

Action #1

Aharon will skateboard to the place he is supposed to speak from.

Dismount:

Hi, My name is Aharon and I am a skateboarder..

<take papers out>

If the height of civilization's production is on full display and show at the theatre of war, a theatre of negatives, at which most actors wish they were not, and if in that theatre the equivalent of Performance Artist (rather than an actor) is the war correspondent having to skate, surf & cross among occurring sequences, as they bring desperate and desperate elements together. Putting together the crossing of no, nots, wish not, oh! nos, and nones, to play for the powers that pay, or to question and expand. With such ifs in mind, I hope you can, at least try & tolerate, if not excuse and maybe even reason - having **no Thens**, but keeping consequent strands in mind..

In the next few heart beats we are about to share, I will try to propose questions, and cross questions as a way to get in-touch with unknowns, and perhaps knowing nots in regards to performance philosophy crossed with philosophy performance.

Because of all these crossing, I will try to contextualise the questions and then elaborate, so please try to bare with me while I place a few pointers that might initially seem unrelated and arbitrary..

For example, skateboarding. I didn't have to skateboard from there <point> to here. Does it mean the bit of skateboarding was a performative act? An act made to convey/express something, rather than an action made of necessity? Maybe it was an act born out of necessity to to convey non-performative activities? Or was it perhaps a performative act in the sense of a necessary action for a show, creating an affect for an abstract impact? I could have walked. However, perhaps I always skateboard before speaking in public, just for kicks? In that case, maybe the skateboarding was, just like the case would have been if I walked - a repeated and repeatable activity without any particular purpose?? A practice? Something to do knowing why not?

In that sense, the question of performativity is whether or not the activity of skateboarding here crossed an imaginary line between being for itself, and being - or referring to - something else, a performative act of some kind. In that sense, it will argued that performative activities have innate crossings with resulting dynamics and rhythms, that they require to live between "real life" and "Performance". Indeed, the unique knowledge that comes through performance, might be an outcome of each and every such crossing. If this is the case, then perhaps by skating & surfing across multiple domains, we can discover new aspects and ways to imagine and practice performance?

Lets cross, for example, me inside and out.

Action #2

Aharon will now converse with one hand.

Hand - Why don't you tell them what's on this paper you are reading from?

aharon - Is this the right time?

Hand - Yes. You need to be open!

aharon - What do you think I should say?

Hand - That you are reading from a script.

aharon - Why?

Hand - It makes the whole presentation here much more of a performance.

aharon - In what way?

Hand - Because you are crossing times and rhythms. This text was written, and you are repeating it, you are re-doing, at a different time, and adapt it to a different beat, a live one.

aharon - Perhaps.. (moving the hand to face audience)

Hand - why did you move me like that?

Aharon - To indicate that I was saying "perhaps"..

Hand - By acknowledging audience, as a group, linked to this conversation, you crossed paths - that of this chat & the one the audience is on.

Aharon - They sit rather quietly. Maybe its the quiet path..?

Hand - This is no joking matter! You are crossing the Then and the Now - You are not doing the text as you go along, but cross it with the live situation to generate ideas that by simply writing it, might not have otherwise surfaced.

Aharon - Lets check if I get your point.. So.. For example, the way this text is written, the structure that begins with a general apologetic tone that calls for people to "bare with this" - hence performing a call for the sense of some understanding. Or the linking between crossing subjects, crossing room, skating and surfing - is that performative?

Hand - You got the point. You are constantly performing!

Aharon - What if I just read this as a script?

Hand - What do you mean?

Aharon:

Hand is asking - What do you mean, again.

Aharon replies by continuing to read the script.

Hand will then point out that there was another crossing here, that of roles & perspectives. Aharon will remind people of rhythms and hope that this particular beat came at the right time, and didn't have too heavy a gravity attached. (whatever that "gravity" might mean...)

Then aharon will move on to read "action #3"

Action #3

Each part of this text is called "action", rather than "act", as a sort of link/tribute/homage to Beuys and the language he used.

Joseph Beuys used the term "action" as an attempt to differentiate between acts of performance and acts of life in general. Part of the expanded concept of art was - in some ways still is - that every activity, planting trees, boxing, chatting to neighbours, etc. - can be an element of an artistic action/performance and more specifically, an element in artistic language.

In this context, there is an anecdotal yet illustrative story about Beuys that, in my mind, points towards what happens when activities within a situation are taken performatively, and perhaps why such seemingly philosophical-only questions, can be of life and death.

As the story goes, Beuys was visited in his studio by a group of students. His studio was full of objects and materials such as honey pots, felt, various kinds of fats, some stuffed dead animals on shelves and tables. The visitors, instead of physically touching/interacting with the objects and materials around, just looked on as if they were visiting a museum. As the story goes, Beuys was very surprised in a disappointed kind of way.

Now, what do we have here?

Beuys thought that in the situation - or perhaps action - of being in his studio, people could feel welcome, like him, to play about with the objects and materials that are around.

In a sense, there is something in that sentiment. If you think of visiting someone's house/home and at the very least touching some objects while talking about them with your host, or waiting for the host to come from the kitchen with a brew - I think such a scenario doesn't sound too far fetched.

However, perhaps the perception is different when visiting someone who makes objects? I don't know.

My mother is a potter, and when people visit her studio, they do touch materials and objects.

Perhaps though, in case of Beuys, we have a question of a protocol. What is the "correct" action when visiting an artist who sells more than anyone before him? Can I touch anything to do with such objects? It is easy to imagine a person wanting to touch, but finding themselves acting a protocol of distance. Doing stuff they might not genuinely want to do, but finding themselves honestly preferring to perform an act of a protocol so as to save themselves from any possible awkward situation.

From the point of view of dynamics of life, practices, action and performance, I think we have here an example of people taking refuge in the performative. Feeling safe in an action that replaces questions of and about the reality of the situation they might actually be sharing with Beuys, through a preconceived protocol. If they really wanted to touch stuff, would they not have asked whether or not it's fine? Were they that scared as to think a question to the effect could upset Beuys?

In that sense, it can be said that just like Beuys presumed people will feel happy to play, like him, with the stuff in his studio, his visitors presumed the other way around. Both parts wanted to believe something else about the reality of the situation, and that crossings of beliefs with situation-realities, and of the make-beliefs themselves, made for a unified performance. A space all participants imagined stuff they felt safe to imagine in.

These points might seem slightly speculative, so it seems apt to remind here that the performative space, be it a theatre, a mask, a time/action agreed upon by people involved, etc. is seen, like art in general, as a unique space where it is safe to imagine.

However that very safety zones that society affords for art - and are under a constant threats - are in themselves a subject of self questioning and philosophical prodding. If we have zones - in spacetime - where it is made safe to imagine, they become self contained, the activities they afford become habitual, predictable and ritualistic. Just like such a description of a love affair seems utterly impossible, so is the case with the safety of performative activities, and time-spaces when they stop crossing boundaries and become rituals.

What might be proposed here is that this very question of crossing between performance, activities (as daily actions), and rituals, is the question that occupied Beuys in context of the students' visit, and for which he attempted - through various means - to find a solution for. (as I hope will transpire, perhaps the very notion of solution, might be oxymoronic for the very question..) However, for now, perhaps something else is more appropriate to mention.

There is a view that the drive, within European culture, to look for the bare materiality of stuff, originates from judeo-protestant histories that aim at stripping away idols and icons. However, I think that philosophically at least - and here yes, the questions of

philosophy are very varying in ways, perceptions, and manners of pursuing than that of religions - come from a different source.

Action #4

Lets move and imagine ourselves in Athens of the ancient kind. No Euro. No cars. No Shining path... And we wander the streets just looking around - Here's Diogenes! In a barrel...

lets follow him for an imaginary day:

oh! he wanks in public!

- He is plucking a chicken and declaring it a man (human) as a response to Socrates' definition of featherless biceps.

- Now searching in daylight with a torch for an honest man*.

- Rolling his barrel up and down the main road for no apparent reason, while everyone else is panicking.

- Living in a barrel.

While these activities could be imagined, if we stay with Athens in mind, in an amphitheatre as parts of some plays, Diogenes doesn't do them in designated sites but where people are. eg agora, streets, academy, etc.. The safety of a space such a theatre, or indeed, a word-based-language based teaching in an academy, is being stripped in favour of the possibility that people can actually perceive the actions positively even out-side these designated cultural zone. Moreover, that outside these zones, the activities could resonate in manners that are being inhibited precisely by the safety society offers through places that replace the possible crossings between life and performance to that of live performance and living ritual.

Indeed, for a social, cultural and philosophical activist, like Diogenes; a guy that attempted to question elements that inhibit what he perceived as ability to experience life genuinely and hence in a free form, like dogmas, rituals, and cultural veneers/pretensions* - designated areas for performance were performative in themselves. That very performativity of spacetime safety is a part of social and cultural, possible, cover-up. A cover-up, that in and of itself - because you never know what's Under a cover-up - the possibility of what might be lurking underneath - makes for less than safe sensations. Unless ofcourse, you attempt to strip away at the cover..

Like a teenager, attempting to uncover where life is at in reality rather than then fairy-tales and myths society narrates, and in a way is in-between challenging the past before integrating it into an updated set of myths and fairy tales - Diogenes acts like a constant teen. By his acts' challenge for the accepted norms, through crossing lines and expectations, Diogenes is skating and surfing in-between currents of cultural perceptions. Perhaps this is why his kind of activities would not seem too alien at times, like 60's and 70's when attempts to stay a teen in spirit and actions was prevalent.

Therefore 60's and 70's inspired kind of activities, which we associate with various aspects of Performance art like:

Wearing a Gorilla mask when speaking in public about feminist related issues. (Guerilla Girls)

Cleaning streets with toothbrushes, dressed in Gtmo uniforms and being shouted at by a USArmy dressed person (Dressed Bare Life Study #1 - Coco Fusco)

Living for an entire year in a wooden cage (One Year Performance 1978-1979- Tehching

Hsieh)

A psychosomatic body of reflective elements collected through a 90 days walk through people's living environments, specifically intended to question & prod sensitivity to Art, and tolerance for artistic activities. (ElElka Krajewska - LOCAL FIELD - 2006)
As indeed other acts like offering people to call imaginary friends in Baghdad as war broke up, offering monkey nuts for pet dogs and pet people in the streets, asking each person that happens to pass by for a Valentine's day date, and other such acts - may have a very direct lineage to Diogenes activities.

In contemporary context these activities are thought of as Performance Art, and are valued culturally, academically and socially as such. Indeed if Diogenes lived today, perhaps his activities would have been both intended and perceived in a Performance Art frame of reference. However, the very fact he did his philosophy with a thought of its performative aspects - eg in contexts not usually afforded for the acts - and produced a philosophical language that speaks with actions & words intertwined, provides an historical reference to contemporary philosophers that attempt to question the hold of the written & spoken word. To question the presumption of performative superiority by one language over another.

Action #5

Hi! Perhaps you can help me? I see you have many mobile phones in this shop. I am looking for one that I could speak to ghosts with.

Do you have the right number?

Yes! Perhaps I do!

This exchange is a bit of a paraphrase on one of Hilan Bensusan's activities. However, this particular questioning, of our knowledge and thinking re technology and death through speculative processes done/performed in mobile phone shops weaves crossing Diogenesian lines between cultural perceptions of truths. Through crossing these truths, building the narrative upon the meeting points of elements that do not necessarily "belong" to one another, and do not oppose one another - we get the beginning of emerging questions.

In this case, philosophical questions that come through the very performativity of the relevant actions.

Bensusan's link to ghosts has other dimensions as well. In another one of explorations, Bensusan linked directly with the ghost of Pippa Bacca in the streets of Istanbul.

Pippa Bacca was a performer that unfortunately, paid the full and ultimate price for the crossings between life and performance. While hard-to-take performative activities are tolerated by most people, precisely because the activities are seen as "out-of-life". Perhaps not of death, but somewhere in the crossing between life and death, hence the "safe" zone can be developed and maintained.

There are activities that challenge the safety zone because, a bit like people such as Diogenes and Beuys, if they are not a part of life, the very reason for the activities to be - is gone. (.7k oaks in a gallery or street?) The challenging of the safe zone is a risky business. Risky in terms of physical, actual, life and dead - as well as of the social and cultural kind. ie people may find it easier to keep away and be dismissive, then give the activities - and the person perpetrating them - another thought.

The philosophy that questions its own performativity and that of performance itself - risks, in this case, being "killed" as well as killed - if not just injured..

As part of "Brides for peace", a collective performative act that involved Pippa Bacca ++ hitch-hiking dressed in white bridal clothes, throughout the middle-east on the way to meet up in Palestine, Pippa hitched through Turkey. There, Pippa got murdered in one of the drives she hitched.

This act clearly crossed between life, performance and death... Indeed, if we consider the performative function of bridal clothing, in the ritual performance of Marriage, they come to assist in the transformative aim of the ceremony itself - from one kind of living, to another, till death.. In a sense, the bridal dress is a garment for crossing between 2 kinds/ways of being and living.

Bensusan, as a crossdresser, picked up fragments of Pippa's performative act and, in a sense, through a performance of his own, connected with her ghost in Istanbul.

Wearing a white bridal dress, similar in look and feel to Pippa's, Bensusan went for a walk in Istanbul. This walk brought Bensusan himself into situations where the crossing between performative acts and acts-of-life disturbed people a fair bit, however this conjuring of Pippa's ghost had another in-built collision of trajectories, that of Art & Philosophy.

In that sense, Bensusan embodied in that act the link between performance and philosophy. He connected to an act that carried artistic sensibilities, in terms of meanings, aesthetics and metaphors. That act, through Pippa's ghost became Bensusan's philosophically oriented performative act. A performance that was to ask how thinking - or the lack of it - is to be questioned when it is crossed with the memory of Pippa's peace bridal performance and murder.

Action #6

Calling elements actions, even through connecting them conceptually to Beuys, makes them action-nots, rather than actions. The Act of declaring a set of written ideas, actions, even within a larger text, doesn't mean they are activities that Do anything else but declaratives that Perform a certain function - Beuysian reminders - in a certain context..

However, once acknowledged, as is done just about now, the performative declarations Action, actionN, ActioN, can turn - fold - the declarative reality onto itself, Be actions, and indeed a practice of Action, that may - or may not - be performed - but is given a chance to Be.

This borrows on Agamben's descriptions of liturgic performative rituals and how they flow from one realm of meninges to another.

Should this have been a note added at the end, or is it fine here as a sort of bridge-link performative sequence. Perhaps just a real sequence without a performance attached?

These ways of folding, bending, twisting, surfing & skating are ways to cross, to cause collisions. To scatter fragments. To encounter fragments. To play with fragments. To Be the fragment of syncopatic collisions that gave you birth. A birth for life to encounter/create new ways to imagine, new ways to practice If?

Performance Art has a specific spacetime-rhythm made of IFs that cross each-other. Not ordinary Ifs that require What & Then, but How Ifs, devil Ifs, self reflecting Ifs,

how-to-cross Ifs, so that they retain their sense of Ifness (eg, opensource) and make an If sequence? This is a simple beginning of how Ifs of art perform and create, move and sound before arriving at other kind of aesthetics.

How is it to ask If without a Then? If 7 is 10, if blue is actually a rejection of all the blues you ever heard, if you were a killer, if brides came with peace, if you walked aimlessly, how if is an if its an actual if of ifs without a Then?

The question is a practice, the then is its performance & its answer is the application. Does Performance art expand the range of Ifs by the very nature of being in all worlds at once? A nature of creating expansions, highlighting wormholes & cutting into unknowns having sensations & senses like a rhythm..?

Interaction #1

Like Beuys' usage of fragmented materials and objects, Bensusan picks up fragments of thoughts, ideas, concepts, sequences and activities. Through the collisions that crossing these elements together bring up, new possibilities rise. The fragments are like organic entities that perform ontologically and through crossing each other's path, bring new questions. Whereas Beuys was concerned with the fragments as physical & visual enablers for an archaeological-If exploration of his processes-come-ImaginationManifestation (work) Bensusan's sensitivities are more Heraclitian. To do with fragments as "thoughts beings", or perhaps "thoughts questioning beings".

Similarly, Diogenes' activities of performing philosophy in unexpected places, imagined the performative elements he was using as tools that supported philosophical questioning. While the activities might seem very similar to contemporary performance art, the sensitivities and resulting points of where performance and philosophy cross paths - are philosophical for both Bensusan and Diogenes.

Using a language directly taken from Performance, as Bensusan keeps doing, the performative philosophical organism/animal that is the result, comes directly through a collision based crossing of practices. This way it is unknown Where exactly they'd cross in a way that will create a new entity, which Bensusan - or some other person - will want to keep developing.

Here, I think, we can begin to consider different kind of entities/beings that come through the crossing of Performance and Philosophy. These entities are elements with rhythmic trajectories that are made of constant collisions. Each - a noise made by these collisions - while having its own unique properties. At times the character of philosophy's questions, and at others, these of art's. Typically, the kind of questions seems dependent upon the trajectory of sensations, the rhythmic intent of these collisions' human & other perpetrators.

Interaction #2

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