

In successive chapters, then, James offers clear and insightful discussions of a wide range of central themes in the work of each of these philosophers. The chapter on Marion focuses on the phenomenology of givenness, the self, the auto-affectation of the flesh, and how saturated phenomena establish “the truth of all phenomenality” (38); the chapter on Nancy centers on embodiment, sensory experience, the infinitude of sense, and the ontology of the singular plural; Stiegler is discussed in terms of technicity and the technological rooting of temporal existence as the means for thinking the fundamental materiality of human life and actively challenging contemporary socio-economic, political, and technological forms; Malabou’s treatment concentrates on plasticity as the foundation for a new materialism of transformation, both in terms of ways of reading philosophical texts (Hegel and Heidegger) and of understanding the latest developments in neuroscience; the chapter on Rancière highlights the “distribution of the sensible,” rethinking equality not as the goal but the precondition for politics, and democracy as the precondition for political subjectivation; Badiou is characterized in terms of a major departure from the post-Kantian paradigm, turning from language to mathematics, using set theory to do ontology as a science of the real (it is worth highlighting that James’s explanation of Badiou’s use of set theory in *Being and Event* is perhaps the clearest explication of Badiou’s mathematical ontology that I have come across), and using category theory in order to account for the logics of existing worlds; and the chapter on Laruelle explores the radical immanence of the One and non-philosophy as the only means to get to the specificity of the real.

At the very least, James has provided an extremely valuable introduction to the work of these seven thinkers, many of whom will be unfamiliar to many readers. His surveys are clear, fair, but not blind to some of the problems with the positions and arguments put forward by those he discusses. Yet even when criticizing a philosophical position, he remains committed to articulating how the thinker discussed offers valuable insights into thinking materiality and the real. As he notes, his selection of representatives of the “new French philosophy” is not intended to be comprehensive, and several others could well have been included. But this does not detract from the value of this work, which goes beyond mere introduction and succeeds both in demonstrating how each of the thinkers examined have ties with the movements in French philosophy that directly preceded them, and how together they each depart from those movements in complementary and interconnected ways as they seek to think the “groundless or non-foundational ground of the real, conceived variously as givenness, sense, technicity, plasticity, the sensible, the multiple or the One” (187).

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TIMOTHY C. CAMPBELL, *Improper Life. Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2011, x + 189 pp., illus., \$25.00.

Campbell’s text *Improper Life. Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben*, published in 2011 by the University of Minnesota Press, stands as an interesting transversal study on the topics of biopolitics and technology mostly throughout four authors: Martin Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito and Peter Sloterdijk. In the background, although they are less explicitly exposed, are Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, who also contribute to elaborate the script from which the author develops his argument.

At first, it is necessary to notice a remarkable semantic transfer – perhaps Foucault’s main point of detachment – achieved by Campbell: a move from the word “biopolitics” to the term “thanatopolitics.” This transition is due to the fact that the author intends to focus more specifically on the ways contemporary societies deal with death than on the customs of

dealing with the population's life at a demographic, sanitary and statistical level, which was on the contrary Foucault's strategic aim in the 1980s.

In this respect, the relationship between thanatopolitics and technology, which constitutes the core of the text, appears to be particularly productive: the question of technology is analysed through its relation to politics and the subjects' bodies, in order to point out (within the scope identified by the above mentioned authors) a key to understand the phenomena that regulate, in contemporaneity, the links between life, death, community, technologies and power structures.

The first chapter is dedicated to a sustained comparison with Martin Heidegger which will be further developed in the analysis of the opposite couple *proper/improper writing*, an essential axis of Campbell's writing. Campbell investigates the texts that Heidegger most explicitly devotes to the question of technology from the beginning of the 1940s to the middle of the 1950s (among which he misses, astonishingly enough, the Bremen and Freiburg conferences): the *Parmenides*, the *Elucidation on Hölderlin's Poetry*, the *Letter on humanism* and the essay *The question concerning technology*.

It is most essential throughout the reading of the *Parmenides* that Campbell develops an interesting mediological analysis (hence following the German theoretician of media Friedrich Kittler) of the Messkirch thinker, who places as a basis in this text the coupling of *handwriting-proper writing* and *mechanical writing-improper writing*. For Heidegger, the writing of a typewriter is indeed an instance of nihilism, of the oversight of being, in that it tends to diminish individual differences, the singular bond with the Being, replacing it by a mass communication, which adorns its darkest features under the communist system. The other essays by Heidegger that are taken into account by Campbell are read in the light of the *Parmenides*, always keeping as essential the difference hereby established between *proper* and *improper writing* (which then produces the difference between *proper* and *improper life*).

Therefore, in *The question concerning technology*, the whole interpretation of the phenomenon-technology is read again in the light of the division proper/improper, noting that the key concepts of the essay (the *Ge-stell* and the *Bestand*) are concepts that make explicit, on the one hand, the modalities of the *Ge-stell* from the world of technology at the time of worldwide spreading of *improper writing*, and on the other hand – the *Bestand* – that of the human being who loses its unique identity and becomes totally *improper*.

We notice at this point what might constitute one of the weak points of the book: the interpretation, if not the exaggeration, of the analysed texts, which are bent – or within which a link to the topic of the *proper/improper writing* is constantly being looked for. Already in the analysis of the heideggerian texts, we notice this tendency: for instance in the reduction of the concept of *Bestand* to a general noun for the life at the time of *improper writing*, whereas Heidegger would never have accepted such a reduction, assuming that *Bestand* is not only a noun describing human dynamics (which, through the widened concept of *Dasein*, is never reducible to the human being – the *Dasein*, indeed, does not fully correspond to “the human being,” considered by Agamben as “bare life”), and especially where Heidegger repeatedly underlines that the human being, although it always risks to reduce itself to the *Bestand*, can never, ontologically, become it.

The essays on Hölderlin are also to be read from this perspective (where the alternative *proper/improper writing* is reflected between *proper/improper nearness*, a nearness instituted, according to Heidegger, by poetry), and the *Letter on humanism* (where the alternative between private existence and public dimension, between proper/improper communication would be based, according to Campbell, on the alternative *proper/improper writing*).

While in the case of the comparison with Hölderlin the re-proposal of the opposition seems to be particularly productive, the reading of *Letter on humanism* through the categories of *proper/improper writing* – in order to extract from the improper communication an onto-

logical difference between proper and improper human beings (the latter being created by mass communication, daughter of the new technologies of diffusion of writing), that would be describable through the agambenian lexicon of the difference between *bios* and *zoé* – appears on the contrary as an exaggeration of the heideggerian thinking.

Proceeding with the reading of the second chapter, we notice that here Campbell confronts himself mainly with Giorgio Agamben. We meet again, in this confrontation, Campbell's attempt at renewing the analysis of the Italian thinker in the horizon of the dichotomy *proper/improper writing* identified through Heidegger. In Agamben's analysis, this pair of opposites allows Campbell to highlight an important point not addressed by the Roman philosopher: the missed consideration of the bonds between technology and the bio/thanatology apparatus. The reduction of the heideggerian *Ge-stell* to the concept of "dispositivo" (which Campbell sometimes draws closer to the French *dispositif*, which is the term originating from Foucault and Deleuze in the acceptation used by Agamben, whereas he sometimes leaves the English translation, *apparatus*) by Agamben, and the determination of the latter as a structure creating subjects, occasion an inclusion in the power structures of the technological and mediological particularities, and of their effects that a more important consideration of the phenomenon-technology in its specificity should carry.

The only weak point of Campbell's analysis on Agamben is probably the excessive attention on a minor text within the corpus of the Italian – *What is an apparatus?*. Although it is linked to more significant works, as *The kingdom and the glory*, it becomes a keystone of the chapter beyond the value of the text in the author's thought. Compared to the misunderstanding of the technical side operated by Agamben's *apparatus*, Campbell finds out that the "philosophy of the impersonal" by Roberto Esposito (whom Campbell has also edited in English), is "embodying" the division proper / improper in the individuals' body itself, leading to the possibility of defining concretely the thanatology as the process that leads to the fusion of things and people, making the two coextensive in a living being (72).

From some notations on the *immunitas* in Esposito's thought, Campbell moves on to the analysis of another major thinker of the contemporary philosophical immunology, Peter Sloterdijk, to whom he dedicates the third chapter. In this chapter, Campbell's arbitrary and partial choices are obvious concerning the analysed texts to recover a (bio-) thanatopolitical bond in the author's thought. The texts by Sloterdijk that are analysed are actually *Die letzte Kugel*, *Terror from the air* and *Rage and Time* and they represent a minor part of the configuration of Sloterdijk's work, both from the mediological and technological point of view, especially the first two texts. Then, the absence of key-texts of the Sloterdijkian immunology comes into view, especially since *Du musst dein Leben ändern* was already published in Germany three years before the publication of Campbell's book.

Thus, if on the one hand Campbell's analysis apprehends with acuteness a crucial point of Sloterdijk's theory – that is to say the problems that the philosopher from Karlsruhe had in the mediation between the individual immunological dimension and the collective one of the *communitas* – on the other hand, the overestimation of one chapter of *Sphären* trilogy (Vol. II, Chap. VIII constitutes the corpus of *Die letzte Kugel*), and the missed consideration of the important role of the individual immunology in *Du musst dein Leben ändern*, leads Campbell to an explanation of Sloterdijk's immunological thinking in a direction that does not fit with the author's.

It is indeed the role of globalisation in Sloterdijk's thought which is misinterpreted by Campbell throughout the dichotomical terms *proper/improper*. Campbell argues that globalisation, making each place and each individual identical to others, operates with Sloterdijk just as the *proper/improper writing-dispositive* given by Heidegger. What he does not understand on this matter is that, if Heidegger expresses in *Parmenides* a criticism to the possibility to give oneself some technique (like the writing as improper writing), which is not the only one and is not irreversible, Sloterdijk however uses globalisation as a process which, in the recent period, only changes in modality but has always been present in the history of occidental civilisation.

This history of globalisation, at first from an ontological, theological, conceptual and finally from a practical point of view (fruits of the great explorations), is analysed by Sloterdijk in the second volume of the *Sphären* and in the text *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals*, which are never taken into consideration by Campbell, except for the aforementioned chapter VIII, but only twice, and episodically for the other text.

The lack of consideration of Sloterdijk's important texts (again *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals* and the third volume of the *Sphären* trilogy) also leads Campbell into an inaccurate comparison between the leninist-communist phenomenon as described by Heidegger in *Parmenides* and the one of the Islam analysed by Sloterdijk: the philosopher from Karlsruhe gets back many times on the fact that the Islam cannot be considered as a new aggregation point of anger (after Christianity and communism) for it has no celebratory perspective – and as we could say with Campbell – neither a mediological one.

In this way, the thinking of globalisation by Sloterdijk is also retroactively projected in the essays *Rules for the Human Zoo* and *Die Domestikation des Seins*, driving Campbell to argue that in Sloterdijk's thought there would be a messianic consideration of biotechnology (115), which shall be the only exit to the apocalyptic thought of the author, based on the immunological ideas related to the terrorist phenomenon expressed in *Terror from the air*.

The misunderstanding on this point is obvious because Sloterdijk – and particularly in the third volume of *Sphären* but also in *Du musst dein Leben ändern* – considers immunology in a completely different meaning, which paradoxically brings him near the *pars construens* given by Campbell in the last chapter.

There, the author offers, with the possibility of changing the understanding of Foucault's concept of *soin de soi* (*epimeleia heatou*), a theory of the *techné* as “attention and play,” that recalls some aspects of the immunological reuse of the same foucauldian thematic by Sloterdijk, which emphasises the individual (anthrop- and auto-) technical practices.

The possibility of changing the understanding of the technique as “attention and play” is the content of the end of Campbell's text, which can be considered as an excellent attempt of confronting crucial thinkers of contemporaneity such as Heidegger, Agamben, Sloterdijk, Esposito, but fails in its will of imposing to those authors a tool of interpretation (namely, the *proper/improper writing* dichotomy), risking at some point to be reductive.

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HUGH G. GAUCH JR., *Scientific Method in Brief*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, xvii + 288 pp., illus., \$39.99.

Hugh G. Gauch Jr.'s introduction to scientific method, *Scientific Method in Brief*, offers a clear and careful exposition of scientific method, presenting the perspective of a working life scientist who also has a great deal of respect for science studies scholars in the humanities. The book is an adapted version of his 2002 text, *Scientific Method in Practice*, which is longer and more oriented toward advanced researchers.

Chapters 1-6 provide an introduction to foundational and philosophical issues in scientific reasoning, “a humanities-rich perspective on science,” as Gauch puts it (21). Chapter 1 introduces Gauch's approach to science, including the position that science is a liberal art. Chapter 2 contends that rationality, truth, objectivity and realism are the foundational concepts for understanding scientific claims. Chapter 3 offers a selective history, from “Aristotle to 1960” (51) of the question, “what inputs are required for us humans to reach true conclusions about the physical world?” (34). Chapter 4 reviews philosophical objections, from Popper through the Science Wars, regarding science's ability to achieve the ideals laid out in