

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

## Culture & Technics: The Politics of Simondon's *Du Mode*

Centre for Critical Thought

University of Kent, Canterbury, September 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### Keynote Speakers:

- Professor Bernard Stiegler (Institut de recherche et d'innovation, Centre Pompidou)
- Dr. Cecile Malaspina (Laboratoire SPHERE, UMR 7219 (CNRS-Université Paris-1 Université Paris 7))
- Dr. Simon Mills (De Montfort University)
- Dr. Yuk Hui (Leuphana Universität)

'[T]he true path toward the reduction of alienation would not be situated within the domain of the social (with the community of work and class), nor in the domain of the inter-individual relationships that social psychology habitually envisages, but at the level of the transindividual collective.' (Simondon, 2017: 254)

Anglophone work on Gilbert Simondon's *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* [1958] (On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects) has, until now, repeatedly lamented the lack of a thorough and complete translation of this rich and dense text. With this long-awaited English translation now published (Simondon, 2017), this conference seeks to ignite and foster exchange among participants transversally across three key themes. First, that of *exegesis*:

- How can, or should, we read Simondon today, in what is a completely transformed technical epoch from his own (digital technics having gone through an unforeseen and rapid process of concretisation)?
- The processes through which everyday life has become, and is becoming, increasingly digitalised (or *cyberneticised* (Hörl and Burton, 2017)) confronts us with new problems. The rapid evolutionary mutation of digital technics has produced new associated milieus. Is culture still, as Simondon noted, a *defense system against technics*? What relation do we have, or could we have, with digital objects (Hui, 2012; 2016) in our associated milieus? What kind of technical beings have we become?

Second, the theme of Simondon's place in French and European philosophy more generally, given his engagement and relation to (for example) Karl Marx, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Georges Canguilhem, and the then emerging field of cybernetics; and further, the subsequent engagement of Simondon by, to name just two key examples, Gilles Deleuze and Bernard Stiegler. Any papers that consider the historical relation of Simondon to his influences, or post-Simondonian thought to Simondon's own work, will be considered.

Third, and most central to this conference, is the *political* nature and dynamic of Simondon's work, as well as its implications in relation to our contemporary questions of, to name some indicative examples:

- Algorithmic governance (Reigeluth, 2014) and Big Data generally (Mills, 2015);
- Automation, post-work politics, change, and accelerationism (Stiegler, 2016; Srnicek and Williams, 2015);
- The sorts of *pedagogical stylistics* which suffuse culture and its relationship to technics: what would the politics and pedagogy of a digital encyclopedism consist?
- What future *transindividual collectives* could we invent (Mills, 2016: 83-89)? What paths towards the "reduction of alienation" can we create?

These initial and non-exhaustive themes and questions will structure a two and a half day conference at the University of Kent, Canterbury, on 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> September, 2018.

*Call for Abstracts and further Conference Information*

As noted, the themes and questions above are non-exhaustive: we welcome creative submissions and, should you have any questions relating to the relevancy of your topic to the conference, please get in touch. This conference will have keynotes, panel sessions, and roundtables. Any submissions will be considered for a **20 minute talk** which will then be followed by feedback sessions. We are also exploring potential publication ventures post-conference. Abstracts should be **300-500 words** and sent to Conor Heaney – [C.C.J.Heaney@kent.ac.uk](mailto:C.C.J.Heaney@kent.ac.uk) - by **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July**.

## References

Hörl, Erich, with Burton, James (eds.), *General Ecology: The New Ecological Paradigm* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Hui, Yuk, 'What is a Digital Object?', *Metaphilosophy*, 43, 4 (2012), 380-395

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Mills, Simon, 'Simondon and Big Data', *Platform: Journal of Media and Communication*, 6 (2015), 59-72

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Reigeluth, Tyler, 'Why Data is Not Enough: Digital Traces as Control of Self and Self-control', *Surveillance & Society*, 12, 2 (2014), 243-254

Simondon, Gilbert, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. by Cecile Malaspina and John Rogrove (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2017)

Srnicek, Nick, and Williams, Alex, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso, 2015)

Stiegler, Bernard, *Automatic Society Volume 1: The Future of Work*, trans. by Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016)