

From Simondon to Philosophical Relativity

Jean-Hugues Barthélémy

Preliminary Note Regarding Translation

Before I begin, it is worth noting that the translation of the French word “*signification*” poses several difficulties in relation to how it is employed in my work and thought. In order to construct a philosophy that does *not* constitute “knowledge” proper, the word “*représentation*” (representation) has been replaced by the word “*signification*”, which *also* refers, in French, to the word “*signe*” (sign). While I have translated “*signification*” into the English “meaning”, the comparable English word “*signification*” should likewise be tacit. Similarly, the French word “*sens*” refers to sense-making and *not only* to “meaning”. I have hence translated “*sens*” by “sense(-making).” As is always the case, *new philosophical thought causes new problems of translation.*

Introduction

I have previously called Gilbert Simondon’s philosophical doctrine “*genetic encyclopaedism*”¹, as it can be distinguished from his lectures, and as it unifies his two doctoral theses: *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* and *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. The unity of these two theses was one of the many problems I encountered early on in my effort to exegete his work.² Now, this exegesis, although animated by the conviction that I could reveal all the strength and actuality of his thought, was always directed towards an *after-Simondon*. Even before my doctoral thesis, my work on Simondon was guided by the prospects of an encompassing refoundation, or a *secondarization* of Simondon’s genetic ontology, which must become a *secondary problematic* and *no longer* the “first philosophy” that Simondon saw in it. Such a secondarization, which also implies a reconstruction of genetic ontology, happens within a new and global system whose first problematic is a post-Wittgensteinian as well as a post-Heideggerian *philosophical semantics*, and which bears the name “*Philosophical Relativity*”³. Two other names of this new philosophy are “system of the individuation of

1 Jean-Hugues Barthélémy, *Simondon ou l’encyclopédisme génétique* (Paris: P.U.F., 2008).

2 Barthélémy, *Penser l’individuation. Simondon et la philosophie de la nature* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005); *Penser la connaissance et la technique après Simondon* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005). For a more pedagogical synthesis, see Barthélémy, *Simondon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016 [2014]).

3 Barthélémy, *Penser la connaissance et la technique après Simondon*. See also the second part of *La Société de l’invention. Pour une architectonique philosophique de l’âge écologique* (Paris: Éditions Matériologiques, 2018). The idea of Philosophical Relativity will be developed and expounded upon in *La Philosophie du paradoxe. Prolégomènes à la Relativité philosophique* (Paris: Éditions Matériologiques, 2023 - forthcoming).

sense(-making)”⁴ and “*human ecology*”⁵. These two names respectively emphasise its first or fundamental problematics, which is that of sense(-making), and its political purpose which is ecological⁶. And as the name “Philosophical Relativity” indicates in its own way, the particularity of such a new system is that it is *not* a system of knowledge, its globality being in reality the *most immediate consequence* of the *diffraction* of manipulated or used meanings. Such a diffraction is the remedy to their traditional *ob-jectionation* by the attitude of knowledge, *as well as to relativism itself* insofar as it is *still* a matter of the *ob-jectionation* of meanings by the philosophizing individual. An *internal criticism* of Simondon’s genetic encyclopaedism will lead us to the idea that the new system of Philosophical Relativity is *both global and radically anti-dogmatic*. I will conclude by offering some consequences of the ontology thus secondarized, and these consequences will lead us back to the two questions of technology and desire—both stemming from a critical dialogue with Simondon as well as with Stiegler.

1. Internal Criticism of Genetic Encyclopaedism

In the last chapter of *Penser la connaissance et la technique après Simondon*, and again in chapter six of *La Société de l’invention*, I raised two problems with Simondon’s genetic ontology, both of which are not reducible to paradoxes that could be resolved from inside the ontology itself:

a/ Simondon’s genetic ontology, or “ontogenesis”, is said to be “first philosophy”, however, it is likewise presented as being based on “physical schemes of thought”. There is an *aporia* here, especially if “first philosophy” is to be defined as a problematics that is based *on itself*; this having been the major characteristic of “first philosophy” since Aristotle’s metaphysics. If metaphysics came “after” physics, it also went *beyond* the latter, and, this did not mean “from” physics but rather: with *an autonomy* that alone allows for the treatment of *fundamental* questions that physics does not address. Physics, thus, could not provide a “first philosophy” with “schemes of thought” or *conceptual* paradigms, even if it could provide *analogical, methodological* and *teleological* paradigms (as it does for the new type of first philosophy qua a theory of knowledge as founded in the *Critique of Pure Reason*). In Kant’s case, these were respectively: 1. the *Copernican* revolution; 2. the *Galilean* inclined plane; 3. *Newtonian* physics

4 Barthélémy, “Encyclopédisme et système de l’individuation du sens,” *Klesis*, no. 42 (2018), doi: <http://revue-klesis.org/pdf/Klesis-42-encycopedisme-06-Jean-Hugues-Barthelemy-Encyclopedisme-et-syste-me-de-l-individuation-du-sens.pdf>

5 Barthélémy, *Manifeste pour l’écologie humaine* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2022). See also Barthélémy, “From Genetic Encyclopaedism to Human Ecology”, *Philosophy Today* 63, no. 3 (2019).

6 On these two points, see also Barthélémy, *Ego Alter: Dialogues pour l’avenir de la Terre* (Paris: Éditions Matériologiques, 2021).

as philosophically founded by Kant's Critique. Thus, a "first philosophy" which would be based on physical schemes of thought or *conceptual paradigms derived from physics* would immediately *lose* its own status of first philosophy. Now, in the system of Philosophical Relativity whose program and structure I gave in 2018, "first philosophy" is to be understood as philosophical semantics qua *simple self-"knowledge"* in its own *non-originary*; and genetic ontology, as a *second translation* of this, is *nothing more than a unifying and non-scientific but philosophical synthesis of scientific knowledge*. Indeed, the sciences, in their absence of unity, remain *methodologically autonomous* and *gnoseologically sovereign*;

b/ Simondon, immediately after having claimed the status of "first philosophy" for genetic ontology, adds: "Unfortunately, it is impossible for the human subject to witness its own genesis, for the subject must exist in order to think"⁷. There is an immediate difficulty here, because Simondon's link between the idea of "first philosophy" and the idea of witnessing one's own genesis means that, while condemning as vain the undertaking of the Husserlian phenomenologists, who want to witness their own genesis, Simondon *concedes* to them that witnessing one's own genesis *would indeed be* self-knowledge which a true first philosophy consists of. Simondon also intends to propose a form of radical reflexivity, since he claims that his genetic ontology is the overcoming of the face-to-face relationship between subject and object: the object of this ontology is the process of individuation, and the knowledge of individuation is itself, he says, "*the individuation of knowledge*." But it is clear that this reflexivity *does not* consist in witnessing its own genesis. And since it is "unfortunate", as Simondon writes, that the subject cannot witness its own genesis, then the knowledge of individuation that is individuated in knowledge is a reflexivity *by default*.

Now, the global and radically anti-dogmatic system of Philosophical Relativity allows the construction of a self-"knowledge" that *does not* consist of witnessing one's own genesis, and that is translated into genetic ontology by a second step, thus solving both problems in one gesture. In what follows, I will present this new first problematics, called "philosophical semantics", starting from *other* motivations, linked to the current schismatic situation of Western philosophy and no longer to the internal criticism of Simondonian thought. I will then indicate the reasons why Simondon's genetic ontology seems to me to offer the *second* but adequate ontological *translation* of this new first problematics, an ontological translation that would be subject of course to some modifications during this refoundation and *reconstruction*. But before doing so, I will offer a very brief assessment of the state of Western philosophy today.

⁷ Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (Grenoble: Millon, 2005), 285.

2. Western Philosophy Today: A Brief Overview

For a century, Western philosophy has been divided into two traditions that tend to ignore each other. The first, called “continental”, has a long history. The second, known as “analytic”, has existed for a century. Yet, despite their undeniable differences, these traditions share the property of providing, so to speak, as many philosophies as there are philosophers, with the difference that analytical philosophers tend to specialise on specific questions rather than proposing a “world view” and can thus more easily organise themselves into relatively united “camps”, each claiming an “ism”—extensionalism *versus* intensionalism, realism *versus* nominalism, and so on. The time has passed, however, for this perpetual “battlefield” of philosophy to be overcome, as Kant wanted, through highlighting the conditions of possibility and the limits of knowledge. Today, Western philosophy can only invent *the reflexive unity of this self-singularisation—of this shared disagreement—which has always characterised it*. There will be no knowledge *as such*, but only a *simple self-“knowledge”* that singularises itself while offering a new terrain—or ground—for a dialogue that is not that of the deaf, but that works to think the *individuation of sense(-making)*.

Analytical philosophy certainly aims to establish a dialogue between thinkers in the name of common principles of argumentation. Such principles are also present in much of the continental tradition, and the ability of analytic philosophers to engage in dialogue has more to do with an Anglo-Saxon academic state of mind—*not yet* that of their Austrian precursors Frege and Wittgenstein. It is by virtue of this state of mind that the analytic field can collectively dialogue around a single recently published article held to be a decisive contribution. This practice is not unrelated to the idea that knowledge *as such* is possible in philosophy, if one is patient and modest in one’s aim, and if one’s aim is itself “analytical” and not global. But there is an illusion here, as evidenced by the ephemeral and reversible character of the “decisive contribution” of this or that article, and this illusion was already one shared by Bergson, despite his insistence regarding the radical difference between analysis and intuition. Such an illusion consists in aiming at a knowledge that would be obtained by increasing approximation, *which is already the case for the most “exact” natural sciences*. Philosophy deludes itself about its vocation and its possibilities, for lack of having been able to reinvent itself after its failure in the path of apodicticity opened by Plato.

Now, we will see that the path opened up and invented by Philosophical Relativity will consist in a return to *the most originary watchword* of philosophy, one which has unfortunately never been a *priority*. This watchword is that of *simple self-“knowledge”*. The *new modality* of this self-“knowledge”, of which the new first problematics offered to philosophy by Philosophical Relativity consists, will also allow philosophy *to assume once again its mission*, which does not consist in locking itself up in this or that

so-called local knowledge, but in covering different fields of problems (epistemo-ontological, political-economic, pedagogical-axiological), starting from an attitude that is *not* an attitude of knowledge proper—a privilege granted to the sciences. To understand this, we must first rid ourselves of a *philosophical* bias that is dominant today: the bias according to which a global system would necessarily be a system of Knowledge, instead of its globality being *the very consequence of the abandonment* of the claim to knowledge proper. Philosophical Relativity will consist here in *redefining the different fields of philosophy* so that the globality of the philosophical system can become the *most immediate* consequence of such an abandonment of the claim to knowledge proper.

3. The Problem of Decentering

There is another path for philosophy than the two paths of apodicticity and increasing approximation, both of which are ultimately characteristics of the sciences—in which mathematical apodicticity functions not only as a pure instrument for physics, but as a “science of relations and virtual operations”. This third way is that of the “*know thyself*” as it proceeds from a prior understanding of what is at its core, *and by difference*, the growing approximation of knowledge *proper* that is offered by the sciences. This is why it is necessary to think of the conditions by which the knowing subject of the sciences *differs fundamentally* from the philosophizing individual.

In order to come to what will make the *still unthought-of advantage* of the sciences with respect to philosophy, it is necessary to pose a *new philosophical problem* with respect to which one can indeed speak of a still unthought-of advantage of the sciences. If this problem is new, it is because the fundamental difference between philosophy and science will *not* be limited here to the question of objectivity. It concerns *another* advantage of the sciences, which has been *ignored* until now because this advantage has the *same conditions* as scientific objectivity. This new philosophical problem, which I believe to be *the most fundamental of all* because it engages the question of *method* in philosophy, is what I call *the cardinal problem of decentering*: it resides in the fact that the *attitude of knowledge*, insofar as it places the knowing subject and the known object face to face, leads to the subject becoming *originary without its knowledge*, if it is not accompanied by a *methodological decentering of this subject*. Indeed, once the object is made *ob-ject*, it seems that the *sense(-making)* concealed by this object does *not* constitute the subject, which is thereby rendered *implicitly originary*. This problem is much more fundamental than that of so-called objectivity, which is a laborious conquest whose *first and much broader* condition is the *ob-jectionation* of manipulated—or used—meanings as they claim to be *equal* to the things they designate. By the word “meanings,” I mean what philosophy, since Kant, has called “representations”, a term that has *served* the attitude of knowledge that I wish to denounce in philosophy. It is the *ob-*

jectivation of manipulated—or used—meanings, therefore, that I want to interrogate, because it makes human consciousness itself an *illusionning structure*.

Indeed, *all* human consciousness is *ob*-jectivating with respect to sense(-making) *as soon as it affirms something about something*. The problem here, which I have been posing since my doctoral thesis, is that of human consciousness in general understood as *a structure of erasure of its own finitude*. This *ob*-jectivation of manipulated—or used—meanings implicitly makes the human subject a being that would *not* be constituted by the sense(-making) of these meanings, thus a being that would be *originary* with respect to sense(-making). Thus, *before* the conquest of objectivity, the problem of the spontaneous *ob*-jectivation of meanings by human consciousness as intentionality and as a structure of erasure of its own finitude arises. My questioning here is not only reflexive, but *archi-reflexive*, because it does *not* concern the human subject thought by the philosophizing subject, but it concerns *the philosophizing individual himself or herself in his or her own relation to the meanings he or she manipulates—or uses*. This questioning is also radically *anti-egological*: Husserl spoke of a “natural attitude” of intentionality that forgets itself in its object. This attitude was defined by him as a forgetting, by intentionality, of its own *meaning-giving originarity*. On the contrary, I denounce a spontaneous and *implicit erasure*, by intentionality, of its own *non-originarity*. For the object in which it forgets itself is *also* spontaneously made *ob*-ject, by virtue of the *ob*-jectivation of the manipulated—or used—meanings, whose sense(-making) is implicitly made *non-constitutive* of the subject. Such is the structure of the erasure of finitude within human intentionality.

Now, the sciences have this *unthought-of virtue* that the *very conditions* of their objectivity *are also* the conditions by which, much more fundamentally, they can *avoid implying* the originarity of the subject implied by the *ob*-jectivation of the meanings manipulated—or used—by this subject. We can take physical knowledge as a paradigm here. Indeed, physical knowledge prevents the knowing subject from making itself originary without its knowledge, insofar as physics, a mathematical-experimental science, bases its approach on an *initial decentring* of this knowing subject, which *reconstructs* itself as a subject by passing through the double mediation of mathematics and instruments. Here, it is no longer the psychic individual as such who *ob*-jectivates the manipulated—or used—meanings and who implicitly posits himself or herself as non-constituted by the sense(-making) of these meanings. The knowing subject of physics *ob*-jectivates the manipulated—or used—meanings *only under the constraint* of mathematical-instrumental decentring.

What about the philosophizing individual? He or she *ob*-jectivates the meanings he or she manipulates—or uses—as *equal* to their reference or denotation. But does he or she possess a *mode of decentring* that allows him or her *not* to become originary without its knowledge within his or her activity as

a subject who *ob*-jectivates the manipulated—or used—meanings? The *second* Wittgenstein, that of the *Philosophical Investigations*, thought that the traditional philosophical “language game” led to hypostases, and that this game had to be brought back to ordinary language. The *last* Wittgenstein, in *Ueber Gewissheit*, questions the *spontaneous attitude* that is *common* to both ordinary and philosophical language games. He tries to define—in a way he admits to being confused—what the *unthought* is within such a spontaneous attitude. He takes examples that belong *at least as much* to ordinary language as to philosophical language, and that raise the question of whether it is possible to *extend* his questioning in the following way: any “S is P” proposition consists in *ob*-jectivating meanings in order to say what is real through them, *as if* the sense(-making) of these meanings was *not* what is *never* “there in front of” but what is individuated in me, who is not originary. *Traditional philosophy therefore only exacerbates an implicit self-absolutisation of the subject that is already present in the “natural” attitude.* It is therefore all the more legitimate to say that the philosophizing individual, in his or her practice of meanings, *and whatever the theses he or she defends*, has so far made himself or herself implicitly originary as non-constituted by the sense(-making) of the meanings he or she manipulates—or uses. *Not* possessing any means of *decentring*, the philosophizing individual has *neither* the means of guaranteeing the objectivity of his or her discourse, *nor* the means of *avoiding* the implicit self-absolutisation implied by the *ob*-jectivation of the manipulated—or used—meanings.

I would add that it is perhaps necessary to specify to what extent the decentring of the knowing subject is present, *in varying degrees and modalities*, in all the sciences. *Each* science has its *own* mode of decentring, which is appropriate to its specific object. Philosophy, on the other hand, is *devoid* of any mode of decentring, and for this reason is condemned to aim at something *other* than knowledge proper, at the risk, for the philosophizing individual, of *unknowingly* rendering himself or herself originary in the absence of decentring. For the decentring that guarantees the objectivity of the sciences is *also* what *protects* the knowing subject from making himself or herself implicitly originary at the moment of the *ob*-jectivation of the manipulated—or used—meanings: such is the fundamental point from which the *methodological decision* proper to Philosophical Relativity as a thought of the individuation of sense(-making) proceeds. It will be a matter of the *multi*-dimensional diffraction of any manipulated—or used—meaning, which is never reduced to the sole dimension of the object of knowledge, this being nevertheless targeted through the meaning. What is at stake, in this, is the adoption of an *archi*-reflexive and *radically anti-natural* attitude.

4. Self-“knowledge” and the Individuation of Sense(-making): Reforming the Idea of a Philosophical System

Western philosophy, not having explicitly posed the question of the relationship of the philosophizing individual to the meanings he or she manipulates—or uses—or having done so only according to the “linguistic turn” of analytic philosophy, has not been able to distinguish itself from an enterprise of positioning philosophy as knowledge proper. The “linguistic turn” was intended to be a different way of taking a *reflexive* step back from phenomenology; what was at stake was the questioning of the *language* in which the philosophical operation itself is expressed. Apart from the path opened up by the second Wittgenstein, the linguistic turn claimed to be based on Frege’s earlier propositional logic known as the “calculus of predicates”. Such a logicist conception could only accentuate the illusion of philosophy as knowledge proper. And even with the second Wittgenstein and his heirs, philosophy has not been able to reconstruct itself in an *archi-reflexive* manner, that is to say, according to a systematicity that would be *the very consequence of the abandonment* of the claim to knowledge proper.

We therefore need a new kind of reflexivity, *paradoxical because radical*, which represents a *semantic* “double reduction”: any meaning thought through a common name has *several* dimensions in its *sense(-making)*, and the denoted *ob-ject* is *only one* of these dimensions. The double reduction consists in passing from the reality of the denoted object to the representation that denotes it, and then in passing from this representation to the *multi-dimensional* meaning that encompasses this dimension of the *ob-ject* and gives it *sense(-making)*. This is a double operation by which the philosophizing individual is no longer confronted with *ob-jectivated* meanings, reduced to the sole object dimension they contain, and henceforth thinks of *sense(-making)* *in so far as it is individuated within him or her as non-ordinary subject*. Western philosophy, whether continental or analytic, far from constructing such a modest *self-“knowledge”*, has persisted in wanting to know beyond the sciences, and this is why it has remained the “battlefield” denounced by Kant.

The ultimate consequence of this blindness is that, in the present era, the advances of cognitive sciences towards an understanding of the *interpenetration* of the dimensions of the being-subject (emotion, cognition, action) are leading to the *replacement* of philosophy by science, *whereas* philosophy *should* make it the motive for an awareness of its *true* role: the invention of a simple self-“knowledge” through the multi-dimensional diffraction of manipulated—or used—meanings, according to an *archi-reflexive* method that is *symmetrical* and *complementary* to the scientific *ob-jectivation* of manipulated— or used—meanings. Thus, while science becomes capable, in its *ob-jectivation* of manipulated—or used—meanings, of showing that emotion, knowledge and action are dimensions of the being-subject that are *both* irreducible to each other *and constitutive* of each other, philosophy, for its part, can invent the

means of *circumventing* the spontaneous *ob*-jection of manipulated—or used—meanings in order to render the philosophizing individual capable of thinking of himself or herself as *constituted by* the multi-dimensional sense(-making) of any manipulated—or used—meaning.

The identification of the different dimensions of sense(-making) that make up and constitute oneself involves the *redefinition* of the different domains of philosophy. These domains can no longer be posited *a priori*, for they must henceforth be defined *according* to the dimensions of sense(-making) that will have been identified as constitutive of the philosophizing individual, because they are individuated within him or her in order to engender him or her as *finite* or *non-originary*. The philosophical “system”, in the classical meaning of this term, articulated domains of inquiry—ontology, ethics, and so on—*without* these domains *arising from* a multi-dimensional diffraction internal to any manipulated—or used—meaning. The meanings manipulated by the philosophizing individual were *ob*-jected or reduced to their single dimension of *ob*-ject, out of a concern to *know* something about something. The redefinition of the globality of the system as an immediate consequence of the abandonment of the claim to knowledge proper will therefore also be a redefinition of the domains of philosophy on the basis of the dimensions of sense(-making) brought out by the new problematics of archi-reflexive semantics as simple self- “knowledge”. This simple philosophical self-“knowledge”, which practices the multi-dimensional diffraction of manipulated—or used—meanings, is thus only the first, and *radically anti-dogmatic*, problematics of a global system composed of *translations* of this first problematics in *each* of the dimensions of sense(-making) that will have been revealed by it. Now, among these dimensions of sense(-making), there is the *epistemo-ontological* dimension of the *ob*-ject of knowledge, and it is here that Simondonian genetic ontology largely prefigures what will henceforth have to be thought of as the *ontological translation* of the first philosophical semantics.

5. Genetic Ontology as a Translation of a Philosophical Semantics

The Simondonian thought of individuation is a thought of the information process—with information being the formula of individuation. Now, as I showed in chapter five of *La Société de l'invention*, in *Philosophical Relativity*, information is precisely *one of the three most general dimensions of sense-making* that are identified by the new semantic problematics. It is in fact the dimension of sense-making that has been privileged since Plato *within a Western philosophical tradition aimed at knowledge proper*, this dimension having in fact overshadowed the other two dimensions, which are nevertheless present in the *sense-(making)* of any manipulated—or used—meaning. These two other general dimensions of the sense-(making) of any manipulated—or used—meaning are: production for the satisfaction of *needs* and

education as the transmission of *values*. Thus, for example, the meanings “tree”, or “table”, or “human”, or “freedom” or “concept”, make sense *both* as something that refers to an object of information, as something that satisfies certain needs and as something that conveys certain values.

The Simondonian thought of individuation, therefore, adequately *translates* the new first problematics *into* the ontological domain, by elaborating a “philosophy of information” whose thought of individuation is onto-genetic—in the sense of genesis. This thought *accounts ontologically for* the finitude or non-originaryity of the subject which, in Philosophical Relativity, *obliges* us precisely *not* to start with ontology but with simple semantic self-“knowledge”. The difference between multi-dimensional sense(-making) and the single dimension of the object has as its ontological equivalent the difference between *object* and *substance* (i.e., *within* this same dimension of the object). For Simondon, who did not have an archi-reflexive semantics, the ontologically principal difference between object and substance took the form of the difference between *individual* and substance.

Economic production, ontological information and axiological education are the three most general dimensions of sense(-making) that the new first problematics proposed by Philosophical Relativity identifies, insofar as any meaning manipulated—or used—by the philosophizing individual can be diffracted three-dimensionally according to these general dimensions. I will not explain here how I identify the dimensions of sense(-making) individuated in oneself as the dimensions of economic production, ontological information and axiological education. I will simply point out that it is decisive that the meanings that designate these dimensions of sense(-making) are meanings that designate *modes of action*. Indeed, the finitude or non-originaryity of which we must become aware, and which is that of the philosophizing individual himself or herself, possesses a *structure of erasure* by which we *cannot avoid* to *ob-jectivate* the meanings we manipulate—or use—and thus to render ourselves implicitly originary. Now, meanings that designate modes of action have the particularity that, *even* when *ob-jectivated*, they *still* designate an object which *constitutes* the subject, since their denotations or references are modes of action.

Thus, philosophical semantics, which is archi-reflexive, is the new “first philosophy,” which aims at a simple self-“knowledge” in which the philosophizing individual ceases to make himself or herself implicitly originary. This new fundamental problematics bypasses the structure of erasure of finitude that is the illusionning structure of human intentionality. This new first problematics of philosophy identifies the three general dimensions of sense(-making) that makes oneself, and then translates this non-originaryity of the philosophizing individual into *each* of the dimensions of sense(-making). In the dimension of ontological information, this translation produces a genetic ontology which is a thought of the individuation process, and this is why Simondon’s genetic ontology is a particularly relevant first version here.

Now, genetic ontology, when it comes to the vital regime of individuation and the development of the psyche within it, *finds* the three-dimensional structure of sense(-making), but this time it finds it *ontologically* and no longer *archi-reflexively*, by positing that the animal is three-dimensional (action, perception, emotion). This three-dimensionality, now an ontological object, then leads by *complexification* to the three dimensions of economic production, ontological information and axiological education when we move on to the ontological analysis of the *transindividual* regime, of which Simondon posited a first theorisation. *Thus, an ontogenetic thinking of individuation leads to an ontological account of the non-originary of the philosophizing individual, which was initially thought of in the archi-reflexive mode defined by the new form of self-“knowledge” proper to philosophical semantics.* Such is nature of the *secondarization by the encompassing refoundation* of genetic ontology within the global but radically anti-dogmatic system of Philosophical Relativity, which will have to reconstruct genetic ontology under the name of “philosophy of ontological information” while adding to it a “philosophy of axiological education” and a “philosophy of economic production”.

I would therefore like to conclude with some remarks concerning the *modifications* introduced by this reconstruction of genetic ontology; these remarks will also concern the status of technology in Simondon, but also in Stiegler. First, Simondon, unlike André Leroi-Gourhan, did not think of the *articulation* of language and technology that made the genus *Homo* possible. In *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, Simondon does not propose a history of culture, but a genetic eidetics that constitutes a new phenomenology of mind. It thinks of the dimensions of culture as “phases” but distinguishes them from temporal “moments” and gives them the status of “essences”. It is within this framework that he makes technology and religion into simultaneous, symmetrical as well as complementary phases, which arise from the de-phasing of the “primitive magical unity” of “being in the world”. Now, this very specific approach prevents him from entering into what Leroi-Gourhan would inaugurate six years later, i.e., in 1964: the understanding that language is, on the level of a genesis—and this time, a historical one—a condition of the human being as fundamental as technology. Leroi-Gourhan spoke of language-technology (as technical system of objects) *coordination*, but today work in neuroscience encourages us to speak of a real *interpenetration* of language and technology *that pre-existed humans, but in a separate state*. What we call the “articulated language” specific to human beings is *also* a language articulated *with technology*, and in such a way that language and technology form a real *interface* producing the transformation of each of the two: in *Homo*, the language of the primates became *grammaticalized* language, i.e., *technicised*, while the technology of the primates became a *system* of objects *referring to each other, i.e., symbolised*.

Before coming to the consequences of this for a critical dialogue with Stiegler, we can point out that the language-technology interface allows us to account ontologically for the *ob-jektivating* character of human intentionality for sense(-making). Here, what my philosophical semantics denounced as a

structure of erasure of the non-originary of the subject can receive an explanation, *but an ontological one*, which is *thus* philosophically *second* within the new global system of Philosophical Relativity, and *subject to the teachings of the sciences*. This ontological, and in this case onto-genetic, explanation is as follows: the techno-linguistically reconstructed subject that is *Homo* now possesses an *ob*-jectivating consciousness for the sense(-making) that he and the other animals experience, because in *Homo* language and technology have interpenetrated. Language and technology now form an interface that is *a double transcendence constitutive* of his being, but this double transcendence paradoxically makes him capable of *ob*-jectivating sense(-making) *as if* the latter were *not* constitutive of him. Such is the *structure of the erasure of non-originary* that characterises human intentionality.

To conclude my remarks, I'd like to turn to the critical dialogue I've been having for years with Bernard Stiegler's thought. One of Stiegler's great merits is to have, in his own way, diagnosed very early on the crisis of reflexivity that I have been talking about since *La Société de l'invention*, and whose three forms I defined in a more pedagogical way in *Ego Alter* and then in my *Manifeste pour l'écologie humaine*. In Stiegler's terms, "systemic stupidity" has developed as a result of an "industrial political economy"⁸ that has transformed the *essentially technological conditions of all human existence* into something that *destroys* not only *know-how* (knowing how to make) and *knowledge-desire* (knowing how to desire), but also *knowledge-thinking*⁹ (knowing how to think). Such is the *generalised* process of progressive "proletarianization" by virtue of which a "pharmacology of the mind" is required, technology being *pharmakon*: both remedy and poison.

However, I must specify that the three *stages* mentioned in the process of proletarianization, *from which ultimately results* the "systemic stupidity" denounced by Stiegler, differ fundamentally from the three *simultaneous forms* of the crisis of reflexivity as I have thought of it since *La Société de l'invention*, and that stem from neoliberalism: the crisis of (political-economic) *ideologies*, the crisis of the (epistemological-ontological) *synthesis of knowledges*, and the crisis of (pedagogical-axiological) *exemplarity*. This difference is due to the fact that, unlike that of Stiegler, which is anthropo-techno-genetic, my fundamental problematics, the simple "knowledge" of oneself as non-originary, is the problematics of multidimensional sense(-making)—and of its crisis—, the three forms of the crisis of reflexivity being linked to the three dimensions of the sense(-making) that is never reduced to the sole dimension of the object of knowledge. A second fundamental difference is that, instead of proceeding to a critique of human Desire as the capitalist West has exacerbated it in the form of the desires for growth and consumption, Stiegler has *infinited* Desire to make it what would mark the nobility of

8 Bernard Stiegler, *États de choc. Bêtise et savoir au XXIe siècle* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2012), 21.

9 See Stiegler, *La Société automatique, 1 : L'Avenir du travail* (Paris : Fayard, 2015).

human Reason in its break with animality. Two points need to be made here.

First, the infinitisation of human Desire has nothing to do with the capacity of desire to change its object infinitely. Rather, it has to do with its capacity to aim at *infinite* or “non-calculable” *objects*, as Stiegler puts it: the Idea of Justice is the paradigm for Stiegler, and the field of law embodies that which transcends mere facts. Now, this capacity of human desire becomes in Stiegler the pretext to identify Desire with Reason itself, *via* the idea of “motive(s)” which is to say *both* the motivation coming from desire and “the reasons” animating Reason. Yet, Stiegler’s critique of consumerism asserts that desire can “desublimates”¹⁰. But at the same time, Stiegler *refuses* to still call “desire” what has become “drive”, *as if the essence of desire itself were to sublimate*.

This first point leads us to the second: it is because the essence of desire would be to sublimate that Stiegler makes Desire the mark of the human, without ever thinking of animal desire as it can develop beyond needs—the sphere of which, moreover, already exceeds simple vital needs. In Stiegler’s work, there is *a residual anthropological cut*, and this cut is also revealed in his thinking about technology, which makes it *the condition, properly human, of desire itself*. This is due to the very specific way in which Stiegler transforms Leroi-Gourhan’s theory of the genesis of the human. Instead of rethinking the “language-technology coordination” as a progressive interpenetration of a language and a technology that existed in a separate state in pre-humanity, Stiegler *absorbs* language *into* technology. Indeed, for him language itself becomes a form of technology, the latter being *that paradoxical essence by which the human constructs itself and has “no essence” or “no nature”*. Here, Stiegler, like his German contemporary Peter Sloterdijk, reaffirms and reformulates what was first affirmed and formulated by Sartre in an existentialist and not anthro-techno-genetic context.

Of course, Stiegler claims not to separate the human from the non-human animal, and this is why the anthropological cut must be called residual rather than assumed. But its residual character does not prevent it from being real, and *it is not enough to refuse the question itself*, as Stiegler has always done by brushing it aside, if one wants to escape this separation that has marked our entire tradition of Western thought up to Heidegger—from which Stiegler largely inherits by making the human a *non-derivable* “Who” *from* the non-human animal.

10 In Freud, “sublimation” is the fact that an unconscious desire finds a diverted satisfaction in adopting a cultural goal and higher than its initial goal. “Desublimation”, a notion invented by the Freudo-Marxist Herbert Marcuse, is the reverse process, where desire becomes a primary drive.