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## **Creative processes: from interventions in art to intervallic experiments through Bergson**

**Abstract:** The recent turn to creativity in geography has led to a proliferation of methodological frameworks that enable us to look at and think about the world differently. For the most part, creativity in geography gets mobilised as an artistic endeavour through empirical research with a particular person or product. One implication of this focus is that creativity gets tied to a foundational subject as the instigator of creative practice. In this paper I want to unpack creativity in geography through a particular theoretical lens, in order to explore a wider array of creative agencies. To this end I turn to Henri Bergson, and his very specific notion of creativity as a process of intuition at the interval. Crucially, Bergson offers a way of processually rethinking the corporeality and materiality of creative practice, enabling us to broaden our engagements with creativity so that they are more open to the diverse ways the material world engages us.

**Keywords:** Creativity, experimentation, corporeality, materiality

### **Introduction**

In the last decade cultural geographers have become increasingly engaged with creative research, both in terms of a direct engagement with artists and their work (Engelmann, 2015; Foster and Lorimer, 2007; Hawkins, 2010; Jellis, 2015; Lapworth, 2015), as well as through a turn to artistic techniques and skilled practices (Butler, 2006; Mann, 2015; Patchett, 2014; Yusoff, 2007). What this trend enables most

powerfully is a mode of enquiry into the way artistic products and practices can help geographers to frame and think about the world differently - whether this difference be in terms of an alternative political critique (Yusoff, 2007), the endorsement of embodied practices in academia (Lorimer and Wylie, 2010), or through an awareness of non-human and material agencies (Lapworth, 2015). For the most part, however, we are left with an understanding of creativity that is centred on the capacity of the individual or the products of art. Despite some uncertainty concerning its critical scope (Hawkins, 2015; Marston and De Leeuw, 2013), the proliferation of 'creative geographies' has been celebrated for introducing alternative empirical frameworks into the discipline. My concern in this paper is that our conceptual engagements with creativity need to be more precise. To this end I engage with the philosophy of Henri Bergson, which offers some vital concepts for thinking through a more processual notion of creativity.

In calling for precision, I mean the Bergsonian notion of precision, which is against conceptual generality. My argument in the paper is that Bergson provides a necessary lens for expanding the ways creativity is delineated in geography in order to challenge our assumptions about how and where it takes place. Specifically, as Marston and De Leeuw (2013) have discussed, the relationship between geography and art has tended to focus on either the products as *objects* of art, or more recently, the people or artistic *subjects*. This emphasis implies an intentional source as creator and inert object as creation, rather than a process of creativity in which both corporeal and material components are seen to have agency. We can think of the understanding of creativity developed in this paper instead as creative in the way the creation of concepts is - it is about a process of interpreting the world that also transforms it by forcing us to look

at something differently. What it also implies is a dispersed sense of creative agency, so that creativity is emergent amidst many constitutive elements rather than sustained through a wilful subject, and in this way a concept, for instance, could be said to hold a particular creative agency.

To rethink creativity in this way is an important shift for geographic research because in emphasising the process we are recognising a future potential of *creativity* rather than the present subjects and objects which we term creative. Crucially, this shift necessitates that we more radically challenge an idea of the artist as sole creative agent and the artwork as manifestation of their creative intention, assumptions that easily slip back into research with an artistic person or product. The importance of Bergson's thought to my argument is that it provides us with the conceptual tools to undertake such a challenge, by emphasising the processual, corporeal and material nascent relations, in place of predominantly cognitive agencies of creativity. Nascent creativity here emphasises the emergence of something processually new in ways that focus more precisely on embodied and corporeal sensation, addressed in literature on affect (Anderson, 2014; Massumi, 2002; Stewart, 2007), and, as we see in object-oriented literature (Harman, 2002; Morton, 2013), a creative agency in matter itself.

Whilst others have developed processual accounts of creativity vis-à-vis art to great effect, by exploring the affective resonances of an art encounter (Hynes, 2013), the agentic potential of artistic materials (Lapworth, 2015), or a more-than-human aesthetics (Dixon et al, 2012), the question about what this relation between art and creativity means in practice is often implied rather than explicitly drawn out. By rethinking the cognitive subject as instigator, these geographic engagements with

creativity are in a position to more vividly address the corporeal and material modes through which creative products and practices emerge. Bergson's thought strikes a chord here by addressing a dispersed sense of creative agency, which invites us to explore how creativity arises without the intentional act of the artist. By challenging the perception of human agencies as primary, Bergson takes us away from creativity understood as a predisposed cognitive quality and towards the potential of creativity in its nascent state. In this way, the turn to Bergson in this paper coincides with efforts to problematize a foundational subject and celebrate the vitality of matter, as we find in post-structuralist geographies (Murdoch, 2006) and 'materialist returns' (Whatmore, 2006) within the discipline.

There are two key concepts in Bergson's work I engage with - *the interval* and *intuition*<sup>1</sup> – which offer a more open mode of creativity understood as a nascent process. By attending to the nascence of creativity we are alerted to the emergent and perpetuating force of creativity rather than the intervening agent that makes the act. This move supports an understanding of creativity as continuous and indeterminate, which houses for the purpose of my argument two propositions for staging creative interventions. The first is to make manifest instances of what Bergson (1911; 2004) calls the interval; this manifestation of the interval, which I develop as intervallic creativity, is the first enactment of the openness I am arguing for in this paper, an openness that intimates the undecidable, the emergent and the processual trajectories of life as it happens. Bergson's (1946) proactive push for intuition as a philosophical method of 'the real' (Grosz, 2005, page 8) can equally act as a destabilising mode for human geographical research, since it places the researcher within the material world outside herself, 'in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently

inexpressible' (Bergson, 1999a, page 24). This intuitive disposition, which I develop in relation to a notion of wallowing, is the second understanding of openness I want to propose, an openness that acts as the 'unmediated apprehension of the object' (Atkinson, 2009, page 243), and thus as an exposure to the agency of matter.

The push in this paper to creativity as an intervallic and intuitive process is not to imply that the emergence of creativity outside of art is a better mode of creativity. My argument is not to reject the vivid creative force of an artistic encounter; rather it is that we could become more attentive to the emergence of a creative impulse that is not attributed to the artistic subject or found in the object. In the sense that Bergson (1999b<sup>2</sup>, page 153, 135) turns to the 'scarcely confessed or scarcely conscious' gestures of comedy 'between art and life', geographic research too could be more open about the ways creativity emerges beyond its manifestation in the artwork or artist, where creativity gets attributed to the intentional act of the individual.

Given the move to a more corporeal and material investigation of creativity, this paper is aligned with non-representational geographies (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Lorimer, 2008), and in particular those that seek to mobilise new-materialist ideas within the discipline (Dewsbury, 2012; Roberts, 2012; Whatmore, 2006), which favour the processuality of life in its diverse forms both living and non-living (Bennett, 2009; Coole and Frost, 2010). New-materialism seeks to enrich discussions of matter by accounting for the agential capacities of stuff, within and outside of anthropomorphic concerns. It destabilises the perceived permanence or autonomy of matter, exploring it instead as 'tendencies of a cosmic flow' (Bennett, 2009, page 76).

The new-materialist perspective has influenced my argument in this paper for a more corporeal and material conceptualisation of creativity - as one that accounts more vividly for, for example, the colours of green encountered on a walk, or the tactility of wet clay. Both these perspectives signal a shift from modes of evaluation to modes of experimentation in that they are less concerned with predefining aims or expectations, and more with what emerges in the moments of research. This turn to experimentation coincides with the understanding of creativity endorsed in this paper as an open encounter 'in the vibratory continuity of the universe as a whole' (Grosz, 2008, page 10).

Before developing Bergson's notion of creativity, in the next section I address two approaches to creativity in geography: geographies of art and experimental geographies. The point is to highlight how creative endeavours in geography often place an emphasis on artists and artistic institutions, which means that we undersubscribe our attention to the nascent creativity in embodied practice and materiality.

### **The concept of creativity: two geographic approaches**

In geography there is a tendency to engage with creativity as an artistic ability, whereby the main points of exploration are the individuals or products of art spaces. Creativity then, gets attended to as both an agentic capacity or a site of evaluation; the problem being that both foci are built upon the assumptions of an individuated subject – as agent or evaluator – which limits how we understand the creative process aside from this perspective. Whilst these sites of evaluation are certainly crucial in our understanding of creativity, they are just one point along a continuous process of

creativity. Thus although it is easy to embrace the idea of a process between the individual and products of art, both in terms of the making of art or an encounter with it, Bergson reminds us that our perception of these points generates an erroneous view that is ‘attached to a “thing” which changes’, and closed to the ‘true reality’ of movement (1946, page 123).

Creative geographies for Hawkins (2013, page 1) incorporates ‘the analysis of diverse creative practices and products... to the studies of the socio-spatial workings of the creative economy, the productive force of vernacular or everyday creativities, as well as creativity as a variegated political strategy’. If ‘creative geographies’ has come to define this particular contemporary trend, it is not a tendency without a historical trajectory. As early as the 1920s, Cornish accounted for the aesthetics of the environment, as a means of attending to ‘those things by which we are enthralled’ (1928, page 276).

Subsequent research into art and landscape (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Daniels, 1992) is often cited to epitomise the relationship between geography and creative research, and celebrated both for requiring geography to ‘reflect on art as enrolled, but also potentially intervening within, political and socio-economic considerations’ (Hawkins, 2013, page 7), and for deploying a critical lens through which to address art-geography relations (Marston and DeLeeuw, 2013). Similarly, the artistic emblems of cartographic productions have provided a useful motif for geographers’ evaluations of art (Cosgrove, 1998; Woodward, 1987), where the meaning of the artistic object is interpreted in attempts, following Harley (1989), to reveal the power of cartographic representations. With both examples, the power of representational



artefacts to alter social knowledge production preceded calls for non-representational research in geography. Where a non-representational approach differs is in the location of creativity relative to art. The difference is in moving away from artwork presented as an end product; a figure that endorses both the assumption that creativity is the means to a final artistic product, and a scenario in which we thus imagine the artist as conjurer of an otherwise inert creative process.

More recent *creative art geographies* attend to what the artwork does in the world rather than the symbolic meanings that a spectator might interpret from it. From Marston and De Leeuw's (2013) politically and critically engaged appropriation of creative practices to Desilvey, Bond and Ryan's (2013) snapshot of narratives, it is evident that creative geographers are not only concerned with analysing creative products, but in exploring the potential of artistic practices as an alternative to traditional geographic methodologies. This shift to the 'doing' of art has certainly altered intentions of analysis. In terms of geographers' engaging with a particular artist or artwork, this means that a greater emphasis is placed on the imbrication of the artistic object within broader processes of sensation and meaning in the world. Turning to less conventional forms of art, Dixon et al (2012) and Lapworth (2015) use bioart to oppose the humanist and individuated assumptions that frame such art-encounters. Whilst Hawkins' (2015) has noted that a processual approach is a positive step in thinking the potential of creativity, the process is pitched between the start and end points of an 'intimate relationship' of drawing - namely the individual and object (Hawkins, 2015, page 255). As such, the phenomenological agentic subject 'discovering' and 'coming [] to know' remains and the humanist endeavour creeps back in (Hawkins, 2015, page 255). An approach to the process of creativity which

emphasises the fixed states is akin to what Bergson would describe as a ‘cinematographic’ model (Ansell-Pearson and Mullarkey, 2002, page 27), since it posits a process *constructed*, where the mind adds movement to a perception of illusory stable images. The problem with this way of perceiving is that it creates an erroneous and limited view of the world, since ‘by positing a definite number of stable elements one has, predetermined, all their possible combinations’ (Bergson, 1946, page 77). It is important to ask, then, what the intellect does to perpetuate our assumptions about what or who has agency in the world and what else is merely inert stuff. In terms of creativity, it is a question of how the tendency to begin from the individual’s creative agency restricts the potential of creative practice elsewhere.

In exploring the implications of Bergson’s work for opening up our engagement with creative practice in geography, an approach that shifts away from the space of art towards the very act of creativity itself becomes more central. This turn, whilst still holding on, as we shall see, to a sense of human agency, has been found within geography under a new fervour of the experimental. This turn to *creative experiments* is evident in and around the question of methodology, where there is a push towards creative research in the name of experiment itself (Jellis, 2015). A key part of this shift has been an increased engagement with artistic techniques of, for example, photography (Yusoff, 2007), video (Patchett, 2014; Simpson, 2011), curatorial work (Alfrey, Daniels and Postle, 2004), and sound art (Butler, 2006; Gallagher, 2015), as a form of geographic method in its own right. Through these experiments, geographers attend to the qualities of the artistic process rather than to the artistic artefact. Thus often aligned to such methods is a non-representational ethic, which conceives of the world ‘in practical or processual terms... as something that is in a perpetual state of

becoming' (Waterton, 2012, page 26-7). Experimental methodologies then, are not reliant on predefined models of analysis but are interested in what emerges in the moment. In this way, they are in a position to broaden the way creativity is engaged through an emphasis on corporeality and materiality – the visceral techniques of an artist, or the habitual patterns of the practitioner. The Bergsonian conceptualisation of creativity can be productively engaged in relation to these experiments by emphasising a process that, whilst accounting for these non-human aspects of creativity, does not then return to the human subject as the agent, or experiencer and knower. Whilst Bergson does not take us drastically away from a formulation of the subject, he does remove the subject as the sole agent of creativity. This shift is important because it foregrounds the corporeal and material aspects of creativity, allowing us to explore the creative process without returning to the frameworks of agency or evaluation.

The call for more precise engagements with creativity in geography does not mean restricting creativity; it is about how we understand the emergence of a creative process in its diverse manifestations. The ways of reading creativity through a Bergsonian lens is setting up a general logic of creativity that at first blush seems to be arguing that creativity is everywhere: that is not the case. The point rather is to have a more expansive understanding of the process of creativity, which can indeed find a broader set of situations where it arises. We can see how a more expansive understanding of creativity does indeed arise in geography through engagements with walking as an aesthetic and performative practice in landscape phenomenology (Macpherson, 2009; Lowenthal, 2007; Wylie, 2005), and psychogeography (Bassett, 2004; Bonnet, 2009; Pinder, 1996). These approaches present us with an

understanding of walking as an inherently creative practice, both as a tool for 'exploring and trying to change the city' (Pinder, 1996, 406) and as a way of attending to the material and corporeal relations of a journey (Lorimer and Wylie, 2010). With both approaches, however, an emphasis is often placed on the intentional walker, where walking is used as a way of 'representing states of consciousness and feeling' (Bassett, 2004, page 402), or carried out from the position of an individuated (often male) walker. As we see next, Bergson presents us with a notion of creativity that is without a foundational subject, which enables us to stage arguments that challenge the human individual as the proprietor of a journey. In this way, we move towards an understanding of materiality as active and away from seeing phenomena in the world only positioned after the sensing subject.

### **Bergsonism: precision in creativity**

The resurgence of interest in Bergson's work can be attributed foremost to Deleuze, who considers Bergson to be the author 'who pushes furthest the critique of the possible' (2004, page 327). In particular, Deleuze's text *Bergsonism* (1991) has been hugely influential to contemporary writers of Bergson. At times I adopt an admittedly Deleuzian tone in my push for Bergson's thought in order to emphasise a non-anthropocentric understanding of creativity as one that is aligned to the creation of concepts; however, I hope to be clear where this marks a pronounced difference to Bergson's writings. Bergson's ideas have been invoked in relation to interests in, for example, interactive life (Murphie, 2005), the virtual (Ansell-Pearson, 2005), and becoming (Grosz, 2005). Guerlac (2006, page x) asserts that Bergson 'consistently challenges our assumptions and our habits of thoughts, to read Bergson is to relearn how to think.' At stake in Bergson's philosophy are our preconceived ideas about the

world. Certainly in terms of the aims of this paper, his work challenges the tendency in geography to understand and attend to creativity in relation to artistic products or persons. This is because, as others have demonstrated, Bergson's creative philosophy, whilst drawn to 'the guiding thread' of art (Sinclair, 2014, page 655), is extended beyond the subjects or objects of art. Rather, 'there is a creative principle underlying all the manifestations of life' (Sinclair, 2014, page 657), which, as Mullarkey (1999, page 99) suggests, 'gives us an insight into the nature of life', and to those corporeal and material relations that constitute it.

The Bergsonian influence in this paper provides a means for targeting precise moments rather than relying on generalised concepts as a starting point. Bergson alerts us to the havoc of generalisations in our understanding of the world, suggesting that what philosophy has lacked most of all is precision (1946, page 1). His philosophy is opposed to conceptual frameworks that are already too broad to 'represent' what they aim to, and instead seeks to analyse what conditions have led to a specific moment and to what that moment might catalyse. The argument of this paper is about how this specificity, directed at the creative process, could inform geographers' engagements with creative methods. Following Bergson I develop a notion of creativity that directs us immediately to a transitive process rather than an end product – a shift that is useful for geographers engaging with creative methods as a conceptual as well as an empirical enterprise.

With both Bergson and Deleuze, Grosz (2000, page 95) finds a philosophy 'that affirms life, time, the future and the new.' This affirmative position underlines their mutual interest in the creative process as transformative and generative, not as one

state of human capacity but as a force of ‘movement and change’ (Grosz 2008, page 19). She aligns both philosophies in a way that helps us to grasp their value for research practices that ‘welcome and privilege the future, which openly accept the rich virtualities and divergent resonances of the present’ (Grosz, 1998, page 38). White (2008, page 46) similarly establishes the importance of Deleuzian and Bergsonian philosophy for propagating creativity that will, ‘affirm the unforeseeable and contingent, and consequently aspire to ... disrupt the static and sedimented dimensions of human action’. My own approach is to interpret the concepts of the interval and intuition as necessary components of Bergson’s creative philosophy in order to orient geographical engagements with creativity towards its nascent state.

To understand the interval and intuition it is necessary to recognise that Bergson is interested in processes rather than states. For Bergson movement is reality, and ‘the truth is that we change without ceasing, and that state itself is nothing but change’ (1911, page 100). The processuality of Bergson’s philosophy becomes evident in the concept of duration, which White (2008, page 45) defines as ‘that which differs from itself in so far as the passage of time marks a perpetual process of change in and for the being that lives and endures.’ Bergson conceives of duration to define an experience of time, one that is constituted by the ‘continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances’ (1911, page 100). The imbrication of past, present and future on our experience of time posits those experiences as transitive and chaotic rather than sequential and orderly. In this way, the notion of duration also pushes an emphasis on becoming rather than being, in that ‘what we do depends on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are, to a certain extent, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually.’ (Bergson

1911, page 13). If creativity is inscribed on this contingent and continuous field by its very nature it must be equally processual. Bergson (1911, page 12-3) himself draws a connection between creativity and a processual notion of time and becoming:

With regard to the moments of our life, of which we are artisans. Each of them is a kind of creation. And just as the talent of the painter is formed or deformed – in any case, is modified – under the very influence of the works he produces, so each of our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form that we are just assuming.

A processual notion of creativity in this sense takes us beyond a fixed individual capacity; it is a creativity that has the potential to emerge at any moment of life, and is always composing a great deal more than our minds. We find this nascent understanding of creativity in writings by Paul Klee (2013, page 10) on the process of creation in art, where ‘a certain fire, an impulse to create, is kindled, is transmitted through the hand, leaps to the canvas, and in the form of a spark leaps back to its starting place, completing the circle – back to the eye and further (back to the source of the movement, the will, the idea.)’

As I demonstrate next, Bergson’s notions of the interval and intuition enable us to explore the nascent state of creativity over the tendency to adopt a more agentic focus. An understanding of creativity developed through the notions of the interval and intuition solicits two propositions that parallel a post-humanist ethic: the first is that the conditions of creativity precede cognition, and following this, that these conditions are not reliant on, determined by or necessitated for an anthropomorphic domain. A post-humanist ethic is one inherent in Bergson’s work, but which

Colebrook draws out more forcefully as a means of ‘imagining a different inclination beyond that of the adaptation and survival of man’ (Colebrook, 2011, page 123). Colebrook (2014, page 100) recognises a ‘creative dynamism’ in Bergson’s philosophy that, ‘is destructive of the closed figures of man, tearing the intellect from its forms and figures.’ This dynamism is where Bergson places a solution for the particularly humanist, difference-reducing mode of intellect, where the ‘mind turns back upon itself, and fixes upon a static image’ (Colebrook, 2014, page 16). Thus to affirm the understanding of creativity found in Bergson’s work, we must recognise it is a process beyond the level of the individuated subject.

Crucially, Bergson does not take us drastically away from the individual to the point that it is difficult to know where to start or what we are left with as conscious beings<sup>3</sup>; ‘the existence which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own’ (1911, page 10). Yet he is able to radically challenge the assumptions and prejudices on which our individuality is framed. A key way in which he is able to do this is by targeting the way that human perception, sensations, feelings and desires, are seen as static points within our conscious existence. This is an important target in Bergson’s work for the development of my argument, because our tendency for this restrictive perceptive organisation can be opposed, as we shall see, through an awareness of the interval and a method of intuition. The crux of Bergson’s critique here arises in the following passage (1911, page 11) in relation to the way we distinguish physical objects as distinct against a processual background:

Discontinuous though they may appear, however, in point of fact they stand out against the continuity of a background on which they are designed, and to which indeed they owe the intervals that separate them; they are the beats of the drum which



break forth here and there in the symphony. Our attention fixes on them because they interest it more, but each of them is borne by the fluid mass of our whole physical existence. Each is only the best illuminated point of a moving zone which comprises all that we feel or think or will – all, in short, that we are at any given moment. It is this entire zone which in reality makes up our state. Now states thus defined cannot be regarded as distinct elements. They continue each other in an endless flow.

What Bergson does here is reveal the problem that, as cognitive beings, we produce a regimented and selective view of the world, one that misses much of what is occurring in between our skewed focus. This is a useful approach to post-humanist thought, because it recognises the limitations of logic and language in distorting our perception of life, but remains realistic about the starting points with which we experience the world. Moving to a closer focus on creativity, there is one point I would like to take forward, which is that Bergson suggests that these states that we perceive as ‘discontinuous’ are in fact owed to the *intervals that separate them*. Albeit briefly, Bergson introduces a notion of the interval that scientific research has missed by focusing on distinct physical objects over an ‘endless flow’. In the next section, Bergson’s shift to the interval is charted and set out as a shift to a generative and more explicitly creative point.

### *The Interval*

Common sense understanding of the interval might see it as a gap or pause, but with Bergson’s conception of time, as discussed in the previous section, we find that static or fixed moments of experience cannot reside within a more processual move to duration. For Bergson, the interval frames an in-between space of connection in which virtual potentials become actualised. According to Hill (2012, page 4), ‘Bergson

ascribes fundamental importance to a formulation of the interval as the opening of thinking and life from which space and time might be conceived.’ In this way, Bergson’s interval precedes our representations of the world, including both material objects as well as immaterial sensations; that is, it is in the interval that the moments we perceive as finished states become. To understand the interval as a space of becoming, is to also recognise it as a necessarily open space. This conceptualisation is crucial for creative research, because it emphasises the need to be open to an emergent creativity that exceeds what we already know.

In *Creative Evolution* (1911), Bergson is cynical of humanity’s preservation of conventional belief systems, suggesting that, ‘common sense which is occupied with detached objects, and also science, which considers isolated systems, are concerned only with the ends of the intervals and not with the intervals themselves’ (Bergson, 1911, page 6). Bergson continues to argue in *Creative Evolution* that human perception cuts out objects from a background - that ‘moving zone’ as noted above, and furthermore that science has placed too much emphasis on the borders of those objects rather than the processes that constitute them. Later in the text (1911, page 329), Bergson begins to push for a celebration of openness at the interval as a mode of better attuning to the flow of duration beyond ready-made signs, suggesting that ‘in order to think movement, a constantly renewed effort of the mind is necessary.’

This push for openness at the interval emerges more explicitly as a break from habitual routine in *Laughter* (1999b). For Bergson, laughter is ‘first and foremost a means of correction’ (1999b, page 173). Since the comic abandons social convention and logic, operating through gestures and automatism (1999b, page 174), what the

interruption of laughter corrects is the ‘increasing stability’ of society: it ‘indicates a slight revolt on the surface of social life.’ (1999b, page 179). We laugh at the absent minded act, or a mechanical walker who trips – an interim that reminds us to correct this routinized, automatism in modes of being. In this way, laughter forces us to be more open and alerted to life as it perpetually unfolds. We might understand laughter to operate on the threshold of the interval, in that it forces a comical recognition of habitual patterns of being, thus opening up to their transformation. If we follow a conceptualisation of the interval that necessitates this interruptive openness, it emerges as a generative and creative space.

With the notion of the interval, Bergson seeks to address the emergent points between fixed illusory states, which the basis of his critique of human perception. His concern for philosophical and scientific method is to shift our attention to these in-between moments; he writes, ‘As to what happens in the interval between the moments, science is no more concerned with that than are our common intelligence, our senses and our language: it does not bear on the interval but only on the extremities’ (1911, page 165). With the notion of intervals, then, Bergson redirects our attention away from entities as static wholes and towards the processes that connect them. This move reveals the human perceptive tendency of fixing bodies as separate, showing instead that they operate on a continuous field, and that the intervals that connect them are indivisible (Bergson 2004, page 246). The process of creativity thus appeals to intervals as points of connection. Bergson’s understanding of the interval solicits a shift in how we think of creativity in geography – from a primarily anthropomorphic domain, towards an experiment in openness.

A departure from the fixity of the human position as a conceptual tool for encountering the world is an essential element of Bergson's interval. By attending to the interval we are in a position to challenge the difference-reducing mode of the intellect, as a process that turns to ready-made concepts and points of reference, which in many cases become too general in their representation. This is a challenge that Colebrook (2014) is inclined towards in her post-humanist reading of Bergson, because it demonstrates how the human intellect restricts our understanding of, and so our engagement with, the world outside of human cognition. It makes explicit that the connections between us and other bodies persist well before we arrive at a particular location with a name and a task, and thus are not the result of cognitive reflections but could be understood as a process of virtual and actual relations at the interval.

If the interval is understood as an in-between space, connecting actualised points in our experience of the duration, we can recognise that these relations do not necessarily resonate at the level of human representation or consciousness. We might think of what occurs when a decision is made, however trivial, and what else might have been decided instead. An interesting analogy here is of a photographer, carefully deciding on where to position their lens – perhaps wanting to include all branches of a tree without sacrificing the clarity of the subjects of the scene. Once the shutter is released a particular image is captured - some branches left amputated but wide smiles in focus - but what then is missed out from the frame, what else might have been taken in this process? Similarly then we might ask what else might have occurred at the interval; although one movement can be taken in the interval between any given body, there is a multitude of different lines that might connect these bodies. With Bergson's work, we open up how different lines might be followed by dwelling

in the interval for longer. Following Massumi (2015, page 71), an intervallic approach might correspond to an aesthetic politics, whereby an event – perhaps an art encounter – ‘always has the potential to affectively attune a multiplicity of bodies to its happening.’ In this way the interval denotes moments of undetermined potential before a representational logic. This is important for our creative interventions because it implies the necessity of being open at these intervals, so to generate new connections through them.

The notion of the interval reveals and demands a necessarily open mode of being; to shift focus from fixed states to the interval, as Bergson does, means to precisely follow the nose of intuition, to pursue ‘not what can be made to seem familiar within the object, but that which is unique to it’ (Linstead, 2002, page 103). Such a position is explored next, to address how Bergson’s intuitive philosophy can inform our own enactments of creativity in geography.

### *Intuition*

Creativity indicates a ‘perceptive and affective mode of thought’, that can alter forces of habit and affirm different modes of existence at the interval (Bogue, 2003, page 195). For Bergson, to apprehend creativity we must be intuitive to the intervals from which transformation will transpire. The method of intuition is a crucial aspect of Bergson’s creative philosophy and one which is central in many accounts of his work; however, it is Deleuze (1991, page 14) that highlights it as the central, ‘methodological thread’, which enables us to better understand Bergson’s philosophical approach. As Grosz (2005, page 8) also suggests, intuition ‘reveals and makes explicit the fine threads within and between objects (including living beings)

that always makes them more than themselves, always propels them in a mode of becoming.’ As with the interval, then, it allows Bergson to focus on the processes – *the fine threads within and between* - that precede our observation of fixed objects in the world.

For Bergson, ‘a thought which brings something new into the world is of course obliged to manifest itself through the ready-made ideas it comes across and draws into its movement’ (1946, page 92). Intuition is a form of perception that transcends these dogmatic habits of understanding to grasp at the more immediate and emergent arrival of thought. It is a consciousness that ‘turns back within itself’ in order to ‘penetrate more deeply into the interior of matter, of life or reality in general’ (1946, page 102). In this way, intuition takes us beyond or perhaps prior to a consciousness that relies on ‘the ready-made, [and] cannot in general enter into what is being done, it cannot follow the moving reality, adopt the becoming which is the life of things’ (1946, pages 103-4).

Connolly (2002; 2010; 2013) has consistently opened up avenues that show what the implications of this intuitive philosophy might be. Although not in explicit reference to Bergson’s method of intuition, Connolly (2002, page 28) is drawn to a notion of wallowing, as in ‘wallowing in our imagination’, in his reading of Bergson, suggesting ‘Bergson commends it is an excellent way to fold creativity into thinking and judgement.’ We might think of wallowing as a form of dwelling in thought or speculative dreaming; what it also implies for me is a lack of intentionality. It is precisely this lack of intentionality, amplified in Proust’s writing on involuntary memory<sup>4</sup>, and which also corresponds to the involuntary manner of the comic in

*Laughter*, that can alert us to creativity as an emergent force that engages bodies and matter, rather than the divine act of the artist.

Although for Bergson intuition is more of an intentional act than the involuntary memory of Proust, there are instances in which Bergson discusses intuition as an ‘unperceived’ act, without an intentional cognitive source (1946, page 89). Intuition in this sense is about the arrival of an unforeseen idea, it is a process of intention, but an intention of the unintended - being in the moment, contemplative and open to creative thought but not as the originator of it. Bergson’s intuition can now be understood as a process of *enabling* something unintended to emerge, and in this way, it is about setting out a platform on which creativity might arise. The implication of this for creative interventions in geography is that, rather than positing a human agent that *intervenes* in the world according to predefined aims, we are intuitive to what emerges beyond that which we already perceive after the interval.

As Colebrook (2014, page 17) highlights, intuition problematizes conceptualisations that aim to account for different modes of experience in an absolute manner: ‘Bergson (1913) argued that there was no subject who intuited images, just images or perceptions from which we posit some thing—the brain—that provides the illusory image that would cause all images.’ Once again here, the method of intuition arises as a means to address the world beyond the authority of cognition. In terms of creative practice, this necessitates that we neither start with nor rely upon these fixed illusory images of perception, such as that of the artistic subject. For Deleuze, it is through openness that an intuitive disposition might be approached.

Deleuze's (1991) reading of Bergson offers a nuanced emphasis on exposition as the condition of creative possibility. It is through Deleuze's reading that intuition comes to the fore as a practice of exposure at the interval – perhaps grasped by wallowing in imagination – and his interest is in the potential for intuition to both force us to think and act differently in the world. Creative thought, Deleuze states (2004, page 100), 'is not a question of opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia, but rather of remembering that schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought – one, moreover, which can only be revealed as such through the abolition of that image'. So for Deleuze, creativity is a destructive process, or as Ruddick (2010: 37) suggests, one of discord rather than harmony; since the creative process is one of thinking the new, it must involve some break with tradition. This rupture, however small, exposes a body 'to new powers of thinking' and opens a potential of becoming different (Jeanes, 2006, page 128). To endorse this corporeal exposition, we must accept an understanding of the body that transgresses the Cartesian duality, in order to recognise multiple factors that form and function as part of its terms. With this recognition we can allow 'bodies, passions and actions', as Dewsbury (2011, page 150) suggests, to get 'segued together with enunciative statements to carve out both a territory and hint at potential transformative worldings.' The kind of experimental ethos implied by Dewsbury here is inherent to Bergson's creativity, since it propagates a necessary openness to the world - those two enactments of openness I have argued for in this paper - at the interval and of intuition.

The implications of Bergson's thought for creative research emerges more explicitly now as a push for open experiments with the divergent ways creativity *becomes*



manifest. If we approach the geographic turn to experimental and creative practice (Last, 2012; Enigbokan and Patchett, 2012; Jellis, 2015) in terms of Bergson's creativity, we are not experimenting in lieu of justifications for our actions, but rather approaching research without predetermined rules and expectations. To be without the predetermined nature of research is precisely why the openness I have argued for is important, because it enables the development of ideas and practices which are not restricted according to limited frameworks of thought. One aspect of any experiment, of course, is that we are not entirely in control, which will indeed and quite necessarily lead to failure in the field. It is important that we embrace the possibilities of failure; creativity is not necessarily the affirmative process it is often portrayed as. Rather, it allows us to encounter new forms of (intervallic) association and to think (intuit) differently.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper has been to introduce Bergson's notions of the interval and intuition to develop theoretical engagements with creativity in geography. In so doing, we are alerted to a more expansive set of creative agencies, which shifts the terms of debate away from the binaries of art (typical in creative geographies (Hawkins, 2013)) or the agency of the individual (as in much social science literature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997)). This is an important shift for geographic interventions in creative practice because it alerts us to the non-individuated and non-organic constituents of creativity, and thus to the potential of creativity in ways that we do not yet know.

The emphasis on creativity as an intervallic and intuitive process is not intended to offer a template for creative practices, rather it is intended to open up experimental

practices that challenge our habits of qualitative research - ‘those “pre-established encodings” of subjects, objects, fields, ethics and positionality’, and our assumptions of evaluation that follow (Gerlach and Jellis, 2015, page 140). In this way, the call for more precise engagements with creativity becomes a conceptual task of rearticulating our ontological foundations towards the processual, singular and indeterminate. In geography of course, theory and practice have been woven together to precisely try and attend to the processual, singular and indeterminate, through, for example, experiments with performance (Dewsbury, 2010). Part of the challenge requires us to stop divorcing theory and empirics – with one informing or illustrating the other, but instead to accept and enliven the two as constitutive elements of research - where theory can develop empirical implications and vice versa. From here we might be inclined towards methodologies without predefined expectations, that are creative in a *conceptually generative* as well as an empirically analytical sense.

Two notions in Bergson’s thought allow us to recuperate aspects of the creative process in research practice. The first is an *intuitive* disposition - this entails an awareness of creativity as a nascent act. The second is a proclivity for the *interval* – which alerts us to the corporeal and material relations of creativity. By way of conclusion, there are three key ways in which we can take these implications forward.

First, what becomes central is an awareness of how creative methodologies generate creative relations. It is precisely the generation of creative relations that are the aim of this paper, ones that are not binary and that do not return to individual sites – of the mind or artwork, but that focus on the process of that relationality. This could be in immersion at the interval, dwelling or wallowing in the precarious points of excess

between the one and the virtual, and as Gerlach and Jellis suggest (2015, page 141), to ‘begin in the middle by not knowing’.

Second, creativity as this relational process opens us to our human position in a heterogeneous world. This means that creativity is a corporeal and material process of transformation, emergent at the interval – those moments between states as we perceive them, or as Lazzarato (2014, page 27) might suggest, the molecular components: those ‘non-individuated intensive subhuman potentials of subjectivity, and the non-individuated, intensive, molecular component parts and potentials of matter’. The importance of this is that it demands a reconfiguration of our understanding of material agency so that it is not subsumed to an image of the whole. The second implication being, then, an acceptance and ability to handle our own perceptive partiality in the creative manifestations seized upon.

Third, I wish to underline that creativity is not understood here as a subjective exploration built upon the premise of an innate individual capability. Rather, creativity in this paper is developed as an intuitive process – as a means of dwelling in the moment in a way that enables new relations between the corporeal and material to emerge. The point being, following Dewsbury (2003: 1910), to get ‘back to a moment of prediscursive experience’, which touches on the new-materialist endeavour to disrupt the human subject as sole individual agent in an otherwise docile material world.

In taking these points forward through Bergson, creative methodologies can be extended to not only develop ways of understanding our empirical experiences in the

world, but to transform them by explicitly challenging the conceptual assumptions that they rest upon. If creativity and aesthetics are not simply about human agency or evaluation, conceived within artistic (and scientific) institutions, we need to develop open and experimental ways of attending to, and activating, the aesthetic and creative process elsewhere. The understanding of creativity that I have argued for in this paper, as something that is emergent in the relations between the corporeal and material, is a much more open sense of creativity that challenges the reliance on predetermined modes of practice in academic research, and enables us to venture, more creatively, into how these processes emerge outside our perceived collective conscious.

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<sup>1</sup> The interval is discussed by Bergson in *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, as an opening into lived experience (duration), and has been productively developed by feminist writers in relation to Luce Irigaray's notion of the interval and sexual difference (Hill, 2012; Whitford, 1991). In *The Creative Mind*, Bergson introduces an intuitive (rather than analytical) philosophical method. It is Deleuze (1991), however, who highlights the concept of intuition as central to Bergson's philosophy, leading subsequent thinkers (Colebrook, 2014; Grosz, 2005; White, 2008) to engage with intuition in equal measure to some of his better-known concepts.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank one of the referees who introduced me to this text.

<sup>3</sup> Dealing with two theorists that have different conceptualisations of the individual – Bergson holding more onto a sense of the individual against the dissolution of the individual in Deleuze- is a tricky enterprise. I want to be clear that while Bergson can be said to destabilise the individual, it remains a much more central figure in his philosophical vocabulary than for Deleuze.

<sup>4</sup> Proust's narrator discusses involuntary memory in *Swann's way vol. 1* (2013, page 51) as 'an unknown state which brought with it no logical proof of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, a real state in whose presence the other state of consciousness vanished'.