


The Politicisation of Life Tout-contre the Techniques of Physis

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Comment entendre l'expression « la politisation de la vie » ? Décrit-elle une rencontre récente entre la vie et les techniques politiques, une stratégie visant à contrôler les formes futures de la vie ? Ou bien fait-elle référence à la vie humaine elle-même, dont l'origine serait technique et marquerait la première rencontre de la politique et de la vie ? Ou peut-être parle-t-elle de quelque chose de tout à fait différent, quelque chose qui s'apparente à l'auto-formation de la vie, à la politisation de la vie par elle-même. Dans tous les cas, l'enjeu est la rencontre entre la technique comme processus de formation et la vie. Sont d'abord présentées ici deux lectures de la « politisation de la vie » qui la comprennent comme le déploiement de techniques contre la vie, d'abord dans l'appropriation par Agamben de la question de la biopolitique, puis dans la pensée anthropotechnique de Stiegler. Les deux auteurs enferment la relation de la vie et de la technique dans un horizon anthropotechnique et cela reproduit l'opposition traditionnelle d'une *physis* pure et d'une *technē* contaminante, qui a des effets significatifs sur leurs conceptions respectives de la politique éthique. L'analyse de ces discours est complétée par une autre lecture de la « politisation de la vie », en tant qu'événement de la vie, à partir de la discussion de Heidegger et de Derrida sur l'étrange jeu originel de la *physis* et de la *technē*. Heidegger, à l'encontre de Derrida, propose une interprétation dé-anthropocentrée de la technique, de la souveraineté et de la formation de la vie, qui donne un tout autre sens à la technicité originelle.

English abstract

How then to hear the phrase, “the politicisation of life”? Does it describe a recent encounter between life and political techniques, a *strategy* to control life's future forms? Or, does it refer to *human* life itself, whose technical origin marks the first encounter of politics and life? Or perhaps it speaks of something altogether different, something akin to

the auto-formation of life, life's politicisation of itself. At stake in any case is the encounter between formative technique and life. I first present two readings of the "the politicisation of life" which understand it as the deployment of techniques *against* life, first in Agamben's appropriation of the question of biopolitics, then in Stiegler's anthropotechnical thought. I argue that both authors enclose the relation of life and technique within an anthropotechnical horizon and that this reproduces the traditional opposition of a pure *physis* and a contaminating *technē*, that has significant effects on their respective understandings of ethical politics. I then supplement these discourses with another reading of "the politicisation of life", as an event of life, which I draw from Heidegger and Derrida's discussion of the strange originary play of *physis* and *technē*. Heidegger right-up-against Derrida offers a de-anthropocentred sense of technique, sovereignty, and life formation, which gives a wholly other meaning to originary technicity.

Does "the politicisation of life" describe a recent encounter between life and political techniques, a *strategy* to control life's future forms? Or, does it refer to *human* life itself, whose technical origin marks the first encounter of politics and life? Or perhaps it is something altogether different, something akin to the auto-formation of life, life's politicisation of itself. In any case, at stake here is the question of the encounter, the play between formative technique and life.

To begin, I'll present two readings of the "the politicisation of life" which understand it to describe the deployment of techniques *against* life, first in Agamben's appropriation of the question of biopolitics, then in Stiegler's anthropotechnical thought. We will see how from the start, both authors enclose the play of life and formative technique within an anthropotechnical horizon, and that this is a presupposition which follows the traditional opposition of a pure *physis* that stands against a contaminating *technē*, introducing troubling effects on their respective understandings of ethical politics. I'll supplement these discourses with another reading of "the politicisation of life", as an event of life, which I'll draw from Heidegger and Derrida's discussion of the strange originary play of *physis* and *technē*. Heidegger and Derrida, Derrida right-up-against Heidegger offers a de-anthropocentred sense of technique, sovereignty, and life formation, which gives a necessary *outside*, a perspective, against which anthropotechnics and its politics always have, and always will, operate.

The politicisation of life as technique

In his lecture course *Society Must be Defended* (1975-1976), Foucault describes biopolitics as a new political strategy of the 18th century that was added to the traditional punitive techniques of power. Whereas the latter are characterised by the strict management of death, Foucault suggests that the new biopolitical techniques sought instead to manage life: to “make [*faire*] live” and only “let [*laisser*] die”. (Foucault, 2003, p. 241) This focus on life amounted to a preemptive, ‘softer’ form of control that could dominate life without patent violence, by engineering and prescribing life’s futures.

Foucault emphasises that this development of political strategy was enabled by new techniques and technologies that allowed life to be understood in the abstract forms of populations, genes, and generations. Importantly, this development was not the result of the introduction of “techniques of power” as such, but of new techniques that allowed for the *thematization* of life-forming technique itself. In this way, formative techniques could become present as a matter to be strategically appropriated to engineer life’s future forms or *bios*: the life forms worthy of living. Foucault’s description of biopolitics thus defines a new *strategy*, a new political program capable of controlling life from within, and *not* the inauguration of formative technique, nor the program, as such.

It becomes immediately evident that the deployment of any such biopolitical program introduces a violent device of exclusion, because it implicitly devaluates beings that cannot achieve its ideal forms or *bios*, beings that cannot be affected properly, who remain superfluous to the political body, and are at best tolerated by it. This exclusionary device is implied not only in biopolitical techniques, but in the sovereign affirmation of *bios* as such, which necessitates indifference towards or active persecution against those that cannot or will not be prevailed over by the law of the locality. While Foucault’s descriptions rarely offer normative critiques, Agamben’s appropriation of this discourse precisely seeks to develop it into a political philosophy inspired by the normative hope of a (human) life to come that would be free of this violent “originary structure of politics [...that] consists in an *ex-ceptio*” of *bios*’ others, others, which he names *zoē* or bare life. (Agamben, 2015, p. 263) For Agamben, *zoē* is life that is incapable of sufficiently comporting to the given sovereign program, and, unable to be properly affected, *zoē* does not receive the properties of *bios* and remains essentially unformed, *unfinished*, and crucially, Agamben writes, it remains simply life, which he describes most famously as

“bare life”, but also and notably, as “natural”, “biologically living”, and “naturally given” life as well. (Agamben, 1998, p. 1-5) Indeed, Agamben will maintain that life is originally separated from technique, and that it is only through their co-contamination that life is exposed to the violence of sovereign exclusion and its potential murder and letting-die. “When life and politics – originally divided, and linked together by means of the no-man’s-land of the state of exception that is inhabited by bare life – begin to become one, all life becomes sacred and all politics becomes the exception.” (Agamben, 1998, p. 148)

Accordingly, Agamben will argue that ethical politics has the task to “completely set free” life’s “purely destituent potential [...] from the sovereign relation of the ban that links it to constituted power” – a liberation that would allow “life, anomie, anarchic potential – [...] to] appear in [their] free and intact form[s].” (Agamben, 2015, p. 268, 273) Here, the political goal *par excellence* is the complete release of life from the relation to sovereignty and its entanglement with forces of formation, selection and organisation, insofar as these forces establish the normative basis of *bios* and a zone of exclusion of *bios’* others which are exposed to unreserved violence. What is at stake is nothing less than the escape from *archè*, as founding, instituting, forming – *arche-teleology* as such – which Agamben writes must be “neutralised” at, and as, the root of sovereign power. (Agamben, 2015, p. 276) Agamben thus offers a fundamentally an-archistic thinking, which remains opposed to techniques of form as such, insofar as they function as essentially arbitrary, normalising forces, from which he seeks to release an in-finite life, a pure living free to be in-different to and undifferentiated by the violence of finite techniques and sovereign determinations.

This an-archic politics underlies the *Homo Sacer* project from the first volume up to the final *The Use of Bodies* and its concept of *form-of-life*. Rather than complicating the thought of a pure life originally distinct from formative technique, Agamben understands the ‘form’ in *form-of-life* as *potentia*, which is not given by a finite technical-natural milieu, but is given by, and as, “the living itself”. He defines *form-of-life* as “a life for which, in its living, one has to do with the living itself, a *life of potential*”, later suggesting that, “the constitution of a form-of-life fully coincides [...] with the destitution [*destituzione*] of the social and biological conditions into which it finds itself thrown.” (Agamben, 2015, p. 278)

In this framework, political struggle strangely becomes the struggle against the politicisation of life, insofar as it is understood as the sovereign imposition of formative techniques *against* life that violently enframes and sends it towards arbitrarily determined *bios*. It is Agamben's belief in an originary separation between human life and technique that allows for a hope of overcoming this formative violence as such, and informs his politics of *Gelassenheit*, of letting beings be free as pure living *potentia* from the violence of finite form. Now we will see that Stiegler's anthropo-technical thought overcomes this metaphysical desire for a pure human life, but it finds its own limitations in the anthropocentric horizon it ascribes to technique and, subsequently, to the futures of life.

Originary technique and sovereign care

Stiegler's first major text, *Technics and Time 1*, begins on a different path than what we have seen thus far, for he argues that human life and technique co-originate when life first externalises memory in material that can be accessed by others. This means that human life is originally technical and impure from its "defaulted" origin, a thesis that prevents the romantic hope for human life pure of formative techniques, and notably, any conception of formative techniques that would be prior to human life. (Stiegler, 1998) For Stiegler, this anthropo-technical life can be understood only from the finite localities in which it is found, which are composed of written and oral traditions, natural milieux, and technologies. These localities give a heritage that individuates human life and gives it concrete future possibilities, a calculable foundation that is a necessary condition for any unique appropriation or technical *différance*, and any incalculable to-come. Localities thus operate as sovereign forces which send human life towards necessarily arbitrary *bios* prior to any political impositions. And for Stiegler, this structure of inheritance prevents any critique of formative techniques as such, allowing only for specific articulations of *bios* to be problematised – and also, created. Indeed, from this basis, Stiegler shifts the task of ethical politics from challenging sovereignty and the violence of bio-political force, to re-forming anthropotechnical localities and demanding for affirmative biopolitical programs that "take care" of the technical localities that are responsible for shaping the futures of human life.

For Stiegler, these politics acquire an unprecedented urgency in the Anthropocene, which he understands as the highly probable threat of the absolute end to recognisable life, ascribing the advent of this crisis to an essential carelessness of contemporary sovereignty, a nihilistic indifference that, he argues, is most visibly exhibited by their ignorance of the problem of entropy. This concept of entropy, understood as the force that dis-orders systems and breaks complex beings down into inert matter, functions as the key to Stiegler's politics and understanding of sovereignty, for when he will refer to the need to cultivate localities, to reform institutions, to care for cognitive health, each of these demands will be understood, in fact for him they must be understood, through the concept of entropy, as its temporary deferral or *anti-entropy*. For Stiegler, politics in the Anthropocene or *Entropocene* has one task: the anti-entropic re-engineering of anthropotechnics; and this is of course diametrically opposed to Agamben's discourse of saving life from the violence of sovereign techniques, which Stiegler explicitly attributes to Agamben's metaphysical understanding of technique, i.e., "the *pharmakon* [...as] a poison, pure and simple." (Stiegler, 2010, p. 166) For Stiegler, there is one problem, entropy, which has been repressed by philosophy and politics while being produced at catastrophic levels, and this is a failure of contemporary sovereignty to properly care for and guide anthropotechnics. This is a "carelessness", he writes, "that could be called '(a)biopolitical'." (Stiegler, 2016, p. 97)

Stiegler's philosophical political program becomes concerning when it becomes clear that the concept of entropy comes to function as the absolute value for the evaluation of all localities and of all the beings within them, from neighbourhoods and cities to nations and transnational orders. This logic and politics become totalising when Stiegler argues that the Anthropocene introduces the complete transformation of the biosphere into the technosphere, meaning that anthropotechnics practically reigns over beings as a whole. For Stiegler this is no longer a question, but a tragic matter-of-fact that a non-nihilistic politics must affirm and subsequently appropriate, that is, transform into a matter-of-law, and thus seize the technosphere and beings as a whole and guide them, order them, reform them according to the law of anti-entropy. This guidance is for Stiegler nothing less than our "duty", a calling that brings him to seek a supra-sovereign "meta-level of locality", the *Internation*, that would wield this power. (Stiegler, 2022, p. 221; Stiegler et. al., 2021, p. 142)

Without an outside to the logic of entropy, Stiegler affirms a total politics controlled by anthropotechnics. The problem arises: in this totalising program, what happens to beings that are calculably entropic? There does not seem to be space for irrational, a-teleological survival, the *burden* of the Other, and although Stiegler overcomes the limitations of biopolitical an-archic thinking, by remaining in an anthropotechnical horizon, he establishes a strange logocentric politics that enables extreme violence against beings, non-human and human alike, that are determined to be entropic. Here too, the politicisation of life has been understood as a politics that controls the living, and Stiegler's affirmation rather than Agamben's denial has led us nevertheless to an ethical impasse.

Sovereignty before the event

Thus far when discussing the politicisation of life, our focus has primarily been the status of formative techniques, which both authors accept as the properly philosophical challenge that is supposedly specific to human life, while the problem of life has been passed on to biology and tacitly accepted as a source of natural resistance. The analyses above demonstrate that for Agamben, life is fundamentally pure an-archic force, while for Stiegler, life is most rigorously understood as the deferral of entropy. In this way, both discourses preserve the traditional metaphysical opposition of life and technique, *physis* and *technē*, for all that shifts between them is the scope of pure life. The *Homo Sacer* and the *Technics and Time* projects are in this way both grounded by a figure of pure life: for Agamben, human life is originally pure and later contaminated by formative technique; while for Stiegler, humanity is impure from the start, and later contaminates life as a whole. *Physis* in either case remains a mere background, whose purity is challenged by *technē*, *nomos*, and *bios*. With this in mind, any move past the limitations we have seen, perhaps will need to focus on this unproblematised idea of pure life, which has implicitly determined technique as impure and derivative, and reserved the work of sovereign force and *bios* for human life alone. It is such a step back to an earlier understanding of *physis* versus *technē* that I suggest can be found in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* and later, in Derrida's *Beast and the Sovereign II*, which together have significant ramifications on the meaning of technique and the politicisation of life that I will now begin to trace out.

From the start of the *Introduction*, Heidegger insists that a fundamental understanding of the living will not come from studying the history and development of the concept of life, but rather from a thoughtful approach to the event that first necessitated such a descriptive discourse. (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 11-14) And, as he typically does, Heidegger finds a proximity to such an event in the pre-Socratics, whose thought has not been affected by later metaphysics and remains closest to what was first determined as life, or rather, as *physis*. For Heidegger, *physis* refers to a problem that was over-simplified and forgotten by its translations into *natura* and nature, and in the analyses of meta-physics, physics, and biology, as these interpretations reduced *physis* to a thinking of the totality of natural living beings. But, “[i]t was not in natural processes that the Greeks first experienced what *physis* is, but the other way around: on the basis of a fundamental experience of Being in poetry and thought [*aufgrund einer dichtend-denkenden Grunderfahrung des Seins*], what they had to call *physis* disclosed itself to them.” (Heidegger, 2014, p.16) Although the natural processes remain essential for understanding *physis*, especially in light of contemporary ecological challenges, for Heidegger, *physis* most radically indicates the pre-Socratic experience of Being itself. And while the return to the question of Being may seem to set him, and us, off course from the original co-implication of technique and life, we shall see that these analyses of *physis* in the *Introduction* describe a co-operation with *technē* that functions as a quasi-originary sovereign force that gives shape to beings and adds an earlier sense of life’s politicisation to the frameworks we have seen thus far.

I pick up in the middle of the *Introduction* as Heidegger presents Parmenides’ third fragment “τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι,” which he translates as: “*Zusammengehörig sind Vernehmung wechselweise und Sein*,” or “belonging-together reciprocally are apprehending and Being.” (Heidegger, 2014, p. 163) Heidegger suggests that in order to understand this fragment, we should begin with a detour to the first choral ode of Sophocles’ *Antigone* which presents this two-fold unity of “apprehending and Being” in the more accessible play of *physis* and *technē* – between *physis* as the all-encompassing force or violence that overwhelms all beings, *das Überwältigende*, and its deferral, the (counter-)violence-doing of *technē*, *das Gewalt-tätige*. (Heidegger, 2014, p. 178) Heidegger writes that after the first *strophe* of the choral ode which describes *physis* as the “uncanniest”, “overabundant”, “overwhelming” violence that draws all

beings under its domain:

The second strophe outwardly passes from a portrayal of the sea, the earth, the animals to the characterisation of the human being. But just as little as the first strophe and antistrophe speak only of nature in the narrower sense does the second strophe speak only of the human being [*menschen*]. Instead, what is to be named now, language [*die Sprache*], understanding, mood, passion, and building, are no less a part of the overwhelming violence than sea and earth and animal. The difference is only that the latter envelop [*umwaltet*] humans in their sway and sustain, beset, and inflame them, whereas what is to be named now pervades them in its sway as that which they have to take over expressly as the beings that they themselves are. This pervasive sway [*Dieses Durchwaltende*] does not lose anything of its overwhelming force because humans take up this sway itself directly into their violence and use this violence as such. This merely conceals the uncanniness of language, of passions, as that into which human beings as historical are disposed [*gefügt*], while it seems to them that it is they who have language and passions at their disposal. [...] How is humanity ever supposed to have invented that which pervades it in its sway, due to which humanity itself can *be* as humanity in the first place? [...] [R]ather[,] they found their way into the overwhelming [*das Überwältigende*] and therein first found themselves: the violence of those who act in this way. The “themselves,” according to what has been said, means those that at once break forth and break up, capture and subjugate. [...] *Technē* characterises [this...] violence-doing [*Gewalt-tätigkeit*], in its decisive basic trait; for to do violence is to need to use violence against the over-whelming [*Überwältigende*]. (Heidegger, 2014, p. 175, p. 178)

From this rich passage and with Derrida’s later analyses in mind, I will draw out three points: first the meaning here of *physis*; then, the relation of *technē* to *physis*; and finally, their finite interplay understood as *Sprache* that perhaps concerns more than human life alone. These paths will begin to displace the usual positions of life, technique, and human life, and set us towards another sense of the politicisation of life.

1. Heidegger characterises *physis* as the overwhelming force that envelops all beings. *Physis* is not a benign background, but the constitutive violence that holds, penetrates, subsumes, and nurtures beings. It is only through this extreme force that technique and humans acquire meaning – they are given possibility as such by the absolute dominance, the *Walten* of *physis*. This presents a significant departure from the previous discourses we have discussed insofar as life here is the first sovereign force, *das Überwältigende*, which Derrida will describe in this context precisely as a “sovereignty so sovereign that it exceeds the theological and political – especially onto-theological – figures, or definitions of sovereignty. [It is] so sovereign, ultra-sovereign.” (Derrida, 2009, p. 279) *Physis* enables sovereign activity in the prosaic sense, which comes only as an appropriation and forgetting of this absolute force. In other words, the human sovereign only can act, as Derrida will note, *as if* it wielded this force, only through a certain mix of *ruse* and *bêtise*.

2. Here, Heidegger presents *technē* as a counter violence against the overwhelming violence of *physis*: “Violence, the violent, within which the doing of the violence-doer moves, is the whole sphere of machination, τὸ μηχανόεν, that is delivered over to him. [...] With this word [machination] we are thinking something essential that announces itself to us in the Greek word *technē*.” (Heidegger, 2014, p. 177) Crucially, Heidegger will emphasise that *technē*, the counter-violence against the overwhelming violence of *physis*, is not produced by human beings, nor does it remain some human faculty, but it is also *of physis*. *Technē*, “is no less a part of this overwhelming violence than the sea and earth and animal.” (Heidegger, 2014, p. 175) It is not added onto a previously whole *physis* as a force of contamination or artificiality. Rather, *technē is physis*, both in the sense of belonging to it: *technē* is inextricably bound with the play of *physis*; but also, and most crucially, *technē is physis* in the sense of being the presentation of *physis*. *Technē*, “sets Being into work as something that in each case *is* in such and such a way. For this reason, the Greeks call authentic artwork and art *technē* in the emphatic sense, because art is what most immediately brings Being – that is, the appearing that stands there in itself – to stand [in something present (in the work)]” (Heidegger, 2014, p. 177, parenthetical remarks are Heidegger’s) In other words, *technē* describes the

folding of *physis* that makes something like differentiation and appearing [*erscheinen*], or coming-to-presence [*an-wesen*] possible. Indeed, this counter-force is a *différance* of *physis* that gives beings as finite and discrete in their differences from Being. This is a differentiation that makes the thought of presence possible, and for this reason, we can understand *technē* as articulation itself, or as Heidegger says, the breaking-up, or in another language still, the ‘jointing’, of *physis*.

3. This co-belonging of *physis* and *technē*, the overwhelming sway, the *Überwältigende*, right up against, and as the *différance* of the violence doing, the *gewalt-tätigen*; this presents the articulation of form, or the self-formation of *physis* that takes place as the presentation of beings. For Heidegger, this self-folding-unfolding [*das in sich sichentfalten*] of *physis* occurs in and as *Sprache*, which he famously describes not as language in the prosaic sense, but as the “house” of Being, meaning the necessarily finite and historical field in which beings emerge and appear in their distinct styles – which in-forms and sets them into how they can be. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 424) In the *Introduction*, Heidegger reminds us that *Sprache* is not ours, it is not the invention of human beings, but precisely it is that into which human beings are “disposed” [*gefügt*], which “pervades” [*durchwaltet*] them. And indeed, he will emphasise that the human essence “stand[s] within the power” of *Sprache* and not the other way around. (Heidegger, 2014, p. 90) As Derrida will later write in *Given Time II*, “*Sprache* (*langue* and *langage*) is not an instrument wielded by an agent, a speaking subject; it is neither a faculty nor an aptitude of man but precedes him in a way as his place, his habitat, and the habitat of *being-there*[.]” (Derrida, 2021, p. 34) *Sprache* is firstly *there*, in the midst of the *polemos* of *physis* and *technē*, and for Heidegger it is human being’s task to enter into this play and appropriate its force. But this does not necessarily mean that it is for human beings alone. What seems highly significant is that in the *Introduction*, human being is and is not privileged. On the one hand, Heidegger notes that all beings are constitutively penetrated-through [*durchgeprägt*] by this differential play, each in turn being-disposed to other beings and Being in different ways. On the other hand, Heidegger ascribes human being with a particular type of being-

dominated, which he will present as a unique task, a special call to seize the violence of *Sprache* which dominates human life from the start. But what precisely is this power to be dominated in a certain way? And is the relation to *Sprache* as such and the encounter with beings and Being as such what is at stake? Or is this a question of anthropotechnics and *its* experience of being-gripped by a finite series of *Sprachen*, which would not exhaust exposure to *Sprache* as the finite unfolding of Being as such? Heidegger maintains that other beings do not have a relation to this originary differential play between *technē* and *physis*, and that they simply remain within *physis*, being untouched in an essential way. He writes that non-human life, “remains in its own single route, [...] familiar with the place where it spends the night and roams. As a living thing, it is fitted [*eingefügt*] into the sway [*Walten*] of the sea and the earth.” (Heidegger, 2014, p. 172) However, in light of what we previously read, this passage appears strange, given the differential character of *physis* and *technē*, which would deconstruct any such metaphysical conception of a whole, purely fitted, nature. In fact from the earlier passages, the only force that would afford such a temporary delay of the overwhelming violence of *physis* would stem precisely from *technē*, the counter-violence, the becoming-articulated of beings in and as *Sprache*. As Derrida frequently argues, this question of access to world should instead be approached in an entirely other way, not as an abyssal difference between the human and the animal, but as a *difference of degree* in what he calls in *Geschlecht III*, “enagrammatic capacity”, the ability, or rather, the non-ability, the distinct *weak* powers that inform the ways in which different beings can or cannot be touched, imprinted, and formed. “The differences between so-called animal species, including the human, are very numerous (far more than one) and here I am speaking of structural differences in, let’s say, enagrammatic capacity and in the economy of inscription, let’s say in mnemonic power and structure. And thus in the experience of territory.” (Derrida, 2020, p. 145) Linking territory, memory, and inscription, Derrida here strikes precisely at the question of *Sprache* as the finite manners, the specific styles, in which beings differ from Being. From this basis, the *différance* of *Sprache* would need to be heard in a wholly other sense, one that would draw near to the question of arche-writing, as a deconstruction not only of the Greco-Germanic monolinguisms that

would lay claim to the proper tongue and the proper forms of Being, and not only of intra-anthropotechnical ethnocentrism, but such that would inflict a violent trembling to the foundation of *anthropotechnical monolingualism* itself. This future itinerary will need to examine how different beings are informed and sent by their distinct *sprachliche* territories, and such a challenge extends the experience of territory, and thus the access to writing, technique, form and world, far beyond the scope of human life, and as coming prior to and otherwise than anthropotechnical *Sprache*. This pre-anthropotechnical sovereignty, this earlier form of sending, returns us now to the question of the politicisation of life.

This strange play of *physis* and *technē* gives another sense to the politicisation of life. Life in its finitude is political from the start insofar as it always is a product of an earlier formative violence that *gives* life as a limited manifold of forms. In this way, *bios* is not novel for human sovereignty, but precedes and informs it. This demands for a thinking of *physis*, of the “natural”, that is not opposed to formative techniques or desired future forms. This formative sending is touched upon later in the *Introduction* as Heidegger characterises the overwhelming violence of *physis* with the Greek term, *dikē*, which, typically translated as “justice” or “political right”, is here understood as “*Fug*” or “fittingness”.

Just as the *deinon*, as doing violence, gathers up its essence into the fundamental Greek word *technē*, the *deinon* as the overwhelming is manifested in the fundamental Greek word *dikē*. We translate this word as fittingness [*Fug*]. Here we understand fittingness first in the sense of joint and structure; then as arrangement, as the direction that the overwhelming gives to its sway; finally, as the enjoining structure, which compels fitting-in and compliance. [...] Thus, the *deinon* as the overwhelming (*dike*) and the *deinon* as the violence doing (*technē*) stand over against each other, although not as two present-at-hand things. This over-againstness consists, instead, in the fact that *technē* breaks out against *dikē* which for its part as fittingness [*Fug*] has all of *technē* at its disposal [*verfügt*]. This reciprocal over-againstness *is*. (Heidegger, 2014, pp. 178-179)

By appropriating *fittingness* as the character of *physis*, Heidegger emphasises the plastic nature of this overwhelming sovereignty which fits beings within the “*Sprache*” of the sites in which they find themselves. This is an originary sovereign program, a violence against beings who are crushed, moulded, *Schlagt*, and destined prior to any question of desire. As Derrida writes in *Geschlecht III*, the finite presentation of beings is always thus a “sending”, the result of “a strike which sets apart, which separates but in order to give [beings their] specificity, originality, [and] proper mark”. (Derrida, 2020, p. 151) And here we see the play of *physis* and *technē* functioning as a supra-sovereign field of power that mirrors and gives bio-political techniques as a possibility. Rather than being secondarily affected by techniques and form, from this basis, *physis* must be understood as originally co-implicated with formative techniques and programatics, which demands for a wholly other thinking of “natural technicity”.

The *politicisation of life*: from a strategy, to the origin of human life, to the auto-formation of life; each understanding presents a different level of the confrontation between formative technique and life. In Agamben and Stiegler’s understandings of the composition of technique and life, technique arrives after and *against* life, and is restricted to an anthropotechnical horizon. Heidegger and Derrida’s discussion of an originally composed *physis* and *technē* gives a de-anthropocentred sense of formative techniques, the ramifications of which I have only begun to trace out above. I close here with a brief return to the words of Foucault, who reminds us that “life and death are not natural or immediate phenomena which are primary or radical, or which fall outside the field of power.” (Foucault, 2003, p. 240) That is, there is no life, no death, no life death as such, that is not firstly sent, given, by (sovereign) technique. This also suggests that the appeal to *Gelassenheit*, to an ethics of letting beings be (free of formative, sovereign imposition), is a phantasm, perhaps a necessary one that is still to be deployed, but nevertheless a ruse that cloaks the imposed finite forms from which anything like the living can be understood.

How then are we to think the political, life, up against this strange ultra-sovereign force? This play of *physis* and *technē* functions as an absolute alterity that must in some sense be worked from today, as its overwhelming sway is increasingly experienced as

something that cannot be undergone and ignored for much longer, and some response, perhaps a sense of welcome for this inhospitable guest must come, a welcome to prevent the worst violence of *physis* and continue to give survival.

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