

## **Atoms and Worms (ontologies of fragments)**

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The nature of any type of existence can only be explained by reference to its implication in creative activity.

Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, p. 93

That's why you should let go of any terror of the new.

Lucretius, *On the Nature of things*, Book 2, ll. 1031–1040

### **0. (fragments)**

The power of the fragment was of crucial importance to the German Romantics especially the Schlegel brothers and their collections (Wheeler, 1984). This is examined in the first chapter of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's (1988) book on the theory of literature of the period and in which they write:

To an even greater extent than the 'genre' of theoretical romanticism, the fragment is considered its incarnation, the most distinctive mark of its originality, or the sign of its radical modernity. [. . .] Indeed, the fragment is the romantic genre *par excellence*. (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988, pp. 39–40)

While we could deliberate over fragments that are accidental or involuntary and those purposefully crafted like so many ruined follies, there remains an intriguing ontological dynamism however they are created. This dynamism will be the focus of this chapter; but by way of entry into this, we will return to the German Romantics. 'A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog,' writes Friedrich Schlegel in number 206 of the *Athenaeum Fragments*

(originally published in 1798). For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988, p. 59), fragmentation is the German Romantics' 'tendency' which 'finally dislocates and "unworks" texts'; with the fragment announcing both such an incompleteness and completeness (as it designates a Romantic System) at the same time (1988, p. 50).

Oscillating between different ontological states – remnants of an original unity or pieces of a whole work yet to come – these Romantic fragments enter into affective ontologies of their own. That is, neither past nor future unities adequately contain them and they can develop creative impact in a multitude of directions. Take them away from the historical contexts that determine how these fragments can be understood (both of the Schlegels' early 1800s and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's 1980s) and we are at liberty to wonder how these little pieces, elements, fragments operate ontologically. Such a discussion announces others that relate wholes and parts, or unities and multiplicities, homogeneity and heterogeneity, holism and reductionism; each of which accesses millennia of philosophical investigation. I have spent some time writing about some of these things over recent years (e.g. Brassett, 2005, 2015; Brassett & O'Reilly, 2018), encountering several philosophers for whom these subjects are key (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, 1988; Serres, 1977, 1982, 1995; Simondon, 1989; Souriau, 1989; Stengers, 1997). This chapter will not be able to cover everything that these topics require, but it will take a look at some of these philosophically to engage with fragments and photographic images.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There is a characterization of Mandelbrot's fractals that can align with fragmentary ontologies thought this way. As aggregates with fractional dimensions fractals can be both more and less than the whole dimensions to which they point (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp.

To do this I will adopt two conceits – understood as both poetic and conceptual constructions – in order to locate the ontologies under production. These are: atoms and worms. Just as with the Schlegels' hedgehog, there are no single points to these conceits, no single interpretation or set of interpretations that they encompass or exhaust.<sup>2</sup> In their (1994) *What is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write of concepts as the creative production of philosophers; products that have important localizations in the context of philosophers' work, but which can be fragmented from their original milieus and put to work in other spaces, by other creative practitioners. Interpreting the truth of concepts is not the point, they argue; but – as Deleuze states in the interview 'Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open' (1995, p. 87) – experimenting with concepts, experiencing them differently in the creation of new work highlights the creativity of the philosopher. There are no points, only vectors: maybe this is the point of the hedgehog? Vectors as points launched out of a single place, breaking a unity into fragments that always head outward: atoms and worms writhing, ontologically fragmented and multiply creative.

### **1. (atoms, worms)**

In Chapter One of his 1841 PhD thesis, 'The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature', Karl Marx (1975) writes of the atom being negated in the line. There is a sense of future dialectics here.

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486–488). They play a part in understanding complexity and the way that complexities remain at different scales. Thanks to Daniel Rubenstein for noticing this relation.

<sup>2</sup> In an essay on this hedgehog fragment and Schubert, Richard Kramer (1997) leaves till the final footnote a discussion of the hedgehog itself, dealing mainly with Romantic notions of unfinished poetry in relation to the composer's Sonata in C Major. The footnote (Kramer, 1997, p. 148 n. 21), marked against the final word of the essay, opens up consideration of the first concept of the title – the hedgehog – just as the paper, supposedly, finishes.

It is as if the atoms in free fall become lines only through an act that requires their negation. Marx could not have had an inkling of the ways in which emergence happens in complex systems where neither the parts nor the wholes negate each other (e.g. Stengers, 1997); even while, as Michel Serres (1977) notices of Lucretius, atoms swerving provides an early account of complexity theory.<sup>3</sup> Still, the emergence of lines as smears of atoms falling and swerving provides an intriguing image: where atoms are neither the reductive creative units of lines, nor the insignificant precursor to a more valuable whole. Isabelle Stengers (1997) refuses to accept either the reductive or holistic interpretations of emergence, preferring a construction where the relation between parts and wholes is both nondetermined by each other and in constant dynamic reconstitution. That is, the complex ontologies delivered through emergence not only move in ‘zones of indiscernability’ – as Deleuze (2003) writes of Francis Bacon’s work – but constitute them too. (We will return to Deleuze and Bacon a little later.) Neither atoms (singly or in concert) nor worms manage to capture the purpose of their relation in a way that controls what the other must be.

This is reminiscent of the way writer Kurt Vonnegut’s Tralfamadorians (the alien beings that pop up in various places throughout his work) see humans. The Tralfamadorians’ experience of time is so different to ours that they see humans as a very long worm, with a new born baby shaped end and a dead person shaped end. While the worm might smear all the moments

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Kaplan (2009) mentions atoms and Lucretius’s *clinamen* via the work of Nancy (2000) within an evaluation of photographing nakedness. While Kaplan (following Nancy) highlights the relational ontology Lucretius’s atomism delivers, such relations (being-in-common) seems to accentuate Being. My emphasis here is rather on creative becoming; see also Brassett & O’Reilly (2018) on this in relation to design practice.

between birth and death, the relation between atomic individuals and the emergence of a life (Deleuze, 1991) is not a negating one. That is, at any one moment our individuality is not negated by the worm. As a life, the worm's specific locations are able to offer up a particular temporally specific individual that may be singled-out at any place. And while these moments do not tell the whole story, they are not negated by the process: the process neither totalises all moments, nor is reducible to any one, or any single set, of moments.

Difficult as it is for the non-specialist, we are able to accept that light can be either a particle or a wave depending upon our perspective at the point of looking and that we are unable to see them both at the same time. Vonnegut's Trafalmadorians have trouble noticing the individual at any moment; we spend time constructing ways of imagining that any of our individual moments have either duration or identity over time. Nevertheless, the non-dialectical relation between atoms and worms (or particles and waves) remains. In whichever way we articulate the swerving or smearing of atoms and worms, we are layering complex ontologies that characterise a variety of beings and becomings both in themselves and in their relations.

## **2. (fragmented becomings)**

On the issue of the complex ontologies of being and becoming, Alfred North Whitehead (1978, p. 23) writes: '*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its "being" is constituted by its "becoming". This is the "principle of process"' (original emphases). Becoming is what being does; with identity nothing more than an experience generated by the mythological

extrapolation of a momentary feeling of stability in a universe of change.

Where is the photographic image in all of this?

Photographs can be considered in terms of such an ontology in a number of ways. First, there is the perspective that sees any photographic image as a fragment of an event. This is a fairly simple notion and while courts appropriate critique – as Vilém Flusser (2000) does in a philosophy of photography context – I will examine the relation between a photograph and the event a little differently below (§4), with reference to the work of Deleuze (1993) and Whitehead. Second, we may view any photograph as an event in itself, even while presenting as a fragment of something else. This may be how the Schlegels might have approached photography. Yet the tension between an individual unity and a fragment of a whole remains: we will approach this by proposing a dynamic ontology of individuation with Gilbert Simondon.<sup>4</sup>

Individuation, for Simondon, is the becoming individual from a rich milieu of pre-individuating stuff. This approach was necessary, Simondon argued, because the production of an individual being needed adequate theorising, not accepting as an ontological ground upon which an account of Being could be built. Though not entirely unproblematic (Stengers, 2002, 2004; Chabot, 2013), Simondon's work provides important insights into theories of processes of individuation and this conceptualization Deleuze found key (Deleuze, 1994, 2004a, 2004b; Voss, 2018).

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<sup>4</sup> Another noteworthy process philosopher (along with Whitehead and Simondon) is Henri Bergson. For important recent work investigating all of these philosophers, see: Williams (2005, 2009), Shaviro (2009) and Stengers (2011) on Whitehead; Deleuze (1991) and Ansell Pearson (2018) on Bergson; De Boever et al. (2012) and Combes (2013) on Simondon.

In one of only a few books on Simondon to be published in English, Muriel Combes (2013, p. 28) writes:

From the outset, in effect, the definition given by Simondon of the individual as ‘reality of a metastable relation’ [. . .] invalidates an approach based upon preconstituted domains; such domains are dependent on the modality of individuation, and do not pre-exist it. Domains are a result of the manner in which the metastability of the individual/milieu system is conserved or, on the contrary, degraded after individuation. (Quoting Simondon, 2005, p. 237)

Here Combes highlights Simondon’s approach to individuation. For Simondon it is a process that describes how an individual emerges from a preindividuated field of potential. As Simondon has interests in information theory, technology and thermodynamics, it is with reference to key concepts that cut through these disciplines that he characterises important aspects of this process of individuation. So, when this preindividuated field is in a *metastable* condition it has the possibility for individuation to emerge and to keep emerging; if a field is *homeostatic* all potential for creative development have been exhausted and the processes of individuation stall. Simondon’s use of the thermodynamic concept of ‘metastability’ is important, therefore, and Simondon expert Anne Sauvagnargues unpacks it as follows:

The concept of metastability intertwines the theory of information and the physics of phase shifts in matter, which Simondon gives a

metaphysical extension by applying it to every field of individuation;

metastability thus qualifies the conditions of every actualization.

Metastable being, in disequilibrium, involves this state of asymmetrical disequilibrium which accounts for tension and the production of the new.

Metastability thus becomes the key concept of a philosophy of becoming. (Sauvagnargues, 2012, p. 58)<sup>5</sup>

Any domain of being is characterised by whether or not its processes of individuation have exhausted its potentialities. Our modes of existence and the milieus that support, and depend upon, them are as fertile as their potentialities allow: metastable, and creativity abounds; homeostatic, and stagnation sets in. For Sauvagnargues (2012, p. 58) it is in this way that Simondon pushes his metaphysics of metastability to engage culture, extending 'material and vital individuation into the processes of psychic and collective individuation'. The processes of becoming that allow individuation to emerge from a preindividuated field, therefore, act as much for socio-cultural individuation as psycho-physical.

In the quotation from Combes cited above, she writes: 'Domains are a result of the manner in which the metastability of the individual/milieu system

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<sup>5</sup> Deleuze, on whose work Sauvagnargues is also expert, says this of metastability: '[it can be explained as] endowed with a potential energy wherein the differences between series are distributed. (Potential energy is the energy of the pure event, whereas forms of actualization correspond to the realization of the event.)' (Deleuze, 2004, p. 119). In a footnote in his book on Kant, Whitehead and Deleuze. Steven Shaviro (2009, p. 81 n. 7) provides an elegant definition of metastability: 'In chemistry and physics, "metastability" refers to a physical state that is stable, but just barely. Even a small disturbance will be enough to destabilize it. For instance, a supersaturated solution is metastable'.



is conserved or, on the contrary, degraded after individuation' (Combes, 2013, p. 28). In this way Simondon emphasises the immanent relation between milieu and individual, rather than take either as the basis for any discussion of existence.<sup>6</sup> This describes why he also takes being as something that needs creating and not the basis for creation. Individuals emerge from a field that has potential to individualise, and this emergence either exhausts that potential (homeostatises) or not (remains metastable).

We have here a particular way of thinking creativity that cuts across both Simondon and Whitehead: where creativity actualises potential (Whitehead, 1967, p. 179) and does so without diminishing the potential of further actualizations (Simondon, 2009). Simondon's individual is either a fluid, dynamic churning of being always in the process of becoming, or the hypertelic exhaustion of all possibilities in a self that has no further potential to develop. The individual is a process not an identity, properly speaking more individuating than individual. He explains, in a passage echoing the quotation from Whitehead (1978, p. 23) used at the start of this section: 'Individuation must be understood as the becoming of being, and not as a model of being that would exhaust its signification' (Simondon, 2009, p. 10).

This discussion of dynamic ontological development via Simondon highlights an important aspect of photographic fragmentation that has been put forward so far here. A photograph, to keep its creative potential alive to possible future actualization, must not drain this potential in any single moment. Unlike the hedgehog of the Schelgel's fragment, such a

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<sup>6</sup> The influence of one of Simondon's thesis advisors, Georges Canguilhem (2001), is evident here in the relation of living and milieu. Philosopher and illustration expert John O'Reilly (2015) brings Canguilhem and Deleuze and Guattari on milieu together with works by Saul Steinberg and Chris Ware.

photographic fragment should never be complete in itself or isolated from the world. A photographic image articulated as a fragment should exist in a metastable state such that any becoming into being either re-energises the potential from which it individuates, or never quite depletes the pool of possibilities in its preindividuating milieu.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. (accidental ontogeneses)**

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<sup>7</sup> I have examined similar concepts in relating creative work to complexity theory (Brassett, 2015) and emergence and entropy (Brassett, 2005). Interestingly, in relation to this discussion of Simondon, complexity biologist Stuart Kauffman (1993, p. xvi) remarks that creative evolution needs not only emerge from a 'moderately complex mixture of catalytic polymers', but to carry on needs to create future possibilities for catalysing each other's potential for further catalysis. It is worth noting, too, the relationship between these concepts and that of *autopoiesis*, especially as it is used in the biological and neurophenomenological work of Varela (1996) and Maturana and Varela (1980) – thanks to Daniel Rubenstein for highlighting this alignment.



Image 1. Street Corner, Cincinnati OH, © Author 2017  
<insert Photo 1 about here>

This section has opened with a photo of mine (image 1). To say this photograph is 'mine' is somewhat misleading, as this picture is a mistake. That is, it was taken as I returned my phone to my pocket after doing something or other that I cannot remember; the camera app must have been running and some confluence of body, software and hardware led to this picture (image 1). This photo is not mine in the sense that I took it, but I was implicated in its taking somehow. Joanna Żylinska (2017) emphasises the network of actors (human and nonhuman) involved in photographic creativity;

and in so doing she recognises that the prevalence of photographic technology distributed across our bodies and garments and in the fabric of our world, requires a new ontological speculation. Źylinska's work therefore does not only highlight nonhuman takers of photographs (drones, CCTV cameras, satellites and so on) in her nonhuman remit, but includes other forms in which the nonhuman plays an important role in image taking: for example, software and hardware, networked systems, apparatuses and machines. In focusing upon a wider contextual network for ontological speculation than any one photograph plus subject plus object plus framing and so on can manage, Źylinska puts across a set of ontological layers for photography that announces its increasing complexity.

Within this complex array of, sometimes competing, ontological positions (tendencies to subject or object, contexts and frames, machinic and organic matter, and whatever else there may be), any photographic image is a fragment. The 'whole' of which it is a 'part' is not a larger capturing of an event that exceeds it, but an actualization of a network involving many modes of being each on its own journey of becoming (Souriau, 2009). To speak of 'wholes' is thus misleading; thought in this way, the edges defining any unity are never either fully or permanently inked in and remain, at least, porous. As we saw in relation to Simondon, this should help any individuation retain its metastability. It is possible, of course, for images to lock themselves down, to represent or identify, to become homeostatic, to drain all creative energy from their pools of invigorating possibilities. Fragments can become stuck in closed systems. Nevertheless, as Źylinska shows, photography's escape from such

ontological desiccation can come from recombining human and nonhuman in hitherto unimagined or accidental networks.

The work of Bonamy Devas is one of Źylinska's examples (2017, pp. 35–37) of human-nonhuman networked creative production, particularly the 'Photo Tai Chi' project (Devas, no date). This project requires the photographer to take pictures of moving objects, or while moving the handset, while using a phone camera's panoramic mode; with the result that things become interrupted, dislocated, smeared or repeated (see: Image 2). The combination of movement and panoramic mode (whether the movement is the world around or past the camera, or the camera itself) results in the imaging of strange beings. Distorted, cut and pasted in stuttering positions, the images in this project unsettle as potentialities for disrupting reality proliferate as if intensified, or even revealed, by hallucinogenics. 'This process,' Devas explains (no date), 'deliberately subverts the iPhone's camera software to reveal the digital image for what it is: the algorithmic construct of an apparatus'. For Źylinska, Devas's work could provide a 'revolutionary' intervention in the circuits of those capital accumulators symbolized by Silicon Valley (Źylinska, 2017, p. 37). Devas's picture (Image 2) is one of the subtlest of the series. Black headed gulls hover, looking just past the camera; wings appear as if from nowhere, headless bodies suspended against the blue sky.

<insert Image 2 about here>



Image 2. Untitled, Bonamy Devas, no date.

The affect here occurs in the misfiring relationship between a camera app's coding and human control and, as the nonhuman becomes a crucial actor in the production of an outcome, the power of the image owes much to human-nonhuman symbiosis and the accidental creative power of them not quite working together as planned by the app and hardware developers.

However, there is something closed in the systems of Devas's distortions, for there are still subjects and objects, or controlling intentionalities that frame and cut (as Žylinska has it for all photographic ontology), the

misfiring of the accidents become somewhat staged, even if the nature of the outcomes are uncertain. It would be worth taking a little detour into accidents.

Philosopher Cathérine Malabou (2012, p. 59) writes – of experience as recounted by Marguerite Duras – ‘here the accident is the experiential dimension of ontology’. Malabou’s (2012) essay is a meditation on being and becoming, destruction and ageing, and her characterization of the ontology of the accident is worth quoting in full:

The possibility of an identity change by destruction, the possibility of an annihilating metamorphosis, does not appear as a constant virtuality of being, inscribed in it as an eventuality, understood within its biological and ontological fate. Destruction remains an accident while really, to make a pun that suggests that the accident is a property of the species, destruction should be seen as a species of accident, so that the ability to transform oneself under the effect of destruction is a possibility, an existential structure. (Malabou, 2012, p. 30)

One wonders, then, of the accidental fragment and its ontological status. In the sense generated by Malabou here, accident both destroys and underpins being itself and so has a part to play in the deviation of being and becoming. As if some accidental swerve knocked atoms out of their regular path downwards and set them into aleatory patterns of creative generation. Not only is accident the experiential dimension of ontology, but the inception of all ontology’s creative potential (Lucretius, 2007; Brassett & O’Reilly, 2018). If the law of the same precludes any creativity, as Serres writes (2000, p. 21) – ‘If

we had only the principle of identity, we would be mute, motionless, passive, and the world would have no existence: nothing new under the sun of sameness' – Being must be destroyed to release creative becoming. The work of Jinkyun Ahn shown in *Foam* (2018) expresses similar ontologies.

A series of photographs of 'a mundane afternoon with [his] family [. . .] were deleted by mistake and could not be restored' (Ahn, 2018, p. 11). In the three images presented, two – showing the top of a child's head, framed by an adult's hands and blue-clothed shoulders and chest – are about three-fifths 'fragmented into disorderly bits' (Ahn, 2018, p. 11). This disorder manifests as a block containing hundreds of multi-coloured, horizontal striations, which mainly emerge as pink. The other image, larger, on the facing page, shows what may be the railings of a balcony through a window and a snippet of a curved building. Distorted into acidic purple and green, this image is crossed in the top third by the same kind of horizontal, block of striations as in the other two photographs; though this block seems greyer than the others. This destructive intervention has happened after capture, however, the result of an aleatory act reworking the source code of sections of the photographs. While the original photographs have been taken by Ahn with intention, an outside force – we imagine at least electro-magnetic – has crossed the material realities of these photographs, rendering them as different kinds of outcome. There is something deeply resonant with Malabou's words here in Ahn's work. Not only has the accident rendered the ontologies of the images differently, it has deeply affected the existential, familial, quality of the photographs. The outcomes are as if some cosmic force has sought to rub out Ahn's family; the resulting pictures are not affectively neutral.



Image 1 differs from these other accidental photographs in important ways. With Devas's choreographed disturbances, insofar as these are recoded intentionally, the subjective and objective possibilities that result (Husserl, 1989; Derrida, 1989) remain intact. The senses of creative subject-as-origin, objectively real image and project framework endure, even as the picture space is disrupted and dislocated. With Ahn's images insofar as these deeply disturbed pictures gather some of this impact in relation to the existential positions of the taker and taken that persist, disruption notwithstanding. Intentionality remains with these images of Ahn's, even while it has been transected by some accidental force, delivering difficult to understand work. 'My' picture, while being able to have recognizable content and identifiable technological modalities, is located rather as event that exists with a complete lack of intention. An event the parts of which assemble a range of actors that share a diverse participation in an ongoing ontogenesis.

The events captured by and as the photographs, but also captured in the process of photographing, are not exhausted by that capture. The disavowal of well-defined subject and object positions is required for this never-ending revitalization of the image to result. These images appear as distributions of intensities within the ontological spaces of the images themselves, but also in relation to the events that surround their capture: with each intensity pointing towards moments of a quickly receding present and to others currently burgeoning or yet to come. They are 'ontological events' (Whitehead 1966, 1967, 1978; Deleuze, 1993) and are in need of interrogation. Before doing this, it is worth making mention of Vilém Flusser's (2000) disregard of the event in photographs. Early in his philosophy of

photography, Flusser writes (2000, p. 9) that ‘it is wrong to look for “frozen events” in images. Rather they replace events by states of things and translate them into scenes’. Flusser goes on to explain that ‘technical images’ (that is, those produced with the aid of ‘apparatuses’) are characterised ontologically by their symbolic representation of complex networks of concepts (Flusser, 2000, pp. 14–20). While he quite quickly locks down his ontological opening to epistemological application (that is, he writes of the ‘significance’ of these symbols and the difficulties in ‘decoding’ them), Flusser’s account works to remove simplistic discussions of subjects and objects of photographs. The issue with events appears to revolve around the sense that there is something real which is captured and pinned down in taking a photograph; Flusser, therefore, wants to keep within the realms of the photograph their ‘magical nature’, those scenarios highlighting ‘states of things’ (Flusser, 2000, p. 9) that thread photographs to the world. There is a way of thinking events, however, that allows Flusser’s ontological complexity to flourish in relation to photography.

#### **4. (some events)**

When Deleuze devotes a whole chapter on Whitehead in *The Fold* (1993, pp. 76–82) he does do as a discussion of the event. ‘Events,’ Deleuze writes (1993, p. 76), ‘are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only the condition that a sort of *screen* intervenes’ (emphasis added). This screen Deleuze (1993, p. 76) characterises not only as ‘a formless elastic membrane’ or ‘an electromagnetic field’, but also as a type of filter that sifts ontological possibilities from chaotic multiplicity. Deleuze reads Whitehead here as providing four components to a definition of the event: first, extension. In

terms of this component, an event is that which spreads over all its surroundings, in the same way that a notion of whole connects together its parts. Second, such extensions of events are distinguishable by their intensive qualities; the extensive, connective series establish conjunctions along lines of intensity ‘converging toward limits, with the relation among limits establishing a conjunction’ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 77). Third, an event is individual. That is, it is not only extensive and intensive, but a “conrescence” of elements’ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 78), writes Deleuze using a term coined by Whitehead. As these elements of an event coalesce into a particular event they become individual: extended and located in time and space, as well as positioned in relationship to other events.<sup>8</sup> Deleuze (1993, p. 78) explains further: ‘the event is inseparably the objectification of one [individual<sup>9</sup>] and the subjectification of another; it is at once public and private, potential and real, participating in the becoming of another event and the subject of its own becoming’. The fourth, and final, of the components of event that Deleuze sees in Whitehead, is ‘eternal Objects’ (the capitalization of ‘objects’ here is Deleuze’s). As events ‘are fluvia’ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 79), as they are constantly being altered as pieces add and subtract from their make-up, any

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<sup>8</sup> Deleuze also uses the Whitehead concept ‘prehension’ here, to describe this act of individuation. ‘Prehension is individual unity,’ he writes (Deleuze, 1993, p. 78). This is a complex concept in Whitehead in which a number of different acts converge – becoming subject and object, private and public – and Deleuze has something of a digression into it here. I will leave it alone, for now, for brevity’s sake. However, Goffey (2008) provides a very good account, not only of Whitehead’s prehension but the use to which it is put by Deleuze. Alliez (2008) also provides an account of prehension, in his critical reading of Stengers (2008), that is worth a look.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze really uses ‘prehension’ at this point, but my substitution is made in light of the rest of Deleuze’s discussion here, for the reasons noted in the footnote just above.

sense of permanence in this flux is given through a relation to eternal objects.<sup>10</sup> Deleuze explains, beginning with a very Whiteheadian phrase:

Eternal objects produce ingression in the event. Sometimes these can be Qualities, such as a color or a sound that qualifies an extension; sometimes Figures, like the pyramid, that determine an extension; sometimes they are Things, like gold or marble, that cut through a matter. [. . .] Inseparable from the process of actualization or realization into which they enter, they gain permanence only in the limits of the flux that creates them [. . .]. (Deleuze, 1993, pp. 79–80)

Without this ‘ingression’, there would be no event, everything that would be extensive, intensive or even individual would simply dissolve back into the chaotic flux from which it came. Without such participation in qualities, figures or things of permanence, there would be nothing. Deleuze emphasises that such eternal objects do not preclude creative production, even at an ontological level, but enter into processes of creation at, or even as, the limits of the flux itself. There is a sense here in which the interaction between events, flux and eternal objects delineate what Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1988, 1994) call the ‘plane of immanence’, as none of these (events, flux, eternal objects and the processes that cross them) exist outside of the empirical in some transcendent realm. The ‘intervention of the screen’ that filters events from chaos, which Deleuze notes in this chapter (1993, p. 76),

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<sup>10</sup> Brian Massumi (2011, p. 184), referencing Deleuze (1990), aligns Whitehead’s Eternal Objects with Deleuze’s singularities.

becomes characterised more clearly now. It is a screen whose fabric is constructed by the interleaving aspects of extension, intensity, individualization and ingression in the act of sifting. Screens come into being when the different elements of the event form in the act of screening that describes the becoming of an event; they are evident as the differential fields of forces of events coalesce. Various elements of event may be concretised in each individual photo, but these do not necessarily exhaust the images. The dynamic extensions, distributed intensities, processes and moments of individualization and the ingression of various qualities, things or figures remain, but the strings of other possible characteristics are not delimited by these moments. They may well repeat every day of my commute, as I stand and wait; and differentiate as my days differ and the other events to which they relate differ. The force fields constantly erupt, even while the events are sifted into view.

### **5. (intensive fields & figures)**

This positioning of the photographic image as fragmentary even nebulising across a range of ontogenetic modes, also alludes to Deleuze's (2003) work on the painter Francis Bacon. In one of his many attacks on representation (see also: Deleuze, 1994), Deleuze accentuates the intensive fields coalescing or erupting across Bacon's work. When Deleuze posits the 'figural' as providing another pictorial mode than the 'figurative' in Bacon, he does so in order to value an area of intensity within a painting without assigning it meaning through either representation or narrative (for example, Deleuze, 2003, pp. 2–3). Flesh and bones encounter each other through 'zones of indiscernibility' in Bacon's work, Deleuze states; zones where neither flesh nor

bone, man nor animal, subjects nor objects, attain a definitive ontological presentation. Both non-determined and ever dynamic, Bacon's figural work deploys images through which the various and varying figures mark fields of intensity that exceed any simplistic and determining representation. Deleuze writes (2003, p. 28), as if emphasizing this point: '[t]he entire body escapes through the screaming mouth'. Then, after reinstating Artaud's body without organs into the frame, Deleuze (2003, p. 44) writes:

Thus the body does not have organs, but thresholds or levels.

Sensation is not qualitative and qualified, but has only an intensive reality, which no longer determines with itself representative elements, but allotropic variations. Sensation is vibration.

In escaping the body the figure maps the body without organs (see also: Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, 1988): where sensation criss-crosses bodies in/as zones of indiscernibility and any organization is achieved only through the production of patterns of affective intensity.

As such, and especially in relation to his work with Bacon, Deleuze can be aligned with other philosophers of excess – Bataille, Blanchot, Klossowski, Artaud and, of course, Nietzsche – where overflowing expressive intensities play important roles in creative production (for the most part in relation to literary work, but drama too<sup>11</sup>). It may well be that elements within any image are recognizable; that is, they can be formed into patterns attachable to actual

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<sup>11</sup> Note here, Félix Guattari's sci-fi love story screenplay *A Love of UIQ* (2012). A strange eruption of an infradimensional universe into ours, with squatters, political activists, schizophrenics and children populating a world that becoming increasingly hybrid.

things: people, places, and so on. But it does not have to end here. Objects do not remain objects, even if they have been subject to objectification, or the concrecence of any event into an actual occasion. If they still hold, or are transected by, intensive zones, the possibilities that they have for intensifying further affective experience are not exhausted in their capture. A fragment need not mark the destruction of a pre-existing unity, neither does it have to gesture towards a future whole. A fragment, as the Schlegels write, may be ontologically valid in itself even while not, in itself, representing a unity. A fragment can be or contain figural zones: those which arrange intensities and even as they concretize as recognizable are still open to realign into new patterns. The events that transect, and are transected by, any photographic fragment, are multiple. The keeping of these multiple possibilities alive is what Simondon calls metastability. In many ways such affects can be said to proliferate, insofar as the image designates itself as its own set of experiences, as well as those that it is capturing (Goffey, 2008). The photographic image thus produces new vectors of affect that, while appearing to capture a moment, launch into a multitude of new directions.

As we saw in relation to Marx's take on Epicurus's atom, any single image is in fact a momentary concrecence of an event within the smearing of a number of fragmented lines of affective intensity, such that these lines always spread out from the photograph keeping it in contact with what Flusser (2000, p. 9) calls the 'state of things'. As we saw with Vonnegut's Tralfamadorian perception of human individuals, any image will exist within a string of elements – person, landmark, background, and so on – each of which is on its own becoming facilitated by other actual occasions

(photographer, apparatus, software and so on) each on their own becoming too. Vonnegut's human characters feel affronted by the Tralfamadorian disregard of their own feeling of identity. Our certainty of a photograph's ontology delivering well-constituted subjects and objects may show a similar lack of imaginative power as Vonnegut's humans.

## **6. (last words?)**

This last section was to be a simple 'note on the text', as on completing the first draft I noticed something: each section has emerged as a fragment. This is a lucky accident. The more psychoanalytical among you may consider some unconscious forces at work, generating form at levels below my intentionality. However one may, or may not, wish to assign causality, the fragments remain. The nature of fragmentation and the direction where we may find possible wholeness is not easily pinned down. There are similar concepts I have worked with over the years in a range of different articles and chapters, with specific thinkers and philosophers recurring: as such, these fragments could connect with other writing events of mine and others. To make a 'whole' (narrative, argument, chapter and so on) is not necessarily unidirectional and patterns can emerge from taking strange, sideways steps. In this way the ontologies of fragments discussed in this chapter transect drives to unify them under well-identifiable, stable or stagnant wholes and provide many points of contact with other multiplicities.

From Deleuze's encounter with Whitehead's event, we have the intriguing prospect of intensive atoms and extensive worms, or momentary atoms and enduring worms, filtered as both specific occurrences and eternally externalising concepts. The lack of fixity of Being should be creatively



exciting. If the accidental images shown here can be used to uncover such ontogenetic drives, they neither necessarily nor exclusively locate this type of creativity. Maybe even the most frozen, homeostatic photographs have atoms and worms writhing somewhere in their cracks; and if they do not, we can simply leave them to wither.

### Images

Image 1. Street Corner, Cincinnati OH, © Author 2017 Essential PH-1 running its native camera app Autumn 2017

Image 2. Bonamy Devas, Untitled, no date. Available from: <https://www.bonamydevas.com/PhotoTaiChi>

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