

4 Against Method

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Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with a good methodology.

(Whitehead, 1929, p. 12)

The question of inter- and transdisciplinarity has recently opened up in academic circles to what we in Canada call “research-creation.” Research-creation, also called “art-based research,” was adopted into academic language through the very question of methodology. Starting out as a funding category that would enable artists teaching in universities who didn’t have PhDs to apply for large academic grants,¹ the apparition of research-creation was instrumental more than it was inventive, for weren’t artists always involved in research, at the level of art-making itself? The issue was not, it seems to me, one of simply acknowledging that artists were also researchers, but an institutional tweaking of that already-existent research category into modes of knowledge more easily recognized by the academic institution. To be an artist-researcher would now mean to be able to organize the delineations between art practice and research methodology for the purposes of a grant that would then, inasmuch as grants ordinarily function this way, orient the research towards “academic” aims.

The issue here is complex. It not only touches on the question of how art itself activates and constitutes new forms of knowledge *in its own right* but also, perhaps most importantly, incites us to inquire into the very question of how practices produce knowledge, and whether those forms of knowledge can engagingly be captured within the strictures of methodological ordering. Although I believe that this is a question that could be posed to all forms of knowledge (following philosophers like Henri Bergson, William James, and Alfred North Whitehead, who all, in their own ways, inquire into the methodological frameworks of science, psychology, and philosophy), for the purposes of this chapter I would like to focus on the question of research-creation, and particularly on the transversality of its proposition.

Unlike the definition used by funding agencies and propagated in many of our institutions, which see the research component as extra to the artistic practice, thereby emphasizing what has come to be known as a theory-practice

split,² I would like to take seriously the idea that research-creation proposes new forms of knowledge, many of which are not intelligible within current understandings of what knowledge might look like. Taking as my inspiration the myriad colleagues and students whose work has moved me to rethink how knowledge is crafted, and taking also my own practice as a starting point, I would like to suggest that research-creation does much more than what the funding agencies had in store for it: it generates new forms of experience; it situates what often seem like disparate practices, giving them a conduit for collective expression; it hesitantly acknowledges that normative modes of inquiry and containment often are incapable of assessing its value; it generates forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic; it creates operative strategies for a mobile positioning that take these new forms of knowledge into account; it proposes concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice, and in collective experimentation.

New forms of knowledge require new forms of evaluation, and even more so, new ways of valuing the work we do. In the case of research-creation, which inevitably involves a transversal engagement with different disciplines, this incites a rethinking of how artistic practice reopens the question of what these disciplines—anthropology, philosophy, art history, cinema, communications, biology, physics, engineering—can do. Here my focus will be on philosophy, which has a history of launching its speculative apparatus in relation to artistic practice. How, I will ask, can the rethinking of how knowledge is created in the context of artistic practice become an opening to thinking of philosophy itself as a practice of research-creation? How, following Gilles Deleuze, might a resituating of research-creation as *a practice that thinks* provide us with the vocabulary to take seriously that “philosophical theory is itself a practice, just as much as its object. It is no more abstract than its object. It is a practice of concepts, and we must judge it in light of the other practices with which it interferes”? (1989, p. 280, translation modified).³

To make this move requires both a reorienting of the concept of art and a rethinking of the concept of thought itself. It will be necessary, as I have argued elsewhere, to turn to the medieval definition of art—defined as “the way,” “the manner”—locating art not at the level of the finished object but in its trajectory (see Manning, in press). As regards thought, it will be necessary to reorient it to the incipency of the occasion, undoing it of its dependence on the human subject. This will mean opening thought beyond its articulation in language towards “the movement of thought,”⁴ engaging it at the immanent limit where it is still fully in the act.

Four propositions to begin:

1. If “art” is understood as a “way” it is not yet about an object, a form, or content.
2. Making is a thinking in its own right, and conceptualization a practice in its own right.

3. Research-creation is not about objects. It is a mode of activity that is at its most interesting when it is constitutive of new processes. This can happen only if its potential is tapped in advance of its alignments with existing disciplinary methods and institutional structures (this includes creative capital).
4. New processes will likely create new forms of knowledge that may have no means of evaluation within current disciplinary models.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE—ON MATTER

In *Modes of Thought*, Alfred North Whitehead protests what he calls “the bifurcation of nature” (1938, p. 30). The tendency to separate out the concept of matter from its perception or to make a constitutive difference between “nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness” leads to a splintering of experience (1938, p. 30). What emerges is an account of experience that separates out the human subject from the ecologies of encounter: “the problem is to discuss the relations inter se of things known, abstracted from the bare fact that they are known” (1938, p. 30). To posit two systems—one “within the mind” and one “without the mind”—is a methodological posture still very much alive in the critical apparatus of the disciplinary model. What we know is what can be abstracted from experience into a system of understanding that is decipherable precisely because its operations are muted by their having been taken out of their operational context. As Whitehead explains,

The reason why the bifurcation of nature is always creeping back into scientific philosophy is the extreme difficulty of exhibiting the perceived redness and warmth of the fire in one system of relations with the agitated molecules of carbon and oxygen, with the radiant energy from them, and with the various functionings of the material body. Unless we produce the all-embracing relations, we are faced with a bifurcated nature; namely, warmth and redness on one side, and molecules, electrons and ether on the other side. (1938, p. 32)

The unquantifiable within experience can be taken into account only if we begin with a mode of inquiry that refutes initial categorization. Positing the terms of the account before the exploration of what the account can do results only in stultifying its potential and relegating it to that which already fits within preexisting schemata of knowledge. Instead of holding knowledge to what can already be ascertained (and measured), we must, as William James suggests, find ways to account not only for the terms of the analysis but also for all that transversally weaves between them. James (2003) calls this “radical empiricism.”

The challenge of radical empiricism is that it begins in the midst, in the mess of relations not yet organized into terms such as “subject” and “object.” James calls this field of relations “pure experience,” pure understood not in the sense of “purity” but in the sense of immanent to actual relations. Pure experience is on the cusp of the virtual and the actual: in the experiential register of the not-quite-yet. It is *of* experience in the sense that it affectively contributes to how experience settles into what James calls “knower-known” relations. As with Deleuze’s actual-virtual distinction, pure experience is the in-folding of potential that keeps actual experience open to its more-than. The virtual is never the opposite of the actual—it is how the actual resonates beyond the limits of its actualization. It is the redness and warmth in the foregoing example.

Radical empiricism refutes the opposition between real and unreal, suggesting that the quality of experience—its redness and warmth—is as real as its molecular composition. James writes, “Nothing shall be admitted as fact [. . .] except what can be experienced at some definite time by some experient; and for every feature of fact ever so experienced, a definite place must be found somewhere in the final system of reality. In other words: Everything real must be experienceable somewhere, and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real” (1996, p. 160). To reorient the real to include that which can be experienced (rather than known as such) is to profoundly challenge the notion that knowledge is based on quantification, for what is real in James’ account cannot, in all cases, be quantified. What is real is the field of relations through which an experience comes to act, comes to be felt as such. What is real is as much the in-act of experience unfolding as what has come to be.

James calls the in-act of experience “something doing” (1996, p. 161; also see Massumi, 2011). When something does, new relational fields are forming, and with them, new modes of existence. A new mode of existence brings with it modalities of knowledge. But these modalities of knowledge are not yet circumscribed—they are transversal to the modes of operation active in the relational field. They are still an in-act. This is the force of radical empiricism: it gives us a technique to work with the in-act at the heart of experience, providing subtle ways of composing with the shifting relations between the knower and the known, keeping in mind, of course, that the knower is not the human subject, but the way relations open themselves towards systems of subjectification.⁵

Similar to Whitehead’s (1978) notion of the “superject”—which emphasizes that the occasion of experience is itself what proposes its own knower-known relations, resulting in a subject that is *the subject of the experience* rather than a subject *external* to the experience—radical empiricism refutes the notion that experience is constituted before all else of *human* relations. To understand experience this way places us, as humans, in a more nuanced relationship to knowledge. An occasion of experience—or what I called a field of relations earlier—produces the means by which it

will eventually define itself as this or that. In Whitehead's terms, "An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences" (1978, p. 43). This means that it is an occasion of experience that creates the conditions for subjectivity, a subjectivity that can never be disentangled from how the event came to fruition. A radically empirical approach takes this as its starting point, giving us the means to consider how relations themselves field experience.

Subjectivity is how the occasion accounts for itself. As such, the superject—or the subjectivity of an occasion—is less about a final delimitation than it is about the tendencies proposed by the occasion, its aim. This does not make subjectivity a substance, or a starting point. Quite the opposite: the superject is the fleeting proposition of an account of experience that has already been interpolated into new compositions, which in turn will create their own superjects.

To reorient the question of knowledge away from the idea of subject/object is to rethink the place of matter within experience. It is to challenge the idea that what is not known as such is not knowable, emphasizing that knowability may take us off the path of the methodological disciplinary account of experience, propelling us into the midst.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 2—ON REASON

The question of knowledge—of its role in experience, of its value, and of its accountability—is, in our philosophical age, still a question of reason. Despite decades of engagement in transdisciplinary thought, disciplines still order knowledge according to specific understandings of what constitute proper methods and police these methods through long-standing systems of peer and institutional review, even tending, in many cases, to suggest that interdisciplinary research is by nature weak because of its inattention to method. Method, here, is aligned to a making-reasonable of experience, fashioning knowledge as a static organization of preformed categories.

But what if the question is tuned towards the issue of what knowledge *does*? This, it seems to me, is how Whitehead approaches the question of reason in his 1929 book *The Function of Reason*. What at first reads as a very strange account of reason, critical at its core of Kant's notion of reason and indebted both to Plato and Ulysses—"the one shares Reason with the Gods, the other shares it with the foxes"—*The Function of Reason* is an extraordinary feat of recontextualizing reason beyond the easy issue of how it superficially orders knowledge (1929, p. 10).

Two kinds of reason are at stake in Whitehead's account: pragmatic and speculative. Drawing out the bold lines of his analysis, what emerges is a call for what might be called a speculative pragmatism, speculative in the sense that a process remains open to its potential, and pragmatic in the sense that it is rooted in the in-act of its "something doing."

Whitehead begins by defining the function of reason as the promotion of “the art of life” (1929, p. 4). The art of life, as he defines it, is “first to be alive, secondly to be alive in a satisfactory way, and thirdly to acquire an increase in satisfaction” (1929, p. 8). To acquire an increase in satisfaction cannot, as Whitehead argues, be limited to a doctrine of the “survival of the fittest”.⁶

In fact life itself is comparatively deficient in survival value. The art of persistence is to be dead. Only inorganic things persist for great lengths of time. A rock survives for eight hundred million years; whereas the limit for a tree is about a thousand years, for a man or an elephant about fifty or one hundred years, for a dog about twelve years, for an insect about one year. (1929, pp. 5–6)

“Why,” he asks, “has the trend of evolution been upwards? The fact that organic species have been produced from inorganic distributions of matter, and the fact that in the lapse of time organic species of higher and higher types have evolved are not in the least explained by any doctrine of adaptation to the environment, or of struggle” (1929, p. 7). Reason, he suggests, may be one way to account for the upward evolution, and, in particular, for the increase of satisfaction occasioned by the art of living, for reason, as Whitehead defines it, directs the field of relations towards its actualization, without which the world would be “anarchic” (1929, p. 1). It is that which “realizes the possibility of some complex form of definiteness, and concurrently understands the world as, in one of its factors, exemplifying that form of definiteness” (1929, p. 9).

The *function* of reason is different from a *definition* of reason. Earlier accounts of reason, many of which are still operative today, account not for its function within ecologies of existence so much as for its role in the very definition of what constitutes knowledge. Here, reason is usually understood as “the godlike faculty which surveys, judges and understands” (1929, p. 9). For Whitehead, however, what is at stake in the operations of reason is not its ability to judge from without but its function as that which is implicated in creating a self-discipline within “the welter of the process” (1929, p. 9).

Reason, understood in the Kantian sense, is at the heart of our contemporary definitions of method, though method is rarely outspokenly aligned today with reason as its core organizing force. The framing of knowledge by method is nonetheless an accounting of how stakes are organized, and this organizing tends to be delimited by existing forms of understanding of the problem at hand. This delimitation functions as an apparatus of capture: it diagnoses, it situates, it organizes, and ultimately it surveys, judges, and understands. Methods, we hear, are ever-changing, and this is surely the case. But any ordering agenda that organizes from without is still active in the exclusion of various processes too unintelligible within current

understandings of knowledge to be recognized, let alone studied. Methods thus become the safeguard against the ineffable: if something cannot be categorized, it cannot be made to account for itself, and therefore it does not exist. The consequences are many: not only is all knowledge relegated to the realm of “conscious knowledge,” but also the force of change that animates a process is deadened, leaving the analysis with a still-born concept. The question of method is therefore not simply an organizational one. Method is not only that which relegates knowledge to disciplinary knowledge, placing it within the local stakes of a circumscribed community. It is also that which defines knowledge to its core, disciplining the very question of what constitutes knowledge. As Whitehead writes,

Each methodology has its own life history. It starts as a dodge facilitating the accomplishment of some nascent urge of life. In its prime, it represents some wide coordination of thought and action whereby this urge expresses itself as a major satisfaction of existence. Finally it enters upon the lassitude of old age, its second childhood. The larger contrasts attainable within the scope of the method have been explored and familiarized. The satisfaction from repetition has faded away. Life then faces the last alternatives in which its fate depends. [. . .] When any methodology of life has exhausted the novelties within its scope and played upon them up to the incoming of fatigue, one final decision determines the fate of a species. It can stabilize itself, and relapse so as to live; or it can shake itself free, and enter upon the adventure of living better. (1929, pp. 18–19)

Beyond the academic institution, beyond the discipline, the question of method as Whitehead defines it is aligned to modes of existence. Whitehead asks (1929, p. 19), what is it that creates the conditions for “the adventure of living better”? What is it that can produce a creative alignment between anarchic forces and the generative potential of a cut that stops the flow? This is the definition of process for Whitehead: the nuanced interplay between potential and activity, between the in-act of the occasion of experience and the flow of its relational interplay. For something to exist, for it to have been felt as such, there had to have been a cut, for it is the cut that brings the occasion to experience, making it known in itself. Reason is this cut for Whitehead, but it is a cut that remains operative, whereas method is a cut that stills. A method stops potential on its way, cutting into the process before it has a chance to fully engage with the complex relational fields the process itself calls forth.

“The birth of a methodology,” by this account, “is in its essence the discovery of a dodge to live” (1929, p. 18).⁷ Any attempt to know in advance how the interplay between potential and the cut can be orchestrated is positing a subject as purveyor of experience—a human subject, no less. This renders experience still-born, for an event accounted for outside its own

evolution is an event that has already been taken out of its liveness and organized within the bounds of preexisting forms of knowledge.

What is most interesting about Whitehead's account of reason is that he provides an alternative to method's role in the accounting of the interplay between the potential and the cut of experience. It's not that we must altogether refrain from organizing experience, he suggests. It's that in the organizing of experience for academic study we must become more attuned to how we are contributing to the creation of new orthodoxies in relation to what we understand experience to do. Otherwise, as Whitehead says, "varied freshness has been lost, and the species lives upon the blind appetitions of old usages" (1929, p. 19).

In the end, as I've done in the past (Manning, 2013), I will want to substitute "appetition"⁸ for reason, as reason still holds for me too strongly the connotation of judgment.⁹ Appetition, it seems to me, immediately gives a sense of event-urgency, emphasizing the way the occasion of experience itself seeks to come to fruition, the way it activates its own passage to becoming-superject. Appetition also speaks well to the novelty Whitehead sees in a livelier concept of reason, novelty in the sense of the event's capacity to open itself to the productive potential of cocomposition that, for Whitehead, happens in the nexus of occasions.¹⁰ Order is part of the account, but only insofar as it creates the conditions for the occasion to become stable enough to have an effect within the realm of the actual.

On the continuum of appetite we find another key concept of Whitehead's: mentality. Mentality is defined within his process philosophy as the force that propels the physical beyond its mere life towards a quality of existence that remains, to some degree, ineffable. Each occasion, for Whitehead, is both physical and mental. What is crucial is to understand that the mental and the physical are not mind/body but differential aspects of one complex process. The physical is that which persists in conformity with past forms. The mental is what undoes the conformity, opening it to its more-than. "Mental experience," he writes, "is the experience of forms of definiteness in respect to their disconnection from any particular physical experience, but with abstract evaluation of what they can contribute to such experience" (1929, p. 32). Mentality is not dependent on consciousness. There are different grades of mentality, some of them conscious, many of them not: "the lowest form of mental experience is blind urge towards a *form* of experience, that is to say, an urge towards a *form* for realization" (1929, p. 32).

Mentality, understood here as the function of reason (in the most productive sense), is the "urge towards some vacuous definiteness" (1929, p. 32), towards a taking-into-account of what otherwise will likely remain unaccounted for. In Whitehead's terms, this is where appetite comes in: "This urge is appetite. It is emotional purpose: it is agency" (1929, p. 32). Appetite is the drive that propels the cut, the force that activates the ineffable within a process where, as James would say, everything is real. And with it

comes, as the function of reason, an appetite for new forms of knowledge, new ways of coming-to-be, new urges for more life, as Nietzsche might say.

Whitehead's process philosophy never privileges the human realm. Experience is experience, and different kinds of experience have different effects. When exploring what an occasion of experience can do, appetite is a productive place to begin, for it reminds us that the urge is part of the process, and the urge has an effect on where the analysis can take us. Whitehead sees reason both as the appetite that creates the initial opening onto the process and as the decision that cuts into it to align it towards a certain direction. Where mentality can open a process to anarchy, revealing the open-endedness of its appetite, appetite of a second order can lend the process a sense of organization. This is not the same kind of organization as method, for it doesn't seek to deny the anarchic share of the process. It acknowledges it while also acknowledging that pure anarchy "means the nothingness of experience" (1929, p. 33). Appetite as the force of reason works instead to tune the occasion to a contrast that contains the anarchy but reflects also a directionality, "canalysing" it into order (1929, p. 33). With mentality as its guide, appetite allows the occasion to become self-regulative, inducing "a higher appetite which discriminates among its own anarchic productions" (1929, p. 34).

Reason is the process's appetite for difference. It is what pushes occasions of experience to distinguish themselves from the welter of activity; it is the "counter-agency which saves the world" from mere life (1929, p. 34). This leads us back to speculative pragmatism. Whitehead's account of reason as appetite, it seems to me, provides us with the tools to engage speculatively in a pragmatic process. And it does so not at the level of a human account abstracted from the event, but within the field of relation occasioned by the experience itself.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 3—ON THOUGHT

A speculative pragmatism understands thought to be an operative constraint at the level of the in-act. Thought is not what organizes the event post-facto, nor is it what articulates an event in language. Thought, instead, is a key aspect of the appetite that drives an occasion to express itself as this or that in experience. Like the difference between a definition of knowledge that situates knowledge as a matrix for experience to fit into, and knowledge as immanent to experience in the making, a thinking-in-the-act suggests that thought is a key aspect of the creativity of an occasion in its coming to expression. This is what, to return to an earlier distinction of Whitehead's, allows us to sidestep the bifurcation of nature.

In the final pages of his account of the function of reason, Whitehead writes, "The quality of an act of experience is largely determined by the factor of the thinking which it contains" (1929, p. 80). Challenging the

habit of situating facts above thinking—"the basis of all authority is the supremacy of fact over thought"—Whitehead inquires into the tendency to place thought outside experience, suggesting that this is precisely what is wrong with any concept of method (1929, p. 80). How might the fact of this occasion—what it does, how it feels, where it moves—be separated out by its thinking when thought itself "is a factor in the fact of experience" (1929, p. 80)? To place thinking *in the event* is to once more challenge the idea that the precomposed subject is extra to the event, and that the thinking happens from outside-in. Thinking-in-the-event suggests, on the other hand, that the machinations of appetite are at work, and that they have thoroughgoing effects. Thought is a generative momentum, a movement towards both the activation and the resolution of processes.

Elsewhere in his work, Whitehead talks about feeling this way, emphasizing, as Brian Massumi (2011) might say, that a thinking-feeling is what is at stake in the evolution of an occasion of experience, for feeling, like thought, is very much at the heart of how an occasion participates in the world of its self-formation. Whitehead explains: the occasion of experience prehends the world through a process "of feeling the many data, so as to absorb them into the unity of one individual 'satisfaction'" (1978, p. 65). Feeling here suggests an operation that moves incipient experience from the objectivity of data to the subjectivity of the actual occasion, data understood here not as packets of information but as the traces of past events that can be taken up and be prehended to form a new occasion of experience. "Feelings," he writes, "are variously specialized operations, effecting a transition into subjectivity" (1978, p. 65). It is essential, of course, to remember here that the subjectivity they effect is not that of a preexisting human subject but the subjectivity of the occasion as such—its superject. Like Bergson's intuition, which is the art in which the very conditions of experience are felt, feeling opens the event to the as-yet-unthought within thought itself.¹¹

Thought taken out of consciousness reminds us that conscious thought is but the pinnacle of an experience that has divested itself of much of its open-endedness. As Nietzsche writes, "The logic of our conscious thinking is only a crude and facilitated form of the thinking needed by our organism, indeed by the particular organs of our organism. For example, a thinking-at-the-same-time is needed of which we have hardly an inkling" (2003, p. 8). A thought that has little inkling of itself is a thought in the act, a thinking in the making of an occasion of experience. It is an incipient activity that summons intensities towards a coming-to-expression, a thinking directly imbued with rhythm, with feeling. Marking a difference between recognizing and knowing—*erkennen* and *kennen*—Nietzsche plays with the strange untimeliness of thought in-forming, reminding us that there is often a sense of recognition despite a lack of knowing in the strong sense (2003, p. 14). Knowing is incipient to the experience at hand, sometimes known as such, sometimes actively felt but indecipherable in linguistic terms, alive only in its rhythms, in its hesitations, in its stuttering.

And all of this is not in the preexisting subject. “I don’t concede,” Nietzsche writes, “that the I is what thinks. I take the *I itself to be a construction of thinking*, of the same rank as ‘matter,’ ‘thing,’ ‘substance,’ ‘individual,’ ‘purpose,’ ‘number’: in other words to be only a regulative fiction with the help of which a kind of constancy and thus ‘knowability’ is inserted into, *invented into*, a world of becoming” (Nietzsche, 2003, pp. 20–21). I is the movement of thought destabilized by the act, the coming-into-itself of a capacity to regulate experience, but only for long enough to be destabilized again.

This does not, of course, mean that there is no “I.” It just means that the I cannot be located in advance of the event, that the I is always in the midst, active in the relational field as one of the vectors of the in-act of experience. “I am” is always, to a large degree, “was that me?”

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 4—ON TECHNIQUE

I began with research-creation and with the question of what art can do. Although I think method everywhere needs to be rethought in relation to its capacity to produce knowledge (rather than simply reproduce it), this rethinking is perhaps most productive in areas that are still by their very nature under redefinition. Research-creation is one of those areas, coming as it does out of a long and rich discussion of transdisciplinarity.

It’s probably fair to say that method has never managed to gain a stronghold in transdisciplinary research, though there have been many attempts to couple the inter- or trans- with method. These attempts, usually organized around introducing students to their “field” through the academic proseminar, have largely focused on bringing together texts from different disciplines to explore a variety of accounts of how a disciplinary problem has been addressed. The supposition behind such courses is that they enliven cultural debate by situating the thinker in a community of thought, thereby opening up discussion to a plurality of modes of doing and thinking. In the best cases, this would then lead to an understanding of how a field or two have dealt with interdisciplinarity, giving the student a sense of the limits of inquiry. When this works, the student has not felt pressure to adopt one approach over others or to cradle the analysis with an already-existing framework.

Still, the question begs: do these approaches to learning accomplish much beyond teaching us to think in terms of disciplinary or scholarly limits? What is made unthinkable by an approach to learning that begins by delimiting, by sequestering modes of knowing from modes of making, including the making of concepts?

A speculative pragmatism takes as its starting point a rigor of experimentation. It is interested in the anarchy at the heart of all process, and is engaged with the techniques that tune the anarchical into new modes of

knowledge. It is also interested in what escapes the order, and especially in what this excess can do. And it implicitly recognizes that knowledge is invented in the escape, in the excess.

What organizes the rigor of a speculative pragmatism can therefore not be a method imposed on the process from without. It must emerge from within the occasion of experience, and cast out from within its formation the stakes of its coming-to-be. Technique is key to this. In philosophy, one technique is close reading. Take this proposition of Bertrand Russell's as a starting point: "In studying a philosopher, the right attitude is neither reverence nor contempt, but first a kind of hypothetical sympathy, until it is possible to know what it feels like to believe in his [or her] theories, and only then a revival of the critical attitude, which should resemble, as far as possible, the state of mind of a person abandoning opinions which he has hitherto held" (1996, p. 47).

A process of close reading involves a technique that opens it to what Russell (1996) calls "a hypothetical sympathy." This sympathy, aligned as it might be with Bergson's notion of intuition (which understands sympathy to be the vector through which the intuition productively resolves itself within a process), involves turning to what the work does and asking the work to open itself to its own field of relations. How are these relations posited? What do they do? How does the rhythm, the cadence, the intensity of the text open up questions that align thought to content? Where does thought-feeling escape existing forms of knowledge? All of this unfolds before even beginning to explore the question of "where I stand," which arguably is probably the least interesting question of all, for "where I stand" in the common academic mode of positioning is the question that stops the process, that takes the writing out of the act, that situates it within this or that family of knowledge, that aligns it to disciplinary method and to institutional power. We all do this, of course, to a certain degree, but it seems to me that we must bear in mind that this "taking a stand" too often becomes the death-knell of creative acts of reading (and, of course, of making). Another kind of stand must be taken, one that erupts from the midst, one that engages sympathetically with the unknowable at the heart of difference, one that heeds the uneasiness of an experience that cannot yet be categorized. Otherwise we find ourselves right back where we started, outside looking in at what is already recognizable, at what is already known.

Taking a stand in the midst is a messy proposition—the image that comes to mind is of us barefoot in a pile of grapes, assisting them in their process of fermentation. Here, the process is directly felt, if not quite understood in its minutiae, and, to push the image further, it will no doubt leave stains. Reading or making are as messy, as uneasy-making, as exciting as pounding the grapes, provided that we take this situatedness seriously, for it is in the midst of the field of relations they call forth that practices are at their most inventive, at their most intense. This is also, of course, the place of risk. All that work, and the wine may still turn, or just never be any good. The same

goes for the sympathetic reading that creates a concept, or the artistic process that activates an object. These may go nowhere. But what they will do, no matter what, is create a process, and it is this process that will have made a difference, for it will have made felt the urge of appetite.

Speculative pragmatism means taking the urge of appetite at face value, asking what thought-feeling does *in this instance*, and how it does it. It means inquiring into the modes of existence generated by the act of “hypothetical sympathy” and seeing where these may lead, in transversal maneuvering. It is about balancing several books, or several passages, or several ideas, or several textures, at the edge of the desk, on the wall of the studio, and wondering how else they might come together, and what, together, they might do. It is about asking, as Russell does, “what it would feel like to believe in his [or her] theories,” a task speculative at best, and taking this speculation to its pragmatic limit: what can you *do* with this, what can it do to thought, to a thinking in action?

This is immanent critique, and it is what I believe is at the heart of a process of research-creation.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 5—ON RESEARCH-CREATION

Technique touches on how a process reveals itself as such. Dance technique engages not only modes of responding to repetitive movements but also collective engagements for creating choreographic thinking. Painting involves not only techniques of color, texture, and form but also modalities of exhibition, techniques of vision, of touch. This is not method: it is more dynamic than method, open to the shift caused by repetition, engaged by the ways in which bodies change, environments are modulated and modulating, and ecologies are composed. The painter-paint-canvas ecology is an ever-changing one, from sitting to standing to looking to feeling to touching to seeing. The writer-keyboard-book ecology also inventively alters its technique from the necessity to get another cup of tea to the rereading of the passage that gets things going to the habit of starting with a citation, to the terror and excitement of the writing itself.

Technique is necessary to the art of thought—to thought in the act—but it is not art in itself. Elsewhere, I have proposed that technicity may be one way to talk about what art can do in its outdoing of technique (Manning, 2013). Technicity would be the experience of the work’s opening itself to its excess, to its more-than. This quality of the more-than that is technicity is ineffable—it can be felt, but is very difficult to articulate in language.

What research-creation can do is make technicity palpable across registers. It can work, as radical empiricism does, in the complex field of conjunctions opened up by the transitions in experience. James writes, “Against [the] rationalistic tendency to treat experience as chopped up into discontinuous static objects, radical empiricism protests. It insists on taking

conjunctions at their ‘face-value,’ just as they come. Consider, for example, such conjunctions as ‘and,’ ‘with,’ ‘near,’ ‘plus,’ ‘towards.’ While we live in such conjunctions our state is one of *transition* in the most literal sense” (1996, p. 236).

Transition doesn’t mean pure unconstrained process. In fact, it means just the opposite—it means flow and cut, discontinuity and difference. Process grows from discontinuity, emerging always in relation to how an occasion of experience has defined itself as such. This is what appetite does, with the force of mentality. James speaks about the need for discontinuity this way, emphasizing how an actual occasion becomes a vector for deflection: “One more will continue, another more will arrest or deflect the direction, in which our experience is moving even now. We cannot, it is true, *name* our different living ‘ands’ or ‘withs’ except by naming the different terms towards which they are moving us, but we *live* their specifications and differences before those terms explicitly arrive” (1996, p. 238).

What the conjunction between research and creation does is make apparent how modes of knowledge are always at crosscurrents with one another, actively reorienting themselves in transversal operations of difference, emphasizing the deflection at the heart of each conjunction. The conjunction is at work, actively adjusting the always-immanent coupling of research and creation, asking how the thinking in the act can be articulated, and what kind of analogous experience it can be coupled with, asking how a making is a thinking in its own right, asking what that thinking might be able *to do*.

The analogous experience that perhaps most strongly connects to the way in which making and thinking combine in research-creation is philosophy, philosophy taken as a force of appetite, as a “hypothetical sympathy” in the intuitive making—but only if philosophy is first acknowledged as a practice of making and thinking in its own right, and art is understood not as an object-making proposition but as a manner, a way, a trajectory alive with the making in the thinking.

In these cases, what philosophy can do is begin to attend to the appetitions activated by the artistic process, taking the thinking-in-the-act not as directly philosophical but as speculative, rigorous on its own terms. Philosophy can then begin to cocompose with the urge at the heart of this incipient thought-in-the-doing. No method will ever assist philosophy in this enterprise, nor will any method take the artist closer to the philosophical concept, for philosophy and art do not fit together in any preordered way. Only technique will help, as long as technique remains immanent to the process at hand.

This transversal activation of the relational fields of thinking and doing is what I am calling research-creation. Here there is no question, it seems to me, that what is at stake is the very redefinition of knowledge, for what research-creation does is ask us to engage directly with a process that, in many cases, will not be or cannot be articulated in language. Philosophically,

the effects of this are an opening towards a speculative pragmatism that defies existing understandings of where knowledge is situated and what it can do. Innate knowledge, for instance, intuition, speculation—all of these are frowned upon within any methodological approach, unless they can somehow be quantified. We need look no further than our own PhD programs in research-creation to see that our emphasis on the written document is about situating incipency, locating intuition, managing speculation.

Research-creation does not need new methods. What it needs is a re-counting of what writing can do in the process of thinking-doing. At its best, writing is an act, alive with the rhythms of uncertainty and the openings of a speculative pragmatism that engages with the force of the milieu where transversality is at its most acute. These, however, are not generally speaking, the documents we require from students of research-creation. What we require are documents that facilitate the task of evaluation, writing that describes, orients, defends. This is the paradox: we are excited by the openings research-creation provides and yet remain largely unwilling to take them on their own terms and experiment with them as new modes of existence and new forms of knowledge. We remain held by existing methods, it seems to me, because we remain incapable (or unwilling) to evaluate knowledge on its own incipient terms or, better, to engage productively with new concepts of valuation.

The challenge that research-creation poses is one that touches on the very core of what the university has come to recognize as knowledge. By inadvertently acknowledging that non-linguistic practices are forms of knowledge in their own right, we face the hurdle that's been with us all along: how do we evaluate process? Certainly, we have developed models of evaluation, and with them methods of inquiry, but have these methods really been successful in producing the most exciting thought, the most inventive practices?

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 6—ON METAMODELING

Several decades ago, Felix Guattari faced similar questions. Having gone through a lengthy analysis with Jacques Lacan and having himself entered the field of psychiatry, he began to ask himself whether the models at hand would be capable of supporting (let alone creating) new modes of existence. "From the start, psychoanalysis tried to make sure that its categories were in agreement with the normative models of the period," he writes (1984, p. 85). Everywhere around him, the emphasis was on language, and on neurosis. What of the modes of articulation, he wondered, that precede or exceed language? What about modes of subjectivity that cannot be defined through the split between subject and object, analyst and analysand? What of modes of existence that defy neurosis (and its oedipal tendencies), that open up new kinds of encounters with experience? And how might we get beyond models when transference is itself such a powerful model? As

Guattari writes, “Regardless of the particular psychoanalytic curriculum, a reference to a pre-determined model of normality remains implicit within its framework. The analyst, of course, does not in principle expect that this normalization is the product of a pure and simple identification of the analysand with the analyst, but it works no less, and even despite him [. . .] as a process of identification of the analysand with a human profile that is compatible with the existing social order” (Guattari, 1996, pp. 65–66).

Schizoanalysis was Guattari’s antimodel proposition. He called it a “metamodel.” A metamodel, for Guattari, was a proposition that would upset existing formations of power and knowledge, challenging the tendency of models to “operate largely by exclusion and reduction, tightly circumscribing their applications and contact with heterogeneity” (Murphie & Genosko, 2008, n.p.). Metamodeling would make felt lines of formation, not starting from one model in particular but actively taking into account the plurality of models vying for fulfillment. Metamodeling is against method, active in its refutation of preexisting modes of existence, “meta in the sense of mapping abstract formative conjunctions, in continuing variation, across varying deflections” (Manning & Massumi, in press). As Andrew Murphie and Gary Genosko write,

Metamodeling de-links modeling with both its representational foundation and its mimetic reproduction. It softens signification by admitting a-signifying forces into a model’s territory; that is, the centrality and stability of meaningfulness is displaced for the sake of singularity’s unpredictability and indistinctness. What was hitherto inaccessible is given room to manifest and project itself into new and creative ways and combinations. Metamodeling is in these respects much more precarious than modeling, less and less attached to homogeneity, standard constraints, and the blinkers of apprehension. (2008, n.p.)

Whether we call it metamodeling, or whether we simply attend to the complex deflections and conjunctions of a radical empiricism, it is the question of how knowledge is crafted that is key. An engaged encounter with the very constitutive nature of knowledge—be it at the level of new forms of subjectivity broached by schizoanalysis, or in the reorientation of how thinking and doing coexist—is necessarily a disruptive operation that risks the dismantling of the strong lines drawn at the edges of disciplines and modes of existence. Of course, we’ve been saying this, in one way or another, for decades, and disciplinarity does tend to win out, again and again.¹² But perhaps ours is another moment, a moment in which the very fact of the academic institution and its role in society are being questioned. Perhaps by emphasizing the transversality of research-creation what is made possible is a rethinking of how knowledge can and does escape instrumentality, bringing back an aesthetics of experience where it is needed most: in the field of learning.

In the context of schizoanalysis, Guattari writes,

With respect to schizoanalysis [. . .] it is clear that it cannot pose itself as a general method which would embrace the ensemble of problems and new social practices. [. . .] Without pretending to promote a didactic program, it is a matter of constituting networks and rhizomes in order to escape the systems of modelization in which we are entangled and which are in the process of completely polluting us, heart and mind [. . .] At base, schizoanalysis only poses one question: “how does one model oneself?” [. . .] Schizoanalysis [. . .] is not an alternative modelization. It is a metamodelization. It tries to understand how it is that you got where you are. “What is your model to you?” It does not work?—Then, I don’t know, one tries to work together [. . .] There is no question of posing a standard model. And the criterion of truth in this comes precisely when the metamodeling transforms itself into self-modeling [automodalization], or self-management [auto-gestion], if you prefer. (1996, p. 133, translation modified)

Against method is not simply an academic stance. Much more is at stake here. How you get where you are is an operative question. What models model you? What else can be created, sympathetically, in the encounter? What kind of modeling is possible, in the event? These questions cannot be abstracted from the question of value as it is defined by current capitalist practices, practices that take knowledge as an instrumental aspect of added value or, in the artistic realm, prestige-value. How do we operate transversally to such capitalist capture? What new processes of valuation can be experimented and what will be the effect, for knowledge, of such experimentations?

New modes of valuation will make apparent the cleft in the very question of what constitutes knowledge, making felt the share of unknowability within knowing. To attend to the cleft in creative and generative ways, we must engage not only the register of conscious knowing, but also that of the in-act of intuition that takes as its project the complexity that is the event’s middling into experience. A leap must be made, and it is a leap that is undoubtedly disorienting.

He who throws himself into the water, having known only the resistance of the solid earth, will immediately be drowned if he does not struggle against the fluidity of the new environment: he must perforce still cling to that solidity, so to speak, which even water presents. Only on this condition can he get used to the fluid’s fluidity. So of our thought, when it has decided to make the leap. (Bergson, 1998, p. 193)

Research-creation embraces the leap, and radical empiricism proposes a technique to compose with it across transversal fields of inquiry. What

emerges across this cleft cannot be mapped in advance. “Thousands and thousands of variations on the theme of walking will never yield a rule for swimming: come, enter the water, and when you know how to swim, you will understand how the mechanism of swimming is connected with that of walking” (Bergson, 1998, p. 193). Making and thinking, art and philosophy, will never resolve their differences, telling us in advance how to compose across their incipient deviations. Each step will be a renewal of how this event, this time, this problem, proposes this mode of inquiry, in this voice, in these materials, this way. At times, in retrospect, the process developed might seem like a method. But repeating it will never bring it back, for techniques must be reinvented at every turn and thought must always leap.

NOTES

1. The Canadian agency for government funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSHRC) implemented research-creation as a funding category in 2003. Since then, it has continued to honor its commitment to artists, now making it possible to apply for any large grant with a research-creation project. This has on the one hand been very productive for artists within the academy, but it has also segregated forms of knowledge—“research”—to specific categories, foregrounding methodological knowledge on the one hand and industry-oriented knowledge-transfer on the other. What it hasn’t been able to engage is the kind of speculative knowledge art is best at producing.
2. I am thinking here of two scenarios, both of which I see in the university setting. The first is the general distrust, within studio departments, of practices that have a strong philosophical component. Here, the fear seems to be that the art will be stifled, which does tend to happen when a theoretical model is simply imposed (from outside) onto the art object. Another example of the theory-practice split happens in the wider arena of the humanities, particularly where there are interdisciplinary research-creation programs. Here, I observe professors lamenting the lack of clear articulation of a project, wishing it had a stronger theoretical backbone, which too often means putting the practice aside in lieu of a more art-historical approach. Neither of these tendencies is productive, it seems to me. What I am proposing here is quite different: an approach that takes the art process as generative of thought, and that transversally connects that thought-in-the act to a writing practice.
3. The SenseLab (www.senselab.ca) has been a creative incubator for this kind of thinking, engaging, as it has, with the question of how events can be created that open themselves to new forms of collaboration not only between different people but also between different kinds of practices.
4. The movement of thought is a concept that is often used with reference to Bergson’s work, particularly in Deleuze’s work on Bergson.
5. For more on the question of subjectivity understood as generative (active in an ecology of practices), see Guattari (2012).
6. Whitehead writes, “The range of species of living things is very large. It stretches from mankind throughout all the vertebrates, and the insects, and the barely organized animals which seem like societies of cells, and throughout the varieties of vegetable life, and down to the minutest microscopic forms of life. At the lower end of the scale, it is hazardous to draw any sharp distinction between living things and inorganic matter. There are two ways of surveying

this range of species. One way abstracts from time, and considers the variety of species as illustrating various levels of life. The other way emphasizes time, by considering the genetic relations of the species one to another. The latter way embraces the doctrine of evolution, and interprets the vanishing of species and of sporadically variant individuals, as being due to maladjustment to the environment. This explanation has its measure of truth: it is one of the great generalizations of science. But enthusiasts have so strained its interpretation as to make it explain nothing, by reason of the fact that it explains everything. We hardly ever know the definite character of the struggle which occasioned the disappearance. [. . .] The importance of the doctrine of the struggle for existence depends on the assumption that living beings reproduce themselves in sufficient numbers of healthy offspring, and that adaptation to the environment is therefore the only decisive factor. This double assumption of prolificness and of healthiness is obviously not always true in particular instances” (1929, pp. 5–7).

7. The use of “methodology” here raises the issue of the difference between method and methodology. I concur with Whitehead that the line between them is very fine. One need only consider the normative use of the term “methodology” as part of dissertations and grant applications to become aware that the term is generally conceived not as the reflection on the value of method but as the placeholder of certain disciplinary criteria. I am not saying, of course, that it is not possible to open method to its potential, but my preferred term for this would be technique, as technique better emphasizes the necessity for a process to itself define the limits of its actualization.
8. Appetition in Whitehead is similar to Spinoza’s definition of it. In *The Ethics*, Spinoza speaks of appetite as “appetite together with consciousness of the appetite” (in *Deleuze, 1988*, p. 20). What is key in Spinozist thought, as in Whitehead, is that “consciousness adds nothing to appetite (‘we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it’)” (*Ethics III*, 2 schol., cited in *Deleuze, 1988*, pp. 20–21).
9. I do this despite the fact that for Whitehead reason is “the appetite of appetite,” a second-order process of mentality. Whitehead writes, “The higher forms of intellectual experience only arise when there are complex integrations, and reintegrations, of mental and physical experience. Reason then appears as a criticism of appetitions. It is a second-order type of mentality. It is the appetite of appetitions. [. . .] Reason is the special embodiment in us of the disciplined counter-agency which saves the world” (1929, pp. 33–34).
10. For a more detailed account of Whitehead’s concept of the nexus, see Portanova, Scliar, and Prevost (2009).
11. Whitehead also refers to Descartes here. He writes, “But the word ‘feeling,’ as used in these lectures, is even more reminiscent of Descartes. For example: ‘Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling (sentire); and used in this precise sense that is no other thing than thinking’” (1978, p. 65).
12. This is apparent in both the art market context and in the academic institution. Artistic trajectories that do not map well on existing “disciplinary” trends are often overlooked, as are scholars whose practices are truly transversal. In my experience, it is quite common in a job interview, for instance, to look upon a scholar’s work with admiration, even while casting aside his or her application because he or she is seen not to have the means to adequately fulfill the needs of a given discipline. This always strikes me as odd, given the fact

that transdisciplinary thinkers are generally very creative and intelligent, and extremely capable of reorienting themselves where the need surfaces. Teaching an undergraduate course in a given discipline is often a task we relegate to the lesser-paid (and lesser valued) part-time academic staff rather than risk having it taught by someone who might make unexpected links, opening the discipline to new areas of investigation.

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