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Disciplinarity, Cross-Disciplinarity and 'Performance'

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Working paper no 70, 2010

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ISBN

87-91690-73-0

1. Introduction

This paper explores various forms of what will be termed cross-disciplinarity (C-D) and the intellectual consequences of the adoption of C-D methods for social scientific analysis (though the moves towards the adoption of C-D methods are not confined just to the social sciences and humanities). C-D is used as a generic category to express a range of what are often labelled interdisciplinary approaches to analytical problems. But for reasons which should become clear later I reserve the term 'inter-disciplinarity' for a particular mode of analytical thought that challenges the ubiquity and solidity of traditional disciplinarity as usually understood. Thus the paper explores all those ways that intellectual disciplinary structures have come into critical focus, and the terminologies that are deployed to express the challenges to the homogeneity of the disciplines. It is suggested that we live in a world where C-D is increasingly celebrated, and part of the paper investigates the possible reasons for the rise of this intellectual trend and style of analysis, and its consequences.

For the most part the paper is suggestive and exploratory. Since there are many terms in play in these discussions a preliminary focus of the paper is on providing some intellectual clarity in respect to the terminological abundance that typifies this area. This involves drawing careful distinctions between various forms of C-D. Unless we are sure of precisely what we are talking about – in terms of both the idea of the disciplines and of C-D – further elaboration of consequences may prove unhelpful. But at this stage the claim is no more than to provide a preliminary specification of these formulations. This is a complex area where positions still remain fluid enough to warrant a note of caution in trying to tie everything down prematurely.

And this note of caution is particularly appropriate for the discussion of the possible reasons for the emergence of a strong cross-disciplinary complex, and its consequences and implications. Here the paper becomes even more speculative. In asking what the consequences of this C-D mood might be, the paper concentrates upon the issue of its implications for the difference between theory and methodology, and particularly for what it says about the *status of theory*. What does 'doing theory' mean in an overtly C-D context? As will be seen, this is not an easy question to answer. But in responding to it the paper raises several issues about another strong contemporary intellectual trend; that associated with the notion of 'performativity'. Here the claim is that theory is increasingly being recast in terms of its performativity, and the paper tries to demarcate various senses of performativity operating in the context of theoretical endeavours undertaken in a C-D framework.

2. The Disciplines and Disciplinarity

Let us begin with the disciplines. There are several aspects of disciplines that are thought to typify them and provide them with their intellectual strength. These aspects are central to the popular beliefs about the disciplines. And they provide a framework for the defence of the integrity of disciplines against attempts to loosen the grip on disciplinary activity with the advance of several forms of what is called 'cross-disciplinarity', which are discussed in a moment.

The first characteristic argued to typify traditional disciplines is that they display a certain *unity*: a unity in their problematics, in their categories, and in their techniques of investigation. This unity provides the disciplines with a coherent intellectual field or purpose, associated with a singular and homogeneous 'object' of investigation: the biological world, the economy, medical conditions, etc.

The second characteristic aspect of disciplines is a certain *rigour* in respect to their procedures and methods of investigation. Such a rigorous discipline ensures against the perils of sloppy thinking, against the dilution of their approaches which threatens to undermine the forcefulness, authenticity and authority of their analytical results and truth claims.

The third aspect is a certain *autonomy* in their modes of existence. This autonomy has two basic features. They are autonomous from each other, and they are autonomous from the powers or authorities that might wish to appropriate them. There is all manner of institutionalization of the disciplines designed to ensure against possible encroachments on their separated territorial identities: professionalization, specialist organizations of support and dissemination, academic departmentalization, publishing outlets, etc.

What these three basic characteristic aspects do is to enable the disciplines to maintain their independence, from one another and from those who might wish to control them. They support the self-confidence of the disciplines, providing them with a seeming strength, authority and singularity of purpose. They enable 'boundary maintenance' (Abbot 2001), which is such an important part of the 'disciplinary complex'. The disciplines fiercely defend their particular intellectual and organizational 'patch'.

If this represents in outline the popular beliefs about the disciplines --which is not to say that it is only held by those who actually know little about disciplinarity since it also represents the self-belief of those who are intimately involved with the disciplines and their defence -- what are we to make of these 'defensive' claims? The argument made here is to suggest that the disciplines display few if any of these features in their actual day to day practices: they are not unified, they are not

rigorous, and nor are they autonomous in the senses outlined above. In fact the disciplines are always already compromised, they are always subject to cross-fertilizations, and they are riddled with disputes.

Take the discipline of geography as an example. Is this unified? Hardly. It is riddled with disputes, for instance between 'physical geography' and various forms of 'cultural geography'. Similarly with psychology: here one of the main lines of fracture is between 'behavioural' and 'social' psychologists. These hardly speak to one another. But I would suggest that these are not isolated instances, and that such disputes – which involve issues associated with all three of the central aspects of disciplinarity outlined above – are an enduring feature of all the disciplines, at least to some extent. Obviously some display more of the characteristics of unity, rigour and autonomy than others, but few are completely exempt from some compromise and accommodation in respect to these.

3. What is Cross-Disciplinarity?

We now move on to those aspects of disciplinarity that consciously challenge the defensive self-representation of the homogeneity of disciplines (D) as just outlined. Here we discuss the following concepts: pre-disciplinarity (P-D), multi-disciplinarity (M-D), inter-disciplinarity (I-D), trans-disciplinarity (T-D), and, finally, post-disciplinarity (Pst-D). With the exception of a possible additional category discussed at the end of this section ('ill-disciplinarity' – II-D) this more or less exhausts the terminology at stake in these debates.

Pre-disciplinarity is a necessary concept to account for both the period before the traditional disciplines were founded, and as a category to illustrate the formation of 'new' disciplinary structures in the contemporary era. In large part the traditional disciplines were forged from disparate sets of practical knowledges, processes and methods, and dispersed cognitive and intellectual developments (see the discussion below on the construction of the 'persona' of the theorist). Some suggest these processes began as a result of the Renaissance, others only with the reform of the ancient -- and formation of the modern -- universities in the 19th Century (Fuller 2004). Taking 'astronomy' as an example, this combined optics and crucially its instruments, with early mathematics and physics. A more contemporary example is 'cultural studies' which involves the forging together of elements drawn from literary theory, sociology and anthropology.

If we skip traditional disciplinarity (D) as outlined above, the next category to consider is multi-disciplinarity. M-D is basically a process that brings together several separate disciplines to address a single object from their different perspectives. Thus this involves an accumulation of disciplinary perspectives focussing on the same object. An example would be 'urban studies', where this can be illuminated with the aid of sociology, economics, geography, municipal engineering, planning, etc. Thus M-D does not 'disturb' the disciplines as such but asks them to address the same issue from their different and already constituted intellectual stances, with the

anticipation that this will provide a richer analysis, adding insights that could not be generated from the application of just a single discipline.

The next category to consider is inter-disciplinarity. For the purposes of this paper I-D describes an 'aggregation' process of disciplinary perspectives. It relates to the way the disciplines are combined under an investigatory stance with respect to an issue, with the intention of producing a 'synthesis' between them. Thus whilst the integrity of the disciplines are still essentially 'preserved' in this process, it also seeks to synthesis their respective approaches; to add insights through a process of their re-assembly and re-configuration.

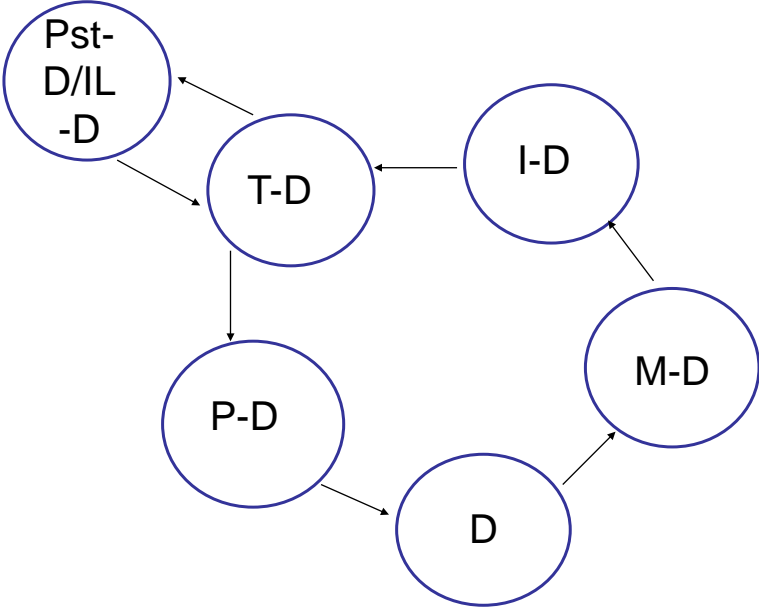
A further step along the process of disruption of the traditional effectivity of disciplinary activity – one that further questions their singular integrity -- is provided by trans-disciplinary approaches (*Futures*, 2003). The distinctive features of T-D approaches are that they overtly seek to 'transcend' or 'transform' the existing disciplinary structures and their descriptions. The objective is to produce *new* structures of intelligibility, *new* orders of knowledge, *new* techniques of intervention, and *new* forms of subjectivity. Above all, this is seen as an 'inventive' process: its outcomes are innovative and deliberately re-constructive.

This is somewhat in contrast to the idea of post-disciplinarity. Pst-D is deliberately 'de-constructive'; it trades on the idea that there can no longer be any form of stable disciplinary based discourse or boundaries (Turner 2006). These have been destroyed by several features of the post-modern world (so here 'post-modernity' -- essentially a discursive category, and the 'post-modern condition' – seen as objective features of the modern world through which we live our lives, tend to be rather run together). Globalization theory, post-colonial studies, networked-knowledge, complexity theory and the like are seen as the modalities of this move into a Pst-D world (Spivak 2003).. Knowledges are necessarily fragmented, continually in play, fluid, always threatening to overspill or overwhelm meaning and sense.

Attitudes towards such a concept of Pst-D are likely to vary depending upon attitudes towards the idea of post-modernity itself. For reasons that cannot be fully discussed here, I do not find this an altogether attractive analytical category. But I suspect it will gather much added momentum in the future. I would liken it to a category mentioned above, that is 'ill-disciplinarity' (II-D). With this category intellectual reason breaks down, any discipline dissipates, disruptive intellectual anarchy rules. This is not quite the same as Pst-D, of course – which maintains some pretence at reason and intellectual rigor. But it is basically the idea of a programmatic and epochal condition associated with Pst-D that is rejected here, ie., 'post-modernity' seen as a totally new configurative social order (see also below). Thus for the most part, and other than in the case of disciplinarity seen as a base category, I am interested in M-D, I-D and T-D, which following Barry *et.al.* (2008), I would term various forms of cross-disciplinarity (C-D).

So how do we relate this series of categories to each other? What is the relationship between all these forms of intellectual activity? One way of representing this is illustrated by Figure 1.

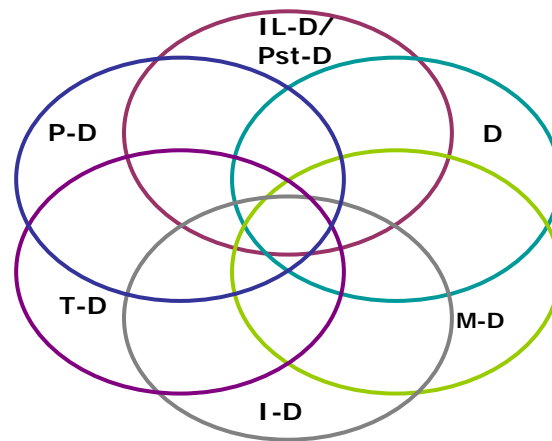
Figure 1: The Disciplinary Cycle



In this case, the representation implies an evolutionary cycle: beginning with a P-D phase, we move to a disciplinary one (D), then on to various forms of C-D that disrupt this phase (M-D, I-D, T-D). At the T-D stage there is a possible 'side-track' to an ill-disciplinary stage (II-D). This is put in the figure to pose the question as to whether T-D in fact implies II-D? Alternatively, these two phases could be characterised by a Pst-D stage. In the first case, however, there remains the possibility of a renewal of the cycle to link to a new P-D phase, and the whole process begins again. But in the second case this looks to be impossible since Pst-D implies no 'return' to the routine of disciplinization: it is a kind of terminal disruption of that process.

But the illustration in Figure 1 may be too 'mechanical' and overly 'evolutionary'. Another way to illustrate the relationship involves seeing the concepts as continually in play rather than one being replaced by the other in a sequence. This is illustrated by Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Disciplinarity Matrix

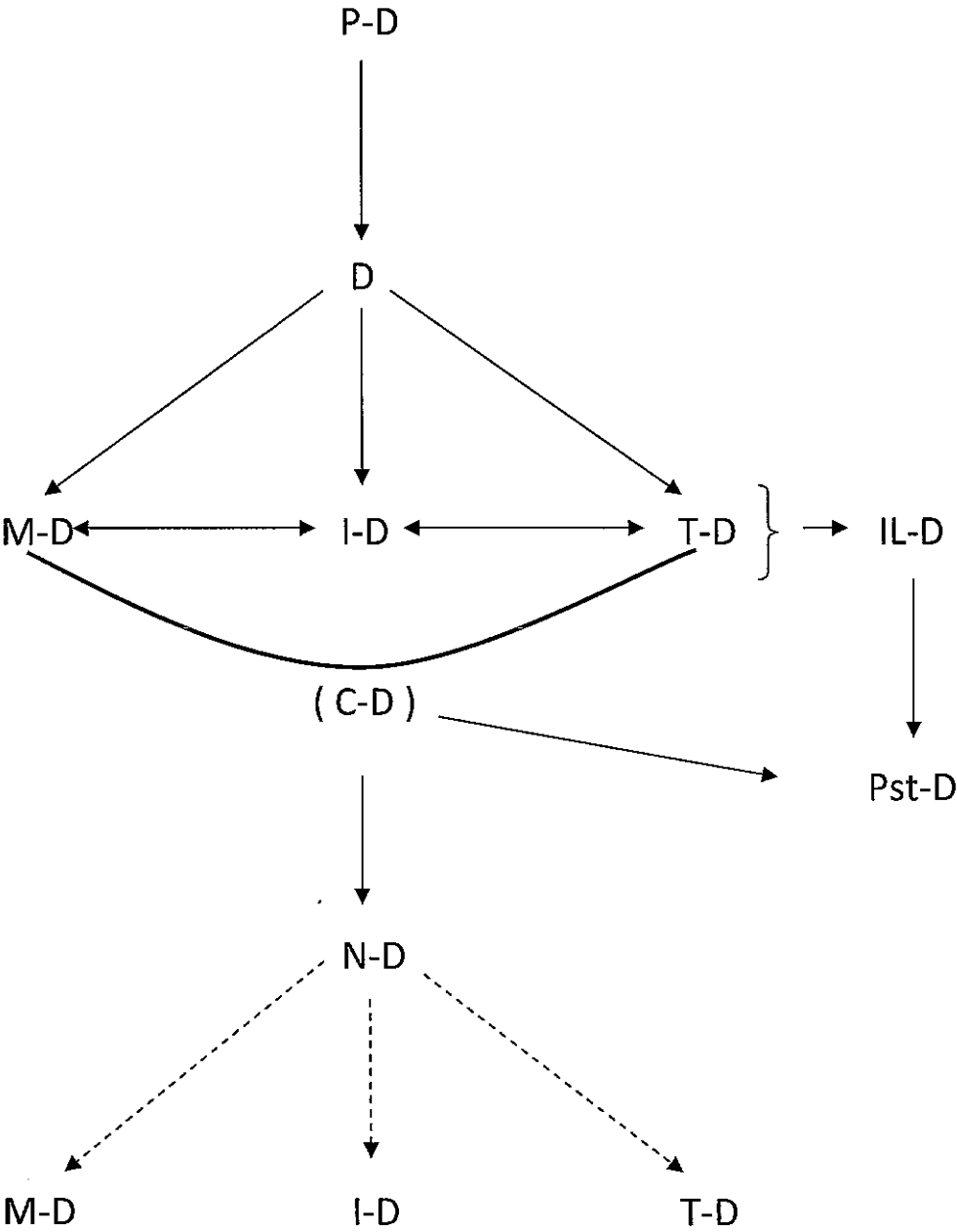


Thus here we have the possibility of an overlapping range of P-D, D and C-D forms in a complex formation where the analytical issue is to deal with the application of several frameworks at the same time. Any object of analysis can be confronted from several different disciplinary and C-D angles. This provides a richer framework of analysis.

But even this may appear overtly complex. So a third possible way of illustrating the relationships involved is shown in Figure 3.¹ A clear pathway is represented here, one that probably conforms closer to the spirit of the remarks outlined above.

¹ I thank Magali Gravier from CBS for suggesting this diagrammatic presentation.

Figure 3: The Disciplinarity Complex



4. Why the Current Emphasis on Cross-Disciplinarity?

Whatever one chooses to term the current enthusiasm for non-single disciplinary approaches, whether it be interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, or cross-disciplinarity as favoured here, the underlying issue is the same. These are promoted and celebrated as offering the only appropriate approaches to current problems and concerns, basically because of the perceived 'complexity' of the modern world. Thus a single disciplinary approach is not considered adequate to analyse or describe 'globalization' for instance. This is too complex a phenomenon to be captured by one single discipline.

And this idea of the complexity of the modern world extends to all the big issues of the day: the 'knowledge-based' society and innovation; environmental sustainability; national and personal security; citizenship and identity, etc., etc. None of these is thought to satisfactorily lend itself to a single disciplinary approach. And one could extend these examples to many other contemporary areas of concern.

Gibbons (1999) suggests this is part of a new 'reflexive' contractual settlement between 'science' and society: "One aspect of this new contract is that it needs to reflect the increasing complexity of modern society. For example, there are no longer clear demarcation lines between university science and industrial science, between basic research, applied research and product development, or even between careers in the academic world and in industry. There is now greater movement across institutional boundaries, a blurring of professional identities and greater diversity of career patterns" (Gibbons, 1999, p.C81).

But there is a second underlying reason why C-D approaches are favoured over single disciplinary ones, which has to do with the desire to engage the public in a dialogue with the traditional disciplinary culture and its outputs. The way this is presented, particularly in the UK context, is the demand by funding bodies to engage the constituencies or stakeholders in any research programme. An enormous amount of effort on the part of researchers goes into meeting this requirement for 'user involvement', which has become effectively a binding rule and condition for funding. Such reflexivity creates its own interesting 'imagined' parties in the relationship: the imagined lay person (ILP) (Martana, *et.al.*, 2003) and a possible counter in the imagined disciplinary expert (IDE) (Strathern 2004).

However, it goes further than this, since in many cases the demand is to draw the public into the very process of investigation; they effectively become co-researchers in many ways. What seems to be at stake here is the attempt to muddy the boundary between 'experts' and 'lay-opinion'. The implication is that there is no longer a clear distinction to be made between those with expertise and those without it, i.e. the general public. Thus, to some extent at least, the notion of 'expertise' is under threat from the adoption of C-D approaches (see below). Indeed, it implies a complex relationship between expertise and lay opinion in which, perhaps, that distinction itself is being

eroded (Strathern 2004). In the UK context this has to do with a more general political programme of 'social inclusion' and the 'democratization' of areas of social and economic life. All research has to be *relevant*, and a way to ensure this is to include the general public in the process of agenda setting and 'assessing' that research as it goes along. This is made more amenable by pressing C-D type approaches since these are not only thought to be more appropriate in dealing with a complex world, but also are more easily understood by the lay-public, enabling them to intervene. In the light of this Gibbons (1999, C.84) suggests that 'reliable knowledge' is being replaced by a new category: 'socially robust knowledge'.

Stephen Turner (2003) provides a thorough analysis of the wider political and cultural issues associated with this trend, one which he sees as providing a serious challenge to traditional notions of 'liberal democracy'. How can the growing divide between rule by the people and rule by experts be bridged, so that the troubled relationship between expertise and democratic accountability is resolved? He suggests several responses organized around a training of the 'competent citizen' (though see below).

But what might be the consequences of this? The difficulty is that it could simple end up promoting the idea that anyone's opinion is as good as anyone else's. Thus knowledge becomes merely a matter of 'opinion' without any clear way of discriminating between such opinions. And this could equally well provide further justification for 'popular prejudice' to become legitimized. One only has to look to the USA where the ideas about Darwinism are incendiary in popular debate, and where scientists like Richard Dawkins are reduced to shouting at evangelical Christians, and vice versa. But these kinds of disputes are accelerating, and this is not unconnected to the way scientific research is being recast along lines that undermines the distinction between expertise and lay opinion. And this raises an important further connected point. Disputation amongst scientists over the validity of research results is increasing and the scepticism amongst the public similarly growing. These two are inter-linked. Take 'global warming' for instance. Climate scientists cannot agree on whether this is happening, or what or who is responsible if it is. There is widespread publicly voiced disagreement. Similarly with vaccinations like MMR for rubella. Medical scientists disagree on the consequences of this. And there are many other profound disagreements along similar lines. What does the public do under these circumstances where science disagrees? The decision is thrown on to the public (lay opinion) to makes up its own mind, or chose what to do. Science (expertise) cannot solve the issue one way or another. So the public is asked to assess what it should do 'on-its-own' as it were. It is 'abandoned' to its own devices in making a judgement. How might it go about this? It must detect partisanship and biases amongst experts. Presumably, it does this by assessing the claims and counterclaims of different groups of scientists by looking at their credentials: what universities or research institutes are they from (prestigious/non-prestigious); what is their status within their professional bodies; who publically backs this or that group; reputation and authority; past record, etc.

And this emphasis on bringing the general public closer into the research agenda setting process is bolstered by another requirement associated with C-D: the disciplines and research must be

made more 'accountable', as mentioned above. Thus C-D is also associated with a desire to make academic and other disciplinary bound bodies more accountable, to both their constituencies of interest and the funding bodies. C-D enhances this process since it is more accessible to funding masters, and less tied up with hidebound single discipline constraints.

An added incentive is provided by the kind of student and their interests that are coming into the higher education system, and the kinds of demands being made by the labour market as they exit that system. Increasingly secondary schools are promoting cross-disciplinary type activity within the curriculum and project work. This is partly to foster student interest and as a strategy for social inclusion, and to deal with mixed abilities. But when they get to universities, their expectations and choices are to build on this with more and more cross-disciplinary type activity. Combined degree and vocationally orientated degree programmes have, as a result, proliferated. And employers want a compliant and adaptable set of work skills, which emerge more readily from cross-disciplinary activity.

Finally, it is worth considering whether C-D actually represents a new form of governance, whether in a rather paradoxical manner it represents a new way to (re)-discipline the disciplines? This could appear paradoxical since, ostensibly at least, C-D seems to undermine the disciplines, to disturb their hold on academic and research life. But it may indirectly provide the means to gain more access to the disciplines themselves. If the traditional disciplinary structures are seen as one of the main obstacles to 'sensible' and 'relevant' research, one 'fit for the modern world', etc., then promoting C-D - in part at least - would provide an avenue to gain added indirect leverage on these disciplines by by-passing them, as it were, or pressing them into the service of C-D.

Thus – to take this one step further – C-D might be a new form of governance associated with the neo-liberal agenda. The neo-liberal agenda increasingly subjects all activity to the test of the market, and academic research is no longer completely exempt from this. Market testing and market discipline, competition over funding, etc., is the language increasingly deployed in the academic research environment. C-D could be the path to further this objective. But neo-liberalism also stresses the 'responsibilization' and 'autonomization' of agents and agencies. In this respect, it promotes indirect 'governance at a distance' by shaping the 'conduct of conduct' (Thompson 2008). But this may not be in contradiction with C-D approaches. In as much that the users are newly empowered to have the right to know what is going on in research projects, this has to be made visible to them through the institutional responsibility for a (visible) self-management of such a responsible institutions' (Strathern 2004). This double reflexive action of 'responsibility' in the mechanism through which such governance-at-a-distance in this area is secured.

5. On Theory and 'The New Performativity'

This section sets out to explore another facet associated with the advent of C-D inflected research agendas: what it says about the nature of theory and methodology. I will argue that this is intimately connected to a re-casting – at least in part – of what is understood by theory, and in the relationship between theory and methodology. But this recasting has itself a much wider resonance, the various implications of which are explored elsewhere, if in a preliminary manner (Thompson 2008). The task of this section is to connect this wider canvass to the rather more limited and specific concerns of this paper, notably its implications with respect to C-D. That will be done later in the section, but there is a necessity to preface this with some general discussion of what may be happening to the traditional conception of 'theory' in contemporary intellectual life, which I will argue is being undermined by the advent of C-D type approaches. And to be clear at this stage, my argument is that not all of this is undesirable or to be condemned out of hand. Indeed, in large part, one particular manner in which this recasting is being undertaken is to be thoroughly supported and celebrated. More of this later.

The main point is to suggest that theory is being recast by being associated with various forms of '*performativity*', some of which are positive, others quite negative in their implications¹. The traditional and conventional view of theory is that it is a prelude to -- or an accompaniment of -- an *investigation*: theory and investigation are closely linked and theory has a strong investigatory moment attached to it. But the argument here is that increasingly theory is being divorced from an investigation – or perhaps better put – is being re-cast in this relationship – by being considered as a performance: theory is above all else a performance. It is enacted by and through a particular type of persona: 'the theorist' (more about this category later). And such theorists speak a particular kind of analytical language, one mainly directed at other theorists. This comprises an almost hermetically sealed discursive enactment directed towards other theorists, access to which is made almost deliberately difficult for those not familiar with its tropes and nuances, the *non-cognoscenti*.

What is more this is connected to the idea of the theorist as 'celebrity'. Theorists can become the new celebrities who's credibility rests upon them performing to their audiences. In addition, of course, there is the other type of celebrity – the 'artistic celebrity' – who gains a voice in debates about public policy and agenda setting, often operating on the international stage (see Cooper 2007). Many of these 'lay-person agenda setters' have no necessary expertise, yet they are the ones that both claim a voice and attract an audience. The question this poses is whether truth itself is also becoming performative rather than substantive or constitutive? (Note that true celebrity can be nothing more than the 'performance of the self': celebrities need no necessary competencies other than the ability to perform or enact themselves, they 'display' themselves as themselves and are celebrated for it).

¹ For a fascinating exchange dealing with these matters (and many more besides) see Ian Hunter (2006); Frederick Jameson's (2008) rather ill-tempered retort, and Hunter's (2008) more measured reply, and also Thompson 2006 for a discussion of different forms of performance – and as a precursor to all of this, Thompson 1985.

Of course we are all subject to this process of performativity. We are constantly subject to the strictures of performance: calculated about, energised by, monitored through, quality assessed by, audited in respect of, and rewarded in the name of, our performance (see Munro 1999). 'Worth' is increasingly dependent upon performance outputs. And here is where expertise can re-enter the picture because this can be recognised as worthy when it leads to clear and immediate results, ones that can be readily understood by the lay public. Thus there can be a clear link between expertise and performance where this is able to be demonstrated via understandable outcomes. But with a good deal of intellectual activity, this link is more obscure, unclear and not immediately apparent. Nevertheless, this should not necessarily mean it is undervalued as a result, but it tends to be so in an environment where it is performativity that provides the criterion for worthiness. Hence in an environment in which performativity (and C-D) abounds, it will be those projects and research issues that promise the most obvious link to clearly defined and immediate outcomes, things that can be easily assessed, that will attract the funding. Traditional theoretical reflection is clearly disadvantaged by this, since it often cannot show clear performative outcomes that can be calculated about, nor do these necessarily arise quickly or transparently. Perhaps this is why, as a result, it may be increasingly only 'performed' to other theorists?

Clearly, there are several different types of performance. Some are successful, other not: good and bad performances abound. And performance can be deliberately varied in respect to different audiences (see Thompson 1985).

What about the relationship between this notion of performance and methodology? Or another way to put this is to ask about the relationship between theory and methodology within this new C-D environment? The questions here are as follows: Is methodology replacing theory? As theory retreats into performance, is it methodology that takes centre stage? Is the 'investigative moment' mentioned above now only confined or associated with methodology? Clearly methodology has risen up the status league in academic research and funding -- if nothing else because the funding masters demand it. But in my experience it is under the umbrella of 'methodology' that more and more 'theory' is taught at the undergraduate and post-graduate level in universities. And because methodology has become such an important part of funding applications, it has risen up the academic agenda anyway. We live in a new and interesting era of 'methodological innovation' as a result. However, methodology then becomes a surrogate for theory -- so 'methods' and 'investigations' can avoid an explicit theoretical moment if it is methodology that stands in the place of theory in this relationship, while 'theory' becomes confined to a celebratory performance for the *cognoscenti* only.

6 Is there a Positive side to 'Performativity'?

Up until now the discussion of performativity and its relationship to theory has been rather negatively and critically inflected. But as suggested earlier, this is not all doom and gloom. I would argue that there is a definite upside to the notion of performativity in relationship to theory, and this is explored in this section of the paper. The discussion will initially take the form of a further reflection as to what theory is and provide a suggestive – though perhaps rather unfamiliar and controversial -- characterization of it. In this context the positive aspect to performance will be elaborated

Obviously theory is subject to several different modalities, some of which are outlined in passing as this discussion develops below. One way to begin is by thinking again in terms of the 'persona' of the theorist (Gaukroger 2006, Hunter 2007). What type of personhood can do or perform theory? How is such 'theorist as persona' constructed?

Supposing we were to think of the theorist as a consequential figure in the 'art of reasoning'. What might be meant by the art of reasoning? This is the key question: the art of reasoning (note: reasoning here has nothing necessarily to do with a 'rational being', indeed it is precisely counterpoised to this figure). Paraphrasing Hunter (2007) I suggest that this term -- the 'arts of reasoning' -- comprises a loose configurative ensemble of logico-rhetorical methods, cognitive techniques, doctrines, modes of proof, techniques and ethical exercises, etc., that constitutes a certain type of personhood that can represent to itself a unity of purposes and 'ideas'. Thus the art of reasoning is an ethico-technical cognitive ensemble of these features, involving the 'practical mastery' of these techniques. From this perspective this is what 'theory' comprises.

What is this conception -- the arts of reasoning -- pitched against? Several terms come to mind: paradigm, problematic, *Weltanschauung* (as in a 'scheme of belief'), and discourse. These are the classic and very current modalities of theoretical exploration. But they are too 'philosophically over-determined' to past-muster for the kind of analysis being suggested here (see Hunter 2006, 2007, 2009). Indeed, it is precisely to draw attention away from such a mega- or master-philosophically driven understanding and underpinning of theory that this conceptual apparatus seeks to elaborate.

This conception also needs to be seen in distinction to a form of theorizing that insists on the idea of 'context-dependency': that to understand any theoretical truth claim requires us to situate it in an (often historically specific) context. Understanding and sense making then become a matter of the reduction of claims to a 'neutral' context, seen as a unity of conditions that provides general historical frameworks for understanding the specifics of truth claims – a context that is faced by everyone and by everything in a particular time frame. Such a 'context dependency' invokes a

quasi-transcendental structure of 'conditions of possibility' facing the intellectual community at large, and with which it must of necessity engage and negotiate to mine or generate the truth claims of theory.

This conception also speaks against the idea of Kuhnian paradigms – understood as mutually interlocking systems of presuppositions, concepts, and theory laden observations giving rise to internal objects of knowledge. Such internal objects of knowledge (the paradigms) are then seen as incompatible and incommensurable – one is simply replaced by another. The theoretical problem then becomes if and how these paradigms can be made reconcilable and able to talk to one another? But strictly speaking they cannot within the problematic of 'paradigms'.

Within the conceptual framework of the arts of reasoning, 'reason' become a generic name for this dispersed array of intellectual arts – that loose and contingent ensemble and deployment of practical acts – which is *performative*. And here arises the positive side of theoretical performativity. It relies for its effectivity on it being performed (and thereby *appropriately mastered*). And this performativity is designed to induce and cultivate a certain scepticism, a pragmatism, a self-problematization, even a 'suspicion', on the part of the intellect (Thompson 2006). Thus a clear distinction between 'the theorist' and others would also be undermined by this conceptualization (or between expert and lay-person in the language used above): theorists and lay persons are on a par with one another, arranged only along a continuum. But this then raises important issues about exactly how the 'mastery of the arts of reasoning' are opened to both theorists and lay-persons.

And this is not quite a 'social practice' either, in the sense of something possessing an inner logic seen as the 'good' that confirms a certain 'knowledge community' (or any other community – in the sense of communities being made up of those social practices that 'typify' or 'characterize' such a community). Thus theory in the sense being elaborated here is not a 'social practice', nor is it reducible to this or directly derivable from it.

But this is 'performativity' of a particular kind and operating in a particular manner. It is not simply a speech act as such but all those aspects outlined above – the 'arts of reasoning' -- comprising that loose configurative ensemble of logico-rhetorical methods, cognitive techniques, doctrines, modes of proof, techniques and ethical exercises, plus experimental apparatuses, all tied to a specific sense and kind of self; that loose assemblage, acquired through the routines of practical mastery, often held together by pedagogical anchoring, not be some set of self-contained beliefs.

And this form of theorizing – of necessity – has political aspects and resonances. As pointed out above, both the theorist persona and competent lay personhood must display a certain political competence as part of their overall epistemic statuses (Turner 2003 explores the nuances and consequences of this at length). But a point made above was about situations where such political competence of the lay person is missing, and proves almost impossible to construct. Then we

would be in a potential downward spiral as far as the recognition of competent expertise is concerned.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion I would like to stress several features of the analysis conducted above.

The first is to suggest that there is nothing necessarily good nor necessarily bad about cross-disciplinary (C-D) approaches to intellectual activity. There is a perfectly robust defence that can be mounted for disciplinarity, the outlines of which were offered in the early part of this paper. As was demonstrated in subsequent sections C-D approaches have their definite upsides as well as their downsides. One potentially disturbing trend, that could be linked to the effacement of the distinction between expert and lay person, is the way opinion and popular prejudice could seriously infect the research agenda, something, it was argued, not unconnected to the development of cross-disciplinarity. In as much as these can be linked to the idea of performativity, there are several aspects to this in its relationship to theory, some of which may be having undesirable consequences while with other understanding of performativity the effects can be liberating and highly positive in respect to C-D.

Probably the best stance to take here is to maintain the tensions between the disciplines. It may well be that a slightly agnostic, or even antagonistic, relationship will prove the most productive. This really speaks to cultivating a 'collaborative troubling' between the disciplines².

But in as much as we embrace C-D we may actually be enacting and performing – in part at least – the neo-liberal project. But again this need be no bad thing. If we are 'all neo-liberals now' (Thompson 2008), then there is nothing necessarily wrong with such an activity, difficult though that may be to convince a still largely sceptical academic audience!!

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² This formulation arises from a reflection on the work of Maja Lotz at CBS

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