Media An-archē-ology

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Abstract

In this article, I explore critical points of mutual concern and potential cooperation for the field of media archaeology and the deconstruction of metaphysics, as articulated in the work of Reiner Schürmann. Each of these critical modes of thought, I argue, has emerged out of a shared impulse to deconstruct our "archaeo-teleological desire" for "archaeo-teleocratic origins," yet the productive capacity of their overlapping, interpenetrating concerns has yet to be posited, much less explored. I therefore trace the contours of two significant points at which each of these seemingly disparate critical traditions reveals itself to be already in the service of the other.

Teleocracy

While its epistemological roots run deep into the twentieth century, the field of media archaeology has taken shape in recent decades in response to the hegemony of "the new" in contemporary media studies and to the "strategic amnesia of digital culture" (Parikka 2012: 13). From touchscreens and social media to predictive algorithms and "atmospheric" networks (Galloway & Thacker 2013), the digital revolution has thrusted us into an age of new media that feels *newer* and far more *mediated* than any other technical revolution in human history. It's hardly surprising, then, that for so many studies aiming to confront the complex challenges of understanding contemporary media culture, "the past has been considered to have little to contribute … The new media have been treated as an all-encompassing and 'timeless' realm that can be explained from within" (Huhtamo & Parikka 2011: 1). This is no coincidence. The instantaneity of connections, functions, and processes saturating life in our new media culture has fundamentally reoriented our experience of and relation to time, capturing us in a permanent, hyper-mediated present, eroding historical consciousness while rewiring the circuits of our desires, attention, labor, subjectivity, politics, and consumerism to the amnesiac tempo of the on-demand and the just-in-time.[1] For its own

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[1] See: Jodi Dean (2009), *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press; Bernard Stiegler (2010), *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, Trans. Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity Press; Mark B.N. Hansen (2015), *Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First Century Media,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Dominic Pettman (2015), *Infinite Distraction*, Cambridge: Polity Press; Franco "Bifo" Berardi (2015), *And: Phenomenology of the*

part, media archaeology aims to give much-needed historical depth to our consciousness of media culture at a moment when said consciousness has been phenomenologically flattened. As Jussi Parikka writes, media archaeology "sees media cultures as sedimented and layered, a fold of time and materiality where the past might be suddenly discovered anew, and the new technologies grow obsolete increasingly fast" (2012: 3). Media archaeology has thus emerged as a field whose methods for mining the "sedimented and layered" past, while actively resisting being corralled into a cohesive set of disciplinary conventions, nevertheless cohere into a collective and self-consciously rebellious effort to disrupt our media-induced slavery to the new/now. In its variable executions, however, media archaeology's amalgamated modes of inquiry constitute a more ambitious and, I argue, more consequential attempt to unearth and disrupt the codes and functions of the very narrative machinery that reifies our present subjection to the new by extorting teleological finitude from the broken vectors of history.

This historical extortion is itself embedded in a question of *desire*—a desire, in fact, that characterizes the entire historical economy of Western metaphysics, broken up into its constituent epochs. As Reiner Schürmann argues, all such metaphysical epochs have been organized by "the very desire for an unshakable ground of theory and action—for a ground, especially, of a theory of action" (1990: 155). In his radical readings of Martin Heidegger and Meister Ekhart, Schürmann deconstructs this most basic, desirous schema at the heart of all metaphysics: the securing of an *archē* of first principles that can serve as the singular condition of the knowable. The *archē*, so secured, functions as the authoritative foundation for a theory of action, providing an answer to the question, "What is to be done?"—an answer that inevitably derives from the commandment given by these supreme principial referents.

Following Heidegger, Schürmann's deconstruction *historicizes* the "question of being" in its various epochal articulations. That is, he historicizes each metaphysical epoch's conditions of possibility for thinking the question of being—a question whose articulation strives for universality at the same time that it is inescapably, tragically locked within the particular, historical language, and subjected to the particular epistemic conditions, of its epoch. Such historicization, however, is only made possible by our collective emergence into the "age of technology," with technology being "understood not as a set of tools for some people's material culture—as one would speak of Roman or medieval technology—but as the phenomenal configuration of the twentieth century" (1990: 17). This "phenomenal configuration" of technological modernity represents the threshold of the full "realization" of metaphysics through technology, which is also the threshold of its "exhaustion." Our belonging to the

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End, Cambridge: The MIT Press; Jonathan Crary (2014), *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep,* London: Verso.

"technological era" serves as the condition of possibility for deconstructing metaphysical epochality because our belonging is defined by the regular phenomenal experience of technology (*Gestell*) as the "event through which any economical [epochal] constellation comes about" (1990: 42). Our experience of technology is an experience of the generative power to make and break epochs: "Technology is essentially Janus-faced, looking backwards with the most rigidly principial gaze ever and forwards with what can be described as anarchy" (Schürmann 1983: 54). And it is only in crossing this threshold into the age of technology that we are afforded the possibility (but by no means guaranteed the actuality) of stepping back, of seeing the machinery of the history of being manifest in its metaphysical epochs, of *detaching* ourselves from the subsumptive capture of hegemonic first principles that order the knowable and the doable.

To deconstruct this machinic history of being is to see each metaphysical epoch as a hegemonic system ("economy of presence") that, by ordering itself around an *archē* of first principles, renders life livable, establishing norms "in the order of authority [and] … intelligibility" and, thus, opening "a 'clearing' in which a given community can live" (1990: 35). The livability of any such epoch is thus *mediated* by a hegemonic order of authority and intelligibility that is both secured and administered by the historically specific *archē* supplying the question of being with a *Why*? To stand on the threshold of the phenomenal configuration that enables us to grasp the historicity of these hegemonic epochal constellations, though, is to feel "the sting that unnerves all archaeo-teleological desire [and] the presumed need for an archaeo-teleocratic origin" (1990: 204)—it is to graze the possibility of articulating the question of being *an-archically*, "without Why."

It is clear, then, that these two historical modes of inquiry—media archaeology and the Schürmannian-Heideggerian deconstruction of metaphysical epochality—are latently, yet crucially, connected. The productive capacity of this connection, however, has yet to be posited, much less explored. In the following sections, I will trace two of the most significant points at which their respective concerns and aims intertwine. First, by examining those remnants and components of bygone media cultures that have either been suppressed or forgotten in the dominant narratives of technological progress, media archaeology embodies, in Siegfried Zielinski's terms, an "anarchaeological" form of resistance to the "archaeo-teleological desire" to extort such unbroken narratives from history by imposing, and appealing to the authority of, "an archaeo-teleocratic origin." Its deep attention to the imagination, creation, functioning, and embeddedness of historical media is simultaneously an excavation of "the processual flux of real temporal change out of which historical narratives emerge in a process of capture, always in favour of particular ends and power formations" (Goddard 2015: 1768). In this way, media archaeology already situates itself, consciously or not, within Schürmann's *an-archē-ological* drive to deconstruct and historicize the authoritative administration of

epochal hegemonies. Second, this drive from Schürmann hinges on the realization that the *archē*'s epoch-defining power depends on "the instatement of a code to the rank of principle," which, in turn, orders the field of intelligibility and thereby enforces its hegemonic order of authority. Thus, any effort to deconstruct a given hegemonic epochal economy in the history of being is, by necessity, a meticulous accounting of said economy's machinic administration and mediation of orders of intelligibility and authority through functionalized codes and executive apparatuses "guaranteeing satisfaction to that desire and that need" for "an archaeo-teleocratic origin" (Schürmann 1990: 204) that will give sense and *telos* to existence. We could say, then, that Schürmann's deconstruction of metaphysical epochality is already an *an-archē-ological* exercise in media archaeology.

Each of these modes of inquiry embodies and an-archic drive to liberate the present by interrogating the past, to disrupt the hegemonic hold of an economy of being that has been historically governed by archaeo-teleological desire. In the following sections, I will trace in greater detail the contours of their mutual entanglements in the hope of drawing out the collaborative potential each has for expanding and augmenting the aims of the other. Doing so, I believe, will necessarily clear a path for something like a media archaeology of the history of being, for methods of interrogating historical media as essential functionaries and administrators of epochal hegemonies, for an *an-archē-ological* deconstruction of the medial conditions of thinking and acting.

Follow the Leader

Media archaeology's emergence as a field has been marked by a general acknowledgement of its more or less "nomadic" lineages and methodologies. This has come at the price of sacrificing robust disciplinary cohesion. However, it puts into stark relief the fact that the driving force behind media archaeology as a "field" is not so much a specific, disciplined set of skills as an "anarchaeological" (which is also, I'll argue, an *an-archē-ological*) impulse to deconstruct the "archaeo-teleological desire" for "archaeo-teleocratic origins" in which to ground metaphysically skewed narratives of technological progress. Not everyone is on board with this ambiguity, however. Simone Natale, for instance, laments the "substantial methodological anarchy" threatening any sense of disciplinary integrity: "by merging media archaeology with a wide range of perspectives in contemporary media history, one ultimately risks losing the significance of this approach—as when you dilute a small amount of salt in a much too large pot of water" (2012: 526). What concerns Natale is the apparent disparateness of methods and analyses from myriad studies that, in one way or another, fall in with the "travelling discipline" of media archaeology (Parikka 2012: 15). This makes it very difficult to find some kind of disciplinary coherence that would distinguish media archaeology as a

systematic "theory about the development and history of media technologies" as opposed to simply "a heterogeneous set of instruments and inspirations to be used by historians of media." In all his shock and horror, though, Natale stumbles onto media archaeology's *anarchic* drive doing what it does best.

What critics like Natale use to question media archaeology's disciplinary solidity is, in large part, what characterizes media archaeology's collective challenge to the normative practices and values that integrate knowledge into solidified disciplines in the first place. In her "Afterword" to the field-"defining" collection edited by Jussi Parikka and Erkki Huhtamo, Vivian Sobchack strikes upon this same question of anarchy, but with an expressly different tone: "media archaeology—ideologically, and in terms of its liberal alliances and differences from the disciplined disciplines of history, film and media studies, and cultural studies—retains its *anarchic status* as undisciplined [and] *poses a major challenge to these disciplines' epistemic norms and established values*" (emphases added) (2011: 327). Still, as Sobchack notes, the various methodological differences and conceptual approaches to media archaeology also share a number of "family features" that connect them through a "shared philosophical *habitus.*" Such family features include:

> a valorization of media in their concrete particularity rather than as a set of abstractions; media as material and structures (in their broadest and most dynamic sense) rather than as subaltern 'stuff' subject (and subjected) to theory or metaphysics; media practice and performance as a corporeal, instrumental, and epistemic method productively equal to methods of distanced analysis; description of media's materials, forms, structures, and operations rather than the interpretation of media content or social effects; media's formal and epistemic variety rather than their remedial similitudes; and, finally ... media, in their multiplicity, rupturing historical continuity and teleologies rather than supporting them (2011: 327).

Regarding media archaeology's "anarchic status," this last "family feature" seems to be the most significant, or at least the most binding. Others are more contested. For instance, while some of the most regularly cited works in the media archaeological tradition (most notably from the anti- or post-humanist descendants of Friedrich Kittler in the somewhat misleadingly termed "German school" of media archaeology) strongly emphasize the "concrete particularity" of media "forms, structures, and operations" over "the interpretation of media content or social effects,"[2] other self-identified media

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2 Wolfgang Ernst, one of the most prominent representatives of the "German School," writes, "To a certain extent, it seems obvious that all media innovations are culturally determined – a premise culminating in the new historicist view that affirms both the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. But this chiastic historical model calls for a supplement: the assumption of an inner logic of

archaeologists, like Erkki Huhtamo, argue that, "although hard technological facts matter, the discourses that envelop them and mold their meanings play an even more decisive role" (2013: 15). Huhtamo's own studies focus on "media-related topoi"[3] while still staking a claim as works of media archaeology, which, for him, primarily constitutes "a way to penetrate beyond accepted historical narratives, uncovering omissions, gaps, and silences" (2013: 16). It's perhaps best, then, to comprehend media archaeology in this vein—not by the, at times, wide variation in its methodological and conceptual alchemy, but by its expressly non-dialectical, anarchic relation to the *machinification of history*, the process of which is most clearly marked out by media archaeology's nomadic practitioners as their perpetual demolition site.[4]

Indeed, this is why Siegfried Zielinski argues that, by way of its embedded deconstructive impulse, media archaeology is, as a whole, *an*archaeological: "The concept of *archaiologia*, stories from history, comprises not only the old, the original (*archaios*), but also the act of governing, of ruling (*archein*) and its substantive *archos* (leader). *Anarchos* is the *nomen agentis* to *archein*, and it means 'the absence of a leader,' also 'the lack of restraint or discipline'" (2006: 27). In this view—an integral "family feature" in media archaeology's "shared philosophical *habitus*"—archaeology stands for a disciplined practice of governance through storytelling, of drawing out and drawing on the old in order to extort teleological finitude and authority from history's residuals. Thus, the media archaeological drive to unearth, from the sedimented layers of history, forgotten media technologies, practices, and topoi—along with the overlooked, functional layers of those that history has not entirely forgotten[5]—is *anarchaeological* in

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media development that literally introduces a third element to the Promethean dichotomy of culture and nature" (2013: 133).

3   "Topoi are building blocks of cultural traditions; they manifest both continuities and transformations in the transmission of ideas. Media-related topoi may serve various roles: as connectors to other cultural spheres; as commentaries and elaborations of media-cultural forms, themes, and fantasies; or as formulas deliberately used for profit or ideological indoctrination" (Huhtamo 2013: 16).

4   A number of media archaeology's pioneers have admitted this up front. "What is it that holds the approaches and interests of the media archaeologists together, justifying the term?" Parrika and Huhtamo ask. "Discontent with 'canonized' narratives of media culture and history may be the clearest common driving force" (2011: 3). "Media archaeology is first and foremost a methodology," according to Geert Lovink, "a hermeneutic reading of the "new" against the grain of the past, rather than a telling of the history of technologies from past to present" (2011: 8).

5   "Rather than being a nostalgic collection of 'dead media' of the past, assembled in a curiosity cabinet, media archaeology is an analytical tool, a method of analyzing and presenting aspects of media that would otherwise escape the discourse of cultural history" (Ernst 2012: 56). Ernst's jab at Zielinski's *wunderkammern* approach to media archaeology is evident. Nevertheless, his neo-Kittlerian "media archaeography" shares the common media-archaeological commitment to deconstructing the ordering authority of general and selective (meta-)narratives of the history of the media. The real villain for Ernst, however, is not so much any one ideologically charged, teleological ordering of history or

its un-disciplinary practice of disrupting or dethroning the narratological *leader*ship of *telos*. But the trajectories of all such *teloi*—that is, all ultimate ends towards which historical progress develops, all aims or goals for which historical action purportedly strives—are themselves derived from and anchored in a metaphysical *archē* of first principles. For *archē* refers both to the *origin* or *foundation* as well as the *commandment* of *authority* that governs action, that delimits the doable and the sayable in its arrangement of the historico-technological living-scape of any given epoch. "The *archē*," Schürmann writes, "always functions in relation to action as substance functions in relation to its accidents, imparting to them sense and *telos*" (1990: 5). By providing artefactual and narrative credence to the authoritative leadership of telos, archaeology thus doubles as *archē*-ology, an agent in the service of that which imparts sense and telos, and thereby governs, action itself. It is, therefore, crucial to recognize that, in its disciplinarily "anarchic" practices of mining the medial remnants and epistemological constructions of the past, in its efforts to interrogate media "in their multiplicity" without recuperating them into an unbroken narrative of technological progress, media (an)archaeology already doubles (if only latently) as *an-archē-ology*.

Media archaeology's conceptual inheritance winds through a number of pivotal sites, from mid-century art history to film studies, from Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* and its disjointed collection of the sensorial data of modernity to Marshall McLuhan's traveling investigations into the constitutive relations *between* different media as well as media's recursive altering of the human sensorium. One of the most consequential lines of inheritance, though, comes from Michel Foucault, and thus concerns both the historically conditioned conditions of appearance for historical subjects and objects, as well as the machinic apparatuses that order history itself and its origins into "onto-theo-teleological" narratives (Schürmann 1990: 8). The first line of this Foucauldian inheritance passes down the terms of his "archaeological" approach to the historical "conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse," institutions, cultural practices, etc. (Foucault 1972: 44). Also folded into this inheritance is a precious concern for what Foucault would later refer to as "genealogy," which aimed more specifically at disrupting the principial authority of simple origins and teleological lines of perceived historical descent from one epoch to another:

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another, but the narrativization of history itself. Beneath layers of the all-too-human devices of rhetoric, metaphor, narrative, etc. through which we understand the past, media structure history and humans in their own way; they have their own "techno-epistemological configurations underlying the discursive surface," their own archaeology of knowledge, which, in order to be properly studied, requires that the media archaeologist be competent not only in discursive analysis but in "informatics (mathematical logic, technique, and control). Media archaeology is primarily interested in the nondiscursive infrastructure and (hidden) programs of media. Thus it turns from the historiographical to the technoarchival (archaeographical) mode, describing the nondiscursive practices specified in the elements of the technocultural archive" (2012: 59).

> Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things ... Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations-or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (1984: 81).

As mentioned above, this, more than any set methodological practices, appears to be the binding source of media archaeology's identity as a "field": this appreciation for the "exteriority of accidents" coupled with a firm resistance to their recuperation into a process of extorting "unbroken continuity" from a history littered with "forgotten things." We find one of the most striking iterations of these binding concerns in Zielinski's *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Zielinski's self-described "anarchaeological" or "variantological" approach to the history of media expresses a deep (some say excessive) affection for the "accidents," the losers, the has- or, more important, the could-have-beens, which enjoy the privileged position in his "cabinet of curiosities" (*wunderkammern*) (Zielinski 2006: 34).

Even if the execution raises more questions than it answers, Zielinski's call for a critical mass of anarchaeological studies to form a "variantology of the media" has a clear goal that speaks to the collective effort of media archaeologists, even those whose approaches vary radically from Zielinski's. "Instead of looking for obligatory trends, master media, or imperative vanishing points," he writes, "one should be able to discover individual variations. Possibly, one will discover fractures or turning points in historical master plans that provide useful ideas for navigating the labyrinth of what is currently firmly established" (2006: 7). Looking back from the present, the happenings of history inevitably calcify into smooth structures connecting the then and the now, the there and here, through a seemingly unbroken chain of causality masquerading as fate or progress. The solidity of already-happened-ness washes such structures clean, erasing the trembling presence (or present-ness) of contingency at each spatio-temporal layer—the possibility, when the past was once the present, that things *could* go many different ways. As is the uncommon commonality within the field, Zielinski's is not at all representative of the wide variation of media archaeological methodologies, but his central aim to locate "fractures ... in historical master plans," I argue, is. Zielinski makes his "cuts" into the deep meat of historical time, retrieving a sense of a lost present teaming with contingent possibility in the stories of forgotten media and inventors that have been crushed under the weight of teleological narratives. A media

(an)archaeological focus on lost and "failed" technologies—technologies that existed on paper only, for instance, or that, for any number of reasons, didn't "take off" the way their (perhaps less sophisticated) competitors did—reminds the subject of the present that the evolution of technology (and, thus, of the human itself, as technical being) is not, and never was, a straightforward matter of progressing from worse to better, or "from primitive to complex" (2006: 7). And media archaeology's deconstructive impulse takes aim at the machinic ordering of history into smooth-functioning archaeo-teleological narratives that suggest otherwise.

Forgotten Things

Media archaeology, then, is already a historical and historiographical question of deconstructing the metaphysical recuperation of "archaeo-teleocratic origins" in the history of the media. Its central aim is guided by the disruption of what Reiner Schürmann identifies as the "desire for an unshakable ground [*archē*] of theory and action" characterizing the hegemonic epochality of all metaphysics, which is the very object of his own deconstruction. The key thread running through Schürmann's oeuvre, as Humberto Gonzalez Nuñez notes, especially the major works,[6] is a complex interrogation of "the tension between existence and principle" (2017). This tension, though, necessarily takes on varying shapes. And if we take Schürmann's objective of historicizing the question of being not only seriously, but literally, then the tension between existence and principle emerges as an irreducibly *historical* problem in which said tension is variably *mediated* by the phenomenal constellations distinguishing each epoch in the history of being. Excavating the functional arrangements of such constellations and their individual components would thus be nothing less than an archaeology of the media of being, of the medial conditions for the thinking of being.

Schürmann carries out increasingly expansive investigations into the mystical philosophy of Meister Ekhart as well as the metaphysical deconstruction (*Abbau*) of Martin Heidegger, but his is something far greater than a "study of" either. Ekhart and Heidegger serve as Schürmann's primary interlocutors on the question of the relation between existence and principle; *through them,* Schürmann develops his own unique and consequential mode of deconstruction. The object of this deconstruction is nothing less than the relation that characterizes the whole of Western metaphysics since Aristotle: the derivative relation, that is, between first philosophy and practical philosophy; the "old problem of the unity between thinking and acting" in which *thinking* "means securing some rational foundation upon which one may establish the

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6   *Wandering Joy* (1978), *Heidegger on Being and Acting* (1982)*,* and *Broken Hegemonies* (1996).

sum total of what is knowable" and *acting* "means conforming one's daily enterprises, both public and private, to the foundation so secured" (Schürmann 1990: 1). More than interrogating any given metaphysical system, Schürmann attempts to excavate the very (we could say technological) schemata qualifying all metaphysical systems, establishing derivative orders between principles and thinking, thinking and acting.

In response to the familiar question, "What is to be done?," Schürmann exposes the metaphysicality at the core of the question itself, which pre-inscribes a direct path by which action—that which is *to be done*—derives its commandment from the hegemonic rule of a first principle that secures itself as the authoritative origin or foundation (*archē*) of the knowable, the thinkable, and the doable. All that falls under the heading of "metaphysics," then, belongs to the "ensemble of speculative efforts" that, regardless of their changing philosophical systems, embrace the systematicity of a normative, "attributive-participative" pattern that refers to an *archē* "with a view to a model, a canon, a *principium* for action." This pattern, "when translated into the doctrines of praxis, results in the ordering of acts to one focal point. This focal point is continually displaced throughout history: ideal city, heavenly kingdom, the happiness of the greatest number, *noumenal* and legislative freedom, 'transcendental pragmatic consensus' (Apel), etc." (1990: 5). It is this epoch-defining matter of "the ordering of acts to one focal point" that reveal the mechanics of metaphysical epochality as such (the mechanics that code, order, execute, maintain, and *mediate* an epochal hegemony) as an essential question of and for media archaeology. Such mechanics are the very functional means by which epochal hegemonies in the history of being are sedimented and administered. Until, that is, metaphysics reaches its point of closure, the point at which the legislative authority of first principles "withers away" and "the ancient derivation of action from being exhausts itself" (1990: 21).

Through Heidegger, Schürmann reads the *closure* of metaphysics, which is to say the closure of the hegemonic organization of thinking that has characterized each epoch in the history of philosophy: "it is a *systematic* closure, inasmuch as the norms for action formally 'proceed from' the corresponding first philosophies; and it is a *historical* closure, since the deconstructionist discourse can arise only from the boundary of the era over which it is exercised… it is in the epochal constellation of the twentieth century that the ancient procession and legitimation of praxis from *theōria* comes to exhaustion. Then, in its essence, action proves to be an-archic" (1990: 4). The "event" of our emergence into the "age of technology" in the twentieth century is simultaneously the point when Western metaphysics reaches its full "realization" through modern *technē*, which is also its point of exhaustion.[7] Our emergence into the "epochal constellation of

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[7] "But one thinks correctly only that to which one belongs: the economies of presencing. *We belong to the technological era because, more originally, we belong to the event through which any economical constellation comes about*" (emphases added) (Schürmann 1990: 42).

the twentieth century" makes it possible to look back onto the metaphysical tradition as if from the outside, to detach ourselves enough from the normative pattern grounding thought and action in the *archē* of first principles that we can see the pattern, and deconstruct it, as such. "The entry into the event is the homecoming from metaphysical errancy, which, for us children of technology, remains thinkable and doable only as the struggle against the injustice, the hubris, of enforced residence under principial surveillance—whatever form it may take" (1990: 281). Moreover, this entry makes it possible (thinkable) to deconstruct "the epochal hegemonies articulating the history of philosophical thought" (Villalobos-Ruminott: 2017), that is, to see the history of thought as broken up into epochs of hegemonic "fantasms" whose principial authority rendered the world "livable" in each epoch before giving way to another epochal hegemony.

The constant obstacle for philosophy is its struggle to realize the *fantasmatic* nature of every epoch's justifications of its hegemonic principles. In fact, this struggle constitutes the *tragic* nature of philosophy itself: striving to think the question of being in its timeless essence within the fantasmatic restrictions of one's historical episteme, grasping to articulate its universality within the grammatical limits of one's epochally particular language. As Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott writes, Schürmann develops an understanding of "philosophy as an epochal organization of the history of being, where a 'philosophical epoch,' is organized around a series of *first principles* that work as nomic injunctions determining hegemonic configurations of meaning, articulated by a fantasmatic referent (The One, Nature, Consciousness)" (2017). The history of being thus becomes a history of *coding*—a history of mediating functions and injunctions whereby a given epochal economy administers orders of intelligibility and authority around first principial referents. Such fantasmic referents are the designata that give *sense* to life, serving as the fundament of reason within any given historical epoch. They hold the world together; they make it livable. They answer the burning question of being: "Why?"[8] In so doing, however, they draw being forth ("bringing to presence") from its radical heterogeneity and force it into the concrete particularity of the epochal constellation, which gives the language in which the question of being can be posed in the first place. This is the tragic "price fantasms [charge to] render the world livable. Life is paid for by denying the singular; according to the vocabulary of apriorism by subsuming it under the figure of the particular" (Schürmann 2003: 7). In the history of such tragic articulations of the question of being, the epochal media are the message.

But this tragic price of epochal hegemony is also the condition for our deconstruction. It is the essential basis for medial arrangements of historically specific orders of

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[8] "The principles answer the question, Why? Why do people in a given epoch speak about, act upon, suffer from phenomena the way they do? The principles, which are arch-present in their respective epochal orders, provide the reasons for all that is the case, whether lofty or lowly, within that order" (Schürmann 1990: 39)

intelligibility and authority. The epochal logic of this hegemonic subsumption of being "under the figure of the particular" works *through* the "instatement of a code to the rank of principle [that] opens a field of intelligibility. It establishes a first" (1990: 30), which becomes the ultimate referent in a "fantasmic economy" governing "the variable relations among beings, large or small, to a referent that is itself diachronically variable" (2003: 8). A crucial media archaeological question begins to emerge in regard to the complex apparatuses at work in the ordering of fantasmic economies and in the maintenance and legislation of the "variable relations among beings" to such hegemonic referents. As such, the deconstruction of metaphysical epochality reveals the epochal economy itself as a (meta-)media technology with its own history. Moreover, this is a history of emergent epochal hegemonies establishing themselves by inscribing their own *archic* referents and recoding life accordingly—a process that is only possible, let alone thinkable, as the referents of the previous epoch wither away and lose their hegemonic coherence. "At the end of an epoch ... it becomes possible to question such coherence. In withering away, the supreme referent of an age becomes problematic" (Schürmann 1990: 25). It is after this break that the principial arrangements of life and thought in previous epochs appear alien to those that come after. They become, in a sense, lost technologies, part of the historical scatter of forgotten things that are media archaeology's stock in trade. Lastly, as with media archaeology's other varied objects of study, the very taking up of the internal technological functioning of past epochal economies is folded into the anarchaeological drive to resist their recuperation into an archaeo-teleological metanarrative of historical progress. Recalling Zielinski, a media *an-archē-ology* of hegemonic epochal economies would resist attempts to extort assumptions of an unbroken transition from worse to better, simple to complex, from the history of one epoch superseding another. Each epoch, in fact, as a (meta-)media technology of coding and ordering, is a functional testament to the absent universality of any "archaeo-teleocratic" referent upon which such metanarratives would have to be based.

Tracing the connective entanglements between media archaeology and the Schürmannian deconstruction of metaphysical epochality prompts far more questions than it answers Such questions, however, speak to the productive capacity that each mode of thought has for expanding and augmenting the other's means for breaking the hegemony of "archaeo-teleological desire." One is left wondering, for instance, if the epoch of metaphysical closure has opened up the an-archic possibility of, as Dominic Pettman puts it, "[declaring] that uncoded existence precedes the modern circumscriptions of citizenship, family, religion, ethnicity, and other blood-soaked calls to an essential identity" (2006: 7)? Does this, in turn, amplify the possibility of a media-archaeological treatment of the historical tension between "uncoded existence" and technical apparatuses of historical capture? In another vein, where—in what medial conditions—can the traces of past epochal hegemonies, along with their constitutive

orders of intelligibility and authority, be most clearly observed? Which fossils can tell us the most about the past? For Heidegger, epochal constellations reveal their principles most clearly in philosophical works; for Schürmann, in the arena of the political. If both arenas are thus coding/coded apparatuses embedded with historical layers of principial-economical functioning, must we then take up the possibility of treating philosophy and politics themselves as objects for media-archaeological study? What might change in our conceptions of the political, for instance, if we treat politics, not just as a clash between competing technologies, but as a historical technology itself in the making and unmaking of epochal hegemonies? Lastly, If the epoch of possibility for being *an-archically* is opened up by the full "realization" of metaphysics through modern technology, then might it stand to reason that there is an inherent filiation between *technē* and anarchy (being without Why)? Has this relation manifested before? Is it, against prevailing arguments for an inherently logical development, manifest in technicity itself?

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