

Title: Deleuze, Whitehead, the Event, and the Contemporary City

The “event” has pervaded the work of many thinkers over the last several decades from phenomenologists, structuralists, to post-structuralists; for many the event is the constituent element of a narrative. In *A Dictionary of Narratology* we find that an event is defined as a “change of state manifested in discourse by a process statement in the mode of *do* or *happen*. An event can be an action or act or a happening. Along with existents [subjects and/or objects] events are the fundamental constituents of a story.”¹ This underscores the notion that events are the essential components of any narrative. Narratives are structured by plots and, following the phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, make both time human, and give sense to human lives; according to this theory an event exists because of its ability to contribute to a plot. Many argue that narratives pervade cities at all levels, from the everyday lives of its citizens to the general history of a city. There is also the belief that provocative urban narratives are an aspect lacking in many public or open spaces in cities.

As presented above, the conventional definition of the event and its relationship to narrative has had an influence on some architects and urbanists during the last half century. For example, the prominent Italian architect Aldo Rossi used the notion of the event as a central idea in his seminal texts *The Architecture of the City* and *A Scientific Autobiography*; Rossi has written that architecture is “the fixed stage for human events.”² Structuralism and post-structuralism influenced a group of architects involved at the Architectural Association during the 1970s and

¹ Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 28.

which included Bernard Tschumi, Nigel Coates, and Rem Koolhaas; Tschumi has written that “there is no space without event, no architecture without programme.”³ The adoption of theories of events by architects and urbanists provided one basis for examining how space can be used, or how architectural and urban space could create events. Much of this was consistent with attacks on modernist urbanism that have occurred since the 1960s, and the broadly shared opinion that modernist urban space was void of meaning and vitality.

However, there are other definitions of the event that have pervaded aspects of twentieth century thinking that provide a different, more elusive, and potentially more comprehensive way of thinking about how events shape the world. For example, the event is one of the central concepts in Gilles Deleuze’s work; this remains a relatively unstudied aspect, in the worlds of architecture and urbanism, of his influential writings. Deleuze, the philosopher of “becoming,” provides an important, and challenging, body of work that attempts to understand the complexities of the contemporary world. In this essay we will explore the implications for Deleuze’s notion of event, and its origins, on contemporary urbanism. Cliff Stagoll, in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, explains that for Deleuze an event arises from a set of particular forces, and stands alone as an indication of the immanent and chaotic nature of the world.⁴ In his definition of Deleuze’s concept of “becoming” Stagoll writes “every event is but a unique instant of production in a continual flow of changes evident in the cosmos. The only thing ‘shared’ by

² Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982), p. 22.

³ Bernard Tschumi, “Spaces and Events,” in *The Discourse of Events* (London: Architectural Association, 1983), p. 6.

⁴ Adrian Parr, ed., *The Deleuze Dictionary* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 87-88.

events is their having become different in the course of their production.”⁵ Therefore, there is no particular linkage between events and narrative in Deleuze’s work.

Deleuze examines the theory of the event primarily in his books *The Logic of Sense* and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, although the event can also be found as a concept elsewhere in his writings. In the earlier text, *The Logic of Sense*, which is an extended study of sense and nonsense through the theories of the Stoics, Lewis Carroll, and Péguy, Deleuze devotes several sections to the event. In the ninth series he describes “singularity” and the idealistic aspect of events. He writes:

Singularities are turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion, condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, “sensitive” points.⁶

In the twenty-fourth series Deleuze tackles the difficult question of what might link events together, drawing on Leibniz and Nietzsche. Here he writes:

Between events, there seem to be formed extrinsic relations of silent compatibility and incompatibility, or conjunction and disjunction, which are very difficult to apprehend.⁷

In the twenty-sixth series he affirms that events do belong to language.⁸

⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 52.

⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

In a subsequent book, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze develops and modifies his theory of the event. In a chapter entitled “What is an Event?,” Deleuze draws directly from Alfred North Whitehead’s definition of the event, as he demonstrates a more precise definition of the term. He describes four conditions of the event: 1) extension, 2) intensities, 3) the individual and “prehensions,” and 4) eternal objects or “ingressions.”⁹ At this point, the definition of the event that will be developed in the remainder of this essay will explore this definition that Deleuze derives from Whitehead. In Whitehead’s work he devotes extensive study to the event in his texts *The Concept of Nature* (published 1920) and *Process and Reality* (published 1929).

If we look at the four conditions for the event that Deleuze identifies, we begin with extension. Events address time and space, particularly with respect to time as the passage of events, which raises Whitehead’s assertion of the “extensive relation between events.”¹⁰ In *The Concept of Nature*, in the chapter entitled “The Method of Extensive Abstraction,” Whitehead notes that the relations between events are transitive, and that events are parts of other events.¹¹ He writes: “In respect to extension two events are mutually related so that either (i) one include the other, or (ii) one overlaps without complete inclusion, or (iii) they are entirely separate.”¹² For Deleuze, the event forms part of an infinite series, with, as Whitehead states, events inter-related with one another.¹³ Alain Badiou, in his essay “The Event in Deleuze,” develops four axioms of the event based on his reading of Deleuze’s work. According to Badiou, Deleuze’s second axiom states

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 77-80.

¹⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), p. 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.

¹³ Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 77.

that the event is a “synthesis of past and future,”¹⁴ or to quote Deleuze, the event “is always that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening.”¹⁵ Here the importance of time is underscored and that, for Deleuze, the present is not determinable. The extensive aspects of the event address the spatial and temporal aspects of events and the relationships between events; the world could be composed (musically, architecturally, etc.) of patterns or infinite series of events. R.G. Collingwood emphasizes the extensive aspect of Whitehead’s theories and stresses that there is an “aim,” or vital teleological dimension, to Whitehead’s process of becoming.¹⁶

In the second part of Whitehead’s definition, Deleuze writes that events have “intrinsic properties (for example, height, intensity, timbre of a sound, a tint, a value, a saturation of color), which enter on their own account in new infinite series, now converging towards limits, with the relation among limits establishing a conjunction.”¹⁷ In particular the intensity of a property is part of an event. Deleuze’s third axiom, according to Badiou, notes that while the event “intensifies bodies, concentrates their constitutive multiplicity” it is not of the same nature as the bodies it affects.¹⁸

The third component embraces Whitehead’s notion of the individual, with an emphasis on creativity or the production of new events. Here we encounter Whitehead’s theory of “prehension,” which he develops in texts such as *Process and Reality*. According to Lewis S. Ford this is Whitehead’s definition of what is more commonly known as “experience” or

¹⁴ Alain Badiou, “The Event in Deleuze,” *Parrhesia* (Number 2, 2007), p. 38.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁶ See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1945), pp. 165-174.

¹⁷ Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 77.

“feeling,” or Deleuze’s concept of “affect.” Lewis writes that prehension for Whitehead means, “any (conscious or unconscious) “taking account” of another, such that the prehender is affected by what is prehended.”¹⁹ A prehension is a relationship between entities.²⁰ Deleuze writes:

...the event is inseparably the objectification of one prehension and the subjectification of another; it is at once public and private, potential and real, participating in the becoming of another event and the subject of its own becoming.²¹

In the fourth aspect of the definition Whitehead discusses objects as part of events. The relationship is defined by what he calls “ingression.” Whitehead writes:

The ingression of an object into an event is the way the character of the event shapes itself in virtue of the being of the object. Namely the event is what it is, because the object is what it is; and when I am thinking of this modification of the event by the object, I call the relation between the two ‘the ingression of the object into the event.’ It is equally true to say that objects are what they are because events are what they are.²²

Whitehead identifies three kinds of objects: 1) sense-objects, 2) perceptual objects, and 3) scientific objects. The sense-object is the most fundamental and can include colours, sounds, smells, or feelings. Perceptual objects include physical objects such as furniture or buildings.

¹⁸ Badiou, “The Event in Deleuze,” p. 38.

¹⁹ Lewis S. Ford, “Afterword,” in L.S. Ford and G.L. Kline, eds., *Explorations in Whitehead’s Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), p. 329.

²⁰ William A. Christian Sr., “Some Aspects of Whitehead’s Metaphysics,” in Ford and Kline, eds., *Explorations in Whitehead’s Philosophy*, p. 33.

²¹ Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 78.

Whitehead does not address scientific objects in detail, suggesting they lie outside his theory. According to Whitehead, objects “convey the permanences recognized in events.”²³

In summary, Whitehead writes: “Events are lived through, they extend around us. They are the medium within which our physical experience develops, or, rather, they are themselves the development of that experience.”²⁴ In a text on Whitehead, originally published in 1942, Stephen Lee Ely also summarizes Whitehead’s notion of events, he writes:

The world is not a thing it is a process....We recognize, first of all, that the underlying drive of things expresses itself in a diversified plurality, an ever-changing, ever-renewed complex of events. Further, the underlying drive is an activity in which novelties incessantly and necessarily emerge: for whatever has already happened makes a difference to each newly born event....The world-process is one in which the component events so interpenetrate that each influences every other, and it is these influences thus received and felt that constitute the material out of which each nascent event is constructed.²⁵

The theory of event expounded by Deleuze in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, derived mainly from Whitehead, is based in part on Whitehead’s critical interpretation of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. Leibniz, Whitehead, and Deleuze are philosophers of becoming, addressing the complexity and chaos of the world; they are also philosophers of the event. They

²² Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, p. 144.

²³ Alfred North Whitehead, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), p. 62.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁵ Stephen Lee Ely, “The Religious Availability of Whitehead’s God: A Critical Analysis,” in Ford and Kline, eds., *Explorations in Whitehead’s Philosophy*, p. 179.

are philosophers who embrace divergence, discord, and change.²⁶ The remainder of the essay will explore the Whiteheadian/Deleuzian definition of the event against definitions of the city, particularly the contemporary city.

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As we begin to consider the potential relationships between the expanded theory of the event provided above, with the contemporary city it is also useful to attempt to define the contemporary city in general terms. Cities emerged with the development of agriculture and the production of surplus food, which in turn led to settlements that supported both specialists (rulers, priests, soldiers, craftsmen, merchants/traders, etc.) and general labour, those not engaged in agriculture. Essential to the structure of cities were the development of writing to keep records, a social structure, and technologies (particularly in transportation, tool making, and weaponry). Therefore, cities have been considered to be both material and immaterial, or social and formal, and they have been dependent on interconnectivity with the surrounding agricultural system, and extensive trading networks. Cities draw people together into dense settlements. Since the emergence of the city in the Neolithic era, the fundamental aspects of the city have remained, however, the relative emphasis on the component elements has changed. With the emergence of postmodernity the city has once again gone through dramatic changes in structure, social organization, and technology.

²⁶ Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 81.

The influential American urban historian and theorist Lewis Mumford, in his 1937 essay “What is a City?,” provides one definition of the city when he writes:

The city is a related collection of primary groups and purposive associations....These varied groups support themselves through economic organizations...and they are all housed in permanent structures, within a relatively limited area....The city in its complete sense, then, is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity.²⁷

Mumford also provides a general definition of the city in the introduction to his 1938 book *The Culture of Cities*, he writes:

The city...is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community....The city is the form and symbol of an integrated social relationship: it is the seat of the temple, the market, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here in the city the goods of civilization are multiplied and manifolded; here is where human experience is transformed into viable signs, symbols, patterns of conduct, systems of order. Here is where the issues of civilization are focused....²⁸

Mumford’s definitions provide a clear indication that the city represents for him a relatively stable condition, that it is the centre of religion, economy, law and education, and that it has a transformative impact on its citizenry. For Mumford, a city occupies a distinctive location and

has material presence, but is also about social relationships, economic systems, laws, and symbolic structures; much of this accords with a brief description of the city provided by Whitehead in his book *Adventures of Ideas*.²⁹ Conventionally cities are also presented as a reciprocal relationship with rural or agricultural space. As Mumford states cities “are a product of the earth,”³⁰ and then recounts how the countryside supplies the city with raw resources. This was historically supported by the clear separation between city and country defined by the city walls. And yet, cities have always relied on dense inter-relationships, including trade networks, and lines of supply and demand. According to Mumford, cities as collectivities, tell a particular story through their structures, the city is a great work of art.³¹ Here he asserts the concrete over the spatial, the built city as an enduring testimony to a culture, or civilization. This could be construed, in the contemporary context, as a nostalgic position. Mumford goes on to state that cities arise from social needs and create new means of expression. Cities are places of innovation, whether in art, commerce, or technology. And while Mumford was a great proponent of the Garden City, he was generally disturbed by the many developments that occurred in cities since the industrial revolution; the seemingly chaotic, dispersed, and sprawling nature of cities in particular. Mumford states that urban structures have been unresponsive to rapid change during the modern era, for Mumford the historic forces that created great cities seem to have been defeated.³²

²⁷ Lewis Mumford, “What is a City?” in R.T. Gates and F. Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 184-85.

²⁸ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 3.

²⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 95-97.

³⁰ Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, p. 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Against the definitions provided by Mumford, the Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti proposes that the contemporary city can be understood, not just a material structure, but also as a “collection of messages, a world of meanings, a grid of communications,”³³ in other words, as a multiplicity of systems:

...(a) an economico-ecological or productive system in the first instance; (b) a political system; (c) a cultural system; (d) a family system, reproductive and relatively educational; (e) a symbolic system, determined by religious faiths, sacred and profane, revealed or immanent.³⁴

Ferrarotti notes that Marxian class structures have crumbled, that capital and economic structures are now very fluid, and that the traditional distinction between country and city is gone. In effect much of what has been associated with the city may have evaporated in the rapid changes that cities have been subjected to, he suggests we may be entering a “post-urban” period.³⁵ The city, country, and wilderness have effectively become part of one large global system; in other words, the material or formal order of the contemporary city no longer functions as the stable aspect of urbanism, in the way that it has done historically, cities are more fluid as structures. Ferrarotti’s definition has some resonance with the definition of the town provided by Deleuze and Guattari:

The town exists only as a function of circulation, and of circuits....It imposes a frequency. It imposes a polarization of matter, inert, living or human; it causes the *phylum*, the flow, to

³³ Franco Ferrarotti, “Civil Society as Polyarchic Form: The City,” in P. Kasinitz, ed., *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 452.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

pass through specific places, along horizontal lines. It is a phenomenon of *transconsistency*, a *network*, because it is fundamentally in contact with other towns.³⁶

The Whiteheadian/Deleuzian theory of the event helps to understand the elusive complexity of the contemporary city. Rather than as a dualistic divide between hard and soft, or material and social, contemporary cities revolve around a complex interplay of events in time and space. The economic and cultural roles of cities are changing rapidly, and institutions historically associated with cities have become much more dispersed. Since the 1940s cities globally have witnessed rapid and radical change. Even older historic cities have seen significant change in the way they interact with global forces. Given the Whiteheadian/Deleuzian notion that everything is event, we then arrive at an understanding of the city as an intensity of particular events in a complex context that is spatial and temporal and continuously changing. This is a more accurate depiction of the contemporary city, where it is difficult to pinpoint permanence, although Whitehead does note that “duration” is an important aspect of societies. Even longstanding institutions, represented by monumental buildings, are subject to change, as Michel Foucault has poignantly demonstrated in his writings. Philosophies, based on becoming, tend to be accused of having nihilistic tendencies, as there is no stable condition onto which meaning can be attached. However, as Whitehead and Deleuze have demonstrated, the inter-connectedness of everything suggests that the structure, or ever-changing patterns of events, does provide an affirmation of cosmic processes. The contemporary city is a dispersed structure, with a completely interconnected relationship between it and its surroundings, local, regional, and global. Cities

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 432.

are complex event structures that can be interpreted as being based on intensities, rather than as narratives, these intensities can be charted and/or composed.

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Elizabeth Grosz, in her book on post-structuralism and architecture, describes Deleuze as “the great nomadologist, the thinker of movement, of difference, the cartographer of force rather than form...”³⁷ The cartography of forces is where the Whiteheadian/Deleuzian theory of event can provide a preliminary basis for examining the event and the contemporary city. As Grosz also underscores in her book, Deleuze’s concepts are not meant to be directly applicable in the manner that many architects have attempted to translate them. However, the theory of the event, following Whitehead, that Deleuze embraces, with its relationship to contemporary theories of complexity and chaos, does provide important insights into the world, and the relationships between sensations, time, space, and structures. The expanded definition of the event provided above, can encompass the more conventional definition of the event as a distinctive happening, one that can contribute to a narrative. The narrative is a structured sequence (not necessarily chronological) of events that occur in time and space, and provides an individual event with a larger structure into which it can be placed. Clearly, Whitehead and Deleuze present a more complex concept of the event. The broader definition they embrace could include narrative structures, but also embraces the entire range of phenomena in space and time, and the impact events have on prehending bodies, in effect it is a unified theory of the event.

A city exists as a complex structure within a larger order of events, a structure that encompasses and creates events at all levels. The emphasis on the creative, or generative, aspect of events, informs both Whitehead's and Deleuze's work. From the rather difficult definition provided above, we can begin to develop a number of preliminary concepts that can provide an approach to the contemporary city. Firstly, the work of Whitehead and Deleuze provides an expanded idea of what an event is. Events occur in space and time, and affirm the complexity of life as a constantly changing condition. The emphasis both authors place on the creation of new events is both affirmative and productive. The definition also gets to the immense complexity of experience, from the fleeting sensation of a smell to the enduring presence of an architectural monument. The notion of intensity also plays into this, when the city is understood as a ever-changing network of intensities. As the statement from Deleuze above regarding singularity attests, the event can also arise out of an unusual coalescing of forces that produce something like a bottleneck, a point of fusion, or a moment of joy. Here the connection to the operations of a city becomes more explicit, in that unlike the normative definition of the event that emphasizes an agent, or actor, and an object or space, the Whiteheadian/Deleuzian formulation implies a prehending body, however, not necessarily as the active component. There is also a deep interrelationship between events and objects, what Whitehead terms "ingression," whether sensed or physical, and events, and that an object is an event and embodies events is a beneficial formulation for architects and urbanists. Contemporary cities, as one expect, produce an infinite range of events on all levels, most of which, like traffic patterns, correspond with the structure of the city as an immense technical and social construct.

³⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT

Secondly, how events interact is an important aspect of this theory. Given the emphasis on becoming, and an ever-changing and pluralistic world, made by Whitehead and Deleuze, the event is a central concept in their work. Events are interrelated, often interpenetrating one another. The interconnection of events in time and space means that the contemporary city provides a useful model for describing the complexity of events. In a public park, the greenness of the space is an event, as are all the environmental aspects, whether wind, sun, seasons, time of day/night, and/or smells. All of the individual elements that comprise the park are events, these exist in time so are constantly changing, while retaining an enduring dimension. The use of the park and its larger context are also events. All of this means that in space and time, a complex set of forces are continuously creating and shifting the nature of the park. Occasionally a set of conditions arise that establish a new set of relationships, intensities, or possibilities. Events establish the park in time and space, affirming its position in a wide range of other forces; it is a living construct. Here, the biological analogies that resonate in Deleuze's work in particular, are also affirmed. Events create a shifting web of inter-connectivity that hold together structures, and demonstrate the aliveness of a structure; events generate more events. According to Whitehead, events also create patterns,³⁸ these affirm the aspect of becoming, or that the world is an organism.

Thirdly, because of their preoccupation with becoming, Whitehead and Deleuze emphasize process, innovation, and plurality. The ever-changing nature of events, leads to the production of new events, therefore, there is a creative, or compositional aspect to the structure of events. A city is comprised of an infinite multitude of events that have occurred and are about to occur;

Press, 2001). p. 60.

most are banal, many are new. A sudden convergence of forces, or events, creates a new event, a sensation, feeling, or structure. Unlike narratology, there is not necessarily a story into which the event fits. Events, for Whitehead and Deleuze, affirm a greater order, they both use organisms as the basis for understanding our perceptions of the world. Whitehead, in particular, against mechanistic and causal models of science developed a “philosophy of organism.”³⁹ This provides a potential basis for examining cities as analogous to organisms, or ecological structures.

Returning to the four-part definition of the event outlined above, we can make the following observations. Firstly, events are a product of time and space, events occur in a temporal and spatial field; events generate more events. Secondly, events have intensions, or intrinsic qualities; they belong to all aspects of experience from the most ephemeral to the most enduring. The emphasis on creativity in both the work of Deleuze and Whitehead, means that events importantly arise from the convergence of forces that create innovation. The question of intensify provides intriguing possibilities for those examining structures such as the contemporary city, as the contemporary city has typically been resistant to conventional methods of analysis. Thirdly, events are public and move to a private prehending body, the creative individual is affected. Here the prehending agent, whether human or not, is fully embedded in events. Fourthly, the important interpenetration of events and objects, the notion of “ingression” addresses questions of duration and permanence. This is of particular interest to architects and urbanists who tend to understand a more oppositional relationship between structure and space, or material and function.

³⁸ See Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, p. 165.

The ever-changing patterns of events means that structures can have a harmonic or musical dimension; this departs from the literary or historic aspect of the more conventional definition. This unified theory of event overcomes dualism, and encompasses space, time, material, properties of all events, along with the interrelation between events and those who experience them. Ultimately, continuously changing patterns of events emerge that affirm the “ontological realization of the...infinite power of Life....there is no contradiction between the limitless of becoming and the singularity of the event.”⁴⁰ As Badiou points out, in his first axiom, Deleuze’s conception of the event encompasses a general ontology or “infinite power of Life,” for Whitehead the full complexity of nature. This effort to create an all encompassing theory of event, means that all that occurs in space, whether in long or short duration, a sensation, or a structure are events.

The fourth Deleuzian axiom that Badiou identifies, addresses the notion that the event “composes a life somewhat as a musical composition is organized by a theme.”⁴¹ This resonates with the first axiom, arguing that events have deeper implications beyond the narrative, structural, or geometrical. The reference to music, implies that events have a musical potential that resonates with the infinite variety of events occurring at all levels of the world, that there are structures that link all events together. Whitehead also touches on the notion of rhythm in the final chapter of his text *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*. A number of urban theorists, including Henri Lefebvre, also address rhythm, music, and the city. In a passage that resonates with Whitehead and Deleuze, Mumford writes:

³⁹ See “Whitehead, Alfred North” in *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1979), pp. 345-46.

By the diversity of its time-structures, the city in part escapes the tyranny of a single present, and the monotony of a future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past.

Through its complex orchestration of time and space, no less than through the social division of labor, life in the city takes on the character of a symphony....⁴²

The notion that contemporary cities are ever-changing harmonic or musical structures composed by infinite patterns of events seems overwhelming, and yet against current reductivist strategies employed by design professionals, planners, politicians, and engineers it provides an optimistic and radically different approach to examining contemporary cities. To conceive of cities as unified totalities also provides a means for understanding contemporary cities as ecological entities, structures that resonate with the world.

⁴⁰ Badiou, "The Event in Deleuze," p. 38.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴² Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, p. 4.