

THE THEATER OF INDIVIDUATION: PHASE-SHIFT AND RESOLUTION IN SIMONDON AND HEIDEGGER¹

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We know very well that where Heidegger says that time is the veritable principle of individuation, Simondon responds that there is no principle of individuation, but the process of individuation. Since the reading that I proposed of *Being and Time*, I have maintained that one of the major concepts that has allowed for the philosophical advances of the twentieth century—as much neglected and misunderstood as it has remained, also in Heidegger—is the concept of primary retention discovered by Husserl in 1905. I will not explain again here the reasons that led me to claim that even if I share with Husserl the point of view that absolutely distinguishes primary retention, which is the “big now” of perception, to speak like Gérard Granel,³ from secondary retention, which is, like the second synthesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the result of reproduction and imagination in memory and thus as past,⁴ I no longer agree at all with Husserl when he claims that primary retention owes *nothing at all* to secondary retention. I have tried to show that primary retention is always a primary *selection* and that this selection is always brought out in function of secondary retentions that anticipate the primary retention in the form of *secondary protentions* (with the primary protentions being carried by the temporal object that supports the phenomenon) and that as such filter it. Furthermore and above all, I have attempted to show that the conditions under which secondary retentions perforate primary retentions, which are thus primary selections, are overdetermined by the factual and prosthetic conditions under which the now can have access to its already-there that is past and secondary, namely through the artifacts in which what I call “*tertiary retentions*” consist, which is to say, the supports of what we are about to examine as a process of individuation.

My thesis about the primary philosophical sense of *Being and Time* is that Heidegger attempts to free himself there from the Husserlian thought of time by introducing the already-there of historicity—which is very close to Simondonian preindividuality. However, he does not truly succeed in breaking with Husserl precisely because, like Husserl, he still wants to exclude tertiary retentions—which constitute for him the realm of *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*—from the *originary* realm of *Eigentlichkeit*. Finally, Simondon’s relation to the question of time is too inhabited by its intimate penetration of Bergsonian thought in order for it to be able to escape both the metaphysics of vitalism that denounces the geometrization of time, which is to say, its spatialization, which is

precisely that in which every tertiary retention consists, and the Bergsonian ignorance of the crucial difference brought about by Husserl between primary and secondary retention. That is why psycho-social individuation is essentially—although perhaps unwittingly—thought with the cone of *Matter and Memory*.

After these elaborations, let me introduce my subject by telling you that, on the one hand, I have always been struck by the *resonance* of Simondon with Heidegger or of Heidegger with Simondon, and that, on the other hand, I have just as much been struck by the immense distance separating the two. And it is in this proximity of distance that joins them that I am going to see today a kind of *transductive relation*, a transduction as Simondon defines it, namely as that which opens up possibilities of internal resonances in a process of psychic and collective individuation, and that thus (re)constitutes its terms.⁵ We, who still attempt to do philosophy, belong to this process that would open us up to the possibility of effecting a *leap* in individuation and thus to realize a transindividuation by one of these leaps of which Heidegger also often speaks.

But as for the *manner* of leaping and what *to leap* means, that would perhaps be a question precisely of *leaping beyond the Heideggerian sense of leaping*. It would thus be a question of transindividuating the potential of philosophical individuation in which the preindividual reserve [*fonds*] of the Heideggerian text consists, insofar as it expands and supersaturates the question of leaping by pushing the “question of being” or the “question of the history of being” to the extreme. And for this Simondon would be, if I dare say so, at the same time a catalyst and a springboard in some way, in that he is the thinker of the quantum leap as the full [*plénière*] modality of individuation. It is, of course, necessary to underscore here that Heidegger will have shared with Simondon the philosophical attention to the quantum question. Recall here, also, the reference to Heisenberg in *Being and Time*.

Finally, the leap to be carried out in this transduction is that which proceeds, for me, from a *reading* in which the *terms of the reading*, which is to say, the texts of Heidegger and Simondon—*Being and Time* and *Psychic and Collective Individuation* in particular—constitute themselves and each other in the proximity of their distance in such a way that, individuated on the basis of the preindividuality that they constitute for us, they lead to a reading of the ensemble that joins the terms of their relation *by default*: as a relation that is thus dynamic because it is a *phase-shift* [*déphasage*] and that calls forth a *resolution*. This resolution is not a *solution*, but a *decision*. For my part, this decision—which is to say, this reading, insofar as it joins the two texts in their immense distance, but at the same time asks them a common question starting from their very resources—this decision of reading consisted in positing the necessity of situating, as a *transductive* and thus also individuating *element*, that which I have called “tertiary retention.” That is to say, just as well, *facticity*, but conceived here as prostheticity and as that which then constitutes the *Wirklichkeit* of the mark of origin’s originary default, the accidentality from which time proceeds and where—as in the case of *Entschlossenheit* and thus in a *quantum leap*—it is a question of *differentiating becoming as future* [*avenir*], which is also to say, this time in a more Simondonian language, of *negentropizing the entropic becoming* that is constituted by accidental chance.

Such questions do not only have a political interest, or an interest beyond the political, in an *apoliticity* on the basis of which I sometimes attempt to think the future and the beyond of *polis*, in the sense that Bataille spoke of an atheological thought, engendered from the theological itself, from its individuation, or as I myself have said sometimes—even in this very place, a little more than fifteen years ago, at the invitation of Gérard Granel—in the name of a thought that I qualify as *atranscendental*, but coming from the transcendental, from its individuation. I explain all of this in the last volume of *Technics and Time*. By “political” or “apolitical,” I mean: in or from the process of psychic and collective individuation that has opened up history as individuation of the West, in the possible *after* of such a Western process if it is true that it is rather a question of thinking how that which—having begun and thus necessarily also having an end—we would essentially be in charge of individuating today, in and as the end of the individuation of the West, namely, the nascent figure of another time, the accidental and yet necessary conditions of a renewed individuation – stating precisely the necessity of such an accident, as “resolution,” but a resolution insofar as it has the capacity to affirm a reinvented phase-shift in the face of an entropic and increasingly hegemonic tendency.

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In any case, it is within such perspective that I situate my intervention: just as Foucault and Deleuze speak of the end of a Greco-Judeo-Christian apparatus [*dispositif*] (we who are no longer Greeks, not even Christians, as they say),⁶ I put forth my capacity for individuation—psychic in the sense of Simondon, existential ipseity in the sense of Heidegger—insofar as it is inscribed at the heart of a *process* that invents itself and in which I attempt to *participate* as an inventor. Whether this process is a “history of being” or an *ontogenesis* in the sense of Simondon is a big part of the question, but it is not the only one: the *real* question is situated in a *beyond* of this alternative, which is to say, precisely in its surpassing [*dépassement*] as a leap into a new process of individuation. That is how I think of philosophy today: as the experience of this *kata-strophe* (that is also a cata-lysis) of what will have been the process of psychic and collective individuation that began from two sources. Of these two, today, the Greek source is, if not accomplished, then at the very least exhausted: it has *exhausted the resources of its initial conditions* and today it is a question of reinitializing this source (in a hypomnesiac and technical sense, the way one “initializes” a system) and reinitiating it (in a logical, which is to say, anamnestic sense, the way a master initiates) or rather reindividuating it from a reinitialization that escapes all decision and all “resolution,” and, a fortiori, all solution and all mastery.

The question is then to agree on this point: what are these *resources*? Or rather, what will these resources have been and to what type of new initial resources, constituted quantically [*quantiquement*] by a leap, can they give rise? Such a reinitialization can only yield an individuation as a quantum leap and it is in the worry [*inquiétude*] attentive to the necessity of *this* leap that I attempt the transductive relation of the Simondonian phase-shift and the Heideggerian resolution, constructing, in one way or another, the new theater of individuation—understanding that here *to construct* means *to individuate* what is already there as preindividual potential.

The *relation* is established first of all through the striking fact of the proximity of the *already-there* of the historical past of Dasein, a past “which is not something that follows along after [Dasein], but something which already goes ahead of it” (§ 6)⁷ and the *preindividuality* from which proceeds the individuation of the Simondonian psychic and collective individual. There are indeed other considerations that are common to the two thinkers. Most notably, there is the consideration—one that perhaps was not reflected upon enough—of the system of objects that, as that which constitutes what I myself called the *whats* [*les quois*], opens up the horizon of a world within which leaps must occur, and which is also what Simondon thinks as *milieu*. The Heideggerian thought of being-in-the-world resonates with the Simondonian *individual-milieu couple*.

Certainly, the conditions of leaps in which individuation from a world or from a milieu consists, as *Entschlossenheit* or as quantum leap, and as the result of the already immense difference between world and milieu are very distant from one another. But I think that this is the case *first of all* because that which is posed in one as an evident *bipolarity that is constitutive of individuation* is in the other the *originary and tragic question of a fall* [*déchéance*] of the individual in the course of the individuation. I mean that the first difference between Simondon and Heidegger, which in truth is constituted as an immense distance, and which all of a sudden puts them into the transductive relation of a *very distant mutuality*, if not of a veritable separation, of a disjunction that could never again return to the conjugation of a conjunction, is that the one speaks of the *we* and the other of the *they*, the *we* of the one lacking the *they* of the other and vice versa. In this regard, Marc Crépon shows in his recent book *Terreur et Poésie* how Hölderlin is in Heidegger the support of a discourse not on the *we*, but on the *people*,⁸ and, in this case, not on the proletariat, the Third State, or the *demos*, but indeed on the *German people*—which constitutes, I believe, the price to pay for the nonthought of the *we* in its originary relation to the *I*, the unthought that is concealed by the question of the fall which, however, correctly claims to be its thought.

In Heidegger, there is neither difference nor the tension in *Dasein* between the *I* and the *we*: Dasein is not an *I*. It is neither, properly speaking, a *we*: it is prior to this kind of distinction, but it does not contain this distinction either. And this is a problem, I think: for it does not allow us to fully interrogate the tension and the dynamic phase-shift that is, by contrast, constitutive in Simondon and allows us to think individuation as process, a process that does not denigrate the collective and that also avoids thinking *Entschlossenheit* as a decision limited by being-towards-death. The stakes—but I will not have time to develop it here—are *overmortality* [*surmortalité*],

which is to say, that which, when it is thought starting from being-towards-death, nevertheless allows to account for the fact that psychic individuation always carries itself forward, as originally collective in this sense, going beyond itself, into a future that exceeds *its own disappearance* and to which it delivers its inadequation as phase-shift because that is the question in the preindividual which it is, from that moment, called upon to constitute in its turn, and in relation to which it is entirely traversed. It is thus that the constitution of a transindividual is possible. But this overmortality is that which presupposes what I call tertiary retentions insofar as they support this transindividual.

Certainly, I use here personal pronouns that are in principle proscribed by everything that *Being and Time* puts in place: it is certainly not a question of making *Dasein* collapse into an *I*. Nor is it a question of reducing it to a *we* that quickly becomes unthinkable, at least by itself—if not precisely as people. Yet it seems to me that *Dasein* oscillates in a permanent denial between the *I* (this is what authorizes a certain interpretation of *Dasein* as ego, as in the work of Jean-Luc Marion, for example: the voice of conscience of being-at-fault, of *Schuldichkeit*, is indeed that of an *I*, as Heidegger says explicitly—and the whole question is then to translate *Schuld* not so much as *guilt* or even *debt* but as *default*⁷ and to translate-by-default is what every translation is); thus, in a permanent denial between the *I* and the *historical people* (as heir of the “Greek *Dasein*,” the people of the Hymns).

It is here that a transduction between Heidegger’s existential analytic and Simondon’s processuality of individuation must be carried out. Rethinking existentiality in the way *Being and Time* attempts to designate it analytically as dimension of a *Da-sein* and as being-towards... is properly that which—joining if not an *I* to a *we*, then at least a “psychic” individuation to a “collective” one—all of a sudden gives *Being and Time* a renewed individuating efficacy, as both reinitialized and reinitiated. But this is only the case insofar as this transindividuating transduction happens, and this is my own contribution, through the affirmation of a dimension of individuation that is found *neither* in Heidegger *nor* in Simondon and which is what I have called the “retentional apparatuses,” which are constituted by tertiary retentions.

I owe much, if not everything, to the preindividual potential that *Being and Time* will have been for me. But this will only have been truly the case, this will only be individuated, as that which characterizes what I believe I think today, when I am able to mobilize the Simondonian question of the process of psychic and collective individuation in my reception of *Being and Time*.⁸ Many years after these connections, after *Le temps du cinéma*,⁹ I ended up telling myself that, contrary to the absence of the difference of the psychic and collective poles in Heidegger—which inevitably leads the latter to confuse the question of the *we* with that of the *they*, which is to say, of the fall—there is no question of the *they* in Simondon. The possible annulment of the *we* in the *they*, the possibility of the annihilation of the difference between the psychic and the collective, of the *I* and of the *we*, in their confusion does not seem to enter Simondon’s thought.

What Heidegger posits as a point of departure, namely *facticity*, *such* that it always results in the ultimately *inevitable* character of the *temptation to determine the undetermined*, which is to say, to flee the necessity of the resolution contained in the solitude that the *singularity* of *Dasein* necessarily is, that individuates itself only at this price, this *solitude in facticity*—is not really a *question* in Simondon. However, this does not mean that it is not addressed [*abordée*] at all. On the contrary: this question of the tension between psychic and collective, of the necessary opposition of the individual to the group, this question that is the dynamic constraint of transindividuation, of internal resonance as effectivity of the theater of individuation permanently addresses [*borde*] us. But it is not treated *as such*, and consequently, it does not allow us to pose the question of the *flight* before the necessity of the quantum leap in which effective individuation necessarily consists. That which, in a language too Aristotelian for Simondon, I call its passage into act.

However, I maintain this question as that of a passage into act not only because this expression intimately concerns me and initially allowed me to think philosophy, but because I think that Aristotle in this regard raised a specific question that concerns precisely the conditions of psycho-collective transindividuation insofar as it is not the gregariousness of collective psychology of that which Freud thought he could call the horde, which he

hastily assimilated to the crowd.

Sensibility, which was thought as such for the first time by Aristotle, characterizes two different types of “souls”: the sensitive, supposedly animal soul and the noetic, supposedly human soul. The sensibility that is supposedly human is also and in some of its parts noetic, which is to say, inscribed into *logic*. It is in this that the noetic sensible opens up to sense. “Logic” does not mean here to conform to the rules of rationality, but to be inscribed in a *becoming-symbolic*. For a noetic soul, everything sensible that is in act becomes the support of an *expression*. This expression (which is also, Aristotle says, a discernment, a *krinein*, a judging, a *making-a-difference*)¹⁰ is a *logos*—as speech [*parole*], as gesture: narration, poem, music, engraving, *mimesis* in all of its forms... I call it an “exclamation”: the noetic experience of the sensible is *exclamatory*. It exclaims before the sensible insofar as it is *sensational*, that is to say, the experience of an *incommensurable* singularity. The sensitive soul neither exclaims nor expresses itself in this sense, it does not experiment with the sensational singularity of its world, it does not *make* world (*kosmos*), which is to say that it does not expand its sense in exclaiming it symbolically. This noetic expansion of sense is what Simondon calls psychic and collective individuation. It is this process.

The sensational is the intellectual sensible. But the passage from the regime of the sensible into the regime of the sensational needs support because, as Aristotle writes in his *On the Soul*, the noetic (sensationally intellectual) soul is only *sometimes* noetic, namely in those moments when it experiences the extra-ordinary: that which comes from another plane. Ordinarily, it is sensitive, which is to say that it lives not in the mode of its animality but of what is to be called its *stupidity* [*bêtise*]*—its regression to the sensitive stage.*¹¹ Ordinarily, I plunge into the ordinary because I submit myself to the *stupid* [*bête*] *tendency* which makes that *I can participate in the divine only discontinuously*, as Aristotle says. It is this tendency of which, in any case, I would not know how to free myself (this dream of purity is what best accomplishes the tendency that it believes to fight: it is the stupidest [*bête*] and laziest expression of stupidity), which makes that, in general, which is to say, ordinarily, in this generality of the genre where I am in the perception without exception, in the non-sensational sensibility, I am in the realm of regression.

Heidegger, referring at the same time to Book A of *Metaphysics* and to *The Nicomachean Ethics*, formulates it as follows: “The human cannot constantly dwell among the *timiôtata*; for the human, this autonomous mode of being, forever attending to the *timiôtata*, is unthinkable.”¹² And Aristotle cites Simonides along the same lines: “God alone can have this privilege.”¹³ The stupid tendency that is thought already in Aristotle as the regression of the intellectual-sensational soul to the sensitive stage is what contemporary industrial entropy exploits as it exploits the projective and fascinator capacity of the cinema of consciousness (something Adorno did not understand).¹⁴ It exploits it through the exploitation of the pulsational depth [*fond*] of the body, which is to say, of the unconscious. It is necessary to critique not only reason, but indeed also stupidity [*bêtise*], which is not simply a critique of unreason, but, above all and primarily, a critique of laziness. This critique of stupidity [*bêtise*] can be constituted only by rules, ethical maxims, and a praxis that are essentially an ethics and a praxis against laziness, an ethics and a praxis of courage.

Such courage is a sensible way to behave, an affirmation of the sensible as sensational and against the becoming-pigsty of the sensational through what I analyzed some time ago as a sensationalist press [*une press à sensations*], a sense-printing machine that has become aesthetic, and that is pursuing the mnemotechniques that forge the collective retentions that the second essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals* contemplates, precisely at the moment when these mnemotechniques, having become mnemotechnologies, are functionally integrated in the system of global production, and with them *all aesthetic* and *symbolic* life in general: such is the society of control that Deleuze speaks of as what succeeds the disciplinary societies of Foucault and Marx.

These mnemotechniques and their efficiency are what neither Heidegger nor Simondon allow us to think, even though both call for this thought; and in any case, for me, the transductive relation that is established between them and that establishes them as the preindividual reserve of the philosophy most necessary and capable of a quantum leap is what leads to the thought of this very mnemotechnicity as what I call “tertiary retention.” But

in order to explicate this point by way of conclusion, let us first return to Simondon and Heidegger.

What Simondon privileges is *transindividuation* as the reality of individuation in general, that is to say as what accomplishes transindividuation while inscribing it in the essential incompleteness of an eternal return. I am currently attempting to show elsewhere (in *De la misère symbolique*) that it is a question here of the circuit of desire as such. This transindividuation as circuit is not truly thinkable on the basis of and with *Being and Time*—unless as what will later become a “history of being”... *Later*, which is to say, *after* that which constitutes the *evidence of a failure of the existential analytic*.

Yet it is a question of *reciprocally critiquing the two gestures* at the same time: the one that proceeds from the *fact of the fall* without positing by way of an equally initial point the *primordial conjunction* of the psychic and the collective, and here I am speaking of Heidegger; and the one that, if not denies, at least occludes or underestimates the *necessity of Verfallen*, which is to say, the *essential fragility* of individuation—the gesture of Simondon. But it is only at the price of this possibility of fall inscribed in facticity that the *primordial conjunction is equally a primordial disjunction*. In neglecting it, Simondon does not see that it is a question of struggling, *between* these two tendencies, *for* their articulation and *against* their decomposition, which is the fact of disindividuation. In other words, individuation is essentially the com-position of forces that bind it and that turn it into a process, which is to say, a dynamic. There is no dynamic without the duality of forces that attempt to annul each other. But that is what Heidegger just as well as Simondon ignore—the one by denigrating the psychic-collective duality by collapsing into the fall; the other by ignoring the fall as the tendency to confuse the two poles in the *they*.

That is what remains of the *metaphysics of mastery* in Simondon (and in his mecanological project as foundation of the control of the technical cybernetic ensemble for mecanological power) which has as its political price its inattention to the question of the confusion of the *I* and the *we* and to the *becoming-they* of individuation, which is to say, *deindividuation* in its own right. The latter constitutes a tendency to a *regression toward the sensitive soul*, which is to say, *the generalization of the gregarious mode*—which is the psycho-social form of entropy. It is what I would like to introduce here first of all by way of a digression on the question of technics in Simondon. There one sees that even if he does not allow one to think directly what I just called “deindividuation,” he nonetheless thinks the machine precisely as a loss of individuation. But he does not see coming the question of deindividuation proper to the hyperindustrial cybernetic machine, that which indifferently logic and technics, producing a logistics where calculation is put in service of deindividuation as desingularization, with singularity being that which must be reduced to particularity in order for the circulation of merchandises be able to impose itself without frontiers or limits, at the price of destroying the circulation of desire, which is to say, *libidinal energy*.

Simondon thinks the nineteenth century as a loss of individuation where the worker cedes to the machine the status of technical individual. This analysis is obviously very close to that of Marx. However, it is also quite different precisely in that it rests on the concept of individuation that escaped Marx (even though the latter justly underscored against Hegel, in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, the irreducibility of singularity to particularity as the incommensurability of the *living* in the process of production): an automatic system of machinery—moved by an automaton, the moving force that moves itself—consisting in a large number of mechanical and intellectual organs such that the workers themselves are nothing but conscious articulations of it. The machine that possesses the ability and the force in place of the worker is itself a virtuoso endowed with a soul represented by the mechanical laws which are acting in it and that, in order to maintain its constant auto-movement, consumes coal, oil, etc., just as the worker consumes nourishment (instrumental materials).

Here it is Marx who is speaking. But in Simondon, form does not precede matter, nor the other way around; he is not a “materialist.” The process of individuation in which technical evolution as differentiation consists must be inscribed into a different categorization: the technical *industrial* object concretizes this dynamic *in itself*, without the intervention of that by which, for instance, Leroi-Gourhan, in his analysis of the realization of technical tendencies, calls the “interior social milieu.” In Simondon, technical evolution as the dynamic of evolutive tendencies tends towards techno-logical perfection through the integration and overdetermination

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of functions, which is in itself a process of individuation—but very paradoxically, *Simondon does not assign any role to it in psychic and collective individuation*. As for the articulation between this becoming-machinic and the becoming-social, which is, by the way, also a becoming-symbol, as the support of the transindividuation, even though it is not thought, it is historicized as follows—I recapitulate here the summary that I have proposed of its position in *The Fault of Epimetheus*: “Industrial technics is characterized by a transformation of technical individuals, which allows for the comprehension of the genesis and breaking down of the present-day relation of the human to the machine. The dramaturgy of modern technics begins in the eighteenth century with a phase of optimism. A crisis ensues with the advent of industrial technics exploiting the resources of the thermodynamic machine. The machine does not replace the human: the latter supplements, up to the Industrial Revolution, the absence of machines. The appearance of the tool-equipped machine, *qua* a new technical individual, however, strips the human of its role as technical individual as well as of its employment.” The machine takes the place of the human because the human fulfilled the function of machine—carrying tools. “However, a new optimism is ushered in during the twentieth century with the cybernetic machine capable of producing negentropy. More profoundly than the relinquishment of the human’s place as technical individual beside the machine, the threat of entropy makes possible the anguish in which the human experiences technical evolution. Against this, optimism is justified through reference to a thought of life, because technical evolution appears as a process of differentiation, creation of order, struggle against death.”¹⁵

However, I attempt to show in *De la misère symbolique 1. L’épochyperindustrielle* that for the time being, which is to say, in the hyperindustrial *hegemony*, the cybernetic machine, far from being negentropic, is archi-entropic: as the hyper-reactive system that tends to real time, it also tends to a synchronization that constitutes a new stage in the history of the loss of individuation and a fusion in what eventually leads to the hegemony of the *they*.

Dasein always lives in a difference in relation to others—in order to even it out or to accentuate it: this is its “distantiality.” But this means that *Dasein* from the beginning stands in subjection to others and that it is not itself. This *who* that *is*, is the *they*, “the *who* is the neuter.” This *who* entails an *essential tendency* (essential to Dasein) to the mediocre leveling down of all possibilities of being (differences): it is the publicness (or the “public opinion”) that controls *prima facie* “every way in which world and Dasein get interpreted,” disburdening “*Dasein* of its everydayness.” “In one’s concern [*Besorgen*] with what one has taken hold of, whether with, for, or against, the others, there is constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether that difference is merely one that is to be evened out, whether one’s own *Dasein* has lagged behind the others and wants to catch up in relationship to them, or whether one’s *Dasein* already has some priority over them and sets out to keep them suppressed. The care about this distance between them is disturbing to being-with-one-another, though this disturbance is one that is hidden from it. If we may express this existentially, such being-with-one-another has the character of distantiality. The more inconspicuous this kind of being is to everyday *Dasein* itself, all the more stubbornly and primordially does it work itself out.”

“But this distantiality which belongs to being-with, implies that *Dasein*, as everyday being-with-one-another, stands in subjection to others. It itself is not; its being has been taken away by the others. *Dasein*’s everyday possibilities of being are for the others to dispose of as they please.” “The ‘who’ is not this one, not that one, not oneself, not some people, and not the sum of them all. The *who* is the neuter, the *they*.” “In this averageness with which it prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets silently suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force. This care of averageness reveals in turn an essential tendency of *Dasein* which we call the ‘levelling down’ of all possibilities of being.”

“Distantiality, averageness, and levelling down, as ways of being for the *they*, constitute what we know as ‘publicness.’” “Publicness proximally controls every way in which the world and *Dasein* get interpreted, and it is always right.” “Thus the particular *Dasein* in its everydayness is *disburdened* by the ‘they.’”¹⁶ As neuter, would the *they* thus be Blanchot’s “they die,” which is to say, the impersonal that is equally concealed by being-towards-

death as undetermined, but whose indeterminacy would thus equally be the neutrality of the impersonal? This very difficult question which joins the *they* to death, but not to being-towards-death in an “attempt to determine the undetermined” by calculation (in *Besorgen*), is also the question of what links *the* death to the dead [*la mort au mort*], to what, as *what, is not living*, to what I call “the dead” in the sense of the reign of what is not alive [*vivant*] and yet essential to what is living in life [*au vif de la vie*] and that is constituted by the existence of the *who*: technics, and more precisely, technics insofar as it constitutes tertiary retention, in fact concealing the dead [*le mort*] in the living, in its very intimacy and as *ex-sistence*,¹⁷ in its intimacy always already ex-claimed as being-in-the-world.

Thus, there are several dimensions of the *they*, which can also be understood as the *one*[*il*], as the impersonal, which is the condition of what Heidegger himself calls the *They*, but which could not be reduced to it. I have attempted elsewhere¹⁸ to characterize this one as what I call here “the dead,” which is to say, also as the impersonal and equally as the condition of the *One*[*Il*], which is to say, of the (mono)theological. But it is also the impersonal as what Blanchot calls “the impersonal knowledge of the book” in *The Beast of Lascaux*¹⁹ and in this very aspect already the preindividual. And it is indeed thus that Deleuze understands the *they* of Blanchot: “Every event is like death, double and impersonal in its double.”²⁰ “It is the abyss of the present, the time without present with which I have no relation, toward which I am unable to project myself. For in it *I* do not die. I forfeit the power of dying. In this abyss *they* (*on*) die—they never cease to die, and they never succeed in dying.”²¹ It is in this multidimensionality that the *they* is the neuter as this other plane of “they die,” *as if here dying were the return of the living to the dead*, which is to say, to the preindividual reserve—the *they* of mortality where the *stupidity* [*bêtise*] of death supports as its point of flight and collapse the *idiocy of life*, which is to say, the singularity of the idiom.

However, Simondon’s inattention to the entropic tendency of digital technology – not only to cybernetic technology, by the way, but also to digital technology that is the expansion into all the domains of logistical and computational technology, that thus imposes calculation on everything that constitutes the movement of life, that is also the development of technologies of the society of control as mnemotechnologies; that is thus also the absorption of the symbolic into the sphere of production and merchandise and the liquidation of the difference that Marx thought he could make between infrastructure and superstructure—this inattention and naiveté, which in fact strongly resembles a discourse of mastery, is an avatar of metaphysics in its modern version. It is the fact of *forgetting the question of support* and of *the question of forgetting support*: of the question of support insofar as it is what always forgets itself, just like a fish forgets the water.

Certainly, Simondon asserts that there can only be transindividuation on the condition of a material and artefactual conservation of its trace: “Through the intermediary of the technical object is created... an interhuman relation that is the model of transindividuality. [This relation puts individuals into a relation with one another] by means of this charge of preindividual reality, this charge of nature that is conserved with the individual being and that contains potentials and virtuality. The object that comes out of technical invention carries with it something of the being that produced it.”²²

But at the same time he argues that information must be thought regardless of its supports; in order to oppose himself to Shannon, he turns to the illusions of Turing, Wiener, and many others—including contemporary cognitivists: “The notion of information should never be brought back to the signals, supports, or vehicles of information in a message, *as the technological theory of information, drawn by abstraction from the technology of transmissions, tends to do*.”²³ In other words, *like Heidegger and yet entirely otherwise*, and against all expectations, Simondon does not see that the informational and computational support cannot be reduced by a mastery because it cannot be limited to a technicity that would only be *Besorgen* and non-originary, derivative facticity. He does not see, *like Heidegger and yet entirely otherwise*, that technicity, being constitutive and, in particular, constituting the condition of access to the past as preindividuality is what opens up temporality as such, the capacity for projecting the future, and it is also what opens up individuation to the question of death, in other words, of incompleteness—being, after all, that which constitutes the very process of the phase-shift, as originary default of origin whose

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thanatological version is existential solitude. I will not develop these points, elaborated in *The Fault of Epimetheus*, any further.

Thus, this blindness will also have been that of Heidegger. But the same forgetting, as wavering in the one as in the other—since, just as Simondon underscores the place of prosthetic support, which is to say, of what I call tertiary retention in transindividuation, Heidegger dedicates long analyses to *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*—the same forgetting has as its consequences two different and even opposing types of forgetting in each of them: one forgets the *we*—this is Heidegger—and the other forgets the *they*—this is Simondon. This is also what renders impossible in both of them a thought of what I called overmortality: it is the history of being that is substituted for it in Heidegger—and as the abandonment of the initial ambition of the existential analytic. This is also what leads to the politics of the “historical people.” The question of a possible completion of the process of Western psychic and collective individuation as the end of the history of being, the end of metaphysics, and the becoming of the *Gestell* in this sense, will appear later. But it is no longer as an *analytical* and *critical* question that this end presents itself, but as *Gelassenheit* in waiting for a god. Thus, the question of the loss of individuation becomes unthinkable both politically and apolitically (in the sense defined above).

The loss of individuation as the *possibility of a blockage of the process of Western psychic and collective individuation* is an eventuality that Simondon does not even envision and that he even rejects, adopting a discourse of mastery of a rather classical kind—the vocation of mecanology being to situate the human as the conductor of an orchestra of cybernetic machines. Simondon sees in the hylomorphic model the error of the techno-logical model of the artisan that one finds in Plato and Aristotle. As a result, it seems to me he loses, in turn, the question of technics as the process of the individuation of the *what*, conditioning the individuation of the *who* as the *we* in a transductive maieutic. Thus, one will not be surprised to see him caught up in the illusion of the abstract machine, or, more precisely, of information without support, rendered possible by maintaining a certain dependence of the lived—a dependence he inherits from Bergson. Undoubtedly, Simondon stands *on the edge* of the question of the non-lived, he even addresses it thematically and recognizes it as an original fact. But he does not put it at the heart of the transduction of the psycho-collective and in this regard he still opposes the living [*le vital*] and the geometric.

Nevertheless, Simondon thinks signification starting with a concept of information that is neither that of Turing—even though he shares with the latter the forgetting of the support—nor that of the theory of information, of computer technology and sciences of information: Simondonian information is *improbabilistic*.²⁴ It is in this sense that his concept of information sustains a concept of *sense* that I will present in the last volume of *Technics and Time as the process of individuation of signification* concretizing itself as the *deposit* of the transindividual: the transindividual is thus a process of concretion and concretization (it makes a system). In other words, *sense* is essentially a process, movement, *e-motion* (as an *act* of individuation, it moves [*é-meut*] individuation as the primary impassable motor, to be precise, of the sensible agent of the noetic soul). But it is necessary to appeal to the undetermined in the Heideggerian sense and to *différance* in the Derridean sense in order to “bring a non-probabilistic term to the theory of information.” On the condition that it be thought as tension, information in the Simondonian sense functions as the textuality of a pro-gram that, in disseminating itself, catalyzes the improbable, as the germ of sea water or mother water [*l’eau-mère*] triggers the process of individuation of a crystal: “The hylomorphic schema or the notion of archetype possess a high tension of information because they have elicited structures of significations over twenty-four centuries of very different cultures. The tension of information would be the property possessed by a schema of structuring a domain, of *propagating* itself through it, of *organizing* it.”²⁵ And information gives concretions because it is functional integration and concretization: “The relation can never be conceived as a relation among preexisting terms, but rather as a reciprocal regime of the exchange of information and of causality in a system that individuates itself. The relation exists physically, biologically, psychologically, collectively as internal resonance of the individuated being; the relation expresses individuation and is at the heart of being. However, the *support* of the relation is missing here, the support that exists only technically and of which *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* said that it was the *condition* of transindividuation, that precisely is described here.”²⁶

Of course, it is on the basis of the central concept of “metastability,” which I did not have time to analyze here, that the sense of these advances must be evaluated, just as the sense of these forgettings or of these retreats. And when it concerns *psychic and collective* individuation, it is necessary to think metastability that is equilibrium at the limit of disequilibrium and disequilibrium at the limit of equilibrium, and that precisely as such is the *mode of existence of the system’s dynamic that is constituted by the process of individuation*, on the basis of *prostheticity* as *default of origin*. Which is to say, as *originary disequilibrium* in which prostheses consist, which is to say, as tertiary retentions supporting transindividuation as its crutches.

A translation of the question of metastability in the context of *Being and Time* would be possible as unstable equilibrium between *Besorgen*, understood as determination of the undetermined, and *Sorgen*, as the trial of the undetermined. The ipseity of Dasein would then become psycho-social individuation as unstable equilibrium of *Besorgen* and *Sorgen*. I tried to show that it is in fact the fixation and with that the determination of the already-there (which is to say, of that which in Simondon is called the preindividual), constituted by *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* as well as by the hypomnesiac discretization of *logos* that form the condition of *différance* where sense individuates itself—the sense that intensifies individuation—which is to say, the quantum leap of *Entschlossenheit* that I analyzed as differing identification.²⁷ In other words, the determined and the undetermined are not opposed: it is a matter of tendencies that compose and this composition constitutes the metastable equilibrium of a process of individuation. Which is to say, the individuation of an *I* in *awe* that the *they* endlessly threatens with decomposition.

This double economy constitutes being-towards-death in the Heideggerian sense as well as the structural incompleteness of individuation in Simondon. Death itself is such an incompleteness. But it is also a knowledge that forgets itself. Metastability is a *différance* in the sense that, incomplete by nature, it maintains itself only by composition. The determined and the undetermined are its strictly tied tendencies as the cross of Dasein and form its edges as well as its contradictory tendencies—which are at the same time its dynamic power and its possible fall, its movement as possibility always exposed to what I called a regression, thinking of Aristotle and Freud, rather than a fall or a collapse. However, it is as the weakness of the thinking of the economy of tendencies in which this dynamic consists that the thinking of Heidegger and the thinking of Simondon neglect—both of them and each respectively—the questions of the *we* and the *They*. I, however, believe that their conjunction renders thinkable a disjunction as a possibility of the opening of a new theater of individuation: the conjunction between the Heideggerian question of the *They* and the Simondonian question of the *we* would be this composition that disjoins ■

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NOTES

1. This essay first appeared as “Le théâtre de l’individuation. Déphasage et résolution chez Simondon et Heidegger” in *Technique, monde, individuation: Heidegger, Simondon, Deleuze*. Ed. Jean-Marie Vaysse. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2006.
2. TN: The translator would like to thank the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy for helping *Parrhesia* acquire the rights to this translation.
3. Gérard Granel. *Le sens du temps et de la perception chez Edmond Husserl*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
I have developed this question in *La technique et le temps 3. Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être* (Paris: Galilée, 2001).
4. This is certainly not the strict definition of the transductive relation according to Simondon: the latter *constitutes* its own terms, fully and entirely. However, internal resonance, as the progressive structuration of a milieu of individuation, is indeed a relation that *re-constitutes* its terms: in joining them, structuration transforms them. The terms, that here are texts, find themselves reinvented in this way.
5. See, for instance, Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 2003), 145: “It’s not the Greeks or Christians who are going to experience things for us these days.” *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 106.
6. Martin Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2006. (*Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1962, 41).
7. Marc Crépon. *Terreur et poésie*. Paris: Galilée, 2003.
I have defended this point of view in Bernard Stiegler, *La technique et le temps 1. La faute d’Épiméthée* (Paris: Galilée, 1994). *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998.
8. And I owe much to François Laruelle who showed me the necessity of reading Simondon when, around 1984, I presented him a draft of what I call an “idiotext.”
9. Bernard Stiegler. *La technique et le temps 3. Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être*. Paris: Galilée, 2001.
10. Aristotle. *De Anima (On the Soul)*. Trans. Richard McKeon in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House, 1941, 426b.
11. See Bernard Stiegler. *Passer à l’acte*. Paris: Galilée, 2003, 31.
12. Martin Heidegger. *Plato’s Sophist*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 92. Translation modified.
13. Aristotle. *Metaphysics*, Bk. A in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 982b 31.
14. Stiegler, *Le temps du cinéma*, Ch. 1, 2, and 3.
15. Stiegler, *La faute d’Épiméthée*, 82-3. *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, 68-9.
16. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 165. Translation modified.

17. In primordial relation with what I call consistence and subsistence in Bernard Stiegler, *Mécréance et discrédit 1. La décadence des démocraties industrielles* (Paris: Galilée, 2004).
18. Bernard Stiegler. *Aimer, s'aimer, nous aimer. Du 11 septembre au 21 avril*. Paris: Galilée, 2003.
19. Maurice Blanchot. "The Beast of Lascaux." Trans. Leslie Hill. Oxford. *Literary Review*, 22 (2000), 9–18 (15).
20. Gilles Deleuze. *Logique du sens*. Paris: Minuit, 1969, 206. (*The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1990, 152.) In *Foucault*, Deleuze also writes: "But all these positions are not the various forms of a primordial 'I' from which a statement stems: on the contrary, these positions stem from the statement itself and consequently become the categories of 'non-person,' 'he,' 'one,' 'He speaks' or 'One speaks,' which are defined by the family of statements. Here Foucault echoes Blanchot in denouncing all linguistic personology and seeing the different positions for the speaking subject as located within a deep anonymous murmur. It is within this murmur without beginning or end that Foucault would like to be situated, in the place assigned to him by statements." Gilles Deleuze. *Foucault*. Paris: Minuit, 2006. Trans. Sean Hand. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 7.
21. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espacelittéraire*.(Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 160.
22. Gilbert Simondon. *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*. Paris: Éditions Aubier Montaigne, 1969, 248. Gilbert Simondon. *L'individuation psychique et collective*. Paris: Éditions Aubier, 1989, 29.
23. Ibid., 51-2.
24. Ibid., 54.
25. Ibid.
26. Bernard Stiegler. *La technique et le temps 2. La désorientation*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.