

## Derrida and Contemporary Media Understanding

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This intervention on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jacques Derrida's 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (1966) seeks to explore Derrida's less widely circulated meditation on varied cultural, political, aesthetic and ethical practices relating to contemporary media technologies. Derrida's thoughts on communication, I propose, straddle the hermeneutic of suspicion and also the hermeneutics of recovery. This article has five different parts to it and all of them seek to read Derrida not merely in relation to his philosophy of deconstruction but foreground his thoughts on media technology quite independently of his overarching explanatory framework. The first section deals with the near absence of Derrida in the discipline of Communication Studies, the second deals with Derrida as a media theorist, the third with Derrida as a fellow poststructuralist alongside Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, the fourth with Derrida's pronouncements on teletechnologies, and the last section with the conversation that Derrida had with the philosopher Bernard Stiegler on technology, including media technologies, at large.

### **Communication Studies**

I hope to provide a particular genealogy of Communication Studies. In the US, it arose as an inter-war discipline and came to address the rapid deterioration of public space alongside technological advances in industrial production and circulation of cultural-economic goods. Prior to the war years, there was a split between Mass Communications Departments and Speech Departments in American Universities.

In some sense, the split between Media Studies and Rhetorics was not of the philosophical kind. We could say that this division between Speech and Mass Communications Departments was based on a Cartesian mind and body distinction which was roughly translated as a division between the Humanities and Social Sciences, the subjective sciences vis-a-vis the objective sciences. The aspiration of the Mass Communications Departments was to become a full-fledged discipline within the objective social sciences. Unlike in Europe, where issues relating to public opinion and journalism were discussed within the frame of change, Mass Communications in the US was resolutely concerned with order and value consensus.

Speech was seen as an embodied form of communication and technological media was considered to be a disembodied form of communication. In this tradition, Speech was

regarded as intrinsically connected to thought and therefore distinctively human and impregnably rational. Body/Matter/technology were perceived as lacking the potential to transform itself but it could re-present thought in a less interiorized, delayed, and relayed and become the Other of thought. At a philosophical level, Communications Studies had the burden of reinforcing matter/body as a passive recipient of form and content. Hence, in that tradition of positivist empiricism, body/matter is treated as unthinking and therefore unbecoming substances or substances that are denied existence/being. Here again, Toronto scholars like Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan made a different contribution and addressed, in their own way, the issue of materiality of the medium and also to some extent the issue of ontology of objects. Until very recently, media scholars have rarely looked at the affective assemblage of people, machines, and discourses as producing a form of empiricism that cannot be adequately evaluated through the framework of a positivist social sciences. Affect Studies is yet to make inroads in the discipline of Communications. Despite this somewhat variegated inheritance of the discipline, the discipline still heavily displays an anthropocentric and phonocentric disposition.

In India, the discipline has largely an applicative understanding, from servicing what was known as a mixed economy to becoming an appendage to the neoliberal project, media has been designed in order to serve the interests of the powerful market located within the space of national, regional and local interests. For some obvious and not so obvious reasons, theory has been relegated to a few elite institutions. There is hardly any funding for theory-laden work while there is visible support for interventionist work like community radio, health communication and so on.

However, in the last decade or so, film study scholars have used interesting theoretical tools to understand popular culture in India. They mostly depend on Neo-Marxists like Louis Althusser, or Freudians like Jacques Lacan, or post-structuralists like Michel Foucault, but rarely Derrida. Cultural Studies, for some reason, has not particularly taken to Continental philosophy of this tradition. There seems to be three kinds of work in India (Marxist, Feminist, and Dalit) and they borrow heavily from a hermeneutic of suspicion rather than a hermeneutic of recovery. On the issue of support for French cinema, vis-à-vis the Hollywood commercial cinema, Derrida had argued in support of French cultural production. In this instance, we find Derrida affirming French cinematic production and therefore we find a hermeneutics of recovery being deployed. It is a heresy to say that Derrida is indulging in a complete hermeneutics of recovery because Derrida is happy to occupy both spaces at the same time. His non-philosophical reading of media appears to be a ceaseless movement from a hermeneutics of suspicion to a hermeneutics of recovery. This movement can be seen as a conversation between what is representable and what is not.

### **Derrida as a Media theorist**

Derrida's sustained meditation on technologically mediated public media has come out as a conversation between him and Bernard Stiegler. This conversation was recorded live, and its transcript appears as *Echographies of Television* in 2002 (originally published in

French in 1996). In this text, the two philosophers offer numerous proposals regarding technology in general and teletechnologies in particular. The term Mediagological deserves some attention, because it is nowhere defined in the conversation (or the text) between Stiegler and Derrida. It is possible that Derrida did not want to use Medialogy because that would undermine his philosophy of the play of difference. It seems as though he wants to retain the productive ambiguity of the term; the contrariness that he sees as an inherent attribute of any concept, the sheer heterogeneity and facilitate the plenitude of meaning that it can give rise to. Derrida wants his analytical tools to be productive rather than be simply representative of an artifactual reality. In complete contrast with Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction in his Magnum opus, *De la grammatologie* (1967), the post war years saw an increasing aspiration towards developing a formal grammar in the American tradition of articulating the discipline of communication.

Derrida attributes contrariness to other comparable terms like communication and information. Contrariness would mean that media technologies work within a complex to and fro movement where they may serve dominant interests but also contain the possibility of destabilizing the prevailing and persisting structures precisely through the artifice of teletechnologies. These teletechnologies work to produce a seeming closure (artificiality) and finite ways of speaking. But the structure and content of the closure while remaining more open to serve powerful interests generally, do not foreclose instances where teletechnologies produce gestures which leap out of the irrepressible present and point towards an inassimilable and unknowable future. The radical uncertainty and the almost over-conformist, predictable nature of mainstream media makes the media institution an open ended one for Derrida.

From a reading of *Echographies*, one can discern a conversation about the process, products, and experiences of media technologies, and the two hermeneutics I have already mentioned. By a hermeneutics of suspicion, I mean, Derrida's efforts to draw attention to the false artificiality of the mediatic experience but encourages us to proceed without forsaking for ourselves these novel resources involving live Television (and the videocamera), even while continuing to be guarded about its obfuscations. By a hermeneutics of recovery, Derrida, I think, cautions us not to exaggerate the simulacrum or the artificiality of the teletechnologies, lest the theory of simulacrum lead people to believe that events like the Gulf war did not really happen. Elsewhere, Derrida suggests how the density of teletechnologies made way for the fall of Berlin and how it occasioned a future to open itself up. In such instances of destabilizing the order, media regimes transform themselves and disinherit their political present and reorder the present. Derrida affirms the journalistic media and power of teletechnologies to produce a recalcitrant reality, a reality that cannot be appropriated by a dominant political-economic ethnocentric reality.

But Derrida remains optimistic while being cautious about the hegemonic design of these media technologies and their damaging effects. About media time, he argues, one should be open about its dual possibilities. After all, information and communication offer heterogeneous possibilities. In that sense, they may not merely serve the dominant interests. These technologies may also open up another time, and this time alongside

the time of artifactuality, produces a gesture' that cannot be formatted, calculated or interpreted in a dominant manner. A gesture is unprogrammable and therefore inaugurates a time that speaks of the future. The way that media makes a presentation of the present goes through a dramatic shift. This is what happened with Gorbachev or the Berlin Wall. The presentation of the present changed and therefore the present changed as well.

Derrida takes extraordinary effort to anticipate such an anachronous time, a time which gives birth to a future, to a democracy to come. He says that there is no way one can hope to perceive a horizon of expectation to anticipate this anachronous time. He calls it an arid, non-horizontal expectation because once you determine the other in advance, the other becomes assimilable. Derrida suggests one needs to prepare for such a moment by instantiating a condition of what he calls "unconditional hospitality" where the Other need not be assimilated into ones' family, religion or constitution. This affirmative opening of the Other through the experience of a non-synchronous mediatic time allows for the Other to be accepted in its irreducible singularity or Otherness.

If one were to think of desires as existing in a chaomastic state, and through the institutions of state, economy, religion and family, these desires get regulated, Derrida seems to be saying is that the media technologies' openness to an anachronous time allows for such desires to be expressed. In other words, media technologies play an important role in regulating, expressing or eliminating desires. The rhythm of media serves to demonstrate differential intensities and affect towards bodies, ideas, and objects. The facilitating of an anachronous time is also about changing the rhythm of media and therefore displaying different kind of intensities towards bodies, ideas, and objects. The materiality of media is not confined to tangible objects. Like Jean-Luc Nancy, Gilles Deleuze and others including Derrida have held that non-tangible objects like feelings or ideas also have intensities, they have the power to move bodies and shape matter. (No wonder then that Deleuze coined the term 'desiring machine'.) What kind of desiring machines are these media technologies? Do they empty our beings or enrich our beings? Are media machines used for representation or production? Do they curtail desires or liberate desires from social and psychic repression? Derrida thinks they are capable of doing both but he is inclined to affirm their positive potentialities. The affirming of technics is important for Derrida and one can see a hermeneutics of recovery operating in the reading of the experience of media technologies.

### **Derrida, Media and Poststructuralists**

Poststructuralists thinkers have generally been inattentive to the human experience of contemporary media technologies, but thinkers like Baudrillard, Virilio and Derrida are an exception. They have intellectually and philosophically invested in a supposedly 'non philosophical object and process' popularly known as information and teletechnologies. They have discussed ways of interpreting the obtrusive and unobtrusive manner through which media technologies colonize our objective, subjective and unconscious dimensions of being. They are concerned with situating the mediated image within an aesthetic, political and philosophical horizon. The situated context is inclusive of the

image that is generated, recorded and transmitted at an incredible speed and which possesses capacities for synthetically producing artifactuality.

For Baudrillard, institutions of mass media function as agents of representations and not communication. In a sense, the communicated object and the represented object are intervened by an imaginary that cannot be solely attributed to cognition, logic or reason. Baudrillard holds an extreme view on the role of imaginary in the construction of meaning. Reality, for Baudrillard, has been replaced by a mass media instantiated system of signs. These signs have their own codes and styles of encryption. Baudrillard has suggested that the images people watch on satellite television cannot but be a simulacrum and one can never have access to the real because mass media resort to playing with their self generated signs. At some level, simulation imitates the difference between the true from the false, the real from the imaginary. These simulated signs do not have referents and therefore they do not lend themselves to any dialogical and public reasoning. Baudrillard would qualify the peculiar (simulated) reality that constitutes the public sphere as distinct from an Arendt or a Habermasian formulation of that public space as a discursively constituted reality.

Virilio has focused on how from the nineteenth century onwards, speed has become central to organizing warfare, economy, transportation and communication. For Virilio, nineteenth century is characterized as a period where acceleration is more important than the application of brakes in economy, polity, culture, and warfare. The use of lasers, satellites, and other computer aided mechanisms facilitate messages to travel at the speed of light. He theorizes how speed threatens to flatten human capacity to think, perceive and critique the technological dissemination of images. Virilio prophesizes that these images affect and erode the human faculty and subjectivity. For him, people who control speed also control power and it is the most contemporary form of holding power. Almost taking a technophobic approach, Virilio proposes that the audience are determined by the image and that they lack power to appropriate the technological produced-ness of the image in terms of accessing, processing, retrieving of information. Audience tend to inhabit the technologically constructed time and their being remains appropriated by the techno-economic order.

Derrida has occupied a middle ground between these extreme positions. While Derrida would agree with Baudrillard that media technologies are products of a fictional fashioning and that it serves the interests of the powerful, his proposal (through his sustained meditation in *Echographies*) is that media technologies are equally capable of subverting the rhythm, space, pace and other elements that generate the experience of reality. Human situations are such that one cannot escape the historically boundedness of our experience of the world, but that does not mean there exist no ruptures. It means that these ruptures do destabilize historically bounded experiences.

In effect, media technology regimes are sometimes open to becoming nomadic rather than operating as a discernible coherent entity, and homogeneity does not always inform the content and structures of such an artifactuality. Technology, at times has the possibility of disclosing or constituting the other and the term nomadic has been coined by Deleuze to talk about agents (the insane, artists, and others) who exhibit aggressive

creativity and cannot be easily appropriated by structures of state, economy or culture. In other words, technology may (sometimes) work against giant structures like Global capitalism, nation-state or patriarchy.

Unlike Virilio, Derrida would not want to believe that every invention was related to acceleration and to a new experience of speed. Although speed has been inscribed into capitalism and that relates to a new relation between speech and action, for Derrida, the race over speech or action will not remain as a closed affair and teletechnologies will allow for mutation of its own structures. In an altogether different context relating to nuclear war, Derrida had given a paradoxical call where he said that a 'call to slow down is also a call to move quickly'. A tension between a philosophy of action is proposed vis-a-vis a philosophy of abstraction or reflection. It is suggestive of a violence associated with thought and abstraction. Media theory should adequately deal with the cultural process associated with the ethically laden world of media experience. Theory should conjoin action, representation with production and desire with social liberation.

### **Derrida and Teletechnologies**

Derrida's meditation on the intralinguistic relation between speech and writing is more widely known rather than his somewhat less pronounced and supposedly 'not so profound' intramedial relationship between words and images. As mentioned earlier, the philosophy of deconstruction has been embraced more by Literary Studies scholars rather than Media Studies scholars. The concepts that Derrida put forward (like arche-writing, trace, Pharmakon, gramme) have quasi transcendental characteristics, but the categories he proposed for studying electronic communication (phonographies, spectrographies, teletechnologies, mediagological) is historically bound and belong to the realm of commercially run institutions.

It may be surmised that Derrida is looking forward to a post-hermeneutic moment where intellectual analysis cannot be done in isolation but has to occur alongside the affective location of being in this world. This non-Cartesian methodology of breaking the division between thinking and being, mind and body, cognition and affect informs the non-philosophical conditions of theorizing the artifactuality of teletechnologies. Derrida's substantive thesis revolves around the unlocking of the force of matter/technology and the interweaving the force of thought with that of matter, thus leading to a demonstration of the *fuzziness* of the compartmentalization between matter and thought, body and mind, unconscious and consciousness.

There are two kinds of difference that Derrida is keen to examine with relation to teletechnologies. First, he examines the quantitative difference between writing and electronic production (Radio, Television, Cinema, Cyber-media). Electronically mediated images and texts are even more difficult to control because of its technological constructedness and the speed of its transmission through global, cyber-mediated networks. Unlike writing and print publishing of nineteenth century, the speed of teletechnologies is disproportionate to the process of human thinking and therefore it hampers critical engagement. Secondly, Derrida cites a qualitative difference between writing and electronic communication, a structural difference between the two. Where

writing records an enunciation, a televised image records the act along with what is enunciated. It gives the impression that it relays a pure presence, the presence of the body as well, and this presence is recorded by the sophisticated repetition machine.

The history of (technology of) writing has been associated with recording enunciations. Texts have the properties of being read without the presence of the person who has written or compiled the enunciations. For Derrida, the technology of writing and printing did not possess the capacity to carry the embodied act associated with enunciation. Act involves the body of the person, body displays an affective rationality very different from reflective rationality, and media personalities like Arnab Goswami tend to work with an affective surplus. Teletechnologies through 'live Television', allow people to watch the composition, recomposition and decomposition of the bodies of actors, agents, and subjects. The absence of bodies informs the technology of writing and the presence of bodies dictates the flow of images through electronic and satellite TV. It is entirely a different matter as to what kind of bodies are allowed inside the repetition machine, how certain bodily presentations are preferred and how certain forms of speaking are privileged over others. In that sense, artifactuality does not just confine itself to manipulation of thinking but also of acting, when it combines enunciation with the bodily act, it produces the experience of 'pure presence'. Following Aristotle, Derrida has always held that there cannot be an unmediated form of presence and therefore, the supposedly 'pure presence', enabled by the artifactuality of the technologies, has to be deconstructed. Indeed, Derrida believes that while media appropriate our gaze, the audience has the ability to re-appropriate that gaze and he refers to this subversive negotiation as expropriation.

First, let me give an example for media's capacity to constitute its own space and time. In the mid-1980s, an exemplary form of national belonging was achieved in most parts of mainland India through the satellite telecast of the mythological serial, Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana*. Some political commentators argue that this serial ushered the BJP in as a major political force for the first time in postcolonial history. The experience of this serial has not been singularly studied for the kind of Hindu religiosity and forms of communality that it engineered. Again, this serial had modest ratings in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu where the anti-Brahmin movement held sway in the decades before and after Independence.

The processes of teletechnologies escape our attention. Subjects, agents, and consumers get caught in the homogenous time and space that these technologies create. The media time is calculated, formatted, and constrained. This time of the media works to satisfy and legitimize forces and interests. The 'national' is one such privileged interest. The space of the national is privileged over other spaces and within the space of the national, foreigners and immigrants are treated as the other. This national is always ethnocentric and it coexists with the interests of the market. The immigrant who has come to seek a livelihood is made to feel that the European nations have no role to play in his country's economic problems. Derrida has raised concerns with the way that the media construct the immigrant vis-a-vis the national citizen. Like Alan Badiou, he has argued for equal entitlement for the immigrant, mostly the Muslim immigrant. In our

country, we are yet to see any political leader or known intellectual coming in support of the Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants and their presence on the media is nearly absent. As Arvind Rajagopal has argued, the English media have displayed secular credentials but the language media has rarely hidden their hegemonic Hindu identity.

Very often, national television images seek to portray a form of national belonging tied to a homogenous space time, this striving for a smooth and silent space is a fantasy for any national cultural ideology. Anything that appears to rupture this technologically constructed national belonging is designated as noise and destroys the unattainable 'pure presence'. For instance, in several states belonging to North East India, Korean televisual material constitutes the ideal form and content. Young people from states like Nagaland and Mizoram tend to identify with the modern, Christian, popular and trendy Televised images that are disseminated through global networks. Many North East communities like Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, and others have their community spread out across the national borders and they inhabit a cultural geography that cuts across national boundaries. It is therefore impossible to realize the fantasy of 'pure presence' in non-mainland India. It is in that spirit that Mizos from the Myanmar border listen to more cable-based music originating from Aizawl, capital of Mizoram, in the federal state of India, than Burmese sponsored music. Border communities have their own transnational dynamic that differs from the time and space of nation-state. Borderland communities occupy a liminal space that transcend national space and homogenous time. It ties in neatly with Derrida's formulation that teletechnologies do not respect (always) a logocentric, national time and space.

For Derrida, the discussion on media technologies serves two purposes. Firstly, he addresses media technology to a broader concept and history of technology *per se*. Secondly, it directs deconstruction to the technical or industrial production of presence rather the philosophical or logocentric construction of presence. This industrial production of mediatic presence is what he terms as artifactuality or actuality or 'mediatic liveness'.

Derrida, while characterizing the teletechnologies as a set of institutions, professions, industries, practices and conventions, seeks to peg the artificial character of the produced-ness of the event with disaggregating its structure, limits, and possibilities. For instance, teletechnologies work with the limits of the camera, the urgency to organize the elements so as to fit news/journalistic genre, the restraint on the length of the story, the ideological and professional affinity of journalists and also the affiliating organizations. The controversy surrounding the videos of the JNU student leader Umar Khalid that described him as a Muslim terrorist was of the kind that questioned the professional norms, technologically (false) constructedness and the mediatic liveness of the image.

Derrida thinks that this artificial process of gathering, selecting and disseminating does not always distort the mediatic event. For Derrida, the event is already riven by spacing, absence and relationality, tending towards the fact that any event can never be complete in itself. It is only interpretation that tends towards the experience of wholeness or

completeness. But for Derrida interpretation cannot guarantee completeness. A general characteristic of these teletechnologies has been the deluge of representational forms and systems of communication where the spoken word survives without the speaker.

In one of the public obituaries that I recently attended of the legendary Carnatic musician Balamuralikrishana, his friends and disciples, apart from paying tributes to the maestro also mentioned how his absence can be contained and his music perpetuated by the sophisticated forms of contemporary technology that is available for recording and dissemination. They felt that the spectral presence outlives organic presence and the memory of the organic gets blurred with the memory of the technic. Balamuralikrishna's voice will outlive his finite body and the ageing of his voice will enter a phase with each technical invention that is generated to disseminate his music. The art of the memory of Carnatic music will be interrupted and the technic will animate the organic *memory* of his admirers and disciples in the future.

### **Stiegler and Derrida on the history and philosophy of technology:**

Stiegler and Derrida are historians and philosophers of technology and they foreground a broader concept and a history of technology. The Greek word 'tekne' has been used to describe the means other than life itself, which helps to make things appear. It is something that intervenes between the material called clay and the product called pot. In a simplistic manner, the transformation of matter into form and content requires tekne. It is based on the assumption that matter has potential to transform itself, become something else, appear as a recognizable thing. How does the materiality of media translate itself into a recognizable form /content?

Pushing that formulation to its logical end, these two philosophers would agree that it was tekne which made possible (accidentally), the invention of man. The history of life was punctuated with this moment or passage but prior to that passage, life journeyed forth without it being described as human or animal, nature or culture. After the *homo sapien* became bipedal, the hand acted on the environment in a way that thought became possible. Thus began the connection with hand, tool, thought, language and speech. The hand that made tools and produced signs was already a hand that wrote without the aid of the pen. The writing that precedes speech still remain the most complex species inheritance.

Stiegler and Derrida separately affirm the work of the paleo-anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan who sought to study the art and communication of France as it existed eleven thousand years ago. Amongst other things, Leroi-Gourhan proposed that the brain did not evolve on its own, bipedalism had initiated certain structural changes and this had consequences for the increase of brain volume in the hominids. The role of bipedalism in the "invention of the human" at a particular juncture was precisely due to the hominids ability to use tools or technics. For instance, going by Leroi-Gourhan's work, when *homo sapiens* became bipedal, the hand became free and developed tools and these tools were used to give form to inorganic matter. This action on the environment, through the use of tools, seems to have created an enlargement of the brain and therefore of thought and still later of speech centres. This approach provides

a non-anthropological account of the emergence of the human and also a non-ordinary origin of the human- it was action and the experience of action that led to the invention of the human. But the important point to be noted is that the exterior (action) shapes the interior (thought). In that sense, thought or consciousness is a product of the structural changes initiated by bipedalism. Bipedalism allowed the face to become free of the feeding and manipulative functions, thereby facilitating the structural specializations for the development of speech. Leroi-Gourhan made technology as entry point for understanding human cultures and suggested that technical activities as reflective of instrumental, communicative, symbolic and culturally orientated.

Following Leroi-Gourhan, Stiegler proceeds to formulate the question relating to technics and the invention of human as one of being co-determinative. It is co-determinative in the sense that the technic invented human and humans invented the technic, each being responsible for the other. It is for this reason that Heidegger gives extraordinary importance to the role of hand in the making of the human. The hand is not merely seen as important because of its tool making capacities but also because of its capacities as a signing, gesturing organ. It is a precursor to the mind.

Drawing upon and elaborating Leroi-Gourhan's work, both Stiegler and Derrida propose a technical history of memory. Plato had already made a division between internal memory and memory based on technics like writing, painting and so on. For Plato, the authentic internal memory associated with speech will be displaced onto external aids like writing. Stiegler and Derrida fiercely contest the compartmentalization of memory into the living and the dead. In Derrida's writing on Plato's *Pharmakon*, the living memory is referred to as anamnesis and the memory of the dead (through books, paintings, cave art and other such expressions) is referred to as hypomnesis. Derrida essentially says that it is difficult to consider the living memory as distinct from the memory of the dead and therefore it is impossible to separate the two.

Following the logic of Derrida in positing a technical history of media, Stiegler coins the term 'Grammatisation' to describe the role of technic in preserving the memory and experience of the authentic being. For Stiegler, Plato's abstract thought process associated with forms, cannot be experienced without the external aid of writing. So writing for Stiegler, is memory of a different kind but memory nevertheless, which is required for understanding the truth of the being.

So, there are two important issues pertaining to the origin of thought or logos: Firstly, thought or the interior is a product of action on the environment triggered through the aid of technic. Secondly, becoming human is described as a process of exteriorization. In his work *Technics and Time* (1998), Stiegler explores a history of time as epiphylogenesis, a preservation in technical objects of epigenetic experience, an experience that supposedly escapes biological evolution and human consciousness.

This preservation of epigenetic experience may be available in cave paintings, language (speech and writing) and it is not clear how they appear in modern technologies like cinema and digital media. At times, technology in the form of epigenetic trace,

discloses the uninterpretable and the non-conceptual spheres of our species. But for Derrida and Stiegler, the extent such an epigenetic experience can be disclosed in the later ideogram, pictography, phonetic literacy, painting and more recently photography including computer generated images is a question they grapple with. For Derrida, this would constitute fantasmatic material and our capacities for producing such fantasmatic material has incredibly increased with teletechnologies.

Archaeological anthropologists have interpreted cave paintings in Africa as an exercise in world-making by pre-historic man to interpret the world afresh or anew. In one of the cave paintings that had the image of hunters chasing animals and the weapons that were used, the archaeologist also found images of bodies that did not confirm to the archaeological remains. Worldmaking presupposes consecrating new objects and ideas and new forms of associations and relationalities. In that sense, art has been used not merely to reflect the world but to transform and provide an opening to a possibility of future(s). Art for them, then, had the capacity to draw them into a world of spiritual experience, an experience of spirituality minus the attendant scriptures, rituals and doctrines.

On understanding photographic image as a form of spectrography, Stiegler differs with Derrida. Stiegler does not fully agree with Derrida's insistence that photography has to be viewed as spectral traces. He brings Roland Barthes' understanding of intimate photographs as a form of an emanation, as inciting a tactile presence not received as a spectral artifact. It looks like when one is talking about the reception of the image in terms of seeing, the image as such may just be a trace but when one is examining the tactile nature of its reception, then the photograph does seem to connote an absolute referent.

## **Conclusion**

Canonical Media Studies have remained faithful to the dominant disposition, to the referential, documentary, visible and graphical world. Among other things, there is a need to rejuvenate a spectral understanding of the mediatic experience. Jacques Derrida's writings on the media offer a way forward to explore the fantasmatic, chaotic cyber-mediated everyday world that we inhabit. To inherit from the dead, to be what we are, is at once a conversation between affirming and questioning the species and civilizational heritage. Media technology may be seen as an inexorable repository of the past and it attends to a many presence and announces future in ways that are not easily predictable. Along with Deleuze and the new materialists, Communication Studies, in order to gain cultural, political and pedagogic relevance should inherit and ethically claim Derrida as one of the most important thinkers of our times.

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