

Jacqueline Bellon

THE ASSOCIATED MILIEU AS A MEANS TOWARDS AUTONOMY IN GILBERT SIMONDON'S PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY AND INDIVIDUATION THEORY

The French philosopher and psychologist coined the term of an “associated milieu” within a concept of technological evolution, while at the same time providing a taxonomy of technical objects, and a description of a specific time of the technical.

According to Simondon technical objects (which include technical elements, technical individuals and technical ensembles) have a tendency to develop, evolving from more umwelt-dependent to a more independent and autonomous organisation. He states that the true essence of the technical, and therefore, true progress, is to be found in a technical object that is carrying its own condition of possibility as an associated milieu within itself and will be less and less dependent on the assistance of its surrounding. There are, according to Simondon, quantum leaps in technical development displaying an idiosyncratic structure of temporality that will follow a specific logic of the technical.

This specific logic and time of the technical influences the human world, just as much as the human ability to invent influences the technical sphere. On the one hand, Simondon sees humans as the organisers of technical objects. On the other hand, he emphasises the importance of a very deep understanding of technical objects and of a concept of technicity itself. If a culture does not want to lose contact to its core influences and become alienated from, and subsequently surprised by the technologies it is using, there need to be mechanologists, who could be seen as sociologists or psychologists of the technical. They'd need to have an understanding of technical processes from “within”, that is: they need to be able to actually take the object apart and put it back together, or, at least, know all the components – and the associated milieus.

In the proposed talk I would like to provide a synopsis of these concepts to be found in Gilbert Simondon's *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (2016; Originally published as *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, 1958).