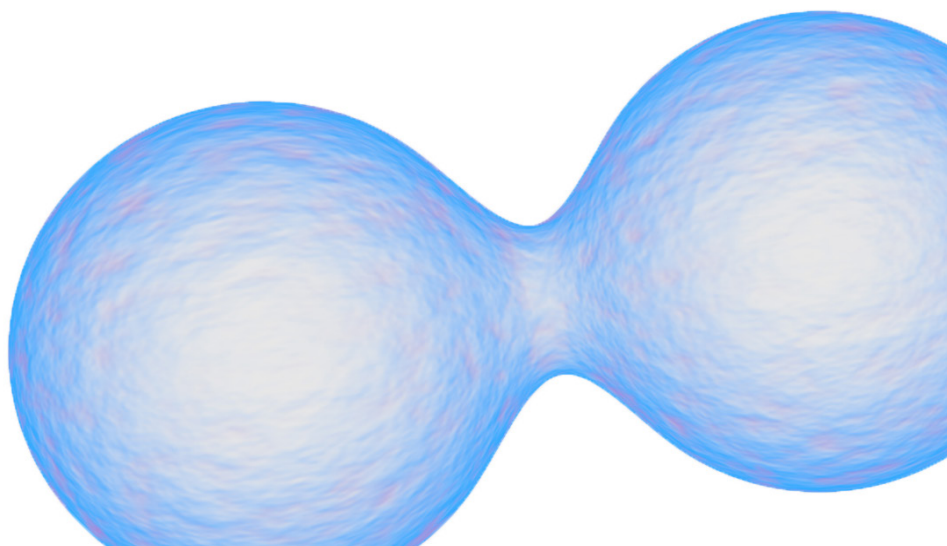


some notes on individuality and dividuality from the perspective
of an identical twinship



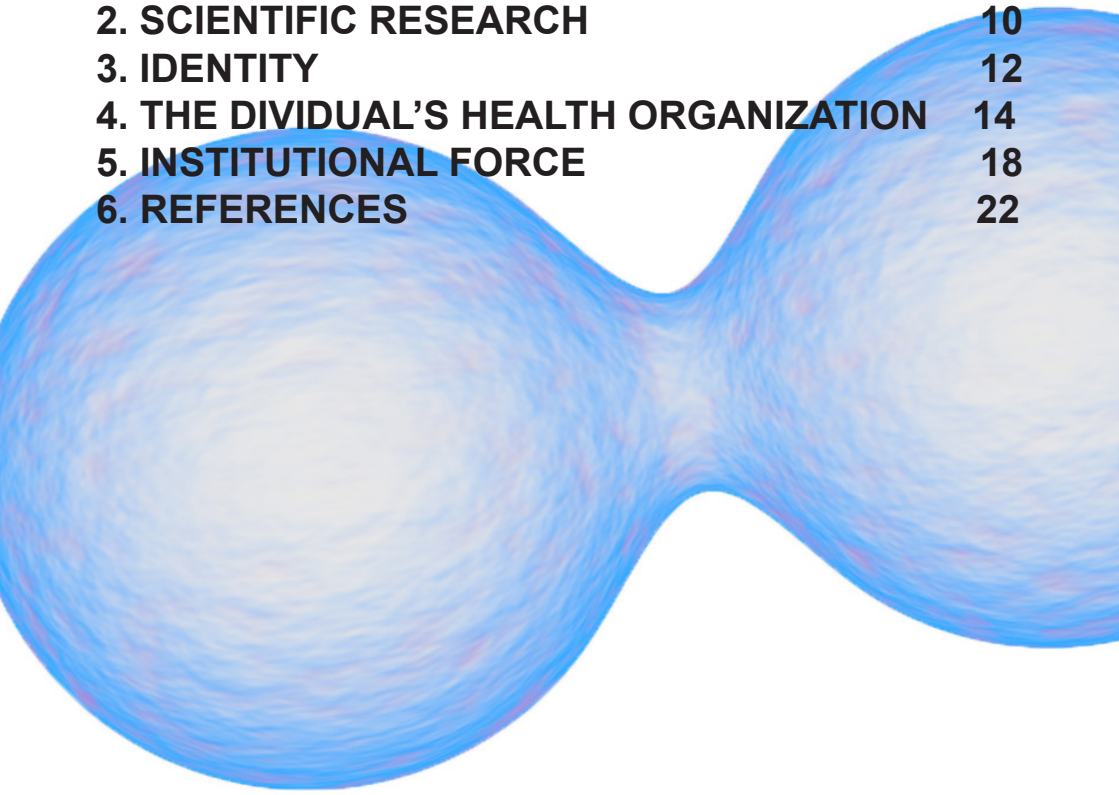
...we no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become “dividuals”, and masses, samples, data, markets or “banks”.

- Gilles Deleuze, Postscript on the Societies of Control



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1 INTRODUCTION

This essay is a framework for a collaboration that focus on the intertwined experiences that emerge from sharing an identical twinship. Our practice is based on these experiences and the specific position of the twin as a sought after study object in medical epidemiology.

These experiences are informed by the conflict that emerge from being an identical twin in an individualist society; one that nurtures solitary individuals. Identical twins are biological clones of each-other as they share the same DNA. A living copy of one another. You question yourself; who is really the original? And does it even make sense to think like that? To be nurtured in an individualistic society creates a dissonance between the identical twin's experienced self and what others perceive it to be. As a result, the twins get disjoined as individuals, but at the same time they get clotted together. The effect of the conflict is a dissolution of identity.

We use the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's take on the dividual as a point of departure to examine the identical twin as a potential "dividual" in an individualist society. This term is the common ground of our research and therefore permeates most of our practice.

According to Gilles Deleuze, we have ceased to be individuals and become dividuals. The dividual is the individual in the new society (the society of control).¹ His ideas has been further developed and discussed by various anthropologists. The term as explained from Wikipedia: "the basic premise is that the term individual means indivisible, the smallest unit which society can be reduced to. Perhaps people are not whole self contained 'units', but may be broken down (divided)... this concept of the 'dividual' as opposed to the 'individual' has been taken up by various anthropologists and used to explain contradictions within

1 Deleuze, Gilles. *Postscript on the Societies of Control*. The MIT Press. October, Vol. 59. (Winter, 1992) p. 5

the formation and conceptualization of identity...”²

To understand the dichotomies individual/dividual we will further reference the Wikipedia explanation of the individual:

“...an individual is that which exists as a distinct entity. Individuality (or self-hood) is the state or quality of being an individual; particularly of being a person separate from other people and possessing their own needs or goals, rights and responsibilities... from the 15th century and earlier individual meant “indivisible”, typically describing any numerically singular thing, but sometimes meaning “a person””.³

So, an individual mean indivisible. A dividual on the other hand, means divisible. Instead of being indivisible solitary units, we are divided non solitary units, interconnected through the environment around us.

This essay upholds a suggestive tone; no decisions or statements are being made as final. It will be written in the perspective of the prospect’s “looking in” and a play of its implemented (or not) memory.

2 https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Social_Relations_as_Persons

3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual>

2 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

In 1958 the Institute of Race Biology (established in Uppsala 1922) closed and the research section merged with the Institute of Medical Genetics. The official assignment of the Swedish institute was to study the inhabitants of the country from a racial perspective. They studied the life conditions and environmental developments of different families. They tried to explain the effect biological heritage (nurture) and the environment (nature) has on people.⁴

Throughout the world today there are different registries documenting individuals in a numeric system to pursue research on them. They gather information about individuals afflicted by disease or just because they are a twin. One of the largest twin registries in the world is the Swedish Twin Registry at the Department for Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. Because of the twins' sharing of DNA, the scientists can map if it is the nature (biological heritage) or the nurture (environment) that causes people to get sick.⁵

The identical twin seem special to everything else as the second is the copy of the first. The couple fully share DNA. A living biological clone of each other. It is according to science a malfunction, an anomaly, a mutation since the fertilized egg randomly splits and form two embryos. The chance that this happens is at 0.2 percent.

Every year the Swedish Registry invite twins to undergo different examinations. For example, if one in the pair gets sick in cancer the researchers might be able to track down what the potential cause could be as they are able to document and compare the twin's different life choices. First, you'll be invited to fill in forms containing questions of an interrogative nature. A question could be "have you ever in your life felt

4 <https://www.ub.uu.se/finding-your-way-in-the-collections/selections-of-special-items-and-collections/state-institute-for-racial-biology/>

5 <https://ki.se/en/research/the-swedish-twin-registry>

that the thoughts in your head are not your own?”

The second step is to undergo physical examinations. It could include bone marrow tests, hair and skin biopsy and general blood work. You could be evaluated by a therapist to discover possible mental illnesses. At the end you might be given an iPad or a movie ticket. This is all done in the name of contributing to important health research.

Your participation is altruistically motivated by doing a good deed... to become a good person, a good twin. What if you could make the world a better place? Wouldn't you want to be a part of that? And what kind of person are you if you're not willing to?

3 IDENTITY

Imagine being able to use another individual's drivers licence as proof, if you would be accused of speeding. Imagine being able to order things through another individual's phone, as the touch-ID mistakes yours for theirs. Imagine switching seats in class to pass that math-test, if the other one is struggling. Imagine being mistaken for the other when the love of your life seems to look straight through you. When you really thought you'd made an impression on someone... and in over just a second you realize you're replaceable.

Maybe you'd start thinking about why that encounter with that other friend of a friend felt so odd. Why did she twitch with her eye, was it something you said? What did you do to make this conversation go so unsmoothly? You can't remember who this 'Johan' is, did you talk about him earlier or have you gone senile before the age of 30? And why is she so assertively referring to someone you've never had that kind of contact with? Maybe you've been here before? Maybe you haven't?

What if all of these insecurities makes you wonder and wander, to ponder on individuation, compulsive self help and an excessive need of branding oneself. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han means that "...today, we do not deem ourselves subjugated subjects, but rather projects: always refashioning and reinventing ourselves".⁶ Today's individuals are exposed to digitalized systems on a daily basis. Now, the individual is able to be at different locations at the same time. Our virtual presence in digital platforms forces our identities to divide themselves between who we really are and what we perform to be. We are able to create new characters using different avatars through several social platforms, both digitally and IRL: free to create better suiting narratives and backstories, to alter ourselves and our personalities, delete those things we do not like, nourish those things we dream to become.

⁶ Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitics: neoliberalism and new technologies of power*. London: Verso Books, 2017. p. 1

We are able to lengthen ourselves in our objects like our bankcard that makes a mark in different located ATMs in different systems several times per day. We leave a digital mark wherever we go. Our words are not our own but from a system we've learnt. We are able to self-optimize to be the perfect version of ourselves. Or the perfect version of one another.

And we should.

As mentioned in the first chapter, twins are biological copies of each other - naturally lengthening themselves to one another. Shattered but yet interconnected. A divided, non self-explanatory individual. Mythology means that they share the same train of thoughts, the same experiences; carrying the same implemented memories... interconnected inbetween with no distinct borders of where one starts and where one really ends - a chain of continuation. A potential example of a divided individual; divided from within. It leaves us with the question: are identical twins able to contain their own individualism? Or are they doubled from within, a collective force to be reckoned with?

Maybe we have left something old to become something new; from yesterday's individual to tomorrow's dividual.

4 THE DIVIDUAL'S HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Do you ever feel alone?

Have you ever in your life felt that the thoughts in your head are not your own?

Maybe you want to renegotiate to make new meanings?

Close your eyes. Imagine walking through that Media Market in your block. Imagine what the air smells like, the buzzing sound of the electrical devices around you, the flickering lights above you...

Do you remember interpreting the showrooms as art-installations?

Subjective experiences like this are important. They become images that you use to imagine what the world is like. How can we make new ones?

Autonomy in a networking society could mean so much more for the individually motivated.

When all things are similar, we no longer have to differentiate them from one another.

Do you dare to imagine a fully self-optimized us?

We at the Dividual's Health Organization invite YOU to be liberated from fixed meaning.

By learning how to be adaptable and receptive, you will transform to a relational DIVIDUAL!

We follow a three-step-program that will allow you to enter the idea of the Dividual:

1. Reaction

The individual is special to everything else.

2. Abandonment

To let go of the idea of the individual as a format that breeds capitalism.

3. Contention

Contest the individual, counter individualism.

The result will be to EXIT...

and ENTER the idea of the DIVIDUAL!

Do you want to make the world a better place?

Become a member!

Through our membership you will be socialized by participation. You will be able to share capital.

Imagine being benefited from relational individuation through BOTH community and an individuated network...

It is important to understand that it's not about you, it's about US.

...as we say at the organization - "the dividual shares the blood but the vampire takes it away".

Join us today!

Become a dividual, become liberated!

You're observing two (identical) individuals on a screen. They look similar and undertake the same voice, but you are somehow able to differentiate them from one another, as they seem to have different body languages. You understand that they are several, but you don't know how many. It seems like they have been copy-pasted and inserted again, as they are saying the same things and following each-others movements. Which one is the copy and which one is really the original? Which one is the index-case, the very first specimen? Do they spread like viruses as they divide from within in a rapid force? And does it even makes sense to think like that?

It seems to stage a world filled with copies, without any consideration to copyright or originality.

You continue to speculate on what they are trying to mediate. You hear them using concepts like liberation, adaptation and participation. New meanings. You observe them in an environment that seems to be an office with plastic plants, bland white wallpapers and furnitures made out of light wood. A parodic feng-shui... as you see them smile awkwardly.

You are now introduced to the (fictive) organization "the Dividual's

Health Organization". Seemingly, an alternative lifestyle where the prospect is offered to divide herself within minutes around her closest environment - a lengthening of oneself. A liberation of fixed meaning of the self. Maybe she will be able to make decisions on a collective basis instead of premiering her own personal ideas and solitary interest over the greater good? As she starts to share capital and becoming more adaptive. Could be a service seen as a futuristic commodity, or a help-line, a mental support in a solitary life, a sacral voice guiding you to safety - to your own sanctuary (hopefully).

5 INSTITUTIONAL FORCE

Imagine yourself putting your slightly undirected hand on the door handle and with force try to slid open that heavy double-door made out of glass. Imagine yourself entering a five storey building and in an ordinary manner approaching the very first object you see: an informative display. You reach out to touch the screen. You register yourself as present by typing in your personal information and you wait until you are confirmed. Unfortunately the screen is unresponsive. It seems to be stuck in a loop. You walk in the direction where you see that glass wearing lady sit behind that generic counter, tapping on what you would guess is a keyboard while she glares over her glasses. You reach the counter and stand in front of her, hoping she will confirm your presence, and if she doesn't you utter something barely hearable. You try to make yourself understood in what business you're there for and hoping she will point you in the right direction. You leave her to sit in that sofa that is usually purple and a bit ragged, only to wait. You watch people come up and down the staircases, watch them grab a drink from the vending machines, you see them stop to talk to each other and exchange niceties. You wonder what they are saying to each other, if they really know how similar they look and sound like. They could be copies of one another, but a slight difference tells them apart, yes, you understand that they are two different individuals. You observe a slightly different hairstyle on the one on the left and a pair of black suede boots on the one on the right. You start to wonder what the philosophical definition is of what constitutes an individual.

Still, you are confused where to draw the line. You try hard to differentiate the facial attributes and body languages from one another, fantasizing names in your head.

Another door opens and your name gets called, you stand up from that raggedy sofa, grab your notebook and follow the voice into another room. You reach out your hand at a proper distance to meet the other in a shake in a way you've learned how to do since you were a kid. It's

always important to be polite: your mother's words echo in your head. Even though the person's misconduct.

Wait, how's your hair? Is it still parted in the middle? Shit, you still have that hole in the outer sole of your left shoe, why don't you ever find the time to pass by a shoemaker?

The walls around you are decorated by pictures of grey-looking people in what seems to be an effort to create a team building spirit and a sense of belonging. Your eyes linger on different motivational quotes embedded in selling a product, printed on cheap materials or projected on a cheap flat-TV. All is profitable self-help but sugarcoated in an illusion of fuzziness and a tolerable narcissism. "My wife got whooping cough so I'm getting the vaccines I need... don't wait, vaccinate!" - "I watched my sister suffer from shingles, that's why I made sure I got vaccinated... don't wait, vaccinate!" it rings in your head.

The cafeteria you are being led through is your typical break room, with similar furniture as the ones in the reception, the microwaves and coffee machines are never ending, paper cups on stash but there are never enough forks. Your eyes wander while walking, you're a bit surprised that nothing is different from that other place you went to last week. You realize that you see patterns, similar looking furnitures, a plastic floor underneath you that reflects the same looking fluorescent lights above you, the same smell of non water-based wall paint, the buzzing sound of electrical devices around you. You look down only to watch your feet move aimlessly forward in this universal space. You imagine what it would look like if you weren't.

Suddenly you notice that weird purple, circular carpet in your periphery. It seems to be following you. You end up at the vending machines and you're offered a drink. Out of politeness you accept. You see the mouth of the voice moving and shaping words but you're too focused sipping on your drink without spilling or burning your tongue. The words seem repetitive to you. You get told that the examinations are usually held on the basement level in designated examination rooms so visitors can't end up there by mistake. You think of bodily pain, injection needles and wet tissue. Feeling a taste of iron in your mouth.

You don't want to know if you have an incurable form of cancer while your sister does not. And least of all, realizing that you're actually hearing voices (or maybe that your sister is just an embryo of your mind).

Someone passes you. “It is so nice to finally meet you, to meet the real people behind the numbers I only see day in day out. Could I please steal them with me so I can get some material for my research? A free sample perhaps?” Jokingly said to the voice but still with a seriousness that makes you question, again, your subjectivity.

You give a smirk and try to create distance, you’re actually having a hard time being professional, you’re experiencing that it’s harder than what you thought it was going to be, you’re not sure anymore if this is becoming too personal. You suddenly feel disorientated, like you don’t really know why you are there or who you are or which position you’re trying to fulfill. What do they think of you? You see how she observes your bare physical form while her tongue almost hangs out like in those looney cartoons your parents grew up with. But in a way it’s subtle. Strategic.

You continue to sip on your drink and out of nowhere you get offered a free ticket to the movies but with the catch: consent to get punctuated by a 10 cm long needle through your backbone into your bone marrow. You start to think of wet tissue again. That feeling of iron in your mouth. You’re considering for a serious 5 seconds to only give that smirk again and say: I wish I could contribute with my randomized lot in life to but there are no movies I want to watch right now. The frown of the voice go from down to up to go back down again and you suddenly feel responsible. You’re becoming an object even though you arrived as a subject.

At least, you thought so.

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