

## Let's Get Physical: Heidegger's Cyborg and the Vicissitudes of the Machine/Body

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In this paper, I want to relate three artistic instances of what I consider to be marvelous marriages between the human and the machinic to a set of theoretical approaches that deal with this relation and/or employ a machinic metaphor when it comes to the question of the human subject. Thus, following the lead that the meaning of *techne* as both art and technics/technology provides, the bits, pieces and engineers of this machine/text in search of an "originary machinicism" are: Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari; Stelarc, Mark Pauline, and *Tetsuo*, the 1989 movie by Shinya Tsukamoto. As a result, I will argue that both the cultural/speaking body AND the 'real body' are machinic.

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In his tools man possesses power over external nature, even though in respect of his ends he is, on the contrary, subject to it.

G.W.F. Hegel<sup>1</sup>

I enjoy being raped by the machine but at the same time I want to destroy the things that are invading me, the human being.

Shinya Tsukamoto<sup>2</sup>

The question concerning technology and its relation to "the human" is more often than not posed in the simple, mostly vulgarized alternative "Does technology liberate or enslave us?" Do we convert to Luddism, or do we joyously accept and celebrate technology/the machinic/the nonhuman? In this paper, I want to suggest a reading of the marriage between the human and the machinic<sup>3</sup> that does not reduce the question to+ this set of alternatives, but

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1. Hegel, G.W.F. *Science of Logic. Vol 1: The Objective Logic*, §1615. See <[http://evans-experimental.freewebspace.com/hegel\\_science10.html](http://evans-experimental.freewebspace.com/hegel_science10.html)>.

2. In Mark Dery (*Escape Velocity* 274).

3. I willfully conflate the terms "technologic," "machinic," and later, "symbolic," in order to free the referent of these terms from any fixed concept related solely to anything "mechanical" or "object-like."

situates it in a kind of middle-layer, occupying a philosophical and psychopathological space in which to test speculatively the relation human-technology in terms of their “primordeal synthesis.” Following the lead of the double meaning of *techne* as both art and technics/technology, the engineers of this machine/text are: the “machine fetishism” of Mark Pauline, the 1991 movie by Shinya Tsukamoto, *Tetsuo*, and the work of the performance artist Stelarc.

The relation of the human to technology has mostly been reduced to a strategy opposing man and technics. In philosophy, Martin Heidegger occupies a prominent position, having scrupulously questioned this simplistic opposition underlying “The Question Concerning Technology,” and showing the difficulty of thinking man and technology together. For Heidegger, the “world” of the subject is a way of “understanding being,” making possible the encounter of people and things. However, there are no things-as-such, waiting for the subject to simply “realize” them as objects in the act of “understanding.” Things can “be” in a twofold way: as an object “ready-to-hand” [*Zuhanden*], and as an object “present-at-hand” [*Vorhanden*]. The object “ready-to-hand” can be roughly equated with both tools and symbolic actions, machines and speech-acts. What is important is Heidegger’s notion that these objects, contrary to “traditional thought,” come before the objects that are “present-at-hand.” To be “present-at-hand” is an already codified method that has come to count as natural.

One important method of “making sense of the world” is the “technological understanding of being,” which implies an understanding of technology itself. At first, Heidegger saw technology basically as a threat because of man’s will to control, mastering technology in the service of his own needs. Man-as-subject sees himself as the bottom/reason/foundation of all being, the *Grund allen Seins*. In his later work, however, Heidegger realized that the essence of technology was not a way in which subjects use and controll objects: “that man becomes the subject and the world the object, is a consequence of technology’s nature establishing itself, and not the other way around” (112). Language and technology thus partake in the same subject/object grammar, “enframing” the subject in the dangerous and misleading realm of instrumental reason. This notion of the instrumentality of technology was a concept he sought to dethrone in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology.” First of all, Heidegger states that “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological” (287).<sup>4</sup> It is exactly this notion that blocks our understanding of what technology *really* is. In what follows, Heidegger deconstructs the *instrumental* interpretation of technology’s essence by referring to Aristotle’s analysis of the *causa*, ultimately showing that what we see as *causa efficiens*, as the “standard for all causality” (*Technology* 291), has a

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4. Subsequently quoted as *Technology*.

completely different meaning in Aristotle. In Greek thought, the *causa* is nothing instrumental, but a “bringing-forth [that] brings out of concealment into unconcealment” (*Technology* 293), and thus has a close relation to the revealing of Truth. In contrast to the “revealing” of *physis* (bringing-forth in itself) and *poiesis* (bringing-forth in another), modern technology, however, though still a mode of revealing [*Entbergen*] and bringing-forth, is “something completely different and therefore new” (*Technology* 288). “Technology” comes to signify the efficient ordering of resources: “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing-reserve [*Bestand*]” (*Technology* 298). Technology erases the object as object (“Gegen-stand” in German literally means “standing against,” i.e., “having a standing of and for its own”). Man, according to Heidegger, is “challenged to exploit the energies of nature” (*Technology* 299). This being said, the question arises that “[i]f man is challenged, ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve” (*Technology* 299).

Since Heidegger explicitly links the words *techne* and *episteme*, both of which are “terms for knowing in the widest sense” (*Technology* 294), it is no big step to the insight that today it is information that ultimately makes objects cease as *Gegen-Stand*. Thus, Heidegger almost uses cybernetic vocabulary to comment on the essence of technology: “[u]nlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching” (*Technology* 298) are technology’s strategies of challenging-forth, a challenging-forth, however, that “never simply comes to an end” (*Technology* 298). For this obscene circularity of technology which is no longer grounded in any external reference, Heidegger uses the word *Gestell*. Despite his insistence that technology itself is nothing technological, Heidegger himself acknowledges that *Gestell* in its “ordinary [but also technical] usage means some kind of apparatus” (*Technology* 301), e.g., “frame,” “mount,” “support,” or “shelf.” Also, it contains the German verb *stellen* which means “placing.” A *Ge-stell* places man and things; it is a kind of exoskeleton, an en-framing that supportingly places. Technology somehow works and functions in and for itself, simultaneously *producing* man as subject (because of man’s “more originally belonging within the standing-reserve”) and *erasing* the subject as an autonomous entity in control. It is exactly this “paradigm word” I want to use in a more apparatus-oriented reading as a guiding image/metaphor throughout this article.

Jacques Lacan’s notion of the symbolic is clearly indebted to Heidegger in this respect. Like Heidegger’s *Gestell*, language oscillates between being both a constituting and constituted factor with regard to the subject. The symbolic, the machine of culture and language, “places” the human, speaking subject in a

universe regulated by logic and reason—it thus could be argued that the *Gestell* and the symbolic are but different names and/or manifestations of that (machinic) logic that situates, places *and* produces the human being *as* subject. Yet, Lacan's notion of the machine is a quite particular one—the subject is a “symbolic machine,” and any reference to a machinic notion of the *corporeal* is somewhat by-passed, inferred negatively as something impossible which nevertheless has effects within the representational registers—the real.

Whereas Lacan's “symbolic machines” might generate a particular kind of pleasure, a *machinic jouissance* of a more material kind is certainly at stake in the work and theatrical performances of Mark Pauline and the *Survival Research Laboratories (SRL)*,<sup>5</sup> founded in 1978. Putting engineering skills in the service of *bricolage*, *SRL*'s objective was to present mechanical spectacles, “operating as an organization of creative technicians dedicated to re-directing the techniques, tools, and tenets of industry, science, and the military away from their typical manifestations in practicality, product or warfare [...] developing themes of socio-political satire.”<sup>6</sup>

*SRL*'s spectacles, always engaging in ever increasing machinic violence—some staging employs flame-throwers and shock-wave cannons—are not so much a critique of technology, but show a delight in extremes: “We build machines of a fairly large size—they are very extreme [...]—some of the machines are very large and weigh up to a couple of tons. [...] Running the V-1 in a closed building—that's pretty intense, like being in the middle of a storm or war zone.”<sup>7</sup> However, machine parts are not the only material involved in Pauline's spectacles. In 1981 and 1982, Pauline joined the machines to dead animals (or animal parts), biological bodies in the purest sense. *Rabot*, for example, mechanically animating the body of a dead rabbit, harnessing and chucking the animal into a frame/mount/*Gestell*, causing it to walk. Other animal-machine hybrids were staged in *A Cruel and Relentless Plot to Pervert the Flesh of Beasts to Unholy Uses*, featuring “a machine incorporating the remains of a dog, mounted on an armature and anchored to a radio-controlled cart. Actuated, the dog-machine lunges forward, its head spinning in goulsh imitation of cartoon violence” (Dery 118). These spectacles, in which the body is controlled and animated by a machine, neatly parallel Pauline's own relation to the machine. They exemplify what Pauline sees to be

the mark of a true machine consciousness—when a mechanical system gets to a point where there's a disjunction between you and what's going

5. See *SRL*'s website, <<http://www.srl.org>>.

6. See <<http://www.srl.org/bio.html>>.

7. See Hertz.

on because what's going on is just too complicated or too intense. Systems are getting so complicated that they're out of control in a rational sense. (Pauline, De Landa and Dery)

Note that in this quote, the term "machine consciousness" is quite open in respect to whom it applies: machine, machine-controller, or a fusion of both.

In this respect, Pauline's *Rabot* and his other "organic robots" are a perfect illustration of both Heidegger's enframing of man and the Lacanian subject, staging the real body *within* and *as animated by* a machine/the symbolic, which Lacan, in his reading of Freud's *fort/da* game, saw ultimately based on an originary binarism, 1/0, thus relating it to cybernetics. Although the real (body), strictly speaking, is excluded from the representational registers, it both *has* effects and *is itself a belated effect* of the symbolic: in a paradoxical logic, "[t]he first [speaking] body produces the second [biological] one, by incorporating itself in it" ("Radiophonie" 61), producing it by en-framing it, "housing" it. For Lacan, the subject "inhabits the signifier" and possesses a "real" "body whose essence it is said is to dwell in language" (*Télévision* 23).<sup>8</sup> In language, in its en-framing *Gestell*, man-as-subject is supported.

Thus for the subject, for whom culture is in fact its most "natural habitat," the machinic proves to be a constituting factor.<sup>9</sup> However, if on the other hand the symbolic/machinic is seen solely in terms of a tool being at the subject's disposal, the house becomes a "prison-house," finally alienating the subject from its "true" self. The question, then, accordingly, is if and how we can gain a free relation to the machinic.

As already noted, *beyond* the representational realms of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the subject participates in what Lacan calls "the impossible real": the body of the drives that cannot be reduced/tamed/represented in those two registers that constitute reality. Lacan describes the drive as a kind of feedback circuit: since "the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, [...] its aim is simply this return into circuit" (*Concepts* 179).<sup>10</sup> This

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8. This notion ultimately refers to Heidegger. He essentially elaborates this idea in his essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." Heidegger puts forward the idea of the close relationship between being, dwelling, and language, as well as man's disturbed relationship with language, acting "as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man" (*Basic Writings* 348, emphasis in the original). See also Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," where he states that "[l]anguage is the house of Being. In its home man dwells," in its en-framing *Gestell*, man-as-subject is supported (271).

9. For example, see Stiegler.

10. Subsequently quoted as *Concepts*.

circuit is described in terms of an input/output loop that Lacan captures in the paradoxical formula “*se faire*” (*Concepts* 195), “to make oneself” eat, shit, even walk.<sup>11</sup> Underneath the regulated drift of desire that ties the human subject to the phallic machine, there is thus the rhythmic pulsation of the drives, another machine, removed from the “typical manifestations in practicality, product or warfare.”

Terry Harpold, in his reading of *Tetsuo*, has connected a refusal of the “fetish model of prosthesis”<sup>12</sup> based on the Oedipal scenario of castration and lack of the sexuated subject, with Lacan’s myth of the lamella, where Lacan highlights the “immortal [...] irrepressible life” (*Concepts* 198) of the drive energy. The lamella is the human being as pre-sexual, pre-subject substance, that something in the *human* subject that is *not* reducible to the pure digitality of the symbolic. Lacan even calls it the organ of the libido, the paradoxical organ of a “life that has need of no organ” (*Concepts* 198).

*Tetsuo: The Iron Man* is more a montage of nonstop surrealistic images than your average movie. It is a montage sped up by its extensive use of stop-motion photography, which emphasizes the overall feverish atmosphere. *Tetsuo* begins in an abandoned factory with a man slashing his thigh open and trying to insert a metal rod into his leg. This man, credited as “the metal fetishist,” is then hit by a car driven by an anonymous businessman, accompanied by his girlfriend. Rather than report it, the businessman dumps the injured but not dead victim in the woods and flees. Waking up the next morning, the businessman finds a metal hair growing out of his cheek. Soon, his body seems to burst open, revealing metal and machinic parts inside. To make things even worse, the businessman starts having sexual fantasies even more bizarre than his reality, and they start coming true: when his penis turns into a rotating drill, he impales his girlfriend. It all turns out to be the metal fetishist’s work. Due to their “contact” made through the accident, a telephatic bond seems to have been developed between them. In a final battle, both fetishist and businessman merge into a gigantic engine, ready to go for the world.

Commenting on Slavoj Žižek’s interpretation of the lamella in the work of David Lynch, Harpold rightly sees Žižek’s restriction to figures of “the flayed, skinned body, the palpitation of raw, skinless red flesh” (Žižek 208) as too limiting, because “too biological.” Harpold observes that later in his seminar, Lacan shortly returns to his notion of the lamella, giving as some of the most ancient examples of the incarnation of the lamella in the body the practices of

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11. See in this respect Pauline’s and Stelarc’s various *Walking Machines* and Stelarc’s performance “Exoskeleton.”

12. I am indebted to Terry Harpold for kindly e-mailing me a copy of his unpublished paper.



“tattooing, scarification” (*Concepts* 206). Presuming that Lacan would include other forms of bodily modifications in this list as well, Harpold then goes on “to extend this lamella-function to other artificial interventions on the body,” interventions that play a predominant role in *Tetsuo*. The materializations of the lamella that Lacan has described have “the function [...] of situating the subject [...] marking his place in the field of the group’s relations. And, at the same time, it obviously has an erotic function” (*Concepts* 206). Whereas the “situating function” doubles the logic of the *Gestell*, the “erotic function” “inscribe[s] the substantiality of the body on its substance” and it is exactly that which combines these practices with the libido-organ, the lamella.

How does *Tetsuo* fit in with all this? According to Terry Harpold, *Tetsuo* can be read as displaying—in its obsessiveness with bodily modification, in its conjunction of flesh, machinery, and pornography—a possibly more up-to-date version of the lamella:

what is revealed in the movie when surfaces are peeled back, or when they burst open from within, is: a tangle of cables and conduits, steaming solder and blossoming rust. The stuff of the real body in *Tetsuo* is metal [...]; what might be otherwise understood as electromechanical extensions of human flesh are revealed to be its essence.

In *Tetsuo*, the logic of the drive is visualized and manifested in wires, scrap, and power-drills. Thus, the machinic body has to be situated *at/as* the interface between the body of the drives and the body of desire; it is the “polymorphously perverse” body/machine that ultimately aims at “spreading” the truth, a truth that the mysterious, manically laughing TV in the movie knew all the time: that the machine *is* the essence of the body. In the final scene of *Tetsuo*, the ambivalence of Tsukamoto’s epilogue to this paper becomes apparent in its full force. The final line of the movie, “We can mutate the whole world!” can be either read as a menace, realizing the worst nightmares of the technophobic, or as a liberating, utopian promise to create a libido-machinic society, the process of which has been shown to be a very painful one for the individual.

In *Tetsuo*, the ultimate aim of the drive is not satisfaction, but insatiability, not function, but *jouissance*, which can be seen exactly as that which does not serve anything. Function, in contrast, is closely related to the law, since it is the essence of the law to regulate enjoyment, to set constraints upon its open-endedness.

Even if Lacan is more concerned with the subject—whereas for Deleuze and Guattari this is quite an obsolete idea, they are more concerned with lines of force and, ultimately, politics—I think that on a structural level, a cautious and tentative analogy can be drawn between the Lacanian differentiation between pre-Oedipal drive and post-Oedipal desire and the “pure/molecular machine” (desire machine) and the “operational/molar machine” (social machine). Desire

machines, according to Deleuze/Guattari, “are of a molecular order [...]: formative machines, whose very misfirings are functional” (*Anti-Oedipus* 286). Like the Lacanian drive, desire machines are “engaged in their own assembly (*montage*) [...] machines in the strict sense, because they proceed by breaks and flows, associated waves and particles, associative flows and partial objects” (*Anti-Oedipus* 286-87). Again, what is at stake is not a matter of oppositions pure and simple. Since the subject’s reality is its psychic reality, fantasy and reality share the same structure, are one and the same thing judged from different perspectives. The difference is thus not between fantasy and reality, desire and utility, but a difference of register, a difference of conditions: the molar “society machines” are molecular machines under “determinate conditions” (*Anti-Oedipus* 287), ultimately two states of one and the same machine. Beyond function, beyond culture, the polymorphous drive reacts against repressive, phallic desire, a “rage against the machine” not from the (however illusory) position of an non-machinic other,<sup>13</sup> but a “rage of the (pure) machine against the (Oedipal) machine,” a “rage against the Symbolic” (Kristeva 178, *emphasis in the original*). The common-sense opposition between machine and human being thus has to be re-written as the opposition between the signifier-machine and the signified-machine. Since there is no escaping the machine, there is only the *machine-that-acknowledges-being-a-machine* and the *machine-that-claims-to-be-natural*. This perspective does not claim nature and the machinic as oppositions. Once within the symbolic (culture), the machinic is our most natural condition. With regard to Heidegger, this comes close to saying that once within the *Gestell*, the subject can only think of an illusory realm *before* the *Gestell* as a belated effect of *always already* having been *within* the *Gestell*. Thus, the body cannot be seen as determined by biological parameters alone anymore. In Félix Guattari’s re-definition of the Lacanian object *a* as an “object machine petit ‘a’” (*Molecular Revolution* 115) the subject is constituted in “a pure signifying space where the machine would represent the subject for another machine” (*Molecular Revolution* 117-18). Whereas the Lacanian object *a* is still a fragment of the real (body), here the body as a whole is not replaced but affected by the machinic; the whole body is an “objet-machine petit ‘a.’” For Deleuze and Guattari, “[d]esire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression” (*Anti-Oedipus* 26). If, according to Lacan, the object *a* is the “stuff” (*Écrits* 315) of the subject, then, in that “pure signifying space,” where the subject as subject is missing, it is in fact the *objet-machine petit ‘a’* that is the

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13. See a similar discussion in my article on Techno, “Stop Making Sense.”



stuff of the “subject”: body and machine become one. The body is part of what Deleuze and Guattari call the *machinic phylum*. This *machinic phylum* is first of all a “flow of matter” (*Thousand Plateaus* 9). It is “materiality, natural or artificial, and both simultaneously; it is matter in movement, in flux, in variation, matter as a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression” (*Thousand Plateaus* 409). In *Tetsuo*, this *machinic phylum*, which, strictly speaking, “is not a life-force, since the phylum is older than life” (*De Landa* 9), is *metallic*. It traverses the ancestry of both the organic and the nonorganic, the human and the robot, etc. It is thus only fitting that for Deleuze and Guattari, the *machinic phylum* is “essentially metallic or metallurgical” (*Thousand Plateaus* 410), since metal “is neither a thing nor an organism, but a *body without organs*” (*Thousand Plateaus* 411, emphasis in the original). With regard to this notion of the *body without organs*, the schizo-body escaping the organization of the symbolic machine, one can see how *Tetsuo* markedly differs from, let’s say, *Terminator 2*. The raw “*bricolage spirit*” of the montage of *Tetsuo*, I argue, relates more to the notion of the *machinic phylum* than the elegant morphing in *Terminator*. Whereas *Terminator 2* relentlessly shows off the skills and power of the “digital machine,” *Tetsuo* revels in a “machino-authentic” Old Skool Lo-Fi—the “real stuff.”

Because of the *machinic phylum*, both human and robot bodies would ultimately be related to a common phylogenetic line” (*De Landa* 7). Following Spinoza, Deleuze reads the body in machinic, computational terms:

In the first place, a body [...] is composed of an infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body. Secondly, a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality. (*Spinoza* 123)

A body is thus not simply a form, a container, but a “complex relation between differential velocities, between deceleration and an acceleration of particles” (*Spinoza* 123), affecting and being affected by other such complex relations: desiring-machines connected to and coupled with other desiring-machines. Since this definition of bodies does without any “substance” whatsoever, it can be applied to any “body,” and it can be known and assessed only with respect to *changes* happening to, in, or between *bodies*. Bodies thus only ever are in states of “becoming,” entering relations with their *milieu*, which in turn is a part of a larger body of particles, *et ad infinitum*. The body thus becomes-what-it-is by forming *assemblages* with other such bodies (human or nonhuman). Following Manuel De Landa, Deleuze and Guattari’s example of the wasp and the orchid (an example of “unnatural coupling”) can thus be

extended, seeing “the role of humans [...] as little more than that of industrious insects pollinating an independent species of machine-flower” (De Landa 3). However, as Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza suggests, since the *machinic phylum* crosses any transversal becoming, the relation described in De Landa’s example should not be read one-way: machine affects human and *vice versa*; they are not separate entities but connected in a mutual phase of “becoming.”

This, I argue, is at stake in the art and strategy of the Australian performance artist Stelarc. Whereas Mark Pauline is working with machine parts and body parts of dead animals, Stelarc has turned to his own body as his “experiment ground.” Employing robotic and medical devices, Stelarc’s work probes and extends the capabilities of the human body. In performances that make extensive use of cyborg and post-human metaphors, Stelarc questions the issue of “biological evolution” and comments on the human body’s (mal)adaptation to an environment that has become increasingly technological: “A BODY IS DESIGNED TO INTERFACE WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT—its sensors are open-to-the-world (compared to its inadequate internal surveillance system).”<sup>14</sup> Because of this poor adaption of the human to its environment, Stelarc’s objective is to “redesign [...] the body,”<sup>15</sup> and by this redesigning to “redefin[e] what is human” (“From Psycho”).

Having started with a series of suspension-performances and having probed the limitations of the human body, his later work concentrates on enhancing this very body. Later performances include a “Third Hand,” a five-finger robotic hand activated by his abdominal and leg muscles, a “Stomach Sculpture” to be inserted into the artist’s “internal space,” etc. More recently, Stelarc has been creating amplified and “virtual” body performances, using prosthetic technologies that “affect” his body with remote and direct muscle stimulation (his muscles in fact affect the system and vice versa). These “machinic dances” stage a choreography of machinic movements and involuntary gestures and body motions ultimately uncontrollable by the artist.

According to Stelarc, “[t]he information explosion is indicative of an evolutionary dead end [...] In our decadent biological phase, we *indulge in information* as if this compensates for our genetic inadequacies” (“From Psycho,” emphasis in the original). Comparable to Heidegger’s *Gestell*, “INFORMATION IS THE PROsthESIS THAT PROPS UP THE BODY” (“From Psycho”), supporting and placing it. Because of the human body’s “*outmoded Pleistocene programme*” (*Prosthetics*, emphasis in the original), we have to get rid of the body.

However, I think Stelarc’s comments on his own work have to be read more as

14. Stelarc. “Absent Bodies”.

15. Stelarc. “From Psycho to Cyber Strategies: Prosthetics, Robotics and Remote Existence.” Subsequently quoted as (“From Psycho”).

a “manifesto” than to be taken at face-value. His stressing of the human being’s *post-evolutionary* status only makes sense as long as we read “evolution” to refer solely to a “natural law” being applied to nature only. As soon as we take the notion of a *machinic phylum* into account, an evolution encompassing both man and machine, the phrase “post-evolutionary” becomes redundant. Also, a statement like “THE BODY IS OBSOLETE” (“From Psycho”) is perhaps too catchy and simplistic in the long run, since what is obsolete is the body as a container of the soul, the body taken as autonomous subject, the body “as we know it.” But what comes to the fore, what resurfaces, even resurrects, is exactly the body *as* machinic, the body as a site of affection. Thus, what I see Stelarc aiming at is not so much a fashionable transformation into a cyborg—he is not a willing victim of the human being’s domestication through technology<sup>16</sup>—but the staging of the endless project of *becoming*, of *body-becoming-machine*, and, ultimately, *machine-becoming-body*.

Thus, the *machinic phylum* enjoys a curious relation to both the body of the drives and Heidegger’s *Gestell* (here, Stelarc’s *proper name* bears a relationship to that “paradigm word” of science, the *Stel* of *stele* is present in both). The body of the drive, itself *machinic*, is placed within the “determinate conditions” of the *Gestell*. The *Gestell* somehow un-covers [*entbergen*] what is ultimately already inherent in the *machinic phylum/body* of the drives, but places it in the service of control and mastery, a mastery that itself has to be mastered (or condemned) by its own creation. Stelarc stages this conflict in his work, and in drastically showing the subject’s endless oscillation between the biological and the machinic.

However, given his credo that THE BODY IS OBSOLETE, why does Stelarc’s body still look like “a body”? In this respect, design—after all, Stelarc’s proclaimed objective is the “re-designing of the body”—is more than just memory, nostalgia. It shows that in the end, MEAT MATTERS in the process of filling the gap created by the hegemony of the human body’s post-biological status with non-symbolic flesh.

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16. See Virilio.

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