

Recommended Articles and Books on Simondon

Gilbert Simondon has inspired many thinkers. We have gathered some books and articles on Simondon and Simondon-inspired thought in philosophy and critical theory that have caught our interest during the editing of this volume.

Nathalie Simondon's biography of her father

Nathalie Simondon, the daughter of Simondon, sums up her father's life in a text published on gilbert.simondon.fr, thematizing his illness and rich intellectual life. Nathalie Simondon quotes a letter from 1952, from the time when her father began to write about individuation, that was to become so prominent in his thought: "I have been working on the notion of individuality since spring. The subject seems to me to be deeply reflexive—thus philosophical". She also quotes a letter Simondon sent to Jean Hyppolite in 1954: "I have chosen the notion of individuality, and, for a year, I have been trying to create a reflexive theory of the criteria for individuality. [...] Indeed, it is necessary to grasp being before it is analyzed in terms of the individual and the milieu: the totality individual-milieu is not self-sufficient; one cannot explain the individual by the milieu nor the milieu by the individual, and one cannot reduce the one to the other."

Gilles Deleuze's review of Gilbert Simondon's dissertation (1966)

Deleuze's 1966-review of the doctoral thesis of Simondon, *L'individu et sa genese physico-biologique*, translated into English by *Ivan Ramirez* for the magazine *Pli* 12 in 2001, concentrates on his theory of individuation. Writing about principles of individuation is nothing new, Deleuze claims, but modern philosophy has avoided the issue until now. It is here, in the theory of individuation, that "the force of Gilbert Simondon's thought comes into play. He sets forth a profoundly original theory of individuation, which entails an entire philosophy." (p. 43)

Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (1994)

As one of the most influential readers of Simondon, Bernard Stiegler seeks in *Technics and Time* to situate Simondon's thinking in a tradition with André Leroi-Gourhan and Bertrand Gille, arguing for technology as a misunderstood and underestimated aspect of Western philosophy with serious consequences for our understanding of man in the world. Stiegler's use of Simondon also makes clear why Heidegger's notion of technology might be inadequate in relation to time as long as it attempts to engage them separately and not together: What is time if it is not registered by techniques? How could it otherwise be known and experienced?

***Parrhesia—A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, issue 7: Special issue on Gilbert Simondon (edited by Arne De Boever, Alex Murray, Jonathan Roffe and Ashley Woodward, 2009)**

The magazine *Parrhesia* has published an impressive volume of texts on Simondon, especially for those of us who do not read French and cannot take part of the rich secondary literature on Simondon in French language. This issue translates texts by Simondon and some of his most interesting interpreters, Jean-Hugues Barthélémy, Bernhard Stiegler, Paolo Virno and Igor Krtolica. In an interview with Brian Massumi, titled "Technical Mentality' Revisited: Brian Massumi on Gilbert Simondon", conducted by Arne De Boever, Alex Murray and Jon Roffe, Massumi calls for a broader approach to Simondon.

"The one thing that worries me is that there seems to be a tendency to concentrate on Simondon's theory of the technical object to the exclusion of the other aspects of this thought – physical individuation, vital individuation,

and psychic individuation (synonymous for him with collective individuation). The force of *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* [On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects] cannot be fully understood in isolation from the overall theory of qualitative change – what he calls "allagmatics" – which is dedicated to understanding these modes of individuation in their relation to each other." (p. 38)

Muriel Combes: *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual* (2012)

Combes's book is philosophically intriguing as well as a brilliant introduction to the philosophy of Simondon, particularly his theory of individuation. Among the many interesting themes Combes touches upon in her book is the ethics of Simondon, which she relates to his understanding of reticularity and the collective individuation referred to in the title of her book.

"In such an ethics, the subject lives on by affirming its relative character, or more precisely, its relational character, by inscribing its acts into the network of other acts as much as it can. (...) To act ethically, for a subject, means in effect to be affirmed as a "singular point in an open infinity of relations" (...), that is, to construct a field of resonance for other acts or to prolong one's acts in a field of resonance constructed by others; it is to proceed on an enterprise of collective transformation, on the production of novelty in common, where each is transformed by carrying potential for transformation for others. This, then, is the definition of collective individuation, opening into the dimension of transindividual." (p. 65)

Bruno Latour: *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (2013)

The French thinker Bruno Latour continues his exploration of knowledge and truth-conditions in this book, with a title that also plays on Simondon's famous book, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958). The scientific institution as we know it is just one of the modes of existence (or modes of extension, according to Latour) that delivers truth today, and Latour calls for an opening up of other modes of existence. Thus, the book dives deeper into the ideas formulated in the book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), by qualifying the questioning of the universality of the ideas of modernity.

Yuk Hui: Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics (*eflux* vol. 86, 2017) and "On the Soul of Technical Objects: Commentary on Simondon's 'Technics and Eschatology'" (*Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 35: 6, 2018)

In both "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics" and "On the Soul of Technical Objects" Yuk Hui uses Simondon to establish a concept of cosmotechnics, relating cosmology, moral and technology. Building on the unique understanding of culture as intertwined with technology and nature in Simondon, Hui defines cosmotechnics as "the unification of the cosmic order and moral order through technical activities" (2017). In the second article recommended, Hui writes about the concept of the soul in Simondon and relates it both to the alienation of technical objects Simondon himself is writing about, as well as to the Marxist concept of alienation. Yuk Hui has also written an updated answer to questions Simondon posed in his 1958 magnum opus: *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, titled *On the Existence of Digital Objects* (2016).

Elisabeth Grosz: "Simondon and the Preindividual", chapter 5 in *The Incorporeal - Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materiality* (2018)

In this chapter in *The Incorporeal*, Elisabeth Grosz reflects upon affections in relation to Simondon's concept of collective individuation. "Anxiety", Grosz writes, is an "operation with no action, a permanent emotion that is not able to resolve affectivity" (p. 192). Anxiety arises when an individual is "cut off from an order of collective being through which it can address its anxiety and enter a new kind of relation in which it can again invent new ways of living in a world that it cannot control." It is a collective existence, Grosz writes, that "provides a 'much vaster' place, or many, by which the subject can overcome itself and enter into new relations (...)." (p. 192f).