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Symbolic Misery and Aesthetics- Bernard Stiegler

Noel Fitzpatrick

Technological University Dublin, noel.fitzpatrick@tudublin.ie

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The European Society for Aesthetics

Department of Philosophy

University of Fribourg

Avenue de l'Europe 20

1700 Fribourg

Switzerland

Internet: <http://www.eurosa.org>

Email: secretary@eurosa.org

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Symbolic Misery and Aesthetics — Bernard Stiegler

Noel Fitzpatrick*

Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, DIT, Ireland

ABSTRACT. In this article I will deal with the development of a theory of aesthetics within the work of the French contemporary philosopher Bernard Stiegler with particular reference to his concept of symbolic misery. Rather than give an extensive account of Bernard Stiegler's aesthetics this article will focus on some key concepts mobilized in the definition and analysis of symbolic misery. Firstly, I will argue that Stiegler's understanding of the aesthetic comes from an expanded notion of *aesthesis*, where the political and the aesthetic are mobilized together. In this regard I will interrogate some key concepts in his work *Symbolic Misery* (2004, 2014) which sets out the diagnosis of the impoverishment of the aesthetic which Stiegler identifies with our current epoch. The impoverishment Stiegler identifies has its sources in a mechanical turn which has led to a proletarianisation of knowledge and a process of disindividuation. This analysis of regression is based on an expansion of the concept of individuation from the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon and the development of the concept of organology. Thirdly, this article will attempt to explore the remedy to symbolic misery which Stiegler seeks in the work of Joseph Beuys: participation becomes the central tenant, a participation which enables the re-engagement with the symbolic. This article argues that the choice of Beuys, as the example of this type participatory practice, is in itself problematic.

i. Introduction

The work of Bernard Stiegler has come to prominence over the last few years in contemporary philosophy and culture studies, his analysis of cinema in *Technics and Time* (1998, 2009, 2010)¹ introduced his philosophy

* Email: noel.fitzpatrick@dit.ie

¹ Stiegler, Bernard (1998) *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* Stanford: Stanford University Press. (2010) *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. (2009) *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*.

to the wider field of cultural and media studies. He has published extensively over the last few years and has become a prominent voice within contemporary French Philosophy. His recent philosophical work revisits questions of technology and epistemology and has led to the foundation of ‘Digital Studies’², an international network of leading academics from Universities across the world examining the impacts of digital technologies on epistemology and aesthetics. In this paper I propose to revisit the question of aesthetics as posed by his book of 2004, *De la misère symbolique*³ the first volume of which has now just been published into English (July 2014). This book is the principal exploration to date by Bernard Stiegler of questions relating directly to aesthetics, in this book he develops a fundamental critique of contemporary aesthetics and the visual arts in particular. His analysis of three major artists, Duchamp, Warhol and Beuys, might at first glance appear to revisit an established canon within Art History, however, his reference to these artists takes place within a wider project of his critique of symbolic misery. He sets out in the first volume of *Symbolic Misery* to give an organological study of art, which is a part of his general organology which was mobilized in his analysis of technics in *Technics and Time*. The general organology extends the concept of individuation from the work of Gilbert Simondon to include a triple individuation (psychic, technical and social).⁴ The proposed organological study of art attempts to give an overview of the history of art and the philosophy of art. The history of aesthetics according to Stiegler consists of a series dis-adjustments which fall into three categories: the body and its physiological, artificial organs (technics, objects, tools, instruments, works of art) and social organization resulting from the articulation of artifacts and bodies. This organology is the starting point of the analysis of what he terms an impoverished contemporary aesthetics which has led to the symbolic misery that we find ourselves in. What I propose to do in this short paper is to attempt to revisit the diagnosis of symbolic misery and in particular to explore possible alternatives that Stiegler suggests through the work of Joseph Beuys and Beuys’ project of ‘Social Sculpture’. However, in order

² www.digital-studies.org.

³ (2014) *Symbolic Misery, Volume 1: The Hyper-Industrial Epoch*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ For an overview of his approach to individuation see interview ‘A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation’, *Transformations*, MIT, 2013.

to do I would like first to highlight some key points of Stiegler's argument which hopefully will shed some light on the choice of Beuys.

2. A Question of *Techné*

In *De La Misère Symbolique* (2004) Stiegler expands in his original analysis of *Technics* to establish an analysis of the state of contemporary art and philosophy and concludes that they are contributing to the construction symbolic misery. Nonetheless, beyond the diagnosis of symbolic misery a redress of disenchantment, by what he has termed therapists and therapeutics, is possible. The mobilization of a therapeutics has become his central concern in more recent publications, *De La Pharmacologie Positive, Ce qui fait que la vie vaut la peine d'être Vécue* (2010) and *Pharmacologie du Front National* (2012). The premise from which Stiegler commences his critique of contemporary art is framed by the legacy of post-structuralist thinking, arguing that this legacy requires a necessary re-arming of question of aesthetics after deconstruction, in derridean terms a deconstruction of deconstruction. His reinterpretation of Derrida is centered on *techné* as the *defaut qu'il faut* the originary default of origin. At the core of questions of aesthetics for Bernard Stiegler is, therefore, the role of *techné* and the technologies of artistic and cultural production. *Technics* understood as forms of general organology, the history of incarnated material processes which express the sensibility of the singularity of the individual. Stiegler, therefore, proposes a genealogy of the sensible. In this genealogical approach, technological development is seen as part and parcel of hominization, we are technology and technology is us. That said, however, the subtle nature of his analysis brings to the fore two key elements in relation to *Technics* and contemporary digital culture, one is the nature of temporal objects, which is a central tenant to his analysis of cinema and, secondly is the notion of epiphylogenesis, which put simply is the genealogy of technical prosthesis necessary for human existence. Epiphylogenesis is the genetic heritage of the prosthesis itself, both as a genetic memory and secondly as a cultural technical memory of the objects themselves. This prosthetic reliance Stiegler refers to as the original fault, *le defaut de l'origine, le defaut qu'il faut*. Epiphylogenesis is the process of production of what he has termed tertiary retention, here Stiegler is expanding on a distinction that Husserl makes

between primary retention (perception) and secondary retention (imagination). For example, in music a melody is made up of primary retention and secondary retention, the ‘now’ of the musical object, is the note present as a note and not just a sound, the note retains the note which precedes it. The primary retention belongs to the present of perception and the secondary retention belongs to recollection of the past melody, I rehear the melody I heard yesterday by remembering it, and it constitutes the past of my consciousness. For Husserl primary retention acts in the present of perception while secondary acts in the imagination. This distinction is problematic for Stiegler he suggests that with the advent of technologies of reproduction a third retention, tertiary retention is possible, a support for the prosthetic exteriorization of memory. For example, the invention of the phonograph enables the memory to be exteriorized and repeated, before the invention of the phonograph it was impossible to hear the same melody twice in succession, the phonography enables the exact repetition of the same melody over and over again. However, within the process of mechanical reproduction there is an inherent loss of knowledge, the ability to read and play music is no longer necessary in order to repeat the music. Stiegler has developed this analysis elsewhere, where processes of categorization and annotation are seen as essential elements in understanding the art work itself⁵. In Stiegler’s analysis the proposed epiphylogenesis, Technics, therefore, are not to be misunderstood as skills⁶, technics themselves require a certain exteriorization of the haptic, physical activity itself.

Secondly, the analysis which Stiegler proposes of symbolic misery is framed by a reexamination of the nature of the object, the aesthetic object, where the object is taken as a form of mnemonic technology, a placeholder for memory. The artifactual traces of the past act as placeholders of processes of collective individuation. Stiegler expands on the notion of individuation from the work of Gilbert Simondon, Stiegler proposes a triple individuation which includes psychic, technical and social, according

⁵ See recent project <http://penserimproviser.org/wp/>

⁶ In a lecture given on Texts and Images at the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM) in Dublin on the 18th of December 2013, Bernard Stiegler elaborates on this distinction between *techné* and *skill* in relation to the curriculum within the Art School. See youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4zBEArbASE>

to Stiegler Simondon does not talk of technical individuation⁷. However, with the advent of the industrial revolution, the creation of specific cultural industries, and massive global digital technological platforms, these processes of individuation and collective individuation have been interrupted. The contemporary media industries exploit the structure of the temporal object so as to control unconscious and conscious time. As Stiegler points out by quoting Patrick Le Lay the managing director of one of the main French TV stations TFI:

...there are lots of ways to talk about television. But from the ‘business’ perspective, let’s be realistic, essentially the job of TFI is to help Coco-Cola, for example, sell its product {so that} a advertisement is perceived, the viewer’s brain has to be available/receptive. Our TV programmes have as a vocation to make it available, that is to say to entertain it, to relax it, to prepare between two ads. What we sell to Coco-Cola is available brain time⁸. (Translation by the author.)

The development of available brain time as the main goal of the media has led to the ultimate impoverishment of the media itself. What is at stake is the aesthetic object itself, at a moment when the use of aesthetics, or the instrumentalisation of the aesthetic, has become commonplace within marketing whose sole role is to promote and make visible products to be consumed in late capitalist society. In addition, there is another aspect the impoverishment of the aesthetic which is the impoverishment of the political, as Stiegler states ‘*Le nous est gravement malade*’ (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.97), the we of the collective is seriously being undermined when ‘we’ become nobodies. The singularity of the individual is denied through

⁷ ‘...the cybernetic object is capable of individuating itself. For Simondon, that is impossible. He says consistently that only the living being can individuate itself in that way’. Bernard Stiegler, interview, ‘A Rational Theory of Miracles’, *New Formations*, p.166.

⁸ “...il y a beaucoup de façons de parler de la télévision. Mais dans une perspective “business” soyons réaliste : a la base, le métier de TFI, c’est d’aider Coco-Cola, par exemple, a vendre son produit. [...pour qu’] un message publicitaire soit perçu, il faut que le cerveau du téléspectateur soit disponible. Nos émissions ont pour vocation de le rendre disponible, c’est-a-dire de le divertir, de le détendre pour le préparer entre deux messages. Ce que nous vendons a Coco-Cola, c’est du temps de cerveau humain disponible.” (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.221)

the synchronization of the enormous machine of audio-visual technologies. I can watch the same event as millions of people at the same time, whether this be the canonization of popes or the world cup football finals, and when we as millions of people watch the same thing, the consciousness of the work interiorizes, adopts and lives the same temporal objects at the same moment. As Stiegler writes:

While these consciousness repeat the same audio visual consumer behaviour everyday, watch the same television programmes, at the same time like clockwork because everything is done in order for it to be so, these ‘consciousness’ end up by becoming the same person - that is to say, no-one/nobody⁹. (Translation by the author.)

The collective I and You, We, are no longer in a process of alterity and differentiation or individuation but have become one and the same. It might seem contradictory, when supposedly everyone can participate through online digital technologies that the very notion of participation itself is being undermined by these very technologies participation, where we become no-one. The notion of participation will come to the fore when we shall return later in this article to Stiegler’s analysis Joseph Beuys which he cites as an example of alternative modes of participation, ‘Social Sculpture’ is understood as an important alternative mode of participation¹⁰.

3. Politics and Aesthetics

In *De la Misère Symbolique* (2004) Stiegler proposes that the question of aesthetics be considered as a political question and that reciprocally political question be considered to be a question of Aesthetics. His mobilization of the ‘The Aesthetic’ is to be understood in the widest sense possible as

⁹ ‘Lorsque ces consciences, tous les jours, répètent le même comportement de consommation audiovisuelle, regardent les mêmes émissions de télévision, à la même heure, et ce façon parfaitement régulière, parce que tout est fait pour cela, ces “consciences” finissent par devenir de la même personne - c’est-à-dire *personne*’. (De la Misère Symbolique, p.51)

¹⁰ I would like to thank the participants in the GradCAM aesthetics seminar who have helped me in gaining a greater understanding of Stiegler’s analysis of aesthetics and the work of Joseph Beuys.

from the Greek term *aisthesis*: a sensation. For Bernard Stiegler, therefore, the question of Aesthetics is one of sensation, sensation in general. The ability to share and participate in the sharing becomes the central tenant to his understanding of aesthetics. He argues, by returning to Aristotle's analysis of participation, that the latter is key to any development of the aesthetic. The division of the soul into vegetive (plants), sensitive (animals) and noetic (human), that is to say spiritual or intellectual, by Aristotle, according to Stiegler analysis, demonstrates a movement to action (*passer à l'acte*). The participation in the divine only takes place intermittently, regression from noetic soul to the sensitive souls is inevitable and this is a loss of participation. He, therefore, contends that the question of aesthetics needs to be asked anew in relation to the question of politics, where artists are asked to take up the question of understanding their political role. This political calling of the aesthetic should not, however, be confused with a simple question of politically engaging art. It is rather, that the work of art should be originally engaged in the question of the sensibility of the other, in the sharing and participation of the other. Symbolic misery is, on the one hand, the result the growth of aestheticization of marketing and, on the other, the growth the hyperindustrial forms of the creative and cultural industries, where the 'available brain time' is bought and sold as a commodity. The aesthetic conditioning has to a large extent become an industry in itself where the principal role of the individual is as a consumer of commodities.

In order to reach these markets, industry developed an aesthetic particularly well adapted to the audiovisual media which *refunctionalised* the aesthetic dimension of the individual according to interests of industrial development, causing him to adopt the behaviours of consumerism. (*Symbolic Misery*, 2014, p.5)¹¹

The development of marketing in the 1930s by Freud's nephew Edward Barny is one of the sources for the development of symbolic misery where the vast majority's aesthetic experience is limited to the dominance of the

¹¹ 'Pour gagner ces marches de masse, l'industrie développe une esthétique faisant appel en particulier aux medias audiovisuels, qui, en refunctionalisation la dimension esthétique de l'individu selon les intérêts du développement industriel, lui font adopter des comportements de consommation.' (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.19)

creative cultural industries and marketing. But what exactly is Symbolic Misery? Stiegler explores this in terms of libidinal misery and the loss of primordial narcissism:

The resulting symbolic misery is also a libidinal and affective misery, which leads to the *loss* of what I call *primordial narcissism*, whereby individuals are stripped of their ability to form aesthetics attachments to singularities or singular objects¹². (*Symbolic Misery*, 2014, p.5).

The loss of the symbolic is, therefore, analogous to the loss of libidinal desire, the desire can never be fulfilled. The promotion of the desire is in relation to industrial objects and not to one particular object as form of singularity itself. I become singular through the singularity of objects with which I am in relation. Later in *De La Pharmacologie Positive* (2010) Stiegler will expand on this analysis in great detail in relation to Winnicott's analysis of the transitional object, the object which contains the absence mother's presence but which can, on the one hand, help the infant attain individuality but which can also become addictive, a toxic force which hinders the infant's development. As a form of pharmakon, the libidinal desire functions in a similar way, where the drive, or in the vocabulary of Kant, the pleasant become confused with Beautiful, the drive confused with the universal nature of desire¹³. The pharmacological character of the object of desire is an extension of his analysis of the curative and the noxious, which originate in the analysis of tertiary retention in writing as mnemonic technology.¹⁴ Symbolic misery is, therefore, from a psychoanalytical perspective the loss of libidinal desire, lost to the impulses of drive. But for the purposes of this paper, there is another aspect to symbolic misery which requires further analysis, the loss of participation.

¹² "Il en résulte une misère symbolique qui est aussi une misère libidinale et affective, et qui conduit à la perte de ce que j'appelle narcissisme primordial: les individus sont privés de leur capacité d'attachement esthétique à des singularités, à des objets singuliers". (MS, p.19)

¹³ See Bernard Stiegler, Lecture on 'Text and Image', GradCAM, Dec 2013.

¹⁴ See Noel Fitzpatrick, (2013). 'Digital Reading: A Question of Plectio?'. In C. Fowley, C. English, & S. Thouësy (Eds.), *Internet Research, Theory, and Practice: Perspectives from Ireland* (pp. 1-16). Dublin: Research-publishing.net.

4. Participation

The loss of participation is counteracted through the conception of social sculpture, which Joseph Beuys developed, this is taken up by Stiegler as an example where a new therapeutics could emerge in contemporary art practice. The choice of Beuys is problematic, Beuys' work has been criticized as chamanistic obscurantism.¹⁵ Stiegler, counters this critique by framing 'social sculpture' in contrast to the loss of participation which is characteristic of the reign of symbolic misery. The following quotation gives an insight into the relationship between symbolic misery and the loss of collectivity and the loss of participation:

By symbolic misery I mean, therefore, the loss of individuation which results from the *loss of participation* in the *production of symbols*. Symbols here being as much the fruits of intellectual life (concepts, ideas, theorems, knowledge) as sensible life (arts, know-how, mores). And I believe that the present status of generalized loss of individuation can only lead to a symbolic collapse, or collapse of desire- in other words to the decomposition of the social as such : the total war. (*Symbolic Misery*, p.10)

There is an inherent connection, which Stiegler is making, between loss of individuation, which is linked to the loss of desire- the libidinal, and the loss of participation. The collapse of desire is the collapse of the symbolic which is generalized loss of individuation. The loss of individuation is a key element within the construction of symbolic misery, Stiegler quoting Nietzsche refers to the "the growing Desert", the growth of dis-individuation. According to Stiegler, the process of individuation is my ability to become singular, to differentiate, my past is less and less different to that of the other because my past is made up of more and more images and sounds that media broadcast into my consciousness, but also the in the objects and the relation between objects that these images bring me to consume, I loose my singularity, that is to say I loose myself as singularity (*Symbolic*

¹⁵ See Martin Crowley, 'Bernard Stiegler Goes Seal-Hunting with Joseph Beuys', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2013), or abridged version in French 'Portrait de Bernard Stiegler en chasseur de phoques, par Joseph Beuys' in *Technologies, La Pharmacie de Bernard Stiegler*, (2013).

Misery, p.20). My singularity is lost with the proliferation of images and sounds instrumentalized to enable me to consume the objects of desire. The consequence for Stiegler of this loss of individuation and singularity are catastrophic and the conclusion of the previous quotation where a war is announced demonstrates the necessary violence that is needed to start the combative process of resisting the loss of singularity. The advanced technology of hyperindustrial society has developed specific forms of technics that causes regression in this process of singularity and has led to the increased loss of singularity.

Stiegler proposes that originally engaged should take place in the context of the development of the contemporary cultural industries, which according to Stiegler, have exploited the sensibility of the other, the aesthetic. Industries which have monetized the sensibility of the other through the development of specific technologies of production and reproduction. Stiegler maintains that this exploitation of the aesthetic has led to the loss of participation, the loss of processes of individuation which has led to symbolic misery. Symbolic misery is hence presented as a loss of aesthetic participation. For Stiegler the notion of the symbolic is at stake, Sym-bol in ancient Greece, the *sum-bolon*, meant to share, to participate together. The development of specific cultural technologies, and the industrial imperative to sell more and more products has led to a loss of symbolic participation, a loss of structural individuation.

The mobilization of the concept of symbolic misery and sensible catastrophe in Stiegler's analysis of creative and cultural industries differs profoundly from the analysis put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer. According to Stiegler Adorno does not take into account the role of technology in our development, the truly pharmacological nature of technologies, their ability to function as cure and poison¹⁶. For Stiegler the development of forms of symbolic misery are due, in part, to the development of specific forms of proletarianisation of knowledge but also are due to the loss of the symbolic.

The key term that it is necessary to highlight in relation to the definition given above is that of *loss of participation*, this might be slightly at

¹⁶ See interview, 'A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation', *Transformations*, MIT, 2013.

odds to say that there is a loss of participation when with the development of digital technologies have been viewed as the development of different modes of producers, prosumers, where participation is present throughout modes of cultural production today, from reality TV programs to interactive art initiatives involving participants rather than an audience. This would also seem at odds with a resurgence of participatory art within contemporary art practice, which following Clare Bishop and Grant Kester I will distinguish by emphasizing the collaborative aspect. Participation is understood as a practice where, to quote Clare Bishop, the socially engaged appropriates social forms ‘as a way to bring art closer to everyday life: intangible experiences such as discussing philosophy (Ian Wilson) or politics (Joseph Beuys), cooking, running a café (Gordon Matta-Clark), running hotel’¹⁷. Bishop points to a direct historical link between contemporary forms of participatory practice and Dadaism, according to Bishop the legacy of Dadaism and the avant-garde is seen in two traditions of participatory art, an authored tradition that ‘seeks to provoke participants, and a de-authored lineage that aims to embrace collective creativity the former disruptive and interventionist, the latter constructive and ameliorative’ (p.11). In theatre one could think of Brecht provoking critical reflection and more controversially Antonin Artaud and his *Theatre of Cruelty*. There is an important insight in Bishop’s analysis, she gives us a taxonomy of participatory practice which enables us to better examine the relationship between Beuys’ practice and Stiegler. Bishop offers three agendas for participatory art:

‘the desire to create an active subject who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation, the second cedes all authorial control and it democratizes the creation of work beyond a single artist, collaborative creativity, the third agenda is collective responsibility from a Marxist tradition’. *Participation* (2006). p.12.

The symbolic participation that she refers to finds direct echoes in Stiegler’s analysis, where the participation in is an empowering shared experience that could be seen as a remedy to the impoverishment of the symbolic. Bishop’s three categories of participatory art are, therefore, Activation, Authorship and Community. The work of Joseph Beuys would fit

¹⁷ Clare Bishop (ed.), *Participation*, MIT press, 2006. p.10.

this schema well, but there is an inherent flaw in Bishop's analysis, a tendency to dismiss all socially engaged art as failure and politically naïve, we find a similar tendency in the 'relational aesthetics' of Nicolas Bourriaud where he also dismisses all forms of socially engaged practices as failures which attempt to be 'directly critical of society fail'. Instead relational aesthetics will offer processes of artistic practice which will reorient practice away from technical expertise or object-production and move towards processes of intersubjective exchange. Grant Kester in his book *The One and the Many* (2011) gives an alternative approach to the taxonomy of participation in artistic practice. For Kester one of the tensions at issue with participatory practices comes through semantic ambiguity that he points to with the word 'Collaboration'. Collaboration has both positive and negative connotations, one is to work together and the other is to coerce, to be uncritically accepting, the collaboration can be with the hegemonic power in place rather than a collaboration which attempts to bring about new collective power structures. Grant Kester offers another perspective whereby the dismissal of Bishop and Bourriaud of socially engaged art by collapsing 'all activist art into the condition of 1930s socialist realism, fails to convey the complexity and diversity of socially engaged art practice over the last few decades' (Kester, *The One and the Many*, p.31). By exploring the wider historical context relative to traditions of the avant-garde Kester proposes that through modernism the core function of art changes dramatically and with it the privileging aesthetic autonomy of what Kester terms a textual paradigm of artistic practice.

The textual paradigm is defined by a spatial concept of agency, in which compositional and receptive modes are fixed. It thus forecloses the possibility that creative insight might be generated through less proprietary forms of compositional agency. That is, rather than viewing agency as unique property of specific individuals, seeing it instead as fluid and transpositional over the course of time. (*The One and the Many*, p.36).

Hence textual paradigm which promotes participation within fixed modes of reception and composition does not allow for alternative modes of fluidity within compositional agency. The critique of participatory socially engaged Art practice given by Bourriaud and Bishop seems to be reliant on

a privileging of the aesthetic autonomy of art practice which defines the spatial and receptive modes of the art work. The alternative paradigm of participation which, I would argue, Stiegler turns to is the example of symbolic participation and social sculpture in the work of Joseph Beuys.

In *Symbolic Misery* (2004, 2014) Stiegler takes three key examples, Duchamps, Warhol and Beuys, and it is in the work of Joseph Beuys Stiegler that sees an alternative to the symbolic misery. Joseph Beuys takes a central role in Stiegler's analysis of participation, the positioning of Beuys as central to Stiegler's analysis is somewhat surprising, given the reputation that Beuys has within art historical analysis. The analysis which Stiegler gives of Beuys's work is largely based upon what Beuys says about his work, and it is notoriously difficult to separate the work of Beuys from the discourse of Beuys about his work. Beuys proposes a new social organism, a social sculpture to overcome what he sees as the tragedy of modern art, which leaves the majority of people in solitude, the enigmas of Kandinsky. To paraphrase Beuys, man could not, in his life regulated by work, take part in these intellectual movements, the vast majority of humanity need something quite different to artists, their works and the art connoisseurs. Beuys proposes through his practice an alternative to the tragedy of the modern. One example stands out as attempt to prompt a difference participatory paradigm, the Bureau for Direct Democracy, Beuys' Documenta 5 a 100 day installation records in detail the interactions with him. The recordings are a daily journal account of interactions with people in the office, which range from passing curiosity, to in-depth debates with people about the advantages and disadvantages of direct democratic processes, to discussions about why would there be such an office at an art exhibition, to questions about what and where is the art work. The participation is participation in the discussion, the disclosure of dialogue and discourses which become the work of art. However, it is important to note that the discussion is lead, orchestrated through the construction of the very office itself, the participation is being orchestrated. So whilst Beuys' famous claim that everyone can be an artist one could add some are more artist than others which does mean that participation and collaboration are not flattened out completely. This I would suggest is the key problematic at stake here within Stiegler's analysis of Beuys, the distinction between participants. As I suggested earlier the choice of Joseph Beuys by Stiegler

seems to be slightly outdated when one thinks of contemporary forms of participatory collaborative projects, durational projects where participation and collaboration take place over long periods of time. One could think of AIDS activists, collectives working in collaboration on environmental issues, Park Fiction in Hamburg, where new forms of collectivity re-invent the process of participation in Urban Planning. The participation which seems at stake for Beuys seems very tentative in comparison, and this perhaps is where Stiegler's analysis needs to be revisited. The rise of participatory art forms over the last 20 years can be glimpsed through their representation in the various international biennales etc. At Documenta 13 there were a number of participatory projects including the presence of the occupy movement¹⁸.

5. Conclusion

The advent of participation in contemporary practice would seem at first glance to place a new emphasis on the construction of the symbolic, the sharing of symbols which has been undermined by the development of aesthetic impoverishment. However, upon closer examination, there is an inherent tension within the different paradigms of participation and it is this that requires further analysis. New modes of analysis for participatory practices which are prevalent at the moment which could be therapeutic sites where new forms participatory practices could enable the symbolic and noetic re-arming of the aesthetic.

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¹⁸ The Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, GradCAM, maintained, for example, a presence over the 100 days with the artist Robin Kahn, the project involved the use of hospitality and cooking as the central focus. See '*Skin of the Goat*', GradCAM, 2014.

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