

Prospects for a Transdisciplinary Ecology

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I want to begin with a deceptively simple question. Why did the late French activist-intellectual Félix Guattari settle on a fixed number in his book *The Three Ecologies*?¹ How many ecologies are there, anyway? Well, if we believe Guattari, there are at least three. I do not know precisely how he arrived at this number. In lieu of what might count as solid autobiographic, explanatory evidence, then, or even other kinds of justifications based on precise theoretical or practical considerations, let's consider this number as a way of critically appreciating the tasks to which Guattari set these ecologies. But the questions pile up: how do these ecologies cohere? What are their constraints and combinational possibilities? Clearly, to speak of three is not so simple. The number of ecologies answer to Guattari's delineation of the ethical, aesthetic and political foundations of transdisciplinary knowledge. In fact, he brings together ecology and disciplinarity in order to pose the problem of what the passage from inter- to transdisciplinary knowledge looks like.²

Ecology is, in its plural, heterogeneous forms, not a conjuration (supernatural) but a conjugation (as in an interchange of closely related elements) with important qualifications and implications. Ecology in the plural does not offer a magical solution to the question of how disparate knowledges and practices cohere. It is not some sort of general pedagogy, a training course for which one might sign up. Guattari clearly rejected such a notion in order to exclude any pretenders to such specialized educational

expertise.³ Indeed, to invoke in the same introduction transdisciplinarity and ecology is not to “solve” anything. It may even appear tautological if by transdisciplinary one means more than a juxtaposition of many (multi-) and greater than a coordinated interconnection (inter-); thus, a somewhat rebellious and always critical kind of ecology of knowledge. When transdisciplinarity is used as a buzzword, an abracadabra word that merely anoints a project in the eyes of potential funders, as Guattari once put it, it changes nothing because nothing really changes at the level of process.⁴ Ecology served Guattari as an example of how to pose the question of transdisciplinarity on a large and stratified scale. In this he is not very original. However, within its plural form, ecology has for Guattari a macroscopic referent⁵; THINK and ACT GLOBALLY.⁶ Yet the macro is not divorced from the micro. The prospects of transdisciplinarity are thought through in terms of three (and maybe more) ecologies, the articulations of which demonstrate the difficulties, potentialities and stakes of knowledge and action in the face of global challenges. Although transdisciplinary ecology goes beyond the multi- and inter-disciplinary pretenders, it is not a higher level synthesis or overriding solution.

In terms of intellectual biography, Guattari shifted his exploration of transdisciplinary projects from groups and institutions to that of ecology later in his life, which is say, during his 50s. He spent most of his career experimenting with combinations of knowledge; indeed, from the time of his youth forward he lived a life of transdisciplinary implementation. Guattari created numerous experimental groups and publications, and participated in many other projects and institutions whose purpose was the exploration of organization through flexible participatory organigrammes, such as the evolving schedule of job rotation at Clinique de la Borde, where he worked as a

psychoanalyst for almost 40 years.⁷ This system was an analytic instrument by means of which individual and collective affects could be articulated with institutional demands (material, social, bureaucratic, therapeutic tasks) towards the goals of enriching social relations, promoting the assumption of responsibility, participating in collective inventions (local jargon development), not only for patients, but for doctors and support staff, as well. In short, he envisaged the transformation of those involved in the extraordinarily complex negotiations and interactions (progressive and regressive) entailed within the Clinique on daily, weekly, and monthly bases, and in longer cycles. Like the institution thus reconceived, ecology is a similar kind of hypercomplex operator, a catalyst of change, a caretaker of concern, with great and grave stakes. But the most important stake was the development of a new kind of subjectivity.

Guattari came to ecology in the latter half of the 1980s as an antidote to what he dubbed the “winter years” of the first half of that decade, which saw the rise of many conservatisms and neo-liberal economic policies, and the ascendancy of “vague vogues” like postmodernism, which he despised.⁸ The greyness of a political field perfused with sabre-rattling and the exponential expansion of what he called the unidimensionalizing forces of Integrated World Capitalism (what is now called Empire) on the back of rapid technological change yoked to reactionary social archaisms almost led to his permanent relocation from France to Brazil. In this respect Guattari’s encounter in 1982 with Lula da Silva, presently Brazil’s president, but then radical leader of the recently legalized Workers’ Party, allowed him to find some much needed energy in a revised, open unionism consonant with that of Solidarity in Poland.⁹ After the mid-80s Guattari struggled to gain some distance from the dirty tricks of the French state like the sinking

of Greenpeace's ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour. He visited Japan during this period on numerous occasions and became fascinated by the strange and singular turns that capitalist subjectivity was taking with the unprecedented wealth of the bubble economy. The year 1989, original publication date for *Les trois écologies* was not propitious for the environment: recall the massive oil spill in Prince William Sound off the Alaska coast caused when the Exxon tanker Valdez ran aground, creating long-standing ecosystemic damage. But by the same token, 1989 was a good year for thinking about the potential for collective social reinvention as the old Communism came crashing down with the Berlin Wall inaugurating a whole new set of relationships with an emergent eastern Europe.

What sort of ecologies do we get when a practising analyst and political radical schooled in far left social movements and transdisciplinary experimentation gets ahold of them? What we get are ecologies that can be represented by *écosophes* such as Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett.¹⁰ You won't find Kafka or Beckett in your *Dictionary of the Environment*. I cannot do justice in this presentation to Guattari's far-reaching critique of psychotherapeutic methodologies; suffice to say that his vision of ecology's psychological dimension owed less to the standard bearers of Freud, Lacan and Klein than to "ecologists of the phantasm" like Marquis de Sade, or master of the refrain, Marcel Proust, to both of whom Guattari regularly turned when he wanted to tackle the most intractable problems of the psyche.

There are, then, arts and logics of the eco; but also praxes of large-scale change linking micro and macro; varieties of ecology that encompass the environment at the macro-level in terms of the extent of ecocatastrophes (Chernobyl, global warming); social

relations at the intermediary level; and mental ecology at the micro or molecular level.¹¹

The threesome is multi-leveled, but the hierarchy is misleading if it leads one to think that the macro holds the greatest value. It is, for Guattari, precisely the opposite, which is perhaps not very surprising for a psychoanalyst to gravitate towards the psychical realm; nor for a seasoned thinker of collectivities, to situate the social in-between. Yet even this is oversimplifying since all the levels are intimately connected and solutions at one level entail changes at the others: earthly spheres, social tissues and worlds of ideas are not compartmentalized.

In an unpublished manuscript concerning the “Great Ecological Fear,” Guattari wrote of an iceberg: the tip, above water and visible, represented environmental disasters and menaces; down below the water line was the bulk of the worry, that is, the degeneration of social relations, like the rise of organized crime organizations in the detritus of Stalinism and as parasites of hypercapitalist growth, and mental pollution caused by media infantilization, passivity-inducing post-political cynicism. The iceberg represented a continuum of material encompassing the fabric of everyday life, large-scale crises, and habits of thought.¹²

My task today is to interrogate Guattari’s three ecologies in terms of the leading questions I have posed with careful attention to their prospects for a transformative thought and action that has been and will continue to be transmissible by artists and through the arts in general. This is neither meant to imply that artists should subordinate themselves to ecological imperatives, say, the amelioration of aesthetic degradation, nor that artistic practices can be adequately judged with reference to a transcendent concept like ecosystemic balance. Ecology is not art’s prop; neither is art ecology’s secret

weapon. These restraints are helpful if only to underline that the interrogation of the three involves transits across, transformative powers, and nothing less portentous than, as Guattari claimed, “the production of human existence itself in new historical contexts.” (34)

Three Ecologies

For Guattari, there are three fundamental types of ecology: environmental, social and mental. (35) These types – biospherical, social relations, human subjectivity - are also figured as registers and “multipolar issues” (29) whose ethico-political articulation, as opposed to technocratic solution, is the proper concern of ecosophy. (28) What makes this articulation superior to technocratic solution-mongering, for instance, the American model of emissions trading which displaces industrial pollution instead of reducing it, is that it will effect a revolution of the subject formations and social groupings charged with tackling ecological issues. In the absence of such profound change at the level of mentalities, that is, of real existential mutations, even the proffering of technocratic solutions lacks the resolve for their authentic deployment. The will, in short, is just not there. This is not a wholesale rejection of technology and international environmental bureaucracies, and environmental science, for that matter, which are often subsumed by and reduced to oft-repeated and poorly understood slogans – Rio Declaration on sustainable development, Kyoto Protocols on climate change, to cite two examples from the 1990s. To the extent that Guattari tried to get beyond tired left-right, east-west, socialist-capitalist, science-anti-science distinctions, international initiatives hold some

promise in terms of the contribution they can make to the complexification of the contexts in which ecological issues are understood. During his lifetime Guattari was signatory to hundreds of good causes. Still, he sought to regain human values against an “unbelievable scientific myopia” that sometimes infects international conferences. Guattari had in mind the Heidelberg Appeal first presented at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and subsequently signed by thousands of scientists. This Appeal constituted a discrediting in the name of technoscientific elites of all naysayers as “irrational” romantics.¹³ What fails in such positioning is that the connection between the material and immaterial is not made, that is, the circle that includes the mutual need for change in material social and environmental conditions and in mentalities. This is what Guattari foregrounds in his conception of a generalized ecology, an ecosophy.¹⁴ There is no easy trade-off in Guattari’s work between a rejection of science and its replacement by art. On the contrary, he would reject any “unequivocal ideology” because it leads to profound impasses and implosions. Guattari wrote with a kind of desperation about the need for biomedical success in the fight against AIDS, for example. But such success would need to be channeled by ethical motivations “in less absurd, less dead-ended directions” than those dictated by interests based solely on profit, property, scarcity, and restricted distribution.¹⁵

By the same token, Guattari’s ecosophic perspective cannot be unified by the simple sloganeering of eco-revivalists, yet the three ecologies are “complementary headings” (41) and “points of view” that are, in effect, like “interchangeable lenses.” (42) Levels, types, views, visions, lenses – Guattari shifts his descriptors throughout his book. His goal is to elucidate the “common principle” of the three ecologies” in the

conception of subjectivity. This is his most original contribution to the theorization of ecology. In Guattari's thought concern with the quality of subjectivity is what holds together art and ecology.

The Guattarian subject is not an individual, an individuated person, thinking and thus being. No climax of philosophical striptease in ordinary intuition; no ego shipwrecked from real territories of existence, as he underlined (35). Rather, the Guattarian subject is an entangled assemblage of many components, a collective (heterogeneous, multiple) articulation of such components before and beyond the individual; the individual is like a transit station for changes, crossings, and switches. (36) In the development of Guattari's conceptual language, assemblage came to replace group. This is not to deny the existence of core elements; on the contrary, there are nuclei or especially dense crossing points where interiority is found and from which energy can be extracted for further differentiation, complexification and enrichment. Such nuclei replaced for Guattari the prevailing psychoanalytic languages of complex, system, and structure, making subjectivity irreducible to a universal syntax, mathemes, imagos, mythemes, etc. This subject is also polyphonic - of many relatively independent parts - because it assembles components in order to posit itself in terms of some points of reference (body, social clusters, etc), in an existential territory, a field in which it is incarnated, but out of which it also ventures. For this productive self-positing is relational, both subsuming autonomous affects of the pre-personal and pre-verbal world, and multitudinous social constructions. Emergent and processual, producing and produced by mutual self-engenderings, the subject emerges as it finds a certain existential consistency, without getting tied down to an identity once and for all, in the crossing

points of components, in their intra- and inter-assemblage relations, sometimes deflating into involutions, blockages, and encystments; at other times taking off through transformations (potential consistencies). Open and full of potential, this subject is truly a work in progress/process outflanking both essentialist and constructionist postulates. Radically creative and at times aggravating in its abstractness, “subjectivity still gets a bad press,” Guattari admitted (36). This is hardly determinative. The stakes are high and this abstruseness is a cost, I think, of escaping from takeovers and annexations by fixed and single and exterior coordinates – psychoanalytic, structural, or postmodern “plinths” upon which the subject may be mounted like a botched taxidermic specimen.¹⁶

For Guattari, the three ecologies point the way toward emancipatory praxes whose “major objective [is] to target the modes of production of subjectivity, that is, knowledge, culture, sensibility and sociability...” (49) Ecology’s business is to attend to the regimes by means of which subjectivity is produced and to intervene in them. Ecology is readied for this task by Guattari insofar as he shifts into the delineation of the dynamics of ecology – how the three ecologies communicate (the terms are affective intensities rather than delimited sets like stages, complexes, linear phaseal developments, or universal structural coordinates). Although Guattari abandoned typical psychoanalytic psychogenetic stages for the sake of a hetero-genetic becoming (giving to singularization a constancy), he still needed to retain some sense of a self’s prospective unfolding without slavishly adhering to a developmental model punctuated by decisive events and sticking points. Only an emergent self would suffice; and the phases of such an emergent organization, while at work over time from childhood through adulthood, would also be parallelly available in different degrees and combinations over a life time.

One of the ways in which Guattari translated this insight into practical criticism may be seen in his observations on the American “artificial realist” painter George Condo. Guattari observed that critics of Condo’s work experienced an acute disorientation before his paintings of figures (many with comic, contorted heads) in landscapes. The cataloguing of countless modern masters as seminal influences and the proliferation of reference points which a single Condo painting seems to visit, often subsuming several periods of a given painter’s works, led Guattari to suggest the following to Condo about the polyphonic character of his work: “all your periods coexisted – blue, clown, linear, volumical, monochrome, etc. It is like a symphony articulating all the levels of your “self”, simultaneously exploring and inventing it through your painting.”¹⁷ The details of this example are perhaps less pertinent than the translation of the coexistence of stratifications of subjectivity (with varying degrees of formedness, capacity to be shared, what one might call degrees of fixity) onto periods of painting each with its distinctive thematics. This example of what might be called transversal criticism – a tool for the enactment of an adventurous connectivity that skirts around the abyss of a list of influences and precursors that only point towards the past and freezes Condo’s work in a crowded representational space, and brings the paintings flush with the engendering of a subjective territory.

Eco-logic concerns new incarnations of subjectivity in partially formed existential territories not yet yoked to normalized extrinsic pillars, whether these are certain family members, respectable academic grammars, religious fixations or aesthetic styles. This lack of fixity is a fecund amodality (an abstract, intense feeling of vitality not object-oriented or attached to causes) that is ripe for the eco-logic. This is where the logic turns

to praxis. The eco-praxes “scout out” (45) somewhat opportunistically “catalysts of existential change” that lack solid support in the assemblage yet are full of passive potential for swerving from normality, running counterclockwise, as it were, but not running completely amok, either. Of course, this is also where things can also go horribly wrong. Instead of summoning forth and assisting new traits of subjective particularity, incomparable singularities breed banal imitations or, we get another aneconomic myth of a return to Nature or similarly counterproductive manifestation (Sea Shepherd Society threatening the lives of Newfoundland sealers). Eco-praxes are on the watch for dissident vectors, ruptures and mutations of subjectification in all walks of life and thus in all the ecologies and in any existential territory. But these have to be delicately “turned” toward productive and active ends and provided with scaffoldings and guy-ropes so they do not just twist in the wind.

Eco-logic is by definition activist, but not in a narrow sense – vigorous, yes; dedicated, certainly; but not motivated by single issue ecopolitics, or animated by the generation of a paper trail of non-binding agreements. It is coloured, perhaps a better term would be marbled, by a therapeutic ethos. Guattari doesn’t simply exclude the political goals of “single-issue” ecological movements or “archaic attachments” to Walden Pond or the stereotype of the “eco-Indian,” but instead occupies different ground: “Ecology,” he wrote, “must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists.” (52)

Indeed, Guattari himself talked the talk and walked the walk since he entered into the fray of French Green politics by taking out memberships in both of the groups into which the movement had split, not with the goal of reunifying the politics whose social

ecology was the economy and the militants who went out and defended the earth, but, of inhabiting a social ecology torn asunder by leadership quarrels, in order to explore the potential for collectively discovering, with the others who followed his lead, not another tired axis (left, right, or neither), but a new way of working together. And it is for this effort that his Green colleagues remembered him.

Breakaway components of subjectification must be handled with care and sobriety, even so, the gentle loosening and tutelage of such catalytic components (or segments thereof) inevitably leads for Guattari, using a chemical metaphor for precipitating change, to certain kinds of redundancies (what he calls existential refrains) in a given assemblage upon which subjectivity becomes focused or which fixes subjectivity in a way that interrupts the diversity of the components at play. Despite everything else going on, one is glued to the television set whose screen then becomes a circumscribed existential territory.¹⁸ Examples of complex refrain motifs are found by Guattari across the arts - in fiction, theatre, visual art, with a preponderance of musical examples, even in literature (the model being *la petite phrase* that captivated Swann in the salon of Madame Verdurin).¹⁹ Refrains (recurrent beatings of time understood in relation to a milieu and its components) are established when motifs are detached from the flux of components, when an established texture is interrupted and a motif curls up without spinning around hopelessly, acquiring the ability to generate a positive process of self-reference. This is not such a rarified phenomenon for after all it happens with those few notes from pop songs that occasionally come back to one as motifs detached from personal turning points or lingering, somewhat autonomous, affective qualities; but, instead of inviting us into rich universes of personal reference, reactivated in the present

for the future, they find themselves hijacked and afixed to automobile tires or boxes of breakfast cereal. Subjectivity shifts but merely onto commodities (capitalistic refrains of advertising), thus restricting its potential for enhancing and enriching itself through the exploration of its own universes of value.

Eco-praxes try to nurture the ruptures and flights of catalysts of change and their productive evolutions, keeping them from turning in circles, getting “shut inside” the Nintendo universe, trapped in the compounds of reality TV programs or in the “doped voids” of classic rock revivals. Enthusiastically, but vaguely, some performance art, Guattari thought, “shoves our noses up against the genesis of beings and forms, before they get a foothold in the dominant redundancies – of styles, schools, and traditions of modernity.”²⁰ Guattari draws on numerous examples from the arts because for him these are positive paradigms, though at times vertigo-inducing, of how the full implications of subjectivity’s mutational forward flight from consumerism and other “steamrollers” and “contractions” can be explored both by creators themselves, observers, critics, and non-experts. He even reserves art’s traditional role of providing refuge for dissident vectors of expression (46). Still, “this is not about making artists the new heroes of the revolution,” Guattari insisted.²¹ It is about the aesthetic dimension of eco-praxis. Ecosophic activism “resembles” the work of artists in extracting details that serve as path-breakers for subjective development and as guidance in responsibly negotiating refrains. (52)

Circa 1989, Guattari was moved by the work of New Yorker David Wojnarowicz, especially in terms of the queer activist aesthetics that this painter and writer knit into his provocative critiques of healthcare (especially redesigned money) in the US that “trigger

an existential movement, if not of revolt, at least of existential creativity.”²² This entails that ecosophic artists are engaged in a form of anti-Empire critique since work on the multitude of dissident, singularizing vectors of subject-formation goes hand-in-hand with this, with the Guattarian proviso that there is no falling back on old state-socialism or the welfare state, nor pre-fab dialectical solutions. (52-3) Thus, Guattari tended to privilege so-called political art (Wojnarowicz’s production of an accelerated reaction of viewers with regard to the politics of the management of AIDS as a global phenomenon), but not absolutely, since there are no guarantees that catalytic components will be engaged, and ethico-aesthetic commitments will be generated. There are many possible strategies in this area. For example, Canadian photographer Ian Wallace treats the assembly of anti-logging protesters at Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia in 1993 through a style of disrupted documentation that attempts to provide some partial existential support for collective action by underplaying the highlights of protest and arrest and refusing to indulge in star-focused rally reportage (in one instance seated protesters are looking in every direction but towards a speaker with a microphone atop a van).

The artistic examples that Guattari mentioned over the course of his life-work are too numerous and diverse to constitute a definitive aesthetic, except that this alone tells us of the importance of heterogeneity, yet his emphasis was on forging new value-systems (not simply renewing existing traditions of militancy,) short of offering a fully elaborated alternative. On this point Guattari was quite candid. (66) Yet the ethico-aesthetic contact point between art and its audiences involved for Guattari inducements precipitating the assumption of responsibility in a transference of singularities leading to the assembling of new constellations of components with their own intrinsic and extrinsic

relations. The ability of buildings like Shin Takamatsu's signature works of the 1980s and early 90s in Kyoto and Osaka (like ARK, Pharaoh, Kirin Plaza, Syntax and Imanishi) to effect a profound transformation of many of the facets of their urban environment, was for Guattari a key example of existential transferences brought about by contextual mutations that trigger in each person gripped by the vision of the architectural project their own taking of initiative within the new existential territories and worlds of reference thus opened up before them²³ For Guattari, stellar architectural projects provided evidence of changes in habits, routines, spatio-temporal coordinates, opening cracks in interpretive grids, and rearranging situatedness for those who occupy and work in them, pass through, or simply observe. Guattari was thinking less about influence than inspiration, a kind of contact with works that gets collective subjects moving towards the acquisition of the means for their own production.

Refrains can be quite precarious. They may implode psychically in deathly repetition. But Guattari's myriad artistic examples possess an open precarity, the capacity to sustain "praxic openings-out" from an existential territory that do not remain trapped by exploitative coordinates or wrapped up in post-political alienation.(53) Not only are these openings enunciated but they find a consistency that makes them habitable by politically, ethically, aesthetically, and psychoanalytically engaged projects; this is certainly not the psychoanalysis that Slavoj Zizek describes as miserably giving one the freedom not to enjoy as much as one wants!²⁴ Being carried beyond familiar territories into alterities of all sorts permits the emergence of new valorisations, new social practices, new subjectivities. Artists can provide the means for these creative forward flights, these breakaways. For Guattari, art begins with the expressive features of a

territory that become for its inhabitants flight paths beyond its borders. Art begins not with a home but with a house, not with inner-directedness, but with outer-directedness; when in 1993 Rachel Whiteread set up her casting operation on Grove Road she turned what was once a home inside out into a house by filling in all the frames and planes and sections so that the work could not shelter anything, but simply point outward, the functional having become expressive and mobile.²⁵

Tri-Ecological Vision

The paths of this vision may be “tangled,” (67) but Guattari’s call for the “permanent recreation of the world” begins by attending to a melody of nature and art that suggested “renam[ing] environmental ecology *machinic ecology*.” (66) The unity of biosphere and mechanosphere means that biological life, including human being, is involved in the vast techno-informatic infrastructures in the era of planetary computerization and the IT revolution. Subjectivity is thus dependent on machinic phyla (telecommunications; synthetics; new temporalities brought about by increasing processing capacities; and biogenetic engineering of life forms) and engenders itself with machinic components from ipods to iris scans.²⁶ This did not displace the biospherical challenge of large scale problems like ozone depletion, for instance; on the contrary, the machinic dimension of the depletion of stratospheric ozone by catalytic chain reactions initiated by imbalances introduced by CFCs and Halons is well recognized. It also meant for Guattari that eco-praxes at the environmental level on “natural equilibria” would involve more and more sophisticated interventions and transversal criticisms – like the “hamburger connection”

that linked rainforest habitat destruction for pasture with fast food; or, the algae bloom in the Venice lagoon that Guattari linked to the proliferation of exploitative New York real estate redevelopers (Trump algae) who generate unknown levels of homelessness and despair in poisoned social urban ecologies (43). The reconstruction of group belonging and institutional life, driven by processes of subjectification that find in realms both intimate, even fantasmatic and more distant, perhaps objective ways of reevaluating the censoring and concealing shrouds (68) engulfing them, begins at the most “miniscule level” (69) but opens toward the global. The omnidirectional openness of subjectivity needs, Guattari also warned, to find real existential anchors and outlets that allow it to simultaneously install itself in all three ecologies, lest it fly away from lack of consistency and perspective. (69)

Transdisciplinary Ecology

Asking after the number of ecologies is not really a quantitative question at all. Readers of *The Three Ecologies* are in much the same position as Gilles Deleuze before the triptychs of Francis Bacon. Deleuze discovered the non-linear distribution of forces whose laws of rhythm make visible invisible musical temporalities across the three panels, and this led him to conclude that there are only triptychs in Bacon.²⁷ Guattari’s three ecologies are themselves evidence of his refusal of transcendent judgement,²⁸ synthesized or subsumed; the three ecologies maintain the paradigm of creativity, soberly serving crossings and connections across disparate domains, running from the intimate, everyday to the planetary in scale. In theorizing this complex three, Guattari showed how

to grasp the generality of ecological vision. The three ecologies are an assemblage that shows how disparate domains constantly engage one another. There is a transference here between art's and ecology's hope in the creation of new universes of value. Looking through the lenses of the three ecologies one sees, better, one senses a possible, not yet real, but unfolding itself toward actualization, and for which one is always responsible, as existential grounds are sought for the incorporeal universes brought into being.

Transdisciplinary ecology is inspired by the interdependent hypercomplexity of its object or problem – that of subjectivity. Unlike so many contemporary definitions of the term, this transdisciplinarity does not seek a transcendent, extrinsic ground or plane for the subject from which its parameters and obligations issue forth.²⁹ Its knowledge is engaged, ethico-aesthetic and political, for it seeks nothing less than creating conditions conducive to subjectivity's self-transformation. Guattarian transdisciplinarity does not seek to transcend, it seeks to transform. It doesn't recoil from chaos. It doesn't solve the problem of chaos by positing a fixed, univocal ground, thereby vouchsaying the differentiated "subject." It is not forever on the path back from chaos.³⁰ It doesn't retrieve a unity from the "massive and immediate ensemble of contextual diversity,"³¹ thus turning around the alleged degradations of flux, but in the very act of assisting subjectivity in finding a position, a "node" around which a territory can be built and universes of meaning find affirmation, chaos in all its discomfort is respected, its textures analyzed, and its tributaries explored. "Emergence" in this sense is not toward a higher level of abstract integration, but is something that must be continuously confronted and permanently reappraised. Art can provide model for subjectivity's eco-conscious heterogeneous explorations, without betraying their singular textures and crushing their

freedoms. Of course, artists have to grapple with their own social ecologies of the schools, gallery system, art market, and fashions of criticism, in which they place themselves, and whose dictates do not make a turn toward singular Guattarian theories all that obvious! After all, nobody studies “subjectification” in art school.

More and more Guattari tended to refer simply to “aesthetic perception” while eschewing stylistic categorisations. Through this perception one may be oriented towards ecosophic activism of the highest order by exploring refrains and extracting innovative segments of components in collective processes of subjectification, the existential impacts of which are never decided in advance. Near the end of his final book *Chaosmosis*, Guattari stated: “Perhaps artists today constitute the final lines along which primordial existential questions are folded?”³² This sober “perhaps” simply tells us that while artists do contribute important components to the tri-ecological vision, there are no guarantees: it is no easy task to throw off certain self-satisfactions of creativity, deal with incomprehension and marginality, expand one’s world so as to take responsibility for matters that were once conveniently outside one’s purview and, adapt one’s means of working in accordance with the demands of contributing to collective processes of subjectification – an inspiration and object that is, frankly, as much a matter of the self-transformation of artists themselves as it concerns the renewals and deviations initiated by works of art.

Notes

1. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, London: The Athlone Press, 2000 (orig. *Les trois écologies*, Paris: Galilée, 1989). All references to this book are given in the body of the text.
2. “Les fondements éthico-politique de l’interdisciplinarité” (handwritten text), Fonds Félix Guattari (IMEC) ET 10-24 (1991 avril).
3. Ibid., p. 15.
4. “De la pluridisciplinarité à la transdisciplinarité,” written with Sergio Vilar (Barcelona-Paris sept 1992). Fond Felix Guattari (IMEC) ET 05-13, p. 6.
5. Guattari, *La Philosophie est essentielle à l’existence humaine*, entretien avec Antoine Spire, Michel Field and Emmanuel Hirsch, Paris: Editions Aube, 2002, p. 47.
6. Verena Conley, “New Ecological Territories,” in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. G. Genosko, volume 2, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 651.
7. See my essay “Félix Guattari: Towards a transdisciplinary metamethodology,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 8/1 (April 2003): 129-40, and Guattari, “La ‘grille’,” *Chimères* 34 (1998): 7-20.
8. Jean Chesnaux (and Roger Gentis), “Félix, Our Friend,” in *D&G: Critical Assessments*, v. II, p. 544.

9. See “Summit of Radicals” in my *The Party without Bosses: Lessons on Anti-Capitalism from Félix Guattari and Luís Inácio ‘Lula’ da Silva*. Semaphore Series. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2003.
10. Guattari, *La Philosophie*, p. 42. Also, Guattari, “L’intervention institutionnelle,” Fonds Félix Guattari (IMEC), typescript of an interview. ET 09-26 (1980), p. 146.
11. Guattari, *La Philosophie*, p. 47.
12. Guattari, “La grand-peur écologique,” handwritten mss. Fonds Félix Guattari (IMEC) ET 10-03.
13. Guattari, “Remaking Social Practices,” in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. G. Genosko, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 264.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 268
16. See Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, London: Reaktion Books, 2000, p. 63.
17. Guattari, “Introduction,” in George Condo, Paris: Daniel Templon, 1990, p. 5. See also Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, trans. P. Bains and J. Pefanis, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 6-7. And Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, London: Continuum, 2002, p. 49ff.
18. “Guattari, “Subjectivities: For Better and for Worse,” in *The Guattari Reader*, pp. 199-200.
19. Guattari, “Les Ritournelles du temps perdu,” in *L’inconscient machinique*, Fontenay-sous-Bois: Recherches, 1979, p. 239ff.
20. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 90.
21. Ibid., p. 91.

22. Guattari, "David Wojnarowicz," *Rethinking Marxism* 3/1 (Spring 1990): 76-7.
23. Guattari, "Les machines architecturales de Shin Takamatsu," *Chimères* 21 (Hiver 1994): 127-41.
24. Hear his remarks in Ben Wright's film, *Slavoj Zizek: The Reality of the Virtual* (2004).
25. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 183-86.
26. Guattari, "Regimes, Pathways, Subjects," in *The Guattari Reader*, p. 103.
27. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. D.W. Smith, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 70.
28. "I refuse transcendent judgements." Guattari, "Entretien," by E. Videcoq and J.-Y. Spanel, *Chimères* 28 (Printemps-été 1996): 22.
29. Several participants in the colloquium on transdisciplinarity at L'Abbaye de Royaumont call for a "transcendent language" or "transcendent explanatory power." M. A. Somerville and D. J. Rapport (eds.), *Transdisciplinarity: reCreating Intergrated Knowledge*, Oxford: EOLSS, 2000.
30. Famously, E.O. Wilson wrote about the "path back from chaos" and this is picked up as a definition of transdisciplinarity by one the editors (Rapport) of the volume *Transdisciplinarity* previously cited, p. 135.
31. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 80.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 133.