ON PERFORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY – 10 IMPULSES FOR DISCUSSION FROM [SOUNDCHECK PHILOSOPHIE]

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Since 2011, the philosophy-performance festival [soundcheck philosophie] has been gathering protagonists in German-speaking countries, who seek and intend to cultivate a certain practice in philosophy. This practice takes philosophy - focussing not only on written texts but also on the fundamental oral situations that take place within philosophy - and presents it artistically, and/or in a mediated or mediatized form.

In this context, the term 'Performative Philosophy' is meant as a working concept for finding criteria and developing contemporary expressions and forms of doing philosophy. The [soundcheck philosophie] festival and the association responsible for it, Expedition Philosophie / Internationale Gesellschaft für Performative Philosophie, are understood as a forum for discourse. The 10 theses at the end of this article are intended to initiate discussion. Inspired by the well-known yet unique structure of an oral conversation, where many things are mentioned out of context and the topic and the precise questions of the conversation frequently need to be negotiated and worked out through the process of conversation, we would also like to contribute impulses for conversation. With this in mind, we have incorporated 10 conversational impulses that answer, tell, ask, state, chat, riddle and reflect upon what it is to undertake Performative Philosophy as a project.

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Impulse for discussion Nº 1: What are we doing?

In Performative Philosophy the interplay of saying and showing matters: often the form mirrors and reflects the content, which it negotiates (or even distorts or foils). In accordance with this, this article plays in the most simple way with the number 10 as a formal principle. Like every presentation, it is to be seen as a rhetorical element, evoking associations. The reader is free to have the numerals 1 and 0 remind them of the digital basic order, or to relate the 10 theses with the 10 Commandments, or to recall the beginnings of learning how to count. The content of this paper is a matter of presenting the project of a contemporary performative philosophy in all the facets it evokes for us.

The festival [soundcheck philosophie] and the association Expedition Philosophie (both founded in 2011) seek performative expressions of philosophy and of philosophizing. In doing so, we follow the tradition of philosophy, where philosophizing takes place in conversation and speech. We search for, develop and discuss forms, which – starting from the philosophy practiced in academia – handle this philosophy in a performative way (that is artistically, publically, in different media, on stage, embodied) or do philosophy themselves in their own specific way.

Our activities started, on the one hand, with the observation that there were more and more individuals coming from academic philosophy who were looking for the encounter of theory and performance: a kind of movement to be recorded. Therefore our goal was to bundle these developments together through the verbal exchange of the protagonists and to demonstrate the spectrum of possible formats to the public and academic philosophy.

With these activities we act within a wider field of cultural developments and we try to mark our position in this search as a genuinely philosophical one. Therefore the 10 theses, which are outlined at the end of this article, are formulated primarily to address academic philosophy.

The idea of Performative Philosophy is based on the principle of the primacy of practice/praxis (before theory) — an idea that can be found throughout the history of Western philosophy, e.g. in Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Sartre, Wittgenstein. And this principle needs to guide theory development within the project of a performative philosophy: Before we can theorize the kinds of insights that can happen in performances intending to think philosophically, we have to sketch out very concretely the practices and situations in which our project exists.

Impulse for discussion Nº 2: Why [soundcheck philosophie]?

Together with Professor Matthias Kaufmann from the Philosophical Seminar at the University Halle Wittenberg, we founded the festival [soundcheck philosophie] in 2011 in Halle / Saale, Germany. The first two festivals were financed by the VolkswagenStiftung as part of the program 'Society – Sciences – Public'. Since then more events have been realised by volunteer work and by project funding.

[soundcheck philosophie] #1 Halle (Saale), Germany (June 2011)

For documentation see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojo1cJzuZqY

Text in the video: "Could the stage be a laboratory for thinking? How can philosophy and the sciences be adequately mediated? Do we need new forms of communicative presentation for a discourse of complex theoretical questions? Philosophy as image? In the body? As sound? Philosophers and performers met to discuss the subjects: TheoryPerformance – can you understand me? And Laboratory of Discourse: We have to talk – but how?"

[soundcheck philosophie] #2 Halle (Saale), Germany (2012)

For documentation see:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=869qqEhz2RY

Text in the video: "The stage as a space for thinking? What are philosophy's forms of expression? Does thinking need an audience? Philosophers and performers met for the second time, this year to discuss: What can be said, what is it better to show? Is philosophy performative? What could new forms of knowledge look like?"

With this initiative we were accommodating an existing phenomenon: namely, that several philosophers in German-speaking countries had independently started to develop artistic or public presentations (on stage) of their philosophy. The questions we pose in and around the festival are these: Why is there the intention to expand, to confuse or even to disrupt the traditional forms of communication in academia? In what way can the forms of expression and

presentation of (academic) philosophical theses be expanded? In what way is philosophy practiced at all? Is philosophy (only) conveyed? Or is academic philosophy transformed and broadened by these attempts?

With the word 'soundcheck' in the title we refer on the one hand to the basic oral and situated event of philosophizing, and on the other hand, to the situation of trial and error testing of technical media – usually before a concert – and in our case, of the contemporary forms (and their media) of doing philosophy.

Fragment of a Chat (1): about the aims of the festival [soundcheck philosophie]

Eva: I think it is like this: We have managed to achieve what we wanted to initiate. Now there exists a kind of network of people with a double-identity in philosophy and in the arts, of border-crossers and protagonists in performative philosophy, and it might increase. I think we have to focus the work on the performance itself in future. With festivals, which have to be presented, we run ourselves into the ground – we are just a mini-structure. We can't shoulder this. And we can't set standards under the conditions that are expected from a festival. Performative philosophy is in its fledgling stages. I haven't seen a lot to convince me. But now – at least – a network of protagonists has emerged – who can have an exchange of ideas on what it is about, how to make it better, and what must be developed. We need internal working sessions. That has to be the focus.

Rainer: Well, the 2015 and 2016 festival editions are waiting in the wings. We have to, and want to, show what is developed anyway. But the question is: for what kind of audience do we want to work? For a broad public or for a specific scene? Right, I absolutely want us to work in both directions – and we can indicate this better at the next festival. If necessary, more offensively... the aesthetic-performative-thinking border-crossing performances and those who have an affinity for the public and are entertaining. That is why there are cooperation partners interested in our work, like LOFFT in Leipzig 2016 or the Event Körper-Denken 2016 in Munich. They want to establish a public discourse – and at the same time catch up with the advanced forms in theatre and performance.

Fragment of Chat (2): thinking about learning and learning Performative Philosophy

Eva: I have a funny question to get to the bottom of our intentions: Imagine you are asked to put Performative Philosophy (or just your way of doing philosophical performances) into pedagogy. You might even imagine an academy of Performative Philosophy. What would be the very first exercise you would do with students?

Rainer: The very first exercise for students: We would go in the theatre room, which belongs to the academy, and each student would have to go up on stage and speak *ad hoc* – in the glare of

the spotlight – about a moment when s/he had thought up an intense question, one which s/he now considers philosophical. When they finished I would delve deeper into what I had just heard/seen....

Eva: Nice first exercise ;-). Mine would probably be a physical improvisation: having not understood a text yet, but absolutely wanting to understand it, but not being able to understand. (Maybe with a concrete text) How is this state expressed physically? What tensions, movements and rhythms follow when you focus on this state of text-appropriation by expanding it into time and space? And by the way, we both have exercises that point to the personal nature of the work of doing philosophy....

Impulse for discussion Nº 3: Why is "Performative Philosophy" a working concept?

The term 'Performative Philosophy' did not appear in the program until the second edition of the festival [soundcheck philosophy], and has immediately started to spread. In the meantime, the term has also been heard outside of the festival context, in seminars and conferences. We understand 'Performative Philosophy' as a working concept and with it we summarize the topics and issues which we address in the framework of the project [soundcheck philosophy]. Discussion and exchange have to be continued beyond the festival, including digitally. Therefore the German-language blog (www.performativephilosophie.org) and the group as part of the Network Performative Philosophy (Internationale Gesellschaft für Performative Philosophie / International Society for Performative Philosophy) are in progress.

The term 'Performative Philosophy' as we use it links three questions and research perspectives:

1) On the one hand, Performative Philosophy refers to the fact that philosophic acts, as far as Austin's reasoning goes, are thought of as intervening enforcements. Philosophical speech acts have a performative dimension in the sense that you are doing something by saying something, and also by how you say something. This draws attention to the forms of representation of philosophy. Performative Philosophy draws attention to those little-reflected ("normal") forms of philosophizing that are not just produced as a written text. It concerns the situational and verbal (standard) forms of philosophizing: the dialogical conversation, the argumentative conversation, the public lecture, the University lecture, and seminar discussions.

2) Secondly, with Performative Philosophy, we can identify those philosophical presentations which are looking to experiment with new forms and formats of philosophizing (specifically those which are oral and situated) through the use and execution of technical and theoretical performance art and theatre (but also other art forms). In particular, we can locate forms which seek to alienate already established forms of philosophizing, to de- and re-

contextualize them, to stretch them to their limits (their limits towards art), and in so doing, to make them visible and questionable.

3) Performative Philosophy is the main term for the practice of systematic reflection which explains the conditions named in (1.), thereby establishing how one should understand the forms of philosophy in text and conversation on the one hand, and those named in (2.) on the other. What can (academic) philosophy learn pragmatically from these representations, which are strongly influenced by performance art, theatre or other forms of art? How is philosophy seen today? And where can one find it? Does a dramaturgy of philosophical knowledge exist? And what form might this dramaturgy take?

Impulse for discussion Nº 4: 10 activities which drive us.

There is a specific form of knowledge that constitutes the focus of the project of Performative Philosophy. Not only are sensuality, corporeality, clarity and mediation addressed, but also its public context, i.e. the collective thinking in a philosophical situation or performance. Here, social aspects also come into play; for example, shared knowledge concerning habitus, generally known communication forms, and situations in which knowledge is negotiated or conveyed. Likewise, it focuses on rhetorical categories, such as ethos, logos and pathos amongst others, which imply that Performative Philosophy can be funny as well as serious. Potentially, the project also claims that the presentation and the act of philosophy is to be distinguished from the presentation and the act of other theories in sciences and humanities. It could be argued that Philosophy as a specific way of thinking has characteristics and possibilities which essentially need to be worked out independently, in contrast to other discipline's theories. It is not easy to create a list of those events and actions that deeply interest us and call upon us to develop Performative Philosophy. But here is a provisional and incomplete list of some of the activities that might:

1. Understanding (*verstehen*)
2. Cognition (*erkennen*)
3. Representing (*darstellen*)
4. Watching (*anschauen*)
5. Apprehension (*begreifen*)
6. Overturning (*umwerfen*)
7. Showing (oneself) ((*sich*) *zeigen*)
8. Reflecting (*reflektieren*)
9. Communicating (*kommunizieren*)
10. Reassuring (oneself) ((*sich*) *überzeugen*)

Impulse for discussion Nº 5: 10 counter reactions we induce.

Our project, Performative Philosophy, can be criticized from many perspectives. Below we have summarized the major criticisms regarding our project in 10 statements. These relate mainly to the impact of the medium and the type of philosophizing on the competence and goals of Performative Philosophy.

1. Philosophy and art are separate areas that are able to express different things. This is good news, for it shows that they have evolved historically and should stay that way!

2. Philosophers who want to go on stage or express themselves artistically are amateurs. This is unprofessional and annoying. One cannot do that to an audience!

3. Artists who also want to philosophize, but do not have the appropriate training, cannot really philosophize. One cannot expect to put an audience through that!

4. This is too nerdy! This means that it is only interesting for a certain scene or elite!

5. This is a popularization of philosophy, it is edutainment, infotainment and just too shallow!

6. This is too mixed! People who throw Philosophy Slams and other forms of entertainment such as the Dead Philosophers Café in a pot with artistic lecture performances and artistic research, which are about knowledge, do not know what they want. (By the way: The artistic research has now thoroughly explored the interference of science and art, and now knows about the potential of cognizance in art) (See also criticism 9 below).

7. Philosophy is about reading! If one can think one doesn't need to mess around with other kinds of media.

8. Performative Philosophy?! This has always existed! This is the rhetoric of philosophy! The aesthetic and artistic design of philosophy content has always been a high priority (at least in some traditions)!

9. Performative Philosophy?! It's too late. It's already been done long before you!

10. It is still quite unclear.

Impulse for discussion Nº 6: Borders to other fields of cultural sense and meaning

The project of Performative Philosophy lies in proximity to other areas and activities in which cultural meaning is interpreted or created and discussions are held. We take up opportunities to conduct public "over the fence"-conversations with these other fields; for example, our recent discussions with representatives of Artistic Research, in 2014 with the session on philosophy teaching at the Congress of the German Society for Philosophy, or with the performance philosopher, Bazon Brock.

Here is a preliminary, incomplete list of disciplines or cultural fields, which are adjacent to the field of Performative Philosophy and partially overlap it.[1]

1. Academic philosophy
2. Performance Art / Theater / Dance
3. Rhetoric
4. Artistic research / Performance studies
5. Teaching philosophy / Didactic
6. Philosophy festivals - Events - Museums - Movies
7. Science communications ("infotainment" / "edutainment")
8. Political public community
9. Art and cultural education
10. Literature in its live performance forms

Why does the field of 'Performance Philosophy' not appear in this proximity? As part of the online-network organisation 'Performance Philosophy' we see us belonging to this field. But the order in the list might articulate our specific genesis and focus. For others 'Performance Philosophy'-members the perspective might come more from performative practice, more from the theory of performance or it might focus a certain tradition of philosophy.

Impulse for discussion Nº 7: Considerations for philosophizing in public

Fragment of a chat (3): What is "thinking together"?

Rainer: If you take the situation of a performance - in a gallery or theatre … There the viewer is indeed addressed in a certain way, and challenged to 'think along'. Is it really possible to discriminate the concerns we discuss under the term of 'Performative Philosophy'? Do philosophical performances directly target thinking in another way than artistic performances or dramatic formats do? And what does "thinking"/"thinking along" actually mean? What are the criteria to see if the audience has really thought about a philosophical problem? That people discuss it during and afterwards? And what kind of discussion does it have to be for it to be philosophical? Or do philosophical performances simply want to instigate a greater quantity or more intense quality of discussions than 'normal' performances?

Eva: Exactly, that is the question we must ask ourselves. Which is why the question of how performance 'thinks' is of course very interesting for us, but it does not go straight to the core of our concerns – because we are focused specifically on philosophical thinking. This means we are orientated towards and want to expand the practices of established philosophy in academic institutions.

   For me, personally, the difference in development is a big one: if I work on a performance, I have every freedom. If I decide to work on Performative Philosophy, I claim to connect with academic discourse and to make a contribution to this field (with other means and media).

But the audience, who do not work professionally in philosophy, should also enter into thinking. Therefore my questions are: What makes philosophical thinking different (from other kinds of thinking)? And what happens in situations of "philosophical gatherings" and of "public philosophizing"? Tricky question: How does one see that an idea has been thought about or thought through? Perhaps through the fact that it has been more precisely discussed? That one sees specific problems held in a common view? That one is capable of grasping more sophisticated concepts?

Rainer: "More specifically" – yes, but what exactly is that? Certain representatives of analytic philosophy accuse the representatives of continental philosophy traditions (such as phenomenology) of not having enough 'exact' arguments, that the problems are all approached too metaphorically and circuitously… and then the retort of continental philosophy: detours increase local knowledge! – Hans Blumenberg for example thinks thus. Postmodernists in any case. This means: I have not got a good answer that will prevent us from unintentionally backing ourselves into a corner.

Back to your remarks about the public: maybe it would make sense to emphasize this relationship to the public even more – because that often really sets us apart from academic philosophy…

I realize now that it is easier for me to productively argue our distinction from academic philosophy, than from performance and theatre.

Eva: Two things: First, I believe that the distinction between 'more artistic' vs. 'more academic' is not helpful. If the crucial point of a philosophical performance is that it articulates a certain philosophical problem or position (with or without reference to the written tradition), then only the gesture of delivery makes a difference. Either it is "in this performance I show you the philosophical problem x / my position – and now let us discuss it" or it is "look at my art – I claim this performance is philosophical thinking. Let's cultivate philosophical communication in other media than written language."

And the second point is:

I dare say that for *every* philosophical direction or practice of academic philosophizing there is an appropriate and consistent form of public performance, in which the audience witnesses the relevant thinking and contemplation. Actually, it really concerns our 'thesis 10 for Performative Philosophy'.

Rainer: On the one hand I agree with you that Performative Philosophy should create appropriate forms of execution in public performance for any kind of academic philosophizing. On the other hand though, there are certain philosophical directions that appear to be closer to the concerns of performative philosophy than others. And you could see during the festival which performances were explicitly inclined towards which philosophical directions. I have three examples: phenomenology in the broadest of senses, specifically phenomenology of the body; hermeneutics (which was naturally apparent because many of the performances are about understanding); and pragmatism. Certain varieties of formal analytic philosophy,

however, seem to offer very little in terms of philosophical starting points for the concerns of Performative Philosophy.

Eva: We should not pass judgment too early; we should wait and see what may come from these directions. Another example: a project such as Hanno Depner's handcrafts-cube 'Kant für die Hand', in which a diagram of the construction of a text (Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*) is constructed in a 3-D model, needs a certain kind of written philosophy. We may be surprised by which performative forms are suitable for certain approaches, directions or methods of doing philosophy (by the way, Michael Hampe's book (2014), which is now well discussed, has a similar concern to our project: narration as philosophical method). Maybe some might be only performed in audioguides others might need participation and physical work, whatever.

Fragment of a chat (4): Academic philosophy with rhetorical awareness

Eva: A quick assessment from you if I may: do you see a way to bind performative philosophy to academic philosophy? Can you imagine that the project could get taken up, and taken seriously? Philosophy within art schools may someday be open to it… but regular academic philosophy? Can and should performative philosophy be noticed and even picked up in its own right? Or does it not risk the danger of being laughed at?

Rainer: Yes, I think it will be taken up … but not in the way that a new area within academic philosophy and its institutes would occur. Rather, Performative Philosophy is something that challenges how academic philosophy understands itself – and successfully modifies this self-understanding towards a more conscious shift to the public, and a greater self-awareness of the wise use of rhetorical devices in philosophy…

Impulse for discussion Nº 8: Mind Games – Experiments for Orientation

The project of Performative Philosophy originates from the intentions of a lot of singular protagonists and lives in the results: philosophical performances and other presentational experiments. Often, reference is made to common forms and formats of philosophy, to public discourse or to the world of art and culture, although the projects often see themselves as caught between two stools.

In order to understand the directions in which Performative Philosophy is currently moving and in what ways its development (and radicalisation) could be forced, we want to name and categorise - on a trial basis - the formats that appeared during the festival [soundcheck philosophie]. (BOX OPEN!) These categories are provisional. The distinction between forms is intended to aid better identification of certain aspects of Performative Philosophy, but it is clear that a lot of interesting things are not yet named or recognized.

Now, we want to invite the reader to take part in an active intellectual game: To play with these categories of formats (the 1st BOXES) and the criteria of comparison (the 2nd BOXES). Let's play these games to get a better understanding:

What are these forms of philosophy about, what do they develop?

Intellectual Game Nº 1

Here are the BOXES of performative-philosophical formats; only the order is in a mess. Draw a line to match up the description (right-hand column) with the corresponding name (left-hand column).

| Dead Philosophers' Café		"Audience participation" is a well-known feature in some areas of performance. In the context of Philosophy Performances, participation might occur by way of directly involving the audience as partners in conversation or dialogue. It is the goal of these performances to enter into a public, spontaneous conversation about a philosophical problem. It can happen in during a performance: for instance, if the audience comes on stage to continue a discussion, about a text or problem, started by the performers. Likewise, this format might involve staging conversations among experts; for example, when 100 philosophers sit at a table in a market place, and are available in a certain timeframe for a dialogue with interested people.
Lecture Performance		In the history of Philosophy, there are examples of this format (such as, 'disputationes'). Today, the audience might relate it to the culture of Poetry Slams or Science Slams. We are yet to discover exactly what a competition between the best Live-Philosophers might look like. Sometimes the subject of a slam is only announced on the evening of the event itself; sometimes there is a connection to political debating clubs; mostly one philosophical subject is announced, which all creative contributions (in words or presentation) should address. Normally, the audience decides who the winner of the evening is, but sometimes there is a jury.
Theatrical philosophizing		….
Philosophy Slam		The reference here is to the communicative situation of a lecture. It is an umbrella term for staging theory, with saying and showing

		(mostly in the classical stage-audience-setting), where philosophical sentences, statements, problems and theories are not only articulated verbally, but visualized, exemplified, commented upon or challenged. The interferences between the said and the shown result in a particular kind of meaning. Special attention is paid to exposition of and reflection on the bodily existence of the thinker and the physicality of thinking. It also often involves the use of media, its simultaneous action, the change of media and a reflection on its medial conditions.
Visualization in space and image		Living philosophers (often university professors) assume the role of dead philosophers and discuss a fundamental philosophical, and generally relevant, question. This format consistently attracts large audiences. Usually the protagonists prepare the dispute, which they then improvise live, so it is a sophisticated improvisation involving expertise and pointed remarks, which draws attention to social and historical aspects of the philosophical discussion. It is without costume, performed frontally and often with a 'neutral' moderator.
Conversational performances and installations		These are experiments in presenting philosophical theory in two or three dimensional form: as objects for exhibition, diagrams, film or as a sculptural model. In successful cases, they do not only show the philosophical content, but thematize the process of how philosophical knowledge is acquired. When Philosophy Performances happen as movement with the audience through the space, then we might describe this as a development of 'social sculpture'.
….		This format originates in the teaching methodology of philosophy: a common reading of a particular philosophical book is used as the basis for devising theatre. Under the guidance of a philosopher, a group of (amateur) actors grasp this philosophy by concretizing it both in scenes and in their bodies. The theatrical production functions as a medium of the process of appropriating the text. The founder of this format describes it as a method of 'text-opening' in processes of philosophical education. He understands doing philosophy as a rational process of generating symbols. In his work, he investigates the interplay between 'argumentative-discursive' and 'theatrical-presenting' practices and wants to contribute to a philosophical culture with the living body at its core, i.e. the continuous reflection on the living body as its guiding principle (Gefert 2002, 15) by using deconstructive strategies.

Criteria for comparing formats of performative philosophy

saying - showing

academia - art world

immediate experience,   - distance, experience of
experience of presence   distance

performer - text

monologue - dialogue

understandable - alienating

unambiguous - plurivalent

heuristic - didactic

acquisition of knowledge   - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - generation of new knowledge

… - …

Visualizing a diagram

Now we provide an example: We choose two pairs of these comparative criteria and put them in a diagram to visualize the territory between the opposing poles, in which a philosophical performance might be situated. And as an example we have put the ordinary, University philosophy lecture in this diagram:
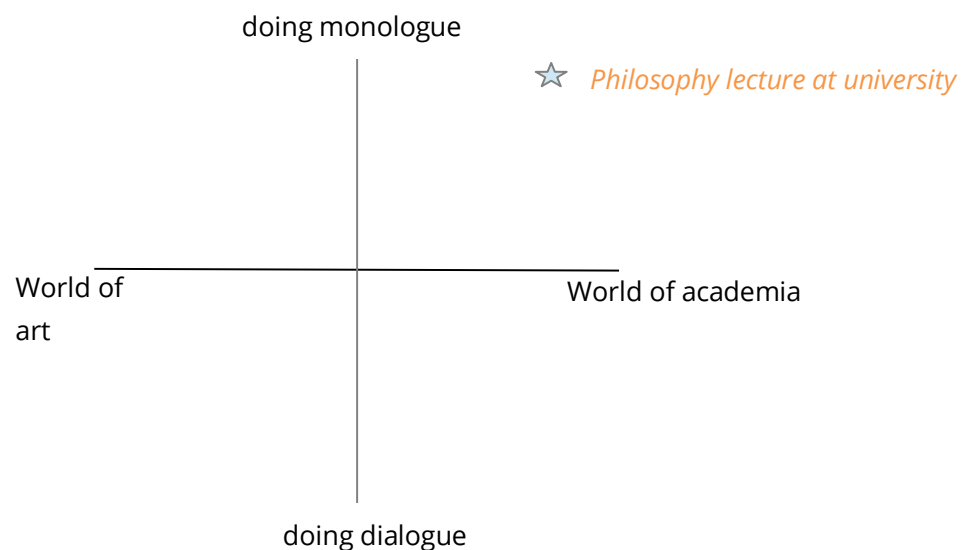
Intellectual Game Nº 2: "Orientating in a diagram"

Now it's your turn. Take other pairs out of the BOX of criteria and sort different formats of performative philosophy into this diagram:
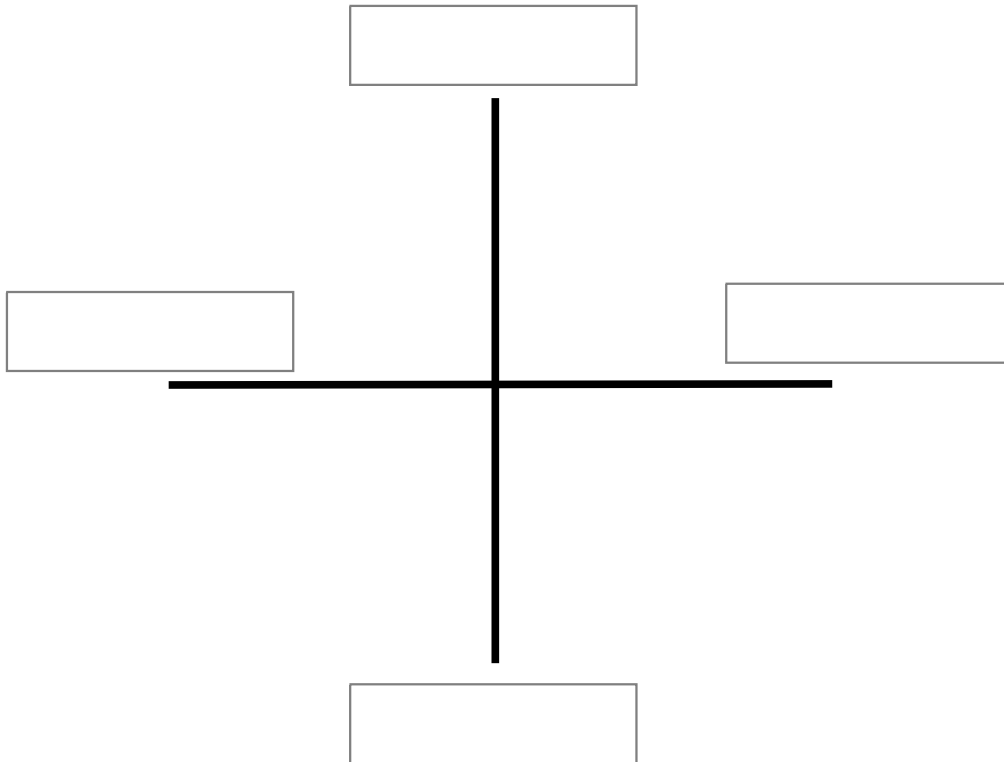
More intellectual games:

3) Create other discriminational BOXES for events of performative philosophy!
4) Invent other and more relevant criteria of comparison!
5) Play with your new findings in the diagram!
6) Play with the metaphor of BOX and SOCKS in this context and find out where the limits of metaphors are.
7) Invent a better diagram for the systematic interpenetration of the field of performative philosophy.
8) Calculate the criteria for good performative philosophy and draw the quotient of performative thinking into your diagram.
9) Cut out your diagram, put it in a 3-D-model, bring it into rotation, film the process!
10) Take this material as a starting point for the invention of a philosophical animation film as a starting point for the invention of a philosophical performance.

10 Theses of Performative Philosophy

1. Philosophy is an embodying practice. Philosophy performances capture the vitality of thinking.

2. Philosophical practice gains an epistemic surplus through both media changes (sequential use of media) and the simultaneous use of different channels of expression (simultaneous use of media).

3. Due to the process character of knowledge acquisition in philosophy performances, they render transparent the provisional nature of truth.

4. Philosophical performances explore the contextual criteria of meaningfulness for philosophical theories.

5. Philosophical performances render transparent how philosophy is done and open up new perspectives for the broadening of philosophical practice within and outside of institutions.

6. Philosophical performances show and insist that philosophy must continually reinvent itself, which means it has to find contemporary forms.

7. Philosophical performances allow the ludic and enigmatic character of philosophy to manifest itself.

8. Through philosophical performances the old battle between (the roles of) logic and rhetoric in philosophy is revived.

9. Philosophical performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.

10. Philosophical performances can only be realised in interaction with the observer, the participant, the spectator. When they work, they embrace both my thoughts and the public's.

Thesis 1: Philosophy is an embodying practice. Philosophical Performances capture the vitality of thinking.

This thesis articulates that doing philosophy has to be fundamentally seen as an activity of living, physical human beings. On the one hand, this means that philosophical theories have to be interpreted as woven into a complex human practice -the philosophical idea of the 'primacy of practice before theory' applies. On the other hand, it means that each way of doing philosophy (reading, trying to understand a text, taking part in a philosophical conversation, attempting to catch up with a philosophical thought and to articulate it) is not only a mental activity but a noticeable physical act. The "livingness of thinking" also appears at this level. Philosophical

performances show this and are concerned with asking: how can one put oneself and others into the mode of a living and struggling, rather than unconcerned reflection?

Thesis 2: Philosophical practice gains an epistemic surplus through both media changes (sequential use of media) and the simultaneous use of different channels of expression (simultaneous use of media).

Philosophy performances implicate and enable, in a specific way, reflection, challenges and ruptures of the unilateral focus of academic philosophy on written sentences and texts. The thesis claims: we come into thinking, when we are forced into medial efforts of translation; for example, if you go from an oral, situated dialogue to the simultaneous mapping on a flipchart or chalkboard of the terms and sentences used in the dialogue and vice versa. Or when you notice thoughts from a conversation and formulate a text, which then is extracted by others; or you acquire philosophy acquainted via visual-written corporeal, theatrical means which are then discussed and worked on. Philosophy performances strengthen this competence in changing the media of presentation, in permanent 'translation', which – if it succeeds – is always a confusing, creative 'translation into the nothingness'. That is, every medial translation of a philosophical text or a oral philosophical dialogue can and must bring out new facets of this text or dialogue, from which it started – in a certain way: it enables us to read and hear the origin text or dialogue anew. A reference might be Benjamin's thoughts on the work of a translator (Benjamin [1923] 2004).

Thesis 3: Due to the process character of knowledge acquisition in philosophy performances, they render transparent the provisional nature of truth.

What does this mean? Philosophy performances induce a pragmatically orientated understanding of truth and knowledge. Unlike truth-claims in the form of (written) sentences, philosophical performances reveal very clearly that they are based on practice and require a process of acquisition to become knowledge. They exhibit points of transformation of sense; they *show* that understanding, knowledge acquisition and production happen only in such situations and processes of transformation. They thematize the basic tentativeness and sketching character of philosophy. Philosophy performances work against the idea of getting hold of the truth, once for all, judgements in the form of noticeable sentences. For example, Adorno says: 'It is not up to philosophy to exhaust things according to scientific usage, to reduce the phenomena to a minimum of propositions […]' (Adorno [1966] 1973, 13). Philosophical performances do not function in a bivalent logic of *yes* or *no*, nor of *is* or is *not*. They work with a showing logic of the constellative or configurative. Again, to cite Adorno: 'Truth is a constantly evolving constellation' ([1966] 2005, 131).

Thesis 4: Philosophy performances explore the contextual criteria of meaningfulness for philosophical theories.

Philosophical performances permanently operate with rupture and changes of context; in this way, they produce confusion and alienation in their treatment of philosophical sentences. They move us into the philosophical origin of not-knowing-our-way-about: 'A philosophical problem

has the form: I don't know my way about,' as Wittgenstein formulates it in §123 of *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein [1953] 1986, 49).

Philosophical performances act out philosophical sentences in different contexts; they place them against one another, and show in which contexts and directions certain sentences are destined to go (or not), and how they are to be read. In this way, philosophical performances investigate sense-making, and, at best, the criteria for sense in philosophical texts and theories respectively. Philosophy is only to be understood adequately – to refer to Hegel – as an interminable, performative work on the 'concept', that is a continuous work on its mediated *presentation.*

Thesis 5: Philosophical performances render transparent how philosophy is done and open up new perspectives for the broadening of philosophical practice in and outside institutions.

Similarly, in academia, there are conventions surrounding the presentation of philosophical ideas in the form of text, as well as inherited standards of oral philosophizing and the philosophical exchange of ideas, which are normally not acknowledged and methodically reflected: lectures, speeches, discussions in seminars, debates. Philosophical performances thematize these forms by removing them from their context, by varying them, radicalizing them, and bringing them to the border of absurdity. Thus they permanently ask – both implicitly and explicitly – what the possibilities and limits of these particular formats of presentation and dialogue are. This challenge and consciousness-raising can only be productive for philosophy in academia and in the mediation and teaching of philosophy. A similar scenario pertains with the public presentation of philosophy by philosophers. Here we have conventions and stereotypes as to who may talk as a 'philosopher', how a philosopher is to be presented, how a philosophical conversation should look, and so forth. A broadening of philosophical practice, as suggested by this thesis, is also about the porousness and interplay between the world of academia and the public.

Thesis 6: Philosophy performances demonstrate and insist that philosophy must continually reinvent itself, which means it has to find contemporary forms.

This is not about adjusting to trends, but instead reflects the necessities and possibilities that arise from a rapidly changing medial culture of knowledge and communication. Adequately philosophical performances address reception competences which follow, not a linear order, but a synchronous and visual one.

Thesis 7: Philosophical performances allow the ludic and enigmatic character of philosophy to manifest itself.

On the one hand, philosophy is a space of thought for conceptual clarification and demarcation; on the other hand, philosophy is a space of thought for creative reflection and the transgression of the borders of common language, ordinary perception and everyday practice. As is well known,

philosophy has always belonged to this context of amazement and wonder. Johan Huizinga ([1939] 1981, 161 ff.) pointed to the ludic and enigmatic character of ancient philosophy from the perspective of cultural history: beginning with the holy mystery and oral completion, it is still visible in Plato's dialogues as striving for truth combined with ludic lightness (167). Philosophy is also the place for rejection: scientific explanations of the world – which are provided all too quickly - are rejected just as much as religious explanations of the world, based on dogmatism. Rational philosophy insists on a principled openness in the construction of the world and the self of human beings, and on the inexhaustible 'mysteriousness' of being-human itself.

Thesis 8: Through philosophical performances the old battle between (the roles of) logic and rhetoric in philosophy is revived.

Does the question of its own form of presentation belong to the content of philosophy? Since Plato distinguished philosophy from sophistry, philosophical form has been suspected for obscuring the truth as content. But rhetoric is about the process of forming and directing content to receivers, and therefore is also part of philosophical communication. Although rarely labelled as such, the practice and form of academic writing conforms to rhetorical principles. For a lot of disciplines in the sciences and humanities, rhetoric is reconstructed and described; for Philosophy this study remains a task: not only to reveal the use of rhetoric principles, but to study the epistemic dimension of form in philosophical communication.

Here, we address questions of presentation and form which need not be reduced to written communication and its results. The process of generating philosophical theory could also be reflected and analysed from a praxeological perspective, like science studies and sociologies of knowledge and science do in other areas. Furthermore, the rhetorical formation of a philosophical thought (it might be in text, embodied, or visual) could be productively conceptualized as part of philosophizing and the production of theory.

Gottfried Gabriel describes the exclusion of considerations of philosophical form and critiques this marginalization when he writes:

> Forms of presentation are in themselves forms of cognisance, at least forms of agency and intermediation of cognisance. Thereby of course it should not be said that presentation has only the function of intermediate cognisance. But it is the aspect of cognisance that the conflict between philosophy and rhetoric is primarily about. And this conflict is our subject. (Gabriel 1999, 65)

Here, Gabriel is referring to written presentation – but we think that these ideas can also be applied to oral and performative ways of doing philosophy.

Thesis 9: Philosophy performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.

It is one of the prerogatives of the arts (at least according to contemporary understanding) to deliberately unsettle – or alienate - us from the certainties and certitudes which we have

established in our lives, in order to open up opportunities for learning. Philosophical performances, likewise, use artistic and artistically-inspired means of performance to confuse and alienate. They can be ironic, entertaining, shocking and/or ludic and just thereby philosophical, because they break conventionalised patterns of thinking and perceiving and raise them for discussion. In this way, artistically-inspired practices of alienation are able to broaden and support the critical business of philosophy. There is a doubling: it is the business of philosophy to call into question our culturally (always-already) given biases and prejudices and to broaden our perspectives. Philosophical performances extend this critical questioning to the very practice of philosophy itself. For some philosophers, good philosophy is related to the arts in its ludic aspect: "As a corrective to the total rule of method, philosophy contains a playful element which the traditional view of it as a science would like to exorcise," says Adorno ([1966] 1973, 14).

Here's an additional thought on how the use of artistically-inspired alienation could serve as a practice within philosophy: in different traditions of philosophy, there are styles of thinking that can no longer be upset by arguments. They only allow one to see things from a certain perspective. Artistically-inspired performances of philosophy, however, are able to change the "view on aspects"; they are able to show the "exit out of the fly-glass" (i.e., out of a certain gridlocked structure of argumentation and thinking) (Wittgenstein [1953] 1986). What Heidegger explains in his famous essay on art — that the successful work of art "thrusts up the extra-ordinary *[Ungeheure]* while thrusting down the ordinary, and what one takes to be such" (Heidegger [1950] 2002, 47) — applies equally to philosophical performances: they too thrust down the (philosophically) ordinary while thrusting up the (philosophically) extra-ordinary.

Impulse for discussion Nº 10: What the 10 theses want

The 10 theses are impulses for conversation. How do they speak? How are they said? What do they indicate? How do they become a manifesto? They are looking for different media through which to be discussed. They exist to be used. What can you do with these 10 theses?

To do:

a) learn by heart and recite
b) read, hate, write, rupture
c) perform, for example like this:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2TuffAxPoU

Notes

1 Why does the field of 'Performance Philosophy' not appear in this list of adjacent fields? As part of the online research network, 'Performance Philosophy' we see ourselves as belonging to this field. But the order of the list might also articulate our specific genesis and focus. The perspective of other members of 'Performance Philosophy' might come more from performative practice, more from the theory of performance or it might focus a certain tradition of philosophy – or even name other neighbours, which are not so relevant for us.

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Further links

The association responsible: www.expeditionphilosophie.org

Archive of [soundcheck philosophie] festivals in 2011 and 2012 with contributors: www.soundcheck-philosophie.de

The festival from 2013 on: http://soundcheckphilosophie.wordpress.com

A platform in German language (under development): www.performativephilosophie.org

Hanno Depner's handcrafts cube 'Kant für die Hand': www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-klS6TzCnE

A similar project and partners/members: mediathek of the festival 'Philosophy on Stage' (Vienna):
http://homepage.univie.ac.at/arno.boehler/php/?p=1987
http://homepage.univie.ac.at/arno.boehler/php/?p=2018