THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Alienation Beyond the Human: From Marx to Simondon

By

Carson Fritz

August 2021

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the

Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

Faculty Advisor: Thomas LaMarre
Preceptor: Dawn Herrera

Alienation Beyond the Human: From Marx to Simondon

ABSTRACT

Alienation as a diagnostic political concept is frequently dismissed due to its reliance, in Marx's account, on a dubious notion of human essence. Such conceptual foundations tend to stunt the potential critical force the concept might have thanks to its psycho-social and politico-existential character. This paper contends that the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon provides a revised notion of alienation which retains its force while moving beyond its dubious foundations. Simondon allows us to see alienation as alienation from time, and subsequently to found a category of political critique which has diagnostic force free from anthropocentric and essentialist assumptions. The first section gives an overview of Simondon's philosophy, while the second section puts this philosophy in conversation with Marx, ultimately leading to a notion of non-human alienation gestured to by the example of the machine which is usually taken merely as 'means of production.' The third section engages Simondon's 'genetic account' of the machine as a way of understanding the general sense of non-human alienation through a particular example. The fourth section then outlines, through the notion of a transindividual relation, what a non-alienated and non-anthropocentric relation to time and becoming might look like. The final section spells out the specifically human dimensions of the problematic of alienation in an attempt to reconnect it not only with Marx, but with a humanistic politics more generally.

INTRODUCTION

Alienation, as it was expounded by Karl Marx in the mid-nineteenth century, pertained to a wide range of problems which were both psychological and social, and which went beyond the political into the realm of labor and production with all of its non-human actors. The concept's capacity to relate different aspects of the social totality is the source of both its novelty and its critical force. However, today this concept is also frequently dismissed due to its foundation, in Marx's account, on a dubious notion of human essence. Yet, such a foundation is not required in order to make illuminative connections between the psychological, the social, and the technical. In this paper, I draw on the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon in order to extrapolate a notion of alienation which retains its critical force while moving beyond its dubious foundations. Simondon's philosophy refuses to make substantial distinctions between individual and society, or between the natural and the technological, while at the same time refusing to reduce their differences: he thus strives to develop a philosophy of difference without sliding into the

negation and opposition present in Marx's more dialectical account. The result is that Simondon allows us to see alienation as *alienation from time*, and subsequently to found a category of political critique which has diagnostic force free from anthropocentric and essentialist assumptions.

SIMONDON'S PROBLEMATIC

Simondon's philosophy begins with the question of the individual: how do individuals come about? What is the process of their *ontogenesis*? It is according to this question that Simondon recapitulates the history of philosophy and, in the process, differentiates his own position from it:

> 'We would like to show that the principle of individuation is not an isolated reality, that it is not localized within itself, and that *it does not preexist the individual* like an already individualized embryo of the individual; that the principle of individuation, in the strict sense of the term, is *the complete system* in which the genesis of the individual takes place; that, moreover, *this system outlasts itself* within the living individual as a milieu associated with the individual in which individuation continues to take place; and that *life is therefore an ongoing individuation*, an individuation continued through time, extending a singularity' (ILFI, 51, emphases mine).

This passage is dense but provides a useful map for Simondon's basic project. First, he makes clear that what concerns him is the 'principle of individuation,' that is, the structure or logic by which individuals come into and persist in their being. Where does this form or structure come from? Simondon approaches an answer by first addressing where it does not come from: a substantial notion of 'form.' The privileged example in his broad critique of the history of philosophy is what he calls the 'hylomorphic schema,' a basic form-matter distinction which is generally assumed in accounts of ontogenesis. The idea should be familiar to most people: an individual comes about through the imposition of an abstract form onto inert, passive matter. This model of what constitutes an individual is frequently imported into a number of other contexts ranging from intelligent design or religious creationism to contemporary narratives of

genetic determinism, all of which understand abstract forms as pre-existing the individual they purportedly shape. But for Simondon, this remains unsatisfying in its self-evidence: after all, how does form communicate with matter? What and where are these forms anyway? Can they really be said to exist apart from the matter they are said to shape? The assumption of a substantial distinction between form and matter is remarkably common and yet entirely under supported, and points to a more general tendency to 'view individuation from the standpoint of the individual,' as if ontogenesis was always on its way to culminating in the present beings. Nevertheless, the hylomorphic schema *appears* to be self-evident precisely because there are real consistent structures to beings and to their ontogenesis: there are 'types' of animals, of plants, of rocks, which seem to imply abstract forms. If Simondon hopes to dispute the hylomorphic schema, he requires another explanation for how these forms or structures comes about.

First, Simondon makes an initial inversion: to think the individual from the standpoint of individuation. This leads him to ask what 'individuation' is prior to its generation of the individual: instead of taking certain structured individuals as pre-given, he asks what sorts of energetic conditions are necessary to *generate* these structures? [1] To address such a question, Simondon develops the idea of pre-individual being, the kind of ontogenetic conditions that could give rise not only to structures but also a kind of energetics which can account for both the genesis and the continuous evolution of structures. Such an account can explain the regularity of individual 'types' while also accounting for the singularity of each instantiation of the type (i.e. why no turtle is identical), as well as their historicity. Throughout his account, it becomes clear that pre-individual being is essentially nature itself, since he uses these terms interchangeably:

[1] Of course, Simondon is in part concerned with refuting the structuralist trend which permeated his own intellectual milieu in mid-century France at the time. Rather than simply refuting it, he finds that there is something *missing* from it: an energetics that drives change and mutability in such structures, and which explains their genesis.

pre-individual is the common denominator of nature, the nature that underpins the diversity of individuals which arise out of it.

But how are we to conceptualize these conditions? Understanding pre-individual being requires taking into account 'the complete system in which the genesis of the individual takes place.' The basic assumption Simondon starts with is that being is always already in excess of itself, it is always more than itself, heterogeneous with respect to itself.[2] This excess is what explains how energetics emerge, for the internal heterogeneity of being comes into tension with itself in the form of a 'problem' or oversaturation, a kind of internal antagonism. This tension or problem then creates a kind of potential energy which serves as the driving force of movement and change. Individuation is precisely this movement or change: individuation (and thus also the individual that it gives rise to) emerges as *a resolution of such a tension*, a processual reconfiguration of being in such a way that its internal heterogeneity can be partially worked out. This resolution is what produces structures or apparent 'forms': the logic or consistency of beings arises from the logic of resolutions to potentialized problems.

To describe this, Simondon substitutes the substantial notion of 'form' with an immanent notion of 'information,' which designates the always singular relation between structure and energetics. Starkly differentiated from notions of information as immaterial or abstract (definitions which are arguably hylomorphism in disguise), Simondon insists that 'there is no unity and identity of information, for information is not a term; it supposes the tension of a system of being in order for it to be adequately received; it can only be inherent to a problematic; information is that through which the non-resolved systems incompatibility becomes an

[2] The explanation for how this originary state initially came about is beyond the scope of this paper and doesn't really interest Simondon anyway. It is more like a hypothesis that is gestured to by present circumstances. In other words, while Simondon has no way to 'prove' that 'there was once pre-individual being,' he finds such conditions plausible based on the behaviors of matter at a quantum level.

organizational dimension in the resolution' (ILFI, 11). In short, *information is a relation*. It exists *between* two disparate systems as a process or 'operation' by which they reciprocally in-form (that is, mutually give form to) one another in such a way that their tension can be resolved. In other words, it is the logic of how two systems change with and through one another. This information is immanent to the conditions of the system, arising not from either term but between them. This allows Simondon to account for both structure and singularity: individuals which arise out of similar conditions will appear to be of the same kind, but none will be identical for the conditions which produced them will always have a particularity. Hence, information is a kind of singular (though not random) form which arises between material conditions: it is the immanent principle of individuation.

The information of disparation in a system of individuation then gives rise to specific individuals which operate this resolution. Muriel Combes provides, in her excellent introduction to Simondon, a lucid encapsulation of this idea:

> 'A plant, for instance, establishes communication between a cosmic order (that to which the energy of light belongs) and an inframolecular order (that of mineral salts, oxygen, etc.). But the individuation of a plant does not only give birth to the plant in question. In dephasing [i.e. individuation], being always simultaneously gives birth to an individual mediating two orders of magnitude and to a milieu at the same level of being (thus the milieu of the plant will be the earth on which it is located and the immediate environment with which it interacts). No individual would be able to exist without a milieu that is its complement, arising simultaneously from the operation of individuation: for this reason, the individual should be seen as but a partial result of the operation bringing it forth' (Combes, 4).

Here, we can see another level of complexity added to the problematic of individuation, for it is not only the individual that arises as a resolution but also an associated milieu with which it is in constant interaction: the individual is the structure, whereas the milieu is the energetic condition. As Gilles Deleuze remarks, 'the individual is not just a result, but an environment of individuation' (86): the individual and the associated milieu are like two sides of the same coin,

unable to exist without one another. The upshot of this is perhaps the key axiom for understanding Simondon's philosophy: *the individual is a relation*. In other words, the individual achieves its consistency precisely through the *relational activity* it engages in with its associated milieu. A cat doesn't hunt, sleep, and purr because it is a cat. Rather, it is a cat because it hunts, sleeps, and purrs. Its 'essence' or consistency as an individual is the consequence of its relational activity, the way it both shapes and is shaped by its associated milieu. Thus, the individual only has what appears to be ontological stability because of the consistency of this relation: a structure is always a structure *of energetic exchange* (and vice versa, energetics are always between structures). In this sense, individual and milieu are 'symbols'[3] of one another: every extant individual implies a milieu, a processual relation binding them together, and an original 'problem' which energizes this process. Hence why Simondon asserts above that the system which produced the individual 'outlasts itself within the living individual as a milieu associated with the individual in which individuation continues to take place.' In a way, the individual-milieu dyad (or the *system* of individuation) is the true organism or existent.

The aspect of the system that 'outlasts itself' is its initial energetic disparation. That is, although the individual-milieu dyad 'resolves' this disparation, it does not do so exhaustively[4]—if they did, there would be no time, history, or evolution: no movement. Rather, Simondon describes this newly individuated vital system as 'metastable': the metastable system is *stable enough* to have a kind of structure, but still contains a kind of potential energy, a pre-individual

---

[3] '…here, as in Plato, the word symbol is taken in the original sense with respect to the usage of relations of hospitality: a stone broken into two halves produces a pair of symbols…each half is a symbol relative to the other; it is the complementary of the other relative to the initial whole. *The symbol is not what each half is relative to the people who produced it*, but each half relative to the other half with which it reconstitutes the whole' (ILFI, 52, my emphasis). The last sentence is crucial, for the isolation of a term of relation without reference to the larger relation itself provides one way of thinking the hylomorphic fallacy and alienation.

[4] To be clear, the individuation of *physical* beings *is* said to exhaust the potential energy in a system, leading to an individual which does not engage in an ongoing relational activity unless the conditions of the system change (ILFI, 262). However, this is not the case for vital individuals (see footnote 5).

dimension or 'charge' which persists alongside every individual-milieu dyad. Hence why 'life is therefore an ongoing individuation': the vital individual, who's relational activity consists in resolving tension between the interior milieu of its body and the exterior milieu of its environment through an associated milieu of activity, never exhausts the energetics from which it arose but continues to resolve the disparation between systems. Put differently, the vital individual is itself the ongoing metastable resolution of a metastable system.[5] In this sense, pre-individual being is never entirely absent, and consequently every individual retains a potentiality to become something still different (as we will see, this persistence of a pre-individual charge forms the basis for Simondon's political philosophy). This is not to say that some substance called 'pre-individual' subsists latently in every individual (as we mentioned earlier, Simondon is adamant about avoiding substantial distinctions). Rather, *pre-individual is itself a potentiated or charged relation*: it is not a 'thing' among others so much as a force or energetics that drives movement and only really exists in this driving. Furthermore, because the resulting individual-milieu couplings are themselves always in ongoing relation with other natural systems (and with each other), relations become messy and even somewhat chaotic such that new tensions might arise, leading to new individuations. In short, pre-individual being, after the 'first' physical individuation, *always exists* and is never entirely exhausted, but at the same time *only exists* in and as relations of tension and their subsequent resolution.

Simondon's conception of the individual as a metastable relation between disparate orders calls into question a number of ontological and political categories which are often taken for granted. For instance, the notion of individual-as-relation (a phrase which already sounds like

[5] 'If this appearance of the individual does not destroy the system's potential of metastability, then the individual is a living being, and its equilibrium is that which maintains metastability: in that case, it is a dynamic equilibrium, which generally supposes a series of new successive structurations, without which the equilibrium of metastability could not be maintained' (ILFI, 262).

an oxymoron) eschews any notion of essence that could be applied to individuals, for this essence is not a fixed thing but a force of relational constitution—change the relational activity and you change the individuals involved. Process (relational activity) is privileged over result: in fact, there really is no such thing as a final 'result' in Simondon's account. The hylomorphic schema, defined as 'a couple in which the two terms are clear and the relation obscure' (METO, 248), is blind to this in the way it thinks and treats individuals as isolated realities. Examples of the dangers of obscuring relation are numerous. For instance, animals captured and brought to urban zoos are conceived of not as parts of an ecological energetics, but as isolated individuals which can be rearranged without consequence, despite the fact that when you bring a penguin to Chicago, you have to reconstruct the very milieu it was torn from in order for it to survive (though this milieu remains static in a way that continues to thwart the creative relational activity that vitalizes the animal). This also applies to the opposite case: the removal or extinction of certain species disrupts a system of relational activity such that the milieu will change in the face of losing its inhabitants, as in the case of honeybee extinction. In both cases, the individual and the milieu require one another such that the psychological ossification of these terms and the physiological or practical severance it enables ends up being reductive and destructive. But such errors are also importantly socio-political. For instance, think of Simone de Beauvoir's famous claim that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, woman' (330): such an assertion already implicitly anticipates Simondon's critique. The category of 'woman' is an example of how what is all too often mistaken as 'essence' is really the result of a certain kind of relational activity which, especially in this case, is structurally facilitated and even imposed by way of a surrounding socio-economic milieu. Not only does one 'become' a woman: one becomes a woman *in relation to a man*, and through certain relational practices like reproduction but also

gender performance. All of this is structured within a society of men that ritualizes these relations in a way that makes them appear essential.[6] To take 'woman' or 'femininity' as essences is to take something that is only intelligible in and as relational activity and to isolate it conceptually from the milieu that serves as its context and its motivator. Put differently, 'woman' never existed outside of this relational activity, and the error lies in thinking that relation is dictated by some essence or eternal form.

Thus, the power of Simondon's account lies precisely in the fact that, from the standpoint of individuation, 'the constituted individual *wouldn't be able* to seem like an entirely detached, absolute being in conformity with the model of substance' (ILFI, 51, my emphasis). But it's crucial to note that what is obscured is not only this relation, but also the pre-individual force which makes the relation thinkable: one cannot see that one 'becomes' a woman if one has no concept of becoming. The precise danger of this ossification of relations into essences lies precisely in its neglect of the pre-individual dimension or 'charge' that every individual partakes in, its potential to become other than itself, to relate differently and thus become differently through that part of it which is in excess of itself. When the relations of 'womanhood' are seen as emanating from some essence, then a kind of stable equilibrium appears to be reached: there is no metastability, no potential for becoming, and indeed no change or history—just fixed essences. Such a standpoint is not only disastrous for human life (as Beauvoir and all those who follow can attest), it ignores an important tendency in being itself: its tendency to become and to keep becoming. What's really at stake here is not simply the insufficiency of reductive representation, but the general force of futurity such reduction obscures. This is precisely the

[6] Simondon confirms this reading when he remarks that 'to be man or woman is to be man in a rapport to a woman or woman in a rapport to a man' (ILFI, 295).

problematic in which alienation is situated, and it is thus on this basis that Simondon takes issue with Marx.

ALIENATON FROM MARX TO SIMONDON

Before diving into Simondon's critique of Marx, it is worth briefly recapitulating Marx's ideas about alienation. In his earlier writings, alienation mostly figures as a diagnostic concept: Marx begins his *1844 Manuscripts* by lamenting the '*decrease in value* of the human world,' the 'misery of the worker,' how the more commodity production increases, 'the poorer he and his inner world become' (SW, 58-60). Indeed, this account has a strong moral and existential undertone, and Marx goes on to assert that 'all these consequences follow from the fact that the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object' (SW, 60). We can make a distinction here between a narrower 'economic fact' (SW, 65) of *alienated labor* and a more general existential *alienation* which has its root cause in the former: it is because labor itself is alienated that the general structure of life takes on an 'alienated' character. This character has a quadripartite structure: 1) alienation from the product of labor, which generalizes to an alienation of one's 'relationship to the sensuous external world' (SW, 62), 2) alienation from the process of labor, which comes to appear as the activity of another, experienced at a distance, 3) alienation from the species-being, and 4) alienation from others, who only appear as either owners or other workers with whom one is in competition. The critique is sweeping: on the basis of the alienation of labor, one is also alienated from milieu, relational activity, the 'human essence' or species-being, and collectivity. The stakes are high for Marx, and although these latter implications are often said to drop out of focus in *Capital*, we can still find there, in the concept of labor-power, an analysis of the essential kernel of *alienated labor.* Thus, even if we assume Marx is less

concerned with the existential consequences of this problem (though this is by no means a given), the basic 'economic fact' of alienated labor remains central to his critique.

But before we can understand alienated labor, we must understand labor: 'labour is, first of all, *a process between man and nature*, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature' (C, 283, my emphasis). For Marx, *labor is not a thing but a relation*, and not a fixed and stable relation but a dynamic and ongoing one which must be re-constituted with every production cycle. Labor is something that exists *between* the human and its milieu,[7] and this relational aspect is crucial to emphasize, for labor can only become alienated precisely because of this 'in-between' quality. The essential pre-condition for alienated labor is the initial separation of its terms[8]: the worker 'must be free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization of his labour-power' (C, 272-3). Here we see the introduction of labor-power as the capacity to participate in a relation of labor, a capacity which is said to inhere in the human body itself. However, labor-power is a peculiar commodity because it 'becomes a reality only by being expressed; it is activated only through labour' (C, 274). That is, the capacity of labor is basically useless (it has no use-value on its own), and in some sense it doesn't even really exist until it is exercised on 'means' or raw

[7] In this way, Marx is not too far from Simondon's notion of the vital individual as constituted by an interplay between its interior and exterior milieux, that is, its body and its environment, itself and the world. Both emphasize the essential *relation* that constitutes the individual.

[8] Such a separation is by no means natural but more like a feudal hangover. As Marx says, 'nature does not produce on the one hand owners of money or commodities, and on the other hand men possessing nothing but their own labour-power. This relation has no basis in natural history, nor does it have a social basis common to all periods of human history. It is clearly the result of a past historical development, the product of many economic revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older formations of social production' (273). Thus, although this initial 'alienation from' the relation of labor, its separation into two terms, is taken as a given from the standpoint of the market, it is crucially *a condition which must be made*, usually by violent means. The reversal of this pseudo-originary condition is an essential starting point for de-alienation in Marx's account.

material—labor is a relation, and the 'capacity to labor' (i.e. the term of labor-power) can only be realized in this relation.

Labor-power is thus the hypostatized, commodified form of the human-half of the relation that is labor. Furthermore, this conceptual ossification is a kind of precondition for *alienated* labor, for the isolated terms of 'labour-power' and 'means of production' are a requirement for such terms to be commodified, sold on the market, and eventually re-united through the medium of ownership. This initial conceptual alienation and the commodification it upholds then leads to a double bind for the unemployed worker: 'the capacity for labour ... is nothing unless it is sold' (Jean Charles Sismodi quoted in Marx, C, 277). One cannot subsist solely off of labor-power, off of their mere capacity for labor. In order to be valuable at all, this capacity must be realized, and the factory is the only means by which to do so. It is at this point of sale that the two terms which began as *alienated from the labor relation*—as labor-power and as means of production—enter back into relation (though not in the same way they might have in a more "natural" state). Thus, although 'alienation' as a term seems to imply a separation or lack of relation, it is actually *itself a relation* because alienated labor *qua* labor is necessarily relational. What makes this relation 'alienated' is the perturbation of this relation, its mediation by an owner which in turn is only possible due to the 'originary' or 'primitive' separation of the terms of labor into labor-power and means of production. In short, alienated labor is a relation (labor) founded on an initial separation/ossification of its terms (alienation), which is re-established by the capitalist, making for alienated labor.

So we might ask: at what point does labor become alienated? It is in their answers to this question that Marx and Simondon differ. For Marx, the problem lies in the politico-economic fact of ownership: labor as a relation becomes alienated when such a relation is only possible

under the purview of an owner. For his part, Simondon concedes that 'alienation does indeed emerge the moment the worker is no longer the owner of his means of production, but it does not emerge *solely* because of this rupture in the link of property' (Simondon, METO, 133, my emphasis). Beyond simply an 'economic fact,' Simondon insists there are important conceptual and practical circumstances that make such problems of property possible in the first place: in his view, alienation occurs prior to both ownership and commodification, when both labor-power and means-of-production, the terms of the alienated labor-relation, are taken as absolute categories. For Simondon, this is another example of the hylomorphic schema, where labor-power is taken as the analog of form and 'means' as that of passive matter. For Simondon, such determinations are by no means given. Rather, natural materials only become 'means,' and humans 'labor power,' when they actually engage in the relational activity of labor, the process of metabolizing and sustaining oneself. The relation comes first, and the terms only exist in this relation. When one relational activity, that of labor, is taken as essential or absolute, individual and milieu appear as though they were pre-destined for this specific relational activity (one can already see here an overdetermination of futurity). Such is the basis for dangerous narratives about humans as 'essentially' made for work, and correlative narratives of nature as existing solely for man's satisfaction (what Heidegger calls 'standing reserve' (322)), but also for Marx's own understanding of labor as a human essence for which he has been relentlessly critiqued.[9]

[9] Marx's earlier philosophical work draws more general conclusions from the problematic of alienated labor (existential alienation) by relying on a modified Feuerbachian humanism in the notion of *species-being*. While this view acknowledges that all animals labor, what makes the human specific for him is that it 'produces free of physical need and only genuinely so in freedom from such need…Thus man creates also according to the laws of beauty' (SW, 64). It is this ability of superfluous or free labor that Marx understands as a kind of *human essence*: we are human by virtue of our ability to labor in ways that are not simply necessitated by survival, to transcend the basic demands of our biology. When these human capacities become mere means to be sold in exchange for the means of survival, we *alienate*, in this selling, the most 'human' aspect of ourselves, losing our life activity. Furthermore, when this 'essence' is put under the control of another, the whole network of relations rooted in this essence becomes tainted by this alien control. Thus, the generalized sense of alienation is heavily dependent on this notion of 'human essence,' and when such an essence appears less plausible (as it does today), so does the notion of

Up to a point, this is consistent with Marx's account, for the latter acknowledges that labor doesn't really exist until the relation is established (through sale), and thus neither do its terms: labor-power can't be realized as such until it is put into relation with means, and vice versa. But if this is consistent with Marx's account, wherein lies Simondon's intervention? Simondon's real issue with Marx lies in the latter's forgetting of this very problem: although he seems to understand the problematic status of separating labor-power and means of production in the first place (the problem of commodification), the conceptual ossification underpinning commodification is not ameliorated through the politico-economic change promised by revolutionary action. All we need to recall is the imperative of proletarian revolt: 'seize the means of production.' The goal of revolution is simply to change who is in the driver's seat of industrial hylomorphism, while machine and milieu remains essentially proletarianized. For Simondon, 'the collectivization of the means of production cannot achieve a reduction of alienation on its own; it can only achieve this reduction if it is the precondition for the acquisition of the intelligence of the individuated technical object by the human individual' (METO, 134). We will return shortly to this 'intelligence of the technical object,' but for now, note that property changing hands still retains the hypostatized terms as such: means of production are still means of production. Although they are no longer commodified since they don't traffic on a market, they remain ossified and in this way alienated. In short, the issue lies in Marx's political conclusions which take a change in ownership as a sufficient solution to the problem. Put differently, 'class consciousness' remains insufficient if it merely abolishes one

a more generalized existential alienation. As we will see later on, re-founding alienation on non-anthropocentric grounds (what will emerge as alienation from time itself) frees the diagnostic power of alienation from this essentialist baggage.

essentialization and not the other: for Simondon, this remains a half-baked critique, one which will never quite escape the root of the problem.

But how original is this intervention, really? The critique of representation is already commonplace in the realm of political critique,[10] and as we already observed, such a criticism is one of the most frequent with respect to Marx and alienation. Evidently, essentialization or reductive representation as an alienating and potentially violent force is widely known to be bad for humans. Yet, what makes Simondon's account valuable is that he insists it is not simply 'bad for humans,' but also for machines, the natural environment, and the larger collective we form with them: 'the technical object possesses a power of alienation because it is itself in a state of alienation' (METO, xiii). This non-human alienation of the machine is unthinkable in Marx's framework, and still seems quite foreign even today despite the ever-increasing complexity of machines. It implies a notion of alienation which is thoroughly cleansed of any anthropocentrism. Understanding how a machine or technical individual can be alienated as much as a human requires the quintessential Simondonian move: to view the individual from the standpoint of individuation. In the case of the machine, this means elaborating a genetic account of *invention*: how is a technical individual invented, and what can this tell us about alienation?

TECHNICAL ONTOGENESIS AND NON-HUMAN ALIENATION

Simondon writes: 'the individualized technical object is an object that has been invented, i.e., produced through the play of recurrent causality between life and thought in man' (METO, 61). Invention and the technical object are two parts of the same process, a process which consists of

[10] For example, see Tormey 2006. Tormey not only points to the democratic experiments of the Zapatista's as exemplary of a kind of non-representative political practice, but is also clear that this idea 'first announced itself in relation to philosophy, ethics and literature some decades ago, in turn spreading to black studies, feminism, queer and lesbian studies, and latterly to postcolonial and subaltern studies' (138).

what Simondon calls here a 'recurrent causality.' Always beginning with concrete cases, Simondon's example of this is the Guimbal turbine which begins as a set of separate though logically-related parts. These parts alone cannot make the unified functional whole of the turbine, they cannot function solely in the form of the prefigured blueprint. Rather, there is a kind of recursive conditioning *called forth by inventions themselves* (and facilitated by the inventor) wherein 'these objects are *the cause of the condition of their functioning*' (METO, 59-60, my emphasis). In the case of the turbine, the 'condition of functioning' is the associated milieu that consists of a 'penstock' or channel of water and oil that surround it. But how does the invention itself 'cause' this condition? As Simondon notes, 'to put the generator into a penstock containing the turbine was unthinkable prior to Guimbals invention' (METO, 57), which is to say that this associated milieu was not prefigured in the blueprints—it is not invented by the inventor alone. Rather, the penstock or associated milieu is the solution to a problem that only became apparent when the abstract schema was actualized and failed to function, when the concrete invention required, of its own accord, adjustments in the abstract schema of the inventor. In other words, it is a problem which is gestured to by the invention itself, the invention being a 'symbol' of the corresponding milieu which it virtually requires for its own consistency. This is not exactly to say that the invention invents itself, for the inventor is certainly an indispensable 'operator' in this process, but the final invention is crucially *not reducible to the inventor either* since the latter relies on the invention to gesture toward or symbolize the virtual associated milieu that makes its operation possible. This is what is meant by 'recurrent causality,' a kind of 'relative autonomy' of the technical object by which it actively participates in its own invention.

What this genetic account of the machine refutes is the hylomorphic schema of 'work' in which 'man models matter according to a form; with this form, which is the intention of a result,

comes a predetermination of what must be obtained at the end of the work in accordance with the pre-existing needs' (METO, 248). Work is the social process that corresponds to the reduction of the machine to means: it is guided by a 'form-intention' which pre-figures becoming from the outset, just as the hylomorphic schema understands individuation as culminating in the individual: both cases are teleological.

Ultimately, all of these problematics—work, hylomorphism, machines-as-means—fall under what Simondon calls 'inter-individual relation,' a type of relation which is content to put only individuated beings into relation, thus neglecting the pre-individual charge and the potentiality it fosters. Put differently, such inter-individual relations are frozen in a perpetual present since the terms of such relations are themselves conceived of as fixed entities, their activity dictated by forms or essences. Indeed, inter-individual might be used to describe hypostatized relations between men and women, as we suggested earlier with respect to Beauvoir. But of course, the machine, when relegated to means, is similarly reduced to an exhaustively-individuated individual in the sense that it is only thought to be used for what it was "made" for, always locked in the 'form-intention' of its owner or user. In short, the machine is relegated to a perpetual present tied to its place in work. Thus, consequence of a hylomorphic outlook is the *inhibition of becoming*. By contrast, the act of invention, and the genetic understanding it points to, accounts for the becoming of the machine: invention only begins when it goes beyond the drawing board, beyond the original blueprints for an invention, when these inter-individual schemata are initially actualized and the process of beta-testing and troubleshooting begins. In this way, invention is thoroughly non-linear and experimental: the final result is partially anticipated but not entirely discernible by the inventor alone. Becoming is

heeded rather than obstructed. According to this schema of recurrent causality, it is impossible to think the machine hylomorphically as a mere means.

What does such a reversal of the hylomorphic schema accomplish beyond a complexification of our understanding? We turned to invention in order to understand the sense in which a machine could be as alienated as a human: put simply, the criteria for a non-anthropocentric conception of alienation emerges here in temporal terms. Not only is the machine's past genesis conceived of as coming about solely for human purposes, but its futurity is also restricted to this intention. This assumed teleology of becoming, which concerns both humans (as in any notion of human essence) and non-humans (as in the examples of the machine as 'means' and the milieu as 'standing reserve'), forms the basic criteria of alienation for Simondon.

Yet, we have not quite gone far enough, for alienation is defined not only by a negative sense of obstruction (the hylomorphic schema) but also by a positive sense of *what is obstructed*: what is problematic in the hylomorphic schema is its neglect of the pre-individual dimension of potential becoming, and this is no different in the case of invention. Simondon is clear that 'above the social community of work and beyond the inter-individual relationship…[the technical object] becomes the medium and symbol of [a] relationship, which we would like to name *transindividual*' (METO, 253). In other words, Simondon's account of invention is not only important because it refutes a reductive hylomorphic schema, but because in doing so, he gestures toward another non-reductive relation to technology (and non-human beings more generally) which itself has profound social, psychical, and political implications. Indeed, Simondon locates 'the true path toward the reduction of alienation…at the level of the transindividual collective' (METO, 254). Thus, unpacking this notion of a transindividual

relation is crucial to understanding the positive conception of becoming to which alienation as a diagnostic concept can lead us.

FROM INTERINDIVIDUAL TO TRANSINDIVIDUAL

Though complex, the notion of transindividual is aptly summed up by Muriel Combes as the concept which encompasses 'an ethics and politics adequate to the hypothesis of preindividual being' (Combes, xxii). Indeed, as with anything in Simondon's account, the transindividual relation is a phenomenon which arises in response to a certain problem or tension at the level of pre-individual being, in this case a problem of the 'subject':

> 'The subject is the ensemble formed by the individuated individual and the *apeiron* [pre-individual charge] that it carries along with it; the subject is more than individual; it is individual and nature, it is both phases of being at the same time; the subject tries to discover the signification of these two phases of being by resolving them in the transindividual signification of the collective' (ILFI, 344).

There is much to be unpacked here. First, we might recall that every individuation entails an open-endedness, that pre-individual potential is never exhausted, especially in the case of the vital individual. The subject arises when this bi-polarity develops into two conflicting psychical problematics: on the one hand, there is a 'perceptive problematic' which tends toward the perpetuation of existing, already individuated structures of being (i.e. the relational activity of the vital individual); on the other hand, there is an 'affective problematic' in which the un-individuated share tends toward new structures of life as a kind of 'index of becoming' (ILFI, 288). These two psychical tendencies are in tension with one another because the former is a perpetuation of the existing structure of relational activity, whereas the latter is compelled toward changes in this structure: perception wants the individual to stay the same, whereas affection points toward a new relational activity, and thus a partially different individual.

Simondon insists that this psychical tension can only be resolved through a new collective individuation. Thus, the transindividual relation is veritably psycho-social, running the full range from the collective right down to the individual's most inhuman part of itself, its pre-individual share. The collective requires this psychic basis, and the psychic requires this collective complementarity. However, the transindividual relation is not merely any group relation, any social participation whatsoever, but is a specific individuation which arises 'above the social community of work and beyond the inter-individual relationship.' Contrary to the inter-individual relation, 'technical activity comprises not only the use of the machine, but also a certain coefficient of attention to the technical functioning, maintenance, adjustment, and improvement of the machine, which continues the activity of invention and construction' (METO, 255). Thus, beyond invention, a knowledgeable and attentive relation to the machine (one which is cultivated precisely through a consideration of its collaborative genesis) continues to give heed to the pre-individual potential of the machine through acts of improvement and maintenance. One might say that in this view, individuals are understood more temporally under-determined, as always charged for further individuation. Put differently, we could say that mental forms continue to be dynamically regulated by the associated milieu, remaining open to revision and thus to further becoming.[11] Invention is only one example of this: the inventor brings her own mental schema (an example of perception guided by a technical schema), whereas the technical object in its partial functioning has its own structure-forms which differ (though not entirely) from the inventor's. The forms are partially disparate, and in the disparation between

[11] At one point, Simondon defines alienation as 'the break between ground and forms in psychic life: the associated milieu no longer regulates the dynamism of forms' (METO, 62). Here, 'forms' refers to mental schema, and the 'ground' as the concrete circumstances which carry virtual forms. This implies that the reverse, non-alienated consciousness, involves a proper regulation. Again, this kind of 'regulation' is precisely what hylomorphism prevents through its ossification of forms.

systems arises a 'signification'[12] which gestures toward their potential compatibility, toward in-formation. Such significations are eminently *affective*: they engage the pre-individual dimension of the beings involved (both terms of the relation, in this case inventor and invention) in a mutual becoming or in-formation that alters both of their structures. Affection, in its awareness of significations, opens onto real individuation, but it does so by virtue of a third term (in this case the technical object) which brings these affections to bear on real perceptions. It is in this sense that the collective calibrates or resolves the affective and perceptive problematic: the individuating tendency of the former is able to be realized concretely when it pertains to a perceptive disparation. Both sides come to rely on one another in the collective: perception for its evolution, affection for its actualization.[13]

The discovery and realization of such significations *is* collective individuation. Indeed, Simondon insists that 'there is no difference between discovering a signification and existing collectively with the being relative to which the signification is discovered, since signification is not of the being but between beings, or rather across beings: it is transindividual' (ILFI, 344). Like information, significations are not terms but relations of disparation which open onto a problem or tension and maybe even an individuation. A signification can only arise as a

[12] Simondon distinguishes 'significations' from 'signals': 'for a signal to receive a signification …there must be a disparation between a form already contained in the receiver and an information signal provided from the outside. If the disparation is null, the signal corresponds to the form exactly, and the information, as a modification of the state of the system, is null. On the contrary, the more the disparation increases, the more the information increases, but only up to a certain point' (ILFI, 248). In other words, a signal fits readily into a perceptive form. By contrast, a signification has a kind of 'relief' that makes the disparation of forms apparent while also indicating a possible in-formation between them. In this way, what significations "signify" are the potential transformations of (and reconciliations between) systems, i.e. *information*.

[13] To be sure, this kind of relation cannot happen willy-nilly, and especially not in the case of technical activity: 'in order for information to be exchanged, man must possess within himself a technical culture, which is to say an ensemble of forms that, upon encountering the forms contributed by the machine, will be able to elicit meaning [signification]' (METO, 257). Thus, Simondon insists that a 'technical culture' is a necessary pre-condition for this kind of transindividual relation to be facilitated by technology. Such is the 'intelligence of the individuated technical object' for which the collectivization of the means of production must be a precondition in order to be effective in reducing alienation.

difference between structures, which implies the coexistence of disparate structures. This is precisely why the psychical problematic requires a collective resolution, for significations are *necessarily 'between' beings* and thus can only be discovered relatively and collectively. In this sense, Simondon forms a powerful conception of alterity as integral to the healthy individuation of the self: one can only resolve one's own interior problems by going outside oneself. Furthermore, what becomes clear here is that when Simondon speaks of a collective, he has not only human collectivity in mind but also the broader collective humans form with machines, animals, plants, and the environment in general. It is not only from other people that we might grow, but through our creative and experimental relations with all different kinds of 'others.'

And yet, at the same time, there is also a specifically human dimension to this collective, one 'in which human beings communicate through what they invent' (METO, 252). What takes place in technical activity is not simply a mutual calibration of forms, but also a new, concrete structure which can go on to enter into further relations of in-formation. In technical activity, 'man creates mediations, and these mediations are detachable from the individual who produces and thinks them; the individual *expresses himself in them*, but does not adhere to them' (METO, 250, my emphasis). To be sure, these 'mediations' should not be understood in the usual sense of a mediation between two pre-existing terms, for Simondon always begins with the assumption that the relation itself precedes the terms rather than mediating between them. Rather, the 'mediation' here is a 'stable mixture of the human and the natural' (METO, 251), a real existing structure which is singular in that it carries with it a trace of the inventor and the natural material used for the invention. The machine stands as a record of a past or ongoing becoming, a testament to the relation that gave rise to its individuation.

Furthermore, as a structure, it can always undergo another operation of in-formation relative to another individual: it still has potential to become something else. Remember, information is not thing but a relation which has a mutually-constitutive energetics. Thus, 'the technical object *can be read* as carrier of a definite information' (METO, 252, my emphasis): the facilitation of becoming requires a certain interpretive gesture beyond the banality of hylomorphism and fixed essences. In the case of the machine, this is what Simondon calls a 'technical culture.' With the proper genetic understanding of the technical object (in the form of a schematic but malleable conception of machines and their construction), it can be taken up yet again by another individual, inciting in her an understanding not only of the machine but also, indirectly, of the original inventor who was involved in its genesis. It is in this sense that 'human beings communicate through what they invent,' for what emerges from this chain of indirect, detachable structures is a kind of collective cultural heritage which moves non-linearly through time, from one in-formative encounter to another.[14] The technical object is thus the 'bearer of information' in two senses: it is an inscription of a past information as well as the potential signification of a possible future information.

Finally we have reached a clear and concrete understanding of collective individuation, for 'this level of technical organization where man encounters man not as the member of a class but as a being who expresses himself within the technical object which is homogeneous with respect to his activity, is the level of the collective' (METO, 257). Indeed, when the technical object becomes the bearer of information in this double sense (and when it is cognized and treated as such, rather than as 'means'), it also becomes a kind of facilitator of becoming. This is

[14] Bernerd Stiegler, whose philosophy is heavily influenced by Simondon, calls this kind of cultural externalization a 'tertiary retention,' a form of cultural memory which is not contained in the human body but nevertheless conditions its development (1993, 246).

because, on the one hand, pre-individual charges in both human and machine are engaged in acts of invention or maintenance (a resolution of the *psychical* problematic with which we began). On the other hand, so long as there is a technical culture prepared to receive and interpret its significations, the machine also facilitates becoming because it transmits and perpetuates such pre-individual forces through its singular structure, thus opening onto a collective individuation. Not only is a past becoming inscribed in the novelty of the machine, but the attentiveness to this past opens onto a singular future, one which is unique to the encounter of the particular structures involved. This even takes on a kind of 'spiritual' quality in which the individual can find an afterlife in the collective: the first inventor lives on not only through her invention, but also through the subsequent significations this invention has for others down the line. Indeed, Simondon is clear that 'the individual is translated into the collective *as an effectuated signification*, as a resolved problem, as information: it is therefore prolonged across and above but not within its individual enclosure' (ILFI, 240, my emphasis). To individuate collectively, then, *is to become signification*, not in any kind of vague or abstract sense but in a very concrete way. In the case of technical activity, this means engaging in a mutual in-formation with a technical object such that something new emerges, something which is detachable and can be re-encountered as information.

CONCLUSION: TIME, ALIENATION, ETHICS

In Simondon's account, alienation implies a range of problematic separations: the psychic from the collective required for its resolution; mental forms from the associated milieu or ground which should regulate them; the present from its relation to both past and future; and perhaps most fundamentally, the individuated individual from its pre-individual charge.

Here we see Simondon's 'moral vision of the world. The fundamental idea is that the pre-individual, a "source of future metastable states," must remain associated with the individual' (Deleuze, 89). Indeed, what is ultimately at stake is this pre-individual charge and the powers of communion and becoming it harbors. Though these potentialities apply equally to human and non-human individuals, it's worth exploring the specifically human consequences of their neglect, most thoroughly explored in Simondon's account of anxiety.

Anxiety arises precisely from 'a separation between the nature associated with the individuated being and this individuated being' (ILFI, 282). When such a separation persists—through hylomorphism, through inter-individual functionalism, through a lack of technical culture—we become anxious with respect to our pre-individual charge:

> 'anxiety already contains the premonition of this new birth of the individuated being … but in order for this new birth to be possible, the dissolution of the previous structures and the reduction of the previous functions in potential must be complete, which is an acceptance of the annihilation of the individuated being…The present becomes hollowed out while losing its actuality; the plunge into the past and into the future dissipates the weft of the present and deprives it of its density as something lived. The individual being flees itself, deserts itself' (ILFI, 284).

In the absence of a transindividual resolution, the unresolved psychical conflict manifests itself most readily in temporal consequences. The isolation of psychic from collective entails an isolation of past from future, for the perceptive problematic tends toward the perpetuation of a *past* individuation, whereas the affective problematic pushes it toward a *future* individuation. The lack of collective mediation is also a lack of temporal mediation, since it is only through a relation of affective exchange with the collective that the individual can calibrate its past with its future. Without this, the present 'becomes hollowed out,' apparently lacking in the potentials necessary for realizing whatever sense of futurity the individual might have. Feelings of potential and becoming seem irreconcilable with present circumstances, and new individuations appear to

require a comprehensive disindividuation of present structures: no signification or resolution is apparent. This results in a dilemma for the subject, wherein the resolution of one tendency seems to require the annihilation of the other. The subject feels forced to disavow one side of itself, with potentially disastrous consequences.

The example of anxiety makes it clear that it is precisely time, futurity, and becoming (in the form of the transindividual relation) from which we are alienated. Such connections between collectivity, futurity, mental health, and cultural production resonate with Mark Fisher's writings on hauntology and capitalist realism (2009, 2012). Fisher suggests that with the 'end of history' after the collapse of the Soviet Union comes a wave of privatizations which in turn stunt cultural production: every invention or artistic endeavor must be predictably saleable as a commodity. This results in profound limitations on the possibility of artistic or technological experimentation, since every creation is yoked in advance to the 'form-intention' of profit. Experimentation only registers as risk, and only the safest bets are made, usually on the recycling of themes and motifs that have 'proven' to be successful. For Fisher, these related phenomena result in a kind of general malaise in which neither cultural nor political futurity seem to exist any longer. The ultimate consequences, though, are psychological: a pervasive apathy and cynicism to which Fisher's own struggles with depression are only one attestation among many. The connections Fisher made between mental health, cultural production, and collective futurity, which have resonated with an unusually large readership, are emblematic of alienation as a psycho-social concept. Indeed, Simondon's notion of alienation gives us a framework for understanding why such things are connected in the first place. Alienation begins in reductive mental forms (either hylomorphic or inter-individual) which are no longer regulated by their associated milieu. Such reductions are alienating precisely because they ignore potential relations

of in-formation. Hylomorphism is blind to information. Inter-individual relation is blind to transindividual relation. Alienation consists in a split or opposition between the individuated individual and the un-individuated pre-individual, between human and nature, which stunts becoming and forecloses the future.

In light of this, the transindividual relation not only accounts for this proclivity for becoming, but it also actually makes it a priority. Whereas the inter-individual relation establishes a collective based on a kind of functional solidarity, in which defined individuals relate based on a shared 'form-intention,' 'the transindividual does not localize individuals: it makes them coincide; it makes individuals communicate through significations: relations of information are what is primordial, not relations of solidarity and functional differentiation' (ILFI, 339). When relations of information are primordial, experimentation and discovery rule the day. This implies a completely different relation to the future: rather than teleological prefiguration, of which the functionalism of work is the paradigmatic example, the transindividual relation keeps the future perpetually open by facilitating the experimental dispositions of in-formation.

It is important to note that this emphasis on becoming should not itself be hypostatized into an ideal, a kind of 'having-to-become' (Combes quoting Gilbert Hottois, 63). It's not so much that becoming is inherently good, but rather that the *obstruction* of becoming is generally unhealthy or dangerous, as we saw in our discussion of anxiety. It is important to facilitate and account for becoming precisely because it stands as a sort of transcendent law of immanence: if being remains in excess of itself, then becoming stands as a kind of fundamental current or Tao with which one must always reckon. 'Life is therefore an ongoing individuation,' as Simondon asserts in the first quote we began with. One always lives with a pre-individual potential for

growth, and such a potential should be accounted for and given heed to, rather than repressed or rejected. What emerges from this giving-heed is a politics adequate not only to space (as a purely economic or proprietary account might have it), but also to time. Rather than being frozen in a perpetually 'functional' present, a Simondonian politics would facilitate the possibility of unexpected futures.

In what way? Is Simondon suggesting that we all become inventors? Far from it, for he is clear that technical activity 'is not the only mode and the only content of the collective' (METO, 250). Of course, technical activity stands as a fruitful and unique example precisely because technology is so easily and so often relegated to the status of a means. But as we have seen, the machine 'can also transport information beyond any utility for determinate production' (METO, 252). How else might information be 'transported'? Examples of this might be musical improvisation and collaboration, or the construction and maintenance of a home, or even the poetic use of language. Indeed, all that is necessary for significations to emerge are relational structures which are similar and yet disparate. The way one person plays the guitar might have similarities to the way another plays it, but they are not identical. The disparation between the two makes it possible for both guitarists to learn something from each other, to change their relation to the guitar by virtue of the other person's relation to *their* guitar. Similarly, the use of language can carry significations. In fact, Simondon is clear that 'if there were no significations to sustain language, there would be no language…language is the instrument of expression, the conveyance of information, but it does not create significations' (ILFI, 344-5). The creative use of language can give others a new vocabulary, new structures and forms of thinking, speaking, and writing, but only if it conveys a unique disparation resulting from a pre-individual encounter with language itself: *poiesis*. What happens in each case is a) a mutual becoming between the

terms which leads to a novelty, and b) the inscription of this novelty into an external, detachable things, allowing for it to live beyond the vital individual.

The transindividual relation thus consists in this expressive in-formation between subjects, oriented toward change and growth through mutual influence. Such is the basis for a 'reticular ethics' of reciprocal 'amplification' wherein actions are made with their significations for others in mind (see Combes, 64-66). The relational activity of the subject takes the collective into account, facilitating its individuation through the expression of and attentiveness to the pre-individual shares which found this collective. It is precisely this transindividual reticularity from which we are alienated through hylomorphic or inter-individual reduction. This is not to say representations *as such* are the problem, but rather their divorce from a dynamic ground, their ossification. It is the lack of re(gu)lation that leads to problems, for the forms still regulate the ground but not the ground the forms. The relation is problematic because of its *one-way* influence. But representations themselves are necessary for structures to appear as significative in the first place.

Such an account of alienation has gone far beyond the Marxist problematic of economic ownership, pertaining instead to our everyday metaphysics of machines, humans, and nature. And yet, have we not also reworked certain aspects of Marx's original account of alienation? For starters, Simondon might be read as reworking Marx's methodological innovation in which 'society is viewed as a process of natural history,' (C, 92) except that 'natural history' is broadened to account for ontogenesis itself. The transindividual relation, and its possible alienation, thus become problematic not only for humans but also for animals, machines, and other existents—this analysis of alienation is non-anthropocentric in that it pertains not merely to every*one* but also to every*thing*. This broad re-working carries over into the four tenets of

alienation expounded in the EPM: alienation from 1) the product of labor, 2) the process of labor, 3) the species-being, and 4) others. Point by point, we can see how each idea is re-worked from the standpoint of individuation. First of all, alienation from the process and product of labor is re-worked into an issue of representation and the ossification of forms. The standpoint of invention combats this, giving us a genetic account of the machine such that product and process are no longer subordinated to these ossified forms but are rather regulated by a praxis of 'recurrent causality,' a feedback loop between the abstract and the concrete. Similarly, the fraught notion of species-being has its correlate in the kind of expressive transindividual 'labor' which has value relative to its collective signification, rather than to any sort of functional 'form-intention.' This non-teleological labor recalls Marx's notion of properly "human" activity as that which goes beyond biological demand so as to labor 'according to the laws of beauty,' with the key difference that Simondon grounds this in a general tendency of nature itself: the residuality of preindividual being. In doing so, he elides any assumed substantial difference between humans and others. Even still, there is also a specifically humanistic reworking of concrete social alienation, the '*alienation of man* from *man*' (SW, 64) which Marx saw as resulting from alienated labor. In Simondon's account, this takes the form of an alienation from the transindividual relation in which humans inform one another non-linearly, through significations stored in a kind of collective cultural tradition. Functionalism and hylomorphism obscure these significations such that subjects only communicate according to 'signals' (which carry no information) rather than significations: subjects remain alienated from in-formative relations with other beings and structures.

Simondon thus critiques Marx's limited understanding of alienation, but he does so in a manner that remains faithful to many of Marx's original convictions. The conception of

alienation he re-founds opens onto an undoubtedly humanistic politics in the way it emphasizes a kind of existential health for human becoming. And yet, it is a humanism cleansed of both essentialism and anthropocentrism: the human is taken seriously as an historical form without endlessly reproducing this form in a perpetual present. It is a humanism with a future, or as Combes remarks, a "humanism after the death of man" (quoting Toni Negri on Leopardi, 50). The conception of human well-being in this account supposes that it is precisely the inhuman (the natural, pre-individual charge) from which we are alienated, and which we require to move beyond ourselves. Thus, it is a humanism which requires not an elevation of the human form, but its ongoing co-evolution alongside and on the same level as non-human others.

WORKS CITED

Beauvoir, Simone de, et al. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2011.

Combes, Muriel. *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of The Transindividual*. MIT Press, 2013.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*. Semiotext(e), 2004.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Zero Books, 2009.

——"What Is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2012, pp. 16–24.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time to the Task of Thinking*. Harper San Francisco, 1993.

['C'] Marx, Karl, and Ben Fowkes. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Penguin Classics, 1990.

['SW'] Marx, Karl, and Lawrence Hugh Simon. *Selected Writings*. Hackett, 1994.

['ILFI'] Simondon, Gilbert, and Taylor Adkins. *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*. University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

——['METO'] *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. Univocal Publishing, 2017.

Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time, 1: the Fault of Epimetheus*. Stanford Univ. Press, 1998.

Tormey, Simon. "'Not in My Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo, and the Critique of Representation." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2005, pp. 138–154.