

# CONSTELLATING CREATIVITY

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Tradition has it that RMIT's Graduate Research Conferences (GRCs) commence with a public lecture by a visitor who is new or relatively new to the GRC. I feel very honoured to have been invited to deliver this key-note address at this very occasion when I am indeed 'external' to RMIT but have already been given generous opportunities to observe some of its forums, platforms and scenarios; some of its perspectives, strategies and lenses.

So, in the following lecture, faithful to a certain thymotic intellectual character and tradition, I intend to fight 'close to the bull': for even if you are holding a very provocative cape [the *muleta*], all the matador's grace and elegance in the world will not be good enough, if the bull is fifty metres away from you. It is more of an art, and certainly a sense of specific mastery is involved, if you can exhibit grace and total control when the bull is running towards you or grazing your shoulder.

Research advice, if generic: *Fight close to the bull!* – or, in *phenomenological* terms: *Get close to the phenomena!*<sup>1</sup> – as up-close as possible, with all sensitivity to detail: only then do *differences* emerge; one will realise that what matters are *nuances*. Two renowned philosophical peers who took specific interest in sharing their creative processes – their conceptual 'design strategies' – once pointed out to me: "*We differ in nuances, but those nuances make monumental difference – they are what matters.*"

My insistence on proximity will compel me to make a series of specific *pases* (three specific *corrida* moves):

We need, in effect, high-resolution lenses, and of course require methods to create differentials to the default design processes, for example by slowing them down, using, as it were, a slow motion-technique, or with fast motion (capture).<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> For the most thorough investigation to date of both the metaphysical foundations and the phenomenological implications of any such 'close up'-formula see (still) Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearances* (Wesleyan University Press, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> In experiential parlour: "Now that it is *so slow*, I *can see* what is going on!" or likewise: "Now that it is *sped up* I *can see* what is going on!" Documentaries with acceleration techniques conducive to insights of the latter kind reveal in seconds that a starfish may "decide", over an entire day, to bend one arm by five degrees.

creation of such *differentials* (as *reflective screens*)<sup>3</sup> is, in variants, already fighting close to the bull. We may acknowledge: 'Closeness' is not about spatial proximity: every so often, in order to get close, we actually need to step back.<sup>4</sup> So then, closeness or rather the degree of proximity may well be a signature quality of one of the prime issues discussed under my title 'Constellating Creativity'. It is of such importance because the same closeness-imperative holds for the fundamental idea of *theorising in the mode of practice*.

Notice: I am not using the term 'theory' - in fact, I advise you to drop it. Not because in today's contexts in philosophy of science and meta-theory of inductive reasoning the term 'theory' might arguably be replaced by the term 'model' - nowadays we 'model', more comfortably, when in yesteryear we agonised over 'theories'. And furthermore: In following the leading German Astrophysicist Harald Lertsch, the only thing we can actually do is "err upwards". The notion of such *ascent labour* in a state of comprehensive suspension is discussed with finely tuned rigour in Kant, but reaches back through Augustine to Plato in the virtuoso disguise of masking himself as his teacher, Socrates (when marvelling over his Delphic riddle.)<sup>5</sup>

The methodology of the "*labour of ascent in the mode of error*" is the oldest, boldest and noblest meta-descriptor for the human being's investigative endeavours, for our explorative quest for knowledge. The most advanced modelling of '*bios*', that is: life, in contemporary biology, to give you only this further example, is acknowledged as ascent labour being a scaffolding of instructive errors.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note the fundamental methodological function of *reflection* for the creative process: Cognitively, the experience of difference bears on similarity and constancy, *variance* bears on *in-variance* (and vice versa). These mutual dependencies are both logical (grammatical) and epistemological relations of necessity. *Pattern analysis* and the *theory of variation* (e.g. visual, acoustic, etc.) depend on a proper grasp of these terms of analysis, but the *variant*, the token that embodies or executes the variance (e.g. a musical phrase transposed from F-major to D-Major) is also essential in creativity analysis as a *reflective screen*: The D-major token is differentiated from the predecessor, F-major, and serves both within the transpositional relation and viewed from the outside (i.e., in analysis and via meta-reflection) as a 'screen' that 'reflects' the variance. The unfolding of a *series*, a sequential *pattern*, then allows and invites one to *notice* variety and variation (e.g. of a *theme*) and exhibits this dual nature of every reflective screen. For *research in the medium of itself* (i.e., the medium itself) a cognitive command over these *reflective processes* is quintessential.

<sup>4</sup> We do know this existentially – through our lives.

<sup>5</sup> The probing task for the pilgrim to the oracle of Delphi would read: Know thyself! Responses provided to the pilgrims by the Delphic oracle (amongst the notable visitors Socrates and not much later Alexander the Great) were given in the form of a riddle: Thus, e.g., Socrates, acknowledging his own complete ignorance, asks the Delphic oracle to reveal the identity of the wisest man in the Greek world and is told that it is Socrates.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ascent labour' is discussed and acknowledged in Kant as '*Aufstiegs-Arbeit*'. The notion of comprehensive suspension of absolutes, e.g. absolute judgements, would have to be finessed in relation to modern notional nephews such as Popper's methodology of falsification. Ascent labour, and its ancient Greek forbear *epan(h)odos*, are of central importance to research in the medium of itself also because of the seminal shift that occurs (e.g. in Kant) away from the (projected) structure towards the *scaffolding*. The *scaffolding* itself

The reason for my earlier advice to drop the concept ‘theory’ (advice that would also apply to the concept of ‘model’) is of a specific nature: The shift in nuance, which is of fundamental importance, is not that from theory to model, but rather: that from ‘theory’ to *theorising* and from ‘model’ to *modelling* – hence the shift to *activity*. Such a move is by no means trivial, *unassuming* as it may appear, and my intention is to discuss further along its centrality to research in the mode of design practice. Kant pointed out that there is no way to *learn philosophy*: that we can learn only *to philosophise*. In this same sense: We cannot learn *theory* but rather: *to theorise*. *Theorising*, or for that matter, *modelling*, is the *activity* of generating explanations in order to foster so-called ‘understanding’.<sup>7</sup>

The unique paradigm shift for which RMIT can readily claim emerging world leadership or, to be less smug, global stewardship, is the determined and radical development of the notion of ‘*theorising through practice*’. The orthodox distinction between theory and practice must collapse, such that the notion of ‘theorising by practice’ leads now back to the opening motive of ‘closeness’ and proximity, to the internal relation of the medium of practice and the medium of research, as the very medium of practice and its very processes, material and mental, essential and cognitive.

Whilst ‘theory’ formerly suggested *stepping out of and away from* practice in order to speculate ‘theoretically’ about the practical realm, to superimpose theoretical layers onto the practice in an attempt to organise and order the field, *theorising through practice* can only be carried out meaningfully if one steps *into* the very practice. The same directionality applies to the use of the term ‘research’: Against the reigning threat of researching yourself *out of* the practice in a process of *abstraction*,

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eventually takes primacy over that which it scaffolds. The actual building may never be built (actualised), yet the scaffolding, when carried out in a radical and consequential way, bears all the ‘qualities’ of what it is supposed to scaffold. A translation manual would allow one, as it were, to infer the intended structure from its scaffold. At philosophical level this is also the relationship between the critical enterprise (i.e. of the three Kantian *Critiques*) and the two planned – but never accomplished(!) – edifices or pillars of metaphysics that Kant intended to erect (namely a *Metaphysics of Nature* on the one hand and a *Metaphysics of Morals* on the other). An important relationship has yet to be teased out between the notions of ‘ascent labour’, scaffolding, and ‘error mode’ (the notion of ‘in the medium of error’) on one side and Wittgenstein’s observation in *Philosophical Remarks* of the procedural necessity of the incessant clacking of the coiffeur’s scissors (vulgo: ‘scaffolding’, between cuts) on the other.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Understanding’ and ‘explanation’ are conceptually, i.e. logically and grammatically, inter-related notions. Theories are complex explanatory devices of special kinds. Note that not all explanations have a theoretical nature, e.g. explanations of the meaning of words are not ‘theories’ although they lead the potential user of the word to eventually *understand* the meaning of the word in question and hence *use* it properly, i.e. according to the rules that govern its meaning. A series of complex issues regarding the distinction between *normativity* and *nomology* require further elaboration but are immaterial to the topic of discussion here.

practice based research provides the unique opportunity to research yourself *into* the practice – or, even more poignantly, *back* into a practice from which you may have become distanced by degrees. It is a gateway through which to potentially re-immense in the discipline.

The notion of 'ab-straction', the move of abstracting yourself from the 'particular' in order to arrive at generality – that is, to a variable degree – calls for re-assessment in a speculative sense: Theorising in the mode of design is not abstracting *from* practice, but rather: 'abstracting *through* design.'<sup>8</sup> Contact, one might claim, brings forth separation, closeness gives birth to detachment.<sup>9</sup>

The type of *mastery* aimed at by the 'research in the medium of practice'-environment' with its distinctive processes requires of the researcher a degree of immersion into his field that is necessary for him to be able to *transcend* the very boundaries of his field. This capacity to transcend the horizon of a given field is without doubt a hallmark of any potential mastery. However, it must be exhibited from within, from a position of saturation and immersion rather than from the external vantage point of the theoretician. In a variant of the mantra of the '*transcendence through immanence*', virtuosity and complete command of one's field means to be *beyond* it.

This requirement of saturation by one's discipline also explains why meaningful *interdisciplinarity*, which occurs at a level of significance in probably only 2–5% of cases, requires the interaction of specific kinds of 'masters': Their interdisciplinary engagement demands at a cognitive level a total immersion, a saturation in their respective disparate fields. An invisible third eye'<sup>10</sup> will then permit the agents in such encounters 'the gaze beyond the wall'. Otherwise one is left with superficial 'empty generics', the mere rhetoric that calls for the formulaic boundary

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<sup>8</sup> The qualification of this re-assessment as 'speculative' indicates at a dialectic reversal of what is regarded as 'abstract' and what as 'concrete'. Whilst research in the medium of itself allows one to appreciate, as it were, the abstract qualities of the concrete, Hegel's inverse speculation was directed towards the concretisation of the abstract, i.e. towards the nobilising of the concept.

<sup>9</sup> The creative dialectical processes that release counter-categories (such as, e.g. 'objective') which are dormant within operating categories (such as, e.g. 'subjective') can be tracked phenomenologically and calibrated in terms of intensity: As strikingly observed at a Ghent GRC presentation in Nov 2010, an individual and personalised, biographically detailed account of, e.g. the emergence and dynamics of a person's 'spatial' or 'acoustic intelligence' may have, precisely by virtue of its extremely individual character, ever stronger inter-subjective relevance.

<sup>10</sup> The motive of the 'invisible agent' is owed structurally to Adam Smith's conception of the 'invisible hand' that generates a value (sphere) *distinct* to the explicit operative spheres of the actual (visible) hands. A separate project would have to engage in a large-scale and detailed investigation of the emergence of such surplus-spheres and the relevance of the proper understanding for creativity research, well beyond an ill-conceived and ideologically distorted economic discourse.

crossing, the breaking out of silos.<sup>11</sup>

The *corrida* of this discussion seems already well underway and some manoeuvres have swept past without scenic applause. Some live events in any arena are too rapid to be captured without the luxury of slow motion replay.<sup>12</sup> However, the next two moves require particular attention: They will harness the notions of ‘Constellations’ and ‘Creativity’ in two directions: ‘Constellating *Creativity*’ and ‘Creating *Constellations*’. These two themes sit at the poles of an axis that will serve as the base in a triangulation process with practice based research as its pinnacle.

### Constellating Creativity

Almost 220 years ago a supernova of incomparable magnitude and impact occurred in philosophy. An array of systems emerged, but there was no understanding of what had made such a supernova possible at all. A colleague in sociology, Randall Collins, embarked upon a more or less structural reconstruction to explain such phenomena of intellectual innovation to a certain depth. However, he cannot be blamed for stopping short of what would have revealed to him the specific creative dynamics that brought about the philosophical supernova of the 1790s, that of the formation of *Speculative (German) Idealism* - emerging out of so-called transcendental idealism, that is Kant's critical philosophy. I mention the name only to label this seminal case study, the philosophical content of which is immaterial to the discussion here. Let me therefore leave *Speculative German Idealism*, a colossus surely, if you only associate with it the fact that in its wake Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel could walk up to the lectern at Humboldt University in Berlin and declare that the 'Absolute Spirit' was

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<sup>11</sup> The point made here resonates directly and strongly with the way in which Mark Burry profiles *trans-disciplinarity*: In contrast with vague, weak and inflationary notions of ‘multi-disciplinarity’ and ‘cross-disciplinarity’, the notion of transdisciplinarity suggests a specific ‘contact’-scenario between disciplines which relies upon a high degree of saturation of the researcher within and through his discipline, as opposed to only partial immersion. The intended result of transdisciplinarity is thus not a “weird fusion” (M. Burry) of disciplines, but rather a potential transformation of and within each discipline. The mantra of a ‘holistic approach’ in response to the complexity of problems must be fundamentally reinterpreted: ‘Holism’ is neither formulaic ‘fusion’ nor any simplistic breaking down of barriers between disciplines as such, but rather the complex interplay of strongly developed ‘noetic realms’ which acknowledge and foster their constellational interdependency and inter-relation.

<sup>12</sup> The specific method of slow-motion *replay* of the creative process *ex post* rather than the slowing down of the process itself *ex eventu* poses a series of challenges within the framework of a comprehensive exploration of strategies of conducting research in the medium of itself, including the question of the possibility of the development of convincing *replay-techniques* that do not distort the real-time creative design process.

speaking through him.

Let me shift from such intellectual hybris – however justified!<sup>13</sup> – to something even more majestic, if not more wonderful: the *mo-bi-le*. The pronunciation is so as not to confuse these profoundly instructive moving installations with a certain wireless communication device. The *mo-bi-le* is a figuration of the complex forces of placement and interplay to be observed and understood in any setting that foregrounds creative endeavour: it represents a *constellation*.

Constellation research is the response to the diagnosis of an explanatory 'gap' – in Leon van Schaik's terminology – of a substantive hermeneutical deficit regarding the emergence of a creative force-field<sup>14</sup>, a cognitive supernova. With group and network theory, chaos and systems theory in its vicinity, it attempts to understand the dynamics of creativity in terms of complex aggregates beautifully captured in a *mo-bi-le* such as Alexander Calder's of 1955.

Think of constellations initially as individuals assuming certain positions represented by the elements of the *mo-bi-le*. It will turn out to be of fundamental importance that such constellations of individuals are often, if not paradigmatically, organised in some triangular figuration. Committed to the project of fighting close to the bull, the task of addressing the topic of 'constellating creativity' now implies spelling out the connection between constellation research, the *mo-bi-le* and design practice research.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of *constellating* the elements, nodes or poles of a structure can be translated into constellating figures, agents, i.e. individuals, with specific profiles – that is, 'characters'<sup>16</sup>: These 'characters' have *gravitas*, 'mass' of their own, but more importantly a forceful weight due to their constellational 'place' or role: 'Mass' can obviously mean: talent, expertise; 'Weight', however, may mean, with constellational

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<sup>13</sup> „It is often our mightiest projects that most obviously betray the degree of our insecurity”, in: W.G. Seebald, *Austerlitz* (Carl Hanser, Munich (2001), p. 14 (cited in English translation by A. Bell, Penguin Books, London (2001), p. 16f.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Leon van Schaik's ideogrammatic explorations of such force-fields and the fundamental “sets of conditions that are needed for creative innovation to occur” in *Mastering Architecture*, pp. 12f. The pictogram presents a cube which reconciles three sets of such conditions: the natural history of the creative individual, ritualised disciplines and the environment. The aris between the faces of the cube inscribed with 'individual' and 'disciplines' is incised with the central notion of “rebels”.

<sup>15</sup> Parallel projects regarding business and economics research with potentially significant implications for the disciplines can be envisaged and should be developed under the heading of *Innovation Practice Research as Innovation Research in the Medium itself*, with the potential to introduce a fundamental paradigm change in Business Faculties.

<sup>16</sup> Note that the concept of 'character' here does not refer to psychological traits and specific features, but rather to the 'Aristotelian' notion of character as a complex, fully-developed personality and moral agent capable of integration at large.

currency: *eros* (deficit – hence: need) and *thymos* (surplus – hence: charity).<sup>17</sup> The mo-bi-le captures a particular feature of constellations through balancing arms; the individuals of constellations exhibit an antagonistic polarity towards each other.<sup>18</sup> However, the 'dialectic' nature of this polarity has to be understood in depth. The antagonism does not imply mutual annihilation, but on the very contrary, the acknowledgement of the mutual dependence of these two agents on one another – in mo-bi-le terms, a delicately attuned balancing act. What is required for such an *attainment*, just as for *tension* (which is its noetic twin or opposite) are *agon* (force) and *ant-agon* (counter-force).

It is the signature of the *master* to understand his position as counterbalanced, not threatened. Only through such counterbalance is his own position in the constellation stable or indeed possible at all. If one pendent is removed, the mobile is on the floor. The project of 'constellating creativity' thus induces the move beyond the one-dimensionality suggested by a (self-)misinterpretation of antagonistic axial forces as mutually destructive.

In a further move at this stage, we may treat 'agon' and 'ant-agon' (or 'A' and 'non-A') as variables, with 'values' to saturate them. As potential values we can use notions, concepts, world-views, self-descriptors (e.g. 'northernness' vs 'southernness') etc. The notions underwriting the constellation of *Speculative German Idealism*, by the way, were 'freedom' versus 'necessity'. Constellations are distinguished from other aggregate structurings of diverse kinds in that a constellational dynamic can unfold only if it is underpinned notionally or conceptually through a force-field of positions merely mirrored or represented by individual constellational agents. In constellating notions and concepts as constitutive of

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<sup>17</sup> The introduction referred without further elaboration to the author's 'thymotic character'. The recurrent theme of the complementary notions of *eros* and *thymos* requires careful intake: the basic functional feature of *eros* is want, its basic structural feature being deficit or lack; the basic functional constructive feature of *thymos* on the other side is charity or giving, given that its structural fundamental feature is surplus, i.e. overflow. These primordial notions have obvious psychological pendants in an awareness of imperfection or need as apposed to a sense of confidence and self-assuredness resulting in the thymotic capacity *to give* in abundance, complementing the *erotic need to take*.

<sup>18</sup> The idea of constellations exploits the positional aspects of the notion: individuals take positions, e.g. in a debate. However, not every debate as such already qualifies as a constellation: Constellations are distinguished from mere position-taking and opinionated deliberations through a quite specific intrinsic connection between the positions taken: The positions necessitate each other, and acknowledge their mutual constitutive dependency on each other. The structural element of the arm in the mobile is a representation of this internal relation between them. The constellational insight of the agents or position-takes into the mutual necessitation of each other is all the more striking if the initial perception in the debate is one of opposition, of plain contradiction or at least adversarial tension: The strength, depth and quality of one agent's position is understood as depending fundamentally on the strength and quality of the counter- position.

genuine constellations, research must advance Randall Collins' generic modelling in his sociology of cognitive structures.<sup>19</sup> 'Supernovas' occur where constellations aggregate or scaffold in dialectic notional space.

The mo-bi-le provides material, concrete evidence for the fact that the 'dialectic' in question occurs in a force-field: A *dimension* is added to the *linearity* of the axial line along which *agon* and *ant-agon* operate. The shift from axial one-dimensionality to triangulated force-field is a dimensional shift. The relation of polarity is 'mediated', it is 'suspended' through a 'third' through which the triangular force-field is enacted.

In the wake of constellation research so-called *figuration theory* (or: figuration analysis) has emphatically embraced the notion of the 'third' and the qualitative *opening up* that it provides within the triangulation process as opposed to a formulaic *closing down* in a weak sense of synthesis.<sup>20</sup>

The 'qualitative leap' that results from this shift is apparent in every constellational triangulation.<sup>21</sup> A fascinating project in the creative (design) or practice mode of research would be to reconstruct historic groupings as such constellational force-fields. The original immaturely pluralistic utopia of the Weimar Bauhaus thus had a pioneering constellational heuristics pivoting around masters of form and workshop masters (German 'Formmeister' and 'Werkmeister') – projecting into 'third' notions such as 'rhythm', 'nature' and 'contrast'.<sup>22</sup>

The deliberate and intricate strategic move from the notion of the Bau-Hütte – the shed – to the Bau-Haus indicated a further crucial idea to research in the mode of practice: to *remain*, in this case also as a formative centre, on the 'construction site'. An RMIT GRC may be viewed, in that sense, as the *essence* of the original Bauhaus:

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Randall Collins: *Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, and "The Sociology of Philosophies: a Précis", in: *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 30, pp. 157-201.

<sup>20</sup> *Die Figur des Dritten* [The Figure of the Third], Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> A potential weakness of an alleged Hegelian formulaic process comprising the progression from *thesis* to *anti-thesis* to the 'resolution' of the tension between the former two in a subsequent *synthesis* is that it importantly misses the dimensional shift and qualitative leap elaborated above; it rather represents an elongated linearity. It should be noted, however, that this linear escalation is not Hegel's own understanding or account of synthesis, but rather represents one of the most widespread Hegel-travesties. It should also be stressed in terms of Hegel philology that the triad *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* as such features only once in Hegel's entire writings and oeuvre (including his lectures), at a highly insignificant place. Nevertheless, the simplistic and formulaic reception of the triad has led to a prolific history of reiterated mis-interpretations and likewise to the most pernicious Hegel-bigotries.

<sup>22</sup> For a comprehensive documentation of the formative phase of the Weimar Bauhaus conception see: V. Wahl (ed): *Das Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar: Dokumente zur Geschichte des Instituts 1919-1926*, Erfurt 2003; see also Boris Friedewald, *Bauhaus*, Prestel, Munich, London, New York 2009.



research by dwelling on the construction site (design) itself.<sup>23</sup>

A powerful 'simile' to argue successfully for the normative nature of practice-based research presents itself in a proper understanding of the role of the sample in *ostensive* definitions, for example of colour predicates. "This is red," uttered by the teaching master, is not an application of the rule; it is its instantiation. A norm is stated, a rule is articulated: In the case of the ostensive definition of the colour red, the rule is provided by pointing at a material *sample* on a colour chart. This *rule* governs the usage, that is: the application of the term 'red' in the future: The rule represents a *standard of correctness* that determines between 'right' and 'wrong' of the application.

The point that takes the apprentice in semantics (or philosophy of language) either two minutes to understand or twenty years to *not* comprehend is that a *material* object, the concrete physical sample, serves in an indispensable, in fact all-important role as a constituent of the articulation of the rule, so that the rule can be invoked as what it is: a standard of correctness. Material objects to be perceived and pointed at ostensively, can form part of, if not be primarily constitutive of 'formal' entities such as rules.<sup>24</sup>

Let there be no doubt: There is no other way to teach the colour predicate 'red'. This is the way to 'define' colour words so that we, in our specific form of life, can indeed apply colour concepts meaningfully. A wavelength account of red is illuminating, but does not play a role in our actual grammar, the rule-book concerning 'red'.<sup>25</sup>

Theories are basically sets of rules clustered together for a range of purposes. Theorising through concretion rather than through abstraction is the most

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<sup>23</sup> The - medieval - notion of German '*Bauhütte*' refers not to the modern site-office, but to the shed or hut (*Hütte*) in which the different master-craftsmen conducted the work on the building's parts and components. Weimar Bauhaus took *this* notion of the *hut* (*Hütte*) in precisely research-through-practice mode and expanded from *hut* to *house* (from *Bauhütte* to *Bauhaus*) to indicate the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness (or, in Mark Burry's terms, the holistic interplay and *trans-disciplinary* collaboration) of the disciplines under the roof of its 'Haus'.

<sup>24</sup> There is wide-spread intellectual bigotry that prevents us from acknowledging and understanding in depth the way how ostensive definitions work as and are nothing but rules. Rules are expected to have a specific 'formal' structure, sometimes captured in quasi-technical generalisations such as "Whenever *x*, *y* holds". Rules, however, can acquire very diverse 'forms', albeit they all operate as standards of correctness. Rules are invoked, searched for or called upon if we do not know whether we have erred in an application, or if we wish or have to justify a specific application (vulgo: a specific move: "I did this (or said this), because *this* is the rule.")

<sup>25</sup> The entries of a rule-book for colour concepts thus differ significantly from the stereotypical entries such as 'The bishop can move always diagonally, yet ever faithful to its original colour' in, e.g. a rule-book for chess.

pronounced signature of RMIT research in the mode of design itself. To insist on immersion in the concrete domain of design, to stay on the material side, as it were, shows a clear understanding of the fact that the concrete and material in this research has the same status as the *material* sample in the definition of a colour predicate. It is indispensable.<sup>26</sup> *There is no way to say it, it must be shown.* This insight is crucial to appreciate RMIT's radical approach to research – a radicality that it must by necessity foster.

Such radicality can manifest itself in gentle ways – thus, Calder's mo-bi-le projects a grave serenity – unto a radical purity. Every single balancing figuration of this kind, each 'arm' of the mo-bi-le, thus represents structurally a proto-constellation. Calder's work shows one macro-constellation with each pole consisting of a series of embedded 'micro'-constellations. So what have masters really mastered? To some extent precisely such complex arrangements of constellational dimensions and layers.

But the quest for mastery of practice based research and the project of evidencing mastery are fundamentally constellational, also insofar as this particular type of research presupposes the capability of the immersed and saturated master who has complete command over his field<sup>27</sup> to sense and 'know' with neither inhibition nor intimidation of the essential necessity of 'the other'. Masters invariably constellate, emerging masters seek to constellate.

Graduate Research Conferences of the RMIT model are the principal public behavioural manifestation of the design practice mode of research.<sup>28</sup> They can be

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<sup>27</sup> The notion of mastery within a *noetic realm* that requires specific capabilities presupposing, e.g. acoustic or spatial intelligence, stands in a complex relation to the idea of command over respective grammars of such fields: Command of the grammar of spatial intelligence, e.g. as command over an *expressive* and *reflective inventory* of tools pertaining to a specific realm, is a matter of degree and calibration, subject to practices and traditions of finessing and relative profiling; 'mastery' in this context is not an absolute notion.

<sup>28</sup> The emergence of research manifestations features prominently in Leon van Schaik's reflections on the necessity to conduct research in the medium of design based on an interest in the 'natural history' of outstanding creative practitioners (see "Zone 1 – The Individual Mastery" in *Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice*, Wiley-Academy (2005), pp. 24-47). Note that the sensitivity to the *actual* natural history of such *individuals* has potentially crucial consequences in relation to research methodology at large: In contrast with orthodox methodic routines the practice based research paradigm aims at the reconstruction and tracking of an actual genesis, of the formation and phenomenology of a capacity and mastery, and tries to avoid any fictionalised and in hindsight stylised account of (alleged) dependencies and potential influences that turn out to be constructs *at a distance*. Rather than stipulating abstract authorities, the practice based research explores

regarded as the suspending 'hook' from which multiple triangulations of intricate constellational force-fields hang in ordered liberty for the duration of the opportunity. GRCs provide *fora* within a framework *forum* consisting of 'noetic nests'. Dwelling in such nests allows for positioning, profiling and the constitution of identities that will be able to have constellational impact in the future. If the title of this talk implies an interest in the 'creation of constellations', RMIT's GRCs attempt to do just that.

'Constellational triangulation' as the central mode of constellating creativity is not an analytic tool in order to formalise or engineer creative settings. The creation of constellations cannot be forced. However, the awareness and understanding of its dynamics can be coaxed, fostered and deepened.<sup>29</sup> In every single constellation, each project and its respective masteries will become evident in their unique profile.

Let me now place more emphasis on the second part of the title, on creativity itself. In his analysis of what he calls the natural history of the creative agent, Howard Gardner highlights that creative agent's sense of marginality, occupying a niche, a sense of transcendence, the breaking down of barriers, the idea of a breakthrough, and the sense of risk: of unfamiliarity while stepping out of the familiar into the unfamiliar territory (the idea of a pioneering exploration.)<sup>30</sup> These descriptors around creativity can be easily transliterated into the constellational notions explored so far.

The very idea of a meaningful transcendence presupposes the state of immersion into what has been called a noetic nest, a saturation regarding its workings, its 'grammar', i.e. the rules that govern its 'logic'. The fundamental creative process occurs invariably where two (or more) noetic nests that have hitherto not been in contact with each other 'make contact'. The 'contact' metaphor indicates: Moves routinised and habitualised to saturation in one domain or nest are being 'contaminated', infiltrated or swayed by moves stemming from a foreign grammatical space. They may start to exhibit an influence on each other, one may enrich the other and break open new pathways. Or it may be that moves deemed possible in the pre-

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*actual* influences, dependencies and formative impulses: it takes the notion of the *natural history* of the *individual* practitioner seriously.

<sup>29</sup> To analyse and understand structural features of constellational dynamics does not lead to formalisations and rigid paradigms; rather, it provides a working *heuristics of reflection* for the searching and re-searching practitioner.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Basic Books (New York), 1999, *passim*.

collision situation are now blocked.<sup>31</sup>

The audience of the present lecture represents an outstanding assembly of creative capability. The projection of a black-and-white image on the wall of the theatre may allow for numerous interpretations by different members of this illustrious gathering of creative ability, ranging from 'moon landscape' to 'sea turtle'. However, once the contours of a cow's head are actually pointed out, alternative interpretations seem to – or must – retreat in favour of the primacy of one 'reading'. That is, it seems no longer possible *not* to see the cow (and to be compelled by this 'aspect' to a certain degree). The lessons regarding perception and cognition to be learned from this experiment are far-reaching.<sup>32</sup> One can witness the gravitational force of one prime interpretation at the expense of other readings: we succumb to the force of one 'grammar'.

The constellational axial antagonism, however, that manifests itself in the premonition of the clash or intended interaction of more than one 'grammatical domains' is possible where we are able to transcend a single domain. Such an impulse to transcend grammatical limitations can be expressed in economic terms: a sense of 'deficit', the lacking of possibility on side A; a trust in 'capability' (if not 'surplus') on the other side, B. The same relations can be spoken of in the 3000-year-old terms that we have already engaged previously: *eros* and *thymos*. Disparity sparks creativity. The creative milieu lives off the interaction of differences.

The challenge of creativity comprises integrating in a transformational way, what is not yours *into* your domain; or to integrate aspects of your domain into a field that is not yours. These are the mirror-acts of creation. If you make the move, and others have done it before you, it is still creation. Why? Because creation is an

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<sup>31</sup> Reflection on the impact of such 'grammatical contamination' is central to all aspect of so-called 'contact theory', be it in terms of contact in cultural, tribal, linguistic, behavioural, cognitive and other distinct realms. Mark Burry's over three decades of work on the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona have led to ground-breaking insights into the 'holistic' nature of the interplay of specific disciplines in exceptionally productive and creative 'contact scenarios' – exhibited in exceptional cases by one person, a holistic master such as Antonio Gaudí. In Gaudí's case, a crucial aspect of his mastery would have to be termed a 'mastery of contact' as his creation 'works on all levels', e.g. the artistic as much as the functional. For a comprehensive behind-the-scenes-look at the more than a hundred-year-long construction drama of this 'Gesamt-Kunstwerk' see M. Burry ed.: *Gaudi Unseen: Completing the Sagrada Familia*, Jovis Verlag, Berlin 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Note that human cognitive capacities are such as to allow for instant re-cognition of the cow-*Gestalt* even after an extended period of non-exposure. The compelling and restricting nature of being conditioned to *have* to see the cow can serve as the starting point of reflections on our capacity to *un-learn* forced or habitualised aspect-seeing after it has been established in the first place. Creative mastery is thus related in part to a specific command in relation to the forces of aspect-seeing.

activity-term: it has to be performed, enacted, executed by the agent, otherwise there is no creation; and, if it is creation hitherto not enacted, it qualifies as innovative creation.

The importation of the foreign other into your 'own' or the meaningful projection of 'yours' into 'the other' can be delivered in terms of the basic principle of immunology: the possessive pronoun 'my' or adjective 'mine' - in contrast to 'not mine'.

It can also be put in basic topological terms around the notion of the 'demarcation line', the 'surface' ['poche'] and liminality that divides 'interior' from 'exterior', the 'inner' from the 'outer'.<sup>33</sup>

It can be expressed in psychopathological idiom as the problem of 'psychosis' versus 'neurosis', because the psychotic has the problem that he has no notion of a world beyond his chamber, and the neurotic does not know which room is *his* own. The best advice one can give Vice-Chancellors genuinely concerned with 'fostering inter-disciplinarity' would therefore be: Bring in people as psychotic *as possible* (vulgo: agents with a tendency towards 'total immersion') and as neurotic *as necessary!*

The quest for creativity can even more importantly, perhaps ultimately, be stated in metaphysical terms: As a quest for the boundaries of our world(s), the means of transgressing those boundaries, and the eventual question regarding the ultimate horizon within which our creative lives take place.

All of these various 'grammars' shed light on different aspects or facets of the principle creative dynamic which is fundamentally a controlled, orchestrated paradox.<sup>34</sup>

There is a sequence of particularly instructive approaches to understand the origins and dynamics of creativity from Schopenhauer, through Nicolai Berdjajew and Henri Bergson, to Arthur Koestler, all concerned with a non-formulaic reconstruction

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<sup>33</sup> The phenomenological description that captures the topological dynamics of occupying a specific position (claiming space and placing oneself in it) reveals: Moves within a grammatical space ('(my) moves here') are juxtaposed with moves (only) possible in a different grammatical space ('moves over there'). While the move that agent A wants to perform is not possible through direct import from B, it is or becomes possible in the mediation space provided by C, the peak of triangulation. This move to 'the third' *suffices*, as evidenced repeatedly, to 'unlock' the paralysis of adversarial dualism by introducing a catalysing dimension through triangulation.

<sup>34</sup> Note also in this context Leon van Schaik's closing reminder that 'a domain is *necessarily* split' (my emphasis) in *Mastering Architecture*, p. 237.

of creative processes – Bergson and Koestler fighting admirably close to the bull, certainly much closer than 'DBI' – 'De Bono Industries' – and bring incomparably more fruitful and stimulating.

So closely, in fact, do they engage, that their analysis foreshadows a paradigm shift in our understanding of creativity, dispensing with all tendencies toward hermeticism or mythologising. They shed light on the processes of creation and discovery alike, on the modelling of creativity as an integration process of 'disparate tendencies' in the evolutionary process, which aims at transformations rather than mere fusions<sup>35</sup> to which the creative activities of art and discovery equally are traced.<sup>36</sup>

Far-reaching consequences of the RMIT model of reflective investigation in the medium of design itself for the Humanities and Social Sciences await discussion. The search for mastery in the design mode, with the idea not to develop but to evidence such mastery through research, would find a corresponding format in sociology or philosophy if the author productive in those disciplines and having a substantial body of work would be invited, through a particular 3-year phase, to explicitly engage and immerse himself in a comprehensive meta-reflection intent on evidencing his very mastery. The *formal* degree of 'Master' or 'Doctor' bestowed upon him at the age of, say, 28 can, in the light of such an in-depth exploration, have but symbolic '*ex ante*' value.

This does not exist: A discursive forum and institutionalised format for this type of meta-reflections, carried out as an integral part of the ongoing productivity of such a candidate where the creative process is fore-grounded and in which future generations can participate instructively. It occurs, if at all, in implicit and wholly indirect ways, and too often the celebration of a true master is relegated to an erratic *Festschrift*. The ramifications of RMIT research methodology for disciplines outside the design area, for their self-understanding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, could be profoundly valuable.

Considering the design disciplines themselves and architecture in particular,

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<sup>35</sup> It is striking to relate Mark Burry's critique of the notion of 'fusion' and his trans-disciplinary re-interpretation of 'holism' to methodological reflections on 'reverse engineering' as executed in the *Sagrada Familia* project in Barcelona: Trans-disciplinarity turns out to be a tracking heuristics: The enacted 'whole' allows one to track the complex interplay of diverse disciplines, levels, domains and realms.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. A. Koestler in a bold attempt to reach out for a 'unifying theory of art and discovery' in *Insight & Outlook*, 1947 (preceding his seminal *Act of Creation*, 1964), p. 8: "Artists treat facts as stimuli for imagination, whereas scientists use imagination to coordinate facts." The aim is to show that such distinctions are not fundamental, that all creativity is based on a common pattern."

the very claim that architecture is professionalised around the wrong body of knowledge – translated into those constellational terms that informed our discussion from the outset – means this: Due to commercial, legislative, economic, socio-political and other pressures on the practice, the practitioner is alienated from his creative and innovative forge. The situation does not allow for that crucial immersion into the 'noetic realm' or 'nest' which is or should be his default domain, namely that of spatial intelligence.<sup>37</sup> The practitioner is straited by expertise demands *outside* of his genuine domain.<sup>38</sup> He is, in our terms, prevented from *constellating*, and 'mo-bi-les' may catch his eye, but no longer his imagination.<sup>39</sup>

In the same sense I would hold that contemporary philosophy is professionalised around the wrong 'body of knowledge'. You will then understand aspirations connected to research in the mode of thinking practice and thus to the irrefutable 'Delphic invitation': *Gnoti seauton*<sup>40</sup> – *Know thyself*.

A Satyr's final whisper: You saw mo-bi-les, heard of nests, marvelled about the *Gestalt* of a cow that may stay with you. And you heard me use a little word that I never explained – *noetic*. Trust me, it is extremely important. I hope to talk to you about it soon.

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<sup>37</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of related issues that aims at rebuilding architecture as a profession and making a 'case for a wider, more collectively motivated profession based on spatial intelligence' see Leon van Schaik's chapter 'New professionalism – new practice manifesto', in: *Spatial Intelligence*, John Wiley & Sons (2008), 183ff.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Leon van Schaik's foundational critique of 'Confusing the Knowledge Base' in *Mastering Architecture* (2005), p.176ff.

<sup>39</sup> The project of 'tracking spatial intelligence' through its individual formation, its phenotypical emergence, is the nearest simile to the ambition of constellation research to track 'Idealism' in its very formative phase. One may speak of a particular 'grammar' that emerges and becomes prominent in the specific noetic nest of spatial intelligence with an eidetic reservoir or eidetic archive. I once coined it 'Spatiallese' (cf. RMIT Presentation in Aarhus, Nov. 2010)

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the Greek Γνῶθι σεαυτόν (*Gnōthi seautón*) as well as the variant Γνῶθι σαυτόν (*Gnōthi sautón*), one of which was inscribed onto the Delphic temple of Appollo in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.