

## Monstrous Individuations: Deleuze, Simondon, and Relational Ontology

Although the opposition between “liberal individualism” and “communitarian holism” is frequently criticized as naively reductionist, scholars offered no viable alternative to it until Gilbert Simondon came up with the concept of “transindividuality.” Étienne Balibar considers Simondon’s an ambitious critique of the metaphysical doctrines of individuality that inevitably lead to the classic dualism of psychologism and sociologism. Working with modern physics and the biology of cognitive processes, Simondon attempts to move beyond metaphysics and redefine the reality of the individual in the twentieth century.

The first part of Simondon’s *L’individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* was published in 1964 and the second part in 1989. In 1966, Gilles Deleuze wrote a famous review of the first part in the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, claiming that Simondon presents “a profoundly original theory of individuation implying a whole philosophy” (89). By praising the influence that modern science has on philosophy, Deleuze—curiously enough—avoids focusing on the philosophical aspects of Simondon’s work. Though brief, the last section of the review is quite

critical in that Deleuze calls it “a moral vision of the world” (89).<sup>1</sup> Even at this point, before Deleuze’s book on Spinoza, there can be no doubt that having a “moral” vision of the world is one of the most unflattering things he could say about someone’s work. Thus, even in a basically sympathetic review, and although Simondon clearly influenced Deleuze, we must keep this “denunciation” in mind. To understand the relationship between Simondon and Deleuze we must also account for Spinoza. If, on the one hand, Deleuze declares Spinoza the only author he invites to his hearth, while on the other, Simondon quotes Spinoza only to denounce and criticize him, there is something more interesting than “influences” suggested in this odd triangle. Even when doing hermeneutical work, we must not overlook Simondon’s highly critical reading of Spinoza.

This essay will consider the aspects of Simondon’s ontology that clearly influenced Deleuze. At the same time, I will point out what is at stake in this conversation, namely, what Deleuze could not have derived from Simondon. Focusing primarily on *Difference and Repetition*, the central work in any analysis of the relationship between Deleuze and Simondon,<sup>2</sup> I first demonstrate that the line of division between the two authors falls exactly along what we can call a Spinozist problematic. I then use this principle to discuss the most interesting elements of Simondon’s thought. These can be found—exactly as Deleuze points out—“beyond” Simondon himself.

## I

No one would deny that Simondon’s intellectual enterprise—nothing less than a profound attack on the traditional concept of “substance” in an attempt to redefine ontology—is extremely ambitious. According to Simondon, the world of substances, how substances relate one to the other and give birth to the notion of the individual, has been considered the only philosophical dimension worth investigating. Substance and the individual are the starting point of every ontology. For this reason, Simondon argues, constituted individualities assume ontological primacy over merely possible individualities. What has been lost is, first, the actual reality of relation and, second, the process of individuation by which something becomes what it actually is and that thus makes it different from all other things. Being as old as the idea of philosophy itself, the idea of such a “principle of individuation” is hardly original, but it is nevertheless an idea that Simondon wants to renew and stress. For Simondon, individuation

must be understood as a process, which means it is not the individual, the concept of “individuality,” that deserves ontological primacy, but on the contrary, “relation” and the concept of “relationality.” Simondon argues that we must substitute individuation for the individual, and operation for the principle. Thus we must leave aside the word *ontology* and use instead the concept of “ontogenesis.” Clearly, this is not merely a change in perspective. This is a revolutionary effort to set “relation” free from the metaphorical cage to which the traditional concept of “substance” has confined it. His objective is to show that relation is not what happens between two substances but that relationality “is” reality itself. From this it follows that Being is not what “is” (and what eventually happens in the form of relations); Being is what “becomes” in and through relationality.

This revolution has many interesting consequences and corollaries. Knowledge, for example, can no longer be seen as a direct and simple link between a subject who knows and an object known. Knowledge must now be seen as a relation between relations. As the content of knowledge, meaning cannot be said to preexist the operation of knowledge itself, which is, once again, a relation between relations. Therefore, for Simondon, meaning can only be understood “in between,” that is, as something between and through individuals. To get around the problem that our vocabulary is so dependent on traditional ontology, Simondon proposes a new word—*transindividuality*—to explain this relational ontology and to express that individuals are not constituted by Being but rather “cross through” it.

Simondon’s redefinition of Being has political implications for how we interpret the place of a particular individual—man—in the world in relation to other individuals. He distinguishes and yet binds together the two forms of individuation he calls *psychique* and *collective*. This is necessary, he argues, if we are to avoid the double failure of psychologism and sociologism, by which he means the doctrines that assign a fixed (ontological) identity to man and his mind, on the one hand, and to society, on the other, and in doing so, fail to acknowledge that their reality is first and foremost relational. *Transindividuality* is Simondon’s term for the double movement of individuation and individualization. The first movement brings the individual from a preindividual being to its physical existence. The second movement—through which individuals continue to exist—is the series of individualizations that corresponds to an individual’s action in an environment and with other individuals. Psychological reality and sociological reality are therefore only the multiple relations of the individual

with his own preindividual reality, as well as with his environment and other individuals.

## II

This theoretical core of Simondon's thought would seem to describe an authentic immanent ontology of relation, based on the dynamic power of becoming rather than on the static concept of being. My impression, though, is that what I have just described is actually closer to the language and thought of post-Deleuzian readers than to Simondon himself.<sup>5</sup> There are, indeed, aspects of Simondon's theory that in my view explain Deleuze's prudent reading and his early critique and, at the same time, suggest what we can use of Simondon "beyond" Simondon himself. The postulate of Simondon's whole theory of individuation is that relation has the status of Being. This claim is anything but original. For here we are completely within the set of questions posed by the ancient Greek philosophers. I am thinking in particular of the pre-Socratic question concerning if and how Being or non-Being "is." Modern scholars have overlooked the important fact that both Simondon and Deleuze paid a great deal of attention to classical sources. These scholars generally begin and end with a simple description of Simondon's point of departure in his critique of classical ontology, that is to say, his claim that the conflicting traditions of atomism and hylomorphism invariably focus on the result of individuation—the individual—rather than on the process of individuation. Both atomism and hylomorphism presuppose something (whether the atom or the form) rather than explain the process by which this something is formed. By focusing on the process, Simondon confronts the same problem that Heraclitus, Plato, and Aristotle once confronted. Simondon thinks of this process as a discontinuous path of Being toward individuation. Rather than becoming, beings "switch" from one state of being into another: individuation is either complete or it is not, or *entweder Sein oder keine Individuation*. Between physical and psychic individuation, as between psychic and collective individuation, there is a discrete sequence of steps, one after the other, as if the biological being of the individual comes before its mental being. This is a dangerous path and not one that helps ground a new ontology of relation and "becoming" rather than being. Even though Simondon's language is based on immanence and horizontal relation, it still relies on the traditional binary idea of *dynamis/energeia* (power/act) as well as on a distinction between essence and existence—precisely what

Simondon declares he wants to go beyond. Being, according to Simondon, is radically preindividual; it is not itself “one” and should only be understood as a “principle,” as separated from every single existing being. Being is pure potentiality, which cannot, by definition, be completely actualized in a given individual. For that reason, individuals live their lives belonging both to the preindividual and to the individuated.

These tensions in Simondon’s own argument should lead us to a closer analysis of his relationship with the pre-Socratic tradition. Let us consider his critique of Atomism. In our time, as in Simondon’s, scholars have hotly contested the status of the atom vis-à-vis its relation with other atoms as seen by Democritus, Epicurus, or Lucretius. Recently, Jean Salem, in *L’Atomisme antique*, has suggested the essential reality of the atom as an ontological identity that exists prior to any interaction and therefore prior to the original vortex. If atoms are progressively added to this vortex, then they must preexist it. If this preexisting reality is not preserved, moreover, then we betray the original materialistic character of Atomism. Before Salem, Jean Bollack pointed out that by considering the vortex as an efficient cause or a *deus ex machina* that derives from matter, scholars have endorsed a post-Aristotelian teleological point of view. In Bollack’s view, the atom exists only in and through its relations with other atoms, and so the entire atomic structure of the universe is actually a “relation of relations.” Matter in the Atomist cosmogony cannot be distinguished from the movement it engenders and that in turn engenders it.<sup>4</sup> Because he does not cite these debates, we must assume that Simondon was not familiar with them. For Simondon, what is, what has been, and what will be arise from the generative power of the *apeiron*, which is never the same and which moves endlessly. The *apeiron* envelops (*periékhei*) everything and has no quality, for it is totally indeterminate (*aóristos*). Things are produced from it by way of separation (*apókrisis*) and ejection (*ékkrisis*). Nor is this generative power immanent to the things that it produces and rules: it is a transcendent and eternal power that produces a cosmos that is contrastingly subject to limitation and death. I find it interesting, however, that we can understand *apeiron* in a very different way. As there is no reason for a world to happen here rather than there, or now rather than before or after, Anaximander himself supposes an infinity of different worlds. And for this reason Simplicius, the sixth-century neo-Platonic author of the commentaries on Aristotle, places him among the Atomists.<sup>5</sup>

Simondon might have developed his reference to indeterminacy in many interesting directions that would have required him to interpret

more carefully the Atomist tradition, giving the ontological status of *apeiron* quite a different meaning. I find it striking, however, that rather than pursue the possible connection between indeterminacy and Atomism, Simondon attacked the essentialism implied in the concept of atoms, linking this implicit essentialism to the hylomorphic hypothesis and seeing the preindividual being as an *apeiron* with all the features of a transcendent principle. Both Simondon and the pre-Socratics try to explain how movement can generate things; how things, from an original totality that is nothing in itself, become something here and now; and how, fundamentally, things move from non-Being into Being. Aristotle solves this problem by saying—against the pre-Socratics—that Being comes both from Being and from non-Being. This is possible because we can understand Being in two different ways, as power and as act. Being in act comes from Being in power, which is non-Being in act. So Being and individuation follow the path of a teleological transformation of *dynamis* into *energheia*.<sup>6</sup> Simondon is not completely successful in overcoming this scheme. His denunciation of hylomorphic theory does not go much beyond the Greeks in explaining how we become what we are not, how we know what we do not know, or how we leave without having already left. Nor, by the same token, does he completely overcome the Aristotelian idea of a *dynamis* that has to be actualized in an *energheia*.

Muriel Combes suggests that the “fracture” dividing the preindividual from actual individualities, as well as from psychological individuation, provides Simondon with a means of criticizing Bergson’s vitalism (“Stato”). The preindividual reality that every individual carries within itself belongs, according to Simondon, to the vital rather than to the prevital. For Combes, this direct assault on the Bergsonian concept of *élan vital* reflects Simondon’s interest in recognizing, contrary to Bergson’s vision of a continuity between prevital and vital, the possibility of fractures and, ultimately, of transformations within Being. This critique is essential for any ontology of relationality.

If his aim is to save himself from vitalism, however, Simondon’s critique of Bergson ends by throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Beyond—or against—Bergson’s vitalism, it is necessary for us to think about discontinuity within immanence rather than through transcendence and a fracture of the preindividual from the individuated. Following Spinoza—and Deleuze—I wonder if breakage, fractures, and transformations within Being can be thought only within a plane of pure immanence and against any form of transcendence. Alberto Toscano perfectly understands

that the “danger” of speaking about the preindividual in such terms or, as he says, of speaking of the preindividual “as such” is that of obliterating the multiplicity and complexity not only of the individuated reality, but also of the individuating operations themselves (156). This is exactly where, in my view, the Anaximandean concept of the preindividual leads, namely, to a “cosmogonic narrative moving from the undifferentiated to the individual, a narrative that would be forced, once again, to adduce transcendent principles to explain the fact of productivity” (156). Toscano suggests that in order to avoid this danger, we must not understand the preindividual reality as a “creative reservoir” of Being but *only* as a “*real* condition of individuation.” Nor should we consider the preindividual field to contain or anticipate any of the forms that individuation may take; it would, as he says, “therefore be more accurate to speak in the plural of preindividual fields.” Toscano suggests what is clearly one of the most interesting philosophical paths we could follow from Simondon, were it not for the fact that it takes us away from Simondon. For Simondon, the choice of Anaximander’s *apeiron* is not metaphorical. This explains not only why Simondon fails to understand Spinoza, the only early modern philosopher to challenge Aristotle’s system successfully, but also why Deleuze—who has produced one of the most interesting readings of Spinoza—is so careful in using Simondon, especially when it comes to quoting him explicitly.

Scholars have suggested an underground connection between Simondon and Spinoza, and there are certainly many elements that suggest common ground.<sup>7</sup> It is important, however, to take into account what Simondon actually says in his critique of Spinoza. I believe that Simondon reads Spinoza in the light of the Hegelian interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Simondon’s main thesis about Spinoza can be summarized in four points:

- 1) An infinite expansion of the unicity of substance to the whole cosmos;
- 2) A radical monism of substance that implicitly negates the individual reality;
- 3) As a result, the impossibility of Being to become something;
- 4) And finally, the common inability of Spinoza’s substance and Leibniz’s monad to conceive “becoming.”

We should therefore think of the theory of individuation as a theory of phases of Being, or how Being becomes; this becoming is what is essential. Indeed, in considering the notion of substance, we find that becoming fails to correspond to the essence of Being; the notion of accident

is less than satisfying in that it forces philosophers to build systematic but fragile edifices, like Leibniz's, that do not take into account becoming as becoming. That is to say, once we see accidents as comprised in essence—conceived as a complete individual notion—there is neither actual becoming nor any potential future for the monadic substance. Regarding becoming, things are not better in the Spinozist system: here becoming is not integrated but negated (just as the individual himself is negated as a separate being).<sup>9</sup>

This was exactly Hegel's critique of Spinoza in *Science of Logic*, which Simondon follows in an extremely naive and limited way.<sup>10</sup> To which he adds further proof of his complete incomprehension of the liberty/necessity relationship in Spinoza by saying that in every pantheism (and here he clearly refers to Spinoza), the only liberty we can have is the one of the Stoic dog, "freely" following the chariot to which it is attached.<sup>11</sup>

### III

In the last section of this essay, I will show not only the peculiar way in which Deleuze uses Simondon but also what of interest we can find in Simondon—even beyond Simondon himself.<sup>12</sup> Deleuze offers a beautiful image of the theater of representation as opposed to the theater of multiplicities, which destroys identity—of the spectator as well as the author. There is neither a final recognition nor any production of knowledge; Deleuze leaves us instead with problems and continually open questions (*Difference* 192). In this same spirit, I would like to propose a series of problems, for which some of Simondon's intuitions might prove instructive.

We have already seen how he completely avoids the debate over the status of the atom in classic Atomism. Paradoxically, his silence and naive conclusions on this issue suggest how important it is, in building an ontology of relations and Becoming, to push Epicurus and Lucretius to their own limits. Ancient Atomists, according to Simondon, look for the principle of individuation within its result and not within the operation of individuation itself, which is another way of saying that there still is a final cause—Being itself—in the Atomist's world. Standing at the crux of different possible interpretations, it is our task—in view of the problems Simondon identifies—to think about the atom not as something preexisting the relation but as something simultaneously "constituted by" and "constituting" the relation.



This is exactly how Deleuze thinks in *Difference and Repetition*. The ancient atoms, he says without quoting Simondon, are still too independent from one another, and their relations seem to “happen within” a space and a time. Such cryptic ideas as the Lucretian *in uno tempore tempora multa latent* [many different times hidden within one single time] indicate there is more work to be done (*De rerum* 4, line 795). The *clinamen*, Deleuze suggests, is not the movement of an atom toward another atom; their reciprocal determination is what makes both the encounter *and* the atoms themselves exist. Understanding multiplicity does not begin with the concept of unity and its multiplication. It is of course possible to say that the multiple is one and the one is multiple, but, Deleuze insists, this is misleading: the true substantive, the substance itself *is* the multiplicity. Proceeding from this assumption, we see that “difference” takes the place of the old dialectic between the one and the multiple. Instead, we have a horizontal plurality of beings, which simply means that in every single space and time, every being contains and in fact implies a multiplicity of different beings.<sup>15</sup> Here we have a perfect example of Deleuze’s “underground” use of Simondon’s thought.

Another example might be called “conflictual ontology,” which we find in such authors as Machiavelli and Spinoza, as well as, it turns out, Simondon and Deleuze.<sup>14</sup> As soon as multiplicity and relation take center stage, we have to pay attention to the concept of conflict. This happens, for example, in Simondon’s definition of perception and knowledge. Knowing, for Simondon, does not involve grasping a meaning or a form that already exists outside conceptualization. Once again, both the world and the individual exist in mutual relation, and knowing, says Simondon in a beautiful image, is nothing more nor less than “placing oneself across” (*se mettre en travers*). Knowledge, so figured, becomes a form of resistance to the flux of being: “[W]ithout this active gesture of the subject within this complex relational system, no perception would ever be possible” (*L’individuation* 91). The same problem appears in Deleuze’s fascinating argument concerning the simulacrum and the copy in the chapter of *Difference and Repetition* titled “Difference in Itself.” There is a danger, he says, in invoking pure differences set free from the negative and identity, the danger of falling into a representation of pure soul, by which he means the “representable, reconcilable and federative differences” that are distant from the “bloody contradictions” of history (52).<sup>15</sup> Yet—as suggested by Simondon—there is a process through which problems arrive at their level of affirmation and positivity. When this happens, knowledge is

no longer the grasp of appearances, but the selection and positioning of problems. These problems

*release a power of aggression and selection which destroys the beautiful soul by depriving it of its very identity and breaking its good will. The problematic and the differential determine struggles or destructions in relation to which those of the negative are only appearances, and the wishes of the beautiful soul are so many mystifications trapped in appearances. The simulacrum is not just a copy, but that which overturns all copies by also overturning the models: every thought becomes an aggression. (Deleuze, Difference xx)*

Finally, let us consider what Simondon calls the “epistemological postulate” of his own work, namely that “the relations between two relations is itself a relation.” Scholars have called attention to the oddity of this formulation, which seems to be at least self-evident, if not redundant. But the logical implications of this postulate are that the reality of knowledge is one and the same as the reality of Being itself, which once again is nothing more nor less than a relation. Knowledge exists only on the very same level of the beings to which it is able to relate; it does not open the door to a different (and transcendent) level vis-à-vis the objects known.<sup>16</sup> Combes suggests that this formulation comes close to subverting the Hegelian formula concerning reality and rationality. It is as if Simondon were saying that “whatever is relational is real, whatever is real is relational.” Not only does the relation finally belong to Being but in some sense it constitutes Being. This aggressive appropriation of Hegel’s formula is fascinating. Following Deleuze, however, it suggests that we might go well beyond Simondon’s formulation. Hegel’s aphorism, in fact, suggests a transcendence and a primacy of rationality *over* reality: “Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich” (What is rational is real). The rational rather than the real comes first, and not the other way around. By reading Simondon in this way, we return to the idea of ontological primacy, which I suggest is the concept we need to challenge if we want to move beyond classical ontology and toward a new ontology of relation and becoming.

Let us return to Deleuze on the simulacrum. He virtually rewrites the postulate of Simondon in claiming that the simulacrum is the system in which different relates to different through difference itself (*Difference* 277). Again this may strike us as an unnecessary repetition, yet again this postulate has a precise meaning: not only a challenge to a

particular model and an attack against a particular paradigm, it is a challenge to and an attack against every model, against the concept of model itself. In reference to the simulacrum, Deleuze says, “[A]narchies are substituted for the hierarchies of representation, nomadic distributions for the sedentary distributions of representation” (277–78).

The simulacrum reflects some of the elements of Simondon’s relational being but in fact goes beyond its boundaries. I think that at the same time, it is possible and necessary to go beyond the idea of primacy itself, even beyond the primacy of relation. This is the monstrous character of Deleuzian philosophy, and in my view he finds traces of this monstrosity first and foremost in Spinoza’s ontology: “[T]his ontological measure,” he writes, introducing the substance/mode relation in Spinoza, “is closer to the immeasurable state of things than to the first kind of measure; this ontological hierarchy is closer to the hubris and anarchy of beings than to the first hierarchy” (*Difference* 37).<sup>17</sup> It is the monster of all demons.

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## Notes

- 1 *The fundamental idea is that the preindividual, a “source of future metastable states,” must remain associated with the individual. Estheticism is therefore condemned as that act by which an individual cuts him- or herself off from the pre-individual reality from which he or she emerged. As a result, the individual is closed in on a singularity, refusing to communicate, and provoking a loss of information. [ . . . ] The reader may indeed ask whether, in his ethics, Simondon has not reintroduced the form of the Self which he had averted with his theory of disparity, i.e., his theory of the individual conceived as dephased and multiphased being. (Deleuze, “On Gilbert Simondon” 89)*
- 2 See also Montebello, who, on the contrary, focuses especially on *Milles Plateaux*. Here Montebello maintains that through an original philosophy of nature and following Simondon, Deleuze and Guattari integrate the ontology of relation into their expressionism. Montebello does not point out any relevant discrepancy between Deleuze’s and Simondon’s thought.
- 3 Toscano underlines the ambivalences of Simondon’s philosophy, which is “legitimate to portray [ . . . ] as driven— he writes— by a fundamentally conciliatory vision, in which the operations of individuation are sequentially ordered into progressive schemata of ever greater integration. [ . . . ] [T]he final horizon of Simondon’s project would be located in the attempt to link every individual to its ultimate participation in a unified reality; in other words, to return to the preindividual ground of its emergence” (140–42). Notwithstanding

- this legitimate portrayal, Toscano points out the consistency of the most significant contributions of Simondon's philosophy, namely, the "operational ontology of relation" as well as individuation conceived as a "constructive operation." Yet, even for Toscano, it is not only possible but also necessary to "separate" the "fundamentals of his ontology" from "the great cosmogonic epic that often transpires from his writings," which "is largely to be ascribed to the normative insistence within his thought of a kind of ethics of inclusion, the utopia of a 'technical culture.'" For this kind of critique, Toscano refers to Deleuze's review of Simondon's *L'individu*, as well as to Hottois.
- 4 *La matière ne peut pas être distinguée du mouvement qu'elle engendre et qui l'engendre. Concentrée en une masse, dès l'origine du processus de la genèse, elle est aussitôt, par l'effet de sa masse, animée d'un mouvement discontinu qui ne dégage pas un à un les constituants ultimes, mais les entremêle aussitôt dans l'innombrables enchevêtrements, et oppose ainsi, selon les différences qui se constituent partout, les composants de la masse. Le tourbillon, comme il ne se dégage pas d'une forme pré-imposée au monde, mais qu'il apparaît comme le contre-effet d'une grande concentration de matière et de l'accumulation d'innombrables virtualités de mouvements, ne se déploie pas dès le début dans les limites d'une sphéricité; il trouve sa forme giratoire dans l'enchaînement des impulsions particulières qui se combinent et donnent, une fois contenues autour d'un centre, à la masse son unité. (Bollack 48)*  
For the counterargument, see Salem, *Démocrate*.
- 5 See Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, 1121.5–9.
- 6 See Johnson.
- 7 See Balibar; and Combes, *Simondon*.
- 8 See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie* 376–79.
- 9 See Simondon, *L'individuation* 223. Leibniz writes in *Discourse on Metaphysics*:  
[I]t is true that we are maintaining that everything that must happen to a person is already contained virtually in his nature or notion, just as the properties of a circle are contained in its definition. [ . . . ] Let us make an example. Since Julius Caesar will become perpetual dictator and master of the republic and will overthrow the freedom of the Romans, this action is contained in his notion, for we assume that it is the nature of such a perfect notion of a subject to contain everything, so that the predicate is included in the subject, ut possit inesse subjecto. [ . . . ] [I]t will be found that the demonstration of this predicate of Caesar is not as absolute as those of numbers or of geometry, but that it supposes the sequence of things that God has freely chosen, a sequence based on God's first free decree always to do what is most perfect and on God's decree with respect to human nature, following out of the first decree, that man will always do (although freely) that which appears to be the best. (12–14)
- 10 See Hegel's *Science of Logic*, vol. 1, bk. 2, sec. 3, "Observation: Philosophy of Spinoza and of Leibniz." On Simondon's first point, see esp.:  
*In a similar manner in the Oriental idea of emanation the Absolute is self-illuminating light. But it does not only illumine itself: it also emanates. Its emanations are distances from its unclouded purity; and the subsequent products are less perfect than the*

*preceding ones out of which they arise. Emanation is taken only as a happening, and becoming only as a progressive loss. Thus Being increasingly obscures itself, and night, the negative, is the last term of the line and does not return to the primal light. (170)*

For Simondon's second point:

"The Substance of this system is One Substance, one inseparable totality; there is no determinateness which is not contained and dissolved in this Absolute; and it is of sufficient importance that everything which to natural imagination or determining understanding appears, distinctly or vaguely, as independent, is wholly reduced in this necessary concept to a mere positedness" (167–68).

For Simondon's third point: "But in this Absolute, which is only unmoved identity, both Attribute and Mode exist only as vanishing and not as becoming, so that this vanishing too now takes its positive beginning only from without" (169); and, "Hence the necessity of the progress of the Absolute to unessentiality is lacking, as well as its dissolution in and for itself into identity; or, the becoming both of identity and of its determinations is wanting" (170).

For Simondon's fourth point:

*The lack of intro-Reflection which is common to Spinoza's exposition of the Absolute and to the theory of emanation is made good in the concept of the monad in Leibniz. The onesidedness of one philosophic principle is generally faced by its opposite onesidedness, and, as everywhere, totality at least is found as a sundered completeness. The monad is only One, an intro-reflected negative; it is the totality of the content of the world; in it the various manifold has not only vanished, but is in a negative manner stowed away. (170)*

11 On the classical *topos* of the Stoic dog, see Bobzien; and Brennan.

12 Toscano writes, "At the antipodes of [Simondon's] ethos of inclusion is the appropriation of [his] ontology of individuation enacted by Deleuze" (142). Toscano introduces his chapter on individuation in Deleuze by arguing:

*Separating out a certain strand or tendency within [Simondon's] work is part of a wider attempt to consider the relational variants of the ontology of anomalous individuation. [ . . . ] [W]e can distinguish a cosmogonic model of preindividuality—thinking the apeiron that both precedes and subtends the partition of the world into items and regions—and a relational/differential model of individuation, which combines the recursive temporality of habit with the "problematic" character of an intensive difference, such that individuation is considered as an invention. (156)*

13 See Morfino.

14 See Del Lucchese.

15 Deleuze continues: "The beautiful soul behaves like a justice of the peace thrown on to a field of battle, one who sees in the inexplicable struggles only simple 'differends' or perhaps misunderstandings" (*Difference* 52). Echoes of this problematic are to be found in Rancière.

16 Something that Spinoza had already suggested, by saying that the higher mode of knowledge is the knowledge of singularity. See *Ethics* 2, prop. 40, schol. 2.

17 Deleuze continues:

*The words "everything is equal" may therefore resound joyfully, on condition that they are said of that which is not equal in this equal, univocal Being: equal being is immediately present in*

*everything, without mediation or intermediary, even though things reside unequally in this equal being. There, however, where they are borne by hubris, all things are in absolute proximity, and whether they are large or small, inferior or superior, none*

*of them participates more or less in being, nor receives it by analogy. Univocity of being thus also signifies equality of being. Univocal Being is at one and the same time nomadic distribution and crowned anarchy. (Difference 47)*

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