



PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## PERFORMING PHILOSOPHY IN ASIAN TRADITIONS

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4 September 2014

Dear Graham!

How was your flight back home? Despite all the institutional obligations waiting for you there, I hope we will find some time to continue our discussion on the concept of *arts-based-philosophy* we started during your stay here in Vienna.

You remember? We both agreed to understand it as a mode of *doing* philosophy that does not merely reflect and conceptualize the arts, but *uses* artistic practices as such to find, think and demonstrate its thoughts. I referred to Plato and Nietzsche as telling examples of 'artist-philosophers', precisely because they were both highly sensitive to the spatio-temporal context in which their thoughts emerged and their teachings took place. Like artists, they obviously assumed that it makes a vital difference *when* and *where* a thought occurs; under *what* circumstances it comes to our mind and *how* it is communicated. In short, in which situated context it shows up: in the market square, at a place outside or inside Athens' city walls, on a mountain, at midnight, on a hot or a cold day, and so forth. For artist-philosophers like Plato (contra the stereotyped version of him) ideas evidently do not reside in a transcendent heaven, but show up in *telling* situations in a dramatic rather than an idealistic ('Platonic') manner. Martin Puchner (2010) wrote a nice book on this issue: *The Drama of Ideas. Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*.

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Since they are concerned with the spatio-temporal design of the material conditions that allow a concept to arrive, an artist-philosopher could be defined as the kind of philosopher who is *sensitive* to the fact that ideas possess an *immanent* relation to a precise bodily configuration that enables them to *take place*, not only *within* a spatio-temporal context, but *out* of it, or to be more precise, *by virtue* of its particular arrangement, that allows a thought to be actually thought. When Nietzsche ([1886] 2008), in *Beyond Good and Evil*, calls a new species of philosophers into being, 'philosophers of the future' whose instincts and taste would be the opposite of those of their predecessors (cf. 2008, 6), I proposed, during our discussion here in Vienna, that he had *artist-philosophers* in mind; namely, philosophers who have learned to practice philosophy as a way of life that *implies* a self-transformation of our *sensual* life and *corporeal* being as an essential part of what it means to perform philosophy. Language is just one medium amongst others in arts-based-philosophy, insofar as the performance of a body and its situated context matters – essentially and equally – for the meaning at stake in this re-search.

Saying this, we both associated, almost immediately—you remember?—Nietzsche's call to practicing philosophy as a self-cultivation of our corporeal being-in-the-world with the concept of philosophy, operative in many traditions of Asian philosophy. I think this idea popped up in a machine-like manner in both of our minds, because the relation between Nietzsche and Asian philosophy has been haunting us for so many years. And with good reason, because his work shares so many features with Asian philosophies: first and foremost, Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers in Europe who valued the significance of the body, being a major agent, subconsciously at work in every performance of thinking. When he argues, especially in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that the largest part of conscious thinking has to be considered an *instinctual* activity, following physiological demands to preserve a particular kind of *corporeal* life, this statement reminds me in particular of the Indian concept of *manas*, or mind. Allow me to develop in this context some ideas on 'Performance-Philosophy in India', which I hope might stimulate you to respond with some corresponding ideas from the East Asian tradition.

In the Indian tradition, *manas* does not only receive, gather and co-ordinate information delivered by our sense organs in the course of perceiving objects (*buddhi-indriyas*) and performing bodily actions (*karma-indriyas*). Beyond this, it is perceived precisely to be a sense organ in itself; a physical part of nature (*prakṛti*) - that is, a *subtle body* that *incarnates* whenever a stimulation of our nervous system *takes place* in such a manner as to activate somebody's sense of self-awareness. Only now a first person position pops up—an intensive, often machine-like yoking (*samyoga*) of the two principles of Self & Matter, which generates a *sensitive* self-awareness of a lived-body *on* itself and *for* itself in its fleshly being-in-the-world. *Manas*, the self-conscious form of affections/affectedness, *gives* us a sense of I-ness (*ahaṁkāra*). It *establishes* a first person position in a body by *creating* a subtle psychic body.

Psyche is extended, but does not know it, says Jean-Luc Nancy in *Corpus*, quoting the latest text note of Freud before he died (Nancy 2008, 21). In the context of Indian philosophies, a lived-body can never be reduced to its first-person position, its psychic-body, because they assume that other bodies also exist as part of everybody's being-in-the-world. For instance, there is *mukhya prāṇa*, the

unconscious parts of our bodily existence. This part of our lives takes place without being consciously registered and sensed by ourselves in the first-person position. It is definitely an important part of *our being-in-the-world*, but no direct part of our conscious self-awareness.

This is an important issue for our discussion of the concept of performance philosophy, especially in the Indian context of philosophy and performance theory. Because this means that artist-philosophers, like artists, have to confront themselves with 'the pre-subjective form of "A" life' first, to borrow a formulation from Deleuze (2001). Performance philosophy implies a self-cultivation of the unconscious and of the conscious parts of our corporeal lives. In the context of Indian philosophy, no art and no philosophy is imaginable without the practice of yoga, the self-cultivation of our lived-bodies.

Patañjali (roughly 350-450 CE), the author of the *Yoga-Sutra* (2007) – perhaps the most authoritative text on yoga in the tradition of Indian philosophy – defines the *practice of yoga (kriyā yoga)* as a transformation of our inherited bodily nature toward a state of being in which a lived-body has started to *simulate (anukāra)* the very nature (*svarūpa*) of a Self that is *immanent* in all beings, but usually veiled by the five hindrances (*kleśa*), disconnecting us from *samādhi*, the target state of yoga (Patañjali 2007, 2.1-2.2 and 2.54-2.55). These five hindrances are namely ignorance, self-centeredness, resentment, greed and fear (2.3). To overcome the dominion of this bad—human, all too human—regime, which ends up in the performance of a 'false life', Patañjali recommends an eightfold practice (2.29) that starts with rules of behaviour towards others and ourselves (*yama, niyama*), continues with the self-cultivation of body, breath and the sense organs (*āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra*), to finally enter a plane of immanence through a threefold practice of contemplation (*dhāraṇā, dhyāna, samādhi*).

In the context of performance philosophy, the fifth limb (*pratyāhāra*) is maybe the most interesting: the detachment of our embodied mind (*citta*) from external stimuli, in which a radical reversal of the ordinary function of our mind (*manas*) and sense organs (*indriya*) takes place. In *pratyāhāra*, says *Yoga-Sutra* 2.54, a lived-body is no more concerned with sensing, conceptualizing and imagining single *external* objects, but with sensing, conceptualizing and unfolding *a Self* that grounds all beings as its immanent cause. It is, says *Yoga-Sutra* 2.54, *as if (iva)* our mind and sense-organs have started to *imitate (anukāra)* the very nature (*svarūpa*) of *a Self*, immanent in all beings. This dimension does not belong to me, to you or any other subject or object, but the other way round: we all are immanent predications of *it*. Accordingly, Deleuze (2001) called it the plane of immanence that is immanent to nobody else than to immanence itself. It does not belong to a subject or an object because, on the contrary, *they* are immanent predications of *it*.

Isn't this strange? *The Self*, which yoga is trying to unveil, can only show up in an *as-if* mode? It can only be *simulated*, not represented by any lived body. Our sense organs have to *mime* and *imitate* it (*anukāra*) to reveal its being-there and become aware of it oneself.

When *Yoga-Sutra* 3.3 describes *samādhi*, the state of yoga, as a state of self-awareness in which only the matter itself shines, *as if* our subjective nature would have vanished (*svarūpa śūnyam iva*), again we encounter the Sanskrit word *iva*. Being in *samādhi* again implies an *as if* mode, *as if* our

self-centred self would have disappeared. *As if* we were empty of ourselves. The Self is still there, but it looks *as if* it had vanished in this state of being. *This fiction* is obviously part of the truth, unveiled in the target state of yoga.

Concluding what I said before, I would finally like to claim at the end of this e-mail that philosophy has to be *performed* in the context of Indian philosophies precisely because it starts with the idea of a body that *actually* appears in space and time. It does not start with the *potentiality* of a body that *could* exist once, but with the *birth of its presence*, its be-coming.

Best wishes in the name of Patañjali on my way to Tanzquartier Vienna,

Arno

PS: *The legend of Sage Patañjali* (2012) says that Patañjali reached *samādhi* by virtue of watching the *Tāṇḍava* dance of Lord Śiva in the golden arena at Cidambaram ...

25 September 2014

Dear Arno,

The flights back to Ireland were as satisfactory as flights can be in these days of diminished air travel, but I landed in a veritable firestorm of clamorously urgent obligations (sorry for mixing that metaphor), which accounts for the tardiness of my reply to your truly interesting message. I don't think I ever told you that the first tradition of Asian philosophy I studied was Indian, and so your fascinating account of the performing dimensions of Indian philosophy, in the mode of 'as if', stirred decades-old memories and instilled a desire to return to those fascinating texts you discuss.

Under these straitened circumstances, however, I'm restraining that desire—as well as the urge to expatiate on the topic of Nietzsche as a performing thinker—in favour of responding to your request to say something on this topic from the East Asian perspective. (By the way, before I begin, let me thank you for recommending Puchner's *Drama of Ideas*. It looks interesting and I look forward to reading it.) In response to your dramatic portrayal of Patañjali as an exponent of 'performance philosophy', let me argue for Confucius (who flourished in China a century or so earlier) as another 'Major Player'.

The prerequisite in ancient China for becoming a philosopher—or a scholar-official, or even just a gentleman—was self-cultivation through the 'Six Arts': ritual performance, the playing of music, calligraphy, mathematics, archery, and charioteering. If we can assume that training in mathematics involved using an abacus, then all six arts would require considerable physical skill, to develop which requires prolonged practice. To do philosophy was thus to *perform*—also in the sense of playing a particular role on the social and political stage (scholar, ruler, minister, or whatever), performing one's proper tasks in the appropriate ways. Like his Western counterpart

Socrates, Confucius, whose philosophy has influenced more people's lives than that of any other figure, didn't write anything. Instead, he taught by example, less by saying intelligent things than by behaving in such an exemplary manner that people were awed by his style and grace, as well as by his wisdom.

By contrast, an applicant for a philosophy position in the Western academy nowadays is assessed mainly on the basis of what he has written, and how he performs in the interview—which basically means how intelligently he speaks and responds to questions. If he stumbles on entering the room, looks at the floor while shaking hands, or spills the contents of his plastic water bottle onto the interviewer's papers, this tends to be ascribed to the candidate's being nervous, and would seldom count against him. In the Confucian context, such physical ineptitude would mean peremptory dismissal.

The supreme 'virtue' in the Confucian tradition is the actualisation of one's humaneness and full humanity in relation to others. Again it's not merely a matter of thinking about it, but of actually doing it. While empathetic imagination plays a major role in learning to understand other people, which is the prerequisite for relating to them appropriately, attention to bodily behaviour is again indispensable. You have to give the other person the requisite sense of who you are through proper demeanour, facial expression and tone of voice (all indispensable for the Western actor too).

According to Confucius, the three things that 'the gentleman values most in the Way' are: 'To stay clear of violence by putting on a serious countenance, to come close to being trusted by setting a proper expression on his face, and to avoid being boorish and unreasonable by speaking in proper tones' (*Analects* 8.4; I'll say something about translations at the end of this message). The Chinese for this last phrase is literally 'energy [*qi*] of words': the condition of your physical person comes through in your tone of voice.

What you say is as important as how you say it: another prime virtue for Confucius is 'sincerity', or standing by one's word. Saying something in ancient Chinese society is tantamount to doing it: the Confucian gentleman is reticent and reluctant to speak, since he'd be ashamed if his behaviour failed to measure up to his words (4.22). Contemporary philosophers (such as Herbert Fingarette) recognise that Confucian speech is 'performative' in the sense that J. L. Austin described: to say, in the context of a marriage ceremony, 'I do' is not merely a report on my current mental attitude toward the person standing next to me: it's rather to do something, to perform the act of sealing the contract. This is why signed contracts were unknown throughout much of China's history: if I say I'll pay you ten thousand euros next month for goods received, that's all the assurance you need.

Conversely, just as a good stage actor responds to the 'energy' of the audience, so the good Confucian pays close attention to what the other person is doing and how he is looking. The first five of 'the nine things the gentleman turns his thought to' are: 'seeing clearly when he uses his eyes, hearing acutely when he uses his ears, looking cordial when it comes to his countenance, appearing respectful when it comes to his demeanour, being conscientious when he speaks'

(16.10). The point is to hone one's perceptions and sharpen one's attention, so that one really hears what the other person is saying by being sensitive to all the over- and under-tones of the voice, reads his or her body language carefully, and discerns the subtleties of facial expression that reveal what is felt but is not being said.

This isn't just a matter not just of getting those 'mirror neurons' crackling, but also of an empathetic sensing of patterns of tension and relaxation in the other person's musculature. The task is to open oneself to an intuitive attunement with the other person's life, so that one can be genuinely helpful to him or her, rather than merely helping the other to become more like oneself. And, of course, when talking to a superior, it's even more important to pay close attention: 'to speak without observing the expression on his face is to be blind' (16.6).

But, talking about talking to a superior, I have a meeting with the Dean shortly, for which I have to collect some very different (and far less interesting) thoughts than these, so I'll have to leave this at that—but with the promise to finish this line of thinking at the next possible opportunity.

In the spirit of Confucius, I send human-hearted greetings to you through the optic fibres (or whatever medium) of the internetnetwork!

Graham

For the *Analects* of Confucius I've used the translation by D. C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), which I think is the most readable of the reliable translations. More philosophically informative, if less elegant, is Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998). The little book by Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1972) remains the best short introduction.

1 October 2014

Dear Graham,

Thank you for your noble thoughts. You write that 'the supreme 'virtue' of the Confucian tradition is the actualisation of one's humaneness and full humanity in relation to others'. Indian philosophy differs from this statement only insofar as it is most concerned with the relation of humans to the 'eternal self', the 'ultimate being', in which all social relations are embedded. As in Spinozism, recognizing our human nature implies recognizing our finite, mortal existence *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity. Because this relation is precisely a constitutive part of our

human nature, we, as human beings, cannot displace the fact of having an idea of eternity. It may be a confused one, but this is precisely the reason why we need philosophy and the arts in the context of Indian philosophy. They clarify our relation as mortal beings toward that which has not been created *in* the world, but creates the world *in itself*. In his *Ethics* (1. prop. 18) Spinoza says that 'God [or Nature] is the immanent but not the transitive cause of all things' (Spinoza, 2000: 93). We don't have to establish a relation toward that which exists eternally; we exist already as a finite mode of *that* existence. Our lives *are* immanent predications of *that* existence. In Indian philosophies the 'eternal self' does not reside in heaven--but *is* the most immanent part of our selves, veiled by the five *kleśa* factors (already mentioned before in my e-mail).

Manomohan Ghosh (1951), in his English translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the most authoritative text of performance theory in India, already emphasized that one first has to understand the doctrine of *anukaraṇa* in order to understand the relation of performance and philosophy in the context of classical Indian philosophies and classical performance theories: 'It may now be asked what exactly was meant by the word mimicry (*anukaraṇa*) by the Indian theorists. Did this mean a perfect reproduction of reality?' But this can't be, because 'the ancient Hindu theatre recognised very early the simple truth that the real art to deserve the name is bound to allow to itself a certain degree of artificiality which receives its recognition through many conventions' (Ghosh 1951, xlv).

Miming nature is obviously more than conceptualizing an already given reality, ready at hand to be reproduced. Nature, miming herself, is a *productive* force, a creative mode of *repetition* which alters what is repeated by repeating it over and over *artificially*, that is to say, always again slightly different. The real tree in nature is nature *simulating* a tree, the evolutionary occurrence of the human species is nature *simulating* a human being, the relation of the mortal human being to the 'eternal self' is one of being able to simulate it, bodily.

*Anukaraṇa*, the performance of mimicry, is not just a reproduction and representation of reality, but reality itself. Reality in its speculative, imaginative *be-coming*. I would therefore like to claim that fictionality *is* the real status of factuality in the context of Indian performance theory. Here again I see an affinity between Indian philosophies and Nietzsche -- for example, in his famous aphorism in *Twilight of the Idols*, 'How the "real world" finally became a fable' (Nietzsche 1998, 20). You have to simulate an animal bodily, as if you were an animal, to simulate a human being, as if you were a human being, to simulate the eternal Self, as if you were the eternal Self, and so on. While imitating a tree, an animal, a God, the Self, you create a bodily gesture that functions as an 'incarnate'. You are not only imagining or conceptualizing a tree, you incarnate it, *as if* you yourself would be-come a tree by means of your human body.

Everybody knows that some animals simulate death under conditions of great danger. They adopt a bodily posture *as if* they were dead even before they are literally dead. Their *anukaraṇa* is not just a simulated state of mind or imagination; it is rather an embodiment (*incarnate*) of their death before they are dead, the performance of a body that indeed realizes a state of being *as if* it were dead.

The same is true when Patañjali defines yoga in *Yoga-Sutra* 1.2 as a calming down of our scattered

minds (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*). To silence ourselves, one has to *imitate*, bodily, the silence operative in the *immanent* cause (*puruṣa*) of nature. Entering the plane of immanence is therefore not only a mindful conceptualization of this plane, but the calming down of body, speech and mind. The entire complex of *manas* (mind) and the sense organs (*indriyas*), operative in a philosopher or artist, has to enter the mostly hidden dimension of our (yogic) Self to unveil it. Bringing about this *transformation* (*nirodha-*, *samādhi*, *ekāgratā-pariṇāma*) is the very aim of performance philosophy in India.

Mimicry, *anukaraṇa*, is obviously a kind of repetition, but an artificial, creative, performative one. Comprehending the double meaning of ‘repetition’ and ‘alteration’, the Sanskrit word “*Iteration*” clearly indicates that repetition is not just the eternal repetition of the same in the context of Indian philosophy and performance theory, but a productive, sometimes even subversive technique that produces differences through repetition. By miming your most immanent nature over and over again in a ritualistic manner, your body finally be-comes it.

Best wishes,

Arno

15 October 2014

Dear Arno,

Once again I’m delighted by much of what you write, though I have to admit that clouds and mist tend to form in my Buddhist-inclined mind at the mention of the ‘eternal self’. But your last point is perfectly parallel with the Confucian way: through bodily enactment of the appropriate rituals handed down from the ancestors, one can become fully human and humane in a unique way. And I love the ‘as if’ you talk about: Confucius talks about ‘sacrificing to the spirits’ in the mode of ‘as if’—while at the same time emphasising the importance of whole-hearted participation in the ritual (*Analects* 3.12).

But, let me try to fulfill my promise to draw my line of thought about Confucius to a conclusion, while accepting that a dialogue between us on performative philosophy in India and China will have to wait till we’ve laid out the basic positions on each side.

The most important of the Six Arts for Confucius are the first two, the practice of ‘ritual propriety’, and of music. These complement one another in that playing (and listening to) music moulds the moods and emotions from within, while the performance of ritual ceremony shapes the energies of the body, as it were, from the outside. Although certain kinds of musical performance could count as valid expressions of Confucian philosophy, I’ll focus just on ritual for now.

In ancient China the goal of philosophy was not, as in Greece, to find the truth—too abstract and cerebral for the ever practical Chinese—but rather to find the *way*, chart one’s course through life, and discover how best to live as a responsible and responsive member of society. And so



philosophy in the Confucian tradition is a matter of becoming a fully human being, rather than of thinking in particular ways or producing grand theories. The task is genuinely performative, insofar as it involves behaving in a manner that's in accordance with ritual propriety. This requires a constant cultivation of the movements and attitudes of the human body mindful of its environment. In Confucian ritual the appropriate garments, for example, are prescribed in advance; but how one wears them—the precise angle of the hat, the arc of the sweep of the sleeve—requires careful attention to detail.

(The Beijing blockbuster *Confucius* [2010] conveys a good sense of the ritual propriety that pervaded social and political life during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, though the production is overwrought by emulation of Hollywood. But Chou Yun-fat gives a fine performance, portraying Confucius performing his philosophy.)

Whether in the presence of the many or the few, the great or the small, 'the gentleman does not dare to neglect anyone, wears his robe and cap correctly, and is polite in his gaze' (20.4). Ritual propriety demands a keen and constant awareness of the position and posture of the body in motion: it simply won't do to be stumbling as one ascends the steps, knocking over the flowers on the altar, or dropping the ritual implements on the floor. Through honing the body's movements in relation to other people and things, one becomes more open and responsive to the world and enhances social harmony through one's skilful interactions (1.12).

Nor is it simply a matter of getting the prescribed movements right: the activity must also be infused with soul. Your heart has to be in it, or else the performance will fall flat. Anyone with a modicum of sensitivity can recognise the perfunctory handshake, the note-perfect but uninspired musical recital, or the lecture that's merely being delivered by rote. Confucius thus advocates a balance between 'native substance' and 'acquired refinement': too much heart and soul, and you risk boorishness, while over-cultivation results in mere punctiliousness (6.18).

In case all this sounds like mere 'performance aesthetics' rather than real philosophy, it should be emphasised that the point of ritual propriety is to enhance interpersonal and social and political harmony by overcoming egocentrism and reducing selfishness—insofar as it all requires submitting oneself and one's personal inclinations to pre-established forms and norms external to the self. Self-cultivation through ritual propriety thus has significant implications for ethics and politics as well as for the flourishing of the individual performer.

And because philosophy in China never undertook the ascent to the level of abstract theorising that became prevalent in Indian (and Western!) philosophy, its practice always remained more firmly rooted in the body, which is the true performer. Some might miss the joys of lofty speculation when engaging the Confucian philosophical tradition; but for those of us who are concerned to play our parts well, between our entrance onto the stage of the social world and our exit, that tradition has many sensible techniques for us to emulate.

Having enjoyed this conversation in the medium of email, I look forward to our next meeting in person, our bodies in the same place!

Graham

20 November 2014

Dear Graham and Arno,

Thanks for including me in this discussion. It's very great to read both of your contributions. I'm very happy to bring the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō into the dialogue, but I have to say, initially I was slightly puzzled about how to fit him into what has been put forth so far, since he neither focuses on performance *per se* nor does he seem to want to explore the cross-over between philosophy and art. Of course he examines both philosophic and artistic roles as embodied practices, but in the end his ideal—even for the philosopher—is the 'religiously volitional' individual, whom he takes to be distinct from those who are artistically volitional. While the artist is a consistent exemplar throughout his writings, he does not lean towards blurring the boundaries between art and philosophy, nor does he seem to be working towards a 'new species of philosopher' as you've pointed out regarding Nietzsche. While this makes it slightly challenging to fit his philosophy into what has been discussed so far, if you can allow me to return to the concept of performance itself, and start a slightly new line of thinking from there, I believe Nishida could add some interesting dimensions to the dialogue.

To bring Nishida's thinking into the context of performance, I will start with the question of what distinguishes expression as performance from a non-performative type of expression. There are many ways to express oneself: with instruments, with one's voice, body, with different materials, paint, clay, computers, and so on. Expressing oneself with any of these media or instruments involves moving the body, yet that movement is not necessarily performance. The dancer can dance in the vacant studio, the actor can rehearse on the empty stage, the musician can record music in her bedroom. While no art-form is *necessarily* performative, any and all can be by adding one element to expressive movement: that is, vision. All that is required for any expressive bodily movement to be a performance is that artists come out of their room, their studio, their practice space, and move their bodies in a shared visual fabric. Performance is a motor *and* a perceptual practice, and it is regarding this aspect of performance—the ambiguous motor-perceptual fabric in which it obtains—that Nishida has a great deal to contribute.

One way I have found useful for thinking about Nishida's understanding of vision and motion is in terms of what it serves to counter: that is, the representational framework for perception and its underlying dualistic and positivist metaphysics. When dealing with concepts of vision, motion, and expression the general representational approach would parse them (or simply assume they are already parsed) into various binaries localized at nodes within a performance space. The performer's body is here, and is the expressive node, it is active, while the audience is over there, passive, receptive, not moving, not expressive. The performer's instruments, costumes, props, computers, as well as the space mediating all of these, are thought to be inert, expressionless, non-

motor-perceptual matter or space. Nishida counters all of this binarization, and he does so by going beyond positivist metaphysics. For him, none of these categories: vision, motion, expression, activity, or passivity, are reducible to any single node, but are spread ambiguously across entities and throughout the motor-perceptual fabric he calls 'Basho'. There are no exclusively active or passive nodes, no exclusively visual or motile nodes. Further, not only motion and vision but expression is also spread throughout the motor-perceptual fabric; where it is not just the human body, but the world that is expressive.

All that is required for expression to become performance is that the artist's movements are seen, yet this visual aspect is much larger than the positivist-representational framework would assume. According to that framework vision is the reception of positive 'visual-data' emanating from an object and traveling in a straight line to the perceptual apparatus of the subject. Contrary to this, as it is with Merleau-Ponty, so with Nishida, there is no simple uni-directional perceptual relation, seeing is always *seeing-seen*. As Nishida writes: 'Our own bodies are seen from the outside... our body is that which sees as well as that which is seen'. (Nishida 1965, 8:328). To perform is not to move in a way that is incidental to the visual impression of an audience. In a shared visual fabric everything that comes along through the visual stream goes in both directions, or we might say obtains ambiguously across the binaries of seer and seen, performer and audience. What and how the performer sees is implicated in how the performer moves. In what might be my favourite line of Nishida's, he writes: 'To know the change of an external thing through one's vision is the same as feeling the movement of one's own body through muscular sensation' (Nishida 1992, 24). The performer therefore does not simply see the audience, but moves her body as it appears to her from the outside, from the audience's vantage point. Because vision and motion obtain within this motor-perceptual ambiguity, motor-perception cannot be reduced to one node in the performance space. In seeing the audience seeing oneself, the performer's body and its expressive motions arise from various points throughout the visual fabric.

While in its positivity the human body has its own local perceptual apparatus, its own physiology and ways of moving in expression, when the performer is immersed in a visual space, he is moving a body much larger than that which we would circumscribe as 'his own'. He is orchestrating a body, which through vision is constituted outside of itself, in ecstasy, with an 'external musculature,' such that he feels his movements as obtaining in and through other bodies because of the seeing-seen ambiguity.

This perceptual ecstasis occurs not only with other humans, but likewise with the material objects of a performance: with the instruments, props, the stage floor, the lighting, the dance shoes, which are normally dismissed as non-motor-perceptual inert matter. My abovementioned favourite quote finishes by bringing the material world into the body's ecstasis: 'The "external world" refers both to our bodies and to other *material* things' (Nishida 1992, 24; emphasis added).

Prefiguring Merleau-Ponty, Nishida posits a motor-perceptual ecstasis regarding the artist's tools. It is not just the audience's body that constitutes the performer's external musculature, her instruments are likewise an extension of her body. Nishida writes: 'We have the possibility of

possessing all things as tools. And this in turn means that things become our body. In its paramount sense, we can say that our self enters the world of tools' (Nishida 2012, 257). The materials surrounding performers are not incidental to their bodies, perception invades them and sees the world from their extremities. 'We may say that there is an eye at the tip of the artist's brush or the sculptor's chisel,' writes Nishida (1973, 156).

Nishida further expands the body's ambiguous relation with the objects surrounding it in a way that is very interesting for performative expression. It is not simply that *perception* manifests in and through an ecstasis into the world of objects, but because vision and motion are co-constituting, there is a *motor-perceptual* ecstasis. We tend to think of the performer's instruments as only receiving motion from the active expressive human. Contrary to this, for Nishida, the essence of material entities is not inert matter or extension, the essence of things is that they are acts. The performer is not the only active entity: 'from the objective side, he is also acted upon by the thing... the artist acts out of his subjectivity and at the same time he is acted upon from the side of the object. The artwork is realized from a mutual interaction—or reciprocal transaction—of subjectivity and objectivity' (Nishida 1998a, 40).

Whereas Arno has alluded to how *ideas* 'possess an immanent relation to a precise bodily configuration,' Nishida posits that *objects* in the artist's environment call on his body, pattern his gestures and postures. Objects are not inert, Nishida considers them to be acts, or what he calls 'volitional objects'. (Nishida 1920: 140).

Performative movement is therefore not the movement of an active human node, against a passive motor-neutral space, but is what Nishida calls a 'unity of act and act' (Nishida 1973, 36). In such a context, 'both the artist and his work become one inseparable act' (Nishida 1973, 26). To move as a self in a world of volitional objects is not to be a discrete and finite actor, but is to be part of what he refers to as an 'infinite continuity of acts' (Nishida 1973, 126). There is therefore no exclusively active, expressive node over against a passive world. In *Art and Morality*, he writes: 'Artistic movement is the unity of the acts of the self, and the acts of the world' (Nishida 1973, 21). And later in *Fundamental Problems*: 'we are active bodily as the world's own self-transformations' (Nishida 1998b, 58). Conceiving of the body-world relation as such is achieved in Nishida's philosophy by thinking of the body, not as a *subject in*, but as *predicate of* the world. If the 'as if' self Arno refers to is neither subjective nor objective, then the 'immanent predication' achieved through imitation might have some interesting resonances with Nishida's thinking on this topic, and specifically regarding his predicate logic.

One difficulty in seeing the body as a predicate of the world is understanding how expression fits into this picture. If performance is a motor-perceptual form of expression, and if motion and perception arise ambiguously between body and world, expression cannot be localized in the human node. While one might be willing to enlarge motion and perception beyond the confines of the body, it is more difficult to say that expression comes from the world itself. Nevertheless Nishida writes that 'we can say that things are expressions' (Nishida 2012, 244), and further that 'mountains and rivers must also be expressive' (Nishida 1970, 35).

The performer does not simply inject expression into a non-expressive world: The world is active, and expression is an interaction between body and world. It is not that the artist makes something and places it into a world that awaits that artwork or performance. The body and the world make one another. Nishida refers to this dynamic as 'from the made to the making' (*tsukuraretamono kara tsukurumono e*, Nishida 2012, 173). This making-made structure is the key for going beyond a positivist notion of expression. Nishida explains:

We make things and we are made by things. Therefore, in this mutual transaction, we are—so to speak—made by making... the world is one in which our making things entails our being made by things, and it is precisely in this respect that it is the active world from which we are born. (Nishida 1998a, 40)

Once a motor-perceptual expansion of the performer's expressive body has been achieved, we arrive at a drastically revised account of expression, and in turn, performance. Because motion has the structure of making-made, the term 'expression' no longer suffices for understanding performance, since it comes with the positivist assumption of a uni-directional 'pushing out' of one expressive entity onto a non-expressive material, or within a non-expressive space. Nishida counters this positivism by framing 'the relation between that which is self-expressed and that which is expressed and expressive,' as what he calls, 'dynamic inter-expression.' (Nishida, 1993: 104).

No longer is the performer thought to be the lone expressive entity pushing expression out into a non-expressive space: The *world* is expressive. The world, Nishida believes, 'is a creative process. And our body is a creative element of that world... I mean to say that the historical world is a creative world' (Nishida 1998a, 48).

The question of how exactly the world is itself expressive, and how the artist-performer can engage this aspect of the world is, to my mind, one of the more difficult and fascinating questions evoked by Nishida's philosophy. I believe the answer lies in the relation he sees as obtaining between what he calls the 'historical body' (*rekishitekishintai*) and 'historical world' (*rekishiteki sekai*). Engaging the creative aspect of the historical world might involve similar aspects to the Confucian 'sacrificing to the spirits,' Graham mentions, where the artist moves 'through bodily enactment of the appropriate rituals handed down from the ancestors'. If these rituals can be thought of as the gestures handed down within a performative tradition, it would be worthwhile exploring a possible connection with Nishida's understanding of how the 'historical world' acts through the 'historical body'. But, I've already exceeded the word limit so I'll leave this question for open for now.

With best wishes from Kobe,

Adam

30 November 2014

Dear Adam,

Many thanks indeed for your fine contribution to our discussion. Since we're over the word limit already, I have to confine myself to one brief comment on just one of the many interesting points you make from Nishida's perspective: when you talk about the performer's moving her body 'as it appears to her from the outside, from the audience's vantage point'. You mentioned a few weeks ago that you were going to see a Noh drama (which you must have seen by now)—and you probably know that one of the main reasons the Noh actor spends time alone in the 'mirror room' before going on stage is to practise precisely what Nishida and you are talking about: to perform while 'seeing himself' (the actors are all male) from the perspective of the audience.

Now I promise (a real performative utterance) not to write any more!

Graham

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