

A Dividual Semiotics: From Nietzsche to Deleuze

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the notion of *dividual*. After the *Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle* (Deleuze 1992), this notion has been widely interpreted as the outcome of a crisis of the western notion of *individuum*, induced by the passage from the disciplinary to the control society. However, Deleuze had already used the term “dividual” in reference to cinema (Deleuze 1986) and to opera (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), without negative political implications. Furthermore, the term *dividuum* is borrowed by Friedrich Nietzsche (1980), who employed it to describe the internal struggle which is the condition of moral thought. In this framework, the paper proposes a different interpretation of the term “dividual”. Semiotics is dividual: after Hjelmslev (1969), every semiotic process can be considered as a relation between two planes (expression and content) which, at the same time, are not independent, being in a relation of reciprocal presupposition. Thus, the term “dividual” is referred to a collective entity, related to a specific affect, belonging to a semiotic plane whose elements undergo to qualitative changes when grouped together.

Keywords

Ethics, Aesthetics, Power, Desire, Affect.

1. Scope of the paper

According to Michaela Ott (2020), Gilles Deleuze employs the term *dividual* with a *positive* and a *negative* connotation. The first is referred to cinema: in the *affection-image*, different elements converge in a whole, creating an overall meaning which disappears when one analyses the components. The negative acceptance is referred to the control society:

Single persons appear dividualized due to their reduction to statistical values, the compulsion to participate at all times, and the modularising of their abilities and performances according to a given set of requirements, in a process of ‘distortion’ of what an individual was previously supposed to be (Ott 2020: 165)

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The contrast between the two perspectives is evident. After Deleuze, many authors used the term *dividual* exclusively in a negative acceptance, to criticize control societies. The risk of disregarding the manifold possible kinds of dividualation (Carbone 2024: 32) is to consider somehow “natural” or “positive” the notion of individual. This is why other authors rediscover the notion of dividual, looking at cultural diversity in a non-Eurocentric perspective (Appadurai 2016).

To cope with the ambivalent value of the notion of dividual, the paper will interpret it in a semiotic perspective. *Dividual* will be collocated in the reference system provided by the relation between the expression and the content plane in a semiotic process.

To support this interpretation, the paper will start from Nietzsche’s notion of *dividuum*, underlining its influence on Freud’s metapsychology and on the crisis of the subject featuring the research of 20th century philosophy. Deleuze interprets it in an original way in the framework of French rediscovery of Nietzsche in the second half of 20th century. Basically, Nietzsche’s notion of *dividuum* inspires Deleuze’s point of view regarding the relation between individuals and masses. However, Deleuze develops it in an original, semiotic direction, as it is proven by his consideration about cinema and opera. This allows us to let emerge the link between dividual and immanence.

2. The notion of dividuum in Nietzsche

The source of Deleuze’s notion of *dividual* is to be found in Nietzsche’s reflection on the origin of moral thought. As Max Stirner, Karl Marx, and many other philosophers of the 19th century, Nietzsche individuates in self-interest the basic motivation to act. In this frame, he needs to justify self-sacrifice as a particular case of egoism. To these purposes, he considers different cases:

A girl in love wishes that she could prove the devoted fidelity of her love by measuring it against the unfaithfulness of her beloved. The soldier wishes that he might fall on the battlefield for his victorious fatherland: for in the victory of his fatherland, his highest wishes also triumph. The mother gives to her child what she takes from herself, sleep, the best food, in certain circumstances her health, her property (Nietzsche 1980: 59).

According to Schopenhauer, whose thought held a significant influence on Nietzsche’s intellectual formation, self-sacrifice is a counterexample to an egoistic foundation of behaviour. Nietzsche urges to emancipate from his precursor¹: «But are all these states

¹ In what follows, I use the term precursor to designate those strong authors who causes *anxiety of influence* in following writers. The term has been proposed in literary theory by Harold Bloom (1973) and it fits to philosophy insofar it is a literary genre. The anxiety is proven by the revisionary rations adopted

unegotistical? Are these acts of morality *miracles* because they, according to Schopenhauer's expression, are "impossible and yet real"?» (Nietzsche 1980: 59). The solution found by Nietzsche is full of implications. According to him, self-sacrifice can be interpreted as egoistical if one renounces to a unitarian notion of "individual".

Isn't it clear that in all these cases the person loves *some part of himself*, a thought, a desire, an offspring, *more than some other part of himself*, that he therefore *divides* his being and sacrifices one part to the other? Is it something *essentially* different if an obstinate fellow says: "I would rather be shot on the spot than to move one step out of that person's way"? (Nietzsche 1980: 59)

In other terms, the condition of possibility of moral thought is individuated by Nietzsche in the *self-division* of human beings. In the following passage, one finds many philosophical topics dear to Deleuze and Guattari, as well as essential to the 20th century philosophy: «The *attraction to something* (wish, drive, desire) is present in all the aforementioned cases; to give in to it with all its consequences is in any case not "unegotistical." – In morality, people treat themselves not as *individuum*, but instead as *dividuum*.» (Nietzsche 1980: 59).

According to the long aphorism discussed above, the "individuum" cannot be considered an elementary, indivisible unit. Rather, it is the unstable outcome of a conflict: at a deeper level, he individuates drives and desire, whose role will become central in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis (I will return to this below).

At the same time, knowledge, associated to egotism, pushes individuals « to give precedence to what is most useful, that is, to general, enduring utility, over personal utility, and to the respectful acknowledgement of general, enduring worth over momentary worth» (Nietzsche 1980: 72). In this manner, the highest stage of morality produces *collective individuals*: the society, and the state.

2.1 Asceticism

Nietzsche develops his dividual conception of moral struggle reflecting on Christianity. In particular, he seems fascinated by sainthood and asceticism. He writes many pages on this topic and will return on the subject in different books during the following decade. It seems interesting, for example, the following paragraph:

There is a defiance of oneself that includes many forms of asceticism as its most sublime manifestations. Certain people, that is, have so great a need to exercise their

by the epigones as Freudian defence mechanisms. For example, the reversal of Schopenhauer can be considered a case of *daemonization*, a movement towards a personalized Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime.

passion for power and domination that, because other objects are lacking or because they have always proven unsuccessful otherwise, they finally hit upon the expedient of tyrannizing certain parts of their own nature, sections or stages of themselves, as it were. (Nietzsche 1980: 105)

The expression “passion for power” is very interesting. In fact, at this stage of his philosophy, Nietzsche does not use the expression “will to power”. In general, he considers “free will” as an illusion, in line with a Mechanist worldview (Nietzsche 1980: 29). The book can be overall considered as an attempt of re-enacting enlightenment, as well as the political bind between philosophy and aristocracy – the book is dedicated to Voltaire. However, in this passage, a new idea sneaks in: the association between life and the will of power. The ascetic is the extremization of the *dividuum*: «In every ascetic morality people worship a part of themselves as a god and therefore need to diabolize the remaining part» (Nietzsche 1980: 106). Obviously, this views have been influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*.

It seems correct to say that, from Nietzsche’s point of view, every moral individuum is a *dividuum*, struggling with himself to satisfy the will of power. This, in turn, is not an individual feature (that would be rather contradictory), but an aspect of life.

2.2 Early reactions to the notion of *dividuum*

The notion of *dividuum* was first discussed by Nietzsche’s closest friends: Paul Ree and Lou von Salomé. In a letter dated June 1878, Ree writes: «Non-egoism must not make us a *dividuum*: I am satisfied if we sometimes grieve because others suffer, and act accordingly» (Nietzsche, Ree, & Salomé 1970). Thus, an egoist motivation can drive altruist feelings without questioning individuality. Only a few years later, Andreas-Salomé observes that, according to Nietzsche, human beings can transcend themselves through a relation with an external, greater vital power, aspiring to a higher unity of their being. Alternatively, they can relate with themselves, obtaining the opposite: an intimate scissure, a conflict of instincts and feelings: the *dividuum*. According to von Salomé (2009), in Nietzsche’s description of the *dividuum* there are autobiographical elements.

It is known that Lou von Salomé and Sigmund Freud formed an intellectual brotherhood. She was also the first woman to become psychoanalyst. Freud often quotes her considerations on eroticism. They met in 1911, during the 3rd congress of psychoanalysis in Weimar. The date serves as a *terminus post quem* for dating Freud’s interest toward Nietzsche: according to Carl Gustav Jung (1961: 153), during a conversation they had in Vienna in 1910, Freud had declared he did not know Nietzsche’s works. Thus, Lou von Salomé played a role in introducing Freud to Nietzsche’s thought.

According to Jung, Freud was in competition with his precursor: he opposes the im-

possibility of desire, represented by the incest taboo, to Nietzsche's will to power². In semiotic terms, the distinction between the two worldviews consists in a modal conflict:

one has not the power to desire
Vs.
one desires power

In Freud, the difference concerns also different actors and the political dimension: desire is the drive of the individual, while society represses it. Freud's criticism toward Nietzsche is explicit in *Beyond the pleasure principle*. The work is important, since it is a revision of psychoanalysis based on the death-instinct. Freud writes:

It may be difficult, too, for many of us, to abandon the belief that there is an instinct towards perfection at work in human beings, which has brought them to their present high level of intellectual achievement and ethical sublimation and which may be expected to watch over their development into supermen. I have no faith, however, in the existence of any such internal instinct and I cannot see how this benevolent illusion is 'to be preserved. (Freud 1955: 42).

Freud's point of view is pessimistic: "will of power" is not the basic motivation of human actions. The basic instinct to preserve life is only represented by sexual reproduction. The illusion of a self-perfecting humanity, embodied by Nietzsche's notion of *overman*, is generated by the social repression of the deepest of the instincts: the death-instinct. As Freud (1955: 50) admits, his views are close to Schopenhauer's.

Despite the distance, however, in his crucial essay Freud borrows different concepts from Nietzsche: for example, the "perpetual recurrence of the same thing", i.e., the neurotic tendency to repeat negative experiences, behaviours, social relations, plays a role in Freud's revision of his previous theories (Freud 1961: 16). In this context, Nietzsche's idea of a divided self and his non unitarian notion of *individuum* could have influenced Freud's later works on the structure of the mind. The very term "super-Ego" seems a parody of Nietzsche's *overman*. Freud admits he borrowed the term "Id" from Nietzsche, through Groddek's research (Freud 1961: 23 n. 3). In spite of the empiricist ground on which they pretend to be founded, different psychological approaches and psychotherapeutic methods, from psychoanalysis to autogenic training, borrowed their kernel notion from a wide range of philosophers, in general, and from Nietzsche's ideas, in particular.

All considered, Nietzsche's notion of *dividuum* has played a central role in the development of later philosophical discussion. His early interpreters did not share his optimistic views about the possibility of redeeming humanity and his love of life expressed

² Another case of *daemonization* (Bloom 1973). See n. 1.

in *Ecce Homo* and in many other works; they worked on his sharp criticism directed toward the false certainties of his time, exploring the concerns and the anxieties of contemporary individuals.

2.3 Deleuze's reading of the ascetic ideal

Nietzsche deeply influenced the early development of Deleuze's thought. Deleuze's sharp reading of Nietzsche was published in France in 1962 (Deleuze 2002). His interpretation relies on the opposition between active and reactive forces: this element of Nietzsche's thought is present in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche 2007a: 49-52), which is central in the French rediscovery of Nietzsche in the '60. Besides that, the only other source of considerations on active and reactive forces is *The Will to Power*, i.e., the posthumous collection of fragments edited by Elizabeth Nietzsche and Peter Gast. Deleuze often quotes the book. Though this choice is debatable from a philological point of view, one should not forget that the reception of Nietzsche's thought was deeply influenced by *The Will to Power* at least till the publication of the Colli – Montinari critical edition of the complete works, starting from the 1960s. The opposition between forces and counterforces features the French reception of Nietzsche's thought. For example, Foucault's notion of conducts and counter-conducts is clearly inspired by the oppositions between actions and counterblows featuring the analysis of revenge (Nietzsche 2007a: 130). Other themes, such as, for example, the eternal return, are marginalized in the period interpretation of Nietzsche's works.

According to Deleuze's reading, the ascetic ideal, together with bad consciousness and resentment, are *reactive forces*: the positive active forces, in which the quality of the will to power is affirmative, turn into negative forces, with a negative quality. The artist, the sovereign, the legislator are substituted by the perpetual accuser, the guilty man, the ascetic. The will to power becomes will to nothingness.

The fiction of a world-beyond in the ascetic ideal: this is what accompanies the steps of *ressentiment* and bad conscience, this is what permits the depreciation of life and all that is active in it, this is what gives the world a value of appearance or of nought. (Deleuze 2002: 145)

The opposition between active and reactive forces allows Deleuze to reconstruct an immanent "system" in Nietzsche's thought. He is not the only interpreter to search for a system: L. von Salomé (2002), the first interpreter of Nietzsche, proposes a similar reconstruction. Provided the objective of reconstructing the system, it is not strange that Deleuze considers some works of Nietzsche's more significant than others. Deleuze's reading of the ascetic ideal is not based on *Human, All Too Human*; once again, he mainly refers to *On the Genealogy of Morality*, which returns on the topic of the ascetic ideal. Not

surprisingly, Deleuze does not mention the *dividuum* in his book. References to *Human, All Too Human* are limited. In his interpretation of Nietzsche, though, it is possible to see a reevaluation of the vital spirit which animates Nietzsche's philosophy: the love of life. Life is the basis of the will to power and of the active, positive forces. And it is always life that contradicts, denies and annihilate itself in the will of nothingness. One should always "say yes to life", even when it turns into a tragic age (Nietzsche 2007b: 48). Thus, Deleuze reverses early, pessimistic interpretations of Nietzsche's work, such as Freud's one. This does not mean that Deleuze preaches a stolid optimism: those reactive forces that deny life are part of that same life one should accept and marry in full. Probably, the positive and the negative connotations associated to the dividuum, depending on the context, are a consequence of this worldview. Furthermore, Deleuze (2002: 145) warns us not to interpret the will of power in psychological terms: the will of power provides the basis of a philosophical revolution, based on genealogy and not on metaphysics or on transcendental critique.

3. Dividual opera

The notion of dividuum seems the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's plural philosophical writing (Carbone 2024: 37). Apart from that, the notion is central in their considerations about the refrain (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 341-342). Focusing on lyric opera, Deleuze and Guattari describe the difference between German romanticism, based on the figure of the solitary hero which is one with the Earth (One-All), and Latin and Slavic romanticism, in which the hero represents a people (One-Crowd). It should be noted that the two relations imply, or, better, constructs, two different relata: a subjective relatum and a nonsubjective one.

The difference between the two *Ones* is constructed through orchestration. «In the first case, it is a question of effecting *grouping of powers*, and these are what constitute affects; in the second case, it is *group individuations* that constitute affect» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 341).

Deleuze and Guattari are describing not only two different collective entities, featured by a different relation with their subjective component, but also how music can represent them. Furthermore, music describes also the *affects* associated to each collective entity.

The grouping of powers produces a first relation between a subject, musically represented by the voice, and a nonsubjective universal, represented by fully diversified sections of the orchestra. The group individuation links the voice to a nonsubjective crowd: «we must use another word, the *Dividual*, to designate the type of musical relations and the intra- or intergroup passages occurring in group individuation» (Deleuze & Guattari

1987: 341)³.

The following schema can help to resume Deleuze and Guattari’s position:

	<i>Subjective relatum</i>	<i>Non-subjective relatum</i>
<i>German Romanticism</i>	Individual	Earth (Universal)
<i>Italian Romanticism</i>	Dividual	People (Crowd)

3.1 Two examples

What does this mean, in musical terms? According to Deleuze and Guattari, Wagner never represents a people, a crowd: in his orchestration, the individuality of each section is always recognizable (strings, reeds, woodwinds...). In this manner, he represents the relation of the solitary hero with the Earth. On the contrary, Verdi merges the orchestral sections to obtain mixed colours, and his hero represents a people. One can consider, to this purpose, the first bars of the “Liebestod”, concluding Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*.

Isolde starts singing on a barely audible carpet made of the most obscure strings (cellos and double basses). Her voice is supported by the bass clarinet. She pronounces the words: «Mild und leise» («How gently and quietly»). As she stops, in the following musical bar, the trombones enter in the downbeat, so that the hearer recognizes them. To avoid every superposition, the voice performs a syncope, entering after the trombones and pronouncing the words «wie er lächelt» («he smiles»). The same technique and the same syncope are employed in the third bar, to underline the entry of the violas («wie das Auge» – «how his eye»). The clarinet in A performs the same air of Isolde, but up-beat, without the syncope, so that the hearer can perceive it distinctly as it merges with the voice at the third beat of the bar. At the fourth bar («hold eröffnet» – «he holds open») the syncope allows to perceive the trombones again; at the fifth bar («seht ihr’s Freunde?» – «Do you see, friends?») the voice’s syncope introduces the horns, and then the violins («Seht ihr’s nicht?» – «Do you see not?»).

During the crescendo, the hearer perceives every time the entering section of the orchestra in its purity, before it reaches the “music carpet” in the background. Isolde’s affect changes at every new bar without blurring, in a discontinuous, surprising way. She is an *individual*, solitary hero, connected with the Earth, represented by a totality of affects merging love and death (*Liebestod*). Of course, individual is also every other section of the orchestra.

³ One can ask why Deleuze and Guattari avoid any reference to Nietzsche. It seems to me another case of *anxiety of influence* (Bloom 1973). See n. 1. In particular, Deleuze’s revisionary ratio can be defined a *tessera*: the author “completes” his precursor’s work, retaining its terms but meaning them in a new sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough. Harold Bloom choses this term since the tessera was a token used by adepts of mystery cult to recognize each other. Thus, only another adept of Nietzsche’s thought can recognize the implications of Deleuze’s use of the term “dividual”.

On the other hand, let us consider Verdi's *I vespri siciliani*. During the first act, some French drunk soldiers force Elena to sing a Sicilian song. Her sing invites the Sicilians to rebel against the occupiers. The Frenchmen sing to wine and to love:

Di vin colmi i bicchieri	Fill the glasses with wine
Rallegrano ogni core,	Rejoice each heart,
Raddoppiano il valore;	Redouble our courage;
Beviamo alla beltà!	Drink to beauty!

(Sicilian Vespers 1860: 8)⁴.

At the same time, the Sicilians find the courage to revolt:

A pugnar su corriam,	Prepare to fight.
l'armi ancor ritentiam,	Let us our arms resume again,
E il valor vincerà.	and bravery must conquer

(Sicilian Vespers 1860: 7).

Thus, two musical planes are superimposed. The Frenchmen's choir is supported by the bassoon, cellos, violas, and the clarinet; the Sicilians are supported by timpani and Double bass, violins, reeds, and the rest of the woodwinds. The hearer perceives distinctly two different melodies associated to two distinct affects: while the musical character associated to the French soldiers is dithyrambic, the Sicilian one is martial and bold: the rhythm is anapaestic.

In the example, Elena can be considered a *dividual* actor, as the other grouped sections of the orchestra associated to the "Sicilians". This statement can be puzzling, since Elena does not sing one of the parts of the choir of the Sicilians. Her words are different:

Già l'antico valore	Now the old courage
Ecco si desta al marinaio in core!	Awakens in the mariner's heart

(Sicilian Vespers 1860: 7).

Yet, Elena's musical plane and her affect are not qualitatively different from the Sicilians, mainly because the rhythm is the same.

It is important to underline that the *dividual* is a semiotic effect. It designates a peculiar link between subjective and nonsubjective actors, affects, and ideologies, expressed by technical means (groupings): in our examples, the composers work with rhythm, colour, and pitch to create different effects and affects. In comparison, Wagner's orchestra-

⁴ There are different versions of the libretto, originally performed in France. In fact, the censorship of the different Italian states, which was, at the time, divided and occupied, did not allow Verdi to represent the original story. The present text and the English translation comes from a libretto printed in Boston in 1860, most probably related to a representation.

tion is analytical. Each section of the orchestra represents a different affect. Isolde is the solitary hero, crossing all the possible affects: she is in conjunction with a totality (One-Earth). On the contrary, Verdi works to the synthesis of different musical planes and affects. Elena is one with the people: her people, opposed to the French invaders (One-Crowd).

3.2 Discussion

In Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the term *dividual* designs a composite identity, a whole which cannot be separated into elementary components. This notion seems neighbouring with Nietzsche's *collective individual*: «The concepts of the One-Crowd and the Dividual are botched if the people is reduced to a juxtaposition, or if it is reduced to a power of the universal» (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 341). At the same time, the universal is conceived as a well differentiable set of individuals.

Two points seem important. First: there is a relation between the *dividual* and the process of *individuation*. The first is an outcome of the second. Thus, the dividual is the outcome of a specific kind of individuation starting from a pre-individual field. Deleuze's non unitarian vision of the individual has been influenced not only by Nietzsche, but also by Gilbert Simondon's notion of *transindividuality* (Simondon 2007; Ott 2020).

Second, Deleuze and Guattari are writing about *semiotic* relations. Let us focus on the following homology:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Grouping of powers Vs. group individuations} \\ \approx \\ \text{(Individual-Universal) Vs. (Dividual-Crowd)} \end{array}$$

In the formula, the symbol “ \approx ” stands for “similar”, since Deleuze features the semiotic relation between the two as similarity. The top elements belong to the expression plane, while the bottom ones belong to the content plane. The homology is related neither to the period aesthetics nor to value judgments. In fact, as the authors state, the same opposition between universal and dividual describes the difference between Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio's works. In particular, the musical expression plane is linked to the content plane by a relation of *similarity*⁵: «groupings of power are fully diversified, but they are like the relations proper to the Universal». In the terms used by Hjelmslev, the orchestral relations are the expression plane; the content plane is constituted by the relation between an individual and the universal *or*, alternatively, to the

⁵ In the next section, similarity will return as the relation between expression and content plane in music. However, it is not unimportant to recall Deleuze bases his notion of similarity on difference: two objects are similar if there is a difference between them (Deleuze 1990: 258). After all, without difference, one should conclude that they are identical, following Leibniz principle of the identity of the indiscernible.

dividual subject and the crowd, the people, which is neither reducible to a set of individuals or to the universal.

To find an analogue in language, one can think to compounds, whose meaning cannot be considered the sum of the meaning of the stems composing the lexeme (e.g. “white-collar”). At the same time, *dividual* is also the timbrical quality of the orchestration, when its resulting colour does not allow the hearer to recognise the simpler colours of the orchestral sections.

The term *dividual* can be applied to micropolitical relations (the crowd) or to aesthetical ones (orchestration) because they are both, first and irreducibly, *semiotic* relations. Semiotic perspective is anti-essentialist: in a semiotic process each plane is functionally individuated (Hjelmslev 1969). Therefore, some political relation can be the content of music or the expression plane for other values. The notion of semiotics provides a relation between the plane of expression and the plane of immanence of value in Deleuze’s philosophy.

4. Dividual cinema

Machaela Ott (2020) already wrote many interesting considerations about Deleuze’s use of the term *dividual* in relation to images. In what follows, the paper will focus on the semiotic relevance of the *dividual*, underlining the relation between image and music in Deleuze’s views. This is evident in the entry of the glossary which concludes the volume: «Dividual: that which is neither indivisible nor divisible, but is divided (or brought together) by changing qualitatively. This is the state of the entity, that is to say of that which is expressed in an expression» (Deleuze 1988: 217). Some elements of this definition links cinema and opera. The term “expression” refers to Hjelmslev: considered as an expression plane, the image is related to a content plane. This content is a whole: when divided into the parts which constitute it, their respective value changes qualitatively. As it was said in the previous section, it is a *compound*: a lexeme whose meaning is not a sum of the meanings of its stems. Deleuze also refers to the Scholastic notion of *significabile complex* of a proposition and calls it “expressed entity” (Deleuze 1988: 105)⁶. In this manner, he underlines how meaning is not to be considered an existing state-of-things. Nevertheless, it is *real*.

According to Deleuze, the reason why the cinematographic image is intrinsically dividual, consists in the fact that

⁶ A *complexum significabile* is the meaning of a sentence the object of knowledge (such as the conclusion of a syllogism). It does not exist, since existence is contingent. However, meaning is real. For this reason, Deleuze writes that it should not be confused with a state of things. Deleuze source could be Hubert Elie (1936) whose study attracted the attention of the philosophers of language for the analogies between the notion of *complexum significabile* and Meinong’s notion of object. See also Gal (1977).

in the final analysis, the screen, as the frame of frames, gives a common standard of measurement to things which do not have one – long shots of countryside and close-ups of the face, an astronomical system and a single drop of water – parts which do not have the same denominator of distance, relief or light. In all these senses the frame ensures a deterritorialisation of the image. (Deleuze 1988: 14-15)

As Deleuze writes, the unities composing the image are continuously divided and re-composed in it (Deleuze 1988: 20).

It is also important to note that the definition of *dividual* is subordinate to the definition of *affection-image*. The other semiotic features of this image are the following: its content is an *affect*; the relation between expression and affect is *similarity* (with references to Charles Peirce's notion of *icon*). For example, a face expresses an affect. Thus, the affection image should be considered as an equivalent of the face. The same can be said of music, in the previous section: it expresses an affect through similarity. In Verdi's music, the timbre mixture is similar to a crowd, and it constitutes an affect. While in the example of the opera the affect is expressed by orchestration and by their modifications, in the image the affect is expressed by an "any-space-whatever".

Being dividual, the affect itself is singular and not divisible without a change of quality; at the same time, one of the features of dividuals seems recursivity: a combination of affects gives birth to a new affect, featured, of course, by a quality modification (Deleuze 1988: 98-99).

4.1 Two examples

Another analogy between music and opera concerns the relation between an individual subject and a nonsubjective universal. In the case of romantic opera, Wagner's orchestration could signify this relation, while Verdi could communicate the affects associated to the people, a nonsubjective crowd, an individuated composite identity not reducible to the dividual subjects which are part of them. An analogy with the Wagner/Verdi opposition at the cinema is the difference between Griffith's and Eisenstein's cinema. Griffith alternates close-ups with long-shots, linking them to public and private, individual and collective values. On the contrary, Eisenstein

(...) produced compact and continuous intensive series, which go beyond all binary structures and exceed the duality of the collective and the individual. Rather, they attain a new reality which could be called Dividual, directly uniting an immense collective reflection with the particular emotions of each individual; in short expressing the unity of power and quality. (Deleuze 1988: 92)

It seems interesting how, both in the case of music and cinema, Deleuze is not interested only to the relation between the elements of the expression plane, such as orchestration-sections or frame-framed entities, but also, on the content plane, to two relations: individual-universal, on one side, and a partitive collective, on the other side.

Furthermore, both in the case of music and of images, the notion of dividual is related to a change of quality which happens when one subdivides these collective entities. These entities are expressed by a semiotic relation of similarity. They are recursively constructible (different dividual entities give birth to a dividual entity, with change of quality). They are associated to affects, and affects seems to be, in given cases, dividual. A composite affect is not a juxtaposition of elementary emotions. Rather, these are continuously, modulated to produce qualitative affective changes.

5. Dividual societies

Deleuze's interpretation of the term "dividual" is not limited to the description of control societies. Nevertheless, he used this term to underline an important difference between disciplinary and control society (1992). As it concerns the first «The disciplinary societies have two poles: the signature that designates the individual, and the number or administrative numeration that indicates his or her position within a mass» (Deleuze 1992: 5). On the contrary,

In the societies of control, on the other hand, what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code: the code is a password, while on the other hand the disciplinary societies are regulated by watchwords (as much from the point of view of integration as from that of resistance). The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become "dividuals", and masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks".

In this comparison between disciplinary and control society, Deleuze returns on the same notion expressed both in *One Thousand Plateaux* and in *Cinema I*:

	<i>Subjective relatum</i>	<i>Non-subjective relatum</i>
<i>Disciplinary society</i>	Individual	Mass
<i>Control society</i>	Dividual	Samples, data, markets, "banks"

Once again, a semiotic process can express two different relations between individuals and collective units. The first relation produces two relata: the individual and the

universe. In the case of the German aesthetics of the romantic period, the universal part is the Earth. In the case of the disciplinary society, the universe is represented by masses. As for the second relation, in the Italian aesthetics of the romantic period, the collective part of the relation was represented by the crowd, the people. In the control society, it is embodied by data, banks and many other different “crowds”.

In line with the previous occurrences of the term *dividual*, one should consider the affects associated to the different entities. The affect associated to the *dividual* seems indeed negative. At the same time, it seems that the affects associated to the disciplinary society are ambivalent. In fact, Deleuze notes that both integration and resistance use *watchwords*. Thus, the *watchword* is not associated to a negative value *per se*. In a similar way, one could find *dividual codes* to resist the control society, and the hacker subculture provides lots of examples. Deleuze does not mention this possibility, since the topic of his paper and his primary concern is the crisis of the institution during the passage from the disciplinary to the control society.

5.1 Semiotic production of *dividuals* and *crowds*

In the case of the Opera and of the Cinema, the *dividual* was the outcome of a semiotic processes, based on group individuation. One can ask what semiotic processes are considered by Deleuze. A semiotic process consists of a relation between an expression plane and a content plane (Hjelmslev 1969). In this perspective, starting from the disciplinary society, it is possible to consider the identity card, the passport, the social security card as the texts in which both individuals and masses are produced as meaning effects. According to Deleuze, the relation between them mirrors two elements: the signature and the number of the document.

In a similar way, Deleuze introduces the notion of *dividual* reflecting on another text: the *credit card*. According to him, there is an important element, here, who substituted the signature and the number of the document: the *password*. Society can be interpreted as a set of motorway tool booths, in which people transit by using their electronic password. These checkpoints produce neither masses nor individuals, but banks and *dividuals* who are inseparable from them. In line with Deleuze’s writings on cinema, a “*dividual*” cannot be distinguished from the data and the samples with which is associated, without a change of quality. The relation between *dividual* and *crowd* is not discrete: it is a continuous modulation producing a change in the quality. When the *dividual* is separated into its components, this quality disappears.

In this perspective, the expression plane of the relation between the “*dividual*” and the relative data and bank accounts is each one’s code. The *password* is the expression plane, while *data* are the content plane, *the data*, which can be considered a sampling of each one’s life. In reference to the Python programming language, I’d say that the rela-

tion is given by a set of *keys* (dividual) and a set of *values* (data) in which every sort of data can be considered, recursively, a key or a value depending on the assigned function, in a non-essentialist perspective. Thus, a dividual relation can become, in turn, a *key* or a *value* of a more general dividual relation, giving birth to complex relational organizations of meaning, each time with a change of quality.

5.2 *Dividuation or group individuation?*

Many authors after Deleuze applied the term “dividual” to a critical analysis of new technologies. In this perspective, they describe processes of dividuation, a term which is not used by Deleuze. For example, Gerald Raunig (2016) focuses on *Facebook*, considered as a machinic confessional. In this way, he reconnects Deleuze to Nietzsche, since the term was originally related to a moral internal struggle.

Raunig considers three modes of *dividuation*: segmentation, participation, and division, where the second corresponds to the synthesis of greater units, while the second is a synonym of singularization. However, apparently these modes disregard the fact that dividuals are the outcome of semiotic processes.

A similar position on control societies is represented by Stiegler (2015). He opposes the processes of individuation (Simondon 2007) to dividuation. These perspectives are based on Deleuze’s text:

the new medicine “without doctor or patient” that singles out potential sick people and subjects at risk (...) in no way attests to individuation -as they say- but substitutes for the individual or numerical body the code of a “dividual” material to be controlled. (Deleuze 1992: 7)

Starting from this passage, *dividuation* has been considered as an arrest and subsequent degradation or involution of psychic individuation towards the loss of links with collective individuation (Baranzoni & Vignola 2015: 165). However, as it was mentioned above, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) clearly state that, in music, the relation between dividual and crowds are the result of *group individuations*. Is there a conflict between the dividual entities when they are expressed by an opera and of a technological process? Probably, the answer depends on the difference between “individuation” and “group individuation”.

In the passage quoted above, Deleuze was trying to predict the crisis of medicine and other institutions: the prison, school, hospital, and corporate system. He was not concerned about the production of dividuals, but about their exploitation. In fact, dividuals are just an ensemble of productions starting from semiotics processes of modulation, associated with positive or negative affects, depending on the context. One should avoid thinking that, in disciplinary societies, the condition of individual is somehow “natural”:

«at the same time power individualizes and masses together, that is, constitutes those over whom it exercises power into a body and molds the individuality of each member of that body» (Deleuze 1992: 5). In this perspective, “individuals” are only a semio-political construction. There is nothing to be nostalgic of.

Furthermore, one should not forget how, according to Nietzsche, the *dividuum* is the result of a *self-division*. Human beings tend to be *dividua*, to inner conflict and to alienation. The liberal ideal of the rational agent is just an ideological construction in comparison to real humans. This is another important connection between Deleuze and Nietzsche, who lived in what nowadays is considered a disciplinary society: the “individual” is just an effect, a product. The same can be said about collective individuals, such as the state or society.

6. Dividual semiotics

Rediscovering the semiotic roots of Deleuze’s thought is of primary importance. In the case of the *dividual*, it allows to reconcile Deleuzian political philosophy and aesthetics, considering the method through which Deleuze constructed one of his most radical concepts. *Dividual* is a peculiar immanent relation between a subjective and a nonsubjective relatum, expressed by a group individuation which leads to their qualitative, non-discontinuous, modulated change, and associated to an affect. More generally, disregarding semiotics scholars inherit a technical philosophical jargon, the meaning of which will diachronically drift, as every other language. The same can be said about the relation with semiotics of many important authors, from Bruno Latour to Julia Kristeva: without considering semiotics, post-structuralism would lose its greatest common factor.

The second reason why I insist on the semiotic nature of the term “dividual” is its counter-ontological significance. The term is coherent with a relational gnoseology. “Dividual” is a relatum produced by group individuation. In fact, after Nietzsche and Freud, one cannot say that *individua* or *dividua* exist, though, as *complexa significabilia*, they influence reality. They are expressed by a semiotic system, which can produce both the discrete relation between individuum and mass or the continuous relation between the crowd and its components, depending on the considered text: identity documents, social networks, movies, operas. Nietzsche’s *dividuum* is a peculiar case of *dividual*, which invites one to write a *genealogy* of the western notion of individuum: how a minority of white male bourgeois secular Europeans convinced themselves they are the universal self-sufficient subject of the history (a Robinson Crusoe, as Marx would write) and how, with some help, they grew disillusioned about that. In a similar way, one could write a genealogy of the crowds: progressive movements and Facebook friends, political parties and think-tanks, *coenobia* and sex clubs, terrorist groups and sectarian cults, se-

cret societies and agricultural communes, brotherhoods and hetaireias.

The third reason to underline the semiotic nature of the dividual, is to link it to the plane of immanence. The distinction between the semiotic planes does not depend on their essence, in ontological terms. One should avoid the identification of the expression plane with the sensible objects and of the content plane with the intelligible objects. A micropolitical, dividual entity can be the expression plane of a political idea, or the content plane of music, depending on its relationship with *others*. Dividual crowds and affects are not transcendent: they all belong to the plane of immanence, the mobile section crossing, opening, and assembling all the semiotic systems and their parts (Deleuze 1988: 59).

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