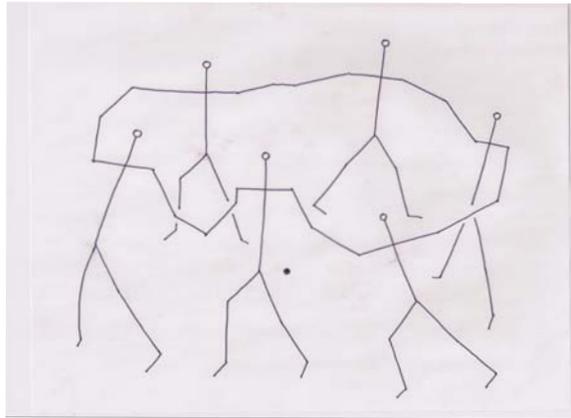


## Introduction

# The complexity of collabor(el)ation<sup>1</sup>

Stamatia Portanova

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Gerardo Cibelli, *Circular Forces* (2008)

In “Affective Commotion” (*Inflexions* n.1), Alanna Thain defines *inflection* as “the moment of sensible changing prior to a determined destination, a ‘transformative tendency’ ” which is also “a form of the gaze, one attuned to the movement of modulation” (Thain, 2008: 11). As the genetic element of an incipient curvature, an inflection is always doubled by a tendency or an attentiveness of the eye predisposing itself to follow the transformative curve. *Inflexions*, a journal of research-creation, shares this task of fostering and following the movement of modulation across different creative fields, at the same time “generating doubled visions of the world that may (...) also induce contagious mutations” (2008: 11). Contagiously affected and affective, perception itself is revealed as a

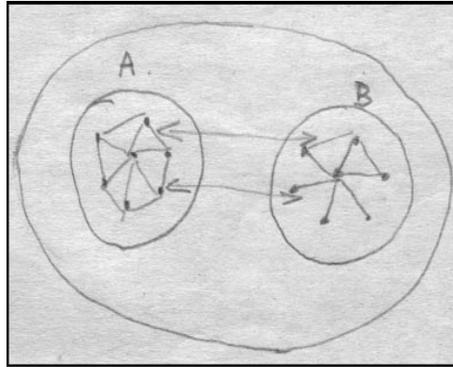
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source of new inflections and of new worlds, every research activity always implying in its rigorous methodologies an accentuated propensity towards the 'new'. The challenging goal of research-creation is thus identified by Thain with the *playful* and *disquieting* vertigo of minding and then travelling along the dashed gap between the two terms. Playful, because every research conceived as an attention for singularity requires an exploration of the creativity of the in-between and the 'verge'; disquieting, because it requests us to expand and play with that "moment of uncertainty and potential," to hold to its unknown forces long enough for a non-exhaustive but precise form of expression to emerge. In order to accomplish this singular task and be able to sustain the force of emerging novelty, the in-between dash as a marker of semantic delay between the two moments of research-creation needs to be differentially repeated, calling forth the addition of a further term and a further conjunctive relation: research – creation – (as) collaboration: every research is creation is collaboration (and vice versa). Being already implied by the expanded gap between the activities and attitudes of research and creation, the relational nature of collaboration appears as the differential element, the crucial condition for the taking place of compositional experimentations of all kinds. Paraphrasing this argument through Alfred North Whitehead's philosophical vocabulary, we can define collaboration as the creation of a *nexus*, a 'togetherness' of occasions of experience, every actual entity being in its turn the temporary singular 'encapsulation' of many different and diverging potentials. Re-animating an expression that not only moves between the essays in *Inflexions* n.1, but also constitutes a generative conceptual momentum for the works presented here, we can understand collaboration through the words of Whitehead, as "the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and (...) the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves. The many become one, and are increased by one" (Whitehead quoted in Thain, 2008: 2). Collaboration is that participation of elements, that co-working of conjoined *and* disjoined parts that allows the formation of doubled, or multiple, visions of the world; a pluralistic sensitivity for the myriad unnoticed events that are always happening 'within', 'without' and 'with' us.

Becoming attentive to "the ongoing everydayness of the singular" (Thain, 2008) inevitably implies falling prey to a sort of communicative complication, an aphasia or a weakness of language in rendering the subtle "creativity of the in-between" and all the infinitesimal transformations animated in it. Every collaboration needs to listen to, and then go beyond, the communicative pretences of verbal language, at the same time re-directing them towards a modulation of tones, timbres, gestures and even silences that can more creatively and efficaciously speak from the in-between: "We do not lack communication," Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write, "On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 108). Collaborative togetherness cannot simply rely on the direct exchange of ideas or on the clear communication of opinions; it always requests the challenge of a transformative

act, an act of creative de-personalisation, de-humanisation, even de-biologisation, through which one takes the distance from the beliefs, the conventions, the habits or attitudes of one's own belonging, becoming a stranger to oneself. In fact, a new crucial role is played by relationality in itself. Under this light, relational germs of collaboration (also definable as 'collaborative relations', or collabor(el)ations) start to appear as happening everywhere, all the time, the majority of these relational experiences going often unnoticed in the unfolding of the everyday.



Alfred N. Whitehead, "A Complex Proposition" (1928) [1]

### The Rhythm Of Relations: A Matter Of Flows And Cuts

To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. (...) Elements may indeed be redistributed, the original placing of things getting corrected, but a real place must be found for every kind of thing experienced, whether term or relation, in the final philosophic arrangement (James, 1976: 22).

Relations often go unnoticed because of the unsustainable space and time they take: as Brian Massumi argues, the 'feeling' of a relation cannot be large enough to be consciously registered, the relation itself being on its turn 'too much' to be contained in the limited range of perception (Massumi, 2002: 16). William James's radical empiricism proposes itself as a conceptual help for the unbearable 'experiential size' of the relation, promoting a new philosophical sensitivity for the 'infraempirical' and the 'superempirical' of experience (Massumi, 2002: 16-17). As often argued by James, radical empiricism is 'a philosophy of parts', a conceptual system which, starting from the component elements and arriving to the composed whole, aspires to take into account every single aspect or element of experience, of whatever dimension or range, including both the relations *and* the relating parts. Relations are thus logically re-considered and re-admitted as empirical experiential components, because the

parts can never be concretely given beyond their relations.

How do relations happen? How does their complex dynamics evolve? For James,

Relations are of different degrees of intimacy. Merely to be 'with' one another in a universe of discourse is the most external relation that terms can have, and seems to involve nothing whatever as to farther consequences. (...) Finally, the relation experienced between terms that form states of mind and are immediately conscious of continuing each other, (...) the self as a system of memories, purposes, strivings, fulfilments or disappointments, is incidental to th[e] most intimate of all relations, the terms of which seem in many cases actually to compenetrates and suffuse each other's being (James, 1976: 23-24).

James's conceptualisation represents a fundamental (and often unnoticed) turning point in the Western philosophical landscape, not only because of its 'renewed' attention for the experiential reality of the relation, but also because of its definition of the individual self as already implicating a collaborative relation between moments, cognitional elements or parts (James, 1976: 25). Every concept of an individual always implies a relation, a not always easy or fluid *collaborative substitution*, between thoughts and perceptions, between perceptions and actions, between the subject in formation and its own past-future selves.

At this point, two clarifications seem necessary. First of all, far from claiming any solipsistic affirmation of an autonomous phenomenological self, the insistence on the 'already collaborative' nature of the individual aims at underlining the significance of the relation *and* the parts as co-constituent elements of one and the same self: in other words, one 'part' of the world (or one subjective self) as *always already* emerging from a relation of conjuncted, internal and external parts. Secondly, the parallel 'risk' of extreme atomism implied by a radical philosophy of parts evaporates through the conceptualisation of an equal ontological importance shared by both aspects: because "Radical empiricism (...) is fair to both the unity and the disconnection. It finds no reason for treating either as illusory." The particular "explanatory stress" posed by James on the crucial role of the *parts* is strategically deployed against rationalist or idealist philosophies where universal, transcendental wholes pre-exist and pre-determine the parts (for example when the undifferentiated and chaotic continuity of relations too easily takes up the role of an all-encompassing universal). Rather than dissolving into the whole which they co-constitute, and rather than being erased by the continuous relations in which they are implicated, the parts maintain their indispensable ontogenetic status as the distinguishable elements of any relation: paradoxically, the relation generates the parts, but without the implicit 'pushing' and 'pulling' of the parts no relation would take place. This principle delineates an ontological ground for ethics: it is not only a plurality of collaborating

subjects, but also the plurality required and implicit in every subject, which makes us understand perception, movement and thought as always already relational acts, combinations and substitutions of more or less conflicting parts. The individuality of the self is never ontologically prior to the relations in which it is involved but always coexistent with them, like an atom which is not pre-existing or previously distinct, but always distinguishable, from its molecular relations.

According to James, the individual self-relation is an extremely limited kind of collaboration which does not manage to link two different selves together: “my experiences and yours float and dangle, terminating, it is true, in a nucleus of common perception, but for the most part out of sight and irrelevant and unimaginable to one another” (1976: 47). The only possible relation between different selves unfolds itself in *space* as a mere ‘witness’ of external relations, like a break or a gap generating a constant need of communication for the confirmation and conformation of a shared commonality of objects and purposes. In James’ words, “I have to get on and off again, to pass from a thing lived to another thing only conceived, and the break is positively experienced and noticed” (1976: 25). Rather than being conceived as mere absence or collaborative lack, the discontinuity of the break as the only possible reality between selves is fully experienced as a further relational element, a constructive disjunction constituting that very ‘condition of uncertainty and potential’ for research-creation-(as) collaboration to take place. In other words, the significance (and not the signification) of actual communicative enunciations is doubled (rather than weakened) by the potentiality of the break, every relation being based on the capacity to effectively modulate continuities and gaps and to rhythmically ‘move’ together along them. Communicative language, Massumi reminds us, is based on the unproblematic and flat “image of a self-governing reflective individual whose inner life can be conveyed at will to a public composed of similarly sovereign individuals – rational atoms of human experience in voluntary congregation, usefully sharing thoughts and experiences” (Massumi, 2003: xiii). Concepts and practices of relational experience can only be encountered and explored along the uneven, rhythmic path of *expression*, and always at a certain distance from the literal denotations and mono-tone unfolding of *communication*. Affect is not a continuous fluidity but needs to cut a space for itself and for its non-socially-connoted, non-linguistically-expressible resonance.

As Deleuze, together with Lewis Carroll, would say: superficiality can be more relational and affective than profundity, effects ‘on the surface’ more significant than mixtures and causalities ‘deep inside bodies’. Pushing the notion of felt superficiality a bit further, Deleuze’s differentiation between the physicality of causes and the incorporeality of events-effects seems to take us to James’s distinction between physical (or phenomenological) and logical (or ontological)

tendencies and levels of experience (which also resonates with the Whiteheadian physical/conceptual poles). All the thinkers mentioned seem to agree on one point: the physicality of the movements of a body always implies the abstraction and 'impersonality' of its relational potential, as a capacity for conceptual prehension or 'thought', collaboration 'on the surface'. The virtuality of a concrete collaboration therefore corresponds to a reality exceeding its own actualisation, an excessive residual precipitate or, in Massumi's words, a latent energetic potential that stays with bodies as their potential 'connectability'.

Collaborative relationality has been philosophically conceptualised, but also pragmatically imagined and produced, in many different ways. In *The Fold*, Deleuze develops a reading of Gottfried Leibniz's philosophy of the soul (or *monad*) along the rhythmic line of a Baroque concert or choir. In the Leibnizian system, as well as in Baroque music, the different separate parts, minds or monads, instruments or voices, are like little rooms or centers of order in the heart of chaos, at the same time establishing among themselves a sort of indirect harmonic contact at a distance. From chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos, through the precarious solipsistic constructions of the monadic soul. Another significant but diametrically opposed conceptual-compositional example is represented, according to Deleuze, by the 'openness' and more direct relationality implicit in Whitehead's philosophy of *prehension*. As a non-communicational and non-anthropomorphic affective response, prehension constitutes the immanent ground of all perceptions and thoughts: the stone prehends the water it falls into. The inter-subjective gap is still there, but this time it has been filled with a sort of affective resonance: prehensions (or feelings) are moments of unmediated opening and affective connection to the world. Beyond the solitude of the monadic soul, the multiple character of each soul and of each of its experiential occasions (perceptions, movements, thoughts) reveals itself as already composed of many prehensions and, on its turn, as converging into a collaborative *nexus* of prehensions allowing the creative emergence of the new. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, it is not enough, for the purpose of creation, to establish a central point of balance in the middle of chaos; it is necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile point, and to organise a space (or a pace) of action. In other words, a meta-stable structure has to be constructed by weaving a series of relations, lines of potential connection, between the soul (or self) and its outside. It is the basic principle of so-called 'neo-Baroque' dissonance and its more direct play with chaos: a prehensive opening towards an infinity of sounds that provokes a series of unresolved accords, generating an un-systematic polytonality or, "as Boulez will say, a 'polyphony of polyphonies' " (Deleuze, 2006: 93).

*Inflexions* n.2 offers itself as an example of multiple superficial collabor(ela)tions 'at a distance'. Each composing element or piece maintains its own singularity, like a precious tendency towards self-individuation, which finds its proper sense

in the articulated conceptual continuum of the whole structure. In the end, what is realised is a series of non-correspondent relations in which the syncopated failures and successes of communication, the risk of excessive conformation or of total chaotic slippage, are overcome by a common rejoicing in the autonomy of expression and in the exploitation of the gap: the communication of a clear content gives way to the creation of experiential occasions, philosophical referents are extended into immanent worlds to play or fight with, subjective words become styles. In turn, each of these singular worlds feeds on the particular collaborative relations appearing between its own composing elements: concrete actions of the everyday, like walking or moving the furniture, can thus be coupled to ontological conceptualisations, dance and philosophy reciprocally potentialise themselves, live performative experiences are accompanied by technological scenarios, science 'with' art, mathematics 'and' audiovision, attentive reflections combined with futuristic thoughts. And all these elements co-work towards an idea, or the variation of an idea. The idea (as the generative momentum for the issue) is to create something 'with' the notion of the in-between: because having an idea is always to be creative with the in-between.

### **The multiple faces of creativity**

As a philosopher-mathematician, Whitehead could not but express the collaborative creative process leading to the formation of experiential nexus as a mathematical function, thus accomplishing an important fusion of speculative and analytical philosophy, and reinterpreting the nature of mathematics not only on the basis of its logical rigor but also in relation to its 'applicability' to the infinity of the world. Highlighting the importance of this speculative re-combination in both ontological and scientific fields, James Bradley discusses Whitehead's understanding of *creative process* as the fundamental *activity* leading, through the reciprocal relations of different prehensions, to the constitution of an 'apparent' order of occasions. In the Whiteheadian terminology, appearance is not to be considered as a category differing from the real, but as a subtractive mode of becoming, a sensible actualisation through which the reality of the past participates in the creation of a new presence. The Whiteheadian philosophical definition of creativity is that of 'a relation between the many and the one', a one which is 'many' pasts and futures, a many which becomes, or tries to become 'one' present. This definition is re-folded into a logical correspondence with the mathematical function, which becomes like the matrix or the schema of the relation: mathematical generalisation working as the diagrammatic sign of a metaphysical generalisation.

According to Bradley, the use of mathematics is coupled to a necessity to subtract the notion of creative process from all its possible connotations, keeping it in the realm of pure potential conceptualisation: creativity is never simply attributable

to a specific cognitive process, but is first and foremost the necessary ontological condition for a concept of the 'new' to be created. For this very reason, the function is not even to be intended as a particular algorithmic process (a functional proposition already appropriated by a primordial intentionality and already directed towards specific ends), but as a generalised function spreading its ontological resonance everywhere. It cannot be read as indicative of a specific rule or order but as a general condition coinciding with the 'ordination of order', the 'structuring of structure': creative relationality understood as a logical irreducible, the "ultimate, underivable condition of transformation or composition, the universal principle of construction or actualization." As a configuration of rules and an origination of patterns, *activity* constitutes the undetermined condition for every determination, a sort of transcendental ground which is proper of matter itself (a field of emergence in scientific terms, or an immanent plane in philosophical terms). Whitehead's opening of the metaphysical field of philosophy to the logic of mathematical thought is therefore to be considered in this context as a possibility for generalised reflection on creativity and its conditions, a way to open up a field of speculative discussion and introduce a virtual immanent plane that comes 'apparitionally before' its successive actualisations: the function, in this case, as a concept about to come. As Bradley explains, Whitehead's identification of 'infinite creative activity' with the mathematical function is aimed at bringing to light its 'meaning': not the specificity of a particular relation but the way in which relations can be directed according to specific functions, structures or rules. At the same time, the mathematical identification also clarifies the function in its 'range': not the concreteness of a particular nexus, but the various ways in which the relational principle of creativity can be incarnated by specific relations of bodies and things.

From the universality and virtuality of the function as creativity in itself, a potentiality appears through the individuation of one specific structure of possible relations: it is what Whitehead defines as a *proposition*, a productive constraint that incites a decisive break or a turning point in the general activity. Relations need to be 'guided'. In Erin Manning's words, a proposition is an invitation to experiment within a particular set of parameters, for example of body, space and movement parameters: in this sense, a proposition can be said to 'animate' a sort of choreographic collaboration between ideas and bodies, eliciting action and change in a specific environment. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead defines propositions as connections of certain actual entities in their 'potentiality' of forming a nexus. A proposition is a form of definiteness for actualities yet to be formed, the conceptual realisation of a definite nexus whose propositional value is based on the correspondence between what is experienced as physically prehended (actual) and what is conceptually felt as possible: "I apprehend blueness as realised in a coat and as possible elsewhere" (Bradley et al, 2003). A proposition intervenes in order to shape and guide, or to

choreograph, the formation of that 'elsewhere', developing itself through "a multiplying ecology governed by the specificity of a co-constituting environment." Without deriving from any transcendental principle of rationality and order, the incipient definiteness of the relation is the realisation of a non-rational propositional logic, a 'logic of sensation', a 'self-definition' and 'self-determinateness' of feeling itself.

The solicitation and motion of relations towards definiteness is the main task of choreography. As much as blueness is not only of a coat, speed and position, rhythm and movement are of course not only of dancers. As a consequence, Manning writes, "It is a mistake to assign choreography to a specific human body. (...) Forsythe asks: 'is it possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principals, a choreographic object, without the body?' Choreography happens everywhere, all the time." Thinking and writing 'with' (rather than just looking at and analysing) William Forsythe's choreographic practice, performances and installations, Manning realises a generative collaboration between the ontogenetic value of Whitehead's notion of 'proposition' and the specificity of choreography as a set of abstract configurations drawing the singularity of bodies towards the creation of new movement possibilities. Her main question can be defined thus as 'meta-choreographic', a way to ask the critical analysis of choreographic practice to become ontogenetic and produce its own conceptual variations, a re-working of the philosophical practice not from the inside but from the in-between of its relations.

The choreographic proposition is always collaborative: it works on a transversal ecology of objects and languages, moving bodies and thoughts-ideas, and also of the spacetimes created and creating them, in a multiplicity of environmental links and temporal re-animations which makes it logically impossible to define any body, any object or any movement as individual or solitary in itself. As much as they are never solipsistic, choreographic collaborations are never innocuous either, and do not occur as unproblematic executions of a demand or a task, but always actualise a contrast by "changing the terms of the relation and bringing them into new configurations." The creative becoming of the proposition works as a cut in the continuous fabric of movement potential, 'an in-gathering of intensities' re-directed by a set of parameters that 'precisely' carve out the experiential realisation of movement from past to present. The precision of the cut is key to the realisation: "Like his choreographies, Forsythe's choreographic objects are created with very precise immanent conditions for movement: they insist on the precision of parameters for movement without divesting the movement of its potential for eventness. They are unforeseeable in their effects yet carefully crafted algorithms for participation." The propositional 'abstraction' of choreography from the body of the dancer requires in return a precise experimentation with the 'thingness' of eternal objects or pure

experiences of movement, identified by Manning as events-effects of 'moving through', 'sitting with', 'getting-there-first'. These experiential vectors become precisely directed by the algorithmic configurational force of a verbal choreographic proposition (or of an object, as in Forsythe's participatory installations). As a 'platform for relation', language abandons its communicational denotative function and vacillates between actual and virtual time, its propositional sentences coagulating the virtuality of a movement effect into a feeling of the specious present: what emerges is an amplified attention for the lived time of movement in its unfolding. Or for the time it takes to 'move through', 'sit with' or 'get-there-first'.

The experience of movement's lived time is for Manning what qualitatively brings forth time as felt: a 'thickness of feeling', in Philipa Rothfield's words, an experiential alteration doubling the oscillation of the movement event between a creatively re-animated past and an actualising present. The relation needs to be felt. As the basic relational events in our physical and conceptual connection to the world, *feelings* (or *prehensions*) compose a sort of experiential quantum, a rhythmic vibration through which past and future actual entities can relate to each other along the wave-lengths of their corresponding qualities (in the case of physical prehensions) or of their abstract potentials (in the case of conceptual prehensions), and create a nexus. Movement unfolds in relation with perception and thought, as it is doubled by feeling.

Rothfield's conceptualisation of a felt alliance between feeling and thought in the process of actualisation of a danced movement, introduces us once again into the field of a reciprocal interrogation between philosophy and choreography. This time, the moving body is a specific dancing body, the body of Philipa as a dancer and as a philosopher questioning her own dancing in relation to Russell Dumas's choreography. The collaborative proposition between philosophy and dance engages now the former in its capacity to encircle and capture the movement while at the same time allowing it to continue "unperturbed", and to always keep enough space for itself to appear through the concepts. The sense of Rothfield's question is not so much enclosed in a philosophical reflection 'on' dance, but in the possibility to pose a 'physical' question to both philosophy and dance, addressing choreographed dance as a movement with a propositional specificity of its own. The ontological question of creativity is therefore inflected here towards the physicality of the dancing body which, without relying on any pre-existing subjectivity to guide and perform the movement, holds and witnesses a phenomenal process of subjective emergence and self-individuation alongside the dance. The ontological condition for this emergence to happen is, for Rothfield, process in itself, the "process of the feeling", a process alive with potential indetermination and, at the same time, with a resolute intention to become dance. Dance and subjectivity as the felt 'appearances' of the untiring work of time.

The challenging task for both the writer-dancer and the choreographer is to make the dancing subject (or the superject) 'appear' through the feeling of movement. From the past (or 'pastness of experience') as a field of possibilities, to the emerging of new movement constellations, the collaborative process involves not so much choreographer and dancer as given presences, but the dance moving the subject and its own multiple, collaborating selves in time. The emerging of a feeling becomes a way in which the qualities of an entity (in this case the quality of a past, non-conscious or hidden feeling) are reproduced, or 'doubled', to enter the composition of the new (a new movement, a new subject). If the relation between past and future feelings can never be said to 'really' perish, neither can it be conceived, despite the absence of a pre-constituted subject, as a continuous un-determined flow. It is 'attracted' by ideas or eternal objects, potentialities which are not even topological yet (the fluid contours of topology being already or still anchored to embodiment) but 'effectual', like indeterminate tendencies or attractors of determination. Defined by Whitehead in both a subjective and an objective sense, the 'eternal object' corresponds here to a 'subjective aim' taking the place of the dancer as a pre-determined subject. The dancer's skill therefore does not correspond with the subjective affirmation of breath-taking virtuosity but with the capacity to follow and articulate the 'message' of potentiality, in a process where the subject is as much destabilised (as the conscious operator of cognitive operations) as it is re-formed (as the carrier of a thinking-feeling of new movements). At the same time, as Rothfield points out, the same thought-felt movement prolongs itself towards the spectator as another subjectivity yet-to-come. In Alanna Thain's words, "from a logic of exposure and distanced visibility [we arrive] to one of encounter, feeling and an otherness at the heart of the self that is our openness to the world."

Turning our attention towards the impersonality of feeling and sensation, Thain analyses a series of what she defines as 'missed encounters' (or mis-collaborations) happening, at the level of the spectatorial gaze, between dancer and audience, between the subject and its multiple selves, but also between on and off-screen bodies, in Jan Fabre's intermedial performance installation *L'Ange de la Mort*. *L'Ange de la Mort* is a written text performed by Forsythe and then filmed in the Musée d'Anatomie de Montpellier in 1996. In 2003, Fabre decided to reanimate the work in a new choreographic installation featuring dancer Ivana Jovic. On a stage only a few inches off the ground in the centre of the performance space, Jovic performs a re-making of the piece, while the image of Forsythe's video plays on four screens placed on the four walls of the room, sometimes simultaneously, at other times in disjunction. On a surrounding sea of cushions, the audience takes their seats on the floor, their backs to the screens and to some of the other spectators. For Thain, the modality of performance-installation realised in Fabre's piece actuates a sort of subjective alterfication through a series of peripheral and missed encounters of the gaze that, "by

missing their mark”, re-direct the vectors of inter-subjective communication (the ‘full frontal’ of face-to-face dialogue and of traditional cinematic perception) towards the rhythmicity of feeling. The virtuality of all that is happening somewhere else, behind your back, on your side or beyond the visual focus of the stage, becomes a vertiginous sensation of creative ‘more-thanness’, to use Manning’s words. In the detoured intersubjectivity of the performance, the inconsistency of all that is repeatedly missed, non-actualised and non-realised acquires at least as much (if not more) importance, than what is clearly perceived. Despite its having been ‘eliminated’ (or, for Whitehead, *negatively prehended*), this vague relational potentiality is what constitutes the very rhythmic ground of the performance, constantly facing the perceiving subject with the challenge of dealing with an ‘alterity’ or an ‘externality’ which is part of its own self but can only appear in sensation, as the scar of a missed encounter. The relation also needs to be ‘missed’. To understand the aesthetic significance of the perceptual and communicational gap as a potential moment of creative self-distancing and sensory accumulation, Thain draws on Guattari’s notion of an “ethico-aesthetic paradigm”, highlighting how the de-subjectified impersonality of qualitative change brought about by the very format of the intermedial performance can help us to think life in the era of the audio-visual archive. The juxtaposition of multiple perspectives allowed by the mixed use of video-installation and live performance, and by the scattering of perception all around the audience’s visual range, obfuscates spectatorial clarity with the halo of an emerging difference. The tension between what is clearly seen and what cannot be distinguished or articulated realises a collaborative non-relation between the actual and the virtual dimensions of the performance, whose main force resides precisely in the un-communicability or the affective break between the seen and the said, or between the visible and the non-visible, the speakable and the ineffable. In this break, sensation (or rhythm) appears as the “force of the interstice” or of the in-between that presses for, but does not need, to actualise itself: “Rhythm (...) should be understood not as a unitary synthesis but as an activation of force in the interstitial gap that brings things into contact with each other, a non-relation that is relation.”

The relationality of the non-relation is also activated, in Jovic’s performance, through the presence of the “synthespian”, intended by Thain “as a means of understanding the affective contagion of live/ lived bodies by the audio-visual archive:” the whole performance happens in the realm of a mixed collaboration between live performance / on-screen audiovision. The precise distribution of screen images around the performer’s and audience’s bodies invites “a distracted and distributive attention, (...) allowing us to feel the sensation of image / space relationality minimized in our usual experience of the ‘cinema’,” while instilling the feeling of becoming “all eyes”. This sensational awareness does not coincide with a panoptical strengthening of subjective vision but with the delirium of a multiplication of impossible perspectives reclaiming a total bodily engagement, a

loss and scattering of one's selves in the intensity of rhythm, "towards an impersonal aesthetic as the world(s) feeling." The impersonality of sensation is thus the effect of an affective way to conceive and position the screen in a way that emphasises the relational aspect of the performance and its different temporalities, against the conception of a full frontality of subjective interaction and of a linear, homogenous cinematic time. Multiple times encounter but also miss themselves in the expressive modality of the installation-performance: the audience's lived time, the technological video time, the danced time of the performer... The aim (and effect) of the video installation, as shown by works such as Fabre's *L'Ange de la Mort* but also by Antonin De Bemels' *Lilith* (where the performance stage is replaced by the whole urban scenario surrounding the video installation), is "to make time appear as a relation between (...) varieties of temporal extension." Sensation, for Thain, occurs where rhythm meets chaos: the diverging temporalities of chaos as a field of potential are thought-felt together through an instantaneous intuition of duration. In this sense, the video-performance intermedial installation elicits a series of interconnected feelings and thoughts about time, its different values (technical and organic, measured and lived, cut and continuous) and its different potentials for 'manipulation'.

Differently from the *Lilith* video installation, its 'smooth' perceptual quality and its 'mixed' intermedial temporality, De Bemel's *Trilogie Stroboscopique* is a series of three videos that dramatically emphasise the abruptness of the cut and its 'sensational resonance', through the use of the stroboscopic technique (a fragmentation and alternation of video sequences frame by frame), in an extreme temporal quantification. Time "is minutely and precisely cut, under the sign of an infinitesimal divisibility allowed by the technical digitalisation:" frenetically changing their configurations and movements, the figures on screen are taken to a maximum level of dis-continuous un-recognisability, in a sort of Cubist re-composition. The effect responds, once again, to a 'logic of sensation' which, in Thain's words, seems to affectively transform the screen into a vehicle of subjective and objective 'alterfications' and 'de-personalisations', a logic that is fluid and broken at the same time. And yet, beyond their perceptual effects, the main difference 'embodied' by these images seems to be mainly ontological: not (or not simply) a matter of frames and montage anymore, the digital moving image does not merely ask perception and imagination to overcome their limits and re-think the whole, or the simultaneity of movement, in relation to time. It can be argued that this is something analog cinema already used to do. Digital video technology undergoes its main challenge in its encounter and collaboration with a concept, or an *eternal object* of conceptualisation: "The whole forms a knowledge, (...) which brings together the image and the concept as two movements each of which goes towards the other" (Deleuze, 2005: 156). The relation needs to be conceptually felt.

The concept is that of the cut as infinite possibility or potential, the cut as idea, but also the border or limit between differential and digital cut. In this sense, what the digital image starts to question is the very capacity or incapacity for thought, the spiritual ability to encounter difference (the dis-continuity in perception, the infinity in the digital), its de-stabilising vibrations, while keeping an acrobatic meta-stable balance on a de-subjectified ground. As Manning argues, thinking 'with' the digital image "is no longer a question of analog or digital. It is a question to thought itself (...), the machinic potential of thought in motion (...) To not yet know how to think: aberrant movement spurs aberrant thought" (Manning, 2008). To not yet know how to think the digital: the aberrant question incites a serial proliferation of thoughts, each engaged in transversal, non-communicational relations with the moving images on screen, each of them inevitably missing its mark, and at the same time re-directing its sense towards itself, towards thought 'in itself'. As Thain reminds, the missed encounter always envelops a potential going far beyond its apparent failure. The question becomes thus an exhortation to both technology and the human to take their own sensitivity to its 'nth' level, to think (or compute) what Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman define as the "weirdness of mathematics", or what Gregory Chaitin defines as "sensual mathematics", that is a way of thinking which comes before, or beyond, the differentiation between 'natural' or 'digital' algorithms. The non-communicational gap between words and images rhythmically develops and expands itself along a common idea: the cut as the object of a non-human (or more-or-less-than-human) thought (or the attractor of a tendency towards thought).

Both the techno-centrism and the anthropocentrism usually related to audiovisual and interactive technologies are ontologically questioned by Parisi and Goodman, who ask: "what if the user is any actual entity whatever among the other components of an ecology?" Parisi and Goodman's argument is based on a critique of the need for participatory interventions that, according to them, are indicative of a metaphysics of continuity over discontinuity whereby the 'humanly lived' and fluid experience of the participant is added to the pre-programmed digital space in order to create novelty. For them, Whitehead's concept of the *extensive continuum* becomes the ontological basis, the conceptual potentiality (potential relatedness or "first determination of order", in Bradley's words) to overcome the analog/digital, or continuity/discontinuity ontological impasse, through the conceptualisation of a 'rhythmic anarchitecture'. The ontological aporia between what is countable and what is unquantifiable, between the continuity of rhythm and the rigid segmentations of metric, is solved by positing a continuum of potentials existing in-between atomic actualities and allowing them to relate to each other.

Communicative continuity and expressive interruption, the flow and the cut: two different modalities of collaborative research-creation seem to delineate

themselves. As a feeling concrete and vague, cadenced and fluid, actual and virtual at the same time, rhythm is key to the ontological duplicity of the relation: collaborative togetherness is always rhythmic. The rhythmic conceptualisation that Parisi and Goodman derive from Whitehead's philosophy positions itself beyond the aporia affirmed by Bergson's metaphysics of total continuity as opposed to Bachelard's arithmetisation of duration. With its 'vibratory' nature, the extensive continuum is defined by them as "gelling potential", a generalised potential activity or relationality which, in physical terms, corresponds to the resonance of quantum regions among themselves. This resonance allows the encounter or the *nexus* of actual occasions to take place through "the in-between of oscillation, the vibration of vibration, the virtuality of the tremble." Parisi and Goodman's argument connects the virtuality of the tremble, or the relational potential between actual entities, to a 'nonconscious calculation' which is not merely reducible to an infinitesimal quantification of experience but appears as the experience of a 'quantifiability' beyond or before actual quantifications, a computability that cannot be humanly or digitally processed but only 'felt'. Their claim is conveyed as a sort of 'futuristic' appeal to think the surplus value of the digital code, in a sort of conceptually felt mathematics coupling the scientific precision of computation to the dissolution of traditional ontological givens (like subject or object, human or technological, analog or digital as necessary presuppositions for feeling, concept or computation). The rigor of scientific formulations is thus associated in their writing to the un-formed or un-formulated of philosophical thought, in a sort of affirmative problematisation, or a questioning claim where the reality of the (thought) relation is subtracted from its most familiar and safe ground.

As a journal of collabor(el)ational research-creation, *Inflexions* is based on two pre-emptive assumptions: the relational nature of collaboration, and the paradoxical nature of thought as a relation with difference in itself; as such, collaboration cannot be other than thought. The basic question addressed in the current issue, to which all the collected works respond in different ways, is how to think (and therefore collaborate with) difference, how to draw a rhythmic nexus out of this encounter. Each work therefore activates and expands the thinking of an empirical difference: philosophy and concepts in relation to choreography, dance, performance-installation, video technology, or even thought in itself. But beyond the description or explanation of things (the algorithmic or compressive tendency of thought to encapsulate difference into precise concepts or programs), what these experiments manage to do is to actualise a different way to think thought, this time as an infinite tendency towards complexity, an affirmation of 'questioning' and 'problematisation' considered as processes with an intrinsic value of their own. Rather than finding solutions, a successful collabor(el)ation will try to leave the question intact in its force and in its creative challenge, because, as Deleuze reminds,

It is enough that the question be posed with sufficient force, (...), in order to quell rather than incite any response. It is here that it discovers its properly ontological import, the (non)-being of the question which cannot be reduced to the non-being of the negative. There are no ultimate or original responses or solutions, there are only problem-questions, in the guise of a mask behind every mask and a displacement behind every place. (Deleuze, 2001: 107).

*Notes:*

[1] "A = nexus as physically objectified B = nexus as mentally prehended .. = actualities - - = predicates O round = subjective form (like the walls of a cell). < - > = integration, fusion of the data (...)." Whitehead's drawing was first published in Bradley et al (eds.) (2003).

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