Wolverhampton University Presentation

Automatic Society: Stiegler on Stupidity, Spirals and the End (of Theory)

This talk will discuss philosopher Bernard Stiegler's efforts to promote a critical encounter with key tendencies readily apparent in contemporary globalised digital technocultural development: a spiralling stupidity, a corresponding loss of the capacity for rational public discussion, and an acceleration of 'disruptive' and systemic modifications to the structures of employment, production, consumption and their social-political coordination and regulation. My topic is prompted in no small way by recent electoral results in the UK and U.S.A. and the rather frenzied reaction in various fora to these indications of the 'will' of the people. Stiegler is not alone in anticipating the progression of these tendencies toward the current situation and beyond. As perhaps the title of one of his earlier books – *Disbelief and Discredit 2: Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals* (first published in 2006) indicates, his analysis offers, I will claim, particularly acute insights into the contemporary state of things. For one thing, this state is above all not a state, but a flux, one whose shape Stiegler traces in *Automatic Society* as a spiral whose trajectory appears to us today as a vicious circle, a spiralling toward the worst. It is all the more critical, then to recognise and discover the potential for a spiralling intensification of technocultural becoming that is 'reparatory', productive of new social-political and economic programmes, new ways of life that are believable, can attract credit and investment (in all its senses); programmes that can dis-automate the implementation of automated systems currently rolling out amidst a literally inconceivable stupidity.

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Epigraph:

When a triggering factor is also an outcome, we find ourselves within a spiral. This can be very fruitful and worthwhile, or it can enclose us – *in the absence of new criteria* – in a vicious circle that we can then describe as a "downward spiral" (*Automatic Society*, 28-29).

Introduction

In my abstract I promised a great deal, more or less everything about where 'we' find ourselves today. Forgive me for my overambition. What I will try to do tonight is to examine some key elements of philosopher Bernard Stiegler's mobilisation of his philosophy of technology at the heart of his sustained critique of the contemporary globalised 'hypercapitalist' world (as he styles it). And I will argue for the relevance of this critique, which is also an appeal for a programme of action to renew the forms and scope of critical knowledge production across the universities and beyond in the face of the blindingly obvious and multiple crises confronting this global hypercapitalist phase of the industrialisation of the means of production, transportation, communication, mediation and knowledge formation and transmission, and so on.

In particular I want to look at Stiegler's thoughts on two pairs of terms:

Stupidity and knowledge, and

automation and autonomy.

As a former student of Jacques Derrida, the 'master of deconstruction', Stiegler's approach to these pairings is not to think of them as definitively opposed – knowledge does not have nothing to do with stupidity and likewise with autonomy and the automatic. But (and I don't have time to properly deal with this tonight) Stiegler's thought 'beyond' the deconstruction of oppositions is inspired by the 'compositional' thinking of philosopher of technology Gilbert Simondon. In particular, by Simondon's key concept of 'individuation' which posits that things never exist in isolation, and that the relation between elements (material as much as conceptual) is the more substantial and fundamental thing – originary, or 'ontogenetic' are probably better words. Eg. The relation between the constituents of a chemical/mineral solution is what forms mineral compounds such as crystals. The relation between animal and vegetable and environmental elements in an eco-system determines the nature and characteristics of the 'individuals' in that milieu – anteater, anthill, ant, snail, soil, plants… As the dynamic process in which these elements maintain themselves and over time change or evolve, individuation (which is the relation) comes before the individual

elements rather than there being discrete and resolved individuals that then enter into relations.

So too with knowledge and stupidity, and automation and autonomy. In *Automatic Society 1: the Future of Work*,

SLIDE BOOK COVER

Stiegler will argue the importance of a better critical investigation of the coming crisis of employment. Understanding that autonomy should not be opposed to automation, but understood in its individuating relation to it is central to his call for a renewed thinking into the future of work, the prospects of massive structural transformation of many labour intensive industries including many involving skilled and trained cognition, from transportation to legal document discovery searching, from security guards to medical diagnosis.

SLIDE FREY AND OSBORNE REPORT

SLIDE TOM DAVENPORT SLIDES

For Stiegler, autonomy is always composed with automatic elements, and this is what makes possible the new phase of the development of the automation of physical and cognitive labour, but one which threatens to destabilise the composition of automation with human social-political and personal autonomy, and even to send it into a self-destructive spiral, for eg. through provoking the total collapse of the social order upon which the continued development of technological automation rests, or a drastic proliferation and intensification of the state of war that we more or less permanently inhabit today.

Now, automation plays a prominent part in the controversies around knowledge, false knowledge, stupidity, opinion, belief and disbelief that my title promised to focus on today, and this is especially marked in the recent Brexit and U.S presidential election campaigns, the results and the reactions to them. In fact it plays a key role in these controversies as what in one way or the other characterizes the 'shock' of digital media and technological transformation both directly affecting and evidenced in these elections.

  eg.

As context/cause:

SLIDE SILICON VALLEY: Bryan Cantrill's wake up call for the masters of disruption: 'we' have produced 2 Americas; the one we love – the global leader of the software innovations 'eating the world', and the disenfranchised, de-prioritized, economically excluded other America whose victory shocked the status quo of neoliberal globalization out of its comfort zone of disruptive agency. Cantrill recognizes in Trump's campaign the spread of disruption

to politics and consequently its reappearance on the edges of the myopia of Silicon Valley entrepeneurship.

As strategic subversion of the automated systems of information access and knowledge acquiistion:

SLIDE: Guardian on Google search autocomplete suggestions: The concentrated and arguably concerted and strategic 'search engine optimisation' efforts of the 'Alt.right's websites and networks of sites to curate, control, 'hack', Google's algorithm for autocompleting search queries, that is, automatically anticipating what the user is looking for, that is what is in their minds;

SLIDE: GOAL OF SEARCH: Google's official position is not helpful in its bare-faced 'fake' naivity.

Automation As the method/goal of a new generation of data-analysis based campaigning:

SLIDE CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICS; The contributions made by the Trump campaign's hiring of the data analysis and strategic marketing company , after suffering a primary defeat at the hands of Ted Cruz who had used them against him. (Note that the Brexit campaign also hired CA).

SLIDE CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICS: CA boast a complex modelling that incorporates 5000 data points on every US citizen, combining inputs from an online questionnaire they push out in multiple directions, and a massive data scraping effort of people's online activity. This leads them to design a 'predictive modelling' of sectors of users they deem to be susceptible to influence, through very targeted marketing; (interestingly, this is different from demographic analysis and targeting; it is not fashioned as an appeal to an individual, but aimed at a collective identity, according to a video on the site of CA's parent corporation, Strategic Communications Limited.

SLIDE SCL WEBSITE

SLIDE: TV AD TARGETING

And of course they design political messaging 'copy'. It is not confirmed but key terms used by Trump like 'Crooked Hilary Clinton' and 'Drain the swamp' appear to be part of CA's message construction.

And, most prominent and perhaps most shocking, automation is at the centre of the 'fake news' phenomenon.

Here, I am, along with many others I think, indebted to the 'amazing' work of Jonathan Albright, digital media/journalism researcher deploying a range of data-analysis and visualisation skills.

SLIDE WELCOME TO FAKE NEWS;

SLIDE: MP PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INVESTIGATION

The UK parliament are responding to the widespread perception that the citizens voting in election campaigns are exposed to false news and to the consequent loss of the ability to distinguish between reliable and unreliable accounts of the world, that is, of the prevention of their ability to formulate their own opinions about various issues based on a shared and collectively verified and 'trusted' sources of knowledge about those issues.

SLIDE: ALBRIGHT'S DATA VIZ;

In a series of blog posts providing details of his data-based analysis of the fake news and related phenomena, Albright has shared his preliminary findings concerning his mapping and tracking of the activities of what he calls the alt.right 'micro-propaganda machine'. (He has also published preliminary findings concerning a left wing propaganda effort which is not the same in nature or in effectiveness according to his findings). To summarize his much more rich and suggestive preliminary findings, what Albright argues this map of alt.right activity shows a more of less coordinated, more or less systematic effort to piggy back on the major internet portals /destinations such as FB, Google, Amazon, YTube and Instagram, to use them as a distribution and supporter recruitment network, including by using all kinds of tracking software, cookies and 'super-cookies', advanced 'ad-tech', much of which is malware, on the edge or over the edge of secure, legally acceptable tracking, that is downloaded onto the machines of people visiting the fake news sights. These are part of what is being termed 'behavioural targeting and tracking' software.

SLIDE ALBRIGHT'S DATA VIZ OF THE AD TRACKING DEATHSTAR: At the centre are the major 'behaviorial targeting and tracking' giants. For instance the FB 'like' button is on most of the fake news sites even when they run frequent articles attacking the 'liberal elite 'attitudes of Mark Zuckerberg: when used the like button incorporates the website where it is into FB's data acquisition system. This is 'exploited' by these Alt right sites as a way of hooking them up to vaster networks of users and sites.

The other goal of this micro-propaganda machine' is to inflect/influence GAFA's own attention capturing and channeling processes by modifying the functioning of their automated algorithmic operation. The effect on Google search's autocomplete function noted above is a prime example. The 'machine's efforts bear on topics of especial interest to the spectrum of extremist neo-nazi, nativist and Christian fundamentalist, anti-liberalist and so on groups associated through these more or less coordinated and overlapping activities

OK,

I said that 'fake news' is the most shocking of these automation-related digital media phenomena but it also in many ways 'no surprise'. It is not as if people didn't know that propaganda, distorted and fabricated 'news' stories have been utilised before, and that the formal features and outward appearance of news and factual reporting could be 'simulated'.

SLIDE: QUOTE FROM ALBRIGHT ARTICLE ON WHAT'S NEW

The new dimension to this *is* precisely the mobilization of these forms of the fictional construction of reality through the incredibly powerful automated systems of information accessing, producing and distributing that dominate our everyday experiential and cognitive landscapes such as Google, FB, Amazon, Youtube, Twitter and so on. But again, and this is perhaps the most symptomatic aspect of this Fake news symptom: it is not as if 'we' didn't already know in a way that 'our' knowledge and our thinking today was so dependent on these incredibly powerful but incredibly 'stupid' systems. What shocks us can do so only because in a way it has always been expected , in the form of the least expected maybe, but it is not the totally unexpected, the never conceived of. Fake news in traumatic in this way – it actualizes a rather shocking regime of stupidity, disbelief and discredit in a rather shocking register:

Eg. when Trump and his administration **can** label CNN a mainstream new media corporation as the purveyor of fake news (it's the force of this 'can' that is the extreme end of what is shocking), and…

SLIDES: INAUGURATION AND

'ALTERNATIVE FACTS'

Eg. this 'story' seems to epitomise the shocking stupidity of Trump and of the way he aims to proceed; but it is something of a lure to stop there with a thought of Trump as egomaniac obsessed with his popularity and irrationally blaming the factual mainstream media news…. The stupidity of this opening move of the Trump administration's entry into the public media sphere is also, I would claim, a 'rational', calculated move, consistent with his election campaign, and insisting from the beginning that the mainstream media cannot be trusted whatsoever, that no media representation of his administration's actions can be trusted, or at least, no representation that does not share the same distrust of the mainstream media.

Fake news is the most paradoxical and symptomatic aspect of the current very messy situation 'we' find ourselves in, and this is why I believe Stiegler's account of stupidity is most pertinent as a means of grasping this situation. For Stiegler, it is critical to grasp that this situation is the unexpected manifestation of what he has called a 'systemic stupidity'

which has increasingly affected us all, in every aspect of individual and collective existence—and this is why it is unexpected but should not come as a complete surprise. Indeed Steigler's diagnoses of contemporary digital culture since the early 2000s trace the movement of a spiralling towards exactly these kinds of electoral shocks. In order to explain this better I need first to introduce briefly Stiegler's account of stupidity in the context of his wider project. I will then finish by returning to the crisis of knowledge, the crisis of confidence in the construction of factual accounts, of belief in, that is of the credit given to the established institutions of 'our' collective identity, that Fake news is such a clear symptom of.

Stupid as a Philosopher (or a University Teacher)

Stiegler's core philosophical position is that philosophy has been largely stupid for ignoring the part played by technics, technical artefacts, techniques etc. in its consideration of all things philosophy wants to analyse, interpret and know about, from the nature of thought, ideas and conceptions (including of 'truth', 'facts', 'justice', 'ethics', knowledge, 'politics', etc.) to the nature of nature, the cosmos, space, time and so on. At its outset philosophy marginalised *tekhne* from its considerations, understanding it as mere tool or instrument of the human, as an external means of the realisation of interior intentions or ideas. From this has come a persistent evasion of the question of human 'technicity' – by which Stiegler means the irreducible relation between technical and human development. Technicity is Stiegler's conception of the irreducible prosthetic character of the human as a 'being' ; a being that has no essential quality, a being that lacks an essence, a being-in-default of an essence as he puts it in TT1. Human being is always prosthetically supplemented, and therefore is always 'historical', contingent: Human is a becoming rather than an underlying essence that manifests itself in a variety of ethnic envelopes, or which is following some trajectory that has some ultimate course. Historical becoming and ethnocultural tradition are intertwined – the human becomes in a composition of ethnic and cultural differentiation and biological differentiation, but the ethno-cultural is the major factor. 'We' are a biological entity but one whose technical capacities have differentiated us from the species-becoming of our animal relatives.

If you recall the influence of Simondon's thought on Stiegler I noted at the beginning it is also evident here: For Stiegler human becoming is an individuation of elements: psychic individuals and their collective identity which is another kind of individual. What individual people do influences the cultural, political, religious etc. groups they belong to (eg. in the recent elections we have been discussing). But those groups shape individuals through their collective, collected stabilisation – through cultural mores, practices, beliefs, preserved and transmitted to infants and children as the very stuff of tradition, education, rites and rituals, everday life and special occasions and so on. And both the practices of living and the means of preserving and transmitting them are thoroughly technical: from tying your shoelaces to

reading a book, from storybooks to holy books, from statues and memorials to video and music streams, from newspapers to tv to Twitter feeds, culture is preserved, reanimated transmitted and transformed thanks to artifacts and technical structures of all kinds.

SLIDE : PSYCHIC AND TECHNICAL INDIVIDUATION

Stiegler has a nice formula for this added complexity of human becoming: the 'and' between psychic and collective individuation is technical individuation. Because technics is not static. We know this more than perhaps any other humans before us, and it is key to our own differentiation from those who have lived before. The horse and cart is not the same as the railway and the world of modern transportation and communication networks is not the world of the horse, the sailing ship, the hand-written letter and so on. It is different, not totally opposite, but the differences are decisive, crucial to what the human being 'is' today as an idea, a value, a potential; which is of course, what politics is about.

Stupidity is like all other aspects of human behaviour or thought in that it is technically conditioned, and best understood from the perspective on human technicity.

SLIDE STATES OF SHOCK

In *States of Shock: Knowledge and Stupidity in the 21st Century*, Stiegler agrees with Gilles Deleuze that stupidity is particular to the human as a kind of technical life that is no longer instinctual like other animals. In Stiegler's view, following Deleuze, stupidity is a 'structure of thought' rather than an erroneous thought or ill-informed opinion. It is a way of thinking that Deleuze characterizes as 'baseness', as a regression to a more base mode of thinking. (States of shock 53).

What is this a regression to? To the vague, imprecise, untested assumptions, opinions, beliefs of the group identity, residing in the mind as part of its formation, as part of the dynamic of individuating itself with and against the 'groupthink' of the collective. For Stiegler stupidity and regression to cruelty, cowardice, etc. is a permanent possibility of the human as psychic and social entity, but it is also, always technically conditioned and conditional. Let me try to explain by means of an eg. I've been thinking about for many years.

When I think my students are stupid it is because they haven't done their reading and preparation for class. They have not undergone the challenge to their thinking that I have prepared for them and they cannot participate in the learning exercises/discussions etc I have planned. They have not extended or transcended their understanding, or even taken the first step, which is to experience confusion, difficulty, incomprehension, and the possibility that their thinking about the topic (eg. of what 'media' is) is limited, and needs further work. They rely on their default knowledges derived principally from their high schooling and what they and their peers 'learn' from the media. In other words, I think they are 'stupid' for failing to develop their individual skills of reading specialist texts,

accumulating and intensifying the insights of many others, and critically interpreting these, eventually articulating their new knowledges through writing and other modes of sharing their own interior process and their own individuation with the collective. As a 'structure of thinking' this means to rely on the 'received opinion' available in the general circulation of ideas and views, to avoid encountering the writings and other artifacts not available in that general circulatio. These ideas have become accepted through the procedures and selection criteria of scholarly, disciplinary knowledge formation. Stiegler will characterise these writings and artifacts as the material basis of particular forms of attention developed by particular disciplines, different to the general view, often influencing it through a process and a rhythm of diffusion; scholarship is a form of attention cultivated through the practicing the particular practices of the discipline.

Received opinion, the general view, this is what Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* famously attributed to the anonymous, collective **the They**, *Das Man*. It is what the mainstream media for the most part traffic in. It is also related to the 'mentality' of the crowd, the herd that Freud discusses in *Civilization and its discontents*.

But I am also stupid, and on two counts.

1. I am stupid to the extent that I haven't done *my* preparation adequately. My knowledge as teacher of a subject is always limited. But my and my students' stupidity is not just a matter of the limitations to what we know: it is not a matter of being in possession of all the available 'information' (and we know today that this is simply impossible, and even that there is no correlation between access to information and knowledge – in fact it appears the very opposite is the case). It is more importantly and fundamentally a failure as a teacher to review and reconsider all of the insights, observations, claims and conclusions about the topic in question that I have taken from my accumulated knowledge of the topic. (Sometimes when I reread the readings I have set for a class I discover something I have missed, misunderstood, or that I no longer accept as valid). **Inevitably** we take much of our existing understandings for granted in applying them to a related phenomenon or a comparable issue or theme. Our thinking is always comprised of a combination of fresh thoughts or rethinkings and established, pre-synthesized ideas automatically adopted without further consideration—either from the 'received opinion' of the general view, or conventional disciplinary understandings, or from our own previous thinking left un-tested.

To this degree then knowledge is always composed with stupidity; they cannot be opposed to each other. As 'noetic' beings—beings who think and who reflect on their thinking, intelligence consists in a thinking that strives reflectively to take account of its dependence on assumptions, taken-for-granteds, in any new process of knowledge forming or any confirmation of an existing synthesis of knowledge. Crossing our two pairings of terms, Stiegler describes knowledge as the capacity to dis-automate our 'stupid' automatisms of thought, belief, opinion and assumptions judiciously, selectively. He quotes Nietszche here who associates knowledge with the desire to 'harm stupidity' (States of Shock p.??).

Now, this is always a technically conditioned capacity: key to my potential for intelligent scholarship is the quality of the texts I am reading – their judicious consideration of the topic and the available scholarship about it, the disciplinary norms and procedures they follow that have shaped inquiry into the object of study, the library and networked facilities making those texts available, my competence in the techniques of critical reading, eg. to compare, contrast their claims and and synthesise their observations.

Today the technical conditioning of intelligence is a key question and a key problem. It goes to the heart of the question of stupidity and its relevance to our topic tonight. And here is where I identify my second kind of stupidity in how I sometimes think of my students as stupid. Sometimes I stupidly blame the individual students or a whole cohort, and forget that they suffer from growing up in a period of the growth of a systemic stupidity that affects them all the more that they are 'children' of the digital age, digital natives.

Systemic Stupidity and Stupid Systematic Exploitation

Stiegler's critical engagement in the contemporary industrial globalised technoculture cites mainstream media as contributing to a systematic production of stupidity – bétise in French. To return to my students who are failing to do their reading and relying on the vague authority of public opinion derived directly and indirectly from what 'the media' tells them – and today this is more likely to be what is on their social media 'news feeds', 'trending topics', notifications, updates and so on – from Stiegler's perspective this is to make yourself vulnerable to a decomposition of the capacity for thought understood as the reflective, noetic potential of human being to carve out a provisional, limited autonomy fashioned from among the automatisms which are carried forward from our heritage of historical, culturally circumscribed, and technical becoming. This heritage is artifactual, technical, material, spatial.

EG: reading Heideggers Principle of Reason.

Stiegler approaches this complex dynamic of our capacity for thinking and for intelligence, for knowledge but also for regression into stupid modes of ignorance and non-knowledge through a discussion of systems in relation to each other (after Bertrand Gille): the individual relates to the collective through all kinds of systems – cultural systems like religion, education, social organisation, the economic, the military, the media. And all of these relate to the technical and today the technological 'system'. Modernity is characterised by the industrial revolution which put technology in the driving seat of transformations of the other systems. And the predominantly capitalistic adoption and mobilisation of industrial technology launched a speed race of innovation in technology, and in the relations between science and technology, at the forefront of these transformations.

So if 'disruption' is our buzzword for today's digital, software-led innovation in established ways of doing things, a technological shift leaping ahead of legal, economic and political pratices and provoking widespread disorientation, job loss, economic and social insecurity etc., then this is also the latest wave of the disorienting destabilisations that have characterised Western European modernity and its globalisation over the last 200 years.

The dynamics between these systems, transforming, disrupting, provoking adjustments, destabilizing and restabilising temporarily, can be understood as a mix of systemic change and systematic adoption and exploitation. (Again, these 2 cannot be neatly opposed but only distinguished in their particular contexts). For example, the spread of digital systems for producing and distributing media emerged through different initiatives in different fields (cinema, photography, internet communications, printed press production etc) but through various systematic efforts to modify existing practices (in film editing, in photo post-processing, in file sharing) there gradually developed a new 'system' of digital media production and distribution: perhaps it is better understood as a system for the programmatic development and rolling out of digital media's seemingly permanent 'evolution'.

The systemic change takes on a particular character and begins to influence, prescribe and gather momentum. But we live in a period of unprecedented, spiralling rapidity between systemic evolution and its systematic exploitation, disruption and destabilisation. So this is one level of the systemic stupidity of the current phase of digital transformation we experience today: We tend to live in the absence of a stable technological system of communication, knowledge production and sharing. Consequently we live in a more or less permanent state of disorientation, which is not a state but the absence of a state of things.

What's more, and this is the second level of our systemic stupidity today, the default logics governing the programmatic expansion and extension of the digital mediation of experience today are those of a capitalist, corporate rationale; this is a specific Reason (which Jurgen Habermas called 'rationalisation'), with a specific desire or motive: the amortisation of capital expenditure in the shortest possible timeframe. This is a key systemic driver whose dominance has become close to total in the period of neoliberal globalisation. The Trump and Brexit results are symptoms of the spiralling destructive trajectory of this unsustainable 'system' of disruption, short-termist thinking, laissez-faire governance, and so on. Today this rationale takes the coordination of consumption to production as its major method, and massively and systematically invests in the marketing, promotions, experience design, and 'behavioural targeting and tracking' practices and so on developed to regulate the behaviour, the thoughts and the desires of consumer/users, **24/7** as Jonathan Crary has recently argued. The ultimate goal of all these efforts is a quasi-automatic regulation of consumers, in a new form of behavioural and social 'governance' of everyday life. There is no provision within this regime for critical thinking or autonomous reflection on the endless cycle of upgrade, innovation, obsolescence, on the endless demands to add your activity ,

communications, emotions, etc into the automated behavioural tracking and targeting. In short, the system promotes the structure of thought and behaviour that Stiegler characterises as more or less automated, more or less stupid. This is in no small part why my students often struggle to retrain their thinking, cultivate new forms of attention.

In Stiegler's analysis, this ultimate goal of a totally automated consumer will never be achieved; on the contrary. These 2 levels of systemic stupidity have between them been central to the crises of our time, environmental, economic and now increasingly explicitly political. The speed and the calculated mobilisation of our global, realtime digital mediations for commercial ends has so effectively interposed itself within and between individuals and their collectives – familial, social, political, cultural etc. – that it has damaged the very viability of the dynamic of individuation between individuals and their collective identities. For Stiegler the many extreme acts and extreme politics, all testify in a way to the collapse of this dynamic and its dangerous byproducts: disenfranchised and disbelieving individuals and a discredited collective identity regressing into fragmented and divisive sub-groups: nativist, racist, isolationist, nihilist, auto-destructive.

SLIDE THE WALKING DEAD GAME

So, what we experience as a rather shocking turn in politics, in poltiical campaigning and in unexpected election results, can be understood as in part a symptom of these crises of belief, and of the credit of the economic, social, and mainstream media systems intrinsic to the fabric of our everyday lives and our sense of the world, and of how to interpret it. It is in this way a symptom of a broader and more systemic stupidity, the toxic effects of a structuring of thinking that deprives users of the coordinates and moorings of their knowledge of the world, and of their capacity to orient themselves to it, and crucially of their capacity to question it, to reflect on the information, the beliefs the values and so on that they are expected to 'mediate' more or less without reflection, quasi-automatically.

The sophisticated predictive modelling and targeted marketing of Trump and Brexit campaigns, the activities of the alt/right micro-propaganda machine' discussed above are systematic exploitations of this systemic stupidity. In so doing, and through their success, they are likely to evolve into systemic characteristics of our disrupted social/cultural/poltiical public sphere. This is Albright's provisional prediction. Or perhaps they are a sign of its spiralling into systemic collapse. When the political system cannot manage to constitute a collective space or forum where arguments over the interpretation of things can be anchored in a collective stabilisation of knowledge, in a collectively negotiated and accepted construction of the 'truth' of the world as it exists for that collective, then the very viability and the future of politics as the non-violent mode of the

individuating struggle and strife between people (eris in the ancient Greek) is in doubt. Of course, eris and polemos, strife and war, politics and violence are never completely separate, but today it is vital to recognise the distinctions between them, and to insist on them. But this can only be achieved collectively if it is to keep the one disappearing in the other.

EXPLAIN THE RATIONALE OF COMMERCIALISATION OF MEDIA. AND ITS AUTOMATION, AND THE DIVIDUALISING STRATEGY OF CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICS AS SYSTEMATIC EXPLOITATION ALONG WITH THE EXPLOITATION OF GOOGLE SEARCH BY ALT.RIGHT.

SO FB, GOOGLE ETC IS A SCAPEGOAT BUT ALSO IS LIABLE TO A PHARMACOLOGICAL CRITIQUE AS POISONOUS SYSTEMICALLY (AS PARTAKING IN SOCIAL MEDIA'S ALGORITHMIC GOVERNMENTALITY) IN NEED OF CRITICAL RECONSIDERATION IN AN 'ORGANOLOGICAL' PERSPECTIVE.

Conclusion