

Standing in the Midst: Intuition at the Fringes of Possible

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Abstract

This paper is an entry point into a different way of doing research: speculative pragmatism. Its roots are to be found in A. N. Whitehead, W. James, H. Bergson, among others. The main concept it fosters for a speculative pragmatism practice is *intuition* (Bergson, 2007; Deleuze, 1988, 2002; Manning, 2016). Around a discussion on knowledge, the concept of intuition is a pivotal milieu that anchors the basis for thinking-with-research-in-the-making. In the outlining of this background, the classical structure of experience is challenged. It introduces the subjective nature of the event, and shifts the role of objects, as they are normally understood.

Keywords: intuition, speculative pragmatism, bifurcation of nature Misplaced Concreteness, qualitative research

“Another kind of stand must be taken, one that erupts from the midst, one that engages sympathetically with the unknowable at the heart of difference, one that heeds the uneasiness of an experience that cannot yet be categorized.”

(Manning, 2016, p. 39)

“We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces.” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479)

Standing in the Midst: Intuition at the Fringes of Possible

In *Science and the Modern World*, Alfred North Whitehead (1925/1967) attributes to William

James “the inauguration of a new stage in philosophy”¹ (p. 143) by contrasting his essay “Does Consciousness Exist?” (James, 1904) with René Descartes’s (1637) *Discourse on the Method*. James’s lineage differs radically from a “mechanistic view,” which is based on matter (see Whitehead, 1925/1967). Conversely, Whitehead proposes a conceptual frame based on process. To think-with Erin Manning is also to think-with Whitehead. This “new stage in philosophy” is where Manning stands: process philosophy. The mechanistic view concords with what has been called elsewhere humanism (St. Pierre, 2000) or positivism (Clough, 2009). Most of our “modern” knowledge—and even the basic subject-verb-object linear language structure—is based on the mechanistic theoretical ground. Therefore, to think-with Manning implies an epistemological rupture between our habitual conceptions of reality and the possibility of conceiving it differently. In *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), Alice’s experiences evoke the disorientation that may accompany this reorganization of foundational assumptions. The main difficulty when studying process philosophy is to withdraw from dualistic modes of thought and to stand in the midst. This paper continues Manning’s invitation to go beyond dualism, right into the heart of relationality. The organizing thresholds here present undo the main pitfalls that may prevent intuition—as a method—to be anchored in “relation” (James, 2003). The intended meaning of *possible* in the title of this paper is inspired by Didier Debaise and Isabelle Stengers’s (2017) differentiation between the probable and the possible: whereas probabilities are a continuation of what is, the possible opens the path for a difference. Thus, the “insistence of possibles” (Debaise & Stengers, 2017) is a mode of existence that persists as a parallel reality of the actualized (the virtual)—which is multiple because there are always other ways available for the expression of existence (see also Lapoujade, 2021). The challenge of the virtual is that it can only be *felt* in its “fringes,” almost as an after-taste. Whitehead provides a rich theoretical frame that explores with acute detail the affective dimension of experience. This paper develops the Whiteheadian background of Manning’s work to help think about qualitative research within the conceptual frame of process philosophy. If we choose to do qualitative research attending to this affective level, we need to replace knowledge with knowing—and stand at the edge of the virtual, in the midst. The thresholds function as an initiatory path. The first is ontological. The second is pragmatic. The first and the second are a prerequisite to the third—intuition—which is epistemological.

Thinking Qualitative Research Processually

There is no end to the *process* of knowing. Acknowledging this also means to engage with learning (which includes the way we conduct research) in a processual way. “Experiment!”—this is Manning’s motto. To engage in a knowing process that starts with experimentation is another saying for *speculative pragmatism*. It means to continuously dust our knowing, and polish it through the lenses of new experiences that keep adding themselves to the cognizance constellation. Speculative pragmatism is not a methodology, but an epistemological positioning. As such, *pragmatic* stands for what empirically emerges (under which mode does it appear?), and

¹The statement does not come, however, without acknowledging other influences of his time.

speculative points to the full potential immanent to each experience (Manning, 2016, p. 33). The speculative movement traverses the relational field of experience fine-tuning differential in order to ask the field what else can it become? Pragmatism (James, 1995), in order to reach its full speculative capacity, must be allied to the theory of radical empiricism as developed by James (Massumi, 2011, p. 29). Radical empiricism (James, 2003; Lapoujade, 2007) develops first and foremost the basis for a relational ontology. Not an interrelation among individuals, but relation as an ontological basis. If you stand in the midst, in relation, object and subject become as inconstant just as right and left depend upon a reference standpoint. For radical empiricism, the point of departure is always relation. The relational dimension stands before the cognitive movement of reflection: the affective dimension of experience. If the point of departure is relation, where does the subject stand? For Whitehead, every event is the subject of its own experience (see Stengers, 2011). This means that the only pertinent subject is relation (the event) as it unfolds the full capacity of its own becoming. The concept of “intuition,” as a method (Bergson, 1946; Deleuze, 1988, 2002; Manning, 2016), seems to be the best fit to perceive and name the event’s unfolding movement.

If intuition is the method, relation is the object of study. Taking relation as a departing point (as the subject of its own becoming), along with questioning the researcher’s positioning regarding *research methodology design*, is a great challenge. It requires eschewing predefined interpretive grids and welcoming a sincere curiosity for the new. It means that speculative pragmatism “takes as its starting point a rigor of experimentation” (Manning, 2016, p. 38). There is a reason for Manning’s insistence on “technique” (Manning, 2016): the field of experimentation is not a playground where anything goes. *Techniques* require *operative questions* that activate a springboard for thought in the act. These operative questions are not asked in order to be answered but to generate *enabling constraints* that will condition a self-organizing movement. These empirical concepts are only guidelines toward new modes of valuation. They aim at an embrace of knowledge in the making and are sustained by the concept of intuition. For Manning, intuition creatively becomes an attunement to the relational field’s immanent directionality. This attunement is the premise for the more-than of an emergent ecology to be truly perceived (Manning, 2016, p. 59). It is through attunement that the affective dimension of experience (relation), may appear—revealing what else qualitative research may become.

The First Threshold: Concreteness (Down the Rabbit Hole²)

When reading Whitehead (1978), one might stay under the impression that every concept grasped will always bring the study further down an intricate rabbit hole of questions. Yet, the fact that he elaborated a highly complex and detailed conceptual frame is only a secondary aspect of the difficulty. The main reason dwells elsewhere. What is specific to Whitehead’s proposition is that, in order to follow it, a radical shift is required in the way we answer the question: “What is the

² The images “Down the Rabbit Hole,” then later in this same text “wonderland,” and “through the looking glass” come from the famous books from Lewis Carroll *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871).

world made of?” (Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 50). And to embrace this shift also entails a radical ontological shift. When we look around and name the objects we see, we will mainly be adhering to a “mechanistic theory of nature” (1925/1967, p. 50). Such a cosmology abides by what Whitehead calls the “bifurcation of nature” (2006). In doing so, Whitehead is pointing to the mechanistic movement that differentiates nature (reality) into two distinct branches: primary and secondary qualities. According to the logic of the bifurcation of nature, there is an objective nature, which is apprehended by its primary qualities such as mass and location (Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 53). These primary qualities belong to the substances (also called stuff, matter) that constitute nature. The substances are spatio-temporal: they are always located in space (here/there) and time (past-present-future). Our encounter with these primary qualities happens by mental apprehension, and this encounter is the cause for the emergence of secondary qualities such as color. The experiences that arise in the presence of these primary qualities clothe the so-called objectivity. In other words, experience adds a subjective layer to these substances. Thus, according to the logic of bifurcation, there is a purely objective reality. We encounter that reality through experience, but that same experience adds a secondary (subjective) character to reality. Consequently, according to the mechanistic movement that differentiates nature into two distinct branches, the challenge of every mental apprehension would be the ability to distinguish the primary from the secondary qualities of matter. The first belongs to matter in its very essence, and the latter corresponds to the variations of experience. This separation itself is the problem that Whitehead stresses, in *The Concept of Nature* (2006), by the expression “bifurcation of nature.”

If we now come back to the question “What is the world made of?” we discover that, in the mechanistic theory of nature, it is objects that are given the utmost importance in the web of reality. This is essentially a formal materialism (Debaise, 2018, p. 27). It reduces reality to matter: the secondary qualities do not belong to the experienced objects: they are added. Therefore, within this movement, the secondary qualities are dismissed as less real—or even altogether unreal (see Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 54). The problem is that, despite its efficacy for the organization of thought, the mechanistic theory of nature generates abstractions, and “we have mistaken our abstraction for concrete realities” (Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 55). Debaise (2018) argues that Whitehead’s position is not simply a critique of the cartesian dualism. In fact, Descartes’s dualism only complies with the deeply anchored epistemology borne of the bifurcation of nature (pp. 15-16). It means that Whitehead’s issue is more closely related to a critique of the materialism rooted in the bifurcation of nature than to the relation between body and mind, mind and space, real and apparent (Debaise, 2018, p. 17). Therefore, to engage with Whitehead’s thought is also to engage with a different form of materialism, or better said, a new way of conceiving the materiality through which nature is woven.³ This is where the study of Whitehead’s thought can become difficult.⁴ Sometimes, it takes time to peel back the layers of

³ In *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (2009), for instance, Manning aligns with this Whiteheadian form of materialism by focusing on “preacceleration.” In this case, the materiality is not the gesture as displacement in space but lies in *what happens* through the activation of the potential forces inherent to the conditions where preacceleration takes place. Concreteness here is the event of preacceleration.

⁴ Actually, Manning’s force is precisely the proliferation of examples through which Whiteheadian concepts are

knowing, to see the world with new eyes. For this reason, I would not be so eager to label Whitehead as a “new materialist” just yet. Much of what we know as “new materialism” still relies too much on the outcome (the object) instead of the process itself (relation)—no matter how much emphasis is placed on the aliveness emerging from the situations where a relational web of objects is generated. Once the actant-object is conceived, the acting itself is abandoned. It is irrelevant how much that web of relations inevitably transforms, bends, creates a point of inflexion around a specific situation. If the focus is on how objects are formed by their relations, the focus will still lie on the outcome. The object as we conceive it, a chair, for instance, is an outcome of *sitability*⁵. The chair may generate a relational web of practices that includes business meetings, the sharing of a meal, or study. It may generate a co-relation between chair-and-table. In the end, the focus will still be the outcome. Sitability is the process that allows the *in-formation* of a chair. *In* means input. *Formation* means form taking place. The input is immanent to the unfolding of process. In other words, the expression of sitability is in itself the subject of the occurring event. Amid this process, the qualitative experience generated by the outcome, a chair, is the “subjective aim” (Whitehead, 1978) of that process. Input: the orientation toward a supported back, feet resting on the floor. The subjective aim belongs to the ontogenetic process of the event taking place, and in-forms every immanent decision of the process as it happens. Its objective is the fulfillment of the event’s highest potential: from sitability to chair. Whitehead names this auto-generative process of the event’s formation “concrecence” (Whitehead, 1978). Since the variations of qualitative experience are what matters the most to Whitehead, it could be as easy to label him an anti-materialist (see Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 42). The problem here raised revolves around *concreteness*.

The bifurcation of nature leads to what Whitehead (1925/1967) calls “The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness” (pp. 39-74). Two mechanistic presuppositions of thought play an important role in this. The first one is “simple location.” This instance is based on the fact that we see nature as being composed of fixed objects belonging to the coordinates of time and space. This view works as a grid where things move from one place to another. For instance, picture yourself on a chessboard. The number of squares you will be able to advance depends on your superpowers: are you a king, a queen, a rook, a bishop, a knight, or a pawn? Your superpowers are intimately related to your primary qualities. According to the mechanistic theory of nature, “some of the qualities are essential, so that apart from them the entity would not be itself; while other qualities are accidental and changeable” (Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 52). The accidental qualities are the above-mentioned secondary qualities. On that chessboard, objects (we also may call them things or individuals) move according to their “substance and quality,” and this is the second mechanistic presupposition of thought (Whitehead, 1925/1967, p. 52). Movements can happen horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. Volume and shape play an important role. With some variations, the primary qualities of a human being are: having one head, two arms and hands, two legs and feet,

enlivened.

⁵ For more on “sitability,” see Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (2009), p. 7, and also p. 230, note 8.

among others. It is part of the condition that allows you to act in a certain way in this world. You move from one place to another. There is displacement. However, this displacement is always taken as a simple location: you are here, just beside here, then over there. Positioning is a simple fact, without reference to any other place. Within this frame, the relations that can be traced with other space-time dimensions become thus a construction because they are added abstractions—juxtapositions. Whitehead (1925/1967) argues that “there is no element whatever which possesses this character of simple location” (p. 58). For him, to place concreteness on objects, substances, or matter (as it is conceived according to a mechanistic view) only leads to the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.

The study of Whitehead remains an intricate rabbit hole of questions only until you reach the ability to think the event. For Whitehead, the most concrete fact is an *event*. This is the first step: enter the event. Whitehead calls the most elemental unit of concreteness an “actual entity” (1978). The term *entity* emphasizes that it is a being in its own right; *actual* stands for the fact that it happens now and there is only *now* happening, unfolding into futurity. The actual entity is “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) itself (see Debaise, 2006, p. 556). As mentioned earlier, Whitehead calls this process *concrecence*. The first abstraction issued from the mechanistic view is to consider space and time separately. It leads to *simple location*: never does an entity occupy the same location as another one.⁶ The second abstraction dwells in the duality between mind and body, leading to the discredit of secondary qualities. The third abstraction is to think the object/entity as a self-sufficient, separate entity, in space-time. These abstractions dwell in the deeply anchored duality of the bifurcation of nature. In process philosophy, there is no space separated from time. To put space and time together means to reach the event: concrecence. Everything that happens has a duration, which is different from a displacement from one moment to the other: it is a qualitative texture unfolding. This quality arises from the situation. *Location* is solely related to space whereas the *situation* encompasses all the characteristics of the space and more. The primary and secondary qualities of the elements in that situation are taken as one single intricacy of reality. It includes everything leading to that single moment as affective memory. An event: you enter a room decorated with lilies. The powerful smell overtakes you. It grows in your experience. At first, you might not notice the flowers, but notice something in the air. If the smell is pleasant to you, it will be a delight. However, some find it too strong, too sweet, too overwhelming. You may remove the lilies, but the smell remains in the air. You cannot see the smell, but the experience is concrete. The quality of the smell persists as vibrating experience. To consider these facts is to acknowledge the infinite variation of experience that truly *materializes* as event. The smell in the air, the impressive tonality in the sunlight, the way you look for the origin of the smell (anxiously in order to get rid of it, or eager to be delighted by the vision of the flowers). The experience of that moment, of any moment, is a qualitative duration: it bears a poignant thickness. Its passing-through-you is never a juxtaposition of moments—to think this way is an abstraction issued from the bifurcation of nature. When considering the dimension of the

⁶ For a discussion on *simple location* and rhythm, see Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (2009), pp. 131-137.

event you cannot conceive secondary qualities as constructions of mental apprehension. Rather, they are part of the event of *experiencing the now* because you are an element of that situation as well. To think the event also means that you cannot think matter in terms of fixed qualities. Some primary qualities may seem to be fixed but, in fact, they are also a becoming. Two-legged are we, but under which mode? How were *these* legs yesterday compared to today? It is always a matter of a definite article. Will they follow you in that run tomorrow morning? How do the waves of tiredness and aliveness pass through them? We are, in the end, only passages.

To enter the event also means to acknowledge that the basis of reality is, in fact, processual. This is process philosophy. What are we looking for when we look around us, when we study, when we ask questions and name things? Whitehead argues the error is to think in terms of matter and fixed space instead of movement and process. The scheme we are only beginning to outline points to a different way of apprehending reality, of living, and consequently it promises a totally new way of doing research—most specifically qualitatively. How do we travel down the rabbit hole and reach the event’s wonderland? When one agrees with Whitehead’s premise that actual entities are the most concrete units of reality, the major mind-bender we need to cope with is to replace the question “What is it?” with “What is happening?” For concreteness is not to be found in matter, but in process. This means we must completely eschew hylomorphism. Replace matter with *actual entity*. Think *subjective form* instead of form. The first anchors in a processual way of conceiving reality and the latter considers the qualitative difference of *how* things happen (Whitehead, 1978). This is Manning’s point of departure: the dimension of the event.

The Second Threshold: The Subject (Through the Looking Glass)

Having entered the event, there remains another challenge to think differently: anthropocentrism. The event is a dimension from which we can start to think relation as the most concrete fact: an actuality. Discard relation between two subjects: this is inter-action. Focus on relation as the subject of its own becoming. Rather than a singular relation, think in terms of a relational field: it is multidimensional. The *eventing*, relation as becoming, is the field out of which subjectivity is produced. Notice that the subject is produced; it does not come into its own relational field as a fixed form, with a fixed purpose, a pre-constituted reflective-consciousness from which it extracts volition and purpose. There is a subjective aim that guides the decisions throughout the process of its own becoming, but this is more like a vectorial force than a pre-constituted idea of what it should become. It does not know, for it has not reached the subject accomplishment just yet. The subject thus discovers itself as it unfolds its own potential. Its qualitative mode, the *how* it happens, is the subjective form. The subject reaches its highest potential as “satisfaction” (Whitehead, 1978). Then it perishes and subsists as an “objectified actual entity” (Whitehead, 1978). We need to think the event as *the* emerging subject. Anthropocentrism blocks this movement of thought like a huge tree trunk fallen across the road. Now, imagine that you are that tree trunk. Simply get yourself out of the way. Human beings are only elements in a constellation of data (the situation) given for the emergence of the event. Objects constitute the available data, given in the situation, for the subject’s experience. Getting yourself out of the way may sound like

an out-of-body experience. It is scary. What will I become? When we get ourselves out of the way, we become the event. It means just the contrary: event-embodiment. We embody the event-feelings emerging through us. We become objects available for the event's experience. And that is when "flow"⁷ experiences can happen: we flow with the event.

Another example: a horror movie situation. For instance, the scariest horror movie I have ever watched: *The Ring* (Parkes et al., 2002). The plot turns around a mysterious videotape. There is not just something mysterious around that videotape, but also in the way the movie successfully builds an atmosphere that creates a *fearful-event-The-Ring* in the viewer. It might be that the actors are exceptionally convincing; it might be the colors chosen by the Art Direction; it might be the music. In any case, each element jointly co-creates an atmosphere that is extremely poignant. I was imbued with fear. When I walked back home after watching it, my pace was fearful. Fear was literally in my eyes, in my veins. The movie characters would watch the content of the videotape... then die few days later. Television became thus an iconic object in the movie, and in my experience. Back home, I covered the television. Fear was very concrete in my experience, and it followed me home. I never watched a horror movie again. This experience served me at least one favor: the certainty that the fear that a horror movie causes is *real* fear. Every experience is real. It is not only a movie; it is a machine that sets the conditions by which fear becomes tangible. The conditions set immanently by the crafting of the movie contribute to the event. The movie is an event. Nevertheless, you must activate the event. This means that there must be a spectator. As I entered the *fearful-event-The-Ring*, I became a special ingredient in its own activation. The subject is the *fearful-event-The-Ring* itself (Whitehead sometimes calls the event an occasion of experience). The occasion of experience *fearful-event-The-Ring*, as it unfolds in the given situation of the movie experience, has a concern for the object: fear. The subject is concerned by the object because it wants to know what else a fearful event can be, and in doing so, it shifts the conditions by which fear can enter into this world. Its own becoming is playing with the infinite variations of how fear can be actualized. It has a concern for the object: fear itself is running through the spectators. Fear is one example of what Whitehead would call an "eternal object"⁸ (1978) making ingression in a given situation. In order to processually analyze the aforementioned example, one might ask: *what* happened exactly? I went to the movie theatre to watch *The Ring* and I became afraid of my television afterward. The event can be summarized as *watching the horror movie The Ring and the actualization of fear*. In the event, subject and object are merged. They are "relative terms," mentions Whitehead (1933/1967, p. 176). Thus, we might say that we have an eternal object, fear, that makes its ingression into the crafting of the horror movie *The Ring*, and that movie sets the conditions allowing for a fearful situation to arise.

Classical accounts of the structure of experience deal with one subject (the knower) encountering

⁷ On flow experiences, see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990).

⁸ *Eternal objects* are only "eternal" in the sense that they are a potentiality available to the experience of the event's unfolding subjectivity. In fact, as Brian Massumi (2015) comments, it is a "misnomer" (p. 62) because it can only be called an object in the specific sense that Whitehead gives to it as *data*. Moreover, its eternity relies on the fact that, as *data*, it constitutes every event.

an object (the known). Knowledge is thus something that is passed along. We teach it in classrooms, and we read it in textbooks. According to that scheme of thought, in the *fearful-event-The-Ring*, I would be the subject, and the movie, the object. Knowing the film's content, I would then be able to pass it along, articulating the story to the best of my storyteller capacities. Thus, knowledge is *something* that we possess and, understood this way, it is just the same as matter, stuff, and thing. (The Fallacy of Misplaced concreteness?) Unfortunately, even though I might be able to make felt the fear that I felt, I would never be able to cast an *affective territory* as poignant as the one lived through the *fearful-event-The-Ring* itself. Whitehead (1933/1967) suggests replacing knowledge with the notion of concern in the classical structure of experience: "the occasion as subject has a 'concern' for the object" (p. 176). Concern, when put into action, becomes "prehension" (Whitehead, 1978). Prehension refers to a mode of activity *concerning* an object. Whitehead (1933/1967) explains this activity as follows:

Thus, a prehension involves three factors. There is the occasion of experience within which the prehension is a detail of activity; there is the datum whose relevance provokes the origination of this prehension; this datum is the prehended object; there is the subjective form, which is the affective tone determining the effectiveness of that prehension in that occasion of experience.
(p. 176)

The occasion of experience, the situation *fearful-event-The-Ring* in which I am one ingredient, has a concern to actualize fear. It prehends fear into its own becoming as it unfolds. The main datum is here the eternal object *fear*. The way in which this actualization happens traces an affective territory around that experience. That affective territory acts through an affective register. That register makes me avoid the actualization of the eternal object, fear, as well as the iconic television. What are the consequences of reshaping the structure of experience through this idea of *concern*?

Concern adds an affective dimension to the classical structure of experience. In the knower-known structure, knowledge is an abstraction: a thing that we possess. In fact, for Whitehead (1933/1967), the classical structure of experience does not support the fact that the "basis of experience is emotional. Stated more generally, the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given" (p. 176). Thus, the shift toward *concern* stresses the idea that the subject is pulled by the object—because it is relevant. For example, a plant has a concern for light because it is vital. Moreover, that pulling is also a shaping. The sunflower is shaped by its light-experiencing. What emerges from that experience is not only a certain inclination but also color. In the domain of experience, knowledge, understood as "conscious discrimination" (Whitehead, 1933/1967, p. 177), is only the tip of the iceberg. It is "an additional factor in the subjective form of the interplay of subject with object" (Whitehead, 1933/1967, p. 177). The interplay is relation. The sunflower not only *knows* where light is: it *feels* sunlight with the entirety of its being. This feeling is "enjoyment" (Whitehead, 1978). For Whitehead, enjoyment is closely related to the concept of satisfaction. It means the fulfillment of what a subject is meant to be. In this case, it is flowering-blooming-yellowish-enjoyment. Not pleasurable

enjoyment—even if some pleasure at a plant level may exist (we cannot know for certain). This enjoyment is related to the very in-act of being a sunflower. But beware! The subject is not *the* sunflower, but sunflowering—as an event.

Therefore, a clear redefinition of *object* happens within process philosophy when Whitehead introduces this idea of concern, further developing James's foregrounding of relation as the basis of experience. While the traditional (mechanistic) conception of object defines it by simple location and primary qualities, Whitehead redefines the object as that which contributes to the event's experience, i.e. mere data. According to Whitehead's conceptual frame, there are four main types of objects: eternal objects, propositions, nexus, and 'objectified' actual entities (2006, pp. 76-86). Basically, objects are constitutive ingredients prehended by occasions of experience (1978). This prehension is a manifest concern realized as the experience of an object (qualitative data) by a subject (the event).

If we focus solely on knowledge, something is missing: the affective dimension of experience with all its intricacies. Having come this far, the event's threshold has been crossed. Then another: the subject is not to be found in human beings but in the interplay of forces that populate the relational field. One peculiar fact draws my attention in the movie *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (Burton et al., 2016). Unlike other adventure movies, an untangling action sets its course through the plot finally undoing the duality between good and bad characters often depicted in movies. In this movie, viewers not only discover how the iconic Red Queen became so mean, but also how her cruelty can be reverted. Knowledge is the information given: the Red Queen is malevolent and the White Queen is kind. As the story proceeds, however, viewers discover there is more to that information. Every past event is an acting force. The present has a concern for the past. It is pulled by it. The pulling is a shaping that in-forms a knot of entangled feelings. In this knot, there is neither good nor bad, only very powerful feelings exerting a force across the situation. To go through the looking glass is to go beyond duality, and to reach pure relationality.

The Third Threshold: Intuition—or How to Tap into Method

If knowledge is considered as a "variable factor" in experience, "only present in the more elaborate examples of occasions of experience" (Whitehead, 1933/1967, p. 176), it does not cover the entire spectrum. Consequently, what are the implications for research and to the pursuit of knowledge? One thing is clear: western academic research is mostly focused on scientific abstractions based on the bifurcation of nature mechanistic view. In alignment with the undeniable respect that Whitehead's writings continuously show for the accomplishment based on these abstractions, we cannot simply blame this scientific project. Still, there is one certainty: the dualism foregrounded by the formal materialist view in science is limited. What are the implications of this? There are other valid forms of knowing. Hence, what are the concepts that we need to shift the conditions and introduce affect into knowledge? For empiricists, all knowledge starts with experience. However, for *radical empiricists*, not only does all knowledge start with experience but all experiences should be lived experiences (James, 2003, p. 22). Now, if *concern* is considered in this equation, how does it change our way of doing research? Concern conveys the

affective pull of the object. To shift from knowledge to *knowing* seems to be the first step to think processually. Instead of knowledge as certainty, most relevant for a process oriented qualitative research is knowing as a process of exploration. How does the object of study pull the researcher towards the eventing of knowing?

An astounding fact in Whitehead's (1933/1967) "philosophic method" (pp. 220-238) is that he calls theories "working hypotheses" (p. 220). Despite the tremendous effects *Process & Reality* (Whitehead, 1978) may elicit in its readers, the implication is that the whole system remains, in fact, a "proposition," i.e. a "Matter of Fact in Potential Determination" (p. 22). In other words, the theory exposed in his masterpiece *Process & Reality* is an invitation for pragmatic experimentation. As far as I know, no one has ever taken this invitation as seriously as the SenseLab, the research laboratory directed by Erin Manning. Defined as "a laboratory for thought in motion,"⁹ the laboratory is not exactly—literally—a space, even though it is officially housed within Concordia University. It is rather an ethos. In this sense, it is a field for thought in motion. As such, it must be activated at every reading group, at every event, at every casual meeting where food for thought may be provoked—or evoked. It uses the "striated" space of the university location for the actualization of a "smooth" space of continuous variation guided by a restless thirst for knowing.¹⁰ The striated space functions like a grid. It traces a path for you to walk, it builds walls where you can live. In the research domain, it traces a structure to understand the world. This structure (closed theoretical models) imposes grids (fixed analytical reference points) which in turn condition the researcher's gaze to see what has already been seen.¹¹ Even though the grids keep charting and encircling, containing, and excluding, there is no space which is purely striated. Smooth and striated always overlap at different proportions. The exact proportion makes the singularity. At the SenseLab, this overlapping remains an opportunity to take a specific approach toward research-creation, embodying a clear epistemological positioning. First: relation is a reality. Enter the event. Second: the unfolding subjectivity is that of the event. It is not about individuals, but a movement of thought. Allow that more-than-human quality to take over. Third: Follow the movement to discover what moves through. What is the operating principle of the unfolding quality? What is the specific agency-ing? Tend to the tendencies that emerge. How do the singularities enter in conjunction? This is the smooth space of research. At its highest potency. The field is populated by tendencies. Their movement is transversal. Follow it. Knowing is fielding a map.

How can the movement that transversally crosses the event be registered? Following the "Bergsonian revolution" (Massumi, 2002, p. 7) is the answer. Movement comes first, and position is a movement residue: "The emphasis is on process before signification or coding" (Massumi, 2002, p. 7). In order to follow the movement of events in their in-act, Henri Bergson has made a

⁹ www.senselab.ca

¹⁰ See Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) chapter "1440: The Smooth and the Striated" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 474-500.

¹¹ For a discussion on how these grids impose culturally constructed subjectivity significations, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation* (2002), p. 2.

proposition: the method of *intuition* (2007).¹² Intuition, for Bergson, is foremost an encounter with the singularity of a movement. We would have known by now that every duration, for Bergson, is not simply a juxtaposition of moments. Rather, every moment is traversed by a thickness expressing a texture of experience. Textures may be crispy or crowded or fluffy or... the variations of texture are infinite. They are lived effects of duration. The event's subjectivity expresses a tendency through each texture. The agency-ing of tendencies is the unfolding subject. Intuition is the capacity to train our attention to the interpretation of expressions of experience. This is indeed in alignment with what Whitehead suggests with his speculative philosophy (1925/1967, p. 222). The difference between intuition for Bergson and for Manning is that Manning integrates every process philosophy premise exposed here in order to bring intuition to the in-act. Hence, instead of a movement that looks backward to understand what happened (as suggested by Bergson), Manning proposes intuition as an attunement to the qualitative difference emerging from the event as it happens. Intuition becomes thus a discovery of the event's subjectivity as it unfolds. In this active and truly immanent participation, intuition, at its higher potential, is the in-act of research-creation.

If predefined interpretive grids are eschewed, the smooth space of research will require techniques. For Manning (2003), technique is an "operative ecology" (p. 31) that "is key because of its rigorous method of experimentation and repetition" (p. 34). It creates the conditions for crossing the threshold of activity (the event). There are techniques for every activity. Parents discern when infants are developing techniques for walking, for eating, for climbing upstairs. As a child grows, the variety of techniques also multiply. The main writing technique is to juggle with the operative ecology between the amount of reading that must be done and the scattered books on the table, the writing device, hands, and ideas. *Techniques* and *enabling constraints* are closely related. These concepts mobilize, at a purely and radically empirical level, the theoretical frame of process philosophy. They are how Manning brings intuition to the in-act. The enabling constraint is a springboard for thought in motion. It creates the conditions for the field to become an operative ecology. The conditions set into movement a self-organizing event. If one has the right amount of food in the body, a quiet space, the right devices, and some good ideas, the conditions are set for a successful enterprise. However, techniques take practice. As part of the enabling constraint, some writers set out to always practice at the same moment of the day, or to write at least one word a day. This is the practice of showing up to the task. One day, there is more than one word that emerges. Then, there is no more writer or words, there is only the writing. The writer has become writing itself. This is technique's higher potential: *technicity*, "the operational field of its expressivity" (Manning, 2013, p. 34).

The writing tries not only to accept the risk of sprouting deviant, but also to invite it. Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected arises. That is the experimental aspect. If you know where you will end up when you begin,

¹² Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to meticulously trace the how-to of intuition as a method. For a more extensive reading on that topic, I suggest Bergson's *Creative Mind* (2007), Gilles Deleuze (2002), "La Conception de la différence chez Bergson" in *L'Île Déserte et autres textes*, pp. 43-72, and also *Bergsonism* (1988).

nothing has happened in the meantime. You have to be willing to surprise yourself writing things you didn't think you thought. Letting examples burgeon requires using inattention as a writing tool. You have to let yourself get so caught up in the flow of your writing that it ceases at moments to be recognizable to you as your own. (Massumi, 2002, p. 18)

Reaching that operational field of technique's expressivity (technicity) is also to reach the unexpected. When the writer becomes writing itself, the whole relational field enacts the movement of thought.

Attune to that movement. For Manning (2006), intuition is performative: it "introduces into experience a rift in knowing, a schism in perception. It forces experience to the limits not only of what it can imagine but what it has technically achieved. For intuition is never separate from technique" (pp. 49-50). It is through technique that technicity emerges. When it does, it is the tendency itself that is revealed, the subjective aim guiding the subject to its own becoming, and the more-than-human acting through the human. Manning (2016) calls this perception "a memory of the future" (p. 50) because its experience vibrates its potentiality. Intuition is the perception of a virtual force on the cusp of its actualization. In this sense, attunement refers to the experience of futurity as rhythm (Manning, 2016, p. 50). Attunement is a qualitative duration felt from inside its own unfolding. The *operative question* "What is intuition for Manning?" sets the conditions for the writing-in-act. Yet, more than the writing hands, there is a more-than-human will that exerts a pressure in the writing act. Hence, the writing event becomes, after all, an attunement to what needs to come out. The event's subjectivity in-forms the writing experience in order to discover what else intuition may become. It takes practice. Technique calls technicity. Enabling constraints sets the conditions, but you must attune to the emerging movement, let it leak—*inattentively*—through experience. Basically, you will need to bring it (not knowledge, but concern for qualitative research) in the in-act. Make pragmatics alive. Remember: it is not about you, but the event; and this is why speculative pragmatism is an epistemological positioning. It is a perspectivism. How do you put thought in motion? Experiment! "Are we there yet?"¹³ In fact, the path has just begun.

We should concern ourselves

Not so much

With the pursuit of happiness

But with the happiness

Of pursuit

(Shpong, 2017)

¹³ Song title #4 from Shpong's album *Codex VI*, Twisted Records, 2017.

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