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From Polyphasic Latency to Polyrhythmic Concretion: Rhythm and Relation in Simondon and Whitehead

Abstract: Is it possible to conceive of a conciliation between the relational ontologies of Simondon and Whitehead? The similarities between their work are evident, but so are the disparities. Simondon is perhaps the most rigorous physicalist of the 20th century; Whitehead offered us a strange energetic or sentimental idealism, thoroughly concrete in its actualization, but involving a God and a host of eternal objects. With the aid of the work of Brian Massumi, Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman, I will try to argue that Simondon and Whitehead both offer rhythmic ontologies, although not quite explicitly. Whitehead generalizes subjectivity throughout all scales, Simondon generalizes the notion of individuation for all scales. The two strategies are radically distinct, but I believe both gestures could be understood as a sort of radically-pluralist panchronism. Being is resonance and feeling for Whitehead, a cosmic actualization of the divine appetition of God, whereas for Simondon being is the amplification of internal resonance. For both philosophers, the rhythms that precede us entrain us throughout all scales. Finally, in this context, a brief understanding of African polyrhythms will be presented as a possible prototype for the collective emergence of complexity from a plurality of durations.

Keywords: Gilbert Simondon; A. N. Whitehead; Brian Massumi; Rhythm; Luciana Parisi; Steve Goodman.

"[…] the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism." (Whitehead)
"I'm not gonna die in 4/4 time." (Moondog)
"De onde é que vem o baião? Vem debaixo do barro do chão." (Gilberto Gil)

Introduction: Whitehead and Simondon – creativity and the problematic field

There are striking connections between the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and the philosophy of ontogenetic individuation of Gilbert Simondon. Both authors have constructed relational ontologies that leap across boundaries of thought and try to offer a philosophical account of the universe described by modern

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science, both were intensely invested in understanding the creativity of nature beyond the domain of human activity, both criticized the passivity of matter in Aristotelian hylomorphism. One can also quickly realize the differences between the two. They can be summarized in the caricature we have of the pure mathematician and the engineer. There is no clear place for the ideal in Simondon's thought, for him forms exist only as instantiated by material-energetic operations. Although it can be dangerous to put Whitehead in any category, he was clearly a platonic idealist of some sort, whereas Simondon seems to be a rigorous physicalist, although he rejected the strict notion of materialism, for its failure to encompass the informational dimension.

Simondon can be considered a materialist in the sense that Marx, Diderot or Lucretius were materialists, but the term itself is not important here. What matters is that in Simondon's philosophy there is nothing but physical processes of individuation all the way down. His work not only attempts to integrate 20th century physics, chemistry and biology into a single conceptual edifice, but to do it in a way which mirrors the actual ontogenetic processes that he is trying to describe. There is no transcendental framework which precedes his arguments, there is an ontogenetic individuation of thinking that tries to start at the very smallest scale of energetic exchange and then proceeds to build itself from the bottom-up.

In Whitehead there is a similar attempt to integrate philosophy and modern science, but Whitehead was primarily a mathematician. His was certainly not a naive sort of idealism, but in his work we find a God with an eternal host of objects. We can say that his is a sort of transitive theism and a sentimental and energetic idealism. His God is a verb that needs an object, his idealism needs energy to be actualized.

Whitehead generalizes subjectivity throughout all scales, Simondon generalizes the notion of individuation for all scales. The two gestures are radically distinct, but I believe both could be understood under the guise of a radically-pluralist panchronism. Being is prehension and feeling for Whitehead, a cosmic actualization of the divine appetition of God, whereas for Simondon being is the amplification of internal resonance. While acknowledging the differences between them, I will try to argue that the panchronism that they offer can be understood as a rhythm-oriented-ontology, to use Hilan Bensusan's term.[1]

Their philosophies can be compared in their focus on a universal relationality which precedes and constitutes its relational terms, in their appeal to the concreteness of experience and to its scientific underpinnings, but their methods and discursive strategies could not be more different.

Mathematics and cosmology are one of the few major fields of scientific discourse which are not very significant in Simondon`s major thesis on individuation. He uses math as a tool for physics and chemistry, but you will never see him trying to bring the abstraction of numbers (or even that of infinity) into his account of nature and individuation. It is matter and energy all the way down.

[1] Hilan Bensusan, *Being up for Grabs: On Speculative Anarcheology* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016).

Although I do not know of any previous work that tries to link these authors through the concept of rhythm, a most expressive disjunctive synthesis of the philosophy of Whitehead and Simondon can already be found in the work of Brian Massumi. In *Parables for the Virtual*, for example, Massumi proposes and expanded empiricism based on the entire dynamic expansiveness of the experimental field, on the concreteness of experience as well as in the reality of abstraction. He criticizes what he saw as a pronounced tendency to think about the body only through the lens of discourse, as if it were affected only by external mechanisms in a restricted theater of subjectivity, instead of being embedded in an ample affective network of ontogenetic processes.[2] Massumi would try to find, then, a semiotics of continuity, instead on insisting on the linguistic model of signification as the basis for all codification.

Massumi has not given the concept of rhythm any systematic treatment, as far as I know, but the concept is often used in his work. He presents us with a speculative vocabulary that can describe qualitative change through movement, and not only discrete displacement.[3] The interval of transformation, and not only the static points at each end. This perspective, I believe, resonates strongly with the vast possibilities of a radically-pluralist and panchronic ontology.

Massumi's attempt to encompass the dynamic actuality of ontogeny and the wide virtuality of processual creativity in the same vocabulary of affect can be seen as an important precursor, not only to a concept of rhythm based on Whitehead and Simondon, but to any theory of rhythm that would be grounded on the materiality of flows of concretion and abstraction, attempting to function at the cross-roads of art and politics. His work will return at the end for a brief speculation of the political reverberations of this discussion.

We are still focused on the differences between Whitehead and Simondon. They can also be summarized by the different roles played by the concept of *creativity*, in Whitehead, and the *problem* in Simondon. Problems in Simondon are not simply our formulations of actual relations, but also concrete constraints on creativity, a positive source for the unfolding of formal resolutions inside a field of meta-stable material tension. Organisms are a montage of problematic resolutions that historically emerge without any sort of rational pre-planning. They are not exactly the speculative key to how the universe creates itself, as in Whitehead's philosophy of the organism. O*ntogeny* plays a similar role for Simondon that the *organism* plays for Whitehead, with the difference of having less of a blatantly romantic resonance.

Whitehead would never place the *apeiron* at the heart of form-taking and potentiality, his world is far too rationally organized to embrace such indeterminacy. As much as the British philosopher insists on the centrality of the stubborn fact of physical reality, and although he is quite clear in defining actual entities as the real things of which the world is made up, his philosophy is also populated with eternal objects

[2] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Dunham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), 2.

[3] Ibid, 3.

and grounded on a speculative metaphysical geometry. Some of his Deleuzean readers seem to want to dismiss this dimension, but I believe many of the strangest and most rewarding aspects of his thinking come exactly from his theism and his idealism. Even if we are not to endorse it, exactly, we should at least try to understand what it is doing.

Isabelle Stengers points out that the emphasis that Whitehead places in creativity can be seen to agree with more recent scientific developments on complexity, emergence and self-organization, but acknowledging that should not make us read Whitehead in strictly physicalist terms, as a banner for a more scientifically-grounded, and thus newly-enlightened, philosophy.[4] However, his focus on creativity, as well as his sentimental idealism, seem to offer powerful solutions to the traditional limitations of materialism.

From matter to rhythm: formal creativity in Whitehead

For Didier Debaise, creativity is the central concept that organizes the speculative method of "Process and Reality". Whitehead's major tome has as its main orientation explaining both cosmic extension and the continuous production of novelty, and for that this notion of creativity is placed as the ultimate notion in his philosophy. This is a creativity that is, in its expansive whole, the production of conjunction through disjunction, and that is different from its actualizations, but exists only in them.[5]

Or, in the wonderful words of Whitehead himself: "creativity is the ultimate behind all forms, inexplicable by forms, and conditioned by its creatures."[6] But how does this creativity manifest itself in our experience of the world?

Elsewhere in the book, Whitehead tries to replace the Aristotelian notion of matter with this notion of creativity, pointing out the limits of the traditional concept of matter as being this continuous stuff with persistent attributes, such as we would say of the appearance and feel of a rock. First, molecular theory has robbed the rock of its apparent quietude and passivity, and then the modern understanding of the atom starts to see it as "societies involving rhythms."[7] And then, as if to finish the job of slaying this comforting image of persistent and continuous self-identity, the quanta make their mysterious appearance, seeming to dissolve in vibrations of light,[8] like star stuff. That is, the solidity of matter comes from vibrations, the building blocks of rocks are not super tiny bricks, but a rhythmic force field that is part of a larger energetic choreography.

So, if Whitehead substitutes the passivity of Aristotelian matter for creativity, and if he criticizes materialism for not taking account of the rhythmic nature of

[4] Isabelle Stengers, "A constructivist reading of Process and Reality," in *The Lure of Whitehead*, ed. Nicholas Gaskill and A. J. Nocek, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 43.

[5] Didier Debaise, *Un Empirisme Spéculatif* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique Jacques Vrin, 2009), 37.

[6] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 21.

[7] Ibid, 78.

[8] Ibid, 79.

matter, it would seem to follow that creativity would be (at least partly) a rhythmic event. Whitehead himself says that the creative process is rhythmic, but in a very lateral and unsystematic way, without giving this sentence or the concept a very deliberate place in his conceptual edifice (a somewhat uncharacteristic move in such a neatly constructed work).

I am not saying, then, that Whitehead offers an explicitly rhythmic ontology, but I am saying that his metaphysical generalization of emotion and feeling as formal subjectivity distributed throughout the cosmos seems to resonate strongly with the prospects of a rhythm-oriented ontology.

A quantitative emotional intensity is a vector of transmission of energy, and its relational eventuality is given in a fabric of superposed durations. The wide subjective plurality that Whitehead proposes is that of a polyrhythmic fabric of cosmic creativity. Understanding the rhythmic character of the world's concrete eventuality throughout all scales (from electrons and cells to our first-person experience) seems to render more intelligible the Whiteheadian proposal of generalizing experience and subjectivity for all actual entities. In this sense, the rhythmicity of a process would be, precisely, its formal dimension of subjective satisfaction. The understanding that everything feels, then, should be understood to mean that everything resonates (at its own frequency, naturally).

This does not mean simply that everything is rhythm, of course, which would just turn into an empty monism, but that both the structure of primary feelings and of subjective forms as described by Whitehead seem like rhythmic events. That is, not only are complex societies of enduring order such as ourselves composed of nested rhythmic relations, but so is the electronic choreography of the sub-atomic dimension and the macrocosmic periodicities of the cosmos.

At every scale we find different figurative modes of a spatio-temporal flow of collective concrescence, a process of energetic satisfaction with its own dimension of experimental intensity. Understanding Whitehead's creativity as a rhythmic process of emergence can be a fertile way of making explicit both its concrete eventuality and its formal subjectivity. This strategy is extremely different from Simondon's own way of grounding being in rhythmic relations, as we will see shortly.

This reading of primary feelings and subjective forms as being rhythmic events draws heavily from the *rhythmic unarchitecture* of Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman,[9] which, in turn, is basically built inside Whitehead's powerful notion of the extensive continuum. As Whitehead himself eloquently defines it, this continuum is "one relational complex in which potential objectifications find their niche. It underlies the whole world, past, present and future."[10]

[9] Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman, "Extensive Continuum: Towards a Rhythmic Anarchitecture," *Inflexions* No. 2 "Nexus" (2008).

[10] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 66.

He also says it expresses "the solidarity of all possible standpoints throughout the whole process of the world."[11] It is basically the widest scope of potential relationality I have ever seen described by a philosopher, wider than Simondon's transindividual dimension. But it is not simply the widest net Whitehead could dream of. Mindful of the quantum dimension of energetic exchange, Whitehead asserts that there is no continuity of becoming, what we do have is the becoming of continuity. Echoing that distinction, Parisi and Goodman try to propose their own kind of rhythmic unarchitecture as an ethico-aesthetic expression of the becoming of continuity, an alternative to the production of places for smooth flow of capital and topological control.[12]

As Goodman and Parisi explain: "The rhythmic anarchitecture offered via Whitehead's concept of the extensive continuum takes us beyond the deadlock of opposing a metaphysic of discontinuity and continuity."[13] Parisi and Goodman seem unconvinced either by Bergson's continuous being or by Bachelard's dialectical re-animation of a broken continuity, pointing out its reliance on polarisation over relation.[14] So they try to move beyond those limits through Whitehead's continuum, constituting a field of experimentation based on its extensive relational potential. Their rhythmic unarchitecture "accounts for a vibratory nexus of actual occasions and tentatively initiates an ethico-aesthetic field of experimentation against the backdrop of a pre-emptive topology of control."[15]

Like Massumi, Steven Shaviro and others, the authors are clearly interested in grounding artistic and political experimentation in Whitehead's speculative metaphysics. They also have a very specific understanding of rhythm: for them, proper rhythm cannot be perceived by the senses, "but is crucially transensory or even nonsensuous."[16]

I understand the importance of understanding rhythm as potential relation, but my own approach tries to encompass both the most immediate aesthetic dimensions of rhythmic experience as well as the virtual (or metastable) potential for creative resolution that lies beneath and beyond the current structures. I gladly adopt the authors' notion of a field of ethico-aesthetic experimentation grounded in a vast vibratory nexus, but I would not work exclusively with a nonsensuous approach to rhythm, when it is precisely this dimension of experimental immediacy and collective emergence through entrainment which I find so seductive and potent in the concept.

The subtlety of imperceptible and potential rhythms is important, but so are the blunt grooves of natural periodicities and technical circuits of entrainment, as obvious as that may seem. Contemporary theories of rhythm should be attentive to the way technical rhythms are embedded or nested in the affordances and intervals

[11] Idem.

12 Luciana Parisi and Steve Goodman, "Extensive Continuum: Towards a Rhythmic Anarchitecture," 2.

[13] Ibid, 2.

[14] Ibid, 5.

[15] Ibid, 4.

[16] Idem.

of natural rhythmicity. And this is exactly what I think Simondon's vocabulary allows us to do.

If in Whitehead creativity is the ultimate principle, in Simondon the concept of the problem seems to serve a similar function as the fundamental source of emergent order. If time in Whitehead is fundamentally creative, it would seem that in Simondon it is fundamentally problematic. In Whitehead divine appetition is the ultimate source of creativity, selecting eternal objects for their ingression into the concrescence of actuality. For Simondon there is the rhythmic unfolding and amplification of an ontogenetic set of problems which uses the present layer as the foundation for the next one (and beneath that there is the indeterminate potential of the pre-individual).

In Whitehead there is God and his eternal objects as a sort of endless reservoir of rhythmic potential, in Simondon there is no need for anything outside actuality. The tension that exists in a problematic field is built from the unrealized potential of the pre-individual domain. The disparity which triggers individuation happens between the energetic and structural dimensions of different scales or orders of magnitude, and not between the ideal and the actual, or between logical opposites like being and nothingness. There is no synthetic rhythm that unifies the whole, no triadic dialectic unfolding at every formal resolution. I will now try to argue that Simondon's notion of individuation as mediation between different orders of magnitude is always a tensive resolution of heterogeneous durations, and that the concept of rhythm is teemingly latent in his own thesis on individuation and information.

The potential tension of heterogeneous durations: Simondon and the rhythms of individuation

For Simondon, being is never one, even when it is "monophasic, pre-individual, it is more than one". There is in pre-individual being more potential than its current structure can take,[17] and it is exactly this excess that phase-shifts the system and sets off the relational unfolding of individuation. The pre-individual field is more than identity, but it can be described as without phases.

Though the name pre-individual may suggest temporal precedence, Simondon is clear that the phases of being are given simultaneously, and that the notions of permanence and succession, then, should be understood only in relation to monophasic being.[18]

For him, "the successive character of dialectical steps can be contracted into a parallelism of phases of being"[19] if we think about becoming as becoming of being, and not as its opposite (the problematic tension of incompatibilities that becomes an amplifying solution does not constitute a logical opposition to itself). Being *is* becoming, they are not contraries, and being is multiple "inasmuch as it is polyphasic,

[17] Gilbert Simondon, *L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et de information* (Paris: MILLON, 2013), 316.

[18] Ibid, 313.

[19] Idem.

multiple because it is a provisory solution, a phase of becoming which will lead to new operations."[20]

That which Simondon calls "ontological monism" should be, then, replaced by a pluralism of phases, with being "incorporating, in place of one single given form, successive informations which are both reciprocal structures and functions."[21] While a unified being would be coherent and self-limiting, Simondon understand that the original state of being "surpasses self-coherence, exceeds its own limits."[22] What I will try to defend here is that this polyphasic being should be understood as a panchronic continuum composed of a radical plurality of discontinuous durations.

The definition of rhythm that I am working with comes from Susanne Langer (a student of Whitehead, no less), who defines it as "the setting-up of new tensions by the resolution of former ones."[23] This short definition carries with itself the dynamism that is implicit in any rhythmic concretion, which is not the case for most definitions that are focused on the regular divison of metre or the stability of periodic repetition. In fact, there is a striking similarity between her definition of rhythm and the meta-stable montage of the organism in relation to is environment in Simondon,[24] as well as to the very nature of meta-stability as fundamentally tensive.

The fact that the previous tensions were resolved by the new rhythmic configuration does not mean that they disappear. The resolution of problematic tension retain the constitutive assymetry between terms without having negativity as its motor. There is something like a dialectical process in the amplification of internal resonance that creates a problematic resolution, but it does not always have that same ternary rhythm that it has in Hegel. Becoming is not a waltz. The tension between heterogenous durations that form a material composition are derived from the pre-individual disparities that constitute its appetitions and that are always partly retained in the meta-stability of a partial rhythmic solution. A pre-individual field de-phases itself into the couple individual-milieu, a chrono-topological set actualizes potential energy, but the individuated set keeps carrying along with itself a pre-individual charge which can be further actualized by the collective dimension of information (the transindividual).

Simondon, like elsewhere, makes a point out of distinguishing his scheme from dialectics (he means Hegel, apparently): "This scheme is different from dialectics, because it does not imply a necessary succession, nor the intervention of negativity as the motor of its progression."[25]

The posterior terms of resolution of a metastable system do not contain more truth than the previous ones, "the sense of Being is its problematic in way of resolution,"[26]

[20] Ibid, 310.

[21] Ibid, 308.

[22] Ibid, 316.

[23] Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Scribners, 1957), 51. For a powerful reading of Langer's notion of rhythm, see Eleni Ikoniadou, The Rhythmic Event (Cambridge – London: MIT Press, 2014).

[24] Gilbert Simondon, *L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et de information*, 204.

[25] Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode de l'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier, 2012), 222.

[26] Simondon, L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et de information, 312.

and not its final result. As he says: "Becoming is, effectively, perpetual and renewed resolution, incorporating and amplifying resolution that proceeds by crises, and such that its sense is in each one of its phases, and not simply in its origin and end."[27]

Becoming is not, then, the tension between Alpha and Omega that would, then, be the actual operational terms. It is not the ending of the figure that determines its full meaning, as in a narrative. The sense of an ontogenetic network lies in every one ifs nexuses and unfolds through its rhythmic centre of experience, a concretion that takes place under the parameters that emerge out of the inventive resolutions of a panchronic fabric of transindividuality.

The phase-shift that unfolds the environment into an individual is a mismeasure, but it is a mismeasure that can give place, through the potential of the transindividual fabric, to another dimension of formal resolution: the collective dimension.

Cosmopolitics and polyrythmia

Being, then, is never completely in-phase with itself. There is always in becoming this bipolar phase-shift, a measure that clashes with another one that exceeds it. This means that Simondon's polyphasic being is always panchronic, in the sense that it holds together a world of heterogenous durations that are superposed in an intensive fabric of discontinuity. Not only is becoming not always ternary as a waltz, but it would not suffice to simply introduce another division for the compass, or even accentuate it erratically (as Lucretius does with his clinamem). The fact is that there is no single beat that drags the whole cosmos, there is no single duration which synthesizes all the durations, there is no synthetic rhythm.[28]

This pre-individual excess that unfolds into the phases of being should be thought of as a process of amplification, which would only be possible starting with "initial plurality of orders of magnitude in reality."[29] Every individuation for Simondon is operated as an energetic and structural transduction between different orders of magnitude. If a plant establishes a mediation between the cosmic domain of the sun and the inframolecular domain of the earth's soil in which it is rooted, this mediation can be understood a polyrhythmic assemblage of diverse durations.

As Stamatia Portanova points out:

> from matter and its tensions, all kinds of individuations (from atomic and physical to biological and organic, and then psychic and collective) are formed through a rhythmic process of modulation of potential energy.[30]

[27] Ibid, 310.

[28] Ibid, 256.

[29] Ibid, 313.

[30] Stamatia Portanova, "Dance, Technology and the Material Mutations of Rhythm," (PhD diss., University of East London, 2006), 173.

Although Simondon never uses this image, we can propose that the notion of polyrhythms be used as a prototype for understanding the ontogenetic emergence of complexity from a disparity of durations. Polyrhythms can be defined as a complex mediation between conjunction and disjunction, where two distinct periodicities come together under a single pulse, their beats going in and out of phase with each other as the whole wider rhythmic figure falls into place (an initial incompatibility of measures is gathered in a larger, distended, order).

What happens when a binary rhythm goes off against a ternary rhythm (2 : 3, the generative matrix of the Ewe music of Ghana, according to Kofi Agawu?[31] We can say that two and three here are contracted here in the same gestalt, as Agawu says, but in a complex and polyphasic gestalt. In dealing with African music, it is not appropriate to say that a compass is being divided by the two measures. Since, according to Simha Aron, in many strands of traditional African music, the musician:

> proceeds neither by splitting, as in Western musical practice, nor by conjunction, as in ancient Greek metric system. He neither divides a basic unit (such as a measure) up into a given number of beats, nor starts with a *chronos protos* of minimal duration, of which larger groups are multiples.[32]

African polyrhythms are built atop of a common pulse that serves as a reference point for the different periodic structures which will be superposed on it. Like in the medieval *tactus*, there is a sort of an heuristical approach to how the different rhythmic phrases will rise out of the pulse of that initial cell. The superposed phrases may enter in symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships, not only through their strict periodic structure, but through accentuation. They go in and out of phase with one another, but they do not fall out of step with the pulse.

The pulse here is neither a measure, nor a conductor. It is the initial cell from which superposed patterns may emerge, the structural germ which triggers a tensive accumulation of complexity. It does not dictate or prefigure which patterns will emerge, it simply guides their coordinated concretion. This might serve as a prototype for understanding the superposed durations that drag us across all scales. Being subjected to many concurrent pulses is not the same as being synchronized under a self-same measure.

The present moment, with its polarity of past and future, is also an expression of the disparity of superposed durations. Matter turns into energy and information, accelerated beats eventually turn into tones and decelerated harmonies decompose into polyrhythms. Simondon explicitly points out that the very difference between organic and non-organic matter could be considered that of different speeds of evolution of

[31] Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm*: *A Northern Ewe Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[32] Simha Aron, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythms: Musical Structure and Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 206.

reality.[33] It would seem that we need a philosophical vocabulary of rhythm that can offer an account of the radical energetic transformations that structures suffer under different velocities. Whitehead was already trying to do something to that effect, as were Deleuze and Guattari (and Massumi is certainly on a similar direction).

Simondon's ontogenetic philosophy let us take in the sedimented layers of periodicities that compose our environments and our technical ensembles; Whitehead's intricate speculative vocabulary allows us to establish a vast community of vibratory feeling and formal creativity that is distributed throughout the universe. Understanding that everything resonates definitely does not mean, simply, that there is a vague vibrational harmony pre-established in the cosmos, but rather that at every step of formal complexity there exists its own degree of self-determined concretion, its own relational thickness as experimented by its neighboring nexus of processual mentality.

Simondon's ontogenetic account of transductive processes of amplification suggest us that understanding the historical layers of natural rhythm that are condensed and nested in our living bodies might give us insights into how our species tends to behave collectively. Whitehead's vocabulary, in turn, may help us ground the relationality that constitutes any event in an extensive continuum that lurks beneath and beyond simple locality.

Taking heed of both philosophies, Massumi's anticapitalist art of the political event[34] tries exactly to deal with the ontogenetic dimension of affects as well as for the extensive relationality of events distributed in our current technical networks. Massumi does not imagine that we can hope to abstract a general rhythmological recipe for revolution. What we can hope for are snapshots of the energetic and structural conditions for social transformation in a given scenario, techniques for harnessing and triggering a cascade of effects under certain conditions. What are the circuits of collective entrainment available, what are the structural and energetic parameters for coupling? What kind of gestures are most likely to be amplified by the given circuits? Those are the kind of problems that Massumi is trying to raise inside his own, affect-oriented, vocabulary.

In *Principle of Unrest*, Massumi further proposes that contemporary capitalism now couples the infra-individual level directly with the transindividual level, energizing itself with the feedback effects between these layers (largely bypassing the human subject).[35] He calls this the *ontopower* of capital, the power of harnessing and channeling ontogeny, of transforming the very productive nature of exchange into a platform for its own self-abstracting value. That is, if I read him correctly, the very properties of collective emergence from pre-individual potential to transindividual relationality have been captured by the technical flow of capital. This seems like a gloomy description, but Massumi highlights that larger subversive potential of trends are present in this layer of expansion. In seeing potential for social transformation in

[33] Simondon, *L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et de information*, 313.

[34] Brian Massumi, *The Power at the End of the Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 94.

[35] Brian Massumi, *The Principle of Unrest* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2017), 14.

this qualitative movement of self-abstraction, he is here explicitly resonating a leftist accelerationist perspective, although specifying that "the only reason to push capitalism beyond its pale is to allow non-capitalist forms of surplus-value to affirm themselves."[36]

I would rather reach for the emergency brake than call for any sort of acceleration, but there seems to exist real potential for undermining capitalism with some of its own protocols of value production. Even if the current social platforms tend toward smooth consumer experiences underlined by metrical topologies of control, the vibratory nexus of the collective dimension of information as such is still taut with relational potential, like Parisi and Goodman would remind us. Our collective imagination is mostly running on corporate platforms, but there is still a panchronic continuum waiting for gestures to resonate, and for social energy to be transduced. The recent collective entrainment of unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd in the United States is the latest, certainly not the last, example.

Simondon and Whitehead would teach us that beneath the present structures there is always latent energy waiting for actualization. Time is both a local gradient of entropy and a universal expansion of inventive transduction (this is not a contradiction, but a disparity). The present moment is always a tense and appetitive negotiation between the retention of the past beat and the protension of its coming satisfaction.

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[36] Ibid, 35. Massumi is involved with projects in this direction of a non-capitalist production of creative (such as the "Three Ecologies Process Seed Bank"), but there is no space to discuss them properly here.

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