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Problematizing Disciplinarity, Transdisciplinary Problematics

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Abstract

This article situates current debates about transdisciplinarity within the deeper history of academic disciplinarity, in its difference from the notions of inter- and multi-disciplinarity. It offers a brief typology and history of established conceptions of transdisciplinarity within science and technology studies. It then goes on to raise the question of the conceptual structure of transdisciplinary generality in the humanities, with respect to the incorporation of the 19th- and 20th-century German and French philosophical traditions into the anglophone humanities, under the name of 'theory'. It identifies two distinct – dialectical and anti-dialectical, or dialectical and transversal – transdisciplinary trajectories. It locates the various contributions to the special issue of which it is the introduction within this conceptual field, drawing attention to the distinct contribution of the French debates about structuralism and its aftermath – those by Serres, Foucault, Derrida, Guattari and Latour, in particular. It concludes with an appendix on Foucault's place within current debates about disciplinarity and academic disciplines.

Keywords

dialectical, disciplinarity, generalization, humanities, philosophy, theory, transdisciplinarity, transversality

Disputes about the nature, borders and rationales of academic disciplines have a history as long as the disciplines themselves. Views differ as to how far back the genealogy of today's disciplines may most meaningfully be traced. The general consensus remains the mid-19th century, but a case for the 'long' 18th century can also be made (Valenza, 2009), with the late medieval university and the seven liberal arts (Kelley, 1997), or even the beginnings of the classical tradition – at least with respect to the

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humanities – being cited in reaction against excessively 'discontinuous' histories of thought and intellectual practices. Which option one finds most convincing will depend upon the formulation of the problem of disciplinarity, within the present, from which one sets out. Yet whichever genealogy one adopts, it is increasingly clear that the history of intellectual disciplines is longer, more differentiated and more 'indisciplined' than has conventionally been presented in the stories that disciplines have told about themselves (Graham et al., 1983; Schaffer, 2013). However indisciplined the disciplines may always have been, though, few would dispute the fact that there has been a qualitative shift in the character of debates about disciplinarity, in relations between academic disciplines, and within disciplines themselves in European and North American universities since the mid-1960s; or that these developments have been associated with the most creative and far-reaching transformations of intellectual practices in the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities alike. Very few of the most important works in the area of 'theory, culture and society', for example, over the last 50 years, are 'disciplinary' in character, or representative of the disciplinary training of their authors.

Disciplinarity has become problematic in multiple and contested ways. What follows begins with a schematization of this process in terms of the multiplication of qualifying prefixes to which the term has been subjected in the course of these debates: inter-, multi-, trans-, de-, anti-, in-, meta- and post-. It proceeds – via a short history of transdisciplinarity, and an account of the distinctive conceptual structures produced by the transposition of the concept into the context of the humanities – to outline the two main and opposed philosophical traditions that have engaged with transdisciplinarity as the necessary consequence of the critique of philosophy itself. In each instance, it is attention to the practical bases of theoretical problems that leads to a transformation in disciplinary self-consciousness attendant upon transformations in the formulations of the problems themselves. The articles that follow in this special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* reconstruct or represent the varying transdisciplinary problematics that structure the writings of a series of main figures in the structuralist, anti-dialectical and anti-humanist strand of French thought: Serres, Foucault, Derrida, Althusser, Guattari and Latour. They are succeeded by three anglophone case studies of transdisciplinary relations: in Feminist Theory, Gender Studies and Psychosocial Studies.

Disciplinarity and Its Prefixes

The main change in the nexus of disciplines, since the 1960s, has involved an intensification of interest in, and a proliferation of proposals for, *interdisciplinarity* and *multidisciplinarity*, of various kinds. The first of

these terms derives from the period between the world wars (Stills, 1986: 17–18), the second from shortly after the Second World War. Indeed, by 1939, 'interdisciplinarity' was apparently already being decried as 'modish and passé' (Schaffer, 2013: 60, citing Frank, 1988: 94) – as 'transdisciplinarity' is now (Lawrence and Després, 2004: 397; Mittelstrass, 2011: 329), despite the insistence on its 'pristine charm' ('not yet corrupted by time') by one of its main proponents, as recently as the mid-1990s (Nicolescu, 2002 [1996]: 1). Since the 1970s, the discourse of disciplines has become increasingly and successively differentiated and theoretically reflexive, with the introduction not only of the concept of *transdisciplinarity* – initially associated with the application of systems theory to educational policy and child development (Jantsch, 1970, 1972; Piaget, 1972) – but also of *anti-disciplinarity* (associated with the academic radicalism of the 1980s – Mowitt, 1992), *indisciplines* (Mitchell, 1995, 2009), *antidisciplines* (Pickering, 1993, 2013), *postdisciplines* – or at least, postdisciplinary academic practices (Messer-Davidow et al., 1993: 397–461; Nelson and Gaonkar, 1996b: 15) – and *de-disciplinarization* (Prost, 2009: 749–50; cf. Foucault, 1980: 39, quoted in Schaeffer, 2013: 63).[1]

The prehistory of the project from which the articles in this issue are an outcome further contributed to this categorial proliferation with the addition of *hegemonic disciplinarity* (Osborne, 2011a).[2] In the course of the project itself, however, we have come increasingly to think of *meta-disciplinarity* – understood as an overarching disciplinary function produced by the failure of certain supra-disciplinary dynamics to escape the bordered and hierarchically organized intellectual forms of an academic discipline – as the main obstacle to the production of genuinely transdisciplinary conceptual constructions in the humanities.[3] These are *re-disciplinarizing* dynamics, which subject de-disciplinarizing initiatives to existing institutional and conceptual forms, respectively. 'English' (or, in the USA, Comparative Literature) and Geography are perhaps the best examples of the former, hegemonic form, incorporating whole hosts of new theoretical developments from without into radically expanded versions of their former selves. Structuralism is the exemplary case of the latter, insofar as it came to function as a 'new transcendental philosophy' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 174) and thereby, ultimately, restored in novel form precisely that theoretical primacy of philosophy over the sciences that it was initially pitted against. (Three of the articles in the current issue – Balibar, Cunningham, Alliez – address that issue directly.)

Two things in particular may be noted about this terminologically proliferating history of disciplinary self-reflections. First, there is a strong tendency in the use of these labels to produce a Whig historiography of disciplinarity, whereby historically successive forms appear necessarily superior to, or more progressive than, earlier ones, by virtue of the relative chronological closeness to the present

of their moments of emergence and consolidation alone. *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, for example, progresses from 'Knowledge Interdisciplined', via 'Institutionalizing Interdisciplinarity', to 'Knowledge Transdisciplined', as its concluding part (Frodeman et al., 2010: Parts 3–5) – 'Institutionalizing Transdisciplinarity' presumably being delegated to the avant-garde of handbooks of transdisciplinarity (such as Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008a). 'Rethinking interdisciplinarity' (Sperber, Nowotny et al., 2003–4) over the last decade, at least in the sciences, has thus generally required some kind of engagement with the discourses and institutionalized frameworks of self-consciously transdisciplinary research, even if only – like Barry and Born – to disavow the distinction in the act of acknowledging it.[4] There is certainly a problem here, insofar as the historicist naturalization of the history of forms of disciplinarity overdetermines critical discourse in advance, bracketting off the possibility of a critical approach to historical developments themselves. On the other hand, the weight of broader socio-economic and institutional determinations in the history of both academic disciplines and the debates about them – and there is a disjunction there – must be acknowledged, if an effective critical discourse about disciplinarity is to be produced. There is a tension here between sociological and epistemological perspectives, which is rarely confronted directly in the literature.

Nonetheless – and this is the second feature of the recent literature – there is a growing acknowledgement of the internal complexity of the concept of an academic discipline, with often discrete intellectual, institutional and political aspects. It is useful at this point to recall something of the historical semantics of 'discipline'. Discipline (from the Latin, *disciplina*) pertains to the disciple: its context is the master/pupil relationship. 'Disciplines discipline disciples' (Barry and Born, 2013a: 1). Disciplines are institutional forms for the generational transmission of intellectual practices – traditions handed down and also therefore, of course, betrayed. (Betrayal is one of the meanings of *traditio*.) In this respect, in the medieval university, disciplines (as the practice of a disciple or scholar) was *opposed* to doctrine – or what we would now call 'theory' – which was the property of a doctor or teacher; although the two were nonetheless bound together, since it was doctrinal/theoretical content that the disciples/scholars studied and disseminated (cf. Prost, 2009: 750–51, citing Shumway and Messer-Davidow, 1991: 202). This is not unconnected to the disruptive role played by 'theory' in the transformation of disciplines in the anglophone humanities and social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s.

This primary meaning of discipline as subjection to an authoritative set of practical norms, which impose order on the mind and body – and of self-discipline as the cultivation of habits and forms of care of the self (scholarship as a discipline of the self) – is in tension with the more recent use of the term to refer to those departments of knowledge, academic

subjects, methods and fields of study that became the basis of the departmental structure of the modern university (Appadurai, 1996: 30–31).[5]
This departmental definition of disciplines according to subject matter and methods of study displaced the authority of the individual doctor, teacher or professor onto the rules governing the production, reproduction and socialization of knowledge: in particular, those of the professional association and the academic journal, which came, in turn, to regulate the market in academic jobs (Post, 1999: 752–5). In the process, the departmental conception of discipline introduced a *disciplinary concept of research*, which, from a semantic standpoint, contradictorily seeks theoretical innovation through disciplinary practices. This is an effect of the condensation of the production of doctrine/theory (construed now, on a natural-scientific model, as 'research') into an expanded conception of disciplines, within the Enlightenment conception of the university as a domain of free inquiry (Kant, 1996 [1784], 1979 [1798]). Yet disciplinary structures play a relatively minor role in *fundamental* research in the natural sciences, where the general concept of 'science' (in its combined theoretical and experimental sense) and the pursuit of specific problems play the main role (Biagioli, 2009: 819–20; Mittelstrass, 2011: 330–31), often generating new disciplines. Indeed, it was precisely the generality of the concept of science, theoretically constituted via the philosophical sub-discipline of the epistemology of science, which was the motor of the transformation of a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences ('the human sciences') in France from the 1950s through to the 1970s, via the alternatively trans- and meta-disciplinary ('doctrinal') concept of 'structure'. Transposed into the context of the humanities and social studies, this concept of science posed new problems for disciplinarity, to which Guattari's development of a 'French' concept of 'transdisciplinarity as transversality' was perhaps the most innovative response (see the text by Guattari, and the introduction to it by Goffey, in this issue). The transformative dynamic of this concept of science – radicalized by its translation into an anglophone context to which it was initially quite 'foreign', and mediated by different national contexts – was then repeated in different ways in the anglophone humanities, from the 1970s onwards.

In the institutional context of the humanities, in universities structured by departments, 'research' is an ambiguous category, since it is at once opposed to and contains 'scholarship' in an unstable and untheorized manner.[6] Research in the humanities, one might say, is a post-Enlightenment production of doctrine, contradictorily subject to, on the one hand, the relativity of belief necessary to free inquiry and, on the other, institutionalized forms of disciplinary procedures, to which it must simultaneously conform (in order to be recognized) and transgress, in order to be original or 'innovative' – hence, it must not transgress them

too flagrantly. In this latter respect, disciplines function as constraints on research, as 'limits to discovery' (Mittelstrass, 2011: 330). Despite these contradictions, however, the departmental definition of the disciplines remains strong because the department is a highly effective self-reproducing institutional machine for training and hiring academics and providing the means of career advancement. Nonetheless, under conditions of increasing research intensity, there is an growing tension between the employment of academics and the organization of teaching in the disciplinary department, on the one hand, and the internal intellectual dictates, organization and funding of research, on the other.[7] The primary disciplinary function of constraint appears to contradict the intellectual function of free inquiry on which the self-image of the modern research university is based. Hence the rhetorical political progressivism of anti-, in-, de-, inter- and transdisciplinarities in academic politics since the 1960s, in which academic freedom functions metonymically for political freedom and the humanities have come to appear as the metonym for the liberal cultural function of the university itself. In Arjun Appadurai's words:

> while many colleges and universities have increasingly become factories for specialized research, applied interest, and professional credentializing, the humanities have become the critical site for the idea that the University is also about thought and reflection, cultivation and conscience, disinterest and abstraction, literacy and cosmopolitanism. (Appadurai, 1996: 27)

And within the humanities, one might add, the inherent 'uselessness' or non-'vocational' status of philosophy has made it the symbolic representative of the intellectual freedom of the humanities itself. (Non-vocational, that is, in the recent instrumental-economic sense of 'vocation', rather than in its original religious one.)

The practical humanism of this line of thought stands in uneasy relation to the anti-humanism of the theoretical resources with which it is often pursued – a gap over which a bridge named 'Foucault' is most frequently cast.[8] But whatever one makes of that tension (and it can certainly be a productive one, as well as a source of incoherence), 'indiscipline' about disciplines has undoubtedly become a marker of the defence of the broader cultural function of universities – as well as a feature of advanced research organizations – under the conditions of a departmentally structured disciplinary system that has remained largely unchanged for over a hundred years (Abbott, 2001: 122 – see also Becher, 1989). Indeed, for some in the humanities there is a necessary relation between the two, embodied in a conception of cultural studies as involving 'a deep concern with how objects, discourses and practices construct possibilities for and constraints on citizenship', and a consequent

commitment 'to the ongoing critique of disciplinarity and to the redef-inition and recombination of disciplines in response to new or newly recognized historical realities' (Nelson and Gaonkar, 1996b: 7, 14; see also, Hall, 1990). The emphasis on citizenship as the focal point of pol-itical concern comes out of the North American context, although one can imagine a possible European equivalent (Balibar, 2004); a UK one is harder to envisage. It has the virtue of drawing attention to the fact that any such political-intellectual project of ongoing disciplinary critique and reorganization 'violates . . . the unwritten and unsigned pact post World War II disciplines made with state power' in the USA (Nelson and Gaonkar, 1996b: 2), and with US foreign policy in particular. When it comes to the supra-disciplinary dynamics of the organization of research, the question of the state and the political rationale of research cannot be avoided.

It is in order to escape the constraints of disciplines on research, as 'limits to discovery', rather than as limits to freedom, that research has *de facto* increasingly become organized in supradisciplinary and often peri-odically organized project-based centres, and especially, more recently, in policy-based, transnational, multi- and aspiringly transdisciplinary research organizations. It is in this context that the concept of transdis-ciplinarity emerged and developed, as a product of methodological self-reflection on new research processes. Before we come to the rather different approach to the concept of transdisciplinarity represented by the articles in this issue, it will be useful to schematize the main stages of the established history of the concept to date.

Transdisciplinarity: A Brief History

In the course of its short, less-than-50-year history, we can trace three main and two secondary discourses about transdisciplinarity in the sci-ences. The main ones are: (i) a systems-theoretical approach to producing 'an integral education/innovation system' (Jantsch, 1970: 7; Kim, 1998; Somerville and Rapport, 2000); (ii) a sociological science-policy approach to new forms of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny et al., 2001; Nowotny, 2003); and (iii) a literature about research methodology in the collaborative solution of 'life-world' prob-lems of environmental sustainability and health (Thompson Klein et al., 2001; Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn, 2007; Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008), of which Guattari's transdisciplinary initiatives may be considered a deviant forerunner (Goffey, 2015). The secondary discourses are: (iv) a cosmo-logical conception of transdisciplinary knowledge, based on a notion of 'levels of reality' derived from quantum physics (Nicolescu, 2002, 2008); and (v) a periodizing discourse in the philosophy of science, which is in various respects also postdisciplinary (Balsiger, 2004; Biagioli, 2009; Mittelstrass, 2011 – see also Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993).

All of these discourses are historically, and especially institutionally, closely related, but they nonetheless have distinct intellectual profiles. It was the passing institutional dominance of the fourth, cosmological conception from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, as a result of UNESCO's co-sponsoring of large international events with Nicolescu's Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires (CIRET), leading to the First World Congress in Transdisciplinarity in 1994, for example, that to a significant extent discredited the concept of transdisciplinarity within science studies, as tending towards a mytho-poetic discourse on the unity of nature. In fact, sponsorship by large international organizations has been central to the propagation of the discourse of transdisciplinarity from the outset (its 'founding' moment in the OECD meeting in Nice in 1970), and in the late 1990s Yersu Kim, Director of the Division of Philosophy and Ethics at UNESCO, went so far as to declare UNESCO itself 'a transdisciplinary organization' (Kim, 1998: 3). This highlights the policy-based managerial imperative behind the aspiration for the production of new forms of integral knowledge (Somerville and Rapport, 2000), and the dangers of overly abstract, typological epistemological classifications and models, along with insufficiently politically examined practical presuppositions. These are certainly weaknesses from which the literature suffers, as a whole, but especially in its more programmatical declarations. (The International Congresses of Transdisciplinarity are prone to concluding Declarations.) It was not until Gibbons et al.'s *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994) that the concept of transdisciplinarity acquired a more concrete, conceptually and empirically grounded historical status as a constituent element in what they called 'Mode 2 knowledge production'.

Whereas the systems-theoretical literature on transdisciplinarity tends towards a meta-disciplinary form of supra-disciplinarity, embodied in the idea of 'a common system of axioms for a set of disciplines' (the generic definition adopted by the First OECD International Conference on Interdisciplinary Research and Education), the second main discourse, the sociological literature in science policy, focuses on large-scale social problems – mainly generated by environmental factors associated with globalization – viewed as amenable to scientific solutions. The specifically 'transdisciplinary' aspect of the research process here derives from its basis in problems that are initially identified and formulated externally to the scientific process itself and cannot be adequately addressed by disciplinary knowledges, their simple combination in multi-disciplinary units, or interdisciplinary interactions (see Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008b). Transdisciplinarity is thus associated here – and this is the core of its dominant institutional reality – with a form of knowledge production that has its basis in broader social processes to which it is ultimately responsible, and from which it cannot ultimately be disengaged. This is a specifically European conception to the extent to which it has as its

historical presupposition a certain kind of social-democratic, 'educational' welfare state, of which it represents a technocratic variant. Whereas the systems-theoretical version of transdisciplinarity, and its cosmological (spiritual and ethicist) variant, is institutionally associated with UNESCO, the sociological-science-policy version is associated with European Union science policy, and the European Research Council in particular (Helga Nowotny was the President of the European Research Council [ERC], 2010–2013), along with the Swiss National Science Foundation (which sponsors a Swiss Transdisciplinarity Award) and the Swiss Academy of Arts and Sciences (Thompson Klein et al., 2001; Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn, 2007).[9]

Transdisciplinarity is sometimes treated as if it is simply the same thing as Mode 2 knowledge production, but it is actually only one of the latter's five main features, albeit a result of its first distinguishing characteristic: namely, that this is a form of knowledge that is *produced in contexts of application*, and therefore cannot be classified according to a distinction between basic and applied research, where 'basic' research is understood (perhaps erroneously) to be disciplinary in orientation. As a result, such knowledge is taken to be 'heterogeneous' in its institutional origins, and to involve a multiplicity of social actors beyond universities (private corporations, think-tanks, hospitals, charities, etc.). Fourth, such knowledge is consequently understood to be reflexive with regard to social accountability (traceable back to its starting point in societal needs and the multiplicity of its social 'stakeholders'). Hence, finally, it is subject to novel types of quality control, involving extra-scientific social criteria, including public participation. This is very much a speculative extrapolation of a tendentially emerging sociology of technoscience, with a strongly prescriptive social-democratic content, ideologically standing out against – while nonetheless practically mediating – the neoliberal corporate tide of the 1990s. It is addressed to governments, supranational research organizations and the general public, and proposes a vision of society ('the knowledge society') as much as, if not more than, of science itself. This latter aspect was extended in the subsequent volume, *Re-thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty* (Nowotny et al., 2001), which sets out from the thesis of the 'scientification of society'. Central to this notion is the idea (borrowed from Bruno Latour) of a transition from a 'culture of science' to a 'culture of research', in which 'Science is certainty; research is uncertainty' (Nowotny et al., 2001: 2–3). This polemical distinction between 'science' and 'research', presaging a new conception of 'science *as* research', leads into the third, most recent main discourse on transdisciplinarity, which focuses on the detailed methodologies of collaborative research in solving both fundamental intra-scientific problems (Biagioli, 2009; Mittelstrass, 2011) and 'life-world' societal problems, largely to do with environmental sustainability and health. It is in line here with the

trajectory of development theory itself. By the 1990s, the post-Second World War development paradigm of modernization theory (closely tied to postwar US foreign policy) had begun to be displaced (or at least accompanied) within international organizations by a human rights-based concept of 'sustainable development'.

This practically-oriented literature – of which the Guattari–Latour line is a more philosophically reflective, hyper-theoretical version (see Alliez in this issue) – is primarily made up of methodological reflection on detailed transdisciplinary case studies; and it is related to the secondary, periodizing discourse in the philosophy of science (the last of the five established discourses on transdisciplinarity identified here). This discourse within the philosophy of science has two main components: first, a framing emphasis on the non-disciplinary and problem-based character of the concept of science; and second, a strong sense of the redundancy of the Kuhnian concept of a paradigm, and hence of the idea of 'normal science' of which it is a part. The stress on research process is in line with a shift within the philosophy of science away from Kuhn's dualism of revolutionary and normal science, towards Lakatos's concept of research programmes (Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970); while the sense of contextual contingency and methodological flexibility aligns transdisciplinary practices with the methodological 'anarchism' of Feyerabend's 'anything goes' (Balsiger, 2004; Feyerabend, 1978a [1975], 1978b). More closely connected to the transdisciplinary problematic itself is the concept of 'post-normal science' developed by Funtowicz and Ravetz in the context of ecological economics, which centres on conditions of 'system uncertainty' and the notion of high 'decision stakes', which require 'extended peer communities'. The crossing of disciplinary boundaries is construed within this literature less in terms of specific sets of transformative or constructive exchanges than as a dissolution of disciplinary frameworks as such. Ironically, it is precisely this conception of a dissolution of existing disciplinary frameworks that raises the spectre of re-disciplinarization via the new 'discipline' (in its original sense) of a methodologically standardized transdisciplinarity.

Concentration on these more concrete aspects of policy-oriented collaborative research processes, in a greater variety of contexts, has disengaged the concept of transdisciplinarity from any necessary relationship to the other features of Mode 2 knowledge production, and made it a self-contained methodological topic.[10] And there is a large and still growing, increasingly detailed literature about it in journals such as *Science and Public Policy*, *Research Policy*, *Higher Education* and *Futures*. The general framework of these debates, however, continues to be something like a more generic and less politicized version of Mode 2 knowledge production (see, for example, Russell et al., 2008), with contributors making more fine-grained distinctions only within particular areas (see, for example, Mobjörk, 2010; Jahn et al., 2012).

The overwhelmingly common feature, both epistemologically and politically, is an instrumental, technocratic humanism.

The concept of problem-solving upon which this emergent conceptual consensus is based centres upon *policy-based* reformulations of life-world problems, which are construed in such a way as to be amenable to *technological* and other instrumental solutions (cf. Osborne, 2011a: 16). The established discourse of transdisciplinarity is thus overwhelmingly *positive* and *organizational*; it is a discourse of the *state*, albeit often in practice of state-like entities on a supranational scale, which lack the means of programmatic enforcement of the classical nation-state. It nonetheless presumes state agency, or at least state-stimulated agency, as the bearer of its practical rationality. In this respect, it has lost the more radical socio-political content associated with many of the interdisciplinary initiatives in the 1970s and '80s. In particular, it requires that one imagine as the agency of science policy a 'better', educational, social-democratic welfare state. In reality, however, European states are in the process of disimbursing themselves of a variety of knowledge-producing and educational functions (this is the neoliberal aspect of 'heterogeneity'), in the name of getting closer to 'worldly' problems. ('The world has problems, but universities have departments', in Brewer's much-quoted phrase – Brewer, 1999: 328). Nonetheless, at the same time, these states want to maintain control over the form of the process of disimbursement, a form of control that is still legitimized, classically, via the notion of 'the public interest' (this is their residual statist aspect: neoliberal statism) – a public interest that the state nonetheless declares itself impotent to fulfil.

It is interesting in this regard that when Hessels and van Lente did a quantitative citational analysis of seven diagnoses of the current state of scientific knowledge production offering themselves as alternatives to the framework of Mode 2 knowledge production, the most cited was that of 'academic capitalism' (Hessels and van Lente, 2008: 743 – the emblematic text was Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This directly contradicts the optimistic democratic-statist presentation of the normative dimension of public scientific accountability in much recent literature on transdisciplinarity, which projects a passing beyond consultation, towards local participation in problem definition. Such discourses tend to abstract from both the politics and the historical context of problem definitions, in favour of idealized democratic models, supported by a small number of highly localized (and dubiously generalizable) examples. This is related to an almost complete lack of fundamental theoretical work on the *concept of a problem*. Is a problem something that requires the positing of practical solutions, or is a problem, primarily, something that defines a shared field of inquiry (a problematic), the investigation of which may take radically unexpected turns, leading to a reproblematization – critical or otherwise – of the original issue?[11] This lack of theoretical work on the concept of a problem is a symptom of an exclusive focus on knowledge

production as 'research process' to the neglect of concepts: concept construction and theory construction. The established literature on transdisciplinarity lacks an account of the internal dynamics of specifically transdisciplinary concepts – or concepts in their transdisciplinary functioning – beyond the idea that they address problems rather than disciplinary objects. And it has no developed concept of a problem. Ironically, it thus shows little interest in how concepts with sufficient generality to address basic societal problems actually function transdisciplinarily 'across' the disciplinary terrains from which they draw, linking the discourses of different disciplines together through non-disciplinary problems, and *transforming the meaning of their basic concepts*, in a manner quite different from any merely interdisciplinary engagements.

Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities

The project of which this issue is a part takes a different approach to transdisciplinarity, in several respects. First, it sets out from a different starting place: those theoretical developments in the anglophone humanities since the 1970s that are based in the reception of the French and German theory of the 1960s and after. These are theoretical forms, we propose, that are in one way or another transdisciplinary in character. The great books of European theory in the second half of the 20th century all exhibit hitherto unexamined transdisciplinary conceptual dynamics. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1962), Foucault's *Words and Things* (1966 – translated as *The Order of Things*), Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967), Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972, 1980), Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) and Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1983) – to name only a selection – are books that cross disciplines with a confidence and facility that belie the complexity of the exchanges between the different knowledges out of which they are constructed, in widely differing and often unstated ways (cf. Osborne, 2011a: 15). Nearly all of these texts either predate the established discourse on transdisciplinarity, with its myth of origin in Nice in 1970, or were produced independently of it, although the questioning of disciplinarity was very much a part of their theoretical self-consciousnesses. Meanwhile, their anglophone reception took place in a series of disciplinarily specific contexts (especially literary studies), which, while they acknowledged – indeed, sought out – the disciplinarily disruptive and transformative forces of these texts, were nonetheless largely unconcerned to theorize these disciplinary dynamics, immanently, other than in terms of a libertarian anti-disciplinarianism,

for which the simple word 'theory' was the marker (Mowitt, 1992; Cusset, 2008 [2003]; Osborne, 2011b: 19–26).

The disciplinarily *specific* dynamics of the radical theoretical generalities of these texts was thus obscured. In retrospect, however, this unconsciousness of the transdisciplinary structures of 'theory' may be seen to have played a crucial role in the *transnationalization* of intellectual traditions in Europe and beyond, since it facilitated its *translational* role in the relative de-nationalization of what Derrida called 'philosophical nationalities' (Derrida, 1982 [1968]: 111; see also Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 1–80). 'Theory', we might say, was the unconscious historical anticipation of the effect of globalization on intellectual life. National intellectual cultures, today, are post-national articulations of specific transnationalizing transdisciplinarities; hence the reactive ideological fervour of nationalisms, political and intellectual (cf. Osborne and Alliez, 2013: 8).[12]

Gibbons et al.'s *The New Production of Knowledge* addresses 'The Case of the Humanities' in Chapter 4. It is claimed there not only that 'many of the developments of Mode 2 can also be found in the humanities', but that they are 'perhaps more typical of the *traditional* humanities than they are of the natural and many of the social sciences'. Indeed, they claim, transdisciplinarity, in particular, is 'endemic' (Gibbons et al., 1994: 90–93, emphasis added). These claims place the humanities at the forefront of Mode 2 knowledge production, despite their more or less complete absence from the literature, other than in this short and highly schematic overview itself.[13] However, on closer examination they are less than convincing. This is, first, because the humanities are taken to be largely only 'serendipitously' Mode 2, on the grounds that their historical 'resistance to scientification' (Romanticism) was a resistance to Mode 1 knowledge production in the sciences. Secondly, 'the shape of trandisciplinarity' here is taken to be no more than a 'growing fuzziness of disciplinary boundaries'. Yet, as is well known, recognition of the fuzziness of boundaries is an effect of precisely the kind of over-rigid and hierarchical 'disciplinary boundary work' that is a primary characteristic of Mode 1 knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994: 93, 106). The reduction of transdisciplinarity to 'fuzziness' of disciplinary boundaries is a serious intellectual collapse. As the reference to the 'traditional' humanities shows, along with the corresponding emphasis on the hermeneutical issues of 'contextualization and meaning', no account is taken here of the fundamental transformations in the anglophone humanities since the 1970s; of their theoretical and purportedly 'scientific' nature; or of their sources in French and German philosophy and critical theory. Yet it is precisely these developments that introduced radical forms of transdisciplinary conceptual functioning into the humanities.

Prior to these developments, and the humanities centres in research universities in the USA to which they gave rise, along with the emergence and disciplinary dissemination of cultural studies in the UK, USA and

Australia, there had been little theoretical debate in the English-speaking world about the unity or epistemological basis of the disciplines that had made up humanities' faculties since the founding of modern universities in the mid- to late-19th century. This unity had largely evolved empirically, taking the form of a series of modifications and additions to the Renaissance *studia humanitatis*, out of which, after Romanticism, 'history' and 'literature' emerged to become the dominant disciplines in the 20th-century humanities, displacing classics, law and an English-language philosophy that, in the course of the 20th century, largely retreated into a self-imposed analytical isolation.[14]

In methodological terms, the unity of humanities' disciplines was largely a negative one, deriving from their mutual difference from the experimentally defined natural sciences. The underlying positive correlate of this distinction in a difference between the natural and the human, with its (displaced theological) roots in Renaissance humanism, was given a transcendental legitimation in Germany in late 19th-century neo-Kantianism, in the difference between the Marburg and 'southwest' or Baden Schools, and in Dilthey's notion of the *Geisteswissenschaften* – a term he popularized, and a notion with which he is associated, but which was originally coined to translate the 'moral sciences' of David Hume and J.S. Mill (a rarely acknowledged lineage) into German. In the intellectual culture of British empiricism, the distinction tended to be simply taken for granted, whether celebrated (Matthew Arnold) or bemoaned (C.P. Snow's 'two cultures'). In this respect, it is ironic that it was primarily a French structuralist '*anti-humanist*' conception of the human sciences that revivified the anglophone 'humanities'. The contradictory convergence of this anti-humanist movement with the introduction of an anthropological conception of culture into literary studies in the Hogart/Williams strand of cultural studies in Britain was subsequently mediated by the critical transformation and 'post-humanist' extension of anthropology itself, including crucially, empirically, into science studies. Latourian/Callonian actor-network theory is the end product of that trajectory (see Latour, 2005).[15]

What is usually meant by the 'anglophone humanities since the 1960s' is a disciplinary matrix that is unified by the incorporation through translation of European – predominantly French – theoretical texts. And the main manner in which its previous disciplinary formation was problematized, at a structural level, was via a new generic notion of 'science', and its critical aftermath (often misleadingly labelled 'post-structuralism'), in particular. While in Germany, the broadly overlapping *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Kulturwissenschaften* (the term preferred by the southwest neo-Kantians) were considered to be methodologically distinct from the natural sciences by virtue of the transcendental constitution of their object domains, both Hume's conception of 'moral sciences' (such as Adam Smith's political economy) and Comte's positive

social philosophy modelled themselves, methodologically, on the natural sciences – despite the culmination of Comte's thought in a 'religion of humanity'. In this respect, it has always been a function of the social or human sciences in Britain and France to act as a problematizing go-between, between the humanities and modern concepts of science. Whilst initially the social sciences tended to be located *within* the humanities, differentiated there from 'the arts', they have become increasingly independent, especially in the eyes of research councils, despite the continuing uncertainty about their epistemological status. (Philosophy of the social sciences hardly exists as a sub-discipline of the philosophy of science, these days – an effect, perhaps, of its previous connections to the Marxist tradition.) In this respect, there is actually a much closer affinity between French 'theory' and Anglo-American scientific and technological intellectual culture than there is between the latter and the formation of German critical theory and literary criticism out of the fragments of Marxism and its German idealist and Romantic philosophical ancestors.

Given the prioritization accorded to problem-definition in contexts of application within the model of Mode 2 knowledge production, one might have expected its approach to the humanities to have included more of an account of the way in which the life-world gives rise to humanities-specific problems, beyond those general questions of meaning and communication associated with the classical role of the humanities in the cultivation of the liberal self. To do that, however, would require stepping down from the standpoint of the state, conceived as the technocratic political representative of a national segment of humanity, to raise more political questions about different social subject positions, their competing socio-economic and cultural needs, and the forms of knowledge production associated with them – including the desire for freedom at a collective as well as an individual level. It is in this context that Guattari's writing on transdisciplinarity appears as something like a more radically social and political, ontologized version of the established discourse, which, furthermore, it largely anticipated.

The Introduction to the dossier on 'Trandisciplinarity in French Thought' that functioned as the pilot for the project of which this issue is a part opened with the confident declaration: 'The concept of transdisciplinarity is not part of the *explicit* discourse or self-consciousness of "French thought"' (Osborne, 2011a: 15, emphasis added). So we believed at the time. Subsequent investigation has revealed this to be a partial truth, at best. Philologically, we find the term in the work of both Michel Serres and Félix Guattari – samples of which we translate here (see Mercier and Goffey) – and it is in no way a merely philological occurrence. Guattari had begun to apply the principle of transversality to the relationship between disciplinary knowledges as early as 1965 in his organizational work with the Federation of Institutional Study

Groups and Research (FGERI) and the Centre for Institutional Study, Research and Training (CERFI). And the FGERI's journal, *Recherches*, founded in January 1966, explicitly promoted a radically cross-disciplinary programme (Dosse, 2010: 76–79). In fact, François Dosse recounts Jean Oury, the psychoanalyst and mentor to Guattari, telling him that François Tosquelles, the Catalan psychiatrist, 'talked about...transdisciplinarity' in the context of their early development of institutional analysis at the Saumery clinic between 1949 and 1953 (Dosse, 2010: 43) – although it seems highly unlikely that the term itself was used at that time. (There is no evidence of which I know that it was.) Nonetheless, there is a clear conceptually transdisciplinary trajectory there, running from the La Bordean institutional analysis of the mid-1960s, via the Institut Polytechnique de Philosophie at the University of Paris 8 (Vincennes) – a philosophy department that was effectively constituted as a part of left politics – to that undoubtedly transdisciplinary text, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972, 1980), and beyond. And it involved a quite different politics from the technocratic social democracy of the more recent, established conception: a post-Trotskyist, anti-authoritarian communist politics of groups, from the Left Opposition in France in the mid-1960s to the post-autonomia of the 1990s. This is a radical post-Sartrean version of the transdisciplinary implications of Marx's critique of philosophy, routed through the organizational analysis of institutional psychotherapy. This leads to the second of the main differences from established discourses of transdisciplinarity of the approach adopted in this project: the centrality of the question of the relationship of transdisciplinarity to philosophy, and the philosophical critique of disciplinary philosophy, in particular.

Transdisciplinarity and the Critique of Philosophy

If the literature on the mutual dependence of academic disciplines – beyond the hierarchical modeling of the structure of the university into faculties – only begins in earnest in the interwar period (1918–1939), in the wake of the founding of modern research universities and the critique of specialization, one powerful model of these relations nonetheless dates back to the early 19th century: the dialectical model of interdisciplinary research, which has its source in Hegel's idea of an *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. When Max Horkheimer took over the directorship of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in 1931, his inaugural address characterized 'the current intellectual situation' as one in which 'traditional disciplinary boundaries have been called into question and will remain unclear for the foreseeable future'. His response was to take up once again the task of Hegelian philosophy as modified by Marx's critique of Hegel – that is to say, by the critique of any

independent or 'self-sufficient' (*selbstständlich*) philosophy – and transform it into the research agenda of an interdisciplinary materialism, the 'ultimate aim' of which was 'the interpretation of the vicissitudes of human fate – the fate of humans not as mere individuals . . . but as members of a community'. The task, in other words, was to 'put a large empirical research apparatus in the service of socio-philosophical problems' (Horkheimer, 1993 [1931]: 1, 10).[16] The dialectical – that is to say, totalizing – form of presentation of the results of this interdisciplinary research appears here as itself the dialectical product of the critique of the idealism of philosophy as such. In Marx and Engels' words, in *The German Ideology*:

> When reality is depicted, philosophy as a self-sufficient (*selbstständlich*) branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At its best its place can only be taken by a summing up of the most general results, abstractions that arise from the observation of the historical development of men and women. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. . . . our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement – the real depiction – of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises . . . which only the study of the actual life-process and the activities of the individuals of each epoch will make evident. (Marx and Engels, 1970: 48, translation amended)

Marx and Engels famously left undetermined here the method of 'summing up the results', but Marx's own subsequent 'study of the actual life-process and the activities of the individuals' of capitalist societies, in *Capital*, authorized Horkheimer's modified – historically open-ended – return to a dialectical form of presentation: 'a continuous, dialectical penetration and development of philosophical theory and specialized scientific praxis'. 'Philosophical theory' here means both the reflective articulation of concepts constituted at the highest level of abstraction ('the most general results') and the formulation of questions corresponding to that level of abstraction: that is to say, the level of the social, and ultimately, the historical 'whole'.

> . . . the question today is to organize investigations stimulated by contemporary philosophical problems in which philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and psychologists are brought together in permanent collaboration.

These questions will not be definitively answered, as such, rather: 'these questions themselves become integrated into the empirical research process; their answers lie in the advance of objective knowledge, which itself affects the form of the questions' (Horkheimer, 1993 [1931]: 9–10). In other words, there is a reflexively iterative process of problem definition, investigation and reformulation, very much like that which structures today's self-consciously transdiscipinary research.[17] Retrospectively, this is a transdisciplinary, as well as a multi- and interdisciplinary, research agenda (all transdisciplinary research involves certain elements of multi- and interdisciplinary research) precisely because of the role of 'philosophical theory' in constituting the most general concepts, to which the most general social and historical problems – the pragmatic basis of the research agenda in social needs – correspond. This 'philosophical theory' (which is itself an interesting phrase) is not part of a disciplinary, in the sense of an autonomous or self-sufficient, philosophy. Philosophy may 'live on because the moment to realize it was missed', as the famous opening line of *Negative Dialectics* has it (Adorno, 1973 [1966]: 3), but it cannot live on in a purely or a strictly ('self-sufficiently') philosophical form. Nor, one might add, can it live on in a *purely negative* form either, without being reduced to the mere shadow of a false self-sufficiency. Rather, here it becomes the conceptual medium of transdisciplinarity, using the materials of the philosophical tradition as conceptual resources for transdisciplinary constructions.

Transdisciplinary concept-construction is a post- and proto-philosophical activity, in the wake of the critique of disciplinary philosophy's false self-sufficiency. On the model of Marx's critique of political economy, it gives socio-historical meaning to idealizing, abstract social forms of universality that were previously misrecognized as purely philosophical concepts: 'subject' and 'person', for example, the meaning of the generality of which must be produced trandisciplinarily, across the domains of philosophy, economics, law, anthropology, religious studies and psychoanalysis – to name only the main disciplinary instances. Transdisciplinary concepts acquire a philosophical *appearance* as the developing theoretical generality produced by their cross-disciplinary functioning approaches a total disciplinary universality; philosophical concepts acquire a transdisciplinary actuality to the extent that their empirical interpretation crosses a multiplicity of disciplines in a manner that reconstitutes them, as the relational product of these crossings.[18]

The main differences of Horkheimer's early project from current discourses of transdisciplinarity concern the central articulating role of 'philosophical theory' and the location of the social – and hence 'problems' – within the historical, philosophically construed. Established discourses of transdisciplinarity show little interest in questions of concept constitution, conceptual relations and conceptual critique. Rather, they displace relational issues onto questions about the organizational form of

the research process. On the other hand, in its materialist post-Hegelian role, dialectical logic is presented by Horkheimer as functioning as a kind of neutral medium of 'general scientificity' (there are shades of 'systems theory' here). Yet the totalizing project – however open-ended, and especially in its historical form – carries with it philosophical presuppositions of its own, which have to be argumentatively redeemed, in relation to the ongoing transdisciplinary totalization of knowledges. This is not the kind of argument that today's transdisciplinary researchers are likely to engage in, since it goes beyond the empirical criteria required by their model of knowledge. It was, however, the main point of contention in the argument between Sartre's existential post-Hegelianism and structuralism in postwar French thought. Structuralism appears there as a new and non-dialectical model of general scientificity. In the structuralist displacement of materialist and existential Hegelianisms, the same set of problems about disciplinarity appears in a new form. Structuralism implicitly aspires to the status of a transdisciplinary discourse (call it 'science') yet, even more perhaps than Horkheimer's 'philosophical theory', it faces the danger of performing a *meta*-disciplinary role, which is indifferent to the specificities of the disciplines it crosses. This is the famous role of structuralism as a 'new transcendental philosophy' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 174) or even, ultimately, a new rationalist metaphysics (Badiou).

This danger can be countered only by a strict immanence in the construal of the 'trans-' (the *movement* across disciplines), whether this immanence be historical (in a capital-logic version of post-Hegelianism, perhaps) or that of the synchronic naturalization of transversality in a Guattarian, post-structuralist, anti-dialectical version – in which Sartre's temporalization/de-temporalization/re-temporalization is replaced by the topological spatiality of territorialization/de-territorialization/re-territorialization. Such immanence means that concepts are *retrospectively*, *artificially* and *temporarily* grasped in their unity, qua concepts. The problem of what *appears* as a strictly philosophical – meaning a 'purely' conceptual – universality thus cannot be dissolved empirically, but is rather re-posed and rendered more complicated.

This is a post-structuralist model of transdisciplinarity that did not emerge directly out of the critique of philosophy as such, but rather out of the critique of the re-transcendentalization of the concept of structure. In the particular case of Guattari, it appears as the immanently philosophical dimension of a social critique of the Lacanian psychoanalytical problematic. It is thus to a great extent free of the repetitive structure of the 'German' problem of philosophy's dialectical relations to its non-philosophical others. Here, it seems, these relations can be theorized without privileging the standpoint of the philosophy that has been left behind (see Alliez, 2011). This is a great *philosophical* advantage.

An approach to transdisciplinarity from the standpoint of the theoretical transformations of the anglophone humanities by variants of

French and German theory thus offers us two basic transdisciplinary problematics: dialectical and anti-dialectical. It is some of the conceptual resources of the structural, anti-dialectical, anti-humanist one that we present in Part 1 of this issue.

This Issue

We set out, surprisingly perhaps, from Michel Serres. The early, broadly structuralist work of Michel Serres remains largely unknown in English. Yet, as Lucie Mercier explains in the introduction to her translation of his text here, Serres produced a philosophical reinterpretation of structuralism, by cross-reading it with Leibniz's metaphysical system, that is so theoretically innovative as to contain a multiplicity of discrete philosophical trajectories, within its system of sytematicities. It is the radical relationality of this project that makes it structurally transdisciplinary: both at the level of Serres's constructive translational practice (as read by Mercier) and within it, in his construal of transdisciplinarity as 'relative exteriority', in the passage translated here. It is the *pre*-disciplinary character of Leibniz's work, perhaps, that renders its transposition into the disciplinary networks of structuralism so radically transdisciplinary.[19]

Serres's attempt at a Leibnizian metaphysical totalization and transformation of the field of structuralism throws an illuminating retrospective light on the disciplinary dynamics at work (and play) in both Foucault's and Derrida's attempts in the mid-1960s to forge theoretical frameworks that would retain something of the post-philosophical generality of the structuralist problematic while avoiding falling back into becoming a 'new transcendental philosophy'. Here, Étienne Balibar and David Cunningham examine the different quasi-transcendental logics of generalization in Foucault's concept of the *episteme* and Derrida's concept of *writing*, respectively – with regard to their undoubtedly transdisciplinary dynamics. Nina Power explores the converse idea to Cunningham's transdisciplinary interpretation of Derrida's concept of writing, and indeed of philosophy itself: the idea of *reading* transdisciplinarily; in particular, the Althusserian symptomatic reading as a transdisciplinary reading. Here, Althusser is read back through the politics of the Sartrean concept of reading that he was writing against.

As noted above, with Guattari we reach the point at which transdisciplinarity becomes explicitly thematized in French thought, in part as a working practice, and in part as a reaction against the institutionalization of interdisciplinarity. Here, Andrew Goffey translates into English, for the first time, a late text in which the transdisciplinary problematic is both embraced and relocated within a generalized ontology of transversal relations. Goffey's introduction contextualizes the piece within the overall trajectory of Guattari's thought. The question of what happens in French thought to the interrogation of disciplinarity through the critique

of structuralism after Guattari is a moot point. One answer is Bruno Latour (whose work, as we have seen, Nowotny et al. draw upon in *Re-thinking Science*): first, with actor-network-theory and now *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (2013) – his dramatologically collective project, which returns to an engagement with explicitly philosophical discourses. Here, Éric Alliez traces the transdisciplinary threads from Guattari through to Latour, throwing a Guattarian light on Latour's new disciplinary incarnation. With Latour's *Inquiry*, the transdisciplinary legacy of structuralist anti-humanism finds its terminal point in a return to a new philosophy. In the context of Serres's Leibnizian attempt to construct its ultimate systematicity, from which we set out, this may also be seen as the closing of a certain circle.

The final three articles, making up Part 2 of this issue, on 'Transdisciplines', present case studies of the emergence of discrete transdisciplinary fields in the 1980s and 1990s, which became proto-disciplines – Feminist Theory, Gender Studies and Psychosocial Studies – out of politically-based critical reproblematizations of existing fields and 'dead' or outmoded concepts, respectively. Stella Sandford takes up the constitution of the transdisciplinary concept of gender in the context of the antagonistic relationship of the dominant disciplinary form of philosophy to feminist theory as such. Disciplinary philosophy resists feminist theory, it is argued, because it cannot incorporate the necessarily transdisciplinary content of its concepts, which derive from its relationship to feminism as a political practice. In a strict disciplinary sense, 'feminist philosophy' thus appears as a 'contradiction in terms'.

In a complementary investigation, Tuija Pulkkinen examines the distinctive structure of Gender Studies as a dialectically 'transdisciplinary discipline' produced by a particular form of political intervention into academic discourse. Gender Studies, it is argued, 'is not the study *of* gender so much as an intervention *into* the prevailing understanding of gender'. The specificity of gender studies here, as an intervention, is compared with Derrida's attempt to intervene into the institution of philosophy through the creation of a transdisciplinary Collège International de Philosophie – an episode to which Cunningham also refers.

Lisa Baraitser takes Judith Butler away from the familiar role of her work in the queering of gender studies, to consider *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) as a foundational text in the 'transdiscipline' of Psychosocial Studies. The basic mechanism of transdisciplinarization identified here is not reproblematization via politicization, but 'temporal drag': the reproblematizing recovery of 'out of date' concepts that continue to impose themselves on us, to the point of requiring the construction of a whole new field of operation for them to work within.

Transdisciplinary problematics, then – multiple and diverse, but each programmatically translating the critique of disciplinary limitations into

new traversal constructions, constructing new concepts through the transformation of problems.

Appendix

Foucault on Academic Disciplines and Disciplinarity

Given the overwhelming influence of Foucault on the politics of the anti- and de-disciplinarizing imaginary, especially in the USA – no one else has so effectively reasserted the primary meaning of discipline as constraint – it is useful to take a quick look at Foucault's own writings on specifically academic disciplines.

Foucault is both an inspiration to, and a red herring within, the literature on disciplinarity. He is an inspiration, first, because of the radical indeterminacy of the disciplinary character of his own writings. From the standpoint of the established division of disciplinary labours, he appears as in some sense a historian – a historian of 'systems of thought', he insisted, rather than 'ideas'; yet his history is no more the history of 'the historians' than his history of thought partakes of the history of philosophy. (Indeed, his rejection of the term 'history of ideas' was intended as a polemical rejection of the hegemony of the history of philosophy within the history of ideas in France.) Nor is Foucault a 'philosopher' in a disciplinary sense. He appears a historian to philosophers and as a philosopher (or, at least, a 'theorist') to conventional historians (Takács, 2004; Castel, 1994). As such, he has become for some an exemplar of *inter*-disciplinarity: a Colossus striding 'between two disciplines'. For others, his writings have been received as a general theoretical resource, available to each and every discipline in the humanities and social sciences (see, for example, Goldstein, 1984; Ball, 1990).

Complementing this image of exemplary interdisciplinarity is a sense of Foucault as being radically and explicitly anti-disciplinary in his academic politics, broadly derived from his construction of the concept of disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish* – although a literal translation of *Surveiller et punir* would, of course, have moderated this reading, since it is the question of visibility which is largely at stake there, in the study of the prison as a disciplinary machine, rather than disciplinarity per se. Nonetheless, discipline appears in this imaginary very much as the opposite of freedom. A discipline is an exercise of 'disciplinary power': 'the art of correct training' (Foucault, 1977 [1975]: 170). It is an almost exclusive emphasis on a negative sense of disciplinary power as a technique of domination that is the red herring in the debate about Foucault and academic disciplines.[20]

However, this is all too superficial a reception, since it both ignores Foucault's own writing on specifically academic disciplines and it identifies the disciplinary power of the 'strict' discipline of the prison with

that of academic disciplines – on the basis of the use of the same term –
via the analogy between the prison and the school; an analogy that *is*
convincing on its own terms (especially today with the virtual militariza-
tion of schools as academies in the UK), but that is a rather different
issue.

In brief, with regard to Foucault's writings on academic disciplines of
the late 1960s in *The Order of Things, The Archaeology of Knowledge* and
The Order of Discourse, two things stand out. First, the construction of
the concept of the episteme in *The Order of Things* appears primarily as
exemplary of both the transdisciplinary – rather than inter-disciplinary –
thrust of the structuralist project *and* the danger of the restitution of a
meta-disciplinarity that it contains (see Balibar's contribution to this
issue). Indeed that danger is balanced there, rhetorically at least, by an
oscillation with the alternative danger of a complete dissolution of dis-
ciplines into positivism. This epistemologically negative view of disci-
plines is reinforced by the priority of discourses over disciplines in *The
Archaeology of Knowledge*, and the exclusion there of disciplines from the
set of relations between knowledge, science and formalization. In short,
in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, transdisciplinary *savoir* trumps disci-
plinary *connaissance*. In the section entitled 'Positivities, Disciplines,
Sciences', in the chapter 'Science and Knowledges', Foucault writes:

> If one calls 'disciplines' groups of statements that borrow their
> organization from scientific models, which tend to coherence and
> demonstrativity, which are accepted, institutionalized, transmitted
> and sometimes taught as sciences, could one not say that archeology
> describes disciplines that are not really sciences, while epistemology
> describes sciences that have been formed on the basis of (or in spite
> of) existing disciplines?

> To these questions I can reply in the negative. Archaeology does not
> study disciplines. At most, such disciplines may, in their manifest
> deployment, serve as starting points for the description of positiv-
> ities; but they do not fix its limits: they do not impose definitive
> divisions upon it; at the end of the analysis they do not reemerge
> in the same state in which they entered it; one cannot establish a
> bi-univocal relation between established disciplines and discursive
> formations. (Foucault, 1972 [1969]: 178–9)

In a return to his previous discussion of the psychiatric discipline in
Madness and Civilization, he continues: 'The discursive formation whose
existence was mapped by the psychiatric discipline was not coextensive
with it, far from it: it went well beyond the boundaries of psychiatry. [. . .]
positivities are not merely the doublets of established disciplines'

(Foucault, 1972 [1969]: 179–80). He then proceeds to ignore disciplines altogether in his articulation of the history of the relations between knowledge, science and formalization, in epistemes, conceived as discursive organizations of the elements of positivities.

Second, however, this negative picture is at least partially countered, or counter-balanced, in *The Order of Discourse*, his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, where disciplines appear as one of the three principles of internal constraint upon discourses (the other two are the commentary principle and the author principle), which are at the same time 'infinite resources for the creation of discourses' (Foucault, 1981a [1971]: 61). The discipline principle is 'a principle which is itself relative and mobile; which permits construction, but within narrow confines':

> a discipline is defined by domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments: all this constitutes a sort of anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it, without their meaning or validity being linked to the one who happened to be their inventor. [...] what is supposed at the outset is...the requisites for the construction of new statements. For there to be a discipline, there must be the possibility of formulating new propositions ad infinitum. (p. 59)

> Still further: in order to be part of a discipline, a proposition has to be able to be inscribed on a certain type of theoretical horizon....Within its limits, each discipline recognizes true and false propositions, but it pushes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins....In short, a proposition must fulfil complex and heavy requirements to be able to belong to the grouping of a discipline; before it can be called true or false, it must be 'in the true', as Cauguilhem would say....It is always possible to speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority, but one is 'in the true' only be obeying the rules of a discursive 'policing' which one has to reactivate in each of one's discourses. (pp. 60–61)

The 'positive and multiplicatory role' of disciplines is thus dependent on their 'restrictive and constraining function' (p. 61). There is a mutual dependence of negative and positive functions here that will come to characterize Foucault's later conception of power, but similarly to that conception, it is wholly misleading to focus on the negative functions alone. There is thus little textual ground for attributing to Foucault a one-sidedly anti-disciplinary stance with regard to academic disciplines, although he does undertake a quasi-structuralist epistemological critique

of them, in the direction of a generically discursive transdisciplinarity that nonetheless still runs *through* them. Inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinarity all depend upon the reproduction and development of the disciplines they stand between, multiply or cross.

Finally, in the late move from an emphasis on techniques of domination to technologies of the self – but without Foucault himself explicitly noting the significance of the change for his concept of disciplines – the relationship of these technologies to truth ('self technology implies a set of truth obligations'; Foucault, 1981b: 177) effectively recodes disciplines as techniques of the self, which for the first time place them in a relationship not only to creativity (the creativity of constraint) but to freedom. The philosophical use of this freedom is conceived by late Foucault in terms of the notion of *problematization* – specifically, 'critical reproblematization' (Schwartz, 1998). It is through this concept that Foucault's work can be used to problematize the very concept of a problem that we find in the hegemonic, technocratic conception of transdisciplinarity.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. The conventional attribution for the coining of the term 'transdisciplinarity' is the first OECD International Conference on Interdisciplinary Research and Education, in Nice in 1970, the proceedings of which were published as Apostel et al. (1972; see also Thompson Klein, 2004: 515; Barry and Born, 2013: 8). Jantsch (1972), Lichnerowicz (1972) and Piaget (1972) all use the term in their papers there. Its first published instance, though, seems to be in the earlier version of Jantsch's paper that appeared in *Policy Sciences* in 1970.
2. 'Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities: Problems, Methods, Histories, Concepts, 2011–2013' (AH/1004378/1): http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/crmep/projects/transdisciplinarity/. Part I of the current volume presents results from the 'French theory' side of the investigation – following in the wake of a more conceptually orientated pilot (Balibar et al., 2011a, 2011b). A future publication, on romantic transdisciplinary, will constitute its 'German' partner.
3. The first version of this argument was outlined in Osborne (2009).
4. 'Whatever the strengths of the concept of transdisciplinarity, in view of the continuing disputes both over its provenance and over its kinship with or difference from interdisciplinarity . . . we attempt neither to define nor to arbitrate between the two terms. Instead, we take "interdisciplinarity" to be a generic expression, while recognising that interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are indigenous concepts with variable significance in particular circumstances' (Barry and Born, 2013a: 9–10). Nothing further is heard of it thereafter.

5. In German universities the main 'social unit' was always, and to some extent remains, 'the individual chair and its associated structures – the seminars and the research institute or laboratory. Each unit supporting an apprenticeship grouping . . . composed of advanced students and assistants but not other chairholders' (Reese, 1995: 545, quoted in Prost, 2009: 752 n. 2). It was only when the German model of the research university was exported to the USA at the end of the 19th century that the department became the main 'social unit', as it remains today, despite all of the institutional upheavals in teaching and research since the 1960s. Meanwhile, the American research university is itself now increasingly being adopted, globally, as an institutional model.

6. For the genealogy of the concept of research, see Clark (2006).

7. Regarding the institutional power of departments, despite their constraining role on the development of research, one might note the extraordinary timidity of the concluding recommendation of Immanuel Wallerstein's Gulbenkian Report, *Open the Social Sciences* (1996): that it should become more regularly possible for an academic's tenure to be split across two departments.

8. See the appendix to this article, 'Foucault on Academic Disciplines'.

9. However, it should be noted that – like the broader interest in interdisciplinarity – this remains largely a policy *aspiration* in this context. Despite the encouragement of the funding body, an empirical study of interdisciplinarity in projects in the Fifth Framework programme of the EU found 'disappointingly few projects that seemed . . . to be clearly interdisciplinary' (Bruce et al., 2004: 457).

10. For the argument that the five main components of Mode 2 knowledge production (of which transdisciplinarity is one) need to be disaggregated and considered separately, see Hessels and van Lente (2008).

11. On the Bachelardian concept of the problematic, central to both the philosophy and practices of the sciences in France in the second half of the 20th century – for which the problem both precedes and structures the subject and object of thought and, in its clarified form, is 'the active summit of research' (Bachelard, 2012 [1949]: 30), see Maniglier (2012b). On Foucault's concept of problematization, see Castel (1994) and Schwartz (1998).

12. See Spivak (2003) for the broader context of the struggles over the transformation of Comparative Literature and Areas Studies in the USA, from their Cold War formation into the fluid complexities of a more polycentric, yet economically capitalistically unified, world 'after-1989'. (In the USA, the Cold War formation of Area Studies effectively functioned as the spatial – that is, geopolitical – correlate to the temporal science of history, reduced in its turn to modernization theory.) Spivak's Derridean background is, of course, in no way coincidental to the central role she has played in these debates.

  Translation is a type of travel, and it might be thought that, in so far as it is a book about travel between disciplines, Bal (2002) is a text about transdisciplinary concepts. However, oddly, Bal understands transdisciplinarity to involve the presupposition of 'immutable rigidity, a travelling without changing' (p. 35): precisely the opposite, in fact, of everything that is most productive about the term. Her example is narrative (pp. 10–11), which she thus, again oddly, thinks of as immutable in this way. The book traces movements of various concepts across disciplines, and is thus effectively about transdisciplinarity, in this regard; or at least, it contains materials for reflection on transdisciplinarity. But its piecemeal empirical approach to theory forgoes any theoretical reflection of that kind.

13. In Thompson Klein's wide-ranging typological work on the differences between inter-, multi- and transdiscipinarity, the humanities fit firmly into her model of interdisciplinarity (Thompson Klein, 2005).
14. See Stuart Hall's remarks on the 'uselessness' of British philosophy to the emergent practice of cultural studies (Hall et al., 1997: 26–7).
15. Interestingly, in his essay on 'Science Studies and the Humanities', Biagioli (2009) sees the future of the humanities largely within science studies itself.
16. For a detailed account of this process, and its difference from Horkheimer's later, better known (1937) model of 'critical theory', see Dubiel (1985).
17. The three topics through which Dubiel focuses his analysis of this research agenda are: '1. The transformation of the relationship between philosophy and the positive sciences. 2. The dialectic of the internal and external generation of problems. 3. The transformation of the relationship between science and society' (Dubiel, 1985: 119–20).
18. Cf. the role of philosophy in cultural theory outlined in Osborne (2000; see also Osborne, 2011b).
19. Cf. Hacking (2004: 194). Interestingly, Hacking also took Leibniz as his role model. However, he conceives his own practice as a deviant practice of disciplinarity: 'applying my discipline in different directions'.
20. The most thoughtful pieces on this topic are Chandler (2009) and Wellbery (2009).

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Introduction to Serres on Transdisciplinarity

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Abstract

Excerpted from an article on Leibniz first published in 1974 in *Hermès III*, *la Traduction*, Michel Serres's 'Transdisciplinarity as Relative Exteriority' offers a synoptic view of Serres's vision of the relationship between philosophy and the sciences. Serres charts four historical strategies by which philosophy has secured its theoretical control over the sciences, four versions of philosophical exteriority towards the scientific field. He contrasts this topography or philosophical 'theatre' of representation to Leibniz's immanent relation to scientific discourse. A systematic whole without fixed metalanguage, the Leibnizian encyclopaedia constitutes, according to Serres, a truly transdisciplinary method.

Keywords

encyclopaedia, Leibniz, philosophy, science, transdisciplinarity, transversality

> I am standing in the empty intersection between these two groups, in this space of which I am trying to speak the cartography. White space deprived of stakes and fights. (Serres, 1980: 17)

As part of what Patrice Maniglier describes as the 'transversal adventure' of French thought of the 1960s (2011: 20), Michel Serres's early works can be read as a series of internal displacements of one discipline by another, engaging philosophy in a permanent decentring. At the convergence of structuralism, cybernetics and the history of science, Serres uncovered two principal transdisciplinary logics: one tied to idealities (abstract forms), the other to the empirical domain (concrete information). Since Serres was not only interested in relations between or across disciplines, but more broadly in the way information is conduced from one systemic entity to another, his 'transdisciplinarity' can also be described as a general theory and practice of *translation*, textual or empirical. Each of the five *Hermès* volumes, which collect texts that Serres wrote between 1961 and 1980, sheds a

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different light on the problem of trandisciplinarity. At times identifying a space, at other times, a specific relation between 'regions', each volume needs to be grasped through this double perspective.[1] Yet when it comes to assessing Serres's conception of *trans*disciplinarity in any precise way, an important difficulty arises, stemming from his tie to Leibniz's philosophy, and to classical thought more generally. As a matter of fact, Serres voluntarily oscillates between the standpoint of *trans*-disciplinarity and that of *a*- (or *pre*-) disciplinarity. Rather than straightforwardly 'acritical' (Latour, 1987), his philosophy subverts the Kantian 'limits' into a *topology of limits* as borders, points of passage and interactions. In other words, the constitution of his 'transdisciplinarity' can only be unstable, constantly put into question by the change of 'scales' of these maps, by the transformation of the very entities between which relations can be established.

Serres's encounter with Leibniz's philosophy proved to be a watershed in his elaboration of the problem of transdisciplinarity, providing it with a structural and systematic framework. His doctoral thesis *Le système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques* (1968) interprets Leibniz's system as an 'exemplary architecture'. This structure is exemplary because it is fully coherent *and* fundamentally pluralist at the same time. Organized by a multiplicity of principles of coherence, it is not only made of analytic logic (formal language) but also contains a morphology, topology or aesthetics (language of forms) (Serres, 1974: 117). Besides the classical deductive sequences, Leibniz's system is constituted by a transversal logic of forms, which transcends the frontiers of particular areas of knowledge. Serres's demonstration relies on showing how Leibniz's mathematical models were translated through various regions of the Encyclopaedia, regardless of their eligibility for a higher principle of disciplinary partition (philosophy, biology, law, theology...). At the same time, each of these models can be ascribed a fundamental transdisciplinary logic of generalization, a capacity to produce transversal, total views of the system. In Leibniz's system, the 'inside' of any given region is fundamentally exogenous. Hence the concept of 'relative exteriority', in the passage translated below.

By thinking of the system as a 'structure' involving a multiplicity of 'models', Serres was problematizing the very notion of disciplinarity from a *precritical* point of view. Leibniz's multiple attempts at creating 'universal characteristics' and a *mathesis universalis* are the most evident expressions of this. Prior to the segmentation of knowledge, representation, not yet under the glare of critique, constituted a liminal space from which to reason, a space where logics and analogy, the logics of science and that of images, were knitted together with rigour.[2] But this 'prior' could as well be transformed into an 'after': behind his exegesis of Leibniz, Serres was in fact addressing contemporary science and its various transdisciplinary logics or 'states of interference' (Serres, 1972).

Another crux of Serres's early writings was to overcome philosophy's pretention to rule over the sciences and the corresponding assertion of

science's autonomy. By claiming the autonomy of science, Serres was appropriating and generalizing a proposition that had emerged from the philosophy of mathematics, and had been channelled through the French epistemological tradition since the 1930s. According to Jean Cavaillès, the crisis of the fundaments and the birth of 'modern algebra' had revealed that mathematics possessed an autonomous becoming, thereby embodying a singular form of historicity (Cavaillès, 1960 [1939], 2011 [1947]). As Serres would summarize it, mathematics evolves by producing its own theory, each time inventing, by transversal generalization, a new 'globalizing' language, which nevertheless remains intrinsic to mathematics (Serres, 1968a: 78–112). For him, every science 'speaks'; every science produces its own self-sufficient epistemology. By renaming epistemology a 'language', Serres highlights the internal or endogenous character of his *method*,[3] by opposition to an overbearing conception of theory. He considers that transdisciplinarity or translation best approaches the movement of science itself: 'The *new* new [scientific] spirit is about thinking without reference; transport is thought itself' (Serres, 1972: 15–16).

First published in *Hermès III, La Traduction* (1974), the following excerpt summarizes a number of these developments in a highly condensed manner, at the same time as it marks Serres's shift away from structuralism. In this passage, Serres draws a general typology of philosophy's main ways of addressing, and situating itself towards, science. Whereas philosophy's relation to science remains generally caught up in a representational paradigm, or perhaps in what Althusser called the 'philosophy of seeing' (Althusser et al., 1996 [1965]: 35), the predisciplinary philosophy of Leibniz *speaks* science without discrepancy; in it, science is not an object of knowledge but a medium. In a surprising move, Serres thus inverts the history of philosophy: Leibniz's pre-critical 'naivety' unmasks the naivety of a critique of metaphysics that ends up restoring a new kind of philosophy in its place, rather than leaping into science. By 'transdisciplinary exteriority', Serres means a language that translates the knowledge of science into its own terms and truth conditions, a standpoint of transversal generalization or structure – in other words, a *structuralism*. Formerly celebrated, this practice of relative exteriority, because it preserves an ineliminable discrepancy between method and its object, is now presented as structuralism's essential flaw.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The titles of the *Hermès* series can be taken as indications of this double outlook: whilst *Communication* (1968b), *Translation* (1974), and the *North-*

Western Passage (1980) refer to forms of relations, *Interference* (1972) and *Distribution* (1977) tend to configure the space in which these relations occur.

2. Serres's reflections on the *mathesis universalis* and the Classical Age were partly coterminous with Foucault's project in *the Order of Things* (1966), but his approach proved diametrically opposed to the latter: whilst Foucault consigned the Classical Age to the (distant shore) of an epistemic gulf, Serres claims to explore it from the inside, reactualizing it by following its various logics as guiding threads. For more details on Serres's critique of Foucault, see *Hermès I, La Communication*, pp. 167–191. On Foucault's conception of transdisciplinarity: see Étienne Balibar's article in the present issue.

3. For Serres, 'method' needs to be brought back to one of its etymological images: *hodos*, designating a way, a path, a means of access.

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Transdisciplinarity as Relative Exteriority

Michel Serres

Does Leibniz practise the philosophy of sciences? How, in the first place, to define it? Where is it? What does it do? It is apparently any kind of theory of science. Yet a theory is primarily a spectacle, and looking at a theatre presupposes standing in a site exterior to the stage. Leibniz often uses the word theatre (for nature, for envelopments and developments of the living...), but never for science. He is one of the heroes of an action that cannot become representation without being altered, without losing its essence of direct action. He provides the only discourse that does not pretend, the only judiciary act where the judge must be party in order to give his sentence. Indeed, Leibniz speaks *from within* science. He practises it.

In its relation to scientific knowledge, philosophy seeks a site from whence to speak about the encyclopaedia. But the latter, well constructed, speaks a language closed upon itself. Yet there are four and only four possible sites that philosophers have discovered, defined and practised. One can gaze upon something from *above*, from *below*, from *the front* or from *the back*. Leibniz never adopted any of these points of view: he somehow foresaw that all four were conceivable; he envisioned the alteration they could induce. He glimpsed that the only discourse on science was the discourse of science itself, that its definition could only be objectivized or thematized through its own course. These four sites define four types or modes of appropriation of science, four ingenious ways to acquire a property by illicit means – in other words, to gain a sovereign science without going through science as such.

Briefly, the first of these points of view is the Greek site. Metaphysics is the queen of sciences, in an overhanging, domineering position. Rigorous sciences are taken as propaedeutic to the dialectic ascension, they are initiatory. Philosophy is a bird's eye thought, a collection of generative and constitutive ideas. On the first steep slopes of the mountain dwell a few geometrician or arithmetician slaves, or the child that the philosopher once was, in a world that he has long forgotten. The elevated site allows him to judge true from false, relevancy and opinion. Metaphysics is the toponym for site. There is a queen; she is normative. It is said to be a science, in a superlative manner.

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The second point of view is the Kantian site. Philosophy, having become science, extricates the conditions of possibility of the encyclopaedic exercise. It unfolds layers and subterranean formations to be discovered in the act of the subject, or elsewhere. The geological, paleontological, archaeological metaphors display an orientation towards the grounding, the foundation, the origin. 'What does science rest upon?' one asks. Such chronology goes from Descartes to Kant, from Kant to Husserl and his epigones. The transcendental (or the historico-intentional) is the toponym for site. There is a ground, a constitutive ground. Philosophy is said to be science, fundamentally.

The third point of view is the site of the Enlightenment. Philosophy projects in front of itself, in a dynamic of progress, the essence of the true. The horizon – where fields of attraction permanently polarize the history of science – constantly recedes. There is a speed vector and an acceleration vector, both oriented in the direction of history. It is a filter of true, of false, of the accident, of the essence, of the crisis, of accomplishment. 'What is science heading towards?' one asks. This chronology goes from the *Aufklärung* to Hegel. Teleology is the toponym for site. There is a *telos*, it attracts. Philosophy is the science of points of no return.

The fourth point of view is the site of modernity. The philosopher is a distrustful and lucid consciousness that cannot be easily fooled. He seeks out the almighty demon behind science. Behind the mask of knowledge and the expert language, the detective epistemology lays bare the class representation, the ideology in power, the *hic fecit cui prodest*, the unknown or unthought, impulsive or dominant. From Marx, Nietzsche, Freud to the contemporary, reading techniques aim at a palimpsest: active writing stands behind activated writing. One asks: 'What is hiding behind this science, which performs scenes it doesn't exactly own? Who is the hidden engineer? Who or what is pulling the strings of these abused puppets, which in turn abuse us?' The approach is retroactive: to slip behind all effective knowledge, behind each and every thing, to constitute, in the tradition of the impregnable discourse of philosophy, a discourse behind which no discourse can slide. There was no higher, deeper or more prophetic discourse; there is now no more anterior, more archaic discourse. The philosopher sees the backs but he has no back. The retroactive is the toponym for site. There are *a tergo* forces; they are disruptive.

This law of the four cardinal sites brings us to the end of an adventure: that of the impregnable texts kept external to knowledge: the four pathways of domination. From these privileged locations, the philosopher invariably remains one who can neither be mistaken nor mistake us. This could be a definition of God: the philosopher is the heir of priests. The scientist takes risks and confronts the dangers of non-knowledge. His endeavour is fallible; his discourse never goes beyond its self-imposed norms. Science is bound by its own law, it is a game bowed in front of the rules. Outside the field, outside the limits, the theoretician-spectator can

always try to escape the rules, what he calls overtaking; his discourse unfailingly exceeds the norms he exposes. The philosopher is a subtle God, that no one can catch swindling. He plays offside. In the name of his privilege, he gives himself the right to speak the very contrary of science: challenge mathematics, immobilize the Earth, negate the thermo-dynamic principles, etc. Speaking of science, he does not speak science.

This can be refined. Each and every discipline of the encyclopaedic movement has served as a suppletive site, from which to speak of all the others. Just as God is at once transcendent and immanent, the philoso-pher is simultaneously outside and within. In other words, each of the sites mentioned is endowed with an *alibi*. The Trojan horse. Situated above, but leaning on mathematics; situated below, yet modelling itself on mechanics, astronomy or logics; situated ahead, but taking his values from biology or history; situated behind, yet referring himself to the humanities. The global discrepancy (*décalage*) generative of philosoph-ical discourse is accompanied by a local centring within the knowledge cycle. The dominant discipline is the courthouse or the courthouse's alibi. Philosophy remains the science of sciences, but might protect itself by means of a substitute: the region elected as the support for judgement and analysis. It is a small-scale science of sciences. Its selection in the encyclopaedia, its partition, are thus to be justified. They are, in general, induced by a history. How, may I ask, are we to grab by the tail what calls itself a mouse, but a bird an instant later?

In any case, the discrepancy is visible. The aim is to take distance from a knowledge that is thereby objectivized, to see it from outside, in order to stage it in a sovereign and untrapped theory. Possessing the knowledge without having its knowledge. Three types of discrepancy: absolute exter-iority, outside of the encyclopaedia; relative or transdisciplinary exteriority; and finally, total substitution, where the philosopher starts to speak directly of the object, bracketing science. Ultimately, we are either dealing with metaphysics (the prefix is thus clearly defined), interpretation by means of a code or a superimposed filter, or a dream, in the manner described by Diderot. This is not a condemnation; dreams can be fecund or premonitory.

Let us eliminate distance, enter into the effective workings of science. Let its discourse speak. An attentive listener will easily hear its implicit philosophy. Is this really a method? Yes. A method is acceptable, not only when the organon which promotes or justifies it is rigorous, or when it stands on its own as a systematic or normative monument – hence the derisory efficiency of most traditionally taught 'methods' (by efficiency we mean the ratio between results and the power of the constructed device) – but when it is fecund, here and now. A method is preferable by virtue of what it does, not by what it thinks. At stake here is not to speak of, around, about, on (meaning 'above') science, but simply to speak science, one science, this part, that theorem.

Translated by Lucie Mercier

Note

This text originally appeared under the heading 'Philosophy of Science' as the final part of the essay 'Leibniz Retranslated into Mathematical Language', in Michel Serres, *La Traduction: Hermès III* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), pp. 152–7. The essay summarizes Michel Serres's 1968 doctoral dissertation on Leibniz, accounting for the relationship between Leibniz's mathematical thought and his philosophy as one of translation. It is translated here with the permission of Minuit publishers.

Michel Serres is a philosopher, historian of sciences, writer and member of the Académie Française, who has taught in Clermont-Ferrand, Vincennes, Paris I and Stanford University. Throughout his numerous books, Serres has designed a singular path at the crossroads of philosophy, literature and the sciences. In the course of the 1960s, he designed a new philosophy of communication, proposing a transdisciplinary renewal of epistemology. His works may be characterized as a search for specific points of passage between the cultural and the scientific realms, evolving into a polymorphous reflexion on topics as diverse as aesthetics, ecology and technology. He has authored over 50 books, among which (translated into English) are *Hermès: Literature, Science, Philosophy; The Parasite; The Birth of Physics; Genesis; The Natural Contract; Rome: The First Book of Foundations*; *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies;* and *Biogea*.

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Foucault's Point of Heresy: 'Quasi-Transcendentals' and the Transdisciplinary Function of the Episteme

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Abstract
Major difficulties for readers of Foucault's *The Order of Things* concern the historical function and the logical construction of the *episteme*. Our proposal is to link it with another notion, the 'point of heresy', less frequently addressed. This leads to asserting that irreconcilable dilemmas are in fact determined by the type of rationality governing the emergence of common objects of knowledge. It also introduces a possibility of 'walking on two roads': a dialogical adventure within rationality. Foucault is not content with either accepting or rejecting the 'transcendental' question 'What is Man?': with the help of *quasi-transcendental categories* performing a 'transdisciplinary' function, he wants to reach the 'heretical' point where anthropology becomes *historicity within the horizon of finitude*.

Keywords
anthropology, episteme, finitude, heresy, historicity, quasi-transcendentals

This article offers a new reading of some central developments in Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (2002 [1966]). It involves re-examining the 'empirical-transcendental doublet' (which helped Foucault characterize the metaphysical artifact dominating the 'humanist' and 'historicist' foundation of knowledge in the modern human sciences) and the definition of 'quasi-transcendental' essences (typically Life, Labour, and Language) which, according to his description, made it possible to investigate in an 'objective' or scientific manner the empirical determinations of the knowing 'subject', and also, conversely, to account for the

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ontological privilege of a certain kind of beings called 'humans' who consciously reflect on their historical finitude. As my subtitle indicates, the discussion will be carried on by bringing to the fore a category – the 'point of heresy' – that until now had remained relatively marginal in the interpretation of *The Order of Things*. I wish to show that it plays a strategic role in the book's formal construction; in fact, it implicitly directs its argument. And it directly affects the understanding of Foucault's intervention with respect to the question of transdisciplinarity, which was certainly one of the important epistemological stakes of 'structuralism'.

First published as *Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966), it was this book that heightened the 'structuralist' controversy and made Foucault a star in the philosophical heaven almost overnight. *The History of Madness*, which had created a stir among psychologists and psychiatrists at the time of its publication in 1961, was recommended to students by some prominent philosophers, but it was read by a broad public only retroactively. However, if we neglect purely erudite commentaries, *The Order of Things* is the book whose conceptual apparatus and doctrine is less discussed today. There is a combination of overlapping reasons for this. The book is technical but also encyclopaedic in its references, it is systematic and even formalistic in its construction, with the help of diagrams and complex typologies. Owing to its epistemological ambitions, it is written in a relatively esoteric style that (with a few exceptions) Foucault never used otherwise. (In an interview henceforth quoted and misquoted, he justified it ironically by suggesting that the book had been written 'to please' Georges Canguilhem, his mentor at the time of his doctoral thesis.) The 'structuralist moment' in French philosophy with which it is closely associated is now widely supposed to have exhausted its merits and Foucault himself soon reversed his attitude towards it. Finally, it seems to be very far away from, if not incompatible with, the political and ethical interests dominating Foucault's later philosophy, which tend to provide a key for the retrospective understanding of his early writings and their final assessment.

Now, some of these motives foregoing a more detailed study of *The Order of Things* are probably changing at the moment, again for several reasons. There is a growing awareness that the issues of 'humanism' and 'anti-humanism', on the one hand, and 'anthropology' as a scientific or philosophical discipline, on the other – however closely related they might have been through references to the 'human', as an essence and a norm – are not identical throughout history. This is shown by recent discussions about 'post-humanist' paradigms in anthropology. It has led to a renewed interest in the argument that pushed Foucault to declare in 1966: 'As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing

its end' (2002: 387) – although what is of primary interest today is the supporting analyses. Then, there is a new wave of discussions about the meaning of such notoriously enigmatic epistemological-metaphysical questions as '*mathesis universalis*' (of Cartesian, Leibnizian and Husserlian descent) and the codes of 'representation' which provide the modern idea of the world with its transdisciplinary models of scientificity.[1] Finally, there is the fact that, in the long trajectory of our idea of 'critique' (with its Kantian, Nietzschean, and Marxian moments, all of which have ceaselessly inspired contemporary philosophers), the articulation of 'power' and 'knowledge' seems to call not only for an elucidation of the interests that command the institution and uses of knowledge, but also for an understanding of the power-effects that are intrinsic to various forms of knowledge and discourse. On all these issues, Foucault's endeavour to systematize and formalize the epistemological difference between the two moments of modernity (on each side of the 'bourgeois revolution', taken as an intellectual as well as a political event) forms either a permanent inspiration or a disputable but inevitable preliminary. I locate myself in this perspective, while selecting for discussion some aspects of the 'archaeological' method that I find especially intriguing.

'Points of Heresy': A Complex Disposition

It is widely recognized that the guiding category in Foucault's archaeological inquiry is that of 'episteme', which is completed by such formulas as 'epistemic field' or 'epistemic discontinuity', and occasionally substituted with 'system of positivities' or simply 'knowledge' (as distinct from 'science'). It performs a triple task: a *periodization* of discourses (and of knowledge inasmuch as knowledge is examined 'from the outside', through the exclusive analysis of its discursive realizations); a *transdisciplinary* unification (inasmuch as an *episteme* does not describe a system of concepts and postulates which are axiomatic for *one* single discipline, but rather the *invariant* 'rationality', or the system of questions and notions which, at a certain moment, or in a certain historical period, command the development of several disciplines – such as biology, economics, philology – and allow it to establish formal correspondences between them, provided they are 'translated' in each discipline's language in order to be applied to its specific objects); finally a *problematization*, which, notwithstanding later uses of this term by Foucault, I will define as a double intellectual gesture of formulating *questions* which are meaningful, therefore *possible* within a certain organization of discourse, and, correlatively, identifying *objects* which are either *visible or invisible* for a certain 'experience' informed by this discourse.

This is a very powerful dispositive. It made it possible for Foucault to discover conceptual analogies between the disciplines that he was

describing (by raising these descriptions from the status of empirical phenomenologies to that of rational constructions) and to propose a new philosophical interpretation of the transition from the 'classical age' of natural typologies to the 'modern age' of historical evolutions. In the specific field of the history of science, it allowed him to transform the formulation of such epistemological problems as the origins of evolutionist ideas and theories in biology and anthropology, by paradoxically rooting them in certain 'fixist' arguments. This is not to say that his theses on this point are unobjectionable, but they remain impossible to simply dismiss.[2] We know that the notion of *episteme* is replete with difficulties of various kinds. Some have to do with the seemingly ad hoc selection of the disciplines that are included in Foucault's construction of the two successive *epistemes* that he wants to compare: for example, why does he include 'biology' and 'economics' in the modern *episteme* of anthropological 'finitude', but never really consider sociology or psychology, which are two very different cases? The linguistic determinations, which are deeply rooted in national intellectual histories, are very important here: the tradition to which Foucault belongs is one in which the notions of 'la science de l'homme' (initially coined by Malebranche) and later 'les sciences humaines' (of Saint-Simonian and Comtean origin) enjoy a philosophical and institutional recognition uninterrupted since the 17th century, whereas 'social science', which is prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon academic world, is considered only as a recent and partial equivalent, and the 'German' notion of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is banned as incurably spiritualistic.

But the major difficulties (for philosophers) concern internal tensions between the historical function and the logical or transcendental construction of the *episteme*. On the one side, epistemic moments within which 'knowledge' is distributed and organized feature not only units of problematization, but also successive terms in a chronological line, modeled on classical histories of modernity: this produces the strange effect of a *counter-historicist historicism*. It seems to propose a 'meta-narrative' of the history of knowledge, where the idea of progress is abolished in favour of independent 'mutations', in the form of successive incompatible problematizations of the object. This does not amount to cancelling the notion of a 'sense of history' with its eschatological connotations – perhaps rather the contrary. The main demarcation proposed by Foucault separates the 'classical' *episteme* – where knowledge is commanded by the prerequisite of 'order' and the articulations of discourse provide a representation of the real that is always already adequate, since thought and being 'belong' to one another – from the 'modern' *episteme*, where the dominant category would be history or historicity, whose driving forces are supposed to lie beyond representation, opening something like a permanent line of escape. This mutation is said to take place in the revolutionary period during which philosophy (with Kant)

becomes a 'critique'. It marks a *before* and an *after*: the revolution, or the intellectual caesura.[3] And since, in order to locate a first discontinuity (whose idea he associates with the sense of hilarious absurdity produced by the reading of a passage in Borges),[4] it seems necessary to Foucault to evoke a prehistory, or a *before the before*, where the 'classical' categories are not yet in action (this would be the late Medieval and Renaissance age of 'resemblance'); similarly our contemporary awareness of the *limits of anthropology* (which are also the limits of historicity) seems to indicate that 'we' (the collective bearers of western knowledge) are on the verge of entering an *after the after*: a post-humanist age of the 'return of language' as essential horizon of thinking. On the other side, the 'invariants' which cut across the boundaries of disciplines are presented at the same time, in Kantian fashion, as conditions of possibility for the formulation of scientific problems (such as: how to combine the articulation of types and the attribution of properties – a question that exists for classical grammar as it exists for natural history or the analysis of riches) *and* conditions of possibility for the recognition of objects in experience (such as 'words' and 'languages', 'animals' and 'plants', 'commerce' and 'riches', etc.). This induces the idea that the categories of knowledge are like *a priori* structures of rationality with respect to actual discourses.

But these two conceptualizations of *episteme* work philosophically in opposite directions. They are reconciled dialectically by means of a definition of the *episteme* as an 'historical *a priori*' – which owes something to neo-Kantian elaborations, but is ultimately a borrowing from Husserl turned against phenomenology.[5] This is, however, an extremely fragile notion, which, if it is not simply to name the difficulty in oxymoronic fashion, cannot but *oscillate* between 'culturalist' analogies (where *epistemes* are like systems of 'cultural determinations' subjecting knowledge to collective identities and social transformations) and an implicit reiteration of the Heideggerian 'history of Being' (where knowledge is not a 'positivity', much less a 'rationality', but a manifestation of the secret loss of truth in its successive figurations). Even a critic as sympathetic but also uncompromising as Canguilhem (1967) indicated this difficulty in his defence of Foucault's book against the anathemas of what he called ironically the 'League of Humanists of all Parties'.

My intention is not so much to resurrect these debates as to indicate why they remain distorted as long as we neglect an essential fact: the category of the *episteme* in Foucault's book cannot be understood alone, in its own right, if we do not take into account its intrinsic correlation with another notion with which it forms a dialectical pair, the 'point of heresy', which signals the conflictual dimension of discursive knowledge. Admittedly, this correlation is somewhat concealed in Foucault's book because the point of heresy, although it is explicitly mentioned in several

passages, is invoked most of the time with other names and through paraphrases, and because it is never properly defined (as is formally the case for *epistemes*), except in the form of an additional determination in the course of their analyses – an overdetermination as it were. But this concealment works like a purloined letter, because as soon as the presence of points of heresy has been identified operating strategically in the text, we become aware that it is precisely the articulation of the two notions (*heresy* and *episteme*) that indicates what an 'epistemic field' exactly includes (or structures) and what it excludes, or what it exactly means to say that there are *limits* for any *episteme,* whose paradoxical 'experience' signals a possibility of transgression. Before anything else, I need therefore to retrieve in Foucault's text the 'traces' of this notion, elusive but also unmistakable.

  Point of heresy is a phrase that obviously has affinities with others in Foucault and some of his contemporaries. (A complete investigation of the topological metaphors of 'points', 'lines', 'spaces' or 'fields', 'bodies', 'surfaces' and 'depth', etc. in Foucault – and others – would be a fascinating study.)[6] Strictly speaking, however, it is uniquely linked to the problematic of *The Order of Things*, with the partial exception of a development in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Literally, it is used three times, in two separate contexts. First, in the course of the description of classical grammar as a general theory of 'speaking', when it is a question of the epistemic choice between decomposing words into meaningless units (sounds and letters) or into more primitive elements of signification, such as 'roots' (Foucault, 1966: 115–16). Second, when in the course of the description of the classical analysis of wealth as a theory of 'exchanging', it is a question of the epistemic conflict between theories of money as 'sign' and theories of money as 'commodity' (Foucault, 1966: 193–4). This is later repeated as an alternative to 'psychological' foundations of the value of goods in utility (advocated by the likes of Cantillon) and a foundation in the productivity of nature (advocated by the Physiocrats), which he calls a 'familiar point of heresy' (Foucault, 1966: 204). We must pay attention to the fact that the same idea of a choice between antithetical opinions (i.e. *doxai*: judgments, positions) relying on a bifurcation in the development of the same 'disposition' of knowledge (e.g. defining money as a 'pledge') – in other words, the idea of a choice whose result is arbitrary but derives from a necessary antithesis within the shared premises ('though it is logically necessary, it is so on the basis of a single arrangement that simply creates, at a given point, the alternatives of an indispensable choice' – Foucault, 2002: 181) – does not need a repetition of the name 'heresy' to be invoked. Quasi-literal equivalents such as 'point of choice', 'fork of a choice', 'real choice of opinions', 'alternatives', express exactly the same idea.[7] The distribution in the book becomes then much more general, but also more complex, and it is this that makes it a strategic object for our reflection.

The variations in the naming are easily explained by the fact that Foucault is using 'heresy' in its etymological sense (in Greek, *hairesis* means 'choice' or 'decision' between alternative possibilities), which in our culture is intimately linked to the religious institution and discourse. Early theologians defined 'heresies' as those doctrines whose opposition to the 'orthodoxy', or to the right opinion (judgment) sanctioned by the authority of the Church, resides not only in a 'wrong choice' or a 'choice of the wrong' but more precisely in the *fact of choosing* a one-sided interpretation of a dogma.[8] This involves the idea that the unity of opposites is precisely what forms the paradoxical condition of a theological utterance of truth, as in the two central – and related – cases of the dogma of the incarnation (the double nature of Christ: divine *and* human) and the doctrine of salvation as result of free actions that are nevertheless entirely determined by the grace/power of God. I submit that Foucault's uses of 'point of heresy' and 'point of choice' are a reminiscence, if not a conscious transposition of this theological use, by means of the etymology, a transposition which 'suspends' any direct reference to religious doctrines, but keeps the idea that in matters of 'dogmatic alternatives' the truth-function (or, as he will later write, the mode of 'veridiction') does not depend on the fact that this or that 'theory' is *separately* verified or refuted (or is scientific or not), but on the fact that the *system* of antithetic propositions *divides* the possibilities of interpretation of a given principle or axiom.

Moreover, Foucault's articulation of knowledge (*episteme*) and choice (*heresy*) in the archaeological discourse is obliquely commanded by a reference to the Pascalian reflection on this subject – as I suggested elsewhere is the case with his coining the expression 'history of the truth', which is in fact a rediscovery of a provocative proposition in Pascal (Balibar, 2002). In his polemical intervention in the controversy on the relationship between divine grace and redemption (linked to the great theological divide about predestination), Blaise Pascal, who was also a logician and a mathematician with a strong doctrine of axioms as 'indemonstrable foundations of demonstrations', proposed a radical definition of the relationship between orthodoxy and heresies, which is a variety of the theological *via negativa* (perhaps itself 'heretical'): since the orthodoxy is about 'mysteries' (or revealed truths without any 'rational' possibility of explanation), there can be no such thing as an intelligible presentation of the positive truth, but only a permanent 'negation' of incompatible false representations which betray it, or an infinite effort to simultaneously avoid antithetic 'errors'. In Foucault as in Pascal, we have 'dialectical' schemes for making the unity of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*) an intrinsic characteristic of thinking, which each in its own way distinguishes itself from the teleological procedure of 'reconciliation' or negation of the negation.

Under its several equivalent names, the concept of a point of heresy returns regularly in *The Order of Things*, with applications of different orders, which seem to accompany the progressive transformations of the concept of the *episteme*, and help to clarify its function.

In the classical age, each and every 'field of positivity', while isolating an object that also features a function in the general space of representation ('speaking' words, 'classifying' natural beings, 'exchanging' goods), exhibits one or several points of heresy. Their importance ranges from a simple difference between alternative interpretations of the same enigmatic notion (such as meaning or value) to a bifurcation separating 'two ways of constituting [the discipline] as a language both possible and indispensable' (as in the case, crucial for the history of 'natural history', of the choice between Linnaeus' *system* and Buffon's *method*) (Foucault, 2002: 139–40). In the case of Representation as the *episteme* of the Classical Age, there is clearly no understanding of the 'epistemic field' without identifying its points of heresy. More precisely:

Points of heresy, inasmuch as they are *internal* to an epistemic field which imposes rigorous conditions of possibility upon the perceptible and the sayable, are the exact opposite of choices 'operated according to individuals, environments, social groups', whose presentation in the form of personal and doctrinal controversies had provided the traditional history of ideas with guiding narratives to describe the *opinions* of certain *authors* (Foucault, 2002: 75). Foucault's archaeology does not explain them as subjective decisions (however 'situated' in history), but as objective possibilities offered by a 'disposition' or structure of knowledge. As a consequence, points of heresy exhibit the kind of (limited) freedom that knowledge offers to its 'subjects', and explain what the function of the author consists in: namely, actualizing and individualizing antithetic positions that are inherent in the latent organization of knowledge, or virtually present as soon as a *new* principle of understanding things and experiences has emerged.[9] The 'controversies' or discursive conflicts as represented in these two incompatible ways appear thus as a major criterion for the discussion of the position of subjects in the history of knowledge.

However, this explanation also means that epistemic conflicts become *relativized*, or they are presented as 'superficial' with respect to the 'general system' (or structure) where they take place. Not only do they not constitute the system, or involve a capacity to transform it, but they form only an 'apparent contradiction' if compared to the positivity itself, or to the *common* 'deep' determinations of experience and objects within a given *episteme*:

One must reconstitute the general system of thought whose network, in its positivity, renders an interplay of simultaneous and apparently contradictory opinions possible. It is this network

that defines the conditions that make a controversy or problem possible, and that bears the historicity of knowledge. (Foucault, 2002: 75)

This is fully coherent with the idea that 'authors' or 'schools' may subjectively believe that they are separated by radical antagonisms, whereas in fact they are only displaying the equivocity of the same principles.

In turn, however, this relativization bears a strong counterpart, because it appears (or it is asserted by Foucault) that *the points of heresy are the same*, or they emerge at the same 'place', giving way to 'isomorphic' alternatives, when describing the various disciplines whose juxtaposition maps the classical *episteme*: grammarians, naturalists and analysts of wealth (who cannot yet be called 'economists') face the same choices and resolve them in analogous manners, albeit in completely different vocabularies and referring to heterogeneous empirical activities (speaking, classifying, exchanging). *Points of heresy are essentially trans-disciplinary*. As such, what they reveal is the unitary construction of the *episteme*, or better said they provide an effective verification of the unity that could be hypothetically asserted when discovering (through formal analyses) that the disciplines had isomorphic conceptual matrixes. If the conflicts are the same at the surface where opinions are formulated, this must be because the latent problems (or the mode of problematization itself) are governed by the same structure. This also shows why Foucault's concept of knowledge is not purely logical or 'mathematical': it reveals how knowledge works not at the level of formulating axioms, but of constructing experience discursively in their terms.

All these characters, which seem to apply in general to what Foucault calls an *episteme* are in fact presented in full detail with respect to one single *episteme*: the Classical field of 'Representation'. This could mean that the very notion of 'heresy' (and the underlying scheme of the bifurcation in the implementation of axiomatic premises) has a privileged relationship to the formal structures of representation and order, which involve binary choices of definitions and taxonomies. But if this were the case, it would also mean that heresy and *episteme* are not absolute correlatives, as I claimed, since there exists at least *another episteme*. So we must take a closer look at the resurgence of this terminology in the framework of the modern *episteme*, characterized by Foucault as a knowledge of *History*, whose general object is *Man* (or the Human, qua living, speaking, and laboring being), therefore opening the possibility of new positivities called 'the human sciences'. We discover that a transformation takes place, which indicates that the concept of the *episteme* is evolving: no two different *epistemes* embody 'knowledge' in exactly the same sense.

To be sure, there is one explicit return of the 'point of heresy' with exactly the same function that we had already seen. It takes place (in a manner that is far from innocent) when Foucault describes an internal conflict of opinions or a bifurcation within the new discipline of 'economy', between the Ricardian and the Marxian interpretations of 'historical tendencies' affecting the relationship between needs and capacities in the organization of productive systems, which he interprets as expressing a fundamental articulation of history and anthropological finitude:

> But the alternatives offered by Ricardo's 'pessimism' and Marx's revolutionary promise are probably of little importance. Such a system of options represents nothing more than the two possible ways of examining the relations of anthropology and History as they are established by economics through the notions of scarcity and labour. For Ricardo, History fills the void produced by anthropological finitude and expressed in a perpetual scarcity, until the moment when a point of definitive stabilization is attained; according to the Marxist interpretation, History, by dispossessing man of his labour, causes the positive form of his finitude to spring into relief – his material truth is finally liberated. There is certainly no difficulty in understanding, on the level of opinion, how such real choices were distributed, and why some opted for the first type of analysis and others for the second. But these are merely derived differences which stem first and last from a doxological investigation and treatment. At the deepest level of western knowledge, Marxism introduced no real discontinuity (*aucune coupure réelle*); it found its place without difficulty, as a full, quiet, comfortable and, goodness knows, satisfying form for a time (its own), within an epistemological arrangement that welcomed it gladly (since it was this arrangement that was in fact making room for it) and that it, in return, had no intention of disturbing and, above all, no power to modify, even one jot, since it rested entirely upon it. Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water: that is, it is unable to breathe anywhere else. Though it is in opposition to the 'bourgeois' theories of economics, and though this opposition leads it to use the project of a radical reversal of History as a weapon against them, that conflict and that project nevertheless have as their condition of possibility, not the reworking of all History, but an event that any archaeology can situate with precision, and that prescribed simultaneously, and according to the same mode, both nineteenth-century bourgeois economics and nineteenth-century revolutionary

economics. Their controversies may have stirred up a few waves and caused a few surface ripples; but they are no more than storms in a children's paddling pool. (Foucault, 2002: 261–2)

I quote at length this famous (very nasty) passage, because it forms itself a bifurcation in the uses of the archaeological method, which reveals some of its deepest strategic intentions. What repeats previous uses is the idea that 'choices of opinions' about laws of history (such as the alternative of Ricardo's 'pessimism' supposedly leading to the conjecture of a 'stationary state' in the history of industrial production, and Marx's revolutionary 'promise' – Foucault does not write 'optimism' – based on a reverse use of negativity) are surface effects, not affecting the deep structures of knowledge, and therefore unable to 'break' (the famous *coupure*: Althusser's word, borrowed from Bachelard) with the historical presuppositions of a discourse. In particular, we should notice that the 'choice' illustrated, according to Foucault, by the opposition between Ricardo and Marx is defined in terms which are much more philosophical, even metaphysical, than epistemological and technical (as was the case with every 'point of heresy' before): it concerns a diverging articulation of History and anthropology that, in Heideggerian fashion, Foucault calls a position about 'finitude'. So, instead of defining just a 'local' antithesis within a stable field of knowledge, this question seems to take us towards the *limits* of the field or the understanding of the conditions of possibility themselves, where the horizon or intentionality of this regime of knowledge (which, according to Foucault, is 'modernity' as such) is reflecting on its intrinsic determination, and therefore confronts the possibility of its own suppression or transgression. To be sure, this does not cancel the possibility of endowing the point of heresy with a 'transdisciplinary' function, but the consequence will be that correspondences or analogies between problems and alternatives which are also pushing other modern disciplines towards a recognition of the ambivalence inherent in their founding principle must be sought in a region of discourse that we tend to see as a *philosophical* elaboration rather than a 'positive' construction of facts, objects and theories.

The clearest example of another point of heresy rooted in the history of 'positive' disciplines, but immediately endowed with a philosophical meaning, emerges with Foucault's presentation of the great antithesis between formalistic and hermeneutic understandings of the function of language. It is illustrated there through an opposition between the contemporary 'inventions' of Bertrand Russell and Sigmund Freud: formal logic and the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams and symptoms. Here is Foucault's summary of the topological figure:

It is true that the division (*le partage*) between interpretation and formalization presses upon us and dominates us today. But it is not

rigorous enough: the fork it forms has not been driven far enough down into our culture, its two branches are too contemporaneous for us to be able to say even that it is prescribing a simple option or that it is inviting us to choose between the past, which believed in meaning (*croyait au sens*), and the present (the future), which has discovered the significant (*le signifiant*). In fact, it is a matter of two correlative techniques whose common ground of possibility is formed by the being of language, as it was constituted on the threshold of the modern age . . . This certainly explains the nineteenth century's double advance (*la double marche*), on the one hand towards formalism in thought and on the other towards the discovery of the unconscious – towards Russell and Freud. It also explains the tendency of one to move towards the other, and of these two directions to cross: the attempt, for example, to discover the pure forms that are imposed upon our unconscious before all content; or again, the endeavor to raise the ground of experience, the sense of being, the lived horizon of all our knowledge to the level of our discourse. It is here that structuralism and phenomenology find, together with the arrangements proper to them, the general space that defines their common ground. (Foucault, 2002: 299)

This indicates that identifying a point of heresy works in two directions. On the one hand, it leads us to asserting again and again that theoretical dilemmas that seem irreconcilable (such as a choice between the point of view of 'meaning' and a point of view of the 'signifier') are in fact determined by the general type of rationality that governs the historical emergence of some common objects of knowledge. On the other hand, it introduces a dynamic pattern of thinking where the possibility arises of 'walking on two roads': not a simple 'antithesis of reason', which remains static, but something like a dialogical adventure within rationality, whose details are retrospectively understandable, but never formed a simple repetition of the initial *partage*. It is because of this new dynamic, or in close relation to it, that Foucault now presents the 'point of heresy' not only as a 'fork', but as a place of interaction, retroaction, or double inscription for the extremes, where philosophy and positivity are practically exchanging their roles. Witness the reference to the way in which a formalistic conception of language as a game of signifiers can become the new 'code' for the interpretation of meaning, a clear allusion to Lacan's structuralist concept of the unconscious and an indication, at least apparently, that a 'dialectic' of Russellian and Freudian conceptions of language is much more productive than a dialectic of Ricardian and Marxian conceptions of productive labor (except that Lacan's preferred logical reference was Frege, rather than Russell).

But there is more, because in this new interactive pattern a reference to the past is involved as much as a projection towards the future (or the latter is possible only in relation to the former). This was clearly indicated when, a few paragraphs earlier, Foucault described the point of heresy inherent in the new 'objectivity of language' produced by modern philological techniques (after the invention of 'flexion' by Schlegel and Bopp) in terms of the opposition of formal logic and comparative grammar, which he presented as twin 'products of the dissociation of *general grammar*' – therefore as an active trace of the vanishing of the old (classical) *episteme*:

> One might say in one sense that logical algebra and the Indo-European languages are two products of the dissociation of general grammar: the Indo-European languages expressing the shift of language in the direction of the known object, logical algebra the movement that makes it swing towards the act of knowing, stripping it in the process of all its already constituted form. But it would be inadequate to express the fact in this purely negative form: at the archaeological level, the conditions of possibility of a non-verbal logic and a historical grammar are the same. The ground of their positivity is identical. (Foucault, 2002: 297)

I submit that we have now reached a quite different notion of the 'point of heresy'. It still describes a discursive singularity (or perhaps we could say a discursive *event*) that is taking place 'within' the *episteme*, or belongs to its 'space', and therefore follows the rules of its constitution and exhibits its historical specificity. But in doing so it also exhibits what makes it impossible to reduce such a space to a simple plane, or a juxtaposition of propositions, even if we add to them formal derivations from certain implicit axioms, and uncover the analogies or isomorphisms between their different regions (and it is striking to see how much Foucault's description of the Laws of Representation resemble an axiomatization of the 'naïve' idea of 'order' organizing the empirical disciplines of the Classical Age, giving birth as it were *a posteriori* to what could have been a *taxinomia universalis* parallel to the *mathesis universalis*) (Foucault, 1966: 1). However, we cannot content ourselves with this kind of ideal reconstruction of one time's structures of rationality because, at least in the case of the 'modern' discourse of anthropology, we also have to deal with the survival of a cancelled *episteme* within the developments of its successor, in the form of 'products of [its] dissolution', which are insistent in the new controversies or antinomies. In other words, we have to deal here with a kind of *temporalization* of the point of heresy, but which remains different from any 'internalization of the past'. Rather, it displays a non-contemporaneity or a juxtaposition of moments of time that are linked as external to one another, in some

epistemological 'hyperspace'. But this more complex idea of 'heresy' forms the essential characteristic of another 'point', which is discussed by Foucault in what seems now to be a pure philosophical field of reflective discourses.

This third type is exhibited in the section where Foucault analyses the meaning and correspondences of discourses competing for a synthetic reconstruction of knowledge at the end of the 18th century: 'Ideology' (initiated by Destutt de Tracy and Cabanis), and 'Critique' (initiated by Kant). I shall leave aside discussing this selection from the point of view of the history of ideas. In particular, it seems to neglect the place occupied by British (and especially Scottish) empiricism in the 'philosophical battlefield' of the revolutionary age (although, in the same chapter, Foucault paid close attention to Adam Smith's problematic, but only as an economist). A new interest in the doctrine of the French *Idéologues* was – temporarily – in the air in the 1960s: Foucault (already with *Histoire de la folie* and *Naissance de la Clinique*) contributed to it, and was praised for that by Canguilhem. But what interests me is the conceptual pattern of the opposition, as he constructs it. Quotations are again necessary here. Let's recall how Foucault characterizes the imperceptible 'event' which, taking place simultaneously in the fields of *general grammar, natural history* and *analyses of wealth*, will show that representation is insufficient to express the being of objects whose essential attribute is an intrinsic plasticity or historicity – be it in the case of the flexion of words, the life of the organism as the antithesis of 'inorganic matter', or the productivity of labour as a measure of the value of commodities:

> This somewhat enigmatic event, this event rising up from below which occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century in these three domains, subjecting them at one blow to one and the same break (*rupture*), can now be located within the unity that forms a foundation for its diverse forms. Quite obviously, it would be superficial to seek this unity in some progress made in rationality, or in the discovery of a new cultural theme [. . .] In a more fundamental fashion, and at the level where acquired knowledge is rooted in its positivity, the event concerns, not the objects aimed at, analyzed, and explained in knowledge, not even the manner of knowing them or rationalizing them, but the relation of representation to that which is posited in it. What came into being with Adam Smith, with the first philologists, with Jussieu, Vicq d'Azyr, or Lamarck, is a minuscule but absolutely essential displacement (*un décalage infime mais absolument essentiel*), which toppled the whole of western thought: representation has lost the power to provide a foundation – with its own being, its own

deployment and its power of doubling over on itself – for the links that can join its various elements together . . . The condition of these links resides henceforth outside representation, beyond its immediate visibility, in a sort of behind-the-scenes world (*une sorte d'arrière-monde*) even deeper and more dense than representation itself . . . The very being of that which is represented is now going to fall outside representation itself. (Foucault, 2002: 238–40)

What is described here in general terms is the emergence, out of transformations and inventions that took place within the positive disciplines themselves (which are 'enigmatically' correlated in a transdisciplinary unity), of a *thing in itself* of which any 'representation' can only express partial and disjunctive aspects. We could say: beyond the 'objects' of representation, it is the 'function *thing*' that emerges simultaneously in all disciplines, subjected to the same epochal change in the organization of knowledge. But it is not the *same thing*, because Life is not Language, and Language is not Labour, even if these three essences name what must be supposed to exist 'behind-the-scenes' of visibility, in an analogous manner.

No wonder that Foucault is led to explain that it is Kant's criticism that most exactly expresses the new disposition of knowledge (because, in meta-disciplinary language, it is the manifestation of the same 'event' or 'break'), although Kant's critique was blind to the *historical* condition of its 'rational' correspondence with contemporary knowledge, for which it sought a foundation in nature – except that the 'nature' in question now is not Nature as an infinite order of beings, but the nature of 'Man' as an empirical-transcendental double. This may explain why Foucault is not busy here repeating the idea (variously illustrated in the neo-Kantian tradition) that a Kantian type of criticism provides the 'foundation' for a new science (or an extension of scientificity, beyond classical physics and mathematics, e.g. to psychology, or to culture and symbolic forms). He is busy explaining that the new transdisciplinary *episteme* that, in the end, generates the system of 'human sciences' will find a privileged expression of its philosophical contradictions in the inner tensions of Kantian criticism. And, in turn, this exquisite sensitivity of Kantianism to the tensions of an anthropological positivity (virtually: its *heresies* to come) will not be presented in terms of an internal reconstruction of the system, but rather in terms of its antithesis with another speculative anthropology, the 'natural science of man' proposed by Kant's exact contemporaries, the 'Idéologues'. The 'deep unity' underlying the formation of the new *episteme* is thus best understood in terms of a conflict between two philosophical discourses that were established during the same period, but are in fact

'non-contemporaneous'. This is also a way to conceptualize an epi-
stemic 'event', or more precisely it develops the idea of the event into
the analysis of a complex 'actuality':

> The coexistence of Ideology and critical philosophy at the end of the
> eighteenth century . . . divides, into two forms of thought, exterior to
> one another, yet simultaneous, what scientific forms of reflection,
> on the other hand, hold together in a unity doomed to imminent
> dissociation . . . We should note, however, that, in defining the
> thought of a relation by the sensation of that relation, or, in briefer
> terms, thought in general by sensation, Destutt is indeed covering,
> without emerging from it, the whole domain of representation; but
> he reaches the frontier where sensation as the primary, completely
> simple form of representation, as the minimum content of what can
> be given to thought, topples over into the domain of the physio-
> logical conditions that can provide an awareness of it . . . Analysis of
> representation, at the moment when it attains its greatest degree of
> extension, brushes with its very outermost edge a domain that is
> more or less – or rather, that will be more or less, for it does not
> exist as yet – that of a natural science of man. Different as they are
> in form, style, and aim, the Kantian question and the question of
> the 'Idéologues' have the same point of application: the relation of
> representations to each other. But Kant does not seek this rela-
> tion . . . on the level of representation . . . he questions it as to what
> renders it possible in general . . . There is thus a definite correspond-
> ence between the Kantian critique and what in the same period was
> posited as the first almost complete form of ideological analysis.
> But Ideology, by extending its reflection over the whole field of
> knowledge . . . tried to resume in the form of representation precisely
> what was being formed and re-formed outside representation . . .
> In   this   sense,   Ideology   is   the   last   of   the   Classical
> philosophies . . . Confronting Ideology, the Kantian critique, on
> the other hand, marks the threshold of our modernity; it questions
> representation, not in accordance with the endless movement that
> proceeds from the simple element to all its possible combinations,
> but on the basis of its rightful limits. Thus it sanctions for the first
> time that event in European culture which coincides with the end of
> the eighteenth century: the withdrawal of knowledge and thought
> outside the space of representation . . . In this sense, Criticism brings
> out the metaphysical dimension that eighteenth-century philosophy
> had attempted to reduce solely by means of the analysis of repre-
> sentation. But it opens up at the same time the possibility of another

metaphysics; one whose purpose will be to question, apart from representation, all that is the source and origin of representation; it makes possible those philosophies of Life, of the Will, and of the Word, that the nineteenth century is to deploy in the wake of criticism. (Foucault, 2002: 240–43)

This is clearly another point of heresy, but of the *second order*. It is destined to radiate throughout the temporal and disciplinary extension of the new *episteme*, but in a very specific form: that of adding to the internal conflicts of the modern 'opinions' a latent conflict with the old knowledge, to which some of them adhere while they nonetheless reflect the logic of the new. Strikingly, this is confirmed when we jump to later considerations on *history* (or 'historicity', as a regime of truth pervading all sciences of 'man'), and the division of 19th-century philosophies between 'eschatology' and 'positivism':

> In fact, it is a question not so much of an alternative as of a fluctuation inherent in all analysis, which brings out the value of the empirical at the transcendental level. Comte and Marx both bear out the fact that eschatology (as the objective truth proceeding from man's discourse) and positivism (as the truth of discourse defined on the basis of the truth of the object) are archaeologically indissociable: a discourse attempting to be both empirical and critical cannot but be both positivist and eschatological; man appears within it as a truth both reduced and promised. Pre-critical naïveté holds undivided rule. (Foucault, 2002: 320)

Let me comment on this statement briefly. First, it proposes another 'nasty' remark on Marxism, based on the suggestion that its 'theory of ideologies' (the core of Marxism's contribution to philosophy, or Marxism as a *new criticism*), is not only 'pre-critical', but belongs to the same kind of discourse as the theory of the 'Idéologues' (for whom Marx, as we know, as a good 'German Idealist', had only disdain). Now we may wonder if it is not partly contradictory with the previous indication that Marxism entirely belongs to the modern *episteme*, together with the political economy that it claims to 'criticize'. But perhaps it is not the same 'Marxism': Marxism as a discourse on the economy is still contemporaneous with Ricardian economics, but Marxism as a 'philosophy' (or a theory of historicity as such) appears as a regression to (or, from a different angle, a survival of) the 'pre-critical' anthropology. There is indeed a 'break' within Marxism, or a point of bifurcation that reflects transformations in the broader epistemic field; but, according to Foucault, it works exactly in the opposite direction of what, around the same period, Althusser and his group were claiming...In the context

of the discussions of the early 1960s on structures and historicity, Foucault is in fact reiterating (or appropriating?) an idea that was already there in 'structuralist Marxism': the idea that phases of transition between dominant structures are characterized by their intrinsic discrepancy or 'non-contemporaneity'. No doubt, this could remain purely tautological.

What Foucault seems to be adding (as, in fact, Althusser would do a few years later in his own way) is the idea that *the transition never ends*, or the break with classicism giving rise to modernity, which is 'radical' at the level of epistemic principles (or dispositions), is also impure or impossible in the effectivity of discourse. 'Under' the deep level of the new positivity (or perhaps intertwined and conflicting with it) there remains a latent confrontation with the old positivity of representation, discourse itself: it is presented here as a principle of regression, but it could also become actively involved in a transgression. This is exactly what we observe when Foucault (who does not think in evolutionist terms of regression vs. progression, but rather in the polemical terms of regression vs. transgression) introduces 'the return of discourse' as a *limit experience* for modernity itself.

This leads me to a third comment: the point of heresy we are discussing here is not only a more complex one, it is also one that virtually *reverses* the articulations between surface and depth, *epistemes* and 'choices', or inclusion and exclusion. It is the point where a question can be asked about possible alternatives to the great alternative (or the great divide) itself. Therefore – in Pascalian terms – a possibility must be faced that *epistemes* are not simply divided internally by some local points of heresies or secondary conflicts, but they are *caught* in the bifurcation of several fundamental modalities of thought, which are not just successive, but permanently antithetic, even if some of them are still 'to come' or in a state of 'imminence' ... It is this 'transgressive' figure of epistemological reflection according to Foucault that I want now to investigate. However, we cannot forget that its insistence in the book (particularly wherever Foucault invokes the allegoric figure of the 'place of the king', which he draws from his virtuoso analysis of Velazquez's *Las Meninas*) has nothing to do with a pure formal definition of spaces and displacements between methodologies or even rationalities. It is closely related to the 'object' or 'thing' whose domination and fragility forms the general content of modern knowledge according to Foucault, namely 'human finitude' or 'human historicity'. We must therefore now discuss his critique of anthropology in a more precise manner.

The 'Quasi-Transcendental' and the 'Anthropological Sleep'

At the core of what, in a terminology borrowed from Althusser, we could call Foucault's own version of 'theoretical anti-humanism', there lies a notion that represents a bold novelty and evokes deep resonances in

Western philosophy and culture: the 'empirical-transcendental doublet'. As we know, this doublet (which I am tempted to simply call 'ET') names a ubiquitous being or entity which should feature *at the same time on both sides* of the divide allowing us, in modern philosophy, to describe knowledge as an activity: it refers to an object among others which, on the other side, is also a faculty of representation confronting all objects (whether as a *perception* of the world, or its *construction,* or its *appropriation* by means of concepts and theories). While apparently breaking with an onto-theological tradition for which such unities of opposites exist only in God (or the Absolute), or derive from a privileged relationship to God (where Man as a 'creature' bears the resemblance of his 'creator'), modern philosophy (especially in its Kantian, critical version) would explain that this double inscription characterizes 'Man' as a generic being, which is part of Nature while also being able to perceive or conceive it as a system of objects and an idea; which, therefore is also a 'subject', or, in a more complex formulation, a moral person *bearing the universal subject* of experience. This being is not absolute at all, on the contrary it is 'finite', in a double sense: because it exists only in relation to other beings in a given external environment, as a product of evolution, and because its capacity to appropriate the world is *internally limited* (in Kantian terms: through the restrictive condition that concepts must always be 'imaginable' in sensible forms).

Foucault's innovation in the discussion of this central question in Western philosophy lies in the fact that he is not content with either accepting or rejecting it, but wants to provide a *genealogy* of its invention and content. (Incidentally, this whole discussion is one of the clearest illustrations of what Foucault means by 'genealogical inquiry', in the middle of the supposedly different 'archaeological' construction – which shows the absurdity of opposing abstractly the two 'methods'.) And although it presupposes a long tradition in Western philosophical, moral and theological discourses, the immediate instrument of his genealogy is a specific epistemological category: that of the 'quasi-transcendental(s)', or more generally the *quasi-transcendental function* of certain concepts (typically: Life, Labour, Language) which serve to unify the regions or disciplines of modern knowledge, and to identify the attributes or conditions of human nature. It is this definition and critical use of the 'hybrid' notion of the quasi-transcendental that we need to clarify first.

I spoke of an epistemological category, but this is both tautological and equivocal. Borrowing from the Kantian terminology of which Foucault is making a free or 'heretic' use, we should rather say that the quasi-transcendentals are *ideas*: the ideas of Life (or *organism*), of Language (in its twofold modality, which the French more customarily distinguishes: *langage* as capacity and *langue* or 'idiom' as institution), Labour (or better *productive labour*). According to Foucault, however, these ideas are not only 'regulative' but *constitutive* of the new positivities

of the modern age, because they are scientifically defined and empirically investigated. Foucault's thesis is nevertheless that each of them indicates an *excess of reality* (albeit each time in a different way) with respect to representation, which for that reason must remain 'uncovered'. As I indicated earlier, they name a *thing* (or a 'power') that is *supposed* or *anticipated* as a 'real' beyond representable reality itself. We may conclude that the three ideas are constitutive because they stand *on the limit* of the representable, from where they prescribe its organization in an analogous manner. But then the question inevitably arises: what do they have in common? Why do they contribute to the emergence of a single *episteme*, as if expressing some latent 'event' which would be the same for them all? Here we must be very careful, because Foucault's answer is a complex one, 'repeating' something of the critical tradition only to be able, in the end, to criticize it from the inside. The answer is *not* that they form part or express aspects of a single *superior idea*, which would be *the idea of 'Man'* (or the Human), as if Foucault had reformulated the famous Kantian typology of 'transcendental questions', simply suggesting that the three questions: What is Life? What is Language? What is Labour? must be subsumed under a fourth one – What is Man? – which would be the ultimate question, bearing the capacity to endow the new *episteme* with its essential *transdisciplinary function* (a function without which, as we know, the very idea of *episteme* is deprived of epistemological interest).

'Man' is *not* the deep source of the new epistemic figure, it is rather the 'surface effect', not to say the *mirage* of the epistemic transformation, and in particular it is not what really unifies the 'human sciences', but only what the human sciences project as their common ideal object. One is tempted to say their common *opinion*. However, this only displaces the question, because there *must exist* nevertheless a transdisciplinary notion that traverses or 'intersects with' all the sciences (of Life, Language, Labour), in order to induce the anthropological question and install the idea of Man as a common horizon. I believe that, from Foucault's point of view, this transdisciplinary notion is *historicity,* or even better, *historicity articulated within the horizon of finitude* (since Foucault never claimed that knowledge had been unaware of history or historicity before the modern age). We may therefore summarize this first understanding of the function of quasi-transcendentals in the following manner:

- they unify each discipline around its constitutive problem, which is to investigate the phenomena of Life, or Language, or Labour as manifestations of a finite (or conditioned, contingent) 'historical' power (of permanent transformation);
- they involve a new transdisciplinarity (or the emergence of a common *episteme*), not inasmuch as their concepts and experimental procedures would be 'isomorphic', appearing as so many translations or realizations of the same

formalism, but inasmuch as they point towards a similar investigation, regarding the 'constitutive histories' of Life, Labour, Language;

- they manifest historicity at the same time as a 'law' of the object (living organisms are subjected to processes of development and evolution, language is a permanent invention of idioms and grammatical forms, economy is a cumulative change in the productivity of labour and modes of production) and the *constitutive* ideal in which a certain 'mode of being' is reflected, which all the positivities have in common, but whose meaning lies beyond them, as a concealed 'power' behind the scene. Let us remark that this is already a 'circle', which could easily become a form of epistemological 'sleep'.

At this point, however, Foucault exhibits a possible bifurcation (therefore a latent point of heresy, which is exemplified in the history of philosophical systems): the constitutive circle can be elaborated in two different ways. Quasi-transcendental ideas could become *foundations* for new metaphysical systems, each in its own right: metaphysics of Life, metaphysics of Language, or even metaphysics of Labour (or production: Marxist 'dialectical materialism'). This would mean that each of the quasi-transcendentals emerges in turn as a *Name of Being* as such, for which the others represent only secondary or partial expressions. We know that this actually exists, but Foucault submits that it is not the dominant or characteristic tendency within the modern *episteme*: both because it tends to obliterate the real difference of positivities (or negate the empiricity of the sciences, which goes along with their pluralism), therefore nullifying the very question of transdisciplinarity; and because it amounts, in fact, to transmuting the *historical finitude* which they have in common, or which they project as a common horizon, into renewed figures of the Absolute. For this reason, the 'choice' operated by the modern *episteme* (or its dominant, most typical orientation) must be the opposite one: not a regression towards metaphysics, but a redoubling of the 'quasi-transcendental' itself, or a reformulation of the 'circle' in the form of a relation in a mirror, whereby the historicity of the empirical sciences is 'founded' in the *finitude* of a transcendental subject ('Man' as a limited power of knowledge), while the finitude on the side of the objects (their material limitations and contingency) imposes a 'constitutive historicity' on the (human) subject itself. To describe this circularity is precisely the function of the 'analytic of finitude', and it is at this point that the definition of the quasi-transcendentals becomes the elucidation of the 'anthropological' function of the empirical-transcendental doublet, which not only presents itself as a crystallization of an epistemological circularity (being at the same time founding and founded, originary and derived, etc.), but as 'ontologically' *consisting in a circle*, since it is at the same time *subject and object*. This is a paradox from the logical point of view, or perhaps an absurdity from a rigorous 'critical' perspective which wants to distinguish the two functions, but it is the very core of the promotion of 'Man' as the founding idea of its own 'sciences': at the

same time their general 'object' of investigation and the ultimate 'subject' of their development.

Quasi-transcendentals all involve the same identification of historicity with a finitude which cannot be reduced to the lack or the retreat of the infinite (as it used to be thought in the 'classical' philosophical systems),[10] but must be conceived as self-limitation, or a relationship of the finite being *with itself* which remains affected with some unthinkable intrinsic otherness. Nevertheless, it is not the case that they *equally* contribute to a critique of the critique. In fact, there emerges an extraordinary dissymmetry and difference of interest for Foucault between the cases of Life, Language, and Labour; and therefore the corresponding disciplines of biology, philology, and economy. Only language radically exhibits the relationship of the empirical-transcendental doublet to its intrinsic otherness (or the necessary relation of any *cogito* to the unthought) in a manner that breaks the anthropological circle, or disturbs the anthropological 'sleep'. In other terms, language has an intrinsic relationship to the unthought and a capacity to manifest the instability of finitude that neither life nor labour possess, because language has an intrinsic relationship *at the same time* with the sciences ('knowledge') and a certain literature. This is a position proper to Foucault at the time of *The Order of Things,* also strongly asserted in such contemporary essays as 'The Thought of (from) the Outside' (1966 – a tribute to Blanchot and a commentary of the capacity of literature to destroy the mastery of the subject). This will not be maintained in the same terms throughout Foucault's career, and in this sense there will be a shift in the genealogical project itself. This is an idea that seems to me more interesting than the more simple one that Foucault exchanged an 'archaeology' for a 'genealogy'. In *The Order of Things* it is implicitly based on the supposition that the Kantian philosophy was prevented from uncovering within its own project a more radical possibility of critique by the fact that it stubbornly maintained the primacy of the 'I think', or did not substitute the 'I think' with an 'I speak'. This should return it to the limitations of the anthropological discourse even before it could begin to question them – an idea that Foucault had elaborated since his early work on Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which remained unpublished at the time, but is now available (Foucault, 2008). We can comment on this critical function of language as follows.

Foucault calls the 'human sciences' that would ultimately contribute to unsettling the idea of the human, 'counter-sciences' (Foucault, 2002: 378–80). They represent a *point of heresy* of the second order within the field of the human sciences. Two of them are explicitly identified and discussed: first, 'psychoanalysis' (in terms which strangely combine Foucault's own reflections on the 'limit-experiences', where death and madness are destroying the communicative function of language, with quasi-Lacanian considerations on the articulation of the Law, desire and

language, which forms the structure of the unconscious and commands the possibility of the cure (see Foucault, 2002: 375); and second, 'ethnology' (in terms which directly evoke a structuralist problematic *à la Lévi-Strauss*[11] and connect it to a critique of the 'colonial' dimension of western culture – one of the very few 'political' indications in *The Order of Things*). Of course, they share a capacity to push 'finitude' to the recognition of its own constitutive limits, inasmuch as their 'object' becomes the *unthought* itself, whose indeterminate alterity is also incompatible with any rational or empirical construction of the human as a 'subject'. But clearly this capacity does not result (or only virtually) from the traditional definitions of psychoanalysis as a psychological and medical technique, or ethnology as a form of sociology applied to the 'primitive' societies. It is entirely linked to the 'structuralist' recasting operated by contemporary theorists such as Lacan and Lévi-Strauss, who have recognized the primacy of language within their own fields, and adopted a scientific model provided by structural linguistics. This takes us to the most difficult question – the one that also involves Foucault's extremely strange *oblique* (not to say perverse) relationship to structuralism as an epistemological program in these years, which was largely perceived as an 'extension' of linguistic structuralism towards anthropological disciplines, in the broad sense.[12] Should we say that, for Foucault, linguistics is the 'counter-science' *par excellence*? And does it, from that point of view, provide something like a principle of 'transgressive transdisciplinarity', i.e. a critical idea that crosses the boundaries of disciplines, as they progressively adopt a model that was first developed by linguists, refuting historicism and manifesting a new, subversive, understanding of finitude itself?

The answer seems to be explicitly yes, in the first instance, witness the development, immediately preceding the final considerations on the 'near end' of the 'figure of man':

> Whereupon there is formed the theme of a pure theory of language which would provide the ethnology and the psychoanalysis thus conceived with their formal model. There would thus be a discipline that could cover in a single movement both the dimension of ethnology that relates the human sciences to the positivities in which they are framed and the dimension of psychoanalysis that relates the knowledge of man to the finitude that gives it its foundation. In linguistics, one would have a science perfectly founded in the order of positivities exterior to man...which, after traversing the whole space of the human sciences, would encounter the question of finitude (since it is through language, and within it, that thought is able to think: so that it is in itself a positivity with the value of a fundamental). Above ethnology and psychoanalysis, or, more

exactly, interwoven with them, a third 'counter-science' would appear to traverse, animate, and disturb the whole constituted field of the human sciences . . . it would form the most general contestation of that field. Like the two other counter-sciences, it would make visible, in a discursive mode, the frontier-forms of the human sciences; like them, it would situate its experience in those enlightened and dangerous regions where the knowledge of man acts out, in the form of the unconscious and of historicity, its relation with what renders them possible. In 'exposing' it, these three counter-sciences threaten the very thing that made it possible for man to be known. Thus we see the destiny of man being spun before our very eyes, but being spun backwards . . . And is that not one way of bringing about its end? For linguistics no more speak of man himself than do psychoanalysis and ethnology. (Foucault, 2002: 381)

But ultimately, this is not the case – and the reason why Foucault writes in the conditional tense. Or it is the case *only* on the condition that structural (or *formal*) linguistics 'communicates' with another way of 'de-subjectivizing' the use and the meaning of language, becoming itself subverted by it: not the science that *masters language,* but the knowledge that *lets itself be subjected* by the 'sovereignty' of language. That *other de-subjectivation* is provided by literature in its modernist, anti-humanist understanding, whose theory and practice is understood to have been initiated by Mallarmé and accomplished by Blanchot.[13] Otherwise, the 'return of language' in contemporary discourse would be nothing other than *a return to the 'order of discourse'* (which was also the order of representation), which dominated the *episteme* of the classical age – even if in an abstract or formal manner. (This is something that many 'structuralists' or formal linguists gladly admitted at the time, when they discovered the affinities between their semantic and syntactic structures and the models of the *Grammaire générale* or 'Cartesian Linguistics'.) This is a crucial indication, because it shows that – in the same place, at the same 'point' – not two, but three possibilities are offered: (i) a continuation of the 'anthropological sleep' (or a development of the human sciences on the continuous assumption that their 'subject-object' is *Man*, the empirical-transcendental being); (ii) an 'anachronistic' reconstitution of the Order of Discourse in the guise of formalized anthropological discipline (which could perhaps appear, with respect to the classical models of representation, as a 'fusion' of *mathesis* and *taxonomia*, in the restored horizon of universality); (iii) an enigmatic (and perhaps aporetic) critique of criticism, or a new 'analytic of finitude', where it is not the normality of the human that is considered the rational object of science, but the 'excessive powers' or extremities announced by Nietzsche which erase

the subject (or its foundational, 'sovereign' place), with the help of a new *coincidentia oppositorum,* the contemporary encounter of formalization and literature. 'Structuralism' is not the answer, rather it is the stake, because its concept is torn between the last two possibilities, and in fact indicates their antagonism. But in any case, it rules out historicism – which seems to mean also history.

Foucault's section on 'History' in the last chapter of the book is remarkably convoluted because it is aiming at two targets at the same time. Given that 'historicity' was this transdisciplinary idea which could be retrieved (in specific, but analogous manners) in every modern science (as historicity of Life, historicity of Language, historicity of Labour), thus making it possible to constitute the anthropological 'doublet' by defining the subject itself as 'historical being', there is a necessity to demonstrate that finitude can be thought beyond historicity, or rather *beneath* historicity, in the form of its excesses or extremities. And, in fact, what the unconscious, or the violence of madness, or the limit-experience of death formally have in common is their 'a-historical' character, at least from the point of view of the 'laws of history' (which are the laws of progress, or evolution, of organization). Better said, it is the uncovering of *another historicity* (later, as we know, called that of the 'event', but the term already plays a crucial role in *The Order of Things* in 'disposing' of the figures of knowledge), which is neither objective nor subjective. But there is also a necessity to demonstrate that history as such (as a discipline) cannot become a 'counter-science' in its own right, a thesis which seems in sharp contrast with what Foucault will propose later (rather soon, in fact, but in a completely different intellectual and political conjuncture), when he will retrieve in the archives and appropriate for himself the notion of a 'counter-history', which bears at least a formal resemblance to the 'counter-sciences' (Foucault, 2003). In this moment, I submit, the demonstration takes the double form of showing that there can exist no such thing as a 'structural history', and that the internal critique of anthropology takes the form of a *reconstruction,* involving a preliminary *dissociation* of the motives of historicity and finitude, which made it possible to construct the empirical-transcendental doublet. The latter is an implicit rejoinder to a Heideggerian notion of *Dasein* that would avoid any anthropological recuperation (as in Heidegger's own mixtures of *Ek-sistenz* and *Sorge* with community or authenticity). The former obviously, once again, includes a refutation of the Althusserian program of a structuralist-Marxist 'science of history' (or structuralist theory of social formations) – another very clear indication of polemical intentions. They do not *define* which 'place' Foucault wanted to institute for the epistemological 'choice' (or choices) that he allegorically covered with the repetition of Nietzsche's prophecy about the 'death of man' (following the 'death of God', or even identical with it). But they indicate in which strategic field the construction of his own '*point of heresy*' must be located.

The Place of the King

At the beginning of Chapter IX ('Man and His Doubles'), Foucault installed a section called 'The Place of the King', which begins to explain why the idea/figure of 'Man' should be absent from the construction of the classical *episteme* (qua Order of Representation, where the adequacy of Thinking and Being is assumed as an effect of the transparency of Discourse), but necessarily *present* (or even *omnipresent*) in the construction of the modern *episteme* (qua generalized historicization of knowledge, where the human is at the same time the effect of all objective transformations and the source of a reflexive idea of history). This involves in particular a discussion of the difference between a 'natural concept of man' and a 'concept of human nature', and a reiteration of the Cartesian *cogito*, where 'I think' and 'I am' are immediately identified, without any anthropological mediation. But the same section – hence its title – includes a return to the theme of the elusive sovereign of representation, as it had been allegorically presented in the opening chapter of the book, through the interpretation of Velazquez's picture, *Las Meninas*. This return plays a very disturbing role. Although Foucault proposes it in a strangely detached tone – not deprived of some *coquetterie* or intellectual dandyism – what it suggests is that the two *epistemes* must delineate (as their internal *limit* or perspective) *the same place* (the 'place of the king', or the sovereign place of the sovereign) – except that, in the first case, the place remains *empty* (or is a pure void), whereas, in the second, it is *occupied* or *filled* (even by a paradoxical 'double' figure). How can the two *epistemes* be radically distinct, if they contain the same 'place', or can be subjected to the same perspective? How can the two 'places' be 'the same', or isomorphic, involving the possibility of such a binary alternative (empty vs. filled, or negatively vs. positively defined), if a radical mutation had taken place, whereby the very construction of knowledge changed, so that each knowledge offered to the other only the 'absurd' meanings of a Borgesian 'Chinese encyclopaedia'?

There are different ways indeed to reflect on this difficulty. For the sake of brevity, I will leave aside considerations that resort either to the 'history of ideas' or the 'history of philosophy', because they do not suffice to resolve the *formal* problem, which articulates a strategic with an epistemological dimension. We could draw the attention to the fact that the 'absent sovereign' in the first presentation of the picture is a *king* (immediately redoubled, it is true, with an *artist*, the painter himself), whereas the 'present subject' in the new age of knowledge announced by this allegoric repetition is an ordinary (or generic, collective) *man*. This consideration cannot be neglected if one believes that there is no innocent signifier, but it might be misleading in interpreting Foucault's *dispositive*, because it might bifurcate towards the idea that, after all, the succession

of the classical and modern *epistemes* expresses a social and political transformation which leads from an implicitly monarchic order towards a republican humanism. This is certainly not what Foucault wanted to explain, even at a symbolic level. But it could take us in the direction of another interpretation, which would explain that an 'absent sovereign' is in fact a name for God, therefore what the allegory suggests is that the classical order of representation (or positive infinity displayed in the rationality of discourse) is 'haunted' by the absence of God (a Pascalian theme). And it is only when this absence becomes *visible* as such that God can be 'incarnated' again, albeit not as Himself, but as a purely finite being. This would not be uninteresting, if we want to understand why Foucault in the end chose to replicate Nietzsche's 'death of God' in the form of the 'death of Man', rather than, for example, following Feuerbachian and Marxian schemes of the 'secularization' of theology in modern culture. But it is an allegory to interpret another allegory, whereas what we need to explain is the play of visibility and invisibility itself.

I draw a first indication from an essay by John Rajchman on 'Foucault's Art of Seeing' that discusses the relationship between the archaeology of *epistemes* and the question of *visibilities* (in the wake of Deleuze's idea that Foucault should be considered 'a seer' or *voyant*):

> The visual thinking of a period would thus have a positive organization. But the organization is not rooted in keeping something concealed. As Foucault came to realize, the 'classical' way of making madness visible was not based on the repression or concealment of the true way of seeing it. The conceptual scheme that determines what can be seen is, in the phrase of the *Archaeology,* 'invisible but not hidden'. The visibility of a period may be invisible to it, but not as something hidden or kept from sight. What is invisible is just the light which illuminates things or makes them visible. (Rajchman, 1988: 92–3)

This would suggest that there are two symmetric problems involved in comparing the 'perspectives' of the age of representation and the modern age of historicity, qua perspectives *on the organization of knowledge* itself: a problem about what renders a certain invisibility visible, and a problem about what renders a certain visibility (or presence) invisible. They cannot be treated separately, since they are the two sides of the same 'closure' of knowledge. But what Rajchman is discussing here is still essentially a relationship between a given *visibilité* (or an epistemic 'space of visibility') and its 'objects' or internal phenomena (however 'abnormal' they may be, as in the case of 'madness' for instance).

In order to jump from there to a question *of the second order*, which would be the question of the 'invisible' relationship between antithetic

regimes of visibility themselves, we may complement these indications with Vinciguerra's recent work, *La representation excessive* (2013). This is a book that with great precision and novelty deals with the relationship between the construction of objectivity and the developments of geometry in the works of Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Pascal – moving back, therefore, from the field of *taxonomia* to that of *mathesis universalis*. In his concluding remarks, Vinciguerra addresses the same puzzle about the epistemological 'ubiquity' of the 'place of the king', which Foucault's analysis of the Velazquez painting had first identified as a representation of the conditions of representation themselves:

> In this place, at the same time empty and attractive, Foucault then wanted...to find, as in a palimpsest, the image of 19th century Man...that a new *episteme* will make the core of its knowledge. How come that this subject-object, which breaks with the transparency of Discourse...could be offered to visibility by classical philosophy, in a picture that would appear as a miraculous tearing apart of its own thinking? (Vinciguerra, 2013: 164)

He then argues that there is a contradiction between the idea that *epistemes* are radically discontinuous, and the idea that the 'central figure' of the new *episteme* could be 'already there' within the old one, even in the form of absence. Unless one supposes that, in fact, there are not 'two epistemes', but *a single one*, albeit one with two 'faces', or two antithetic regimes of visibility: one for the absence and one for the presence of the 'king'. This means that the 'revolutionary' event taking place in the middle, which the conflict between Kant and the Ideologues contributes to highlight, is a *reversal,* not an irreversibility. However, following Vinciguerra, this hypothesis of the deep unity underlying the transition from classicism to modernity– implying that Foucault never wanted to simply propose something like a *succession of epistemes* ordered in time: what I called above a paradoxical *historicist critique of historicism* – leads to heavy and unacceptable assumptions. They are heavy, because the idea becomes reintroduced that there is a 'philosophical standpoint' from which the *disjunctive unity* of the two correlative *epistemes* (of representation and history, order and finitude, etc.) can be seen or made 'visible': something like a 'hyper-epistemic' point of view, not to say an Absolute knowledge. They are unacceptable, because the consequence will be that *specific epistemes* or rationalities cannot be analysed in terms of their own positive (transdisciplinary) rules of construction (as, after *The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* would insist again), but will remain suspended on some *negative* play of differences (Vinciguerra, 2013: 172). With these remarks, we are on a good track, but I want to propose a variation, which modifies the conclusion.

   I think that 'points of heresy' of different orders must be distinguished. Foucault is not discussing the same differences or discursive conflicts when he distinguishes bifurcations or oppositions which are meaningful within a given rationality, but not outside it, and when he identifies the latent conflict that makes visible for a certain regime of knowledge what is invisible in another one – even if, as we have seen, there are 'choices' which move from the centre of the *episteme* towards its constitutive *limits*, thus approaching a reversal of its perspective, or a subversion of its rationality, creating for it a danger of disruption. Further, the 'place of the king' is indeed an allegory, through which Foucault attempts to think, not the 'unthinkable', but the impossible: a representation of certain objects or a formulation of certain epistemic questions in a rationality for which they cannot 'exist'. But, *pace* Vinciguerra, in order to 'problematize' this thinking of the impossible, there is no need to create an equivalent of the absolute knowledge or to install in the position of the philosophical *synoptikos* a 'theory of theories', an epistemic hyperspace. It is only a question of *reaching the limit* and, as it were, staying at the limit to analyse or describe it 'as an outside', by *turning outwards its inside*. This is, in Foucault's perspective, a matter of choice or decision, rather than theory, even if it is based on careful description and archival work.

   But there is more. An additional dialectical twist can be brought to this configuration of choice, as our discussion of the 'counter-sciences' and their problematic relationship to the unthought should have indicated. To reach this limit is not to find oneself oscillating indefinitely between two epistemic possibilities, to remain enclosed in the symmetry of the existing closures (representation, anthropology). On the contrary, it is to discover a 'point of heresy' that is in fact a *triple point*, where the third, the 'neuter' that is *neither one nor the other* can be, at least, anticipated, or even 'read' in the transgressive moments of existing knowledge. Allegorically, this triple point is one where it can be a question not only of 'choosing' between God (or Nature) and Man, but of anticipating the Overman, as Nietzsche called the neuter. Philosophically, or epistemologically, this triple point is one where a 'return of language' that was carried on by the development of philology and linguistics themselves, but above all by the literary 'externalization of thought', confers upon the human sciences the possibility of breaking the circle of their own constitutive paralogism. Strategically, this triple point is one where the vacillation of pre-existing *epistemes* or models of rationality does not open so much the perspective of a *new age for knowledge* (as some 'structuralists' and particularly some 'Marxists' seem to have believed), as the possibility of *thinking otherwise*, in the light of their own alterity, that which historical knowledge had subjected to quasi-transcendental ideas. This is something that, strangely, seems closer to a notion of 'deconstruction' than to a notion of 'epistemological break'. Foucault's

ambitious 'book of philosophy', *The Order of Things*, was probably not purely in his opinion a way to 'discover' this point of heresy. It was rather an attempt at constructing it, in order to be able to 'occupy' it and speak from there. Whether this point – the 'place of the king', where not only the king himself, or his painter, but also an equally absent but even more insistent spectator, 'seer', could come – would appear to him as a place to stay or to work from for long is another matter. The triple point thus acquires a decisive function at two different levels (but its allegorization as 'the place of the king' also shows why the two levels cannot remain epistemologically separated): it is the point from which, ultimately, the transdisciplinary effect of scientific discoveries concerning Life, Language and Labour can become intelligible. It is also the point that – when reached or anticipated – makes it possible to question the 'disciplinary order' itself. *Coincidentia oppositorum*, once again.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. See the recent study by Vinciguerra (2013), from which, at the end of this essay, I will borrow an important clue.
2. The two points are linked, of course, since the thesis of a radical discontinuity between *epistemes* forces Foucault to explain that 'anticipations' of evolutionist or historicist ideas in the classical age, where the dominant model is order, not change, are meaningless from the epistemological point of view. See the discussion of his interpretation of the relationship between Lamarck, Cuvier and Darwin, at the colloquium organized by Georges Canguilhem after the publication of *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1971).
3. On at least one subsequent occasion, on which he returns to these themes, Foucault will call it a '*choix originel*', in the sense of 'choosing a new origin', either in the field of philosophy or scientific knowledge, or both (therefore 'culture'). See the interview with T. Shimizu and M. Watanabe (Foucault, 2001).
4. See the preface to *The Order of Things*: 'This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.'
5. See Foucault's preface to the French translation of Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Cassirer, 1966). On the meaning and progressive construction of the 'historical a priori' between *The Birth of the Clinic, The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (where a whole section – III.§4 – is devoted to its definition), see Courtine (2007).

6. See Sardinha (2011).
7. In the subsequent *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1967), which expands and complicates a discussion with the members of the 'Cercle d'Epistémologie', initially published in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* (see the critical edition online by Peter Hallward and Knox Peden, http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/), Foucault exclusively uses 'point of choice', and provides a somewhat more formal definition, which retains only what I describe here as the first meaning in *The Order of Things*
8. The founding treatise is Iraeneus's *Against Heresies* (c. 180). See Danielou and Marrou (1965).
9. Sometime later, in 1969, but in the same spirit, Foucault proposed a systematic analysis of the 'author function'. See 'What is an Author?' (Foucault, 1979).
10. Here Foucault is almost certainly expanding on formulations about the 'positive infinity' of Cartesian and post-Cartesian metaphysics proposed by Merleau-Ponty in *Signs* (1964 [1960]).
11. 'It studies (both by systematic choice and because of the lack of documents) the structural invariables of cultures rather than the succession of events' (Foucault, 2002: 376). On page 379, Lévi-Strauss himself is quoted as saying that 'ethnology dissolves man', and the thesis is extended to psychoanalysis.
12. This point, of course, remains hotly disputed; see Milner (2008).
13. 'By a much longer and much more unexpected path, we are led back to the place that Nietzsche and Mallarmé signposted when the first asked: Who speaks?, and the second saw his glittering answer in the Word itself. The question as to what language is in its being is once more of the greatest urgency... And it is indeed in this space thus revealed that literature, first with surrealism (though still in a very much disguised form), then, more and more purely, with Kafka, Bataille, and Blanchot, posited itself as experience: as experience of death (and in the element of death), of unthinkable thought (and in its inaccessible presence), of repetition (of original innocence, always there at the nearest and yet always the most distant limit of language); as experience of finitude (trapped in the opening and the tyranny of that finitude)' (Foucault, 2002: 382–4). Sabot (2006: 144, sv.) rightly suggests the idea of a 'literary counter-discourse', but in doing so, he leaves aside the function of the 'counter-sciences' and their epistemic relationship to the linguistic model – in other words, the intrinsic relationship of *The Order of Things* with the discussion of structuralism.

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Logics of Generalization: Derrida, Grammatology and Transdisciplinarity

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Abstract
This article seeks to explore some issues regarding the different modes of generality at stake in the formation of transdisciplinary concepts within the production of 'theory' in the humanities and social sciences. Focused around Jacques Derrida's seminal account of 'writing' in his 1967 book *Of Grammatology*, the article outlines what it defines as a logic of generalization at stake in Derrida's elaborations of a quasi-transcendental 'inscription in general'. Starting out from the questions thereby raised about the relationship between such forms of generality and those historically ascribed to philosophy, the article concludes by contrasting Derrida's generalized writing with more recent returns to 'metaphysics' in the work of Bruno Latour and others. Against the immediately 'ontological' orientation of much recent 'new materialist' or 'object-oriented' thought, the article argues for the necessity of 'different levels of writing in general' through a continual folding back of absolute generalization into historically specific disciplinary crossings and exchanges; something suggested by but never really developed in Derrida's own work.

In the Preface to *A Singular Modernity* (2002), Fredric Jameson observes that 'we have begun in the last few years' to witness a series of phenomena 'that suggest the return to all kinds of old things':

> one of the great achievements of…'theory' or theoretical discourse…was surely to have discredited 'philosophy' in the traditional disciplinary sense, and to have stimulated a proliferation of

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new kinds of thinking and new kinds of conceptual writing...[but]
now we begin to witness the return of traditional philosophy all over
the world, beginning with its hoariest subfields such as ethics; can
metaphysics be far behind, one wonders...if not theology itself?
(Jameson, 2002: 1–2)[1]

While Jameson's assertion that such 'regressions' are happening 'all over
the world' speaks to a parochialism that was always implicit in his
master-concept of postmodernism, this passage testifies to something
like a 'structure of feeling' that is hard to deny. It is not the intention
of this article to open up, yet again, the question of whether we now
inhabit some purportedly *post*-Theory moment. Nonetheless, it does
seem productive to readdress at least some of the complexities of the
relations between 'philosophy' and those 'new kinds of conceptual writ-
ing' identified here with 'theory' in light of the latter's genealogy and
ongoing legacy today.

Such a relation has, of course, always been in part a question of
translation. As the editors of one recent collection, *Theory After
'Theory'*, write – without in any way interrogating the actual terms at
stake – 'the heyday of "Theory" is associated with a moment of energy
and excitement fuelled in the English-speaking world by the production
and translation of works by the seminal figures of post-war French phil-
osophy' (Elliott and Attridge, 2011: 1). Insofar then as Theory, in its
Anglophone form, was constituted through its displacement of what
Jameson calls '"philosophy" in the traditional disciplinary sense', the
fact it should find its 'fuel' in figures who could still be themselves
described *as* philosophers evidently complicates any simple account of
the relation between the two. This article considers some questions con-
cerning this relationship, largely from the side of French thought itself.
In particular, it seeks to explore some issues regarding the different *modes
of generality* – and their different range or levels – at stake in the forma-
tion of concepts within and across the production of 'theory' in the
humanities and social sciences. Its principal frame can be found in a
long, and notoriously 'impolite', response by Jacques Derrida to the
American philosopher John Searle, in which Derrida insists that far
from having the 'intention of distinguishing between writing and
speech', as Searle supposed, the point of his work was actually to
'*generalize[d]* certain predicates usually attributed to writing in order
to show that they are *also* valid for spoken language, *and even beyond
it*' (Derrida, 1988: 46, emphases added). It is the question of how to
understand the logic of such 'generalization' – a 'generalized writing'
or 'inscription in general' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 55, 9), articulated
most fully in *Of Grammatology* – and its relationship to the traditional
claim of philosophy to be *the* theoretical discourse of 'the general' that
will be central in the pages that follow.

This is, no doubt, a somewhat self-consciously 'untimely' gesture. For if by common consent it was Derrida who most consistently set the orientation of Anglophone theory's heyday in the 1980s and 1990s, 'our' own theoretical present is one that has tended to be defined as precisely post-Derridean or post-deconstructive in character. It is Derrida who has, in various forms of new materialist, vitalist or 'object-oriented' thought, provided a common point of reference for the rather vaguely defined background against which the theoretical novelty attributed to such thought stands out. Typically presented without any citation from (or indeed seeming engagement with) Derrida's actual texts, Rosi Braidotti's assertion that a contemporary 'posthumanism' embodies, above all, a move beyond the 'deconstructive brand of social constructivism introduced by post-structuralist thinkers like Jacques Derrida', marked by the 'limitations of its linguistic frame of reference', is exemplary (Braidotti, 2013: 24, 30). And it would certainly not be hard to show from even a cursory encounter with Derrida's writings that such a lazily received description is demonstrably false. Nonetheless, my interest is less in providing an accurate account of Derrida's work in this respect than it is in tracking a logic of generalization, not in fact unrelated to what Braidotti terms the 'posthuman', that can be located within that work itself: a logic which, from the perspective of a characteristic identification of deconstruction as *the* dominant moment of a so-called poststructuralism, invites the further question of how we might re-approach this apparently outmoded term today. This is not to say that such a concept was ever an adequate one. Nonetheless, I want strategically to privilege it here, if only retrospectively, to the extent that one of my central claims will be that it is precisely as a certain 'really existing' *model of transdisciplinarity* that structuralism can be understood, historically, to acquire a particular critical significance in Derrida's work, so complicating the 'philosophical' dimensions of that work itself.

Practically speaking, this was doubtless because, as one commentator puts it, structuralism 'was a vehicle that carried Derrida's ideas to the broadest possible audience and allowed him to contribute to debates about Marxism, psychoanalysis, and ethnology' in France and beyond (Baring, 2011: 2); a common language that organized the 'liaison between psychoanalysis, linguistics, history of science and epistemology that constituted this singular moment in philosophy' (Yves Duroux cited in Baring, 2011: 277). Yet this is not only a question of audience or influence. More fundamentally, it concerns a 'debate' over the ways in which different forms of conceptual generality are understood to be constructed according to a form of generalization that intrinsically *exceeds* existing disciplinary divisions in the very nature of construction itself, for which the examples of Marxism and psychoanalysis (neither exactly 'disciplines' in the usual institutional sense) have a particular historical importance. If, in this sense, as Peter Osborne has argued, '[u]nexamined

transdisciplinary dynamics motivate and energize many of the "great books" of postwar European theory', including *Of Grammatology* (Osborne, 2011a: 15), these invite reexamination via a consideration of the most general concepts produced there – writing, the text, the supplement, but also rhizome (Alliez, 2011), episteme (Foucault, 1970), power (Foucault, 1990: 93), and so on – and, in particular, via the role of such 'dynamics' *within* their construction and elaboration. It is, in this way, the precise nature of the 'excess' claimed over disciplinarity by such concepts – for which, of course, the 'transcendental' *could* be another name[2] – that opens up a broader question of the relation between philosophy and the modes of generality found in other 'kinds of conceptual writing', including those that Jameson associates with 'Theory'.

Philosophy, Disciplinarity and the General

From the perspective of a deconstruction of presence, as Samuel Weber notes, *all* disciplinary 'demarcation' is 'ambivalent' since it 'simultaneously entail[s] exclusions and incorporations, which render the system constitutively dependent on factors it cannot integrate or comprehend'. There is an irreducible reference to, and hence contamination by, any discipline's 'exterior' necessary to establishing that very difference constitutive of its identity as a 'self-contained body of investigative procedures and of knowledge' (Weber, 1987: 145, 19, 147). Yet if this contamination is indeed generalized, in practice it does not unsettle all disciplines equally or in quite the same way. For philosophy cannot in this regard be considered as simply one discipline among others. The resultant complexity may thus be situated, up to a point, within the far broader problematic of the disciplinary autonomy of philosophy itself since the early 19th century – one in which it finds itself increasingly put 'on a stage that it does not govern' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 50), and in which it is thereby opened up to other discourses as a condition of its ongoing (im)possibility.

The consequences of such loss of sovereignty remain a persistent concern across almost all of Derrida's writings – hence, for example, the opening of 'Violence and Metaphysics', with its assertion that 'the only questions today capable of founding the community of those who are still called philosophers' would be those concerning 'problems put to philosophy as problems philosophy cannot resolve' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 79). It is, however, probably most explicitly taken up in a 'sheaf' of texts written in the latter half of the 1970s and the 1980s, and collected together under the title *The Right to Philosophy*, where it is framed in terms of what is described as 'a paradoxically indissociable couple: the hegemony/death of philosophy' – a modern doubling irreducibly linked to 'the relation between philosophy and [other] fields of knowledge as this relation has been established in the model of the

university institution' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 197, 212). Most important is what must thus appear, according to Derrida, as an irreducibly *paradoxical* conception of the 'space' occupied by philosophical disciplinarity itself. In *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), Kant attempts to relegitimate philosophy's claim to stand theoretically over the other disciplines, despite its historical loss of territory to them, by virtue of its claim to 'a freedom of judgement' over questions of truth as opposed to a concern for 'utility'. Yet Kant's assertion that such 'freedom' just is the 'unconditioned condition' of university autonomy also means that this 'unconditioned condition *is* nothing other than philosophy'. As a result, Kant's attempt to 'mark off the juridical borders' immanent to the university can only result in an internally-divided conception of philosophy as that which, simultaneously, occupies the institutional space of one *specific* department, faculty or discipline, while also constituting the very essence or absolutely *general* 'theoretical concept' of the university space as a whole (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 105–6). Historically, it is the paradoxical nature of this 'topological perspective' – at once transcendental and regional – that identifies an emergent problem which will only intensify once what Kant identifies as the two departments of philosophy – the historical sciences (including the 'empirical knowledge contained in the natural sciences') and 'pure rational knowledge' (including mathematics) – come themselves to separate off over the course of the 19th century. In particular, it raises a number of questions about the role played by philosophy in its guise as a kind of *super*-discipline of 'generalized translation', as Derrida puts it, with regard to those 'differences' constitutive of the general field of disciplinarity itself.

In part, then, a question of 'absolute' generality appears as 'internal' to the post-Kantian development of modern philosophy *tout court* – one thinks, particularly, of the Husserlian distinction between formal ontology (transcendentally applicable to the 'object in general') and the various regional or 'material' disciplines, as well as, more complexly, the Heideggerian re-opening of 'the question of being in general, beyond all regional ontologies and all metaphysics': a question that 'broaches philosophy . . . and lets itself be taken over by philosophy' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 20–1). But it is also directly connected, in a rather different way, to the broader intellectual context from which Derrida's own early writings emerged, and, in particular, to the 'deconstructive' implications of structuralism (as well as psychoanalysis) in the 1960s, in so far as these constituted themselves precisely as 'non-philosophical' forms of intellectual work that could no longer be viewed as 'simple regional science[s]', but instead claimed their own 'generality' and 'a controlling meaning with regard to all local science' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 88). Hence, even if 'modern linguistics remains completely enclosed within a classical conceptuality', *Of Grammatology* notes, it can 'no longer . . . be circumscribed as ontic science and regional ontology' with respect to any strictly

philosophical transcendentality or formal-general ontology (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 21).

Some of the difficulties attendant upon this are broached in a 1989 interview with Michael Sprinker in which Derrida discusses what he terms a 'precritical theoreticism' characteristic of, for example, Althusser's adoption of structuralism, and of its attempts to elaborate the conditions of a 'General Theory' as 'a matter of regions of objectivity, of regional ontologies as theories of objectivity without any questions . . . about the determination of the entity as object, about history, and the implications of this determination' (Derrida, 1993: 189). Notoriously, in the 1963 essay 'On the Materialist Dialectic', Althusser suggested a substitution of the capitalized 'Theory' for 'philosophy' altogether, whereby the properly 'scientific' character of the former might thus be contrasted with the 'ideological' nature of the latter. And while this was a short-lived phase in Althusser's work (as he acknowledges in the essay's introduction in *For Marx*), its underlying rationale is not insignificant, insofar as it rests on a question concerning the nature of any supra-disciplinary 'generality' itself. Thus, by contrast to *a* 'theory' as 'any theoretical practice of a *scientific* character', 'I shall call Theory (with a capital T), general theory', Althusser writes, 'that is, the Theory of practice in general, itself elaborated on the basis of the Theory of existing theoretical practices (of the sciences)' (Althusser, 1977: 162, 168). In this sense, what Derrida describes as Theory's 'grandiloquent use of capital letters with regard to *the* theory' itself internally registers a broader claim not only to displace but to *replace* 'philosophy' as *the* discipline of the 'in general' (Derrida, 1993: 188–9).

The obvious question is then: how does a thought of, say, *writing* – the 'object' of a grammatology, which must not be 'just one regional science among others' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 83) – relate itself to a disciplinary field or topology in this sense, given what Derrida routinely describes as its own (ultimately 'limitless') 'generalization'? If it is not, as Derrida insists, a general 'theoreticism' of its own, in what sense is writing a *transdisciplinary* concept, no longer contained by that 'topological perspective' which, for Kant, it was the task of philosophy to govern? And, if it is, how precisely does it relate to the form of generality of the philosophical concept itself?

What Was Poststructuralism?

Let us take a step back to the strategic privilege that I suggested earlier might be given to a reconsideration of the notion of poststructuralism. Importantly, in Derrida's case, this concerns a confrontation, in the mid-1960s, with both structuralism's exemplary challenge to the theoretical privilege of philosophy itself (as it is posed from the human or social sciences, those descendants of the department of 'historical knowledge'

as Kant defines it, and in particular, from their claim to some non-philosophical 'scientificity' as such), and, second, the general conception of language or the sign that underpins such a model. It is significant that, in both cases, Derrida's initial point of interrogation concerns the reliance of structuralism upon what he identifies as a series of precisely *philosophical* presuppositions that necessarily accompany the very aspiration to 'disengage' from philosophy itself. For it is as a result of this, Derrida argues, that structuralist thinkers tended inevitably to generate some *new* transcendental term (such as 'structure') to do the job of 'explanation' (or 'generalized translation') once reserved for philosophical thought – a 'transcendental contraband', as he calls it in *Glas* (Derrida, 1986 [1974]: 244).[3] This is, in short, the problem inherent to *all* attempts to have done with transcendental questions simply by placing some other term – language, history, the social, biology, etc. – in the privileged 'structuring position'. As Derrida puts it of the 'human sciences', consequently the 'step "outside philosophy" is much more difficult to conceive than is generally imagined by those who think they made it long ago with cavalier ease' (Derrida, 1978 [1967b]: 284), insofar as it is always *from* philosophy 'that the non-critical notions which are applied to its delimitation must be borrowed' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 180).

In the case of structuralism, specifically, a certain model of transdisciplinarity thus threatens to become a more or less positivistic renewal of the very transcendental philosophy from which it had thought to 'disengage' (Derrida, 1978 [1967b]: 284).[4] This is a point explored at greater length in, for example, the important 1971 essay on Benveniste, 'The Supplement of the Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics', where Derrida discusses the linguist's attempts to reduce the Aristotelian categories to 'the fundamental categories of the *language* in which he thought' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 180). Here, linguistics performs an exemplary two-stage displacement of philosophy: first, by rendering itself as an autonomous discipline in such a way as to reinscribe a certain philosophical history as its own prehistory (Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche) – this being the very basis of its claim to have become *a* science (as opposed to 'metaphysics') – and, second, to take the place of philosophy through the assertion of its own 'transcendental' or 'transcategorial' status (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 195). It is this second move that indicates the resultant complexity of Derrida's own relation to philosophy, and to 'transcendental questions' in particular, precisely from the perspective of a confrontation with what is itself a certain historical model of a 'non-' or 'post-' philosophical transdisciplinarity.

Most obviously, in *Of Grammatology*, this complexity is associated with an apparent endorsement of Heidegger's 'task of thinking' as the ongoing deconstruction of the history of a metaphysics or onto-theology – an affiliation which, however, also seeks to distance itself from Heidegger's own tendency to conceive of such *post*-philosophical

thinking (a 'thinking to come') in the form of a simultaneous return to a
pre-philosophical beginning associated with an accompanying meta-
phorics of proximity, gathering or dwelling.[5] And, certainly, it is true
that Derrida's stress upon the inescapability of some reflective and critical
negotiation with a metaphysical inheritance, language and conceptuality
both follows a broadly Heideggerian line, concerning the 'closure' of phil-
osophy, and is in considerable part what animates the deconstruction of
structuralist theory – where such theory might imagine that it could simply
free itself of such a legacy (Derrida, 1978 [1967b]: 282).

It is in the attempt to reduce the complexity of this relation to phil-
osophy that the two most persistent misreadings of Derrida can conse-
quently be said to lie; each of which would effectively close down the
trans- or counter-disciplinary problematics at stake here, but from
opposed directions. On the one hand, there are those who have taken
Derrida to be arguing that philosophy was nothing other than, say, a
particular language game, rhetoric or literary genre – which would reduce
philosophy to the concerns of some other hegemonic discipline, such as
linguistics or literary criticism, that would, in turn, simply assume the
metadisciplinary place of traditional philosophy itself. Yet this is pre-
cisely the basis for Derrida's *critique* of Benveniste. On the other hand,
there are those who have read him, conversely, as the very epitome of the
transcendental philosopher, subjecting the sciences to some unknowable
and thus mystified universal 'law' of *différance* that would ultimately
reclaim philosophy's mastery over any other, upstart disciplines (see,
for example, the argument made partly in the name of 'the sociological
alternative to metaphysics' in Rose, 1984: 5).

However, if it is true that a modified Heideggerian argument is set to
work against structuralism, it is equally important that the latter func-
tions, in turn, as a kind of corrective to, or contamination of, Heidegger's
own construal of thinking as connected to some more 'originary' – we
might say: *pre*disciplinary – moment in the history of Being that 'knew
neither a "logic" nor an "ethics" nor "physics"' (Heidegger, 1993: 267).[6]
The confrontation with the *modernity* of structuralism and psychoanaly-
sis, as sciences that cannot simply be mastered by the existing discipline
of philosophy, is pivotal to grasping this. Derrida's comments on the
perhaps 'privileged place' occupied by ethnology, in his 1966 essay on
Lévi-Strauss, are especially pertinent:[7]

> [E]thnology could have been born as a science only at the moment when
> a decentring had come about: at the moment when European cul-
> ture...had been *dislocated*, driven from its locus, and forced to stop
> considering itself as the culture of reference. (Derrida, 1978 [1967b]: 282)

As Derrida argues in the chapter on 'Of Grammatology as a Positive
Science', then, 'a reflection must clearly be undertaken, within which the

"positive" discovery [of facts in the sciences] and the "deconstruction" of the history of metaphysics, in all its concepts, are controlled reciprocally, minutely, laboriously' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 83). Significantly, to the extent that this thus accords a 'certain privilege' to, for example, 'research of the psychoanalytic type' in the writings of the 1960s, it is because, in 'touching' questions of 'the originary constitution of object-ivity', Freud or Klein do so via the 'constitution' of 'categories that do not allow themselves to be derived from a *theoretical* formal ontology and from a science of the objectivity of the object in general' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 88), or, in other words, from philosophy as such. If the 'field' of psychoanalysis as a 'science' is then 'no longer simply ontic', and, furthermore, 'the limits of ontology that correspond to it no longer have anything regional about them', it is important that it is 'no longer *dominated* by the questions of a transcendental phenomenology or fundamental ontology' in this regard (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 21). The pressure exerted in this way by psychoanalysis (or structural linguistics or theoretical mathematics) upon the 'logocentric heritage' – including at a 'transcendental' level itself – is hence something that, practically speak-ing, occurs in what can indeed be defined as a complex and shifting *trans*disciplinary domain, traversing 'philosophy' and the 'sciences', and should rest upon the possibility of their reciprocal mediation (see also, for example, on mathematical 'formalization', Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 34–5). Indeed, it is precisely in this transdisciplinary movement in *Of Grammatology*, as it traces a passage through linguistics, biology and ethnology – rather than simply a modified transcendental claim to 'reassign' philosophy 'on the basis of the ontological question', as Badiou (2005: 2) puts it – that Derrida's distance from any Heideggerianism is most emphatically acute.[8]

Grammatology, Language and Transdisciplinarity

How then is one to understand the distinctive elaboration of a general 'theory' of writing in *Of Grammatology* as part of its transdisciplinary dynamics? Derrida's initial philosophical interest in 'writing' derives, as is well known, from its consistent 'abasement' as a mere technical or mater-ial supplement that must be securely (if futilely) placed outside that self-presence said to be uniquely embodied in speech or consciousness, and hence as always 'derivative, accidental, particular, exterior' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 29). As against this, *Of Grammatology* shows how, in fact, an *essential* contamination of the primary (speech) by the secondary (writing) must, by virtue of its necessary reliance upon that which it seeks to exclude in its very self-constitution, necessarily disrupt any such structure upon which a hierarchical 'metaphysics of presence' depends. This is a famous argument, not least through Derrida's own formalization of it in *Positions* (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 41–2). Yet in its

elaboration through the pages of *Of Grammatology* it also involves a number of different 'levels' of generality inherent to its unfolding across a number of different disciplinary domains.

Strikingly, early on Derrida appears to toy with the idea of elaborating something like an actual positive science, with all the appearance of establishing some 'entirely new discipline whose inauguration is being undertaken' (Nancy, 2011: 99). 'The concept of writing should define the field of a science' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 27), begins the book's second chapter. This is, he argues, first, because insofar as writing has been consistently denigrated as a mere adjunct to speech, no truly adequate account of writing, in either scientific or historical terms, has yet been produced (see Derrida, 1978 [1967b]: 230). Second, however, a positive thought of writing would additionally seem to be required, at this historical moment, precisely because of what Derrida describes, at the very beginning of *Of Grammatology*, as a contemporary cross-disciplinary *inflation*, in structuralist semiology in particular, of the very 'sign "language"' which is 'the inflation of the sign itself' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 6).

Any reading of Derrida as a primarily *linguistic* (let alone 'semiological' or 'social constructivist') thinker is thereby profoundly mistaken. Indeed, on the contrary, what is at stake here is an attempt to demarcate a 'linguistic turn' across the human sciences as precisely a problem *of* its cross-disciplinary 'inflation', in which it becomes 'adrift in the threat of [its own] limitlessness':

> However the topic is considered, the *problem of language* has never been simply one problem among others. But never so much as at present has it invaded, *as such*, the global horizon of the most diverse researches and the most heterogenous discourses. . . . The devaluation of the word 'language' itself, and how, in the very hold it has upon us, it betrays a loose vocabulary . . . are evidences of this effect. (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 6)

What is being criticized as a 'devaluation' in such passages can be understood as explicitly directed *against* a certain model of transdisciplinarity at work within the generalization of a linguistic paradigm, for which the invasion of a phrase such as 'structured like a language', as it travels across anthropology, psychoanalysis, political economy and so on, would thus be a 'symptom'. ('If we wished to elaborate the question of the *model*, we would have to examine all the "as"-s and "likewise"-s that punctuate the argument [in Lévi-Strauss], ordering and authorizing the analogy between phonology and sociology, between phonemes and the terms of kinship'; Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 103.) In fact, this is part of the apparently 'post-philosophical' modernity of structuralism in general (see Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 139).

In his reading of Lévi-Strauss, Derrida quotes from the latter's 'Language and Kinship' to this effect:

> The advent of structural linguistics . . . [did not only] renew linguistic perspectives; a transformation of this magnitude is not limited to a single discipline. Structural linguistics will certainly play the same renovating role with respect to the social sciences that nuclear physics, for example, has played for the physical sciences. (Lévi-Strauss, cited in Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 102–3)

Yet the problem is less this peculiarly modern transdisciplinary crossing per se – as if 'language' ought to be put back within the disciplinary limits of linguistics where it belongs – than it is the ways in which it tends to enforce its own kind of unreflective 'transcendental contraband', by virtue of the very hegemony accorded to linguistics as a discipline whose 'magnitude is not limited to a single discipline'. A thought of writing must, Derrida consequently argues, necessarily go *beyond* the general concepts of both language and the sign – 'the concept of writing exceeds and comprehends that of language' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 7) – with the result that the very project of a grammatology as anything like a new positive science of 'writing' has itself to be exceeded by another level of generalization: 'Graphematics or grammatography ought no longer to be presented as sciences; their goal should be *exorbitant* when compared to grammato*logical knowledge*' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 74).

However, if, as a result, grammatology can 'no longer be presented' as a new scientific discipline – indeed, if it resists all regionalization – this does not mean that one need not take seriously the issue of scientific knowledge in relation to the dynamics of such generalization, and, in particular, its challenge to the self-sufficiency of a philosophical 'universality', so as to 'pursue and consolidate whatever, in scientific practice, has always already begun to exceed the logocentric closure' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 36) – or, at least, so Derrida continually insists. Indeed, this is one post-Kantian condition of its modernity. The dispute with Heidegger is, in part, to be understood on these grounds.[9] Equally, the crucial dimension of Derrida's critique of structuralist science would relate, in large part, to its failure to be scientific *enough* in this respect. It is thus noticeable that Derrida's argument with Lévi-Strauss deliberately proceeds along what can appear, initially, to be fairly conventional 'empirical' lines, pointing to the ways in which, for example, the latter dismisses signs of existing forms of inscription among the Nambikwara – 'those "few dots" and "zig zags" on their calabashes, so briefly evoked in *Tristes Tropiques*' – or the 'fact' of the Nambikwara's prohibition upon the use of the proper name (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 108–10). Lévi-Strauss's seemingly scientific 'anti-humanism' masks a covertly metaphysical privileging of the human and of

speech that cannot itself, therefore, be justified upon 'scientific' grounds – one of the results of which is a certain dogmatic regulation of disciplinarity in the form of the closed and self-generating structure making up the so-called 'human sciences' as a whole. Against this, the necessity of 'the most *general* concept of the *gramme*' is located, according to Derrida, in its exceeding of any such disciplinary organization, instead extending a 'history of writing', and the 'scientific field' of its concept, from

> 'genetic inscription' and the 'short programmatic chains' regulating the behaviour of the amoeba or the annelid up to the passage beyond alphabetic writing to the orders of the logos and a certain *homo sapiens*...according to rigorously original levels, types, and rhythms. (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 84)

Significantly, where Derrida thereby interrogates what in Lévi-Strauss's anthropology remains reliant on philosophical as well as ethnocentric assumptions, he does so in part through the challenge posed to it by *another* science with which it intersects in disciplinary terms: that of Andre Leroi-Gourhan's paleo-anthropology, a science for which, he suggests, contra Lévi-Strauss's account of the Nambikwara, pre-modern 'peoples said to be "without writing" lack only a certain type of writing' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 83).[10] In particular, Leroi-Gourhan's concept of the 'pro-gram', drawn from cybernetic theory, names here a '*generalized* operation' of inscription for which, in line with a 'history of writing' stretching out from 'genetic inscription' to the latest forms of technological prosthesis, 'the human adventure' is to be regarded as simply 'a stage or an articulation in the history of life...the history of the *gramme*', exceeding any strict determination of the anthropological itself, as well as the very separation of 'the machine from man', or social from natural history (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 9).

Levels of Generality

What is traced in *Of Grammatology* may be read, then, as a certain movement or dynamic of generalization – one that takes the 'logical' form of a demonstration of the unsustainability of each limit that might be placed upon such generalization. In schematic terms, this might be set out as follows. First, there is the proposition of grammatology as a science that, taking its cue from contemporary linguistics, biology and theoretical mathematics, as well as 'the development of the *practical methods* of information retrieval' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 10), would form a historically new regional 'object', or, rather, something like a new thematic network, responding to a prior denigration and repression of the graphic. Second, moving up a level, so to speak, there is a

deconstruction of the repression as it is continued – seemingly outside of philosophy as such, but in fact, in important respects, 'philosophical' through-and-through – in the initially meta- but ultimately trans-transdisciplinary inflation of the sign 'language' common to structuralism and the 'linguistic turn' more generally. Third, there is a claim that – given the ultimate incoherence of such an account of language, to the degree that what is said of writing can be shown to be already at work in speech, and to be structurally continuous with it – it must, in fact, be the traditionally *secondary* term ('writing') that, paradoxically, most plausibly 'comprehends' the field of language as a whole: 'language is first, in a sense I shall gradually reveal, writing' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 37). Fourth, however, there is the recognition that what is therefore meant, at this point, by 'writing' can no longer be contained by its ordinary or empirical sense, in opposition to speech, and hence must be radically 'enlarged', made 'exorbitant', in such a way that it begins to 'go beyond the extension of language' per se. Language is, *contra* Lévi-Strauss, 'a possibility founded on the general possibility of writing' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 7, 52). Fifth, there is a demonstration that this 'enlargement', or generalization, cannot, however, be limited at the point of covering only 'the entire field of linguistic signs', but can be shown to, in some sense, designate *all* 'effects' of presence, including those constitutive of 'life' itself.[11] This is a kind of 'writing before the letter' or 'inscription in general', which is most evidently signalled in contemporary biology, paleo-anthropology and cybernetic systems theory. Sixth, and finally, there is an arrival at what in later texts is termed the *quasi-transcendental* concept of an *arche*-writing, which constitutes a '*limitless* generality' (Derrida, 1992: 71): an unconditional generalization for which *all* 'experience' – indeed, all 'being' – is only ever, 'everywhere, differences and traces of traces' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 26). 'The trace must be thought before the entity', whether linguistic or non-linguistic, living or non-living. If the specific term 'writing', with which this sequence of 'levels' began, is retained to name this 'generality', Derrida states, 'it is only because it essentially communicates with the vulgar concept of writing', insofar as 'writing' named, for the tradition, a 'formidable difference' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 47, 57). The theme of writing, in other words, is *useful* in articulating this precisely because of those traditionally negative qualities associated with its empirical or narrow sense (mediation, representation, finitude, abstraction, exteriorization), while, at the same time, what it names at such a quasi-transcendental level must be utterly 'exorbitant', by definition, with regard to any such empirical sense itself.

This is a schematic presentation of the more complex flows through which such 'levels' interact within the book. What is described as a movement between levels, going up one at a time – suggestive of some hierarchy of 'high' and 'low' – could equally be described as a movement

sideways; or, better, as both at once: akin to the gradual 'inflation' of a balloon. Nonetheless, it is in the transdisciplinary form that this movement takes that the question of how to grasp Derrida's claim to *reinscribe* the empirical-transcendental relation most obviously arises. In defining transcendental philosophy in *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously demands that 'absolutely no concepts must enter into it that contain anything empirical, or that the *a priori* cognition be entirely pure' (Kant, 1998: 134). With regard to other disciplinary formations, the transcendental is precisely that which '*transcends* every genre', or discipline, absolutely (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 195) – a definition Derrida credits to Chancellor Philip in the 12th century, but which, he remarks, '[d]espite contextual differences ... also suits the Kantian and Husserlian concepts of the transcendental' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 195). It is the impossibility of this absolute independence of the transcendental from experience that generated a series of apparently intractable problems for the self-sufficiency of philosophical thought in Kant's wake. As such, it has also provided, over the last two centuries, the basis for a more thoroughgoing critique of philosophy, and particularly its claims to universality, on the part of other emergent disciplines.

It is in insisting, up to a point, on the inescapability of 'transcendental questions' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 290–1) that Derrida's own articulation of a *quasi-transcendental* 'level' must therefore be understood. This term has come to be used as the standard term for describing the peculiar 'position' occupied by what is named by words such as '*différance*' or '*arche*-writing' in much of the secondary literature on Derrida, although, in many ways, it is not ideal, if only because it can serve to overemphasize the exclusively transcendental (and Kantian) character of what is at stake within it. (In so far as *différance* is nothing outside of its 'effects' it might just as well be described as quasi-immanence, or for that matter, quasi-ontological; hence Derrida's assertion that *différance* could be said to be, *paradoxically*, more 'fundamental' than the ontico-ontological difference 'itself' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 22; 1976 [1967a]: 23–4).) Nonetheless, I retain it as justified – or, at least, useful – on the basis that if the 'trace' is the condition of possibility of all entities and experience, as Derrida argues, in a Kantian register, it is equally never actually transcendent to them, in as much as it nowhere exists (even theoretically) outside of these relations of traces 'themselves'. As such, as well as constituting the condition of (im)possibility for any putative self-presence or identity *whatsoever* – hence its 'limitless' generality – it also marks out, on Derrida's account, the formal impossibility of any absolutely transcendentalizing gesture with regard to this.

Like difference, supplement or trace, writing's 'appropriateness' as a name is thus derived from association with modalities that, precisely as concepts, cannot be transcendentally positioned, but only *relationally* inscribed – mediation, representation, exteriorization, secondary, etc.

– which means that, where they are absolutely generalized, it can *only be* in an inherently 'quasi-' form. (What would it mean for difference to come 'before' what it differentiates, mediation 'before' immediacy, the supplement 'before' what it supplements?) As a consequence, while Kant seeks to shore up the autonomy and universality of philosophy vis-à-vis other disciplines by radically separating the transcendental from the empirical (which can then be properly parcelled out to the positive sciences), Derrida consistently attempts to demonstrate the 'originary' necessity of their contamination. Paradoxically, this means that a certain facticity or finitude assumes a contradictorily transcendental position with respect to the transcendental itself (since it is its own 'condition of possibility'), thus bringing into question the very structure *of* transcendentality. To the extent that the quasi-transcendental 'itself' can never consequently be mastered by philosophy (or indeed any other hegemonic discipline), it requires, practically, a certain transdisciplinary movement as a condition of its very articulations. Indeed, the latter is, in some sense, a condition of it *not* becoming transcendentalized; the quasi-transcendental's own condition of (*im*)possibility, so to speak. To put it another way, even an absolutely generalized writing cannot but be *constructed*, by virtue of such originary 'contamination', as a kind of reciprocally mediated transdisciplinary concept.

How to Name a Quasi-Transcendental

To the extent that, as Derrida tirelessly reiterated, there can be no 'proper' name for what is designated by *arche*-writing – a term derived, in this instance, only from the fact that, for the philosophical tradition, writing designated a 'formidable difference' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 47, 57) – what 'name' it *is* given is always variant, part of a possible chain of 'nonsynonymous substitutions, according to the necessity of the context' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 12). It is 'strategically nicknamed' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 93) in a form that is only 'meaningful for us' for *this* moment and *this* form of domination (however historically extended) (see Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 4).[12] Or, in other words, its 'naming' can only ever be – in what is perhaps the most enigmatic concept in all of Derrida's work – a matter of *strategy*:

> If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic [an orientation in space] and an historical strategy. The justification can therefore never be absolute and definitive. It corresponds to a condition of forces and translates an historical calculation. (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 70)

Now this word, 'strategy', Derrida writes in 1980, is one 'that I have perhaps abused...especially as it was always to specify *in the end...*a

strategy without any goal [*finalité*]'. Yet it remains clear that there would be little justification for describing this as a question of 'strategy' if there were not at least *some* kind of orientation according to which any 'historical calculation' might be made – a question of 'determining the best *lever*' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 128, 110). Given, therefore, that this can 'never be absolute and definitive', while still being in some way *determined* by 'strictly defined situations' (Derrida, 1988: 148) or finite 'standpoints' (Derrida, 1993: 215), it is the impossibility of ontologically or transcendentally justifying such an orientation, we might say, that constitutes the moment of a certain ineliminable (if underelaborated) *pragmatics* in Derrida's thought, as well as of an account of 'a certain historical necessity', whereby 'a certain number of givens belonging to the discourse of our time have progressively imposed this choice [of word] upon me' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 70).[13] (The 'choice' is not, in other words, a simply 'subjective' or voluntaristic one.) Hence Derrida's suggestion *a propos* structuralism and the linguistic turn: 'Undoubtedly it is not by chance that this *overwhelming* supervenes at the moment when the extension of the concept of language effaces all its limits' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 6–7). For it is the already existing trans-disciplinary 'extension' of the concept of language in structuralism that precisely governs a historical calculation to utilize the term 'writing' as a strategic focus:

> Now we tend to say 'writing'...to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible...And thus we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not...cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing'. ...It is also in this sense that the contemporary biologist speaks of writing and *pro-gram* in relation to the most elementary processes of information within the living cell. And, finally, whether it has essential limits or not, the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be the field of writing. (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 9)

A couple of important points follow. First, what Derrida will delineate as a 'limitless' generalization in the concept of *arche*-writing cannot then be thought or articulated, 'today' (in 1967), without the privileged 'motif' of writing, or at least not in the same way. This also means, however, that it is equally reliant upon the specific historical resonances of any 'chosen' motif itself; resonances which do not by and large derive from philosophy but more often are appropriated from elsewhere, from (in this instance) a cross-disciplinary proliferation of 'the name of writing' across an already active range of

different fields of knowledge or research, from linguistics to biology to the already-transdisciplinary fields of general cybernetic theory. It is the existing range of these resonances that, in a sense, 'legitimizes' the choice of term.

Second, while therefore a certain unconditional generalization may be structurally 'without limit' – hence its difference from the culturally or historically relativizing conception of a 'quasi-transcendental' to be found in Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests* or Foucault's notion of the historical *a priori*[14] – this motif or 'name', as itself historically finite, clearly is not. Indeed, it is necessarily limited by the relative elasticity of its 'resonances' as a 'focal point of economic condensation' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 40). Hence the consequent opening to new motifs constructed along similar lines – Bernard Stiegler's 'technics' for example, or Catherine Malabou's 'plasticity' – since, however one might judge their efficacy or limits, they function via a strategy of reinscribing their own contemporary character by way of an engagement with *new* extra-philosophical problematics, such as digitization or neuroscience.[15] This is, in part, what accounts for the special significance accorded by Derrida himself in 1967 to 'the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program*' in *Of Grammatology*, since, 'whether it has essential limits or not', as a generalized concept the program may well be said to be *already* (quasi-)transcendent given its presentation in systems theory as 'the condition of possibility of *all* structured form and *all* ordered (sequential) function, from DNA to primitive nervous systems to the human brain to . . . electronic memories, calculators and logical machines' (Johnson, 2011: 91, emphasis added). Even more than structuralism, cybernetics was, in many ways, *the* transdisciplinary moment of the postwar era, transgressing any separation of the human and natural sciences, spanning biology, anthropology, early computer science, urbanism, and so on; hence, its distinctive historical significance here, as Christopher Johnson, for one, has noted.[16] 'The role philosophy has played up to now has been taken over by the sciences', remarks Heidegger in a notorious 1966 interview with *Der Spiegel*. 'Philosophy dissolves into the individual sciences: psychology, logic and political science'. 'And now what or who takes the place of philosophy?' Cybernetics (Heidegger, 2006: 39–40). But if this is not simply to be construed as the straightforward death of philosophy (to be 'replaced' by another master discipline), or, conversely, as is more often the case today, the pretext for a return to doing pre-critical metaphysics under a new quasi-scientific name,[17] there then remains a question of how to relate the transdisciplinary and the quasi-transcendental as interlocking (but not identical) logics of generalization. This requires a careful and critically reflexive reciprocal mediation in ways that precisely *cross* the domains of philosophy and science in the form that *Of Grammatology* suggests.

Specific Generalities and Intersciences

In his now-famous introduction to *We Have Never Been Modern*, originally published in 1991, Bruno Latour reads through a series of articles from an unnamed daily newspaper. While some of these offer what Latour calls 'soothing features' focused purely on issues of politics or literature, the paper's other articles – covering stories that range from climate change to the transmission of the AIDs virus to Japanese computing to the radio tracking of whales – 'sketch out imbroglios of science, politics, economy, law, religion, technology, fiction'. 'Yet', Latour comments, 'no one seems to find this troubling'. Instead, a 'delicate network' that 'weave[s] our world together' in proliferating 'hybrid' forms is sliced into 'tiny compartments', 'broken into as many segments as there are pure disciplines' (Latour, 1993: 2–3). For anyone schooled in the humanities or social sciences, such counter-disciplinary affirmations of the pervasive reality of hybridizations are hardly unfamiliar – indeed, they constitute the mainstream of most postcolonial and so-called 'postmodernist' theory over the last few decades. But what is new, according to Latour, is the assertion that such hybrids can no longer be (indeed never truly were) restricted to the disciplinary domains of culture and language, or what was called once the 'human sciences', but rather are extended and generalized in such a fashion as to relate to *everything*. 'There are *only* natures-cultures', and so there is nothing outside the hybrid: *Il n'y a pas de hors-hybride*. 'The imbroglios and networks that had no place', Latour writes, 'now have the whole place to themselves' (Latour, 1993: 104, emphasis added; 144). 'All that exists is a legion of actants', as two recent converts describe a now 'familiar view' for which 'all, human, nonhuman, natural, and artificial objects [are placed] on the same footing' (Amin and Thrift, 2013: 55, 6). And, whether it finds its privileged reference in Bergson, Tarde, Stengers, DeLanda or Latour, this flattened 'all' is fast becoming *the* common perspective and quasi-philosophical basis of a 'transdisciplinary' theory across the social sciences and humanities today.

Whereas, then, an earlier 'anti-humanism', associated with structuralist and post-structuralist thought, 'mobilized primarily the disciplinary fields of philosophy, history, cultural studies and the classical Humanities in general', writes Braidotti, in a *posthumanist* theory such as Latour's:

> the issue of post-anthropocentrism enlists also science and technology studies, new media and digital culture, environmentalism and earth sciences, biogenetics, neuroscience and robotics, evolutionary theory, critical legal theory, primatology, animal rights and science fiction. This high degree of trans-disciplinarity alone adds an extra layer of complexity to the issue. (Braidotti, 2013: 57–8)

It should be clear by now that, despite Derrida's customary association with an 'anti-humanism' restricted to the 'disciplinary fields' of the humanities and social sciences, many of the historical and theoretical conditions of posthuman transdisciplinarity are to be found (for better or worse) already at work in Derrida's writings and, in particular, in their logics of absolute generalization. '*Il n'y a pas de hors-hybride*' would, in this sense, be as good a 'motto' for *Of Grammatology* as for *We Have Never Been Modern*. Yet if what Derrida defines as a 'generalized writing' can be read as functionally equivalent, at some level at least, to these modes of generalization apparent in more recent 'posthumanist' theory, it also entails a particularly complex 'self-critical' relation to philosophy, on the one hand – to a determination of philosophy as ontology or metaphysics, in particular – and to other disciplines, on the other, which have tended to be problematically swept aside in more recent work.

In 'Philosophy After Theory', Peter Osborne suggests that from 'the standpoint of the Anglo-American reception of the tradition of French theory, the current empirical answer to the question "What is theory (in the Anglophone humanities) after 'Theory'?" is most definitely "Philosophy" . . . a turn to what Marx called "self-sufficient philosophy", philosophy in its classical modern sense'. (Osborne, 2011b: 22). If this 'turn' is certainly manifest in the contemporary enthusiasm for 'the full-blown metaphysics of Deleuze and Alain Badiou', it is even more intensely the case (and considerably less qualified) in the various 'new materialisms', 'speculative realisms' and 'object-oriented' philosophies that have emerged in their wake. Here, the desire to do 'ontology' has more often than not signified a return to a pre-critical idea of philosophy: what Peter Sloterdijk calls the 'old-European project of metaphysical sciences of essences', even if such 'essences' are most likely to be couched today in terms of an 'immanent' difference, relationality or becoming (Sloterdijk, 2013: 95).

Indeed the pervasiveness of such *re-philosophizing* of the space of 'Theory' is especially manifest in the most recent development of Latour's work, given its 'origins' in what would seem decidedly 'non-philosophical' and broadly empiricist practices of sociological and anthropological description.[18] While this has in part been a result of the emphatically philosophical readings of Latour's commentators – most influentially, Graham Harman's *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, which constructs a kind of 'formal ontology' around Latour's terminology of actants and networks (Harman, 2009; see also Maniglier, 2012) – such 'ontologization' is increasingly apparent in Latour's own writings, and has assumed its own full-blown metaphysical form in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Latour, 2013); in particular, in the thoroughly classical turn to 'Philosophy' as a general 'metalanguage' bridging the 'plurality' of different 'regional' ontologies

in an explicitly 'metaphysical' mode, at the end of the book's introduction.[19] Given its own intensely complex relationship to philosophy, and to philosophy *qua* ontology in particular, there may therefore be something oddly timely about a reengagement with the logic of generalization, and of its own transdisciplinary form, in Derrida's work.

In the closing pages of the 1966 essay 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', Derrida writes: 'A radicalisation of the thought of the trace would be fruitful not only in the deconstruction of logocentrism, but in a kind of reflection exercised more positively in different fields, at different levels of writing in general'. 'These fields', he continues, 'would be numerous', even if the 'problem of their respective limits would be that much more formidable' (Derrida, 1976 [1967b]: 230). However, if the concept of 'writing' may be said to function as *both* quasi-transcendental *and* transdisciplinary – and must do so – ultimately, across Derrida's oeuvre, the elaboration of the quasi-transcendental always tends to win out over any reflection upon those 'different levels' of transdisciplinarity that the essay on Freud suggests. One reason is the increasing domination of Derrida's later work (as of most of his acolytes) by an indissoluble linkage of a 'quasi-transcendental' logic of limitless generality to one of *singularity*, at least partly indebted to Levinas: that which cannot be reduced to the status of a particular case according to a general law or discipline, even as its very singularity is dependent upon its relations with others. (Hence, for example, Rudolphe Gasché's repudiation of any association of 'deconstruction' with critique, in the name of doing 'justice to what requires recognition on the basis of its singularity'; Gasché, 2007: 21.) This is more complicated than many suppose, since the singular is neither simply the individual nor the particular, nor is it either pure alterity or pure event, but is always 'itself' internally fissured by the necessary possibility of reiteration or re-marking elsewhere. Nonetheless, what its focus on 'the other [that] remains inappropriable to the process of identification' (Derrida, 1996: 84) can occlude is the ongoing necessity for alternate modes of generality and generalization – 'different *levels* of writing in general' – and hence different forms of *specific* transdisciplinary thought and conceptual construction.

It is perhaps for this reason that so much recent 'deconstruction' has tended towards not a transdisciplinary development of different logics of conceptual generalization, but an essentially tragic account of conceptualization (as unacceptably violent or abstracting) per se. Yet, here, an 'ethical' privileging of the singular risks simply reasserting, at another level, a metaphysical story of that 'process of falling, an abstraction, degradation, or emptying' which was the very 'object' of Derrida's earliest deconstructive readings themselves (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 203). If this leads, on one side, towards an uninterrogated privileging of the ungraspable singular 'event', on its other side lies the cross-disciplinary fate of many of Derrida's 'most general' concepts when set to work

across other fields, where they can tend towards a local (and paradoxically transcendentalizing-ontologizing) *de*-specifying mimicry of a logic of generalization itself – such that *all* 'texts' come to be regarded as literature, for example. This can be observed in recent uses of the concept of 'hauntology' drawn from *Spectres of Marx* – itself a 're-formulation' of the logic of the *arche*-trace – where, typically, as one Derridean puts it, 'all stories are, more or less, ghost stories . . . all forms of narrative are, in one way or another, haunted' (Wolfreys, 2002: 3). And it is not as though this is *wrong*. It is, however, unclear exactly what it can contribute to a theorization of narrative (itself a transdisciplinary concept) at such a level. Hauntology, or the 'ghost in general', Derrida writes, evokes the necessity to 'introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of *every* concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time' (Derrida, 1994: 161, emphasis added). *Il n'y a pas de hors-spectre.* Strikingly, then, although this is written in the context of a discussion of Marx, it is a point at which any strictly political considerations must necessarily be displaced, since, because of its *absolute* generalization as the condition of possibility of *any* and *all* praxis whatsoever, this can, as a matter of principle, have nothing to say about any actual specific historico-political 'calculation' as such. To cite Derrida himself: 'We must insist on this specific point precisely because it points to an essential lack of specificity' (Derrida, 1994: 73). If a (political) question of 'strategy' reemerges here, it is, of necessity, at a different (more specific, or 'lower') level of transdisciplinary generalization.

In fact, if the 'problem of their respective limits would be that much more formidable', as Derrida asserts, there is nothing, in principle, that prevents the emergence of forms of *specific generality*, construed at 'different levels of writing [or spectrality] in general', and 'exercised more positively in different fields' (Derrida, 1976 [1967b]: 230); it is just that this remained substantially underdeveloped in Derrida's own work. Certainly, the 'respective limits' (or 'scales'[20]) of such a specificity cannot be stabilized or guaranteed, given the generalized 'entanglement' of all entities upon which a *quasi*-transcendentality insists. But this is simply to acknowledge the forms of pragmatics, relationality and historicity necessarily built into the construction of any such conceptual generality – the necessity of what Karen Barad calls, in her own account of the *essential* entanglement of 'matter and meaning', the 'cut' through which agential interventions are co-constituted with 'the determinate boundaries and properties' of that 'object of investigation' which, via such a cut, they produce (Barad, 2007: 148).[21]

Indeed, it is arguably something like this that is loosely envisaged in one of those texts included as an appendix to the *Right to Philosophy* collection – called 'Titles', written as part of a coauthored report produced in preparation for the founding of the Collège International de Philosophie – in which Derrida introduces a concept

he calls the *interscience*.[22] As far as I'm aware, this word – which is 'taken up...out of context', Derrida observes, not from the lexicon of a philosopher but from Einstein, or, more specifically, from the latter's citation in Braudel – plays no significant role outside of this particular essay (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 297, n. 5). Here, however, 'interscience' serves to name not the 'level' of a limitless generalization – the privileged 'concern' of most of Derrida's work of the 1980s and '90 s – but rather, according to precise historical and institutional limits, 'any thematics, any field, any research activity...that the map of institutions, *at a given moment*, does not yet grant stable, accredited, habitable departments'. The 'interscientific' is thus manifested as the construction of an open series of distinctive and hence *specific* 'zones of instability', which, in disturbing a 'certain social representation of organised research', are 'sites of great traffic' (or hybridity?), 'privileged sites for the formation of new objects or rather of new thematic networks' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 206, emphasis added).

This is a useful reminder that any account of transdisciplinarity must be configured not solely as a theoretical question, but also as an institutional one, and, in particular, as one concerned with 'what has been handed down to us of the concept of the university' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 85). I want to conclude, however, by wondering whether, as much as it is a quasi-transcendental concept, a thought of 'writing' should also be regarded as an *interscience* in this sense:

> Now we tend to say 'writing'...to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription...we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not...cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing'. (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 9)

Writing would then not only be (or have been) a singular 'nickname' or 'motif' for a quasi-transcendentality, and hence a *limitless* generalization, but also what is described in 'Titles' as 'a tendential *succession* of a multiplicity of transversal exchanges, original at once in their local character and in the renunciation of a *classical* recourse to philosophy (a "radical", fundamentalist, ontological, or transcendental recourse)' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 200, emphasis added). Those thinkers currently occupying the dominant space of 'Theory' in the Anglophone world have, it is fair to say, not exactly taken this route. Instead, in the turn to the latest French thinkers from Badiou to Laruelle to Quentin Meillassoux, as well as in the ontologization of the sociological work of Latour and others, it is a massive (and often self-consciously 'classical') *re*-philosophizing of theoretical discourse as metaphysics that has tended, above all, to hold the stage, with a consequently profound distancing from any truly transdisciplinary 'reciprocal mediation' as a result. Yet, without a

connection to such reciprocality – the very point of the 'quasi' as marking the necessity of a continual folding back of absolute generalization into the specificities of historically determinate transdisciplinary crossings, and the impossibility of any metadisciplinary transcendental as such – the putative shift from epistemology to ontology, in terms of which such rephilosophization has often tended to define itself, results merely in the production of metaphysical claims (about, say, the being of 'objects') the justification or warrant for which can only ever be profoundly unclear, other than as a form of quasi-theological 'intuition' or decision.

If the unfortunate term 'deconstruction' indicates anything, it is (or should be), by contrast, an emphasis on the critical *demonstration* (rather than merely speculative assertion) of a logic of generalization in which the 'distinction between writing and speech', or between the human and non-human, society and nature, 'loses all pertinence', according to a critical interrogation of the ultimate inadequacy of attempts to separate these within and across existing disciplinary fields (Derrida, 1988: 46–7). Ironically, given that at least some of it has been lauded for the degree to which it takes seriously the consequences of scientific work for philosophical concerns, the immediately 'ontological' orientation of recent 'new materialist' or 'object-oriented' thought actually forbids engagement with science as anything other than raw material for the ratification of an already given metaphysical 'choice'. This is less 'scientism' than it is a form of 'philosophism', in which the classical, pre-critical sovereignty of philosophy reconstitutes itself again. While 'we' may not 'now' say 'writing' as we did in 1967, nonetheless a conception of an interscience's multiplicity of successive transversal exchanges seems more compelling than most as a basic program for taking forward the theoretical humanities and sciences today. Unlike contemporary revalorizations of the philosophy of the concept (Foucault, 1984), however, this remains a problem that, *qua* philosophy, 'philosophy cannot resolve' (Derrida, 1976 [1967b]: 282).

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. See also Jameson's earlier account of the relationship between 'philosophy' and those texts 'characterized as "theory"', rather than work in a particular discipline', in Jameson (1984).
2. See, for example, Derrida's comments on the concepts of being and language in Benveniste: 'What Benveniste very quickly calls the "notion of 'being'" is no longer one category that is simply homogenous with all the others: it is the transcategorial condition of the categories'; 'What Benveniste discovers then…is the absolutely unique relationship between the transcendental

and language. ...Transcendental means transcategorial. Literally: "that which *transcends* every genre"' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 195).

3. '[W]henever a discourse is made *against* the transcendental, a matrix...constrains the discourse to place the non-transcendental, the outside of the transcendental field, the excluded, in a structuring position. The matrix in question constitutes the excluded as the transcendental's transcendental, as simili-transcendental, transcendental contra-band' (Derrida, 1986 [1974]: 244).

4. This might be regarded as Derrida's own version of an argument also set out in Deleuze (2004; written in 1967), although it is probably fair to say that Derrida is ultimately more worried by this 'transcendentalism' than is Deleuze – something which may bear upon their respective relations to 'philosophy' as such (see Alliez, 2011).

5. See Heidegger (1993: 265): 'The thinking that is to come is no longer philosophy, because it thinks more originally than metaphysics – a name identical to philosophy'. Derrida's own reformulation of this is: 'It is in fact this indetermination [of a certain disciplinarity] and this very opening that we designate, in this context, by the word "thinking". This word is not nothing, but it is nothing else: not philosophy but what questions it' (Derrida, 2004 [1990]: 202–3). This recalls the end of Part I of *Of Grammatology*, where Derrida writes: 'The constitution of a science or philosophy of writing is a necessary and difficult task. But, a *thought* of the trace, of difference or of reserve, having arrived at these limits and repeating them ceaselessly, must also point beyond the field of the *episteme*. Outside of the economic and strategic reference to the name that Heidegger justifies himself in giving to an analogous but not identical transgression of all philosophemes, *thought* is here for me a perfectly neutral name' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 93).

6. See also Derrida's comments on the ways in which, for Heidegger, the 'entry into writing and literature...would have decided the destiny of Western science as much *qua doctrina* of the Middle Ages (teaching, discipline, *Lehre*) as *qua* the science of Modern Times. This is naturally a matter of what constructs the dominant concept of discipline, teaching, and the university' (Derrida, 1987: 181).

7. Compare, here, Foucault's similar identification of psychoanalysis and ethnology as occupying a 'privileged position in our knowledge', in part because they 'are not so much two human sciences among others, but... span the entire domain of those sciences...and are able to propound their methods of decipherment and their interpretations everywhere' (Foucault, 1970: 373, 379). As Étienne Balibar points out in his article in this issue, this was, in turn, dependent upon the transformation effected upon both ethnology and psychoanalysis, in Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, by their 'recasting' in terms provided by structural linguistics (see Foucault, 1970: 381).

8. In this specific sense Badiou may be said, amusingly, to be rather more of a Heideggerian than Derrida.

9. Hence, for instance, the observation that, in the 'Letter on Humanism', 'Heidegger takes no account of a certain "zoological knowledge" that accumulates, is differentiated, and becomes more refined concerning what is brought together under this so general and confused word animality' (Derrida, 1987: 173).

10. Part I of *Of Grammatology*, and in particular its third section, was derived, in fact, from what was originally a two-part review article for the journal *Critique*, focused upon Leroi-Gourhan's *Le geste et le parole* along with two contemporary collections on the history of writing.

11. Martin Hägglund thus rightly argues that 'there is no limit to the generality of *différance* and the structure of the trace applies to all fields of the living' (Hägglund, 2008: 19). Yet precisely because there is indeed no limit to this generality, one also cannot stop at 'the fields of the living', since it quasi-transcendentally 'exceeds', in principle, any division between living and non-living, animate and inanimate itself.

12. This is also why the lack of any 'proper name' for *différance* should be regarded as neither a matter of provisionality (as if it might eventually be properly named if we could just find the right word) or ineffability (in the fashion of a negative theology). Rather, as Derrida puts it, the assertion that 'there is no name for it' is a 'proposition to be read in its *platitude*' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 26) or its banality.

13. Elsewhere the term 'pragrammatological' is proposed as naming such a space 'at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammatology' (Derrida, 1981 [1972a]: 27). The 1996 volume entitled *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* disappointingly fails to engage this central aspect of Derrida's thought, largely because it takes 'pragmatism' to be more or less synonymous with Rorty's work and its own version of the American tradition (Mouffe, 1996).

14. Étienne Balibar throws some doubt on this characterization of Foucault, in his article on quasi-transcendentals in this issue, concluding – with an emphasis on the latter's affirmation of a modernist literary 'externalization of thought' in the book's closing pages – that Foucault's 'thinking other-wise' can seem closer here 'to a notion of "deconstruction" than to a notion of "epistemological break"'. Balibar's reading is exceptionally lucid, but there remains a question, I think, of how far what he describes as Foucault's 'paradoxical historicist critique of historicism' is able to reflect upon its own (quasi-)transcendentalizing of 'historicity' itself – in the fashion of *Of Grammatology*'s account of 'writing' – and thus whether 'history' becomes, in some sense, Foucault's own 'transcendental contraband' (2015, 22). The issue is a difficult one, not least because of a certain shared debt to Heidegger. It is, at any rate, noticeable that such a problem is largely 'abandoned' in the later Foucault's work, and that what would appear to be the status accorded to such work's privileged 'quasi-transcendental' – power – is generally undertheorized as a result.

15. In the case of Malabou, one of the consequences of this is the profoundly uncertain 'theoretical' status of a *general* transdisciplinary concept of 'plasticity' that would cross over philosophy and science insofar as this is largely constructed through a correlation *between* the (philosophical) use of the word in Hegel and its more recent uses in cognitive science. One consequence of this is a tendency towards a kind of re-ontologization of plasticity as essential 'mutability of being', which Malabou sometimes seems to suggest would 'precede' *différance*. See, for example, Johnston and Malabou (2013). By contrast, Stiegler's work, extending *Of Grammatology*'s numerous references to Leroi-Gourhan, seems most productive precisely where it is directed towards an attempt to specify distinctive modes by which *différance*

is put 'into actual play' (Stiegler, 1998: 234) in the form of different, histori-cally-specific 'technical systems'.

16. Here, it is the transdisciplinary concept of the *system* (rather than 'struc-ture') that exerts a particularly powerful organizing function. For some discussion of Derrida's relation to cybernetics, see Johnson (1993) and Wolfe (2009).

17. See, for example, the thoroughgoing philosophization of cybernetics as 'ontology', partly influenced by Latour, in Andrew Pickering (2010: 17–33, 380–402).

18. It is perhaps worth noting that this more recent desire for a reassertion of philosophy's sovereignty *over* the cross-disciplinary terrain of 'Theory' is already present internally to the reception of Derrida's work. Hence, for example, Gasché's anxious insistence on considering Derrida within the 'sphere of "serious", that is, philosophical discussion' as a precondition of doing 'justice to the complexity of the Derridean enterprise'. The identifi-cation of the 'serious' with the philosophical (against, here, 'literary theory') is, of course, telling (see Gasché, 1986: 1).

19. What Hans-Jörg Rheinberger describes as the 'transdisciplinary' status ascribed to anthropology by Latour, as uniquely able to 'break the modern claim of the sciences to a proud autonomy', might, in this sense, be more accurately defined as 'meta-disciplinary'. As such, it lays the groundwork for a 'return' to a kind of anthropological metaphysics in Latour's recent work (see Rheinberger, 2010: 85).

20. The question of 'scale' is one posed by Jean-Luc Nancy in conversation with Derrida around the question of how to think the 'differences' between dif-ferent 'living beings' (including the human and other animals), so as neither to negate such differences nor to erect a simple 'linear and oppositional limit' between them. Perhaps rightly, Derrida rejects the idea of 'scale' – which would distinguish, say, the 'ant' from the 'chimpanzee'. What is at stake here might, however, more productively be thought of as a problem of *specificity* (see Derrida, 2014: 29).

21. For an interesting and productive attempt to think Derrida and Barad together on this point, see Kirby (2011, esp. 68–79). Kirby's book is prob-ably the best attempt to date to think Derrida's absolute generalization of writing in relation to modern science, particularly biology and quantum physics. Significantly, *Quantum Anthropologies* does this, in part, through extending a Latourian or new materialist 'hybridity' via Kirby's own 'coun-terintuitive gambit . . . to *generalize* the assumed capacities of humanness', including 'agency' and 'intentionality' (p. 88, emphasis added). This is, of course, a position that can certainly be read out of Derrida himself, but, again, it tends to pass over the question of how exactly one is, then, to move between the limitless generality of an argument for the 'relational imbrica-tions' that constitute the 'being' of *all* 'things' and the *specific* scientific issues at stake in (to cite her own examples) the 'neuronal chatter' of sting-rays, the production of ball lightning or quantum action at a distance. The danger is that the latter become simply *interchangeable* 'illustrations' of an entanglement in general, which, given that such entanglement must, accord-ing to this account, be true of *everything*, comes to appear peculiarly *unspe-cific* at this 'level' of analysis. (There can be nothing 'special', *at this level of*

generality, about, for example, stingrays' neuronal chatter, in which specific cells unlock themselves in anticipation of a message which has yet to arrive.)

22. It should be said that the theoretical evaluation of this concept in no way entails a particular judgement on the success of the College itself, which could, I think, hardly be said to have lived up to the ambitions articulated in 'Titles' or elsewhere. Equally, it should be acknowledged that Derrida's text is significantly delimited by its own institutional function, which is in part to act as a kind of funding application for the College, addressed to the French state.

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Reading Transdisciplinarily: Sartre and Althusser

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Abstract

This article considers transdisciplinarity from the standpoint of reading and readers, rather than as a collection of texts, concepts or proper names. It argues that the humanism and anti-humanism debates of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly understood through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Louis Althusser, was above all a debate about the politics of reading. Understanding transdisciplinarity to relate to a projected model of post-disciplinarity, the article suggests that transdisciplinarity needs to supplement its conceptual and political remit with a theory of reading, such that reading across disciplines simultaneously becomes a question of reading beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Transdisciplinarity has been variously described as 'a kind of operator or problematizing device', a series of attempts that will 'of necessity spring of some specific discipline(s) while not remaining confined within them, and not allowing them to remain confined within themselves' and as having 'a privileged relationship to the philosophical tradition, even if it is primarily one of negation' (Osborne, 2011a: 15; Sandford, 2011: 23). A particular series of key concepts – structure, sex, subject, rhizome, networks, and so on – have been identified as possessing transdisciplinary qualities. That is to say, they cut across different disciplinary fields and destabilize the field(s) from which they apparently 'come'. A particular series of texts that address questions – social, political, conceptual – in a transdisciplinary way have also been tentatively suggested, amongst which, according to Osborne, we find in mid- to late-20th-century France: Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical*

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Reason, Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*, Foucault's *The Order of Things*, Lacan's *Ecrits*, and Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Osborne, 2011a: 15). What could be tentatively described as transdisciplinary texts also appear earlier, in the German critical tradition, in the wake of Marx's movement through and beyond philosophy. Marx's texts can themselves be seen as exemplarily transdisciplinary, moving between economics, politics, sociology, philosophy and history in an acute and yet often irreverent way – irreverent in the sense of crossing boundaries between disciplines and between languages.

So, we have a movement, (anti)-traditions of thought, some key texts, and some important names. Transdisciplinary concepts may originally circle around particular disciplines, perhaps overwhelmingly philosophy itself – although what 'philosophy' is remains in serious dispute, it is often tempting to agree with Badiou that as a discipline it remains 'empty', merely a kind of shelter for truths generated by other disciplines or conditions (2008: 11) – but these concepts in any case undermine any 'disciplinary monopoly', as Sandford puts it (2011: 23). Philosophy has, then, a privileged role in the formation of any conceptualization of transdisciplinarity, but it is a role characterized by emptiness, or at least a certain vanishing. As Cunningham puts it in this issue:

> philosophy cannot . . . be considered as simply one discipline among others. The resultant complexity may thus be situated, up to a point, within the far broader problematic of the disciplinary autonomy of philosophy itself since the early 19th century – one in which it finds itself increasingly put 'on a stage that it does not govern' (Derrida, 1981 [1972b]: 50), and in which it is thereby opened up to other discourses as a condition of its ongoing (im)possibility. (2015, 82)

Philosophers are not, of course, necessarily 'transdisciplinary' thinkers any more than Philosophy as an institutionalized discourse and set of conceptual objects necessarily lends itself to the kind of problematizing insights that the idea of transdisciplinarity hopes to capture; though it is interesting in this regard to note the fear that Philosophy tends to invoke in the minds of rationalizing bureaucrats who worry about all aspects of its 'measurability'.

If tentative transdisciplinauts are potentially and perhaps gleefully bereft of a disciplinary home, whether institutionally or otherwise, what stance can operate as a marker of an explicitly transdiciplinary approach without engaging in the repetitive erection of new metadisciplines or falling into a black hole of boundarylessness? Oddly, we could cite here Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, where by 'boundarylessness' he means the elimination of boundaries within an organization to create universal ownership of the organization's overall mission – the philosophical equivalent perhaps being the creation of concepts so

general and so purportedly 'universal' that they perversely reinforce the need for disciplines. 'Universality' itself could indeed be one of these concepts.

Given these indeterminacies, it seems that we are reliant, in the last instance, on *texts* (as opposed to schools, authors, methods) as the bearers or indicators of transdisciplinary qualities. But is it enough to merely state that there are certain transdisciplinary texts and presume that we will all read them in the same way, even assuming we are able and willing to leave our disciplines behind, or at least keep them hanging in the balance? Who is the reading public that these transdisciplinary texts are directed towards? Do these transdisciplinary texts construct a different kind of reading public to the model bourgeois isolated reader? Do transdisciplinary texts actively create their readers by virtue of writing towards a new kind of addressee? What then of the collective address of these texts? Are we forever in isolated, unchartered territory as readers or can we move forward together as the communal reader of transdisciplinary texts – does post-discipline equal post-atomization? Overall, I want to defend a model of reading that is post-disciplinary but that also comes *before* the separation into disciplines, of the categorization of texts and their corresponding readers. It is in the issues raised by an earlier debate about reading in the context of the humanism-antihumanism discussions of the 1950s and '60s that we find some of the problems with imagining a contemporary or future transdisciplinary practice of reading: how to avoid minimizing, fetishizing or over-determining the reader's response? My imagined transdisciplinary reader reads as if *already* collective – post-individual, post-disciplinary and post the imagined publics of both Sartre and Althusser, as discussed below.

The destabilizing and boundary-crossing qualities of Sartre's sprawling and unfinished *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* for example, which touches upon political theory, philosophy, sociology, history, without ever being reducible to any or all of these disciplines, poses questions at the level of both form and content: how are we supposed to read and understand this text *as* a transdisciplinary object? It strikes me that much as the identification of texts, concepts, anti-traditions and so on are important, what really is being called for is a *way of reading* that is itself transdisciplinary. What this means is that it should be possible to construct a way of understanding texts identifiable as 'transdisciplinary' *in* their very transdisciplinarity (in Marx and Osborne's sense that disciplines – Philosophy in particular in Marx's case – are only realized and surpassed 'outside of themselves'). This would require an exploration of reading that no longer saw itself as the mirror of writing (dominated by the conceptual and disciplinary world imposed by the writer), or as the delayed response to texts which, however transdisciplinary they might appear to be, become reinscribed as the bearers of new structures and architectures of thought. A transdisciplinary theory of reading, or a

paying attention to reading as itself a transdisciplinary practice, could avoid the reduction of transdisciplinarity to a new canon, and instead inaugurate news ways of approaching texts prior to their one-sided take-up by specific disciplines. What would it mean, to take a historical example, to read Leibniz and Descartes as philosophers, mathematicians and scientists all at once without shearing off elements of their work into tidy predigestible fragments appropriate to predetermined modes of thinking? As Osborne has put it with reference to the image of a post-'Theory' world:

> 'theory after Theory' will be the element of conceptual construction in a transdisciplinary philosophizing – a philosophizing without *disciplinary* limits, but precisely *not*, thereby, without limits, since this opens philosophy up to the test of experience. What would a philosophically self-conscious theorizing of this kind be like? (Osborne, 2011b: 26)

If part of the ambition of transdisciplinarity is to avoid thought being reduced to bureaucratic tick-boxes (along the lines of the definitions of inter- and multidisciplinarity established by funding bodies), then some kind of hypothetical *futural* structural fantasy – namely, that there will one day be no disciplines to operate as constraints on thought and action – ought to be pursued, at least in outline: this is not the same as the 'boundarylessness' mentioned above, but rather a kind of postdisciplinary holism that would take into account the divisions of disciplines as well as overturning them. This would be a kind of radical openness to the possibility and problems of disciplinarity as such, as a formal question as well as a practical acceptance of the *content* of transdisciplinary writing. Why must we always read as philosophers, scientists, artists instead of as philosophers and scientists and artists all at once? This raises the question of what it would mean to read in a transdisciplinary way, whether we be reading explicitly designated 'transdisciplinary' texts or otherwise. It also returns us to the centrality of the transdisciplinary reader and its possible collective existence.

This proposal for a transdisciplinary approach to reading runs alongside Cunningham's call in this issue to interrogate further the relationship between writing and transdiciplinarity. As he puts it with reference to Derrida in particular:

> The obvious question is then: how does a thought of, say, *writing* – the 'object' of a grammatology, which must not be 'just one regional science among others' (Derrida, 1976 [1967a]: 83) – relate itself to a disciplinary field or topology in this sense, given what Derrida routinely describes as its own (ultimately 'limitless') 'generalization'? If it is not, as Derrida insists, a general 'theoreticism' of its own, in

what sense is writing a *transdisciplinary* concept, no longer contained by that 'topological perspective' which, for Kant, it was the task of philosophy to govern? And, if it is, how precisely does it relate to the form of generality of the philosophical concept itself?

While these large questions hover in the background, it is evident that the question 'in what sense is writing a transdisciplinary concept?' needs to be matched by asking the same question of reading.

The call for a transdisciplinary theory of reading is in keeping with the radical possibilities opened up by the core desires and demands of trandisciplinarity as they currently stand. However, this attempt at outlining a transdisciplinary mode of reading should not be understood as primarily destructive or deconstructive, insofar as it is not looking for the abolition of disciplinarity as such, nor for codes and poles that subtend texts, but rather trying to think through the mode of reading that would operate in the situation – albeit not without its parodic and literary qualities – that Marx famously outlines in *The German Ideology*, such that:

> in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. (Marx and Engels, 1970: 54)

The division of labour that Marx identifies as separating the 'particular and the common interest', the 'fixation of social activity' and the 'sphere of activity' has significant overlap with the model of disciplinarity that dominates contemporary life. This 'consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations' (Marx and Engels, 1970: 54) maps on well to the restrictions and productive constraints not only of academic work, but of existence in general. A model of reading that is not related to a particular discipline *in advance* but breaks down the spheres of action (or, perhaps, in the speculative attempt at hand here, at least the spheres of thought) would be a notion of social reading, of reading as a collective practice – as practically absurd as this may sound, used as we are to conceiving reading as a wholly serial, atomized, even bourgeois activity, though it is interesting to note the perennial existence of book clubs at all levels of society.

What would it mean to read *as if* from the standpoint of a communism to come? Is transdisciplinarity, in this sense, a call for a kind of post-disciplinarity that would dialectically complicate the relationship

between disciplines in such a way that their interlinked structural hierarchies and competitions would be overturned? The disciplinary divisions and inequalities of status that operate in the contemporary academy and in broader social and cultural life must be, in part, the critical object of any transdisciplinary project, even if this way of reading/thinking ultimately focuses in the first place on philosophy, above all, as a spectre-like metadiscipline, despite the many historical and political attempts to displace it.

The attempt here to start to work through this question of 'reading transdisciplinarily' cuts across the humanism/antihumanism 'controversy' of the 1950s and '60s, not only because 'reading' was a central problematic within the debate, but also because it combines the question of what philosophy is and does with the question of what a text is, how it works and who it is for – questions central to the political and practical (non-bureaucratic) aspects of transdisciplinarity as a whole. While there are other important 20th-century thinkers to draw upon for a reconceptualization of reading, particularly with reference to semiotics (Eco, Barthes), I have chosen to focus on Sartre and Althusser here because the political stakes in their conceptions of reading are more to the fore. For each of these two of the 20th century's most divergent, though temporally proximate, philosophical and political thinkers, a quite specific notion of 'reading' in each case forms an explicit backdrop to the stage upon which they are more commonly seen to fight. A transdisciplinary notion of reading that could potentially be extracted from this debate would cover much of the same ground that continues to inform and, arguably, misinform much of contemporary political and philosophical thought today. In the attempt, then, to delineate the main characteristics of, first, a Sartrean and, second, an Althusserian conception of reading – taken from Sartre's *What Is Literature?* (1967 [1948]) and various essays and longer works by Althusser, in particular *Reading Capital* (1979 [1965]) – I shall be putting into play some of the broader problematics of what Althusser terms 'the humanist controversy'. What role do the conceptions of reading in Sartre and Althusser play in their understandings of the category of humanism, as a defence or as a polemical attack thereupon? How do the humanist and antihumanist modes of reading suggested by each writer, respectively, help us to think about what a transdisciplinary concept of reading might entail?

Sartre

Let me begin with two quotations from Sartre's *What Is Literature?*:

> If I appeal to my readers so that we may carry the enterprise that I have begun to a successful conclusion, it is self-evident that I

consider him as a pure freedom, as an unconditional activity; thus, in no case can I address myself to his passiveness, that is, try to affect him. (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 34)

And:

One cannot write without a public and without a myth – without a certain public which historical circumstances have made, without a certain myth of literature which depends to a very great extent upon the demand of this public. In a word, the author is in a situation, like all other men. But his writings, like every human project, simultaneously enclose, specify, and surpass this situation. (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 111–12)

Here, in these two quotations, we have more or less a summation of the Sartrean-existentialist conception of reading, understood from both the perspective of the situation of the writer and that of the reader. It would be easy here to criticize Sartre for adopting a didactic tone, for imagining a readymade readership, mutely awaiting dictates from on high (from Sartre himself, or someone like him), before any understanding of this 'specific situation', whatever that might be, can be reached. However, Sartre's imagined readership is undoubtedly more complex. Rather than understanding reading in terms of its affectivity, i.e. the direct action of the text on a passive student, the reader is in no way merely a blank recipient for Sartre. The end to which the book aims is not to bludgeon its reader to death with didacticism, but to appeal, quite simply, to his or her freedom; one's capacity, in other words, to transcend one's situation. The Sartrean-existentialist conception of reading we find here is thus fairly consistent with the more general notion of freedom at the heart of *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism and Humanism*: the active choosing of choice itself, that which characterizes nothing other than the being, or equally, the nothingness of man. It is in this way that the reader can be described as an 'unconditional activity', the one who has the potential to act, to choose: he/she is, in the language of *Being and Nothingness*, condemned to be free.

However, what distinguishes the community of readers in *What Is Literature?* from their isolation as atomized individuals is precisely that: their community. Referring to Kant's 'kingdom of ends' in which it is now the reading of texts that constitutes the ideality of the kingdom, Sartre describes how each reader reads as if on behalf of everyone else, i.e. universally. Ideally, he states, one writes for the universal reader, for all: 'actual literature can only realise its full essence in a classless society' (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 137). This imagined community of egalitarian readers – imagined because their existence must remain closed off to one another – creates a kind of virtual 'group in fusion', an idea that

prefigures some of the attempts to discuss the possibility of political group formations that so concerns Sartre in his 1960 *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. And not only this, but the community of readers also testifies to, and indeed completes, the creation of the author:

> It is the joint effort of author and reader that brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. There is no art except for and by others...Reading seems...to be the synthesis of perception and creation...Reading is directed creation. (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 30–31)

Thus, the author writes in order to address himself or herself to the freedom of readers. But this freedom, unlike the more extreme pronouncements upon 'freedom' in *Being and Nothingness*, is a conditioned one. The more we as readers recognize our freedom as readers, by encountering the author's text, the more is demanded of us. This is where the power of literature lies for Sartre, in the dialectical dependence of reader and author. The content of the prose is here the contingent element of the relationship, strangely: this is what Sartre intends by that which is specific to the situation, that which is concrete, which is 'useful'. It follows that literature – any literature – has a finite period of efficacy. Sartre is clearly unsubtle here in seeing a direct continuity between socio-political constraints, the epoch and the 'commitment' literature is thus supposed to manifest in the face of whatsoever concrete situation. There is an existentializing of the book itself, and hence of the book's efficacy for the reader. Yet the implications here for a transdisciplinary concept of reading are intriguing: reading is directed creation, a kind of pact between writer and reader, and ideally finds its telos in a 'classless society'. Hypothetically replacing 'class' with 'discipline' we could say that Sartre's existentialist concept of reading opens up the possibility of a surpassing of the closed worlds of self-isolated and isolating readerships, where limited situations hypothetically burst open into unlimited horizons in which writer, text and reader form an expansive relationship.

However, Sartre concludes *What is Literature?* with the claim: 'We stand for an ethics and an art of the finite' (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 238). Sartre's emphatic utilitarianism of the dialectic of reading and writing renders prose flatly propositional, and it is no surprise that he must restrict his discussion to prose alone, and block off, with a nod to Plato, all that he calls 'poetic'. 'The empire of signs is prose', he writes, 'poetry is on the side of painting, sculpture, and music' (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 4). Interestingly, Sartre makes no attempt to distinguish, within the category of prose, fiction from non-fiction, and any possible separation of fiction and factual writing is obfuscated from the start: 'The work of art, from whichever side you approach it, is an act of confidence in the freedom of men' (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 45). Here we see quite clearly

in what Sartre's humanism consists: its dependency upon the human freedom, and on the freedom of a certain reading public. This humanism leads Sartre to imagine a kind of 'principle of freedom', by which 'the moment I feel that my freedom is indissolubly linked with that of all other men, it cannot be demanded of me that I use it to approve the enslavement of ... man' (Sartre, 1967 [1948]: 46). The reading public can thus only be democratic and libertarian in nature, to a greater or lesser degree, no matter what the concrete circumstances are, or the nature of the text.

In sum, the Sartrean conception of reading can be characterized by four main traits:

1. Its insistence on the active element of the reader's situation, which reveals the universal element of his or her capacity: 'in the age of fatalism, we must reveal to the reader his power' (Sartre, 1967: 216).
2. The continuity between a specific socio-political situation and the relevance of the prose together with the concomitant refusal of the possibility of the usefulness of poetry to achieve this end.
3. The existential-experiential quality of reading. Sartre claims: 'Reading should not be mystical communion any more than it should be masturbation, but rather a companionship' (Sartre, 1967: 203). It remains idealist: 'The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy'. The author writes, says Sartre, with the following question perpetually in mind: 'what would happen if everybody read what I wrote?' (Sartre, 1967: 14).
4. The transitory relevance of literature to the age in which it appears: a text may sometimes 'outrun' the death of its author, like the courier of Marathon, who dies an hour before reaching Athens but nevertheless carries on running to deliver his message, but, for Sartre, the text can only ever 'make sense' within a given historical time. As he put it: 'Books that are handed down from age to age are dead fruit' (Sartre, 1967: 236). Similarly: 'There is no guarantee that literature is immortal' (Sartre, 1967: 220).

We can identify several problems with this understanding of reading for any attempt to mobilize Sartre in the name of transdisciplinarity. We can see that Sartre's discussion of literature in *What Is Literature?* seems to consist of a series of explicit and implicit slippages between different registers and regions of experience, of the experience of literature and of the historical situatedness of literature. Literature is that which necessarily maintains a direct relation between the reader, the author and the work: this relation to a reading public is, however, nothing other than a 'certain myth'. There is no account of why, or indeed how, 'literature' can ever direct the political action of its readers, other than purely formally, by revealing to them their freedom as readers. There seems to be an incommensurable gulf between the formal, politically democratic, experience of reading and the concrete situatedness that Sartre argues literature must reveal. Sartre is simply too quick to see a direct and transparent link

between socio-political conditions and a certain responsibility of prose. The openness hinted at in the discussion of a 'classless society' is quickly shut down by a moralizing of the situation, in Sartre's sense of situation. We counter by saying that disciplines exist, and thus we are bound by them and the responsibilities that remaining faithful to disciplinary conditions entail: a moralism of disciplinarity, perhaps.

Furthermore, the slippages between the dialectic of the reader-author relation and the phenomenology of the reading experience can only mean that history and the epochal nature of texts remain confused. When exactly does the reading of a certain text become useless, and what does this mean for any account of the experience of reading? Is there not a residual didacticism at work in Sartre's humanist account of reading, despite his privileging of the reader's freedom? We are still dealing with the language of essence, of the myth of an ideal readership. There is in Sartre's work, arguably, the assumption that the writer himself will always be a certain kind of person, but only the readership will change, or, indeed, vanish. 'We no longer know', he remarks of his situation in 1948, 'for whom to write' (Sartre, 1967: 178). It is hard to escape the impression that this 'we' to which Sartre refers remains the bourgeois writer, no longer writing for the bourgeoisie alone, as Sartre characterizes the situation of the 17th-century writer, but nevertheless: 'We were born into the bourgeoisie' (Sartre, 1967: 205).

Worst still, there is a despondency that characterizes Sartrean reading: 'we do not have the crazy ambition of influencing the State Department, but rather the slightly less crazy one of acting upon the opinion of our fellow citizens' (Sartre, 1967: 212). It remains a question of telling the reader what to think, what to opine, and the only activity that reading elicits is that of the reading itself. For all his discussions of freedom, for the Sartre of *What Is Literature?* reading and writing remain restricted to the world of literary affect: 'The most beautiful book in the world will not save a child from pain' (Sartre, 1967: 233). Sartre's complex humanism retains, albeit negativity, the implicit constraints of genre, of the bourgeois forms of literature, and it gives them an existential spin. The deflationist aspect of the efficacy of writing may make it a recognizably post-Enlightenment project, but the promise of collective reading quickly turns into 'companionship', a rather more familiar model of reading where the mythical public reader devolves once again into the domestic, isolated individual.

In this reiteration of the classical relation of author-text-reader, despite radical elements, Sartre's description of reading remains less politically useful than that of Barthes, in particular. Barthes' claim breaks open the concept of the reader in a way that Sartre ultimately blocks off:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a
> writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity

lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (Barthes, 1977: 148)

The anonymity and generic quality of Barthes' reader allows the reader to more radically democratically take over, or really overturn, the function of the author in the name of a non-moralistic, non-humanistic concept of the social, which is why Barthes is so scathing about 'a humanism hypocritically turned champion of the reader's rights' (Barthes, 1977: 148). To mobilize Barthes in a transdisciplinary notion of reading, however, would require a revisiting of his concept of writing, along the lines identified by Cunningham above – which exceeds our compass here. It is, rather, Althusser against whom Sartre's conception stands out most starkly.

Althusser

The difference between Sartre's and Althusser's approaches to reading may be initially summed up in the following way: on the one side, a quasi-Marxist, humanist attempt to describe the experience of reading; on the other, an anti- or a-humanist attempt to read Marx. Whilst Althusser's proclamations about reading must be taken in the specific context of his work on Marx, it is quite clear that Althusser also tries to instigate an entirely new approach to the understanding of reading more generally. He argues that in Marx 'we note that not only in what he says but in what he does we can grasp the transition from an earlier idea and practice of reading to a new practice of reading, and to a theory of history capable of providing us with a new theory of reading' (Althusser, 1979 [1965]: 18). Arguably, this is precisely what Sartre attempted to do, without, however, managing to escape from the language of the 'essence' of the text, of a certain kind of 'myth', of literature and of a hypothetical community of readers. How then does Althusser attempt to describe his understanding of this new theory of reading? What must we escape before we can understand in what it might consist? How does Althusser's model help us to think in a more dynamically transdisciplinary way about reading? Althusser replies:

To break with the religious myth of reading: with Marx this theoretical necessity took precisely the form of a rupture with the Hegelian conception of the whole as a 'spiritual' totality, to be precise, as an expressive totality. It is no accident that when we turn the thin sheet of the theory of reading, we discover beneath it a theory of expression, and that we discover this theory of expressive

totality ... to be the theory which, in Hegel, for the last time and on the terrain of history itself, assembled all the complementary religious myths of the voice (the Logos) speaking in the sequences of a discourse; of a Truth that inhabits its Scripture. (Althusser, 1979 [1965]: 17)

Rather than endeavouring to trace the effects of a text on a reader, whether passive or active, what Althusser describes as 'symptomatic reading', attempts to read the text against itself, to discern within it that which might constitute its hidden problematic, the one that would not be visible if the text was to be read as already 'full'. Althusser argues against transparency, against the idea of an initial transparency of the true, and also against epiphany and parousia – the presence, the revelatory illumination of thought. The possibilities of extracting a transdisciplinary account of reading from Althusser's insights seem initially promising, even if the text is modelled on the unconscious, rather than the passages between different disciplines. We could make connections between the problematizing qualities of a transdisciplinary account of reading and Althusser's criticism of 'religious' reading, for example, given the scholasticism and dogmatism of an image of disciplines as kinds of 'schools' with their own internal heresies, deliberate blindspots and acolytes. Indeed, we could go further and suggest that transdisciplinarity must in fact pay great attention to the unconscious of the text in order to see and make connections that would otherwise be parcelled and sold off to specific pre-existing disciplines. In this way, Althusser provides us with important elements of the antihumanist aspect of transdisciplinary reading.

On the Althusserian model, both Hegelian and empiricist readings (and Sartre arguably fits somewhere between the two) attempt to understand reading as direct communication, rather than paying attention to the unconscious of the text, to the very unspoken and initially unclear conditions for the very possibility of its content to emerge. It is the complex relation between the sights – *vues* – of the texts and its constitutive oversights – *bévues* – that characterize symptomatic reading for Althusser: a reading that is never the first reading, never the initial impression of a text. It is a machinic, rather than organicist, conception of reading, an attempt to draw out the technical structures that silently shape a text and indicate its real significance for thought. Interestingly, whilst arguing that it is Marx who introduced the question of what it might mean to read into contemporary thought, it is to Spinoza that Althusser turns as the historical precursor for this symptomatic, materialist reading:

The first man ever to have posed the problem of reading, and in consequence of writing, was Spinoza, and he was also the first man

in the world to have proposed both a theory of history and a philosophy of the opacity of the immediate. With him, for the first time ever, a man linked together in this way the essence of reading and the essence of history in a theory of the difference between the imaginary and the true. This explains to us why Marx could not possibly have become Marx except by founding a theory of history and a philosophy of the historical distinction between ideology and science, and why in the last instance this foundation was consummated in the dissipation of the religious myth of reading. (Althusser, 1979 [1965]: 16–17)

The dissolution of the religious myth of reading is the necessary precondition of the dissolution of what Spinoza calls 'knowledge of the first kind', and what Althusser calls ideology. All that, in effect, forms an epistemic obstacle, to borrow a Bachelardian lexicon, as Althusser so often does, to a reading of a text that pays attention to that which is of key importance.

As an aside, we may note that Althusser's use of a Spinozist conception of reading is ultimately quite far from Deleuze and Guattari's own use of Spinoza in their discussions of literature, and here I am thinking of their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* where they too speak of books in machinic terms: 'A book itself is a little machine', it exists 'only through the outside and on the outside' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 4). However, Deleuze and Guattari's refusal of the concept of ideology – 'there is no ideology and never has been' – arguably entails a necessarily expressive (though non-Hegelian) account of the affectivity of literature; the very expression and transmission of intensities that Althusser argues against, as we saw above, also on the basis of a Spinozist understanding of reading.

Because for Althusser there is necessary opacity to one's first reading of a text, an incomplete and illusory 'first kind of knowledge', there can be no recourse to the language of immediacy, intensity or expressionism, however undead, that is, 'rhizomatic' and 'machinic'. Deleuze and Guattari's account of reading remains too empiricist to be properly attentive to the productive, yet not immediately apparent, force of a text: its political/psychoanalytic dimension. *Reading Capital* explicitly addresses this question of production:

It is therefore a question of producing, in the precise sense of the word, which seems to signify making manifest what is latent, but which really means transforming...something which in a certain sense already exists. This production...is the production of a knowledge. (Althusser, 1979 [1965]: 34)

To the Hegelian-religious notion of reading there corresponds an empiricist theory of knowledge as vision, as the extraction of an object

from the real of vision. To a symptomatic reading there corresponds an idea of knowledge as production. However, somewhat critically, there seems to be a sense in which Althusser's characterization of this Hegelian-religious notion of reading hides a deeper flaw in his own conception. He may well claim that 'there is no such thing as an innocent reading, we must say what reading we are guilty of' and make provision for his particular account of it by arguing that: 'It is therefore a special reading which exculpates itself as a reading by posing every guilty reading the very question that unmasks its innocence, the mere question of its innocence: what is to be read?' (Althusser, 1979 [1965]: 14–15). Nevertheless, as Jacques Rancière points out:

> The religious-speculative myth of the immediate presence of sense in writing is, for Althusser, what implicitly sustains the naiveties of that empiricism which identifies the words in a book with the concepts of science and the concepts of science with the objects one holds in one's hand. (Rancière, 2004: 130)

In other words, is Althusser too hasty, too wilfully keen to simply elide the 'religious myth' of reading with a kind of naïve empiricism, even if the former must by definition depend upon a conception of transcendence that is constitutively unavailable to the latter? As Rancière further argues:

> One readily sees the obvious advantage provided by this handy identification of the religion of the book with the parousia in the book, by coupling from the start religious speculation with naïve empiricism it guarantees the entire chain of identifications in which the economist and the humanist, the opportunist and the leftist will be wisely aligned, the perverse couples symmetrically aligned together and tainted by the same sin. (Rancière, 2004: 130)

Althusser is thus guilty of characterizing a conception of reading that is not the one held even by those who adhere to a 'religious myth of reading' or to a naïve empiricism. In effect, the only person who really understands reading in the way that Althusser negatively depicts it, halfway between empiricism and transcendence, is Sartre, the old enemy, the Marxist who owes more to Hegel and Kierkegaard than he does to *Capital*. The vexed question of 'reading' is thus nothing other than one strand of the larger question of humanism and its overturning. In this sense, then, while Althusser provides one crucial aspect of a possible transdisciplinary model of reading – namely the attention paid to the unconscious of the text – he ultimately subsumes 'reading' in the quest for a thoroughgoing destructive takedown of humanism as such, rather than in the name of criticizing a humanist model of reading more

specifically. A transdisciplinary notion of reading will need to be shaped by a political problematic, but it must avoid overdetermining what its 'post-disciplinary' method will be, instead paying attention to the form and content (as well as the 'unconscious') of particular texts.

Coda

Althusser's understanding of symptomatic reading allows us to appreciate the necessity of reading that in a text which is (literally) not there to be read. Not that which does not exist, but that which forms, as he would say, borrowing openly from Lacan, the unconscious of the text. It is a technique picked up most obviously by Foucault, but also by Rancière – which makes his critique of Althusserian reading on Althusserian grounds perhaps most revealing of all. In the wake of Althusser's definition of reading in terms of problematics, epistemic obstacles and opacity, we can no longer believe that a direct, cursory, revelatory impression of a text will suffice for us to understand the conditions of the production of its content. If we are to read carefully, it is because much is at stake. Marx himself read Smith, Ricardo and Hegel symptomatically, Althusser claims at one point, which is precisely why he was able to open up a new 'continent' of thought, namely that of history, understood in an altogether new and polemical way. Of course, there is little discussion in Althusser of who readers – symptomatic or otherwise – might be, or what a reading community might look like; precisely those questions that Sartre was so concerned to understand. Althusser is quite forbidden to pose these questions in this way, as they owe much to a kind of low-level empiricism, or humanist phenomenology, as we saw in Sartre. Nevertheless, should one not extend Althusser's analysis, to address the question of the unconscious and the opacities of the reader, above and beyond the unconscious of the text? If the answer to this question is affirmative, then Sartre's question of the reading community and Althusser's concept of symptomatic reading could perhaps be dialectically combined and transformed into a further project: the project of transdisciplinary reading, in which a collective notion of post-disciplinary reading would be understood materially, addressing the 'problematics, epistemic obstacles' and so on, not only at the level of the text itself, but also by looking at the problematics and epistemic obstacles between the text and the disciplines that want to possess or expel it.

If Sartre's conception of reading remains wedded to a humanist-Hegelian or even Kantian framework, it nevertheless attempts to think what an active conception of reading might be – one that would have revolutionary ramifications in the present. If Sartre fails, it is because there is too much dependency on the transparency of the relations between the author and the reader, and between the reader and the text. Althusser's conception of reading destroys this Sartrean scenario,

which clearly does depend upon both the transcendence of the reader in his or her free activity and on a simple conception of writing that would be necessarily relevant to its epoch, albeit for a finite amount of time. If the discussion of the 'religious myth of reading' in Althusser had a target, it was undoubtedly Sartre, as without destroying the whole edifice of myth and essentialism that accompanies Sartre's description of writing in *What Is Literature?* there would be no way of mounting an alternative account of reading. Such an alternative account is one that seeks to indicate the possibility of a truly innovative understanding of a text in all its philosophical and political radicality, not only from within, but also from without, moving across texts and disciplines in a way that raises the possibility of a truly transdisciplinary, collective mode of reading in general.

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Introduction to Guattari on Trandisciplinarity

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Abstract
Written roughly a year before the end of his life, Guattari's 'The Ethico-Political Foundations of Interdisciplinarity' elaborates an account of transdisciplinary research processes closely informed by his conception of transversality. Tacitly critiquing institutions of research that separate it from the political practices associated with the reinvention of democracy, the paper explores in particular the possibilities of conducting transversal research into urban life, and speculates on the value of information technology.

Keywords
Guattari, institutions, micropolitics, transversality

With his call, 'transdisciplinarity must become transversality', Félix Guattari points the reader of this brief text (originally titled 'The Ethico-Political Foundations of Interdisciplinarity') in a direction that he had been endeavouring to push knowledge production in the field of the human sciences since the early 1960s. For the concept of transversality – which, in truth, is as much a name for an evolving series of practical and institutional engagements in which Guattari had invested his own very considerable energies as it is a concept – is at the starting point of an intellectual adventure into the exploration of, and experimentation with, an unconscious that has challenged the autonomy and sufficiency of any and every project.

Written in 1991, at a time when he was elaborating the theoretical and practical approach to the production of subjectivity that he had started to call 'ecosophy', Guattari's brief text casts an interesting light on his understanding of research. Thematizing the question of the foundations of transdisciplinary research in the context of his growing concern with ecological issues – issues explored across the natural, social and mental realms – Guattari appears here as someone concerned with the problematic sufficiency of professional expertise as the basis for undertaking

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research. As someone who did not have a position as an academic, who worked for many years at the La Borde clinic as well as in his own psychoanalytical practice, and militated extensively not just around obvious political causes but also in significant relation to the possibilities of conducting collective research, Guattari was certainly no stranger to the problematic cloistering and compartmentalization of intellectual expertise. Indeed, his own endeavours at reformulating analytical ideas about the unconscious consistently point towards a critique of professional expertise that was central to his 'toolbox' understanding of the role of concepts and his more substantive theorization of an unconscious that would be open to all. Furthermore, given his own early history exploring the possibilities – and problems – of translating psychoanalysis into the psychiatric institution, the idea of research acquired for him a particularly *existential* hue that may not be readily evident from the text translated here.

The concept of transversality emerged as the fruit of an ongoing and intensive engagement of workers in the field of psychiatry in France with psychoanalysis and, more specifically, with the limits of traditional psychoanalytic technique when faced with patients in an institutional setting. In this respect (although it did not, at least in the first instance, play this role), the concept also forms a part of Guattari's incipient critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its insufficiencies with regard to the treatment of psychosis. This in turn precipitated its extension and revision, with the assistance of Deleuze (whose own strategic interest in psychosis was made fully evident in *Logic of Sense*), as part of a more nuanced response to the structuralist ideal in Lacanian analysis. It is, of course, easy to read the development of the concept of transversality retrospectively, in the light of Deleuze's more obviously philosophical proclivities, but doing so can blind us to elements of Guattari's thinking that are of signal importance with regard to his later interest in research as such. As writings from towards the end of his life indicate, the 'singular experience' of working at the La Borde clinic where these ideas were first developed, not only marked Guattari deeply but informed his understanding of the 'ethico-political' roots of all analytic work (Guattari, 2012).

In a series of texts written in the early to mid-1960s, Guattari can be found wrestling with the ossified and bureaucratic quality of psychiatric institutions, referring (no doubt in part with Tosquelles in mind) to the experiences of prisoners of war and concentration camps as giving some people a different view of the psychiatric hospital. Given that, as he puts it, the 'habitual proliferation of institutions in contemporary society only results in the reinforcement of the alienation of the individual', he asks, 'is there a possibility that a transfer of responsibility may be brought about and that an *institutional creativity* might take the place of bureaucracy?' (Guattari, 2003: 39). In this context, a question about the nature

of groups within the psychiatric institution emerges for Guattari, evidently influenced by Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Considering the institutional locatedness of 'the mad' and the situation of psychiatry and psychiatrists – as those socially delegated to deal with a group lacking the aptitude for 'normal' commerce – Guattari sought to reformulate psychoanalytic thinking in such a way as to overcome the problems raised, in an institutional setting, both by its reliance on a kind of methodological individualism and its emerging reworking by a focus on language.

Referring even at this early stage to the institutional subject as a 'collective agent of enunciation', Guattari's aim was to avoid a situation in which the institution might become a structure, a possibility that he felt would, analytically, imply a reification of the institution. Thinking in terms of groups rather than structures allowed Guattari to retain a concern with praxis and its possibilities vis-à-vis an institution which necessitated a commitment to the transitory in order to make good on the idea of breaking down the barrier between reason and madness. And making a distinction between subjugated groups (groups that are the object of the discourse of others) and subject groups (groups that are the subject of their own enunciation) further facilitated the possibility of developing an analytic exploration of the social unconscious operative within the institution. The concept of transversality intervenes here as a way to introduce distinctions between groups with regard to their degree of openness towards, and aptitude for bringing to light, the desire that circulated within the institution. This in turn made a critique of professional expertise not only possible but necessary, for given that those normally in charge of the institution were just as likely to be the objects of other discourses, invested in the vertical dimension of hierarchy both inside and outside the institution, there could be no guarantee that they would be in a particularly good position to bring to light the desire operative within the institution. Hence, in a text from 1962–3, discussing institutional psychotherapy, Guattari argued for the importance of

[having] done with the doctor as individual, colleague, citizen, who puts himself forward as the one who 'speaks for . . .', who is the 'spokesperson' of the subject that the institution could be. And not necessarily in full knowledge of so doing. Is he not himself as much the unconscious prisoner as the agent of this process, with his conjugal life, his culture, his opinions, etc.? (Guattari, 2003: 39)

In his preface to *Psychanalyse et transversalité*, Deleuze brings out well a crucial aspect of the functioning of the concept of transversality for Guattari: it breaks down the opposition (even the dialectically complicated one) between analysis and desire. As he put it in typically Deleuzean terms, institutional analysis has the practical aim of

'introducing into the institution a militant political function, constituting a sort of "monster" that is neither psychoanalysis nor hospital practice, even less group dynamics, and which aims to be applicable everywhere, in the hospital, the school, in militancy – a machine to produce and to enunciate desire' (Deleuze, 2003: x).

In the context of the essay translated here, what is particularly interesting about the discovery/invention of transversality is that, by 'detotalizing' the institution, it implied the need to extend the analytic possibilities of the social unconscious out into society more generally, a point that Guattari made readily in a discussion of institutional training written at the end of the 1980s. 'Whilst working on a day to day basis with its hundred or so patients, La Borde found itself progressively implicated in a more global calling into question of health, pedagogy, the penal condition, the condition of women, of architecture, of urban planning' (Guattari, 2012: 68). This implication led in turn to a series of group initiatives that were, as he puts it, set up with a view to exploring 'unconscious formations that didn't just concern the two protagonists of classical psychoanalysis but could be broadened out to much larger segments of society' (Guattari, 2012: 69). Dosse has suggested that the Federation of Groups for Institutional Study and Research (FGERI), set up in 1965 – to which Guattari is alluding in this quote – aimed, in this regard, to 'convert intellectual work into a programme of non-academic research' (Dosse, 2007: 99), a programme in which research that might otherwise be considered the privileged domain of academic institutions could acquire a different set of connections with the social field. In any case, the editorial of the second issue of the journal *Recherches* that formed the mouthpiece of the federation (and later, the Centre for Institutional Study, Researching, and Training [CERFI]) makes it clear that the transversal approach to research that was envisaged would not be divorced from a concern with the institution. '*Recherches* is the mouthpiece of every group that works in a social field directed towards the analysis of the institutions in which everyone is inserted and agrees to be constantly addressed by groups planted in other sectors' (Dosse, 2007: 100).

The reality of this programme – a testament equally to the political upheavals of the years following the events of May 1968 – was doubtless somewhat chaotic. CERFI, which was set up on the back of FGERI in 1967 and became a fully-fledged research organization, received numerous grants from the French government, and it is probably true to say that the experimental contestation of the division between analysis and desire it facilitated in relation to research didn't always result in decisions that facilitated the kind of research that Guattari wanted. The activities of CERFI have proved to be of interest to scholars interested in aspects of the history of French theory, not least, perhaps, because of the involvement of Foucault with some of its projects (see, amongst others,

Mozère, 2004). In the present context, CERFI is interesting because a number of the projects that it undertook have a direct bearing on the substantive issues mentioned in the essay by Guattari presented here. Publications that resulted from the third of CERFI's substantial research grants, devoted to studying the 'genealogy of collective equipment' are of special note in this regard.

In addition to the involvement of Foucault and Deleuze, the focus of this project gives its title to a manuscript written by Guattari whilst he was working on *A Thousand Plateaus* with Deleuze, 'Collective Equipment and Semiotic Subjection' (2011). Engaging specifically in the study of issues that might now be considered the province of urbanism, town planning or urban geography, the first of the issues of *Recherches* exploring the loosely conceived genealogy included two interviews with Foucault. And whilst the discussions are not entirely conclusive, they do point towards some of the ways in which the transversal approach to transdisciplinary research Guattari was interested in extended into a reworking of his understanding of the social unconscious, which is flatly identified, in the first of two discussions with Foucault, with 'collective equipment as such' (Foucault et al., 2001: 1316). The idea of collective equipment is notably absent from *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is, in some respects, regrettable. It is largely the exploration of collective equipment undertaken by CERFI (and other CERFI projects such as that by Anne Querrien) that informs the concern with machinic enslavement in that book, and in Guattari's own later references to the planetary networks of integrated world capitalism (Guattari, 2013: 36–7). His references here to 'machinic transdisciplinarity' should, perhaps, be understood in this context. More pointedly, the connections between the work of CERFI and the philosophical project undertaken by Deleuze and Guattari suggests that, for Guattari, the call for transdisciplinarity to become transversality, explored in the article we present here, was already operative theoretically and practically – institutionally – in the work Guattari was undertaking with Deleuze throughout the 1970s.

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Transdisciplinarity Must Become Transversality

Félix Guattari

Everyone is aware that the complexity of the objects of research in the domain of the human and environmental sciences demands an interdisciplinary approach. But the encounter between disciplines does not permit a decompartmentalization of the problematics and modes of expression brought together. Signs are made from one domain to another in the absence of any in-depth communication. How is a bridge to be established between living eco-systems? The stakes are considerable, as they condition the possibility of any real efficacy in these matters. Scientific ecology, applied to the environment, will remain powerless if it is not relayed by new social and political components, and the latter will in turn vegetate in immobility and conservatism without a profound transformation of mentalities.

The question of interdisciplinarity thus shifts from the cognitive to social, political, ethical, even aesthetic domains. This is because the ecology of the visible is inseparably linked to an ecology of the virtual, to the problematics of individual and collective choice, to universes of value that are on the way to promotion or to collapse.

Under the protection of a scientific or, rather, scientistic paradigm, the human sciences have endeavoured systematically to remove the subjective factors of responsibility and commitment. In fact, what it would be worth calling into question in these registers is a certain formal status given to objectivity. The vision that one has of a 'normal' state of things always depends on a normative point of view. To describe urban life, at the end of the millennium, to appreciate what it tends towards, implies a choice of values relative to the social good, to the position of the imaginary in relation to the media, to the relation between the natural, the cosmic and the artificial, the machinic. That does not signify that one has to remain in the vague, the approximate, but that in the course of authentic research one is always caught up in a constructivist process. The object of research has a feedback relation with the latter. In these conditions, social experimentation and action-research ought to be imbricated much more frequently with the objective analysis of social

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facts. In fact, in many domains, the research process is called on permanently to modify, to reconstruct, its object.

Human life can only be maintained on the planet thanks to its reliance on science and technology. The death race between science and AIDS is a dramatic illustration of this: without the development of a vaccine or medication, hundreds of millions of individuals will find themselves at risk in the decades to come. And in this particular sphere, interdisciplinary research imposes itself. It is the same in the spheres of education, family life, neighbourhoods: their social legitimacy, their cultural consistency, seems lost. They involve a more and more frequent recourse to public intervention (the police, social work, the legal system, etc), or mass media intrusion (the role of television series, opinion polls, advertising). The third and fourth age henceforth arise almost exclusively from specialized collective equipment.[1] There has thus been a general deterritorialization of old social territories, ways and customs, traditions, self-regulating representations, an appeal to the welfare state, social work, to specialists and professionals, that has become more and more pressing. One may find this regrettable but one must make the best of it, at least in current conditions.

In the long term, it will become more and more necessary to rethink human life in terms of a generalized ecology – environmental, social and mental – that I have called ecosophy and, as a consequence, also to rethink the status of research in all these domains. The [UN] Charter of Human Rights ought to include an article on the right of everyone to research. All social groups, all professions, minorities ... have a need of the research that concerns or implicates them. Creating a pole for the singularization, the particularization of research, balancing out the pole of the universal rationality of science seems indispensable. It is a matter here of the affirmation of a new paradigm of processual creation, linked to aesthetics in the social domain. Its axiological target would cease to be the Truth with a capital T but instead a localized modelling, incarnated in a social body whose destiny is in question.

The enlarging of the horizons of research, its being taken in charge by social relays that are always more numerous, does not, however, imply a loss of rigour, but a change of attitude with regard to its interlocutors. Let's take the example of urban ecology. Here the interlocutor must sometimes be completely fabricated. This is the case with the concept of urban space of the 'new cities' type, where it is advisable to prefigure or simulate the populations or professions called on to have an investment in a given social territory.

Let us flag up in this regard the interesting experiences that have developed in the USSR, in the context of situations that were for a long time blocked by bureaucracy and in the context of Perestroika. Self-managed groups have constituted themselves with the aim of opposing the immobility of the local Soviets, particularly in the domain of

architecture, urbanism, and the defence of the environment. (These experiments/experiences were coordinated by a centre for regional research created by the Academy of Sciences under the direction of Victor Tischenko.) The activity of these groups led to the putting into place of cooperatives, which constructed apartments in Moscow, Leningrad and in other cities of a much better quality than those constructed by the state. In 1987, at Boris Yeltsin's request, a large-scale collective game on the theme of the social becoming of the city took place in the city of Moscow, with the participation of 150 people from every level of the social hierarchy, in order to define a new methodology in this domain. The aim of such 'role-playing' games was equally one of making the group of participants understand that power can be transformed and become an instance with multiple partners, operating by alliance and negotiation, and not a relation of domination between hierarchical instances. Thus an entire political culture finds itself called into question through such research. Although western democracies and Japan find themselves in very different situations to that of the USSR, one can think that in other forms, in different modalities, it will become equally necessary here to invent what one might call collective assemblages of enunciation, balancing out the technocratic visions that reign too frequently in these sectors.

Interdisciplinarity, which I prefer to call transdisciplinarity, in my opinion thus passes/takes place by a permanent reinvention of democracy at different stages in the social field. During the execution of programmes of urban development, the renovation of old neighbourhoods or the conversions of 'industrial wastelands', significant contracts for research and social experimentation should be established not just with social science researchers but also with a certain number of future inhabitants and users of these constructions and equipments, in order to study what might be new modes of domestic life, new neighbouring practices, practices of cooperation and solidarity, education, culture, sport, looking after children, the elderly and the handicapped, etc. A collective awareness of the fact that the means of changing life and of creating a new style of activity, new values, are within reach, at least in our developed societies, has not yet been gained. (Besides, there would be many lessons to learn from certain already existing experiences in Third World countries!) Desire and the will to move in the direction of such transformations depend in large part on the orientation of social labour and research. It is not legitimate to study a neighbourhood in difficulty without at the same time working for its regeneration. Cognitive elaboration here is inseparable from human commitment and the value choices it implies.

Envisaged from this angle, the broadening out of transdisciplinarity goes without saying. To stick with our example of the remodelling of urban life, it is evident that no desire for change, no collective emulation, can be born if it is not inscribed against the background of a will to

transform the human condition on the planet. Environmental ecology, social ecology and mental ecology will never be able to result in major creations if they are only cultivated in one country, one neighbourhood, indeed even just a continent of the well-off. Taking into account the developments of informatics, of robotics, of telematics, the planetary division of labour is becoming more and more cruel. Numerous zones in the Third World have been marked by unbelievable super-exploitation (marked in particular by child labour), whilst bigger and bigger regions of the world are the object of a sort of economic and cultural desertification. For the majority of social, urban and ecological questions, transdisciplinarity would thus also consist in stepping back at a planetary level and problematizing local questions on the basis of horizons that put the whole of life and of international relations into play.

Another axis for the broadening out of transdisciplinarity would consist in escaping from traditional visions starting systematically from the white, adult male, competing on the market of dominant values. Seen from the emancipatory point of view of the condition of women, how many new questions would be posed? Ethnology has remained essentially masculine. There remains an immense domain to be deciphered concerning myths, rituals and collective female practices. Equally, looking at the world through the eyes of children, the elderly, the disabled . . . In short, [it is a matter of] breaking with the standard, mass-mediatized gaze, which corrupts our intellect and our sensibility.

Transdisciplinarity must become transversality between science, the socius, aesthetics and politics. If, as Marxists with their historical materialism believe, there is no science of politics, there is by contrast a necessity to rethink a politics of science. As a dialectical counterpart, politics ought to be rethought as a transversalist domain; it ought to leave its usual arenas and its focus on the media, so as to arrive at a reappropriation of technique and science (which are oriented solely towards profit, and lead to aberration and catastrophe, particularly in the ecological domain) by the fabric of the social: a politics that is closer to the eco-systems of everyday life and yet with a grasp of the major stakes for the planet. At this point in history, humanity is for the first time responsible for its destiny as a species, and beyond that, for the all living species and the future of the bio-sphere. But it is worth adding a necessary protection and optimal development of incorporeal species to living species. Cultures and forms of sensibility alike are threatened. Science cannot content itself with studying these evolutions passively. It is required to intervene, to commit itself.

From a more prospectivist perspective, one may also envisage the possible evolution of transdisciplinarity in the context of the development of new technologies. In the first place, it will be possible to liberate a greater and greater quantity of activity and of labour from repetitive material tasks and to devote it to study, research and culture, which will

establish new junctions of all kinds between themselves. In the long term, one can imagine investment in these domains will take precedence over all others. It goes without saying that such an overturning of values would imply considerable geopolitical, social and economic transformations (in particular, modes of valorization of human activities and machinic productions). In the second place, the evolution of informatics, its junction with television, telematics, data banks and the image, will develop a sort of machinic transdisciplinarity. This is already largely the case with every major discovery, every major technological innovation, which does not just irrigate neighbouring domains but frequently has fallout in the most distant of domains. Whether one considers the extreme imbrication of informatics, spatial technologies, communication techniques, physics, astrophysics, biology, etc. . . . In the third place, one might think that the era to come will lay down a profound transformation of the means of expression, knowledge, coordination and sensibility. To a great extent, the rapid expansion of science in the Renaissance was linked to the discovery of printing.

Today a new kind of informatic writing is perhaps starting to take shape. A writing that will not restrict itself to transcribing written and oral signs, but whose semiotic segments will possess their own richness, their own autonomy. I refer in this regard to the illuminating work of Pierre Lévy on 'dynamic ideography' [published by Éditions de la Découverte], which demonstrates that it is possible for a transdisciplinarity to be born internal to the language of informatics, a transdisciplinarity that would enable the problematic of one model in relation to another to be clarified (Pierre Lévy, precisely, takes the example of the transfer of knowledge between heterogeneous ecosystems), a transdisciplinarity that would, in a way, position research 'astride' science, art and social communication.

As an internal movement of the transformation of the sciences, an opening onto the social, aesthetics and ethics, transdisciplinarity will not be born spontaneously. International scientific life is often tangled up in formal rituals, in a sham interdisciplinarity. Its deepening implies a permanent 'research into research', an experimentation with new paths for the constitution of collective assemblages of enunciation. To this end, conditions must be created. It is not just that pluri-disciplinary teams have to be put in place, sometimes for long periods, or according to appropriate temporal rhythms, but the question of their implantation, of their fields of investigation, of their interaction with a human environment will be frequently posed. For example, in the domain of cooperation with developing countries, experts have too frequently been 'parachuted' onto social terrains which were not prepared to receive them, and which weren't prepared to encounter them. In this register, the analysis of failures should be most enriching. Agronomic, medical, ecological, architectural knowledge must somehow be reinvented in each concrete situation. Hence the corollary importance of the putting together of monographs tracing

out the trajectories initiating an experiment, its positive and negative phases, the bifurcations that have characterized the formation of what I have called collective assemblages of enunciation.

There is no general pedagogy relative to the constitution of a living transdisciplinarity. It is a matter here of initiative, the taste for risk, for exiting pre-established schemas, the maturing of the personality (which can concern very young people). Once again, much more will be gained in this register by referring to processes of aesthetic creation than to the standardized, planned, bureaucratized visions that reign too frequently in centres of scientific research, laboratories and universities.

Translated by Andrew Goffey

Notes

This is a translation of a typescript dated April 1992, entitled '*Fondements éthico-politiques de l' interdisciplinarité*'. It is translated with the kind permission of Emmanuelle and Bruno Guattari, with thanks to IMEC for their provision of a copy of the manuscript. It has been retitled here – using a phrase from within the text – in line with its main argument, and terminological resonance with other pieces in this issue.

1. Guattari uses the term *equipements collectifs* both here and in other writings. It does not translate easily into English. I have followed Rabinow in his simple rendering of the French term as 'equipment' [AG].

Félix Guattari (1930–1992) was a psychoanalyst by training and a political militant by vocation, and worked from 1955 at the La Borde clinic alongside Jean Oury. Achieving prominence most notably for his elaboration of a philosophy with Gilles Deleuze, he wrote numerous texts of his own, including *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, *Molecular Revolution*, *The Machinic Unconscious*, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* and *Chaosmosis*. Guattari considered his theoretical and analytic work to be inseparable from his political activities and was a key figure in the development of numerous organizations that fused research and political struggle, including most notably CERFI (the Centre for Institutional Study, Researching, and Training).

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Structuralism's Afters: Tracing Transdisciplinarity through Guattari and Latour

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Abstract
This article analyses Guattari's and Latour's bodies of work as radical developers of a processual and ontological transdisciplinarity. These works impose a definitive break from the history that, in the 1960s, had drawn upon structuralism in order to oppose philosophy with an epistemological revolution from the perspective of a scientific problematization and first transdisciplinary reconfiguration of the *sciences de l'homme*. It is shown that the second anti-structuralist transdisciplinarity affirms as its raison d'être "the necessity to return to Pragmatics" (Guattari), to enact the new significance of the transversal constructions liberated by the rhizomatic monism of a hybrid social ontology (Latour). Between Guattari, Latour, and the ecologization they share, a total de-epistemologization and re-ontologization is engaged. It leads to the fall of the 'Ontological Iron Curtain' erected by the philosophical tradition between mind and matter, nature and society. The article concludes by critically addressing the final statements of both Guattari and Latour towards a new aesthetic paradigm and a new diplomacy of institutional forms respectively.

Keywords
Deleuze, Guattari, Latour, pragmatics, rhizome, structuralism, transdisciplinarity

The writings of Guattari and Latour are best described as *interventions*, which mobilize the politics at stake in the respective economies of their work. At the same time, they enact a provisional, open, late state of the transdisciplinary problematic, critically deconstructing and *destroying* the whole field of disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledges. They

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involve a common, paradoxical and polemical 'political epistemology' (Latour, 2005: 254) that identifies the redefinition of politics at stake in this uncertain 'epistemology' with an ontological pragmatics – or a pragmatic ontology – which submits epistemology to an absolute de-definition, forced upon it by the new ecological emergencies: environmental, social *and* mental ecology, as Guattari insists.

I propose here to *redesign* these two bodies of work as *radical developers* of a transdisciplinarity that imposes a definitive bifurcation as the historical and ontological truth of its final construction. Following the rediscovery and reinvent of pragmatics (Guattari-Deleuze) and pragmatism (Latour), this bifurcation ends up breaking through that history which, since the 1960s, had drawn upon structuralism and post-structuralism in order to question disciplinary definitions of the sciences and humanities. It affirms as its *raison d'être* 'the necessity to return to Pragmatics', to experiment with the new transdisciplinary significance of the processual constructions liberated by the 'magic formula PLURALISM = MONISM': i.e. the hard ontological core or *milieu* of *A Thousand Plateaus* and its rhizomatic (that is, anti-structuralist) motto (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b [1980]: 23). And it does so against any of the disciplinary ordinations maintained by the dualisms of subject/object, mind/matter, nature/society, etc.

It could be objected to this anti-dualistic statement that the passage in which the 'magic formula PLURALISM = MONISM' is proposed speaks of proceeding '*via* all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging'. Yet the context clearly shows that this sentence involves nothing other than the strategic presentation of the rhizome and of its 'transformational multiplicities' *in contrast to* a structure 'which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b [1980]: 23, emphasis added). Or, in Latour's words (here adopting a kind of Guattarian parlance): 'in structuralism nothing is really transformed, it is simply *combined*' (Latour, 2005: 153). And the antagonism is so asymmetrical, from the perspective of 'an immanent process' that overturns the very idea of model and abstract modelling – since 'it is perpetually in construction or collapsing', and the process is 'perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting again' – that 'there is not a new or different dualism' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b [1980]: 23). Rather, there is a radical bifurcation *mobilizing the ontological problem* from which interdisciplinarity is equally and differently excluded as a mere institutional resolution of epistemological questions, and from which transdisciplinarity gets its affirmative sense and critical empowerment with regard to both the sciences and philosophy, in the uncommon monism of a social ontology – 'not a social epistemology', Latour emphasizes (Latour, 2007: 14).

To explore the pragmatic turn that spurs the equation PLURALISM = MONISM, and the zone of resonance where Guattari and Latour meet within and beyond Deleuzian philosophy, in the recoding of 'ANT' (actor-network theory) as 'ARO' (*actant-rhizome ontology*) (Latour, 1999: 19), we need first to retrace the history of this bifurcation.

Structuralism Re-cognized

The transdisciplinary research program of structuralism was based on the structural functionalism of linguistics and developed in a combinatory system of relations mobilizing the *scientific* problematization of the 'human sciences' against the *transcendental* legitimacy and theoretical primacy of philosophy. It is this radical challenge to philosophy that makes Ricoeur (during the famous 1963 debate with Lévi-Strauss organized by *Esprit*) ironically render explicit what structures *are not*, in a neither/nor that condemns any possible mediation, dilemma or *balancing* between a 'subjective' form and/or an 'objective' content: structures as transcendental apparatus and structures as objectivities located in the real in itself (Ricoeur, 1963).[1] It is not so much that the 'theme' of the 'end of philosophy' was *translated* into the linguistic opening and operational closure of structural space, but rather that the unrivalled ontological status of the structure opposes to philosophy its *epistemological revolution* from the perspective of a transdisciplinary reconfiguration of the *sciences de l'homme* and within a structural-linguistic paradigm that breaks with representation – i.e. with any representative content related to forms of consciousness of the subject, 'within the meaning bequeathed by philosophy' (Lacan, 2001b [1966]: 222).[2] This formally or *symbolically* redefines the very concept of science to include a thoroughly recast anthropology, psychoanalysis and 'class struggle in theory': Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser.[3] If this sequence brought together linguistics and mathematics as the centre and major point of tension of the structural paradigm, it must be emphasized that its transdisciplinary identity/alterity depends on a prior condition. This prior condition is that of a *flat ontology of the sign* where the differential and purely relational/positional character of the sign undoes the association of ontology with metaphysics – '*une ontologie sans métaphysique*', Foucault wrote (2002 [1966]: 370) – to identify it with the symbolic order itself: 'a new type of ontology' (Milner, 2002: 38), an ontology of the symbolic order that raises the classical modern problem of the relation between being and subjectivity, and conceives of subjectivity itself as the *split effect* of a non-referential logic of the signifier, which 'vectorizes' *onto-topologically* the transdisciplinary plane of consistency of structuralism.

This provides the full *logic of sense* of Deleuze's re-presentation of structuralism, 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?' (2004 [1967]), ascribing its origin to linguistics and erecting the symbolic as its 'first

criterion', the better to *re-enact* the Lacanian empty square (neither an image, nor a concept: this is Deleuze's sixth and last nominal criterion) as the differentiator of difference itself and the 'problematizer' of the '*complete determination* of singular points that constitute a space corresponding to these elements' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 177). However, the most interesting thing about this infamous article by Deleuze is that it *over- and under-determines* the structuralist archaeology of knowledge put forward by Foucault in his concluding remarks about the 'human sciences' in *The Order of Things* (1966). Briefly stated, since Étienne Balibar largely carries out this work in his article in this issue (Balibar, 2015): it is well known that the final chapter of *The Order of Things* proposes a substantial variation of the *first* transdisciplinary unification operated by an *episteme* through invariants that govern *formal correspondences* and *conceptual analogies* between the disciplines articulated in a general type of rationality: a classically modern transdisciplinary rationality, or paradigm. In fact, Foucault argues in favour of a totally new transdisciplinary status for psychoanalysis and ethnology: 'they span the entire domain of [human] sciences, [...] they animate its whole surface, spread their concepts throughout it, and are able to propound their methods of decipherment and their interpretations everywhere' (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 413). It is through their *structuralist recasting* that they can work as 'counter-sciences', *unmaking* 'that very man who is creating and re-creating his positivity in the human sciences' while 'they intersect at right angles; for the chain of the signifier by which the unique experience of the individual is constituted is perpendicular to the formal system on the basis of which the significations of culture are constituted' (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 414–15).

A *transdisciplinary model of structural ordination here submits the subject to its own systematicity*. It is worth quoting what follows since it formulates exactly what Deleuze tries to problematize and render differential in his 1967 article (Deleuze quotes this passage from Foucault; Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 189), before producing an alternative 'anti-model' that can only come *after structuralism* – and after Guattari's critique of structuralism). It reads:

> At any given instant, the structure proper to individual experience finds a certain number of possible choices (and of excluded possibilities) in the systems of society; inversely, at each of their points of choice the social structures encounter a certain number of possible individuals (and others who are not) – just as the linear structure of language always produces a possible choice between several words or several phonemes at any given moment (but excludes all others). (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 415)

If, to quote Balibar, 'linguistics is the "counter-science" par excellence' (Balibar, 2015), and already incorporates the transdisciplinary paradigm

identified with structuralism, it is because it is in linguistics that 'the theme of a pure theory of language' emerges and provides 'the ethnology and the psychoanalysis thus conceived with their formal model' (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 414). It is this new *scientific* order of positivity determined by the emergence of the structure (as an invariant relation of elements within an ensemble of elements) that, after reopening its relations to mathematics and 'traversing the whole space of human sciences, would encounter the question of finitude', desubjectivated and dishistoricized in the very '*being of language*' ('*l'être du langage*') as ontologically explored in literature (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 415–18). But is it not exactly this double modernist 'solution' that Deleuze diplomatically refuses when he reopens the enquiry on structuralism at the very end of his article, under the heading 'Final Criteria: From the Subject to Practice'? These will be immediately considered as 'the most obscure – the criteria of the future' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 192).

As we know, Deleuze dramatizes a mysterious 'structuralist *hero*: neither God nor man, neither personal nor universal . . . without an identity, made of non-personal individuations and pre-individual singularities' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 191), a hero whose emergence is located between two quotations from *The Order of Things*. The first one is extracted from the last Nietzschean-inspired page of Chapter 9, 'Man and His Doubles'. It states:

> It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For *this void does not create a deficiency* [a lack: *un manque* – EA]; *it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled in*. It is nothing more and nothing less than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think. (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 373, quoted in Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 190)

But in Deleuze's text, this 'void' strictly refers to the Lacanian paradox of the empty square, disengaged from any negativity to affirm the 'positive being of the "problematic", the objective being of a problem and of a question; it *is* (nothing else than) the onto-topological problem of the subject since 'the *subject* is precisely the agency [*instance*] which follows the empty place: as Lacan says, it is less subject than subjected [*assujetti*] – subjected to the empty square, subjected to the phallus and its displacements' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 189–90). Nevertheless, against Lacan's active void, negating the very existence of a 'virtual',[4] by definition irreducible to a formal language determining the subject,[5] this subject will be immediately translated – or better, transduced – into the Deleuzian *nomad* subject, de-defined in terms of 'non-personal individuations and pre-individual singularities' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 191). It becomes thus, *par la bande* (a Bergsonian 'band'!), the philosophical 'truth' of the structuralist break-up *qua* this 'new transcendental philosophy' from which structuralism would *then* be inseparable. But the most interesting thing is

the way in which the possible 'accidents' of this nomad subject (the disappearance of the 'signifier' or the fading away of the 'signified': the two pathological aspects of psychosis) are brought back to the question of their immanent determinations in the structures and to the problem of their mutations. This, finally, relates to the problem of *praxis*, to the 'resistant and creative force' of a (structuralist) *hero*, 'the break-up [*éclatement*] of a structure affected by excess or deficiency', with the opposition of '*his own* ideal events' to 'the ideal events we have just described' – as '*strictly determined* by the play of [the] structural adventures and the contradictions resulting from it' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 191, my emphasis). Invoking a possible radical rewriting of the Lacanian analysand's 'subjective conversion' (Lacan, 1966: 43), this passage is footnoted with a second quotation from Foucault concerning the onset of a structural mutation at the beginning of the 19th century (the 'Age of History'): 'a radical event that is distributed across the entire visible surface of the knowledge, and whose signs, shocks and effects it is possible to follow step by step', and which can be thus 'analysed' but *not* 'explained' (Foucault, 2002 [1966]: 236, quoted in Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 308, n.64).[6]

In Deleuze, the radical event has *changed place and subject* to become the *heroic* 'point of permanent revolution', still referred to as a structuralist 'practice', be it 'therapeutic or political', but clearly announcing, as it traces out this unique path *translating* structuralism into post-structuralism, a subjective break with an all-too-complete structural determination and with the effects of other logical structures of a twofold epistemological transdisciplinarity, maintaining and perhaps accentuating its *closure* in the 'symbolic' passage from classical modern knowledge to contemporary thought. Interestingly, the Foucaldian passage from a still unexplained 'transformable group' *(ensemble transformable)* referring, in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, to the historical *a priori* of positivities, to 'transformable singularities' is based upon a 'modality of relation to the self' which will result in a *hermeneutics of the subject* – an anti-Lacanian non-self-identical form.[7] Its Deleuzean re-presentation in terms of 'lines of subjectivation', escaping from the lines of sedimentation of established powers and constituted knowledges, gives it an immediate Guattarian output — 'a process, a production of subjectivity in a dispositive [*dispositif*] . . . a line of flight' (Deleuze, 1989: 186–7) – superposing the 'crisis in Foucault's thought' from which it emerged onto Deleuze's own crossing of the line.

Guattari: From Machinic Transversality to a New Aesthetic Paradigm

Following Guattari, who in the 1960s was struggling with the very same question from within a Lacanism he reconfigured out of the 'structuralist

impasse' (Guattari, 1972: 180; 1984a [1972]: 182),[8] it was as if structural transdisciplinarity had *critically* to become *transversality*, had to reopen the problem of 'causality, subjectivity and history' in its most *theoretical* and *practical* stakes from within the politically (re)charged question of *transformation*.[9] The Deleuzian warning in *The Logic of Sense* (2001 [1969]) will certainly have been part of the crystallization of the *agencement* in Deleuze-Guattari. It reads: 'How are we to stay at the surface without staying on the shore?' (Deleuze, 2001 [1969]: 179). Guattari, for his part, had already stated that on this surface 'Reality and history have become subject to an eternal symbolic order from which they are totally isolated and which essentially nullifies them. Subjectivity and the signifier have become interchangeable' (Guattari, 1984a [1972]: 177), in the guise of the *action of the structure* (Miller, 2012).[10]

From this perspective, it is 1968 as the driver of a historical and causal break that *ends* structuralism. Breaking through an *anti-Oedipus* more generational than ethical, 1968 liberates the *non-identique à soi* from the chain of the signifier (*chaîne signifiante*) and ushers in the time of the 'rhizome' as an anti-structuralist war machine that makes *structure take flight* according to a machinic apparatus that *desymbolizes* or *desutures* its real-abstraction so as to animate it from the outside. But following Guattari, this outside is nothing other than the machination of the subject *qua* 'anti-signifier' (Guattari, 2013c: 161). Or, to put it another way: it is by identifying the critique of the structure with an absolute deterritorialization and socialization of the (concept of) subject that 'transformation' will confront its real ontological dimension, in a single but *mixed semiotic* plane of immanence. 'Signs work flush to the real' (*les signes travaillent à même le réel* – Guattari, 1977: 250) is the leitmotiv of the Guattarian scaffoldings and the key formula in *Molecular Revolution*'s 1977 toolbox. This animates the rhizome with the principles of connexion and heterogeneity, performing 'transformational *multiplicities*' in such a way that enunciation – the enunciation at work in the transformation of the subject into a 'collective agent of enunciation' – escapes from the structuralist temptation.[11] Enunciation means *semiotization*, making 'the *collective assemblages of enunciation* function directly within [concrete and abstract] *machinic assemblages*', making it 'impossible to make a radical break between regimes of signs and their objects' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b [1980]: 7–8). 'Getting out of language' (*Sortir de la langue*)[12] through a radical critique of linguistics conducted on behalf of a pragmatic ontology of signs (projecting a 'diagrammatic' Hjelmslev against structuralism 'and its fondness for the signifier')[13] will occupy a full third of *A Thousand Plateaus*, and will mobilize, again and again, the schizoanalytic 'meta-modelizations'. It is definitively the real 'introduction' into the rhizome and to a total *de-epistemologization* and *re-ontologization*, as the extreme transdisciplinary condition necessary to attain a *politics of multiplicities* that is totally oriented towards experimentation

with the complexity of the real. The real is not the impossible, Guattari says somewhere, but the field of the possible, correlative to the deterritorialization of the sign. Or, more provocatively, in the mood of the sign's *mad constructivism*: if 'the genesis of enunciation is itself caught up in the movement of processual creation . . . the process precedes the heterogenesis of being' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 107–8).

This 'schizo-ontology' or 'onto-logic', developing the logic of a 'transversal ontology' (all Guattari's terms), will inevitably denounce Science (with a capital S) and the received disciplinary models of scientificity.[14] It reads as an anti-Althusserian motto: 'We are no more familiar with scientificity than we are with ideology: all we know are assemblages' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b: 25). Equally, they will involve 'the psyche, human societies, the living world, machinic species and, in the last analysis, the Cosmos itself', in a mecanosphere intertwined with the biosphere. This is a very ANT (Actor-Network Theory) or ARO (Actant-Rhizome Ontology) catalogue, as is confirmed by Guattari's declared interest for the 'sociological school around Bruno Latour', because 'there is no pure conceptual scientific object that could be separated from its [social, economic, contextual] components' (Guattari, 2013a [1992]: 138). The conclusion is also strangely Latourian in its *phrasing*: 'such a "transversalist" enlargement of enunciation should lead to the fall of the "Ontological Iron Curtain" that the philosophical tradition erected between mind and matter' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 108).[15] It will be understood that the insistence on 'the machination producing the existent, the generative praxes of heterogeneity and complexity' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 109), the very notion of a 'non-human enunciation' and the plane of machinic interfaces from which 'Being crystallizes through an infinity of enunciative assemblages' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 58), calls into question all disciplinary boundaries, short-circuited now by the formula PROCESSUAL MONISM = PLURALISM OF ASSEMBLAGES.

Do we not therefore also reach here the *adisciplinary limit* of transdisciplinarity, where 'disciplines' are attacked *qua* the 'control principle over the production of discourse' highlighted by Foucault in 'The Order of Discourse' (Foucault, 1981 [1971]: 61), and deconstructed at its highest level by Guattari as signifying the exclusion of 'trans-semiotic and amodal enunciative compositions' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 104)? If the Guattarian formulation of a *transfer* from scientific paradigms to an 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' (developed in *Chaosmosis* in a kind of *meta-physics* of the rhizome)[16] is not the most convincing position on this question, Guattari nevertheless insists that the strengthening of the heterogeneity of components in a process of heterogenesis, supporting a new 'politics of science' upon what he calls an 'ecology of the virtual', depends on considering science in terms of the specificity of 'its scientific assemblage, of its partial enunciators, of the scientific plane of reference,

with introduction of systems of limits, of coordinates'. It is after this passage, directly derived from the 'scientific' chapter of *What Is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994 [1991]: 117–133) that Guattari affirms: 'This is the condition that will allow us to position science in a non scientistic way' with regard to these '*praxical* objects' (Guattari, 2013a [1992]: 138–9 [transl. modified]), conditioning a constructivist opening up of the fields of virtuality and new modalities of a computer-aided subjectivation.[17]

We may read here a radical alternative to the 'expanded Galileism' *linguistically* extended to new objects ('*un galiléisme de la langue*' – Milner, 1995: 92–7)[18] promoted by Althusserian-Lacanian structuralism. And we can see that Guattari's critical movement overlaps Foucault's 'Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie' (i.e. to the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*), when the latter deconstructs the 'epistemological extrapolation' and the 'formalizing illusion' that imagines 'that science is established by an act of rupture and decision, that it frees itself at one stroke from the qualitative field and from all the murmurings of the imaginary by the violence . . . of a reason that founds itself by its own assertion' (Foucault, 2012 [1968]: 331). And yet, still in parallel with Foucault's 'regional analysis', we should also note the forced rearticulation of *A Thousand* transdisciplinary *Plateaus* with the redisciplinarization of *What Is Philosophy?*, which Guattari projects as a 'chaosmosis' taking over, ontologically and politically, from the socially expanded field of forces and trajectories from which disciplines constitute themselves. Ontologically, before and beyond the regional differences between 'activities', the superposition of the immanence of infinity and finitude onto the machinic point of negotiation between complexity and chaos, *upstream*, will let loose the 'Universes of references' into a 'mutant creationism' promoting 'different enunciative assemblages, different semiotic recourses, an alterity grasped at the point of its emergence' (Guattari, 1995 [1992]: 117). In their extreme meta-physical modalities (in the most difficult pages of *Chaosmosis*, in Chapter 6, 'The New Aesthetic Paradigm'), these 'Universes of references' will *exceed* the sectorization and binarization of values' transcendent autonomized pole of reference, from the key heterogenetic position of a machinic transversality translated into the 'new aesthetic paradigm'. But the point is that this whole process, which *necessarily* associates the 'aesthetic machine' with technoscience's machinic creativity and the machinic dimensions of subjectivity, cannot really develop consistency *politically*, at the level of an '*ecology of practices*' (to use Isabelle Stengers' locution in resonance with the Guattarian articulation between 'social experimentation and action-research'), without permanently addressing and confronting its institutionally stabilized modes of existences into disciplines, which are also, historically, the overdetermined 'regional' configuration of the most speculative thought.[19] As we shall see, a similar kind of difficulty awaits Bruno Latour.

Latour: From 'Actant-Rhizome Ontology' to a New Politics of Institutional Forms

Let us return to the rhizome and to its pragmatic development in terms of an actor-network theory self-critically re-presented, against its managerialist reduction to the multinational enterprise ANT, as ARO (*Haro sur l'ANT* – Death to ANT?!): actant-rhizome ontology. In the introduction to a collective work published in 1999 under the heading *Actor Network Theory and After*, John Law makes sense of this equivalence, coming back ruthlessly to the 'two stories' generating and articulating the theory. *Semiotics of materiality*, translated into *relational materiality*, is the name of the first one. 'It takes the insight of semiotics, that of the relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials – and not simply to those that are linguistic' (Law, 1999: 4).[20] But it is *performatively* that the 'inherent qualities' and 'essentialist divisions' have to be 'thrown on the bonfire of dualisms': since entities are not only located in the relations of which they are the effects (structural topology), they perform and 'are performed in, by, and through these relations'. Performativity, performance, happening or event (*événement*: a word used by Latour) is the second 'story' that translates the *intentionally oxymoronic* 'actor-network' into the local problematizations of its onto-semiotic principle of heterogeneity (Law, 1999: 4–5). Bruno Latour, in the same book, starts his article by saying that 'there are four things that do not work with ANT: the word actor, the word network, the word theory and the hyphen! Four nails in the coffin!' (Latour, 1999: 15). The word network, the 'double click' information-system (the Evil Genius of 2013's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*) is caricatured as the 'pet notion of all those who want to modernize modernization with the most frightening of the slogans: "Down with rigid institutions, long live flexible networks"'. This new capitalistic scenography is immediately opposed to the Deleuzo-Guattarian use of the term network, identified with a rhizome meaning a 'series of transformations' (Latour adds: 'translations, transductions') which is not only opposed to the current web-engineering of a transportation of information without deformation: it cannot 'be captured by any of the traditional terms of social theory'. The conclusion reads: 'I don't think we should use it anymore, at least not to mean the type of transformations and translations we want to explore'. The rhizomatic *motto* means a pragmatist, processual and relational ontology that refuses the bifurcation into subject/object *and* any perspective of reconciliation (since it is a complete artefact), as well as any dualism of material/social, individual actor-agency/structure, micro/macro, local/global, etc. That is, it means 'following circulations [rather] than … defining entities, essences or provinces' (Latour, 1999: 20). A *circulating molecular transdisplinarity* is the key to this processual constructionism, which will

'nail' the two other terms nominally configuring ANT. It is a way to travel from one spot to the next, learning from the most heterogeneous *actants* and their world-building associative capacities; a method not *for a theory*, but for a research protocol empirically correlated with an *irreductive* ontology, proposing that actantiality is not what an 'actor' does but what provides human and non-human actants with their inter/actions, their assemblages in continuity/discontinuity among modes of action, and their 'subjectivity'.

If actor/actant and network/worknet are two faces of the same process reflecting its movement beyond the great bifurcation material/social or society/nature, a fully deterritorialized subjectivity is ready to drift from the fold between the sociology of science's laboratory (the new *transdisciplinary discipline* largely invented by ANT case studies and located in science and technology studies (STS) as an institutional meta-discipline) and the anthropology of social sciences, into a 'monist or a symmetric anthropology' (the subtitle of *We Have Never Been Modern*, 1991) 'abandoning *simultaneously* the use of Nature and the use of Society' (Latour, 2005: 93, 109).[21] What is at stake here is a radical deconstruction of the structural divides of modernity (in there/out there). While invoking the *general dispositif* of *Anti-Oedipus*,[22] it *works* from the 'circulation of transformations' (Latour, 1999: 22) deploying each 'thing' as a multiple through local effects of absolute concreteness in a non-modern (but *not* a postmodern) situation. It is this *pluriverse*, to use William James's expression, that is to be defined ontologically as a unique plane of immanence animated by a chiasmatic double movement: 'the more we have "socialized" so to speak "outside" nature, the more "outside" objectivity the content of our subjectivity can gain' (Latour, 1999: 23). This double movement *mediating* ANT transdisciplinarity *ungrounds* (*effonde*) western metaphysics – from the Aristotelian-Thomistic *substantia* to the transcendental subject – to determine a *politics of collectives* which would allow political relevance *stricto sensu* to be redefined within a 'relocation of the extraordinary originality of political circulation' (Latour, 1999: 23). With reference to Isabelle Stengers' *Cosmopolitics*, and the way she affirms the ecology of practices *as* political apprenticeship *and* speculative thought, in a very para-Guattarian movement, Latour concludes his article by referring to the political perspective that is supposed to take place after (*après/d'après*) ANT, as the major task of a 'collective philosophy'.

It is interesting to notice that a bit later, in *Reassembling the Social* (2005), Latour will kindly 'apologize' for his former critical position about ANT ('four nails in a coffin') and will resuscitate the acronym (a perfect 'trail sniffing and collective traveller': 'an ant writing for other ants, this fits my project very well') from the distinction between the 'sociology of the social' and the 'sociology of associations' (or *asso-ciology*), reciprocally and historically referring to the quarrel between Durkheim and Tarde. Because 'he does not respect any border between

nature and society, and because he does not stop at the borders between physics, biology and sociology' (Latour, 2002: 4), Gabriel Tarde and his neo-monadology is rediscovered as the 'forefather' of ANT in a world made of differences, differential associations or collectives, mixing humans and non-humans, a world *without which politics*, as the continuous/discontinuous composition/assembling of *one* common world, *would be impossible* (Latour, 2005: 250–53). It is this common world that cannot be properly divided in ready-made disciplinary domains, but only in terms of the different *skills* or *operations* applied to one and the 'same domain' (Latour, 2005: 254); a domain that in turn cannot exist without its associations with all the other domains that make the former escape from the regular mechanisms it institutes and constitutes. Collectively translated and redesigned, the 'magic formula' PLURALISM = MONISM presents itself as a kind of *politics of transdisciplinarity* in which each discipline, while extending and testing the entities it mobilizes, enters into an inter-problematization of the modes of *assembling its assemblages*, liberated from the modern meta-language of the epistemological bifurcation human/non-human, or, more classically, nature/culture (or nature/knowledge, following Whitehead's deconstruction of 'the bifurcation of nature').

Transdisciplinary ecologization versus *disciplinary modernization*: this is the crossing zone Latour and Guattari may share in the un/common emergency of a *hybrid political ontology*, denouncing the division between primary (objective) and secondary (subjective) qualities as the forclosure of an *ontological politics* redefined by 'the progressive composition of a common world'.[23]

This rough schematization had no other goal than the *tracing of associations* (to the detriment of the differences) with the Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome to better suggest a provisional framework from within which it would be possible to apprehend, by contrast, the 'categorial diplomatic' turn of *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (2013).[24] If it envelops politics in a positive anthropology of the Moderns, it is in the *agora* – supported by a Web 2.0 participative *dispositif*, building upon the possibility afforded by technological networks to 'follow up interactions in a detailed way'[25] – that the ontological categorization of the *experience of the values* related to the plurality of the modes of existence, which are *not* taken into account by networks, is supposedly developed. At this point, we can grasp the very different meaning of this 'after' actor-network theory, since the network is no longer the (processual machination of) being but *one mode of existence among many others*, one that will be criticized because of its *non-diplomatic monotony*. Monotony in 'saying almost the *same thing* about all [the domains/disciplines]: namely, that they are "composed in a heterogeneous fashion of unexpected elements revealed by the investigation"' (Latour, 2013a: 35).[26] For having 'retained some of the limitations of critical thought' (Latour, 2013a:

64) and being exclusively focused on the 'relations of forces' (Latour, 1988 [1984]: 12),[27] the network is regressing to the expression of a *phenomenal* empiricism, and seems to lose the ontological-rhizomatic plane of immanence that, for Deleuze and Guattari, not only had to be 'followed' but always had to be *constructed* in complex semio-machinic processes of production of specific multiplicities, constantly addressing the capitalistic deterritorialization/reterritorialization machinery as its constitutive field of forces. Although it is not without possible analogies with the passage from *A Thousand Plateaus* to *What Is Philosophy?*, the *terrain* of the *Inquiry* is nevertheless very different (and very different from its Guattarian chaosmotic reinvestment). The question becomes that of the heterogenetic reconstruction (or the 'ontological history') of the disciplines, given their dependence on the metaphysical categorization of 'values' (associated with the *prepositions* commanding each mode of existence) and their transdisciplinary crossings in a purely 'regional ontology'. Latour's formulations 'are supposed to allow each mode to enter into resonance with all the others, but also to be differentiated from the institution that has often betrayed it, as well as from the domain that encloses it' (Latour, 2013a: 480). The disciplines are, after all, destined to be diplomatically renegotiated, to redefine the Moderns but with a chance to gain their agreement, since we are taking into account 'what they cherish':[28] a *positive* and *respectful* anthropology of the Moderns.[29] If multiplicities have to be made in the making (compare the Deleuzo-Guattarian formula: *le multiple, il faut le faire*), they have to be redirected towards this new figure of universality (*l'universel, il faut le faire*)[30] that activates and mobilizes the diplomat in his hope for a common world in the postnatural/postcultural age of 'Gaia'. (It would be extremely interesting to compare the Latourian diplomat with Stengers' first model of the diplomat at the end of *Cosmopolitics*, which opens with the will 'to diagnose new immanent modes of existence').[31]

Gaia, or the truly other Other, becomes the support for a philosophical anthropology of Being-as-Other that, through its ontological pluralism, mediates the possible pacific coexistence of modes of existence, from the open space between the value of experiences, the diverging modes of valorizations of Being, and the institutional translations/reductions of their proper *transcendences*. But the fact that Gaia – or the incarnation of the Monism of the Other in the *Inquiry* – being *the* mode of existence *sui generis* and the 'mix up of all the mix ups', is neither a mode of existence like the 'others', nor properly analysed with regard to the ontologico-political recompositions required by its 'anthropocenic' insistence and its incompatibility with capitalistic logic,[32] may encourage a *practical-metaphysical* – and perhaps vaguely *scholastic* – reading of this new philosophy of mediation, compensating Gaia's original religious *Stimmung*.[33]

One cannot deny the *fantastic* transdisciplinary redistributions operated by a new image of thought where – as Patrice Maniglier puts

it – 'psychology becomes a kind of sorcery, language a sort of fiction (and not conversely), technology something that long precedes humanity and so on' (Maniglier, 2014: 41). Nevertheless, transdisciplinarity as such is less constructively problematized after ANT, as the '*speculative* question of an ecology of practices' (Stengers, 1997b: 119), than openly mediated by a *very institutional* political play, inseparable from its own putting into form (*mise en forme*).[34] So that the 'sovereign' tension between the 'experimental metaphysics' claimed by the *Inquiry* and the reality principle of a new kind of 'institutional analysis' (to use the Guattarian appellation, transformed here into an ironic mode) makes all its actuality.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Telescoping the two in an 'objective transcendental field', Michel Serres will later define a *structuralist philosophy* based on a Leibnizian mathematical paradigm, de facto excluding the leading function of linguistics for the constitution of this structural field (see Serres, 2015).
2. It is this exclusion that will allow the affirmation: 'the experience of the unconscious taken at the level where I install it can't be distinguished from the physical experience. *It is also external to the subject, within its traditional* [philosophical] *meaning*' (Lacan, 2001b [1966]: 222).
3. Following Lacan, in the same text: '*Tout ceci s'énonce en une suite scientifique à partir du moment où il y a une science du langage aussi fondée et aussi sûre que la physique, ce qui est le cas au point où en la linguistique – c'est le nom de cette science – d'être considéré partout maintenant pour ce qui est du champ humain comme une science pilote*' (Lacan, 2001b [1966]: 223). The next page integrates the 'foundation of Marxist history' into this new scientific configuration and its psychoanalytic 'supplement'. But this sequence is (and had to be) preceded by the reframing of the question: 'Is psychoanalysis a science?' towards 'What would a science that includes psychoanalysis have to be like?' (Lacan, 2001a: 187).
4. In Jean-Claude Milner's terms: '*il n'y a pas de virtuel*', or '*il n'y a de virtuel qu'imaginaire*' (Milner, 2002: 159). For Deleuze, the virtual is the horizon of the 'fourth criterion: the differentiator, differentiation' (Deleuze, 2004 [1967]: 178–82).
5. Following the cardinal affirmation of the 'Séminaire sur "La Lettre volée"' that opens Lacan's *Écrits* (Lacan, 1966: 42).
6. In his foreword to the English edition, written in 1970 (i.e. after the publication of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* with its focus on the question of discontinuity, developed out of structuralism), Foucault admits that he has been 'incapable...of offering [a solution]' to this question of change (Foucault, 2002: xiii).

7. I am largely following here Knox Peden's reconstruction (Peden, 2012: 82–88).

8. The key to this attempt is a 'machinic interpretation of Lacan's *a*'. On this point, see Guattari (2006: 152–7), for the Hjelmslevian semiotics implied in the Guattarian operation and the way it gives birth to a 'collective assemblage of the enunciations' (wrongly translated on p. 156 as 'collective assemblage of enunciation' in the analytical process).

9. On transversality, see Andrew Goffey's introduction to Guattari's text in this issue (2015). It is important to note that this transversal movement is not without relations to Foucault's own trajectory, from *The Order of Things* to *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

10. In 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?', Deleuze largely founded his own re-presentation of an inflated Lacanian structuralism on Miller's article (quoted by Deleuze). For Guattari, there is no doubt that it was the emergence of the Jacques-Alain Miller 'group' as an influential 'cartel' at the École Freudienne de Paris, founded by Lacan in 1964, that overdetermined his violent anti-structuralism. Jacques-Alain Miller's article had been written and distributed in 1964 under these Lacanian auspices (see the 'Avertissement' introducing 'Action de la structure'), to which Guattari's 'Causality, Subjectivity and History' *reacts*.

11. To my knowledge, the first occurence of this '*agent collectif d'énonciation*' can be found in 'Introduction à la psychothérapie institutionnelle' (1962–3), in Guattari's *Psychanalyse et transversalité* (Guattari, 1972: 47.)

12. After the introduction, this is the first heading of *L'Inconscient machinique* (Guattari, 1979: 21). This book should be read as standing in the same relation to *A Thousand Plateaus* as Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers* does to *Anti-Oedipus*.

13. Cf. *Anti-Oedipus*: 'Far from being an overdetermination of structuralism and of its fondness for the signifier, Hjelmslev's linguistics implies the concerted destruction of the signifier, and constitutes a decoded theory of language' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b [1972]: 262).

14. This is the leitmotiv of Guattari's 'From Transdisciplinarity to Transversality' (1992): 'balancing out the pole of the universal rationality of science seems indispensable'.

15. The expression 'Ontological Iron Curtain' comes from Pierre Lévy, who was himself an avid reader of Latour.

16. See the Guattarian reprise of the concept of rhizome in a typescript without title (IMEC GTR 12-24), recently published as 'Rhizome and Tree' in Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que l'écosophie?* (Guattari, 2013b: 535–45).

17. Cf. Guattari (2008 [1989]). This argument is summarized in the first chapter of Guattari (1995 [1992]: 'On the Production of Subjectivity').

18. Jean-Claude Milner's two 'Galilean' expressions articulate perfectly the scientific realm of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, and its counter-trace in the Guattarian new aesthetic (or 'proto-aesthetic') paradigm, objecting against the indefinite paradigmatic extension of a scientific method *reduced* to its reduction of sensible qualities.

19. See Guattari (2015). Let us not forget that the Guattarian 'machine' has strong historical and Marxist foundations (cf. Guattari, 1984b [1969]). This article from 1969, initially intended for the journal of the École Freudienne

(and refused by the latter), opened the collaboration with Deleuze. It proposes to substitute the order of the machine for the structuralist differentiator, as expounded by Deleuze in *Logic of Sense*, 8th series (which may be considered a reworking of 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?'). It is this whole process that Isabelle Stengers folds and retrojects into her affirmation that 'philosophy, science and art in *What Is Philosophy?* do not speak, the truth of the risks of thought, except by the effect of a properly modernist misunderstanding, because they are rather aspects of the three discourses stabilized by distinct traditions' (Stengers, 1997b: 126, n 4).

20. Bruno Latour has always insisted on the constitutive importance of semiotics for his trajectory. For an evolutionary analysis of its use through the concept of 'enunciation' see, for example, Latour (2013b).

21. This is to say that both sociology and anthropology are *experimentally hyper-problematized* in their passage to ANT.

22. Latour refers frequently to the importance of his reading of *Anti-Oedipus*. To see it at work in a key text of ANT literature see Callon and Latour (1981: 302, n. 9).

23. Cf. Latour (2004: 47): 'we notice that the division between primary and secondary qualities has already done *the bulk of the political work*'. The term 'ontological politics' does not come from Latour but from John Law. It has been used further by Annemarie Mol (1999). The most Guattarian resonances in Latour's corpus can be found in *Irréductions* (1988 [1984]), which has been retrospectively considered the first conceptual manifesto of actor-network theory. See, in particular, 2.4.2, 2.4.4 and 2.4.5, on 'words' *in* 'things', with the subsequent critique of linguistics; 3.2.5, Scolie, for the non-separation of the forces in human/non-human, and the final proposition of the term 'unconscious': 'if you were sufficiently open-minded to designate *things-in-themselves* with it'; 3.3.3.2, on the non-separation of the technical and the social in 'machines'.

24. Regarding the rhizome, Michel Serres is an important intercessor with his texts (from the *Hermes* series) on the network and his concept of translation, put to work in ANT as a 'Sociology of Translation' (see Callon, 1986). Following Deleuze, Latour frequently refers the rhizome to Tarde's *Monadology and Sociology* (Tarde, 1999). The original protocol of the 'categorial diplomatic' turn may be found in Latour's *Politics of Nature* (2004 [1999]), with its final call to the 'diplomat' and an 'ecological diplomacy' largely influenced by Isabelle Stengers' *Cosmopolitics*.

25. Latour (2002: 2, n. 2). This is why, to Latour, the internet ultimately seems 'such a Tardian technology' (11, n. 15). For a more detailed profile, see Latour (2013b). The imposing AIME dispositive can be accessed on http://www.modesofexistence.org/.

26. Following Latour himself, this would be the 'complete contradiction' haunting his metaphysical treatise *Irréductions*: 'it claimed to use the same metalanguage, in terms of translation, networks, and entelechies for all associations' (Latour, 2013b: 12–13).

27. These introductory pages have been substantially modified in the English edition (Latour, 1988 [1984]). This question of force defines the plane of consistency of *Irréductions*: '*there is nothing more than relations of forces*

(*épreuves de forces*)' – bizarrely translated as 'trials of weakness' (Latour, 1984: 213; 1988: 191).

28. Cf. Latour's autocritique concerning the science wars of the 1980s in contrast with the methodological statement at the beginning of *Les Microbes*: 'expliquer la science des pasteuriens, c'est n'utiliser pour en rendre compte *aucun des termes de la tribu*' (my emphasis). ('In other words, to explain the science of the Pasteurians, we must describe it *without resorting to any of the terms of the tribe*'; Latour, 1984: 13; Latour, 1988: 8–9).

29. 'Is respect not the ultimate value of the anthropological project?', Latour asks in a recent article (Latour, 2009: 473).

30. Cf. Latour (2012b: 955).

31. Stengers quotes Deleuze and Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?*: 'To diagnose the becomings in each present' (Stengers, 1997a: 23–4). The function of the diplomat is developed in Vol. 7, Chapters 7–10 (Stengers, 1997b).

32. In contrast with Latour's distrust of the term 'capitalism', Stengers has never stopped referring to its 'logic' (see Stengers, 2013).

33. Against which Latour, in "Waiting for Gaia. Composing the common world through art and politics", restates Gaia as a 'scientific concept'.

34. The expression 'speculative question of an ecology of practices' is understood by Stengers as 'the ecology of practices *qua* speculative thought' (Stengers, 1997b: 150). As we read on the website AIME: 'As the goal of the inquiry is not to find a foundation, but only to ease the passage from one mode to another, we will try to limit as far as possible the metalanguage to a few all-purpose terms – modes of existence, felicity conditions, category mistakes, etc.; all other terms will be defined in each instance according to the different modes which will themselves have, so to speak, their own particular vocabulary' (http://www.modesofexistence.org/; accessed 22 February 2014). The Introduction of the *Inquiry* is entitled 'Trusting Institutions Again?' For the importance in the *Inquiry* of this concept of 'form', and its substitution for the ANT concept of 'forces', see Latour (2013a: 106 sq.).

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Contradiction of Terms: Feminist Theory, Philosophy and Transdisciplinarity

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Abstract
This article addresses the question of the relation between disciplines and transdisciplinary practices and concepts through a discussion of the relationship between philosophy and the emblematically transdisciplinary practice of feminist theory, via a discussion of interdisciplinarity and related terms in gender studies. It argues that the tendency of philosophy to reject feminist theory, as alien to it as a discipline, is in a sense correct, to the extent that the two defining features of feminist theory – its constitutive tie to a political agenda for social change and the transdisciplinary character of many of its central concepts – are indeed at odds with, and pose a threat to, the traditional insularity of the discipline of philosophy. If feminist philosophy incorporates feminist theory, its transdisciplinary aspects thus open it up to an unavoidable contradiction. Nonetheless, I will argue, this is a contradiction that can and must be endured and made productive.

What happens when well-defined disciplines meet or are confronted with transdisciplinary discourses and concepts, where transdisciplinary concepts are analytical tools rather than specifications of a field of objects or a class of entities? 'Gender', 'race', 'structure' and 'art' are perhaps exemplary transdisciplinary concepts in this respect. Or, if disciplines *reject* transdisciplinary discourses and concepts as having no part to play in their practice, why do they so reject them? This article will address these questions through a discussion of the relationship between philosophy – the most tightly policed discipline in the humanities – and what I will argue is the emblematically transdisciplinary practice of feminist theory,

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via a discussion of *inter*disciplinarity and related terms in gender studies. I will argue that the tendency of philosophy to reject feminist theory in fact correctly intuited that the two defining features of feminist theory – its constitutive tie to a political agenda for social change and the transdisciplinary character of many of its central concepts – are indeed at odds with, and pose a threat to, the traditional insularity of the discipline of philosophy. I will argue that feminist theory operates with what we should now recognize as a set of transdisciplinary concepts – including, sex, gender, woman, sexuality and sexual difference – and that the use of these concepts (particularly 'gender') in feminist philosophy has been the most far-reaching continuation in the late 20th/early 21st centuries of the critique of philosophy initiated by Marx and pursued by 'critical theory'. This puts feminist *philosophy* in a difficult position: its transdisciplinary aspects open it up to an unavoidable contradiction. Nonetheless, I will argue, this is a contradiction that can and must be endured and made productive.

In order to draw out the specificity of the concept of transdisciplinarity at issue here I will begin with a discussion of attempts to define inter- and transdisciplinarity, particularly in gender studies. Arguing for the transdisciplinary origin of the concept of gender, I will then suggest one way of understanding its function as a *critical* concept, before making explicit how this leads to the historical antagonism between traditional philosophy and the critical, transdisciplinary concept of gender and with feminist theory more generally.

Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity in Gender Studies

First, then, what is 'transdisciplinarity', as this article proposes to understand it? How is it different from 'inter'- and 'multi'-disciplinarity? As Peter Osborne suggests in his introduction to the dossier on 'Transdisciplinarity in French Thought' (Osborne, 2011a: 16), one might take the definitions of inter- and multi-disciplinarity given by the major funding body for arts and humanities research in the UK (the AHRC) as a – soon to be transcended – starting point. According to these definitions, *interdisciplinarity* characterizes work by an individual that draws on more than one discipline, while *multidisciplinarity* characterizes work done by a team of individuals from more than one discipline. In each case the idea of specific disciplinary knowledges, concepts, practices and methods is maintained in the context of a recognition of the virtue of communication between them, according to the presumption that different disciplines can learn from each other and can contribute differently, but complementarily, to the analysis or understanding of a given phenomenon or problem. In distinction from these, the hypothesis here is that *transdisciplinary* theory and its concepts are not necessarily identifiable with any specific disciplinary fields, either in their origin or

application. In this article feminist theory in general and the concept of gender in particular will be a test case for this hypothesis.

According to the above AHRC definitions of multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, the latter is the more challenging practice – both for the practitioner herself and for the disciplines with which she intersects. However, the restricted scope of the AHRC definition of interdisciplinarity is clear when we consider that it in fact excludes most of the interdisciplinary *practice* of the past century, or at least most attempts at it. For intellectual cultures of interdisciplinarity and the literature that addresses it have tended to concern not lone researchers but collaborative ventures and fields of collective endeavour: the anti-disciplines, or non-disciplines or post-disciplines that circumscribe their fields as 'studies' – gender studies, feminist studies, psychosocial studies, critical race studies, translation studies, education studies, cultural studies, area studies, and so on.[1] This restriction is, of course, intentional. The AHRC's definition of interdisciplinarity is stipulative, not descriptive; it concerns what, for the purposes of a grant application, shall be called 'interdisciplinarity'. In contrast, where definitions are offered from within intellectual fields that claim to *practise* interdisciplinarity (rather than simply promise to fund it) we are offered what seem to be descriptive definitions. In these, much more is at stake than the clarity of terms. In gender studies,[2] for example, which I will concentrate on here not least because of the contrast with philosophy, the extensive literature on multi-, inter- and transdiciplinarity is concerned to a great extent with the nature of the field itself – its being-interdisciplinary – and with its institutionalization and institutional practices and forms: its modes of pedagogy, the construction of academic programmes, its modes of dissemination, and so on. An examination of the definitions of concepts of inter- and transdisciplinarity in some of this literature in gender studies and other fields will allow the specificity of the concept of transciplinarity proposed in this article to become visible.

Of course, different definitions of interdisciplinarity abound even within gender studies. Nevertheless, some consensus has emerged as to the definition of multidisciplinarity and its difference from interdisciplinarity. In particular, interdisciplinarity is often said to 'go beyond' multi-disciplinarity, which tends to be seen as a somewhat conservative approach to the extent that it leaves disciplines and their various methodologies intact.[3] Interdisciplinarity, in Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz's words, goes beyond multidisciplinarity in 'carving out an area of study whose organizing theoretical and methodological frame is constructed from cross-disciplinary sources, so that a new synthetic field is created over time' (quoted in Lykke, 2011: 139). In interdisciplinarity the insights from different disciplines do not accrue; they are mixed or blended. In interdisciplinary work one does not stay on one side of a boundary but straddles it, working on it (so-called 'boundary work'); or,

disciplinary boundaries are not respected but rather crossed, or transgressed (Lykke, 2011: 142).[4] The rhetoric of interdisciplinarity in gender studies often implies that there is always something admirably iconoclastic and transgressive about the interdisciplinary researcher. However, in other areas definitions of interdisciplinarity may be part of an aspiration to unity or even totality that might seem, from the perspective of gender studies, altogether more conventional.[5] Claims about the interdisciplinarity of a field may also be presented as a matter of necessity, rather than a matter of laudable choice – for example in education studies and translation studies – and related to an aspiration to 'disciplinarity'.[6]

For many theorists, the problem with interdisciplinarity remains its residual disciplinarity.[7] In response, recent attempts to distinguish, further, a *trans*disciplinary practice in relation to gender studies have tended to see it as, in various ways, a higher-order, critical reflection on disciplines and on interdisciplinarity, which Hornscheidt and Baer, for example, describe as

> a reflexive way of dealing with disciplines, rather than a move against or beyond them…Transdisciplinarity is based upon a systematically critical reflection on all disciplines, their agenda, methodology and established findings…*explicitly* reflexive research. (2011: 165, 171)[8]

Irene Dölling and Sabine Hark had earlier proposed a similar definition, in which transdisciplinarity involves 'a critical evaluation of terms, concepts, and methods that transgresses disciplinary boundaries [that] can be a means to this higher level of reflexivity' (2000: 1195). For them, this 'epistemological and methodological strategy' depends on the refusal of the idea of disciplines as 'independent domains with clear boundaries', characterizing them instead as always already (and from their inception) 'shot through with cross-disciplinary pathways' (2000: 1196). Dölling and Hark see transdisciplinarity as a way for gender studies to avoid the perils of institutionalization – that is, its disciplinarization. For them, transdisciplinarity, 'characterized by a continual examination of artificially drawn and contingent boundaries and that which they exclude' (2000: 1197), is essential for the future of gender studies, allowing it to 'reflect on its own modes of knowledge production' (2000: 1195), on 'the contingency of its own premises and constructions' (2000: 1197). Thus Dölling and Hark effectively recommend transdisciplinarity as something like Hornscheidt and Baer's 'reflexive way of dealing with disciplines' in relation to gender studies *itself* as (or in danger of becoming) a discipline – transdisciplinarity or die.

In contrast, Nina Lykke's definition of transdisciplinarity takes issue with the idea that it remains tied to the reflexive critique of disciplines. For Lykke, transdisciplinarity 'goes beyond the boundaries of existing

disciplines. In the transdisciplinary mode research problems and thinking technologies are articulated in ways that are not "owned" by any specific discipline' (2011: 142). This is a characterization that bears some resemblance to the science and technology studies' understanding of transdisciplinarity as Mode 2 knowledge production.[9] However, none of these competing characterizations is really part of a disagreement about the nature of a common practice; they are all, rather, different stipulative definitions of a word – less descriptions of practices than outlines of the shapes of their ideals. Of course, the problem of the transition from ideal to actuality – where what ought to be, is – has long been acknowledged. And this is as true of interdisciplinarity as it is of the higher-level transdisciplinary reflection that some of these authors propose here. That the difficulties in achieving 'true' interdisciplinarity should not be underestimated is made clear in the report from the Practicing Interdisciplinarity group of the research project 'Travelling Concepts in Feminist Pedagogy: European Perspectives'.[10] The 'Travelling Concepts' project was 'dedicated to mapping and interrogating movements of key concepts in feminist theory within and across Europe'. The contribution to this project of the Practicing Interdisciplinarity group focused on the concept of interdisciplinarity, setting out from the acknowledgement that, despite the ubiquity of claims to an actual or ideal interdisciplinarity in gender and feminist studies, the precise meaning of the concept and the extension of the practices actually covered by it remain unclear. This was connected to their 'shared experience of disappointment that a claim to interdisciplinarity in feminist teaching or research often turns out to be a misleading description of what might be more accurately termed *multidisciplinarity*' (Demény et al., 2006: 8).

As part of the attempt to overcome this, the Practicing Interdisciplinarity group offer their own definition: 'interdisciplinarity involves working at the interstices of disciplines, in order to challenge those boundaries as part of extending possible meanings and practices', constituting a 'spatio-ethical challenge to disciplinary boundaries' (Demény et al., 2006: 54).[11] This connects to their earlier finding that it is a focus on the 'critical relationships among disciplinary fields' that mitigates against self-styled 'interdisciplinarity' sliding into an unwitting multidisciplinarity. Referring to Lykke's definition, they suggest that 'transdisciplinarity' (in feminist studies specifically) goes 'beyond disciplines and beyond existing canons', perhaps 'creating a new theoretical canon for feminist studies' or 'proposing feminist studies as a discipline in its own right' – an outcome towards which the authors are strikingly ambivalent (Demény et al., 2006: 51, 63–4).

Differences and disagreements apart, the common point in all of the literature discussed here is in the presumption that inter- and transdisciplinarity in gender studies – however they are defined – refer to practices and forms of institutional or intellectual collaboration: research

methodologies, research programmes, institutionally defined intellectual groupings and, *mutatis mutandis*, relations between disciplines and new 'transdisciplines' or 'postdisciplines'. The Practicing Interdisciplinarity group identified different disciplinary methodologies as the major intellectual stumbling block in interdisciplinary endeavours (Demény et al., 2006: 46).[12] Perhaps the *idea* of a transdisciplinary method is in part a response to this, but the findings of the Practicing Interdisciplinarity group suggest that the actual practice of transdisciplinary methods in gender studies may be elusive.

Have Concept, Will Travel

Without disagreeing with either the aspiration towards or the actual practice of inter- and transdisciplinarity as these authors understand it, the idea proposed here – that gender is a specifically transdisciplinary *concept* – suggests something else. Of course, the foregrounding of concepts in interdisciplinary fields is not new. Indeed, the title of the research programme of the Practicing Interdisciplinarity group was 'Travelling Concepts in Feminist Pedagogy: European Perspectives'. This is borrowed from Mieke's Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (2002), and we can see that some of the findings echo Bal's starting point too. Bal argues in *Travelling Concepts* that the main problem faced by the would-be-interdisciplinary scholar in the humanities is that of method. Whereas one might have expected new 'inter-disciplines' – particularly cultural studies (and, we might add, gender studies) – to have developed a new methodology 'to counter the exclusionary methods of the separate disciplines', they have not; old disciplinary methods tend to reassert themselves, even where new fields of objects for analysis have opened up (2002: 6–7). Bal's wager, then, is that 'interdisciplinarity in the humanities, necessary, exciting, serious, must seek its heuristic and methodological basis in *concepts* rather than *methods*' (2002: 5). To explain this, Bal presents us with a little vignette:

> A philosopher, a psychoanalytic critic, a narratologist, an architectural historian, and an art historian are talking together in a seminar about, say, 'signs and ideologies'. Eager young scholars, excited, committed. The word 'subject' comes up and keeps recurring. With growing bewilderment, the first participant assumes the topic is the rise of individualism; the second sees it as the unconscious; the third, the narrator's voice; the fourth, the human confronted with space; and the fifth, the subject matter of a painting or, more sophisticatedly, the depicted figure. This could be just amusing, if only all five did not take their interpretation of 'subject', on the sub-reflective level of obviousness, to be the only right one. They are, in their own eyes, just 'applying a method'. Not because they

are selfish, stupid, or uneducated, but because their disciplinary
training has never given them the opportunity, or a reason, to con-
sider the possibility that such a simple word as 'subject' might, in
fact, be a concept. (2002: 5–6)

Bal identifies three principal roots of this confusion of tongues: the ten-
dency to conflate words ('from everyday language') and concepts; lack of
attention to the fact that a concept may have 'travelled' from one dis-
cipline to another and got 'muddled in a mixed setting'; and the partial
overlap of concepts that 'is an inevitable consequence of their creation
and subsequent adjustment within the separate disciplines . . . this overlap
leads to their confused and vague use in interdisciplinary work' (2002: 26,
25, 14). To move from 'a muddled multidisciplinarity to a productive
interdisciplinarity', Bal thus advocates that we get clear about our con-
cepts, but not in the manner of analytical philosophy. Concepts, obvi-
ously, will never be univocal terms. But Bal suggests that in 'groping to
define, provisionally and partly, what a particular concept may *mean*, we
gain an insight into what it can *do*'. Our concepts thus (provisionally,
partly) defined can act as beacons with which we might orient ourselves
in the 'labyrinthine land of a humanities without boundaries' (2002: 25,
11, 8). *Travelling Concepts* devotes each chapter to a 'case study' of a
concept that has travelled from one place (ordinary language, a discip-
line, a practice) to another. She discusses, for example, the travel of the
concept of *mise-en-scène* from theatre to psychoanalysis (in Freud's
Interpretation of Dreams), a journey in which, for Bal, *mise-en-scène* pre-
cisely *becomes* a concept, or a 'conceptual tool' (2002: 129) capable of
articulating the 'staging' of the subject, and not just an artistic practice.[13]
In another chapter Bal refers to Jonathan Culler's account of the travels
of the concept of the performative (or performativity) from philosophy,
to literature, to gender studies, and confronts this with the different jour-
ney of the concept of 'performance' whose 'home', she writes, 'is not
philosophy of language but aesthetics' (2002: 179).
    At one point, where the distinction between inter-, multi- and trans-
disciplinarity is explicitly broached, Bal describes the 'inter-disciplinary'
itinerary of the concept of 'focalization':

    After travelling first from the visual domain to narratology, then to
    the more specific analysis of visual images, focalization, having
    arrived at its new destination, visual analysis, has received a meaning
    that overlaps neither with the old visual one – focusing with a lens –
    nor with the new narratological one – the cluster of perception and
    interpretation that guides the attention through the narrative.

This travelling from one discipline to another, undergoing change in the
process, is – according to Bal – '*inter*-disciplinary' as opposed to

'transdisciplinary', as the latter would 'presuppose its immutable rigidity, a travelling without changing' (2002: 39). Just over one decade later it seems odd that 'trans' should evoke 'immutable rigidity'; which just goes to show that prefixes can travel too. Bal continues: 'to call it "multidisciplinary" would be to subject the fields of the two disciplines to a common analytic tool'; that is, one presumes, to apply the same concept in different disciplines indifferently. Neither the trans- nor the multi-option is viable for Bal: 'Instead, a negotiation, a transformation, a reassessment is needed at each stage' (2002: 39).[14]

Presuming that no one wants to defend 'immutable rigidity', how, then, does Bal's notion of interdisciplinarity differ from what I am proposing here as transdisciplinarity? It is not Bal's concern to map either the birth of concepts or their history. Nevertheless, certain claims are made about where concepts (or their embryonic selves, 'words') come from, and the extended metaphorics of 'travel' does suggest that they begin their journey somewhere. Sometimes this is quite explicit, for example with the origin of the *mise-en-scène* in theatre, of focalization in optics and of hybridity in biology, and in the claim that 'the home of the word *performance* is ... aesthetics'. Indeed the disciplinary origins of concepts are often identified as the source of some of the confusion or muddle that ensues when they begin to travel, and when concepts become, once more, mere words or – worse – labels (2002: 24, 179, 17). However, the specificity of what I am here calling 'transdisciplinary' concepts is that they are, precisely, *not* identifiable with any specific disciplinary fields, either in their origin or in their application. This is not to say that they were necessarily conceived as such from the off, or purposively created to *be* transdisciplinary, but that this is the manner of their emergence and their functioning, in so far as they are theoretically significant. A case study of our own, concerning the concept of gender in feminist theory, will hopefully justify this claim. Indeed, an account of the transdisciplinary functioning of the concept of gender may be exemplary in relation to all transdisciplinary concepts.

Gender and Feminist Theory

Unlike the concepts that Bal traces, 'gender', *in its transdiciplinary form –* that is, its *feminist* form – is a relatively recent construction. To track the emergence of the concept of gender is, necessarily, to track its relation to another concept – sex – or to track the emergence of the sex/gender distinction. It would not be possible to give a comprehensive picture of this theoretical history here, but nor is it necessary. In order to make the point that the feminist concept of gender is a transdisciplinary one, I will therefore limit myself to the discussion of just a couple of emblematic examples. Further, as we shall see, the fact that the meaning of the term is contested will not mean that it is necessary to choose one definition from

among many, when the point is precisely that this internal diversity of meaning belongs to the very concept itself.

One common narrative of the origin of the concept of gender in its conceptual distinction from sex begins with Robert Stoller's psychoanalytical theory (Stoller, 1968), and tracks the swift reception and deployment of the theoretical distinction in feminist work in different disciplines. Stoller was clear that 'sex' was a biological term. But his concept of 'gender' – as he was the first to admit – is more difficult to pin down,[15] encompassing, in a sense, everything that is related to the fact of sex division and that is yet not itself 'biological'. Abstracting from biological sex we are left with 'tremendous areas of behaviour, feelings, thoughts, and fantasies that are related to the sexes and yet do not have primarily biological connotations. It is for some of these psychological phenomena that the term *gender* will be used' (Stoller, 1968: ix).

In fact Stoller credited Freud (and in particular his *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*) with the insight that led to the terminological distinction between sex and gender: the insight that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are not bound to sex in a 'one-to-one relationship' (Stoller, 1968: ix).[16] For Stoller, 'gender role' is 'the overt behaviour one displays in society, the role which he [sic] plays, especially with other people, to establish his position with them insofar as his and their evaluation of his gender is concerned' (Stoller, 1968: 10).[17] '*Gender identity*' – which is the main topic of *Sex and Gender* – is the knowledge and awareness of being either male or female, one's sense of being either a man or a woman. But although Stoller thus, in principle, distinguishes a social or cultural realm of 'gender', in relation to which a psychological notion of 'gender identity' is developed, he effectively conflates 'gender' with 'gender identity', such that 'gender' tends to function in *Sex and Gender* as itself a psychological category. Thus although his central conclusion in *Sex and Gender* is that gender identity is learned, not biologically determined (Stoller, 1968: xiii), the focus is always less on the broader social or relational aspects of gender, in favour of the individual's sense of him- or herself as male or female – what Stoller called the 'core gender identity' (Stoller, 1968: 29–46).

If, then, we trace the feminist distinction between sex and gender back to Stoller's work, we would have to say that his feminist readers were productively interpreting awry. Ann Oakley's statement of the distinction in *Sex, Gender and Society* – which was published in 1972 and includes a long discussion of Stoller – presents the distinction in its classic early form. Oakley echoes Stoller with the claim that '"Sex" is a biological term: "gender" a psychological and cultural one' (1972: 158), but the addition of 'society' to the 'sex' and 'gender' of her title and the – actually extremely subtle – feminist orientation of her analysis turns 'gender' into a *critical* term for social analysis, when it was nothing like this for Stoller.[18] When, in 1980, Michèle Barrett, in the context of a discussion

of women's oppression, reiterated the distinction between the biological category of sex and the 'social' category of gender (Barrett, 1980: 13), and insisted that 'any feminism [including Marxist feminism] must insist on the specific character of gender relations . . . to identify the operation of gender relations' (1980: 9), the implicit critical function of 'gender' is again brought to the fore. Identifying certain social phenomena in terms of gender was to historicize them – to render their contingency visible – against their naturalization in terms of sex.

But it is a curious irony that both sex/gender feminists and their ideological opponents – the apologists for existing inequality and oppression – largely shared a concept of sex, even if the defenders of the sexual status quo had no concept of gender. Barrett, for example, identified sex difference – or biological differences more generally – as simply existing at a level of reality not open to question. Drawing on the work of the Italian Marxist Sebastiano Timpanaro (*On Materialism*, first published 1975), Barrett wrote that 'sex differences, along with other biological characteristics of human beings, . . . form part of the raw material on which social relations are constructed and which they transform in the course of history'. Thus Barrett asserts her materialist credentials, accepting, further – rhetorical hesitations notwithstanding – the idea of the 'biological liabilities' (again, Timpanaro's phrase) of the 'female condition' (Barrett, 1980: 74, 75).

Others, however, drew different conclusions. In an essay first published in 1991, Christine Delphy, for example, claims that 'The notion of gender developed from that of sex roles, and, rightly or wrongly, the person who is credited with being the founding mother of this line of thought is [anthropologist] Margaret Mead' (Delphy, 2000: 63). Referring to Mead's *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), Delphy ties the emergence of 'gender' to the foundational anthropological distinction between nature and culture and traces its development (via the *critical* development of the idea of sex roles) in sociology. Delphy cites Oakley's book – 'one of the first works directly on "gender"' (Delphy, 2000: 65) – but notes that its definition of gender lacks what the earlier sociological work on 'sex roles' had, crucially, made central to their analyses: asymmetry and hierarchy (although Oakley cites some of the same feminist sociologists to whom Delphy refers: Mathilde Vaerting, Mirra Komarovsky and Viola Klein). For Delphy the 'arrival of the concept of gender' did not place it side by side with sex, marking off a realm of cultural or socially constructed (and thus mutable) phenomena from the realm of biology. As a singular term it allowed the emphasis to shift from the two divided parts of sex to the 'principle of partition itself' and, as the 'idea of hierarchy was firmly anchored in the concept', it 'allowed the relation between the divided parts to be considered from another angle' (Delphy, 2000: 66). Tracing the genealogy of the concept of gender to the idea of 'sex roles',

inextricably tied to social status, Delphy describes the perspective in which they now both appear as 'sociological in the true sense of the word: people's situations and activities are held to derive from the social structure, rather than from either nature or their particular capacities'. Thus the stage is set for the explanatory priority of gender as a social relation, with sex relegated, as it were, to the mark of a social division: 'sex is a sign' (Delphy, 2000: 64, 69). If for Barrett it was the *affirmation* of the natural reality of sex that made a feminist also a materialist, for Delphy it was, on the contrary, the *refusal* of the category of sex as natural.[19]

Of course one could cite very many other accounts of the emergence of the sex/gender distinction and trace very many other possible genealogies, in relation to different national, continental and global concerns. Together these different accounts would build a complex picture of the historical 'invention' of the concept of gender. I have made no attempt to be comprehensive here because the aim is not to write that complex history but merely to indicate the transdisciplinary mode of emergence of the critical feminist concept of gender. If one were to attempt to write that complex history one would no doubt find that different narratives of the development of the concept of gender would contest each other, and one could then, if one was so inclined, pursue the project of working out which of them is most accurate. But that would be to overlook the ongoing *collective* construction of the concept. Perhaps we could say that each part of this intellectual history continues to circulate in a discontinuous construction, not of *a* concept of gender, but a dynamic conceptual constellation of constructions of gender. To this extent 'gender' has not been quieted by being subject to any definition, and this may be precisely because it did not come from, has not and will not be settled into, any one discipline or even inter-discipline in particular – that is, because it is a *transdisciplinary* concept.

One does not have to look far to see that the critique of the sex/gender distinction as it appears in, for example, Oakley and Barrett, was almost immediately part of the ongoing construction of the concept of gender. In fact 'gender' quickly outgrew its opposition to sex, in a series of theoretical moves (most familiarly in Delphy, Wittig and Butler) that drew 'sex' itself into question.[20] Further, the critique of the presumption that feminist work in other languages could always be translated into the anglophone sex/gender distinction – and indeed resistance to the conceptual hegemony of the anglophone distinction – has now become part of critical reflection on its introduction and use.[21] But feminists (and not just anglophone ones) continue to use the category of gender; some of us continue to speak of gender studies and gender critique and gender analysis because in certain contexts we continue to find it an indispensable critical, transdisciplinary concept.

Critical Transdisciplinarity

What, then, is transdisciplinarity, such that we can say that gender is a transdisciplinary concept? In beginning a collective attempt to construct a concept of transdisciplinarity,[22] my colleagues and I set out from the contention that, in the late-20th century (from the early 1970s, let us say), the humanities, in the English-speaking world, *but with the notable exception of mainstream philosophy*, were transformed by the reception of a set of mainly French and German transdisciplinary texts or discourses published or originating in the middle of the 20th century. These include Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, amongst many significant others. This reception took place in a range of specific disciplinary contexts (especially English literary studies, and the 'new' disciplines of cultural studies, film studies and, later, postcolonial studies), at the same time as feminist theory was all over the humanities and social science – again, with the notable exception of mainstream philosophy. A few years later the same could perhaps be said of the influence of critical race theory.

Accustomed as we are to assigning works to disciplines, some of these texts might now be thought of as belonging to 'continental philosophy', or as having a right to belong to philosophy understood more broadly (as in the case of *The Second Sex*, which some have argued deserves to be included in the canon of philosophy, thus stamping it with the mark of the discipline). Some of this work belongs to the German tradition of 'critical theory', associated with the Institute for Social Research, originally based in Frankfurt. In the 1970s and 1980s German critical theory, along with the theoretical work of various, heterogeneous but broadly leftist, French writers including Lacan, Foucault, Barthes, Deleuze, and so on, were received into the anglophone humanities – again, largely excluding philosophy – and put to work to further produce what was sometimes called 'high theory' or simply 'Theory'.[23] Both German critical theory and the relevant theoretical discourses from France were explicitly – constitutionally – critical of the dominant disciplinary forms of philosophy to the extent that these dominant forms were, or conceived themselves to be, 'self-sufficient', in Marx's sense – independent of and uninfluenced by any empirical content: idealist and thereby (unwittingly) ideological.[24] If these German and French works are still, nevertheless, 'philosophical' – and still laying claim, some of them, to the title of 'philosophy' – it is in part because of their relation to the history of philosophy; because of their universalist aspirations (albeit a universal viewed historically); and because they still involve conceptual abstraction at the highest level – the traditional practice of philosophy – yet with an insistence on the social and historical conditions of possibility for such

abstractions, along with their *use* in the *criticism* of what Marx and Engels, in *The German Ideology*, rather straightforwardly call 'reality' (1974: 41, 48).

Of course, none of these texts – not even Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* – proposed a concept of gender; far from it. But we can now see what the transdisciplinary field of feminist theory, from which the concept of gender did arise, shares with this tradition of critique. The model for this is Marx's critique of political economy, which did not just criticize existing theories of political economy, but proposed a new set of categories, at once both political-economic and philosophical in form – abstract labour, labour-power, value-form, and so on. People tend to misinterpret Marx's relation to philosophy as a rejection of it; in fact the overcoming of classical German philosophy was, for Marx, its *transformation* into critique. Critique – or its theoretical result, critical theory – is the name for *a transformed practice of philosophy*, no longer self-sufficient and idealist but historically and practically based and materialist.

There are, of course, traditions of Marxist feminist theory that share their intellectual roots with critical theory. But, unlike critical theory, Marxist feminist theory was very little interested in the criticism of philosophy – it was more interested in the criticism of Marxism – and we do not tend to number amongst the many varieties of feminist theory something like a 'critical theory' variant. However, as Kate Soper pointed out in 1989, there is a sense in which feminist critique *is* critical theory. In fact, Soper drew attention to what she called 'the distinctly "Marxian" character of feminist criticism', which was not to say that all feminists are Marxists – Soper saw that that would be an absurd claim – but that 'feminist argument conforms with the theoretical exercise conducted by Marx under the name of "critique" in fusing critical and substantive elements. The Marxist critique, *in explaining the source in reality of the cognitive shortcomings of the theory under attack*, called for changes in reality itself' (1989: 93). This means that feminist theory, just in so far as it is *feminist*, is constructed with an emancipatory aim: it is not politically neutral, and it conceives of itself as practical criticism. Further, the process of feminist critique is such that in criticizing the terms – the philosophical presuppositions – of a given theory or ideology, it proposes new terms (this, I think, is what Soper means by 'substantive elements'). One of the new terms proposed by feminist theory in its criticism of existing theories or ideologies was that of 'gender'. This means that the category of gender does not just slot in alongside the existing terms upon which any given theoretical structure is based; rather, it destabilizes that structure and is part of the proposal to build another.

The critical practice of feminist theory is, as I said before, a transdisciplinary practice. It operates with what we should now, I suggest, recognize as a set of transdisciplinary concepts, including, sex, gender,

woman, sexuality and sexual difference.[25] At least one of these is required for a feminist theory. Historically, however, the most important of these in anglophone theory is probably 'gender'. There *may* be specific disciplinary uses of the term 'gender'; other specific uses of the term *may* be intra-disciplinarily defined. But the theoretical productivity of the concept of 'gender' in feminist theory is down to its transdisciplinary functioning. We may take Judith Butler's early work to be emblematic of the productive deployment of a transdisciplinary concept of gender.

Philosophy: The Recalcitrant Discipline

So, to return to our original question: what happens when well-defined disciplines meet or are confronted with transdisciplinary discourses and concepts? Or, if disciplines *reject* transdisciplinary discourses and concepts, why do they so reject them? Joan Scott's famous essay from 1986, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', goes some way towards answering this in her reflection on the encounter between the discipline of history and the transdisciplinary concept of gender; although, of course, Scott herself does not use the vocabulary of 'transdisciplinarity'. Scott distinguished between descriptive and analytic uses of the concept of 'gender' by historians, a distinction that holds good across other disciplines. In stark contrast with philosophy, the incursion of 'gender' into history was already so advanced by 1986 that Scott was in a position to criticize feminist historians' uses of it. In philosophy in 1986 feminists were still slapping each other on the back if any of them had managed to smuggle it in anywhere. That was the year of the first issue of *Hypatia* as a stand-alone academic journal of feminist philosophy,[26] only three years after the first special issue of *Radical Philosophy* on 'Women, Gender and Philosophy', in which the issue editor, Alison Assiter, wrote of the dearth of feminist writing in philosophy compared with literary studies, economics and the social sciences more generally (Assiter, 1983: 1).

Scott criticized the descriptive uses of the concept of gender by feminist historians, uses in which, at their simplest, '"gender" is a synonym for "women"', associated with the study of things related to women (Scott, 1986: 1056). According to Scott, the descriptive approach has no power to address or change existing disciplinary paradigms[27] (a problem which, *mutatis mutandis*, would, as we have seen, echo through discussions of multi- and interdisciplinarity in gender studies). Gender as an analytic category, on the other hand, was, Scott writes, introduced into the discipline of history precisely with the intention of challenging and transforming disciplinary paradigms and dominant disciplinary concepts – to transform the nature of the discipline of history itself. Thus we can see, I think, how Scott's work is part of that tradition of feminist critique identified by Soper. For Scott 'gender' is a 'new' category that allows us

to question the assumptions of existing theoretical discourses (which we may or may not want to call ideological) and to provide the basis for a more adequate understanding of social phenomena. Accordingly, it is not difficult to see why any discipline is likely to refuse or react with *some* hostility to the incursion of a transdisciplinary concept like gender. For it does not just find a place for itself within existing theoretical discourses or present itself as a new object to them; it challenges them to transform themselves according to its demands. (This is also why orthodox Marxism finds 'gender' difficult.) It is not difficult to see, further, why it should be the discipline of philosophy that has been most resistant and hostile to feminist theory and its transdisciplinary concepts. It is because philosophy has so much invested in distinguishing itself from other disciplines on the basis of its conceptual self-sufficiency, in policing its own boundaries and hanging on to its understanding of itself as a self-sufficient discipline, that it rejected this challenge from the outside.

Different national contexts and different philosophical traditions mean that there is not just one story to be told about the relation between feminism and philosophy. But on the whole, in the English-speaking world, mainstream philosophy resisted feminism, and one of its main tactics was to deny that feminist philosophy was in fact 'philosophy' at all. Insofar as the concerns of feminist philosophy were thought to have something to do with gender, they were, for example, said to be the domain of sociology, not properly philosophical concerns. Readers outside of the academic discipline of philosophy may be puzzled by this characterization of philosophy, especially if they work in or across those disciplines and interdisciplines and fields in which 'continental' philosophy has been welcomed. But the claim is about the traditional, hegemonic academic discipline of philosophy, which generally continues to deny the legitimacy of 'continental' philosophy.[28] However, if mainstream philosophy – that is, Anglo-American style analytical philosophy – rejected both inter- and transdisciplinarity and feminist theory, a certain kind of feminist philosophy embraced both with vigour. In her Inaugural Professorial Lecture in 1996, Margaret Whitford summed this up well:

> A feminist researcher is obliged to be interdisciplinary, with all the problems that this entails. I use the term 'feminist researcher' here for short, to refer to all those engaged in the different types of research which involve the generation, exploration or application of feminist theory. In the area where I would situate myself, for example, that of feminist philosophy, once one takes 'gender' as an analytical category – whether this is seen as an empirical or as a conceptual category – one is more or less obliged to see what has happened to the concept in adjacent disciplines. And once one posits a structure as systemic, the supporting evidence cannot be

confined to one discipline only, but gains in weight and plausibility from making links with evidence or arguments in other disciplines. Although without aspiring to the comprehensiveness of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, most feminist researchers in philosophy also read work in other fields – political theory, sociology, intellectual history, anthropology, literary theory, film theory, psychology, psychoanalytic theory – to name only the most obvious. . . . As an absolute minimum, we have to know about our own subject, plus feminist theory. (1996: 33–34)

If this is not the case with the growing field of analytical feminist philosophy, this explains why it has no audience outside of the discipline, narrowly defined.

Mainstream philosophy's initial rejection of feminism was obviously narrow-minded and short-sighted. But, in fact, when those hostile to feminist philosophy saw in it something that was *not* philosophy, or *not* generated from within philosophy itself, they were quite right. Because the life-blood of feminist philosophy was *feminist theory*, which did not owe its origins to philosophy. A quick survey of recent articles on the multi-disciplinary origins of feminist theory confirms this. To take just one example, in the first issue of the UK journal *Feminist Theory* (in 2000), the editors note the generation of feminist theory from within the social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent shift to theoretical production in literary and cultural studies. Other contributors to this issue of *Feminist Theory* mention other disciplines as well; but not one of them mentions philosophy. No one outside of philosophy even notices the absence of philosophy in their lists; philosophy is simply irrelevant.[29]

As with gender studies, in attempts to specify the nature of feminist theory its inter- or multidisciplinary character is frequently mentioned as one of its defining and academically most positive features. But in disputes over the definition and nature of feminist theory – particularly from within women's studies – what was primarily at issue for most discussants was not the relation between feminist theory and any specific discipline, or the disciplines in general, or disciplinarity, but the relation between feminist theory and *practice*, that is, *politics*. Thus we can say that two constitutive features of feminist theory do indeed set it radically at odds with the traditional self-understanding of philosophy as an academic discipline. First, feminist theory is explicitly tied to a political agenda for social change. Second, in contrast to mainstream philosophy feminist theory is a *transdisciplinary* practice, dependent on transdisciplinary concepts.

Further, the disciplinary specificity of philosophy that predisposes it against transdisciplinary feminist theory is at the same time what

predisposes it against becoming critical theory. If feminist theory is feminist critique this means that 'feminist philosophy' is, in a sense – just as those anti-feminist philosophers always suspected – something of a contradiction in terms, *but for completely different reasons than they thought*. Feminist philosophy is a contradiction not because, *as feminist*, it *fails* to live up to or to conform to some ideal of philosophy. On the contrary, it is contradictory precisely because it *succeeds* in being philosophy. The rich traditions of feminist epistemology, feminist metaphysics, feminist phenomenology, feminist philosophy of science and so on, as well as the fully-fledged feminist philosophy of sex and gender, amply demonstrate this. But feminist philosophy remains contradictory because, with its roots in feminist theory as a transdisciplinary practice of critique, it is the demand for the overcoming of philosophy, in Marx's sense; that is, as we might put it now, the initial demand that it become – like feminist theory itself – critical theory.[30] But this is just what traditional philosophy, to the extent that it understands itself as a self-sufficient discipline, cannot do. Its limitation – of which it is perversely proud – results in what Whitford called a 'schizoid fission' between itself and other forms of thought: its 'defensive logic of exclusion makes it impossible to allow metabolic thought through contact with something other than itself' (Whitford, 1996: 38).

This clearly puts feminist philosophy in a difficult position, for it is part of the social and institutional reality that it criticizes. Marx and the Marxist tradition of critical theory eschewed the name 'philosophy' in favour of 'critique', 'practical materialism', and 'critical theory', partly in order to distinguish themselves from the ideological self-understanding of the old philosophy. However today, from within the academy, there are good political reasons to hang on to 'philosophy' and for feminists to hang on to the word, to name what they do 'feminist philosophy'.[31] To the extent that 'feminist philosophy' is a contradiction in terms it is therefore a contradiction that must be sustained as a *productive* contradiction. It cannot be resolved by rejecting philosophy or ceding it to its traditional self-understanding, which would only repeat the error of what Marx called the 'practical political party', because 'You cannot transcend [*aufheben*] philosophy without realizing [*verwirklichen*] it' (Marx, 1992: 250). At the same time, however, feminist philosophy cannot realize itself, and cannot pit itself against a reality to be transformed, without taking account of the way in which feminist philosophy, as philosophy, belongs to this reality. Philosophy cannot be realized without being transcended, that is, without critique of philosophy, which for feminist philosophy means not without critique of itself *as philosophy*.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Granted, teaching programmes and the building of institutions are outside of the remit of the AHRC; but the point holds in relation to collaborative research too.
2. From here on I use 'gender studies' (lower case) as shorthand to include gender studies, feminist studies, women's studies and masculinity studies. In this I follow Tuija Pulkkinen (2015).
3. Thus Antje Lann Hornscheidt and Susanne Baer: 'we consider multidisciplinarity as a concept which is more relevant to mainstream research than to critical gender studies' (2011: 165).
4. A similar distinction between multi- and interdisciplinarity is drawn in Paul Stenner and David Taylor's discussion of the emerging 'transdisciplinary' field of psychosocial studies, and in particular its deployment in critical social policy studies of welfare (see Stenner and Taylor, 2008: 429–30).
5. See, for example, Rege Colet and Tardif (2008: 17–18), who argue that across different definitions of interdisciplinarity three common principles emerge: that of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological integration of the disciplines; that of the collaboration between representatives of the disciplines; and that of the expected result – that (ideally) integration and collaboration might take the form of a synthesis leading to a '"non-disciplinary" conception of "reality"'. They similarly quote definitions of transdisciplinarity that aim at 'the unity of knowledge' (2008: 18).
6. In relation to translation studies see, for example, Malmkjaer (2005: 21) and Bassnett-McGuire (1998: xi).
7. See, for example, Stenner and Taylor (2008: 431): 'Both multi- and interdisciplinarity, then, remain disciplinary in form since the goals of such research remain discipline-centred, even as they transform and give rise to new disciplines.'
8. In fact, Hornscheidt and Baer's definition of interdisciplinary work is difficult, ultimately, to distinguish from their 'transdisciplinarity': 'interdisciplinary work . . . means more than adding and in a simple sense combining knowledge. By elucidating approaches chosen within disciplines and articulating their limitations, a sharp awareness of the disciplines' varying ways to produce knowledge can be developed, including a critical assessment of the questions posed, the theories applied and the methods used, as well as the disciplinary genre conventions governing how research is re/presented' (2011: 170).
9. Indeed, Lykke (2011: 139) identifies the point of emergence of the concept of transdisciplinarity precisely in the work of the authors associated with Mode 2 knowledge production: Gibbons et al. (1994) and Nowotny et al. (2001). Lykke's definition of transdisciplinarity is taken up in, for example, Sari Irni (2013: 348). Stenner and Taylor (2008: 430), whilst not endorsing the 'somewhat utilitarian and pragmatic' conception of transdiciplinarity as Mode 2 knowledge production, similarly see the specificity of transdisciplinarity in its 'going beyond'.
10. Conducted under the umbrella of the Athena Network Project pursued by researchers and teachers from various women's and gender studies' programmes across Europe (see Demény et al., 2006, and www.athena2.org).

11. Whereas those gender studies' programmes 'housed within a discipline tend to focus on "gendering" the particular discipline in question' (Demény et al., 2006: 54), opening it up to gender issues without fundamentally challenging it.

12. Although the groups found that the major obstacles to genuinely interdisciplinary programmes were institutional (see Demény et al., 2006, especially 'Institutional Contexts of Interdisciplinarity I, II, and III', pp. 38–62), the institutional obstacles principally concern resources. For example, the group argue convincingly that for true interdisciplinarity to emerge in team-taught programmes, the teaching team should be familiar with each other's disciplines, but institutional resources (for these purposes translated into allocations on individuals' timetables) rarely allow individuals the time to attend each other's lectures, etc. Darbellay (2005: 13–14) identifies four principal obstructions to inter- and transdisciplinary research: epistemological [or perhaps methodological]; institutional; psycho-sociological; and cultural (including different languages and 'mentalities').

13. See Bal (2002: ch. 3, esp. 106–111). Bal also claims in Chapter 3 that 'a concept from artistic practice – *mise-en-scène* – is deployed as a theoretical concept for cultural analysis' (2002: 15).

14. Earlier, however, referring back to her previous work, Bal writes that 'narrative' and 'focalization' 'are, in fact, good examples of *trans*disciplinary concepts'. "Narrative" is thus a transdisciplinary concept (2002: 10, 11)'. This is perhaps an auto-critique of Bal's earlier presumptions about narrative ('at some point I realized that the reason I saw narrative in this way had to do with the concept of narrative that I had unreflectively endorsed'; 2002: 11); but it seems to be a contradiction in relation to focalization, at least. It is perhaps surprising that the shared prefix of 'transdisciplinarity' and 'transformation' did not catch this wordsmith's attention.

15. In *Sex and Gender* Stoller writes that his 'sidestepping a serious attempt to define *gender* and *gender identity*' will be evident to his reader (Stoller, 1968: xi).

16. See, for example, the footnote added to the 1915 edition of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 2001: 219–20), where Freud distinguishes between three 'uses' of the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' – the psychological, the biological and the sociological. This debt to Freud is perhaps under-recognized in gender studies, which has tended to be hostile to psychoanalysis. Its importance is recognized in Connell (2002: 120) and Chanter (2006).

17. Stoller also calls this 'gender behaviour' (Stoller, 1968: x).

18. John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, in *Man and Woman, Boy and Girl* (1972: 4), reproduce Stoller's definitions of gender identity and gender role, but without any reflection on the category of gender itself. And it is very clear that for Money and Ehrhardt 'gender' is a normative, not a critical, category.

19. Of course, there are different conceptions of materialism at stake for each author here. Barrett's 'materialism' is effectively 'naturalism'; Delphy's is the practical materialism of Marx.

20. Moira Gatens's well-known 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction' was published in 1983. Jean Grimshaw's *Feminist Philosophers: Women's Perspectives on Philosophical Traditions* (1986), one of the first anglophone (and perhaps the first of the important British) books of feminist philosophy, contained a critique of the sex/gender distinction (pp. 128–133), largely based on the need for a critical reflection on the realm of the biological. On the other hand Carol Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1988: 225–6) rejects the idea of 'gender' to the extent that she associates this (as did Grimshaw (1986: 144), in part) with the ideal of a sex-neutral 'individual' as the basis of political thought; that is, largely because of a need for a critical reflection on the realm of civil society. Genevieve's Lloyd's *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy* (1984) seems to have been written without notice of the sex/gender distinction (the word 'gender' and its cognates appear very infrequently, and as synonyms for 'sex'). Responding in 1993 (in the second edition) to the criticism that the sex/gender distinction was 'perversely blurred' in *The Man of Reason*, Lloyd argued that her object – 'the symbolic content of maleness and femaleness' – 'belongs properly neither with sex nor with gender' (1993: ix). But here Lloyd associates 'gender' only with 'socially produced masculinity and femininity' and 'gender identity'.
21. See, in particular, Braidotti (2002).
22. The research project, 'Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities: Problems, Methods, Histories, Concepts', began in 2011. For the project outline see: http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/crmep/projects/transdisciplinarity/summary/
23. See Osborne (2011b: 19–20).
24. Frédéric Darbellay (2005: 10) notes – without fully endorsing it – the co-incidence of radical critiques of disciplinarity and the critique of the university ('its modes of construction and transmission of knowledge') in the 1960s in France, culminating in 1968. This history of the critique of institutional forms is most obviously connected to the history of the critique of disciplines in the case of philosophy.
25. For an argument concerning the transdiciplinary nature of the concept of sex, see Sandford (2011).
26. *Hypatia* began in 1982, 'piggy-backing' on *Women's Studies International Forum*.
27. More recently, Claire Hemmings (2011: 10) has made a similar point about the institutional life, in the UK, of what is now called 'gender studies', 'supported where it is harnessed to globalisation and seen as producing future gender mainstreaming or gender experts', her example being the London School of Economics, where she herself works. Looking back on her 1986 essay in 2010, Scott also noted the 'recuperation' of the word 'gender', for example in the official report on 1995 United Nations Fourth World Congress on Women (Beijing), where gender 'was an innocuous term, often simply a substitute for "women"' (Scott, 2010: 9). In an interview from 2004, reflecting on her critique of the sex/gender distinction, Gatens too identifies the tendency to equate 'gender' and 'women' (Gatens and Walsh, 2004: 214). Gatens seems unwilling to recognize *any* positive

role, historically, for gender as an analytical or critical concept ('I thought the replacement of "sex" with "gender" was a bad move politically, a suspect move'). Gatens regrets the fact that the introduction of 'gender' left 'the body and corporeality out of the picture' (Gatens and Walsh, 2004: 213), but fails, absolutely, to acknowledge how the concept of gender was used strategically as a critique of the pre-feminist use of the concept of sex. And, after all, the pre-feminist concept of sex is still with us.

28. Of course other kinds of philosophy have flourished in all sorts of interdisciplinary spaces. In 'Out of Bounds: Philosophy in an Age of Transition', Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler discuss precisely this – new philosophical practices and 'venues of thinking' (Butler and Braidotti, 2013: 307). But this is precisely 'philosophy outside its bounds', not philosophy in traditional philosophy departments. There are still plenty of people in plenty of traditional philosophy departments who would not recognize anything that Bradotti and Butler (or Deleuze or Derrida, etc.) do as 'philosophy'.

29. In the same issue (Griffin et al., 2000), Elizabeth Ermath asked 'What Counts as Feminist Theory?' and answered without ever referring to philosophy, feminist or otherwise. Sara Ahmed objected to the idea that anyone should be counting, but still attempted a characterization of the diversity of feminist theory without, again, mentioning philosophy at all.

30. Elizabeth Grosz (2009) criticizes the idea that feminist theory is a primarily critical discourse, in favour of a description of it as the practice of the creation of concepts. But her Deleuzian account of 'feminist theory', which she effectively equates with 'feminist philosophy', swallows the former up into the latter, and gives a partial view in which most of what constitutes the history of feminist theory does not in fact qualify as 'feminist theory' on Grosz's definition. (Neither does most of what makes up the history of feminist philosophy count as 'feminist philosophy'.) Grosz seems to allow feminist philosophy, in its disciplinary specificity, to define feminist theory, instead of seeing the theoretical dependence of feminist philosophy on the transdisciplinary and disciplinarily critical practice of feminist theory. Grosz's position also seems to exclude the possibility that critical discourses construct concepts; the example of Marx shows this not to be true.

31. These reasons include the erosion of philosophy as critical discourse in favour of 'critical thinking', understood as the cultivation of 'transferable skills' for the job market, and the privileging of vocational subjects and science and technology disciplines, as part of an economistic devaluation of the humanities in general. For feminist philosophy, especially, the main point may still be not to cede 'philosophy' to the enemy's 'self-sufficient' definition.

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Identity and Intervention: Disciplinarity as Transdisciplinarity in Gender Studies

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Abstract

Within the past 40 years, feminist studies/women's studies/gender studies/studies in gender and sexuality has effectively grown into a globally practised academic discipline while simultaneously resisting the notion of disciplinarity and strongly advocating multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity. In this article, I argue that gaining identity through refusing an identity can be viewed as being a constitutive paradox of gender studies. Through exploring gender studies as a transdisciplinary intellectual discipline, which came into existence in very particular multidisciplinary historical conditions of the feminist movement, I suggest that transdisciplinarity within gender studies takes on a meaning which results in a radical problematization of the academic goal of 'knowledge production'. Instead of such 'knowledge production', transdisciplinarity in gender studies promotes intervention which reaches beyond the concepts of accountability, innovation and corporate management. I argue that Jacques Derrida's promotion of the Collège International de Philosophie in 1982 in its particular relationship to the tradition of philosophy provides a parallel example of such an attitude. Adding to Joan Scott's and Clare Hemmings's insights on gender studies in terms of critique and transformation, I argue that transdisciplinarity as practice of 'intervention' is crucial for the construction of gender studies disciplinary identity, based upon apparent non-identity.

Keywords

gender studies, intervention, transdisciplinarity

Inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity are contested terms in the intellectual and political understanding of academic activity. In this article I argue that among the various disciplines and transdisciplines gender

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studies[1] is distinctive as a practice and as an historical event of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and challenges the most obvious under-standings of these terms. Even in comparison with other transdisciplin-ary, hybrid fields, such as cultural studies or urban studies, and within the accelerated re-grouping of disciplines within universities in their apparent quest for accountability and innovation, gender studies consti-tutes a unique case: in disciplinary terms, it seems to maintain an identity based on non-identity, and its transdisciplinarity seems to be of its own explicit and stable kind.

It is common to oppose inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity to dis-ciplinarity and disciplines, where disciplinarity and disciplines are thought of as constraining structures which slow down the free flow of knowledge. But the history of transdisciplinary gender studies is already beyond this opposition. While the motivation to go beyond disciplinary divisions has been a driving force in gender studies since its early days, there has simultaneously been a strong urge within it to develop discip-linary structures of its own. This effort has been successful and has produced what I would call a transdisciplinary discipline.

I begin with the observation that gender studies seems obstinately to deny the disciplinary identity it has achieved and commonly presents itself in opposition to all disciplines, that is, almost as having no identity in disciplinary terms. Thus while the claim of transdisciplinarity often operates in gender studies in the attempt to distinguish it from all other disciplines, it simultaneously founds its claim for its autonomous place among the disciplines in university structures. In this article I will inves-tigate this dialectic of disciplinarity and non-disciplinarity and its para-doxes while asking whether, and if so how, transdisciplinarity in gender studies really points beyond the distinction discipline/not discipline. I will further examine the identity paradox of gender studies' transdisciplinar-ity by comparing it to another understanding of transdisciplinarity: transdisciplinarity as a standard ideal in contemporary governmental and EU research policies. 'Transdisciplinarity' is a key term in the dis-course of the production of new knowledge as a policy ideal for enhan-cing innovation and accountability. I argue that as easy as it would be to see gender studies as a successful product of this new mode of knowledge production, the transdisciplinarity of gender studies cannot be reduced to what is envisioned in the policies of managing knowledge production for 'problem-solving' ends. The academic form and the history of gender studies' entry into the academy through feminist and queer politics requires that we take into account a further dimension which I call 'inter-vention', and which I here oppose to the idea of knowledge production.

In what follows, I will thus explain how the transdisciplinarity of gender studies is different to the corporate style of transdisciplinarity. This involves a defence of both the 'artisanal' form of academic struc-tures and the particular content of the transdisciplinary scholarship in

gender studies, which I call 'intervention'. I will connect this to a different, but nevertheless comparable, historical project: the creation of an institution for transdisciplinarity, that is, the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. Jacques Derrida's defence of the new structure of the Collège, a quarter of a century ago now, bears a startling resemblance to the current policy ideals of transdisciplinarity. However, I argue that Derrida's relationship with transdisciplinarity involves a dimension that is not present in the contemporary discussion of knowledge production, and that, in its relation to the tradition of philosophy, has an affinity with the academic ideals animating the history of gender studies. This is the ideal of *intervention*.

Finally, in discussing the notion of intervention in Clare Hemmings's recent work and connecting it to Joan Scott's explanation of the 'critical edge' of gender studies, I argue that what makes gender studies distinctive in terms of transdisciplinarity, what provides transdisciplinarity with a distinctive meaning, and what contributes to its ability to turn an apparent non-identity into an identity, is precisely this dimension of intervention at the heart of gender studies. Gender studies is not the study *of* gender so much as an intervention *into* the prevailing understanding of gender. Can this account for the distinctiveness of gender studies as a paradoxical discipline? I will argue that it can, and that rather than standing opposed to all disciplinary structures, gender studies' paradoxical identity in non-identity is based on its essentially critical and politicizing impulse; or in other words, on intervention.

The Identity Paradox of Gender Studies

In the past 40 years feminist studies, by whatever name it is called – gender studies, women's studies or studies in gender and sexuality – has, step by step, established itself globally with a specific disciplinary identity in the universities. Feminist scholarship has gained for itself the status of a quasi-independent field, self-managing its own standards of quality, constructing degree programmes, and exercising its own hierarchy in referencing. In other words, it has become one of those areas of quasi-autonomous artisan-type intellectual practices that, somewhat like medieval guild structures, organize scholarly work in universities. It has been an amazing experience to live through this evolving sense of autonomy in an academic field during the last few decades.

In my recent experience as a teacher of gender studies, students now have no difficulty in understanding how to cite the relevant literature in the field. Not so long ago, however, this was not the case. I recall a couple of decades ago that women's studies students were constantly alarmed: they worried whether their feminist concerns were a legitimate basis for 'real' research; whether they had enough 'real' disciplinary literature in their theses; whether the 'real' disciplines (sociology, politics, literature,

philosophy, anthropology, law, or whatever it was) would recognize their work as properly academic in the literature that it cited and the methods that it used. There was a strong sense of 'disciplining' in early women's studies seminars, as if there was a shared fear of punishment: 'what if this does not count?' I no longer sense this fear amongst my gender studies students; on the contrary, they are confident in their disciplinary specificity. I have to say, I do not miss the earlier state of affairs in this respect.

There are now hundreds of university gender studies programmes around the world,[2] and although institutions are often vulnerable, there is a growing body of literature which can be referred to as a gender studies canon. In universities the world over the curricula in women's and gender studies resemble each other. The disciplinary core includes the feminist theory of the late 20th century, the history of feminist thought, the history of the feminist movement, representations of gender, as well as a set of concepts central to the history of the field and to contemporary discussions in it, including 'sex', 'gender', 'identity', 'difference', 'the body', and 'queer'. There is, further, a central literature in each of the various fields where feminist thought has flourished – in history, politics, and art, for example. There is intersectional analysis; there are queer studies, masculinity studies and postcolonial studies. All of this currently generates similar courses of study across the continents. The classics of feminist thought include writers as diverse as Olympe de Gouge, John Stuart Mill, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Kate Millet. The contemporary classics include Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Teresa de Lauretis, Donna Haraway, Gayatri Spivak, Eve Kosovsky-Sedgwick, Carole Pateman, Gayle Rubin, Rosi Braidotti, and bell hooks, to mention just a few. The curricula teach this canon; degrees measure students' mastery of it; evaluations are carried out; professors and lecturers are recruited; MAs and PhDs graduate; new dissertations are published; a number of specialized journals flourish – all this, and much more that constitutes a discipline.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that while there is clearly a sense of a coherent new discipline, in the self-presentations of gender studies programmes, the term 'discipline' is not used. Although departments of gender studies proliferate in the virtual space of the academic community, the term 'discipline' is studiously avoided. The websites of programmes, as well as the textbooks in the field, all resolutely avoid calling this a discipline. On the contrary, and often striking an oppositional stance in relation to disciplinarity, the websites and books most commonly associate gender studies with 'interdisciplinarity', 'multidisciplinarity' and 'transdisciplinarity'.

Examples are not hard to find. The Indiana University website states that 'Gender Studies is a *transdisciplinary* department engaging students in the study of gender and the intersection of gender with other substantive categories of analysis and identity[3] (emphasis added here and in all

quotations throughout). Northwestern University welcomes potential students to gender and sexuality studies with the claim that 'We are a dynamic *interdisciplinary* program. ... Students and faculty at Gender Studies pursue research in history and theory of gender, in feminism and in sexuality studies'.[4] The European organization for gender studies, AtGender, describes itself as 'a professional association for academics in the *interdisciplinary* field of Women's and Gender Studies'; the Indian Association for Women's Studies 'is a professional association that aims to further Women's Studies as an interdisciplinary academic field'.[5]

Similarly, in the very textbooks that have, for more than a quarter of a century now, helped to establish a sense of the discipline, the word 'discipline' itself is typically replaced with expressions like 'area of study' or 'field' or 'area of academic concern'. We find the following, for example, in the introductions to a selection of recent gender studies textbooks:

> Firmly *interdisciplinary* in perspective, Women's Studies initially resided mainly (if uneasily) within the *disciplines* of English, History and Sociology ... Once Women's Studies Programs emerged, often gathering together the work of scholars across the *disciplines* into one centre or as a team of a master's or undergraduate degree, *the area* developed a clearer identity. (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: xi)[6]

> Even though the 'Women's Studies' identity suggests a degree of empowerment for feminist knowledge, it is always pulled in two directions – as a critique that transforms existing *disciplines* and as a specialist, even separatist, *area of academic concern*. (Davis et al., 2006: viii)

These extracts refer to other 'disciplines', but women's studies/gender studies, even when its disciplinary status is clearly described, is instead referred to as an 'area' or an 'area of academic concern'. The phrases 'a study of' or 'the academic study of' are also common when the institutional structures of gender studies are described:

> Whatever label given to *the academic study of gender relations* in the twenty-first century, there are a number of features that have endured. First, *the study of gender* remains resolutely multi- and interdisciplinary and that is its key strength, and has had the most profound impact on contemporary theory and attitudes to the production of knowledge. (Davis et al., 2006: xiii)

So what is going on here, in this almost phobic relation to the notion of a discipline in gender studies? What might this resolute refusal of

disciplinary identity imply, when it flies in the face of clear evidence of both disciplinary status and structures, and of an increasingly clearly defined and definable academic tradition? The extensive history of the discussion of disciplinarity in gender studies,[7] of course, provides answers and, to a degree, explains the peculiar phenomenon of the widespread denial of a disciplinary identity. The field has grown in opposition to 'the disciplines', and in the course of its turning into a discipline itself, the notion of its disciplinarity and disciplinary identity has remained a contested issue. Autonomy, integration and an inherent anti-disciplinarity have been important stakes in this discussion.[8]

However, beyond the explicit discussion in the field, albeit partly taking shape through it, references to transdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity work performatively in *constructing* the disciplinary *identity* of gender studies. In other words, inter/multi and transdisciplinarity are invoked to specify the uniqueness and difference of gender studies in comparison to other disciplines, such that the construction of an identity through the denial of identity is the constitutive paradox of gender studies. One indicator of this is the way that the principle of intersectionality has become the hallmark of gender studies in the past few decades. The notion of intersectionality paradoxically downplays gender – the identifying focus of the field – while it simultaneously strengthens the identity of *gender* studies as a transdisciplinary discipline. Intersectionality, particularly in its reference to intersecting inequalities of class, race and gender, is a product of gender studies that has now been exported but is still proudly presented as part of its core identity, such that even the Wikipedia article on women's studies confirms it: 'Women's Studies, also known as Feminist Studies, is an interdisciplinary academic field which explores politics, society and history from an intersectional (multicultural women's) perspective'.[9] Through the notion of intersectionality, the study of class, race and ethnicity and queer and postcolonial studies have been subsumed within the disciplinary identity of transdisciplinary gender studies.

No doubt there are perfectly good reasons – both historical and contemporary – for why the tradition of feminist thought has resorted to the parallelism of subjection, intertwining the legacy of all exclusionary social injustices. Nevertheless, a remarkable dialectical operation of identity is achieved at a conceptual level through the mobilization of the inherently non-identitarian concept of intersection, into the identity work of an academic (trans)discipline. This is a parallel gesture to the assumption of inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity as characteristic of a particular discipline, gender studies. In short, 'intersectionality' and 'transdisciplinarity' identify the discipline of gender studies by dis-identifying it. And this constant motion of dis-identification – the defining/ constitutive paradox of gender studies – is successful in driving the discipline forward. Moreover, the multidisciplinarity ambition of gender

studies also crosses the humanities/sciences border, and increasingly so in recent years. Studies of the biosciences and biotechnologies, for example, have been an inspiration to and a partner in both feminist theoretical work and in feminist cultural analysis,[10] and there have recently been attempts to institutionalize these intersections.[11] Interestingly, this kind of transdisciplinary crossing between the boundaries of the sciences and humanities has been pursued by European science policy for some time.

This all points to gender studies appearing to be unique among the disciplines in being firmly and resolutely inter-, multi- and transdiciplinary, and being this on an extremely wide disciplinary basis. Gender studies is not a combination of earlier established disciplines (as are, say, bio-chemistry, or medical ethics) but works across a large number of disciplinary borders, and also performs transdisciplinarily beyond exact disciplinary combinations. In multidisciplinary encounters, and in conversations between academics who 'come from' different disciplines, the gender studies people are often the 'transdisciplinary' ones. In other words, the characteristics of being against disciplinary identity (being multi/inter or transdiscipline) turns, once more, into a marker of a particular disciplinary identity. Far from dissipating or challenging the core disciplinary identity of gender studies, the discourse of transdisciplinarity furnishes the discipline with an identity and is considered to be an asset within academia more broadly, not least within the competition for disciplinary resources in universities.

Within the discipline itself, the discussion of the inter/multi or transdisciplinary nature of gender studies has taken place (negatively) through a feminist opposition to old disciplines as rigid structures and hegemonic powers. But as a disciplinary marker, transdisciplinarity has also acquired a positive meaning and has developed as something that differentiates gender studies from other disciplines. The question then arises as to whether transdisciplinarity in gender studies now points to something beyond the mere negation of disciplinarity in general. What is the message of that ideal of transdisciplinarity that gender studies carries? One way to begin the exploration of this question is through the comparison of transdisciplinarity in gender studies with those goals that are set in the name of transdisciplinarity in another context where the term is frequently used – the context of research funding policies. Many governments and research funding bodies now promote 'transdisciplinarity', understood as 'Mode 2' knowledge production, to achieve the goals of innovation and accountability in social, industrial and commercial terms. How does gender studies relate to transdisciplinarity as a desired policy objective? Does gender studies represent the kind of new knowledge production that the research policies promote, or does transdisciplinarity in gender studies carry a meaning beyond innovation and accountability, as I would suggest?

Transdisciplinarity as Policy and Politics: Innovation and Accountability and the Feminist Movement

At first sight, gender studies seems in many ways to score highly on the scale of values currently widely promoted as 'Mode 2' knowledge production in the policies of research assessment and in research funding organizations (Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny et al., 2001). The idea of 'Mode 2' knowledge production was introduced by Gibbons et al. in *New Production of Knowledge* (1994) and was subsequently further specified by Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons in *Re-thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty* (2001). The key terms and the ideals articulated here are very much alive in the European research funding institutions and are echoed in research assessment practices (Barry et al., 2008: 24).[12] The claim is that Mode 2 knowledge production has replaced the old disciplinary type of knowledge production, particularly in the sciences. Nowotny summarizes the main features of Mode 2 as follows: contemporary research is increasingly carried out in the context of application – that is, problems are formulated in discussion among a large number of different actors and from a variety of different perspectives. Mode 2 knowledge is characterized by loose organizational structures, flat hierarchies, and open-ended chains of command. Universities are the opposite of this. Mode 2 knowledge is also characterized by accountability, quality control and, most importantly, by transdisciplinarity, which in relation to Mode 2 knowledge has a precise meaning: transdisciplinarity means that problems do not develop within disciplinary structures but in the context of application. Nowotny also emphasizes that Mode 2 knowledge does not respect institutional boundaries: it is transgressive.[13]

The key ideals guiding policy-makers who take their cue from the idea of Mode 2 knowledge production in the promotion of inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity are *innovation* and *accountability* (Barry et al., 2008). There is a clear vision of the displacement of the culture of the autonomy of science by a culture of accountability, and more than anything, the funding instruments have been sharpened to promote innovation. From the point of view of EU-sponsored and governmental research policy, gender studies could easily be seen as a successful product: it is multi-disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity turned into real transdisciplinarity; it is therefore an innovation in itself. If the main idea behind much of the research policy promoting multidisciplinarity is that academic fields easily become too stable and repetitive and lose their edge, and that innovative results are achieved when inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary environments are created, when researchers from various disciplines are brought together in order to combine their knowledge in a new way, when they act on problem-solving together, and when they create a completely new approach, then the entire field of gender studies is an example of exactly this kind of new approach, both as a process and as a result: it

is the end product of some decades of intensive inter- and multidisciplinary labour.

Simultaneously, gender studies also showcases other virtues that Nowotny et al. define as integral to Mode 2 (see Griffin, 2005; Liinason and Holm, 2006): problems identified from a feminist perspective have called for such research, and research has been developed in the context of its application. The research involves investigation of the social problems of gender and sexuality, and it maintains relations with activists, NGOs and with politics more broadly. On the basis of its feminist premises, gender studies has also cherished the ideal of loose organizational structures and flat hierarchies. In addressing the perpetration of injustices it also promotes accountability.[14] Even better, gender studies has been extremely productive in generating innovative thought and theoretical discussions that have spread into other academic fields. Consider Judith Butler's work, notions of performativity, the notion of intersectionality, and also various discussions of the body and of materiality. Gender studies seems regularly to generate disturbances in many of the fields of the humanities and the social sciences. But gender studies is a new 'product' which has nevertheless achieved a certain level of stability, and is effective in its environment – in other words, it is exactly the kind of product that research policy-makers are trying to build their instruments to produce.

However, the innovational strength and high level of accountability of gender studies has not been developed through attention to the goals of governmental research policies. The success story of transdisciplinary gender studies is, rather, the direct result of the second-wave feminist movement. Thus gender studies as a discipline is unique in being able to locate its origin in a large and intensively mobilizing historical event: second-wave feminism. It is also true, of course, that in many countries government funds have been channelled towards gender studies and there exist, currently, clear differences in the levels of academic study in the field between those countries and universities in which this has been done (for example, in Australia, Sweden, Norway and Finland, where government funds have supported gender studies, or in Budapest Central European University, with funding by the Soros Foundation) and those in which it has not, or which have received resources to a much lesser degree (Italy, Spain, Germany and Denmark, for example; Griffin, 2005). The research politics do matter, as is the case in many other fields. But although state-sponsored funds have helped at some stages and in some countries in the initial development of the field and in its continuing to thrive, this was never decisive. The decisive factor is more spectacular: the second-wave feminist movement and the continuation of feminist political thought and action. The feminist movement accounts for all the 'Mode 2' features of gender studies, and most clearly for its inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity.

It was a shared relation to the feminist movement that, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, brought together people in the universities who studied and did research in multiple disciplines. These were people who, were it not for feminism, would not have met as students of different disciplines, let alone started to think through problems together over lengthy periods of time. They were people who might otherwise not have met at all in an academic setting. Moreover, they had enough time and interest to sustain more than just a couple of meetings for multidisciplinary purposes, the time and interest to be together and to begin to understand the different scholarly approaches of each in matters important to feminism. It is hardly surprising that the first wave of feminism, which at the turn of the 19th century also generated significant texts and brought together many learned women, hardly left a mark in academic disciplinary organizational structures of thought and learning, since women were then still excluded from these institutions. But the breaking of the second wave in the 1960s and 1970s affected young women from multiple disciplines in the universities, and brought them together to transform virtually all disciplinary knowledge. Much of the now classic work – for example that of Kate Millet, Monique Wittig or Shulamith Firestone – was written by young university students who intervened with no fear.

A significant feature of the second wave of feminism was precisely that it took place in large part in academic settings and quite often also through scholarly work. Much of this research was, of course, initially marginal, and in an adversarial relation to traditional academia, but nevertheless originated from strong scholarly ambitions (Millet, 1969; Firestone, 1970; Irigaray, 1974; Rubin, 1975). It was clearly academic work, but fearlessly *un*disciplined, intervening within established frameworks. By the late 1980s and early 1990s the feminist and queer movements had already developed a certain density of scholarly work. The finest transdisciplinary work of the period, such as that of de Lauretis (1987), Haraway (1989), Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1990) and Braidotti (1991), was produced out of feminist and queer transdisciplinary legacies, and has had a very considerable impact since. It should be emphasized (and I will return to this point later) that all of this work was *interventionist*. None of it was primarily concerned with the creation of new knowledge *about* gender; instead it *challenged* prevailing ideas about gender and sexuality.

While early feminist scholars integrated feminist views into their own disciplines, they simultaneously, together, created something new – something that in 40–50 years would become a full-grown discipline. If corporate governmental and EU research policies of innovation and accountability are currently attempting to stimulate something equivalent to the feminist movement in creative potency – a movement forged with passion, hours of unpaid work, strong emotional investments, etc. – one

can only wish it good luck. This kind of thing happens only rarely, and there is good reason to understand it as an historical event. It involved large numbers of scholars of different types and disciplines, and mobilized them as persons, as individuals with their political, emotional and personal sensibilities, with exceptional intensity.

The sensibilities of this buzzing laboratory, the feeling of the excitement of creating something new, is part of the explanation for why trans-, multi- and interdisciplinarity continue to be evoked with such fervour in the self-descriptions of the discipline and why this self-description is not easily abandoned, even in the face of the evidence of disciplinary structures. Thus gender studies cannot be viewed, tempting as it is, merely within the framework of the production of Mode 2 knowledge in terms of innovation and accountability, for two reasons. First, because gender studies has become an academic discipline – it is not problem-solving co-operation – and as an academic discipline it has justified its institutional structures in terms of their distinctiveness. Second, having grown out of the feminist and lesbian, gay and queer movements, gender studies is not about knowledge production, but politicized intervention. In the next two sections I will attempt to justify these claims.

Pro Discipline and Autonomous Structure

The drawback of multidisciplinary academic work has often been identified as the danger of the loosening of the quality controls that medievally-organized disciplinary structures provide. While multi- and transdisciplinarity is the common productive research ideal of the day, lack of disciplinarity has also come under attack as both an ideal and a practice. From a practical point of view it is claimed that people coming from different disciplines do not necessarily speak the same language, and at its worse, policies which steer us towards multidisciplinarity lead to shallow, eclectic research without intellectual strength: thinking is reduced to the lowest common denominator. The controversy around the value of disciplinarity in the organization of academic practices could be called the Nowotny-Strathern debate, since Marilyn Strathern has been one of the most eloquent critics of the idea of Mode 2 knowledge production in the defence of a disciplinary mode of knowledge (Strathern, 2000, 2004, 2006). According to Strathern: 'Disciplines have an inbuilt accountability of a kind (self-monitoring and epistemological, i.e. knowing how knowledge is made and where it comes from)' (Strathern, 2004: 68). This suggests that the familiar structures of a discipline help build intellectual strength and provide the space for its exercise.

Strathern has pointed out that although the Nowotnian Mode 2 concepts of public accountability and social usefulness sound good in comparison with the idea of elite and ivory tower knowledge, the notion of

acting in the 'interest of society' is hardly unproblematic: who is able to articulate this interest? Whose interest is it we are interested in as the interest of society? Is it the interest of large corporations rather than those who are losing their livelihood to those interests? As there are always multiple candidates, the idea of a neutrally responsive society is extremely weak, as Strathern has argued (Strathern, 2004: 89–90). Furthermore, managing research from the point of view of the 'legitimate' interests of society runs the risk not only of weakening research intellectually in comparison with scholarly work in the disciplines traditionally understood, but also of placing the control of research in the hands of the powerful, refusing scholars the power of self-reflection about the effects of their research. British researchers subject to the 'impact agenda' of successive research assessment exercises are painfully aware of this. Thus, at its most powerful the defence of disciplinary modes of scholarly activity dovetails with the critique of the corporate managerialism that has taken over in universities in the last few decades. In short, this involves transferring the power to decide what counts from the disciplines as self-organizing structures to those who direct and manage knowledge production. It is, clearly, much easier to govern a university when disciplinary structures have lost their power and when scholars are no longer autonomous with respect to policy-makers and corporations.

The defence of disciplinarity evokes the long history of disputes concerning the medieval guild-type structures of universities, scholarly self-governance, the Humboldtian ideals of a self-governing republic of scholars, the idea of autonomy, the artisan quality of intellectual work and the self-organization of disciplines as the guarantee of quality control. However, rather than talk of artisans, guilds, masters, and workshops, the dominant image in discussions of scholarly activity today is that of industrial production. The phrase 'production of knowledge' is common to the discourses driven by the new managerialism, and both Mode 2 advocates and critics use it as the general name for research (Griffin, 2005; Lykke, 2010). But a strong case can be made against the policy ideal of 'useful' knowledge and knowledge production for corporate interests in defence of the quality and depth of disciplinary research and autonomous structures governed by those rooted in the scholarly traditions of a particular field, schooled and working in the 'artisan' manner.

The danger of shallowness in gender studies was raised by Wendy Brown in the early 1990s in her infamous article 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies'. Brown argues that the proliferation of categories of women (according to race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and sexual preference) is evidence of the limits of 'any field organized by social identity rather than *genre of inquiry*' (Brown, 2008: 23). Brown's presumption is that women's studies is not a discipline; it is too loose, there is no central

literature, its practitioners come from different disciplines and they do different things. Without stating it directly, her implicit message is that the result is the loss of intellectual strength: women's studies is messy (see also Hemmings, 2011: 84–9). But since the publication of Brown's article in the early 1990s – an article probably written in frustration with the Santa Cruz women's studies programme and with various disputes over identity politics in US academia – gender studies has in fact consolidated as a discipline. What Brown said then could not be said now of any leading gender studies programme. The standard curricula today display much more intellectual strength and sophistication (Wiegman, 2002; Griffin, 2005; Lykke, 2010; Hemmings, 2011). In the last three decades of the 20th century we have witnessed the formation of a new academic discipline, the story of which will be told as we tell the story of the emergence of sociology as an academic discipline (how Durkheim established the first department in Bordeaux in 1895, and so on) and many other disciplines. Gender studies as a discipline has 'arrived'; it now appears in the list of disciplines in Academies of Science, in publishers' catalogues, and in all of the other places which mark disciplines as distinct.

Collège International de Philosophie

There are positive elements to this disciplinarity. It allows for the repetition essential to any tradition; there are criteria for standards and the kind of testing, examinations, and degree-awarding that work to secure a certain depth in and quality of inquiry. The establishment of the innovative and the new needs protective structures, as even the original Mode 2 publication, *New Production of Knowledge* (1994), notes, particularly in its section on the humanities: 'Reflexivity requires rootedness, a context in which one can act' (Gibbons et al., 1994: 92). And indeed, most scholars in the humanities continue to work in a traditional 'artisanal' fashion, aided by the structures of their disciplines.

A good example of the need for institutional structures, for a context in which to act in an 'artisanal' scholarly fashion, is the establishment of the Collège international de philosophie, which was also born under the sign of transdisciplinarity, and which provides an interesting parallel with gender studies. The Collège was founded in 1983 by a group of French philosophers, including, notably, Jacques Derrida.[15] They proposed a new institutional structure for something that, although different in its relationship with the university, was similarly inherently intended to be transdisciplinary. Derrida's text 'Titles (for the Collège international de philosophie)', is a defence of this new institution. The text is interesting both for the argument that it makes for funding, and for its vision of philosophy. It offers an example that parallels the argument I have made in relation to gender studies and suggests a way of thinking about

scholarly activity in terms of the attitude of intervention which I see as crucial for gender studies in so far as it has grown into an academic discipline from the feminist movement.

Derrida's 'Titles (for the Collège international de philosophie)' starts with an appeal for support for the envisioned institution: 'By now justifying the titles of this new institution, beginning with the name we propose to give it, we want to emphasize its titles to exist' (Derrida, 2004: 195). Founding a new 'college', Derrida et al. propose the establishment of another institution for practicing philosophy. The college is supposed to reflect on philosophy and to welcome 'the speculative attitude and traditional [artisanal] experimentation' (Derrida, 2004: 205) as well as making it possible to 'converge or cross' disciplines in the style of 'incisive incentive, speculative or experimental exploration, establishing intercommunications' (Derrida, 2004: 203). Its traditional name, 'collège', is justified by its being autonomous and liberal; that is, not accountable to the state or to religion (Derrida, 2004: 215).

Reading Derrida's text, written over 30 years ago (in 1982), I was struck by its resemblance to a funding application for a new institution, one that could be submitted to a funding body today. In an odd way, Derrida's argument echoes or prefigures the now absolutely dominant corporate innovation language of both the EU and the policies of the various national research funding institutions that promote the idea of Mode 2 knowledge. Reading it, I could not help but think that under the current regime it would be a very successful research institute proposal. It has all the elements required today by the European Research Council, for example, for success in competition. Derrida writes about the 'transversal intersection of fields', which, he makes a point of saying, goes beyond mere interdisciplinarity; he constantly stresses 'originality' and 'innovation'; he mentions international collaboration, research training, and social impact (in the form of school curricula); he writes that the college will enhance the creation of research groups, and he mentions, several times, the need to take risks – which is a fashionable criterion for top funding instruments these days: 'We must stress this point, for it no doubt defines one of the most original stakes for the Collège, the high risk and the difficulty of calculation' (Derrida, 2004: 203–14).

It is also striking that Derrida frequently uses the word 'intersections' – the word that has now become the hallmark of women's and gender studies – to describe transdisciplinarity. Derrida writes about 'the necessity of uniting philosophy . . . with multiple and active intersections' (Derrida, 2004: 207) and proposes that 'This motif of intersection or crossing would be a kind of charter for the Collège' (Derrida, 2004: 210). Still today the Collège describes itself thus: 'The principal concept of its theoretical *dispositive* is that of *intersection*, which structures the relation between philosophy and the other disciplinary fields.'[16] But this idea of intersection (in this case the intersection of philosophy with other

disciplines) and transdisciplinarity does not put the discipline of philosophy in doubt, it does not suggest that we need to question the idea of 'artisanal' forms of disciplinary institutions in order for this new transdisciplinarity to be realized. Thus, although the emphasis is on intersections, the aim is primarily to found an institution in which this intersecting might take place. This parallels the paradox of identity and non-identity that similarly constitutes gender studies. In the act of founding an institution which advocates disciplinary structures, Derrida also approvingly quotes Schelling who 'objected to the idea of a department of philosophy, since philosophy had to be everywhere, and thus nowhere, in no determinate place' (Derrida, 2004: 212).

Intervention

So what is it in Derrida's kind of philosophy and in gender studies as feminist endeavour that creates the particular type of transdisciplinarity that is more than accountability and innovation? I have argued that the shared sense of transdisciplinarity in both gender studies and the Collège international de philosophie lies in their both being defined by the paradox of disciplinary identity and non-identity and by the attitude of *intervention*. The stakes of this 'intervention' are evident in this text-book characterization of gender studies: '*feminism* remains a central perspective for the study of gender relations, reminding us that *this discipline* emerged from the identification that women as a group were misrepresented – in both the public sphere and in the conception of their "real" natures' (Davis et al., 2006). Here it is explicitly with regard to feminism – the political, interventionist, disruptive approach distinctive to gender studies – that the word 'discipline' appears. The apparent banality of this point veils its significance: gender studies as a distinctive discipline is not just a study of gender and sexuality and their theorization, it is – as such – feminist and queer intervention. Gender studies is not in the business of establishing the right account of gender or the correct knowledge of it; it is the intervention into established 'knowledges'. The metaphor of knowledge 'production' is therefore a poor fit for the kind of academic work undertaken in gender studies, just as it is for the description of Derrida's work within philosophy.

In 'The Life and Times of Academic Feminism', Claire Hemmings discusses the question of disciplinarity in the field of gender studies in terms of what she calls the 'autonomy/integration debate' (Davis et al., 2006: 13–34). Summarizing her article in the introduction to the collection in which it appears, the editors place 'discipline' in inverted commas when referring to gender studies, even though Hemmings herself does not. Although the notion of discipline is disputed in the field of gender studies, for Hemmings, as for Derrida, there is no contradiction between disciplinary structures and interventionist content. This is also clear in

Hemmings's introduction to *Why Stories Matter* (2011), in which she deals with the disciplinary presence of gender studies and the creative power of self-narration in contemporary feminist scholarship. It is no co-incidence that Hemmings also evokes the idea of theory and research as intervention. For intervention, just as much as the form of institutions of study, is crucial for the idea of transdisciplinarity that circulates in gender studies. That is, transdisciplinarity, in the case of gender studies, crystal-lizes *in intervention*.

This is perhaps best explained by first evoking its opposite: what would a non-interventionist, non-political, non-contingency-driven approach towards gender be? For there is plenty of that. There is a copious literature in which gender is studied and theorized without any relation to feminist or queer traditions, or any relation to the gender studies literature. There are ethnological, anthropological and socio-logical descriptions of kinship; theories about and generalizations con-cerning gender roles; medical theories of sex; sexological studies of sexuality; historical studies of gendered phenomena; pedagogical, psy-chological and psychoanalytical theories of gender and sexuality; all without any connection to feminism or to queer or gender studies. These sorts of studies can be found in the arts and social sciences (including theology) and in the medical and natural sciences. What is characteristic in them is not just that they usually study women and men, and therefore tend not to problematize gender from a queer studies' perspective, but also *how* they study gender: that is, they study gender without challenging it. In other words, there is plenty of 'knowledge production' concerning gender in many disciplines – but this is not gender studies. Because what singles out the gender studies literature is precisely its relation to feminism and queer. And this implies: *critique*.

Joan Scott (2008) identifies critique and self-critique as one of the specific characteristics of women's studies:

> Feminists have not only wielded *critique* (against patriarchy, the nation-state, capitalism, socialism, republicanism, science, canons of literature, all the major disciplines) in the name of ending dis-crimination against women; they have also interrogated the prem-ises of their own beliefs, the foundation of their own movement. This impulse of *self-critique* has been present from the inception of feminism as a social-political movement. (Scott 2008: 7)

Similarly, Ellen Rooney had earlier (1988) noted that:

> Women's studies is driven by political concerns that inevitably lead to a critique of the way knowledge is produced. … The feminist students who choose to major in women's studies construct their choice as a political one. (Rooney, 2008: 146)[17]

Some 25 years later, I would say that this is still true. Gender studies is not (and nor should it ever be allowed to become) a study of what gender *is*, or what sexuality *is*. It is not a study of women and men or their difference; it is not a study of what women or men, or sexual minorities, really are; what gender really is; or what human beings as gendered or sexed are; or even *that* they are gendered and sexed. The aim is not to explain, or to give an overarching account of what is; it is not about the mastery and organization of the accumulated knowledge on topics of gender and sexuality.

If there is something distinctive in the transdisciplinary disciplinarity of gender studies in relation to the production of knowledge on gender and sexuality, it is close to what Derrida wanted the Collège to privilege as an approach with respect to the tradition of philosophy: *intervention*, and intervention *against* the previous totalizing discourses (particularly pertinent in the case of philosophy). Hemmings exemplifies this attitude of intervention, as opposed to the production of knowledge as totalizing view, in her discussion of the histories that feminist scholars tell about feminist scholarship. She ends her introduction to the book with a section subtitled 'Interventions' and writes:

> I seek to flesh out the substance of Western feminist stories and to *intervene* by experimenting with how we might tell stories differently rather than telling different stories…If we can identify the techniques through which dominant stories are secured, through which their status as 'common sense' is reproduced, that political grammar may also offer a rigorous *point of intervention* through which Western feminist stories might be *transformed*. (Hemmings, 2011: 16, 20, emphases added)

Thus Hemmings does not merely study the dominant accounts of gender studies, she attempts to transform them. Inspired by Hayden White (1992), she professes her refusal to 'marshal corrective efforts to set the story of Western feminist theory straight', not least because it is this impulse to produce the 'correct' account that animates the traditional disciplines.

If Hemmings's intention is to transform feminist stories, Derrida's target is the traditional discipline of philosophy in his specific context – that is, the hegemonic intellectual practice of philosophy in France, in its universalistic, humanist and transcendental totalizing form. In the Collège, Derrida writes,

> a different philosophical practice and a different relation to the philosophical are being sought…As an alternative to the philosophical all-or-nothing, to philosophical hegemony *versus* non-philosophy…a renunciation of a *classical* recourse to philosophy

(a 'radical', fundamentalist, ontological, or transcendental recourse, an always-totalizing recourse). . . . these new incursions compel the philosopher . . . . to change styles and rhythms in any case, sometimes languages without, however, renouncing philosophy and without believing that it is invalid. (Derrida, 2004: 200–1)[18]

The relationship of gender studies to much academic study in other disciplines, including the disciplines that study gender, resembles, in its transdisciplinarity, the attitude towards philosophy that Derrida here recommends. There is no reason to delegitimize the traditional 'production of knowledge' about gender; it is just not what gender studies does. Consider, for example, Judith Butler, perhaps the best-known gender studies theorist today. Clearly Butler does not provide a theory of gender even if, of course, there are repeated attempts to turn her work into such a thing. Rather, Butler disrupts those theories which seek to pin down what gender or sexuality is. The question of gender in Butler's work never concerns the revelation of the truth about humanity in general. For from the omnitemporal issue of human gender, human sexuality, or humanity as such, Butler's work asks: who counts, as a human, here and now, and who does not (Butler, 2004, 2005, 2009)? And in common with much work in gender studies, her research is not focused on gender *alone*, but intervenes where there is a call for a critical intellectual to intervene (Butler, 2005, 2009).

Consider also Elizabeth Grosz, who in many ways seems to provide an explanation of gender with her evolutionary accounts (Grosz, 2004, 2005). But Grosz's Deleuzian project is not driven, finally, by a scientific ambition. Rather, the urge for change is, at least at the outset, the motivation in Grosz's work; just as it is in much other feminist work with the biosciences (for example, Braidotti, Franklin and Lykke). Similarly, Irigaray, Eve Kosovsky-Sedgwick and Drucilla Cornell – to name just three of the most prominent – are all feminist scholars who intervene into existing knowledges in order to disturb them, according to the impulse not to produce but to *transform*. The temporal horizon of this work is not the eternal but the here-and-now: not repudiating the work which is done within the horizon of eternity, but engaging seriously – critically – with it. As with Derrida's philosophical project with the Collège, there is a move away from philosophical omnitemporality and the transcendental abstraction of place and time. Philosophical approaches to questions of gender tend, similarly, to eschew totalizing aspirations. Philosophy aims, in this case, not to explore the limits of the human, or the essence of gender and sexuality or sexual difference; not to provide total explanations, but to *intervene* into currently established 'truths'. I call this 'thinking politically'.

I have argued that the constitutive paradox of gender studies is that it claims an identity by refusing an identity. Gender studies has developed

into a discipline through a process that, although it might resemble 'Mode 2 knowledge production', is substantially different to it. The transdisciplinarity of gender studies cannot be reduced to the idea of innovative and accountable knowledge production pitted against disciplinary structures. On the contrary, the transdisciplinarity of gender studies operates now within a paradoxical disciplinary identity, which consists of an apparent non-identity. The specific content of the transdisciplinary identity of gender studies, I suggest, consists in the fact that it is not the 'production' of knowledge about gender, but rather the intervention into existing 'knowledge'. Its transdisciplinarity does not, therefore, only consist of the fact that these interventions can be 'applied' in a broad range of other disciplines, but also in the particular character of the scholarly work that this discipline encourages. In this the approach of gender studies is similar to the critical, philosophical project of the Collège international de philosophie. The politicizing, challenging, intervening attitude marks this discipline out, and contributes to its name as transdiscipline.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Throughout this article I use the different institutional names for the discipline synonymously: feminist studies, women's studies, gender studies and studies in gender and sexuality.
2. An independent information website managed by Joan Korenman lists 900 women's studies programs, departments and research centers worldwide in May 2014 (see: http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html).
3. See: http://www.indiana.edu/~gender/ (accessed 14 March 2013).
4. See: http://www.genderstudies.northwestern.edu/ (accessed 14 March 2013).
5. See: http://www.atgender.eu/index.php/atgendermenu/organization (accessed 25 February 2013); http://iaws.org (accessed 23 April 2014). Numerous other examples could be given, but Duke University's website is also very representative: 'In the field's first decades, feminist scholarship reoriented traditional disciplines toward the study of women and gender and developed new methodologies and critical vocabularies that have made *interdisciplinarity* a key feature of Women's Studies as an autonomous field. Today, scholars continue to explore the meaning and impact of identity as a primary though by no means transhistorical or universal way of organizing social life by pursuing an *intersectional* analysis of gender, race, sexuality, class, and nationality' (http://womenstudies.duke.edu/about; accessed 14 March 2013).

6. *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (2004) begins with a chapter entitled 'Introduction. Everywhere and Somewhere: Gender Studies, Women's Studies, Feminist Perspectives and Interdisciplinarity' (pp. i–xv). All emphases in these quotations are my own.

7. See, for example, Bowles and Klein (1983), Wiegman (2002), May (2002), Griffin and Hanmer (2001), Vasterling et al. (2006), Lykke (2010) and Hemmings (2011).

8. For example, Nina Lykke expresses a widespread view in the field: 'I find a compartmentalized, discipline-specific organization of knowledge to be problematic in general and for feminist studies in particular.' On the issue of the disciplinary structures of gender studies, Lykke argues for the position that: 'Feminist Studies can *pass and claim authority as an academic field in its own right*, while at the same time *pointing toward alternative-trans-and postdisciplinary-modes of working and organizing knowledge production*' (Lykke, 2010: 18–19).

9. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_studies (accessed 14 March 2013).

10. See, for example, Haraway (1989, 1991), Braidotti (2002), Grosz (2004, 2005), Franklin et al. (2000) and Barad (2007).

11. For example in Linköping University (http://www.tema.liu.se/tema-g/Posthuman/posthumanities-hub?l=en) and in Uppsala University (http://www.genna.gender.uu.se).

12. Helga Nowotny, one of the editors of the collection, is a founding member of the European Research Council (ERC), the major European research funding organization, and has worked as its president since 2010.

13. Nowotny, 'The Potential of Transdisciplinarity' (http://helga-nowotny.eu/downloads/helga_nowotny_b59.pdf; accessed 27 February 2013).

14. For example, AtGender, the academic organization which promotes academic gender studies and the dissemination of the knowledge it produces, includes in its mission statement the objective: 'To foster exchange and cooperation between the academic community and women's organisations, women's documentation centres and libraries, policymakers and NGOs in the field of women's rights, gender equality and diversity, and ambassadors for diversity in profit and non-profit organisations' (http://www.atgender.eu/index.php/atgendermenu/mission; accessed 25 February 2013).

15. The others were François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye and Dominique Lecourt.

16. See: http://www.ciph.org (accessed 1 March 2013).

17. This point is echoed in the title of Scott's collection on gender studies, in which Rooney's article was reprinted: *Critical Edge*.

18. The full claim, with respect to the relationship of the Collège to philosophy traditionally understood, is as follows: 'What is being sought now is perhaps a different philosophical style and a different relation of philosophical language to other discourse (a more horizontal relation, without hierarchy, without radical or fundamental recentering, without architectonics, and without imperative totalizations). Will this still be philosophical style? Will philosophy survive the test of these new fields of knowledge, this new topology of limits? This will be the test and the very question of the Collège.'

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Temporal Drag: Transdisciplinarity and the 'Case' of Psychosocial Studies

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Abstract
Psychosocial studies is a putatively 'new' or emerging field concerned with the irreducible relation between psychic and social life. Genealogically, it attempts to re-suture a tentative relation between mind and social world, individual and mass, internality and externality, norm and subject, and the human and non-human, through gathering up and re-animating largely forgotten debates that have played out across a range of other disciplinary spaces. If, as I argue, the central tenets, concepts and questions for psychosocial studies emerge out of a re-appropriation of what have become anachronistic or 'useless' concepts in other fields – 'the unconscious', for instance, in the discipline of psychology – then we need to think about transdisciplinarity not just in spatial terms (that is, in terms of the movement across disciplinary borders) but also in temporal terms. This may involve engaging with theoretical 'embarrassments', one of which – the notion of 'psychic reality' – I explore here.

Keywords
psychic reality, psychoanalysis, psychosocial studies, transdisciplinarity

Trans-

1. A prefix occurring in loanwords from Latin (transcend; transfix); on this model used with the meanings "across,""beyond," "through," "changing thoroughly," "transverse," in combination with elements of any origin: transisthmian; trans-Siberian; transempirical; transvalue.
2. Chemistry. A prefix denoting a geometric isomer having a pair of identical atoms or groups on the opposite sides of two atoms linked by a double bond. Compare cis-.
3. Astronomy. A prefix denoting something farther from the sun (than a given planet): trans-Martian; trans-Neptunian.

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Origin: < Latin, combining form of trāns (adv. and preposition) across, beyond, through.

<div align="right">(Collins English Dictionary, 2009)</div>

I write from a small department, based in one of the University of London colleges, which goes by the name of psychosocial studies. It is not immediately obvious what this department deals with. The name suggests that it could be a department of social psychology, concerned with the mutually constitutive arenas of individual behaviour and social environment. It could equally be a department of sociology that draws, perhaps, on the insights of psychoanalysis, or on the turn to affect and emotion in the humanities to 'thicken' understandings of the relation between individual and society that take us beyond more traditional concerns with material base and ideological superstructure. Given that the list of programmes offered includes a variety of psychoanalytically-orientated clinical trainings alongside its critical academic offerings, it could even be mistaken for a department concerned with bio-psycho-social models of mental health; models that seek, for instance, to explain the relations between social inequalities, health inequalities and mental health diagnosis, or to explain how a nexus of neuro-chemical, psychological and social forces might articulate patterns in child development, including the development of psychological disorders. In fact, though, the self-description of the department on the university website attempts to distance itself from either a social approach to psychology or a psychological approach to sociology and makes little mention of neuroscience, on the grounds that these approaches tend to bracket the prior ontological question of what the 'individual', 'social' or 'biological' might refer to, leaving these terms assumed rather than questioned, and sealed off from traditions of thought that have put the critique of these categories at the centre of their concerns.

Instead, the claims are for something else – for a dialogue with the various post-structuralist traditions that eschew an a priori distinction between psyche and social. These traditions pursue ontological questions concerning the formation, potentials and limits of such categories, with a commitment to understanding how each might be produced with and through the other, and how there simply is no domain we call 'the psyche' that is not already premised on what is appealed to by the term 'social', and vice versa. In neither jettisoning a human subject who comes to have a sense of interiority, however mistaken this sense is, nor letting up on the critical practices available for understanding sociality in its most contingent and deterritorialized forms, the department appears to be trying to hold together and understand our tenacious attachments and deep ambivalences to certain social and political formations, whilst also offering an account of their maintenance and production. The list of departmental research interests reveals common concerns with the social and political sphere,[1] but also gathers together

many terms recognizable from classic texts in the humanities and social sciences (what is generically termed 'theory'), such as desire, subjectivity, melancholia, alterity, fantasy, biopolitics, identification, ambivalence, affect, relational ethics, ecology, actor-networks, objects, and, of course, inter, multi and transdisciplinarity. Some of these terms have classical psychoanalytic roots, but have been reworked as modes of social critique in the traditions of critical theory, post-colonial studies, Lacanian psychoanalysis, feminism and queer theories, Foucaultian discursive analysis and schizoanalysis. I know the website well, as I wrote parts of it, and am continually troubled by our collective failures to delineate clearly the concerns, parameters, research focus, and potential limits of this emerging non-disciplinary space.

To describe an emerging discipline as non-disciplinary, and to imagine this non-disciplinarity as a 'space' is itself a kind of sleight of hand, a slippage that is perhaps motivated by resistance to enclosures, borders, edges and limits, and the concomitant ossification of thinking, that have come to characterize powerful mainstream debates in the 'master' disciplines of psychology and sociology – debates that tend to maintain a distinction between psychological and social life. Whilst there is always a question as to whether the institutionalization of such an emergent 'non-discipline' blunts the political edge of the terrain from which it emerges, the appeal to the non-disciplinary is perhaps a rather romantic attempt to side with the marginal, fluid and nomadic practice of thinking *across* (or even hovering *above*), rather than *between*, pre-existing disciplines. It might even be an appeal to the perpetual motion of critique itself, a commitment to unsettle as soon as one settles, to deliberately look for the place where a field meets its breaking points and therefore faces its contingencies, and to reflexively reposition oneself wherever a new liminal space opens up.

However, I am not sure that this will really do. Whether we like it or not, the 'psychosocial' is weighed down by a 'temporal drag', to borrow Elizabeth Freeman's term (Freeman, 2011); weighed down by debates that have taken place in a host of disciplines in both their normative and emancipatory forms that do anchor this emerging discipline 'somewhere', even if we are not quite sure where that somewhere is. I am not convinced that psychosocial studies can escape so easily the genealogies of the relation between psychic reality and social antagonisms that it seeks to understand in its appeal to the nomadism of the non-disciplinary, and that continue to be debated within traditional disciplinary domains.

My aim in this article, then, is to approach the psychosocial as a 'case' – a kind of test case perhaps – for thinking about how transdisciplinary practices might operate in their temporal dimensions, pursuing this notion of temporal drag, and what drags a discipline back to 'out of date' debates or concepts, despite its desire to be free of them. If the

central tenets, concepts and questions for psychosocial studies emerge
out of a re-appropriation of what have become anachronistic or 'useless'
concepts in other fields – I'm thinking here of 'society' for sociology, or
'the unconscious' for psychology, or even 'hysteria' for psychoanalysis,
all of which are routinely referred to as outmoded, superseded, or simply
medically discredited – then we need to think about transdisciplinarity
not just in spatial terms (that is, in terms of the movement across discip-
linary borders) but also in temporal terms. My claim is that tracing the
connections between different ways of thinking about psychic and social
relations that are the objects of this discipline's study might involve
engaging with the ways in which we *cannot* rid ourselves of concepts
and terms that themselves emerge out of specifically located disciplinary
debates and yet perhaps do not come to full effect until after the event of
their emergence. This would include tracking the ways that these super-
seded or discredited concepts come to have efficacy through a kind of
delayed action reminiscent of après-coup.[2] Rather than viewing
psychosocial studies as interdisciplinary in the sense of creating a new
dialogue, say, between queer studies and affect studies (i.e. transdisciplin-
ary in the sense of the production of categories that move across both
disciplines and yet remain distinct from them), I want to argue for psy-
chosocial studies as an opportunity for anachronistic concepts (ones that
have come to be sensed as 'embarrassments' in contemporary theory) to
be reanimated, and where 'old' and 'new' ideas speak to one another
contemporaneously in generative ways.

In the first part of the article I look in more detail at how 'trans-' can
operate as a temporal phenomenon. In the second part I trace out what
might have happened to a key 'embarrassment' in psychoanalytic theory:
the notion of 'psychic reality'. I want to suggest, with Michel Serres, that
this idea, which was 'of its time', and is now 'out of its time', and thereby
'wrong' in that double sense that the contemporary suggests, resurfaces
in the work of Judith Butler through a particular contiguity, or 'folding'
that she performs between the work of Freud and Foucault, which allows
the former gains of the concept of psychic reality to become active again.
Although my reading of Butler is well rehearsed and may offer nothing
new to the substantial literature on her work, I use it simply as an
example of a kind of 'psychosocial study' that I hope can act as a general
condition, a 'case' of the transdisciplinarity of 'psychosocial studies'.
Where Freud's original concept opened the question of how a disturbing
or traumatic external event at the centre of psychic life gets reconsidered
as a form of fantasy-taken-as-real, Butler's elaboration of the psychic life
of power draws Freud into an uneasy but productive tension with
Foucault to understand the very production of a distinction between
psychic and social life. Rather than psychic reality being seen to have
been surpassed, in what I am calling Butler's psychosocial reading it
becomes available again for contemporary thought, not to describe a

mode of fantasy but for an account of the very potential of the malleability of norms, and hence for social change. As we shift from a discussion of reality to one of power, or, in other terms, from a distinction between the law to more socially mutable norms, so paradoxically a key area of psychoanalytic thought that has fallen into disrepair becomes available retroactively, gathered into this new psychosocial disciplinary domain. It is the process of gathering, as a transdisciplinary practice, that I primarily wish to elucidate.

'Trans-'

One particular question that hovers over psychosocial studies is whether it is in fact a branch of psychoanalytic studies, which operates as its 'master' discourse. I certainly think a cartography of psychosocial studies would include a loosely-termed 'psychoanalytic-Marxist' tradition that might include some of the work of early critical theorists such as Wilhelm Reich, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Eric Fromm, as well as the developments of Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Cornelius Castoriadis and Alain Badiou.[3] Certainly psychosocial studies might retrospectively read these authors as engaged with the wholesale deconstruction of a priori categories such as 'individual', 'society' or 'collective', where the radical decentring of the subject in psychoanalysis could be aligned with various accounts of the tensions between power and resistance in a bid to understand better the failure of social change. If we were to trace other psychoanalytic social theories that might 'govern' psychosocial studies, we might turn to the long feminist psychoanalytic trajectory of which the work of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin and Jacqueline Rose are examples; the engagements between psychoanalysis and philosophy exemplified in the work of Jacques Derrida;[4] and the history of engagements between psychoanalysis and post-colonial theory that takes the work of Frantz Fanon as its starting point and then develops in the texts of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Ranjana Khanna, Derek Hook and Gail Lewis,[5] to name a few. Or again, we could approach the question of the place of psychoanalysis in psychosocial studies through tracing the ways that key psychoanalytic concepts such as melancholia, fantasy, desire, guilt, and identification have been taken up and productively reworked as ways of understanding identity, subjectivity, and ethics.

However, there are elements of the field that do not work with a psychoanalytic frame at all, or actively reject a version of Freudianism, and yet might still be rendered 'psychosocial' in the particular ways that they draw on phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and especially discursive theory, for accounts of subjectivity that have been taken up in a dialogue with critical psychology. These elements would include the

particularly influential theories of affect and emotion aligned with the work of Deleuze and Guattari and developed by Brian Massumi, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti and Sara Ahmed, or the cultural theory of Lauren Berlant with her keen eye for the ways intimate life operates in public spheres, where affect is released from the kind of subject that possesses interiority, and suggests a 'psychic' life turned inside out, exteriorized, a surface exemplified as a body without organs.[6] We could also include in this trajectory a renewed interest in the category of 'experience' through the work of A.N. Whitehead, and we could add to this cartography the possibilities for psychosocial readings of recent work on materiality, objects, ecology, vibrancy, and virtuality. These are broadly perspectives that trouble distinctions between subjects and objects, either drawing our attention to the social lives of human and non-human actors, or insisting that 'things' do not precede their inter-action with one another, but emerge through particular inter- (or in Karen Barad's words intra-) actions (Barad, 2007). By shifting atten-tion to assemblage and dispersal, psychosocial studies becomes not just the study of the relation between the psychoanalytic decentred self and the possibilities for social and political change, but how the material-discursive phenomena that we cluster under 'psyche' and those under 'social' come to mutually constitute and produce one another.

This already places us in some kind of intensive interdisciplinary domain which begs the question as to whether psychosocial studies might be better described as a set of transdisciplinary practices that allow movement across different traditions of thought without having to fully belong anywhere. The discussions in this issue have been prompted by a distinction drawn between inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinarity whereby inter- and multi-disciplinary practices would include those where specific knowledges, concepts and methods are main-tained, and a certain cross-fertilization is sought so as to elucidate better a given phenomenon or problem (see the articles by Osborne and Sandford, 2015). The 'trans' describes something distinct from this, sug-gesting there are practices, objects, methods, concepts and knowledges that do not firmly belong within one disciplinary field or another, but move amongst them, somehow beyond the reach of disciplinarity. Unlike the prefix 'inter-', which retains a certain claustrophobia, signalling the situation of betweenness or amongness, trans- seems to gesture towards *the great outdoors*. We could say that a certain freedom accompanies whatever the prefix trans- attaches itself to, suggesting that a transdisci-plinary concept, text, practice or method might be free to roam, inserting itself like a foreign entity within an otherwise homogeneous field, much like the genetic meaning of the term 'transformation'. Despite trans-being used in chemistry to describe a radical *separation* (in the definition above the two atoms linked by a double bond hold the pair of identical atoms in opposition, so that their relationship is one constituted by a

distance across an atomic terrain), trans- may better evoke that other chemical example, the free radical. Here an atom has an open electronic shell, making free radicals chemically promiscuous with others, and also with themselves, highly reactive, transformational. The bonds are suggestively described as 'dangling', somehow available for polymerization as they move. So, as a concept departs from one disciplinary domain and inserts itself in another, it may both underscore the distinction between those domains, whilst at the same time, through its anomalous presence, bring about some kind of change or re-formation.[7]

As I have tried to suggest, the idea that the psychosocial may operate as a transdisciplinary practice is certainly appealing, especially if trans- has something to do with a kind of freedom of movement that allows untethered concepts, texts, ideas, objects, practices or methods to cross-disciplinary domains, with possibilities for transformation that accompany the anomalous when it pops up in the realm of the same. However, I have also suggested that such movement may not be as untethered as we wish, and that we are never free of the history of both normative and emancipatory elements of field formation. This shifts our attention to how transdisciplinary practices may operate in relation to *time* – how they sediment over time, how they themselves operate as temporal entities, and how we may trace the ways they come, over time, to appear as knowledge without recourse to disciplinary traditions that by definition do not apply. Thinking about transdisciplinarity not just in spatial terms but in spatio-temporal terms we can begin to think about how concepts or methods may only become apparent, or useful, or indeed reach the limit of their usefulness, when they are taken up at particular historical junctures, or when other concepts also become available, allowing them to perform their transformational work.

The 'Case' of Psychosocial Studies: Judgement, Melancholia and Temporal Folding

To think about the 'case' of the psychosocial in a wider discussion about transdisciplinarity is to echo Lauren Berlant's understanding of case as *genre* (Berlant, 2007). For Berlant, the case is something that takes shape in many different professional and life scenes – psychoanalysis and law, of course, but also in the academy, in aesthetic forms like documentary, detective stories, and fictional autobiography, and life scenes like chat shows or blogs. For Berlant, the case represents a particular way in which the singular is folded into the general, in which singularity and its relation to generality is managed, and most importantly *judged*. Indeed, in all these genres, what matters is the idiom of judgement: cases are 'problem-events' that have 'animated some kind of judgment' (Berlant, 2011). The case of psychosocial studies, for instance, may animate a judgement on how transdisciplinary practices work across and through temporal

folding, as well as a more internal judgement that is constantly taking place, that has to do with assessing the usefulness of concepts, texts, critical operations and research practices that have been otherwise rendered useless, or simply wrong in contemporary disciplinary spaces. If psychosocial studies is a critical transdisciplinary practice, then its critique is not so much about what the disciplines of psychology and sociology 'lack', and that psychosocial studies 'fills', but in part to do with the deliberate reappraisal of what is no longer seen as efficacious. This is not to suggest that this is the only way that psychosocial studies proceeds. Psychosocial researchers do, of course, produce new and hybrid concepts all the time, suggest new ways of approaching a range of social problems, and develop new and innovative approaches to research methodologies that are making a major contribution to qualitative research in the social sciences (e.g. Roseneil, 2012; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). But I would contend that even these new developments require a constant process of 'judgement' about former, now obsolete texts, concepts, and objects within the field, a process that we cannot escape by easy reference to 'trans'.

This argument concerning temporal drag is similar to those discussions in which the idea of melancholia has been used to think through the process of field formation that refuses to let go of its antecedents, and cannot rid itself of 'originary' texts despite its desires for non-disciplinarity. Ranjana Khanna (2006) suggests melancholia as a way of understanding the formation of post-colonial studies, for instance, and Judith Butler's work on melancholic gender identifications could be seen as suggestive for the whole field of gender and sexuality studies (Butler, 1993). Khanna distinguishes between affect and affectation in thinking melancholia in relation to the postcolonial field. Melancholia as affectation is a result of the realization that there is always a complicity between colonialism and canon formation which may lead a field to collapse in ineffective immobility and guilt on the part of the academics located in privileged first world institutions, as well as a melancholic relation to the crisis of representational politics. Melancholia as affect, or what she calls the 'work of melancholia', in contrast to affectation, is something Khanna uses to understand the productive and future-orientated aspects of the critical agency that is a by-product of the relation between ego and lost objects in Freud's conceptualization of melancholia. Melancholia refers to the time of persistence – the work of not letting the lost object go, of retaining an attachment over time even when that attachment pulls one back into the past, as well as projecting into the future in the form of critical agency. There certainly is a way that psychosocial studies, like the field of the postcolonial, is melancholic in affect. It also does not know what it holds on to (what, after all, are its founding texts, and what precisely are its objects and its ideals?), and employs a similar critical agency to

deconstruct such linear formations and its own tendencies to an uncritical retrenchment to the world.

However, I think this misses an aspect of psychosocial studies that has to deal with the affect not just of guilt, but also of *embarrassment*. Can we really, seriously, talk about the 'psyche' for instance, or even the 'subject' now that the humanities, through a widespread uptake of a Deleuzian sensibility and the recent interest in objects and materiality, has suggested that we dispense with objects and subjects and embrace the notion that what we have is 'various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations' (Bennett, 2004: 354),[8] a 'sticky web of connections', as Jane Bennett puts it, an ecology rather than a psychosocial field? In *Time Binds*, Elizabeth Freeman explores this notion of the embarrassment of former political positions or attachments to certain ideas. Punning on the drag of time past, drag as gendered performance, and the drag as a big bore, she reminds us of the 'bind' that lesbians committed to feminism, for instance, find themselves in, in the wake of the transformations that queer studies brought to feminist theory in the early 1990s. As she comments, 'the lesbian feminist seems cast as the big drag. Even to entertain lesbian feminist ideas seems to somehow inexorably hearken back to essentialised bodies, normative visions of women's sexuality, and single-issue identity politics that exclude people of colour, the working class, and the transgendered' (Freeman, 2011: 62). And yet many of the political interventions made by lesbian feminists speak to the now in interesting and important ways. In a similar vein, Kathi Weekes (2011), Stella Sandford (2011) and Mandy Merck and Stella Sandford (2010), have all done fascinating recent work on reappraising the contributions made by Marxist feminist thought (another embarrassment, let's face it) to contemporary debates about post-work, changing gendered patterns of labour, and what is emerging as a 'feminist' commons.

The Baker's Dough

Before proceeding any further, I therefore want to think about how we might understand the ways that earlier, and in some senses obsolete, ideas and concepts might become contemporary, how they might make trouble in the form of an embarrassment, and how they might address the particular kinds of social concerns about which psychosocial studies might want to speak. Rather than turning to melancholia, I want to think about this through the work of Michel Serres, someone who has worked across culture, science and philosophy, and who perhaps more than anyone proposes a transdisciplinary approach to understanding knowledge, critique, time, and space. One of Serres's favoured figurations, for instance, is Hermes – literally translated as 'transport', the figure who traverses, 'exports and imports' (Serres and Latour, 1995: 66) in the name of invention. Neither inter-disciplinarity nor multi-disciplinarity quite

captures what Serres proposes through the figure of Hermes. In his well-known series of conversations with Bruno Latour he states:

> Have you noticed the popularity among scientists of the word *inter-face* – which supposes that the junction between two sciences or two concepts is perfectly under control, or seamless, and poses no problems? On the contrary, I believe that these spaces between are more complicated than one thinks. This is why I have compared them to the Northwest Passage [in *Hermès V. Le Passage du Nord-Ouest*], with shores, islands, and fractal ice floes. (Serres and Latour, 1995: 70)

Serres talks of the 'field of comparativism', not so much a moving between established disciplinary areas of thought (say, the sciences and the humanities) but creating that very passage in the first place – closer to what we are exploring here as transdisciplinarity in its transformational potential. Though the metaphor is spatial, resting on his interest in topology (the mathematical study of continuity and connectivity which describes the special properties of objects that do not tear or break, but whose morphology persists under homeomorphic deformation), Serres develops a related notion of time that is centrally concerned with the relationship between contemporaneity and superseded or outmoded modes of thought which he elaborates through various figurations. These include the baker kneading dough (Serres, 1991), and the crumpling and folding of a handkerchief, noting the ways that temporal folding produces new contiguities, proximities and confluences of thought, much like the ways apparently widely separated points on a handkerchief may be drawn together into adjacency (Serres and Latour, 1995: 60–1). Serres invites us to understand that time is chaotic in a precise sense:

> Time does not always flow according to a line . . . nor according to a plan but, rather, according to an extraordinarily complex mixture, as though it reflected stopping points, ruptures, deep wells, chimneys of thunderous acceleration, rendings, gaps – all sown at random at least in a visible disorder. Thus, the development of history truly resembles what chaos theory describes . . . things that are very close can exist in culture, but the line makes them appear very distant from one another. Or, on the other hand, that there are things that seem very close that, in fact, are very distant from one another. (Serres and Latour, 1995: 57)

Time does not flow as much as 'percolates' (Serres and Latour, 1995: 58), flowing, that is, in a turbulent manner. Steven Connor has written that

because topology is concerned with what remains invariant as a result of transformation, 'it may be thought of as geometry plus time' (Connor, 2004). And one of the most important of Serres's applications of topological thought is to thinking about history. In place of the line of history (something Serres identifies as inherently violent), he proposes time understood in terms of dynamic volumes, or topologies. Time is seen as a river or flame, forking, branching, slewing, slowing, rolling back on itself. Connor writes: 'these structures involve apprehending time as what David Bohm (1980) called an "implicate order", as a complex volume that folds over on itself, and in the process does not merely transform in time, but itself gathers up and releases time, as though time were like the intricately folded structure of a protein' (Connor, 2004). The discussion of baker's dough in *Rome* (Serres, 1991) exemplifies this:

> The system grows old without letting time escape; it garners age – the new emblems are caught up and subsumed by old ones; the baker molds memory . . . Time enters into the dough, a prisoner of its folds, a shadow of its folding over. (Serres, 1991: 81)

For Serres, the notion of the contemporary captures the doubleness of someone thinking in radically new ways in their own times, and through that newness, through the ways that those ideas are out of time with their own era, they are available for 'contemporary' thought.

Serres therefore puts together two issues of concern here. The first is his deliberate resurrection of dead texts, and the problems with repudiating the past as bygone and the present as authentic when time is understood as linear. From a linear perspective 'our time' is always conceived of as the cutting edge, and in this way 'we' are always right. In doing so, we condemn what we think of as false to being 'out-of-date' or 'obsolete', belonging to an earlier time, and thereby expel ideas, modes of thought, practices, concepts from the now. Serres argues for a suspension of judgement about what is 'right', and an attention to what remains conserved, sometimes quite close to our own era, including counting the cultural losses that correspond to the gains of contemporary scientific discovery. The second has to do with interdisciplinarity. Serres argues that as science becomes our only mode of contemporary discovery, so the insights of literature, and the humanities more generally, become by definition outmoded, 'wrong', along with all their sedimented gains. The humanities can only then operate according to historicism, dealing with the remains of the past, whereas the sciences completely cancel out their past, overturning it with each new advance. In this way the problem of the relation between different viable disciplines and the problem of time are one and the same.

Psychic Reality and the Psychic Life of Power

Can we talk, then, about 'psychic' life? I've suggested above that references to the 'psyche' may show up as a kind of embarrassment in contemporary theory. It goes against the grain of mainstream psychological discourse where 'psyche' gave way some time ago to 'mental' and now simply to 'neuro', as the brain, albeit conceived of as plastic, responsive, porous and in some ways relational, has become *the* psychological subject. The notion of a psychic life is tinged with something unsavoury, perhaps a leftover connection with the 19th-century interest in telepathy and the occult, linked historically in Britain to the Society for Psychical Research, with which Freud had some connection (Luckhurst, 2002; Frosh, 2013).

Not only is it anachronistic to refer to psychic life, but in particular the notion of 'psychic reality' has pretty much collapsed as a useful category in some traditions of psychoanalytic thinking. In a recent book, Marion Oliner (2012) suggests that a two-sided response to 'reality' in psychoanalytic thinking has developed over the decades. On the one hand, psychoanalysis recognizes a group of patients who have experienced severe trauma, for whom reality has pressed in so forcefully that they remain passive to the enormity of this experience. Traumatic experiences, however, require assimilation over time as they prompt a range of psychic 'solutions', often including unconscious omnipotence in relation to survival. Internal conflicts, in other words, are understood in relation to the processes of assimilating trauma. On the other hand, there is another group of patients who have failed solutions to childhood internal conflict, and who could be said to be active agents in their suffering. Here concerns with alterity, intersubjectivity, and figurability come to the fore, as a way to understand how we come to accept that the world has its own independent existence beyond the machinations of primary narcissism or omnipotence. Oliner argues that Freud's original notion of self-preservation was initially enough to understand why one comes to deal with 'reality', but Freud's own turn towards psychic reality has led to a kind of ossification of the dual positions she lays out, and a stagnation of theoretical developments on how psychoanalysis conceptualizes the relation between 'inside and out'. In fact the American psychoanalyst Jacob Arlow, back in 1985, also noted this stagnation, and declared psychic reality dead: 'Let me begin by saying that I consider the term psychic reality anachronic. It belongs to an earlier period of psychoanalysis. Its continued use in present-day psychoanalytic conceptualization is unwarranted' (Arlow, 1985: 521).

For Arlow, psychic reality is always a recollection of some kind involving an 'event', but this event is a mixture of fact and fantasy, memory and perception. How the recollection of such psychic events emerges in analysis, and what is done with them, is entirely based, he claims, on the

orientation of the analyst. Given the multitude of orientations, we end up with a multitude of psychic realities, rendering the concept, in his view, useless:

> Whether one is a classical Freudian analyst, oriented in terms of childhood traumas of abandonment, loss of love, castration anxiety, oedipal defeat or penis envy, or a Kleinian tracing out the vicissitudes of the depressive and paranoid positions, or an object-relations theorist, concentrating on the deleterious effects of an environment that is not a safe, protective barrier, or a self-psychologist, searching out the failures of empathic communication and mirroring, or an attachment theorist eyeing the evidence of an unstable, unreassuring mother who cannot supply the protective holding environment – each one will orient himself differently towards the patient's productions, selectively attending and responding to those elements that are consonant with his theory of pathogenesis. Each will find a different psychic reality in keeping with the favoured view of what process or events they believe caused neurotic illness and character deformation. Each one will find in his or her patient a different vision of psychic reality, i.e. a different version of the nature of the unconscious elements in the patient's mind. Each will envision psychic reality in keeping with the favoured theory of pathogenesis. Under the circumstances, therefore, the concept of psychic reality furnishes no common ground for discourse. It has become an anachronism. (Arlow, 1996: 664)

But what might it mean, we should perhaps ask, for psychic reality, an absolutely central concept in psychoanalysis, to have become anachronistic in this way, even within the discipline where it originated, and what might have happened to it, as it has migrated beyond the clinical field? This is just the kind of transdisciplinary concept that psychosocial studies might want to make use of, gesturing as it does towards internal mental processes, and a simultaneous engagement with something excessive to psychic life, rendered here as 'reality'. The problem, it appears, is not just one of emphasis – either on the trace of a core reality within our fantasy life, or on the limitations of psychical operations that give rise to forms of psychical reality – but of 'going astray' theoretically, a proliferation of directions that theory has taken and a dissipation of understanding. The notion that reality itself might be multiple, as Bruno Latour would hold, is not considered by Arlow. Multiplicity leads to fragmentation leads to anachronism.

Although psychic reality may have been expelled from the American scene, this is not quite the case elsewhere. The contention of the final section of this article is that by the time Judith Butler comes to the notion

of the psyche in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler, 1997), psychic reality has indeed become useless, but is reanimated through a particular dialogue she sets up in relation to the work of Foucault. However, the ground of Butler's reading of the relation between power and psychic life is a certain rendition of psychic reality in the work of both Lacan and Laplanche that conceptualizes a form reality takes, beyond the dualism of interiority and externality, which remains active in psychoanalytic theorizing beyond this dissipation. This involves the conceptualization of psychic reality as a third term, an idea that we could say remains rather latent in more mainstream psychoanalytic thought until its later reanimation in psychoanalysis 'beyond the clinic'.

Freud and the Third

In brief, psychic reality first appears in Freud's early paper on 'Hysterical Paralyses' (1893), where he begins to discuss how the 'lesion' that he believes is associated with hysteria is an alteration of a thought or an idea.[8] Freud develops this idea in *A Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), where he makes an initial distinction between 'thought reality' and 'external reality' and in the work on hysteria with Joseph Breuer in 1895, before he famously (and infamously) abandoned his 'seduction theory' in 1897 in favour of a theory of unconscious infantile fantasy. Hysteria, in this early work, was understood to arise in relation to painful or traumatic 'real' events, the memory of which was repressed, turned away from the conscious mind, and yet dynamically active in creating disturbances elsewhere. Hysterical symptoms formed when this repression broke down, the symptom acting as an alternative solution to keeping these memories from consciousness. By 1906, by way of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, Freud had revised his position on the nature of the events that cause the production of hysterical symptoms, shifting the emphasis from what we could call the materiality of sexual trauma to the psychic realm of fantasy and unconscious wish, whereby memories are not the result of an event simply inflicted from the outside but, as Lawrence Friedman has evocatively put it, are 'structured by preference' (Friedman, 1995). Freud, however, resisted a simple distinction in which the internal world now triumphed over the external, offering a shifting dynamic interaction between memory, perception, fantasy and the pressure of the drive or wish in a field that *could* involve material trauma (he never repudiated the existence of sexual trauma in some of his patients), but now decentralized in relation to unconscious fantasy. As Laplanche and Pontalis put it:

> It is right to emphasise at this point, however, that the expression 'psychical reality' itself is not simply synonymous with 'internal world', 'psychological domain', etc. If taken in the most basic

sense that it has for Freud, this expression denotes a nucleus within that domain which is heterogeneous and resistant and which is alone in being truly 'real' as compared with the majority of psychical phenomena. (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988 [1973]: 316)

That nucleus that is truly 'real' is what Lacan would go on to name the Real, the aspect of the wish that remains impossible, resistant, heterogeneous to the unconscious, extending Freud's claim that 'there are no indications of reality in the unconscious' (Freud, 1897). At the same time, however, Freud saw the unconscious as subsuming all areas of mental life, so that consciousness was simply a small part of this wider 'psychical reality', claiming paradoxically:

The unconscious is the true psychical reality; in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs. (Freud, 1900: vol. 4, p. 613)

If both internal and external worlds remain partial in our apprehension of them, then there is some aspect of mental and social life that remains distinct from both material reality and what Laplanche and Pontalis call 'pure psychology' – 'extimate', as Lacan would say. The particular move that Freud makes in relation to hysteria as he shifts from the aetiology of sexual trauma to that of fantasy is that hysterical individuals treat the fantasy which is born of a repressed wish *as if it were real*. A fantasy, once consciously understood as fantasy, has none of the dynamic repressive force of a fantasy thought to be reality, which, though not identical with delusion, induces a range of unconscious psychical effects related to the original wish, such as guilt, envy, anxiety, and identification. In other words, Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory was not simply about replacing real events with fantasies, but about embedding the difficulty with making a distinction between reality and fantasy as a core struggle in neurotic psychic life. In deluded states, if we follow Lacan, there is no such struggle, as the law that allows a distinction between reality and fantasy to be maintained is foreclosed, so that there is little awareness that fantasy and reality have not coincided. What has been internally abolished 'returns from without' and can only appear in the Real, as the entire area of symbolic functioning has been foreclosed. In hysteria, the analysand knows the difference between fantasy and reality, but nevertheless treats fantasy as if it were real. Its *reality* describes the effects of being taken as real – the fantasy's capacity to produce the 'real' psychic processes of guilt, envy, identification and so on.

Where Lacan follows Freud in talking about an impossible Real – traumatic, unrepresentable, irreducible – Jean Laplanche goes in a

different direction. For Laplanche psychic reality is a particular instance in Freud's thought in which the vector that usually moves from internality outwards is radically reversed. Although psychoanalysis makes what he describes as 'ridiculous efforts to reconstruct the outside, objectivity, on the basis of the inside' in such a way as to be worthy of the great idealist philosophies, there is a germ of a break with this Ptolemaic, self-centred position in Freud's own writing (Laplanche, 1995). This shows up at various moments in Freud's work – in seduction and transference, the superego, persecution and delusion – that bring out an irreducible otherness that gives rise to psychic life. The most important discovery of psychoanalysis for Laplanche is the presence of the 'other thing in me, and of the link between the other thing and the other person' (1995: 663). In focusing on the link, Laplanche provides an account of psychic reality as a third term that resists being co-opted as either a version of internality or externality, and puts their relation as the condition for their emergence – something on which Butler later builds.

The link takes the form of a message between adult and child that comes too early for the child to decode. Sexual in its intent, the message is a form of seduction, and not simply a seduction fantasy on the part of the child: '"Psychic reality" is not created by me; it is invasive. In this domain of the sexual, there is too much reality at the beginning' (Laplanche, 1995: 680). However, it is not the content of the message that matters but the irreducibility of the fact of communication (Laplanche, 1995: 665). This third domain of reality then, that is neither the materiality of the gesture made by an adult that we could ascertain as 'abuse', nor the pure psychology of either the protagonist or victim, is simply the reality of a message that passes from adult to child. Because the message is enigmatic and cannot deliver its content in a straightforward manner, it both fails and succeeds at one and the same time (Laplanche, 1995: 665). For example, Freud, Laplanche tells us, makes an enormous effort to manufacture the primal scene from just two ingredients – perceptual reality, on the one hand, and the child's fantasy, on the other. But the reality that is not material but also not purely subjective has to do with the adult *proffering* of the scene, a kind of unconscious intent on the part of the adults, an offering, indeed a seduction, through an invitation to look, to witness, to receive a message, regardless of what actually takes place. In this sense trauma is embedded in the proffering, as it is here that the adult imposes their enigmas, which are addressed to the child. It is not just that adult sexuality is focused towards other adults that the child witnesses and/or fantasizes about, but it is *aimed also at the child*. Laplanche triangulates the primal scene not simply in the child's mind but in the reality of the adult's enigmatic message to the child at the same time as being caught up in the dyadic sexual relation with a third. The message says something like: 'I am showing you – or letting you

see – something which, by definition, you cannot understand, and in which you cannot take part' (Laplanche, 1995: 666).

The 'Soul' and the Psyche

The notion of psychic reality as a third reality, irreducible not only in the sense of the Lacanian Real, but in the sense that Laplanche offers us, of something sexual and yet completely impossible to decode that invades us from the other, provides a bridge in Butler's work between Freud and Foucault. A message, after all, is always social, not a form of telepathy in which an adult psychic state is passed to a child. Crucially, Laplanche's rendition of psychic reality opens the way for it to be understood to change the social norm, not just the other way round, and it is this possibility that Butler pursues in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). In what we could claim as a foundational text for psychosocial studies, Butler creates a 'new passage' out of her reading of Freud and Foucault, to offer us an account of a tenuous, always strained, but productive relation between psychic and social spheres. This productivity is not just about what may be produced as excessive to these categories, but the process by which the border between internality and externality is itself produced. Butler deliberately holds on to a notion of the psyche, a category neither identical with the subject nor with Foucault's 'soul' (Foucault, 1975), but some kind of gesture towards interiority that is at the same time utterly predicated on the sociality of its production. Through her reading of Freud and Foucault together, I suggest she offers us a way of circumventing the 'embarrassment' of the conjunction 'psychic reality', and enacts a temporal fold, in the sense that Serres intends, allowing Freud's term to become available in a contemporary scene as a theoretical resource through her careful reading of melancholia alongside an analytics of power. In this sense Butler's work is exemplary of a temporal transdisciplinary practice in a psychosocial register. What I offer here is a brief reminder of the work Butler does in *The Psychic Life of Power* to highlight a particular usage of the terms 'psyche' and 'social' that allows us to access Freud's earlier work on psychic reality in contemporary ways.

From a position that is concordant with both Foucault and Lacan, Butler begins with a notion of the subject as a placeholder, created through linguistic operations that predate us and that we did not choose, and yet on which we depend for our intelligibility and agency. However, discourse understood in a Foucaultian sense of the dispositif[9] does not free us from the problem of attachment, or desire for subjection. Once power is no longer thought of as pressing down on the subject from the outside but, as productive of the subject, then at best we will have an ambiguous relation to power, both desiring and resisting it at once. For Butler this means we must account for our *desire for* subjection, i.e. for

its *psychic form*. Moving away from the subject caught in a nexus of external power, whose response to that power emanates from somewhere 'within', Butler addresses the problem of how that 'within' comes into operation in relation to power. If she learns from Foucault that power enunciates the subject and that she cannot therefore posit a subject on whom power operates, she is reliant on a figure or trope of 'turning' rather than resisting, for understanding how power inaugurates the subject. 'Trope', the use of figurative language, itself both means, and operates as, a kind of turning, so this becomes a perfect vehicle for Butler, picking up on how the trope of turning is itself a kind of 'turn on turning', or a turn that turns in on itself. Where an Althusserian account of interpellation demonstrates how the subject is produced through the address of state authority and suggests that a psychic operation, conscience, is already in operation with the regulatory norm, Butler highlights how it is the formation of the psychic operation (the turn of turning) itself for which we need to account. Butler therefore attempts to work the groove *between* Freud and Foucault – Freud because he deals with a precarious subjectivity that is carved out of internalized attachments to that which we have lost and yet remain dependent on, and Foucault because he provides a productive account of power.

Butler's key question concerns process, and indeed temporality in the form of repetition or iteration is central to her theorizing. How, she wants to know, do social norms become internalized, not just once, but again and again over time, if we have done away with a simple distinction between social norm and interior life? Her answer is that it is the process of internalization that allows that distinction. As internalization (the taking in of the norm) works its ambivalent process, the norm itself takes on different forms as psychic rather than social phenomenon. Through Foucault we know that norms, as internalized social regulatory forces, take over internal life almost totally, so much so that the 'soul' for Foucault becomes a social category. However, Butler argues that 'being psychic, the norm does not merely reinstate social power, it becomes formative and vulnerable in highly specific ways' (Butler, 1997: 21). By vulnerable, she is suggesting 'mutable', hence what she offers us is a way to think about not just resistance but the process of producing changes in conditions of intelligibility. As she reminds us, 'to thwart the injunction to produce a docile body is not the same as dismantling the injunction or changing the terms of subject constitution' (Butler, 1997: 88). Undermining is one thing, and rearticulating the symbolic terms by which subjects are constituted is another.

In order to understand our passionate attachment to the disciplinary regimes that both produce and totalize the subject, Butler mines psychoanalysis for a response to the ontological question of 'who' is there to make attachments prior to subjectivation as subject formation. Here she looks to Freud's account of how the ego paradoxically comes into being

through melancholic processes, through identification with lost objects and lost attachments. It is unnecessary to rehearse Freud's concept of melancholia fully here. What I want to highlight is how, in Butler's hands, melancholia becomes a way for understanding the institution of a distinction between social and psychic life, and that the boundary that, in her terms, 'distributes' the terrain between the two is dependent on mutable social norms. This is a crucial point for psychosocial studies, as Butler offers a way of articulating a *social psyche* that builds on Laplanche's insistence on the constitution of psychic life through an encounter with alterity, but a socially constituted alterity, and therefore one that changes as it becomes psychic.

Briefly, from Freud's 1917 account of melancholia a bond is formed between subject and object followed by a withdrawal of the object. The subject, instead of decathecting and loving a new object, withdraws the libidinal energy that had been caught up in the original attachment into the ego and cannot find anywhere for it to go. This state produces an identification of the ego with the abandoned object: 'I' am, like you, a lost and abandoned object. The loss of the object creates a split in the ego, caught in a dynamic interaction between ego-criticism (a condemning agency) and an ego modified by identification. By the time we get to 'The Ego and the Id' (1923) Freud states: 'The character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes' and that 'it contains the history of those object choices'. Melancholia becomes the generalized condition, as the lost object is taken 'in' to an ego that through that process is built up and formed. The ego is precipitated by loss, 'sheltering', as Butler puts it, the memory trace of that lost love. So, as Lacan also draws out, prior to ego formation there is some kind of traumatic encounter, an encounter that entails both identification and aggression with the other which cannot be given up, and institutes the ego through taking in the remains of that loss. The 'turn' that constitutes psychic life contains both a change in direction and a change in affect – from object to ego, and from love to hate – as the object-taken-in is berated and sadistically attacked by a condemning agency, as well as loved. The failure of the ego to fully take itself as its own love object, as in primary narcissism, creates a sliver of a gap between subject and object, and in doing so internal and external worlds are instituted.

Crucially for Butler, and I would argue for psychosocial studies: 'if the melancholic turn is the mechanism by which the distinction between internal and external worlds is instituted, then melancholia initiates a *variable* boundary between the psychic and the social, a boundary [...] that distributes and regulates the psychic sphere in relation to prevailing norms of social regulation' (Butler, 1997: 171, my emphasis). As the ego is modified through identification with lost objects, social ideals, silences and prohibitions are also taken in. What is denoted as 'object' is actually an already configured social world. The berating agency is not simply

internal. When the melancholic states 'I have lost nothing', this is not just as a psychic bolstering against loss, but a statement that reveals the social forms of power that regulate what losses can and cannot not be grieved, as much of Butler's later work elaborates. 'Conscience' is an internal violence turned in on the self, but it originates in the violence of social norms that regulate the lost object.

Finally, the counter-point to the psychic form that the violence of social norms takes is the political promise that can be understood as part of the melancholic's 'plaint'. Many theorists have commented on the 'spirit of revolt' that Freud writes about in the melancholic, as they attempt to break the bond that they also want to sustain (e.g. Kristeva, 2001; Khanna, 2006). Butler understands melancholia not as an individual pathology but as a condition produced and reproduced through systematic cultural and social exclusions from dominant norms that provide recognition. The condition of melancholia, that is also the generalized condition of ego formation, institutes a boundary that produces and regulates a separation of psychic and social spheres, and in becoming 'psychic' social norms can in their turn be regulated and (re)produced. Whilst the ego cannot escape the incorporation of the violence of non-recognition, at the same time it is in revolt, seeking to break the bond on which its formation depends. Hence, for Butler, we 'work through' social regulation all the while we are constrained by it.

Conclusion

Michel Serres talks of how a system can grow old without letting time escape, and through a process of temporal folding or kneading, unexpected contiguities can be made. He is particularly concerned with the fate of 'dead' texts or ideas, and how quickly they are relegated as 'obsolete'. He urges us to pay attention to what has remained conserved, close to our own era, and deliberately reserves judgement on the insights from previous eras, proposing a kind of waiting, until their usefulness can resurface again through their contiguity to other, more ostensibly 'contemporary' texts and ideas.

The idea that a Foucaultian perspective on power and the norm can surface *within* a psychoanalytic account of the psyche positions these concepts as transdisciplinary. However, what I have tried to do here is not just identify and trace key transdisciplinary concepts that are active in the field of psychosocial studies, but show how psychosocial studies is, itself, a transdisciplinary practice. It proceeds by gathering up 'dead' or outmoded concepts and reading them with and through other more contemporary concepts. In doing so, both are transformed. It is this process of mutual transformation that is at the heart of Judith Butler's account of the psychic life of power. Her account therefore could be read as indicative of a form of psychosocial transdisciplinary work, although

she may not, herself, name it as such. Psychic reality, that Freud first articulates in 1893, is pronounced dead in 1985, but remains active in the French tradition, and reappears 'beyond' clinical psychoanalysis through the folding or kneading Butler performs of Freud and Foucault that produces a psychosocial account of a variable boundary that both instigates and regulates psychic and social spheres. Through this process we see how the norm comes to have 'gotten in', and how the psyche in its turn can affect some leverage on socially produced norms and regulatory practices of governance. Psychic reality, as neither simply reality nor simply internality, is reworked in Butler's hands, through the redoubling of effects of the two spheres as they are constituted through power, subjection, and our attachments to our subjection. This more political reading of psychic reality is then available to be 'gifted back' to the clinical sphere, so that the violence of social norms, and their mutability, can form part of our understanding of the emergence of the subject in the clinic.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. This list is taken from the departmental website and represents a fragment of what researchers in psychosocial studies might want to attend to – violence, state violence and conflict; intimacy, parenting, care and personal life; human rights, social responsibility and helping behaviour; public cultures, social movements, citizenship and social identities; postcolonial urban cultures and histories of 'race' and racism; gender and sexuality; emotional development, psychic change and ageing.
2. Après-coups, deferred action, retroaction, and afterwards-ness are all related translations of Freud's term, *Nachträglichkeit*, meaning delayed or belated understanding, or the later pathogenic effect of earlier traumatic experience (Freud and Breuer, 1895). I have turned to both Elizabeth Freeman's notion of temporal drag, and to the concept of melancholia, rather than *Nachträglichkeit*, to indicate a more psychosocial reading of delayed action, explored later in the essay.
3. For example, see Adorno, 1953, 1973; Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002; Althusser, 1971; Badiou, 2000; Castoriadis, 1998; Fromm, 1942; Horkheimer, 1982; Lacan, 1992; Marcuse, 1969; Reich, 1946; Žižek, 2007.
4. For example, see Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b, 1991, 1993a, 1993b; Kristeva, 2001; Mitchell, 1974; Chodorow, 1978, 1989; Benjamin, 1990, 1995, 1998; Rose, 1998; Derrida, 1976.
5. For example, see Fanon, 1986; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1992, 1997; Khanna, 2006; Hook, 2011; Lewis, 2009.
6. For example see Deleuze and Guattari, 1972; Massumi, 2002; Sedgwick, 2003; Grosz, 1994, 1995, 2008; Braidotti, 2006, 2011; Ahmed, 2008; Berlant, 2011.

7. Gender is never far from our thoughts when we are talking about the transformational consequences of the anomalous in the realm of the same – the 'wandering womb', for instance, is the paradigmatic example of the moveable substance that is 'altogether erratic' and yet responsible for creating symptoms of illness, a transformation from health to ill-health.

8. 'Considered psychologically, the paralysis of the arm consists in the fact that the conception of the arm cannot enter into association with the other ideas constituting the ego of which the subject's body forms an important part. The lesion would therefore be the abolition of the associative accessibility of the conception of the arm. The arm behaves as though it did not exist for the play of associations. There is no doubt that if the material conditions corresponding to the conception of the arm are profoundly altered, the conception will also be lost. But I have to show that it can be inaccessible without being destroyed and without its material substratum (the nervous tissue of the corresponding region of the cortex) being damaged' (Freud, 1893: 170).

9. Foucault states in the 1977 'The Confession of the Flesh' interview: 'What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements' (1988: 194).

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