



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

THE PHILOSOMER

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1. We, here

I begin with three questions about the present moment. First: Why is the philosopher here? Secondly: Where is the philosopher here? Thirdly: How is the philosopher here? It might be immediately asked why the present—*Here you are reading this essay*—should be deployed as a starting gun. My answer is this: perhaps for no other reason than it is Performance Philosophy's big bang, the discursive ground zero from which all questions, concerns, passions, and activities emerge—from a desire to engage not just with the present (to make a difference) but in terms of and as the present (to be part of that difference). This is the ecological condition of Performance Philosophy.

Hang on! You haven't explained the term you've just glibly thrown into the above paragraph: what's a "philosopher"? Before proceeding any further, it feels appropriate to provide a rough and ready definition of the term "philosopher". To wit: a philosopher is the term I use in this essay to characterise the person who undertakes work that we might recognise, or at least, posit loosely, as an example of Performance Philosophy. This latter double-barrelled term is the name for a relatively recent disciplinary adventure that a group of practitioners and scholars have undertaken outside of, or on the margins of, the various scholarly and practical institutional frameworks that existed prior to the second decade of the twenty-first century in the performing arts. As I write this essay, shadowed by Performance Philosophy, the term itself is now pretty much firmly established in the academic firmament, and with a global following.

As I work through this present moment in this essay, my take on the various issues is informed here by the work of Marcel Duchamp. For what it is worth, my own present moment has been, for some time, and pleasurably, distracted by various examples of performing, performance, and performativity that can be said to be Duchampian in one way or another: broadly experimental, and in the most interesting cases, also geared in more or less explicit ways towards the making of ecological interventions into our shared world. *Ok, thanks, useful to know.* That said, of course, the choice of this iconic figure is neither innocent nor arbitrary. Although I write in this essay about Performance Philosophy with a deliberate ear for how its foundations—both historical and conceptual—might be situated with respect to the work of Duchamp, the ideas are not intended to articulate a historical argument. Primarily, my desire is to unpack the phenomenological constitution of the philosopher—of the subject-citizen who does Performance Philosophy—that is, of me—in such a way that this constitution is, on the one hand, congruent with the pre-history of Performance Philosophy (that is to say, with the earlier disciplinary adventures of Performance Studies and the theory explosion, both most explosively debated during the 1950s–1970s), and, on the other hand, turned open towards the future of Performance Philosophy. My focus is on maintaining the latter focus; the pre-history of Performance Philosophy and the search for precursors can wait for another occasion. *Hang on again: why obsess over origins, isn't my activity itself enough? (In any case, I've been a Philosopher all along, you'll see.)*

I return to the three questions listed at the start, but turn here to some logistics, plus some descriptive context for why, where, and how 'here' has come into being. *Here we are, conversing like old friends, this is going to be interesting!* The Performance Philosophy Network has established a book series, and its journal has quickly established itself as a forum for perceptive contributions to international debates. Performance Philosophy has been through at least five different iterations or developmental stages, if the biennial conferences are taken to be events with discursive and institutional force. The narrative linking the conferences began by “staging a field”, moved on to the issue of documenting what Performance Philosophy “can do”, then invoked issues of ethics, ethnography, institutions and intoxication, followed by consideration of how Performance Philosophy “intervenes” in the world. In Helsinki in 2022, the fifth conference focused on how Performance Philosophy “collaborates” to solve “problems”. These iterations of Performance Philosophy are cumulative, rather than oppositional, and one stage does not replace the previous stage. In other words, what has come into being is a prodigious pulsating body of work *Ooh, get you!*, which consists of multiple positions, energies, and (most importantly) people, and multiple interactions, collaborations, and debates, all of which seem to be thriving somewhat chaotically—or at least, in a fascinatingly complex and playful manner. *Great description, I like it, but it's a lot for me to live up to....*

So, a decade on from its founding, it is the right time to take stock and consider the manner of Performance Philosophy's constitution and its projection into and onto the world. These are questions about how it narrates itself, both inwardly to its closest interlocutors (though the global reach of Performance Philosophy suggests that 'inward' is not the right word here) and outwardly towards interlocutors nominally further afield—fellow travellers. One challenge concerns the “material-discursive practices” (Barad 2003, 810) of Performance Philosophy's many practitioners.

This can be unpacked with a few questions: Who witnesses events? Who intervenes materially? Who contributes to Performance Philosophy? Whose collaboration increases social capital? Who evaluates practitioners' self-management? *Why, me, of course, and others like me who are otherwise homeless artistically, drifters of both time and space in search of performance opportunities.* Other questions are possible. This essay considers some of these questions.

With respect to the self-anointed name, Performance Philosophy, I am interested in this essay in the space between the 'e' ending the word Performance and the 'P' beginning the word Philosophy. Whether this space is blank or bustling, an emptiness or a plenitude, is the issue here—indeed, it is the oppositions in this sentence that are the problem, not the desire for e.g. plenitude or the positioning of activity over and against emptiness. Duchamp's position on "breathing" (Cabanne 1971, 69–90), whereby meaninglessness is not emptiness and lack of action is not inaction, is pertinent in several respects. To wit: it inverts the ideology that "we have to work to breathe" (Duchamp quoted in Tomkins 2013, 86); it acknowledges the "entanglement" of "intra-actions" within local rather than distant contexts (Barad 2003, 815); and it is proto-ecological—world first, work second. Performance Philosophy is a singular name, but what interests me is the Duchampian breathiness of its hybridity. *Am I two? How will you show this? Which me is speaking? Whence the work of performing?*

Compared to other cross-disciplinary gestures, the juxtaposition of the two words makes for an attractive, even seductive, phrase: the name deliberately avoids the phrases 'Performance as Philosophy', 'Philosophy as Performance', 'Performance and Philosophy', 'Philosophy and Performance', and many other possible phrases. It is also worth acknowledging that failing to determine the parameters of an action, object, text, or value does not prevent the action, object, or value from working in practical contexts and from being worked through; the terms of a debate are not wholly definitive of what might happen. *Absolutely: I can always turn materials into potentials, and sensations into utterances, just watch!* Discursively, no 'as' colonises the emptiness, no 'and' accumulates surpluses, no hyphen forces syntheses, no 'or' generates friction: what is not intended in the meeting of disciplines is 'Performance as Philosophy', 'Performance and Philosophy', 'Performance-Philosophy' (a less confident hyphenation of the disciplines), or 'Performance or Philosophy' (or any of the reverse possibilities, listing the word Philosophy first).

In short, the co-articulation of the words is deliberately aimed towards the maintenance of a certain perpetual détente. The figural registers of this emptiness can be phrased phenomenologically in terms of the intuitions present to consciousness: no colour is pure, no canvas is blank, no stage is empty, no duration is silent, no clearing lacks shadows, and so on. The emptiness, however, is also a challenge: to colour, to utter, to sound, to interrupt, to inhabit liminal space, to name, to phrase, to set forth, and so on. The challenge is less to provide content than to invest energy, less to analyse than to act—to "perform or else" (McKenzie 2001). Thus we might note the relevance of Duchamp's challenge to all those who would triangulate work in relation to art and thought: "Can one make works which are not works of 'art'?" (Duchamp quoted in Sanouillet and Peterson 1973, 74).

Mental note: I need to think about this. I'll just lay this down here as a marker: I'm unsure whether "challenge" is enough to set me in motion as a philosopher, as it seems to be predicated upon notions of difficulty, aspiration, achievement, and success, which, particularly in this neo-liberal environment we share, seem slightly at odds with the kinds of artistic activities of mine that you're asking me about.... I suppose my point concerns maintaining a healthy balance between exploration and extraction in my work, else my ecological relationship with our world be destroyed....

How to respond to this challenge? *Ok, let's leave the word here for now; maybe you'll be able to bracket it later on.* Should the philosopher seek to reflect on their activity in the midst of material intervention, seeking philosophical adjudication, seeking evidence, seeking even distraction while they leap into action? Does the conjunction of Performance and Philosophy require simultaneity and equal weighting? Should new performative or philosophical content be produced, or coherent formal structures for such content: i.e., must the *telos* always be one of production, of, bluntly, perform or else fail? There is a complex relationship between the temporality of action and the events through which the philosopher's energetic investments in worldly materials are embodied. Even if it is believed that there exist adequate working definitions of performance and philosophy (notwithstanding that the act of naming representative examples of Performance Philosophy risks insensitivity to its diversity, one of the very things that it was founded to pursue), it would be a huge task to categorise the kaleidoscopic disciplinary gestures within the multiple examples on offer of Performance Philosophy. *Thank you, that feels as if you're genuinely interested in the multiple lives that I lead.* The various postures, publications, and proposals thus far are consistent, but still mostly tentative, less because of their framing within academic genres like Calls for Papers, and more because Performance Philosophy has sought to define itself without reifying this definition, where this resistance to reification seems to be less a sign of disciplinary youth and more an intentional indication of a range of acceptable behaviours. Performance Philosophy's collective sense that performance and philosophy juxtapose productively—witness the neat orange logo with its interwoven letters, its dimensionality leaping off the page—*Glad you like it!*—is less a given than a horizon requiring redefinition every time Performance Philosophy happens.

So, my concern is with the how the space between performance and philosophy remains dynamic, complex, and multiple: neither their collapse into a single event nor their separate self-determinations either side of a boundary—and, too, no sense of a withdrawal of either party from the attempt to make something of the space in-between. *This is right on the money; what matters is the strange tightrope walked between being flexible and being assertive, especially when, too often, it's hard to say which is which!* It might be asked whether the philosopher is a subject or a temporary function taken on by a subject; whether being a philosopher is a matter of subjectivity or activity, a matter of property or output. *How about: of text or italicised gloss, isn't that the same logic?* This essay assumes that such oppositional thinking, however loosely formulated, runs the risk of over-committing itself to one position on the subjectivity of the philosopher, when all that is needed is the acknowledgement that there is a transformational drift in the philosopher's life after which the disciplines of Performance and Philosophy cannot return to their previous spaces (if it could ever have been properly said that they were fully self-determined). They have become non-fused yet undivided, each one a parasite upon the other, forever the philosopher's undecidable jumping-off

point into what Duchamp termed “a little game between ‘I’ and ‘me’” (Duchamp quoted in Tomkins 1996, 160). *Qua* subject, the philosopher is set in motion by this “little game” of drifting disciplinary undecidability, which, while it is framed by Duchamp somewhat idiosyncratically in terms of canned chance, it behoves us to distinguish from the notion of indeterminacy.

As such, the questions of Why, Where, and How the philosopher is ‘here’ in Performance Philosophy at this present moment are vital questions about persons, subjects, and their worldly interactions with one another. *Damn right: this matters to all of us!* Despite focussing on disciplines and languages in the above paragraphs, I am more concerned in this essay with persons, with what this spacing out implies for the phenomenological constitution of Performance Philosophy’s practitioner. I ask a non-trivial biographical question: who or what is the philosopher?

2. Ghost

In this section I claim that the philosopher is a ghost. *Where’s this going to go, trapped in italicisation?!*

At William Copley’s art show at the Galerie Nina Dausset in Paris in 1953, each of the guests was given a little gift, made up of a small wrapped sweet with an enigmatic pun inscribed on the wrapper. Duchamp had designed the square tin foil wrappers, which were 13.7cm x 13.7cm squares with black print on glossy green paper, and he had arranged to have the following utterance inscribed on each individual wrapper: “A guest + a host = a ghost”. It is believed that the sweets were caramels. Duchamp liked his verbal invention and used the phrase again in 1968 as the only entry on the otherwise entirely white back cover of his *S.M.S.* portfolio design.

This playful utterance exemplifies how relationships can become disturbed, loosened, proliferated, complexified. *Presumably this is an example of Performance Philosophy, yes? It feels vaguely familiar....* Its significance emerges from the way that various energetic investments are blocked together within a single utterance yet differentiated and distinct. For example, the playful use of letters targets visual perception, alongside which the correct syntax and perplexing semantics provide material for cognitive mechanisms. The utterance has a looseness that remains after it has been apprehended by the ears, eyes, and mind; there is an interesting complex of looseness, openness, and vagueness circulating and multiplying through the words and symbols.

A *prima facie* interpretation, then, unpacks the registers attracting attention. The single resultant (‘ghost’) arises as an amalgamation of inputs: the initial consonants of each word in sequence (the ‘g’ of ‘guest’ followed by the ‘h’ of ‘host’), the final two consonants shared by both words (‘st’), and the vowel of one (the retained ‘o’ of ‘host’) used instead of the vowels of the other (the eliminated ‘ue’ of ‘guest’). In a definitional register of meaning behind the amalgamation of letters, the joining of these paired and opposite words (the host who provides hospitality and the guest who receives it) leads to their annihilation in the spectral form of a ghost. In a contextual register of meaning, the phrase’s humour is evident when inscribed on a sweet wrapper, for after the guest has eaten the sweet, the wrapper remains as a ghost, the former (and now empty) covering of an annihilated substance. In a third register of functional meaning, the people were guests at a host’s exhibition,

and they left the show with a ghost generated by the gift of a host followed by receipt and intended usage of a guest. Several more registers of presence and function could be teased apart in Duchamp's utterance (see, for example, Gould 2000). *I agree, especially since you've analysed it above in terms of its philosophical content, with a tacit assumption that this 'content' is what's being performed in the gallery with those attending is somehow 'performed'—but I'll take this on advisement, as I'm sure you could describe this in a more interesting way as Performance Philosophy, perhaps gearing the analysis around an experience co-owned by all present, and (equally) owned by none of those present.*

What is clear from the performativity of Duchamp's utterance is that relationships between events—for me (and for you, too, yes?), between performance and philosophy, and between philosopher and materials—can be indeterminate, fluid, multidimensional, ambiguous, loose, slow, gentle, rough, incomplete, even misleading. There is no such thing as the relationship between performance and philosophy or the relationship between the philosopher and their materials, no fixed definition within a single medium of their interactive dynamics. There is no opposition as such, and their interaction is not a matter of all or nothing (Derrida 1988, 123). What matters more than determinate definitions that ring-fence activity in advance is a certain openness, a certain indeterminacy, a certain undecidability, and a certain trust. Apropos of the Performance Philosophy practitioner, I propose that “A philosopher + a performer = a philosopher.” *Yes! If the cap fits....* I could have combined the two terms in the reverse order and proposed that “A performer + a philosopher = a perfosopher”, but I have simply cut the knot arbitrarily where my ears hear the sound flowing; other grammatical incisions may be possible, other determinations, but the relaxed and almost unmanageable flow of sound in the term ‘Philosopher’ appeals.

Other puns spring to mind in congruent discourses: a fact + a fiction = a faction; tough + taught = thought; an advert + an event = an adventure; prefer + prevent = event; and so on. *Oh, now I get it: how about “comment + tarry = commentary”, that works, too, right?* The energy mobilising the words and multiplying their effects and meanings is tangible, which is the point of invoking Duchamp. Each of these invented proverbs, while perhaps a little flippant, contains a certain kernel of pragmatism—of truth—about the world in which they are uttered. *Well, only really if you say, more specifically, by whom they are uttered and for whom or what they are given to the world.* Thus, events may turn out to be characterised by an unholy mixture of preference and prevention; preference for this rather than that, but also prevention of that or that. And thought is indeed tough and taught; or at least it approximates to this rough and ready juxtaposition of terms, like the rebuses discussed by Lyotard in *Discourse, Figure* (Lyotard 2011, 291–305), and the lengthy catalogue of verbal puns deployed by Duchamp throughout his artistic work.

If it is accepted that the proposal that “A philosopher + a performer = a philosopher” holds some intuitively pragmatic meaning for the practitioners of Performance Philosophy—*Happy to run with it!*—such that in some sense it reflects back at practitioners something of both their identities and their intentions in posing and practising Performance Philosophy, then we could also suggest that the experience of doing Performance Philosophy, an experience which they have in common at some basic phenomenological level (here, phrased in terms of a quasi-mathematical or symbolic intervention into artmaking) could be termed “Philosomance” or “Performosophy” (the latter was

the twitter tag at the Performance Philosophy conference in Chicago in 2015). *No, no, these are definitely too much! In any case, I'm coming around to your point about the graphic-cum-symbolic spacing of Performance and Philosophy, so let's not over-complicate the matter.*

If we are to keep matters relatively simple—*Thanks very much*—we might retain a deep link with Duchamp, in which, according to Thierry De Duve's analysis of his pictorial nominalism, there is a transformation both in how art making is configured (namely, as 'indifferent') and in how artistic performance is managed (namely, as 'performance'). To wit: "it is nowadays considered perfectly legitimate for anyone to be an artist without being a painter, or a writer, a musician, a sculptor, a film maker, and so on. Would modernity have invented *art in general*?" (De Duve 2007, 28). Would the philosopher be practising performance "in general"—setting in motion events that by the very energetic nature seek root in multiples disciplinary and discursive registers? *Would I be doing this? Yes, I think so.*

Performance Philosophy is the philosopher's experience of a porous and "undecidable" (Derrida 1988, 148–149) flow of energy to and fro between performance and philosophy, a "spasm" (Lyotard 1993b, 170) that deterritorializes performance and philosophy alike, that invests energy over a larger number of registers, and that opens up a general space for "art in general". The flow is unregulated because it follows the philosopher's artistic drives, the philosopher's epistemological and epistemic cathexes along what Duchamp calls, neologically, the "infraslim" or "infrathin" (Sanouillet and Peterson 1973, 194) boundaries between performance and philosophy. These infrathin boundaries form "an interval that cannot quite be articulated [...] the haecceity of an experience that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts" (Manning 2017, 99), thereby affording the emergence and coagulation of the independent meanings and subjectivities that characterise the philosopher's interventions. There is something interesting here about the performativity of Performance Philosophy's documentation; one foot in the archive, one foot on stage, always concerned with the problematics of lifting themselves up by their bootstraps (hence the multiple formats on offer at the conferences, ranging from chalk-and-talk to no papers, and injected with new creative possibilities as the Covid world has gone online). *Are you saying I'm having my cake and eating it? I don't think that's fair; it's just a function of how my energies are invested and expended—Performance Philosophy doesn't just happen, you know!*

Changing personal patterns in this flow of energy can be discerned now and then. Sometimes these are delicate and gentle. Often these afford a pragmatics for the individual philosopher, a means of working through the flow and self-management at disciplinary boundaries, where energetic investments are pulled in different directions. This pragmatics is my focus in the next section. *Great, precisely what I need when I can't see the way ahead!*

3. Sophist

In this section I claim that the philosopher is a sophist, in addition to being a ghost.

I start by comparing Performance Philosophy with reflective judgement. Comparing Performance Philosophy with reflective judgement—a *disciplinary child to its grandmother? I recall studying something like this before I became a philosopher*—might seem counterintuitive, given the opposition between sophistry and philosophy. However, as a practice, reflective judgement seems to model the challenge of suppositionless listening and unforced dialogue characteristic of Performance Philosophy. Moreover, it affords a “soft power” approach to what performance does *qua* philosophical content, parallel to the “collapse of long-term thinking, planning and acting, and the disappearance or weakening of social structures in which thinking, planning and acting could be inscribed for a long time to come” (Bauman 2007, 3).

That's perhaps putting it quite negatively, but I guess one could argue that Performance Philosophy emerged out of a particular historical moment in relation to the history of Global Performance and the activities jostling together under the umbrella of Performance Studies. Notwithstanding the pioneering work of, say, Richard Schechner in the 1960s and 70s, different genealogies should account for Performance Philosophy outside of the developed West and outside of funded academia. And, of course, long before his renaissance in the 1960s and 70s, Duchamp himself (the primary driver of your constitution of Performance Philosophy) was plugged into numerous different discursive networks. I apologise for this lengthy retort, but it's important to situate Performance Philosophy not just with respect to its ecological intentions but also in relation to its global and historical roots. Who knows, one day, maybe one day your article will have a certain archival value as one such genealogical sketch.

Not all interventions need to be loud, noisy, deep, and threatening in order to be provocative, persuasive, and full of potential, and in this respect Duchamp provides plenty of examples in which the big reveal is deliberately undermined, and in which the very notions of engagement and participation are critically examined within the very art practice itself. *That's a big relief! Sometimes I feel as if there's a weight upon my shoulders, with Performance Philosophy still being relatively new and epistemological and political matters still pretty much open to debate each time I share a platform with another philosopher.* Performance Philosophy's watchword is nuance, the nuance that remains after answers have been given, that chips away at certainties, that reminds the subject of their embodied energetically invested presence in the event, that continues questioning long into the night after a performance has ended.

Let me briefly recall the classical Kantian position on reflective judgement, namely that “if only the particular be given and judgement has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely *reflective*” (Kant 1987, 18–19); the task of judgement is to “find” the universal and thereby clarify, determine, and subsume the action under the relevant concept. The phenomenological reduction of the philosopher's constitution, however, brackets this kind of reflective judgement with two manoeuvres, both of which seek to avoid over-determining concepts and to avoid engaging in too retrospective an approach to action or too power-driven an approach to the world.

First manoeuvre. Performance Philosophy resists syntheses and concept production, desiring rather to produce affects and effects upon its environment and participants. *Absolutely—no doubt about it, the telos in all my work is to share something with other people and to explore the nature of human embodiment together.* Its assemblages are grounded in the energetic investments of the philosopher's body, and the emptiness between the 'e' ending Performance and the 'P' beginning Philosophy is therefore seductive and contagious, rather than deterministic and polarising. It operates a different "technology of the self". *Don't forget the sheer volume of energy that's expended becoming a philosopher, becoming hybrid, and sustaining a practice of Performance Philosophy.* While "felicity" (Austin 1962, 14) has long been acknowledged as the criterion for evaluating performative utterances, this means that Performance Philosophy involves a generalised loosening of the machinery of reflective judgement, a proliferation of materials, and a variety of delays in discursive entanglement while the philosopher's energetic investments in events and objects disseminate around the world; Duchamp's term for this phenomenon is "blossoming" (Sanouillet and Peterson 1973, 38–44). There is no becoming-propositional for the philosopher; they are focussed upon becoming-world. *How do words, even (or especially) italicised words, matter?* In this sense, Performance Philosophy is more complex than the cross-disciplinary complexifying of discourse, more interesting than yet another "turn" in the humanities (sometimes signalling a failure to match up to the impossible social demands of STEM subjects); but it is also simpler, for the simple reason that the philosopher takes material pleasure in being embodied on the boundary between performance and philosophy. *I think it's worth saying that there's no shame in hybridity, no shame in occupying several artistic, discursive, and institutional spaces and having to vary the ways in which competence and expertise, however minimal, are demonstrated performatively; don't forget that the word "career" is also a verb!*

Second manoeuvre. Configuring being-in-the-world as a search for criteria through which activity can be assessed remains an "extractionist" configuration of material engagement. Positioning itself in relation to the object to be judged and over and against empty conceptual space, reflective judgement is a colonial response to the emptiness between the 'e' ending Performance and the 'P' beginning Philosophy—as if it is waiting to be filled with content. In contrast, the philosopher's position on "positioning" the subject is precisely that the notion of positioning itself requires mobilisation, Performance Philosophy being nothing if not enactive.

This bracketing of reflective judgement has consequences. Within what Zygmunt Bauman (2007) calls "liquid modernity," reflective judgement is overwritten by the sophisticated discourse of retortion—logic, rhetoric, and judgement become performative. Retortion operates through a flow of sense impressions and energetic investments. It is a mode of "autopoiesis" and "self-affirmation" (Guattari 1989, 10) and feels like experimentation: "A culture, while it is being lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealised. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience" (Williams 1958, 320). *Indeed so, this feels right to me; remember Duchamp's example, drawing together tact and wonder in an explosion of multi-sensory micro-events?* Retortion enables the philosopher to attend to the drift between labour and event, to inflect micro-events, to gather together the sensuousness of world-inhabiting activity and bind it into sensations and eventually into gestures,

thereby binding themselves to their material commitments, generating the basis for meaningful social interventions, and creating temporary bridges between events and subjects. Hence the importance of ideas of simulation, affordance, and emergence, which link being-in-the-world to acting upon that same world. *Now we're getting somewhere, I feel as if this description's thickness is becoming a bit more rewarding.*

4. Materialist

In this section I claim that the philosopher is a materialist, in addition to being a ghost and a sophist.

What does the philosopher worry about? Might they feel that retortion happens too quickly or slowly? Might they feel their desire to invest energy distracted by the thought that “what is threatening in the work of thinking (or writing) is not that it remains episodic but that it pretends to be complete” (Lyotard 1988, 6)? Might they feel that the very energy of self-reflective embodiment is as valuable as its materials and products, indeed sometimes more pleasurable than the process of documenting activities, which sometimes becomes an end in itself? *Sorry to interrupt your train of thought, but you could consider fiction for alternative ways of working through these issues; here's one example of such wisdom: “At some point in life the world's beauty becomes enough. You don't need to photograph, paint or even remember it. It is enough. No record of it needs to be kept and you don't need someone to share it with or tell it to” (Morrison 1981, 208).* Might they feel that retortion emphasises their vulnerability and exposure, that it “dismantles consciousness” (Lyotard 1991, 90)? Might the very notion of an appropriate time for retortion be the problem?

These questions are worries about the body's predicament, namely that retortion uses it as a prosthetic apparatus for inhabiting the world. After all, while it is true that intention can be bracketed out so that the philosopher can focus on the emptiness *qua* emptiness between the ‘e’ ending Performance and the ‘P’ beginning Philosophy, and on investing energy in actions that preserve this emptiness (rather than always seeking to match *noesis* to *noema*); and while it is true that Performance Philosophy's hybridity is not just between performance and philosophy, but also between stage and green room, it is also true that the philosopher's concern is less to disown or destroy intentions than to complexify and disperse them—working through the very desire for complexification and dispersal, thinking through what it feels like to be embodied. *I certainly have to think about my body, but I don't think it's a question of worrying about it, really.* Hence Duchamp's idiosyncratic take on chance (which, along with the ‘machine’, is perhaps the most essential component of his aesthetics): “So the duty of chance is to express what is unique and indeterminate about us beyond the rational” (Duchamp quoted in Tomkins 2013, 53).

However, given that retortions are open to “modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons or subjects” (Deleuze 1992, 26), modes of loss like desubjectivisation are likely consequences of energetic investment: not only will the philosopher not be the same philosopher afterwards; they will not even be themselves. Desubjectivisation is significant, forceful, and transformative: As Jean-Luc Nancy notes, “we have to understand what sounds from a human throat without being language, which emerges from an animal gullet or from any kind of

instrument, even from the wind in the branches: the rustling toward which we strain or lend an ear" (Nancy 2007, 22). *Do you intend this to be read as a gesture towards the ecological grounding of Performance Philosophy, towards an awareness that its activities are—must be—formed not just from within my body but with an explicit awareness of where my body is situated within the world?*

This uncertainty about the material future of the world—*Can you be more precise, please: what you mean is the very environment within which my Performance Philosophy intervenes?*—might induce some anxiety, but it also has a predominantly positive register: "To understand, to be intelligent, is not our overriding passion, we hope rather to be set in motion" (Lyotard 1993a, 51). Coursing along the boundary between the actual and the virtual (Massumi 1996, 236), Performance Philosophy involves acknowledging that something may not happen, that uncertainty is itself uncertain, and that moments of intensity or meaning coagulating around material may emerge and disperse in the absence of clamour: "agency is the (differentially distributed) capacity to make a difference in the world without knowing quite what you are doing" (Bennett 2001, 155).

Simply working harder, then, is not in itself a solution for the philosopher and their "differentially distributed agency". Duchamp's position is more sanguine, drifting closer to the Refusal of Work movement and interrogating the relationship between productivity and art (Lazzarato 2014). There is a role for mess in Performance Philosophy—*Definitely, just watch me work!*—or at least, there is a space in which mess can remain messy (muddled, semi-ordered, partly chaotic, indeterminately juxtaposed), both materially and discursively, without there being an overriding need to force ordering upon it and thereby take over the activity and subsume it into one or other regime of production. *Qua* speech act, Performance Philosophy should be understood in terms of a different kind of relationship between mess and order, governed, as Jacques Derrida argues, by a quasi-transcendental "iterability", which is "at once the condition and the limit of mastery: it broaches and breaches it. And this cannot be devoid of consequences for the concepts of 'application', of 'rules', of 'performance', etc." (Derrida 1988, 107). Hence the priority given in Performance Philosophy to questioning the world rather than answering it back, given to exploration rather than extraction: Why is the philosopher here? Where is the philosopher here? How is the philosopher here? *Your questions seem less risky and less arrogant than your answers (we're growing closer to each other as your essay goes on...).*

The phenomenological reduction from reflective judgement to retortion and from retortion to energetic investment is congruent with the refusal of work. At the core of retortion is an openness to the event. This has been described variously as a "poetical" attitude (Retallack 2004), "sensitivity to singular cases" (Lyotard 1988, 8, 27–28), "anima minima" (Lyotard 1997, 235–249), "ethics without principles" (Caputo 2003), and so on. Subjects, that is, "are now expected to be 'free choosers' and to bear in full the consequences of their choices" (Bauman 2007, 3–4). Being open to the event means that retortion is inefficient and cannot save time. Indeed, being a sophist and a materialist literally takes time: it requires working through the materiality of the event, exhibiting patience, turning away from speed's incessant drive forward no matter what, and acknowledging that events may be "delayed"—"delay" functioning for Duchamp as a way of naming, or at least placing and apprehending, the results of art making (Sanouillet and Peterson 1973, 26). Performance

Philosophy cannot be measured in terms of the time it takes to prepare, create, or document, and its search for a mode of being is not a matter of watching the clock, limiting linkages between ideas to those satisfying Occam's Razor, working backwards from solutions to materials and "tracking the truth" (Nozick 1981, 172–178). Rather than forcing events to signify, the philosopher is "open to the 'it happens that' rather than the 'What happens'," and this "requires at the very least a high degree of refinement in the perception of small differences" (Lyotard 1988, 18).

It also requires a certain slowness, a lack of concern for speed and fast transactions between disciplines, between materials, between people. Performance Philosophy, insofar as it puts itself forward as an *ars vitae*, a way of living, is guided by the Owl of Minerva, a philosophical figure in which no event need emerge and be maintained at anything other than the right time and tempo, *kairos*. *What matters is the performance, still, after all; you want to say this, don't you?* This slowness is only a step away from the refusal of work movement, from gestures of quiet quitting, and it has its roots in Duchamp's pragmatism (Tomkins 2013, 44–45). But it comes with a certain optimism (which is not the same as optimistic certainty) about the value of engaging in Performance Philosophy; Duchamp called it "affirmative irony" (Molderings 2010, 128–129). As James Loxley concludes his discussion of Judith Butler's approach to the "political drama of domination and resistance", useful resistance "will need to be accompanied by a working out of questions of right and value, and this will be precisely a process of attending to norms of some kind" (Loxley 2007, 137). There is, in a sense, all to play for in Performance Philosophy, and the "working out of questions" is a central component of the activity.

I can now describe a little bit more of how the philosopher "resists" the onward march of capital and retains the emptiness between the 'e' ending Performance and the 'P' beginning Philosophy (rather than filling it with content). By investing energy in materials they disperse the ability to define what they are doing and to decide that they are done, their energetic investment working more like a palimpsest than a *tabula rasa*, with materials and investments co-present in a giant, messy collage of micro-events, many ill-formed and un-formed, many failing to remain beyond a limited moment; multiple determinations of human activity, but not necessarily indeterminate. Resisting transparency, accountability, audit, relevance, knowledge transfer, and impact, all of which are designed to increase productivity per unit time, the philosopher's retortions do not scurry on towards their conclusions (which is not to say that they lack conclusions). Not only is there no need to scurry on but there is no benefit in doing so, even in thinking that one might consider scurrying on; on the contrary, the world contains many more "possibilities" than scurrying on can hope to entertain, and it is more complex than such a self-aggrandising ideology: "The world is an ongoing open process of mattering through which 'mattering' itself acquires meaning and form in the realization of different agential possibilities" (Barad 2003, 817).

Not rushing to posit a community of assenting subjects, the philosopher lingers with events, problematises their materials, and allows materials to do their thing. Failing or forgetting to allow materials to "matter" would be to succumb to "haste", which Jean-François Lyotard criticises as follows: "What it hurries, and crushes, is what after the fact I find I have always tried, under diverse headings—work, figural, heterogeneity, dissensus, event, thing—to reserve: the unharmonizable"

(Lyotard 1991, 4). They seek, somewhat playfully, to distract everybody away from the process of reifying events into mere facts, and possibilities into mere affirmations. There is a certain languor. *And a warmth, perhaps?* Embracing the impermanence and of the event, they seek to breathe like Duchamp, no more, no less, thereby embracing “the aesthetic moment: a sigh, the provisional suspension of the principle of efficiency” (Lyotard 1997, 58). *Mmmm, interesting...*

5. You, when?

Biographies of living people are incomplete, and this is true of my loose and rather sketchy phenomenological reduction of the philosopher’s constitution. Nevertheless, I could conclude with the far-reaching claim that the philosopher described above is the archetypal liquid citizen, in the sense that their radical Duchampian individuality (Molderings 2010, 133–144) bears sombre comparison with, *inter alia*, the liminality of the refugee (forever forced into performing somebody else’s dance), the difficulty of saying “we” in the global context, and the importance of “improvisation and experimentation” (Bauman 2007, 87, 95). Such characteristics of liquid life are both maintained by and resisted by the philosopher. *Such a claim is not all that radical, really, despite some of your rhetoric earlier in your essay, though I agree that the pointed end of your argument is all too sharp here.* This claim would represent no specific advance in securing the epistemological foundations of Performance and Philosophy—if anything, the opposite. What such a claim about the philosopher does acknowledge, though, more honestly, is that disciplinary multiplicity is at the heart of the academy, regardless of the numerous exclusionary actions that have constituted the histories of ‘separate’ disciplines. *I interrupted you at the beginning and I’ll interrupt you again now: I’ve been a philosopher all along, long before your concern with discursive and disciplinary drift came to clarify what I already knew in my body.* In this respect, Performance Philosophy’s example is exemplary, for it does nothing in its activities, discussions, and interventions if not include, embrace—and therefore inspire and enhance—all those in its fluidly shifting disciplinary vicinity.

Given the quasi-biographical title of this essay, ‘The Philosopher’, which might be read as requiring a sense of the core values in question, it would be remiss of me to end this essay without providing a manifesto. *That’s a good idea, let’s see it please.* So, I end by proposing four imperatives that might be taken as governing Performance Philosophy and the work of the philosopher. These are positive without really being provocative, and they are not intended to lay down the gauntlet to aspiring philosophers—to them it ought to be clear: *You must find your own way.*

(1) The emptiness between the ‘e’ ending Performance and the ‘P’ beginning Philosophy must not be forced into over-determining the colour, shape, volume, and intensity of projects and outputs: *Embrace openness!*

(2) The philosopher must invest in events that maintain a flexible co-articulation of performance and philosophy: *Remain loose!*

(3) The energy invested in events must be allowed to disseminate, disperse, and die out according to its own temporality: *Let energy blossom!*

(4) The ghostly, sophisticated, and materialistic relationships between terms, disciplines, philosophers, spaces, postures, and utterances must emerge affectionately, following the flows of energies: *Be gentle!*

In this manner, the philosopher's energetic investments, actions, hesitations, and mistakes will be pragmatic and productive—not necessarily of work, but of life.

Although the above paragraph puts its head above the battlements with some characteristics of what Performance Philosophy is or should be, I would rather end with something more celebratory, something more like a toast to Performance Philosophy's many voices. *Me too* Not with a pat conclusion like, for example, *We are all philosophers now*, after which the celebration will be short-lived, while everybody is assimilated to the category of 'philosopher'. *I agree; I'd strongly resist that gesture*. Instead, how about something looser, more open-ended, vaguer, and challenging, where the emphasis remains on what is yet to come, perhaps: *Here's to the philosopher!*

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Biography

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