



I want to present a new strategy for approaching Félix Guattari's work through the contemporary issues of inter- and transdisciplinarity. Run-of-the-mill academic interdisciplinary activities were of little use to Guattari since they were indelibly stamped with the paradox of the between: subject to an institutional orthodoxization and normopathy that allowed them to be valorized *from* an already established disciplinary perspective as exciting places to visit and extend one's core work. Guattari poked fun at interdisciplinarity in its limited sense and referred to it as an *abracadabra* word deployed cynically by many pretenders. But he made several significant attempts to theorize a metamethodology adequate to the passage from inter- to transdisciplinarity in his little read proposal- and report-writing (for UNESCO and other organizations) as well as in reflections on ecosophy and chaosophy.

Guattari's well-known career as an activist and political organizer may be represented in a way that shows how he went about creating experimental assemblages, between and beyond the covers of books, towards transdisciplinarity. I want to emphasize Guattari's prerequisite (and, for that matter, what I call a postrequisite for the metamethod) for transdisciplinary practice – the formative influence of activist experiments in institution/organization building – before turning to his plans for a transdisciplinary metamethodology that would truly make the rethinking of method – rather than its migration across epistemological boundaries, supplementation/accessorization by “other” methods, or simple multiplication of perspectives without adequate integration – a concern for theory and practice.

gary genosko

FÉLIX GUATTARI

towards a transdisciplinary metamethodology

i. youthful activism

Guattari became a militant at sixteen years of age (*Chaosophy* 189). A child, then, of the Liberation, and all of its “extraordinary wild imaginings,” above all those of the youth-hostelling movement (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 154; my trans. throughout). The hostels were established in the early 1930s and gathered impetus later in the decade, with their use as accommodations for paid holidays under the Front Populaire government, which earned them their nickname “Communist summer camps.” While it is not clear that Guattari spent his summer vacations learning his labor classics, he did apparently learn how to organize young adults and sustain a radical organization.

Fernand Oury (1920–98) was instrumental in getting Guattari involved during the summer “caravans” he organized in the Paris suburb of La Garenne-Colombes (for working-class suburban youth like Guattari himself, who grew up in the same department in nearby Villeneuve) for the youth-hostelling movement. The non-religious, para-scholastic activities for French youth that took off in the heady atmosphere of the immediate postwar years were facilitated by militants and innovators such as Oury and his brother Jean (Guattari’s mentor at La Borde clinic) and formed a cluster of antididactic practices emphasizing autonomy and self-reliance.

Fernand Oury was a schoolteacher in suburban Paris who specialized in maladjusted youth and used a printing press as an organizing principle for manual and intellectual, individual and group work. Class work centered on printing a collectively created journal and using it as the basis for scholarly lessons and correspondence between school classes and schools. Fernand Oury’s influence was decisive for Guattari in both theory and practice. Guattari once remarked that “my presumed competence in this domain [setting up an intra-hospital committee at La Borde] was due to the fact that since the age of sixteen I had always been a ‘militant’ in organizations like the ‘Youth Hostels’ and a whole range of activities for the extreme left” (*Chaosophy* 189).

Guattari learned early that there were always other ways of doing things, complexifying componential heterogeneity, respecting singular (automodeling) and collective (general modeling) assemblages. The same old barriers were thrown up again and again – fear, timidity, boredom, reticence, closed-mindedness, laziness – and each time they had to be taken down, more arose in their wake. But each time this occurred over the course of a protracted struggle for an enriching change, a singularity was confronted, and if it could become the basis – in terms of its relationship to the institutional structure that gave expression to it (limits, implosions, unanalyzed procedures) – of an analysis of how fixity precludes heterogeneity, then a new organizational form could be envisaged that presented new possibilities, and cultivated respect for

processual creativity. What Guattari learned, perhaps, was how to maintain and even cultivate singularity within an organization whose structure neither diluted nor pressurized it.

In developing institutional pedagogy, Fernand learned much from his brother Jean’s efforts at La Borde in the milieu of institutional analysis or psychotherapy. What both approaches appreciated, despite their obvious differences of purpose, was that the institutional context itself had to be analyzed. To this end, around 1960, a diverse group of therapists and educators gathered around François Tosquelles and the Ourys to discuss the problems of institutions, their production, modification through creative organizational solutions, etc., under the name of the *Groupe de travail de psychologie et de sociologie institutionnelles* (GTPSI). With the founding of *Fédération des groupes d’études et de recherches institutionnelles* (FGERI) in 1965, not only did Fernand’s colleagues – working in the *Groupe d’éducation thérapeutique* (GET) on their *triangular experiments* (*systematic triangulation of relations*) with groups of students, based on a signifying, mediating object, a collectively produced monograph – finally find interlocutors, but they found themselves in the company of psychiatrists, analysts, anti-psychiatrists, architects, urbanists, activists ... Later, in 1968, FGERI would develop sub-groups such as CERFI (*Centre d’études et de recherches sur le fonctionnement des institutions*), which published the journal *Recherches*, the organ of institutional psychotherapy edited by Guattari. FGERI was nothing less than a proto-transdisciplinary experimental research group that Guattari described as a “*detour* through other disciplines that allowed false problems to be overcome (relative to functions of space: volumes, levels, communications, and the institutional and micropolitical options of instigators and participants)” (FFG ET09-26; my trans. throughout). But Guattari did not romanticize FGERI:

The FGERI was rather extraordinary: no funding, no grants and even so there were more than a hundred people, from very different backgrounds, who would meet in order to deepen the theme of widening the scope of analysis, moving it beyond the limits of the

couch and the psychoanalytic structuralism that had begun to install itself in a despotic way around Lacanianism. The negative aspect was that this technique of “brainstorming” could become an alibi for doing nothing ... (*Chaosophy* 28; trans. modified)

The confluence of activism and organizational experimentation had the goal of creating progressive scenes of subjectification, and this was how Guattari characterized Fernand Oury’s efforts to overcome the “encasernée scolaire” (school-as-barracks) for an appreciation of collectivity sensitive to heterogeneous components as well as local conditions that would be otherwise steamrolled if one arrived with prefabricated and rigid interpretive grids (FFG 102-22, 6–7).

The principles and program outlined in the classic statement on institutional pedagogy, *Vers une pédagogie institutionnelle* (1968), pick up on themes vital to Guattari’s concept of the group. Oury emphasized the act of writing as an individual and collective project that not only allowed for the expression of meaningful interests by individuals, but realized success in communication, that is, being read or heard by one or more others. Teachers attempted to set up a pedagogical scene of subjectification that guaranteed the certainty of being read through the circulation of published, reproduced texts, entailing reading before the class, but only from those sections of one’s personal “free text” that would interest the group, and upon which they would pass a certain kind of judgment, making corrections, suggestions, editing, towards its inclusion in a collective publication, in addition to correspondence between individuals, between individuals and groups, and group-to-group exchange of collectively written manuscripts, between geographically diverse schools (refocusing attention on otherwise overlooked everyday situations that would appear unique to other readers, i.e., describing the Paris Métro to a group of students in the Haute Savoie). For Oury, the “school journal is a privileged technique” (*Vers une pédagogie* 43, 200; my trans. throughout) in the constitution of a *third* object that opens the students to the world (the grade school is not a total institution!). Oury echoes a great chain of psychoanalytic objects – partial, transitional,

genosko

institutional – that would become less and less typical and progressively singular, an important Guattarian theme developed with regard to his choice objects, with this third object of the published text. This Gutenbergian realization of the collective around the movable type of the printing press in the real work of cooperative production may sound today out of date with the IT revolution (references to roneo duplication, linotype, monotype, and stencils abound) but the machinic dimension of the third object remains intact since it opens the class to the world and serves, pedagogically, as a focal point for lessons about grammar, reading, and relations between class and community.

One of Oury’s most enduring creations was the weekly event called the *conseil de coopérative*, the cooperative meeting directed by the students themselves. In Oury’s work (*Vers une pédagogie* 82), an institution is defined by

the places, moments, status of each according to his/her level of performance, that is to say according to his/her potentialities, the functions (services, posts, responsibilities), roles (president, secretary), diverse meetings (team captains, different levels of classes, etc.), and the rituals that maintain their efficacy.

In the meeting, the teacher is one among many participants and, although s/he may veto any motions, the class remains active as a self-directed group, like Guattari’s sense of a subject group that formulates its own projects, speaks and is heard, and puts itself at risk in pursuing its own ends and taking responsibility for them; indeed, the *conseil* is sometimes silent, faced with tumult, until it finds language. There is always a risk of disappearing, or simply being ignored, in both cases where young students and psychiatric patients are concerned, upon their insertion into the broad socio-politico-economic fields of normal childhood/adulthood. The *conseil* was for Oury the eyes of the group (witness of each person’s transgressions, successes ...), its brain as well, and heart, a refining machine: it is the “keystone of the system since this meeting has the power to create new institutions, and institutionalize the milieu of communal life” (*Vers une pédagogie* 82). The

conseil is the pedagogical equivalent, on the organization level, of *la grille*, the system of work rotation that Guattari helped to implement at La Borde.

The mediating third object is a fundamental principle of the institutional situation, following upon a critique, by François Tosquelles and others, of the dual therapeutic situation of psychoanalysis and the alleged neutrality of analysts. Two becomes three, but three is not just three, it is 3 plus *n*. Tosquelles looked beyond the dual analysis at the openings provided by “multiple impersonal networks of the symbolic order ... [towards] a form of group therapeutics that is often established, with the doctor’s knowledge, in psychiatric hospitals as a result of the material organization and the psycho-social interactions between patients and between patients and doctors” (*Vers une pédagogie* 242). For Oury:

the introduction between the therapist and the patient of a *mediation* is the necessary condition for the cure at least at the outset, and is also the characteristic, if one can schematize it in the extreme, of institutional therapy. The mediation may be apparently an object (tool or aim) or a person or an institution that always proves to be more than an object or person. (*Vers une pédagogie* 243)

Such mediations may take diverse forms and, in the pedagogical milieu, the school journal, published by the class and the *conseil*, which brings the group to language, is an organizational institution created, reinvented and maintained by the group over time. A mediating third object exists outside of face-to-face relations, and upon which work is done cooperatively, and for which responsibility is collectively assumed, through a series of obligatory exchanges (one speaks of the journal apropos of a resolution, etc.). I cannot pursue here all the implications of the triangulation of otherwise dual relations. Rather, put simply: it is with the triangle and threes that micropolitics begins.

ii. paradoxes of a young “leninist”

If an “anterior activism” was a feature of the careers of the founding members of La Borde,

Guattari was also a young activist who attempted to create links across and between existing progressive movements. The simple observation that many activists agitating for social change would feel out of place being with psychiatric patients in a clinical setting formed part of the basic political intelligence for both Guattari and Jean Oury since the mid-1950s. Guattari participated in extreme left groups all through his youth. One could compile an impressive list of radical credentials, and an equally long list of expulsions for breaking through too many sectorial boundaries and defying authority, counterformations against hierarchizations and against obligatory ideological pronouncements, inventions of innovative micro-spaces of liberty unleashing mutational machines that would permit new social practices of liberation to sit astride diverse social groups with quite different interests. Every decade of Guattari’s life had its own texture of radicalism. My goal here is not to present a catalogue.

There are many points at which Guattari’s activism overflowed party containers but, more importantly, he wanted to explore ways of overcoming both traditional parties of the working class (inertial institutional objects substituting themselves, that is, their bureaucratic reproduction, for those they represent – big unionism) as well as highly specialized political groupuscules that at least attempted to evade the anti-productive traps of such empty objects by embodying revolutionary subjectivity, but so often got stuck in demagoguery, losing their grip on social reality. His analytic experiments with FGERI were turned towards this end, modeling themselves simultaneously on Lenin’s elitism (machine of the revolutionary vanguard, professional revolutionaries all, disciplined paramilitary men, to boot) and Antonio Gramsci’s political refocus on the *emarginati* (marginalized people, with whom he was “organic” as a disabled, Sardinian, proletarian, rural, politically inexperienced, casual writer), the party as cultural-ideological-educative, with a leadership linked organically to the mass and its diverse groupings whose creative interventions are more important than their mechanical application of orders issued from above. The paradox of the young Guattari’s

attachment to Lenin is much in evidence and it is instructive, not because it points to a weakness – a Leninist who is not very Leninist – or an overestimation of FGERI, about which he had few illusions because of its undeniable distance from influencing key sectors of production, but because of the enormity of the task he set himself c.1965–67. Guattari wrote in the presentations that constitute “La causalité, la subjectivité et l’histoire” [“Causality, Subjectivity, and History”]:

I believe that there is still reason to be Leninist, at least on the precise point that there is little point expecting the spontaneity and creativity of the masses to establish analytic groups in a *long-lasting way* – if one is still allowed to say Leninist considering that the present objective is no longer the promotion of a highly centralized party but rather a means by which the masses may take control of their own situation. (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 202)

No facile invocation of interdisciplinary research will suffice, nor molar militarism:

only an analytic venture outlined against the background of revolutionary praxis can pretend to a true exploration of the unconscious – for the good reason that the unconscious is nothing other than the real that is to come, the transfinite field of potentialities received by signifying chains which await being opened and articulated by a real agent [*agent*] of enunciation and effectuation. What this comes down to is that signifying breakthroughs, even of the most “intimate” kind, including those from so-called “private life,” could turn out to be decisive cruxes of historic causality. (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 203–04)

A molecular, psychoanalytically inspired “Leninism”? How, then, can an analytic undertaking provide the means for the masses to understand and take control of their lives? Already, then, we have a sense that the unconscious is a concern of everyone; that psychoanalysis, radically renovated, may be crossed with political groups in order to produce creative, institution-building transversal communications. That politics doesn’t abide by

programs, that revolutionary praxis may stir in the most unlikely – from the perspective of the leadership – places, which are the same places where the most subtle forms of alienation often go unanalyzed. Still, singularity must be respected. Becoming political is itself a breakthrough. Communism may have failed, Lenin’s institutional innovations may have been distorted; this much must be admitted.

Read or act; immerse or withdraw; left or right; margin or center; lead or follow: these dichotomies solve nothing. For the real task is to find the institutional means to incarnate new modes of subjectification while simultaneously avoiding the slide into bureaucratic sclerosis; in diagramming the “Leninist rupture” and the rise of the molar dictatorship of Stalin, for example, Guattari (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 159) suggested that the most excessive repressive measures were required to equal and exceed the “richest current of social expression history has known.” Activists are often condemned to the phantasms of subjugated groups (the infantile disorders of ultra-leftism) which keep them from exploring the “real texture of an organization”; they get hung up on the significations produced by the leadership rather than producing their own signifiers and speaking in the name of the institutions they create adequate to the course of their actions. Similarly, even subject groups may become bewitched by their own phantasies, losing their sense of direction for a time; these phantasies are transitional and correspond to changes inside the group, rather than those requiring the subordination of the group (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 167).

A refrain in Guattari’s consideration of group subjectivity concerned the events in 1903 in which the Bolsheviks or Majoritarians, under Lenin’s leadership, defeated the so-called “opportunist” Mensheviks or Minoritarians (not on all points, of course, but in terms of control of the central committee of the party at the Second Congress and the party organ, *Iskra*). This breakthrough of 1903 unleashed the percussive Bolshevik libido that transformed the revolutionary workers’ movement organizationally and institutionally, but not before a good deal of post-congress wrangling and, a year later, the

establishment of a Lenin-led faction with its own newspaper, and then the demand for a split, once and for all, between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, revolutionaries and moderates, respectively. Guattari posed fundamental questions of political sociology: what is the relationship between the vanguard and the mass? The signifying event of a revolutionary “break” in history called for the reinvention of the party – which model should inform it (militaristic dictatorship, organic, anti-authoritarian)? – and the emergence of a new political subjectivity that had escaped from serial sameness, repetition, and death. (*Psychanalyse et transversalité* 157–58, 176ff.; *Inconscient machinique* 183–85). From this early statement all the way to Guattari’s ecological politics of the late 1980s, the question of the political sociology of the party remained constant and for this reason, with explicit reference to Lenin, problematic: according to the French Green political division of labor, there is the vanguard or party of the avant-garde, the Green nobles whose social ecology is the economy, and the mass organization, marching forth to defend the earth (FFG ET10-03).

As we are amorously transported into the universe of Guattarian theory, it is pragmatic to consider how this would have sounded on the hustings as he stood for office in the Paris regional elections under the banner of a Green politics that saw him move transversally between two parties: Les Verts and Génération Ecologie. Both and beyond: that was the point of Guattari’s transversal “double membership” in both parties, an unprecedented event in the French Greens in the climate of a political game of either/or, and others followed suit.

iii. towards a transdisciplinary metamethodology

For Guattari, the movement from interdisciplinarity, with all its compromises, towards transdisciplinarity was both inevitable and necessary. This irreversible movement was an internal force whose very existence necessarily transformed how interrelations between living systems, social structures and psychical processes are conceived. Put simply, this internal movement was evident,

thought Guattari, in the IT revolution because its complex objects compose a world of interdependent hypercomplexity irreducible to unidimensional evaluation on the single basis, let’s say, of the market, or of predictive, objective science. And, ultimately, this hypercomplexity would itself entail the transformation of *method* as such. To put this in another way, Guattari’s life of youthful and mature activist engagements and struggles on numerous fronts itself necessitated a reflexive grasp of its consistency through a theorization of the character of the relations between its diverse components and their development. Guattari’s preferred term of transdisciplinary research was a call to rethink relations between science, society, politics, ethics and aesthetics through the development of a metamethodology adequate to this new field of relations. Problems of organization directly entail problems of method beyond the compromise of merely uncritically transporting one method from one domain to another. And to cite an important historical example, this correlation of theory construction and organizational research practices in a specific institution was evident at the outset of Max Horkheimer’s directorship (1933) of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Horkheimer’s sense of social research (cooperatively integrating the social scientific perspectives of members of the Frankfurt Circle – economics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, music, etc.) was not towards the creation of a superdiscipline but, rather, following the lead of the object (contemporary society) and developing a new method on that basis (see Dubiel’s *Theory and Politics* 129ff.). One cannot help but think of experimental meetings such as FGERI as a kind of French Frankfurt Circle (where Erich Fromm was what Jacques Lacan would be).

Readers of Guattari’s last book, *Chaosmosis*, will recognize that schizoanalysis had become an attempt at a transdisciplinary metamodeling of assemblages: briefly, Being is “crystallized” in assemblages of enunciation through four ontological functions (material Fluxes, machinic Phylums, incorporeal Universes, existential Territories) and the metamodel ensures precariousness, uncertainty and creativity over fixity,

universality and automatic articulations (*Chaosmosis* 59): “Schizoanalysis, rather than moving in the direction of reductionist modelizations which simplify the complex, will work towards its complexification, its processual enrichment, towards the consistency of its virtual lines of bifurcation and differentiation, in short towards its ontological heterogeneity” (*Chaosmosis* 61). Although Guattari was aware that even metamodelizations can retreat into theoretical binarisms in which fours fall back into twos or threes, or get stuck on an existing modelization, such methodological innovation is not merely an option – the demand was there in the hypercomplex objects of which the object world of interdependent hypercomplexity consists. Although the focus of this paper is not the four functors of *Chaosmosis*’s metamodel, I want to bring out some of its salient features in the context of Guattari’s elaboration, with Sergio Vilar, of his conception of transdisciplinarity.

“There is no general pedagogy relative to the constitution of a living transdisciplinarity,” Guattari wrote (FFG ET20-24, 15; my trans. throughout). FGERI was an experiment, not a definitive model; and the metamodel of the four functors elaborated in *Chaosmosis* distilled a lifetime of experimentation. Even today, as bringing together interdisciplinary research teams in private and public labs and research centers is becoming a general goal, hyperspecialization (and all of the counterproductive aspects of protectionism and boundary patrols and tokenism of the kind seen every day in genetics research with a cramped little space tacked on for the “social,” as long as it contains technical solutions to ethical issues around privacy, and borrows social science methods of interviews) still rules the day.

Readers of the metamodel may be struck by the theoretical density of Guattari’s language, which makes it seem far away from transformative organizational concerns. After all, what Guattari is offering is an ontological description (not purely objective, he specified), a cartographic way of making discernible what many existing models (i.e., psychoanalytic, scientific) leave out or reduce, that is, self-referential enunciation in all its richness. How to preserve singu-

larity, expand referential fields, open new lines of possibility, allow selves to mutate, autodevelop and redevelop – these were Guattari’s concerns. It is the difference, to use one of his examples, between treating a “Freudian slip” negatively (as an expression of repressed material) or positively as an “indexical manifestation of a Universe trying to find itself, which comes to knock at the window like a magic bird” (*Chaosmosis* 68). Or, even better, it is the difference between the Lacanian Signifier inherited from a linguistics that valorized linearity and discursivity, as opposed to a semiotic open to the non-discursive and pathic dimensions of semiosis; simplifying greatly the difference between a signifier that traps or a singularity that opens, a structure into which one is inserted or a component of self-invention, a submersion in “chaosmic immanence” (*Chaosmosis* 74–75). Guattari’s psychoanalytic practice, both private and at La Borde clinic, was the organizational correlate to this theorization to which he tried to give consistency through experimental means that would allow new forms of subjectivity to emerge (i.e., a schedule of negotiated work rotation for all members of the clinic overseen by a collective of monitors, designed to enrich and expand social relations and provide access to diverse semiotic matters). This perhaps explains why he often turned in his published works to examples of what was going on in La Borde’s kitchen or laundry.

In his jointly written (with Vilar in Barcelona) report to the Assistant Director General of UNESCO on the operation of interdisciplinary research, “From Interdisciplinarity to Transdisciplinarity via the Complex Objects which Compose the Object World and its Interdependent Hypercomplexity” (my trans.) Guattari offered a vision of the tasks of metamethodology beyond the postmodern condition of the rule of paralogy and dissensus. Guattari’s engagement with dissensus needs to be carefully disimbricated from that of Jean-François Lyotard. Still, Lyotard (*Postmodern Condition* 52–53) also had to reckon with what had become of the post-1968 popular slogan of “interdisciplinary studies” in the current team-based interdisciplinary approach (i.e., valorization of brainstorming, social scientific

tokenism in state-sponsored scientific research) to knowledge production (research) and its transmission (mass and elite versions) under the growing influence of the marketplace.

Both Guattari and Lyotard would have agreed that consensus had become a problem. Why it was a problem for Guattari may be appreciated by considering his vision of the post-mass-media era in “Pour une éthique des médias.” It needs to be acknowledged that Guattari’s desire for a transition – exiting from one era and entering the next – rested on a somewhat clichéd representation of the masses as passive (a receiving structure), but typically full of potential. The ability of leaders (of political parties, unions, associations) in democracies to create consensus around certain issues has weakened considerably as media and advertising have assumed this role. Mass consensus is now created in terms of passive responses to commercial media messages. “There is a weakening of true debate,” Guattari argues, “and an avoidance of authentically dissensual problematics” (“Ethique des médias” 2; my trans. throughout) This is where Guattari parted company with Lyotard: dissensus was not the new end of dialogue, but merely a “transitory phase of the state of media” (ibid.) out of which something new will emerge. Genuine dissensus cannot be achieved under current conditions in which it is simulated (short-sighted use of new information technologies for the gain of multinationals; production and distribution controlled either by private or public interests; a situation in which relations between producers and consumers are of concern only after a product has been brought to market; absence of effective bodies, nationally and internationally, to investigate media manipulation); yet Guattari thought that authenticity – “a redefinition of social democracy articulating the power of consensus and the right to dissensus, difference, and singularity” (ibid.) – may be achieved in the post-mass-media era.

Guattari’s “post” does not make him post-modern. Guattari retained precisely what was suggested by Lyotard in a clarificatory letter: “the difference between modernism and post-modernism [re architecture] would be better characterized by the following feature: the disap-

pearance of the close bond that once linked the project of modern architecture to an ideal of the progressive realization of social and individual emancipation encompassing all humanity” (*Postmodern Explained* 75–76). For Guattari, then, this didn’t disappear and, as I suggested above with regard to the Frankfurt Circle, is maintained in the correlation of theory and organization perfused with progressive activist orientations. Guattari’s “prospective perspective” (“Ethique des médias” 2) on the media used some of the watchwords of postmodernism but retained an emancipatory horizon. Guattari really did have a plan for the planet: “the question of the ethics of the media and the prospective orientation of new communications technologies, artificial intelligence and control constitute, alongside the ecological problematic, one of the two axes of recomposition of a progressive way of thinking about the planet, today” (ibid.).

For Guattari and Vilar, “the organization of human culture by disciplines belongs to the past, although to a certain degree it is a necessary point of departure in the advance towards domains of knowledge that involve new practices and changing styles of individual and collective life” (FFG ET05-13, 3; my trans. throughout). Within university systems, disciplines remain closeted and largely ignorant of one another. While there has been much fanfare about interdisciplinarity as a novel combinatory, there has been little effort expended at the level of *method* to realize its implications. The authors note the risk that interdisciplinary might become nothing more than a kind of “magic word,” the utterance of which would make a given project wide and with mixed components, while changing nothing. Despite such degradations, the task becomes the elaboration of a genuine metamethodology that would upset existing power/knowledge formations. Like the activist prerequisite, the rethinking of method must as a postrequisite issue a challenge to the status quo.

The authors elaborated eight conditions:

1. call into question a given discipline’s ability to understand the globality within which it finds itself;
2. adopt a humble attitude in the face of the immense field of knowledge of the real;

3. open one's own assemblages towards heterogeneous fields of dialogue and other forms of mutual exchange;
4. do not abandon specialization as an ideological principle but, rather, proceed irreversibly by fluctuation and bifurcation towards transdisciplinarity, each discipline according to its own speed and willingness to make sacrifices or suffer "amputations";
5. certain theoretical approaches will need to be deconstructed, but hopefully not in an anarchic way so that existing disciplines may see the confluence of concepts and problems from a new theoretico-pragmatic and virtual perspective;
6. the creation of numerous cross-references is not heresy but has always existed to some extent;
7. from a critical interdisciplinary perspective, certain scientific positions of alleged self-sufficiency and omnipotence will be subject to definitive critique (no more queen of the sciences, no more pure [higher] and applied [lower], etc.);
8. *intradisciplinary* graspings of the virtualities of heterogeneous, evolving fields will have repercussions for the movement towards transdisciplinarity. (FFG ET05-13, 6-9)

None of these points is isolated from more global cultural, political and institutional transformations. The important point is that transdisciplinarity goes beyond interdisciplinarity and is caught up in the general movement of deterritorialization that is rhizomic and mixes heterogeneous axiological dimensions. Guattari and Vilar supposed that researchers will be predisposed towards a transdisciplinary perspective on the basis of their grasp, even at first from within their own disciplines, of the character of emerging and quickly changing multidimensional complex objects such as data processing systems, and their value for elaborating a transdisciplinary perspective. This openness means that researchers will have to familiarize themselves with concepts from other disciplines and learn how to work with them. In this way certain common fundamental traits of such complex objects may come to be known relative to cultural elements (and their subcultural utilizations); social elements (gender and race inter-

genosko

ests), from micro- and macro-perspectives crossed by diverse universes of value; economic factors in local, regional, national and global contexts; technico-scientific developments; and ecological implications. The principal characteristics of complex objects, relative to the areas just listed, are crossed by processes that reveal: dynamic instabilities; contingencies and vulnerabilities; entropic irreversibility; and creative possibilities of negative entropy. The metamethod would map the transitions, transformations and effects of complex objects theoretically and empirically – because they constantly undergo changes based on imbalances between their elements, they must be capable of modification in their turn.

How does this movement from interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary metamethod get underway? Much of what Guattari and Vilar wrote was attitudinal and concerned a perceived mental ecology of those in specialized areas and the tasks of forgoing further intradisciplinary sub-specialization. This is both a weakness and a strength; the former because it seems to reproduce the external imposition onto the sciences of an urgently felt need for action on a range of social and political issues and problems, and the latter since it is suggested in item 8 that such a need may be generated intradisciplinarily with the proviso: "if the virtualities of heterogenesis" can be grasped (FFG ET05-13). That is, can a researcher make known to him/herself (by drawing a map) the potentialities (diverse and extensive Universes of reference evoked by a given object, as in Guattari's example of a hammer, but which threatens to lapse into free association – hammer and ... (*Chaosmosis* 36ff.)) of multidimensional complex objects and their many, many "registers" (the references they make to dimensions, categories, things, backgrounds, and characteristics other than themselves, with which they intersect)? Additionally, Guattari and Vilar at times seemed to think that technological convergences that will overcome static individuated systems, as well as more general global interconnectedness, would simply favor transdisciplinarity, which seems in this respect inevitable (technico-cultural evolution). This immanentist evolutionary perspective has

been developed by Pierre Lévy, among others, who sees technological evolution tending, in Guattarian terms, towards a molecular (post-molar or mass) revolution led by genetics, nanotechnology, digitization, and self-organization (world-composing singular becomings). Lévy's term for transdisciplinarity is knowledge organized along cosmopedic lines; this is made possible, as in Guattari and Vilar, by technological complexification (computerization) that facilitates the multidimensional combination of many semiotics whose mapping is ongoing. Importantly, the cosmopedia is based on a principle of "non-separation" and Lévy figures it as a "quilt," "dissolution of differences between specializations," "fluidity of borders," or an "unbroken dynamic topology" (*Collective Intelligence* 216–17).

In Guattari's conceptual nomenclature, meta-models are not to be confused with metanarratives because they eschew universality for the sake of singularity, and the self-constitution of references, organization, relations, and limits. This makes Guattari's metamodel akin to a continuous process of automodelization that attempts to extract its own consistency – rather than deriving it from a universal syntax or model that produces one kind of subjectivity – from the components of the assemblages to which it relates. Metamodels are not just abstractions because they require the putting into place of the organizational and institutional means for their collective realization. GTPSI, FGERI, CINEL, *la grille* at La Borde were all transversal, trans-disciplinary "solutions" at work in the same sense that a constituted team of researchers seeks a solution or answer to some problem or question. The enduring problem is how to do it, how to assemble a workable collectivity that will function as a counter-current against all the seductions of fallback positions, become aware of its own blockages and automutilations, as well as finding ways to realize its potential, risking itself in the face of others; make no mistake, developing a new methodology is a great risk.

How is a Leninist breakthrough made and preserved and a breakdown avoided? Suffice to say that Lenin could not solve the problem posed by an intransigent bureaucracy, tsarist and bour-

geois administrators, and hence failed to increase the coefficients of bureaucratic transversality through purges in the judiciary, radical decree after decree, appointments of revolutionaries, growing authoritarian centralism, and the like, in the years after the Revolution.

A transdisciplinary assemblage must explore its transversality, initiating new and multiplying existing connections between science-society-ethics-aesthetics-politics, while struggling against reductionistic versions of this process that have become increasingly pegged on profit or accepting of multidisciplinary fuzziness without real institutional commitments, or simply further exploitations of existing power imbalances in given institutions between the sciences and the humanities, the coefficient of transversality of which would be zero because no relation would exist between the benefits predicted by interdisciplinary formations and what actually resulted from them (other than success at getting the grant) in terms of activities undertaken by each of the participating disciplines.

Guattari's transdisciplinary assemblages, his inter- and intra-institutional molecular transportations, passages between, transversal reworkings, calls for pooling "creative uncertainty" (*Chaosmosis* 134), the rescue of subjectivity by means of its resingularization – all of these are part of a transversalized activist intellectuality in Guattari's life and work, an activism that went together with an at times terribly abstruse theory, accessible yet excruciatingly dense. A theory that didn't take institutional refuge, didn't squirrel away in obscure nooks. And from the time he was 16 until his death at 62, he continuously explored, experimented, (re)modeled, and metamodeled.

Throughout his life Guattari restlessly sought out examples of progressive forms of association and organization. He gravitated equally towards politics and ideas, learning new lessons about forms of mass association from the Solidarity and Autonomist movements in Poland and Italy. In Brazil during the early 1980s he became interested in the anti-capitalist (anti-IMF and anti-FTAA) Partido do Trabalhadores (Workers' Party) and its leader Lula (Luis Inácio da Silva). This mass party had an internal organization that

combined a Leninist political rhetoric and structure (with an executive committee of paid professional radicals) with an openness that allowed all members to constitute issue-based collectives that would have standing in the party, thus necessitating the stitching together of many divergent social movements and leftist trends. Guattari drew a line between Solidarity and the Workers' Party on the basis of their concerns with the character of everyday life; that is, the structure of the non-traditional party touched the micropolitical level and reached beyond national boundaries, yet without abandoning municipal affairs. He distinguished these examples from Gorbachev's failure to achieve real social advances by reaching into the micropolitical dimension of the food lines that seemed resistant to *perestroika* ("Félix Guattari in Russia"). These living political and organizational experiments were linked by Guattari to theoretical problems in characterizing associations in terms of groups or assemblages, for example, and his search for a transdisciplinary solution to the challenge of contemporary knowledge production. These ideas have recently been seized upon by French intellectuals such as Edgar Morin (1997) and once again tied to the need to reform the education system from the primary school to the university. Morin is also aware of the dangers of making connections for the sake of making connections. But his thought, unlike Guattari's, is much more oriented towards reform (i.e., of Humboldt's vision of the university as repository and carrier of collective cultural heritage) rather than institutional experimentation, with the proviso that for Morin "the reform of the university carries in it virtualities that surpass the reform of the university in itself." Guattari's thought did not pass through the university, except through his collaborations with intellectuals based there. Both Guattari and Morin would have shared the belief, however, that the reform of thought brings with it ethical responsibility. Whether in the end this entails an ethic of finitude that recognizes singularity as a fundamental right and/or an ethic of comprehension of the bond between thought and the cosmos is probably a moot point, for the promise of transdisciplinarity lies elsewhere in a thought

genosko

that has eluded the traps it regularly sets for itself and has found an organizational means equal to the task of its exploration.



note

An earlier version of this paper was presented at The Humanities Center, Harvard University (November 2001). I wish to thank Verena Conley for her kind invitation and helpful comments. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this article for his/her insightful remarks. Some of the material in this paper is developed at greater length in my book *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (Continuum, 2002).

abbreviations

FFG = Félix Guattari archival materials: Fonds Félix Guattari, Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, Paris.

ET = Ecrits théoriques [theoretical writings].

I = Entretiens [interviews].

bibliography

Dubiel, Helmut. *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*. Trans. Benjamin Gregg. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1985.

FFG ET05-13. With Sergio Vilar. "De la pluridisciplinarité à la transdisciplinarité en passant par les OBJETS COMPLEXES qui composent L'OBJET-MONDE et son HYPERCOMPLEXITÉ L'INTERDÉPENDANTE." Barcelona-Paris, Sept. 1992.

FFG ET09-26. "L'intervention institutionnelle." Typescript of an interview. Published under the same title in a book of the same name (Paris: Payot [Petite Bibliothèque n. 382], 1980).

FFG ET10-03. "Le grand-peur écologique." Handwritten text, no date.

FFG ET20-24. "Les fondements éthico-politiques de l'interdisciplinarité." Handwritten text, Apr. 1991.

FFG I02-22. "Du Zen aux Galeries Lafayette." Interview with Jacky Beillerot. Typescript, 23 Nov. 1986.

félix guattari

Guattari, Félix. *Psychanalyse et transversalité*. Paris: François Maspero, 1972.

Guattari, Félix. "Félix Guattari in Russia." Interview by Shaun Caley. *Flash Art* 137 (Nov.–Dec. 1987): 74–75.

Guattari, Félix. *L'Inconscient machinique*. Fontenay-sous-Bois: Encre/Recherches, 1979.

Guattari, Félix. "Pour une éthique des médias." *Le Monde* 6 Nov. 1991: 2.

Guattari, Félix. *Chaosophy*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. New York: Semiotext(e), 1995.

Guattari, Félix. *Chaosmosis*. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.

Guattari, Félix. "La 'grille.'" *Chimères* 34 (1998): 7–20.

Lévy, Pierre. *Collective Intelligence*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 1997.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Explained*. Trans. Don Barry et al. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992.

Morin, Edgar. "Réforme de pensée, transdisciplinarité, réforme de l'université." Conference presentation to "Quelle université pour demain? Vers une évolution transdisciplinaire de l'université." Locarno, Switzerland, 1997. <<http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/bulletin/b12/b12c1.htm>> (Centre International de Recherches et Etudes Transdisciplinaires).

Oury, Fernand and Aïda Vasquez. *Vers une pédagogie institutionnelle*. Paris: Maspero, 1968.

Gary Genosko
Department of Sociology
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay
Ontario P7B 5E1
Canada
E-mail: genosko@mail1.lakeheadu.ca