegger repeatedly emphasized with reference to the German verb *Vor-stellen*. For this reason, the dynamic of coming into Being is not something subject to domination and thus can no longer be framed in terms of presence, substance, and necessity — that is, in the terms proper to the metaphysical tradition. In the broad panorama of Western thought that Heidegger sketches beginning from the event, technology occupies a position of particular importance, one that, as is well known, also confers upon it an ambiguous — indeed, *maximally ambiguous* — status. In the famous *Question Concerning Technology*, technology appears as the danger in which what saves can also be discerned. The connection between ontology and technology in Heidegger is by no means new. One might even argue that from the very beginning the theme of technology is constantly intertwined, in an increasingly

[6] As is well known, this does not entail abandoning the fundamental questions of metaphysics altogether, but rather, transforming them in light of the problem of ontotheology. Of course, Heidegger's position represents only one proposal within a much broader and more diverse spectrum of thinkers. On this point, see Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2014), in particular Part 2, 138–289.

[7] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 241.

stratified and complex fashion, with the ontological question, to the point that it could be regarded as a veritable touchstone for the development of his entire thought. Consider, for example, the role of the tool, which is central throughout *Being and Time*. Already in this text Heidegger explicitly warned that without a thematic treatment of the tool, the phenomenon of world would be lost, thereby setting the ontological analysis on a false track that would relapse into the paradigm of presence.[8] After all, the centrality of technology does not appear suddenly in *Being and Time*; rather, it is already present in numerous earlier texts. The significance of technology is evident in Heidegger's early writings, particularly in works such as the so-called *Natorp Bericht*[9] and the lecture course on *Plato's Sophist*.[10] In both cases, one can clearly see how Heidegger's engagement with Aristotle's philosophy — an author on whom we will focus shortly — leads him to consider τέχνη as one of the fundamental modes of ἀληθεύειν.[11]

The importance of technology becomes even more pronounced with the introduction of the question of the event, where the connection between the destiny of Being and technology becomes all the more evident. In the later Heidegger this relation is to be thought through the notions of *Machenschaft*[12] and *Gestell*. The term

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8 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), §43.

9 Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation", in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 111–145.

10 Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

11 These very brief references serve only insofar as they prepare the background for showing how the significance of technology has always been of fundamental importance throughout Heidegger's path of thought. Although the present article does not aim at a rigorous reconstruction of this aspect — a task that is by now no longer necessary — it is nonetheless worth considering one final text, as further confirmation of this crucial importance. What is referred to here is Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). In this text, particularly in *Being and Thinking* (part three of chapter four), Heidegger offers a profound interrogation of the status of technology in relation to the human and Being. The reference shifts from Aristotle to the first stasimon of "Antigone", in *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), (vv. 332–375) 76–78, with its famous definition of the human as τὸ δεινότατον. While a full discussion lies beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting certain affinities and differences with what will later be referred to as the technical ontology of the event.

12 A comprehensive treatment of the question of *Machenschaft* would require reading it in connection with the thought of Ernst Jünger, a decisive interlocutor for Heidegger's later theses on technology and one too often neglected. As it is not possible to address this issue in the present context, reference may be made to Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger 1920–1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007).

Machenschaft concerns a central aspect of Heidegger's treatment of technology in his later work. With this term Heidegger refers to the reduction of reality to technical domination, whereby reality is flattened into the possibility of technical *Machen* ("making" or "doing"). In this sense, the term encompasses a wide range of attitudes grounded in this common root, just as the term *Gestell* signifies the gathering (indicated by the German prefix *Ge-*) of the attitudes inherent in *Stellen* (for instance, *Bestellen, Vorstellen*), which reduce beings to what is *gestellt* — that is, posited and grounded by an orientation that seeks the ultimate foundation of beings and thus their complete controllability. According to what these two concepts indicate, within the domain of *Machenschaft* or *Gestell* every being is reduced to a mere *positum*, to a *Bestand* that can be dominated and calculated through the presupposition of a subjectivity fully in command of the instruments it employs.

From what has been indicated so far, it follows that a different understanding of technology — or, more precisely, of its ontological status — would make it possible, *ex negativo*, to no longer regard it as that which enables the unchallenged domination of the human being, since the human would in turn amount to nothing more than *Bestand*, on a par with, if not worse than, the other beings around it. Yet the importance of rethinking technology is not limited to this. On the contrary, it also allows one, *ex positivo*, to point toward the direction of the leap *(Sprung)* into a thinking of the event. It thus becomes clear that technology itself can assume the status of a "threshold" for the non-metaphysical thinking that Heidegger seeks, hence the statement in *Zeit und Sein* that technology is "the Janus-face between the history of metaphysics and the event."[13] The role of technology, always central for Heidegger, assumes in his later thought — that is, in the thinking of the event — an even more essential significance precisely by virtue of this ambiguity. As just noted, it is a *genuine threshold*, an amphibious space capable both of propelling thought beyond metaphysics and of condemning it to technical rationalization. This *liminal and amphibious character of technology* becomes increasingly evident for Heidegger, to the point that he eventually describes it as "a prelude to what is called the event of appropriation"[14] and, finally, as the "photographic negative"[15] of the event.

To fully develop these fundamental insights from Heidegger, technology must be thought within a dynamic of co-belonging *(Zusammengehörigkeit)*, without the necessity of any definitive reference to a stable foundation. In other words, the

[13] Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 39.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "The Principle of Identity", in *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 36–37.

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars: Le Thor 1966, 1968, 1969, Zähringen 1973*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 60.

proximity between technology and event requires us to think a space of meaning in which the human being is always already constituted, thereby effecting, as it were, a de-transcendentalization of the framework of *Being and Time*. For our purposes, to de-transcendentalize means to pursue the genesis of transcendental itself, whether it be subjectivity or the pairs linked to it — such as a priori/a posteriori, condition/conditioned, transcendental/empirical — as evidenced by Heidegger's increasing recourse to a lexicon of institution *(Stiftung)*.[16]

In this respect, what Heidegger calls the "instrumental definition of technology"[17] is insufficient for these purposes. This is because it merely *presupposes* what it ought to explain, namely the nexus that binds together technology, event, and the human. What matters here is that there are two possible ways of conceiving this nexus. The first corresponds to the limitations of the instrumental definition: it treats the terms of the nexus as substantial elements, already constituted, whose connection must then be reconstructed only in a secondary manner. In this case, the relation is not genuinely constitutive; arising only afterward, it remains external to the phenomenon under analysis. By contrast, the second way, exemplified by Heidegger's own approach, is to analyze the phenomenon as something "*unitary*",[18] thereby placing at the center the *constitutive character of the relation with respect to its elements*. According to the first approach, the human being would be understood as already fully formed at the moment of engaging with tools, which would thus be nothing more than means. In this way, the relational character — *Zusammengehörigkeit* — is lost, whereas it is precisely in light of this co-belonging that the renewed role of technology must be thought.

3. THE HEIDEGGERIAN 'PATHOS'

Although Heidegger established some fundamental elements for rethinking these questions, his position on technology risks remaining, in certain respects, *indebted to a metaphysical framework*. Derrida is the thinker who, more than any other, has made this critical point with particular clarity:

> Heidegger […] perhaps remains, at a certain moment, tempted by a certain relegation of the technical to a secondary position in relation to a pretechnical originariness or a *physis*. […] Here, a presence, a present, or a presentifiable essence, a being as presence of *physis*, would perhaps reconstitute itself, not simply before any technics in the modern sense, but before any *tekhnē*. Even if

[16] For example, see Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–57.

[17] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 5.

[18] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78.

> *tekhnē* belongs to the movement of truth, there would be, in *physis*, something like a truth that would not be *tekhnē*.[19]

As Derrida himself observes, this is undeniably a problem within Heidegger's text and concerns what we have already referred to as a "metaphysical residue", namely what Ihde characterizes as romanticism and what Derrida here seeks to identify as a "'pathos' which, despite so many denials on this subject, remains antitechnological, originaristic, even ecologistic".[20] The aim of this section will be to examine this critical point more closely, in order eventually to arrive at a redefinition of the status of technology.

Derrida's observation is helpful for testing the difficulties involved in connecting the question of the event with that of technology. This connection appears justified when employed as a guiding thread for criticizing the metaphysical–instrumental conception of technology. Yet a closer examination of Derrida's doubt allows us to show that even when Heidegger positively thematizes the relation between technology and event, he is not free from a certain "temptation". This consists in linking the event not so much with technology as with φύσις, thereby reinstating the *classical metaphysical schema that opposes the technical to the natural, granting ontological primacy to the latter*. Indeed, this doubt can be reinforced, if not confirmed, when one considers the conclusion of *The Question Concerning Technology*.

There, despite the well-known statement concerning its ambiguity, technology seems reduced to what "threatens revealing".[21] For if anything in it may be seen as *das Rettende*, it is rather art, with which the text concludes. On this point, I do not find convincing the objection that in the concept of τέχνη one can rediscover the unity of these two notions. The final page of the text seems instead to move in the *opposite direction*—precisely the direction of Derrida's doubt: the value of art does not lie in showing, through what the Greeks already understood as τέχνη, the possibility that technology may have a positive relation to Being. On the contrary, the value of art would reside in the fact that, although close to technology, it is in reality "fundamentally different".[22] Thus, despite the centrality of technology in Heidegger — a centrality that coincides with the ontological question — it nonetheless risks assuming only a negative connotation, stripped moreover of the unity that the Greek concept of τέχνη could have offered it. This would entail the loss of the greatest insight we have identified, namely the amphibious and liminal nature of technology.

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19 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 133.

20 Ibid.

21 Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 33.

22 Ibid. 35.

Yet, in pursuing Derrida's doubt more closely, it becomes clear that Heidegger ultimately falls back into one of the most deep-seated oppositions of metaphysical thought, namely that between τέχνη and φύσις. What concerns us here is to show that for Heidegger the "more primally *[anfänglicher]* granted revealing"[23] is precisely φύσις. To this end, we will refer to his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1, where he underscores the impossibility of bringing τέχνη and φύσις into proximity, affirming instead the ontological superiority of the latter — and in a manner far more radical than Aristotle himself, who employs analogy in order to treat both.

This superiority derives from the fact that φύσις, as already in Aristotle,[24] is that whose cause lies *within itself and is internal to it* (ἐν ἑαυτῷ)[25] — as opposed to the other causes (δι᾽ἄλλας αἰτίας),[26] those bound to *exteriority and accidentality*, which encompass the domain of technics. This difference, at once modal and ontological, is already exemplified by Aristotle, who, following Antiphon, notes that the substance of the bed is the wood, not the form it assumes as the result of ποίησις. For our purposes, it is important to note that Heidegger's strategy is to radicalize still further the divide that Aristotle had already opened between these two concepts, showing in particular how φύσις is "vast expanse of the unfathomable essence of a mode of being that is denied to all τέχνη because τέχνη renounces any claim to knowing and grounding *truth* as such".[27] Moreover, it is precisely in connection with this discussion that one of Heidegger's main trajectories emerges: namely, the attempt to think φύσις, through the Presocratics, as the very site of the event beyond any analogy with technical production — beyond, as one might say today, any auto-poietic[28] conception of nature.

However, little of this trajectory remains for thinking technology, and even less for considering its relation to the event. Yet what the event ought to compel us to think, first of all, is an intertwining of what is proper and what is improper — in this case, of the substantial and the accidental. One may then ask why Heidegger chooses to comment precisely on this passage of the *Physics*, aiming to exclude every kind of relation, even analogical, between φύσις and τέχνη, and instead asserting, in one of the most unmistakably metaphysical gestures, the ontological superiority of the former. In other words, why emphasize the superiority of φύσις as the domain *par*

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23 Ibid. 34.

24 See also Aristotle, "Metaphysics", *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), Δ4, 1014b16 ff., 63–64.

25 Aristotle, "Physics", in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 315–447, B1, 192b13, 329.

26 Ibid. 192b8–9.

27 Heidegger, "On the Essence and Concept of Physis in Aristotle's *Physics* B, I," 198.

28 Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980), 77ff.

excellence of what is proper and internal, when it is precisely the *opposition between proper and improper, internal and external*, that constitutes one of the most powerful metaphysical matrices used to reduce technology to mere exteriority? In this sense, one might say that Heidegger, on the one hand, goes beyond Aristotle — by showing his unavoidable dependence on the metaphysical framework — yet, on the other hand, follows him along the path of the temptation mentioned above. In doing so, Heidegger intensifies Aristotle's conception of φύσις as superior in rank to τέχνη,[29] thereby reinforcing the distance between the sphere of what is proper and has its cause within itself, and the secondariness of human production. Put briefly, Heidegger asserts even more strongly than Aristotle a certain ontological verticality that is not only modal but also axiological: for him, the problem of modern technology is precisely this *revolt of the ontological order*, that is, of the accidental against the necessary. In this way, of the ambiguity of technology nothing would remain except the idea of domination and violence, which once again can be traced back to Aristotle,[30] who describes it as an external cause of a movement contrary to nature, that is, as something improper and accidental.

4. Accidental Cause: the Invention of the Human

At this point, the question must be asked: is it possible to reread the relation between φύσις and τέχνη in such a way as to give full weight to that between technology, the human, and the event? After all, to regard technology as violence imposed upon nature — the domain of δίκη — [31] is necessary only if φύσις is understood as the site of what is most proper, of that which has its cause ἐν ἑαυτῷ. Indeed, this may seem unavoidable if we follow Heidegger's commentary. Yet I believe it is now necessary to proceed without him. Let us note, first, that what is said in B, 1 is not Aristotle's final word: nature is not fully explicable through substantial causes and thus is not entirely the object of science.[32]

To rediscover the path that leads from φύσις back to the event and its connection with technology, we must consider the subsequent chapters. In B, 4–6, Aristotle discusses the *accidental causes*, namely those "κατὰ συμβεβηκός".[33] In this regard,

[29] Camilo Vega González, "Aristotle's Definition of Phýsis in *Physics* B 1," *Philosophy Study* 12 (2013): 337–343.

[30] For example, see Aristotle, "Generation of Animals", in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), E8, 788b20ff., 1217–1218.

[31] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, chap. IV, §3.

[32] It may be observed, in passing, that what Heidegger takes as the basis for asserting the superiority of φύσις is precisely that which, for Aristotle, is the object of the highest degree of scientific knowledge — namely, that which ultimately falls back into the metaphysics of presence.

[33] Aristotle, *Physics*, B5, 196b28, 336.

and for the purposes of the present article, it is important to note from the outset that the Greek verb συμβαίνω, "to happen" or "to occur", may be taken as a partially acceptable translation of Heidegger's *Ereignis*. These causes, for Aristotle, are τύχη, fortune, and αὐτόματον, chance. It is not necessary here to examine these two causes in detail[34] (though much could be said about αὐτόματον and its resonance with both technical automatism and autonomy). What matters instead is to point to the space, within φύσις, of these "pseudo-causes". They are so defined because they designate something *constitutively non-objectifiable*, that is, something accidental, non-present and therefore excluded from the possibility of becoming the object of science.[35] The space of these "pseudo-causes" within φύσις is, as I will argue with the help of Stiegler, the space of a technical event.

Turning to Stiegler[36] is necessary because, as a student of Derrida,[37] he seeks to formulate a positive position out of Derrida's critiques of Heidegger.[38] In *Technics and Time, I*, for example, we see this attempt developed within a paleo-anthropological yet fully philosophical perspective. It is in this context that Stiegler introduces the

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34 On this regard, see John Dudley, *Aristotle's Concept of Chance: Accidents, Cause, Necessity, and Determinism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

35 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, E1, 1025b3 ff., 84–85.

36 For a more analytical discussion of his thought, I refer to Benoît Dillet and Alain Jugnon, eds., *Technologiques: La Pharmacie de Bernard Stiegler* (Paris: Éditions Lignes, 2013); Christina Howells and Gerald Moore, eds., *Stiegler and Technics*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Noel Fitzpatrick, Néill O'Dwyer, and Michael O'Hara, eds., *Aesthetics, Digital Studies, and Bernard Stiegler*. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

37 Regarding the relationship between Stiegler and Derrida, see Bernard Stiegler, "Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 238–271; Bernard Stiegler, "La peau de chagrin: ou L'accident franco-européen de la philosophie d'après Jacques Derrida," *Rue Descartes*, n. 52 (May 2006): 109. For an analytical discussion of these aspects, see Ian James, *The Technique of Thought. Nancy, Laruelle, Malabou, and Stiegler after Naturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019); Anne Alombert, "From Derrida's Deconstruction to Stiegler's Organology: Thinking after Postmodernity", *Derrida Today* 13, no. 1 (2020): 33–47, https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2020.0218; Francesco Vitale, "Making the Différance: Between Derrida and Stiegler," *Derrida Today* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2020.0216; Pietro Prunotto, "Metamorphosis of Deconstruction: Life, Death, and Technics in Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler", *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 81, no. 1–2 (2025): 557–582, https://doi.org/10.17990/RPF/2025_81_1_0557.

38 As should now be clear, my concern here is not to reconstruct each author based on what is explicitly contained in their texts, but rather to draw on them in order to address the questions at stake in my own inquiry. Consequently, for a reconstruction more closely tied to the texts themselves, I refer to Tracy Colony, "A Matter of Time: Stiegler on Heidegger and Being Technological", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 41, no. 2 (2010): 117–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2010.11006706; Ian James, "Bernard Stiegler and the Time of Technics", *Cultural Politics* 6, no. 2 (2010): 207–226, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174310X12672016548360.

expression "invention of the human",[39] which he employs to theorize the correlative emergence of the human and the technical — an emergence that I will interpret as the technical event.

The question posed by Stiegler's text is the following: in this expression, *who invents what*? Is it the human who invents the tool, or is it the reverse? In the first case, we fall back into the instrumental perspective criticized by Heidegger, since *we would be presupposing precisely what we ought to explain*. In the second, we would collapse into an *Object-Oriented Ontology*,[40] leaving little room for the question of the human. We are thus confronted either with the domination of nature by the human, or with a form of naturalism in which the relation the human weaves with its world would be no different from that of an animal with its environment. With Stiegler, however, it becomes possible to continue Heidegger's concerns while avoiding both horns of the dilemma: the invention of the human is the event of the emergence of the human as a *reciprocal co-determination between human and tool*. In this circularity, the "who" and the "what" of this ποίησις continually exchange places: the human works upon matter, just as matter works upon the human — following the theories already advanced by Leroi-Gourhan.[41] Consequently, what this circularity allows us to recover is Heidegger's approach that grants primacy to relation rather than to terms conceived as substantial or atomic. This technical circularity thus indicates the reciprocal constitution of subject and object, as well as their subsequent complication, since it raises the question of whether the "who" should be identified with the human and the "what" with the tool, pointing instead to the possibility of a radical circularity between these functions and positions.

The invention of the human is an accidental cause: it leads neither to something necessary nor to something that occurs, as Aristotle says, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ.[42] It is a pseudo-cause, if we still wish to use that word, but it would be better defined as an event, a *"singulare tantum"*[43] for which no foundation or essence can be given and which, consequently, cannot provide a universal definition of what the human or

[39] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, I: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), Part I, §3.

[40] Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican, 2018).

[41] André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), vol. 2 "Memory and Rhythms," chaps. 7–8, 219–257. Leroi-Gourhan's significance — owing to his perspective linking anthropogenesis with technogenesis — surpasses that of Derrida in this context, as evidenced by the publication of several articles dedicated to his work. See Bernard Stiegler, "Leroi-Gourhan, part maudite de l'anthropologie," *Les nouvelles de l'archéologie* 48/49 (1992): 23–30; and Bernard Stiegler, "Leroi-Gourhan: l'inorganique organisé", *Les cahiers de médiologie* 2, n. 6 (1998): 187–194.

[42] Aristotle, *Physics*, B5, 196b11, 335.

[43] Heidegger, *The Principle of Identity*, 36.

technology is. It is fully συμβεβηκός, that is, the event that institutes them in their reciprocal co-belonging.

That we are only apparently far from the initial questions is shown by Heidegger himself, as further evidence that the meaning of a text — or even more so, the corpus of an author — can never be entirely coherent with itself, that is, never wholly totalizable within a single interpretation, not even the one the author gives of his own work. In *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger returns to the relation between φύσις and τέχνη, affirming that the latter is "wholly other [*das ganz Andere*] than φύσις".[44] It might seem that we are simply repeating what has already been said; yet here Heidegger adds that this wholly other "yet belong […] to φύσις in the most essential way *[am wesentlichsten zugehört]*".[45] By bringing together two entirely opposed concepts — alterity and propriety — this statement obliges us to think the invention of the human: an event that opens an internal difference within φύσις, one that refers back to no science, that is, to no substance, as Aristotle would say. Extending Heidegger with Stiegler, we can thus think this space positively as a limit to the definition of φύσις as that which has its cause ἐν ἑαυτῷ, traversing it from within and exposing it to exteriority. On the one hand, what appears after this event still belongs to φύσις (the bed decays insofar as it is wood, and we ourselves insofar as we are flesh); yet this is already something different both from φύσις and from the anthropological definition of technology. What has been said above concerns not the presupposition of the human, but its genesis, which thus becomes *fully anthropogenetic precisely insofar as it is also a technogenesis*. Nor is this limited to the instrumental definition if, with it, we once again follow a well-known passage from Aristotle, who states that "from art [τέχνη] are produced all those things whose form [εἶδος] is present in the soul of the maker".[46]

Stiegler allows us to move beyond this traditional schema, which Zimmerman situates within Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as "productionist metaphysics".[47] Unlike in Aristotle's account, the invention of the human as the co-production of human and tool must be rigorously understood as a "paradox".[48] This is because, in this event, there is no ψυχή that pre-exists the constitution of the technical object, and vice versa: there is no interiority that, already formed, turns outward in order to shape it; rather, interior and exterior are constituted in their reciprocal referral, within a

44 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic",* trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 155.

45 Ibid.

46 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Z7, 1032b, 97. Translation is mine – P.P.

47 Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 3.

48 Stiegler, *Technics and Time, I: The Fault of Epimetheus*, 138.

chiasmic structure that both connects and disjoins inside and outside, organic and inorganic, life and technology. Of this, just as with the *es gibt*, we can only assess the result, without being able to trace it back to any foundation — for it is the accidental character of a pseudo-cause, something that, occurring within φύσις, has opened it to its *ganz Andere*, technology.

In the case of the "invention of the human", one cannot speak of a pre-given essence, neither of the tool nor of the human, but only of their correlated genesis. This suspends a metaphysical logic of subject and predicate, replacing it with what we might call a *technical middle voice*:[49] a co-constitution between human and technology without recourse to substance or foundation, but also, another possible interpretation of middle voice, the condition for the *reflexivity* necessary to produce tools. This technical middle voice, like the differential structure of *différance*,[50] makes it possible to indicate the common *Wesung* of oppositions such as essence and existence, matter and form, condition and conditioned.

From this trajectory, I would argue, one can remain faithful to Heidegger's theoretical demands while at the same time overcoming certain of his limitations. What Stiegler develops here is precisely the idea of rethinking the existential analytic of *Dasein*[51] based on an *originary technicity* that is never fully mastered, yet which is precisely what determines access to Being. This is articulated in the form of a historical–technical process: an ongoing negotiation between memory, event, and archive.

In sum, the technical event — what Stiegler names the "invention of the human" — realizes Heidegger's attempt to think Being as event, while freeing it from the metaphysical residue of the opposition between φύσις and τέχνη. Human and technology emerge together, in a singularity that institutes both history and meaning.

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[49] On the importance of the middle voice see Miklós Nyírő, "Art, Truth, Event: Positioning the Non-representationalist Paradigms of Pragmatic Naturalism and Philosophical Hermeneutics", *Pragmatism Today: The Journal of the Central European Pragmatist Forum* 6, no. 1 (2015): 89–119.

[50] Jacques Derrida, "Différance", in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–28.

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