Talking to Transform -

Aesthetic Experiments in Conversational Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Talking to Transform - Aesthetic Experiments in Conversational Inquiry

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This dissertation is an investigation into conversation practices of transformative inquiry examples of which lie across philosophical, therapeutic, spiritual and pedagogical disciplines and include: Socratic dialogue, Community of Philosophical Inquiry, Philosophy for Children, Psychodrama, Psychoanalysis, Authentic Relating practices, Quaker Meetings, confessionals, dialogic pedagogies. My central claims are that these practices contain linguistic and paralinguistic techniques which: 1) perform functions of transformative inquiry 2) can perform these functions apart from the institutions, communities and ideologies typically tied to these techniques 3) can be aesthetically re-combined and re-deployed within artistic formats to expand the scope of these performative functions.

I begin this study by a close investigation of a singular practice – Socratic dialogue – arguing how it was a live, performative practice which relied on techniques of questioning, clarifications, brachylogia, facilitation and role-play, and showing how these techniques moved in and out of play through interlocutory negotiations of power, desire and investment. The focus widens as I create a glossary of conversational techniques of transformative inquiry drawn from dozens of conversation practices. This glossary arranges techniques by their linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic functions and analyzes how each technique performs transformative inquiry through the following variables: noticing, affective and conceptual clarity, opening and closing, expressivity, and focus. What follows is an analysis of Tino Sehgal's *This Progress* which draws on the performative functions of the glossary to show how a contemporary work of art can utilize conversation techniques of transformative inquiry. I then conduct a more systematic analysis of how artworks can utilize techniques of transformative inquiry by examining: how conversation is deployed in artworks, how semantic determinacy or indeterminacy is negotiated, how determinate aspects can be notated or scored, questions of audienceship and witnessing, and how the transformative inquiry itself changes when conducted within a work of art. This leads into an extended study of my own art practice of developing conversation pieces for transformative inquiry, a practice which expands the reflexivity and reflectivity of transformative inquiry itself. I conclude with a brief investigation into how my own practice is para and pata-philosophical by examining key concepts of philosophical inquiry – expertise, techne, poiesis, eidos, immanence, logos, repetition.

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I would also like to thank all the people in my creative community here in Montreal who have been participants and active interlocutors in my creative work. This includes: Naomi Moon, Hannah Kaya, Kai Iverson, Lina Moreno, Adriana Disman, Anique Vered, Bronwen Moen, Isabella Donati-Simmons, Esther Kalaba, Hilary Bergen, Jack Bride, Natalie Fletcher, Claudia Edwards, Kyla Gilbert, Leya Gervais, Mark Weissfelner, Haley Baird, Cicely Austin. I believe that some of my best work has been produced only because of the nourishing friendships and brilliant minds and hearts of those mentioned.

I would like the deeply thank my partner Hannah, who has been a vital source of affirmation and support throughout this entire process. And I would like to thank Steve Reich, whose piece *Music for Eighteen Musicians* accompanied roughly 75% of my writing of this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

> *As the art of asking questions, dialectic proves its value because only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further—i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue.*

–Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth & Method, 360

> *We are able to give ourselves up to the play of dialogue in the CPI [Community of Philosophical Inquiry] because we trust implicitly that there is an immanent formation and unfolding of both thought and relational structure among us. We sense that we are embarked together on a movement toward a coordination of perspectives through which our universe of meaning will be transformed, including the fundamental relationship between the individual and the group, that is, the ontic structure of the community itself.*

–David Kennedy, Philosophical Dialogue With Children, 212-13

I.   <u>Introducing the Question</u>

Conversations transform – they change the way we relate to ourselves, others and our world. From political summits to courtroom legislation, from heated discussions with a loved one to insightful talks with friends, transformative conversations have significant impact on our lives and perhaps even the course of history. Many of these conversations (and perhaps even the most impactful) involve a process of transformation that relies on active inquiry – where we question our relations to ourselves, others and our world, and potentially gain greater insight into these connections. These "conversations of transformative inquiry" have been performed by diverse cultures, groups and persons throughout history who have developed practices in effort to more readily and profoundly bring about the transformation of these conversations. Some examples include: Socratic dialogue, Tibetan Zen debate, talk therapy, Quaker meetings, Christian confessionals, and contemporary practices of dialogical facilitation. Not only have these practices transformed innumerable individuals, they are also partially responsible for creating new cultural movements and disciplines – for example, Socratic dialogue contributed to the

development of the western discipline of philosophy, and talk therapy contributed to the development of modern therapy.

However, despite the often positive potential inherent in such practices, these practices also can be deeply problematic. A conversation practice, while empowering some individuals, can disempower others who are not allowed into the organization or school (for example, women and slaves in ancient Greece) or who are less disposed towards the conversational methods utilized by a given practice (for example, Socrates' interlocutors who were not disciplined enough to engage in dialectics). A conversation practice can overemphasize one set of thematic issues and not touch on other vital subject matters (for example, Socrates' constant mention of craftsmen and doctors much to the annoyance of his interlocutors). Practices can utilize discursive conventions and rules that limit the expressive potential of individuals or the potential for one person to speak over another (for example, Socrates did not allow his interlocutors to engage in stories or long speeches). Finally, while many of these practices are purportedly transformative, and base this transformation on a process of inquiry, they can function as implicit mechanisms for inculcating ideology, for one set of views to be masterfully implanted into another person while they believe the process is truly their own or wholesomely collaborative (for example, Socrates' questionable use of dialectics to indoctrinate his "students" into the doctrine of Platonic forms and the immortality of the soul).

These problems reveal basic unaddressed questions regarding conversation as such: Who gets to speak? Who is expected to listen and for how long? What subject matters are opened or closed to a given conversation, and what conditions motivate one topic over another? What behavioral parameters and rulings determine the syntactic and semantic guidelines that we use? Which contexts motivate what gestures, intonations and embodied positions? And these questions then begin to uncover even more foundational questions regarding conversation: What is dialogue and what constitutes its relation to speech? How much of dialogue is determined by its material apparatus of expression (voice, writing, gesture)? How is time constructed within dialogue? How is the self constructed and deconstructed in a transformative conversation? How does a given conversation frame the boundary between self and other? Who or what causes a conversation to

move in the directions that it moves? How can conversation be both structured and emergent? How are speaking and listening co-constituted?

These foundational questions cannot be adequately addressed by a given conversation practice because any given practice must, in order for it to function, provide determinate answers to these questions before the questions themselves can be adequately posed.[1] Moreover, academic research into these practices, which examine a practice's aims, cultural consequences, social history, or intellectual, historical influences also typically fail to address these questions.[2] The above questions are performative in nature, and to be adequately addressed they require an analysis of the practices themselves – specifically, by looking at the techniques that underlie these practices, some of which are linguistic (demanding clarifications, questions, or reformulations), many of which, however, are paralinguistic or non-linguistic (adjusting body position, room design, length of time between utterances, intonation, and role-play). The central aim of this project is to address the connection between conversation techniques and the way in which these techniques perform transformative inquiry in efforts to better understand the complex dynamics of conversational transformative inquiry and provide innovative formats which expand its pedagogical and methodological proclivities. This will be addressed in the following chapters:

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[1] For example, in Socratic Dialogue, the way in which the facilitator functions determines a particular relationship between the formation of self – the interlocutor comes to know themself through the guided questions of the person leading the dialogue. Likewise, the construction of time in the Socratic dialogues is mediated through brachylogic intentions to break the longform rhetorical speeches within ancient greek culture. When this practice shifts radically in contemporary formats we also see the answers to these questions shifting as well. In Philosophy for Children (P4C) practitioners utilize Socratic Dialogical practices but in a format where the role of the facilitator has shifted to become a more collaborative instigator of conversation and questioning. Whereas in the original Socratic practice the conversation and the self that were transformed were motivated by the expert skilled moves of the facilitator, this contemporary practice shifts the power relations towards less hierarchical mediation.

[2] Take for example Pierre Hadot's brilliant and innovative scholarly work which shows how ancient Greek philosophy was not purely ideological or scriptural, but a living practice. Or Martha Nussbaum's groundbreaking research which shows the therapeutic nature of these practices. Or even Eric Havelock, whose preface to Plato exposes the entire Homeric poetic knowledge system that was in place prior to Plato. These thinkers begin to address the aforementioned questions regarding conversation, however always frame them within literary or historical analysis and not within the particular conversation practices themselves. Even Hadot who explicitly discusses conversation, does not offer a detailed exposition of the methods by which those conversations unfold. And Havelock, who discusses the interruptive quality of Platonic speech, does not give detailed expositions speculating how this quality would be performed in a living dialogue.

1) In Chapter 1 I will look at one particular conversation practice of transformative inquiry (Socratic dialogue) to see how its techniques perform transformative inquiry.

2) In Chapter 2 I will attempt to isolate techniques from practices, as I construct a glossary of techniques of transformative inquiry based on their linguistic, para-linguistic and non-linguistic qualities.

3) In Chapter 3 I will examine how these techniques can be utilized within contemporary artistic contexts, providing a set of aesthetic considerations for how art practices can facilitate conversational transformative inquiry and what changes when they do.

4) Finally, in Chapter 4 I will show how I utilize these techniques in my own art practice of conversational transformative inquiry.

This highlights a progressive performativity of technique. Techniques are first found only within conversation practices (Ch 1), then functionally and structurally removed from these practices (Ch 2), then migratory with the potential to be redeployed into artistic practices (Ch 3), then explicitly, aesthetically designed and experimented with (Ch 4). As techniques move through this progression they gain greater fluidity, performativity and creative capacity. Moreover, underlying this progression we can see another implicit progression of transformative inquiry. Where at first transformative inquiry is achievable through the development of a conversation practice (Ch 1), we then see how it is achievable through technique (Ch 2), then we see techniques cohese not only into practices but into works of art, each of which utilize a sequence of techniques of transformative inquiry for ulterior aims (political, institutional, performative, etc) (Ch 3), and then we can hone in on one of these aims (namely, formal innovations in conversational mechanics) examining my own art practice which creates a reflexive transformative inquiry modified through aesthetic and formal experimentation (Ch 4).

II.   Definitions of Key Terms

Conversation: Spoken generally, conversation does not necessarily have to be linguistic. It might be gestural, embodied, affective, musical; the scope of my research, however, will only consider non-linguistic or para-linguistic phenomena that occur within and alongside the linguistic. I am only investigating practices that use words, and more specifically, dialogical or

polylogical word use, not monological utterances such as those found in the vast majority of literature or visual media (explained below).

In this, I draw on a definition of conversation as an interactive system of utterance generation and response. This definition builds off of Sheizaf Rafaeli's communication theory model of interactivity predicated on differing levels of responsiveness (Rafaeli 118-120). Table 1 below demonstrates how conversation is set apart from monological practices. Each letter represents a different subject[3] capable of listening and generating communicative responses. *Oral monologues* and the *dissemination of literature* do not utilize messages that go back and forth between the same subject, but disseminate uni-directionally across a field of multiple subjects who potentially respond (to a book or speech) through their own writing directed towards another group of subjects (as seen with Person C in literature dissemination). For *letter writing*, there is a back-and-forth responsive communication, however the length of time between utterances reduces its conversational quality; yet letter writing is still, technically, conversational. *Conversations* create a system of communication between two or more subjects who both utter and respond. Furthermore, the utterances must be located in time (i.e. one utterance occurs at t-1, which, in turn, results in the next utterance at t-2), thereby excluding temporally staticized conversations that occur within texts. Moreover, these utterances must not only occur sequentially, but must be generated sequentially; a pre-determined system of responses (for example where three persons are following a script), is not technically a conversation (discussed further in Chapter 3).[4]

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[3] "Subject" might be replaced by the term "entity" or "organism." I do not claim that conversation, with its alternating responses, necessarily must be a human activity. Non human entities could potentially partake in conversation.

[4] It is important to note that this definition of conversation does not necessitate that conversation be oral. Sequentially generated, quick exchanges of responsive utterances can be equally written or verbal. It just so happens that most cultural practices with these characteristics are verbal practices. Some examples of written conversational modalities include texting or live-editing a shared word-processing document.

Table 1. Conversation vs Non-Conversation
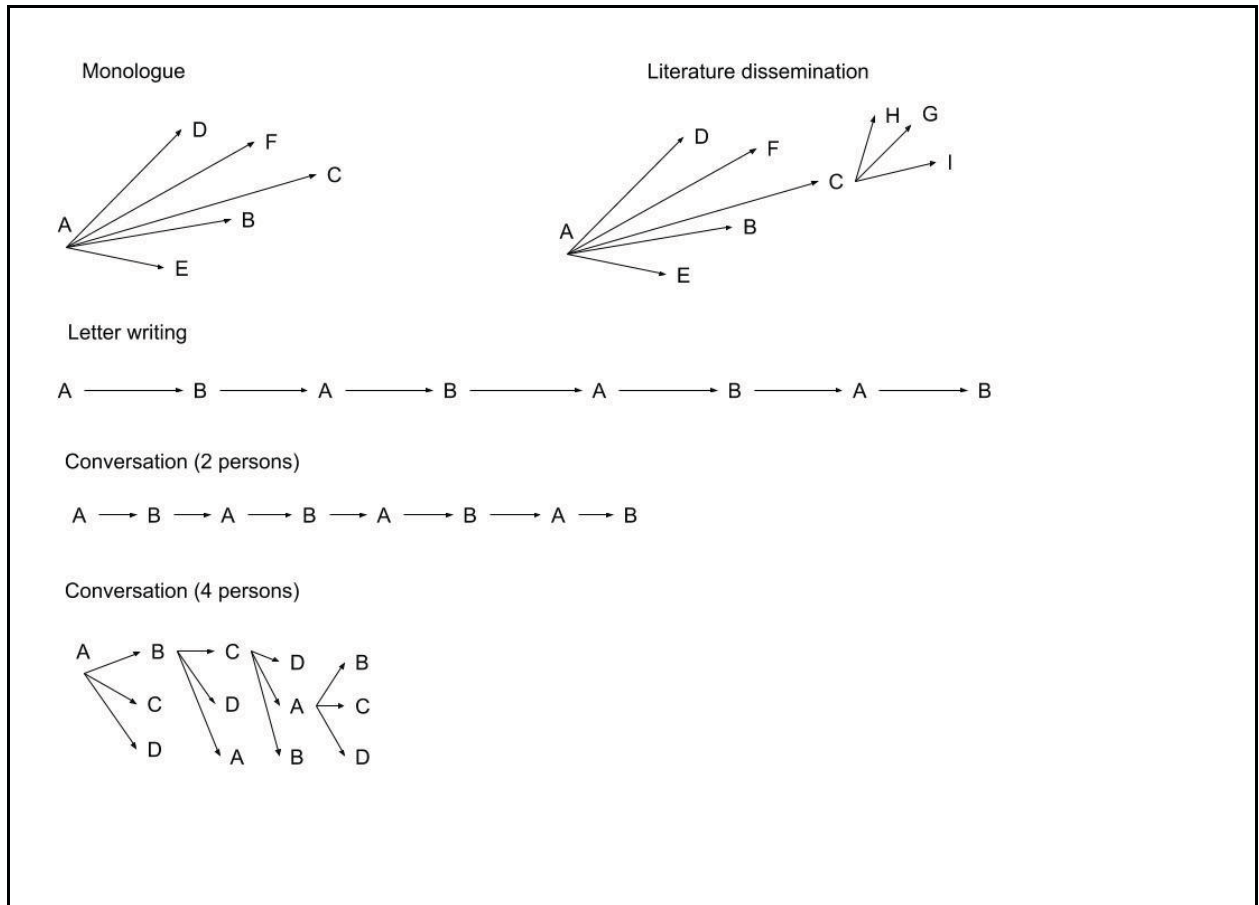
Transformative: A conversation is transformative if any of the following are altered within (or as a result of) the conversation: beliefs, values, attitudes, dispositions, emotions. Following from this definition, many (perhaps even too many) conversations could be considered transformative – a talk with one's mother may change your emotions, a conversation about politics may change your beliefs, etc. However, this over-expansive scope is lessened significantly by considering how the vast majority of transformative conversations may indeed occur outside of conversation practices and outside of the codification of technique, thereby making these transformations less relevant to this study. Moveover, conversations can have differing degrees of transformative impact on the strength of an emotion, or on the consequences of a belief (for example, a change in your belief in how octopi function may well have less impact on your life than a change in

your belief in an afterlife). The majority of transformations considered here will involve multiple areas of transformation.[5]

Inquiry: An inquiry is a partially undetermined, open-ended, experimental investigation of one's self, of an other or of the world. Inquiry is impossible if one enters a conversation with a pre-determined answer.[6] Similarly if one's questions are too expansive, an inquiry will have no focus or starting point. For a conversation to be a conversational inquiry, it must have an open quality and a potential for emergence directed towards a subject matter (or subject) that is at least partially unknown. For a *conversation of inquiry* to be transformative, this inquiry must moreover be tied to the personal (or interpersonal) beliefs, values, attitudes, dispositions or emotions of those having the conversation.

Practice: The term "practice" is used with more specificity than Bourdieu's *habitus*, i.e. habituated actions within a given culture. While transformative inquiry could conceivably occur in a conversation while walking with a loved one, in a heated discussion in a living room, or in a car on a family vacation, these contexts and the transformative actions within them are not intentionally constructed to be transformative. My use of the term "practice" will be limited to habituated actions developed over time within a particular social body which has developed them with inquisitive-transformative intentions in mind.

Technique: Techniques are codified behavior. In the sciences, this can be understood as the "standardization of a performance ability" (Crease and Lutterbie 165), or in the theatrical arts this can be thought of as a set of skills or tools that "allow the performer to access the emotional contents demanded by a role" (161). In either of these cases, techniques are, as Marcel Mauss writes, "effective and traditional" (162). A behavior is codified into a technique after repeated instantiations of a behavior that were found to have some degree of effectiveness towards a given aim. In our case, techniques will be considered as linguistic, para-linguistic, or non-linguistic tools that perform functions of transformative inquiry. Techniques aid transformative inquiry by

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[5] For example, we will see in Chapter 1 (Socratic dialogue) how a change in belief usually is accompanied by an emotional transformation as well (feelings of anger, calmness or numbness).
[6] This problematic potential will be discussed in Chapter 1 regarding Socratic irony which assumes a predetermined knowledge and belief set that one desires to inculcate in one's interlocutor.

aiding expression, adding focus, creating connectivity amongst participants, or by creating openings or closures (explained in further depth in Chapter 2). A conversation of transformative inquiry always comes about by some kind of linguistic tool or behavior; this, however, does not mean that each of these tools also is a technique. The behavior could have been enacted in a manner that precludes codification, e.g. the behavior could be particular to a singular case of transformation and thus not generalizable.

III.   The Epistemology of Transformative Inquiry

What exactly is a transformative inquiry? An attempt at answering this question involves questioning knowledge itself. For transformative inquiry is underpinned by an epistemological premise that goes against common sense – namely, that knowledge relies upon uncertainty. Moreover, this is not merely a mild uncertainty, i.e. uncertainty as a mere starting point that is soon left behind; rather, within practices of transformative inquiry uncertainty is woven into the process of acquiring knowledge and potentially is all we are left with at the end of our search.

We see this epistemology in western philosophy's origins of aporetic dialectics. This is the case both for Socrates, who finds no final answers, and for Plato, whose final answers are only earned through an overwhelmingly challenging process of dialectics that doesn't catch sight of its answers until one has traversed through much uncertainty.[7] We also see this epistemology of uncertainty playing out in contemporary thinkers – in educational theories developed by John Dewey, who constructs an entire pedagogical project of inquiry based on the central role of the question (*Inquiry* 105), and in the contemporary hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer who builds the entire process of textual or dialogic interpretation on a question-based procedure of dialectics (*Truth and Method* 363). What all these thinkers share is a belief that knowledge makes sense only if the knower can connect their knowledge to questions. To understand knowledge and the process of knowing and thereby make sense of the process of transformative inquiry one must understand the basic unit that underlies it – the question.

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[7] While all models of distinguishing Socrates from Plato are debatable, this one draws it support primarily from Alexander Nehamas's article "Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry" which views that Socrates was not a teacher of anything, given his insistence that he did know what virtue was (Nehamas 11). Plato did know virtue and contained a "sweeping moral vision" (13). This will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

> This is the real and fundamental nature of a question: namely to make things
> indeterminate. Questions always bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing.
> (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 367-8)

To question is to make indeterminate; likewise, to make indeterminate is to bring a matter into questioning. Questions create (or perhaps more properly: reveal) a foundational fluidity or porousness between things. A question reveals that the boundaries between a thing are not clear; a question shows us that certain concepts, feelings or perceptions bleeds into another. This is precisely why questions are considered dangerous, problematic and troublesome – because questioning muddies things. If the boundaries between things are uncertain, we lose the ability to clearly say what one thing is – for only if we can distinguish one thing from another are we able to say what it is. However, questions do not create pure indeterminacy, i.e. they do not produce absolute liquidity, a tremendous porousness of all things bleeding into one another. A question always contains syntactic boundaries (it ends with a question mark) and semantic boundaries (it has specific named referents). Radical indeterminacy results rather in situations of sheer terror (Dewey, *Inquiry* 105), utterly unrecognizable chaos, or perhaps mystical transcendence – but not through questioning. For questioning to work there must be partial indeterminacy (105-8); in the midst of a haze there must be some things that are more clear than others; there must be a recognition of quasi-distinctness in the midst of a porous bleeding of boundaries.

But *what* is it that is indeterminate? The indeterminacy that grounds the practice of philosophy is an indeterminacy of *eidos*. We can't quite say what a particular idea is, and Socrates shows us how foolish we are for believing that we know an idea when we clearly do not. When I try to grasp one concept I find that I am holding onto a different concept, and where I thought I was arguing one claim I now find myself arguing another.[8] Philosophy's goal within the Socratic tradition is to achieve a clarity of ideas, or to dispel unclear ideas, or to at least to clearly state

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[8] I can think of no better example of this than from the *Lesser Hippias* where the argument that has been wrought by Socrates leaves him and his interlocutor in a final state of disarray. Socrates states: "however, as I said before, on these matters I waver back and forth and never believe the same thing. And it's not surprising at all that I or any other ordinary person should waver. But if you wise men are going to do it, too—that means something terrible for us, if we can't stop our wavering even after we've put ourselves in your company." (Lesser Hippias 372c)

what is unclear. However, this broad intent towards clarity does not result in an actual movement towards clarity in all historical moments of philosophical practice. Sometimes what is needed is to first traverse through unclarity, or to dispel what is only *believed* to be clear in order to make room for what is more clear (or less unclear), or sometimes, philosophy's goal must be to make things less clear because people have wrongly attributed clarity to a great many things. Philosophy constantly plays with an oscillatory movement between determinacy and indeterminacy, question and answer (i.e. dialectics), in an erotic attraction towards clarity, which sometimes involves undermining or evading it.[9]

It is here where we can begin to see how a process of inquiry connects to transformation. This movement toward conceptual clarity[10] results in transformation. For we *are* our ideas, and to change one's ideas is to change one's self. However, this transformation is not purely self-oriented – it also alters our relation to the world. Ideas are semantic frameworks we use to make sense of our self, of others and the world. To move, rupture, alter them, can be extremely disorienting.[11] Philosophy transforms us and our relations to others by its ability to move us through fields of indeterminacy, to rupture our beliefs, and create hesitant new concepts – each with its own potential for future rupture.

But conceptual transformation is only one kind of transformation via inquiry; the indeterminacy of ideas is only one kind of questionable-ness. Not all questioning, not all dialogue, is a questioning of the *what* of what is said, despite Gadamer's claim that it is such (*Truth and Method* 387) – some dialogue also question the *how* and the *why* of what is said. Our relations to ourselves and each other can be transformed – relations composed of behaviors, attitudes and feelings. Feelings too can be both determinate and indeterminate. Our ability to name a feeling ("I feel sad" or "I feel happy") is only possible when feelings become determinate. However, there are many moments when feelings do not lend themselves to such facile naming, when we

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[9] Perhaps some of the best examples of this evasion of clarity are seen in contemporary philosophers – Nietzsche's aphorisms, at times blatant attacks against truth and reason which often lend themselves to contradiction, Heidegger's dizzying poetics of being, Derrida's deconstructive word play, or Deleuze's rhizomatic texts that belie linearity and systematicity.

[10] Jan Zwicky's *Plato as Artist* discusses this transformation regarding it as "eidetic" clarity.

[11] As seen most vividly when Meno decries that he is numbed from the torpedo fish sting of Socrates (Meno 80a-b).

are uncertain or unaware of what we are feeling.[12] Moreover, the mechanisms that determine how we interact with others – our psychic functions, our implicitly learnt habits and relational behaviors – can remain unclear and unrecognized. Many relational practices work on this indeterminate field of psychic motivations and behaviors through similar processes of oscillating indeterminacy and determinacy. The work of psychoanalysis (for Freud and many others) is designed to help a patient translate unconscious content into conscious content; however this process is rarely linear. Many patients may be provoked into a more radical state of disorientation before they are ready for reparative progress. In a therapy session, the indeterminate affective content which is constantly being produced is also constantly being reinterpreted, with the aim of establishing newly learnt patterns of noticing that can help this process materialize with greater ease.

In all the cases mentioned above, in all movements from determinacy to indeterminacy, an inquiry is occurring – an inquiry with a potential for moving those who are inquiring towards transformation. This inquiry is not only a process of questioning, but is an *art* of questioning, an art which is unlearnable because it necessitates an unlearning (*Truth and Method* 359). To inquire one must first locate a particular indeterminacy and bask in its questionableness; one must unlearn and disorient so that the boundaries between things (ideas, selves, feelings) are never fully concretized. The ability to stay in this "state of wonder", is vital for one's ability to "question even further" (360) and for the process of inquiry to extend and to deepen – a process that Gadamer calls "thinking." Each question places us onto a path towards an answer; each question directs us (356) towards possible determinants that close down the indeterminacy. The inquiry is the exploration and the testing-out of these determinants in a dialectic process of question-answer that prevents its own closure. Many forces can halt inquiry's vital process: inquiry can be closed down when a final answer is given; it can be rendered static and inert by a lack of directedness that drives the inquiry to test possible determinate paths; it can be stupified

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[12] There is much resonance here with Eve Sedgwick's affect theory as seen in her book *Touching Feeling*. Emotion can be viewed as a "vehicle or manifestation of an underlying libidinal drive" (Sedgwick 18), a drive which later Sedgwick comes to call "affect." Emotions for Sedwick are the "objects" of affects (19) where affect is a kind of "social force" or "glue" (18) that manifests emotions. As affects enable "lability, fickleness, and finickiness" (21) it makes them a great candidate for a kind of disorientation of feeling that is characterised by an indeterminate state.

by a disorientation that is too indeterminate. The essential art of inquiry is the art of holding open.

When the inquiry is about our ideas, and when we hold open this process of inquiry for long enough, then our ideas can be transformed. For beliefs will be tested in ways we have not thought possible, and new ideas will be tried on which were previously unimaginable. When this process of inquiry is about our affective states, behaviors and unconscious motivations, then our relational states can be transformed, made possible by the new insights and habits generated by the testing-out of inter/intra-personal interpretations and the conscious recognition of one's affective processes. When this process is performed with a community of others in conversation the community itself will also be transformed – transformed into a cohesive togetherness whose foundation is the shared movement of the question-answer procedure.[13]

IV.   The Problem of Technique

But how exactly does one achieve transformation through a conversation of inquiry? This question, and the underlying pedagogical and performative mechanisms that are bound up in it, is one of the central questions that motivates this project. The question implies a certain underlying assumption – namely, that conversations of transformative inquiry do not simply happen on their own. But could this assumption be false? Perhaps we do not need to *do* anything to *make* a transformative inquiry occur. What is clear, however, is that not everyone is amenable of transformation through inquiry. Consider how many people in ancient Athens were unable to move through the processes of questioning that Socrates followed. Consider how few people are able to analyze themselves to the degree of thorough analysis made possible after ten years in psychoanalysis. Moreover, those open to undergoing conversations of transformative inquiry are not always capable of enacting it at all times. Certain persons may be more predisposed towards inquiry and transformation and certain conditions may produce these states more easily than others.

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[13] Of course, this "sharing" of the process is not always achieved. In all too many conversations of transformative inquiry power differentials occur. One person pushes the inquiry in their desired direction, or the practice itself makes certain behaviors more easily achievable by some and not others. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 1.

Even granted that successful conversations of transformative inquiry might perhaps develop organically, unprovoked, unfacilitated and undesigned, they would be an extremely rare phenomenon. For conversations of transformative inquiry usually are performed successfully only when either an expert facilitates them and/or when proper techniques are enacted. When considering the pedagogy of how to conduct a transformative inquiry there are two schools of thought – those who say that such conversations rely on technique and those who say that such conversations rely upon artistry. Either a person – a healer, a facilitator, a philosopher – helps you transform; or a technique transforms you – psychoanalysis, the Socratic method, a Quaker Meeting.

However, either position seems to implicate the other. No matter how powerful a technique is, a technique does not always successfully perform its intended function. As a seed needs a proper environment for it to grow, so too does a technique need to be performed in the right context for it to succeed – the right time and place, with the right emphasis and nuance – and sometimes even this isn't enough to ensure success. A facilitator using these tools with an understanding of how and when to implement them can help a technique to perform its function. In this regard, both technique and facilitator are co-determinative. For a technique always needs someone or something to facilitate its activation and a facilitator must always implement transformation (at least partially) through the use of techniques.[14]

We are creating a binary between facilitator and technique, however, the facilitator is merely one possible mechanism or force capable of creating a context for a technique to function well. A more appropriate dichotomy is between behavior (sometimes codified into a technique) and the mechanism that implements and frames this behavior. This relationship between technique and its context bears a similar relationship to a linguistic utterance and its corresponding context – a dichotomy discussed extensively by contemporary linguists and theorists. The linguistic function of a sentence (as discussed in Saussure and Derrida) allows for words to be removed from a distinct context and for them to continue to perform a similar function. In other words, the same

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[14] Another very related line of questioning related to this consideration is whether or not the skills of the facilitator – their knowledge of when to use a technique, when to disavow it, how to adapt it – is teachable or unteachable. For more on this see Crease and Lutterbie.

sentence can change contexts and still mean roughly the same thing. As the contexts change there is a central unit that stays the same, which allows for a sentence to be iterative.[15] This property of language can perhaps also apply to techniques as well. Potentially, a technique – whether it be the closure of eyes, the asking of a question, or the placement of a body on a couch – has a central unit that stays the same, that enables it to act on multiple contexts.

But how does this iterative property differ between spoken language and behavioral techniques? Language has a referential function that performs irrespective of the speaker, their position, their articulation, their enunciation, their body positions, or where exactly a sentence is placed within a larger body of text.[16] But as the linguistic function moves away from this referential function and becomes performative, these external conditions cannot be so easily differentiated from the technique itself, as they too have performative power. In other words, it becomes more difficult to delineate where a technique ends and where its context begins.

Let us take an example of a moment in therapy where a therapist stays silent for five seconds, which then causes the client to come to a profound realization. Was it the silence which performed this function? Or was it the silence in that exact moment? Were the embodied gestures on the therapist's face the trigger? Was it a calm breath that occurred alongside the silence? Was the effect aided by the position of the client, on a couch, looking away from the therapist? The relevant behavioral information that aids a technique's performance is somewhat unbounded; context and content bleed into one another. Techniques do not have neatly contained symbolic "impact" as do sentences. Nonetheless, this does not eliminate the existence of a performative capacity of the technique; this just means it is more difficult to discern what these techniques are, and also perhaps implies that any such argument will be somewhat speculative.

In Chapter 2, I will create such a speculative account; however, such a project of identifying how techniques perform does not ever ensure that techniques will successfully perform, but merely defines a technique by its capacity to perform in a specific way. Techniques hold potential

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[15] "A signifier is from the very beginning the possibility of its own repetition, of its own image or resemblance." (Derrida 91)

[16] Deictic referents (for example "I", "you", "here", "there") do go against this model, however, they are linguistic outliers.

transformative functions, and Chapter 2 delineates some of these functions by classifying techniques according to the mechanism through which they alter language (linguistic, para-linguistic, non-linguistic).

The reason why an isolated technique can never guarantee the performance of a transformative function is that a technique always contains an outside – a manifold of contextual, spatial and temporal factors which contribute to their function. Crease and Lutterbie, in their jointly written chapter "Technique" featured in *Staging Philosophy*, even argue that technique developed, in arts and in sciences, as a method of de-contextualization, as a method of bringing specific behavioral engagements with a situation into a repeatable structure that can persist across variations (Crease and Lutterbie 164-166). These factors – location, timing, emphasis, environment, duration – unlike techniques, cannot always be established prior to the conversation of transformative inquiry. They require immanent placement – discernments made *while* and *within* a conversation as to when and where they occur. Because of the emergent nature of conversation, no transcendent rule or system can totally predict when and where a technique might be best utilized. The affective-conceptual content of a conversation comes into existence emergently and cannot be entirely predicted even when we predetermine the subject matter or who will speak.[17] This is why of all the possible mechanisms for discerning where and when techniques are utilized the facilitator is the most used mechanism in conversational practices – a facilitator can discern from within the conversation how to help it achieve transformative potential. However, to reiterate, a facilitator is only one possible mechanism of discernment. Many conversational practices of transformative inquiry place undue emphasis on facilitation. Facilitators can be elevated to the status of masters or gurus whereby the force of the techniques themselves is hidden and all transformative success is deemed to be caused by the power of these masters. Cultural industries capitalize on this mastery and mobilize vast economies around the training of facilitators with expensive training programs and licensure to ensure that these transformative practices are only utilized by those who are experts.

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[17] As Crease and Lutterbie argue, the formation and utilization of techniques themselves always exist in an ebb and flow between what is purely predetermined or willed on the one hand, and a direct engagement with a situation on the other hand. To them it is always a misunderstanding of technique to think that one who utilizes techniques has a goal or idea that comes into being via a technique. Whenever we utilize a technique we are always "involved in an interactive process with something that responds, with something that is giving us something back, with something more complex than we can possibly represent." (Crease and Lutterbie 171)

It is important to diversify and to explore other mechanisms of technique utilization which aren't entirely contingent on the mastery of a facilitator. Some of this is happening in support groups, authentic relating communities[18], and other less hierarchical structures whereby participants themselves learn transformative techniques and utilize them collectively. In these settings there is less weight placed upon a teacher to push the group towards transformation as the entire dialogic community shares this responsibility. This also occurs via some artistic models such as scores, rehearsals and artistic performances. They can regulate a technique's deployment while also allowing a certain openness in their interpretation and implementation. Such open artistic models (rather than scripts which create predetermined conversation) can design conversational possibilities and help create the kind of fluid aesthetic-transformative systems that are usually called *open works*. As I will argue in Chapter 3, such models are invaluable to the practice of transformative inquiry. They move the performance of transformative inquiry from a model of practice to one of a work, which involves the design of specific combinations of techniques into a repeatable form. Each work, rather than each practice, creates a unique model of transformative inquiry. Artworks of transformative inquiry highlight the balance between technique and context, as each work uniquely (comprovisationaly) co-designs these two elements. Therefore, as conversations of transformative inquiry become artwork they create a new level of reflexivity, as these conversations examine, criticize and design the implicit structures that condition them.

Each conversation piece creates conditions that affect our relationality, which in turn affect the conversation as it is occuring. Sometimes the piece structures techniques (and in turn the conversation itself) around a subject matter or concept – as seen in Tino Seghal's *This Progress*. Other times these works can structure techniques around a political or institutional critique – as in Andrea Fraser's *Projection* and Liz Magic Laser's *Primal Speech*. In my own practice (as well as in many of the aforementioned examples) the pieces create reflexive and reflective containers, not only regarding the content, but about the way in which we are together exploring the content. These works add another level of reflection to an already reflective practice of inquiry. One

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[18] The Authentic Relating Movement is a grassroots movement that, "began in San Francisco in the late 1990s and now has a presence in 50 communities in 14 different countries throughout the world" (Prewitt). Prewitt explains that Authentic Relating "uses exercises, or games, to teach and facilitate the skills, like curiosity and empathy, necessary to quickly create deep, meaningful human connection" (Ibid).

begins to explore the way one explores, which, because the inquiry involved is conversational, is always an exploration of the way we speak and listen and the way we are together (or alone) in this process. What is transformed is the mode of inquiry itself. Additionally, the container in which we find ourselves results in two simultaneous and co-constitutive transformations. In my own art practice, as seen in Chapter 4, it is these reflexive questions regarding the conditions that underlie inquiry itself which are brought into focus: What are we here together? What is it to be like this in this way? What is the boundary between me and you? What are the interpersonal thresholds of our beliefs, desires and intentions? What kind of thinking does our unique relationality encourage or prevent? How can we play with language as it plays with us? What degree of agency can we have over the implicit rules and systems that determine how we inquire, transform and converse?

V.   Methodology

While the methodologies of these first 3 chapters are diverse, they still follow traditional models of interdisciplinarity that can commonly be found in the humanities. Chapter 1 utilizes literary analysis; Chapter 2 uses more of an anthropological, social-scientific methodology; Chapter 3 takes an art historical approach alongside aesthetic considerations. However, Chapter 4, where I unfold my own practice of conversation pieces, significantly deviates from standard academic methodology.

Although parts of my methodology of Chapter 4 resemble certain research-creation methodologies, I am reticent to classify my work as research-creation. This is partially due to shared criticisms outlined by Manning and Massumi in *Thought In The Act*,[19] but also due to the fact that I disagree with certain methodological assumptions of Research-Creation (for instance, those that presume that research or theoretical practices are distinct from artistic practices; or those which assume that "research" implies scientific or socio-scientific research methodologies

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[19] They argue that 1) "the new category (of research creation) could do little more than become an institutional operator: a mechanism for existing practices to interface with the neoliberalization of art and academics" 2) this institutionality backgrounds essential and critical questions regarding the interpenetration of art and research 3) research creation pushes artist-researchers towards quantitative productivity measures 4) it "does little to create new potential for a thinking-with and -across techniques of creative practices." (Massumi and Manning 88)

and fail to acknowledge other intellectual lineages of "research": philosophical, phenomenological, hermeneutic, etc). I agree with Manning and Massumi's push-back against research-creation, especially when they say that it does not ask "how research has always been a modality of practice with its own creative edge, and how creative practice stages thought in innovative ways" (ibid)[20]. I respond to the former in Chapter 1 as I outline Socratic Dialogue as a thinking practice which is creative in its discovery and implementation of technique, and I also address this critique in Chapter 2 as I discuss the performative components that underlie practices of inquiry. The later criticism is responded to in Chapter 3, which outlines how contemporary creative practices can (and have) staged conversations of transformative inquiry. Chapter 4 outlines the development of my own practice which is itself a unique attempt to bridge particular lineages of "research" and "creation."

Although I do distance my work from certain concepts in Research-Creation, my work discussed in Chapter 4 does reflect a particular Research-Creation methodology elucidated by Sandeep Bhagwati called "The AGNI Methodology."[21] This methodology is comprised of 4 steps: Analysis, Grammar, Notation, Implementation. *Analysis* involves "observ(ing) practitioners of an existing or emerging art practice" (Bhagwati, "AGNI" 1), which in my case involved observing practitioners of conversation practices of transformative inquiry which include: Tino Sehgal (Chapter 3), Socrates (Chapter 1), and a wide array of contemporary practice of transformative inquiry which include Circling, Psychodrama, Philosophy for Children, psychotherapy, etc (the techniques of which are discussed in Chapter 3). Within the discussion of these practices (and practitioners) I have implemented the *Grammar* step by utilizing the insights from the aforementioned analysis to "determine underlying (unspoken) rules governing the practice" (ibid). These unspoken rules are what I designate "techniques" and the process of determining these techniques from these practices is reflected in Chapters 1-2. The next step, *Notation*, is a process of formalizing a system of notation adequate to my art form. It is here that I deviate from this methodology slightly. Bhagwati notes that, "notations enable us to de-construct and re-combine an art practice and structurally create new relationships between

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[20] Another book which takes up this line of critique is Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method*.

[21] It should be noted that this research-creation methodology was not used or implemented prior to the development of the works discussed in Chapter 4. I encountered the AGNI methodology only in Fall 2018, and the creative practice mentioned in Chapter 4 spans 2008 - 2019.

different modes of artistic expression." (ibid 2) This is precisely what I investigate in Chapter 3 with regard to how arts practices can re-combine techniques taken from conversation practices of transformative inquiry; however, notation is merely one means by which I investigate this question, one parameter that I consider within a wider array of other aesthetic parameters. The final step, *Implementation*, or, "implementing works based on these notations," (ibid) is reflected in Chapter 4 where I explain my own process of developing conversation pieces of transformative inquiry which have been inspired by: 1) practitioners (Analysis) 2) techniques (Grammar) 3) aesthetic and philosophical considerations involved in re-combining techniques into varied artistic formats (Notation). Bhagwati mentions that work done within the Implementation phase, "will then constitute the "raw" material (the new case study) for a new iterative cycle of Analysis, Notation, Grammar and Implementation" (ibid). This cycle is what guides each phase of development of my pieces as the raw material of a given work provides a new case study for considering how and what to re-combine into a new artistic form.

While all of this sets the background for the work I discuss in Chapter 4, it still does not reflect many aspects of my own personal methodology of working with conversation pieces and the way I grow and develop this line of work. The "research" that I conduct within my practice has mostly to do with technique. The work involved in creating one of my conversation pieces involves all four stages of AGNI. Each piece reflects upon practitioners' styles and methodologies of a given practice, the techniques of that practice, methods of aestheticizing these techniques, and an active process of implementing a combination of these three elements. After each piece is completed I reflect back on its successes and failures holding it up to the following metrics: how does this work compare to the transformative work of master practitioners? How successful were the techniques in performing transformative inquiry? How did the aesthetic structures push the techniques to do something more or different? How was the group cohering or fragmenting? What are the unique skills of each performer and how are these amplified or diminished? In a sense, each work creates a unique ecology of performers, director, techniques, artistic format, sequence, duration and environment all of which work together to create a conversation of transformative inquiry. Working in this way does not primarily involve cognitive discernments regarding how a piece is functioning; rather, it involves an experiential evaluation that "feels into" this ecology through a constant oscillation between immanence – as I

too try out a technique or am wrapped up in the conversation or the affective responses of the participants – and transcendence – as I step outside of the piece, draw considerations and reflections, and compare this piece to other "organic" conversations located within the center of philosophical or therapeutic discursive practices.

VI.   <u>Relevance</u>

If transformative conversations have been shaping ourselves and our cultures for millennia, then this research – an analysis into the function, performance and design of conversations of transformative inquiry – is amply justified by the ubiquity and importance of the cultural phenomena it is studying. However, what *does* require further justification is the particular form and methodology of my analysis. Why not conduct an anthropological or linguistic investigation? Why this particular transdisciplinary and speculative research which spans dozens of practices, isolates performative units of "technique", and then argues for an aesthetic recombination of techniques to reshape the very phenomena of transformative inquiry? Who stands to benefit from such a study?

Firstly, I believe that practitioners of transformative conversation practices (facilitators, therapists, healers, etc) could profit from this research. The second chapter offers a wide proliferation of techniques by detailing their transformative functions. This list could potentially aid a practitioner of a given practice by providing them with alternate techniques (including the justification for their use) which they could use to supplement their own practice. The third chapter offers artistic examples and methodologies of expansion which could additionally inspire practitioners to implement aesthetic models of transformative inquiry and design. However, I also anticipate a moderate amount of skepticism from cautious therapeutic practitioners about the efficacy of these claims who might observe the absence of conventionally rigorous experimentation and/or the dearth of relevant scientific citations.[22]

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[22] This skepticism is challenged by the mere fact that so many of the relational and therapeutic practices cited in this chapter (Psychoanalysis, Gestalt therapy, Quaker meetings, Circling, Non-Violent Communication, etc) do not contain a thorough body of scientific experimental justification (unlike a practice such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which does contain such justification). In other words, many of these practitioners already come from practices which do not offer the rigorous scientific justifications that they would be demanding of this study.

However, art historical and philosophical research this speculative might also be attractive to those invested in skirting disciplinary conventions, or those invested in questioning the underlying assumptions of these disciplinary conventions. This certainly includes academics, theorists and philosophers who engage with the reflexivity at the heart of philosophical thinking and are not troubled by the performative discursivity that this questioning implicates. This research provides pedagogical-performative insights and techniques which help to expand the methods of critical thinking and widen the scope of the reflexive analysis already present within critical thinking, philosophy and the academy.

Discursive structures such as Socratic dialogue, Christian confessionals, and talk therapy represent formal changes in the structure of conversation which have radically shifted cultural discourse. The academy, whose origins lie with Plato, is shaped by transformative inquiry in spite of its growing neo-liberalization. Especially in the humanities, social sciences and the arts, we are witnessing the academy slowly changing from the model of a safe, secluded ivory tower where one goes to practice transformative inquiry that hopefully seeps outward to influence society (somewhat similar to Plato's academy) into a model of more direct socio-political engagement and transformation. With this in mind, I believe this transdisciplinary analysis into techniques of transformative inquiry will help offer a new layer of academic reflexivity – one that questions the implicit discursive models in place, offers alternatives, and offers new methods of experimentation to produce future alternative transformative discourses. A fundamental assumption underlying this project is that political change, social justice and radical social transformation are facilitated by practices that alter the way dialogue comes to be, which in-turn allow for the content of conversation to shift as well.

I also believe this research will be of great interest to artists, especially those with performative proclivities, as the integration of transformative conversational techniques has the potential to engender new and innovative artistic models. In particular, I have found that my work has at times succeeded in translating (or transferring) various dialogical practices or methodologies into performative situations (practices that have previously resisted this kind of translation). Among such practices are: authentic dialogue, performative intellectual discussion, dialogue that

implicates the real identity of the performer (rather than their role), and immersive dialogical practices (without an audience). My work is informed by similar practices in the performing arts: Tino Sehgal's constructed situations, The Odyssey Works, Forced Entertainment, Wooster Group, Odyssey Works, Elevator Repair Service and Michael Portnoy's games. The contemporary arts scene is experiencing not only a therapeutic turn[23], but a participatory turn[24] as well. As Claire Bishop argues in her exposition of Rancière's aesthetics, contemporary art finds unique ways of mediating two historical models of art – art as life, interwoven with ethical and political potential, and art as an external sphere outside of life, as a collection of formal investigations into materiality and sensibility (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3). This dissertation, especially the latter half, articulates a new hybrid practice which meditates these two artistic models through highly structured yet unscripted dialogical encounters that facilitate transformative inquiry. The conversation pieces of my practice have the potential (both while they are conducted and through reflection afterwards) to afford new models of relationality; this is facilitated via formal investigations into conversational turn-orders and the sequencing and aesthetic realization of conversational techniques.

Finally, I believe my project can significantly impact research into pedagogical innovation. I do not explicitly use the term "pedagogy" throughout this study, mostly because I believe this term erroneously brings a reader to conclude that the claims made pertain only to schools, colleges or universities. Rather, I follow some of the claims made by Jacques Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* or Elizabeth Ellsworth in *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* which argue that the pedagogical encounter is the framework underlying all communicative situations. In other words, we are constantly learning and re-learning how to have a transformative conversation, and each conversation we undergo (whether scored or unscored, whether facilitated or "organic") will involve both active and passive pedagogical techniques. So then, which pedagogical institution would find my research relevant and beneficial? Given primary, secondary, and post-secondary education's concern for critical thinking and for creating actively engaged students, I believe that my work has vast potential for the traditional classroom but even more so for alternative schools and curriculums. Additionally, I can see my pedagogies

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[23] See Maria Walsh's "Art: A Suitable Case for Treatment?"
[24] See Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells.*

finding a home within institutions truly invested in resisting neoliberal ethics and embracing liberal arts educational philosophies,[25] and who are not afraid to follow this ethic where it "rationally" leads – who push critical reflexivity to the point of looking at the performativity that frames liberal arts education itself.

That said, this dissertation will not thoroughly engage in this pedagogical discussion, as my focus is around a theoretical and performative consideration of conversation as practice and artwork; however, these pedagogical considerations do need to be briefly addressed here given that the readers or participants who have engaged in my work are typically driven to ask the question of its relevance to pedagogy. I anticipate that this research will correspond with various contemporary scholars of pedagogy who share my underlying opinions. This includes practitioners and theorists of Philosophy for Children – David Kennedy, Megan J. Laverty, Natalie Flescher to name a few – as I draw much from these practices and offer performative possibilities of expanding these techniques. Also I believe this work is relevant to those working in the fields of Dialogic Pedagogy, such as David Skidmore and Kyoko Murakami, as my work picks out particular dialogic techniques many of which would function well in a classroom setting. I also draw on the work of Stephanie Springgay, particularly her mobilization of pedagogy against knowledge as representation – "pedagogy is transformed from learning about to the mobility of thinking-doing" (Springgay 70) – which resonates with my argument that transformation involves a heightened consideration of a context that includes the environments and the techniques contained within it, rather than a narrow consideration of human elements (the mastery of the practitioners). Furthermore, I find significant resonance between my research and New Materialist pedagogies embraced by thinkers such as Nathan Snaza, as my research thinks through the spatio-temporal materialities contained within the context of the act of thinking and argues that these are critical for understanding what "thinking" truly is.

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[25] While there are many scholarly sources that define and defend the classic liberal arts education model, one salient example is Martha Nussbaum's *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Nussbaum asserts that liberal arts education involves, "a cultivation of the whole human being for the functions of citizenship and life generally" (*Cultivating* 9). The emphasis on life as something potentially separate from one's involvement in the nation-state emphasizes the capacity for liberal arts education to go beyond neo-liberal and capitalist-industrial demands as this style of education teaches one "how to be a human being capable of love and imagination" (14). As Nussbaum, towards the end of her book, explores contemporary liberal arts projects in a wide variety of American universities she reminds us that these projects are highly uncertain as they are, "undermined by a growing interest in vocational, rather than liberal, education." (297)

CHAPTER 1. SOCRATIC DIALOGUE –
PHILOSOPHY AS TRANSFORMATIVE INQUIRY

I.   <u>Introduction</u>

One of the most salient examples of a conversational practice of transformative inquiry is philosophical dialogue, whose western origins are located in Socratic dialogue. This chapter will study this practice by picking it apart technique by technique in an effort to show how these techniques contribute to this practice's transformative capacities, to see how the techniques are activated by inquiry and reflexive investigation, and to see how the techniques interact with the desires, intentions and conversational dynamics that are in play.

But why Socrates? Conversational practices in western philosophy are not easy to find. Given the vast array of philosophical writing on dialogue (including: Plato, Buber, Habermas, Gadamer, Bhaktin and others) and given the vast time span of western philosophy, one would think that these dialogical practices would be rather common: that there would be too many sources to even know where to begin. This is not the case. Philosophers in the past several hundred years which have used dialogue (including: Hume, Berkeley, Galileo, Sartre, Heidegger) have written their dialogues for literary dissemination, not to inform or inspire live dialogic practice. To find such dialogical practices, one must look either towards contemporary philosophical practices that have experimented with pedagogical methodologies – SenseLab, The Performance Philosophy Network, soundcheck philosophie, Philosophy for Children, Community of Philosophical Inquiry, etc – or towards the schools of ancient philosophy – Skeptics, Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics. Why these philosophical dialogical proliferations occur only either in western philosophy's origins or in our contemporary era is a question beyond of the scope of this investigation.[26]

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[26] A plausible, but speculative attempt at explanation might have to do with the academicization of philosophy as a monastic practice which was predominantly written, literary and embedded in the dissemination of practices of reading and writing. We then find dialogical practices proliferating in contemporary culture due to the semi-collapse of print culture in late modernity in favor of audio-visual sources of mediation.

I have chosen to focus on Socrates rather than consider contemporary philosophical dialogical practices, for a few reasons. Firstly, I want to gesture towards a radical supposition – that the very roots of the entire tradition of western philosophy have latent dialogic potential, and to suggest that the transformative capacity within philosophy's origins lies not in a system of ideas, but in a dialogical practice and its dissemination. Secondly, the connections between transformation and inquiry are more strongly seen in this ancient period of philosophy, where *all* philosophy was performed for transformative intentions (as argued by Martha Nussbaum). It is perhaps an unfortunate fact that one must locate western philosophy's dialogical origins within textual traditions, mostly because one runs the continued risk of not finding practices, but of uncovering pedagogical positions, concepts and ideologies that spring from these practices. Lived practices are lost to history and what remains are ideas, rather than instructive traces for how to recover the practice itself. The dialogue I hope to find is not an intra-textual dialogue, nor any communication between literary characters. I am treating the Platonic corpus as a wayfinder for actual existing practices; practices that involve the live communication between two or more persons.

This presents a very serious methodological hurdle because the question of the real historical practice of Socratic dialogue has been embroiled in indeterminacy. Faced with this uncertainty, two methodological approaches to the dialogues suggest themselves, neither of which I fully subscribe to: 1) engage in a laborious, scholarly, historical investigation in order to determine the form of dialogue that Socrates actually used 2) extract from the dialogues solely their philosophical import (i.e. Socratic ideas or concepts). Instead, I would like to embark on a third option: to construct the dialogic potential from what we *can* see, and not necessarily what may have been the case. I aim to create a speculative account, a hypothetical picture of an oral practice derived from certain texts within the Platonic corpus to show what a living dialogical practice *may* have looked like. In light of this, my method of textual analysis has two facets: 1) gleaning, or using key points in the text to argue for a transformative dialogical practice, which is necessary because certain parts of Platonic corpus point more in the direction of the non-dialogical or perhaps even the non-transformative 2) attempting to integrate these aberrations and arguing for their pedagogical necessity. These historical discussions, while important to a

historical study, appear to be less relevant to my more structural inquiry which need not concern itself with whether these techniques were actually used. My methodology succeeds with its speculative intent if it can show how these techniques might have been deployed, and by extracting the transformative effects arising from their potential use.

II.   Dialogue – Platonic or Socratic

Socrates professed to write nothing; yet the vast majority of what we know about Socrates has been preserved in the written accounts of his pupils, most notably Plato. Plato wrote extensively: but the vast majority of Plato's writing takes the form of dialogues which feature Socrates as a character – but the direct voice of Plato is absent from them. This begins to set the stage for the vast difficulties that confront scholars as how to resolve the boundary between Socrates and Plato.[27] Moreover this ambiguity does not only afflict the biographical and ideological claims about these two figures, but it equally pertains to the dialogical practices that can be attributed to them (*Way of Life* 91). However, it is not my intention here to embark upon a path of resolution, but rather to try to (re)construct a dialogical practice that could be called Socratic-Platonic. Where distinctions can be made and where they matter, I will outline these. For brevity's sake, however, I will continue to describe the dialogical practice I analyse as Socratic dialogue and focus on its instantiations as they are portrayed by the Platonic corpus.

Much of the western philosophical community has approached the Platonic corpus by attempting to derive a set of nuanced philosophical beliefs which constitute Platonic or Socratic thought. Philosophers use Plato to illuminate, understand or expand upon epistemological, moral, political, aesthetic and metaphysical questions. Or philosophers attempt to understand the philosophical methodology that is embedded within the Platonic corpus, a methodology mainly considered to be conceptual and not regarded with a view to its performative or conversational functions. The groundbreaking work of Pierre Hadot and Martha Nussbaum[28] is distinguished from this long tradition of understanding ancient philosophy as a textual and literary practice and placing primary emphasis on the nuanced beliefs of each school. What Hadot, Nausbaum, and

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[27] Ann Michelini describes this as an "unending search for Plato's voice" (Michelini 59) and Hadot points out that "the borderline between "Socratic" and "Platonic" dialogue is impossible to delimit." (*Way of Life* 91)
[28] See Nussbaum *Therapy of Desire*, Hadot *Philosophy as a Way of Life*

others have shown is that these texts do not function as mere receptacles of textual knowledge transfer; rather, they show that ancient philosophy's texts are vehicles for lived practices – whether of care, spirituality or therapy, or more broadly "transformation." Specifically, concerning the Platonic Dialogues, Pierre Hadot claims that they are not transcriptions of events which actually occurred, but rather were meant as "model exercises," pedagogical tools for learning how to practice philosophy (*Way of Life* 91). It is as an extension of this pedagogical framework that I want to place my speculative project. This framework of philosophical practice as model exercise will be expanded upon throughout this study and is especially important with regards to my creative practice (discussed in Chapter 4).

My research will focus on dialogues within the Platonic corpus which: 1) exhibit explicit dialogical rules – moments where Socrates asks his interlocutors to speak differently 2) speak about the practice of Socratic dialogue either regarding its transformative functions or its pedagogy 3) portray dialogue in various forms. The texts which are best disposed towards all these points are texts where Socrates is in discussion with sophists and trying to convince them to take part in a different mode of speech – namely elenctics. These texts are: *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Lesser* and *Greater Hippias*, and *Euthydemus*. These five dialogues are deeply argumentative in that Socrates is going against interlocutors who are in antagonistic positions towards him and this antagonism plays out in shifting dialogical rules and procedures. *Theaetetus* and *Meno* are more "friendly" dialogues whereby Socrates undergoes a joint investigation in attempting to bring out right opinion. The *Sophist*, *Statesmen* and *Parmenides* are examples of Socratic method being implemented where Socrates is not the main interlocutor and so are useful to consider how this practice may have functioned outside of Socrates' specific role or persona. Regarding The *Republic*, I will primarily focus on Book I, as it is filled with ripe moment of dialogical dissent. *Symposium*, *Crito*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are texts with dialogical components but where Socrates also uses long speeches and myth to make his points. I will consider the dialogic value of long speeches within these texts, likewise in the *Timaeus* and *Apology*, which contains no (or hardly any) elenctic components.

III.   Transformations

Ancient Philosophy was primarily and fundamentally a therapeutic practice. Martha Nussbaum rigorously defends this claim in *Therapy of Desire* where she defines philosophy as that which heals "diseases produced by false belief," whose arguments are evaluated by "their power to heal" (*Desire* 14). All philosophical practice and techniques, all rigor and rational argumentative power, have their aims in the "achievement of flourishing human lives" (15). This practical component of philosophical techniques, this aim of flourishing, is the foundational setting through which we can begin to situate the practice of Socratic Dialogue.

For Socrates, the dialogic arts are frequently equated to the medical profession. While an ideal philosophical curative would be to produce true belief, it is not clear if a Socratic method can provide this transformative potential; but it is clear that it aims for, and sometimes succeeds at, eradicating false belief. Similarly, if a doctor cannot strengthen and beautify a body then at the very least a doctor can remove disease from the body;[29] so likewise philosophy can cure the soul of false belief even if it does not provide positive truth. Socrates the midwife might never deliver truth-babies, he may even deliver only wind eggs – yet in the process of rejecting one wind egg belief-stillbirth after another, this refutation triggers a transformative soul healing process (Sophist 230b, Theaetetus 189e). With refutation as the greatest good, Socrates professes that he is happy to be both the refuter or the refuted (Gorgias 458a) – but as he is more skilled and experienced in this practice than are his interlocutors he typically is the one who enacts the refutation.

The transformative process of refutation makes an interlocutor "more modest" in that now they know what they don't know" (Theaetetus 210b) and makes them "calmer towards others and lose their inflated egos and rigid beliefs" (Sophist 230b). This calmness, exhibited by Theaetetus in the end of his dialogue with Socrates, is however only one mental state that comes out of this transformation into not knowing. The eleatic stranger in the *Sophist* mentions another – anger towards oneself (ibid) – which can be seen alongside countless interlocutory refutations: Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, Gorgias and Polus bowing out of the argument in *Gorgias*, and Protagoras struggling in anger with the argument (333e). This transformation also elicits states of

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[29] And perhaps it is not even the role of a doctor to strengthen to body, but rather this is the responsibility of the physical trainer (Gorgias 452b)

numbness, as seen in Meno, causing him to equate Socrates with the torpedo fish (80c), and strangeness and discontentedness in Hippias causing him to want to leave the dialectical situation and go off by himself to find a solution (294a).

Yet, in spite of these affective states which are evident of a refutative transformative process, only occasionally are Socrates' interlocutors persuaded to believe the claims that are elicited by the dialectical procedure.[30] Dialogues which end with some degree of persuasion typically conclude with Socrates propounding a myth or a long anecdote and breaking from the dialogical procedures of refutation (to be discussed further). For the most part, this method of transformation is entirely based on refutation and is aimed at the elimination of falseness, without any sense that knowledge is attainable.[31]

Hadot expounds upon this tactic of un-knowing by connecting it to the Delphic oracular proclamation to "Know Thyself" (*Way of Life* 90). To refuse knowing is to position one in relation to philosophy as "philosophos", one who is forever "on the way towards wisdom" (90) whereby wisdom is never actually achieved. To know oneself in this regard is to enter a humbling state akin to the Socratic proclamation of "knowing nothing", whereby knowledge is never claimed definitively, but only provisionally, likening it to an erotic search never ultimately satisfied. The epistemological claim of not-knowing is aimed at positioning itself against dogma. Wisdom cannot be prescribed nor given.[32] One is transformed by coming to know oneself as one who doesn't know.

However, it would be foolish to think that all of Socrates' transformative aims focus on pure un-knowing, as many of the dialogues leave certain pathways of thought refuted and others

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[30] At the end of the *Gorgias*, Callicles is still not convinced. *Protagoras* ends without a clear indication of persuasion. Thrasymachus in the *Republic* says nothing for the entirety of the dialogue after he begrudgingly falls silent after lashing out in anger and physical violence. In the *Apology*, Miletus is not convinced and Socrates is sentenced to death. Euthyphro needs to leave at the end before the dialogue can continue. *Cratylus* ends ambiguous whereby he will further instruct Socrates upon his return. *Meno* ends with Meno believing that virtue is teachable, yet the question of what virtue is, is not answered, thereby leaving the validity of this belief in question as well. *Theaetetus* ends without any claims argued successfully.

[31] See Nehemas for an in depth consideration of this as he posits that it was Plato who introduced the necessity of infallible truth claims into the practice of dialectics.

[32] Most radically, we cannot even create a conceptually determinate Platonic system, which would define Platonism as a set of coherently articulable ideas.

pathways unquestioned. Given that Socrates is a master wrestler of ideas (a master dialectician) he is able to refute x, but leave open and unrefuted the possibility of y, thereby leaving interlocutors with a knowledge that x isn't true, but with the possibility that y might be true. These possible truths are the famous conceptual components of Platonic discourse: the immutable tripartite soul, the transitory nature of pleasures, the soul's guidance via reason and logos, the abnegation of death, the theory of the forms, etc. Socrates is hopeful that his interlocutors will be transformed to believe *these* beliefs. However, it is important to make a distinction between Socrates' "partial" belief system and his dialogic method; the method does not necessarily lead one to these beliefs, even though this could be argued to be Socrates' intention. Leading towards these beliefs is not an inherent methodological feature of the dialogical practice, but merely one possible manifestation of its performance, and it problematically points towards a potential misuse of the entire procedure: if one is skilled enough one can negate what one likes and leave un-negated what one doesn't like. Nevertheless, the dialogic method itself *does* bear at least one resemblance to these aforementioned Socratic "beliefs" in that it demonstrates to the interlocutors the power of logos and rationality. By learning to love the procedure of dialectics, and the powers of reason to move an argument forward, one comes to favor and strengthen these qualities in oneself.

Moreover, the intentions behind this dialogical practices were not merely the transformation of a singular individual, but had larger political intentions to influence civic and communal transformative processes. Both Socrates' and Plato's philosophical practices were interwoven into the civic fabric of Athens. Socrates, who claims to be the only true politician (Gorgias 521d), hopes to cure the souls of a few Athenians willing to discuss with him and thereby make Athens better through a process of expanding circles of influence. For Plato "training in dialectics was absolutely necessary, insofar as Plato's disciples were destined to play a role in their city" (*Ancient Philosophy* 62). This was the case because "in a civilization where political discourse was central, young people had to be trained to have a perfect mastery of speech and reasoning" (ibid). For both Socrates and Plato, to do philosophy meant to aid the functioning of one's community and the strength of one's city. The way in which either Socrates or Plato identifies and attempts to achieve these political aims has considerable ramifications on the practice of dialogue itself (as we will see later).

IV.   Elenctics

These aforementioned transformative properties both condition and are conditioned by Socratic dialogical methods and techniques. A dialogical practice is not merely defined by its intentions and aims; nor can it be defined by an understanding of the theoretical dispositions which occur alongside this practice. Each practice is composed of rules, bodily arrangements, grammatical forms and performative utterances which define the practice, set its boundaries and which are the agents of transformation when followed (and perhaps also when resisted). The precise rules of practice, the rules of the game so to speak, will differ from conversation to conversation but indeed what comes to define the practice itself is a coherent structure of rules.[33]

I will provide the basic procedures of Socratic dialogue and then to go into greater detail into the specific components, the pedagogical implications, and offer more nuanced arguments for each technique. The aforementioned transformative aims are achieved via a unique practice of conversational inquiry called elenctics. Each inquiry requires a starting position – a claim which is potentially false. The inquiry then revolves around questioning the validity of this starting claim. The claim is evaluated via an interlocutory back-and-forth that proceeds as various connected claims and assumptions are tested. One interlocutor interrogates the claim by presenting a series of logically connected underlying assumptions, which if accepted, potentially destabilize the validity of the initial claim. The other interlocutor proceeds by either admitting or refuting each of these subsidiary claims which then potentially results in the initial claim withstanding refutation or being refuted.

The basic procedures of Socratic elenctics have been extensively discussed by many notable scholars, however, none to my knowledge have classified these procedures as a game (as I will

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[33] The degree to which these "rules" are definitive and determinate and the question of who actually determines these rules is open to debate. Given the flexible and fluid nature of practices across various social bodies it is unlikely that any dogmatic prescription of a practice will actually be the determining factor for what defines the practice itself. Nonetheless a practice must have some sort of glue that binds together these semi-fluid social behaviors. I am tempted to veer in the direction of Bourdieu and identify practice with habitus – "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 72). The practices I am identifying create predispositions, or propensities towards certain types of action along with propensities towards particular kinds of transformations.

now proceed to do). These rules are: 1) one must vocalize one's thoughts and generate thoughts in the moment, otherwise their validity cannot be ascertained and an interlocutor is unable to ask questions regarding whether they are understood or not 2) the interrogator should proceed by asking questions which are clear and focused and which predominantly ask for clarifications, definitions and connect these to underlying assumptions 3) one must give short answers, and refrain from long speeches which prevent interlocutory admissions and rejections 4) the argument can only proceed based on what an interlocutor admits; if admission to any premise is not granted then the argument must turn in such a direction to account for this otherwise the refutation of the initial claim will not be based on one's personal acceptance 5) one's claims must entail beliefs that one *really* believes, or else one is not able to be transformed via the process 6) the investigation must involve some degree of collaborative efforts or else one will grow into anger and reject the process of philosophy. This practice can be codified by the following grouping of these rules: material requirements (1), durational requirements (2), grammatical and semantic requirements (3), procedural structures of turn order (4), relationship to identity or personal commitment (5), and overall intentions (6). Once these procedures are expounded we will turn towards other dialogical techniques that reinforce the mainstay of this practice but which are inconstant and flexible and which include paralinguistic factors such as – setting or place, number of interlocutors, role-play and features of one's identity.

V.   Vocality, Brachylogia

Socratic dialogue is a live, oral, dialogical practice (*Ancient Philosophy* 71). In the *Sophist* it is admitted that thought and speech are of the same source; thoughts originates in the soul, and speech is the streaming forth out of the mouth of these thoughts (Sophist 263e). Socratic dialogue *can* occur within oneself and by oneself, and Socrates clearly practices this (as when Socrates stopped in the middle of the road lost in thought), however, how can we trust that others have the capacity to undergo this internal dialogue? How can Socrates trust that Hippias the sophist will have an internal elenctics when he desires to leave the interlocutory situation because things are becoming confusing? How is Socrates to administer the transformative

process of refutation if not by vocal conversation?[34] The potential for a dialogue of refutation requires a living interlocutor and an encounter with this person's beliefs which can potentially be refuted. To read aloud or enact a written Platonic text is not going to have the same effect as an actual Socratic dialogue - for the words alone, spoken aloud, would not reflect the actual beliefs of the interlocutor at hand. One is only able to be transformed if one truly believes in the grounds for the refutation (to be discussed in greater detail later). As soon as one gives this up one leaves the dialogue, as Protagoras does by creating responses that distance himself from personal admission. Socrates tells Protagoras that, "it's you and me I want to put on the line" (Protagoras 331c). It is the live vocal quality of the dialogue not re-enacted predetermined scripts which sets the stage for dialogic transformation.

In order to dialogue, one has to be an interlocutor. And the basic interlocutory stance is one of authentic refutation and admission; if one cannot refute, one cannot dialogue. This is why writing and long-speeches are equated in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. The critique of both is that one cannot question these forms; one is unable to interrupt and the spontaneous generation of responses is precluded. If one speaks too long then what is said loses its dialogic quality and becomes a monologue. In the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras,* this issue of how much one should speak is a fundamental problem, it opens the dialogue and continues to resound throughout. The sophists prefer long speeches and Socrates prefers short speech (brachylogia). A marvelous back-and-forth of dialogic rules and prescriptions are given with justifications for why each must be followed. Long speeches are not going to cure Socrates of false belief (Lesser Hippias 373a) for Socrates can't follow them (ibid) and forgets the contents of which are spoken (Protagoras 334d). The sophists on the other hand, attack the fragmentary nature of brachylogia as being clipped, abbreviated and not addressing a subject as a whole (Lesser Hippias 369c, Greater Hippias 304a).

In many moments of these texts we witness a power struggle over these practices and it is Socrates' persuasive power, this time a methodological persuasion, that wins the day. As each

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[34] The possibility of a written process of refutations is a viable a option (were one to write a claim, and then have it be refuted or admitted); however, it is unlikely that this method of writing was available to the ancient greeks at this time as writing in the Platonic corpus is always understood as that which is unable to answer, detached, separate and not alongside an author potentially ready to write a response.

interlocutor enters in the *Gorgias,* Socrates instructs them to leave behind their long speeches and to enter into a brachylogic speech. Each temporarily agrees but continually bows out due to anger and concessions of beliefs they do not want to admit. In the *Protagoras* a battle for pedagogical primacy ensues as Protagoras desires to speak in long speeches, yet still confesses that he is more skilled than Socrates in both brachylogia and long speeches. Socrates, desirous of a brachylogic method, professes to only be skilled in this practice. Various silent interlocutors chime in to provide solutions. The most favorable of which is to elect an arbiter who will enforce a middle-ground between the two techniques, but Socrates turns the tables and convinces Protagoras to enact a brachylogic method by admitting that he can ask questions of him first.

The shortness of an utterance, its brachylogic quality, is co-determined by both dialogical partners, as it is up to the interlocutor to interrupt and lay claim to the potential reasonableness of an utterance, but also up to the speaker to wait hesitantly for this admission, or perhaps more rightly, to ask for it. Brachylogia helps manifest a transformative self-knowing via the denial of enforced ideology. One cannot be dogmatically instructed if one's speech is limited to tiny, questionable morsels, each only large enough to delivery one hesitant and arguable claim. Furthermore, by asking that each claim be respondable, this pushes the transformative quality of the logos onto each individual claim. The very unit of speech comes to be that of the sentence, which demands waiting, interruption and response, rather than the unit of the string of sentences, which demands presence, adherence, and getting lost in the narrative pathways given (Havelock 208-9).

Brachylogia restructures the durational content of speech by breaching the speech of another; a rupture that opens the grounds for explanations, definitions and clarifications. Havelock's beautiful preface to Plato identifies these ruptures as a historical break away from poetic and bardic knowledge dissemination which brought about the beginnings of prosaic language (Havelock 209). These poetic structures demanded a total absorption in a poem that necessitated passivity – an individual must be fully receptive to the stories and facts of the poetic recitation (ibid 217). The demands for definition in Platonic dialogue destroy the poetic syntax, understood as a series of temporally sequential verbs of actions (219), for these definitions create timeless universals. The act of brachylogic dialogic interruption breaks the poetic flow of words, thus

preparing the ground for an active and responsive individual. This interruption perturbs the narrative's spatial and temporal specificity by demanding a clear definition – an abstracted form which subsumes individuated instances into a universal. We see here the seeds of another type of transformation, one not concerned with the refutation of false claims, but one that constructs a new type of belief – universal, not particular – which is achieved via a new type of individual – responsive, not a passive recipient of the flow of words.

One can provide reasonable counterarguments to this account of brachylogia as a technique of Socratic dialogue. First of all, sometimes when Socrates asks for interlocutors to use brachylogia the purported long speeches that he is responding to are actually not long at all.[35] This raises questions as to whether it is even the length of speech that determines this difference. Perhaps length is only one factor, another being taking up multiple subjects or paths of thought at once. Secondly, long speeches clearly can have a transformative function. After listening to some orator's speeches, Socrates is numbed and bewildered in a similar fashion to that of his interlocutors after hearing Socrates speak. But how do these speeches transform? It is not clear whether and how long speeches eliminate a listener's false beliefs, as the form of long speech provides no clear test for its validity – we do not know if and how its claims are true (nor if one listening to the speech regards such claims as true). Finally, Socrates himself uses long speeches in a variety of forms, and for a variety of reasons.[36]

If Socratic Dialogue is defined by its brachylogic quality, then why does it break into long speeches? Why does Socrates give long speeches if the speeches themselves do not allow an interlocutor the space for refutation and admission? Why enter into this form if the form itself doesn't create the possibility of eliminating false beliefs? One possibility is that Socrates is using long speeches because his interlocutors require it. Intellectual utterance in ancient Greek society

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[35] For example, Polus's entry into dialogue in the *Gorgias* is actually quite short (quite shorter than many of Socrates elenctic moves); yet, this utterance causes Socrates to ask Polus to shorten his words.

[36] In the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* Socrates is at times pressured into speaking in this form by his interlocutors as they couldn't understand his short answers and required narration (Gorgias 465e). In *The Phaedrus*, Socrates and Phaedrus play a game of speech exchange which precedes a more dialectic examination. A similar pressure for Socrates to use long form speech doesn't exist in the *Symposium*, and even though much of Socrates' Diotima speech in the *Symposium* is itself a recounting of a dialogue, it has many long winded mythic elements. Similarly we find these long winded myths given by Socrates in *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*, not to mention the *Timaeus* which is almost entirely a rhetorical account given by Socrates.

took place predominantly through long speeches, and it is possible that his interlocutors would not understand him otherwise or would understand him less. Another possibility is that these speeches come at points where Socrates doesn't have a theoretical solution that is achievable via elenctics. Socrates has beliefs and suppositions (as mentioned above – the immortality of the soul, the forms, etc), and so it is possible that he uses long speeches to disseminate these beliefs. A third possibility is that Socratic speeches are formed in such a way that they differ substantially from the speeches of his oratorical interlocutors. All three reasons are plausible, and one can find support for them within the Platonic corpus of there being two types of oratory (noble and ignoble).[37]

In all likelihood, Socrates himself is invested in the dialogic technique of long speeches and therefore uses it at certain moments instead of elenctics. Dangerous as it is to persuade and transform one's beliefs using this method (for one cannot ensure the truth of the claims), Socrates is willing to take this risk. The switch into long speech points to the capacity for conversational structures to likewise morph, sway and adapt. Either this adaptation comes about due to an interlocutor's requirement for it (they cannot understand otherwise), or one shifts into long speech because one lacks a good step-by-step argument for a given belief, or one is persuaded into given long speeches (as seen in the *Phaedrus*). Networks of desires – our own and those around us – cause ruptures in techniques and ask for others to be utilized. Entry into Socratic dialogue always includes the possibility that its elenctic core practice may suddenly be abandoned – turning conversation into long speech. But on the other hand, long speeches, too, can be interrupted by rounds of question-answer. A dialogue can thus catalyse a monologue and vice versa if the social context enables or expects it.

VI.   Questions, Admissions, Refutations

Socratic dialogue begins and is sustained by questioning. The type of question asked is important – they were not immediately answerable topical questions, but complicated philosophical questions of an ethical, epistemological or ontological nature. However, the manner of asking is

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[37] It appears unlikely, though, that Socrates' speeches would satisfy his own requirements as stated in Gorgias: 1) address only one issue at a time 2) allow interruptions so that their truth can be verified via elimination of error.

of equal importance, as these questions are not merely directed towards the interlocutor but asked *of* him; the questions are aimed to put the interlocutor in question (Hadot, *Way of Life* 89). The transformative potential of self-knowledge relies upon this inquisitive ability of the question to engage the interlocutors and to not allow the core of the conversation to remain outside of the interlocutor's influence and interest.[38]

Asking questions is a key grammatical technique: it enables an examination into a claim's truthfulness – and the way questions are asked is critical to this function. An entry into a discussion may be a general question – such as, "what is virtue" or "what is knowledge" or "how is knowledge teachable" – yet the majority of questions employed after this initiation are quite diverse. The questioner's line of questioning must raise interconnected questions that, if admitted, would potentially jeopardize the validity of the interlocutor's initial claim. The goal is to expose underlying assumptions which the interlocutor has not considered. After each question there is an opportunity for the interlocutor to reply – typically in the form of an admission or a refutation – for if an interlocutor isn't following and agreeing to each step then the transformation loses its quality of being a transformation *of* the interlocutor and becomes a mere intellectual exercise.

Frequently a dialogue would begin with clarifications: Socrates clarifies his questions, or asks interlocutors to clarify their positions. In the *Protagoras*, Hippocrates says he is going to see a person for wisdom, and Socrates then seeks clarification: What kind of person? Protogras says it is a sophist who gives wisdom, but Socrates seeks clarification: What kind of wisdom? Socrates frequently professes his investment in clarity and order of argument (453c, 454c, 458a, 360e) because a clearer, sequential argument will both more clearly provide truth and more firmly establish an understanding between interlocutors. By asking questions through clarification the dialogue stays focused on the interlocutor's own utterances and motivates interlocutory involvement as Socrates links hypotheses and counter-questions to attempts to better understand

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[38] The entire discussion of the *Republic* is set off as Socrates asks of Cephalus: Is old age hard to bear? (Republic 328e). The debate on oratory practices of the *Gorgias* is sparked as Socrates asks Gorgias "what is he", implying a question into Gorgias's manner of profession (Gorgias 447c). The account of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* is brought about by Socrates asking Theaetetus about a piece of geometric wisdom that he apparently acquired from Theodorus (Theaetetus 145c).

another's words and their meaning, rather than create a line of questioning removed from an interlocutor's interests.[39] It is also for the sake of clarity that Socrates asks Gorgias to not ask two questions at once (Gorgias 466), as taking up one question at a time is both easier to follow and allows for an interlocutor to respond to each claim.

The main pedagogical instruction that motivates the movement from question to question is that one must "only base replies on that which the interlocutor admits" (Meno 75d). The discussion proceeds via admissions or refutations. If a refutation is given, a new line of questioning must begin anew until a claim is agreed with. This technique aims to bring about the transformative process of false-belief elimination, for the veracity of a claim will be based on the collective agreement of given claims and their agreed upon logical necessity, rather than an external authoritative force of tradition or custom.[40] What comes from this process of admission may be absurd, or counterintuitive, or something we very much don't like, but logically it must stand if we agreed to all the interconnected premises. And it is precisely this disjunction that is so frustrating for Socrates' interlocutors. One may desire for something to be true, one may want to defend the goodness of the tyrant, or the un-teachability of virtue, or for knowledge to be perception, but one cannot hold onto these beliefs if one has admitted to the prior claims that Socrates has introduced. This makes it very difficult for one to impose one's beliefs upon a dialogical partner, as any imposed claim will be open to the refutations, negations and questions of the other, or will be mutually agreed upon based on a shared agreement of premises.

However, this strict rigour of admission/refutation procedures is not always followed by Socrates' interlocutors. Socrates' needs someone to answer, and when Callicles doesn't want to and asks Socrates, "and you couldn't speak unless somebody answered you?" (Gorgias 519d), Socrates appeals to the god of friendship to try to convince Callicles to continue the dialogue.

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[39] Problematically, Socrates does frequently distance the conversation from an interlocutor's interests. This is seen most prominently when he directs arguments towards a consideration of potters, doctors and other craftsmen. Many times in these instances Socrates is criticised for being irrelevant and Socrates must persuade his interlocutors to bear with him just a little bit further. These moments verify the dangers of straying too far from shared interests. If one does stray, one must be prepared to persuade one's interlocutors to carry onwards through content that is only seemingly disconnected. If this persuasion is not done effectively one runs the risk of one's interlocutors leaving the conversation or revolting against the decision to discuss a particular subject matter.

[40] Socrates is not interested in external witnesses but the witness of those who are in discussion with him (Gorgias 472c).

This breakdown in form (both here, and above when Socrates gives stories and stops asking questions) provokes us to investigate more clearly how the mutual contract between interlocutors occurs within Socratic dialogue.

VII.   Investment – Shared, Personal

This fluctuation of interlocutory desire is the background against which the Socratic dialogic techniques are shaped and utilized. The entry into dialogue is based on a mutual "willing choice to engage" (*Ancient Philosophy* 75) and this "agreement between interlocutors [...] [is] renewed at each stage of the discussion" (66). Quite frequently, however, this mutual agreement is suspended, which causes the parameters of conversation to shift. We saw examples of this above when interlocutors wanted to stop discussing and begin giving speeches. But there are several moments when interlocutors want to stop for other reasons. Hippias wants to stop and go be by himself to meditate on the issues at hand. Thrasymachus threatens to leave the company after failing to convince Socrates (Republic 344d), and Protagoras disengages after he has been rattled. Disengagement also is triggered by a lack of time. The oratorical art is rushed by bureaucratic practicalities (Theaetetus 172e) whereas philosophy is leisurely able to follow the conversation wherever it may lead. Socrates frequently warns his interlocutor that their conversation may take quite some time and that they must make time if they want to continue with it.[41] Socrates must persuade his interlocutors to engage in elenctics with him, but he must first convince them to do this in the right way – to shorten and clarify their statements, to not end with a hypothetical statement, etc. Socrates never uses physical coercion;[42] rather, his method of persuasion involves enticing his interlocutor to try to find truth, an intention that Socrates assumes is present in his interlocutors (Gorgias 453b) even if they are squirmy or resistant; or Socrates persuades via an ironic request that his interlocutor deliver truth to Socrates, an occurrence that typically opens up a dialogue shortly before the interlocutors realize that they do not know what they are talking about.

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[41] For example, Euthyphro breaks off at the end of the dialogue because of a lack of time.

[42] Although quite a few passages allude to this being enacted upon Socrates. One example being in the beginning of the *Republic* when Polemarchus's slave physically grabs Socrates by the cloak asking him to wait up, and then Polemarchus tells Socrates that he would not be able to turn away because he is outnumbered, alluding to the potential use of physical force they could use to make him stay (*Republic* I.327b-c).

For the elenctic procedure to work, not only must an interlocutor be at least minimally invested – they need to be also personally implicated. But how and to what degree, and what sort of person is affected? The dialogues themselves provide contradictory clues. Socrates continually reduces personal emphasis placing focus on the argument itself. Yet at other times, he demands personal investment.[43] How do we make sense of this contradiction? What is being transformed via dialogue are the beliefs of an interlocutor, not one's character or public persona. Some of the moments when the personal is resisted by Socrates are for this reason – because Socrates is resisting personal attacks and ad hominem arguments.[44] While these statements are clearly personal refutations, these do not refute a belief by addressing the validity of the belief itself, but rather of the legitimacy of he who holds the belief. This is why Socrates assures Gorgias that he will not hurt him, but also that he should submit himself to the healing hand of the argument (475d), and why Socrates asks Polus not to attack him but prove him wrong (467c). A powerful argument (a transformative argument) will not attack one's person, but their beliefs. This distinction helps us to understand how a dialectical procedure can be both agonistic and mild. Socrates frequently induces his interlocutors to be gentler with him, but never asks his interlocutors to refrain from attacking his beliefs, for it is only by transforming our beliefs via refutation that our souls will be saved. This refutation of belief necessitates both an attachment to the belief (felt because it is our own) and then a painful process of letting go of this belief (letting go not because we want to but because logic necessitates that we must). In this regard the beliefs must be personal to begin with, but the healing refutative process results in de-personalization, the release of our possession from beliefs which we once held dear.

For the transformative process to work, the beliefs must be the beliefs *of* the interlocutor. In other words, they must *really* be believed by them. When Callicles, locked into an argumentative hold, adjusts his claim to create greater consistencies, Socrates retorts that one cannot be an adequate inquirer into truth with him if he is going to go against what he thinks (495a). It would be wrong

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[43] "It's not me you have to thank, its truth," Socrates says to Agathon in The *Symposium*. In the *Protagoras* he says, "I'm primarily interested in testing the argument," (333c). Socrates admits to Gorgias that he is not "after" him, but after clarity of subject matter (Gorgias 453). Yet, when Protagoras avoids expressing his own opinion by saying things like "if you will" or "as you say" Socrates asks him to desist, saying, "it's me and you I want to put on the line." (331c)

[44] These are frequently produced by Thrasymachus, Gorgias, Polus and Callicles, and perhaps also by Socrates himself as he ironically declares how wise his interlocutors are.

to interpret this as meaning that one is unable to go back on one's claims – for this is precisely what occurs throughout Meno, Theaetetus, and countless other dialogues. Rather, one must interpret this as meaning that if one is to inquire with Socrates they must only make claims that they believe (at the moment of uttering) to be true. This points to the quality of fearless speech that makes Callicles a worthwhile interlocutory partner as Callicles is willing to utter what others were too scared or ashamed to say.[45] So why then does Socrates tell Protagoras that he doesn't care who answers the questions and that he is "primarily interested in testing the argument, although it may happen both that the questioner, myself, and my respondent wind up being tested"? (333c) I can only surmise that this statement is said somewhat ironically. Socrates is simultaneously invested in testing the argument and invested in the testing (via refutation) of all involved. How can someone be tested if it is not *their* beliefs which are tested? How can one be transformed if one is only giving an answer to appease one's friend and expedite the argument (Callicles in Gorgias 501c)? Socrates is the midwife who both delivers belief-babies and also tests to see if they are viable; however, how is he to do this if the babies are not mothered by those who he is speaking to?

Beliefs, in different dialogic moments, shift their degree of ownership. Depending on the precise dialogic circumstances we have different amounts of personal investment. Socrates doesn't merely ferret out the truth from his interlocutors, he must also induce his interlocutors to be invested if the transformative project is going to work. Perhaps Socrates, at times, is only interested in the argument itself, and perhaps Socrates, at times, believes that if the argument is flawed then the interlocutor will be moved to see this. But he also notices that his interlocutors will not always be moved by the flaws in an argument because his interlocutors aren't moved by the power of reason (and they uphold pacts to friends as Callicles does at the end of the *Gorgias*) and because beliefs sometimes do not hold personal currency – they are not *of* the interlocutor. And so at times Socrates recognizes this, and makes dialogical maneuvers to induce investment – using long speeches, agreeing to give answers when needed, etc. For a transformative conversational technique to function an interlocutor must buy in, yet the terms of this purchase

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[45] Socrates is the one who is not shameful, willing to discuss catamites and the pleasures of scratching. Callicles, on the other hand, lets his love of the people get in the way of accepting the truth of the argument (513c) – he is too attached to his friends and their beliefs and opinions and this attachment doesn't let his own beliefs be transformed.

are always in flux. Socrates not only utilizes his techniques but acts as a facilitator who is able to move the techniques at the right moment to the best impact – this moment determined by countless factors which include the ebb and and flow of personal investment

VIII.   Collaboration

As a facilitator of refutation, Socrates will direct an inquiry that is potentially collaborative but never entirely equal. Socrates is persistent in claiming that he knows nothing, that he only has an impartial "human wisdom" (Apology 20d) which only knows things via fragmentary, particular, interlocutory, logical claims and admissions made between those in the conversation. To Cratylus he says that he only speaks what "seems" correct as a result of the investigations (238b). Socrates insures Theodorus that he is not a bag of arguments that you can dip your hand into and pick one out, for the arguments come from the person he is speaking to (161a). And while this is partially true, in that the arguments only develop their form and shape via conversation, it seems likely that Socrates *does* indeed have a bag of arguments in his mind (in the way a chess player or wrestler has a bag of possible moves) which have been partially tested by him, and which he utilizes in certain dialogic situations. While it is implausible that *during* his elenctic back-and-forths Socrates always has a clear conception of the exact beliefs that should be imparted upon his interlocutors,[46] Socrates still does have beliefs and suppositions which he does sometimes want his interlocutors to believe in.[47] There exists an unresolved tension between a Socrates who 1) partially knows and has beliefs which he imparts to his interlocutors through long speeches and myths or through a masterful refutation of some beliefs and not others 2) a Socrates whose partial, suppositional knowledge is overcome by a larger sense of wonder and unknowing which guides an interlocutory exchange that has no predetermined end.[48]

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[46] In the *Protagoras*, the argument ends up leading Socrates in the opposite direction of where he initially intended (361b-c), and in the *Theaetetus* Socrates ends the investigation by leaving all claims refuted, thereby providing no sense of any positive framework of beliefs.

[47] One explicit clear example of this is a statement to Theaetetus regarding one claim that Theaetetus eventually admitted – "this was what I thought myself, but I wanted you to think it too." (185e)

[48] Socratic irony and how it plays out, and the question of what or how much is known by Socrates, have been debated and discussed by many contemporary scholars. See for example Scott J Senn's *Ignorance or Irony in Plato's Socrates?* Or Ann Michelini as she points out that non-Platonic texts portray Socrates with much greater wisdom and knowledge, "imparting sage advice to friends, and poring over books with them" (Michelini 49). Or Michelini as she states that, "when, in longer and more ambitious dialogues, Plato's Socrates suddenly speaks in a more authoritative voice that contrasts with his claims to "know

This division can be mapped on to the distinction between eristics and dialectics outlined in the Platonic corpus. To do eristics is to aim to trip up an opponent (167e), engage in mere verbal contradictions (454a) and be unable to divide things into corresponding forms (454a). To practice dialectics is to help one's opponent up on their feet (167e), to be more gentle (75d) and to, "point out to him only those of his slips which are due to himself or to the intellectual society which he has previously frequented" (167e). And despite the fact that Socrates scolds the practice of eristics by saying it will produce enemies of philosophy and praises dialectics for its transformative quality of making people "become different" by seeking refuge in philosophy (168a-b), Socrates not only practices eristics explicitly (454a), and implicitly (I would argue in the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*), but it is frequently unclear as to whether he is practicing dialectics or eristics.[49] Socratic dialogue contains the potential for both. Just as it is not clear which form Socrates is utilizing, so too is it not clear to what extent someone has an agenda and to what degree you may be manipulated by the practice to transform your beliefs to something not yet falsified and seemingly true. A transformative conversation practice contains these risks.

Nonetheless, there are certain ways in which, in spite of these risks, this dialogical practice is still is collaborative. Firstly, the practice itself requires a minimal collaborative element for a transformation to succeed. Socrates must go in tandem (Protagoras 348c-d) for the refutation of error and the cleansing of the soul requires a conversation rather than private perceptions. Secondly, transformation occurs via the procedure of only making claims that an interlocutor admits to. For as long one engages in an elenctic methodology the beliefs that are produced will always belong to both interlocutors and result from a collective procedure. The process of admission and refutation always implicates some degree of togetherness – a togetherness perhaps fraught at times with the suspicious that Socrates has planned out every move and will annihilate

nothing," centuries of readers have been greatly tempted to hear the voice of "Plato" coming through, as the Socratic coating thins out." (58) Or Sarah Chesters in *The Socratic Classroom*: "for example, Socrates is known for his relentless questioning of basic concepts, but in Plato's dialogues it becomes clear that he had certain cherished beliefs that underlie his questioning that sometimes led him to direct the conversation in subtle ways." (Chesters 35)

[49] One may argue that dialectics is distinct from eristics in its ability to find truth rather than negate falsity, or in its ability to divide into forms. However, not all Socratic argumentation does either of these. Furthermore, I would argue the technique of identifying forms, while perhaps an underlying motivation for philosophy, can nevertheless still coincide with eristic methods of tearing down an opponent's argument and utilizing verbal trickery in order to find forms and produce clear ideas.

anything that he does not desire to subsist – but a togetherness nonetheless made possible by each admission that an interlocutor agrees to.[50] Finally, whether or not Socrates has an agenda, Socrates is always a slave to the logos embedded in the argument which provide moments of: surprise (Theaetetus 202d), negation (Parmenides), admissions of his own lack of clarity (Gorgias 463e), wavering of opinion (Lesser Hippias), and moments where his whole argument turns on its head (Protagoras 361b-c). To engage in Socratic dialogue, or any dialogical inquiry for that manner, will always involve some degree of collaboration as the turn orders of conversation necessitates this, but also because most practices of transformative inquiry contain techniques that attempt to facilitate collaboration. However, no matter how collaborative these techniques are, there may always be a conversationalist who abuses the practice for their own seemingly good intentions, who seems to play by the rules (or perhaps even their rules that they convinced you of), but who is not really engaged in an unknowing which holds equal weight before various notions, ready to accept only that which is deemed truthful out of the immanent conversational pact. One can merely hope that as long as one enters into conversation with another in good intentions – of finding knowledge, of not foreclosing another's thoughts before adequately analysed, of holding wonderment – that these qualities of openness will push into the conversation itself, and move the dialogue more towards a collaborative inquiry and less towards insidious, eristic refutation. Or one can take the advice from Socrates at the end of the *Euthydemus*, which is to stop engaging in Socratic dialogue with any given other, either a good dialectician or an evil eristician, and to take up the matter for oneself (307c), outside of externalized conversation by internalizing the dialectician into oneself and thereby leaving the dialogical situation behind.

IX.   Identity, Role-play

What sorts of characteristics, traits or roles are utilized by Socrates and his interlocutors that help a dialogue to function? The most prevalent of these are the roles of attacker and defender.

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[50] This degree of collaboration may seem quite minimal; however its importance is seen more profoundly when we contrast Socratic Dialogue with the sophist's long speech form. In the long speech form resistance or disagreement is entirely an individual act – during, or after, a speech one can internally form disagreements. However, these refutations have no bearing on the person giving the speech (for the social structure of speech giving doesn't necessitate that its listeners are ever able to voice these refutations). In Socratic Dialogue the *possibility* of refutation is always present. After each claim one *can* resist and this resistance is collaborative and dialogic.

Socratic dialogue does not merely proceed via a turn ordering of refutation and admission, but by interlocutors who uphold a role of attacker – defined by they who ask the questions – and defender – defined by those whose claim is being tested and who answers by admission or refutation. This role solidifies one's identity in the dialogical game. And while the identity is not fixed – one can switch roles – it seems that one cannot play two roles at once.[51] Socrates typically plays the role of attacker; nonetheless, there are moments where Socrates plays other roles as well.[52] The argument is tested by and *through* the roles played. One must posit a claim, and in the positing of a claim, one takes up the role of defending it. This role ends when one stops defending it and begins to defend a different claim or begins to take up a line of attack. If the roles were to switch before an argument is played out then one would be unable to see if the initial claims were really truthful or not (this occurs at the end of the *Gorgias* when Callicles wants to stop discussing). However, this is not to say that the rules of each role need to remain constant. When discussing with Euthydemus, instead of following the rules and saying merely "yes" or "no", Socrates adds addendums, makes distinctions in his phrases and asks clarifying questions much to the annoyance of his interlocutors (296b). The elenctic roles are tools to be *mostly* adhered to, but the intentions of clarity, understanding and the attainment of truth can intervene in its strict adherence and create offshoot dialogical structures that appear only momentarily.

Another moment that clarifies the use of role-play in Socratic dialogue occurs in *Greater Hippias* where Socrates pretends to be in dialogue with a third person as he speaks to Hippias. When Hippias raises a contentious claim, instead of directly attacking it, Socrates attacks the claim via the mediating position of a mysterious, non-present interlocutor who would give a particular retort were Socrates to relay Hippias's response to him. It is through this mediating identity that Socrates is able to advance shameful, irrelevant or seemingly "ugly" claims. Hippias's ad hominem attacks are placed on this other interlocutor, rather than Socrates himself. If this were not performed, Hippias would have quickly bowed out of the conversation due to the coarseness

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[51] As exemplified when Socrates is confounded by Polus and says he can't make out whether he is making statements or questioning (466c).

[52] Socrates plays the defender in his recounted dialogue to Diotima in the *Symposium*. He agrees to switch roles with Protagoras and let him lead the argument. In the *Gorgias* there is a moment when Socrates plays both roles of attacker and defender, and in the *Sophist* Socrates is merely a silent bystander to the dialectical unfolding.

of style and content of his interlocutor. By playing this role, a critical distance is created which allows the dialogical technique to function in the face of adversarial conditions.

Role-play here is being defined as an identity that one temporarily assumes. In these above examples this identity is constituted by certain dialogical procedures or actions; however, roles can also expand to include a wider range of features such as: personas, characteristics and attitudes. Socrates says to Callicles that if one is going to test souls for knowledge then one must have three qualities: "knowledge, good will, and frankness" (487a). We can add to this list non-reluctance (Theaetetus 187b-c) or non-hesitation (Cratylus 238b). And while Socrates seems to profess here that he would love it if these roles were adhered to, these qualities are not always present (not only in various interlocutors but in Socrates himself) and it is by means of dialogic persuasions that a quality is sometimes won or achieved.

The notion that an interlocutor should be knowledgeable raises a considerable objection to this entire project – must there be an extremely skilled practitioner, a Socrates, to engage in Socratic dialogue? For while it is easy to imagine engaging in Socratic dialogue with good will, frankness and non-hesitation, it is much harder to imagine engaging in Socratic dialogue with a facilitator as skilled in improvisational elenctics as Socrates was. One way to test whether Socratic dialogue is possible without a Socrates is to see the functional capacity of the dialogical game when Socrates is not leading it. What we find is that, indeed, the game differs dramatically when a different leader takes control. In the *Sophist*, the dialogue is led by the eleatic stranger, a successful conversational leader who manages to espouse philosophical accounts of both statesman and sophist; however, this leadership changes the elenctic quality by not basing a discussion on the refutation of an interlocutor's false belief but through a 'method of division' (diairesis) used to ascertain certain forms. In *Euthydemus*, the leading role is taken up by Dionysodorus and Euthydemus who are clearly very skilled in argumentation, but in a kind of argumentation that is not serious (288c), and which makes no progress and instead knocks down all arguments around it (288a). Protagoras takes up the elenctic method, which delivers a blackening blow to Socrates (339d) but then alters the dialogue to be one of poetic exegesis regarding a passage of poetry from Simonides of Ceos. Others who take the role of questioner fare much worse – as Polus does when Socrates has to instruct him on what questions he should

ask (462d). This exchange proceeds for a few turns and then switches back to Socrates taking the lead out of confusion as to the meaning of Socrates' answers. A shift in facilitator will result in a shift in the dialogic practice, but the practice has a certain threshold where if one is radically unskilled the practice will begin to breakdown. If the goal of Socratic dialogue is to transform beliefs via refutation of false beliefs (or a delivery of true knowledge as perhaps espoused in the *Sophist* and the *Republic*) then a certain degree of knowledge and facilitation skills are required for the practice to function. What degree of skill is required is an open question; however there is no precedent of a Socratic dialogue occurring without a certain amount of facilitation skills.[53]

X.   Setting, Silence, Number of Interlocutors

In some moments of the Platonic dialogues, the setting itself plays a critical role in performing transformative functions. The vast majority of the dialogues are held in private Athenian homes.[54] For the most part, as Callicles harshly notes, Socrates hides in corners whispering with a few boys (485e).[55] Socrates admits to the necessity of this privacy, arguing that he is still honing his skills of soul medicine (515d). If he were to go out in public to practice before becoming skilled – a backhanded reproach of the sophists, who, according to Socrates did exactly this – people would deservingly punish him harshly. Socrates is not yet (and perhaps never was) ready to have the public title of soul healer. By setting his dialogical practice in the private environment of a home, he has the advantage of an excess amount of time that this setting facilitates. Socrates even goes as far to say that this leisure time is a distinguishing feature of the

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[53] For Socrates it seems likely that a major aspect of this skill is to improvisationally provide connected underlying assumptions which undermine the veracity of the original claim and to keep this process going onward and onward until one can find unrefuted claims. For Plato it seems likely that this facilitation skill involves moving the argument by the use of forms and knowledge of the good (Nehamas) which ensures that truth is found and not merely the refutation of error. For more contemporary practices which take up this Socratic method (such as P4C, i.e. Philosophy for Children), the facilitator has an overarching vocabulary of the dialogical moves made and of the discussion as a whole and is able to direct the conversation via questions to further considerations, problems, disjunctions or areas that have more potential for conceptual growth (Gregory 61-2).

[54] Some exceptions being: the *Apology*, which takes place in the public assembly; the *Phaedrus*, which takes place along a river bank outside of Athens; and *Crito* and *Phaedo* which take place in the jail as Socrates is going to be sentenced to death. But of all of these it is only the *Apology* which presents a dialogue before the greater public.

[55] I'm inclined to take Callicles word here regarding the whispering (which I interpret to mean that Socrates speaks in private assemblies, and before few in number); but, if we take the dialogues to their word then Socrates was in communication with men, not only boys.

practice of philosophy – one has the time to see an argument through and follow its tangents. A public orator, on the other hand, must be rushed,[56] and this rushedness is due, in part, to place – the court is more time-bound than the endless leisure afforded to aristocrats in private residents. Socratic dialogue functioned because of its place in the private home, a function aided by the excessive amount of leisure (and abundance of free slave labor) that the aristocratic class performed in the privacy of their homes.

As elenctics moved from its Socratic origins to those of Plato, the technique began to be practiced in the meeting rooms of a gymnasium on the outskirts of Athens called, "The Academy", and a small property nearby acquired by Plato where the members of the school could meet and live together (*Ancient Philosophy* 57). Socratic dialogue in the Academy became mostly a private affair for members of the school; however, these isolationist tendencies were intended to be pedagogical and temporary. Plato hoped that his trained pupils would eventually influence civic affairs by moving into the public realm, involving themselves in the politics of the city (62). For Socrates, this political aspect seems non-existent as the Socratic practice was always located in and amongst private spheres. So while both Socratic and Platonic instatiations of this dialogical practice had similar political intentions, the locations of their practice had clear effects on the practice's performance. In private homes where one's interlocutors and audience are not trained, one must be fluid and accommodating. One can be much more precise and exacting in a school setting with rigorous training techniques. The element of excessive leisure that defined philosophy for Socrates must have shifted somewhat in the Academy, for if one is taking these skills to the courtroom one would have to learn how to argue briefly and pragmatically. The rigorous and defined shape that Socratic dialogue came to achieve for Plato, and its function as a debating technique and skill training, came about as the location shifted away from the colloquial, informal and unpredictable private sphere – a shift which demanded that a skilled practitioner be on their feet and have researched the practice so well that they could improvise at a moment's notice.

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[56] "The man of the law courts—is always in a hurry when he is talking; he has to speak with one eye on the clock." (Theaetetus 172e)

Another question concerns the number of participants in Socratic dialogue. Were there always only two interlocutors? In the Academy it seems as though this was the case, as explicitly noted by Hadot (*Ancient Philosophy* 62)[57]; however this does not seem to be the case for Socrates, as we see many of the Platonic dialogues involve Socrates in larger conversations with three or four persons at times. Why would these heuristic training manuals give examples of larger conversations if this practice were not able to be expanded, if it were not vital and impactful to dialogue with more than two? A greater polyphony of voices drastically influences the dialogical practice and perhaps this is why Plato moved away from this manifestation in the Academy. Where there are only two there is a potential for a clear delineation of roles – for or against. As more people are involved the roles become muddied, which opens more opportunities for cutting-in, finding an edge and arguing against given claims. In dialogues of more than two, the grounding for consent and desire becomes more frequently challenged, as disensus and silences weave in and out of conversation. In short, as Socratic dialogue becomes a group dialogical practice, a different set of techniques are needed and new facilitation strategies are required.[58]

Another technique to consider are marked silences that occur within the dialogues. Socrates' interlocutors have silences which are frequent and pronounced. Occasionally, Socrates addresses these silences by ironically prodding the interlocutors, indicating that these silences are signs of an interlocutor's deliberation or moments where we can see the transformative dialogic procedure at work. Silence can also be a sign of disinterest as Socrates remarks of Miletus's silence in his trial after he has spoken (25d). The charge of silence, leveled against paintings in the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias*, is similar to the charge against people (275d) – a painting is flawed because its silence implies it will not reply when questioned. For how can something silent produce the admissions required for the elenctic procedure? However, Socrates himself professes to have fallen into silence when Hippias was giving a speech, recounting that he didn't want to interrupt with questions, admitting that there were too many people to make an interruption (364b). This calls attention to two strategic qualities of silence in Socratic dialogue: 1) an interlocutor can remain silent, reducing interruptions, and thereby allow a train of thought to persist on its own

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[57] Although Hadot does not state where he derives this fact from, he seems to derive it from a reading of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*.

[58] We see these manifest in the contemporary practices of Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI) which take Socratic dialogue techniques and use this practice but with children and with larger groups.

path 2) interlocutors can remain on the sideline of the conversation and become audience members, thereby reducing the number of interlocutors who potentially can interject and make interruptions. This latter point is reflected in many of the dialogues, as interlocutors remain silent for huge portions during speeches or throughout the elenctic displays (Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, Gorgias while Socrates is talking to Polus and Callicles). The question of silences is a question of who is silent, in what place, and for what reason. The movements of silence, and the negotiations into silence and out of it, are another example of dialogic techniques affecting and being affected by the desires of those implicated. Socrates can't transform everyone at once, and so sometimes silence is tolerated as Socrates perhaps assumes that those who are silent are quietly admitting to the claims being presented. At other times, this silence is perhaps more begrudgingly tolerated by Socrates (Thrasymachus in Books II-X of the *Republic*) as the silence was brought about by undesired forced admissions of the interlocutor. An interlocutor may utilize silence to either pay attention or to silently resist. If one is in doubt as to which silence is experienced one can attempt to wrest one from their silent position thereby re-engaging in a battle for techniques – words over their absence, admissions or refutations of claims vs. silent resistance.

X.   Conclusion

It is my hope that this chapter has displayed the power of a conversational practice of transformative inquiry by showing how techniques perform transformations rather than the systems of belief which are espoused from the practice. In this sense, I may go so far to say that Socrates was not the best practitioner of his own practice. Socrates, as many readers sense when they read the Platonic dialogues, is a clever, ironic, arrogant facilitator with hidden ascetic agendas aimed at enacting revenge over his more powerful rivals by stripping them of their certainty and then rising to dominance in an afterlife where philosophers will reign supreme. Socrates asks for gentleness, yet makes ironic insults of his dialogical interlocutors; he says that eristics will turn others against philosophy, but then practices eristics; he professes to know nothing, but much to our surprise the same arguments keep popping up again and again. However, all this need not reflect poorly on the dialogic techniques themselves. Perhaps many

who create transformative dialogic practices do not follow their own prescribed methods,[59] and perhaps it is not the responsibility of those who establish a dialogic practice to be the best facilitators of their own practice. But a bad facilitator may show us much more about how a practice can and should function, and provides greater pedagogical insights than a perfect facilitator. What Socrates shows us is how the foundational techniques of a given conversation practice of transformative inquiry are fluid, and that in spite of this fluidity it is possible to maintain a common center that demarcates this practice while simultaneously fluctuating in the precise interpretation of a given rule.

With Socratic dialogue we see how a conversational practice coming into existence. Alive and fluid, it moves around a rule-bound center alongside aberrations and moments where what is outside of it becomes internal. The complicated network of desires or pedagogical preferences of Socrates (or whoever will be attempting to facilitate a transformative inquiry) and his interlocutors (or those less familiar with the practice) creates the necessity to constantly adapt one's dialogical structure on one's feet. Each dialogue is shaped by the interlocutor. Each transformational inquiry is individuated and personable as each Platonic dialogue, "is addressed to a specific person, and corresponds to his needs and possibilities" (*Ancient Philosophy* 71). A perfect interlocutor, as we see in the *Sophist* and in books II-X of the *Republic*, delivers a rather boring structure – perfectly delineated, nicely assenting, everyone desirous of a similar truth. But where desires stray, where conflicts of method occur, or when the conditions are not possible to practice philosophy in the way Socrates desires, then Socrates is forced to recite poetry, to answer his own questions, to give oratorical speeches, and to be more brief than he would like. A practice moves in and out of existence and swallows what is foreign to it, trying to use it too for the practice of transformation, and perhaps succeeds in this at times. But in doing so the transformation changes as well. For to listen to a speech or to interact with dialectics are both transformative, but the later transforms one into having the skills to defend a true belief, where the former provides belief but without the pathway to get there. This shifting between techniques is due to the needs of those speaking, but also shifts due to the larger social system that a practice

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[59] It is said that Freud was rarely silent during analysis (Shapiro 202).

is located within.[60] Conversational techniques transform; but the conversation, those subjects within it and the larger social forces around it, also have the capacity to transform the techniques. Nonetheless, it is the linguistic or para-linguistic performance of a technique that both transforms and inquires. What is negotiated by shifting techniques is the precise type of transformation and inquiry, and when and how these occur. This can be better seen through an assemblage of transformative techniques. What follows is precisely this: a more systematic and procedural analysis of conversational techniques of transformative inquiry.

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[60] This occurs from Socrates to Plato as seen above where the social conditions of the academy create a different practice. However this practice also shifted with larger social influences, such as Plato's initiation into Pythagorean geometry and logic, which had critical impacts on Plato's attempt to mould dialogic techniques that could administer geometric truths. This shift also occurred throughout the ancient world as Platonic Dialogue perhaps became integrated into Hellenistic debate techniques (Hadot, 2004, p. 225). And this shift occurred millenia later in the dialogic practices of Philosophy for Children as larger pedagogical systems of democratic learning created a Socratic dialogue that lost much of its hierarchical edge.

CH 2. CONVERSATIONAL ELEMENTS OF TRANSFORMATIVE INQUIRY

I. <u>Introduction</u>

As we saw with Socratic dialogue, transformative inquiry can be facilitated through a conversation practice – an organized collection of techniques that ebb and flow, given the interplay of socio-cultural impacts, the desires of those involved, and the individual facilitator implementing the practice. In most cultural settings, a given conversation practice and its techniques are not separated. Either one learns the techniques via training in a practice (for example, becoming a psychoanalyst), or one engages in a practice's teachings and conceptual frameworks without a thorough engagement in its techniques (for example, learning about Freudian drive theory). The aim of this chapter will be to depart from these traditional pedagogies, and focus instead on the conversational techniques themselves, to draw out their transformative potential within language itself (as defined by linguistic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic communications). I intend to construct a vocabulary of transformative techniques by drawing connections between these techniques and their transformative functions, creating a systematic vocabulary that accounts for different types of techniques, and different ways of performing transformative functions.

In this regard, I hold that practices do not lay claim to their techniques; moreover, techniques can become stifling and isolated when caught within a singular practice. A given technique will be more accessible to some, and less accessible to others, as the verbal, somatic, affective and intellectual requirements of the technique make it easier to learn by some, and more difficult for others. When a technique is codified into a practice (through a school, organization or institution), this codification concretizes the technique and makes it less fluid and adaptable. Furthermore, when a person engages in transformative conversation practices, it is rare to use only one technique; rather a given technique typically implicates a larger set of techniques and conceptual frameworks. Therefore, this rigidity is expanded as multiple techniques and concepts are paired together, creating homogeneous pedagogies and practices. By isolating techniques from their respective practices, we give ourselves tools to construct new conversational structures, and implement a greater diversity of pedagogies. We are also given new insights into

how conversations can transform and inquire by revealing how each technique provides a unique performative function (or set of functions) of transformative inquiry. One technique provides an opening, another provides clarity, while another provides greater focus and expression (see below). Arranging these techniques according to their different linguistic affects will be invaluable, not only to conversational practitioners across disciplines (who may rarely communicate with each other), but also because this account offers a new methodology for considering how conversations of transformative inquiry perform. This vocabulary will be particularly critical in the following chapters when I explain how we can utilize these techniques to create conversational scores and aesthetic conversational structures.

II.   Criteria for Classification

Table 2 shows conversational techniques codified according to their linguistic function. The three columns reflect how a technique uses language to perform its transformative function – linguistically, para-linguistically, non-linguistically. For each of these categories, the techniques themselves are listed under bolded sub-categories of language-specific classification (for example, the technique of formulation is listed in the category of "semantic-specific", a specific type of linguistic function).[61] For each category (and in some cases, for each technique) I will perform a three-fold operation: 1) CLASSIFY, in which I will situate the technique linguistically, and articulate how it functions within the linguistic category it is placed within 2) EXEMPLIFY, in which I will show which practices utilize this technique 3) PERFORMATIVITY, in which I will explain how this technique assists, performs, or allows for transformative inquiry.

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[61] My aim is to order these techniques by their communicative relationship to language – i.e., to what degree does a technique work with and adjust specific words, sentences and responses? – and also at the sub-category level. For example, how does a given type of paralinguistic technique alter the distribution of utterances?

Table 2. Conversational Techniques Arranged by Their Grammatical Function

Linguistic	Para-linguistic	Non-linguistic
Word-Specific (no variation) Word stems (ex "I notice, I am feeling")		
	Speed of utterances Fast	**Embodied** Eye gazing Body Positioning Repetitive Actions Embellishing Gestures Exaggerating Gestures
Word-Specific (some variations) "Tell me more about that" Continuers		
	Duration of utterances Long Speeches Frequent interruptions	
Grammar-Specific Pronouns Questioning Hypotheticals (Syllogisms)		**Spatial** Objects Environments
	Spacing of utterances Pauses Silences Simultaneity	
Semantic-Specific Formulations Lexical Substitutions Extensions Reinterpretive Statements Modifications Clarification Definitions Examples Identifying Underlying Assumptions		**Identity** Roleplay Facilitation
	Free association Nonsense	**Materiality** Writing Speaking

Linguistic techniques alter specific ways of using words. A technique is linguistic if it demands particular kinds of words to be spoken. For example, a technique which asks someone to clarify a statement will demand that only words which clarify should be spoken. A technique which implicates questioning will demand that sentences must not be declarations, but interrogative instead. **Paralinguistic techniques** make no such demands, but rather alter the distribution of words, including their speed, spacing, duration, and gaps between utterances. **Non-linguistic techniques** alter various factors that occur alongside words and their distribution – bodies, gestures, identities, roles, objects, and the environments surrounding them.

Outliers: The boundary between the linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic can be blurry, and, as with most systems, there are outliers. For example, nonsensical utterances do not alter the

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distribution of utterances, yet they also make no claim as to which words need be uttered. Likewise, a directive such as "free associate" doesn't demand the exact kinds of words to be spoken, but asks one to merely speak without hesitation or restriction. The materiality in which words occur (i.e. verbal or written) is not a distributed paralinguistic technique, yet it does not exist alongside utterances as most non-linguistic techniques do. Rather the materiality is that of which an utterance is – its physical composition.

Table 3. Conversational Techniques Arranged by Their Transformative Inquiry Function

Affective Clarity

Embelling Gestures
Formulations
Word Stems
1st Person Pronouns
Lexical Substitutions
Modifications
Examples
Long Speeches
Eye Gazing
Roleplay
Facilitation

Conceptual Clarity

Definitions
Syllogisms
Word Stems
Hypotheticals
Examples
Identifying Underlying Assumptions
Long Speeches
Frequent Interruptions
Roleplay
Facilitation

Opens the system

Questioning
Roleplay
Facilitation

Closes the system

Formulations
1st Person Pronouns
Lexical Substitutions
Clarifications
Definitions
Syllogisms / Hypotheticals
Roleplay
Facilitation

Listening

Continuers
Silences
Environment (Nature)
Roleplay
Facilitation

Meditative Focus

Long Speeches
Repetitive Actions (Walking)
Bodied Positioning (Tibetan Claps)
Environment (Nature)
Roleplay
Facilitation

Freedom of Expression

Fast Utterances
Long Speeches
Simultaneity of Speech
Free Association
Nonsense
Eye Gaze
Objects (Therapy Couches)
Roleplay
Facilitation

Table 3 displays how the given techniques to be discussed have elements which function to perform critical roles in enhancing transformative inquiry. The following is an explication of each function.

III. Performative Functions of Transformative Inquiry

Noticing: To notice implies a slowing down of the conversational turn-orders to watch, listen and perceive. Noticing is an observational state which brings something into presence that was foreclosed or diminished. It can be performed towards oneself, to another individual or to an entire group. Noticing can be directed at concepts, emotions, moods or environments. Any conversational inquiry involves various moves or steps which can open some pathways, or close others (see "Opening" or "Closing" below). To notice is to pause the inquiry in the moment and to observe the state that it is in, the relationality that binds it, or the conceptual frames related to it. This can prevent the inquiry from going astray, from getting disconnected from the group, or it can help clarify a given emotion or concept by giving it space to breathe and thus helping people to see it more clearly. Collectively noticing can bring about greater group unification, as the group is no longer attempting to change something, or to bring something from our individual egos into the conversation, but rather members are united in a perceptive state of waiting and watching that takes in a situation.

Affective & Conceptual Clarity: Some techniques direct an inquiry towards our emotional attunements. This can include noticing emotions, but also includes embellishing or heightening them, making claims about their connections, and investigating how they function within a relational and affective sphere. Other techniques investigate networks of concepts that connect conversationalists via beliefs that are shared or contrasted. Conceptual exploration entails noticing how a concept functions either logically, theoretically, historically or culturally. It includes investigations into the boundaries of a given concept, revealing how it may function within a constellation of other concepts.[62]

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[62] It should be noted that both the conceptual and affective realms can implicate each other. On the one hand, most emotional exploration implicitly entails beliefs and, therefore, the way in which our beliefs function can condition the way in which our emotions are constituted. We saw this interconnectedness in ancient Greek philosophical practices, but is also present in contemporary practices such as logotherapy or existential humanistic therapies. On the other hand, all concepts are expressive of underlying attitudes – levels of investment and moods attached to various beliefs. These attitudes risk being foregrounded, in which case an inquiry could potentially lose its connection from relationality; i.e. beliefs could be not *someone's* beliefs. This runs the risk of the conversation becoming non-transformative, as a transformation has be *of* an individual, or group, and not contain disconnected beliefs. A conceptual inquiry can reconnect beliefs to a sense of ownership, belonging, and motivational investment, and thereby create the potential for transformation.

Opening or Closing: Any inquiry moves across closures and openings, knowns and unknowns, as experiments are set up, hypotheses raised, and temporary solutions are found. An inquiry can never close down entirely. That would mean that an answer had been found, and there was nothing more to inquire after. An inquiry cannot be opened too widely either, for then there would be too much to wonder about, too many modes of expression or conversational topics for anything useful to be said. At various points in a conversation, some moves create openings, and others create closure. A closure is an act of determination upon the field of conversational potential – an ambiguous idea is articulated into a definite concept or declaration, or an uncertain affect is altered and becomes a clear feeling. An opening is an act of indeterminacy upon the field of conversational potential – a determinate conceptual system or declaration has a hole poked into it, a doubt raised, a problem found, or a clear feeling shifts into an ambiguous and unnameable affect. It is these dialectical movements of openings and closings that allow conversational inquiry to move to greater depths, by a process of reconstitution and recombination that occurs after each rupture or opening.

Expressivity: When inhibitions are lessened, and when we are able to express ourselves clearly and honestly, group cohesion is fostered, and we can access truths that are harder to notice, because we have entered an inquiry with more clarity and presence. Techniques that increase freedom of expression either create more opportunities for one to speak, or increase one's capacity to speak by eliminating hesitations and voices of judgement and self-criticism, both in ourselves and others. This freedom from inhibitions aids inquiry, by helping us get unstuck, by revealing and loosening subconscious psychic obstructions, and by lowering defense mechanisms, all of which can prevent us from being present to conversational moments, insights, and the complicated movements of concepts or feelings.[63]

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[63] This is not to say that there cannot also be highly effective transformative inquiries that operate via restriction and withholding. For instance, the amount of impulse withholding that goes into writing book is almost unfathomable. Potentially all techniques that foster greater freedom of expressivity in certain aspects also implicate a simultaneous withholding of countless other unnameable aspects as well. Radical inhibition and release can even prevent an effective transformative inquiry from taking place as it would perhaps dislodge the ability to use words effectively or listen effectively to other members of a conversation. However, this does not discount the effectiveness of techniques that bring about a greater

Focus: Techniques that emphasize focus use rhythm, duration or environmental stimuli to create perceptive situations which allow us to follow a particular conversational pathway without being easily diverted. This focus can be directed towards either affective or conceptual states, it can coincide with openings or closures, and it can result in clarifications or obfuscations. Focusing techniques allow for an elimination of distraction, a reduction of breadth or a branching-out of the elements within a system, or even a psychic attunement that facilitates a greater ability to stay with a given conversational move.

In this chapter I argue that conversational transformative inquiry performs linguistically. In other words, that these conversational techniques contain linguistic forces which can alter relational dynamics, and push conversations towards deeper and more impactful inquiries. One might argue that these techniques cannot function if they are divorced from the unique contexts provided by the practices in which they originate. These contexts can include subject matters, specific environmental containers, ideological backgrounds, grounding in the intentions of a practice, specific communities, etc. However, I believe these techniques can, indeed, function apart from the practices from which they came for for two reasons. The first is that techniques lie across multiple practices (for example: eye gazing, facilitation, or use of I-statements), which shows that a techniques can hold similar functions in different contexts. The second reason is that practices are not always singular (for example: therapeutic practices have multiple schools as did ancient Greek philosophical practice), which shows that a given practice does not have a singular setting or system, yet techniques are still able to function across these differences. I am not arguing that techniques are independent of their practices, for clearly techniques change when they move from one practice to another; but rather that techniques *can* function outside these practices, and that no school or philosophy can lay exclusive claim to their transformative potential.

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expressibility. This is because one of the major obstacles to a transformative inquiry is personal investment, the ability for one to feel as if the transformation that is occurring is truly "their own" or that it concerns them or is open to their unique subjectivity and personhood. Techniques that release inhibitions give one a greater sense that one is represented in the conversation and this personal investment is critical for a transformation to *really* occur, for an inquiry to not fall flat (as we saw happening all too often with many of the sophists in dialogue with Socrates).

David Kennedy states that the moves of the language game of philosophy, "are implicit in the semantic and syntactical structures of language" (Kennedy 56). In a similar fashion, I hold that these techniques of transformative inquiry also lie within language itself; and that therefore there can be no question of ownership with regard to these techniques, and that no dogma or ideology can claim them. One could remove all Quaker elements from their silent prayer practice, completely secularize it, and although the technique would have a different context, in that the participants would not be meditating in silence about a common divine essence informed by the community's beliefs and prayer, there would still remain some core transformative element that is the constitutive linguistic (or in this case para-linguistic) function of the technique – the silence itself, which extends the empty spaces between statements and allow for noticing and reflection.

IV. Linguistic Techniques

Linguistic techniques will be arranged by the degree to which they prescribe *specific* utterances. The most determinate techniques require entirely scripted lines with signifiers that are predetermined (for example: a therapist using the term "tell me more about that"). These techniques are barely conversational, as they restrict the spontaneous generation of words – yet they are still relevant because they do not take up an entire conversation. Next are techniques that require determinacy for parts of sentences and use word stems or quasi-scripted responses which have some degree of variability (for example, the Authentic Relating practice of starting sentences with "I'm curious about"). After this are techniques with grammatical restrictions, where the technique asks for particular grammatical functions. Some ask for a particular mood, most notably the interrogative, or asking questions (for example, in philosophical dialogue or common classroom pedagogies). Other techniques adjust lexical categories, such as nouns in the case of using personal pronouns or I-statements (for example, as seen in Nonviolent Communication). A further level of determinacy involves techniques that restrict utterances based on semantic particularities – for example, this response must contain words that clarify, or that response must contain words that provide a definition (for example, as utilized in Philosophy for Children's structured philosophical dialogues). Finally, mechanisms that fall on the

boundary-line between linguistic and paralinguistic will be discussed (which includes techniques of free-association and nonsense).

All of the grammatical elements mentioned will not be analyzed for their syntactical grammar, but for their turn-based grammar.[64] Turn-based grammars are "interactional" and utilize "turn construction units" to analyse the modulation of one person's turn into the next (Mazeland 476). In other words, whereas some linguistic systems attempt to construct linguistic analyses around a singular sentence and its utterance, this study will always consider sentences within dialogic exchange. The discipline of conversation analysis utilizes this approach considering conversation as an exchange of "turns", where one person speaks and then the other. By bringing in this interactive back-and-forth process of dialogue exchange, linguistics begins to take account of conversational mechanics. Such an approach will influence the linguistic analysis in this chapter by incorporating interlocutors' exchange of responses into the grammatical function of a given technique. For example, the use of I-statements not only affects the speaker, but provokes an emotional response from an interlocutor, which in turn affects the conversation as a whole.

Word Specificity

1) CLASSIFICATION: These linguistic techniques are the most specific of the linguistic-based techniques, as they demand the necessity of a speaker to implement specific words – either an exact sentence or a partial sentence.

2) EXAMPLES: In many therapeutic practices popular phrases such as "how does that make you feel?" or "tell me more about that" have become almost ubiquitous to the practice as they push a client to analyze their emotional responses in greater depth. Continuers, or the "mms", "ahs", "uh huhs" and "yeahs" (Fitzgerald 6) of therapists are used to convey presence and listening, and subtly nudge the client to keep speaking in a particular way (168-9). In Circling, sentences stems such as "I notice" or "I feel" or "I wonder" are the predominant utterances which drive the relational inquiry.

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[64] The identification and study of turn-based grammars is taken up by the discipline of conversational analysis.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Such sentences perform transformative functions semantically. The meaning of an "I feel" sentence, an indication to say more about one's feeling, or the use of a continuer, is interpreted by the person spoken to, prompting them to give a response that deepens transformative conversation. The exact nature of this transformation will differ depending on the sentence (or sentence stem). The performance of these techniques relies upon well-conceived implementation of these quasi-scripted devices – understanding when and where each of them should be spoken. It is much clearer to give instructions and propagate a practice with techniques at this level of specificity, rather than utilize techniques such as "identify an underlying assumption." In the latter case, one must first understand what an act of identification and underlying assumption is, and only after this is known (which involves familiarity with the given conversational practice) is one able to implicitly restrict the range of possible utterances falling under this larger umbrella.

Questioning

1) CLASSIFICATION: This technique utilizes grammatical specificity (specifically one of an interrogative mood).

2) EXAMPLES: While questions have a wide variety of functions outside of conversation practices, the question plays a critical role in both therapy and philosophy, both of which use questions in an open-ended process, where questions need not be given finalized responses that provide closure.[65]

3) PERFORMATIVITY: For philosophical dialogue, the question is the basic unit of inquiry as it, "represents the disequilibrative element in any conceptual structure, and thus the opening for its deconstruction and reconstruction" (Kennedy 98). In therapeutic discourses, questions are the

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[65] Regarding the issue of question-delimitation one should consult J.T. Dillon's *The Practice of Questioning* which explicates all sorts of questions that do not pertain to the questioning practices I am analysing here including: "trivial, foolish, dumb, vacuous, pathological, premature, inappropriate, or absurd" questions (Dillon 132-3). It is the "open question" that most concerns our study, and while the so-called "open question" is never actually open, it appears to have this quality because it, "permits respondents to bespeak their own ideas in their own words, whereas the other generic form specifies ideas and words for them to choose." (Ibid 140)

tools used by therapists to direct an investigation towards a given aspect of a patient's psyche. In both cases, and for all inquiry as such, questions are also the formative linguistic unit. An inquiry is not possible within a determinate system of statements and facts. Rather, it requires pathways of unknowns sown into the fabric of the conceptual frameworks. These unknowns are linguistically created by the question and the interrogative mood that it establishes.

Personal Pronouns

1) CLASSIFICATION: Grammatical Specificity (noun replacement).

2) EXAMPLES: Non-violent communication, Circling, Twelve-step programs. Practices such as Circling and nonviolent communication (NVP) and twelve-step programs transform sentences using second person pronouns into first person pronouns. For example, a sentence such as "you are making me upset" would be transformed into "when you did this, I felt upset."

3) PERFORMATIVITY: In heightened emotional contexts one can easily assign blame, judgements or projections onto another person. Any sentence which performs these function via second person pronouns can be transformed to the first person, and requires the speaker to locate their own feelings and sometimes substitute causation with correlation (as seen in the example above). By eliminating an other person's role as causal agent responsible for a challenging emotion it becomes easier to navigate challenging emotions. Without accusations, judgements or claims about another person that reduce their agency, the technique avoids conflict and reactionary statements that risk closing down inquiry. Similarly, first person pronouns can be uttered alongside verbs and actions and direct attention to the moment (for example: "I am feeling" or "I am noticing"). "I", being a deictic term, denotes a different referent each time it is uttered, depending on who speaks it. When a group of persons all say "I", this shifting placement of "I" brings to light the interrelated affective situation. This exchange of personal pronouns (which all have the same signifier but different signifieds) creates a background upon which individuals in a group can explore the ways in which their subjectivities grammatically swing back-and-forth, and reveal how such subjectivities are predicated on a co-constitutional communal situatedness.

Semantic Specificity

1) CLASSIFICATION: Semantic specificity restricts the range of utterances, and their responses, based on an understanding of the implied meaning of the term utilized in the instruction.

2) EXAMPLES: The vast majority of conversational transformative techniques rely upon semantic specificity. In therapeutic practices, these include a wide range of techniques such as formulations, lexical substitutions, extensions and re-interpretive statements.[66] Such techniques may be found in the philosophical dialogical practice called "Community of Philosophical Inquiry."[67]

3) PERFORMATIVITY: All of the techniques that imply semantic specificity rely upon an implicit understanding of the possible range of utterances that lie behind each instruction, a range determined by the meaning of each term, such as "extension," "substitution," or "formulation." This meaning need not be conceptually understood, but can be grasped functionally. Knowing

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[66] Some examples and how they function: Formulations, or attempts at clarifications, are used to gently nudge a client's conversation in a given direction such that the therapist "can focus on aspects of the client's problem" (Fitzgerald 169) and push the therapeutic work of interpretation, decision and action upon the client rather than upon the therapist. These formulations are key in therapeutic work as they push a client's inquiry towards "mutual understandings" (Fitzgerald 105) rather than having to accept advice from an external authority figure. Lexical substitution, offering alternative words for prior expressions by the client, are ways of deliberately intensifying emotions or showing attentiveness – which, in turn, can prompt a client to "talk more explicitly about feelings" (Peräkylä 190). Extensions, or utterances designed as, "syntactical continuation[s] of the first speaker's talk" (192) perform two quite different, but related, transformative functions: either "suggesting to the client that he or she does not fully recognize what is in his or her experience", or "validating the client's emotional experience" (193). Reinterpretive statements, which attempt to offer new and different understandings of a given claim "serve the therapeutic goal of challenging the patient's current understandings of his or her mind or action, and of offering new ones" (193). They "interpret the unconscious", "explicate the symbolic meaning of a patient's action" and aid in "identifying and managing unconscious resistance" (190) all of which allow an inquiry to move into further psychic depths within the given theoretical psychoanalytic framework.

[67] Some of the dialogical moves used include, "identifying an underlying assumption, restating a point as a logical proposition or as a syllogism, pointing out the necessary implications of a statement (showing what follows), identifying a contradiction, stringing a series of points together in a logical sequence" (Kennedy 148). Moves such as these add conceptual clarity to a given discussion by revealing the "underlying logical structure" (149) of the argument or its absence, and thereby attempt to gain a more cohesive mutual understanding of the given topic. These moves also perpetuate a listening that is focused around the conceptual movements at hand. In making any of the above mentioned "moves," one undergoes a larger attempt to "make visible, clarify, or connect what has already emerged" (148).

the kinds of responses a given utterance can produce can determine which responses will be successful for driving the inquiry deeper. While a reinterpretive statement gains acuity by those trained in therapeutic fields, its functionality need not be tied simply here. The techniques mentioned above function primarily on the conversational responsiveness that they condition, and which produce further responses by the speaker.

Nonsense

1) CLASSIFICATION: These techniques utilize nonsensical and meaningless words. Given that these nonsensical practices are not linguistically defined,[68] they cannot be classified as linguistic practices; yet, their transformative potential is not performed via spacing or duration, and therefore these practices cannot be classified as para-linguistic. Nonsense-based practices lie on the margins of linguistic practice, and like techniques of free association, they transform via the free and unrestricted flow of words. For both practices, it is words that transform, but through the mere phatic act of speaking – speech without meaning.

2) EXAMPLES: This phenomenon is present in certain avant-garde art movements (sound poetry, dada, surrealists) but has more significant transformative functions in religious practices, such as the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity movements who practice glossolalia.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Glossolalia is defined as a involuntary, "automatic" speech-like vocalization predominantly accompanied by shaking, trembling, and other sorts of kinetic behavior (Goodman F. 124). Those who practice glossolalia speak of it as a "baptism of the holy spirit" (Samarin 65) made possible in part by a shift towards a greater focus on feeling with fewer thoughts (20), facilitated by a trance-like state with a lack of conscious control. A typical entry into glossolalia is given by a simple instruction for one to "speak whatever comes to you" which is meant to "reduce inhibitions" (20). This entry into nonsense preceded by these simple instructions is meant to catalyze the transformative experience of "speaking in tongues" popularized in media and contemporary culture. This transformative experience can produce

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[68] One doesn't speak a language when one practices glossolalia as there is no learnt set of rules and no grammar (Samarin 73).

states of mind that sometimes last as long as weeks, and can entirely alter an individual's mindset, attitudes, beliefs and values. The transformative potential of this practice, in part, relies on techniques that create judgement-free rapid flows of speech. Nonsense acts as a vehicle for even faster speech flows, and an even greater absence of judgmental thoughts, by reducing language to a pure state of utterance divorced of all meaning. In the context of a church, this unhindered and uninterrupted speech punctuates religio-spiritual conversations – but if transferred to another setting, this practice can enhance or inform conversational inquiries into the transformative states produced by such practices.

Free Association

1) CLASSIFICATION: A similar outlier is the technique of free association, which does not limit one's speech by any given semantic constraints, but rather by a durational constraint – one speaks whatever comes to mind without limit or hesitation.[69]

2) EXAMPLES: This technique is used widely in all psychoanalysis and talk therapy. It is considered by some to be "the principal method of psychoanalysis" (Kris 3) whereby 'the analyst brings to light discontinuities in the patient's associations, toward the ultimate goal of helping patients "regain lost connections"' (5).

3) PERFORMATIVITY: The technique involves a person speaking whatever comes to mind, while another person analyzes the associations that are produced. While this analysis, and the insight it provides are, to a significant degree, informed by psychoanalytic practice and doctrine, a crucial aspect of the technique of free associating lies in its mere linguistic performance, which has therapeutic value "in and of itself" (Tuch 38). The technique gives its practitioner the capacity to "gracefully and effortlessly shift between the two competing modes of thinking (modes of consciousness) – active and passive, doing and being" (ibid). Through this process, the person who freely associates gains a better capacity to see parts of themselves that are usually

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[69] It may be argued that free association is not a dialogical technique and that it is purely a monogical practice; however, the continuers used by therapists who are actively listening play a key role in this technique's function (Fitzgerald 168-9). Moreover, Freud was never silent during his patient's free associations (Shapiro 202) and additionally it is likely that even monologically inclined analysts are pone to add infrequent interruptions and re-formulations (208).

concealed. The speaker becomes more capable of drawing connections between causes and motivations of various psychic contents, thereby allowing an inner inquiry to create more significant insights.[70]

V. Paralinguistic Techniques

This section will focus on how utterances are distributed – their speed, their duration, and the spacings that occur between them. While all speech is distributed, spaced, rhythmic and composed of varying durations, intentionally constructed practices exaggerate or diminish these spacings to aid functions of transformative inquiry.

Long Utterances

1) CLASSIFICATION: Duration of speech can be exaggerated to create extremely long utterances, thereby creating an emotional and affective distance between speaker and listeners. These are, however, outlier phenomena – for in them, speech moves away from a conversational modality and towards monological utterances. Two types of long utterances will be considered – those whose performance rely upon transmission, and those which rely upon expressivity.

2) EXAMPLES: Examples of practices which rely upon transmission include: religious sermons, oratory practices, political speeches, or in conferences and lectures. Examples of practices which rely upon expressivity include: christian confessional booths, traditional psychotherapeutic practices, talking circles, 12-step programs, and Quaker meetings.

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[70] The actual method of transformation is far from clear and differs according to different schools of psychotherapy. While some believe this bond is one of empathetic listening, other schools of thought, for instant Lacanian, disavow an empathetic response and place emphasis on the analyst training their mind to stop listening to what is being said and to begin listening to how things are being said. This involves resisting the story that is being told via the analysand's free associations, and resisting trying to understand them (Fink 10-11). In this sense, free association can be considered an act that merely pierces or breaks through a patient's layers of story which irrationally (and perhaps incoherently) allows inner psychic content to be revealed. Christopher Bollas, in an attempt to return to Freud, considers the analysand-analyst relationship as one where both participants must abandon reason in favor of "associative thinking and speaking." (Bollas 15) The technique of free association may indeed create a mutual relationship between participants of non-conscious thinking which is mutually "regressive" and returns participants to childhood but now, as adults, equipped with, "more sophisticated unconscious capabilities" (Ibid).

3a) PERFORMATIVITY (Transmission): Monologues establish a greater distance between speaker and audience. Such a distance can move this speech act away from a reflective analysis of this very relation (between speaker and audience). Yet, it is precisely this sustained duration and distance that gives this technique efficacy. The function of monological practices, as seen in Ancient Greek oratory, has the effect of transmitting knowledge by bringing the listener into a dream-like and hypnotized state of focused listening and absorption (Havelock 217). Problematically, this transmission does not ensure that a speech aids inquiry. The birth of philosophical inquiry positioned itself against this absence of dialects within sophistic long-form speech. Socratic Dialogue created a mode of discourse capable of responsive exchanges of questions and answers and requests for definitions and clarifications (219). However, as dialectical question-answer modalities became embedded into monological formats (as seen in the vast majority of contemporary written philosophy), long form speeches themselves began to have the potential to be somewhat dialogical, insofar as they are capable of "pursuing two different yet mutually responsive and corresponding trains of thought" (Nikulin 67). In such circumstances, the speech functions as a focusing mechanism giving the audience one speaker, one voice and one style that creates perceptual coherence across a multiplicity of potential conversational pathways. One is less distracted by questions that could derail a conversation, as our minds and attentions are guided towards the pathways articulated by the author's intentions.

3b) PERFORMATIVITY (Expressivity): Long speeches, however, afford another function other than transmission – that of enhancing one's expressive capacities. Conversations can be fraught with anxiety, as one never knows when another person is going to interrupt, what the interruption will be, and whether one can prepare for such interruptions (Nikulin 104). Long speeches, on the other hand, demand implicit social consent that those listening will not interrupt, thereby reducing a speaker's conversational anxiety. A certain calm and focus can allow the listener to concentrate on ideas and feelings. These speeches differ from religious or political speech in that they are not pre-planned, and do not attempt to argue a position; rather, they begin from a place of unknowing, and are themselves investigative. The listener is given the function of aiding the speaker's focus and deepening their inquiry by listening without the possibility of interruption. By not responding to someone's inner monologue, one can force a monologuer to go deeper into

their psyche and witness emergent fantasies that would not have been possible in a more inter-relational focus (Shapiro 215). Additionally, this lack of response forces the client "to work things out alone" (Fitzgerald 143), pushing the individual to do the investigative work via the relational space of the other who is listening to the lengthy speech.

Short Utterances

1) CLASSIFICATION: At the opposite end of the durational spectrum are techniques which utilize short utterances. Even though this includes most conversational practice, the structural mechanisms embedded within the quick back-and-forth is what endows transformative techniques with the capacity to perform. While the actual duration of short utterances is conditioned by the circumstances, all short utterances have in common an interruptive quality that can potentially, at any moment, cut a particular utterance off and begin another utterance by a different speaker (see below).

2) EXAMPLES: Countless examples (the vast majority of conversational practices, excluding the aforementioned long speech practices).

3) PERFORMATIVITY: An interruptibility that facilitates conversations of short utterances is one of the foundational elements for all dialogical practices (Yakubinsky 51). Examples can be found in dinner table conversations, talks with friends, arguments on the street, etc. In this respect, interruptibility is responsible for the functioning of the linguistic techniques mentioned above (rejoinders, clarifications, questions, amendments, responses, analysis, etc). These techniques operate on turn-based responses. Short utterances allow for one turn to end, and another to begin, thereby enabling a technique's performance to operate within the responsive exchange of conversation, and also enabling multiple techniques to be interconnected. This aggregative interruptive process is what extends a given inquiry and allows an inquiry to proceed and deepen via a dialectical process of utterance and response. It also provides increased opportunities for interlocutors to utilize transformative linguistic techniques by increasing the number of turns of a given conversation.

Utterance Gaps

1) CLASSIFICATION: Another duration to consider is not that of the speech itself, but the gaps between utterances. Usually quite short, the extension of these pauses can create revelatory silences and open a contemplative space.

2) EXAMPLES: We can see these silences or pauses occuring continually in talk therapy, but they are also found in Quaker Meetings, where these pauses are a predominant technique of transformative inquiry.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: In Quaker Meetings, worshipers sit in extended pauses or silences in-between taking turns giving a spoken monologue. Quaker worshippers think of themselves as "radical seekers" (Searl 60) whose inquiry is in part activated by this silent worship. For Quakers, "words and silence share a symbiotic relationship" (Searl 43), implying that these pauses in-between speech create a contemplative capacity that extends into the re-introduction of speech. The silence creates a mood of quiet calm or focused waiting and listening (Searl 69) afforded by the removal of active utterances and by a conversational "letting-be" – namely, an acceptance of the state we find ourselves in, rather than the use of speech to alter this state. This letting-be is facilitated not only by the silence, but by stopping all intentions to speak. Paolo Virno in *When the Word Becomes Flesh,* undertakes a linguistic analysis that can be applied to these silences. In speech, Virno identifies a pure phatic sayable "I Speak" which underlies a decision to break the internal speech, to expose oneself to others, to enter noisy egocentric language (Virno 71). By not speaking, by not engaging in this pure sayable, one is brought into existential quandaries, as one questions such things as the underlying necessity for all speech whatsoever and one's underlying intentions for undergoing speech acts. When speech is returned, the speaker is then able to express something that lies "inward" (Searl 61). It is the calm waiting in silence that gives this "inward" expression the spaciousness to unfold. One observes one's thoughts and feelings more easily in this silence, and this noticing gives one's thoughts more time to develop and deepen.

Speed

1) CLASSIFICATION: An increase in the rate of speech creates the potential for more expressive inquiries.

2) EXAMPLES: As seen in Surrealist automatic writing, speaking and creative techniques, as well as in glossolalia practices.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Andre Breton mentions this practice in the *Surrealist Manifesto,* when he speaks of an attempt to create "a monologue spoken as rapidly as possible without any intervention on the part of the critical faculties, a monologue consequently unencumbered by the slightest inhibition and which was, as closely as possible, akin to spoken thought" (Breton 23). This practice aims to loosen the divide between thought and speech, to let all possible thoughts come out, unhindered and judgement-free. The mechanism of achieving this expressive function is not an instruction to "free associate", but rather a necessity to speak so quickly that one is unable to hesitate or judge one's thoughts. Without judgement, and without repression, one is able to see (or to record and then go back and see) repressed thoughts that form the inner workings of one's psyche. This visibility of inner psychic mechanisms enables a more penetrative self-inquiry, as the inquiry moves beyond surface impressions and reveals more ingrained truths about an affective state. While this practice was not predominantly utilized as a conversational technique within Surrealist practices, it was embedded within larger conversational and written practices whereby one would speak rapidly and other participants would listen and record the thoughts for further dialogue, reflection and creative inspiration.

Simultaneity

1) CLASSIFICATION: This paralinguistic technique eliminates the turn-based aspect of conversation achieved by speaking simultaneously with an interlocutor.

2) EXAMPLES: This phenomenon happens naturally and quite frequently in brief conversational moments, but also occurs artistically in works such as Linda Griffith's *Age of Arousal* and Glenn Gould's *Contrapuntal Radio*. Although, to my knowledge at least, this practice is not used in any

established conversational setting, I have experimented with it with remarkable success (see Chapter 4).

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Simultaneous talking eliminates the conversational issue of waiting – of not being able give a response when one desires to. Talking simultaneously allows for a greater cohesion and unity of conversationalists, because no singular individual is highlighted by their ability to speak, and no one is diminished by being unable to speak in that moment. Nobody is pushed outside by another voice. This practice is challenging to learn; it takes much practice to be able to: 1) resist the urge to stop speaking and let someone else speak; 2) listen at the same time as one is talking. Nonetheless, simultaneously speaking, via the cohesiveness just mentioned, can push a conversational inquiry into a level of communal expressivity and collaborative simultaneity of expression. This is made possible by a moment-by-moment, shared, phatic, communal experience.

Writing / Speaking

1) CLASSIFICATION: Alternating between writing and speaking is a non-linguistic technique which changes the materiality of the utterance. While the materiality of utterances, such as whether an utterance is written or spoken, can seriously impact a transformative inquiry, the scope of this impact is not contained to individual conversation practices, and stretches out over the history of print and literate culture. Nonetheless, I shall note some of these differences which relate to, and add depth to, techniques already mentioned.

2) EXAMPLES: Countless transformative practices utilize writing; however, not all utilize it in a conversational manner. Some examples which do utilize writing conversationally are: classroom pedagogy, drama therapy, twelve step programs and letter writing.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Writing's spatiality can afford a more visualized and concretized thinking process, as it gives one the ability to write a thought, to place it and distribute it within a spatial field. This allows for a graphic movement of thoughts and a complicated transcendent assemblage of ideas that is much harder to achieve in speech (see Ong). Such a picture helps

grant nuance and subtlety to one's conceptual or affective conversations. While writing practices do not, for the most part, implicate dialogical and conversational modalities that I am invested in here, and tend to utilize more individualistic, monological communication, there are nevertheless conversational practices of writing that *relate* – such as letter writing, emailing, texting and collaborative online word processing.[71] Writing is typically a much quieter practice than speaking, with less pronounced gestures and intonations, and a greater uniformity of body positions. This allows writing to achieve a quasi-meditative silence, as one is able to write in the company of (and at the same time as) others, but without others knowing the content of your communication. One can break off from a conversation to give everyone the opportunity to write at the same time (a technique used frequently in classroom settings), which allows for a more in-depth investigation. This is made possible not only by the visuality of the words (discussed above), but also by the elimination of conversational turns. Writing allows us to externalize our thoughts together without necessarily implicating others in those externalizations. Such a technique allows a person to better mask emotions or embodied, gestural responses. Reducing the "visibility" of emotions affords the possibility of an easier turn inwards and a focus on a given affective or conceptual concern (and also notably decreases one's focus on the relational space that one is currently in). Vocal utterances have the opposite appeal, in that they foreground gesture and intonation, which can give voice to hidden feelings and motivations. Moreover, speaking is typically much faster than writing, lending it a greater capacity for breaking through our own judgements (as seen above in the Surrealist techniques of fast talking).

VI. Non-Linguistic Techniques

Eyes – Gazing, Averting

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[71] The long and varied history of letter writing contains varied durations, materialities, spacings, and paratextual marginalia all of which may indeed contribute to transformations of the senders and recipients. I can think of no better example than the exchange of love letters, a practice which goes back thousands of years and, while clearly being transformative, carries a special relation to inquiry. The inquiry of love letters is not necessarily a testing of one's beliefs or of the behaviors and contexts which condition certain affective states, rather it involves a testing of inter-relational attraction and repulsion – an investigation into the limits, boundaries (or lack thereof) between two subjects. Some famous historical examples of these include letters written between Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre or Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt.

1) CLASSIFICATION: Whether we see them as windows to the soul, or as parasympathetic nervous system activator, eyes are emotionally charged affective zones which play out powerfully in conversations of inquiry. These visual signals of the face are "interactionally more relevant than looking anywhere else during a conversation" (Rossano 310). Eye gaze is utilized in conversations of transformative inquiry by holding a gaze into another's eyes which deepens intimacy and affective focus, or by averting one's gaze which can remove our conscious mind from a focus on another's feelings and their responses.[72]

2) EXAMPLES: Averting gaze examples are found mostly in psychotherapy. Examples of deepening gaze include: numerous contemporary performance art practices (for example Marina Abramovic *The Artist is Present*) and countless therapeutic and relational practices (Circling, Group Therapy, Gestalt, etc) where a greater emotional intensity and intimate focus is desired.

3a) PERFORMATIVITY (Averting): Traditional psychotherapeutic practice purposefully employs an aversion of eye gaze for therapeutic functions. The client, seated in a couch, looks away from the therapist or closes their eyes to produce a focus on one's inner landscape and help achieve the task of free association. The client, "is deprived of the facial cues by which we normally judge the receptivity, the approval or disapproval, of an interlocutor," (Shapiro 211) which reduces a client's focus on how their words are received, and lets a client disclose more protected parts of themself, as they are potentially less concerned with the impact of what they say. The lack of eye gaze establishes a distance from the relational-emotive terrain of the other, which allows the client to undergo a self inquiry removed from the moment-by-moment relationality and the linguistic or gestural responses that occur in most conversations. This removal of another's responses can be quite uncomfortable, as one doesn't know how one is being judged. This, in turn, helps to bring transferences and latent psychic issues to the surface which can be analyzed and explored. Because a client sees or hears no response, and in fact sees or hears no-one, this lets the client's imagination more easily project prior intra-subjective

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[72] Another possibility which I will briefly mention here is that of looking towards a particular object which can help afford meditative focus. This happens frequently in instances such as walking through a natural setting and conversing while observing trees, the ocean or other elements of one's surroundings. One constructed conversation practice that intentionally utilizes this aspect of eye gaze is hypnotism which utilizes deep focus on an object to achieve a trance-like state. In both cases the use of repetitive movements of external objects affords a deeper focus or stillness.

personas onto the therapist (a past lover, one's mother or father). The exploration that ensues is relational, but the relationality is extended to a wider network of the client's inter/intra-subjective entities (parts of themselves and significant others) made possible by the reduction of the immediate affective and responsive relationality in the room.

3b) PERFORMATIVITY (Deepening): Alternatively, one can use a deeper focus into the eye gaze of another to facilitate transformative functions. Looking into someone's eyes is an act that creates intimacy. It allows you to better read another's emotions, while simultaneously letting the other read yours. Moreover, it allows for interconnected reactions between interlocutors to these readings of emotion. Eye gazing both helps emotions rise to the surface and allows these emotions to be observed and responded to. While this is occurring (or immediately after), conversation becomes more emotionally charged and interconnected, and typically the subject matter becomes weighted with affect, allowing an inquiry to go deeper into the affective-relational aspects of a given conversation.

Body Positioning

1) CLASSIFICATION: Some practices spatially arrange bodies within a room to help visualize and actualize social dynamics.

2) EXAMPLES: Sociometry and embodied spectrograms, as developed by Jacob Moreno and psychodramatic practitioners, utilize techniques of body positioning. One method of enactment is to posit that one end of a room represents a given choice and the other end an opposing choice (for example: the left side of the room represents those who feel scared to proceed, and the right side of the room represents those who feel excited to proceed). The next step is that everyone places themselves in the room in a spot that corresponds to their feeling in relation to these two poles. Another method of enactment asks participants a question, and guided instructions are then related to the people in the room (for example: put your hand on the shoulder of the person you would most like to comfort you if you were feeling bad). This method creates a complicated social mapping of intersecting and polarizing desires. Once these embodied social maps are

created (in either method of enactment), a discussion then ensues between participants, asking why they are where they are, and directing individuals to discuss reasons for their placement.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: The embodied positioning of these social maps allows for a tactile and visual representation of social dynamics. Desires and social relations can typically go unnoticed, be repressed, or be only marginally discussed. Mapping these desires allows an entire group to simultaneously display and express an implicit social configuration or desire. This allows the group to notice the distribution of desires and interests in a way that mere conversation would preclude. It is the embodied spatialization which facilitates the expression of these desires and implicit social structures which then gives a group a deepened level of expression and articulation.

Repetitive Actions

1) CLASSIFICATION: The repetitive actions under consideration here are non-linguistic and embodied, and unlike gestures (see below) they are not extensions of conversational semantic content.

2) EXAMPLES: The repetitive motions of bowing, walking, or clapping have historically accompanied a wide range of transformative conversational inquiries. From Chasidic shuckling while studying the Talmud, to Zen Debate claps used to engage the interlocutor, to the practice of contemplative walking, these repetitive movements accompany conversation meant to aid transformation. In Western philosophy, the practice of walking plays a significant role, from Aristotle's peripatetic practice of walking while giving his lectures, to Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker,* written after a series of long saunterings, to the lonely wooded or mountainous strolls of Nietzsche and Heidegger.

3a) PERFORMATIVITY (Background): These repetitive physical actions can be seen as extensions of the embodied vocalizations already occurring within speech. Eric Havelock, in an analysis of the cultural practices of the recitation of Homeric poetry, claims that all repetitions of speech create embodied reverberations (which are also repetitive) in the larynx (Havelock 148).

The simple repetition of a phrase or a bodily motion alongside speech creates a more restricted economy "of possible combinations of reflexes" (149), which establishes an embodied patterning that aids memorization of concepts, words and ideas. This embodied patterning not only assists memorization, but also creates the conditions for a deepened focus. The repeated pattern establishes a gestural baseline – a rhythmic convention which the mind can rest upon. If one thinks of a conversation gesturally, then the actual diversity of types of larynx movements within conversation is aided dynamically by a physical rhythmic gestural baseline (walking, bowing, strumming) that can "keep the tempo." Musically, a kind of focus is created through the presence of a repetitive and meditative rhythm underneath a more complex melody. This analogy applies to conversation as well. Actions such as shuckling, or walking and pacing, facilitate this baseline underneath a conversation of inquiry, and help give conversationalists a calm focus that allows the inquiry to move deeper into its subject matter.

3b) PERFORMATIVITY (Foreground): In addition to creating a background of focus, repetitive gestures can also more explicitly punctuate sentences. In the practice of Tibetan debate, the action of clapping is "used by the questioner to punctuate each question" (Dreyfus). For debaters, the "gestures function primarily to stage debates, bringing them a clarity and a decisiveness that can help mobilize the intellectual capacities of the debaters and capture the attention of the audience" (Ibid). The clap highlights the unit of the question; its abrasive, loud and focused energetic pulse catalyzes the attack of the questioner. In this instance, the question is not calm and curious; it is decisive and somewhat aggressive. It is the clap that helps give the question this quality, using its punctuated force to again and again place the interlocutor's focus on the question at hand. The clap instills deepened focus, but uses an abrasive gesture to bring focus and attention to the inquiry.

Embellishing and Exaggerating Gestures

1) PERFORMATIVITY: Gestures, or non-linguistic embodied articulations, are unlike the repetitive movements articulated above that do not add embodied expression to a given semantic phrase. Gestures occur naturally within conversation and are tied to emotive expression. Techniques which utilize gesture do so mainly through embellishment and exaggeration.

2) EXAMPLES: This technique is used primarily in drama therapy and gestalt therapy, where a gesture is seen as a more telling articulation of one's psyche, or inner landscape, and sometimes more so than words. Within a therapeutic conversation, a client will produce a spontaneous gesture, such as a scratch of the head, a twiddle of the thumbs, or a tapping of the foot. The therapist will notice this gesture, and then instruct the client to exaggerate the gesture or to vocalize utterances that coincide with these gestures.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: This practice helps a client to "go deeper" or "stay with" an emotion that is connected to the given gesture. This in turn contributes to a greater agency over a situation and greater awareness (Brownell 160-161). Exaggerating and embellishing gestures can deepen an inquiry by helping conversationalists further explore one's affective state by highlighting and expressing emotions that were not noticed or only marginally, gesturally displayed. Given that gestures are expressive of emotions that are unnoticed or unseen, highlighting and exaggerating these gestures allows the emotion "underneath" to also be highlighted and exaggerated, foregrounding vital affective information that can be discussed or utilized within a given conversational inquiry.

Objects

1) CLASSIFICATION: The utilization of objects is a non-linguistic technique of incorporating tools and inanimate physical material into a conversation. These objects, unlike environmental factors (see below), are manipulated and utilized by conversationalists for varied effects.

2) EXAMPLES: In traditional psychotherapeutic practice it is the couch which "impedes both patient and analyst in availing themselves of channels of communication found in most conversations" (Shapiro 211).[73] The "empty chair" technique of Gestalt Therapy, pioneered by

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[73] For a thorough and engaging discussion of the psychotherapeutic history of the couch see *On the Couch: A Repressed History of the Analytic Couch from Plato to Freud* by Nathan Kravis. Kravis opens his book by arguing that if the analyst's couch were merely a technique of impeding communication channels then chairs facing opposite directions would do quite well (1); to the contrary, the couch has unique transformative functions that chairs do not hold. Kravis goes on to consider: phylogenetic and ontogenetic evidence that argues that reclining brings us closer to our "primitive" natures (66), considers

Fritz Perls utilizes an empty chair in which the client can imagine and role-play various personal and interpersonal persona in order to actively explore the relationship between one's differing identities (Joyce & Sills 98). In classroom settings, desks can be arranged to mimic factories, to propagate values of individualism, and/or establish an open, airy environment for a greater emphasis on nature and the environment (Baker).

3) PERFORMATIVITY In the case of the chair, it is its physicality, its fluid ease of movement, alongside its ubiquitous placement in culture – that creates the potential for numerous roles, associations and identities to be mapped upon it. Chairs facing a singular teacher, facilitator or lecturer create a sense of hierarchical focus towards this leading individual, which can aid in the ability to give directed attention in environments where a singular person or media source is communicating to a group. In the vast majority of contemporary conversational settings, and given the interspersed and fluid attentions moving from different conversationalists (and implicit egalitarian values of providing equal opportunity to all interlocutors), the arrangement of furniture attempts to destabilize rigid hierarchy. This can be accomplished by fluid design arrangements (Plummer) or by arranging chairs or desks into circles, squares and other shapes that decenter any given individual. By consciously setting objects in place, the objects in turn spatially distribute our bodies and gestures, which then impacts a conversation by more easily facilitating certain techniques. Chair placement can either help our eyes move towards each other, or towards an aversion of gaze (techniques mentioned above). Furniture placement in general can direct our attention to be focused on a particular person, object or each other, or can result in a more peripheral attention. Overall, the use and placement of objects within conversation contains transformative functions particular to each object and placement; however, all of these functions share a similar mechanism of altering embodied positions and distributions which facilitate (or impede) the enactment of other techniques or conversational behaviors.

Environments

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the histories of somatic and suggestive therapies, all contemporary with Freud, that required recumbency (115), remarks on how the psychoanalytic twin drives of death and sex both are intimately related recumbency (163), and finally argues that "recumbent speech transcends free association in that it authorizes a mode of intrapsychic and interpersonal luxuriation" (167).

1) CLASSIFICATION: Environmental conditions can be intentionally arranged to impact a conversational inquiry. This includes factors such as: environment, setting, place, etc. An intentional choice of a setting, or a design choice to construct a certain type of room, all stem from a shared investment in the type of functionality of a given space, of the given set of affordances available, defined as, "the possibilities provided by the environment to a user with certain skills and inclications (Woolner 46).

2) EXAMPLES: Spiritual journeys, religious pilgrimages, and walking meditations use the natural outdoor environs to situate and condition a reflective modality made possible by the open landscape, scenery and greater expansiveness of movement potentials that the outdoors affords. Classroom design and the design of indoor therapeutic spaces also utilize environmental considerations in their design.

3) PERFORMATIVITY Outdoor, natural settings typically contain less intentionally designed objects, which results in a wider range of possibilities for action and movement and a corresponding feeling of openness, possibility and play. When designing interior spaces for learning, this open expansiveness is a design possibility which can stimulate a sense of discovery and facilitate an active awareness and growth of self identity (Goodman R. 95). Another option is that learning spaces can be designed to facilitate control and discipline, such as the factory-like school designs of the 19th century.[74] Intentionally choosing a place for an inquiry allows one to alter these sets of affordances, as well as the networks of associations manifested in an environment and the set of possible movements one can perform within the given conversational setting. An active, expansive inquiry can be aided by being set within an open place with a wide range of potentials. A focused inquiry, one that intends to direct the subjects of the conversation to the topics or the people in the conversation itself, could close off these sets of associations to potentially allow a more focused conversation.

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[74] This interplay between discipline and control, between the desire "to impose discipline and control through a resolute set of spaces" and "the emerging desire to encourage individual creativity by the production of the buildings which were not enclosing and confining" is a defining pedagogical dialectic of the 19th and early 20th century (Dudek 5) and perhaps stills plays out today in the design of learning spaces.

Role-play

1) CLASSIFICATION: We always exist in roles – worker, father, student, teacher, client, etc – which have varying degrees of fluidity and self-understanding. A role, mediates between self and other, and can be defined as "qualities of thought, feeling, and behavior taken on from another and represented in a way prescribed by social convention" (Landy 92). Certain techniques explicitly adapt and create roles within a conversational setting for transformative effects.

2) EXAMPLES: Used primarily in psychodrama, drama therapy, and gestalt therapy.

3) PERFORMATIVITY Drama therapy aims to increase the dimensions of one's roles to allow a client to feel a wider range of expressions and to think a wider range of thoughts made possible by increased role dimensionality (Landy 45). This is achieved as a client either, "assumes a fictional identity that is not their own" (Jones 97), or plays the role of themselves in another time period, or even isolates an aspect of their identity to adapt and play (198). By allowing the playing-out of specific and alternative identities: 1) one can inquire more deeply, because one is able to inquire *from* a role more accustomed to inquiry (for example: perhaps playing one's critical mother allow more penetrative conversational moves) 2) one is given a fuller range of emotional expressibility, as role-play facilitates expanded expressiveness by allowing roles to be played containing emotions not easily played-out, or perhaps subconsciously undermined and blocked 3) one is given a wider vocabulary of roles, expanding the affective inquiry that individuals undergo. This play of identities can facilitate an almost limitless range of linguistic and paralinguistic techniques, such as silences, attentiveness to feeling, long or short speeches, etc. In this regard, the act of role-play creates the potential to more easily facilitate any of the aforementioned techniques.

Facilitation

1) CLASSIFICATION: Facilitation is a kind of role that helps activate a wide array of subsidiary techniques and conversational transformations. Typically, it entails a single person taking on a leadership role which involves making more pronounced conversational moves and decisions.

2) EXAMPLES: Facilitation is perhaps the most prevalent technique of transformative conversational practices, and in fact almost every practice under consideration has the potential of utilizing a facilitator.

3) PERFORMATIVITY The facilitator has at their disposal a complicated, and ultimately unknowable, set of rules and conversational demarcations all made possible by the group's underlying agreement, namely, that one person will assume the role of the facilitator and, that in this role, the facilitator will possess increased decision-making power over certain conversational moves and group dynamics. While all conversations have implicit, ever-present, fluid power differentials which determine conversational turn order, a facilitator lessens the degree to which the conversational system itself determines conversational moves and instead places some control of these moves into the hands of a single individual. As a facilitator, one can implement techniques from across the entire gamut of techniques considered above, and so the act of facilitation is a kind of container that gives techniques a heightened activation potential. However, facilitation does not merely consist of the increased conversational power placed onto a single individual. The facilitator must be experienced with the given range of conversational techniques expected of them, and should be a skilled improviser, able to know exactly when a technique should be implemented and able to determine exactly how it should be enacted. The skill of the facilitator lies not in *choosing* the right move, but in *feeling* into the conversational system in a given moment and making a move that coheres a part-whole relationship of the given system (Kennedy 150). In this regard, facilitation as a technique has the potential to catalyze any of the given techniques of transformative inquiry discussed above, and its primary function is to let a given technique work more decisively and effectively through the expert skills articulated above.[75]

Number

1) CLASSIFICATION: Some conversational techniques intentionally alter the number of people in dialogue at a given time. This can be done explicitly by asking certain persons to talk and

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[75] For more on facilitation see the Introduction and Chapter 1.

others to remain silent, or this can be done implicitly by creating conversational structures which give some people the ability to speak and then alternate.

2) EXAMPLES: Most educative settings, conferences, group therapy, twelve-step programs.

3) PERFORMATIVITY: Conversation functions via turn-order responses which allow one person to speak and another to respond. Many of the aforementioned techniques – clarifications, extensions, personal pronouns, questions, etc – rely on this turn order as the techniques require back-and-forth conversational responses. In conversations of large groups, it can be challenging for a conversation to allow everyone an opportunity activate transformative techniques or give everyone the chance to actively contribute to the collective inquiry. Frequently, in large conversations, some people will feel left out and excluded. A solution taken up in many educational settings is to divide the large group into smaller groups, each of which has their own conversation; however, this decision comes at a price – group cohesiveness can be lost and sometimes even the problems of exclusion can also be found in the smaller groups. Switching the number of persons in a group, all centered around a common conversation, can help alleviate this problem by 1) reducing the number of persons, at certain key moments, to provide greater opportunity for one to express and respond 2) bringing the group together, at other key moments, to create unity and cohesion.

VII. Conclusion

I am hopeful that this structured vocabulary of conversational techniques of transformative inquiry has covered most of the ground, but it is not my intention for it be exhaustive. It is meant to provide a general pallet of techniques which can be filled-in in the future (by myself or others) with more particular shades and colors. This chapter merely lays out the groundwork for cross-disciplinary research into conversational techniques of transformative inquiry.

All of the techniques that I have mentioned, implemented within a wide range of practices, institutions, organizations and schools, have linguistic functions which imbue the techniques with a certain degree of fluidity and flexibility (in the same way that within spoken language the

semantic function of a greeting has a certain flexibility given by a range of possible phrases and gestures). Techniques perform transformative inquiry, and because these performances are located in and around language, they do not inherently rely upon codified social structures, institutional backing, or rigid conceptual frameworks. Techniques can be drawn upon freely; they can be mixed, matched, combined, altered and deconstructed. Of course, these re-combinatory efforts will inevitably alter the techniques, in the same way that a wave of a hand will change meanings from one setting to the next; however, these creative mixings and matchings will not sacrifice all semblance of a shared meaning for techniques are semi-migratory and transient. How far a technique can be changed before it becomes unrecognizable (or, perhaps more aptly, unperformable or non-functional) is a fluid threshold that changes depending on the technique and context.

The practices which typically housed these techniques gave the techniques a social framework or cultural setting for their performance and additionally helped create a community of fluent speakers able to rehearse these techniques so they could be more effectively and efficiently performed. My intention behind the creation of this vocabulary of techniques is to create a "cookbook" of such techniques so that future practitioners can begin to carve new practices, combinations of techniques and methodologies which integrate techniques across practices, thus enabling interpractitional performances. However, once these techniques are removed from their practices, there now exists a need to establish new models, formats, cultural settings and social frameworks for the performance of these techniques. The framework I propose is an artistic one – via scores, performance art, experimental theater, games, and structured improvisations. In the following chapter, I will investigate this aesthetic potential and see how it may be theoretically and structurally possible to use these artistic models to stage conversations of transformative inquiry.

CH 3. FROM CONVERSATION PRACTICES TO WORKS OF ART

I.   <u>Tino Seghal's This Progress</u>

Figure 1. Rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum. Taken during Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*, 2010. Photo by Justin Wolf

In May 2010, I walked into the the Guggenheim Museum in New York City to see Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*. Quickly moving past his piece *The Kiss,* which was on display in the main floor of the rotunda, I looked up to see visitors ascending the rotunda, but no art on the walls. As I began to reach the first level of the rotunda, a small child of age 7 to 9 approached me, asked me for my name, and told me that "this is a piece by Tino Sehgal," and then asked me to follow them. Bemused and quite curious, I proceeded as the child then posed a simple question: "what is progress?" As I attempted to answer this difficult question, the child started walking up the rotunda. I followed, walking and continuing to try to respond. Not satisfied with my attempts at

an answer, he/she prodded me for examples or clarifications until eventually we reached the second level of the rotunda, where the child introduced me to a teenager and summarized what I had said about progress to this new person. The teenager quickly took over the conversation and started walking along the rotunda with me, leaving the child behind. Our conversation continued until we reached the next level of the rotunda, where an adult jutted into the conversation by blurting out some idea, sentence or thought. Eventually, as we continued walking the teenager left and I continued the conversation on progress with this adult. Upon reaching the final level of the rotunda I was presented with an older individual who told me the name of the piece, "This Progress", and then proceeded to tell me a story connected to the theme of progress. We continued to converse until we reached the top of the rotunda, whereupon the piece concluded. The actor (or "interpreter" as Sehgal calls them) thanked me, and I was left at the top of the Guggenheim looking down at the bottom of the rotunda. I quickly returned to the ground floor to experience the piece two more times.

This Progress is an exemplary piece of contemporary art which creates a conversation of transformative inquiry, and utilizes many of the techniques discussed in the prior chapter to achieve this transformation. Semantic specifications are used by the children as they ask for clarifications and repetitions, prompting participants to interrogate our surface-level beliefs more deeply than we may have been prepared for. At the beginning, participants use monologues when talking to the child, allowing for an initial loquacious expansion of the subject matter. Similarly, at the end of the piece, an elder gives a monological story or anecdote. The material of this story is fashioned from a behind-the-scenes conversation with the child, who shares with the elder what the participant has related about progress, and this allows the elder's monologue (many of them experts in various academic fields) to display a penetrative exposition on the participant's account of progress.

Role-play is another prominent technique in *This Progress,* as actors both contain the identity of their given age, but also perform conversational techniques exemplified by each age. For example, childhood exemplifies curiosity and imitation, as the child asks the opening question ("What do you think progress is?), asks further questions, repeats statements, demands clarifications, and then, reminiscent of a grade school rote learning exercise, repeats the words of

the participant to the teenager. The teenager portrays an adolescent freedom of enthusiastic discovery and negation, shown by their lack of scripted restrictions and by a spirited dialectical approach to the conversation as he/she both questions and affirms. The adult portrays qualities of decisive choice and focus, exemplified by their concentrated delivery of an idea or claim and their clear identification with this claim. Old age is presented as a time of closure, reflection, and looking back which is portrayed by delivering the title of the piece itself and by telling an important life story or anecdote. Role-play is used to manifest the conversational qualities of a particular age, and it is through these roles that the thematics of progress are worked into the structure of the conversation itself. Moreover, within this role-play, various conversational techniques appear to come more easily to different ages. The speed of the utterances, the degree of interruptions, the amount of space between utterances, all of these are either deliberate artistic interventions (for instance when the adult juts in with a sentence) or else they are manifest in the implicit conversational behaviors found predominantly in a given age group, which are intentionally designed by Sehgal, but not consciously delivered by the interpreters.

The architecture itself, the spiraling rotunda of the Guggenheim, is an environmental technique used to develop the transformative content as well. The spiral allows for variegated perspectives. Participants can see both what is behind them and what is to come; they are able to see participants who are further along the piece and participants who are behind them; they catch a glimpse of both future and past while slowly marching onwards towards the former. The conversation about progress is stimulated by this progressive moving image. At each moment in the conversation we are offered a new visual perspective of our immediate pasts and futures. These visual cues can help a conversation stay focused, as they too present us with progress – a progress that keeps shifting alongside constantly shifting perspectives. In this way, Sehgal utilizes the affordances of the environment surrounding the piece in order to play with questions of progress.

Moreover, the spiraling rotunda facilitates another technique of walking, that of circumambulation. While the walking establishes a rhythmic tempo for the conversation itself (a steady baseline below the complicated woven conversational melodies), the particular walking style of circumambulation adds another conceptual layer to this movement technique.

Circumambulation is "the act of marking off a space through physically walking its circumference [which allows] humans [to] create a boundary between the sacred and the profane or mundane aspects of their world" (Larson 153). By circumambulating the Guggenheim rotunda, we are taking part in a marking off of space. And while perhaps this is not a sacred demarcation, it is still a stepping outside of the common or ordinary. Beyond the walls of this museum, public conversation in a civic setting is mainly reserved for brief utilitarian exchanges. By walking this circle we are marking this space as one reserved for non-practical, but politically important, philosophical conversation.

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While *This Progress* is one example among many contemporary artworks that create conversations of transformative inquiry, for Sehgal and his critics, the predominant discourse around the work lies elsewhere. Sehgal positions his work as a critique of museums and the obsessive, material, collecting tendencies of modern culture. In Sehgal's own words, spoken to Lauren Collins, he states: "what my work is about is, can something that is not an inanimate object be considered valuable?" (Collins 1) Sehgal allows no documentation of his work, and even the purchase of *This Progress* by the Guggenheim was a notarized verbal transaction. As such, Sehgal classifies his work not as performance or live-art, but as "constructed situations" or sculpture. In her article "No Pictures Please" Claire Bishop explains the political impact of this immaterial sculptural positioning, arguing that Seghal's use of titles, and statements of the titles within his pieces are used to create "ironic metacommentary on the fetish value of art" ("No Pictures" 217). She claims that what Sehgal "deproduced in his practice is the materiality of the art object" and suggests that what is being produced are gestures (ibid), which highlight the entire ecosystem of the artworld through institutional critique.

While I agree with Bishop that Seghal's pieces enact institutional critique through an immateriality that is in contrast to the material-obsessive museum culture, I do not think this analysis touches on what is so powerful and unique about a work such as *This Progress*. Moreover, I believe that Seghal's adamant political claims of de-materiality and forceful pushback against his work's classification as theatre or performance distracts from a

consideration of the transformative functions that many of his pieces perform. Seghal's statement that, "in the theatre, you do something one time for eight hundred people, but we might do something eight hundred times for one person," (Collins 8) is perhaps true for mainstream theatre practices, but this is an ignorant statement to make in light of contemporary avant garde and postdramatic theatrical and performative practices.[76] I too find myself rolling my eyes along with Sehgal's critics such as Claudia La Rocco who criticize his attempts at declassifying his works as non-performative, and with those who point out that many of Seghal's pieces rely on "trained dancers and choreographers" (Collins 8). While *This Progress* does not utilize the same degree of dance choreography as pieces such as *This Situation* or *This is Good* or *This Variation*, the piece still involved months of rehearsals with highly skilled participants.[77] Sehgal is invested in his pieces performing a specific transformation, namely "the transformation of actions" into "material-deproduction" (Griffin 218), which pushes back against the tendency of capitalism to turn actions into products. But there is another transformation occurring in the piece which is perhaps more worthy of our attention, and that is a transformation in the way philosophical conversation is performed.

One exception to the view that Sehgal's work is primarily about institutional critique is an analysis offered by Pape, Solomon and Thain in "Welcome to *This Situation*," who show how *This Progress* redefines the mechanics of conversation by creating a structured ecology of techniques. Although the article discusses Sehgal's piece *This Situation,* many of their analyses are relevant to *This Progress*. They argue that Seghal's work creates an "ecology of practices" (Pape 90) which playfully invites participants to engage in unexpected "modes of engaging" (91). Techniques of rewinding speech, inhalations, the question "what do you think" are non-linearly and unpredictably enacted and form a "machinic assemblage" (91). In other words, the

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[76] All of the less traditionally performative quality found in *This Progress* – its degree of audience participation, its lack of stage or theater, its manifold iterations for an audience of one or two, its lack of formal theatre training by its "interpreters" – are qualities found in a variety of contemporary theatre and performance. Immersive theatre and environmental theatre, such as Punchdrunk's *Macbeth* have done groundbreaking work by setting theatre pieces in non-traditional settings. Theatre groups such as Gob Squad or Forum Theatre utilize audience in their performances (to be discussed below). Moreover, one year before Seghal's *This Progress* Lyn Gardner wrote an article in the Guardian which describes a trend at the 2009 Edinburgh Fringe Festival for "one-to-one" theatre pieces – namely theatre pieces devised to iterate before an audience of only one viewer (Gardner).

[77] As Bishop points out, the professionals that Sehgal hires, "tend to be specialists in fields other than that of art or performance, and [...] tend to be recruited on the basis of their professional (elective) identity." (*Outsourcing Authenticity* 95)

techniques are not structured to create a mere "game of interactions", but operate within an expanded relational field, an openness of unknown interactions, words and gestures of the participants. *This Situation* and *This Progress* alike, are delicate ecological assemblages of techniques and the rules which govern them, but which are also open and contingent. In this regard, Sehgal's pieces create a delicate balance between order and chaos, and between contingency and context-independent elements. As such, Sehgal's art pieces are a prime example of an open work, or a work of comprovisation (discussed below). *This Progress* innovates conversational form. Participants are not given a container to merely freely discuss (as in Rirkrit Tiravanija's oft-cited work of relational aesthetics "pad thai"), nor is there a given structure that merely provides a tiny opening for participation (as in Thomas Ostermeier's *An Enemy of the People* in which a discussion with the audience occurs at the end of the piece). The work is not merely an ecology of techniques (which is the case in conversation practices), for in *This Progress* there is a clearly defined aesthetic structure and sequence. The entire piece is participatory, yet the moment-by-moment details of how one participates are, to some degree, designed and predetermined. *This Progress* is an intentionally constructed conversation "machine" which creates an ecology for transformative inquiry.

The precise way this machine operates, the way it is ordered, its sequence, is crucial for understanding its transformative function. *This Progress* utilizes techniques that perform conversational transformative inquiry, and it creates formal structures which resonate with the content (and/or structure) of the conversation. We have already seen how these techniques themselves push an inquiry towards a developed theme of progress; but the sequence of the techniques also push the inquiry towards the theme of progress by displaying a movement from technique to technique which belies the question of whether these techniques themselves are progressing. We move from monologue to dialogue; our position changes along the rotunda; the ages of the interlocutors change as well. Is the conversation itself progressing or regressing, or is it merely remaining static? Are we moving towards some lofty goal? Do the ages progress or merely change? We move through a conversation about progress as the conversational techniques, the environments around them, and our bodies themselves, undergo consciously designed transitions meant to stimulate questions of progress. This gives interlocutors a heightened focus, as conversational techniques both push them to converse in a particular way,

and are also structured to implicitly and peripherally move conversations to be about progress. Progress is not only discussed and enacted, but the precise way it is enacted conditions its discussion. A co-generative system of technique and aesthetic structuring of these techniques are intertwined to create a new form of constructed conversation.

But if *This Progress* is not merely a transformative institutional critique, then what kind of transformation does it perform? It would be naive to think that *This Progress* is providing a rigorous philosophical exposition of the concept of progress that alters the dominant discourse around the term. Unlike Hegel, Marx or Adorno, Sehgal is not providing a philosophical and critical examination of the term "progress," and without such a critical examination, how could *This Progress* hope to create a transformative inquiry? If the aim of the piece were a philosophical transformation of belief, then a more effective means of achieving this might be to hire philosophers to come to the museum and offer classes or seminars on the notion of progress. But *This Progress* is invested in a participant-centered approach. Much like Socrates, an exposition on the topic is not placed before an interlocutor; rather the interlocutor themself is questioned – the piece begins as a child asks "what is progress?" A daring claim of the piece is that this personal investment, combined with a well-timed and facilitated sequence of conversation techniques of inquiry can move an interlocutor towards a transformation of belief more effectively than a philosophical text. Furthermore, the piece offers an implicit political claim as well – that the museum-going public is more receptive to a transformative conversation initiated via personal investment in a one-on-one conversation. Similarly they would perhaps be more left out of a transformative conversation initiated by an expert's esoteric language delivered in a more monological format (even a seminar on the subject with experts could make one feel more excluded than the deeply personal investment given by a one-on-one conversation).

While I believe that *This Progress* does provide its participants with a conversational experience that can transform one's beliefs, this is not the type of transformation most worthy of note.[78] What is most innovative in this piece is that this transformation of belief occurs alongside

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[78] Socrates in Ancient Greece and philosophical pedagogues such as Ann Sharp or Matthew Lippman in modern times perform(ed) this type of conversational transformation with much greater accuracy, success and frequency.

another transformation – namely, a transformation of the form of transformative inquiry itself. This conversation of transformative inquiry is not entirely dependent on techniques that must be expertly facilitated within the context of an emergent conversation (as is the case with Socratic dialogue or Philosophy for Children). Facilitation is still present – interpreters must know when to ask, how to clarify, and when to interrupt (none of which is predetermined or set before a given iteration of the work begins). But what is important to note is that this facilitation of techniques occurs within an aesthetically constructed structure. Sehgal has designed a series of conversational-performative situations, each of which constitutes a unique ecology of techniques, gestures, and sites all of which occur while the conversation is held. By way of contrast, if we are reading a book by Adorno, our external environment and the set of gestures contained within it might affect our reading, but these have not been intentionally designed by the author. While discussing with Socrates or Matthew Lipman, the gestures might be consciously generated by a facilitator, but are done so imminently and emergently. However, during the conversation of transformative inquiry in *This Progress*, we are guided through a sequence of movements, gestures and conversational techniques set in place prior to this conversation, and which iterate each time the machine is "turned on," i.e. each time a participant walks up to the first interpreter. While we question whether a museum is progressive, we are walking up towards the top of the rotunda. While we question whether any given movement or change is progressive, we experience the changes in the ages of the interpreters and the changes in their conversational rules and habits. This allows the transformative inquiry to adopt a new dimension, one of intentionally embodied, spatial, temporal and linguistic design, intended to move conversation in a direction without foreclosing its content. The structure guides the conversation towards varied affective or existential questions of the progress of age or progress of dialogue, and creates varied juxtapositions between the content and this structure. A conversation of historical progress is constantly bombarded with the question of the progressive ages. A conversation of intangible progressive states is faced with the highly modernist architecture of the Guggenheim.

Sehgal's *This Progress*, and other conversational works of this nature are innovative in precisely this regard – they create a conversation that has the potential to transform one's beliefs while transforming the form of transformation; they create a unique sequence of conversational transformations which change the way a conversation can be both open and closed. Such works

move the focus of conversational transformation away from a strict attention to the topic, and towards a simultaneous structuring of the techniques of conversation that occur alongside this topic. Critics are correct in claiming that the site of the piece (the museum) is important, but the museum is merely one factor among many. What is critiqued is not merely the museum with its focus on materiality. What is critiqued is the form of conversation that museum and art criticism tend to create. Sehgal is tired of the art world's implicit, and perhaps false, belief that progress is material and technological. And he challenges this belief by providing a radical innovation of form without the direct mediation of modern technology or digital media. Bishop is right – *This Progress* produces gestures ("No Pictures" 217). But it also produces an ecology of gesture, participant, artist, conversation. We are progressing through a widening of the potential of conversational transformation. Not only can more people be transformed through inquiry than we thought; but the form of inquiry which allows for transformation can also change, allowing greater access into its conversation. This access is possible not only by locating this transformation in the museum, but also by expanding the techniques of transformative inquiry to include those which are embodied, interactive and ludic. Sehgal's critique is also a critique of discourse. The discursive tools of inquiry of the critic, the academic and the curator are not our only options for transformative inquiry; an artwork can create its own form of transformative discourse. Not only can an artwork create unique conversational content, subject matters and aesthetics representations, but, perhaps more importantly, a work of art can aesthetically interlock these elements with its own unique conversational grammars and linguistic rules.

II.   Aesthetic Classifications

I mention Sehgal's *This Progress* not only because it is an exemplary piece of conversational artwork of transformative inquiry, but because my viewing of the piece in 2010 was instrumental in my own artistic practice's development, terminology and classification. *This Progress* has set a standard for the way in which an artwork can perform transformative inquiry through conversation. I will now offer an more structural analysis of how this plays out for works of art in general.

Table 4. Classifications and Examples of Transformative Conversation Practice into Art Work

I. **Artwork & Conversation**

    A. Artwork is the conversation

        1. The artist creates a container for a conversation – physical, cultural, social (socially engaged or community-based art, Hirschhorn's *Monuments*)

        2. Within that container the artist also creates an opportunity for conversation which is aesthetically improvised (theatrical improvisation)

        3. Within that container the artist also structures the turn orders of the conversation itself (Tino Sehgal's constructed situations, *This Progress*)

    B. Conversation is one component of the artwork (conversational components of event score, Ken Friedman's *Restaurant Event*)

    C. Artwork is one component of a conversation (classroom pedagogy which uses artwork as an example)

    D. Artwork leads to a conversation (a work of art creates a critical discourse around it)

    E. Conversation leads to artwork (a collaborative creation process which results in a work of theatre)

II. **Determinacy / Indeterminacy**

    A. Conversation's signifiers & signifieds are almost entirely predetermined (didactic literature, Classical Renaissance forms)

    B. Conversation's signifiers are entirely predetermined (traditional theatre, most literature)

    C. Conversation has moments of non-predetermined signifers (some theatre and some electronic literature, John Cayley's *The Listeners*)

    D. Conversation is predominantly composed of non-predetermined signifiers but has a predetermined structure or sequence (constructed situations, Tino Seghal's *This Progress*)

    E. Conversation is composed of a non-predetermined signifers, and predetermined techniques, but these techniques are not codified into a repeatable sequence or structure (conversation practices)

    F. Conversation is composed of a non-predetermined signifiers, and there are little to none consciously deployed sets of techniques (a dinner conversation, walk with a friend)

III. **Scores**

    A. Artwork has no context-independent elements; either it was only performed once, or it has no recognizable common elements between performances

    B. Artwork has context-independent elements which are implicitly learnt

C. Artwork has context-independent elements which are learnt explicitly, but not written down

D. Artwork has context-independent elements which are notated via a score or instructions for how these elements should be activated

E. Artwork has context-independent elements but no room for contingency; either it is a text not meant to be performed, or it is a score which as not been performed

IV. Audience

A. Artwork is presented before persons who are not involved in the action of the performance (traditional theatre)

B. Artwork is presented before persons who participate in some of the actions of the performance (most participatory theatre, works from The Gob Squad)

C. Artwork is presented before persons who participate in almost all of the actions of the performance (constructed situations, Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*)

D. Artwork is devised and presented simultaneously such that the relationship between audience and performers are troubled or indistinguishable (socially engaged or community-based art, Hirschhorn's *Monuments*, and much performance art, Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm O*)

E. Artwork is presented separately, but devised using members of the public (socially engaged works that use documentation, Leigh Ledare's *The Task*)

I. Transformative Inquiry*

A. Artwork predominantly changes the site and community of the transformative inquiry (Einat Amir's *Our Best Intentions*)

B. Artwork changes the transformative inquiry to be directed towards social conventions, cultural idioms and institutional critique (Andrea Fraser's *Projection*)

C. Artwork changes the transformative inquiry to be directed towards the form of transformative inquiry itself (Tino Seghal's *This Progress*)

*the examples in this section are work-specific and do not reflect sub-classifications or groupings of artworks

In each of the categories listed above (Table 4) there are types of work which are less relevant to this investigation for a number of reasons which will be discussed below. I am primarily interested in artworks which are themselves conversational (I A); where the conversation within the work predominantly contains signifiers that have not been predetermined, but which are

arranged into a predetermined structure or sequence (II D); where the piece contains context-independent elements that allow for its repetition, but also contain conversational contingency (III B-D); where the performance undermines traditional audience-performer relationships (IV B-E); and where the work transforms the form of transformative inquiry itself (V C). The rest of the chapter will investigate each of these categories, and justify these classifications by focusing on specific art historical precedents and aesthetic, philosophical and conversational elements.

III.   Artwork & Conversation

Area of Investigation

While the chart above shows multiple ways in which art and conversation *can* inform one another, the main analysis in this section will be to understand *how* – in what respects can conversations be art. The other possibilities in this chart are easy enough to discuss. Artworks can generate conversation (D). A painting, performance or film can spark lengthy dialogues among viewers and critics, and even generate entire types of discourse, such as those found in art history, ethnomusicology, and so on. We can also see how a conversation can generate an artwork: theatrical rehearsals may contain countless conversations between actors and directors and choreographers, all of which generate a "singular" work of art (E). These two examples are marked by causal separation, in that one of the terms clearly produces the other. It is more difficult to see is how artworks can contain conversation (or vise versa); difficult because to make this argument one has to know where both the artwork and conversation begins and ends. In some cases this is easy to see. A classroom is an example of a conversational space which is typically not viewed as an artwork, yet which can contain discussion of artworks, and even generate artworks within a larger conversational framework (C). We can also look at a work such as Ken Friedman's *Restaurant Event*, a Fluxus performance score giving instructions to dress poorly and dine at a fancy restaurant. An ensuing conversation between a participant and a waiter would be a conversation contained *within* this work of art (B). However, in much contemporary art, the conversational aspects of the pieces are seamlessly interwoven into the artistic structure. I will examine how the ways in which this occur informs how conversation is itself an artwork.

Method

I am going to analyze these conversational works utilizing a frame analysis similar to that of Schechner's in *Performance Theory* (Schechner 14). In Schechner's analysis all performative artworks exist in-between the wild freedom of pure play and the strict rule-governed mandates of ritual. In this in-between there is a scaffolding of frames, around which a participant acts and certain rules (or lack thereof) operate. The widest of these frames is the space itself, while the narrowest are the specific tasks given by the director for a particular moment. I will group the following conversational works into three categories, based on this idea of frames. The first are works which structure the site and the general social conventions that govern it (IA 1, in the chart above). The second encompasses works which narrow the frame to include dramatic and character structurings (IA 2). Finally, there are pieces with an even tighter frame, structuring the conversational turn orders themselves, producing explicitly rule-governed participant interactions (IA 3). As the frame shifts, each art form changes the focus as to what is understood by conversation. The first category of works highlight conversation as a socio-cultural construction. The second category frames conversation as a fluid system of character, narrative, and audience interaction. Finally, the third category highlights conversation as an emergent system of responses.

Wide Frame: Site & Social Convention

Let us historically ground the connection between conversation and art by considering Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics.* Bourriaud argues that instead of being an independent and private symbolic space, relational art draws its theoretical horizon around the realm of human interactions and its social context (Bourriaud 14). In this sense, we can say that conversational art performs in, but more crucially *on*, this realm of human interactivity.[79] From Rirkrit Tiravanija's *pad thai,* where food is served to gallery members, to Gabriel Orozco's *Crazy Tourist,* where hammocks are slung up in the gardens of New York's MoMa, these works intentionally create conditions for conversation, and take up the social conditions themselves as a

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[79] A painting occurs within a relational sphere (audience members walking about it and experiencing it), but is not typically created to act upon this sphere.

form of aesthetic content. Claire Bishop describes a similar form of participatory artwork in *Artificial Hells,* which are, "less interested in a relational *aesthetic* than in the creative rewards of participation as a politicised working process" (*Artificial Hells* 2). These examples include Oda Projesi's series of platforms, projects and workshops set in an Istanbul apartment from 1997-2005, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Monument* series, which creates living monuments to philosophers set in urban neighborhoods, and Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, "a performance re-enacting a violent clash between miners and mounted policeman in 1984," whose performance involved working with members of the community from the original political event (ibid 30). Although these artists may not share similar intentions for their works, they all create social structures for participation that seamlessly integrate conversation. The artwork and the conversations that it creates are co-constitutive.

Figure 2. Thomas Hirschorn's *Gramsci Monument* (2013). Photo by Daniel Creahan for Art Observed.

In these kinds of conversational works, the artist usually creates a structure, an elaborate setting, event or scene, in which conversation occurs (IA 1). Despite the intentional design of the artist,

once the conversation begins, the designs of the artist move to the background. For example, Hirschhorn's monument series includes countless workshops, seminars and activities that contain conversations, but no direct indications are provided by Hirschhorn as to how the conversations within the workshops should occur.[80] Rather, Hirschhorn's contribution is the creation of a series of physical structures, a community held within and around these structures, and a demanding schedule of events, all of which create the background on which conversation occurs. The artistic setup of this philosophical community, placed in a given neighborhood with a unique set of histories and designed to correspond to the themes of the given philosopher of the particular monument all inform the conversations that occur, but do so indirectly.

Calls, Canto 3
Two persons, one standing on the south side of a large lake — at least 1 kilometer apart — the other standing on the north side of the lake, talk to each other.

Figure 3. Bengt af Klintberg *Calls, Canto 3*. Fluxus Performance Workbook.

Works from traditions outside social and participatory art also create containers for conversation, albeit ones that operate within a more narrow frame. In Klintberg's *Calls, Canto 3* an event is structured through a set of instructions giving details as to where two people should stand and exactly what distance apart. However, once the two participants begin talking, no instructions are given. As opposed to Hirschhorn, Klintberg's piece displays a further level of direct artistic involvement in the conversation. The locational choice has direct consequence on the conversation's form, as the lake's acoustic structure will inevitably inform the length and type of responses, forcing interlocutors to yell, listen to their voice reverberate and then wait an extended length of a time for a response. A further level of direct conversation design occurs in the politically subversive theatre pieces of Augusto Boal's *Invisible Theatre*, in which a theatre group rehearses a scripted performance which opens up into an unscripted and unforeseen conversation with the public. In this example, the artist's intentions structure much of the content

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[80] What I mean by this is that while Hirschorn may be somewhat responsible for determining who gives a workshop, and perhaps even the content of the workshop (and perhaps even where in the "monument" a workshop is given) once the workshop is going the conversation is entirely contingent and not determined by his aesthetic determinations.

right up until the conversation, and provides a meticulously crafted scene that seamlessly transitions into a conversation.

All of these are cases where the artwork creates containers and events for conversation with differing degrees of direct influence upon conversation. These works work on the conversation by artistically affecting what is around it, or directly preceding it, but then once the conversation is occurring the intentional decisions fade into the background. In these kinds of participatory works, conversation is considered systemically. The main aesthetic consideration implicates who is included and how the conversation frames social, cultural and political issues. The work of the artist is to create new socio-cultural paradigms by re-designing the site of the conversation, re-framing which political issues are discussed through an aesthetically designed re-distribution of who is allowed to discuss them.

Mid Frame: Character, Drama

Figure 4. Centre for Applied Theatre (CAT) utilizing Forum Theatre technique (2013).

We see a different relationship to "conversation as art" in certain works of improvisational theatre. One example is Forum Theatre, where a joker acts as a facilitator who "gives out rules as the 'game' is running," and guides guests by "giving them roles to play in scenarios" (White 49). As White points out, works like this create a "horizon of participation" where we are offered a limited set of actions within a field of possibility (59). This horizon of participation is provided within the conversation; while we are in discussion, roles are given that affect and change the discussion itself. Another example is a workshop on bullying put on in schools by the Armadillo Theater (1991-2). These workshops let audience members call "stop" to halt the action of the play, and then actors continue in response to audience suggestions.[81] These pieces provide actors with thematic or dramatic considerations to use while improvising. The artist imparts to actors a horizon of possibilities for participation, but this horizon is quite general and conditioned by the immersive set of relations that occur in the improvised moment. The sequence of predesigned actions opens for a moment to allow in a non-predetermined conversation, one which is governed by the peripheral and preceding factors, rather than by direct intentional artistic structure and design. Shortly afterwards, this non-predetermined conversation ends and the prescripted intentionally designed conversation continues (more on this openness will be discussed below). Moreover, these improvisational moments are typically conditioned by a larger dramatic structure.[82] In this sense, the action of the theatre undermines the conversational quality of emergence, as the conversational content is foreclosed by implicit dramatic direction.[83] Even in conditions where one is not guided by a dramatic structure, the improvised conversation will be determined by implicit rules and structures. As Schechner points out, when the actor is free from both drama and director they will have to make fuller use of "stock situations and characters, and audience's expectations" (Schechner 14). The artwork in these improvised situations creates a series of shifting frames around setting, character, space, and audience. These

[81] Many of these works contain both improvised and scripted conversation, and while I could potentially argue that these works merely contain conversation and therefore are not examples of works that "are" a conversation, this would miss an opportunity to explain a crucial factor in how the artwork operates in connection with these types of conversations.

[82] For example: "in the Off-Broadway production of Tony n' Tina's Wedding (which opened in 1988) performers present a mock Italian wedding ceremony and reception, to which audience members are invited as guests. Tony and Tina hold their wedding at Washington Square Church, then pose for pictures on the steps of the church, and drive off in stretch limousines to the reception-held at a simulated nightclub two blocks away from the church. During the performance, characters talk with the spectators around the cash bar, the dance floor, and tables." (Lancaster 1997, 81)

[83] We see this in Umberto Eco's account of how live television utilized programmatic dramatic arcs and plots in spite of its spontaneous quality (Eco 108)

frames create a fluid and open system in which conversations are played out. In these settings, the conversational artist is less one who externally designs these frames, and more one who immersively works and plays within them while they are presented to an audience.

Narrow Frame: Turn-Based Instructions

Figure 5. Sample scene from Alessandro Bosetti *The Pool and the Soup*.
http://www.melgun.net/pieces/the-pool-and-the-soup/

Another way that artworks can be conversational is to provide precise sets of instructions that work within conversational turn orders. We see this in many of Seghal's works, a notable example being *This Objective of That Object*, in which "five performers with their backs turned to you urge you to join in a discussion on subjectivity and objectivity" which utilizes scripted lines, breaths, falling, questions, and open discussion, all structured into a game piece with memorized rules (Carpenter 224). Another example is Alessandro Bosetti's *The Pool and the Soup,* a structured improvisation piece in which a conductor instructs a "conversation choir" with hand gestures, directing them to splice sentences and words, alter dynamics, and generate new conversational content. These kinds of works explicitly design conversation structure, allowing for a responsive and interactive emergent system of responses, but also conditioning the types of

responses that a given utterance will create. The work exists *within* conversational turn orders, as the artist intentionally designs the types of responses (and the embodied positions that occur alongside these responses) which in turn facilitate further responses, also intentionally designed. These works highlight conversation's rule-governed and emergent systems of response. By playing with these rules while retaining the emergent quality of the conversation, these works directly work *on* conversation – surgically manipulating precise moments of interaction without damaging the emergent conversational organism.

Why Turn-Based?

While all of these categories show how conversation can be considered as an artwork, I am invested in works in the third category. These are works that create unique conversational designs, structures or forms,[84] because these works highlight conversation as a generative emergent system of response. Artworks that work directly in this system create a more enmeshed fabric of artwork and conversation, pieces that seamlessly and fluidly contain both aesthetic design and emergent utterance. These kinds of conversational works afford a greater potential for a transformation of conversational form. And while works like Hirschhorn's monuments provide participants with transformative opportunities, I find that works which create conditions around conversations always are faced with behavioral and formal obstacles that limit this transformation. Once a conversation is happening, despite operating in new locations, with new people, or in unfamiliar situations or mediating technologies, the conversation will inevitably operate via implicit cultural constructs and behaviors.[85]

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[84] While Boalian theatre, Forum theatre or improvisational theatre in general create unique conversational forms, these forms are unique to the practices themself and not to specific works of art.

[85] A similar argument applies for musical improvisation. Altering the setting of a musical performance, or designing the set of notes preceding an improvised section, does not necessarily ensure innovative content. In fact, this is a predominant critique against improvisation – that its free and spontaneous quality can preclude its ability to be innovative, as many times improvising artist will rely on traditional habits, styles, and idioms. In an interview with Gavin Bryars, Derek Bailey, speaking about free improvisation, notes how "the tendency is often for the music to slide off into some more readily identifiable area, jazz or comedy or into very obvious forms..." (Bailey 115). Gary Peters in *The Philosophy of Improvisation* explains how Pierre Boulez regards free improvisation as an activity that produces endless cliches because of its instantaneousness. In this situation, memory is given nothing to draw upon and so "comes into play for extremely banal criteria and clichés such as, for instance, repeated notes or notes separated by long silences" (in Peters 82). Eco discusses how in live television broadcasts, there is an extreme degree of moment-by-moment decisions spontaneously improvised, yet this spontaneity, when analyzed carefully, actually contains habituated decisions made on the basis of audience preference, dramatic

Claire Bishop reminds us that dialogue always retains a balance between authority and liberty, and always takes place inside some "programme and content" (*Artificial Hells* 266). Given that this is the case, the crucial question for Bishop is to ask of participatory works, "what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?" (*Antagonism* 65) In her analysis of these relations Bishop focuses on a critique of the ameliorative quality contained within the majority of social arts pieces, claiming that this type of relation is dominated by neo-liberal Christian morality systems. The works that Bishop is most concerned with create relational situations for dialogue which are emancipatory in the sense that they disclose social relations hidden by the dominant cultural paradigm. By and large, however, these participatory works push against cultural paradigms by altering the external set of conditions which establish these conversations. As Hirschhorn's *Monuments* creates potentially non-amerialiative conditions that highlight and exaggerate uncomfortable systemic violence or risk, they simultaneously replicate conventional conversational forms of the workshop, lecture, or seminar. Worse, they can let conversation happen "organically" and allow implicit power structures to inevitably determine who speaks, when and how.

This difficulty points to two differing aesthetic frameworks – one that examines the altered socio-cultural relations catalyzed by a conversation, versus one that examines altered socio-cultural relations produced by formal shifts in how a conversation functions. These two approaches bring to light a crucial distinction of aesthetic classification within the works under consideration (and within my entire project). Bishop utilizes a Rancièrean framework, whereby the aesthetics of a work are understood as the work's unique way of navigating the historical and ontological ambiguity between art as a sphere separate from life, on the one hand, and art as a part of life, on the other. Bishop argues that works deserving the most merit are those which, in navigating this ambiguity, create aesthetic structures that expose and reveal underlying socio-

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action and an intentional narrative arc. Live television is able to be completely formulaic while being radically improvisational. (Eco 105-122)

I believe this equally applies for conversation. Implicit and formulaic arguments, claims and systems of belief will re-propagate (disguising themselves as novel because they are spontaneous and free). And while I can easily see how someone would see this as a call for conversation to be prescribed and scripted by an intelligent artist, I am less invested in innovative content of a conversation being generated, than innovative forms of conversation being generated. See Introduction.

cultural assumptions. However, I am invested in locating this aesthetic within the very nature of conversation itself – a tension between conversation as an emergent form of social interaction and conversation as an intentionally designed practice. This tension is what generates the unique transformative content within conversation pieces – the tension between a technique and its implementation, between a facilitator's desires and the emergent demands of the group, and the design of an artist and a conversation's immanent decisions. When conversation becomes art, the form of a piece creates a unique tension between these contrasting elements.

IV. Determinacy / Indeterminacy

Definitions

Determinacy is the quality of having defined limits, and so the question of the determinateness of artworks is one of defining limits and boundaries. By following a performance across its iterations, and by looking at the elements of a work that remain from one iteration to the next, we can begin to identify differing degrees of indeterminacy and determinacy in particular works. I take "elements" to mean the perceivable marks of a work – such as the pitches of a Mozart sonata, or the gestures of a given character in a Macbeth performance. These elements can be grouped into sets by the unifying quality across a range of elements (for example, pitches or gestures), which I shall call "aspects". Any element of a work of art can either persist from performance to performance, or be confined to a particular instantiation of that piece. Elements that stay the same from instantiation to instantiation are "context-independent" (Bhagwati, "Notational Perspectives" 165) and are determinate in that they give limit and boundary to the piece, demarcating a piece by elements (certain gestures) or aspects (the entire set of gestures) which remain consistent. Those elements which change cannot be used to render definable limits to a piece and therefore yield aspects which are indeterminate or "contingent" (ibid).

Table 5 below maps the indeterminacy and determinacy of both devised conversational practices and musical art practices. Musical scores on staves, theatrical scripts, and books all contain a large number of context-independent elements, so that they are materially and structurally highly similar from iteration to iteration. Free improvisation and real-life conversations (outside of

conversational practices), on the other hand, contain mainly contingent aspects. Somewhere in the middle, we can find practices which operate between these two extremes.[86]

Table 5. Musical and Conversational Arts Forms Mapped via Degrees of Determinacy and Indeterminacy
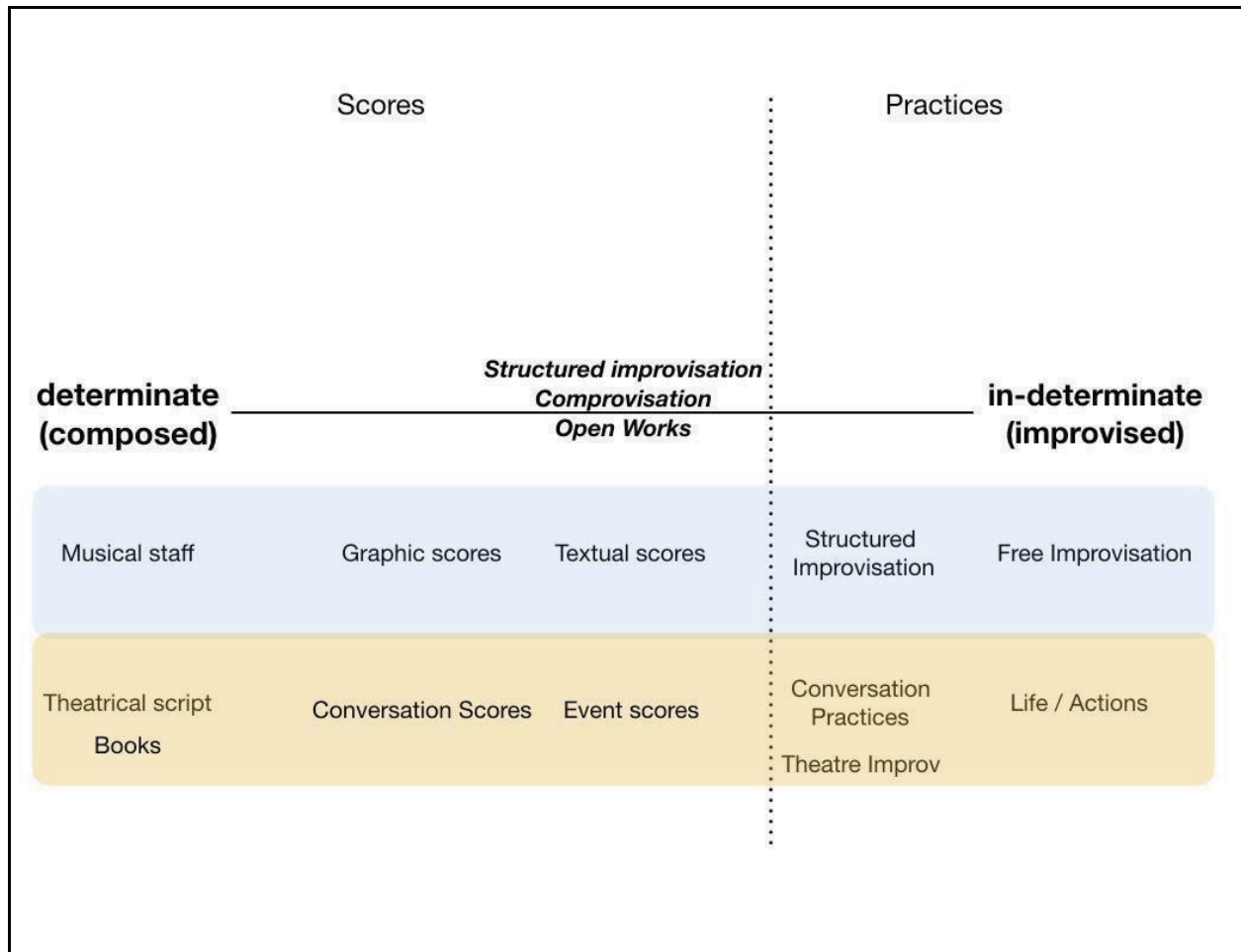
Another way of explaining this chart is to consider the time at which the elements of a piece are constructed. Context-independent elements are typically constructed prior to the artwork's performance, whereas contingent elements are not predetermined, but constructed while the piece is performed.

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[86] Neither extremes represent pure determinacy or indeterminacy. Even free improvisation contains implicit rules which are utilized from one performance to the next. And even the most rigid musical compositions on a staff have room for interpretation of the musician about the articulation and expression of a given note or phrase when it is played.

Method & Area of Investigation

While there are many aspects to consider regarding conversation (gestures, subject matter, who is speaking, etc), of primary concern for this analysis will be the words themselves. Following the work of Saussure, I will consider words as signs composed of signifieds or meaning units (for example the meaning of the word "sister"), and signifiers, defined as the perceivable mark that stands in for this meaning (for example the string of letters "sister"). The most determinate of all possible conversational art forms would be one that attempted to foreclose and predetermine the signifieds (A, in Table 4). An example of this is given in Umberto Eco's analysis of literature in the Middle Ages which attempted to prescribe "rigidly preestablished and ordained interpretive solutions" (Eco 6). Many works of literature and theatre do the opposite: for example, playwrights such as Becket or Brecht leave open the interpretative capacity of their words; nonetheless the signifiers remain the same from iteration to iteration (B). Some theatre and music create momentary openings in these signifieds, leaving certain elements undetermined within the performance (C). The works of primary interest for this study are those which are predominantly composed of non-predetermined signifiers (D-E), but which also intentionally create or utilize some kind of repeatable structure or set of techniques, unlike the vast majority of conversations outside of conversation practices (F).

Open Works & Comprovisations

Aesthetically, artworks found within the parameters of D and E create partially determinate structures. One way of considering this partial determinacy is to consider Eco's term "works in movement," defined as works that have "unplanned or physically incomplete structural units" (Eco 12). These structural units for music are sound units or notes, and not the interpretation or meaning of the notes. Likewise for language, these structural units will be the signifiers (either words or phrases) and not the signifieds (the meanings of these words and phrases). In works of movement, structural units are physically incomplete and unplanned. A conversation piece considered to be a "work in movement" will have physically incomplete structural content – the signifiers of the piece will be unplanned prior to its performance or presentation. But it is not enough to say these aspects are left open and completely undetermined, because in these works

the artist also creates a system of gestures, movements, positions, instructions and turn orders which structure the conversation while leaving its signifieds open and undetermined. These works are works of "comprovisation," in the sense explicated by Bhagwati, who means to say that the artist consciously interlocks "aesthetically relevant" context-dependent and context-independent elements ("Notational Perspectives" 171).[87] What is important to note is that the context-independent aspects of these works will not be the signifiers, but rather elements of aspects such as the position of the actors, their place, their gestures, or the type of instructions for speech. By interlocking these context-independent elements with the contingency of the signifiers the artist alters the field of semantic contingency itself. The words uttered will not be entirely random or arbitrary; rather, the artist creates a set of "oriented insertions," which are "rationally organized, oriented, and endowed with specifications for proper development" (Eco 19). The contingent words uttered within the performance exists within a field of possibility, partially determined by the unique organization of context-independent elements.

Open works of conversation can draw from a wide variety of performative arts. Works of participatory social arts or relational aesthetics typically contain context-independent aspects such as persons, site, structure or event. In the works discussed above, such Hirschorn's monument series or Oda Projesi's workshops, conversations are staged around a location, building or structure for gathering which remains consistent throughout the duration of the piece. Examples of quasi-improvisational theatre discussed above (Forum Theatre's workshop on bullying, etc) create momentary openings for contingency. Theatre pieces which venture towards greater degrees of contingency can be seen in Cage's *TV Dinner: Homage to E.A.T. (Food for Thought)* (1967) where a dinner conversation was staged in which all the objects around the table had contact mics attached to them. Similarly, *The Marrying Maiden* (1960) drew on rules of chance from the hexagrams of the I Ching to give instructions for movement and dialogue. In Cage's *TV Dinner*, the context-independent elements were the staging of the mics and objects, whereas in *The Marrying Maiden*, the context-independent aspect was the set of instructions.

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[87] Bhagwati defines this kind of art as "comprovisation" a term meant to be inclusive of several pre-existing contemporary musical practices: "'structured improvisation" (Malcolm Goldstein and many others), "conduction" (Butch Morris), "game pieces" (John Zorn) or "indeterminacy" (John Cage), "intuitive music" (Karlheinz Stockhausen) or "limited aleatorism"' ("Notational Perspectives" 170).
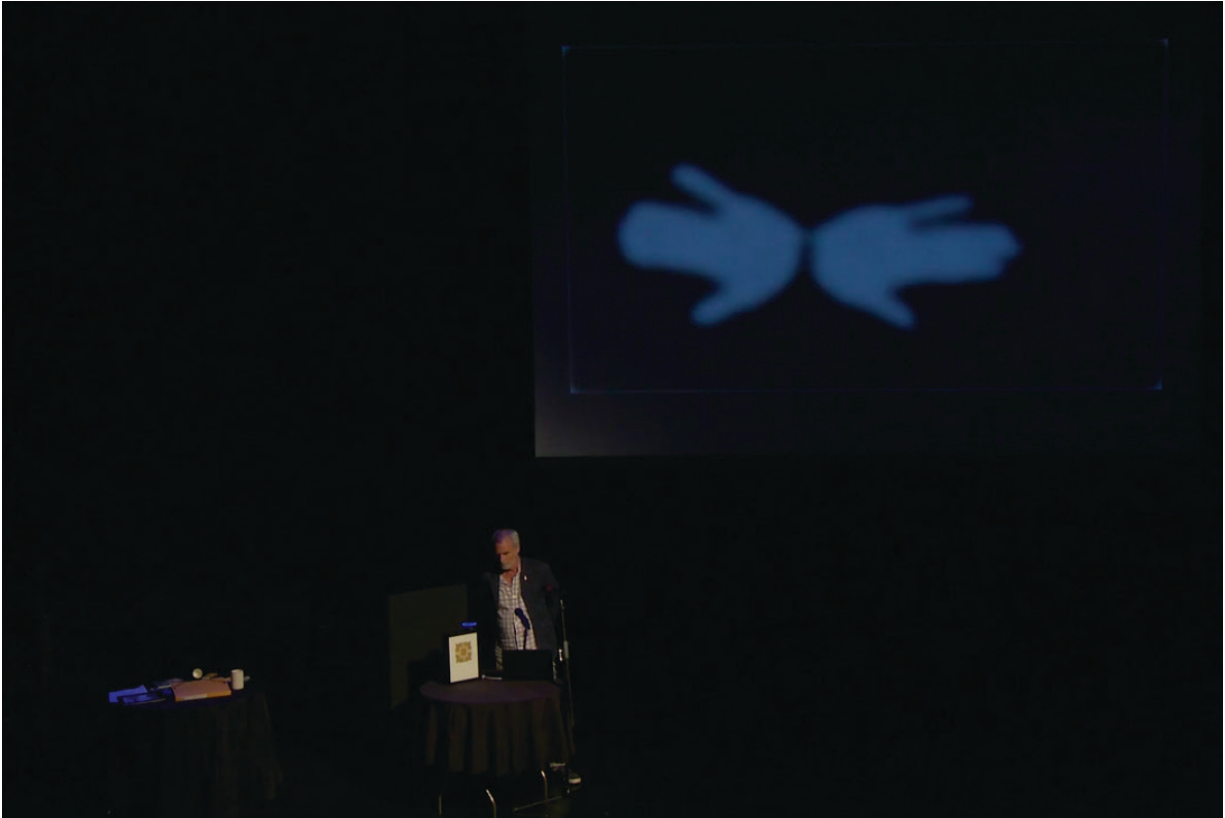
Figure 6. John Caley's *The Listeners*. Performed 2016. Videography by Iki Nakagawa, courtesy of The Kitchen.

Some works of electronic literature also utilize contingent conversational content, such as John Caley's *The Listeners*, whereby the artist fabricated an altered Amazon Echo which utters poetic responses when participants engage it in conversation. While the dialogical prompts of the participants are completely contingent, Alexa's responses (and the program of determining which responses are given) are entirely context-independent. The works I am most invested in are those which leave the vast majority of their signifers contingent, and which structure this contingency through a complicated sequence of context-independent aspects. We see this most readily in the works of Sehgal discussed above – a structure of conversational instructions which remain consistent from iteration to iteration. These works occupy a hard-to-achieve middle ground between 1) works which determine too little, leaving the conversational form open to contingency and thereby to factors outside of the artist's consideration, and 2) works that determine too much, closing a conversation too tightly around a set of pre-given utterances and which reduce a conversation's emergent and responsive quality.

Margins

I will now discuss works that don't neatly fit into the account give above of open or closed works. One margin to consider are works that initially stage a conversation with non-predetermined signifers, and then manipulate and prescribe these signifers, thereby creating a performance which is ultimately non-conversational. A video piece such as Leigh Ledare's *The Task* is a prime example of this – a 2 hour video recording of a Tavistock group psychotherapy process. We can also see this in verbatim theatre such as *The Laramie Project* (2000), a production that involved conducting hundreds of interviews with inhabitants of the town of Laramie in Wyoming, and transcribing them to create a prescribed theatrical script. While it could be argued that these works are not conversational, it could also be argued that they are by taking into consideration the artistic design of the conversation's form itself (rather than its editing post-event). In *The Task,* this artistic design was minimal, and merely involved the placement of video cameras and the body of the artist himself. In spite of being a minor gesture, both of these interventions had critical affects on the conversation. In other works of this sort, we can see more intentional design, as in Liz Magic Laser's *Primal Speech*, a video piece which staged an interaction between a group of participants with radically different political beliefs undergoing a psychotherapeutic process called "primal therapy."

Figure 7. Leigh Ledare *The Task* (2017). https://lightboxfilmcenter.org

Figure 8. Liz Magic Laser *Primal Speech* (2016). http://www.lizmagiclaser.com

Works involving little intentionally-constructed context-independent elements reside on the threshold between artwork and conversation practices. In works such as Leeny Sack's *Therapy as Performance* (2018), or Einat Amir's *Our Best Intentions*, the activity of therapy is placed within a performative setting. In the case of Sack, the artist plays the role of therapist, and in the case of Amir, the artist stages a drama therapy workshop in a gallery. For both pieces, the aesthetic construction of context-independent aspects is quite limited. These pieces hardly perform an aesthetic interlocking of context-independent and contingent elements, merely altering the context-independent aspect of site (a change from therapy room to gallery or theatre stage) in an attempt to reposition the practice as an artwork.

These examples help us understand how works of art differ from conversation practices and from conversations outside of practices. Conversation practices also have consciously constructed independent elements (place, duration, prescribed greetings, etc) which interlock with the contingency of a conversation. However, this conscious construction is not aesthetic. I mean two things by this: 1) the interlocking does not create a singular piece with a repeatable form, but rather creates a repeatable practice. The difference between the two is that the repeatable practice

(for example group therapy or psychodrama) is developed, practiced and modified by a wide community of practitioners, rather than by a singular artist or group of artists. 2) the interlocking does not partially remove conversation from life, or hold it in a separate sphere of formal play (as discussed above with Bishop). Instead, the interlocking is primarily concerned with the conversation's capacity to perform the social function of healing. If we move further towards contingency, and remove all intentional interlocking (whether aesthetic or therapeutic), then we have general conversation outside of any given practice – a conversation without any intentionally constructed context-independent elements. A dinner conversation may always reside in the same location, yet this location was not chosen to consciously interlock with the conversation in an attempt to create a cohesive and organic unity of site and event.

Figure 9. Einat Amir *Our Best Intentions* (2013). http://artis.art/programs/einat-amir-our-best-intentions

Why Open Works?

Before moving onward, I will provide a justification for why I am focusing only on open works in my consideration of conversational artworks. The answer, as discussed briefly in the introduction, is that works with context-independent signifers are not conversational, because they preclude the possibility of a conversation having a spontaneous emergent quality. But why must a conversation contain this quality? At the risk of sounding tautological, it is because it is precisely this quality that marks the majority of practices deemed "conversational" across a wide range of cultures. Lev Yakubinsky, a Russian linguist and sociologist, identifies the quality of interruptibility as a consistent feature of conversational practices (Yakubinsky 51). Interruptibility is the *possibility* of being interrupted, which entails a quality of responsiveness we have been speaking of in prior chapters, and places conversation within a system of indeterminacy. If there is always a possibility of interruption, this means that the interruption itself is indeterminate. One does not know when an interruption will occur, how it will occur, or by whom. In a conversation where the content is predetermined, this interruptibility is absent – we know exactly who will interrupt us, when they will interrupt us, and what they will say to interrupt. Conversational interruptibility creates an ever-present anxiety within conversation, as one never knows when another person is going to interrupt, what the interruption will be, and whether one can prepare for such interruptions (Nikulin 104). Artworks that work on conversation work precisely on this anxiety, by adapting it, changing its form, or motivating different degrees of anxiety and its placement – but they can never remove it entirely.

The requirement that conversational content (the signifers) be indeterminate has implications regarding conversation's transformative inquiry. What drives an inquiry is the questionable-ness of the question, the pull towards the unknown as formulated by a problem. When the content of what is produced is unknown, when we are thrust into a situation where we do not know what will be said by whom and when, this places us in a more radically indeterminate situation. Within this indeterminacy, there is limited capacity to access pre-given agendas or dogmas which would otherwise limit an inquiry by foreclosing an answer. All claims are equally open to all to assent or deny (as seen in Chapter 1 with Socrates). This allows the interlocutors within a conversation to suspend prejudices and remove their attachment to particular claims, which helps the investigation move by one's curiosity towards the subject matter itself, rather than ulterior motives of winning or boosting one's ego. Conversations with contingent content are more

responsive to the unique set of issues that surround the interlocutors involved in the conversation. This is critical to achieve a desired level of personal transformation (as discussed in Chapter 1). Transformative inquiry is always a somewhat collaborative practice that comes from a shared seeking. This collaboration is created by an implicit assumption that all of the conversational content is generated by the group that is conversing in the moment it is conversing. And while this assumption is fictitious, for all ideas and emotions have a past, the episteme of the conversational content (the "how" and "why" of what is known or knowable in a conversation) is generated both by and through the conversation itself and in the creation of a conversational community. Conversations of inquiry create an epistemic community where the knowable content of the conversion is set by the threshold of a conversation's immanent temporality, making conversation both personal and interpersonal.[88]

V.   <u>Scores</u>

Before turning away from context-independent elements, I want to briefly discuss scoring and notation. Along with a consideration of the balance between context-independent and contingent elements, it is also important to consider how this relationship between contingency and context-independent elements are codified and distinguished. In other words, how do we know what the context-independent elements are? And how does a performer learn them across a performance's iterations? As Bhagwati points out, scores "are among the most important conceptual devices" for demarcating this distinction ("Notational Perspectives" 166), but they are only one among many. Others include rehearsals, practice, memorization of rules and watching past recordings.

Area of Investigation

There are only a very few examples of open works of conversation which score their performance (D, Table 4), as the majority of these pieces utilize other frameworks to determine their context-independent elements. Most of the pieces which do utilize scores come from the Fluxus tradition and use verbal scoring techniques. Fluxus works such as Larry Miller's

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[88] To quote David Kennedy: "Ontologically, dialogue implies the intersubject. Epistemologically, it implies that knowledge is a shared construction, taking place in time, always related to context, and in continual reconstruction." (99)

Talk/Don't Talk and Bengt af Klintberg's *Calls, Cantos 3* utilize verbal scores to notate the elements around which a conversational event occurs. As Brecht describes, event scores prepare one "for the moment itself" or for "an event to happen in one's own 'now'" (Robinson 113). The tradition of Fluxus event scores uses verbal instructions to catalyze an event – a moment with heightened presence and focus. In serving this goal, Fluxus scores do not typically contain complex sequencings, temporal designations, and theatrical stagings. However, this is not always the case, as can be seen in some of George Maciunas pieces, and, in a contemporary event score perhaps most notable to this investigation, Seth Kim Cohen's *How to Write A Text About How to Write a Text Score (And Why)* (see appendix) which provides a sequence of complicated instructions for monological verbal performance. While traditional theatrical scripts cannot be included in this account (as they prescribe the signifiers themselves) there are some notable theatre pieces which utilize scripts that do not adhere to this. A good example might be John Cage's *Solo for Voice 6* (see appendix), which although not explicitly a piece for verbal conversation, nonetheless uses a chance method for randomly assigning actions (many of which could be conversational). The best example from theatre I have found is Anthony Howell's *Going* (see appendix) which uses instructions to sequence moments of dialogic activity. This piece instructs one performer in 5 different scenes to "execute an action with words" while other performers create layered repetitions of these actions. Finally, Brian O'Doherty's *Structural Plays* (see appendix) are brilliant examples of graphic scores for conversation. While the conversation in these scores involves words which are themselves context-independent (thereby limiting this piece's conversational quality), it is easy enough to imagine a modified version of this piece which gave instructions for certain kinds of words to be spoken, rather than inscribe the precise words themselves.

The vast majority of the conversational works under consideration in this chapter do not utilize scores; yet, these pieces iterate and contain context-independent elements across iterations (B-C, Table 4). While many of these pieces communicate these elements through rehearsals or verbal instructions, they have the potential of generating a score, given their procedural and iterative nature. A piece such as *This Progress* contains a perceivable repeated sequence of actions, which could map easily onto a linear score if we were aware of the instructions given by Sehgal to his "interpreters". In a piece such as Bosetti's *The Pool and the Soup*, such linearity is not possible,

given that no clear sequence of actions is prescribed. In an example such as this, the context-independent elements could be easily codified into a non-linear game with a set of instructions, similar to the instruction sheet used for John Zorn's improvisation game piece *Cobra* (see appendix), especially given the fact that the artist provides these instructions on a video on his website. In a work such as Michael Portnoy's *Wrixling*, a quasi-farcical platform for "word therapy," where participants schedule online sessions with trained "Directors of Behavior," the elements of what is context-independent and contingent are hard to discern because: 1) Portnoy does not describe these instructions 2) the work does not contain a clearly discernible, linear sequence 3) of high prices (one wrixling session is $20-50) which prohibit a participant from being able to re-experience the piece, and 4) Portnoy's intentions seem to be to confound the viewer into a state of skepsis about the reliability of the practice itself. In works such as this, making a score would be challenging and likely fail to capture the particular mixture of context-independent and contingent elements that defines the piece.

Figure 10. Michael Portnoy *Wrixling*. Screen capture of wrixling.com (Feb 11, 2019)

On the margins of scoring there are works performed only once (A, Table 4), or works that are recorded and where the recording "is the piece" (E). Works that involve video-recording conversations (for example, Liz Magic Laser's *Primal Speech* or Andrea Fraser's *Projection*) create a final piece of video documentation which undermines the possibility of creating a score.

The video piece's elements are entirely uniform in each of its iterations, so there is no need for a score, as there are no contingent elements contained within the piece. For these works, we can either consider the conversation that occured prior to the recording (in which case we can utilize the aforementioned considerations, and think of these as sequential instructions) or we can consider the final artifact (the video piece) as a work in which a score is irrelevant. Works performed only once, such as Vito Acconci's infamous performance *Seedbed* (where the artist masturbated under the floorboards of an art gallery), and which do not contain a score, make it nearly impossible to discern what the context-independent elements are, as this is only possible by viewing a work across multiple iterations.

Why Scores?

The decision to score a conversation piece has multiple implications, some of which are more advantageous than others. One of these factors is visibility. A musical score, "like a map…offers an immediate and complete overview of something that is otherwise not visually perceivable." (Coessens, Interlude I, 61) A score, unlike a rehearsal, creates more immediate and direct access to the set of techniques and elements of a given piece. In this regard, a score can help one to easily visualize and understand a performance involving multiple parts, sections and stagings. Another factor to consider are the socio-political conditions of accessibility that govern a work's reproducibility and dissemination. Beneath the question "do I score this piece?" lies the question "who is able to perform this piece?" Works without scores (and especially those in which the artist does not disclose the instructions nor easily allow documentation and multiple iterations of a piece) limit the conditions of a piece's reproducibility to those which involve the artist. Producing a score affords greater democratic access and reproducibility. Scoring a work allows for a transferable and easily disseminated artifact which makes a work reproducible beyond an artist's intentions.[89] The act of scoring points towards the removal of the artist from the work. A score, unlike a rehearsal process, puts the iterability of the work into a non-subjective entity. This increases the longevity of iterability (i.e. if an artist dies, a score allows the work to be

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[89] This may be complicated by the fact that digital technology now allows video documentation of a piece to be quickly and cheaply disseminated. This raises the question of whether in particular cases, this form of documentation is the piece itself, or represents the piece, or is itself a different form of scoring or notation.

reproduced beyond their death), but this also is advantageous, in that it creates distance from an authorial voice, which highlights the work itself, and not the subjectivity which gave rise to it.[90] Scores are immutable and the inscriptive traces they leave are static; in this regard, it is possible to say that the challenge of interpretation is less formidable in a rehearsal process where the director can be consulted for an explanation of an instruction. This difference is not just found between a score and a rehearsal, but also within scores themselves. As Coessens explains:

> "At one extreme the score can be considered as a kind of command, a series of directions—how to perform, which material, what comes first and next in time, how long or loud it should be. At the other extreme it leaves open the interpretation of artistic expression. The score as such has characteristics pertaining to both freedom and constraint." (Coessens, Interlude III, 178-9)

A musician needs to possess a certain kind of "artistic know-how to be able to translate the visual image into sound and vice versa." (Coessens, Interlude I, 62) This plays out in conversation scoring as well. A certain degree of interpretive capacity is required to know how to translate a directive into a conversational moment, or into a semantically relevant idea or conversational response (as explained in more depth in Chapter 4). The advantage to a rehearsal process can be that it creates a conversational modality out of the process of learning a piece. One can ask questions, revise, and make adaptations. But a disadvantage is that it limits who can be a part of this conversation. In this sense, scoring opens up the question of who is implicated in the piece, and so turns our attention to larger considerations of involvement and audienceship.

VI. Audience

What is Audience?

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[90] I would further argue that scores have the potential to offset the overemphasis of mastery that is placed onto artists in cults of genius. Scores highlight the power of a sequence of techniques to perform transformation, rather than masterful facilitators (in this situation, artists). Yes, artists still put their signature on these scores and thus inevitably tie their subjectivity to their creation; but a separation between artist and piece is still enacted.

Figure 11. Gob Squad *Kitchen*.

While the question of audience in theatre seems to imply considerations of determinateness and predetermination, these are actually ancillary concerns. White's *Audience Participation in Theatre Aesthetics* provides a detailed analysis of the variety of ways that theatre pieces can become open before audiences. He maps horizons of participation that are facilitated when a director gives up control over a piece (50) and provides examples of theatre pieces that play out along axes of control and its abnegation. While White's considerations are insightful, this entry point into the issue of audienceship is unhelpful, as it does not highlight who is affected by this oscillation of control. We can imagine an open work – Zorn's *Cobra* for example – which has no room at all for any audience participation. Or we can think of a very closed work which actively involves the audience – for example, Gob Squad's *Kitchen*, "when several audience members were given headphones, and asked to take the place of performers [and] ... the performers then took places in the audience, with microphones, and gave instructions for action and dialogue to their replacements through the headphones" (White 64). The question of audience is primarily the question of who is involved in the participatory dimensions of performance and how they are involved.

A major challenge to considerations of audienceship is the fact that the term is fluid – the role, function and identity of the audience shifts dramatically in different forms of theatre and different cultural moments (Shakespearean, Brechtian, Boalian, etc); however, the type of fluidity I am invested in discussing is perhaps more radical as it constitutes an ontological befuddlement. The question becomes – at what point does one become an audience? For example, are the participants in *This Progress* audience members? If I were to secretly video document my involvement in the piece, would those watching this documentation be the audience? What about Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*? Are the non-actor participants who have been trained in this piece "audience" members or performers? The term itself is confusing in these marginal contexts, and more importantly, it doesn't allow us to ask more important questions regarding participation such as who participates, who witnesses, and how are these actions constituted? Considerations of audienceship must not be analyzed from how a work is open or closed (how directorial power is given up or consolidated) but must be understood by considering differing degrees and types of witnessing and participation.

Method & Area of Investigation

In framing this consideration, I will consider different degrees by which a work involves witnesses. I am going to use White's terminology to situate this type of "involvement" as one that regards "the action of a performance" (White 4), which specifically excludes considerations of laughter, applause, side conversations, and other extraneous and ancillary actions. Works such an improvised comedy (as seen in Second City) only marginally involve those who are witnessing a performance (for a prompt or a thematic suggestion) and generally involve a presentation where the audience is not involved in the actions of the performance (A, Table 4). Other works create more significant openings in the actions of the performance for witnesses to participate, an example being the work by Gob Squad mentioned above (B). Other works are presented before persons who participate in the vast majority of the actions of the performance, and include works such as the Tino Sehgal's pieces and some works of non-traditional theatre such as Blast Theory's *Kidnap* (1998), a piece where two willing participants were chosen by lottery to be kidnapped for 48 hours (C). Finally some works are not extensively devised prior to

the performance, and so the creation of the work and its presentation are indistinguishable, creating a relationship between performer and audience that is itself troubled – we find this in most of the social works of art mentioned above, and in works of performance art such as Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm O*, a piece which involved the artist inviting the audience to do whatever they wished to her using one of 72 objects placed on a table (D). Finally, there are works which are performed with non-artistic members of a public which trouble the status of who is considered audience – we see this in works such as *The Task* or *The Battle of Orgreave* (E).

Figure 12. Marina Abramovic, *Rhythm 0* (1974).

Witnessing

As we can see, this discussion of audience revolves around the status of presentation and witness. This witnessing is of primary concern as it raises a foundational ontological question regarding the status of conversational art pieces. This question can be put this way – does a conversation undergo a radical ontological shift when it shifts from something that is purely participatory, to something that is witnessed? Gadamer thinks so. For Gadamer, it is the movement towards presentation that separates creative play from a work of art. When play is "aimed at an audience" or "represented for someone" this play becomes art (*Truth and Method*

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108). For Gadamer, having a conversation (for example to have a discussion with Socrates) cannot be considered a work of art. It is only when this conversation is documented, designed or structured, such that it is aimed at another that it moves from representation to presentation, and undergoes an ontological shift to artwork. Only when the play of conversation is aimed at those outside of it can those inside relinquish their absorption, absorbing the audience and thereby "play their role in relation and regard to the whole of the play" (ibid 109).[91]

While Gadamer's ontological analysis may work well for traditional works of theatre, it fails to discuss the unique relationship between participation and witnessing in the contemporary works of art under consideration in this chapter. These works create an ambiguous interplay between absorption and witness, representation and presentation; they aim simultaneously inwards to participants and outwards towards witnesses. Hirschhorn's *Monuments* immerse participants within manifold conversations, all of which are structured in order to point towards socio-political critique. Improvised theater (for example "comedy improv" as in Chicago's *Second City*) instigates a moment-by-moment interplay between the player's radical absorption in what is being said, alongside rapid decisions to present these conversational modalities to an audience member. Tino Sehgal's constructed situations or Portnoy's *Wrixling* fully immerse participants in conversation games, but structure the site of these games towards larger institutional critiques. The vast majority of works under consideration do not neatly or easily structure play by a transfer of representation into presentation – they do not display their play to a witness. These pieces implicate a complicated movement between witnessing and performing, absorption and reflection, involvement and abstention.[92]

Nonetheless, Gadamer does open up the question of the status of the witness which has not been adequately resolved. While the roles of witness and participant may not create such a drastic ontological shift that a work's status as artwork or play is brought into question, witnessing a

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[91] While this may be true of the play of theatre, it is hard to see how this would work in pieces where a presentation is created post-factum; i.e. in cases where a dialogue occurs for its own sake and then only later is presented for an audience.

[92] Gadamer's account is also brought into question if we consider the rather thin line that separates some games, sports and theatre – all of which Schechner maps into a similar field as mediating the self-centric fantasies of play and the other-centered authority of ritual (Schechner 13). For example, games and sports are many times both highly immersive for the participants, not truly "aimed at an audience", yet are witnessed by audiences.

conversation (instead of participating in it) points to an important modality in how one is connected to a given conversation. This pertains to issues touched on in Chapter 1, when considering Socratic dialogues. Although I argued that the Socratic dialogues are a pedagogical tool for a conversational form, and although these dialogues were perhaps entirely devised, they provide an entry point into the consideration of a very important question – how is it different to read or witness a dialogue than it is to read or witness a purely monological utterance, speech or narrative? If dialogue can retain a responsive quality even in situations when it is transcribed and witnessed then this may resolve the foundational problem with textuality identified by Socrates in the Phaedrus – namely that texts cannot answer our questions. One way to argue this point is through an account of dialogic polyphony (i.e. representative of a multiplicity of voices) as seen in Bakhtin.[93] A dialogical text, speech, or performance can be representative of a multiplicity of voices, which would provide ulterior opinions and perspectives to challenge dominant opinions or argument from an authorial, authoritative voice. These ulterior voices will inevitably allow an audience witnessing them to push against the dominant narrative with similar questions and responses. In other words, polyvocal texts contain a greater likelihood that we may find our questions within them, that the text itself can anticipate our questions.[94] Works of this nature allow us to follow the interlocutor's questions, identify with them, and increase the personal investment in our inquiry. We can see this occur in a work like Leigh Ledare's *The Task* which allows us to closely observe multiple dissenting voices in a near endless process of group awareness and discussion. This piece also points to another advantage afforded by witnessing a conversation – as a witness, one can perceive more easily the conversational form itself. While those immersed in a conversation are enacting or performing a given conversation's structure, witnesses are in the privileged position of observing its outline or shape by watching the transitions from one stage to the next. In *The Task* those viewing the video not only gain a greater recognition of the structure of a Tavistock Group, but they can witness the very mode of presentation (the documentation of the piece) interfering or accentuating the working of this conversational practice. Gadamer's turn from play to art, seen as residing in the ability to "regard

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[93] The major text which discusses this position is *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* which states that "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels." (Baktin 6)

[94] This is propounded even further by considering texts that have not been didactically presented, and which may in fact contain true dissent articulated by multiple interlocutors; i.e. texts which have not passed through the censorship of an author like Plato, invested in providing a universal and absolutist worldview.

the whole of the play" (*Truth and Method* 109) is made possible through the position of witness, even though one can be a witness in more ways than those described by Gadamer.

Problems with Witnessing Conversation

Something is always lost when one is no longer a participant in the conversation and merely a witness. A witness to a piece is no longer an active agent in the construction of the conversation itself. It is important to note, however, that this "active" quality has nothing to do with the level of reflection or investigation an audience member (or witness) might engage in. This question of involvement touches upon the critique that Rancière makes in *The Emancipated Spectator,* which troubles the divide between passive and active audiences by pointing out that reflective activities of watching and listening can also be active. While I agree with Rancière on this, his account does not mention the changes that occur within a conversation when an audience member is able to be a part of a conversation, when they are able to add in their voice and participate. Non-participation will always create a power imbalance between those who get to speak and those who can only listen. Even if the content creates an active "inner reception" (i.e. audience members compare, contrast and reflect) there still remains a material or physical divide between those who can generate utterances and those who cannot. The network of associations that an audience member follows when witnessing creates unacknowledged divisions and dissociations in the conversation itself, thereby creating a dissensus.[95] And while dissensus is not inherently negative for the conversation, it is not contained within the conversation, as those listening are not arguing, debating and discussing; rather the witness comes to their own conclusions following their own systems of beliefs and patterns of emotional behavior. When we are witnessing, we are always somewhat outside, which means that the potential for

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[95] We can see dissensus here in two possible ways. One is common sensical, whereby there are dissenting values, opinions, attitudes, etc. Or we can view dissensus in the way that Rancière uses the term in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.* He says: "A dissensus is not a conflict of interests, opinions or values; it is a division inserted in 'common sense': a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given" (*Dissensus* 69). And while Rancière's "frame" is meant to capture radical breaks in systems of thought (such as those expressed by women criticizing the terms of "The Declaration of the Rights of Man"), one could argue that this frame can be understood as the very process by which something is given in the moment it is given. In this sense, the frame of witness will always be separate from the frame of participant. The frame "which sees something as given" for the participant is a conversation, and the frame for the witness is always the viewing of this conversation. Materially or pedagogically, these frames seem to be radically heterogeneous.

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transformative inquiry is not a dialogic negotiation. In this sense, it cannot be a true conversational inquiry, for the structure of response in our own inner monologue will never be a true conversational responsiveness that implicates the other in a radically immersive way. It will always only implicate a fictitious other, an other whose voice generates our own considerations, questions and fantasies, but who we are never in dialogue with because of the lack of back-and-forth when we are on the outside of a performance or a text.[96]

And so the question of witness raises questions critical to this entire investigation of how conversation can be utilized in artistic practice, one that involves a return to Socrates' critique of speeches and writing: can these forms answer our questions? This crucial question always points to the deficits of a non-participant. In any given inquiry, no singular utterance (even if it implicates a vast multiplicity of perspectives and dialectical exchanges) can encompass all possible viewpoints and pedagogical dimensions. It is never possible for a conversational work to transmit its entire content to another witnessing the conversation, not only because there will always be something lost, some noise in the transmission (there will be a claim that one doesn't understand, or a connection that one fails to see, or a counter argument that one thinks that goes unacknowledged[97]) but because the foundational methodology of conversational inquiry is not one of transmission. To converse is to be within the conversation, to be vitally immersed, to be included amongst those who can question and response, and to be able to move the conversation in a direction in order to stay fully invested.[98] That is why works that implicate witnesses, audiences and spectators will be most effective if they add an additional form of transformative inquiry, one that is only achievable from this external observational perspective, and which shifts the focus away from the content of the conversation itself and towards the form, or some other political or cultural idiom, which I will discuss below.

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[96] David Kennedy comments that this real other that presents conflicting opinions is a necessary function for inquiry. He says: "the experience of inquiry always bears a negative element, a necessity that one be refuted in order to learn what one does not know. The dia of dialectic stands for the process of differentiation, of a going-through in which there is implicitly a taking things asunder, which always involves a certain degree of conflict." (Kennedy 213)

[97] Or if the inquiry is an affective inquiry of emotional states and positions, then, likewise, the audience members will potentially be accruing diverse and oppositional affects which are not brought into dialogue with the affects of the performers.

[98] Of course this may not happen even if one is within the conversation (as we also saw in many of the Platonic dialogues). However, the structure of dialogue in the very least allows for this possibility.

Types of Transformation

Many, if not all works of art transform. Artworks transform material substance itself into a meaningful aesthetic form (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 112). Artworks transform our emotions through a process of catharsis in many works of theatre, film and music. They can transform our beliefs, as Cage's *4'33* or Duchamp's *Fountain* pushed the boundaries of what was considered music or visual art. Art, especially social and participatory works, can aim to transform social conventions (Kester 87). Contemporary performance art can transform identity as it breaks down barriers between audience, spectator, individual and community (Fischer-Lichte 205). A work can transform the very process of inquiry itself, as seen in Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*. Moreover, there is the question of *who* is transformed. Static works of visual arts aim at transforming the viewer. Likewise, traditional theatre and music aims at transforming an audience. Social practice works hope to achieve a democratic transformation of all participants. Grotowski's ritualistic pieces of "paratheatre" that contain no observers are transformative predominantly for the participants.

Method & Area of Investigation

Given this vast landscape of transformation, it is difficult to know where to begin our analysis. Fortunately, we have already been discussing transformation and conversation practices aimed at transformation through inquiry. We will begin this consideration of transformation with techniques that we have already identified as transformative. The question of this section becomes, therefore, how does a conversation of transformative inquiry change when a transformative technique moves from conversation practice to a work of art? I will analyze three categories of response. There are artworks which alter the site of the transformative inquiry, changing who is implicated in the work (A, Table 4) such as Einat Amir's *Our Best Intentions*. There are works which alter the direction or focus of the transformative inquiry, typically towards a social convention or institutional critique (B). Works in this category perform this shift by creating a critical distance from techniques (or from the conversation practice itself) and

allows the viewer to see the practice within a wider range of cultural and social institutions. This can be done through a material separation of the audience from the work (primarily through recorded documentation) as in Liz Magic Laser's *Primal Speech* or in Andrea Fraser's *Projection*. This can also be done through an immanent skepsis, typically performed through mimicry or mocking gestures, which establishes this separation within the piece itself as seen in Ann Liv Young's *Sherapy,* a mock therapy performance staged in multiple settings whereby the artist plays a sassy, lewd, radical, feminist therapist who tactlessly points out uncomfortable truths to her audience members. Finally, there are works which transform the very process and procedure of transformative inquiry itself, creating new participatory forms of transformation through discourse which expands a technique's pedagogical, embodied and material dimensions, as seen in *This Progress* (C).[99]

Critical Distance

Maria Walsh, in discussing video pieces that utilize therapeutic practices, names a current trend – the "critical therapeutic zeitgeist in contemporary art" (Walsh 14). Pieces within this grouping aesthetically frame recordings of therapeutic conversations to radically alter the political dimension these practices operate within. Perhaps this is easiest to see in Liz Magic Laser's *Primal Speech,* which gives voice to the "conflicted nature of citizenship in neoliberal capitalism," by casting actors with vastly differing political beliefs who are subjected to the same therapeutic treatment ("primal therapy"), thereby conflating "personal traumas with their political frustrations" (ibid 15-16). We see this same dynamic play out in Andrea Fraser's *Projection*, where Fraser took videos recorded of her during a form of psychoanalysis called ISTDP (Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy), re-staged these sessions playing both herself and the therapist, and then displayed the videos of these re-staged sessions at the Tate Modern, thereby exposing this technique as one not of, "mutative transformation (the kind that Fraser cherishes), but as a form which encourages the subject's aggressive dissolution" (Morra 175). Both examples begin with a conversation practice that is already performing transformative inquiry. Lazer's participants are transformed by the primal therapy technique, involving actions

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[99] I will not discuss category C below as I have already discussed this in depth in the beginning of this chapter. For more considerations into aesthetic practices that transform the form and format of transformative inquiry please see chapter 4 (especially the conclusion).

actions guided by a facilitator which bring up unconscious, repressed trauma. Fraser's sessions in ISTDP clearly were effective as the practice used directed conflict to break through Fraser's resistances, resulting in an intense transformation of Fraser's affective and attitudinal states.

Figure 13. Andrea Fraser. *Projection* (2008)

Both artists play with the way in which these transformative techniques are staged, documented, and performed, in order to create additional transformative effects. In *Primal Speech*, through cuts and splices in the group process, the video only gradually shows that the actors are together in the same room and that each of them is undergoing not merely a collective transformative experience, but that the content of the transformation is related to the political beliefs of the participants. The political nature of the content, less relevant to each individual interlocutor,

becomes relevant to the viewer as Laser plays with how and when this information is disclosed, and how it is framed. In Fraser's *Projection,* ISDTP is performed but in an altered setting where the same person is both client and therapist. The cuts of the video prevent a viewer from seeing a gradual process (or to follow the conversation fully) and create a fragmented experience troubled by dialogue that seems unnecessarily cruel or intense. Therapist and client are represented in two different monitors, each a hallway distance apart, which further fragments this conversation. Both pieces re-structure key elements of the conversation – the positioning of each interlocutor, the backgrounds of the interlocutor, the linearity of the conversation itself. Decisions made within the creation of the conversation itself combine with decisions made post-conversation about its representation, which then combine to form a finished video work placed into a gallery or museum. The finished work manipulates these key elements of the initial conversations of transformative inquiry in order to create a video piece which directs a viewer towards a different transformative function other than the transformation represented in the video. For Laser, we are led to inquire into the political relevance of therapeutic techniques. For Fraser, we are led to inquire into how institutions (both the psychoanalytic institute and the museum and art world) are silent co-conspirators in the production of "a subjectivity in dissolution." (Morra 175). These aesthetic manipulations of the conversation re-frame the conversation itself. The focus remains the same – the individual transformation of the conversationalists. But what is framed has entirely changed. We are now invited to ask questions about the political implications of institutional complicity in the use of therapeutic techniques. The work re-frames the initial transformation to catalyze a new inquiry in the viewer. Perhaps one powerful enough to transform their beliefs on the topics under consideration.

Alternatively, this transformation of technique can occur through altering the way in which these practices are performed (rather than manipulated post-performance). We can see examples of this in the work of Michael Portnoy's *Wrixling* and *Sherapy* by Ann Liv Young. Both create farcical, quasi-therapeutic practices utilizing techniques found in actual therapeutic practice. While *Sherapy* is clearly mocking traditional psychoanalytical talk therapy practices, *Wrixling* draws its sources from a more ambiguous mixture of imaginative exercises, surrealist word games and nonsense. In the case of *Sherapy*, Young creates a role that highlights undisclosed political and social assumptions locating within therapeutic practice:

By drawing attention to her body fluids and body parts and saying "use me, use me", she ironises the consumer industry, with its constantly changing and thus unattainable ideals of femininity. She portrays commercial availability as a postfeminist practice, by contrast with a therapist who would usually keep this aspect of themselves—the practitioner as a commodity—below the threshold of visibility. The otherness of Sherry goes together with what has been called the transgressive body and adolescent temporality, both staged by Young as resisting and discomforting phenomena. (Spiess 595)

Young explicitly discusses the institutional critique of her practice and discusses how the character of Sherry is partially responsible for performing this critique. Sherry is lewd, bold and unapologetic; but she is also incisive, lucid and effective, thereby making viewers feel troubled by what simultaneously seems like effective therapy, but also by its ironic representation. Young creates a character that allows viewers' attention to oscillate between these two possibilities – at times immersed in the techniques that Sherry administers and at times brought outside of the techniques to question the entire framework that Young is creating.

Figure 14. Ann Liv Young. *Sherapy*. World Psychiatric Conference (2014)

While the institutional critique of *Sherapy* is perhaps somewhat clear, Portnoy's *Wrixling* bears a greater degree of ambiguity. Wrixling is described as a 'performance portal [which] incorporates the model of one-on-one video therapy with language games that "reengineer the logic, language and movements of human exchange' (Stokic 19). Having experienced *Wrixling* myself, I can say that I was utterly confounded by the experience, not knowing if it was therapy or even what it did. I share Ross Simonini's sentiments expressed in The Paris Review on *Wrixling* which concludes with him saying: "I can't say that Wrixling transformed me, but it certainly did something" (Simonini). This "something" lies on the edge of transformation and farce, reality and fiction – an edge that is only possible because the practice lies on the threshold of a successful transformation. While Simonini explains that to create Wrixling, Portnoy drew "upon the hypnotherapist Milton Erickson's "psychological confusion" technique" (Simonini), this technique, and the many others which draw from nonsense, surrealism and Oulipo, blend together into a para-therapeutic soup.[100] Much like *Sherapy*, I was at times affected by these techniques, brought into some state of quasi-transformed affect, and at times left quizzically wondering in what way I was being duped or played with. This edge is precisely Wrixling strength. It is what establishes *Wrixling* as farcical para-practice (or pata-practice) that brings the viewer to playfully question the legitimacy of therapeutic techniques while also almost transforming in the process.[101] True irony must play dangerously close to what it mocks.

Margins

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[100] The website *does* say that "WRIXLING is for entertainment purposes only and is not therapy", however this statement does not tell us much about what is actually happening. It is most likely included on the website so that Portnoy will not get sued by any participants whose psyche remains radically dislodged or upset after the experience.

[101] I use both these terms "para" and "pata" to explain how a work such a *Wrixling* engages in the center of a practice such as therapy. The "para" implies that the piece is around or on the margins of the center of a given practice. *Wrixling* is not performing therapy, but is also not *not* performing therapy. I utilize "pata" with a nod to pataphysics, a nomadic and undefinable artistic method first coined by Alfred Jarry in *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician*. Pataphysics is a discipline that derides definitions, making it quite hard to define. Pataphysics is a quasi-science of imaginary solutions which enacts the methodological move that metaphysics makes on physics, but on metaphysics itself. In this sense, pataphysics implies a going beyond the methodological assumptions of a given practice, but also implicates a playful means of performing this reflexivity. More on this will be discussed in the Postscript as I discuss how my own creative practice can be considered para and pata-philosophical.

Finally, we can briefly consider artworks that merely alter the site of a transformative practice, placing it within an artistic context.[102] While artists in this category (such as Leeny Sack or Einat Amir) utilize some degree of staging, costume and design (for instance in Amir's pieces audience members wear vests with writing that indicates what drama therapeutic role they are playing), these works do not significantly innovate the techniques themselves, nor do these artists use the site itself to create a significant institutional critique (as explained above). Although inevitably the transformative inquiry practices in these works of art will change as they are placed into an altered setting, these changes will primarily be one of access and audienceship and secondarily involve altered expectations of what is suppose to happen in a museum or stage (i.e. viewers typically anticipate that these spaces do not afford opportunities for interpersonal transformation). As argued above, these works do not aesthetically interlock the context-independent aspects of site with the context-independent aspects within the conversation practice itself. In other words, these artists do not create pieces that aesthetically engage with the altered site, nor do they create pieces that aesthetically transform the transformative inquiry. All these pieces do is re-stage an already-existent practice with mild, aesthetic accoutrement which are mostly irrelevant to the inquiry.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to ask after the value of bringing conversational techniques of transformative inquiry into artistic practice. One answer, seen most profoundly in the works of Einat Amir, is simply that this action increase access to transformation – we can alter *where* performances of deep empathy, therapy, connection and relational transformation occur, thereby altering *who* is able to access such transformations. I am somewhat skeptical of Einat Aimir's work, which relocates this activity to the museum, an already privileged site, as opposed to the many cultural locations that social workers, counselors or support centers operate within. However, many of the works discussed above challenge these privileged sites of access by re-locating transformation into sites of marginalized communities (Oda Projesi, Hirschhorn, etc). Other works create virtual platforms for a work's dissemination – scores, online platforms,

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[102] These artworks were already considered above (in the section on Determinacy) and so I will only briefly reframe this conversation given considerations of transformative inquiry.

multi-site performances (like Sherapy) – which offset a singular place and also create possibilities of future artist-practitioners utilizing the pieces in places of their own choosing. Other works seek less to alter who is transformed and instead use aesthetic methods to challenge how or what this transformation itself can perform. Video pieces like *Primal Speech* and *Projection* capture the traces of transformative conversation techniques and aesthetically manipulate these traces to create institutional critique. Other works alter the very techniques themselves, including the way they are utilized within conversation, using aesthetic tools such as rehearsals, choreography or structured improvisation to model expanded forms of conversational transformative inquiry.

In this movement from practice to artwork, no matter the aim of transformation, there is always a shift away from the transformed participant. As discussed above, artworks move the representation of play into presentation. This movement towards presentation still occurs even if a work undergoes mild alterations (for example, altering the site) and even if a work is extremely immersive and participatory (for example, community-based arts). The active participants of a conversation practice become audiences, either spatio-temporally distanced from the practice itself (in the video works discussed above) or distanced through an immersive critical distance produced by irony and mimicry, or merely by the fact that participants know they are not in therapist's office or the classroom but are within an altered setting. This creates an added reflexivity for participants or witnesses of these works, allowing one to notice where one is, what one is doing, and how one is doing it. The frame shifts away from being a transformation of participants in a room discussing together, to a transformation that looks at the very process of transformation. There are always at least two transformations: first, a transformation of the participant, of those affected by the techniques, while the other transformation is about those witnessing people affected by the techniques in question. The distance between these two transformations can align or malign, as the artist is able to negotiate this boundary to direct a transformations at particular beliefs, views, attitudes or institutions. In the movement to art, this added reflexivity, combined with a wider set of aesthetic tools for distributing techniques and rehearsing them, creates a wider set of possible transformations, adding layers of who or what is transformed – participant, witness, institution, transformative inquiry itself.

In becoming a work, each piece establishes a transformative inquiry unique in its individual form of transformation. In doing so, all the pieces mentioned in this section play with the way in which conversations of transformative inquiry inquire. This play can be as subtle as simply changing where transformative inquiry occurs, or determining who is allowed into the inquiry. But in some pieces, this play doesn't merely work on the context around which techniques are deployed, or the way in which these techniques are revealed. Some works create a conversational ecology, like a machine, whereby certain rule-sets and sequences alter how we come together to converse. These pieces – which have narrow turn-based frames, indeterminate semantics (they don't predermine what is said), which contain systems for determining their context-independent elements (rehearsals, scores, notation), which either eliminate the "witness" and are entirely participatory or redirect the transformation through the act of witnessing – are unique in their ability to work at the conversational level. The more a work coheres to the emergent logic of conversation, and works surgically within the conversation's system of emergence (designing rules for how we can speak differently), the more a work will begin to transform the way in which we are able to come together to speak differently. Changing a site (as seen in the work of social practice art discussed above) will not do this alone, for we all too easily fall back to habitual ways of speaking that either fails to transform or merely transforms via the same standards of the practice it is imitating. Making a script will not do this, because a script will fail to transform those speaking by eliminating the anxious unknown of conversational immanence. The works that most deserve attention are those that are able to transform the conversational mechanics of transformative inquiry. These works operate on the level of conversational grammars by re-deploying and re-sequencing techniques that alter moment-by-moment where and how conversational bodies act. These types of works will be what we turn our focus to as I now detail my own process of creating works of transformative inquiry.

CH 4. DEVISING CONVERSATION PIECES OF TRANSFORMATIVE INQUIRY

I. <u>Introduction</u>

The aim of this chapter is to explore in greater depth conversational art pieces of transformative inquiry within my own creative practice. I will begin by situating my work along a historical timeline, starting with my first attempts at making conversation pieces in 2010 up to and including the structures I am devising today. The first stage of development came out of a desire to create pieces that were deeply philosophical – either by playing with the semantic techniques of dialogical philosophy, or by creating pieces that worked closely with particular philosophical texts. The second of these developments was characterized by attempting to "translate" pre-existing musical scores into conversation scores, which pushed my work into the direction of using scoring, rehearsals, and elaborate instructions to push up against conventional conversational forms. The latter part of the chapter is divided into thematic sections to show how my recent body of work has developed alongside various systemic considerations.

Some of the fundamental questions I will address include: how do specific techniques (as discussed in Chapter 2) function when utilized in a work of art? How does the structuring, sequencing and design of techniques enable alternative transformative functions? Where do these structures fail and succeed in facilitating transformation? How does the transformation itself shift from piece to piece? What implicit conditions are needed to enable the transformation of a given piece? What skills are required of the participants and how are these skills imparted? How much of the performance of a piece is due to this skill, to implicit contextual conditions (political situation, cultural backgrounds, etc), and how much is due to the techniques themselves?

Question Maps

In 2010 my shared interests in philosophy and performance pushed me in the direction of making my first conversation piece of transformative inquiry. This decision was precipitated by dissatisfaction with my M.A. philosophy program's inability to create experimental pedagogical platforms, as well as a dissatisfaction with contemporary art's inability to rigorously engage an

audience in intellectual conversation. I was partially involved in the art scene in Brooklyn at the time, and had been exploring public performance in the style of Happenings or Dérives, but I was desiring to create something more programmatic. I jumped at the opportunity to make a piece for Bushwick Open Studio's BETA SPACES, which led to the creation of *Question Maps* (2010). For this piece I created a series of dialogical prompts aimed at catalyzing a philosophical conversation. I then laid these prompts along a rooftop gallery in Brooklyn for participants to move along, like a dance map, advancing from position to position, from utterance to response, by following pieces of string that connected the different prompts.

Figure 15. Aaron Finbloom. *Question Maps*. Brooklyn (2010)

I was hopeful that by creating the opportunity for participants to engage in dialectical exchange through questions and answers, which would then prompt more complicated questions and answers, that a philosophical conversation would ensue, one that was embodied – as bodies were instructed to move and alter their proximity – and whose conversational structure was now visible, material and aesthetic. *Question Maps* gestured towards this enactment of a performative philosophical dialogue; however, the piece contained significant room for development. The movements had no conceptual or aesthetic significance. Why move along a pathway on a

rooftop? Why place the bodies in altered degrees of proximity? Why use these specific questions? The prompts were broad and unfocused; not all of them directly responded to the prior directive, thereby foreclosing the potential for focused and in-depth discussion. Each dance map contained roughly four to six instructions for each participant, which began as an interrogative process, but then shut down shortly after commencing. The duration of the rounds were not long enough to dwell significantly on a conversational topic, nor were they long enough to cycle through processes of questioning, thereby interrogating the grounds of questions to uncover philosophical problems. The quick movements, the dispersed reactions and the limited duration all worked against the possibility of creating a collective affective situation; participants were not given time to "feel" into the uniqueness of the encounter of the other, and to let this encounter influence the conversation itself. I knew that in order to create more effective philosophical conversation pieces I would need to ask more of my participants, and extend the duration of the conversation itself.

II.   Philosophical-Textual

One trajectory of my work that followed were philosophical conversation pieces derived from specific philosophical texts, authors or discourses. These pieces aimed to expand the philosophical problems of specific texts exegetically, creating additional interpretations and analyses; but also aimed to expand the method of interpretation to include a larger gamut of interpretive actions and performative-conversational enactments whose structure would mimic philosophical problematics within the text.

A Lecture On Play

The first of these pieces was titled *A Lecture on Play* which was a performative enactment of two lectures about Hans-Georg Gadamer's "Ontology of the Work of Art and Its Hermeneutic Significance" from *Truth & Method*. For the two-part lecture series, which premiered at the Elsewhere Residency Program in Greensboro North Carolina, I dressed up and role-played a fictitious Gadamer character, guiding the audience through Elsewhere's fantastical play-space of mid-20th century paraphernalia, and providing a lecture based on a detailed exegesis of a few

pages of the philosophical text which centered on the aesthetic development of the work of art from an ontological analysis of play. The lecture attempted to instantiate the philosophical material through games, demonstrations, and songs as the audience moved from different "play stations," each of which ludically demonstrated a paragraph of the text.
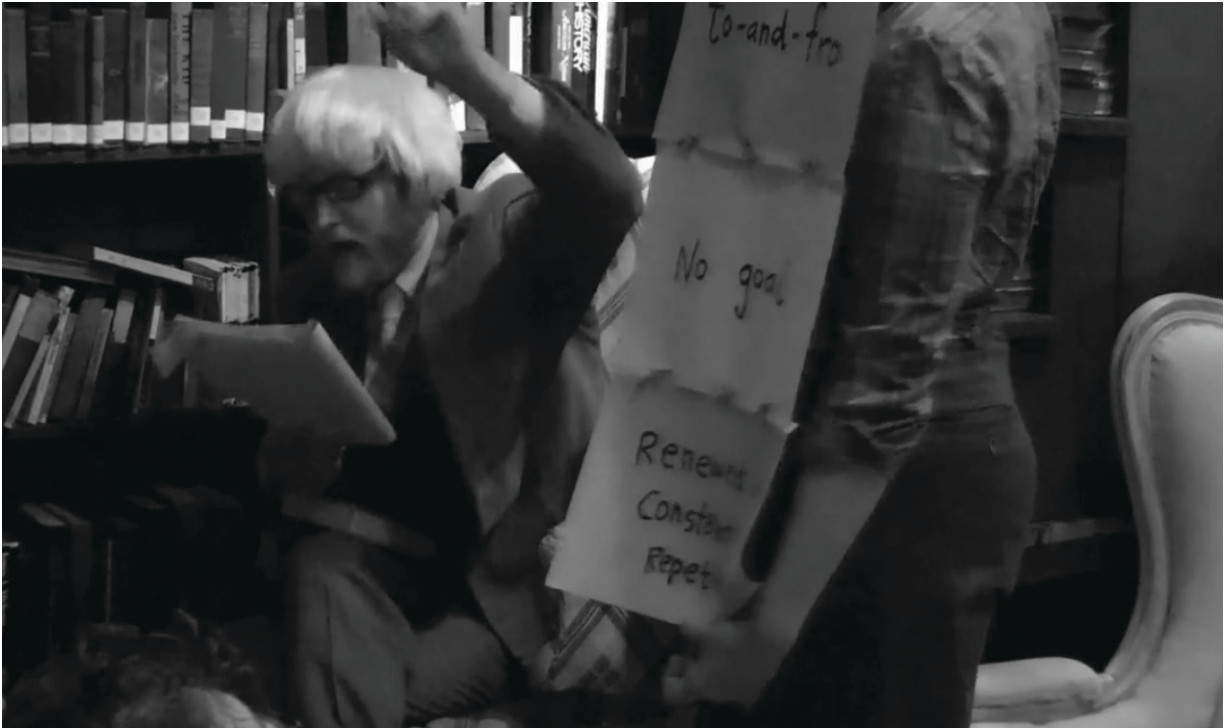
Figure 16. Aaron Finbloom. *A Lecture on Play*. Elsewhere, Greensboro (2012)

The use of role-play in *A Lecture on Play* was critical for its success. I attempted to create a fictionalized philosophical figure of Gadamer who was simultaneous rigorous and silly, pushing for a fuller understanding of passages discussing the topic of play, while donning a German accent, and dressed in colorful professorial garb. This role-play prompted audience participation, as it let participants know we were collectively playing a game, and that this conversational "world" was a unique play space where one could take part by conversing, asking questions or enacting a demonstration. As a facilitator, I was modeling role-play and inviting the audience into the world of a playful philosophical encounter. Within that world of role-play other techniques became more easily accessible – asking pointed questions, revealing underlying assumptions, making clarifications – all techniques which were enacted, exaggerated, and

encouraged by a fictionalized philosopher, helping the audience to create alternative personas in themselves, to activate techniques not typically a part of their conversational repertoire.

While *A Lecture on Play* was perhaps a successful performative enactment of a philosophical textual analysis, the aesthetic aspects of these piece were somewhat disconnected from the conceptual underpinnings. At one point in the piece I used a bouncing ball to display the concept of "to-and-fro." At another point I used a colorful chart with three concepts on it which unfolded like an accordion (Figure 2). Later in the piece I sang a song about play while accompanying myself on an antique electric organ. While each of these moves perhaps helped participants learn a concept more fully, through enactment and physical demonstration, I remain skeptical about these pedagogical devices as they seemed elementary, degrading the level of nuanced abstraction that the text contained. For example, a bouncing ball demonstrates "to-and-fro," but does not complicate the concept of "to-and-fo" and prompt dialectical considerations. Merely displaying or enacting an idea aesthetically, while perhaps capturing the attention of the listeners, does not significantly deepen understanding of the concept. Neither does it aid in advancing the philosophical "moves" within the text and expanding philosophical interpretation.

Another issue with *A Lecture on Play* was the required skill-set of the actor playing Gadamer. To be able to seamlessly field questions from the audience requires a certain type of skill, most importantly, a level of depth and understanding of the given philosophical text that takes years of philosophical study to acquire. Such training is different from the actor's capacity to memorize a text. However, to cast a philosopher in this role would be equally problematic, for not all philosophers are up to the task of improvising in German accents and creating playful guises and performative enactments. So there was clearly an issue in how this piece would be reproduced, given that it is hard to find philosophically trained actors, or philosophers with theatrical proclivities.

This issue points to a larger question (briefly discussed in the introduction) of whether a technique or the context around the technique performs the work of transformation. Let's take the technique of posing questions. A given question within this piece (or a series of questions) performs transformative inquiry by altering the beliefs of those participating. This technique is

made more effective by the role-play which, as explained above, opens up a world of play around the question, which gives an audience permission to ask further questions, as well as a greater sense of concentration on the question due to the thrill of being transported to a world of play. But questions also are able to perform this function (i.e. are able to move another's beliefs) because the text itself frames a line of questioning, by an author (in this case, Gadamer) who initially composed the text, and by all the citational forces which Gadamer relied upon. A single question performs transformative inquiry not because of the grammar of the question, nor through the utilization of the role-play, but because of an endless array of contexts, citations and conceptual valances. The unique history of a question, including all those who have aided in its unfolding and deepening, is responsible for a question's potential to create a deep and penetrative inquiry within a given conversation. It seems as though it doesn't really matter so much as how a question is uttered, in what space, or alongside what techniques. What matters is that a question successfully connects to its conceptual and intellectual history.

While this latter point is relevant no matter what the conversation, an inquiry relies less on this history when the inquiry is untethered to an author's positions, or less connected to the specific pathways of dialectic question-answer conditioned by its history. Moreover, this is less a concern when the inquiry is non-conceptual, but affective or behavioral, or when the inquiry is reflexive and pointed towards its own conditions as we inquire into the situation of inquiry itself. In *A Lecture on Play*, the conditions which enabled the piece's successful enactment of techniques seemed too contingent on external factors – too contingent upon my successful implementation of the role of Gadamer, and too contingent upon a successful alignment with the text and its paratexts. What is required to reproduce this piece is an entire set of pre-given skills that are not explicitly worked on nor developed within this piece – a background in philosophical understanding, the history of contemporary hermeneutics, and a large degree of time to rehearse the playful role of Gadamer. This piece transforms because one has the skills to play the right kind of Gadamer, who can unfold the right kind of exegetical analysis, and not because of the techniques themselves or their aesthetic structure. In my next piece I was determined to complicate this textual lineage, and create a piece that wouldn't require a skillful performer for its reproduction.

Memory Pharmacy

The second text-based philosophical conversation piece I created was *Memory Pharmacy* – created at an artist residency I help run called The School of Making Thinking. *Memory Pharmacy* is an investigation into a peculiar passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* where Plato has Socrates question the very medium by which we encounter him – writing. In the work, I erased all of Socrates' interlocutors' lines and replaced them with "what do you think?" and then gave this passage of the text to participants to read aloud. The erased passages would prompt an improvised conversation about the text's issues, which would eventually return to the text, as participants would proceed to reading aloud the subsequent passage until the next "what do you think" occurred. After collecting the transcriptions of these "readings" I then compiled them into a rhizomatic dialogical game where participants read aloud from an interactive text interspliced with both Platonic passages of the *Phaedrus,* as well as the compiled transcriptions of the participant's conversations regarding these passages. The game is played on Twine, an open-source tool for non-linear storytelling, where players choose a character, either Socrates or Phaedrus, and begin by reading aloud scripted lines of the Platonic text, at times pausing the verbatim reading to voice their own opinions and have a discussion. Players are guided down conversation pathways that discuss the philosophical foundations of writing and textuality, literature and electronic literature, and the game ends by forcing players to make a choice posed by Socrates in the original text – to choose between writing on a soul (a virtual, non-inscribed, potentially eternal form of writing), or by writing on an inscriptive platform (a decaying yet sensible material).

Figure 17. Aaron Finbloom. *Memory Pharmacy* (2014). Sample Pathway.

Memory Pharmacy derived its semantic directives from actual dialogical and dialectical "moves" made from verbal or textual conversation. Conversational moves such as disagreements, provocations and clarifications were created not ad-hoc, randomly, or by sheer will, but were created *from* and connected *to* actual conversational content (see examples in Figure 17). By explicitly disclosing the kind of move (for example agreement, disagreement or clarification), and connecting it to an already-trodden conversational pathway, interlocutors could then choose which conversational pathway they wanted to pursue. However, this would always involve choosing a pathway which would push the conversation deeper, for all the pathways were carefully chosen and edited under my discretion, carving out pathways that were ripe with philosophical content.

This deepening of the conversation was also facilitated by the unique interplay between writing and speaking. The game hints at a potentially infinite process of dialogue and transcription, a never-ending cycle of linguistic generation whereby a text creates a dialogue which then creates

a transcription, which then creates a dialogue, and so on. The written components of this process provide precision and clarity as past conversations are codified, re-structured and re-arranged. This writing is then interrupted by moments of non-scripted dialogue that rupture the text, that give voice to the interlocutors themselves, along with their unique and personal issues with the textual ideas. The writing pushes the inquiry into precise and clear subject matters, but the dialogue opens these matters to the potential of self-transformation as the individual interlocutor can enter at these important junctures and provide a crucial personal connection to the subject matter necessary for transformation.

Aesthetic Considerations

Both *Memory Pharmacy* and *A Lecture on Play* are conversation pieces whose conversational techniques are structured according to formal aesthetic considerations, and not only to transformative functions. The chapter from *Truth and Method* which *A Lecture on Play* performatively demonstrates is a text which questions the role of subjectivity, rules, structure and audience in play and art. *A Lecture on Play*'s structure is deliberately formed around these questions as the piece creates: 1) an ambiguous audience, one both "inside" the piece in their participatory powers, but "outside" in their inability to truly direct the overall narrative 2) a play that is both structural, in that techniques or games are responsible for its performance, but also personal and subjective, as playfulness is created via the playful and silly character of Gadamer 3) rules that both define the game (for example one must sing this song at time x and play with that ball at position y) but which are are also fluid and non-prescribed, for at times rules can be broken and an unpredicted conversation could ensue. These unsettled dichotomies within the structure of the piece played with the creative tension of elements in the text itself. In other words, we were not only discussing how rules, subjectivities and audience informed play and art, we were holding this discussion in a setting that was ambiguously ruled-governed, participatory and personal.

We see these formal considerations in *Memory Pharmacy* as well, which discusses problematics of writing vs. speaking, interactivity, aliveness and responsiveness. The source material, Plato's *Phaedrus*, is itself a paradox as it is simultaneously written, and yet critical of writing. *Memory*

Pharmacy is an extension of this paradox in its never-ending processual movements to and from conversation and its transcription. The conversational prompts within the piece simultaneously impel participants to discuss issues of textual "aliveness" and interactivity, while enmeshed in a structure whereby "dead" passages of text (roughly 2300 years old) are read aloud, re-interpreted, and interspliced with contemporary exegesis which itself becomes "dead" when it is transcribed onto the computer screen. We are questioning a medium's aliveness while the medium we are using to question is itself questionably alive.

Both *Memory Pharmacy* and *A Lecture on Play* extend the problematics of the text into a performative-structural dimension, and utilize techniques of transformative inquiry to push these problematics further, to conversationally generate new discussions related to their problems, and allow discussion itself to structurally enact those problems. Discussion is driven onward not only by the techniques themselves, but by mimicry of issues in the piece's structure. Both pieces aim to transform beliefs by creating structures which facilitate a conversation where participants can think otherwise, and which hold open the potential that one could think differently through play, writing, or the spoken word.

However, both pieces were also only marginally conversational. They provided brief moments of dialogical opening, for interpretation, and generation of new content by the interlocutors. The majority of the spoken content for both pieces was generated prior to the performance. *Memory Pharmacy,* mostly a script, and *A Lecture on Play*, mostly a lecture, both gestured towards the possibility of a conversational structure that was more radically dialogical, participatory and non-predetermined. At this point in my artistic process it seemed absolutely necessary to move in the direction of greater interlocutory participation. Doing so would create greater transformative potential by adding a greater personal involvement, which is a vital and crucial component of transformative inquiry. Greater interlocutory participation meant the creation of an entire piece composed of conversational responsiveness, where questions could be answered, and where these questions informed the direction of discursive content. It could also re-create the anxiety-filled life of conversation, one in which we don't know who will speak, how they will speak, or when.

The Philosophy Conversation Game
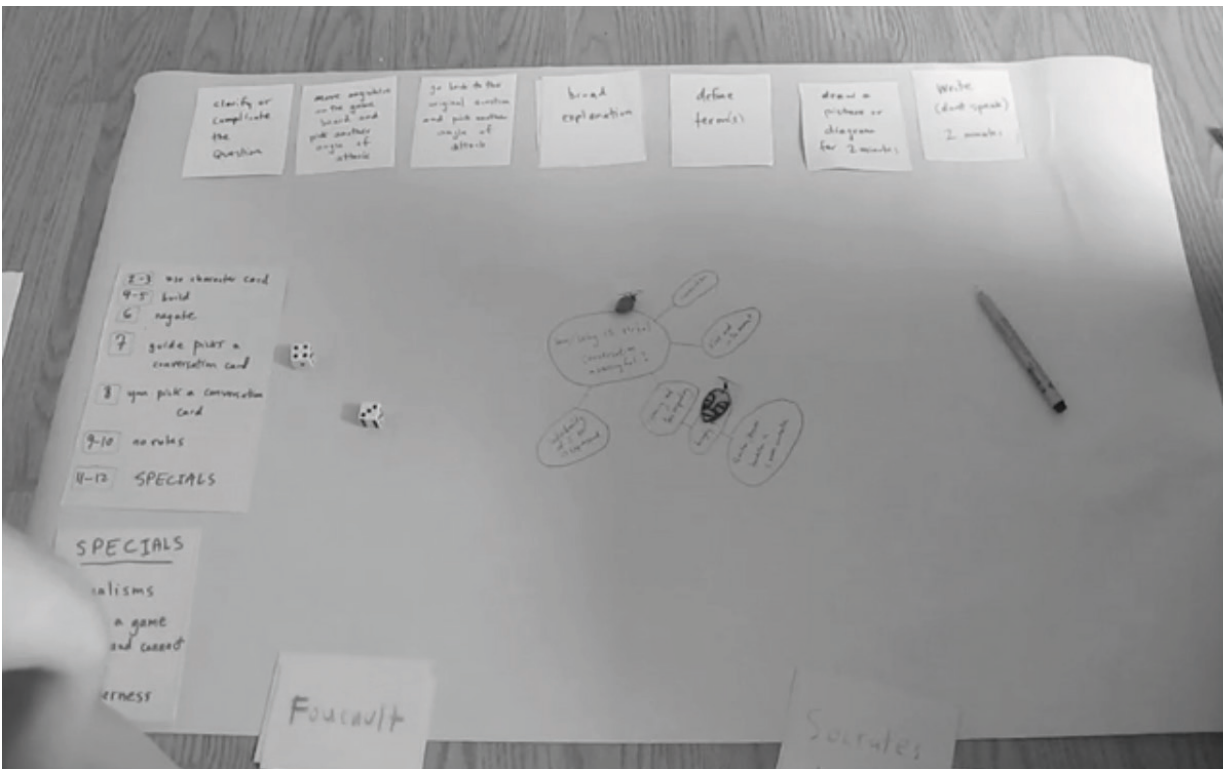
Figure 18. Aaron Finbloom. *The Philosophy Conversation Game* (2011-present)

In response to this conversational turn, I created *The Philosophy Conversation Game* (PCG). PCG is a game that facilitates a philosophical conversation while making explicit and interactive conversational structure and methodology. Two players take turns conversing while a third person, the conversation guide, visually maps the conversation while it occurs. This visual map becomes the conversational game board, as players roll dice to see which conversational topic they can discuss, and draw cards to determine which philosophical-dialogical move (for example: negate, complicate, build) they will have to use to discuss the given topic. All the while, the conversation guide acts as both an archivist and conversation facilitator, who helps the conversation stay balanced, move in interesting directions. The guide also clarifies word meanings and advances the players deeper into a subject. Before the game begins, players choose from six different philosophers, each of whom has special conversational "powers" which can be

used throughout the game to alter the game play (for example: one of the Foucault cards reads: "radically alter the power dynamics of this game for 2 minutes").

One of the strengths of *PCG*, much like *Memory Pharmacy*, is its utilization of techniques of writing and conversation. While *Memory Pharmacy* created rounds of conversational generation and transcription *prior* to its performance, *PCG* created an immanent process of transcription and response in every round, as every dialogical utterance was transcribed, visually mapped, and connected to other conversation utterances. By having a conversation guide (an interlocutor who was outside of the conversation) produce the transcriptions and map, transcription and conversation occurred alongside one another, and gave speaking players enough time to deliberate on what should be said. This procedure also gave the conversation guide enough time to effectively record what was said without the added pressure of needing to add their own conversational content.

PCG also created a dynamic movement between techniques of monologue and dialogue which greatly enhanced the conversational content of the piece. The majority of game-play is structured around exchanges of monologues, as players speak one-at-a-time, giving thirty to sixty second utterances guided by various rules (Figure 18) such as: defining terms, building, negating, etc.[103] This allows individual players the opportunity to provide focused clarifications on a given topic of the conversation by allocating time to form these thoughts outside of conversational interruptability. However, the game also implements a traditional conversational modality, activated by a card called "togetherness," which is strategically placed at the beginning of the game and then randomly drawn by players later in the game. The "togetherness" rounds allow players to discuss in a general and non-linear way, where players are not focused on a particular outlined topic. This creates the necessary conditions for a conversation's emergent quality, and allows a broader conversation to ensue which re-establish vital themes that a player may have wanted to investigate, but which were not able to be isolated into a singular topic.

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[103] For the entire instructions and rules for gameplay see the Appendix.

CONVERSATION CARDS (yellow) - Drawn at random at the beginning of each chapter

Build (2)- Building means to positively work with a claim to develop it.

Negate (2) Go against a claim by opposing it, playing devil's advocate, or finding areas in need of evidence.

Define (2) You must give a definition or clarify a term or idea.

Why (2) Explain why a particular idea/concept is what it is, or seek to uncover underlying assumptions

Example (2) Give an example, counter-example, story or metaphor

Complicate (2) Add complexity or complication to a question or idea

Togetherness (2) Set a timer for 3 minutes. Conversationalists can talk together generally (no need to take turns) about the main topic of conversation (no need to follow any one game space). During this time the Conversation Guide is free to give short verbal prompts to guide the conversation as they see fit. Also, during this time the Conversation Guide is encouraged to take notes on a separate sheet of paper. After the 3 minutes is over the Conversation guide can add 3 game spaces to the game board which express key points articulated during this round.

Figure 18. Aaron Finbloom *The Philosophy Conversation Game* (2011-present) Conversation Cards.

The real anxiety-inducing novelty of *PCG* lies in the gamification of conversational structure, one that forces players to implement conversational moves that they may not desire or agree with. For example, a player may completely agree with a given topic, but having drawn a "negate" card, they are forced into the challenging position of having to negate a topic that may not wish to negate. This uncomfortable position forces new ideas to develop, and makes players explore the unanticipated and undesired consequences of particular ideas. Having a conversation while utilizing one's "own" beliefs and the network of justifications that one uses to support them is not possible in *PCG*. One is forced into shaky and unknown territory, as one must justify things one does not want to justify and argue against things that one firmly believes. This is exactly the position that Socrates establishes as the ripe grounds of philosophical inquiry – a position where one's "own" beliefs are transformed through a taking up of the position not typically argued. The complicated navigation of this transformation for Socrates involved a

constantly shifting power-play which determined whose conversational technique would be accepted (for example, long speeches or brachylogia) and whose conversational move would allow an interlocutor to validate a belief, question it, or radically follow a new line of inquiry. *PCG* gamifies this play of power. The game dynamics, the choice of characters, cards and dice rolls all determine whether one will be able to fight for what they believe to be the case, or whether they will have to venture into unknown and uncomfortable discursive territory.

PCG implements live scoring, mixing both prescripted techniques and techniques generated within conversation itself. The game begins with players only being able to choose cards that give general and traditionally philosophical instructions – negate, affirm, clarify, question, etc. This helps players become acclimated to the kind of conversational moves found in *PCG*, moves that push inquiry forward, developing lines of thought through dialectical "back-and-forths." After becoming familiar with the intention behind these techniques (and the system by which they are implemented), players are allowed to write their own techniques. Techniques generated by the participants while the game occurs have the added advantage of being able to relate precisely to the given needs and demands of the conversation. Given that conversational topics, dynamics, and power plays all develop imminently, any pre-given instruction is ultimately going to be less incisive than an instruction unique to the particular conversation at hand. By allowing this instruction generation to happen mid-way through the game, players do not move too far from the discursive world of philosophy. This effectively solves a problem with live scoring, which is that it allows for participant-chosen options that can stray too far from an author's intentions. Once this problem is bypassed, live-scoring can be extremely effective, as it allows for techniques of transformation to be intimately tied to the emergent content of a conversation.

PCG doesn't go into the same level of depth into a particular philosophical text as the aforementioned pieces; moreover, its formal structure does not mimic any particular text. Instead, the piece gamifies the very procedures by which a philosophical conversation occurs. The game begins on philosophical grounds, initiated by a philosophical quote, driven by rounds of intense questioning, and then moves onward by forcing players to make philosophical moves related to focused pieces of conversation imminently mapped and transcribed. Philosophical conversation transforms by transforming belief, by moving our beliefs to be otherwise and by

holding open new and unforeseen possibilities. This process occurs by a complicated structure of moves, techniques, intentions and power differentials. In "normal" conversation these are all implicit and hidden behind the screen of discourse. In *PCG* these are intentionally structured, gamified and placed into altered fields of possibility as the game progresses. The dynamic play of power, which determines whose intention will guide the conversation and whose technique will outwin another or whose forceful rhetoric will be convincing, is subsumed into the game mechanics. At one point a player's philosophical avatar may give them an advantage, but at another point another player's dice roll will allow them to have a rhetorical upper hand. All the while, the conversation guide is trying to direct all these ploys for power into a dialectical back and forth, and trying to sublimate them into the inquiry itself. The form of this game could be likened to John Zorn's *Cobra*, a game piece which not only activates musical improvisation but which, through the use of complicated cards, gestural procedures and coups to overthrow the conductor, creates a game whereby improvisation is itself improvised (see appendix). Zorn not only creates a game which structures the content of the improvised music, but the game piece structures the types of improvised moves – the way in which one can come in, and the implicit structures of power that determine these entry-points. *PCG* operates at a similar level for philosophical conversation. It dissects a conversational inquiry while it is happening. All is gamified – the philosophers behind the ideas, the conversational moves, the memory of the conversation, even the turn order. The game strips these aspects of their content, and what remains is their conversational form, which is placed into a dynamic system of chance and choice, immanence and transcendence. What is transformed are not only beliefs, and the conversational system, but also our sense of agency. We see chance dictating how the conversation comes to be, and we see our agency as one small piece in this complicated conversational system. What is exposed are the mechanisms *behind* the transformative inquiry. Our beliefs transform, but we also see that which transforms our beliefs – a messy system of our desires, the desires of the other, and a vast system of conversational structures and techniques which ebb and sway to the force of our wills and the unbending sway of chance.

III. <u>Conversation Scores</u>

Exegetical Reading Machine

NEWSPAPER-READING MACHINE

John White c. 1971

Material: (photo-) copies of a column about a
        page long from a newspaper article.
Performers: more than 5.

Procedure: after an agreed signal to start, read
        through the material 8 times
        continuously, following the stated
        instructions (at own speed, no
        co-ordination with other players).

1st x : silently.
2nd x : mumbled "sotto voce".
3rd x : silently except for the word "the", sung staccato,
        high in the voice.
4th x : text mumbled "sotto voce", the word "and" spoken
        sostenuto, low in the voice.
5th x : silently, except interpreting [commas] with the
        quiet, firmly spoken sound "tic".
6th x : text mumbled "sotto voce", except interpreting
        [full stops] with the quiet, firmly spoken sound "toc"
7th x : silently.
8th x : silently, except interpreting [commas] "tic",
        [full stops] "toc", the word "the" sung high and
        staccato, the word "and" spoken low and
        sostenuto.
At the end of the reading remain silent and
immobile until all the performers have completed
the material before breaking "performer silence".

Figure 19. John White. *Newspaper Reading Machine*, c 1971

The next major shift in my practice of constructing conversation pieces occurred in the Fall of
2015 in an independent study course with Sandeep Bhagwati called "Conversation Scores." The

course was aimed at thinking through and creating "comprovisational" conversation pieces, predominantly through a process of "translation" of contemporary musical scores into conversation scores. The task was to find scores within music that had already begun to explore this middle-ground between the improvisational and the compositional, i.e. works of comprovisation, and then "translate" these scores into transformative conversation pieces. I looked through various compilations of scores and found a handful which utilized verbal scores that could easily modified for semantic conversation. After a few tests, trials and conversations we were left with: Douglas Barrett's *A Few Silences* and John White's *Newspaper Reading Machine*.

In *Newspaper Reading Machine,* White has a group of musicians read print-outs of a newspaper article while verbalizing commas, periods and the words "the" and "and" with ticks, tocks and low humming sounds. The musicalizing of these words and grammatical symbols transports the listener into a room of newspaper production through machine-like vocalized sounds, while the semantic content of the words of the newspaper becomes subsumed by this para-semantic musicality. Each iteration of the piece plays with the mutation of semantic into musical content, as sometimes the meaning of the newspaper phrases are partially (and other times entirely) obscured. My translation, titled *Exegetical Reading Machine,* focused on this iterable mutation, but moved the topic of this mutation to that of exegetical content. *Exegetical Reaching Machine* (Figure 20) plays with the practice of reading, response, and exegetical dialogue. Instead of a newspaper article, a philosophical text is chosen by participants which then undergoes a process of exegetical iteration as the text is read, interpreted, reread and re-interpreted a total of nine times.

Exegetical Reading Machine (inspired by Newspaper Reading Machine by John White)
by Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati

Material: Photocopies of a philosophical text of one's choice situated in the middle of a page with wide margins on all 4 sides (top, bottom, left, right). Performers: 4-10. Procedure: Designate a conductor who will cue round transitions by reading aloud the round number at the beginning of each round. Designate an order for reading for rounds that entail "one at a time." After an agreed signal to start, read/alter the indicated text 9 times following the instructions listed below. Note: Please sing softly one word from the text whenever one is waiting for all to finish. Once everyone is singing, this is a cue for the conductor to initiate the next round.

1- Aloud, together, moderate pace
2- Read silently, underlining and writing questions in the Left Margin. Wait for all to finish
3- Quiet, together, emphasizing loudly that which is underlined.
4- One at a time, read aloud downwards only the left margin, one question at a time, until all questions are read. Once a player has read all their questions, they should raise their hand.
5- Read silently, writing comments in the Right Margin. Wait for all to finish.
6- All together, read aloud Right Margin. Stagger readings such that Player 1 begins, after Player 1 reads one sentence Player 2 begins reading, after Player 2 reads one sentence, Player 3 begins, etc. Wait for all to finish.
7- Write in the Top Margin a commentary about this passage as a whole. Wait for all to finish.
8- Pass your sheet of paper to a reader on your right. Write commentary in the Bottom Margin about the content in the Top Margin. When finished, pass your sheet back to the left. Wait for all to finish.
9- One at a time, read aloud the Bottom Margin's commentary adding improvised vocalized interpretations of your own about the commentary.

Figure 20. Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati. *Exegetical Reading Machine* 2015

The piece utilized opposing techniques – writing and speech, silences and utterances, semantic content and musical content – to create an immersive communal experience of textual exegesis. The majority of all conversational content in the piece was generated first via writing, allowing for silence or muted sung words to fill the external environment while one was generating thought. However, this silence around thinking was then punctuated by thoughts read aloud, and

by vocalized repetitions of the core text. Furthermore, sometimes the same line would be read aloud in unison, and at other times different utterances generated from the participant's writing were read aloud sequentially. The interstices between self and other were given further dynamic expression. Sometimes everyone would be speaking the same *kind* of utterance (for example: all asking questions). At other times reading would be verbatim, but the emphasis of a word would change when an interlocutor felt the word to be important. When waiting in-between rounds, participants softly sang one word from the text, creating a shared vocal community that was phatic but non-semantic, thereby removing any content-based anxieties that could arise in shared settings when one is required to discuss intellectual matters. Additionally, for a brief moment in the sixth round, participants read their textual commentary simultaneously which created a quasi-cacophonous reading environment where one was only able to catch glimmers of what was said, and all specific meaning was washed over in a sea of utterances.

Exegetical Reading Machine played with the way in which speaking and writing are potentially individuating or communalizing. It was striated with multiplicitous options – speaking and writing that are my own, another's and somewhere in between. Just as a text is striated with strands of myself and other, and as Gadamerian hermeneutics explicates, interpretations can arise which can fuse these divisive horizons, so too does *Exegetical Reading Machine* create a community of textual interpretation that oscillates between nuanced dynamics of self and other, alongside the process of exegetical communication. In creating this piece, I was inspired by Talmudic texts with their original passage in the center and surrounded by layers of historical commentary proliferating the margins. By the end of *Exegetical Reading Machine*, each participant creates a quasi-Talmudic pamphlet, riddled with layers of commentary, each of which is reflective not of a unique voice (as is the case in a Talmudic tractate) but of a unique interpretive gesture.

This piece runs the gamut of methods of interjection and interpretation: reading the same texts verbatim and also differing texts simultaneously, reading silently, reciting one at a time, speaking quietly but with added emphasis on that which is underlined, generating interpretations, generating interpretations based on interpretations and reading one-at-a-time but with added personal ad-lib comments. Each of these methods performs a function of transformative inquiry,

contemplating the meaning of a passage, but doing so with differing degrees of individuation and collectivity, vocality and silence, generation and repetition. The beauty and challenge in composing this piece was to allow the rhythm between the semantic and musical, the harmonious interpretation and the discordant interpretation, the individual and communal to striate. Each round places the participants in a different kind of togetherness which facilitates a different kind of textual interpretation. As the reading iterates, as we read again and again, the meaning of the text itself changes, and the way we come together changes alongside an altered mechanism of textual analysis. Each time we repeat, we can become closer or a new thought or feeling distances us. We come to know each other a bit more as our horizons intersect with the horizons of a textual encounter. As each iteration proliferates new ideas and interpretations, we undergo a transformation in the way we find ourselves together.

A Few (more) Silences

In *A Few Silences* by Douglas Barrett, musicians observe a five minute "silence" and write down worded observations of any sounds heard within this silence, and the time at which these sounds occurred. These written observations then become a score for musicians to perform during the following five minutes playing (this time on instruments) the indicated sounds at the indicated time. In this playing-back, the sounds themselves transform when they are transferred from their original environment into an environment musically constructed by humans. The piece plays uncannily with time and memory, as it allows for the "re-creation" of a five-minute span of time by carrying-forward sonic content from one moment to the next. This re-played time span is both the same and yet uncannily different. In my translation of the piece, this iterative re-production of a span of time was retained as I altered the sonic content to semantic observations.

A Few Silence (*location, date, time of performance*)

for any number of performers

Preparation

Each performer provides a battery of instruments/objects with a range of sound-producing abilities including but not limited to: sustained noises, sustained tones, pitched or non-pitched percussive sounds, metallic sounds, wood sounds, plant sounds, brief tones or noises. A stopwatch is required for each performer.

I

The piece starts with a duration of five minutes in which the performers listen to the "silence" of the performance space while creating written scores based on their observations of sounds that occur within this time span. A list of timings should be created, each timing to correspond to a textual description of a sound occurring at the given moment. Included in each description should be features such as the overall shape or contour of the sound, dynamic level, duration, etc. An occasional reference to a sound's source is ok but should not predominate. Examples: "low sustaining tone"; "soft sustaining noise"; "quick percussive sound"; "noisy descending glissando". [*See also the included example score.*]

II

At the end of the five minutes the performers reset their stopwatches and perform their respective scores, creating the indicated sounds to the best of their ability using the instruments at hand. The piece ends at the end of this, the second five-minute duration.

Figure 21. Douglas Barrett. *A Few Silences* (2008)

A Few (More) Silences (Figure 22) follows a similar structure to Barrett's piece, but does so through verbal and written observations, questions and dialogue. Writing, speaking, silence, and breaking from silences are utilized strategically to generate a reflective and reflexive space. The piece pivots along an axis of silence – sometimes awkward, anxiety-filled, at other times calm and reflective. The participants begin with silence, and silence punctuates the rounds as participants make observations in writing or speaking regarding states of mind, feelings or ideas

which come out of this silence. The piece begins as participants are divided into two groups. The first group (group A) vocalizes their observations, but these spoken words are not recorded or transcribed and therefore are not explicitly carried onwards to the next rounds. While this occurs, the second group (group B) writes down their observations, thereby not immediately influencing group A in that moment; however, these observations persist onward to the next round (as will shortly be seen). In the second round, we start to see the magic of the piece. Group B reads aloud their observations at the exact time in which they occurred from the prior round, thereby "re-creating" via re-telling and describing the moments from the prior round. This can include the awkward sneezes, breaths, ambient sounds, feelings and thoughts. While this is happening, group A is now writing their own observations. In the later rounds this simultaneous generation of observations turns to questions as groups generate and recite questions. Finally participants select a few questions to be openly discussed by participants.

A Few (More) Silences alters the dialogical conditions of inquiry itself. Participants are not *really* dialoguing, for there is no possibility of being interrupted and no direct response to another. Everyone is producing monologues, yet the monologues are receiving input from other monologues that are simultaneously occurring (one set of monologues given orally, the other written), folding each voice into the other and allowing utterances to influence one another, but indirectly and without the direct possibility of responsiveness and interruption. In this sense the piece breaks down the divide between monologue and dialogue, and creates a unique merger of self and other. The communal space is colored by the utterances of the entire group, but this happens in a setting where no single individual is forced to withhold their interiority.[104] In this tranquility, offsetting conversational anxiety, one is able to more fluidly find one's voice and observations achieve a greater degree of lucidity. An inquiry emerges which is transformed by the way in which we come to find each other. We are able to be in relation to each other, and ask questions about this relationality without dangerously stepping into the discursive space of another. We are able to speak and respond, think and think-with others without interruption, all without the isolating social dynamics of most conversations. A new mode of inquiry is made

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[104] This "withholding of one's interiority" is the exact situation that occurs in typical dialogue where we must wait for another to speak and even while speaking we are always beset by the anxious potential of another's interruption.

possible, one that rests on an in-between of dialogue and monologue, presence and absentive reflection.

A Few (more) Silences (inspired by "A Few Silences" by Douglas Barrett)
by Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati

Notes: For 4-12 players divided into 2 groups (A and B). Materials: stopwatches and writing material. When recording or vocalizing observations, only do 3-5 per round. Read through the instructions thoroughly before beginning

1) Set a timer for 5 minutes. Both groups spend 5 minutes making observations about the environment they are in. Observations may be about: sounds, movements, moods, thoughts, one's self, other persons, another group's observations, etc. Group A writes down their observations silently and the time in which they occurred. Group B vocalizes their observations and writes nothing down.

2) Re-set the timer for another 5 minutes. Group A verbalizes their observations at the moment they were given. While this is occurring Group B is now making written notes about their observations with corresponding time signatures.

3) Re-set the timer for another 5 minutes. Group B verbalizes their observations at the moment they were given. While this is occurring Group A writes down questions that arise during these 5 minutes.

4) Re-set the timer for 5 minutes. These questions are read aloud and repeated until 5 minutes is over (The reading should happen sequentially. In other words, Person A reads question 1, then Person B reads question 1, then Person C reads question 1, then Person A reads question 2, etc). While this is happening, Group B writes down questions that arise during these 5 minutes.

5) Re-set the timer for 5 minutes. Group B reads aloud their questions, sequentially, and repeats them until 5 minutes is over. While this is happening each member of Group A picks one question they want to talk about in the next round

6) Re-set the timer for 5 minutes. Members of Group A read aloud their questions. Members of Group B pick one question to answer and try to answer it. At any point, members of Group A can ask a new question.

Figure 22. Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati. *A Few (more) Silences* (2015)

A Few (more) Silences is not a conversation piece that transforms beliefs, for it doesn't penetrate deeply into any particular path of thought; rather what is transformed in this piece is the structure that holds inquiry itself. *A Few (more) Silences* transforms the way we inquire. It begins with silence, and captures the latent content brought up out of this silence to start a process of inquiry. The attitudes, thoughts and feelings contained in the unique encounter of our shared togetherness are foreclosed into a five-minute span of time, and then repeated and repeated again, each time re-seen, re-articulated, and re-expressed. The altered mode of dialogic quasi-responsiveness creates a greater capacity for openness for the expression of thoughts and feelings. The temporality of the piece allows these thoughts and feelings to then iterate, again and again, each time unfolding another layer of reflection. The very temporality of inquiry is itself transformed, allowing us to re-see, to re-observe, to re-inquire. Alongside this, our proximity to another is also transformed, as the structure of the piece allows us to be close and question together, but to not lose ourselves in the interruptibility of dialogue.

IV.   <u>Systematic Aspects of My Practice</u>

I would now like to discuss four conversation pieces made between 2015 and 2018. *Question Animals* (2015) is a four-person, thirty-minute performance performed at matralab and constructed as part of my independent study with Sandeep Bhagwati (Figure 23). *Deictic Dialectics* (2016) is a six-person, forty-five minute performance performed at matralab for my research-creation comprehensive examination (Figure 24). *Guidelines for Reflective Intonations* (2017) is a five-person, thirty minute performance, performed at The School of Making Thinking. *Oscillations of One to Many* (2018) is a five-person piece devised in collaboration with Hannah Kaya, rehearsed and revised numerous times, but yet to be performed in full (Figures 25). These pieces reflect the next stage of development of my practice. They are not translations of other scores, nor are they pieces which focus on a singular philosophical text or discourse. They each contain complicated sequences that must be learnt, studied, and rehearsed extensively before activation. Moreover, in the creation of all these pieces, I began with very little content or sense of what would occur – sometimes starting with a single passage of a text, sometimes a single technique or game. Each of these pieces developed significantly through trial

and error, through rehearsals and experimentation. Instead of offering a detailed analysis of each piece, I will explicate systematic aspects that cut across these four pieces.[105]

Question Animals
by Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati

NOTE- Please See Accompanying Instruction Sheet

Block 1 (~30 seconds / ~30 seconds / x3 / ~1.5 minute):

	~30 seconds	~30 seconds	x3			~1.5 minute
A	silent	3x simultaneously, loudly, wildly: "is it not first through the voice that one becomes animal?"	"is it not?"	animal sound		play definition game using previous quote
B			"first through the voice?"			this continues until the conductor chooses one quote by repeating it back
C			animal sound	"that one becomes animal?"		
M	pensive stances or slow movement	walking	standing still			sit back to back

Block 2 (~30 seconds / ~3 minutes / ~2 minutes):

	~30 seconds	~3 minutes		~2 minutes	
A	repeat the quote given by conductor 3 times	simultaneous monologues reflecting on the quote	write 2 questions while whispering them	read questions aloud, one after another	question game
B			write 2 questions while whispering them		
C				choose one question (or create a question which responds to the question(s) asked) which will be used to initiate a conversation in the next round	
M	pensive rocking back and forth	pacing the room during monologues | standing still while writing		facing one another, standing	

Block 3 (~10seconds / ~3 minutes / ~30seconds / x5 / ~3 minutes):

	~10seconds	~3 minutes	~30seconds	x5		~3 minutes
A	reads prompt aloud	converse	silent thinking about the topic at hand	instantaneous enactment of the instruction providing the most extreme interpretation	"Is this what you mean?" (one at a time, waiting for response)	Re-trace each Movement Stage of the performance while simultaneously having a conversation about what was really happening at each stage up until "sit back to back"
B						
C						
D			Read one Instruction*		responds "yes" or "no"	calls out movements from score to transition
M	sit in chairs	perform a mundane action which helps you think				"

Block 4 (~30seconds / ~1 minute / ~1 minute / ~30seconds):

	~30seconds	~1 minute	~1 minute	~30seconds
A	wait for conductor to speak, then repeat the quote in unison x3	have a conversation describing what is really occurring in this quote →	sentences get more fragmented/disjointed →	silence
B				
C		keep repeating quote quietly →	quote gets more fragmented/disjointed →	only the consonants of the quote are spoken
D	"is it not first through the voice that one becomes animal?"			
M		walking around the room	fragmented walking	very fragmented walking

Figure 23. Aaron Finbloom & Sandeep Bhagwati. *Question Animals* (2015)

Conversational Content

In an "organic" conversation of inquiry, interlocutors are drawn into subject matter which develops emergently alongside negotiated interests, gestures, and affective states. Think of a dinner conversation about politics, or a long walk discussing one's life plans. The subject matter,

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[105] The scores of all pieces mentioned in this section (with the exception of *Question Animals* listed below) are included in the appendix.

while not being entirely linear, still holds the attention of the interlocutors and contains a cohesive logic. Within conversation pieces, this organic flow of conversational content can be barraged by instructions which jeopardize this flow. For example, a direction could instruct people to change moods, intonations or positions, and after each of these instructions is enacted the content of the conversation could end up shifting as well. The instructions themselves foreclose a cohesive conversational topic from developing, and therefore close off the potential for a cohesive inquiry.

Figure 24. Aaron Finbloom. *Deictic Dialectics* (2016)

A key to moving past this obstruction in conversational content has been the discovery that in these moments too much is being asked of a conversationalist. As when one learns a new language, one can be overwhelmed when asked to perform a conversational move that is beyond one's skill set, or asked to perform moves simultaneously or in rapid succession. One solution has been to divide up the roles in a given instance of conversation. For example, in *Question Animals,* I decided to use a technique of "only asking questions." But instead of having everyone ask questions, I employed an "observer role" who would pick a question to carry forward to the

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next round. Employing an observer in this fashion was done to an even greater extent later in the piece where the director themself, observing the entirety of the piece, would come in at certain key points and give a conversational instruction. Those who were "within" the conversation could focus more upon the content, or upon their unique contributions at that precise moment. This relieved those within from having to think about which part of what they were talking about would be utilized in a further round, and from having to think about what instruction would come next. The observer might silently observe or write down thoughts, but in either case, this provided a contrast between fast, conversational, in-the-moment utterances, and slower, more observational contributions which allowed a particular utterance to gain traction and gestate. By shifting who is "inside" the conversation (i.e. who is closely following the conversational content) and who is "outside" (i.e who is observing this happening) one can create conditions which simultaneously build conversational content and provide instructions that develop this content.

Figure 25. Aaron Finbloom & Hannah Kaya *Oscillations of One to Many* (2017)

Another facet which aided conversational content was the realization that certain instructions can pull conversational content astray. In *Deictic Dialectics,* a director instructs players to perform

certain gestural or embodied prompts, such as holding hands, or closing eyes. In some of the rehearsals of this piece the director would instruct participants to enact behaviors related to the conversational content. For example, if we were discussing fear, players would be instructed to hide under a chair, or if we discussed animality, they would be asked to engage in animalistic behaviors. These behavioral instructions, while relating to the conversation itself, nonetheless pushed the conversational content away from the topic the inquiry was developing. They tended to create a conversation where the content of what was said was less important than behavior occurring alongside the spoken words. It became clear that certain types of conversational prompts would distract from a conversation, and it seemed as though the prompts which were most responsible for this were those requiring either a great deal of attention on the part of the performers, or which created large, active gestures. For *Deictic Dialectics*, through much trial and error, I eventually created a list of embodied prompts that seemed to have a greater efficacy, and I then further revised this list in *Guidelines for Reflective Intonations*, and finally utilized many of these in *Oscillations of One to Many*. In *Guidelines for Reflective Intonations*, the list includes the following: repetitions of words, repetitions of gestures, slow bodily movement, slow walking, pauses, expressions of feeling, guidelines for reflective intonations, role play, altering of identity, eye gazing at a particular object or person, eye closure, tone, mood, atmosphere. Unsurprisingly, many of these prompts rely on the performative functions of transformative techniques discussed in Chapter 2.

Role-play

The line that distinguishes technique and role-play is somewhat grey and hard to determine. While not all roles utilize conversational techniques, many conversational techniques have the potential to develop into roles (for example: the technique of questioning can develop into the role of questioner, the technique of clarification into the role of clarifier). The movement from technique to role-playing which utilizes a given technique involves extending the duration of a technique, but also implies an identification with one's technique – "I am this function." As my practice developed, so did my considerations of how one would move from technique to role-play, and how such role-play could be facilitated.

Deictic Dialectics was my first piece that assigned roles to participants. In the piece the roles were identified and explored in rehearsals, but were only assigned within the piece *while* it was being performed. The advantage to this was that a conversationalist could choose a role that would fit the emergent conversational needs (for example, if the conversation develops such that a participant is desiring to ask many questions, they can take the role of questioner). In *Deictic Dialectics* these roles were represented by objects – a skull for the questioner, a book for the archivist, etc. The advantage to this was that these material objects created a singular visual-theatrical element materially representing each role, which helped participants to choose roles, and helped the audience to distinguish them. However, the role-play utilized in *Deictic Dialectics* was too brief, and the transition into roles was too abrupt and jarring. Working on *Deictic Dialectics* taught me that roles take time to solidify and become integrated into a conversation. Moreover, not knowing one's role prior, and having to immediately adopt it within a performance, can create excessive anxiety.

In *Reflective Intonations*, these same roles were given *prior* to the performance, thereby allowing performers to know their roles before the piece began. The playing of these roles was greatly enhanced, and participants were more comfortably able to adopt roles. The disadvantage to this approach was that I removed the agentic quality of performers being able to choose their role, and I removed the possibility for this choice to be made in the moment of conversation, chosen by the demands of the conversation itself. I was presented with the directorial choice of having to choose between giving greater emphasis on the emergent quality of conversational choices, or giving greater emphasis to a more substantial playing of roles. I could create the best possible questioner, or I could let the conversation determine who would question at exactly the right moment. In *Reflective Intonations* one transforms more deeply into a role, whereas in *Deictic Dialectics* identity is freely adaptable and presents participants with the radical excitement of multiplicitous transformative potentials. Problematically this sheer delight in switching roles can foreclose the development of a conversation's topic, as the energy required to move into a new role can upset the delicate balance of a conversational topic from taking hold within the collective. There must be a balance between these two possibilities – between a solidified role that is exciting in its depths but cumbersome in its stagnation, on the one hand, and a endless role-switching on the other that is exciting in its heights, but tiresome in its groundlessness.

This raises several related questions: how do our roles solidify? Where precisely does the transformative inquiry in role-play lie? Do I choose someone who is good at clarifying because they have already been trained in this role throughout their life? If so, then this "life training" in this role is a pre-given context which informs the conversational content and the conversation is deepened not by one's role-play in the conversation piece, but by the skilled activation of a role learned throughout one's education. In this case one is not exactly becoming other-than what one already is (i.e. one's transformation is not a radical transformation), but one is merely enacting a potential already performed consistently throughout one's life. On the other hand, if one is given a role that one rarely performs in one's life, then a more radical *intra*personal transformation is made possible. Perhaps this will not significantly impact the conversational content (for it seems unlikely that one who is new to a role will be able to perform that role in such a way to make an important contribution); but it will alter the relationality within the conversation by creating a more dramatic transformation of an interlocutor's identity. All conversations where role-play is active (or for that matter, where any new techniques are activated where one performs behaviors that do not conform with one's pre-established identity) are conversations whereby participants undergo experimentation with who one is, and who one can become. In a conversation where everyone is trying on new roles or techniques, this trying-on is shared by the entire interlocutory community. The conversation itself becomes a shared experiment in identity. The transformative inquiry is non-conceptual, in that it matters less *what* is discussed, than it does *who* discussed it. We are transformed in the speaking, not by what we say; we inquire through testing out new behavioral possibilities and their limits, not by testing the boundaries of a concept.

Monologues / Dialogues

All conversations require turns – a back and forth switching between participants each of whom utter content and listen to the utterances of others. Conversations are rarely polyphonic[106], but are

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[106] Conversational polyphony does occur, but briefly and rarely. This mainly happens in-between turns when multiple people speak at once, momentarily, in a kind of vying for conversational power, which usually ends a few seconds after it starts with one person speaking. Think of a moment in a dinner party where someone says something contentious. The conversation explodes into a momentary polyphony with all sorts of half-formed sentences and exclamations until one person's speech miraculously catches the attention of others and we return to monophony.

predominantly monophonic. As the number of interlocutors within a conversation increases, fewer and fewer interlocutors are able to speak, and we are forced to wait. There is a complicated dance of networks of power, deliberation, intonation, and gesticulation which determines who gets to come in, when, how, and how long they are allowed to speak. In the introduction, I specify these aspects as being required for dialogue – a situation of responsiveness and interruptibility, where we do not know what one will say, how one will say it, and when it will be said. On the other hand, in certain highly structured conversational contexts, this indeterminate field of power dynamics becomes more determinate as clear turn-orders are established (conferences, classrooms, AA meetings, etc). These highly structured contexts move conversation towards monologues in that: interruptibility is reduced, the anxiety of not knowing when one will say something is also reduced, and one is given time to think about what to say (although the exact content of one's speech need not be precisely pre-determined). Much of my conversation pieces are attempts to find conversational modalities of inquiry which disrupt the neat binary of these two discursive practices; i.e. I am invested in creating modes of speech that are neither monologues nor dialogues, and which are both monological and dialogical. We have already seen this above in *A Few (more) Silences*, as the monologues of interlocutors in this piece were non-interruptive but responsive. As my practice has developed I have been attempting to find new ways to disrupt this binary.

One method of exploration has been simultaneous monologues; i.e., attempting to create a dialogue which eliminates turn-orders as everyone speaks simultaneously and listens at the same time, eliminating the need to wait for another to speak. This creates an activity of simultaneous speaking-listening-responding, and transforms the foundational mechanics of the dialogic encounter. I believe this mode of speech has the potential to radically transform inquiry as the cohesion and unity between interlocutors can be greatly enhanced.

My first attempt at simultaneous monologuing was in *Question Animals*. After reading a quote, interlocutors started speaking aloud responses to the quote while pacing around the room. I thought that the pacing would enable each interlocutor to focus in on their own monological world, in distant proximity to one another, and then respond to others when needed when in close proximity to other participants. I repeated this attempt in *Deictic Dialectics*, this time for a longer

duration, to help interlocutors feel more comfortable in this unfamiliar mode of speech. However, I realized that in both pieces I was evading the potential for simultaneous talk, merely creating the illusion that this was occurring for the audience. The pacing created either distinct moments of speaking or listening, or precluded the ability to focus on another's speech because it flitted in and out of auditory range too quickly. In *Deictic Dialectics* I attempted to remedy this by introducing a moment when one interlocutor would be the focus of everyone's attention by having the interlocutor move to the middle of the room and speak louder than everyone else, and all the other interlocutors would speak in whispers. Problematically, this created a omni-directional speaking, whereby the main interlocutor's speech would influence others but other interlocutors, being too soft to be heard, would not be able to influence each other, and instead produced a wash of inarticulate sounds.

It was only in *Reflective Intonations* that I finally perfected this technique. In this piece all performers are situated around a table, stationary and in close proximity to one another. The round of simultaneous monologuing begins with only two interlocutors speaking at the same time, both of whom are given a guiding question to focus speaking. While this is occurring, the other three participants silently observe, and after a few minutes one of them attempts to deepen the conversation by asking a new guiding question. This participant is then added to the group as another simultaneous speaker. After a few minutes another observer asks a new guiding question, and this process repeats until all six participants are speaking together. The results were staggeringly impressive. A community of speakers was created whose speech organically bled into each other's. One could seamlessly follow one's path of thought and "free associate", but this free association was now in harmony with others. This was accomplished via a fluid shifting of focus. At times focus was inwards, but even then there was always the other's words on the periphery of attention. This peripheral focus subconsciously unified the content of conversation, but also resulted in moments where another's words would enter another's directed attention, and this participant would then alter their monologue accordingly and begin responding to the other person's thoughts. This required players to always be talking, to always speak and listen, and never stop speaking and listening. While this mode of speech was incredibly generative, it was also challenging, because sometimes one would not have anything to say, but would have to

keep speaking. In these moments players would repeat words or phrases several times, or say sentences like "I'm not really sure," or "I wonder."

Simultaneous monologuing wasn't able to hold conversational focus on a subject matter that would allow for an inquiry to penetrate a desired depth. Perhaps this was because the mode of speech required too much energy and could not be sustained for long durations. Perhaps this was because this mode of speaking was so new and uncanny that it was hard to focus on the content; the modality itself demanded too much attention. Or perhaps this is because reflection requires silences and pauses where one can think "inside one's head." In any case, the importance of this activity did not necessarily lie in the content, but rather on the type of relationality it afforded. This form of speech is an experiment to reveal how much of myself can be here while I am with another. It places us into a mode of speech where the bounds of myself are altered and where the voice of the other permeates my own thinking. It creates a radical communion of thinking-speaking-listening with others, or at the very least it creates a disruption in one's self-guided thoughts. It helps interlocutors inquire together, or at the very least it pushes thinking into a collective inquiry about what kind of relationality can be present.

Inspired by this rupture in dialogue-monologue duality, I attempted another procedure of disrupting this duality in *Oscillations of One to Many* which involved creating monological and dialogical rounds with highly structured interruptions. For the monological rounds, one player spoke in an improvised monologue, while other players held cards they could use to interrupt the monologuer. These interruptions began quite simply as players could only: 1) ask the monologuer to alter one word; 2) speak a sentence stem which the monologuer must then repeat and then "fill-in;" 3) state an observation. Similarly for the dialogical rounds, interlocutors would have to point to cards on the table that conditioned how they would speak. In the beginning of the piece, these instructions were quite simple, such as asking a question, giving clarification, etc. For both rounds the complexity of the cards increased until finally the participants and audience created their own cards.

Oscillations plays with the boundary zones between dialogue and monologue. Much like psychoanalysis, the improvised monologue of a client is never entirely without interruptions, as

the therapist sometimes nods with agreement and at other times asks leading questions. The monologuer is the person "driving the conversation," as they are in charge of how and where the conversation moves. However, as the potential for interlocutory interruptions increases, the communal quality of the conversation begins to sway towards dialogue. This is also the case in the dialogical rounds. In the beginning, the dialogue is rather limited and one must wait, reflect, and consider what to say based on cards that dictate how one can speak. As the number of cards one can choose from increases, and as one familiarizes oneself with this new mode of speech, it becomes easier and easier to dialogue freely, to quickly come in without needing to consciously guide one's thoughts towards the appropriate card. The transitions between dialogical and monological rounds helped deepen the inquiry by using semantic techniques of inquiry in both rounds, and by structuring these techniques around a larger container of dialogue or monologue.

Like the other pieces, this potential for transformation was not merely conceptual nor affective. Participants are not only playing with ideas and feelings; they are playing with the rules that structure them. Participants are not only utilizing monologue and dialogue to have a transformative inquiry; they are consistently transforming the boundaries between monologue and dialogue to aid this process. Within monologue rounds, participants must decide which interruptions to make, all of which still retain monologue's quality of letting one person lead, while balancing this with interruptions that push the monologuer to inquire deeper, and pull conversation towards the interests of those listening. Within a dialogue round, participants have a shared pool of prompts which obstruct the ability to "merely speak" – to implicitly utilize conversational rules, rather than consciously decide how to speak before uttering. In this sense, prompts push up against dialogue's emergent quality; yet, with a wider proliferation of prompts, and with greater experience in this round, one gains the ability to move more fluidly and integrate observations about how one speaks with the content of what is said. This creates the ability to have a dialogue grounded on the particular stage one is at within the piece (as the later rounds imply one has greater experience), and the particular choice of prompts interlocutors choose to integrate into a given round. What is transformed in both cases are the linguistic thresholds that allow or obstruct conversation. What is played with are the spacings between ourselves and others, and who controls the ability to adjust these spacings – a player, the game designer, mere chance, or language itself?

Live-Scoring

Any technique, instruction or prompt within a conversation piece is always limited by the fact that it is predetermined – it is pre-given when and how it will occur. In opposition to this, the great advantage of conversational practices is that these techniques are not-predetermined – an expert facilitator determines when and how they occur. One way of bypassing this dichotomy is to give a certain degree of control to participants within the piece to implement a technique and devise their own techniques. In music, this process is called "live scoring," and I believe it is critical for developing an effective conversation piece of transformative inquiry.

I have discussed above how I attempted this in *PCG* and in *Question Animals*, where a director observing the entire piece generates instructions while the piece is happening and then gives these instructions to performers. Additionally, I discussed how in *Deictic Dialectics* I had a director give instructions to conversationalists while they were discussing. In the pieces which followed chronologically, I moved away from this live director role, attempting to give more autonomy to participants themselves, and attempting to imbue live scoring with more structure that would affect when and how a particular instruction could occur. In *Reflective Intonations* (as discussed above) guidelines were given to performers regarding the type of prompts they should use to construct a score for a reflective monologue that another performer would enact. Not only were participants responsible for constructing techniques, but they were responsible for their sequencing as well. *Reflective Intonations* created scores within its score, as six participants created minor conversation pieces towards the end of the piece. Each of these minor pieces was an attempt to deepen the conversation carried over from the first part of the larger piece. In *Oscillations*, like in *PCG* discussed above, as the game progressed, the participants and audience were able to write their own cards which guided interlocutors in their monologues and dialogues. In both instances, I found it critical to give this agency only after interlocutors familiarized themselves with the rules of the game. This allowed players to understand how the piece utilized techniques of transformative inquiry, and not create techniques that diverged too sharply from this type of conversation.

In all these pieces live scoring creates a piece of comprovisation (as discussed in Chapter 3), although the aspect under consideration are techniques themselves, rather than words. In conversation practices, the facilitator is the master improviser, able to make quick in-the moment decisions as to what technique to use and when. In my conversation pieces, techniques are pre-given, which limit the capacity for a participant to act as a facilitator. Participants can't use any technique they choose, whenever they choose. The performative power of the techniques rests less on the expert skills of a master facilitator, but it does not lie entirely within the expertly designed sequence of techniques. The power to create rules is dispensed conditionally and strategically in an effort to create a delicate balance of power between artist and performer, or conversationalist and conversation piece designer. Much like Zorn's *Cobra*, my pieces create opportunities for this balance to be navigated within the piece itself. In these cases, successful design does not merely rely on determining what technique to put where, but in determining what level of control to give over to participants and where to place this level of control. A successful design will be one that balances who has the power, how much power they have, and how this power assists with the piece's overall aim of transformative inquiry. The question then becomes one of who controls the transformative inquiry? And while all conversation pieces, even if they do not implement live scoring, implicitly ask this question, a piece with live scoring emphasizes this question by giving participants not only the power to implement a scored technique, but the power to design and score techniques as well. Moreover, witnessing a piece with live scoring reveals this shifting nature of conversational control, and so the question of control is made more explicit. Live scoring puts the question before the audience of who the agent of transformative inquiry actually is? The answer is constantly shifting: at times it is myself, at times the player, at times the techniques, and at times it is an emergent structure that is a combination of these forces and other contingent factors such as who is in the room, what kind of room is it, and even what happened to us this week.

Training, Skill Sets

What kind of training, skill or rehearsals are necessary to perform my pieces? In conversation practices that rely on a skilled facilitator, such as Socratic dialogue, talk therapy, or P4C, years or even a lifetime of training is required to achieve a successful conversational transformation. In

traditional theater, actors have years of training which allows them the ability to effectively perform a piece learned over the course of a few weeks or months. Even in less traditional pieces, such as Tino Sehgal's *This Progress*, interpreters with unique skill sets learned over many years were utilized during the weeks of training that Sehgal required for the piece's implementation. As contexts shift from conversation practice, to performance art practice, or to a constructed situation, so do the skill requirements.

As a result, a question to ask is what kind of skills are required for the performance of my pieces? Some techniques within my pieces are extremely uncomfortable (for example role-play and simultaneous monologues). Other techniques, even if not uncomfortable, may require a great amount of learnt skills to be able to activate them effectively (for example, being able to uncover underlying assumptions within a conversation). Generally, my pieces require specific conversational skills. For example, my work calls for a performer able to improvise conversationally, able to be open-minded and listen, and who has some familiarity with conversational inquiry. Participants must also possess moderate rhetorical skills. The performer should be someone who will not be too shy in front of a large group of people, someone who can speak loudly and articulately. They also require certain emotional and relational skills: someone who will not take up too much space, someone who is able to carefully monitor not only what they say but how they say it, someone who is comfortable with strange new modalities of being-together and speaking together.

What is critical to note is that all of these qualities are not so much as necessary or required, but merely make the piece more easily performable. The presence of these skills imply a piece will take less time to rehearse, and help create a work that more effectively performs the indicated score. However, an underlying question is what amount of these skills do I require? Asking this question exposes my underlying pedagogical motivations, for I am not confident that I desire performers who are the most skilled in the aforementioned qualities. As a pedagogue, I am invested in making these conversation pieces accessible to a wide audience of interested participants, despite the fact that they have only been performed with a small group of

participants.[107] Ideally, my pieces contain the potential to be presented in multi-modal formats.[108]A group of less "skilled" participants could learn these conversation pieces on their own without the help of a facilitator and practice them in a casual social setting without any audience. A teacher in a classroom, with a greater level of skills from the list above, could teach the scores to his/her students and make key choices regarding roles, timings and topics that would yield a more successful performance, given this person's skill set. In other settings, where participants possessed an even greater level of skills from the list above, these conversation pieces could be performed in front of audiences who would be impressed and moved by the masterful movements and deepened insights delivered from skilled practitioners.[109]

In this sense, I believe my conversation pieces can disseminate themselves in a manner similar to that of games. Games have the potential to be played in various settings with varying skill sets. When expert players (players who have mastery in the skills a game requires) play a game, the game becomes something worth watching, something an audience can gain pleasure in witnessing. However, unlike most games, I believe that an audience would gain more than just sheer pleasure in watching performances of my conversation pieces. It helps to compare my pieces to Zorn's *Cobra*, which is not a piece that is innovative for its tonal or perhaps even musical content. To witness *Cobra* is to observe performers undergo structural transformations,

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[107] This problem stems predominantly from dissemination. As I am not currently teaching, nor currently published in pedagogical publications, my work has not rapidly disseminated to traditional pedagogical community (schools and classrooms). That being said, all of my works are open-access and available online, and I have consistently encouraged interested persons to use my scores, adapt them, and implement them as they see fit.

[108] I take inspiration from the collaborations between Susan Howe and David Grubbs as they create pieces ("Melville's Marginalia", "Thorow") which are part CD, part publication, and part live-performance.

[109] This distribution of skill-sets across different performances of my pieces can also be applied within my pieces as well. This is best seen in Game #2 of *Deictic Dialectics* where two interlocutors in the center of a circle are conversationalists, and where interlocutors on the outer rings of the circle have roles of: clarifier, questioner, thought-keeper, director. These roles differ in the degree to which they demand active, attentive and skilled participation. Likewise, each roles requires different amount of training and expertise.

This distribution of degrees of participation is discussed by Thomas Turino in *Music as Social Life*. Turino analyzes a variety of musical traditions which implement participatory performance and states that these traditions, "usually include a variety of roles demanding different degrees of specialization, so that people can join in at a level that offers the right balance of challenge and required skill" (Turino 31). As I continue to develop my practice, I look forward to creating a greater variety of degrees of specialization in my pieces, such that my performances can be highly designed, specialized and nuanced, while simultaneously allowing audience members to contribute in a variety of roles that compliment this central performance.

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playing not with rules of music, but with rules of when and how to enter the improvisation. If Cage's *4'33* famously extends the phenomena of music to include the shuffles and sneezes of the audiences, then Zorn's *Cobra* extends the phenomena of music to include the power dynamics by which one improvises. This is precisely what my hope is for my pieces – that audiences are not awed by the conversational content, but awed by the innovative form that conversation is taking, a form which expands the act of conversation to include the implicit rule structures that govern it.

Throughout the development of my practice I have also learned much about the rehearsal process required for my pieces. For *A Lecture on Play,* the rehearsals consisted only of myself. For *Memory Pharmacy,* no rehearsal was necessary because the countless hours of dialogical "rehearsals" had been carefully folded into the transcription of the piece itself. *PCG*, much like the game of Dungeons and Dragons, contains a process of "rehearsal" that extends to multiple iterations of play – one rehearses by playing and re-playing the game over and over which advances one's skills at gameplay. *A Few (more) Silences* and *Exegetical Reading Machine* both require only minimal training, approximately 15 minutes to go over how the score works and then it can be performed.

My recent pieces require much more training. These pieces, as they all necessitate complicated sequences of techniques, resemble the methodology of theatre rehearsals. A crew of participants require multiple days of rehearsal to learn the complicated movements so that they can be more easily performed. These rehearsals often involve playing with components of the piece, practicing more complicated techniques, and rehearsing the structure of the piece through multiple iterations so that it can be memorized and the structure can fade away so that performers can concentrate on what the structure does. Again, this can be likened to learning a new language, where after much practice one can speak about something without having to think about how to speak. Like many theatre rehearsals, the exact sequencing of techniques can undergo an almost endless process of re-scripting, re-devising and re-sequencing. This makes it so the language that is learnt is not only specific to each conversation piece, but specific to each iteration of a piece, and to each performance. Each iteration requires new words, new grammars

and new rules as the group of participants, their backgrounds and skills, and the larger socio-cultural context of a piece's performance change from iteration to iteration.

V. Conclusion - Transformation, Inquiry, Technique

While all my pieces have the potential to transform an interlocutor's beliefs, attitudes or affective states, I do not believe this type of transformation reflects the strength of my practice. While one's beliefs may sway and alter within the course of one of my conversation pieces, and while one's beliefs may also be called into question, my pieces do not guide interlocutors into an involved dialectical consideration drawn from a topic's particular historical, intellectual and conceptual lineage. Such guidance is required for a transformation of belief that has longer durational potential and is precisely what occurs in good philosophical texts, Socrates' elenctic method, and perhaps also in my earlier works drawn from philosophical texts such as *A Lecture on Play* and *Memory Pharmacy*.[110]

My later works explore methods of transforming the nature of transformative inquiry itself. These pieces involve a collective inquiry into discursive structures which facilitate transformation, thereby creating an additional level of reflexivity. We are not merely questioning together, and not only questioning who we are together – we are questioning how we question. This "how" is omni-directional, for interlocutors question: 1) the techniques that move their questions and transformations; 2) how these techniques are sequenced; 3) how (and to whom) are these techniques presented, and 4) how techniques are remembered and transcribed. In this sense, the questioning begins to include the implicit dialogical assumptions of all conversational transformation, namely the way in which we come together and exist in relation.

Each of my pieces is a unique experiment for activating these questions. Within them, interlocutors are poised, waiting not only for what will be said, but waiting to see how they will be in relation to each other differently, and how much control over the structure will be given to them so they can become, if only partially, instruments of an altered relationality. Interlocutors

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[110] A similar argument can be made for my pieces inability to produce lasting attitudinal or affective transformation. Involved psychotherapeutic practices that take place over months or years are much more effective towards achieving this.

play with (and are played by) the rules of discourse which consistently brings before them the question of who (or what) is playing or being played. Is it the interlocutors? The designer? The conversational techniques, and the structuring of the techniques? Who will determine what to say next and how will this be determined? How will all of these come together in the play of the moment? The answers to these questions are determined by the following factors. Firstly, by changing the way in which language works in conversation through techniques of relationality which alter our implicit habitual behaviors replacing them with linguistic and paralinguistic rules by which the conversation operates. Secondly, by designing these techniques in such a way to structure a unique form, a conversational "piece", a sequenced movement through techniques and behaviors which transforms the way we come together into a unique practice of inquiry via conversation. Thirdly, by the delicate balancing of rules and spontaneity, self and other, chaos and deliberation that is both determined by us and for us.

The challenge in all my pieces is not just to create a structure that brings an inquiry about inquiry – but to do this in such a way that this reflexivity is in service to the inquiry itself. In this regard my work is engaging with the nature of theory.[111] Distanced observation is itself a kind of practice – located in a site, engaged with a body, and containing underlying linguistic and behavioral rules or techniques. One cannot engage with these rules, bring them to light, question them or explore a greater diversity of techniques by continuing to have a distanced observational stance towards these elements (i.e. via a talk or book written about them). This type of critique merely utilizes the traditional format of distanced observation in an effort to challenge the format of distanced observation. In order to effectively challenge this format one must act upon it, playing with the very rules of conversation we are using to discuss. The greatest risk of this play is that this level of reflexivity will prevent the inquiry from establishing its grounds. This is so not only because this play introduces new rules which demand an attention that shifts our focus away from the subject matter; not only because playing in language risks radical departures from conversational practices of inquiry; but because this reflexivity itself can be debilitating. We can be caught in an anxious mental loop of speaking about something while simultaneously thinking about how we are thinking about that thing. In other words, the reflexivity can prevent fluidity of thought.

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[111] The Greek origins of the word "theoria" is a practice of distanced observation.

This is precisely why my practice must find ways to navigate (or oscillate between) distance and play. Playing Gadamer allowed those witnessing this performance to follow both the play of inquiry and the questioning of this inquiry's form – for the reflexive question was located in the role itself. Playing *PCG* divides up moments for inquiry (when a player is speaking) and moments for reflexive inquiry (when a player is deliberating how to speak). In *Question Animals* there was perhaps a too rapid rate by which rules needed to be implemented for enacting inquiry, and to be deliberated upon in order to enact reflexive inquiry. The piece's dizzying structure didn't allow enough space or time for interlocutors to rest in either state. In Game #1 of *Deictic Dialectics* this reflexivity was tied to objects, each imbued with a role which interlocutors would look towards peripherally to deliberate on the type of desired conversational move. In Game #2 of *Deictic Dialectics* two interlocutors could freely inquire, imbuing other players with the task of reflecting on their inquiry (literally standing outside of it). In *Reflective Guidelines* the moment of reflexive inquiry was isolated mainly to one moment of the piece where the interlocutors consciously constructed (and then implemented) a conversation score out of suggested guidelines. In *Oscillations* each round changed the distribution of these two inquiries: in the monologue rounds the main monologuer inquired while the other players engaged in a reflexive inquiry, and in the dialogue rounds each player looked around to determine which dialogue card they wanted to utilize while almost seamlessly integrating this decision with the desired content of their utterance.

Each conversation piece redistributes decisions of what to say with decisions of how to say it. In most conversations we frequently oscillate between deliberations of what we will say with deliberations of how we will say it and when. In this sense, all conversations, to a certain degree, endow an interlocutor with both thinking and thinking about this thinking. In my pieces, these deliberations are materially embodied, structured and gamified. The decision of "how to speak" exists on a card, as a rule, in an object or within role. My entire practice is aimed towards altering the implicit mechanisms which govern the oscillations between our thinking "what to say" and "how we are saying what we say." My work makes these implicit mechanisms known, as an act of revealing underlying assumptions – one of the hallmarks of philosophy as critique. Additionally, my practice plays with these mechanisms and invites others to do so as well. The

goal is not merely to call attention to the ways in which how we talk conditions how we think; but to play in the field of these relations, rules, and techniques. Why? Foremost because of a hope that we may find other distributions of these relations, other ways of talking and thinking. Unlike Freud or Socrates, I am not attempting to create a singular innovative conversation methodology that will redistribute the rules of speaking in such a way as to produce a new discourse (philosophy or psychoanalysis). Rather, my goal is to create a new field of conversational play such that more people can be empowered to take up the reigns of their own thinking methodologies. It is my hope that participants in my pieces may discover a technique (or a way of combining techniques) that helps them transform through inquiry. It also my hope that individuals will be inspired by this type of work and go on to design their own conversation scores, experiment with their own methods of combining techniques, and discover methodologies of transformative inquiry that work for them. In a pedagogical-ethical move similar to Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I am hopeful that my practice can show a way, not so that it may be taken up without reflection, but that it may show one possible path of discovery which enables the development of further, unique practices. My practice is implicitly guided by a Nietzschean ethico-aesthetic of radical play – of delighting in the destruction of old ways, and of speaking through ludic experimentations with the very rules by which conversations of transformative inquiry perform.

POSTSCRIPT – THE QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHY

The focus of this dissertation has been on conversation practices of transformative inquiry. And while I carved out this term to hold a great many practices and techniques, the main practice that keeps coming in and out of focus throughout is that of philosophy. It makes sense that this is the case, for my intellectual heritage is in philosophy, and philosophy was the discipline I was studying which I felt to be not addressing the question of its own performativity and "mode of address." It was this dissatisfaction which motivated the aesthetic expansions mentioned in the previous chapter. Until recently, I was calling my practice an expanded philosophical practice, a way of "performing" philosophy, or improvising philosophy. As this study comes to a close, I thought it necessary to explicitly address this connection, and ask to what extent this study relates directly to the practice of philosophy?

I.   <u>Philosophy Recognizing its Margins</u>

What has always attracted me to philosophy is its ability to question its own methodology, its concern with deepening the field upon which questions are asked, and its ability to identify underlying assumptions that lie concealed beneath a given discourse. However, critical reflexivity can extend beyond methodological examinations towards a questioning of its own format – the material, embodied, spatio-temporal orientations that occur when and where philosophy is practiced. All philosophy is always already a performance in that it is a living, embodied and material act; however, not all philosophy involves a reflective and attentive stance towards its performative dimensions. Philosophy's lack of attention to its own performative dispositions points to a larger story than that of western philosophy, and brings in an entire history of textuality and literary culture. The scholastization and becoming-textual of philosophical practice is a movement that has occurred over the past thousand years in the west. While one can argue that writing deadens presence and removes spatio-temporality in a becoming immaterial, these arguments must always be located within particular socio-historical movements of textuality and literature. In other words, textuality itself doesn't necessarily implicate a removal of performativity, for every text is material and alongside every text is a reader and writer. Yet, the culture of contemporary philosophical practice is located within a

history of literary practices where text is estranged from its site (Ong) (Rasula 303). This is a culture of de-emphasis on a text's encounter, and an emphasis placed instead on a text's ubiquitousness, its de-materialization and disembodiment. This textual movement away from context can be placed alongside a structuralist linguistic theory of prose. Contemporary, academic philosophy utilizes language that makes denotative, eidetic statements (Suber 188), which is made possible by language's disembodied, de-materialized, iterative potential (Saussure).

This has changed significantly with certain contemporary movements of philosophy. Philosophers are beginning to take note of philosophy's "mode of address" and have begun critical examinations of the site and context upon which philosophical utterances are performed. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi in *Thought in the Act* draw on Rancière to describe how various contemporary theoretical encounters such as the "conference, artist's talk, demo, exhibition, festival" all assume dominant spatio-temporal parameters, combinations and "transitional formattings" which combine to create particular "economies of attention." (Massumi and Manning 113). Laura Cull, in *Encounter in Performance Philosophy*, explains that in the last decade, and particularly in the past few years, there has been a "gaining momentum" in the meeting point and relationship "between philosophy and performance (including theatre, but also music, dance, visual art performance and performance in everyday life)" which has resulted in a new field inaugurated by Cull called "Performance Philosophy (Cull 17). Eva Maria Gauss and Rainer Totzke's *On Performative Philosophy* claims that "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" (Gauss and Totzke 91). These thinkers are taking part in a contemporary movement which pushes up against an implicit claim within Western Philosophy, perhaps since Aristotle, which deems rhetorical techniques or the consideration of modes of address as ancillary to rational or scientific discourses (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* Book III).

But along with these changes in philosophical practice, there must also exist a new linguistic framework which supports these shifts. Arno Böhler in *Staging Philosophy: Toward a Performance of Immanent Expression* expresses this quite succinctly, saying that:

Most philosophers still think that the meaning of an idea exists independently of the spatial context of its expression. These kinds of philosophers do not stage ideas, since they still believe that the 'empirical conditions' under which they utter their ideas are entirely external to the meaning of the utterance. Thus they do not perform philosophy from the perspective of the arts. (Bohler 191)

The recognition of the importance of site necessitates a different understanding of language – the notion that a given idea which is linguistically represented can come to mean something different depending on the context in which it is uttered and received. And while I do not necessarily agree with Bohler's particular formation of this linguistic shift,[112] I do think it represents a growing appreciation for contextuality. This heightening of contextuality extends not only to the act of disseminating an idea, but to the generation of an idea as well – not only to the journal which contains a philosophical essay, but to the writer's room in which the idea germinates.

The process by which language communicates meaning is imbricated with contextuality. We can see this by noticing that a sentence does something different when it moves from being written to being spoken; however, this difference changes the emotional, connotative and performative elements of an utterance and leaves the denotative quality of the utterance unaffected. We see a more pronounced contextuality in the phenomena of deixis, where some words have referents that change depending on the context, hinting at the possibility that all language itself can be contextual, and that words themselves are empty vessels to be filled-in by the context in which they are uttered (Rasula 66-67). This expanded question of contextuality is seen in thinkers such as Austin, Derrida, Butler and Sedgwick, who analyze the very term "context" itself to see how far one linguistic context extends, to see how much can be enclosed, included or occluded within a given context. A Derridean contextuality, contests Butler, consists of a limitless iterability which doesn't speak to the socio-historical iterability of particular utterances, and doesn't help make sense of differentiated degrees of contextuality, or how some words travel differently than

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[112] The disagreement stems from the fact that Bohler's account assumes a hierarchical framework of creation where the lone philosopher creatively fashions an idea into an amorphous shape that requires one to pick from a "shelf" of empirical conditions (or contexts) with which to stage that idea, such that it coheres into a solid shape.

others.[113] While Butler is invested in the question of why particular utterances break from a past context more easily than others, and while Sedgwick is invested in the question of who periperformativly lies around a given utterance, my investigation concerns the particular embodied, material and spatial elements that lie within and around utterances and their formation. Which contexts support philosophical discourse, and how can these contexts be extended in such a way that philosophical discourse is itself extended?[114]

II.   <u>Contemporary Philosophical Alternatives and Expansions</u>

Rather than merely call attention to the given cultural formats of contemporary, academic, philosophical utterance and practice – readings, classrooms, lectures, conferences, talks – a second step is to question the validity of these formats, and to argue that alternative performances are another valid way of doing philosophy. One more radical method of this work involves eroding the boundary between philosophy and its outside. These movements call for philosophical expansion into the performative, repositioning performance "as" philosophy in such a way where performance becomes philosophy and philosophy becomes performance. Laura Cull, Isabelle Stengers, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi are a few contemporary theorists immersed in these boundary zones between philosophy and performance who view this "as" approach as perhaps too radically destabilizing, unjustifiably ungrounding the strengths of the techniques of either side. These thinkers value a heterogeneous ecology of practices, where a given practice is not flattened or absorbed into another, but rather each practice (and perhaps more importantly each meeting point between practices) is considered on its own terms. Cull states that she is much more sympathetic to an "and" that can hold the difference between practices, and enrich the concepts of either terms (Cull 26). She simultaneously cautions against an openness which "risks expanding the meaning of terms – such as philosophy – to the point that they are rendered meaningless, no longer useful for thinking through the relationships between different practices (if everything can be called philosophy)," but also holds a counter-

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[113] "Derrida's account tends to accentuate the relative autonomy of the structural operation of the sign, identifying the 'force' of the performative as a structural feature of any sign that must breed with its prior contexts in order to sustain its iterability as a sign. The force of the performance is thus not inherited from prior usage but issues forth precisely from its break with any and all prior usage" (Butler 148).
[114] For a more detailed explication of these different accounts of contextuality see Finbloom's "Linguistic Contextuality: Deixis, Performance, Materiality."

position, questioning "why *disciplinary* divisions – such as the distinction between 'performance' or 'theatre' and 'philosophy' – are the privileged categories here." (ibid) She asks whether we can simultaneously, "resist the homogenization of practices, to resist the reduction of everything to *x*, but with new terms, new categories?" (ibid)

Manning and Massumi explore this hybridity through the concept of technique. Like Cull, they are sympathetic to the boundary zone between performance and philosophy, seeing it as a "mutual interpenetration of processes rather than a communication of products" (Massumi and Manning 88-9). They employ the term "technique" to capture a "thinking-in-action" that plays across both the performative and the philosophical, the artistic and the theoretical. Techniques come to be defined by the set of conditions that allow them to enfold; conditions which are always imminently and processually configured (89). In SenseLab, the process philosophy lab catalyzed by Massumi and Manning, some examples of techniques which have been utilized for events have included: "a ban [that] was set in place as regards presenting already-completed work of whatever kind" (95); a requirement that all participants read the same selection of philosophical texts before arriving (ibid); and a dialogical game or score called "conceptual speed dating" (97). While these techniques would not be called "philosophical" by Manning and Massumi, because they identify philosophical techniques as writing techniques (vii), nonetheless, these techniques "reconnect with philosophy's outside" (ix) and create expanded techniques for theoretical inquiry and research.

Gauss and Totzke also present a prominent voice in favor of this pedagogical expansion. They explicate various expanded philosophical techniques such as: Dead Philosopher's Cafe, lecture performances, theatrical philosophizing, Philosophy Slams, visualizations in space and image, and conversational performances and installations (Gauss and Totzke 84-85). They argue that philosophical thinking occurs when we undergo medial translation, when we switch from one mediated form to the next, and thereby create multi-valenced performances that strengthen one's competence in thinking (89). They claim claim that these new, hybrid, philosophical performances, "demonstrate and insist that philosophy must continually reinvent itself, which means it has to find contemporary forms" (90).

Philosophy For Children (P4C), which has made brief appearances throughout this dissertation, is another practice that is expanding the practice of philosophy. P4C creates structured conversations for philosophical investigations. These conversations typically open with some form of stimulus (a book, a media clip, etc), draw out questions that relate to this stimulus, vote on a central question, and then begin a highly facilitated dialogue around this core question. David Kennedy claims that this dialogue co-implicates five structural dimensions – gesture, language, mind, love and interest – which are expressions of a "communicative, interpretive process, converging on a common body of signs" (Kennedy 192-3). The facilitator skillfully navigates the emergent system of philosophical conversation by using techniques such as, "restating the positions of others, summarizing, calling for clarification, asking for or offering examples and definitions, pointing out contradictions, connecting and distinguishing ideas, building on another's idea, attempting to delineate the steps of the argument so far" (Kennedy 146). These techniques help participants better follow the inquiry, and look "for the limits, the boundaries, the gray or fuzzy areas of a concept" (98) which pushes the philosophical inquiry deeper through greater openings and extensions.[115]

Needless to say, these philosophical enterprises which hold open the "and" between philosophy and an extended array of performative practices exist on the margins of philosophical practice. Most academic philosophers (for linguistic, institutional, professional or personal reasons) would not even recognize these activities as somewhat "philosophical." However, what concerns this investigation are not the personal, socio-historical or economic reasons for why a given person or institution fails to recognize these practices as philosophical, but rather, a more complicated and nuanced question, namely: to what degree are these extended practices justified in being called "philosophical". One may clearly object that any investigation of this sort that attempts to bypass socio-historical considerations will be doomed from the start for all disciplines exist within socio-historical conditions. "Philosophy," like many other disciplines, has no singular center, because in different cultural contexts the practice of philosophy alters its shape, widening to include certain behaviors, or collapsing to disavow them. However, this doesn't prevent one from identifying elements of philosophical practice that persist across these changes, thereby

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[115] For a more in-depth explication of this practice, and the techniques utilized see Matthew Lipman's *Thinking in Education* (especially 158-60, 151-2, 164).

constructing a positivistic account of a center around which the various manifestations of philosophical activity can reside. In doing so, we can begin to see where this center of philosophical practice loosens its grips, and where a collapse of this center bleeds into a wider practice of transformative inquiry (or merely a widened practice of philosophy, depending on one's terminology). In such an account, the question "is this philosophy?" becomes less important than that of "what happens when a core element of philosophical practice is altered?"

III.   My Practice as Para/Pata Philosophy

I am not insisting that one should regard my creative practice as a philosophical practice; I am content with it being situated between philosophy and performance. When navigating this nebulous "in-between" in my practice one of the foremost considerations is oral conversation's relation to philosophical practice. Given that contemporary academic philosophy is predominantly textual, one must make a large methodological and discursive leap when considering philosophical practice as oral and dialogical. Therefore, to do justice to the question of whether my practice is or is not philosophical would necessitate an in-depth engagement with the question of textuality and its connections to philosophical practice. This is an enormous task, and therefore one that I cannot conduct here; however, I would like to note that there are others performing this task, most notably Dmitri Nikulin in his book *Dialectic and Dialogue*, but also the writers and practitioners of Philosophy for Children, such as Matthew Lippman and David Kennedy.

In situating my work as in-between philosophy and performance I would like to designate my practice as para-philosophical. The center of contemporary, academic, philosophical practice is textual, producing concepts whose traces reside on pages as static signifiers. This practice aims towards truth acquisition by rationally engaging in ontological and epistemological discourses. It is practiced by experts, trained in the nuanced language and problems that frame this practice's history. My practice is "para" in that it resides on the outskirts of this center, resisting but not rejecting many of these central philosophical elements. But it is also a *pata* practice. What metaphysics is to physics, pataphysics is to metaphysics. Pataphysics challenges methodological assumptions of metaphysics, one of these being the very linguistic structure upon which sense is

made. In this regard my practice is pata-philosophical, as I lucidly extend philosophy's own reflexivity to include the context around its utterances and the very embodied, linguistic and paralinguistic rules that are used to generate philosophical utterances.[116]

Skill Displaced: Structures as Experts

As we saw in the first chapter, Socratic dialogue contains a core set of techniques, but also requires a skilled practitioner to implement them. Philosophers aren't merely those who seek wisdom, but those who have enough training in this practice to be able to seek it well. In much contemporary practice this skill is textually mediated. In a philosophical dialogue this skill is partially dispersed amongst its participants. This is much less the case for Socrates, who masterfully manipulated conversation in directions he saw fit. When we examine contemporary philosophical dialogical practices, for instance "Philosophy For Children" (P4C), we see a very different picture of the facilitator – one who, while still being expert, does not have pre-planned moves they execute, nor conceptual frameworks they are hoping to disseminate. However, P4C facilitation still contains hierarchy, as the facilitator is granted a greater degree of conversational power used to deepen the inquiry at hand.

But (as discussed in the introduction) a masterfully skilled philosophical facilitator is only one method of pushing a discourse into a deepened and extended process of inquiry. If P4C practices begin to chip away at conversational hierarchy, in my work I create a further de-stabilizing of the skilled expert. David Kennedy and other practitioners of P4C argue that, "the moves of the language game of philosophy – moves like offering and evaluating categorical statements, exemplifying, and reasoning syllogistically, analogically, and conditionally – are implicit in the semantic and syntactical structures of language, and therefore always implicit among those who use language" (Kennedy 56). Rather than assuming that rank in culture and social positioning give one the capacity for philosophical thinking, this position implies that everyone has a certain

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[116] I can think of no better quote regarding pataphysics to emphasize this ludic reflexivity than Christian Bok paraphrasing Baudrillard. He states: "Metaphysics is a supreme ruse because it makes us believe in the true; 'pataphysics is a superior ruse because it lets us pretend to be untrue. Truth implodes upon itself and reveals an aporia at it centre--the "[d]ead point [...] where every system crosses this subtle limit of [...] contradiction [...] and enters live into non-contradiction" -- the ecstasy of thought: "[h]ere begins a [']pataphysics of systems (1990:14)." (Bok 13)

"philosopher potential" if only language can be activated in the right way. The foundational claim of my practice is that this burden on the individual can be offset by structure, game mechanics and choreographies. My practice is radically de-humanizing and de-individualising in this regard, for it attempts to place the weight of success upon a system that successfully activates implicit, syntactic structures. The individual is never eradicated, but their privileged position as knowledge bringer (or knowledge facilitator) is displaced or deemphasized. As such, this lessens the possibility that a transformative inquiry will achieve a philosophical inquiry and this lessening of philosophical depth is sacrificed in order to create an inquiry whose process involves a dynamic interaction between persons, system, game and circumstance.

While a general disavowal of philosophical skill is part of my work, it is also crucial to note *which* specific skills are being deemphasized. I choose to discard reliance on one's pre-established knowledge of philosophical systems, concepts and problems which allows the conversation to achieve more radical unknowing and immance. I also deemphasize expertise in rational discourse which allows the conversation to investigate more affective and relational modes of thought by not becoming overly attentive to logical reasoning which can cause one to ignore affective content. Finally, there is in my work a disavowal of one's skills as a facilitator which prevents any single person from directing a conversation knowingly and preemptively, thus exaggerating the collective level of unknowing and uncertainty. This creates a more shared (or fluid) distribution of power such that a conversation topic and ways of talking are determined more by a collective emergent system or the pre-set sequence of techniques meant also to distribute roles and power.

Belief Ecologies: Eidos, Affect, and Relationality

Philosophical practice relies upon conceptual transformations. Even in ancient Greece, where philosophy was used therapeutically, it was through a rational means of argumentation (of displacing some ideas and strengthening others) that psyches were healed. Utilizing the term "transformative inquiry" opens up inquiry to other non-conceptual explorations, most notably affective or emotional explorations or explorations of one's psyche, and the behavioral patterns which condition it. As I argued in Chapter 4, my practice also opens transformative inquiry itself

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into an expanded reflexivity, whereby each conversation piece becomes an investigation of the very means by which we come to have a conversation of transformative inquiry – an examination of how techniques transform and inquire. While one may argue that these inquiries are no longer philosophical as they heighten the focus on non-conceptual content – affect, relationality, technique; however, I would argue that my works also trouble the very center by which philosophical belief is constituted.

Systems of thought which radically separate belief from affect are classical relics in our contemporary theoretical landscape. For instance, John Dewey established that knowledge was predicated on emotion,[117] and Heideggerian ontology implicates mood alongside every existential state of being in the world.[118] Affective and conceptual inquiries are co-implicated; but this does not mean that one must necessarily investigate emotion. This co-imbrication of emotion and belief typically merely requires one to find a suitable emotional state for conceptual investigations, which usually involves calmness, stability and a lessening of the impact of emotions which may overwhelm rational discourse. Most rationalistic discursive systems recognize the role of emotion and attempt to control or isolate it by various means. Moving in opposition to this, my work destabilizes the very notion of a belief through an ungrounding of belief. Beliefs become inchoate and malleability as they shift from person to person, and change the degree to which they are believed (for the force of a belief is tied to the force of a feeling). While reading a book a similar destabilization of belief may also occur; however, in my practice this malleability of belief is mitigated by the immediate relational context that exists alongside a belief's generation and reception. Because beliefs in conversation are generated one sentence at at time, to react to any given belief will necessarily ripple this reaction outwards to all the further beliefs of the conversation. Because conversations contain interruptibility, this reaction can happen at all moments, and thereby constitutes the very nature of conversational philosophy.

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[117] "In a noteworthy recollection, a student of Dewey's reports an exchange in a large evening class at Teachers College (Columbia University) in the mid-1930s. Responding to this student's questioning about the role of emotion in thinking, Dewey- after a silence lasting "for the better part of two minutes"- tells his student, "Knowledge is a small cup of water floating on a sea of emotion." (Fishman, 21)

[118] "Every mood is unified with cognition or understanding, and every understanding with its mood." (Crosswhite, 33)

We already have seen the seeds of this belief fluidity in Socratic dialogues, as Socrates and his interlocutors constantly shifted the degree to which a belief was one's own. Implicit within the transformative foundations of philosophical practice is the notion that transformation transforms one's own beliefs; however, the nice boundary that separates one's belief from another's is not so easy to discern. At one moment I say something that seems to be true, but at another moment I'm not sure to what degree I deem it such. My goal is not to use this dynamic interchange of beliefs to eventually come upon eternal immutable truths; my goal is merely to follow this dynamic interchange in order to push thinking further. Beliefs in my works can never concretize into a fixed signifer; neither can they concatenate into a chain of undisputed arguments, connected together to form a systemic whole. Conversational interruptibility forecloses these possibilities. As soon as a belief is uttered it has the potential to be questioned, disagreed with, clarified or revised. Immediately after a belief is generated and received by one's interlocutors it is subjected to countless relational factors which determine degrees of acceptance or rejection of this given belief, and which determine if and how this belief will be integrated into the rest of the conversation.

This emergent and fluid system of belief propagation alters the predominant philosophical mechanism by which a belief is held or resisted – the truth value of a belief is no longer ascertainable through a rational, linguistic analysis upon that individual claim but is now contained within a wider set of relations. Kennedy argues how Peirce's semiotics show that within conversation there exists an interrelationality between signs such that any given sign is "determined by both its antecedents and consequents" (Kennedy 106). This temporal extension is further extended to include the spatial and relational context of a given conversation; meaning is now tied to the "ontic structure of the community itself" (212). This community is defined not only by the affective-conceptual aggregates of interlocutors in conversation, but also by the unique site with its set of persons, bodies and spatio-temporal relations. Belief hinges on context not just in that our context conditions *what* we believe, but in that our context conditions the very meaning of a given belief, and that context determines how much (and to what degree) a belief is our own.

This play of context relates intimately to the contextual and deictic linguistic considerations discussed above, yet takes on another level of play in my work. These spatio-temporal contexts are not only determined by cultural milieus, institutions or conversational practices; they are determined by artists and interlocutors. Playing with context, technique and the way in which these are structured is a play that plays with our relationality, the way in which we are together, and therefore is a way of playing with belief. As we play with who speaks, when and how, so too do we play with what beliefs are generated and how much they are believed and by whom.

Unpredictable Immanence

In line with Manning and Massumi, my work partially enacts immanent critique, defined as that which "engages with new processes more than new products, from a constructivist angle [...] seek[ing] to energize new modes of activity, already in germ, that seem to offer a potential to escape or overspill ready-made channelings into the dominant value system" (Massumi and Manning 87). My work seeks to de-emphasize philosophical knowledge as something that is attained, prescribed and semiotically transferred. In doing this, I hope to energize new modes of activity (linguistic or paralinguistic techniques) implicitly contained within philosophical practice, or alternate modes of activity with degrees of likeness or adhesive capacities such that they can be grafted onto a philosophical practice. While it is true that my work does contain products – structures, games, performances and the inscriptive traces of these (scores, instructions, documentation) – these traces function as a mere waystation for the next iteration, the next processes of enactment and discovery. The specific type of textuality that I utilize, the score or instruction manual for practices and performances, does have a marginal, yet important, status within the history of philosophy. Not only does it include the Platonic corpus (as argued by Hadot and discussed in Chapter 1), but also includes Descartes's and Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* and potentially Nietzsche's aphorisms as well.

Part of this orientation towards process comes from a displacement away from textuality towards conversationality. However, it must be noted that many conversational formats uphold transcendent modes of knowledge production (most academic conferences) and that some textual formats can offset this mode of knowledge production as well (Derridean deconstruction, some

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works of electronic literature, etc). In my work, dialogue is enacted in such a way that its only real product is its process. In other words, "its product is a dynamic semiotic structure in which an ever changing network of concepts, feelings, and judgments emerge chaotically" (Kennedy 47). Because this dialogic process contains no permanent trace of its content and because it doesn't end in any conclusive "take away", winner or conclusive statement, it is nearly impossible to know how or if truth has been achieved, to judge or evaluate whether or not an inquiry has succeeded, and leaves us empty-handed without tangible traces of the inquiry that can be shared with others. This conversational system enacts a truth hidden behind the nature of all communicative exchange – namely that ideas can never be transferred from one setting to the next. Dewey explains:

"No thought, no idea, can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another. When it is told, it is, to the one to whom it is told, another given fact, not an idea. The communication may stimulate the other person to realize the question for himself and to think out a like idea, or it may smother his intellectual interest and suppress his dawning effort at thought. But what he directly gets cannot be an idea. Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think." (*Democracy and Education* 166)

The best of textual philosophy constructs vibrant stimulations that help establish conditions for a reader to wrestle with the problems of which an author writes. In other words it is processual, enacting its discourse via sparking a creative process in another, which then sparks a creative process in another, in an unending process. Facts are merely a means to a process of discovery, and in that regard only one possible means towards that discovery. All texts involve a degree of unpredictability, as one doesn't know if and how they will spark this wrestling. They also involve immanence, as every time the "facts" are encountered, they are measured up to their very immediate ability to spark one's "wrestling".

So while philosophy is always already unpredictable and immanent in these regards, my work expands these terms. In my work the unpredictability is not merely pedagogical, i.e. regarding the degree to which a work will or will not assist a reader's "wrestling"; the unpredictability is

brought to bear upon the very content that will be discussed. In my work the conversational content is immanent to a conversation in that it is not predetermined, and neither is it determined by what is immediately in front of those who are discussing. One cultural referent for this process-oriented methodology is psychoanalysis – a practice where neither participants nor facilitator ever know where or how a session will begin. Unlike many other conversational practices or discursive paradigms, psychoanalysis contains no formulaic beginnings meant to activate a particular concept, subject matter or way of knowing. Moreover, psychoanalysis is located within the "here-and-now". This information of the here-and-now, the immediate affective, relational and conceptual data in the room, is always where the inquiries of my practice begin, always holding currency *while* inquiries are occurring.

While all conversations have this quality of live moment-by-moment temporality, not all conversations call attention to what is happening in the present. In a recent study by Daniel Stern and others, they claim that relational in-the-moment occurrences deeply affect psychotherapeutic process. They elucidate a certain kind of relationality called "Now-Moments" (a term borrowed from Walter Freedman) which are "lit up" with affect as "shared implicit relationship" are made explicit (Stern et al. 910). These now-moments are announcements of "potential emergent propert[ies] of a complex dynamic system" (911). The explicit calling attention to relationality opens up emergent properties in the system of the conversationalists, but also of larger systemic, relational, political and social systems. The moment is always pregnant with this data, as each of my conversation pieces creates a unique ecology of structured structurelessness, an open structure by which this data of a moment can be explored.

In my work, philosophical skill and conceptual focus are disavowed along with any predetermined system whereby content can be directed or prescribed. Discussing philosophical content is still possible, but this content must be at least partially determined by what is immediately present. Like a Socratic dialogue, philosophical conversation can emerge from within any given context, as all contexts contain imbedded claims that can be philosophically challenged. Philosophical conversations can momentarily derail because of the immediate relations (interlocutors silently fuming or growing discontent with the rules of discourse) and these derailments can frequently enhance the conversation itself. Both facets enable a

personalized discourse, a personalization required for transformation. A conversation that begins with a prefabricated entry will always fail to intimately relate to the particular beliefs, motivations and dispositions of a given interlocutor. A conversation that barrels on with rational discourse, ignoring relational and affective content, will always fail to relate to the interlocutor's attitudes, intentions and feelings that can eventually (through further discussion and disputation) allow an interlocutor to accept claims and thereby be transformed. By sacrificing predetermined content-based entry points and a discursivity able to proceed rationally outside of contextual demands, my work is able to bring interlocutors into a shared community of personal investment that greatly increases the potential for a conversation to transform. What Socrates teaches us (through his persuasive failures) is that logic and rationality are not the only ingredients necessary for transformation. To conduct philosophy effectively, one must connect with *who* is there. This necessitates a constant negotiation with the person's immediate affects and concepts that relate to what is being said. In other words, my pata-philosophical practice involves building arguments immersively within the unpredictable situation of the other.

Philosophical texts can perform personal transformations because they respond to philosophical problems contained within a common socio-cultural sphere. A reader can recognize themself and their problems in the text. However, one never knows if a text will transform a reader. A text's transformative techniques are pre-set, and so if a reader is not responding to a text's transformative designs, a reader may stop reading and disengage. There is a nothing a text can do to adapt itself to a reader's disengagement or rejections which can prevent them from transformation.[119] Conversational transformations operate in conjunction with a specific interlocutor in the moment of transformation. Transformative techniques can be redistributed and realigned to match the needs of the person conversing, and conversations can change their parameters to more effectively catalyze a transformation if things aren't going well (as Socrates had to do when his interlocutors were not satisfied with his method of elenctics).

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[119] It is of course conceivable that an author revises their book according to the feedback of their peers. The proliferation of multiple editions of a given book is evidence of conversation existing amongst literary communities. However, I would argue that this is a point in my favor. Only by engaging in a para-textual encounter (i.e. a reader writing back to an author, or discussing with an author) does this text respond to the reader.

My creative practice plays with this radically unpredictable immanence, bringing back in a degree of textual predetermination. The scores of my work, the instructions and games learnt, do not erase this unpredictability, but rather play within it. Each piece re-negotiates the balance between transcendence (techniques placed in a pre-set order) and immance (techniques determined by the immediate "now" of the conversation). What my pata-practice performs is a reflexive play that plays with the mechanisms of transformation; artists and interlocutors negotiate the line that demarcates presence and trace, unknowable immediacy and habitual techniques. This play occurs *while* concepts and affects are generated, uttered and received thereby personalizing this transformative play to a constantly changing subject, whose beliefs and feelings change alongside the changing context of communal relationality.

From Repetition to Rehearsal

From Plato, Nietzsche and Deleuze, the concept of repetition has been a central philosophical concern. Much philosophical activity aims to produce (or manipulate) immutable concepts, whose atemporal status delimit their potential to repeat. The signifiers contained within a book cannot repeat because their identity remains the same (and a necessary ingredient for repetition is the potential for difference). Conversations, on the other hand, have the opposite problem. When we have one conversation, and then another, there is no formal similitude that connects the two conversations. Each conversation is a separate entity, and so we do not repeat conversations, but rather have different conversations. When philosophy is considered as an action, a practice or a performance, it then gains the potential for repetition. A conversation *practice* can repeat and so too can a conversation piece.

What then occurs through this repetition? There are two formal elements. One is the notational device that depicts the context-independent elements of a piece or practice (for the sake of simplicity, the score). The score is the means by which a piece can be repeated, it tells one the structural center of a piece such that this center can either be strictly adhered to or resisted. It is possible for any given director or facilitator to disavow this center, but at some point, this process of disavowing will result in a different piece. There is a hazy and fluid threshold that if one crosses, i.e. if one performs a piece without a certain amount of context-independent

elements, then audiences will no longer agree that this work is the same, and it will no longer be a viable repetition. The score is what allows for enough similitude in a given piece or practice such that it has enough of itself to repeat.

The second formal element is that which facilitates difference. This is seen best in the process of revision that a given piece or practice undergoes across decades or millenia of iteration. A cycle of repetition allows for participants to experiment with new sequences, sites, techniques and choreographies. It allows for a piece to be displaced and replaced, dislodged and rebound, dematerialized and reset. An iterable piece itself is never truly finished, because there is an infinite amount of contextual potentialities, or of context-dependent aspects that one can adhere to a piece's center, and so any given piece can be infinitely re-deployed utilizing a different set and sequence of these aspects. In the testing of new possibilities, a piece's boundaries ebb and flow as one work changes slightly into something it wasn't before. This allows for a piece or a practice to mould and shape to variegated cultures, societal functions and intentions. This is what allows the practice of Socratic dialogue to be used in both ancient Athens and in the contemporary P4C classroom, and it is what enables this practice to shift so dramatically, yet remain fundamentally the same.

But repetition also functions *within* a singular performance of a piece in the process of rehearsal, which assists in achieving a more successful performance. A rehearsal helps participants to learn a piece. By repeating the same techniques in the same sequence, with the same bodily movements in the same place, with same people in the same durational container, participants can more easily and fluidly enact the given structure of a piece, learn better who the other persons are that are in conversation with each other and gain familiarity with techniques. This not only allows a piece to be performed before an audience, but increases the successful performance of the piece whether or not it is witnessed. Learning a language is a good analogy. One may rehearse language skills through conversation so that one can eventually give a presentation or talk, but this conversational practice also deepens and expands the conversations themselves. The more one speaks, the better one speaks. The more one speaks with another, the more one gains ease and comfort and is able to speak with greater fluidity and expressiveness. Since each piece is a language unto itself with new grammars of technique, syntax of movements

and relation being learned, each practiced iteration of the piece allows this language to increase its performative capacities.

The process of rehearsal in my pieces helps all other aforementioned qualities activate more effectively. It helps participants push an immersive non-predetermined conceptual, affective or relational conversation towards greater depth and transformation. Of course the techniques themselves help with this process of transformation, but techniques are always contained within the spatio-temporal context in which they occur. This context and its connection to the techniques is what is worked on in the rehearsal. The rehearsal allows for a greater cohesion between these two aspects (context and technique), which in turn allows for a transformative inquiry to achieve a dynamic "communion" between players, techniques and context that more greatly enhances transformative functions.

Mixing Terms: Techne, Poesis, Sophos, Theoria

The division between *theoria* and *poiesis*, although an old division with Western philosophy, has been called into question perhaps most notably by Nietzsche and Heidegger, who have dispelled the notion that *theoria* is a practice of pure distanced speculation. All philosophers are poets; all theorists creatively fashion their beliefs; *sophos* is *poesis*. However, this move can also be somewhat problematic, because it eradicates the nuanced dispositions of these actions. In other words, by reducing the five virtues of thinking (dianoia) – techne, episteme, phronesis, nous, sophos – (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b15) to acts of poiesis, the distinctions between these terms are de-emphasized.

So what is the classical relation between these terms and their relation to poiesis? For Aristotle, all acts of making (poesis) involve a specific kind of knowing (techne). A pot is created via the techniques responsible for such making; health is made via techniques of healing. While poesis, scientific knowledge and philosophy are united in that they all "show forth" being (Gracia and White 20), scientific knowledge is based on demonstration, which is ultimately based on principles (nous), and philosophy concerns the "supreme form of knowing" which unifies and relates all forms of knowing to one another (24). Here we find a center by which philosophy has

operated for thousands of years. Sophos is purportedly distinct from techne in both its method, its ability to make rational demonstrations, and its content, the forms and methods by which other disciplines operate. However, I do not see how these requirements for sophos necessarily distance it from techne. This distancing only comes with a third characteristic of sophos – the requirement that philosophical activity must not contain a telos, i.e., its aim must be its own activity. However, this requirement that philosophic activity be atelic is Aristotelian and is not found in Socrates. Philosophy had a very clear practical function for Socrates – transformation. And to achieve this transformation a poesis and corresponding techne were used (Socrates constantly compared his craft to that of the physician as discussed in Chapter 1). In this regard, my practice undergoes a return to considering philosophy as a poesis imbricated with the techne of transformation.

But Socratic practice hints at an even more radical offsetting of these tradition categories. For although Socrates (or Plato) wants techne to be immutable (i.e. for the knowledge of how to make a pot, or how to cure a sickness to be unchanging), this is only partially true. While techniques are discovered, practices are invented. In other words, techniques may obey certain linguistic and paralinguistic laws that exist outside of any specific context which allows for them to be discovered (not fashioned ex nihilo); however, the way in which techniques are used is designed and constructed. Socrates not only created spiritual health via elenctic techniques; he created the form by which these techniques were deployed. Socrates is an artist not primarily for his sophistry (he even himself declared that he abandoned this practice to be a midwife of others ideas); nor is he even an artist for his midwifery (only in a very few of the dialogues is Socrates depicted as helping give birth to "live" ideas, and not stillbirths); nor is he primarily an artist in his ability to remove diseases (rare are the interlocutors whose views were *really* changed at the end of a dialogue); he was an artist in his ability to fashion a cohesive practice out of techniques.

What the Socratic dialogues show us is that while the techniques themselves contain a certain non-specific knowledge (techne) that connects to transformative functions, the way in which techniques cohere and are facilitated is designed, and can always be improved. If Socrates instituted techniques A, B, C in order to eradicate irrational belief X, then the para-philosophical activity I am undergoing is one that plays with the ordering of these techniques (also adding

some, and taking other away) not to eradicate X, but to see what kind of relational structure will result that is capable of propagating belief X with varying degrees of rationality. The knowledge that is acquired in this practice is indeed a techne resulting from a poesis of technique construction and facilitation. This poiesis is a discursive poiesis that creates potentialities for interlocutors to come to, via discussion, other forms of knowledge – episteme (demonstrable truths) or sophos (ontological, epistemological, ethical truths).

But these arguments above, which come from specific dillineations between techne and sophos, can be further complicated by looking at Gadamer's interpretation of the distinction between techne and poiesis in Plato and Heidegger. Here, Gadamer locates a common nexus of logos as answerability between the two terms. According to Gadamer, techne and the theoria of philosophical activity share a common logos – "being answerable" or "giving an account by stating a reason or cause" (*Dialectical Ethics* 27). Techne provides an "anticipatory disposition" over a given thing and therefore has the character of necessity and universalizability (ibid). Philosophy provides answerability towards a given problem, but does so through explicit statements that provide reasons which are then tested against the agreement or disagreement of another. Both techne and sophos produce reasons; but philosophy does this through a denotative linguistic act. This specific act of presencing, the very manner in which philosophy conducts its activity of disclosing universalized truths, is only one manner of truth disclosure (and as Heidegger later came to believe, this was perhaps not even the best manner of disclosing truth).

My para-practice does not radically depart from logos in this regard (i.e. of using language to produce reasons that can be tested via agreement or disagreement) but aggregates other modes of production on top of it. Conversations in my practice explicitly discuss causes, reasons and conceptual connections between entities. While this is happening, the conversation continually touches upon what is imminently occurring – there is an emergent system of beliefs, affects and relations co-determining what is talked about and how it is discussed. But this is just an initial operative dimension of my practice, shared by philosophical dialogical practices like P4C. In my work the techniques of discourse are made explicit and played with by both artist and participant. Typically this creates a feedback loop of reflexive discursivity – the play of how we speak (poiesis), and the techniques responsible for this play (techne) condition the reasons or causes

that are discussed (sophos). As one continues to play one's technical knowledge increases – one begins to understand better how a given technique can be used and how it performs (for instance, what does a question do, or an eye closure, or an embellished gesture). The performativity of these techniques is nuanced, for much of their transformative function depends on the context of a particular conversation. But through each piece's iteration, participants gain more knowledge of this specific context – they understand better who they are with and they can more easily decipher the affective and relational cues of those around them. Participants gain techne of how linguistic and paralinguistic behaviors can be used to think philosophically. These philosophical discussions can never quite get underway, and they are prevented from doing so by the constantly changing affective states, the limited duration of a given piece, and by the fact that we are always tempted to dive back into the feedback loop of reflexivity. However, this lack of philosophical "depth" does not concern me. There are plenty of other cultural formats for conversations about metaphysics and epistemology. My work opens the work of philosophy into a widening expansion of its material, spatial and performative surroundings – surroundings that can never fully be ignored, and surroundings which are ripe with affordances (material, behavioral, technical) that condition a given inquiry. These are typically set in place by culture, or in some instances designed (poiesis) by a person or practice. In my work they are designed by both artist and interlocutor, working within a structured improvisation that involves examining and creating discursive modalities alongside the central discourse.

I will end with a note concerning rhetoric. Much ink has been spilled as to how, and to what extent rhetoric can be distinguished from dialectics. Much of this concerns the difference between persuasion based on reason, vs. persuasion based on other non-rational means. Classically, it would seem that rhetoric is a perfect discipline to situate this entire project, for it is concerned with contextual and paralinguistic devices around and within the speech act (mood, intonation, etc). It may be useful to point out that rhetoric is also an art that implicates logos, which also must account for separation and division in order to know exactly what are the parts of speech and parts of the soul (Gadamer, *Dialectical Ethics* 88-89) and which thereby implicates technical knowledge as well concerning "techniques of speech" (89). However, I must admit that I have always viewed rhetoric as an art very much at a distance from my own practice. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, which in its classical formation involves persons who utilize

rhetorical devices to convince audiences, or in its more contemporary usage studies how non-human entities can hold persuasive dispositions. In either case, I do not see rhetoric or persuasion itself as a ground by which inquiry begins or takes hold. It is true that discursive, material and performative forces (either rational or irrational) will always persuade no matter what the discourse, and no matter how "pure" the conversational inquiry; however, if rhetorical devices are consciously utilized, i.e. if one consciously administers a particular intonation or mood to induce persuasion in one's interlocutor, then this radically precludes the potential for conjoined discovery in a conversational inquiry. It is almost as if doing such a thing is to misunderstand the game of inquiry, and to think of inquiry as a game to be won. As discussed in the introduction, a closed inquiry is an ended inquiry, which is a non-thinking inquiry. The goal of an inquiry is to always keep opening and to question further, exploring and discovering reasons, causes and connections. Rhetorical units of persuasion will always be present, and they too are elements of the exploration, more fodder for a para-philosophical inquiry turned relational. When you speak in this way, what does it do to our beliefs? When you change the way you speak, how are we also changed?

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APPENDICES: SELECTED SCORES

I. Cage, John. *Solo for Voice 6*

SOLO FOR VOICE 6   THEATRE   (IRRELEVANT)

DIRECTIONS

A series of numbers 1-64 each preceded by a plus or minus sign, one number sometimes written above another or others. The series may be performed completely or in part.

To prepare for a performance, the actor will make a numbered list of verbs (actions) and/or nouns (things) not to exceed 64 with which he or she is willing to be involved and which are theatrically feasible (these may include stage properties, clothes, etc.; actions may be 'real' or mimed, etc.). If these number 64, the tables given below (which relate numbers less than 64 to 64) are unnecessary. In any other case, the appropriate table below will enable the actor to identify which, for instance, of twenty-seven nouns and verbs the number 36 refers to. The minus and plus signs may be given any significance that the performer finds useful. For instance, a minus sign may mean "beginning with" or "taking off", etc.; a plus sign may mean "going to" or putting on" etc. Or they may refer to the degree or emphasis with which something is done. Change of type-face may also be so interpreted. Where nouns or verbs indicating expressivity are included in the list, expressivity is obligatory. Otherwise perform impassively. Total time-length and duration of individual actions are free.

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Deictic Dialectics:
A Practice in Constructed Philosophical Conversation

Players: 6-10
Time: ~60 minutes

General Aim: Everyone is working together in service of the conversation — a conversation that keeps changing, that is never settled, that is always fluid and becoming. The conversation is somewhat akin to a delicate animal that needs nurturing and food and attention and love. All decisions made in the entire performance are done with a deep sense of care for the development of this conversation creature — only together can we infuse our dialogue with importance, urgency, curiosity, complexity, play.

General Note on Rules: The conversation rules for each game are meant as a center that can be adhered to, but need not be adhered to rigidly. You are encouraged to find an aesthetic and dynamic interplay between rule following and rule breaking.

Materials: Small booklets of paper and markers (1 for each player), chairs (1 for each player), table, podium (or music stand) portable keyboard connected to a computer connected to a projector, xeroxed copies of one paragraph of a philosophical text (1 for each player), timer/stopwatch, Objects for Game 1 — stuffed animal, fabric, skull, old book, jacket (these can be substituted for other objects if needed)

GAME 1 Instructions	Notes
(0) Each player is sitting back to back in the center of a room, in silence, reading from a xeroxed page of philosophical text, reading and thinking until someone says a word from the text. This word is then repeated by everyone 3 times.	The person who said this word initiates the transition out of this round by choosing to stand up The text is meant as a prompt for conversation and doesn't need to be adhered to rigidly.
CAMP- Backs to each other, rapid generation of thought, disregarding rules of politeness and interrupting each other whenever one feels like speaking.	
WALKING - All walk around the room, muttering to oneself trying to make sense of things that were said, REALLY thinking, but doing it sotto voce.	Chose a path and stick to it. The trajectory of walking around should convey that you are actually thinking.
OBJECTS - One at a time people take an object from a table and sit down in the center of the room and adopt the object's corresponding role and conversational directives. The first role chosen must be the lecturer. The last role chosen must be the archivist. In every round LECTURER *Soft/thin fabric*- gives monologues (until with others, then they become a conversationalist) LIBRARIAN *Stuffed animal*- connects thoughts to examples, persons, other ideas/concepts ENCYCLOPEDIAST *Book*- asking/supplying definitions of terms and giving clarifications ARCHIVIST *Keyboard* writing down important thoughts, such that they are not lost QUESTIONER *Skull*- can only ask questions PHILOSOPHER *Jacket*- attempting to disclose foundational questions/issues, ontological, epistemological, aesthetic, trying to "meta" the conversation	The movement to take an object should be decisive, as should be the walk to the table. Once the object is chosen, begin your utterance while walking to the center thereby interrupting the people talking. For the people who are still walking around while the conversation in the center is going on, your role is to listen to the conversation while simultaneously giving your own thoughts, view opinions (sotto voce).

GAME 1 SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS		
ROUND	**TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND**	**TIMING (approximate)**
0-SILENCE W/ QUOTES	After word is spoken 3 times	2 minutes
1-CAMP	Person who spoke initial word decides to stand	3 minutes
2-WALKING	Someone decides to be a lecturer	3 minutes
3-OBJECTS	The archivist (w/ the keyboard) sits down	1-2 minutes prior to each interruption
4-CAMP	The archivist decides to stand up and continues writing at a podium. Objects are re-set on the table.	3 minutes
5-WALKING	The archivist returns the keyboard and they take the fabric and become the lecturer, sitting down in the center of the room, reading their notes on the screen. Once they finish reading the text, they can improvise a monologue until the next player sits down with an object.	3 minutes
6-OBJECTS	The archivist (w/ the keyboard) sits down	1-2 minutes prior to each interruption
7-CAMP	The archivist decides to stand up and continues writing at a podium. Objects are re-set on the table.	3 minutes
8-WALKING	At this point the archivist is the only one writing, and then reading aloud their notes. As soon as the archivist begins reading aloud the notes everyone begins setting up GAME 2, choosing their roles, getting into position, and waiting until the archivist stops speaking and then begins GAME 2. The archivist of GAME 1 becomes the Question-Master of GAME 2.	3 minutes

GAME 2 Instructions	**Notes**
2 chairs in the center **Conversationalist** (2ppl) - Conversing (all other instructions will be given imminently) Second Ring (slowly circumambulating, words burst out) **Clarifiers** (2ppl) - MAIN ROLE - repeat lines (inquisitively & enthusiastically) AND can say the following: "Can you repeat x?" "Can you say that again but differently?" "What do you mean by x?" "I'm not sure I understand x" "Can you say that again in 5 words?" "Wow, X sounds super interesting, can you say more about that?" Third Ring (standing on chairs) **Question-Master** (1ppl) - Three Main Roles -Prod center of circle conversationalists to re-tie in the conversation to the given Question OR Determine a new question which deepens the conversation. -Call for roles to switch (during role switch, the Question-Master stays the same) -Taking notes on key ideas spoken, important shifts in the conversation (using the keyboard) **Director** (1ppl) - Prod center of circle conversations to alter the modality of their speech. You can say the following: -More gaps in speaking/silences -Faster paced interruptions / Longer statements -Speak with: enthusiasm, curiosity, criticality, certitude, uncertainty, ambiguity -Speak louder/softer -Use less/more jargon -Sit, Stand -Hold hands, hold heads, hold shoulders, -Move closer, Move farther away -Close eyes, Open Eyes	Conversationalists don't need to stop your conversation, but do take heed (somewhat) to what is spoken to you (especially if it comes from the third ring) The movements of the clarifiers should be natural and yet also inquisitive. You are really thinking, and questioning, and wondering. Sometimes seated, sometimes crouched, sometimes pacing, sometimes circumambulating, usually staying close to the conversationalists. The question-master has a timer/clock which they are checking to see how long Game 2 should last. (and how long each round should last). Be careful dramaturg -- you have the most potential (more than any point in the entire game) to derail the conversation. Make sure that all your decisions are in service of the conversation.

SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS

ROUND	TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND	TIMING (approximate)
First Iteration	Question-Master calls for roles to switch (this is done by saying the name of the role or the persons in the role)	5 mins
	Transition - 30 seconds of silence	
Second Iteration	*ibid*	5 mins
	Transition - 30 seconds of silence	
Third Iteration	*ibid*	5 mins
	Transition - 30 seconds of silence	
Fourth Iteration	During this round the Question-Master is calling out conversational centering-topics much more frequently/frenetically, and as this occurs the clarifiers and the dramaturg likewise increase the frequency of their instructions. This increases in craziness and frenetic-ness until the game begins breaking down. At a high point of intensity, the Question-Master QUICKLY puts his keyboard on the card table and moves the table to the center of the room, and everyone moves their chairs into position for GAME 3 and gets the cards and markers. As soon as everyone is seated the game begins.	5 mins

GAME 3 Instructions

All seated around table. Each player has a stack of cards. The game begins as each player thinks back to all the topics / subject matters from the entire performance. The initial task is to generate one question that unifies (coheres) the entirety of the topics of thought that were discussed. Everyone writes this down on a card.

Everyone looks around at each other to see that everyone has finished writing. Then one person places their card on the table face up and reads it aloud. Then things progress (clockwise) with each player reading their card aloud and placing it on the table until all cards are placed.

Once all cards are placed, players look around at each other, readying their pen caps, ready to cast a vote on which topic they want to explore (i.e. which card is worthy of conversation). Then, all at the same time, pen caps are cast on the card of choice, each casting their vote. (if there is a tie, the two which tied are re-voted on).

As soon as the vote is cast, the pen caps are pushed aside slightly, and a cacophonous conversation builds and builds and builds, slowly, until it reaches a maximum level of intensity and volume. This occurs in 3 stages:

1) Players sit back in their chair and speak softly
2) Players sit upright and speak regularly
3) Players stand up and speak loudly

Then the player whose card was chosen sits down, and this cues everyone to advance to the next round which mimics these instructions precisely except for the guiding thought behind what is written on the card (see below). The player who sits down, takes the keyboard writes down the content of the card that was chosen, and then joins the rest of the players in the next round.

SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS

ROUND	TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND	TIMING (approximate)
Central Question - A central question that links the entirety of the conversation prior	Sitting down after standing w/ a rising intensity	2 mins
Sub-Question - A question which deepens the chosen "central question"	ibid	2 mins
Answer - An answer to the "sub-question"	ibid	2 mins
Clarification - A clarification of that answer	ibid	2 mins
Final Word -a final word that concretizes that clarification	Instead of building the rising intensity for this round, once the final word is voted on all players repeat that word 3 times and then the performance is finished.	2 mins

III. Finbloom, Aaron. *Guidelines for Reflective Intonations* (2017)

Guidelines for Reflective Intonations

Persons*: For 5 Participants (Persons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*

Equipment*: Timer, Notecards, Pens (for all timing use a silent timer and a glass/metallic object)*

Space*: Around a table, next to a small open area that allows for mild movement*

Aim*: To generate an interesting, thoughtful and creative conversation, both in content and method. To follow questions down their thought paths. To lead with curiosity and generosity.*

I. Round 1 – Questions

    A. Persons 1-4 speak together by only asking questions

    B. When moved Person 5 selects one question that was asked and speaks it aloud

II. Round 2 – Togetherness

    A. Persons 3, 4, 5 are silently observing (paper/pen optional)

    B. Persons 1 & 2 speak simultaneously (answering the question Person 5 asked)

    C. When moved, Person 3 asks a question

    D. Persons 1, 2, 3 speak simultaneously

    E. When moved, Person 4 asks a question

    F. Persons 1, 2, 3, 4 speak simultaneously

    G. When moved, Person 5 asks a question

III. Round 3 – Decision

    A. Silence. Each person picks up a notecard and writes a few sentences about what they want to talk about (building off of the question Person 5 asked)

    B. Person 1 reads their card aloud and places it on the table.

    C. Person 2 reads their card aloud and places it on the table.

    D. Person 3 reads their card aloud and places it on the table.

    E. Person 4 reads their card aloud and places it on the table.

    F. Person 5 reads their card aloud and places it on the table.

    G. At the exact same time, all persons place their pen on the notecard with the conversation path they want to keep talking about (a player cannot vote on their own card)

    H. This card is read aloud 3 times, together, slight staggered, by all persons, placing emphasis on different words with the attempt to gain greater understanding

IV. Round 4 – Dialogical Diving

    A. All persons are seated, speaking about the voted on question in their given roles.

    B. Person 1 (the explainer). Develops explanatory hypotheses

    C. Person 2 (the clarifier). Clarifies and defines ill-defined concepts/ideas.

    D. Person 3 (the analyst). Seeks to uncover hidden/foundational assumptions.

    E. Person 4 (the storyteller). Provides clarity via examples, stories, images.

    F. Person 5 (the collaborator). Builds on the ideas of others.

    G. When any player feels satisfied, bored, or ready to move on, they may stand up.

    H. Once standing the player is no longer in their role; but is now an observer who is writing and considering the conversation. Any standing player may sit back down and return to their role

    I. When all persons are standing the round is over.

V. Round 5(a) – Monologues (setup)

    A. For 3 minutes each player composes guidelines (all at the same time and in writing) for another player to conduct a 3-minute monologue.

    B. The guidelines are meant to help the other player achieve an utterance that is: articulate, expressive, profound, insightful and creative. Guidelines should guide, not over-prescribe. Guidelines should mainly guide method, and minimally guide content.

    C. Guidelines will incorporate (and mildly modify) any of the following elements: **repetition of word, repetition of gesture, slow bodily movement, slow walking, pauses, expressions of feeling, guidelines for reflective intonations, role play, altering of identity, eye gazing at a particular object or person, eye closure, tone, mood, atmosphere.**

    D. Player 1 composes for Player 2

    E. Player 2 composes for Player 3

    F. Player 3 composes for Player 4

    G. Player 4 composes for Player 5

    H. Player 5 composes for Player 1

VI. Round 5(b) – Monologues (activation)

    A. At any point while a person is humming they may change the word of their hum to a word that was spoken by the player giving a monologue

B. Person 1 performs their 3-minute monologue (other persons hum 1 note softly "oo")

C. Person 2 performs their 3-minute monologue (other persons hum 1 note softly "ooh

D. Person 3 performs their 3-minute monologue (other persons hum 1 note softly "eh")

E. Person 4 performs their 3-minute monologue (other persons hum 1 note softly "ee")

F. Person 5 performs their 3-minute monologue (other persons hum 1 note softly "ah")

VII. Round 6 – Conclusion

A. Each person moves to a part of the room where they can talk to themselves aloud and not clearly hear the words of others

B. Each person should begin speaking aloud assessing and evaluating the monologue of the person they wrote a monologue for

C. When moved, begin to gravitate towards another person (thereby forming two groups: one of 2 persons, another of 3 persons) and continue talking simultaneously about the assessment of various monologues

D. When moved, begin to gravitate towards a large group and continue talking about a final assessment of the monologues as a whole

E. When each player feels moved, they should, individually, pick up a notecard and 1) on one side of the note card write "rubric" and then write 3 words that they are using to evaluate the monologues 2) on the other side of the note card write "evaluation" and then write one number between 1-10 that ranks the value of all the monologues combined

F. When all persons have stopped writing, each person reads aloud their cards, one at at a time (first the side with words, then the side with the number)

IV. Finbloom, Aaron & Hannah Kaya. *Oscillations of One to Many* **(2017)**

Practicalities: For 2-4 Participants. Required materials are: "Monologue and Dialogue 3x5 Cards" (see next page), ample blank 3x5 cards for rounds 7-8, writing implements

Monologue Phase: During Monologue phases the monologuer speaks about anything they desires trying not to have any long drawn-out gaps in their speech. While this is happening other participants can only interject by holding up a card in their hand and speak using the card's directive. Cards can be used any number of times. And when used, each card has maximum duration of 5 seconds or 2 sentences.

Prior to each monologue phase, all participants simultaneously hold up their hands to indicate their level of interest in monologuing (as low as possible indicates no interest, as high as possible indicates great interest). The person with the greatest interest is the monologuer for the forthcoming round. If someone has already been the monologuer in a prior, they can only monologue again if all other participants have had a turn to be the monologuer.

Dialogue Phase: During Dialogue phases all cards are shared and placed in the middle. In order for anyone to say anything, they must point to a card in the shared pile and speak using its directive. There is no pre-set order. Cards can be used any number of times. You are allowed to interrupt someone if they are speaking; however, as stated above, interruptions must occur by the interrupter pointing to a card and following its directives.

SEQUENCE

#1 Monologue:	no cards	[2 minutes]
#2 Dialogue:	no cards	[2 minutes]
#3 Monologue:	4 card hand, traditional set	[3 minutes]
#4 Dialogue:	8 card shared pile, traditional set	[3 minutes]
#5 Monologue:	4 card hand, all cards to choose from	[4 minutes]
#6 Dialogue:	8 card shared pile, all cards to choose from	[4 minutes]

BREAK   [5 minutes]

-Each performer writes 2 monologue cards

-Each audience member writes 1 dialogue card

-Each performer selects their 4-card hand for the following round

-Each performer eliminate 2 dialogue cards (original or audience-made)

-The monologuer for Round #7 choses 2 participants to give their monologue cards to

#7 Monologue:	4 card hand, custom set	[6 minutes]
#8 Dialogue:	all non-eliminated dialogue cards in shard pile	[7 minutes]

Monologue Cards	Dialogue Cards
Traditional Set	**Traditional Set**
-Sentence (speak the beginning of a sentence and the monologuer repeats your sentence and fills in the end of the sentence and keeps talking)	-Negate
	-Clarify
	-Question
-Word (repeat one word that the monologuer has just said and the monologuer now must replace this word with another word of their choosing)	-Example
	-Analogy/Metaphor
	-Observation
-Story (speak about some event or idea that relates)	-Definition
-Observation (make an observation)	-Build
Additional Cards	**Additional Cards**
-"That makes me feel _____."	-Support
-Repetition w/ Difference	-Judge
(Could you say that again, but differently?)	-Appease
-Dynamics (louder/softer)	-State what is really happening
-Speed (slower/faster)	-State underlying assumptions
-"What are you feeling right now?"	-Find flaws in the argument
-Eyes Closed/Open (for the monologuer)	-"That reminds me of"
-Hold Hands/Let go (yours and the monologuer)	-Affirm
-5 second humming break (all hum)	-Expression of feeling/desire

V. Finbloom, Aaron. The Philosophy Conversation Game (2018).

AIM
To create an adventure of thought in which all are led through conceptual depths, breadths and methodological unknowns. A well played game will create a dynamic experience that moves between the two opposing poles of 1) a philosophical conversation which uses logical and descriptive language to analyze ideas 2) a playful, experimental activation of pedagogy which perhaps departs from theoretical language and activates ideas through theatricality, embodiment, or other immersive methodologies.

GAMEBOARD
-VERY large piece of paper, or computer program (Scapple), or small pieces of paper that can continuously expand. Each game space is a node/bubble of a mind map (created by the Conversation Guide)

GAMEPLAY (for 3-4 players)
-Designate 1 Conversation Guide. This player will not take part in the conversation directly, but will be a guide, rule arbiter, and conversation therapist for the game. The rest of the players are Conversationalist. Each Conversationalist should pick a Philosopher they want as their avatar (see special abilities below).

PRIOR TO (AND ENDING) EACH CHAPTER
1) Create any necessary cards as Chapter instructions indicate below
2) Shuffle Yellow Cards and draw designated number of cards at random (randomness is offset if Chapter instructions indicate or if the Conversation Guide indicates)
3) When all players have run out of cards, the chapter is over. At the end of each chapter the Conversation Guide speaks to the conversation development (what is missing, needed, going well, encouraged, etc)

CHAPTER GAMEPLAY: each chapter is composed of x number of rounds where x = the total number of cards in play at the beginning of the chapter.

ROUND GAMEPLAY
1) Conversationalist rolls dice to determine possible spaces of movement on the game board (each space is one node/bubble of the mind map.
2) Conversationalist moves their game piece to an appropriate game space and activates a card from their hand. Activation = speaking/acting for less than 1 minute in the indicated way (on the card) about the given idea written on the gamespace (node).
3) While this is occurring the Conversation Guide is adding new game spaces to the board.
4) The cards used are discarded and removed from the game (not to be used again until chapters 5-6 indicate)

<u>SET CARDS (yellow)</u> - Drawn at random at the beginning of each chapter

Build (2)- Building means to positively work with a claim to develop it.

Negate (2) Go against a claim by opposing it, playing devil's advocate, or finding areas in need of evidence.

Define (2) You must give a definition or clarify a term or idea.

Why (2) Explain why a particular idea/concept is what it is, or seek to uncover underlying assumptions

Example (2) Give an example, counter-example, story or metaphor

Complicate (2) Add complexity or complication to a question or idea

Togetherness (2) Set a timer for 3 minutes. Conversationalists can talk together generally (no need to take turns) about the main topic of conversation (no need to follow any one game space). During this time the Conversation Guide is free to give short verbal prompts to guide the conversation as they see fit. Also, during this time the Conversation Guide is encouraged to take notes on a separate sheet of paper. After the 3 minutes is over the Conversation guide can add 3 game spaces to the game board which express key points articulated during this round.

<u>PLAYER GENERATED CARDS (green)</u>
To be written by each player at the beginning of a chapter.

<u>GUIDE GENERATION CARDS (blue)</u>
To be written by the Conversation Guide beginning of a chapter.

<u>FINAL ROUND CARDS (red)</u>

Text- Each player silently and legibly writes a conclusion to the conversation on a sheet of paper and hands this to the player to the right who then reads it silently

Perform- Players collectively imagine an actual situation or occurrence that would help clarify and give depth to the conversation. This situation is then congealed into a 1 minute performance.

Surrealism- Players have a conversation using mainly words or phrases from the game board BUT players can only speak 1 word at a time (i.e. you have to wait until the next player says a word before you can speak, BUT you don't have to go in any specific order). Also please try to speak quickly, or at least alter the dynamics of your speech considerably as you go.

<u>END TALLY (after the game has ended)</u>
1) Collectively agree to eliminate one of these elements: Fulfillment, Urgency, Curiosity, Complexity, Play
2) Each player writes down another element that will be used to judge the success of the game
3) There should now be a total of seven elements (four original, three new) that will be used to judge the success of the game
4) Each of these is said aloud, and pause occurs, and then each player says aloud a number between 1-10 which ranks the given element (1= not present, 10= very present)
5) These amounts are tallied together to generate a final score

ON THE CONVERSATION GUIDE: A good conversation guide can make or break a game. You are the facilitator, the game master, the therapist, the final arbiter of all rules. Any of the above rules, you can bend. Anytime a player is speaking, you can tell them to stop speaking, to abbreviate, to extend, etc. But you must use your power wisely, minimally, and judiciously. Above all else, your powers should always be used in accordance with the AIM of the game.

NOTES: The Conversation Guide is the final arbiter of how any green or red card should be interpreted or played. Written Cards (green/blue) can only create conditions for the round they are played. Their effects go away once the next round commences.

CHAPTERS
PRELUDE Choose who will be Conversationalists and who will be the Conversation Guide Conversationalists, choose your philosopher avatar INTRO **Step 1**: Each player crosses out 1 undesired quote from the quote sheet **Step 2**: Each player circles 1 desired quote from the quote sheet (you cannot circle a crossed out quote) **Step 3**: First quote = 1/2 | Second quote= 3/4 | Third quote = 5/6 **Step 4**: Roll the dice to determine the quote **Step 5**: Read the quote aloud **Step 6**: Players only ask questions back and forth (6 questions each) **Step 7**: Guide writes 1-2 questions of their choice onto the game board CHAPTER 1 **Conversationalists**: 2 yellow cards each (one player must be Togetherness which must go first) CHAPTER 2 **In Play**: Philosopher Power #1 **Conversationalists**: 2 yellow cards each (cannot draw Togetherness in this Chapter)   CHAPTER 3 **In Play**: Philosopher Power #1

Card Construction: Guide makes 1 blue card for each player
Conversationalists Cards in Play: 1 yellow cards each (drawn at random), 1 green cards each, 1 blue card each
Guide Extra Powers: Guide can choose which game space is landed on (2 times)

INTERLUDE
Step 1: Each player and guide reads aloud a game space of their choice
Step 2: Players and guide only ask questions back and forth (10 questions each)
Step 3: Guide writes 1-3 questions of their choice onto the game board

CHAPTER 4
In Play: Philosopher Powers #1 & #2
Card Construction: Conversationalists make 1 green card for the other player, Guide makes 1 blue card for each player.
Conversationalist Cards in Play: 1 yellow card each chosen intentionally, 1 green card each, 1 blue card each
Guide Extra Powers: Guide can decide a Conservationist's card choice (2 times)

CHAPTER 5
In Play: 2 Philosopher Powers #1 & #2
Conversationalist Cards in Play: 1 yellow card each chosen randomly (from discard pile), 1 green or blue card each (chosen from random from the discard pile)
Guide Extra Powers: Becomes a Conversationalist

ENDING
Step 1: The Guide writes 1 additional endgame card
Step 2: The 4 endgame cards are placed face up on the game board.
Step 3: Each player takes two blank cards and writes the numbers 1 and 2 (representing 1st choice and 2nd choice)
Step 4: Each player puts the numbers face down on 2 endgame cards of their choice
Step 5: Cards are turned up.
Step 6: Players decide if they want to enact both 1st and 2nd choices and in what order.
Step 7: Activate endings.

PHILOSOPHER POWERS

Nietzsche

#1 - Aphorism You can speak one sentence at the end of the other play's utterance.

#2 - Will to Power Roll a dice when the other player rolls. If your role is higher than theirs, you move their game piece to a space of your choice as determined by the # on your dice roll

Deleuze

#1 - Rhizomes While the other player is speaking you can write one Conversation Node (i.e. what the Guide is only able to do). This Node is inserted randomly into the Game Board.

#2 - N+1 You get double dice rolls.

Socrates

#1 - Aporia For each round you can question the legitimacy of one node written by the Conversation Guide. The Conversation Guide is then bound to alter the node accordingly.

#2 - Socratic Method You are allowed 1 interruption per round, while another Conversationalist (or Guide) is speaking

Butler

#1 - Cultural Construction During your turn, discard a card from your hand, and then choose any conversational node to analyze. Discuss how this ideas within this node are constructed solely based on the existence of the ideas from the nodes surrounding it.

#2 - Iterability During your turn, discard a card from your hand, and then choose any conversational node to analyze. All other plays (including the guide) must repeat the contents of this node aloud while you add on words and ideas (feel free to act as a conductor and indicate which words others should say and how they should say them).

VI. Howell, Anthony. Going.

GOING

There are five acts in the play. Each of the five acts is a repetition of the first act, each is begun by a different performer. In each act a further element is introduced by the first performer to enter in that act. Each new element is repeated in all subsequent acts.

EXAMPLE: ACT 1.

Scene 2:
  – Metronome.
  – Entry of the first performer.
  – First performer executes an action with words.

Scene 2:
  – Metronome
  – Entry of the second performer.
  – First performer executes an action with words.
  – Second performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 1.

Scene 3:
  – Metronome.
  – Entry of the third and fourth performers.
  – First performer executes an action with words.
  – Second performer freezes — only turning in order to observe the actions of the first performer.
  – Third performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 1.
  – Fourth performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 2.
  – Exit of the first performer.

Scene 4:
  – First performer as metronome.
  – Entry of initial metronome as the fifth performer.
  – Second performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 3.
  – Third performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 2.
  – Fourth performer freezes — only turning in order to observe the actions of the second performer repeating all the actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 3.
  – Fifth performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 1.
  – Exit of the second performer.

Scene 5:	– Metronome.
	– Second performer begins Tone Poem Chorus.
	– Third performer freezes.
	– Fourth performer repeats all actions and words employed by the second performer in Scene 4.
	– Fifth performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 2.
	– Exit of the third and fourth performers.
Scene 6:	– Metronome.
	– Second performer continues Tone Poem Chorus.
	– Third and fourth performers begin Tone Poem Chorus.
	– Fifth performer repeats all actions and words employed by the first performer in Scene 3.
	– Exit of the fifth performer.
ENTR'ACTE:	– Metronome begins Slowed Songs while all other performers continue Tone Poem Chorus.

There are five performers in the play. Since Act 1 was begun by the first performer, Act 2 will be begun by the second performer, Act 3 by the third performer, Act 4 by the fourth performer and Act 5 by the fifth performer.

In each act another performer begins Slowed Songs instead of the Tone Poem Chorus — thus, by the end of Act 5, all the performers will be engaged in Slow Songs.

VII. Kim-Cohen, Seth. *How To Write A Text About How To Write A Text Score (And Why)* (2009)

How To Write A Text About How To Write A Text Score (And Why)
Seth Kim-Cohen

Legato

1. Write the words, "I don't speak 'music'". (In which the interior quotation marks cradle the delicate word 'music', so as to prevent it from breaking.)

2. Ask the question, "Why can't I read or write musical notation?"

3. Answer (defensively, yet with a certain pride), "I have been playing music for thirty years. At times, I have made a living solely writing, recording and playing music. I have written something like three hundred songs, a few dozen experimental musical compositions, and released eight albums. I have taken and taught classes about music, written books about music, hosted radio shows about music. But I can't read or write musical notation."

4. Ask (hoping it will be taken rhetorically), "What kind of ignoramus am I?"

> A brief interlude on cognitive style (to the tune of the ocarina part in the second movement of Ligeti's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*):

> > My mind doesn't function mathematically, hierarchically, systematically. I process information as magnetic particles, some attract, some repel. I process information as liquid, a little in this container, a little in that, a little spilled on the floor, a little evaporated. I process information as signs. It's not important to me that I'm hearing a 1-4-5 chord progression, it's important that what I'm hearing is relating itself to the blues: what, then, is the nature of that relation? Respectful? Antagonistic? Ironic? I group. I slurp. I engage. Derrida is never far from my thoughts: "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" ("There is no outside-the-text.") Conversely, and equally true: everything is (in the) text.

5. Justify this musico-logos-ical incompetence by arguing, "Music isn't a set of numerical values, it's a set of ethical/ontological/epistemological values. That is to say, it's part of life and life's part of it. So, why should I feel compelled to adopt this invented, artificial, specialist language to produce, receive, and talk about music? The language I use everyday, for everything else, ought to suffice. And, what do you know? For me, it does."

6. Continue, beginning to feel like a dead horse is being beaten, yet wanting to persuade: "I use text notation the same way I use everyday language: descriptively, deceptively, instructively, ironically, generously, mischievously. The point is, we all relate to everyday language. We don't all relate to musical notation. If we're interested in the social aspects of art and music, then it seems wise to use the most inclusive language on offer."

7. Being careful not to seem self-important, give an example from the work: "I can whisper a text notation in the ear of an audience member and ask them to 'pass it on' to another audience member, until it reaches the performer on the stage. This doesn't work as well with a little black dot on the end of a stick attached to the third of five horizontal lines, referring back to a cluster of little signs and some numbers."

7a. Go on, another example couldn't hurt: "I can describe sound as 'stubborn' or 'like a fruit bat', or designate its duration as equivalent to 'completely opening and then closing a door'. The subsequent sounds are now adorned with life-qualities that are unavailable to notation. As are the performer and the audience. Pretty neat, huh?"

8. Conclude by comparing attitudes toward life and music, implying that the former should guide the latter, "I put no faith in higher powers, final answers, destiny. I do not obey a set of behavioral instructions determining my every movement, my tempo, my termination. Why then, would I ask music to submit to these unrealistic constraints? What right do I have to impose them on the listener? We're all in this together. Better yet if cake is served."

9. Always say thank you, "Thank you."

– 14 March 2009
  New York City

Cobra

MOUTH *yellow*
1. [P] POOL
2. [R] RUNNER
3. [S] SUBSTITUTE
4. [SX] SUBSTITUTE CROSSFADE

NOSE *white*
1. [D] DUOS
2. [T] TRADES
3. [E] EVENTS 1, 2 OR 3
4. [B] BUDDIES

EYE *orange*
1. [CT] CARTOON TRADES
2. [CO] ORDERED CARTOON TRADES
   with guests

EAR *blue*
1. [MΔ] G = G   M Δ
2. [GΔ] M = M   G Δ
3. [VΔ] VOLUME   Δ

HEAD *red*
1. [1] SOUND MEMORY 1
2. [2] SOUND MEMORY 2
3. [3] SOUND MEMORY 3

PALM *black*
1. [■] CUT
2. [▮] CODA
3. [▬] HOLD & FADE

GUERRILLA SYSTEMS   *Squad Leader + 2 Spotters*

TACTICS
1. Imitate
2. Trade
3. Hold
4. Capture
5. Switch/Crossfade
} *to next downbeat*

OPERATIONS (*Squad Leader* ONLY)

(I) DIVISI   Memory drone, squad leader tactics, and systems control

(II) INTERCUT   Locus Unit return to same sound

(III) FENCING   Unit with alternates

G. UNIT LIFE SPAN: 7 Downbeats

SPY may cut unit during OPERATIONS ONLY if unidentified.

Unit members may cut at any time

End of DIVISI superimposition

SOME LOCUS HAND CUES

thumb = stop   back & forth = trade

hand = rhythm   one = intercut

finger = pip   cut = change

hand = drone

John Zorn, NYC © October 9, 1984

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