

Creating Different Modes of Existence. Towards an Ontological Ethics of Design

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Abstract

This paper will address some design concerns relating to philosopher Étienne Souriau's work *Les différents modes d'existence* (2009). This has important bearings upon design because, first, this philosophical attitude thinks of designing not as an act of forming objects with identity and meaning, but rather as a process of delivering things that allow for a multiplicity of creative remodulation of our very existences. Secondly, Souriau unpicks the concept of a being existing as a unified identity and redefines existence as a creative act of nonstop production of a variety of modes of existence. In doing this he not only moves ontological considerations to the fore of philosophical discussions away from epistemological ones, but does so in such a way as to align with attitudes to ethics that relate it to ontology – notably the work of Spinoza. (This places Souriau in a philosophical lineage that leads back, for example, to Nietzsche and Whitehead, and forward (from his era) to Deleuze and Guattari.) In thinking both ontology and ethics together, this paper will introduce a different approach to the ethics of design.

Keywords: designing; ethics; instauration; modes of existence; Souriau

I say: each being, in order to exist must discover its mode of existence (or even, have it discovered for them); and emphasise that there are some modes of existence to be discovered still unnamed and unexplored. Without inventing or innovating these modes, we will not be able to establish [*instaurer*] certain things and they will remain unfulfilled. (Souriau, 2009, p. 161; my translation).

With the proliferation in recent years of the importance of 'co-' in designing¹ we might say that the value of ethics to design has increased, whether overtly discussed or not. This

¹ For a good overview of some of the main texts in this see Sanders & Stappers (2008) in particular, and the journal *CoDesign* in which their article is published.

would require a particular way of considering ethics, however: as a measure and a delivery of the intensity of the relationships between people. Such an account of ethics is by no means normal and owes much to the works of philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1996), as well as to others who have been influenced by him, especially Gilles Deleuze and incorporates within it, as a necessary part of ethics, an attitude towards ontology (the study of being). It is the purpose of this paper to bring this attitude towards ethics to design.

As might be expected, the journal *Design Philosophy Papers* has played a large part in providing design's ethics a philosophical voice (note especially: Willis (2004), Tonkinwise (2004) and Fry (2006))² though not exclusively (see also the journals: *Design Issues* – notably d'Anjou (2009) and Taylor (2013) – and *Design and Culture*), and there is a chorus of designers and design researchers for whom an ethical (and related social) conscience is important.³ Oftentimes, however, positions on ethics are reached by following paths that rather focus upon morality; in particular, approaches to morality

² The work of Tony Fry (2008, 2010, 2012) is important to mention, as it provides a way of thinking the creative relationship between designing and human ontologies, albeit in a way very different to the one I propose here. His (2012) *Becoming Human by Design* states such a programme of thought and action explicitly. He writes that the current condition of uneven consumption relations between human, non-human life and the rest of the world 'requires that we start to embrace ontological futuring practices from a far more critical and strategic basis, this so as (a) to be able to adequately interpret the emergent experience of the fractured human condition as the status quo implodes under the pressure of an ever-growing defuturing human global population; and (b) to be able to make new modes of agency that are viable, intelligible and efficacious' (Fry, 2012, p. 37). There is much here that would require a Fry-focussed piece to examine properly: for example, the concepts of futuring and defuturing, as well as the 'fractured human condition'. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that while Fry endeavours to deliver an ontological designing that highlights 'modes of agency' is not dissimilar to what I propose in this article, his philosophical foundations of Heidegger, Derrida and a way of thinking Nietzsche influenced by both, is markedly different to mine.

³ Notable in this area is the DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) Network (<http://www.desis-network.org>) and the work of its founder Ezio Manzini (see particularly Manzini 2015). DESIS also has a relationship to philosophy via a series of lectures it curates under the title DESIS Philosophy Talks (<http://www.desis-philosophytalks.org>).

which judge good/bad behaviour according to principles that transcend the milieus in which they are implemented. This is especially the case of Viktor Papanek's influential work on social and ethical design, *Design for the Real World* (1984), which provides a series of imperatives – be authentic not phony, address needs not desires, be good not bad – according to which design should be practised. Philosopher Gilles Deleuze offers a different approach to ethics, describing it in the shorter of his books on Spinoza (1988, p. 23) as 'a typology of immanent modes of existence'. 'Typology' would appear an odd word for Deleuze to use, as it seems either to draw elements together in relation to common forms or features, or to homogenise via a totalisation of form, both of which approaches run counter to his philosophy. Its use in design might reinforce this, where typology can stand for an ideal form of something (in a Platonic sense), or a unified set of formal codes according to which things (products, images, services and so on) can be designed in order to be understood. Deleuze's conception, however, is otherwise. As a thoughtful investigation of types, of instances or creative moments, typology in Deleuze's case can designate an account of the modes of existence created in milieus co-extensive and co-intensive with the typological process itself. Thus, an ethics regarded in this way does not transcend or idealise, neither does it homogenise or totalise, but follows the events in which modes of existence are created and impact each other. For Deleuze, following Spinoza, ethics is thus a deeply ontological concern,⁴ as stated above, and delineates a field of relative potentials from which our individual and singular modes of

⁴ The use of 'concern' here, and throughout, follows both Latour (2008) and Whitehead (1966). Whitehead is explicit in using it 'in the Quaker sense of that term' (1966, p. 167), which is a (divinely inspired and so obligatory) call to action and not simply a synonym of 'anxiety'.

existence emerge as processually dynamic and relationally affective. In this way, our opportunities for being are immanent to the possible relations according to which they could be manifest and ethics is immanent again to all of this not simply as a reactive reflection on such opportunities, but an active creation of them too. This approach entails a redistribution of a simply identified individual across an array of modes of existence, not all of which will be accessed at any one time, and which may exceed any individual if taken together. This will prove to be an important pair of points, especially when considering designing as an ethical and ontological act.

This paper will make a start on investigating modes of existence in relation to design, and to highlight a way of thinking ethics that arises. (With this in mind, it is clear that many important issues will need to be side-lined for the moment – specifically, those of immanence and of the social forms that emerge from this affective interplay of modes – with the thought that they will serve as the focus of other work.) This discussion of modes of existence will pay particular attention to Étienne Souriau’s *Les différents modes d’existence* (2009), because the reconsideration of Being in terms of creative, multiplicitous and dynamic modes of existence will provide for design the basis for a different way of doing ethics, just as Deleuze states. My argument will posit that in generating (or not) the possibilities for the flourishing of modes of existence, in many different relationships with other modes at different scales, design will necessarily be entangled within concerns that can be recognised as ethical. This paper will address this in two main sections: a ‘Literature Review’ that unpacks the concept of modes of existence, with emphasis upon the role of creativity here; and a ‘Discussion’ section that brings this concept to design, drawing out the ethical issues that arise. Finally, the

‘Conclusion’ will not so much draw a close to this topic, as find directions to take it further.

Literature Review: on different modes of existence

In order to focus upon the concept of ‘modes of existence’ that Deleuze announces in the quotation referred to above, and to draw out the elements of this concept that engage with ethics and fold them into a way of thinking and doing design, it is worth noting first that alongside Souriau there are two philosophers with contemporary currency upon whom we can draw to examine modes of existence: Alfred North Whitehead and Gilbert Simondon.⁵

For Whitehead, to consider modes of existence is already a critical response to ways of thinking ontology that have always only allowed an engagement with subjects and objects. Philosophy seems forever to have sanctioned only these two possibilities, Whitehead bemoans – across his work, and sometimes with real ire in his tone – revolving around them as around a pair of dead stars: one year closer to one, another year the other. This ‘bifurcation of nature’, as he terms it, has rooted in us and rooted us, keeping us constrained in our thinking and bereft of creative endeavour. For him, it is a ‘facile vice’ (Whitehead, 2004, p. vi). Philosophers and scientists might argue over the prominence of one or the importance of the other but, in the end, there are still just the two of them. Whitehead’s work takes us away from this tendency, exploding subjects and

⁵ There are companion articles to this that focus on various concerns mentioned so far. One centred around Spinoza’s conceptualisation of affect in relation to ethics and social design, is currently under review for a journal. Another on Simondon’s characterisation of modes of existence is almost finished, while others on Whitehead’s ‘bifurcation of nature’ and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘assemblage’, are works in progress. All of these articles seek to develop an ethics of design based around modes of existence.

objects into new possibilities: multiple experiential and experimental modes of existing, each with their own trajectories of becoming. Subjects and objects become moments in more nebulous ‘occasions of experience’ (Whitehead, 1967, *passim*), whose cloud expands from initial burst, and which is cut across by modes of existing. The dissolution of subject-object bifurcations into constellations of multiple modes of existence offers much to philosophy and science, in Whitehead’s terms; and design, in mine, as I hope to show.

For Simondon, the emergence of the individual from its preindividual conditions is neither a totalising nor an exhaustive act. With a nod to one of his thesis advisors, Georges Canguilhem, Simondon (1989, 2005 & 2009) develops positively productive feedback loops from milieu to individual in which the individual’s ontological conditions of creative proliferation are assigned to the simultaneous development of multiplicitous modes of existence (Canguilhem, 2001). This is an extremely entangled, complex situation that demands an investigation of the ethical and material forces according to which modes of existence are designed. Nevertheless, this produces not simple, well-defined and well-identified beings – users and their needs, for example – but teeming, creative, agents always in the process of coming about.

It is probably thanks to Bruno Latour that Souriau is coming back into the philosophical spotlight; as Latour (2011, 2013) has spent some time over the past few years engaging with Souriau’s work, examining modes of existence in particular. Renowned for his work on aesthetics, Souriau’s astonishing *Les différents modes d’existence* has recently been republished by Presses Universitaires de France (2009) with an extensive introduction co-written by Latour and philosopher of science Isabelle

Stengers. Souriau's work has warranted little discussion over the decades, which is particularly lamented by one thinker who has devoted much to Souriau's work: Luce de Vitry Maubrey who, in 1985, believed that the time was ripe for Souriau to be remembered. It didn't quite happen. In an insight obviously ahead of its time, De Vitry Maubrey (1985, p. 327) acknowledges that 'entering Souriau's cosmological vision requires a radical revamping of some of the basic assumptions of the traditional way of thinking'. A 'revamping' that requires epistemology becoming ontology and finding 'the empiricism in the transcendental' (Mikel Dufrenne quoted in De Vitry Maubrey, 1985, p. 327).⁶

Souriau writes of his ontology that:

It is a matter of inventing (as one 'invents' a treasure⁷), of discovering positive modes of existence, coming to meet us with their palm fronds, to greet our hopes, our aspirations, or our problematic speculations, in order to gather them in and comfort them. All other research is metaphysical famine. (Souriau, 2009, pp. 142–143; my translation).

The greeting, welcoming, opening towards that describes an act of creating, *instaurates* not only the work but also our modes of existence. This *instauration* – inception,

⁶ The currency of the points De Vitry Maubrey (and Dufrenne) make can be recognised especially through the work of philosophers with interest in some of those already mentioned (Deleuze, Whitehead, Simondon), for example: Sauvagnargues (2010), Massumi (2011) and Stengers (2011).

⁷ The phrase "'invents' a treasure' here is a strange one to native English speakers. Latour's typically playful note describing it (2011, p. 311 n. 30) runs: 'The French legal term for someone who discovers a treasure is actually the "inventor" . . . French is constructivist by construction!'

establishment – is an important concept for Souriau as it takes the creative act away from being regarded as the imposition of form onto inert matter by an energetic genius,⁸ and makes of it an act and event at the very heart of being. The urge to create drives all being and without it there would be nothing. For Souriau here, then, being is neither foundational, nor founded on an individual (see also: Simondon, 1989 & 2005), but must be uncovered, discovered, created in continuous moments of ontogenesis; and this is not being as a unified, unchanging mass either, but an ever-changing dynamic of different modes of existence. That is, a plethora of micro-becomings at times coming together, and others fleeing apart (see also: Guattari, 1989). To work as an artist, a philosopher – or even a designer – without engaging in such *instauration* is, he emphasises, ‘metaphysical famine’. In this way creativity allowed by *instauration* and which it congruent with it can bring forth, welcome, open up the possibilities for myriad modes of existence. Stengers and Latour – in their prefatory essay to Souriau’s book – add their own exposition in terms that are heavily reliant upon the examples of creative practice that are so important to Souriau: ‘To say of a work of art that it is “instaurated”, is to prepare oneself to make of the potter one who welcomes, collects, prepares, explores and invents – as one invents a treasure – the form of the work’ (Stengers & Latour, 2009, pp. 10–11; my translation). Being *instaurated*, a work of creativity emerges from an entanglement of different forces – some channelled through the human, others from a multitude of other directions – and

⁸ Hylomorphism is the term given by Aristotle (1986) to giving form to inert matter, particularly in the sense that the soul gives form to the body’s matter. Simondon (2009) rails against this notion, offering instead a creative, morphogenic process whereby matter forms itself. See also: Brassett & O’Reilly (2015), Crawford (2015), Hales (2015) for discussions of these concepts in relation to design.

allows for the variety of beings that coalesce along the way their own inception.⁹ Piece by piece, moment by moment, collision by collision, creative works are discovered and invented by those for whom their very beings are in reciprocal processes of discovery and invention (Souriau, 2009, p. 108–109; my translation). No one artist or potter – or designer or philosopher, or anyone, for that matter – is in control of this process, but finds themselves emerging at the confluence of the forces coming together in/as things.¹⁰ This highlights the important issue concerning the immanence of the thing created and the creator. It is an important point for Souriau that the act of creation opens up ontological opportunities for both creators and created.

For Souriau, to focus upon modes of existence is to recognise that being is multiplicitous, dynamic, changing and creative, more than single, simple and identifiable, and always yet to come – that is, it is in a process of becoming.¹¹ In an essay which brings Souriau’s concept of *instauration* and Simondon’s approach to individuation into collision, Alice Haumont explains that both philosophers ‘build a thought that embraces

⁹ In *Genesis* (1995, p. 57) Michel Serres explains: ‘instauration is a Greek word meaning fork, meaning bifurcation, which sketches a cross or a dovetail. In the beginning is the crossroads’. The emphasis here is on the break, or change of direction, of a flow. For a questioning note about Serres’s etymology here, see Brassett & O’Reilly (in press) n. 5.

¹⁰ In Chapter 6 of his book on Leibniz and the Baroque that Deleuze (1993) devotes to Whitehead, he gives a marvellous quotation from Leibniz that illustrates just this point: ‘As if the [orchestra’s] instrumentalists played the little phrase far less than they were performing the rites it required in order to appear’ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 80; quoting Leibniz’s ‘Letter to Arnauld’ (April 1687), Mason (1985, p. 119)).

¹¹ Whitehead (whom Souriau references positively in the work under discussion) shares an approach to being that prioritises its process of becoming rather than its transcendent unity: ‘*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its “being” is constituted by its “becoming”. This is the “principle of process”’ (Whitehead, 1978, p. 23; original emphases). See also Connolly (2011). It is important, also, to note here an important concept in Souriau’s text, one that Stengers and Latour focus upon heavily: that of the ‘work to come’. I will leave a full examination of this to another time, suffice to say that existence considered as a ‘work to come’ will be oriented externally (as De Landa (2006, 2016) says of assemblages), developing new relations and opportunities for affecting and being affected, forever proliferating its different modes of being as becoming, rather than as an ideal possibility of future unification.

the *modes of existence* between which human life is woven' (Haumont, 2002, p. 70; original emphasis; my translation). Human life is not situated in any special being-human, but erupts in between the creations in which it is implicated and explicated, across many different modes. She writes further: '[the human] can *become human* only on condition of opening itself up to these ways of being that surpass it on all sides' (Haumont, 2002, p. 70; original emphasis; my translation). The human is the basis for all its possible modes of existence ('these ways of being'), without being their cause, and if it is 'opened up' to them can find many new ways of being. That is, if it can engage in an active and creative becoming it will recognise that all modes of existence are possible and should be welcomed. As Haumont's human opens up it finds that its own interstitial moments offer opportunities for ontological development. For Souriau it is important to acknowledge this when considering creativity. Thus, creativity is not a transcendent set of rules to which everything must adhere in order to be creative, but a way of existing whose principles for future elaboration emerge from the particular instances of any creative event. (In this way, we can also notice Deleuze's recognition of the value of immanence to ethics.) Haumont highlights too, following Simondon and Souriau, that the human is not a unifying or totalising factor bringing all these things under control, but the name of a particular set of material and energetic tendencies that assemble and affect each other and the milieus in which they operate. The design consequences of this encounter with modes of existence will be the focus of the discussion that follows.

Discussion: the potential for designing

It is with Latour's reading (2011, 2013) that many of the design-related issues emerge; though this is not necessarily a novel evaluation of Souriau's work, interested as Souriau was in aesthetics.¹² As discussed above, Souriau regards the bringing into being of a work of art – or science Latour adds; or, we might add, design – as an act of devotion, an act of *instauration* that encourages the work on its trajectory of becoming at the same time as it provides the material upon which an artist's, scientist's, designer's, and so on, own modes of being are conceived. Souriau explains:

But one can also exist by the force of others. There are certain things – poems, symphonies or homelands – that do not possess access to existence by themselves. Man has to devote himself to their being; and perhaps in this devotion he might, incidentally, find a real existence. In any case, this act of existence designates and takes note of this success (of being or its support) insofar as it is achieved.

(Souriau, 2009, p. 110; my translation).

There are things whose participation in existence is mediated and modulated through human creative action, Souriau explains here, while at the same time this action allows for human existential journeys to flow; indeed, these very journeys are engendered by what had seemed like a one-way creative inception from creator to created thing. The success of Souriau's *instauration* is evident not only *in* multiplicitous existences that it

¹² It is worth remembering the affective and so ethical nature of the original Greek for this term, *aisthetikos*, which relates to sensation. Souriau gathers this in a marvellous line about things: 'Sensations are in a way the roar of phenomena' (Souriau, 2009, p. 117; my translation). For a fuller discussion of the affective import of design's *aisthetikos* swerved through the question of the role of style in designing and innovating the future, see Brassett & O'Reilly (2015).

produces, but *as* multiplicitous too. The thoroughly intertwined ontological generation of creator and created in any act of creation shifts existential locus from any one mode of being across a whole field of possibility. Just as Spinoza (1996) distributes of ethical import across a network of variously intensive and related elements, so here Souriau undoes any reliance upon actual or transcendent unity of being, favouring instead a collection of modes in ever-churning dynamism. To design things, then, is that process in which the designer devotes her or himself to the possibilities of her or his own being; and the things, the multi-modal opportunities that are *instaurated* in any act of creation, open-up at least as many directions for her or his being to become. This is further intensified as the existential modalities offered to those who encounter this work are themselves opened up to new possibilities (or closed down into a straight-jacketed single mode of being). This is probably the most important implication of this study regarding design: that the act of designing can welcome potentially disruptive energetic, creative flows into modes of existing that blossom as much for the designers as for us all. However, it can also shut these down, or restrict all opportunities to those most easily controlled. Here lies the ethical import of designing; to which I will return in the concluding section of this paper.

The ‘roar’ of phenomena giving rise to sensations (Souriau, 2009, p. 113; my translation) is an effect of the multimodal bringing into being undertaken not only by individuals creating things, but also by the multiple and complex web of relations in which their (individuals, things, spaces and all) existence is entailed. Humans’ modes of existence and the works that they produce are in relationships that are either reciprocally supportive or damaging. ‘Each mode [of existence] alone’, Souriau (2009, p. 111; my translation) writes, ‘is itself an art of existence’. It seems irrelevant whether the modes of

existence that emerge from the relations between humans, spaces, technologies, things, and so on, belong to any one of those categories (human, spaces, technology, things and so on), so utterly intertwined are they in each other's existences. And to draw each one, any one, of them out is an art, a skill, a fiction, a fabulation – a design. Any act of designing can allow for, or deny, a range of ontological opportunities simultaneously, at levels that go from the micro- to the macro-modal.

Contemporary smartphones exemplify this well. One does not simply design social systems of smartphones, but ways of being and becoming whose inter-affects allow better or worse relations between a number of assembled modes: human-human, human-thing, thing-social, human-thing-social, and so on. Design theorist Betti Marenko (2015) highlights such qualities in her essay 'Digital Materiality, Morphogenesis and the Intelligence of the Technodigital Object'. Not a simple object, the smartphone, Marenko posits (2015, p. 107), becomes whatever 'app, programme, stream of data' it runs at any moment, converging a 'highly immersive, sensory and somatic' set of experiences, becoming 'a new assemblage of multiple material intelligences, not necessarily and not exclusively human'. For Marenko the liquidity of ontological positions adoptable by such a technological 'device' puts into question those of the 'humans' supposedly 'using' them. As the materialising and dematerialising nature of the phone remodulates its own existential opportunities in relation to the particular contingencies according to which its software and hardware interact (with, it should be said the various assemblages of power, mapping, locating and control that designate contemporary portable devices), Marenko offers, so it also does for 'us'. Such a platform – *all* hardware (Kittler, 1992; see also Marenko, 2015; Hales, 2015, 2016) – is a material space of possible existences

modulating and remodulating. The smartphone as morphogenic platform, immersed in an array of intensities from which a range of different modes of existence can coagulate, *instaurationes* in exactly the same way that Souriau shows at the crux of created thing and creator.¹³

The collision of designed things and the people implicated, and explicated, in their creation (named variously ‘designer’, ‘user’, ‘consumer’ and a whole host of other terms) locates ontogenesis not in simple isolation, but spread across networks of mutually affective modes of existence. While the complexity that characterises the creative relations between all of the different existential modes does not allow for an easily identifiable locus of control of such creativity, it is clear that particular combinations, identifications and relations put into effect by the processes of designing afford specific ontological outcomes. Taking both of these points together, we can say that any particularities afforded by specific design outcomes, the complex and mutually affective relationship structures in which they sit, and the potentials that remain for the further creative remodulation of all of these, highlight that design is working already within ethical concerns.¹⁴ Put another way, it is an ethical consideration for design to realise through its acts: that it welcomes (or not) existential opportunities; that it works within,

¹³ At the same time, the providers of digital and physical functionality across such devices (and maybe all ‘smart’ devices) use any particular mode or app to identify and cohere their users into controllable beings. The ‘quantified self’ achieved particularly well through connected, smart, designed things emphasises this point. See, especially, Swan (2013), Grew & Svendsen (2017) and Sanders (2017). See also: Williams (2017) for an article in *Financial Times* that discusses smartphones in terms of design ethics. It is clear that no one example is simple enough only to evidence what it is supposed to exemplify.

¹⁴ It is crucial to recognise that such responsibility does not fall to design alone. It, and the various ontological modes that make it up, operate in networks of power and control that include elements (for example, business entities, political parties, cultural formations) that bear the brunt of ethical (and other) responsibility too.

and produces, complex mutually impacting relationships; and, that such relational modes of existence can either stagnate or creatively burgeon.¹⁵ For Latour (2011, p. 329) the ‘only worthwhile question (in theology as much as in art and science) concerns what it is *good* to fabricate’ (original emphasis). This might be the only worthwhile question to ask of designing too: what is it good to fabricate, or to *instaurate*, to allow to emerge from the many different forces, materials and relations that gather together at any one moment, under specific conditions?

Conclusion

An account of Latour’s ‘good’, from the perspective of the sort of ontological ethics announced from looking at Souriau, might map and measure the impacts of the relationships of the many modes of existence brought into the open by designing, account for the modes of existence for which there is still potential, as well as find ways for manoeuvring around acts of existential blockage and deliberate disabling of ontological potential.

Furthermore, along with welcoming the ontological opportunities afforded by any design work, such concepts as have been introduced here might help diagram the power relations instantiated in, and the forces of oppression that disavow, the creative becomings of human, things and all. For example, to map the different modes of existence instantiated by smart, connected household goods, and the forces of power and

¹⁵ Mention has already been made of Simondon, especially insofar as his work relates to Souriau’s. It is with Simondon (1989 & 2005) that we see this ontology pushed to its limits. For him creative ontology, or ontogenesis, should ensure the possibilities for future existential development, for any system in which all potential is exhausted, or realised, stops being creative and becomes entropic (see also: Brassett, 2005, 2015 & 2016).

control that direct such formations – notably, the advertising-based business models that drive digitally networked sociality and the drives therein to cathect attention – brings the relational ethics positioned with this ontology into collision with aspects of design politics: particularly those related to design activism (for example: Fuad-Luke, 2009; Julier, 2013a & 2013b), social design and innovation (for example: Gamman & Thorpe, 2011a & 2011b; Manzini, 2014 & 2015), and critical approaches to design’s relations to neoliberal economics (Julier, 2017). In all of these examples of social and economic politics of design, what is missing is the ontological dimension. Further work is needed to piece some of these discussions together. Moreover, the view on design ethics that I have started to give here – affective and wholly entangled with an ontology of multiple, modal becomings – needs to be elucidated further; bringing into account Spinoza and Deleuze. Lastly, as design has changed its own being in recent times, taking into its realm strategy, organisation and business, for example, it would be worth mapping how a discussion of ethically affective, multiple modes of existence can scale up to various sizes of collective depending upon the relative perspective one is taking. Modes of existence can, of course, take shape as, and cut across, organisational strategies, social networks and cultural forms, and so many other things.

It serves to finish, for now, with the assertion that a designing that takes account of the modes of existence that it opens up, promotes or shuts down, at the very least becomes ethical through its ontological focus. It does so not by referencing a transcendent system of ideals or imperatives, but as a creative act deeply entangled with the existences with which it plays – the designer’s own included. It is ‘immanent’ to the creative typologies within which it operates, as Deleuze writes (1988, p. 23; and quoted

above). The realisation for and in design, here, is that design is always already ontological, in that it *instaurates*, modes of existence. This cannot be avoided. The addition via the argument I've been presenting, is that the creation of modes of existence is always already ethical too. It will serve us well, next, to wonder what ethically, politically and socially we can become.

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