

OF HOLES AND WHOLES

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1. | VORTEX |

1.0

The discrete reality we perceive encourages us into believing that everything is separated, isolated, pre-defined. Our analytic gaze produces a world made of subjects, objects, substances, by incessantly unknitting the relations that make the dense fabric of the real.² Useful as it may be to engage with reality, the operation easily becomes misleading, when epistemology is mistaken for ontology, and discreteness is taken to be a property of the world.

1.1

In the foundational myth of Western subjectivity, perception, reflection and representation overlap on the flat surface of a pond. On the water, the forms reverberate as clear, distinct, identical, self-standing.³ Perception does emerge from immersion, however. It results from diffraction and turbulence, not reflection. It is not the projection of an external eye-subject over a screen. It is the ripples of a stone falling on a pond. It is the waves a body produces by condensing and bending the field of vision around its point of view.⁴

1.2

Dispelling narcissism is awakening to the entangled condition of existence. Once the narcotic comfort of clarity, definition and reflection is done with, dizziness may ensue.⁵ Lines begin to tremble, colours merge, contours become fuzzy, forms are no longer – they appear deformed. Reality leaves room to an impression of it.⁶

1.3

That overcoming our spatialising, hylomorphic bias must lead into confusion is the proof of the power this bias exercises upon us.⁷ If bodies are entangled, this does not mean they are confused [from *cum* and *fusion*]. There are still forms, but they are not still: they incessantly become, *with* matter, in a dynamic process of formation.⁸

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² The word 'analysis' stems from the etymological root *lyein*, which means to loosen, to untie.

³ 'quid videat, nescit ; sed quod videt, uritur illo, atque oculos idem, qui decipit, incitat error' [What he sees he knows not ; but that which he sees he burns for, and the same delusion mocks and allures his eyes]. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. F.J. Miller, (Harvard University Press 1916), Book III, 430-31

⁴ cf. Henri Bergson, *Matière et Mémoire* (PUF 2008[1898])

⁵ At the etymological roots of narcissism is *narkê*, the Greek word for 'numbness', from which: 'narcosis'.

⁶ In 1874, Émile Cardon dismissed the first 'impressionist' exhibition in Paris as follows: 'this school does away with two things: line, without which it is impossible to reproduce any form, animate or inanimate, and colour, which gives the form the appearance of reality. Dirty three-quarters of a canvas with black and white, rub the rest with yellow, dot it with red and blue blobs at random, and you will have an impression of spring before which the initiates will swoon in ecstasy'. 'The exhibition of the Revoltes', *La Presse*, 29 April 1874

⁷ *Spatialisation*, as Henri Bergson called it, is the tendency to perceive reality as made by isolated and independent points localisable in space and time. Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution* (Random House 1911)

⁸ The hylomorphic model assumes a distinction between a genetic form and an inert matter, where the former shapes the latter in the same way as in *Genesis*, God shapes Adam from clay. For a piercing critique of hylomorphism, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (University of Minnesota Press 2008[1980]), ch. 12

1.4

Perception always begins in the middle, where everything is relation, intra-action, and co-implication. Grasping the nature of this interconnection is a matter of aesthetics as much as ethics.

1.5

Understanding the ontological priority of relation means dissolving the abstract individuals that substantialist accounts of the real keep fabricating. One must be careful, however, not to get carried away. Relational accounts all too often deprive beings from existence altogether, reducing them to mere nodes of a network, after-effects of all-encompassing (socio-economic, symbolic, affective, material) structures.⁹

1.6

Beings aren't individual substances. They are processes of individuation. Beings aren't nodes in a network. They are knots in a meshwork.¹⁰

1.7

The knot is distinct but not separated from the environment: it emerges by tying its threads, it is an archive where relations are tied up in space and sediment in time. The knot is the actualisation of a diffuse potential that perpetually overflows the individual knot it gives birth to.

1.8

In an ideal, absolute space, beings would be infinite lines, vectors for ever expanding. In the dense fabric of the real, vectorial expansion is constantly bent at the event horizon of manifold encounters. 'The threads of things extend in every direction, and where they encounter, knots are tied up'.¹¹

1.9

Beings are the knotting of the real into the differential singularity of a *vortex*.

...

⁹ Tommaso Tuppini, *Vortici. Forme dell'esperienza* (Orthotes 2020)

¹⁰ 'We must begin with individuation, with the being grasped at its centre and its relation to its spatiality and its becoming, and not by a realized [substantialisé] individual faced with a world that is external to it' [Gilbert Simondon, 'The genesis of the individual.' In *ZONE 6: Incorporations*, edited by Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, 297-319 (Zone 1992[1964]), p. 310]. On the difference between knots and nodes, network and meshwork, see Tim Ingold: 'The lines of a network, in its contemporary sense, join the dots. They are connectors', while a meshwork emerges out of 'interwoven trails rather than a network of intersecting routes'. *Lines: a brief history* (Routledge 2007) pp. 80-81.

¹¹ Tuppini, *Vortici*, op. cit., p. 9 (my translation). For an understanding of people as vectors, see for instance Paul Virilio: 'between object and subject, between objective and subjective there is an enormous gap: the trajectory [*le trajectif*]. Object, subject and trajectory are one single being', quoted in Offner, J.M., Sander, A. and Virilio, P. 'For a geography of trajectories. An interview with Paul Virilio'. *FLUX: Cahiers scientifiques internationaux Réseaux et Territoires* 7(5) 1991: 48-54, p. 48. See also Andrea Mubi Brighenti. 'Lines, barred lines. Movement, territory and the law.' *International Journal of Law in Context* 6 (3) 2010: 217-227. The Walbiri of Australia offers an intriguing example of an ontology of vortex. For them, as Ingold writes, life goes on *around* places, as well as *towards* and *away from* places elsewhere [...] The place, in Walbiri thinking, is like a vortex' [*Lines*, op. cit., pp. 99-100]

2 | VOID |

2.0

Environments carry problems. An environment is a problematic field shaped by all sorts of physical, chemical, social, historical, biological, economic, affective, financial, geological, and cosmic forces.

2.1

A being emerges by addressing a problematic field: its own constitution is a creative response to a problem that unfolds – knitting, knotting – around an embodied point of view.¹²

2.2

Addressing a problem means *working out* one's relation with the environment through selection, by distinguishing between an inside and an outside: a semio-physical process of perception, definition, and evaluation. The selection of what is relevant. The disregarding of what is irrelevant.¹³

2.3

'A universe comes into being when a space is severed or taken apart'.¹⁴ By selecting, a being turns the environment into a world. A being is nothing but this process of selection. An empty centre of action around which the flux of matter, energy and information condenses, and whirls.¹⁵ A fold of intensity where inside and outside are (re)produced and negotiated, and space and time are bent.

2.4

It is not the boundary itself that makes an organism distinctive, but what that boundary does. In other words, the boundary is not a thing, it is a process, conferring upon the organism a persistence that endures as long as its boundary can adaptively modify the flows of energy and matter through it¹⁶

2.5

A vortex is the actualisation of a potential to become. It unfurls at the encounter between an energetic and a structuring condition.¹⁷ For instance, the flowing force of a river and the peculiar conformation of a riverbed. For

¹² Cf. Gilbert Simondon *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Millon 1995[1964])

¹³ René Thom. *Semio Physics: A Sketch* (Addison-Wesley 1990).

¹⁴ George and Spencer-Brown *Laws of Form* (Bohemeier Verlag 1997[1969]), p. xxii. See also Alexander Wilson. 'Biosphere, Noosphere, Infosphere: Epistemo-Aesthetics and The Age Of Big Data'. *Parallax*, 23(2), 2017: 202-219.

¹⁵ Quentin Meillassoux, 'Subtraction and Contraction: Deleuze, Immanence and Matter and Memory.' *Collapse, III: Unknown Deleuze* (Urbanomic 2007), p. 72

¹⁶ J. Scott Turner. *The extended organism: the physiology of animal-built structures* (Harvard University Press 2009), p. 5

¹⁷ Tuppini, *Vortici*, op. cit.

instance, the desire of a body to persevere in its own being and the environment it encounters.¹⁸

2.6

Individuation is a pneumatic operation that addresses a problematic field by centrifugally becoming at its limits. It is a dynamic response to a structuring problem which unfolds around a central void: ‘the physic individual, perpetually decentred, perpetually peripheral to himself, only active at the very limit of his domain, has no real interiority’.¹⁹

2.7

Individuation does not occur in a vacuum, *ex nihilo*. It rather generates a vacuum, by bending and knotting the environment around a void which was not there before. This is the novelty of the vortex’s centrifugal becoming, what distinguishes it from the environment out of which it emerges nonetheless: *the creation of a void out of something*.

2.8

One cannot flee oneself. Thus, the common saying goes. And yet, it is only by giving form to this centrifugal impossibility that beings exist.²⁰

2.9

the only way out from the impossibility of flight appears to be the formation of a *form* of flight. In other words, both the formation of a type or ersatz of flight and the formation of an identity that flees itself, that flees the impossibility of fleeing itself²¹

...

3 | DESIRE |

3.0

¹⁸ This desire is what Spinoza refers to as *conatus*, namely ‘the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being’ [*Ethics*, part III, pr.7] by entering in ‘joyful’ or empowering relations and avoiding ‘sad’ or debilitating ones [*Ethics*, part III, pr.9, sc.].

¹⁹ ‘l’individu physique, perpétuellement excentré, perpétuellement périphérique par rapport à lui-même, actif à la limite de son domaine, n’a pas de véritable intériorité’, Simondon, *L’individu et sa genèse*, op. cit., p. 26

²⁰ The word centrifugal is composed by *centrum* (centre) and *-fugus*, ‘fleeing’

²¹ Catherine Malabou. *Ontology of the accident: an essay on destructive plasticity* (Polity Books 2012) pp. 11-12. In this quote, Catherine Malabou is reflecting on dramatic traumas or degenerative disorders, with respect to which the processes of regenerating brain-body plasticity (that is, brain-body resilience) that neurologists describe as the positive capacity of the brain-body to undergo and overcome traumatic events, is apparently neutralised. Alien to themselves, inhabiting the ruins of their former selves, these individuals *become* nonetheless, albeit without the continuity that a ‘subject’ supposedly provides. It is as if the spectral has taken the central stage, assisting to ‘the fabrication of a new person, a new form of life, without anything in common with a preceding form’ (p. 12). In mythology or literature, writes Malabou, ‘metamorphoses never carry off the true nature of being’, that is, they are transformation that keep unaltered the identity of the being that is being transformed (p. 9). The ‘metamorphosis by destruction’ she instead explores is different. It is a transformation that has no longer anything to transform into, it is a flight that has no longer anywhere to flee. How can a subject flee itself? How can a vortex be fulfilled? Malabou enigmatically observes that ‘Metamorphosis by destruction is not the same as flight; it is rather the form of the impossibility of fleeing (p. 10)’. I believe this reflection can be applied at the process of ontogenesis more generally.

The process through which an individual emerges is a value-laden distinction fed by desire.²²

3.1

Beings are knots of desire. By voiding the field, they create the lacks, needs and values that desire is mistakenly believed to depend on.²³

3.2

Reactionary nostalgia fixes desire to lack, it reduces desire to an après-coup, the retroactive fulfilment of a pre-existent need. Ideology is the promise to fulfil it.

3.3

Fixed to lack, desire can be organised to flow as quickly, efficiently, and safely as possible. The network is the logistical architecture of desire under capitalism. Its purpose is the maximisation of value circulation as well as the preventive neutralisation of any danger to the circulation itself.²⁴

3.4

The network's architecture uses a language of lines and circles. It requires individuals to be nodes, relations to be connectors, and the spaces in between to be empty.

3.5

The ideology of the network frames individual as abstract vessels freely floating in a space-less and time-less metaverse. It conceals the sedimented archive of culture, power, and violence that constitutes them. It binds them to the cruel optimism of realisation: striving to be different, to be fulfilled, to come full circle.²⁵

3.6

Philosophical anthropology and network science, neoliberal ideology and social media, all converge in feeding logistical reason and its dream to

²² 'There can be no distinction without motive, and there can be no motive unless contents are seen to differ in value. If a content is of value, a name can be taken to indicate this value. Thus the calling of the name can be identified with the value of the content'. Spencer-Brown, *Laws*, op. cit. p.1

²³ 'We neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it'. Spinoza, *Ethics*, p. III, pr. 9, sc. 'Needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces. Lack is a countereffect of desire' Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit. p. 27

²⁴ An organisation of power, Deleuze explains, is 'the unity of desire and the economic infrastructure'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'Capitalism: A Very Special Delirium', in Sylvere Lotringer (ed.) *Chaosophy* (Autonomedia / Semiotexte 1995) available at <https://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze7.htm>. On the governmental relation between circulation and event – and the prevention thereof –, see Michel Foucault. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009), p. 65

²⁵ Laurent Berlant defines cruel optimism as the quintessential affective condition of neoliberalism, namely 'an incitement to inhabit and to track the affective attachment to what we call "the good life," which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subject which nonetheless, and at the same time, find the conditions of possibility within it'. Laurent Berlant. *Cruel optimism* (Duke University Press 2011) p.27

translate the contingent and emergent surplus-value of life – its immanent desire – into all sorts of value metrics and calculations.²⁶

3.7

‘Everything is interconnected’. Thus goes the network’s motto. In order to connect, however, the network must first disconnect. The real must be vectorialised in advance, it must be untangled: vortexes must be circles, knots must be nodes, relations must be linear, individuals must be lacking.

3.8

Colonialism, likewise, tames the multilinear meshwork it encounters into an organised network of controlled nodes and circulation, safe and logistical spaces whose ‘lines are surveyed and built in advance of the traffic that comes to pass.’²⁷ Total interconnection has always been the foremost colonial objective.

3.9

You can fill a circle. You cannot fill a vortex.

...

4 | EXPERIENCE |

4.0

A soothing circle of light on the ground, a dark pond circled by a halo, four silent speakers looking on. The scene has the enigmatic air of a portal, and the enticing allure of circular hope, namely, the promise of a comforting refuge beyond the present perturbation.²⁸

4.1

Out of the blue, a memory comes to mind. London. A glass bottle rolling, back and forth, on the top of a double-decker bus. It must have come loose, after a tight bend. Its predictable oscillation across the aisle fills the space with irritation and noise. Yet, no one does *anything* about it, as if everyone were frozen, willing, and yet impotent, to act.²⁹

4.2

²⁶ ‘The age of logistical reason could be thus regarded, among other things, as the subsumption, or even erasure, of epistemic immutability by an indefinitely extendable field of contingent calculation. Not the age of the world picture, as much as the age of the emendable algorithm’, Alberto Toscano. ‘Logistics as Will and Representation’. In Hamed Khosravi, Taneha Kuzniecowa Bacchin and Filippo LaFleur (eds.) *Aesthetics and Politics of Logistics* (Humboldt Books 2019) p. 32. On the concept of ‘surplus-value of life’, see Brian Massumi: ‘there is an excess of liveliness over any indexing of it. this lively remainder left over after capture is surplus-value of life’, in *99 theses on the revaluation of value: A postcapitalist manifesto* (University of Minnesota Press 2018), T. 43, sc. A

²⁷ Ingold, *Lines*, op. cit. p. 81

²⁸ *ground-ground* is an installation with sound, light and interaction, devised by CADA [Jared Hawkey / Sofia Oliveira - www.cada.l.net] and exposed at Salto gallery, Lisbon, 9-24.09.2022

²⁹ The event took place in a winter night of 2008

The problem *ground-ground* attends to is the experience of perturbation – the perturbation of experience – that unfolds at the juncture between the incessant disintegration and re-composition bodies undergo in the digital age, and the possibility to think and experience another sort of continuity, belonging, community.

4.3

An overabundance of contradictory information fills the present turbulence. How can you believe it? Scepticism abounds. We keep asking, and the answers pour down, translated into the images that incessantly flicker on our screens. We do believe less and less. We do rely more and more.³⁰

4.4

Information is concerned with signal transmission, efficient transportation, noise reduction, automatic response. It abhors distraction, distortion, diffraction – it must be self-evident.³¹ Information does explain, make clear, plain, *plane* [*ex-planus*]: it flattens out. At its purest, it is communication without communicability, the ‘actual fact’, that is, ‘the fact, what was, without its possibility, its power: we are given a fact before which we are powerless [...] indignant, but powerless’.³²

4.5

Narration, conversely, strives to keep ‘a story free from explanation’, so that the story ‘preserves and concentrates its energy and is capable of releasing it even after a long time’.³³ It is not the passive, informative account of *what* has occurred, but the active de-sclerotization of the present by means of attending to what is *within* what occurred.³⁴ The narration suspends automatic recognition to open up a space of hesitation and ambivalence within the circuit of communication. It is the risky praxis of conjuring up ghosts, letting them talk, providing them with a *form*.³⁵

4.6

Adaptation to the network is grounded on a protocol of information, recognition and response, performed by machine-to-machine communication, to which we increasingly outsource our capacity and response-ability to figure out. This logistics of perception, made of data, algorithms, and machines, occurs at a scale, speed and complexity that far outpace human capacity, pre-

³⁰ Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Andrea Pavoni. ‘Vertical vision and atmocultural navigation. Notes on emerging urban scopic regimes’. *Visual Studies* 35 (5), 2020: 429-441.

³¹ ‘Information lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appear “understandable in itself”’. Walter Benjamin. ‘The story-teller: Reflections on the works of Nicolai Leskov’. *Chicago Review*, 16(1), 1963[1936]: 80-101, p. 85

³² Giorgio Agamben, ‘Difference and Repetition: on Guy Debord’s Films’, trans. Brian Holmes, in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (Tate Publishing 2008 [1995]), p. 316

³³ Benjamin, ‘The story-teller’, op. cit. p. 86

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du Sens* ((Edition de Minuit, 1969)

³⁵ ‘For a machine or computer, [to recognise] is “to identify automatically and respond correctly (to a specific feature, object, or event).”’ Wendy H.K. Chun. *Discriminating data: Correlation, neighborhoods, and the new politics of recognition* (MIT Press 2021) p. 232. ‘To find a form that accommodates the mess’: this is the task of art for Samuel Beckett, quoted in Tom F. Driver. ‘Beckett by the Madeleine’, *Columbia University Forum*, 1961, p. 23.

selecting and shaping the environment for us to adapt to. We do not know or understand the problem, but we do trust the solutions.³⁶

4.7

Grammatization is ‘the broader analytical process by which temporal and perceptual flows of all kinds are rendered discrete and reproducible through being spatialized’.³⁷ This process expands dramatically with the advent of the network, whose infrastructure of automatic storing (surveillance), automatic generation (algorithms) and automatic sharing (social media) enacts, filters, and threatens to atrophy, the collective capacity to sense, think, and imagine. Functional stupidity is not a collateral damage of this infrastructure, it is what the infrastructure requires in order to function smoothly.³⁸

4.8

Multiple events flood the present incessantly, as a film reel unrolling, as a compulsive scrolling. Nothing seems to be ever happening though.³⁹ We know what is occurring, real time. We are able to explain all sorts of events by drawing ever complex diagrams of causation and responsibility. Yet, we are increasingly numb to the dead time that escapes the present, the spectral time that provides events with their thickness.⁴⁰ As the experience of communication is accelerated and amplified, the communication of experience risks to be everywhere inhibited, as if the poverty of experience were a function of the structure of communication itself.⁴¹

4.9

The line, the circle and the vortex are figures of ontogenesis. The circle is what the line aspires to become, a place of tranquillity and security beyond perturbation. The recursive spiralling of the vortex keeps haunting the line, however. This is what *ground-ground* conjures. As bodies approach the form, they fall into the dark pond. The light begins to flash. The speakers emit a whirling sound. Perception merges with the ripples that expand around the body. The circular hope the circle [ground] promises is incessantly betrayed by its intra-active unfurling [ground-ground].⁴²

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³⁶ Paul Virilio. *War and cinema: The logistics of perception* (Verso 1989). For two different but complementary perspectives on the contemporary depletion of our capacity to think, imagine and figure out, see Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic society: The future of work* (Wiley 2018) and AbdouMalik Simone, ‘The uninhabitable? In between collapsed yet still rigid distinctions’ *Cultural Politics* 12(2), 2016: 135-154.

³⁷ This is Stiegler’s definition, paraphrased by Daniel Ross in his introduction to Bernard Stiegler. *The Neganthropocene* (Open Humanities Press 2018): 7-33, p. 20

³⁸ Cf. Stiegler, *Automatic society*, op. cit. For a neoliberal genealogy of the concept of adaptation, see Barbara Stiegler. ‘Il faut s’adapter’. *Sur un nouvel impératif politique* (Gallimard 2019). On the concept of functional stupidity, see Mats Alvesson and André Spicer. ‘A stupidity-based theory of organizations.’ *Journal of Management Studies* 49 (?), 2012: 1994-1220

³⁹ ‘The present age is the age of advertisement, the age of miscellaneous announcements: nothing happens, but what does happen is instant notification.’ Søren Kierkegaard. *A Literary Review* (Penguin Books 2001[1846], p. 70.

⁴⁰ ‘le temps mort n’est pas chez eux entre deux événements, il est dans l’événement même, il en fait l’épaisseur’, Gilles Deleuze. *Pourparlers. 1972-1990* (Minuit 2014), p. 218

⁴¹ This would be, perhaps, the qualitative upgrade that, in the digital age, the condition that Benjamin was diagnosing almost a century ago has undergone [‘The story-teller’, op. cit.]

⁴² ‘ground-ground started when, out of the blue, we both independently imagined two similar funnel-like forms’. From the text by CADA accompanying the *ground-ground* exhibition at Salto gallery, Lisbon, 9-24.09.2022

5 | CARE |

5.0

‘Networks hollow clouds of uncertainty in order to foreground clean connections across empty space. Networks dream of communication without community’.⁴³

5.1

Network science superimposes a meta-verse fantasy of no space no time interconnection, reducing space into nodes, connectors, and empty gaps. The gaps aren’t empty, however. A swarming multitude inhabits them. The network doesn’t care. It denies it as turbulence [noise], while surreptitiously extracting value from it. This ambivalence of denial and extraction keeps its logistical infrastructure in place.

5.2

Learning to see the multitude *as* multitude – the turbulence as *turba* – is an aesthetical and ethical task: it requires sensing, experiencing, and working. ‘Without maintenance work, affectivity does not make it up to care and keeps it closer to a moral intention, to a disposition to “care about,” without putting in the work to “care for”’.⁴⁴

5.3

Care is ‘everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair “our world” so that we can live in it as well as possible’. The more one feels lost, the more the network promises to make it up, offering us the possibility to outsource the work necessary to build trust, friendship, and community to its infrastructure of organised irresponsibility which, in turn, extracts it as free labour.⁴⁵

5.4

That bodies are always in the process of being lost, in fact, is not a historical contingency. Neither should it be a cause of despair. It is an ontological quality. Bodies are vortexes occurring in the midst of the swarming turbulence of a spectral multitude composed by what is no longer, not yet, not here, nowhere. Bodies are incessantly eaten away by this turbulence.

5.5

There is no authentic interiority, identity, or community to be rescued. There is no authentic experience or perception to be attained. Never surrender to

⁴³ Chun, *Discriminating data*, op. cit. p. 235

⁴⁴ María Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (University of Minnesota Press 2017), p. 5. *Turba* is the Latin for crowd, disturbance, tumult. It is at the root of both notions of ‘turbulence’ and ‘trouble’

⁴⁵ Jean Tronto. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (Routledge 1993), p. 103. On the notion of ‘organised irresponsibility’, see Scott Veitch. *Law and Irresponsibility: On the Legitimation of Human Suffering* (Routledge-Cavendish 2007). On new media and free labour, see Tiziana Terranova. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (Pluto Press 2004).

essentialist nostalgia. Identity is a vorticose flight. Perception is diffraction. Experience is a common turbulence. Community is a not a coherent whole to be recovered: it is a holey wholeness that must be recreated each time.

5.6

community, far from being what society has crushed or lost, is *what happens to us* – question, waiting, event, imperative – *in the wake of society*. Nothing, therefore, has been lost, and for this reason nothing is lost. We alone are lost, we upon whom the “social bond” (relations, communication), our own invention, now descends heavily like the net of an economic, technical, political, and cultural snare. Entangled in its meshes, we have wrung for ourselves the phantasms of the lost community [...] what this community has “lost” – the immanence of intimacy of a communion – is lost only in the sense that such a ‘loss’ is constitutive of “community” itself.⁴⁶

5.7

One should be careful with inoperative phantasies. Yes, a community is not a ‘production’, it is a common spacing, an infrastructure that must be held together.⁴⁷ This infrastructure, however, does require maintenance, repair, mending – that is, *work*. The work of turning communication into relation, information into narration, explanation into interpretation, automatism into hesitation, recognition into diffraction.⁴⁸ The work of unworking the mutual separation. The work of carefully weaving singular knots into a common fabric, being ‘attentive to, and responsive/responsible to, the specificity of material entanglements in their agential becoming.’⁴⁹

5.8

A form of relationality that one finds oneself drawn to and finds oneself nurturing or caring for. This being “drawn to” is often initially a very fragile connection, a sense of an immanent connectivity. Choices are then made to enrich and intensify these connections. But even these choices need to be understood as retrospective and the subject choosing as herself continually deferred by the choice. I might be able to describe why I am drawn to a particular space and I may try to nurture this obligation or to break away from it, but still I have very little that can be described as “choice” or determination in the original orientation.⁵⁰

5.9

Ontological response-ability cannot be outsourced, anarchically eschewed. Nor can it be simply, self-consciously assumed. From this dense turbulence there is no ‘way out’, let alone a comfortable one, let alone *alone*. Falling into the

⁴⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy. *The inoperative community* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991[1986]) pp. 11-12

⁴⁷ ‘I am redefining “structure” here as that which organizes transformation and “infrastructure” as that which binds us to the world in movement and keeps the world practically bound to itself’. Laurent Berlant. ‘The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34(3), 2016: 393-419.

⁴⁸ E.g. Alia Al-Saji. ‘Phenomenology of hesitation: Interrupting racializing habits of seeing’ in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, edited by Emily Lee, 133-172 (State University of New York Press 2014).

⁴⁹ Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press 2007), p. 91

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Povinelli and Kim Turcotte DiFrancia. ‘A Conversation with Elizabeth A. Povinelli.’ *Trans-Scripts* (2), 2012: 76-90, p. 84

dark pond forces to learn how to swim by conjugating the distinctive points of the body with those of the liquid and its shifting composition. ‘This conjugation determines for us a threshold of consciousness at which our real acts are adjusted to our perceptions of the real relations, thereby providing a solution to the problem’ – a way to stay afloat.⁵¹ This material and necessary praxis is neither dependent on moral choice nor on intellectual abstraction: ‘the notion of “ethical obligation” shifts meaning, from ethical commitments arising out of moral principles—such as contracts or promises—to be embedded in vital material forces involved in the constraints of everyday continuation and maintenance of life’.⁵²

6 | WHOLE |

6.0

In the incoercible *differance* the here-now unfurls. Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity, singular because differing, precisely [*justement*], and always other, binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and in urgency*.⁵³

6.1

‘Late one night during the silence of lockdown, we heard a glass bottle rolling without breaking – as if without gravity, in an impossible loop’.⁵⁴

6.2

As in a whiteout, one may feel lost. Separation, recognition, possession, reflection, representation: all these operations have run idle, as the eye-subject they relied upon has been reabsorbed into the body’s intra-active whirling. ‘The traumatic force catches up and, as it were, shakes the ego down from the high tree or the tower. This is described as a frightening whirlwind, ending in the complete dissolution of connexions and a terrible vertigo, until finally the ability, or even the attempt, to resist the force is given up as hopeless, and the function of self-preservation declares itself bankrupt’.⁵⁵

6.3

Seeking to reassert subjective control would only bring more dizziness. Just going with the flow would recklessly expose to danger. Action and inaction are equally *stupid* responses, their consequences equally catastrophic.⁵⁶ One must

⁵¹ ‘The idea of the sea, for example, as Leibniz showed, is a system of liaisons or differential relations between particulars and singularities corresponding to the degrees of variation among these relations – the totality of the system being incarnated in the real movement of the waves. To learn to swim is to conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field. his conjugation determines for us a threshold of consciousness at which our real acts are adjusted to our perceptions of the real relations, thereby providing a solution to the problem’. Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition* (Continuum 2004[1968]), p. 165. ‘The fact that we make knowledge not from outside but as part of the world does not mean that knowledge is necessarily subjective (a notion that already presumes the preexisting distinction between object and subject that feeds representationalist thinking). At the same time, objectivity cannot be about producing undistorted representations from afar; rather, objectivity is about being accountable to the specific materializations of which we are a part’. Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, op. cit. p. 91

⁵² de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, op. cit. p. 22

⁵³ Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international* (Routledge 2012[1993]) p. 37

⁵⁴ From the text by CADA accompanying the *ground-ground* exhibition at Salto gallery, Lisbon, 9-24.09.2022

⁵⁵ Sandor Ferenczi, *Final contributions to the problems and methods of psychoanalysis* (Karnac Books, 1994[1930]), pp. 222-223.

⁵⁶ ‘Stupidity [...] is for the living being always a way of conserving itself in its being, without opening out onto exteriority’. It is the reactive dystopia of closure, a ‘death by narcosis, by exhaustion, by an ever-increasing indifference to the world’. Conversely, functional stupidity is

remain still and keep moving, at the same time, as a dervish would do. One must stay with the trouble.⁵⁷

6.4

the composer here neither resists the unrest of this sensorial chasm nor asserts himself with the hegemony of an outside agent, no longer anchored by the tyranny of presence through which he might intrude as an autonomous, knowing subject, but rather assumes the status of a trigger, a catalyst, that which clears space for the infiltration of sound's unruly wilting⁵⁸

6.5

In the field
I am the absence of field.
This is
always the case.
Wherever I am
I am what is missing.⁵⁹

6.6

To be (in) common is a process of disappearance. The vortex whirls and through the centrifugal movement an absence does emerge. One experiences powerlessness, but also some kind of becoming, a force that is able to generate voids in the seemingly homogeneous fabric of the real, like blips of light in the darkest night, as fireflies do.⁶⁰

6.7

When I walk
I part the air
and always
the air moves in
to fill the spaces
where my body's been.⁶¹

6.8

Neither void nor fullness: voiding. Neither grounding nor ungrounding: *ground-ground*. A force of perforation that punctures the real into a holey space through which desire can overflow, through which fugitive

absolute delegation, infinite floating in a horizonless state, dissolving as data among data, pattern among patterns. 'Death, thus understood, is the triumphant reign of communication. To die is to become a pure point of passage, a pure centre of communication of all things with all things'. Meillassoux, 'Subtraction', op. cit. pp. 100-104. One may frame in these terms Bernard Stiegler's somehow emphatic statement: 'the only thing that, at bottom, is worth being lived - in this life that must constantly be critiqued in order for it to be, in fact, worth living - is the struggle against stupidity' *What makes life worth living: On pharmacology* (Wiley 2013) p. 132.

⁵⁷ Donna Haraway. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press 2016).

⁵⁸ Jason B. Mohaghegh, and Seema Golestaneh. 'Haunted Sound: Nothingness, Movement, and the Minimalist Imagination.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29 (3) 2011: 485-498, p. 490

⁵⁹ Mark Strand, 'Keeping Things Whole', in *Selected Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002[1979])

⁶⁰ Georges Didi-Huberman. *Survival of the Fireflies* (University of Minnesota Press 2018[2008]) p. 77. Andrea Pavoni. 'Mapping Disappearance'. *How To Sleep Faster 12* (Arcadia Missa 2021). The nausea we experience in the middle of the whiteout is 'the sign that we are fraught with becoming'. Davide Sapienza, *La Musica della Neve: Piccole Variazioni sulla Materia Bianca* (Ediciclo 2011), p. 32 (my translation). See also Andrea Pavoni, *Controlling Urban Events. Law, Ethics, and the Material*. (Routledge 2018), pp. 245-49

⁶¹ Strand, 'Keeping Things Whole' op. cit

undercommons can emerge.⁶² A force of suspension, of deactivation, ‘almost the counter-force which, in the creation, resists to the creation and undoes it’.⁶³ Nothing to be done, plenty to be undone.

6.9

We all have reasons
for moving.
I move
to keep things whole⁶⁴

⁶² Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Autonomedia 2013)

⁶³ Giorgio Agamben. *Nudità* (Nottetempo 2009), p. 14 (my translation). On holey space, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit. p. 415. See also Favoni, *Controlling*, op. cit. pp. 251-2

⁶⁴ Strand, ‘Keeping Things Whole’ op. cit