

Individual choices in the context of psychical and collective individuation

Elecciones individuales en el contexto de la individuación psíquica y colectiva

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This paper presents an approach to individual choice based on a theory from philosopher and psychologist Gilbert Simondon. The purpose is to highlight the psychological and psychosocial aspects of Simondon's theory, which has not been explored enough. This author proposes to study individuation from a broader perspective and develops some intrinsic characteristics of psychical and collective individuation. His core thesis is that individuals may participate in the transindividual through their choices. Furthermore, choice is analyzed as a possible way to individuate the self. Therefore, Simondon's concept of individuation will be explained, followed by some reflections on the nature of psychical and collective individuation and the transindividual dimension, considering some similarities and differences with biological individuation. Finally, the author's understanding of individual choice and his ethical view of individuation are illustrated, and a connection between choice and invention in Simondon's theory is suggested.

Keywords: individuation, psychical and collective, transindividual, choice, invention

Este artículo presenta un enfoque de la elección individual basado en una teoría del filósofo y psicólogo Gilbert Simondon. El propósito es destacar los aspectos psicológicos y psicosociales de la teoría de Simondon, que no se ha explorado lo suficiente. Este autor propone estudiar la individuación desde una perspectiva más amplia y desarrolla algunas características intrínsecas de la individuación psíquica y colectiva. Su tesis central es que los individuos pueden participar en el transindividual a través de sus elecciones. Además, la elección se analiza como una posible forma de individualizar el yo. Por lo tanto, se explicará el concepto de individuación de Simondon, seguido de algunas reflexiones sobre la naturaleza de la individuación psíquica y colectiva y la dimensión transindividual, considerando algunas similitudes y diferencias con la individuación biológica. Finalmente, se ilustra la comprensión del autor de la elección individual y su visión ética de la individuación, y se sugiere una conexión entre la elección y la invención en la teoría de Simondon.

Palabras clave: individuación, psíquico y colectivo, transindividual, elección, invención



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1. INTRODUCTION

Gilbert Simondon was a French philosopher whose work—most of it—became known in the last quarter of a century. Simondon (1924-1989) is best known for his theory of individuation. He was a professor of philosophy and physics and director of a laboratory of general psychology and technology for 20 years. The beginning of widespread dissemination of his work can be dated to the publication of the second part of his main thesis in 1989, the year of his death. However, it has been asserted on several occasions that the French academic community had relegated Simondon to an undeserved purgatory, from which it took him a long time to emerge. Not surprisingly, his central thesis was first published in full only in 2005. This article focuses on his theory's psychic and collective individuation domain, which has not been explored much.

For this purpose, the following points concerning psychic and collective individuation and the transindividual dimension are presented. According to Simondon (2014), psychic individuation is consecutive and concomitant to collective individuation. Moreover, when the subject participates in the transindividual dimension, this allows him to find meaning in a community. Furthermore, the choice is understood as an action that leads the subject to a specific course or individuation based on a process of self-organization.

If we take a look at the research made about the author, it is generous when it is about the technical and technological implications of his theory (cf. Bardin, 2015; Blanco et al., 2015; Chabot, 2003; Montoya, 2019; Simondon, 2007). However, recently, we have seen publications highlighting the psychosocial aspects of his theory (Combes, 2013; Gil, 2019; Heredia, 2012, 2015). In Psychology, specifically, it is viable to investigate this point of view from Simondon's perspective.

Also, this topic is relevant in finding connections between philosophy and psychology, and this research may be interesting for a broad spectrum of academic studies from philosophy or psychology. The reason is that both academic fields study, amongst other topics, the process of individuation and the decision-making process. This article aims to highlight the psychological and psychosocial aspects of Simondon's theory, which have not been explored enough, specifically choice and its connection with the image cycle.

Psychical individuation combines two elements for the process of solving tensions through transduction: Affective-emotivity and perceptive-active operations. Affection is the subject's ability to let themselves be passively modified by the environment; emotion relates to a state of internal resonance, leading the subject to behave proactively to modify their milieu. Furthermore, perception is another operation in psychical individuation; through perception, the subject solves tensions, making compatible two opposites, because perception is not just capturing a

pre-existing reality; perception is also an invention.

Also, the transindividual dimension for psychical and collective individuation results in a new and more complex problem because the subject cannot resolve all their tensions internally; on the inside of the subject as an individuated being, the process for resolving tensions requires other individuals, and also a conjoined collaboration with a group or community. Besides that, in the second section of this paper, we also approach the problem of choice for Simondon and present the connections between choice and invention in Simondon's philosophy.

With this purpose, we open the article with an explanation of individuation in general from Simondon's perspective. Also, the processes involved in psychic and collective individuation, in particular, are described. Finally, we present the definition of choice in Simondon's theory and its connection with the cycle of image and invention.

2. WHAT DOES INDIVIDUATION MEAN?

In psychology, the term *individuation* is used to refer to an essential developmental stage in human beings: the moment when the human infant achieves a preliminary separation at the psychic level from his mother figure and begins, step by step, to build his life as an individual and later his identity. The individuation process corresponds to a *psychological birth*, which does not coincide with the biological birth (Mahler, 1990). During the first two or three years of life, the infant progressively goes through this separation-individuation process (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 2002). According to Jung (2002), individuation refers to the process of becoming an individual, building one's self concerning one's environment. It is the accomplishment of psychological individuality, for psychical individuality is a given from birth.

Notwithstanding the above, this paper focuses on explaining individuation as a broader process beyond a specific moment of human development. The French philosopher and psychologist Gilbert Simondon (2020) conversely defines individuation as a general process of becoming, which means that every individual, whether a physical being or a living being, individuates. There are no isolated individuals; an individual-milieu coupling constitutes the being. In his explanation of individuals and the individuation process, Simondon (2020) distances himself from substantialism and hylomorphism, which conceive being as a predetermined substance as a union between form and matter with a single possible result. Following this critique, he seeks to explain the process of the becoming of the being, that is, how individuals come to be, provided certain preconditions and as a result of their endless becoming. For Simondon, in order to individuate, the being passes from the pre-individual, which is undetermined potential energy, to individuation as such, when the individual takes form and modifies its relation to the milieu; this process may even go further in the transindi-

dual dimension. The individuation process consists of deploying potentials without needing a single pre-established essence to be obtained. Pre-individual energy is undetermined, chaotic, and random: pure potential energy. However, the being possesses a tendency to phase-shift which allows it to deploy said pre-individual energy (Simondon, 2014) on the individual on the one hand and the associated milieu on the other.

Individuation takes place in both physical and living individuals. In a given physical system, individuation implies that the potential energy within the system diminishes so that the individual may go on to a state of relative stability. Nevertheless, physical objects and living beings are constantly related to their milieu (Bardin, 2015). Consequently, there is no such thing as a perfect, completely individuated individual: when a system consumes all its potential energy, nothing is left but decay.

Simondon (2020) resorts to *metastability* to explain the relative equilibrium in which individuals find themselves, as they do not yet possess the possibility of transforming themselves through the information they exchange with their milieu. This type of equilibrium is not stable, then; it goes beyond stability; it is a relative or metastable equilibrium: “The resolving individuation conserves the tensions in the equilibrium of metastability instead of nullifying them in the equilibrium of stability” (Simondon, 2020, p. 226).

In the case of living beings, individuation does not offer one single result, nor is it pre-determined, because the result obtained from an initial process of individuation serves as the basis for successive individuations. Among living beings, the resolution of tensions with the milieu takes place through *transduction* (Simondon, 2020), which is an operation that involves the translation of information between different levels, which allows for metastable structures to form within individuals. The living individual sustains itself by resolving its tensions through individuation and transduction, taking them to a state of metastability instead of nullifying them in total equilibrium and stability.

As a result, the author proposes substituting the concept of homeostasis as stable equilibrium with that of metastable equilibrium: the living individual operates a transduction process through the interaction between interiority and exteriority. For this purpose, he resorts to integration and differentiation instead of simply adjusting external conditions. Similarly, biologist Jakob von Uexküll (2016) suggests that living beings are rooted in and tied to their environment. As a result, the milieu is always an associated milieu, an environment-world (*Umwelt*), which becomes more complex depending on the individual. A reciprocal determination exists between the subject and the environment (Heredia, 2021).

In Simondon’s work (2014), the psychical and the vital are not to be distinguished as two substances or parallel or superposed functions, even though Simondon

distinguishes two types of individuals: physical and biological. Furthermore, psychical individuation is an amplification of the vital individuation: “[...] the psychical intervenes as a slowing down of the individuation of the living, a neotenic amplification of the first state of this genesis; the psyche exists when the living being does not completely become concretized and conserves an internal duality” (Simondon, 2020, p. 177). The psychical is a problematized or more complex expression of the living insofar as every problem of the living cannot be resolved through transduction via affectivity. When affectivity can no longer resolve the tensions, it becomes situated alongside perceptive-active functions, which allow for the deployment of other potentials within the individual. The following section proposes a more in-depth explanation of the affective-emotive and perceptive-active functions regarding psychical and collective individuation.

3. PSYCHICAL AND COLLECTIVE INDIVIDUATION IN THE WORK OF SIMONDON

According to Simondon (2020), psychical individuation correlates to collective individuation; they are both formed simultaneously. Psychical individuation results from biological individuation, as psychical beings are living beings that possess different modes of psychical functioning. Consequently, Simondon (2008; 2020; 2023) does not establish a dividing line that qualitatively separates human beings from animals. Conversely, in *Imagination and Invention* (Simondon, 2013), he proposes that living individuals possess primary (biological) and secondary (psychical) modes of functioning. As human beings are found most of the time in a secondary mode of functioning and—to a lesser extent—in a primary mode of functioning, he thus resorts to the frequency of behavior—rather than appealing to substantialism—to explain the differences between human beings and animals.

In the biological or primary mode of relation to the milieu, the organism mobilizes its action system to inventory the milieu according to primary categories such as valence and signification (predator, prey, mate, offspring, and others). Primary functioning is the state of alertness within an individual outside their territory. The psychical, or secondary, level occurs when the milieu has already been converted into a territory; it corresponds to the organism’s functioning, which does not involve it entirely in the situation. Secondary functioning is not opposed to primary activities but comes after them (Simondon, 2013).

In the territory, the living being may deploy a purely psychical mode of action, once the object has been identified. In this sense, as we have already mentioned, the animal is not opposed to man; the issue becomes to situate the frequency of behaviors at either the biological or the psychical level. The more advanced the organization of the milieu, the less it is necessary to provide an inventory according to primary categories. After a preliminary categorical scouting, the field becomes open to psychical

activity. Animals can only exhibit proper psychical activity within their territories (Simondon, 2013).

According to Gil (2016), the transition from milieu to territory also implies a shift from situations to objects, considering that action is not reduced to vital categories such as attack and defense. The information gradient becomes broader through the capacities of perception and integration. The more advanced the organization of the territory, the closer it is to the psychical, with intelligent behavior then taking place. A transition gradually occurs from the biological to the psychical; it does not happen suddenly. At the secondary (psychological) level, mental analogues of objects exist, and desire, motivation, and conscious anticipation intervene. Simondon proposes a third level he calls formal: "The third level is reflexive, formal; in it, the subject dominates concerning the milieu: objects become 'frameworks or provide support for relations'" (Gil, 2019, p. 98).

For Chabot (2003), human beings experience different forms of individuation. Human development goes beyond biological considerations, and as a result, human beings cannot resolve their tensions solely through physical means. The psyche emerges as a novel attempt to resolve tensions through thinking or reason. As a result, psychical individuation requires the evolution of the individual towards the universe of the mind. Thus, this means a relation to the world based on perception, action, and signification. Psychical abilities are the ones that constitute a thinking being inside the body of a living organism.

Psychical individuation begins with a continuous relation between internal and external reality. Therefore, it resorts to mechanisms of differentiation and integration to constitute its individuality in the transduction process. This process takes place through the formation of layers that, in turn, form structures susceptible to being modified through information exchange operations, similar to a crystal that grows little by little, layer by layer, within the mother liquor. There is a constant relation between internal and external functions. Perception, for instance, takes place at the internal level. However, afterward, it leads to the external level through action: "The individual individuates insofar as it perceives beings, constitutes an individuation through action or a productive construction, and belongs to the system that includes its unique reality and the objects it perceives or constitutes" (Simondon, 2020, p. 272).

Individualization is the process through which an already individuated subject tends towards uniqueness without losing previous individuation that connects the individual to others like them and to the system from which they emerge and belong (Simondon, 2020). Personality is the element that connects these two aspects: the individuated being and the individualized being: it is a mixture of individuation and individualization. The author offers an example in which he relates individuation to sexuality as a general trait shared with others. In contrast, individualiza-

tion corresponds to singularity, i.e., the contingent events that have affected how the subject expresses its sexuality. Personality integrates both aspects and reflects both individuation concerning sexuality in general, as well as individualization, in the form of the person's experience of sexuality. For Simondon (2020): "What constitutes the human concretely is neither pure individuation nor pure individualization, but a mixture of the two" (p. 294). Moreover, he goes on: "Personality is thus a relational activity between principle and result; personality is what produces the being's unity between its foundations of universality and the particularities of individualization" (Simondon, 2020, p. 294).

Simondon (2020) then explores the question of whether it is possible to speak of psychical individuation as such, i.e., if there is a properly psychical individual in addition to physical and living individuals. He suggests, however, that the psyche is a form of individualization, which would correspond to a more restricted type of individuation, which in turn requires support from the already individuated living individual to develop. Psychical functioning is not unrelated to living functioning; instead, it occurs after initial individuation in the living individual, which acquires psychical functions such as thinking without the latter nullifying the former but instead being complementary. This, in turn, results in the living individual becoming the theater of successive individuations which coincide with its phase-shifting. The physiological and the psychical components then become complementary within a given individual.

Individualization creates new structures for the functioning of the individual. It integrates thinking with the body. According to the author:

Psychological individuality introduces certain norms that do not exist on the biological level; whereas biological finality is homeostatic and seeks to obtain satisfaction for the being in a state of greater equilibrium, psychological individuality exists to the extent that this biological equilibrium and this satisfaction are judged insufficient (Simondon, 2020, p. 317).

The psychical contents would then result from solving a series of problems that had emerged before the living individual and are resolved through individualization. Psychical structures express this individualization, generating somatic and psychical domains within the individuated being. These are not identical to each other but are rather complementary and constitute somatic and psychical subsets coordinated so that the individual may function. Simondon is critical of the dualistic and substantialist separation of mind and body; conversely, he suggests that the individual's functioning is always somatic and psychical.

In this sense, individuals originate psychological reality—beyond the physical—through interactions. Simondon (2020) refers to this dimension as *transindividual*,

as it originated in individuals and is sustained by their interactions, even though it goes beyond the individual. Culture, for example, with its monuments and expressions, continues to exist as individuals reactualized and understood them as bearers of signification. Simondon (2020) states that it is not enough to say that language is the one that allows man to gain access to significations, as he believes that there are significations at the transindividual level; for him, language is the vehicle for the exchange of information among subjects, an instrument for the expression of collective significations. In his words:

The psyche continues vital individuation in a being that, in order to resolve its problematic, is itself forced to intervene as an element of the problem through its action as subject; the subject can be conceived as the unit of being qua individuated living being and qua being that is the representative of its action through the world as an element and dimension of the world [...] (Simondon, 2020, p. 9).

According to Gil (2019), the notion of subject in Simondon is directly linked to the psyche because, in the context of vital individuation, a problem arises that forces the subject to act according to the psychical mode of functioning. She also suggests that there are two levels connected to each other, for which Simondon uses the term *subject*: as the *unity of being* and as a *being that acts in the world*. The subject can choose; these aspects constitute its individuation process through the information it receives and exchanges, as it resolves tensions by taking them to a relation to the collective.

On the one hand, affect is the capacity to be passively modified by events; emotion, on the other hand, expresses an internal resonance that generates in the subject dispositions and attitudes that make the subject actively modify their future.

For Simondon (2014), affective-emotivity is fundamental, as it delimits the core of individuality. It should not be located at the level of pure consciousness or organic unconsciousness. At the limit between consciousness and unconsciousness, there is a layer that Simondon calls subconscious, which is composed of affectivity and emotivity. Affective-emotivity allows the subject to go from the undetermined to the transindividual since affections such as pleasure and pain—which are interpreted as a favorable or unfavorable event in one's life—also exhibit some signification in the transition from the pre-individual to the transindividual. Negative affective states are states of conflict between the pre-individual and the individual, whereas positive affective states indicate synergy between the constituted individuality and the pre-individual. By way of example, the experience of anxiety indicates a tension between the pre-individual and the already-individuated, which cannot be resolved by the solitary subject and requires a relation to others to be resolved (Combes, 2013).

The affections are a way of orientation of the living

being regarding itself; they offer a sign about life as such and show a variation in self-becoming. For example, the sense of hunger is not merely a physical discomfort that affects a living being; it is embedded in the subject's becoming according to a temporal structure. It has meaning for the living being and its life, just like any other affect such as desire, exhaustion, or cold.

[...] affectivity is much more than just pleasure and pain; it is a way for the being to be instantaneously situated according to a vaster becoming; affection is the index of becoming [...]; each mode, each instant, each action, and each state of the living being are between the world and the living being; this being is polarized in accordance with the world on the one hand and in accordance with becoming on the other (Simondon, 2020, pp. 288-289).

Affective-emotivity expresses the relation between two subject's domains; it modifies the subject's action in an attempt to create harmony between the subject and the pre-individual and the transindividual dimension. Simondon explains that emotion is, then, the counterpart of affectivity. Affectivity precedes emotion as emotion emerges in the context of the tensions being resolved regarding the collective. Emotion has a regulative value and functions at the collective level, allowing the subject to articulate or deploy itself in the transindividual and resolve tensions through action. The transition from affectivity to emotion may be exemplified by the transition from simple pleasure to joy, as the latter occurs in the transindividual dimension. Affectivity is, then, the ground—the basis—for emotivity.

Emotion connects initially unrelated effects and creates unity in the inner world of the living beings, which recognizes emotions as theirs to externalize them towards collectivity. Emotion is integrative and more complex than affect; it expresses the individuality of a given living being. The emotion propels the living being, gives it meaning, directs its action, integrates its affectivity, and unifies it. Emotion unfolds; meanwhile, affectivity can only be experienced passively. Emotion belongs to the order of the metastable; it has a sense of totality and tends to self-maintenance; however, another emotion may also substitute it as the result of changes in individuality. Affections, instead, come and go without persevering.

Yet another major function in the context of the psychical is perception. For Simondon,

Perception is not the grasping of a form but the resolution of a conflict, the discovery of a compatibility, the *invention* of a form. This form that perception is modifies not only the relation between the object and the subject, but also the structure of the object and the structure of the subject. Like all physical and vital forms, it is susceptible to degrading, and this degradation is also a degradation of the whole subject, because each form is part of the subject's structure (Simondon, 2020, p. 259).

Through perception, conflicts can be resolved by transforming tensions into compatibilities; it is not merely the grasping of predetermined forms or forms existing in the real world. Sensations experienced by the living being are marked by their disparity; as a result, the individual discovers patterns through perception that resolve fundamental incompatibilities or disparities present in sensations. This process is, in turn, a discovery of significations not initially contained in the sensations but invented through perception. Consequently, perception is a process of amplification of basic information. Simondon (2020) provides an example when he discusses visual perception. He claims that each retina is covered by a two-dimensional image: the image on the right and the one on the left are disparate; there is no third image to unify the two former images. In order to integrate them, a new dimension of tri-dimensionality would be necessary. A new system, then, is generated and composed of both images, with their specific details thoroughly perceived. This process constitutes an amplifying operation.

Consequently, the subject constructs through perceptions. It does not merely grasp previously constituted forms since they are no longer present in reality. There is an active relationship between the subject and the world to be perceived. For the author, “to perceive is literally to take through; without this active gesture, which supposes that the subject is part of the system in which the perceptive problem is posed, the perception could not take place” (Simondon, 2020, p. 270). It is not that subjectivity deforms the perceived reality since the subject follows signals received from the outside world. However, there is, in fact, an active disposition on its part in constructing its act of perception.

Perception is materialized in the collective through action, just as affectivity is materialized in the collective through emotion. According to Simondon, “Action and emotion arise when the collective individuates; for the subject, the collective is the reciprocity of affectivity and perception, a reciprocity that unifies these two domains by giving them an additional dimension” (Simondon, 2020, pp. 280-281). Action gives a concrete meaning to emotion and perception. Neuroscientist J. M. Fuster (2018) similarly argues that one of the rudimentary functions of the brain is the perception-action cycle, which he defines as:

The circular cybernetic processing of information adapts the organism to its environment during sequential goal-directed behavior. In it, environmental changes elicit stimuli that are analyzed by sensory structures, which prompt the nervous system to produce reactive responses to those changes, which produce new outer changes, and so on. The processing flow of that adaptive cycle is reciprocated by counter-cyclical feedback flow from motor to sensory structures to accelerate the adjustment process and to prepare sensory structures for expected self-induced change. In humans, the PA cycle involves the perceptual (posterior) and executive (frontal) cortices engaged suc-

cessively through the environment. A conversational dialogue is a vivid example of two PAs in action, where each interlocutor is the ‘environment’ of the other (Fuster, 2013, p. 253).

In the context of this psychical and collective individuation, it is significant to introduce the concept of the *transindividual* because it is through its inclusion that Simondon (2014) presents a new way of understanding the relationship between the individual and society. In this scenario, an exclusively psychological or sociological approach does not sufficiently describe human phenomena (Combes, 2013). For Simondon,

Discovering the significance of the message that comes from one being or several beings is to form a collective with them and to participate in group individuation with them. There is no difference between discovering a signification and existing collectively with the being relative to it since signification is not of the being but between beings, or rather across beings: it is transindividual (Simondon, 2023, p. 344).

For the subject, then, being a part of the collective constitutes a second individuation; the collective is a set of participations to which the subject has access through its choices and in which it may participate in the transindividual. “The subject being can be conceived as a more or less perfectly coherent system of three successive phases of being: the pre-individual phase, the individuated phase, and the transindividual phase [...]” (Simondon, 2020, pp. 348-349).

Psychical life implies the emergence of a new, more difficult problematic that cannot be resolved within the living being, within its limits as an individuated being, intraindividually. It requires the transindividual through its participation in the collective dimension. The collective allows for the integration of the past and the future and stores significations for individuals.

Such a collective reality is psychosocial in nature, i.e., it integrates the psychical and the collective: it is transindividual. It encompasses what the individuated being carries with itself and the pre-individual charge for future individuations. The subject finds a different charge of pre-individual reality in others, which gives rise to new structures and functions that cannot be produced at the intra-individual or inter-individual level. The transindividual constitutes a new individuation that links the individuals of a group through a network of meanings shared by them and to which they contribute. It is a type of individuation that gathers the natures that several individuals bear, which goes beyond their already constituted individualities. Communication with the world and with other beings occurs precisely because of these pre-individual charges.

From this perspective, it could then be said that psychical and collective individuation generates the possibility of gaining access to the spiritual regime (or spiritua-

lity). In Simondon's words:

The side of action expresses spirituality insofar as it emerges from the subject and is established in objective eternity, in a monument more durable than bronze, through language, an institution, art, or an oeuvre. The side of emotion expresses spirituality insofar as it penetrates the subject, flowing back into it and filling the subject in an instant, rendering it symbolic relative to itself, reciprocal relative to itself, comprehended relative to what engulfs it (Simondon, 2020, p. 281).

Spirituality is not, then, the most common experience concerning the individual, but it results in synergy and a shared structuration of beings. It indicates to the individuals that they are not merely individuals since they are bound to the world: there is a reserve within it not yet polarized, which is available and lies in wait. It belongs to the transindividual's order rather than the individuated individual. Spirituality may be articulated in writing, through the spoken word, in what has been expressed or recorded. Nevertheless, this is only one of its two possibilities; it may also be expressed in an instant, without seeking eternity: only a moment in the present, a synergy that later fades away: "Spirituality is the signification of the being as separated and attached, as alone and as a member of the collective" (Simondon, 2020, p. 278). And he adds:

Spirituality is the signification of the relation of the individuated being to the collective and therefore also the signification of the foundation of this relation, i.e., the fact that the individuated being is not entirely individuated but still contains a particular charge of non-individuated, pre-individual reality that it preserves and respects, living with the awareness of its existence instead of retreating into a substantial individuality, a false aseity (Simondon, 2020, p. 278).

Participation in the transindividual dimension may occur in the subjects through personal choices. Despite being part of a collective dimension, subjects need to participate actively, not merely establish an interindividual relation (although that may be a starting point). Access to the transindividual dimension requires appropriation of spirituality through reflexivity. It requires being significant in the network of which one is a part.

4. CHOICE AS A FORM OF PSYCHICAL AND COLLECTIVE INDIVIDUATION AND ITS CONNECTION WITH INVENTION

Imagination and Invention is a book based on a seminar Simondon issued during 1965 and 1966, mostly to psychologists, where the author explores images and their role in invention. In there, he emphasizes the importance of images and comes up with a cycle of images from anticipation to invention, mentioning its role in the subject's decision-making process. This image cycle is a remarkable contribution to psychology because the cycle

of image includes a reconceptualization of the understanding of perception and mental images and considers some aspects regarding Gestalt theory, Kurt Lewin's field theory, and psychoanalysis.

In his exploration of images, Simondon (2013) suggests we typically associate images with mental images and consciousness. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to link a priori the existence of images with subjectivity. Images function as quasi-organisms because they show tendencies as if they had free will; images do not always correspond to the subject's will; they have intrinsic drive. Images can take over the subject and modify their trajectory and choices, and a Socratic *daimon*. Images might be like parasites, or they might contribute to decision-making through implicit know-how applied for problem resolution situations without including conscious thinking. According to the author:

In situations of urgency or concern, or generally emotional situations, images truly highlight and guide decisions; these images are not perceptions, and they do not correspond to something concrete because, to choose something, the subject must preserve a certain distance to reality, to not be engaged entirely; the semi-concrete character of images involves elements from anticipation (projects, vision of the future), cognitive contents (reality representations, specific details heard or seen); finally affective and emotional contents; image is a sample of life, but it remains partially abstract because of the incompleteness of this sample (Simondon, 2013, p. 15).

Simondon (2013) explains this process using the cycle of images. As previously mentioned, images are quasi-organisms that develop inside the subject and allow them to resolve tensions. Thus, objects manufactured by humans are always an object-image because they contain latent significance on a cognitive, conative, and affective-emotive level. These significations may transfer to other subjects and become new inventions. In this sense, images lay the foundations for invention because they involve anticipation and cognitive and affective elements that can become a symbol and give rise to invention.

For Simondon (2013), invention is the resolution of a problem by using information collected from anticipation and cognitive and affective experiences that the subject gathers through imagination. In this process, when images turn into symbols, they may result in invention. Invention derives in complex solutions because it is not only an association of images; invention goes beyond the actual needs and opens new possibilities for the future. According to this, we explain the connection between invention and choices in Simondon's theory.

Based on what we have presented, we may ask what choice means for Simondon. We may further enquire: In what contexts does he mention or develop this concept? Moreover, what is the connection between choice and invention?

For Simondon, the problem of choice emerges when there is nothing left but the empty form of action, when the technical or organic forces that determine us become irrelevant, and when we need to choose a path that may or may not be moral, when there is a chance for self-constitution of the subject through its action, and it can resolve problems through self-constitution. Values help us address these dilemmas since they predispose us to resolve them. According to Simondon,

Thus, the subject, more so than the individual, is implicated in choice; choice occurs on the level of subjects and involves the constituted individuals within the collective. Choice is, therefore, the advent of the being. It is not a simple relation. It would be more appropriate to study if there are modes of the pre-individual, i.e., the different aspects of nature that subjects include (Simondon, 2020, pp. 347-348).

For him, choice can be related to the transindividual, as it is an operation that allows for one's becoming regarding the collective. Choice is not merely conducted based on what has already been fully individuated in the subject. It also requires individuation on the part of yet un-individuated nature: "for choice is the discovery of a relation of the being through which the subject is constituted in a collective unity" (Simondon, 2020, p. 347). It allows for the discovery and the institution of new norms within the collective, which does not result from a single subject but from a number of them (i.e., it is transindividual); it is the structuration of one subject with other subjects; the subject is the milieu of choice and at the same time an agent of choice: "ontologically, every actual choice is reciprocal and supposes an operation of individuation deeper than communication of consciousness or an intersubjective relation. The choice is a collective operation, a group foundation, a transindividual activity" (Simondon, 2020, p. 347).

Simondon (2020) also explores the question of freedom and responsibility concerning choice. For him, a responsible act is one that takes place considering the synergy between constitutive normativity and constituted normativity: it is a free act, properly speaking. When an act is entirely determined by social normativity or by the specific normativity of the individual, it cannot be considered a free act. Absolute conformity to an external or an internal norm does not constitute a free act; the act points to an as yet unconstituted normativity, to an order that seeks to institute one which creates the conditions of possibility for reality. It results in the resolution of a problem; it is normative, capable of incorporating and promoting new compatibility between two normativities: society and the individual. The act is the actual relation between these two levels.

This concerns a network and not a chain of acts; the chain of acts is an abstract simplification of the network;

ethical reality is indeed structured in a network because there is a resonance of acts concerning one another, not by way of their implicit or explicit norms, but directly in the system that they form, i.e., the being's becoming; the reduction to norms is identical to the reduction to forms: it only involves one of the extreme terms of the real (Simondon, 2020, pp. 377-378).

Such a process of resolving tensions through invention is connatural with intelligent action. Invention contributes to the integration of problematic data within a unit. The data, which initially may have seemed to be incompatible, generate a process of integration, which reveals a more affluent, heightened systematics through the compatibility of a situation considered impossible at first (Simondon, 2016; 2023). Concerning the question of ethics, Simondon elaborates:

Ethics is that through which the subject remains subject, refusing to become an absolute individual, a closed domain of reality, or a detached singularity; it is that through which the subject remains in an ever-charged internal and external problematic, i.e., in a real present, living on the central zone of being, neither wanting to become either form or matter. Ethics expresses the meaning of perpetuated individuation, the stability of becoming, that of the being as pre-individuated, individuating, and tending toward the continuous that reconstructs a reality as vast as the pre-individuated system in an organized form of communication. Across the individual—understood as the amplificative transfer emerging from Nature—societies become a world (Simondon, 2020, p. 380).

Simondon (2020) also analyzes the place of moral conscience in choice. The subject acts and controls itself. Conscience is the reactivity of the subject regarding itself, which takes place when one is about to solve a problem through choice, understood as an optative action. Moral conscience guides such choice, and there is relative indetermination in it. The subject is not only endowed with determinations; it is also endowed with internal self-regulation.

According to Simondon, the moral act resists becoming and possesses a proactive force that allows it to become part of the system to which it belongs; it is endowed with the power of becoming and articulating itself with other acts in a network of significations. The non-moral act is an act lost within itself, one which covers over and is covered over a part of the subject's becoming: it implies a loss of being. The immoral act, on its part, destroys the significations of the acts that have existed or may yet exist and precludes other acts from structuring themselves into a network. Simondon (2020) refers to this type of act as aestheticism, the iteration or repetition of an act concerning becoming which is not articulated with other acts:

Such is aestheticism as counter-moral, the unification of

acts according to a particular shared style and not according to their power of transductivity. Aestheticism is a parasite of moral becoming; it is the creation of abstract forms within the existence of the subject and the illusion of unification according to these abstract forms. Aestheticism, which wants ever new acts, deceives itself in a certain sense and becomes an iteration of novelty according to the extrinsic norm of novelty; in the same way, conformism or perpetual opposition to social norms is a resignation facing the characteristic of the actuality of acts and a flight into a style of iteration according to a positive form of coincidence or a negative form of opposition with respect to a given (Simondon, 2020, p. 379).

According to Simondon (2020), each action of the living being results from integration and differentiation processes. As a result, the choice is known as such in the subject's consciousness. It becomes information to be integrated even though it may have initially been considered potential energy to be differentiated. Choice as an act implies true differentiation. Simondon thus establishes a difference between choice and relaxation. Constructive choice does not link the subject to previous states; relaxation, on the other hand, relates the subject back to a neutral state similar to previous neutral states, characterized by inactivity or an absolute lack of information. Thus, "this existence is the feature of every aestheticism; the subject in the state of aestheticism is a subject that has replaced its affectivity with a reactivity of action and information according to a closed cycle that is incapable of accepting a new action or a new information (Simondon, 2020, p. 176).

Accordingly, we find a connection between choice and invention in Simondon's theory. Choice is a process that takes place in the context of psychic-collective individuation, especially considering the subject as a proactive being who participates in resolving tensions. Also, in the same way as choice, invention is a process characteristic of living individuals, consisting of a simple foraging pattern at the beginning, a more complex use of tools, and the construction of technical and aesthetic objects. Simondon (2014) does not address the problem of choice in physical individuation because, in this level, individuation arises from a combination of internal and external forces affecting the individual; choice, on the other hand, is an action the subject does, and this action affects its milieu.

Also, choice is a process leading to new ways of being and is a practice of freedom. Moreover, for Simondon (2013), invention is characteristic of intelligence; this is why we consider it possible to understand choice as an invention from Simondon's perspective if we link these processes to ethical behavior, meaning the subject constantly interacts with their milieu exchanging information (in a way to the transindividual). It does not limit itself to acting like a closed system where there is only an option for degradation. This last option is equivalent to aestheticism for Simondon, but it inhibits the possibility of new indi-

viduations aiming to achieve the transindividual dimension.

Now, the image cycle is the foundation for choice-making because choices take into account anticipation and cognitive and affective elements, all of them combined to generate a valuable action for the subject to resolve tensions within their milieu. This choice can be understood as an invention when it solves problems not only in the present but also for the future and establishes new possibilities that may change the future for the subject and other subjects.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper presents some operations from the psychical and collective individuation perspective. With this purpose, we started by introducing some aspects of the concept of individuation in Simondon (2014), the psychical and collective individuation, and the affective-emotive and perceptive-active operations present in this individuation.

Also, we explained the transindividual dimension and some implications regarding spirituality. The subject must interact with a community to solve tensions, and through this path, starting with the interactions, it is possible to access the transindividual. Spirituality leads to a connection with collectivity. The transindividual goes beyond the individual and is reserved in manifestations such as habits, traditions, or monuments contributing to psychical individuation in the present and the future through the collected information.

It is significant to highlight that this article is an approximation to exploring more deeply the implications of psychic and collective individuation in Simondon's theory because the technical dimension of his theory has already been widely explored. Also, it presents a new link between choice and invention from Simondon's perspective.

Lastly, we established that choice could be an invention from Simondon's perspective because both consider the affective-emotive and perceptive-active operations and might develop into an act of freedom from the subject, which may promote their transindividual individuation.

Also, we contemplate that the connection established between choice and invention is a topic for future research in psychology and philosophy because both academic fields are interested in studying individual choices regarding freedom, responsibility, and ethical consequences. Moreover, it is useful to appreciate the connection between choice and the image cycle to understand this decision-making process better.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

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