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Metaphysics of Performance

Performance, Performativity and the Relation Between Theatre and Philosophy

Alice Lagaay

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Table of Content

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 10
DANKSAGUNG 11
INTRODUCTION 13

PART ONE: Discourses of Performance and Performativity 17

I. Language Performance and the Performativity of Language 19

- 1. Chomsky's Notion of Competence vs. Performance 19
- 2. The Shift of Focus from Competence to Performance 19
- 3. J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory 20
  - a) Performative vs. Constative Language 20
  - b) The Collapse of the Performative/Constative Distinction 21
  - c) The Austinian Fallacy 22
  - d) Austin's Performative Legacy 22
- 4. Derrida's Deconstruction of Austin 23
  - a) Iterability and Différance vs. "Absolutely Meaningful Speech" 23
  - b) Language and Ritual 24

II. Performance/Performativity and Identity 25

- 1. Judith Butler 25
  - a) Two Modes of Performativity 25
  - b) Butler's Use of Austin's Notion of Performative Language...... 26
  - c) Butler's Use of Derrida 26
    - i) Language and Repetition 26
    - ii) Butler's "Problem" - and her Solution 27
  - d) The Performativity of Discourse 28
- 2. Erving Goffman 28
  - a) The "Stage" of Social Interaction 28
  - b) Identity as Role-Play and Effect 29
  - c) Normative Rules and Social Codes: Framing and Keying 29
  - d) Goffman's "Non-Performative" Streak or the Ambivalence of Performance 30

III. Culture as Performance 31

1. The "Performative Turn" in Anthropology and Culture Studies 31
2. Victor Turner 31
    a) The Concept of Social Drama 31
    b) Liminal and Liminoid Activity 32
    c) Flow vs. Reflexivity 33
    d) Conclusion 34
3. Richard Schechner 34
    a) Restored Behaviour 34
    b) The Relation between Social Drama and Aesthetic Drama 35

IV. Performance Art 36

1. Origins of Performance Art 37
2. A First-Hand Example: The Performance at Liverpool Street Station 38
3. Analysis: Performance Art vs. Traditional Theatre 38
    a) Characteristics of Traditional Theatre 38
    b) Characteristics of Performance Art 39
4. Performance Art and Deconstruction: Josette Féral 41
    a) The Hidden Face of Theatre 41
    b) *Différance made perceptible* 42
    c) Implications 43

V. Performance and Performativity: a Bird's-Eye View 44

1. Summary and Diagram 44
2. Outstanding Features of the Performance/Performativity Current 45
    a) A Turn *Towards* the Paradigm of Theatre 45
    b) A Turn *Away* from "Philosophy". 46
        i) The Anti-Metaphysical Thrust in Performance 46
        ii) The Crisis of Philosophy in Performance/Performativity Discourse 46
3. Preliminary Conclusion, Questions and Outlook 47

PART TWO: The Relation Between Theatre and Philosophy 49

VI. Theatre and Philosophy: The Ancient Quarrel 51

1. Nietzsche's Account of the Origins of Tragedy 51
   - a) The Apollinian and Dionysian Duality 51
     - i) General Characteristics of the Apollinian and the Dionysian 52
     - ii) The Relation Between Apollinian and Dionysian Art Impulses 53
   - b) A Nietzschean Chronology of *pre-dramatic* History 55
   - c) The Miracle of Tragedy 56
     - i) The Roots in Lyric Poetry 56
     - ii) The Dionysian Satyr Chorus 58
     - iii) The Merging of Dionysian *and* Apollinian Forces in Tragedy 59
   - d) Tragedy and Early Greek Philosophy 60
2. Death of Tragedy at the Hand of Philosophy 62
   - a) Nietzsche's Interpretation of Socrates 62
     - i) "Aesthetic Socratism" 62
     - ii) Repercussions in the Art of Tragedy: Euripides 64
   - b) Plato's Condemnation of the Dramatic Arts 66
     - i) The Metaphysical Argument 66
     - ii) The Moral/Political Argument 68
     - iii) The Irony of Plato's Position 69
   - c) Aristotle's Attempt to Reconcile Philosophy and Theatre 70
     - i) Arguments in Favour of Tragedy 70
     - ii) The "Final Blow" to a Dionysian Vision of Tragedy 71
3. Recapitulative Diagram and Preliminary Conclusions 72

VII. Correspondence Between Theatre and Philosophy 74

1. Structural Similarity: Seeing as Revealing 74
   - a) Universal vs. Empirical Reality 74
   - b) Catharsis and Contemplation 75
2. World of the Stage and Stage of the World: Thresholds of Being 77
   - a) Enactment vs. Narration 77
   - b) Full-Blooded Presence vs. Imitation: "Being-For-the-First-Time" 78
3. Being as Performance 80

PART THREE: Metaphysics of Performance 83

VIII. Performance/Performativity, Theatre and Philosophy 85
- 1. Characteristics of the "Performative Turn" 85
  - a) Confirmation 85
  - b) Modification 86

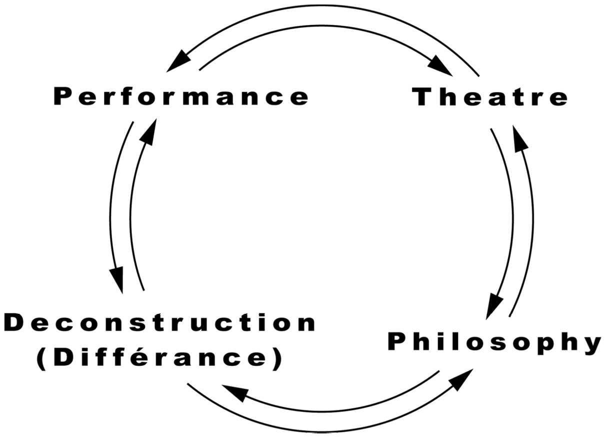
IX. Metaphysics of Performance 86
- 1. Definition 86
- 2. Further Characteristics 87

X. Performance/Performativity Reconsidered 89
- 1. Performative Language 89
  - a) Language and Drama: The Difference between a Wedding and a *Wedding* 89
    - i) Austin re-imagined 89
    - ii) On Law and Ceremony 90
    - iii) Dramatic Conditions 90
  - b) On the Functioning of Language 92
    - i) Repetition and Difference 92
    - ii) Language and Witness: The Example of Promising 93
  - c) Conclusion 94
- 2. Performance/Performativity and Identity 95
  - a) Being and Acting 95
  - b) Donna Williams' Autistic Identity 98
    - i) The Case 98
    - ii) Performing a Self 99
    - iii) Being "*In Between*" 101
- 3. Outcome 102
  - a) Approaching the "Grey Zone" 102
  - b) Performativity Redefined: The Question of Competence 102

CONCLUSION 105

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG 107

BIBLIOGRAPHY 109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Introduction

At some point during the course of my studies I became aware of a word that was being used in all sorts of different contexts and that I hadn't heard being used in these ways before. The word was *performance*. There was talk of "language performance", the "performance of social identity", "performance art"… I wasn't sure if the word meant something different in each case or whether there was a clear semantic link between its different uses. Soon after I had first become aware of it, I realized that the word was often coupled with another term that I had certainly never heard before. This term was *performativity*. There was talk of the "performativity of language", the "performativity of society", "identity and performativity"… I wondered about the relationship between the two terms. Perhaps the difference between them was purely "grammatical", a difference of order and focus: to speak of "performativity" was to speak of the attributes that make a performance performance-like. In some cases, but only in a certain sense, this proved to be true, but as I investigated further, I came to realize that there was in fact a more subtle distinction to be made between the notions of performance and performativity. For whereas "performance" tended to suppose *an acting subject* who was *performing the performance*, "performativity", on the other hand, seemed to refer to the *performance itself as an acting subject*.[1] Thus, for instance, to speak of a person's linguistic performance or of, say, an orchestra's musical performance is essentially to state something about the person or the orchestra: their ability, brilliance or weakness in a certain capacity. But to speak of the performativity of language is not primarily to speak about a particular person's expression in a language but to speak of what the language itself does/performs in being spoken, to speak of what its *effects are on the world*. Of course, language is essentially spoken by people, so that to say something about the performativity of language is also, by extension, to say something about the performativity of people, their power to affect the world. Yet there is also a sense in which to speak of the performativity of language (and language here is just an example of what has been or can be analysed in terms of performativity) is to say something about just the opposite: not what people do with language but *what language does with people*. Indeed, from the performative perspective the individual is no longer seen as an omnipotent subject, free and responsible for choosing how to behave, master of his own words. For the powers of language are revealed to extend far beyond the individual speaking subject. Moreover, not only is every individual shown to have been shaped by the language that she/he uses, but the structures of society and cultural practices provide a framework within which the individual is defined and beyond which she/he cannot venture.

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[1] Judith Butler makes this distinction quite clear: "It is important to distinguish performance from performativity: the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject", in Butler 1993. See also Dolan 1993.

The relation between performance and performativity is therefore far from simple. Though closely connected, the terms highlight at times very different, almost contradictory, aspects of human activity. What is at issue, then, is not only the question of the nature of individual being and subjectivity, but also the larger issue of the position of human kind in relation to the world. Are we essentially active agents or passive victims? Or what could it mean to be simultaneously both? These seem to be central questions underlying much of what has come to be known as performativity theory.

As I wondered about the contemporary interdisciplinary use of the notions of performance and performativity, at the back of my mind was the question of how the development that these terms stand for could be related to the long-standing love/hate relationship between theatre and philosophy. That there could be a fruitful connection between the two realms seemed evident. For if the debate around performance and performativity raises, amongst other problems, the question of the nature and significance of representation, it is precisely this - or the concept of *mimesis* - that has traditionally been the central cause of contention between theatre and philosophy. Moreover, the struggle between philosophy and drama boils down to a debate over the nature and accessibility of truth. It raises the fundamental question of the *nature of metaphysics* which, interestingly, is also a question which can be seen to emerge within discourses of performance and performativity.

To what extent does an understanding of the relationship between theatre and philosophy help one to form an opinion of the complex, interconnected issues raised by the debate surrounding performance and performativity? This is the general question that I set out here to examine.

This work is thus the result of a personal quest: to find a way of grasping the maze of different positions that have become incorporated within the general and often overlapping terms of performance studies and performative theory, and to consider them in terms of the relation between theatre and philosophy. I have deliberately sought to present the "performative turn" as a development touching on a wide variety of disciplinary contexts whilst at the same time endeavouring to draw together common concepts and perspectives. As far as possible, my purpose has been to condense into a nutshell the most striking characteristics and issues concerning the notions of performance and performativity. The extent to which I succeed in this endeavour will be the particular achievement of this paper. At the same time however, the sheer breadth of such a task will involve certain obvious limitations or shortcomings. For in seeking to refer to a such a wide range of issues in a variety of contexts, I have necessarily had to limit my study to the most striking and general aspects of performance and performativity in the respective fields. Also, in aspiring to see commonalities in the most widely varying discourses, one is faced with the constant risk that the subtler arguments within those discourses, which we have not been able to consider, may in fact point in very different directions. But is not the problem of tainting results with one's personal bias almost always unavoidable? My personal bias happens to be an interest in philosophy. And so, ultimately, what I have sought to discover about the "performative turn" is its significance for the philosophical quest.

The work is structured in three parts. Part One (I-V) introduces the central characteristics of the "performative turn" in four main fields of research:

1. Linguistics/Philosophy of Language (performance/performativity of *language*);
2. Sociology/Psychology (performance/performativity of *identity*);
3. Anthropology/Cultural Science (performance/performativity of *rituals and theatre*);
4. Art (the relation between traditional theatre and *performance art*).[2]

At the end of Part One I draw out what I perceive to be the general characteristics of the "performative turn" as a whole: 1) a *turn towards* theatrical metaphors to explain cultural phenomena, and 2) a *turn away* from classical metaphysics. These results call for an inquiry into the relation between theatre and philosophy (Part Two). Here (VI), from the perspective of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, I look at the history of theatre and philosophy in an attempt to explain the "ancient quarrel" that has traditionally divided them. This quarrel reveals that the issue over which theatre and philosophy have tended to be at odds is the question of the nature of metaphysics. In a second step (VII),

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[2] The separation of performance/performativity discourses into these four major departments broadly echoes the structure of the Collaborative Research Centre (Sonderforschungsbereich) entitled "Culture and the Performative" which opened at the Freie Universität Berlin in January 2000. At the Graduate Summer School on "Media and Performativity" held by the C. R. C. in July 2000, lectures and workshops were organised into four groups: 1. *Media and Communication* (linguistic/philosophical perspective); 2. *Notions of Performance and Performativity* (anthropological-pedagogical perspective); 3. *Multimedia and Aesthetic Perception* (theatre/cultural studies); 4. "*How to Analyse Performances*" (performance art and theory).

I consider the close structural resemblance between theatre and philosophy. The relation between these two activities, both characterised by particular kinds of seeing, opens the way for the notion of a *metaphysics of performance*. Finally, in Part Three (VIII-X), I attempt to reconsider the discourses of performance and performativity in the light of a metaphysics of performance.

PART ONE

Discourses of Performance and Performativity

The current debate surrounding the notions of performance and performativity covers a wide spectrum of different issues in a variety of academic disciplines ranging from the philosophy of language to the social and cultural sciences, and the dramatic arts. It is clear that the terms are used in different ways in these different fields. Yet it is also an explicit characteristic of the "performative turn" to challenge the boundaries between different academic disciplines and establish an inter- and trans-disciplinary forum for discussion and research. This suggests that there must be something common to the various applications of the "performative gaze". It is not my purpose here to go into the smallest intricacies of the current discussion on performance within the various fields. However, since part of my aim is to look at the academic study of performance as a historical phenomenon, it is necessary to sketch the outlines of the debate in its various contexts in order to tease out what the different positions or angles on performance and performativity have in common and what philosophical problems they raise. What follows is therefore an overview of the main concepts and issues at stake in what are, to my mind, the four main distinct "locations" of performance and performativity theory.

I. Language Performance and the Performativity of Language

1. CHOMSKY'S NOTION OF COMPETENCE VS. PERFORMANCE

In *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), Noam Chomsky makes a clear distinction between linguistic *competence* and linguistic *performance.* Competence describes the ideal, general, grammatical knowledge that a speaker of any language must have in order to formulate specific sentences of his/her own. Performance, on the other hand, is the actual articulation of that knowledge in a given speech situation, that is, what a speaker actually says. There is of course always a discrepancy between the ideal linguistic form "behind" any spoken utterance and the particular example of real spoken language. Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance can be seen as a version of Ferdinand de Saussure's earlier separation between the basic organising principles of language, *la langue*, and specific examples of spoken language, *la parole*. Both belong to a traditional view of linguistics that emphasizes abstract principles extrapolated from a variety of individual examples. This structuralist approach to linguistics relies heavily on the assumption that there is some sort of transcendental system *behind* any spoken language. The separation of language into "two worlds"[3], one real and one abstract, can be seen as analogous to a host of similar tendencies in other fields of thinking that echo the Platonic metaphysical distinction between the perceived world and the ideal realm of ideas or forms from which everything else derives. Interestingly, it is precisely *against* this view of the world (or at least in a spirit of awareness of the human constructedness of such a position) that much of the thinking concerned with performance and performativity is defined.

2. THE SHIFT OF FOCUS FROM COMPETENCE TO PERFORMANCE

From the 1960s onwards, inspired by parallel research in the humanities and social sciences, scholars interested in linguistics gradually began to regard performance "not simply as a restricted, circumscribed, even corrupted derivative of competence, but as a *positive and enabling activity in its own right*" (Carlson 1996: 57, my italics). Characteristic of this approach has been a growing awareness of the reflexivity and self-generative nature of language which is no longer seen as essentially derived from an abstract system of rules, but as a functioning social practice used "to build the very contexts in terms of which

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[3] See Krämer 1998, 1999a, 1999b and the notion there of a "two-world ontology" (Zwei-Welten Ontologie).

[people] understand what they are doing and talking about with each other" (Dore/McDermott 1982: 396).[4] In order to understand how language works from this *socio-linguistic* perspective[5], one must look at how society functions, and analyse the context of a speaking situation. What this shift points to is a *closing of the gap between language and the world in which it is used*.

3. J. L. AUSTIN'S SPEECH ACT THEORY

a) Performative vs. Constative Language

The move towards an emphasis on language as a human activity that *creates* as much as it *describes*, runs parallel to J. L. Austin's extremely influential study of speech acts, first developed in his 1955 William James lectures and later published in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). Austin's fundamental intuition was that sentences like "I (hereby) name this ship the Queen Elizabeth", or "I declare the meeting adjourned", insofar as their utterance *simultaneously* constitutes the performance of an action, in other words, an "event" that literally changes the world, they seem to possess a quasi-magical power of creation. Austin considered the study of the performative quality of language as a challenge to the standard philosophical tradition that viewed language as purely descriptive. He called the philosophical tendency to insist on a vision of language as descriptive, i.e. subordinate to the world, "the descriptive fallacy". The archetypal kind of utterance that corresponds to this perspective is the statement, or what Austin calls *constative* language. Insofar as a constative utterance is seen to reflect or describe a certain state of affairs that already exists in the world, its content can be verified with the world and thus assessed in terms of "truth" or "falsity". *Performative* utterances, on the other hand, do not describe the world as much as their purpose is to *effect* it. Their success or failure is thus better described not in terms of truth or falsity, but in terms of "happiness" or "unhappiness". In order, for instance, for a performative utterance to succeed in its intended effect, certain conditions must be fulfilled: the speaker must be in the appropriate position of authority (i.e. a priest in a marriage ceremony, the chairman at a conference etc.), in the right context, with the right people etc.[6]

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[4] Quoted in Carlson 1996: 57.

[5] Dell Hymes is one of the pioneers in modern socio-linguistics.

[6] "Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the *circumstances in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways,* appropriate, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also perform certain* other actions, whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ actions or even acts of uttering further words. Thus, for naming the ship, it is essential that I should be the person appointed to name her, for (Christian) marrying, it is essential that I should not be already married with a

b) The Collapse of the Performative/Constative Distinction

Austin tried to define a system for identifying performative utterances. Plausible solutions were for instance, the simple test of adding "hereby" in English before the verb (where hereby means "by uttering these words". Thus, for instance, "I hereby promise..." or "I hereby order you..." are performative, but *"I hereby walk to town" is not!), and the apparent rule that performative sentences must be in the first person, indicative present simple active ("I pronounce you man and wife" is performative, but "you promised" is not). However, Austin soon realised that this was not a sufficient definition of performatives because although one might be able to draw up a list of verbs which under these conditions perform the action they designate, other performative utterances do not follow this form at all: I can, for instance, perform the act of ordering someone to stop by shouting "Stop!" rather than "I hereby order you to stop!"; inversely, the apparently constative statements "I'll pay you tomorrow", or "I'd like to announce...", when spoken under the right conditions, could constitute respectively a promise and an announcement. But once you allow for the existence of such "implicit performatives", where there is no "explicitly performative" verb, you have to admit that any utterance can be an implicit performative. The constative utterance, "Paul lives in a cottage in Hampshire" can be seen as a version of "I hereby affirm that Paul lives in a cottage in Hampshire", thus performing the act of affirming.

The performative/constative distinction collapses with the recognition that constative utterances also perform actions - actions of stating, affirming, describing, and so on. They are in fact, a *type* of performative. Austin therefore abandoned the constative/performative distinction in favour of a more differentiated approach, a new, "more complete and general doctrine" (Austin 1971: 22) to explain what one is doing in saying something. He went on to define three levels of action at play in every act of speech: a) the *locutionary* refers to the act *of* saying something (defined by the rules of the particular language in which it is spoken); b) the *illocutionary* is the act of doing something *in* saying something; and c) the *perlocutionary* refers to the consequences or what is achieved by doing something in saying something. Thus, in a given situation, to utter the words, or perform the locutionary act of *saying* "I think you should...because..." is also to perform the illocutionary act of *arguing* (Austin calls this the *illocutionary force*), which can have the perlocutionary consequence of *convincing* someone to do something.

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wife living, sane and undivorced, and so on; for a bet to have been made, it is generally necessary for the offer of the bet to have been accepted by the taker (who must have done something, such as to say ‘Done’), and it is hardly a gift if I *say ‘I give it you’ but never hand it over"*, Austin 1962: 8-9.

c) The Austinian Fallacy

Austin's subsequent attempt to classify illocutionary verbs, an endeavour pursued later most notably by John Searle, need not further interest us here. For there is a sense in which Austin's abandonment of the concept of performatives and his attempt to categorise linguistic usage actually undermine what was initially most interesting and influential about his intuition of the performative nature of language[7].

As already mentioned, Austin considered the study of the performative power of language as a challenge to the prevailing philosophical tradition. He identified two fallacies characteristic of philosopher's in this tradition: the true/false fetish[8] (linked to what Austin calls the "descriptive fallacy") and philosophy's normative tendency to want to define what is right or wrong. Yet, in wanting to define the rules under which language can have a certain effect, in attempting to classify illocutionary verbs, as well as in his general attitude towards what counts as "serious" language and what not (artistic, theatrical, and citational language is woefully dismissed as parasitic), Austin can be seen to have clung to the traditional assumptions that he claimed to be challenging.[9]

d) Austin's Performative Legacy

There are therefore two contradictory sides to Austin. On the one hand he was clearly entrenched in the Oxford tradition of common sense, no-nonsense, empirical "ordinary language" philosophy,[10] and yet on the other hand, there is in his work (especially the early work on performatives) what has been called a "Nietzschean"[11] voice, one that goes against philosophy's self-loving claim to truth and that would hint at the more mysterious, magical dimension of the "power of words". This ambivalence is reflected in the Austinian legacy which on one hand encompasses an empirical strain of development in the philosophy of language (and linguistics) epitomized in the work of John Searle, and, on the other hand, while pointing in a very different direction, has inspired a deconstructionist wave of performative thinking. The central aim of this is to expose the constructed, performative nature of philosophical and social discourse. It is to the latter branch of the Austinian legacy that I refer when speaking of performance and performativity.

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[7] "Austin's specific philosophical point in isolating the performative has gotten obscured", Gould 1995: 20. See also Krämer 1999a.

[8] See Gould 1995.

[9] See Derrida's criticism of Austin, pp. 23-25 below.

[10] In line with such philosophers as Moore, Ryle, Strawson as well as the later Wittgenstein.

[11] See e.g. Derrida 1972: 383.

Most relevant for now is perhaps simply to remember that with the Austinian speech act theory, the traditional distinction between the activities of doing and saying was for the first time radically shaken: saying is revealed as a kind of doing. Moreover, with Austin (and indeed perhaps despite him), it seems that the foundation stones were laid for an investigation into the "exceptional" situations, which philosophers had tended to ignore, where *word and world completely coincide*, in which *saying and showing correspond*, and where language explicitly reveals itself as *self-referential* (that is, not verifiable with reference to a pre-existence outside of language), and *world-constituting*.

Of course, investigation of that which is exceptional or unusual, of what the norm has dismissed as marginal often reveals that it is in fact far less special or marginal than was at first presumed. This then has significant transformational consequences for that which is conceived as "normal".[12]

4. DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION OF AUSTIN

In his well-known criticism of Austin's approach to performative language in "Signature, événement, contexte" (1972), Jacques Derrida can be seen to have provided a link between the more strictly language and linguistic orientations on the topic and approaches that emphasize the historical, political, social, and, not least, philosophical implications of the performative power of language.

a) Iterability and Différance vs. "Absolutely Meaningful Speech"

Derrida's central point of criticism of Austin's speech act theory is that in emphasizing the importance of context, (what Austin calls "the total speech situation"[13]), and in insisting, for instance, on the relevance of the speaker's intentions for the success of performative language, Austin's analysis centres on the concept of an *absolutely meaningful speech* that is, so to speak, master of itself. But for Derrida, there *is no* such thing as a language that is absolutely meaningful! All signs are necessarily caught up in a constant play of repetition with difference (*différance*), which, whilst constituting the very condition for signification, *simultaneously prevents* any meaning from ever being made totally present.[14]

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[12] This certainly seems to be what happened to Austin. He started out investigating the "special case" of explicit performatives only to discover that the same principles that governed them seemed to apply to constatives (considered the norm of language). This constitutes the deconstructive strain in Austin's work. But it was perhaps too early and he the wrong "kind" of philosopher (in the tradition of ordinary language philosophy) to pursue the deconstruction further and apply it to himself.

[13] "The total speech act in the total speech situation is the *only actual* phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating", Austin 1962: 148.

Austin's original notion of performative language is of interest to Derrida, and compatible with his principles of deconstruction to the extent that Austin's account challenges the traditional semiotic notion of communication as the transportation of a pre-existent and contained unit of meaning. Indeed, Austin's description of the performativity of an utterance in terms of *force*, is certainly evoked in the kind of movement that produces an effect and which Derrida's *différance* attempts to conceptualise.

Nevertheless, in Derrida's view, Austin is prey to the pitfalls of traditional analysis by failing to acknowledge the citational character, the *iterability*, of all signifying actions (or indeed experiences). Indeed, for Derrida, if performative utterances can succeed, then it is only by virtue of citation. If it makes sense at all to speak of the context of a linguistic utterance, then, for Derrida, that context is the incommensurable sum of all the different contexts in which a certain signifier has been repeated. Or, seen from a different angle, what constitutes the *force* of a performative utterance, because it is essentially repeatable, is precisely its capacity to break with (Derrida speaks of *rupture* with) any form of context. The essence of all speech according to Derrida is that insofar as it is code, insofar as it is structurally repeatable, that is, *iterable*, its existence and signification cannot be fundamentally attributed to an individual speaking subject. Of course in *this* context, there is little room left for the idea of an "absolutely meaningful speech", or of the absolutely autonomous conscious speaking subject, which traditional language analysis and philosophy (including that of Austin) have taken for granted.

b) Language and Ritual

In typical deconstructionist style, Derrida demonstrates how Austin's exclusion of ritual and theatrical practices from the realm of the performative work against him. Whilst Austin dismisses these "parasitic", exceptional uses of language from the realm of study because they are "unserious", Derrida on the contrary sees ritual and theatrical expression as the archetypal forms of language par excellence:

> "Le rite n'est pas une éventualité, c'est en tant qu'itérabilité, un trait structurel de toute marque" (Derrida 1972: 385).

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[14] The "non-concept" of *différance*, often likened to a movement, gesture or force that constitutes the very possibility of conceptuality according to Derrida is first introduced in *De la grammatologie* (1967).

We shall return to this idea later on. For now, let it simply be said that a consequence of Derrida's deconstruction of Austin is that speech acts are seen to depend even more radically on socially constructed contexts than Austin had supposed, or at least more radically than Austin had worked out and demonstrated.

II. Performativity and Identity

Moving away from an account of performativity that focuses primarily on language, the second major "location" of performative discourse gravitates around the issue of personal *identity* as something that is *performed* within society. Of the many different thinkers and theories that would merit mention here, I have chosen Judith Butler and Erving Goffman, as two very different thinkers who have been most influential in the social and cultural sciences and beyond, and whose theories, both in terms of their content and their reception in other fields of study, aptly serve to portray the vast array of criss-crossing, overlapping, and echoing discourses within and beyond performance and performativity studies.

1. JUDITH BUTLER

The influence of Judith Butler's work on gender and performativity within social and cultural science and its repercussions in other fields of performance thinking, cannot be over stressed. Central to her work is a view of gender not as a given social or cultural attribute, but as a category constructed through performance, that is, through doing. One of the central purposes of this position is to challenge the traditional *essentialist* view that gender identity is necessarily conditioned by biological difference. Butler emphasizes the fact that a person is *not born* with either feminine or masculine characteristics, but that gender identity is the result or the *effect* of acquired gendered behaviour, assimilated from the codes of conduct that define the culture into which one is born.

a) Two Modes of Performativity

There are, for Butler, two distinct though connected *modes* of performativity. One has to do with what the *subject does*, how one's behaviour *establishes* the person one is or is perceived to be; the other has to do with what *is done to the subject*, how, for instance, a culture's language, and prevailing discourses within society, impose a certain identity on its people.[15] Both modalities of performativity undermine the classical essentialist notion of subjecthood, as something nature- or god-given, that language and behaviour are traditionally seen to express. On the one hand, what I am, my identity, is defined by what I do, how I behave, how I dress, present myself etc. and how this performance of identity is perceived. This, however, does not mean, that I am absolutely free to choose my identity. For, in Butler's view, there *is no I* that exists *behind* the performance of my identity.[16] On the other hand, the nature and scope of my behaviour is defined by the codes of the culture in which I am brought up and the *degree of success* that culture has had in colouring or conditioning, in *creating* my identity, not least through the performative power of language.

b) Butler's Use of Austin's Notion of Performative Language

The performative process begins at birth when the gender of the baby is literally pronounced with the Austinian illocutionary force of a declaration:

> "'It's a girl' begins that long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girled; gender is ritualistically repeated, whereby the repetition occasions both the risk of failure and the congealed effect of sedimentation" (Butler 1995: 203).

Butler makes use of Austin's notion of performative language as that which creates what it describes in order to highlight the ways in which culture and society work on individuals to have them conform to pre-existent models which are not nature- or god-given but the result of prevailing discourse, involving certain clear power structures and hierarchical assumptions.

c) Butler's Use of Derrida

i) Language and Repetition

Building on Derrida's rewriting of Austin, Butler identifies the performative power of language not, like Austin, with the speaker's intention, or with the context of a speaking situation as an enclosed whole, but with processes of repetition and citation that necessarily evoke a whole baggage of history and tradition whenever words are used:

> "If a performative provisionally succeeds (…), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions,

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[15] How individuals *perform* their identity is the focus of Butler's earlier work, e.g. *Gender Trouble* (1990); the *performativity* of gender discourse is more explicitly dealt with in her later works, e.g. *Bodies that Matter* (1993).

[16] Butler quotes Nietzsche: "There is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed - the deed is everything", Butler 1995: 199.

> and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices*" (Butler 1995: 205, italics in original).

One of the central issues raised by Butler concerning the citational character of language is the question of responsibility and accountability when, for instance, words are used to do harm. For if a) subjecthood is merely the effect of performative behaviour[17] and b) the force of words has to do with how they have been used in the past by other speakers, what/who is there that can be held accountable when language does injustice? Indeed, more generally speaking, to what extent *am I at all responsible* for the meaning that my words convey, to what extent are they at all *mine*?

ii) Butler's "Problem"- and Her Solution

Here we come close to a certain ambivalence at the heart of Butler's thinking. For in revealing the essentialist notion of subjectivity to be an illusion, that is, in raising our awareness of the constructed nature of the subject, and in emphasizing the citational character of language, we are left with little on which to anchor any notion of identity, self, intentionality, or responsibility. And yet, it is clearly Butler's very purpose to advocate the possibility of individual difference, indeed if anything, to strengthen the concept of self, rather than destroy the possibility of responsible being, and to extend our understanding of self to include and respect other, different modes of being.

The "solution" to this dichotomy is to be sought in the peculiar *double force* at work in language and all signification processes - what Derrida describes with the notion of *différance*, as the movement that is both repetition *and* difference. Butler sees at the heart of performativity a similar double effect. Applied to the issue of accountability in citation, this double movement explains how in citing an utterance, the speaker is, in a sense, *both* evoking a host of past contexts - traces of which still hang around the words like a kind of echo - whilst *simultaneously* performing him/herself as the original author of the utterance to the extent that meaning, and the performative force of language (its iterability), function essentially by breaking with all contexts past and present (Derrida's notion of *rupture*).[18]

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[17] Butler speaks of the "subject-effect" to underline the view (inspired by Nietzsche and Foucault) that there is *no naturally pre-existent subject* that underlies its autonomous action. Rather, the very notion of subjecthood is something that is thought of and applied to an action as its cause *after* its occurrence (in Nietzsche's words, "hinzugedichtet"). See Butler 1995: 199.

[18] See Butler 1995: 203: "Does the ‘one’ who speaks the term cite the term, thereby establishing his or herself as the author while at the same time establishing the derivative status of that authorship? Is a community and history of such speakers not magically invoked at the moment in which that utterance is spoken? And if that utterance brings injury, is it the utterance or the utterer who is the cause of the injury, or does that utter-

d) The Performativity of Discourse

It is not our purpose here to delve any deeper into the intricate relation between Butler's theory and Derrida's strategy of deconstruction, nor to further describe the enormous impact Butler's work has had in other fields of study as well as in the arts. Furthermore, I am aware of the simplification that such a fleeting overview necessarily entails. However, for our present concern it is sufficient to hold in mind that the notion of performativity for Butler has to do with the complex interconnection between both the coercive processes of society and language and their performative effects on the individual, and the individual's capacity to perform his/her own identity, which whilst constituting that person's identity, can serve as a strategy of resistance to and subversion against the prevalent and oppressive power structures at work within society.

The effect of Butler's theory - its performativity or illocutionary force - is to unsettle our assumptions about subjectivity, sharpen our awareness of the effects of language, and awaken our senses to the coercion at work in society, as well as to help us claim our freedom to transform the world, by daring to think differently.

2. ERVING GOFFMAN

The sociologist Erving Goffman may belong to a very different generation and category of thinkers than Judith Butler - his most influential texts were written in the nineteen fifties - but there is a connection between them insofar as Goffman also sought to present identity as something that is performed and which cannot be considered outside of the context of human interactions.

a) The "Stage" of Social Interaction

Goffman employed a "dramaturgical approach", drawing on theatrical concepts such as the stage, performance, audience, props, scenery etc. to analyse the workings of social interaction and self-presentation in everyday situations. Although Goffman, does not make explicit use of the notion of performativity in his micro-analyses of social interaction,[19] his approach is representative of

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ance perform its injury through a transitivity that cannot be reduced to a causal or intentional process originating in a singular subject? Indeed, is iterability and citationality not precisely this: *the operation of that metalepsis by which the subject who 'cites' the performative is temporarily produced as the belated and fictive origin of the performative itself*?"

[19] Goffman does, however, define performance: first very generally, as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some effect on the observers", (Goffman 1959:

the "performative turn" in sociology and psychology insofar as he relates personal identity and selfhood to the various roles that a person plays on the "stage" of social interaction.

b) Identity as Role-Play and Effect

For Goffman, a person's sense of self is always necessarily embodied in a certain social role. A person may have a variety of different roles, but the *I* is always only constituted within one. Every individual is therefore a network of various *I* roles; a person's identity is shaped by the particular role(s) that he/she regularly plays.[20] However, as with Butler, this does not mean that an individual is completely free to "make up" the role that he/she presents him/herself as; for society and the social context define not only the kind of roles that can be played, but also, to a large extent the codes of behaviour, customs and rules, that determine *how* a certain role is *expected* to be performed. Thus, an individual's staged identity, stands in close connection to an "audience" of observers (themselves performing social roles) that embody certain social "interaction constraints" as well as contribute largely to the setting or context in which a more or less successful dramatic staging of identity is performed. Whether or not a person's staged identity is successful depends therefore on the extent to which the performance is credible, consistent, and appropriate in the eyes of the audience. Indeed, Goffman clearly conceives of performance as performance *for the other*.

Thus, the "performativity" of Goffman's theory is that identity is not seen as something pre-existing its particular dramatic presentation but rather as constituted by and through performance as an *effect* in the eyes of the audience, observers or other participants in the social situation.

> "A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation - this self - is a *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it" (Goffman 1959: 252).

c) Normative Rules and Social Codes: Framing and Keying.

One of Goffman's central concerns is to identify the normative rules or social codes that determine and regulate how a person is expected to perform the various roles she or he is called upon to perform and how one's identity and sense of self is determined by how these roles are received by the "audience" (the team, the gang, the public) for which they are necessarily performed.

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22); and later more specifically, as "the arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer", (Goffman 1974: 124).

[20] See Bausch 2001.

Goffman is particularly interested in certain ritualised forms of interaction, for instance the ritual procedure of apologizing after some kind of crisis has occurred in the flow of social interaction. He defines four phases in the performance of such "interpersonal ritual behaviour": challenge, offering, acceptance, and thanks.[21] Moreover, with the notions of *framing*, and *keying*, Goffman describes the various ways in which the participants in a situation recognize and acknowledge certain social events as *set apart* from normal life and how they identify and play with the codes and rules of behaviour that regulate such situations. These "strips of experience" (Goffman 1974: 10), whilst calling for a certain ritualised code of behaviour to be performed, that is, replicated, also allow for transformation by "recontextualisation into something with a different meaning" (Carlson 1996: 50-51). By and large, however, Goffman seems to emphasize less the individual's power to create difference than the ritual repetition of behaviour which he sees at work in all social performance and which suggests a certain social conditioning as well as implicit skill. Moreover, he seems unconcerned with the issue of self-authenticity and responsibility except in terms of the consistency of a role presentation.[22]

d) Goffman's Non-Performative Streak or the Ambivalence of Performance

To the extent that Goffman's quest is to define the implicit knowledge at stake in everyday social interactions, one could see within his work an echo of the linguistic conception of competence - the necessary knowledge behind any actual performance, that points to a kind of ideal form of language. Indeed, there may well be a sense in which social performances can be seen to follow well-defined structures that hint at a kind of "ideal performance" of which every real performance is but an inspired copy.[23] On this point Goffman's approach is perhaps less typical of the "performative stance" which tends to lay emphasis on the creative, improvisatory nature of social performance than on the controlled, repetition of given models of behaviour.[24] On the other hand, perhaps what we have here is an instance of the ambivalence at the core of what it means to think the performative, that is, to think the nature of human action and identity.

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[21] Note the similarity here with Victor Turner's notion of social drama (see pp. 31-32 below).

[22] See Carlson 1996: 42-46 on the various "positive" (Robert Park, William James, Moreno),"negative" (Plato, Sartre, Wilshire) and "neutral" (Goffman) evaluations of the significance of social role seen as performance.

[23] Here we may be reminded of Plato's classical scepticism of *mimesis* (see pp. 66-67 below).

[24] See Carlson 1996: 50.

III. Culture as Performance

1. THE "PERFORMATIVE TURN" IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

To speak of the "performative turn" in the field of anthropology, ethnography and culture studies is to point to two major interconnected developments within the study of culture. This two-fold shift is clearly connected to and analogous with developments in the linguistic realm of performative thinking. Firstly, to look at culture through the performative lens is to *distance oneself* from the *traditional* anthropological assumption that particular cultural practices represent the expression of an intrinsic essence or nature specific to the respective culture which it is the purpose of anthropology to uncover. In other words, instead of being referential, cultural practices are seen as occasions where social and cultural structures are *created*, *sustained* and *transformed*. Secondly, the performative stance in anthropology concentrates its attention most especially on ritual, theatrical or other "extraordinary" activities within a culture with a view to understanding their generative effects on the society in question. Thus, the "performative turn" in anthropology stands for a new intensity of *awareness of the intricate connection between theatre, ritual practices and the processes that construct and transform human society.*

Victor Turner and Richard Schechner stand out, in this context, as two theorists who have contributed significantly to the discussion of performance and performativity by highlighting, through their approach from different directions, the multifarious connections between theatre, ritual, and other cultural performative practices. My purpose here is to sketch a brief outline of their central concerns and most influential concepts.

2. VICTOR TURNER

a) The Concept of Social Drama

Throughout much of his career the anthropologist Victor Turner focused his interest on the dramatic nature of ritual practices and what he called social drama. In emphasizing the dramatic/theatrical structure of many social and cultural activities, Turner recognized and built upon Erving Goffman's dramaturgic approach to social interaction. However, unlike Goffman, Turner was less interested in analysing all social phenomena within the theatrical paradigm than in particular crisis situations that stand out from the normal flow of everyday life, which he refers to as "social drama". In Turner's own words:

> "For Goffman, 'all the world's a stage', the world of social interaction anyway, and is full of ritual acts. For me the dramaturgical phase begins when crises arise in the daily flow of social interaction" (Turner 1987: 75-6).

A social drama is a "processually structured" break in the regular course of events caused for instance by a conflict between individuals or groups within a community. Turner identifies four phases in the structure of social dramas: (1) a *breach* in the regular norm governed social relations leads to (2) a *crisis* in which people are pressured to take sides. This is followed by (3) a liminal *redressive/remedial procedure* of reflexive analysis and self-scrutiny, in which the community works out (4) an *outcome* to the crisis either in the form of a reintegration of the disturbed individual or group or of a recognition of an irreparable schism between the parties.

Turner's concept of the nature and structure of social dramas bears a striking resemblance to Aristotle's definition of tragedy in the *Poetics*.[25] Indeed, part of the thrust of Turner's approach to culture and social drama is to show that "the roots of theatre are in social drama" (Turner 1982: 11).[26]

Turner's concept of social drama is largely inspired by Arnold van Gennep's earlier work on rites of passage, that is, on situations, often ceremonious ones, in which a community marks the transition from one state of affairs to another (from peace to war, from plague to health, or, in the case of individuals, from childhood to adulthood etc.).[27] Turner was particularly interested in the notion of a *liminal* phase that marks the threshold or transition *between* one state and another.

b) Liminal and Liminoid Activity

The crises that give rise to social drama are liminal insofar as a) they *stand out* from the normal structure of cultural activity in the same way as the more explicitly ritual practices (i.e. religious ceremonies) and cultural performances (i.e. theatre events or carnivals)[28]; and b) they mark an *in between state*, which is of particular interest to Turner as well as subsequent performance theorists and practitioners. Turner distinguishes between liminal and liminoid phenomena. The *liminal* refers to the traditional, often cyclical, community-oriented ritual and theatrical activities predominant in tribal and early agrarian societies; the *liminoid* refers to the more individualistic "out of work" activities such as leisure and sport, as well as to the experimental art performances that flourish in modern industrial societies.[29] Whilst liminal activities are associated with tradition and therefore bound up with a certain notion of work and duty - Turner emphasizes their conservative function within a society - liminoid activities are associated with the notion of *play* and *experiment* and are thus considered by Turner to constitute privileged occasions for resistance to tradition and therefore a potential *source of subversion and change* within society.[30]

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[25] For instance, social drama according to Turner, follows the form of Aristotle's definition of tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude…having a beginning, a middle, and an end." For explicit reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* see Turner 1982: 11, 72.

[26] Consider also: "Life, after all, is as much an imitation of art as the reverse", Turner 1982: 72.

[27] Van Gennep distinguished three phases in a rite of passage: *separation*, *transition*, and *incorporation*. See Turner 1982: 24.

[28] In *The Ritual Process* (1969), Turner talks of liminal activities as "anti-structure".

c) Flow vs. Reflexivity

The main characteristic of liminal and liminoid activity is the state of *flow* that participants are often seen to attain. Victor Turner is indebted to John MacAloon and Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi for the concept of flow which they conceive as:

> "…an interior state which can be described as the *merging of action and awareness*, the holistic sensation present when we *act with total involvement*, a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic, with *no apparent need for conscious intervention* on our part. Flow may be experienced, say these scholars, in play and sport, in artistic performance, and religious ritual…" (Turner 1982: 54, my italics).

The main characteristic of the flow experience is a certain "loss of ego" and a dissolution of one's awareness of past and future: only the *now* matters. Self-consciousness and reflexivity - the ability not only to be aware of what one is doing, but to be aware that one is aware - stand in opposition to the flow experience.[31] Reflexivity is "an arrest of the flow process, a throwing of it back against itself".

The distinctive quality of performance genres (both ritual and theatrical activities), according to Turner, is a dialectic relationship between flow and reflexivity[32], that is:

> "a *peculiar union of primary processes*, (…) where action and awareness are one (…), *and secondary processes*, where cognitive discriminations are made" (Turner 1987: 107).

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[29] On the difference between liminal and liminoid activities see Turner 1982: 53-55.

[30] Within anthropological and performance studies there is contention over the definitions of liminal and liminoid activity as well as over the question as to which harbours the strongest potential for engendering social change. For an overview of different positions and issues at stake, see Carlson 1996: 22-25.

[31] "'Flow' perceived from the outside becomes non-'flow' or anti-'flow'",
Turner 1982: 56.

[32] Turner 1982: 55.

d) Conclusion

In conclusion, what we can retain from Turner is the notion of a structural connection between the "real life" of social dramas and the realm of cultural ritual and theatre. In his own words again:

> "My contention is that social dramas are the ‘raw stuff’ out of which theatre comes to be created as societies develop in scale and complexity and out of which it is continually regenerated. For I would assert that the social drama form is, indeed, universal, though it may be culturally elaborated in different ways in different societies" (Turner 1982: 105).

Furthermore, characteristic of this anthropological/theatrical performative stance is the insistence on the notion of process and the processual qualities of liminal activity. This *focus on process*, which corresponds, in fact, to an emphasis on *movement* (as opposed to stasis), constitutes perhaps one of the most essential elements of the "performative turn", which Victor Turner associates with postmodernism:

> "It is obvious that Goffman, Schechner, and I constantly stress process and processual qualities: performance, move, staging, plot, redressive action, crisis, schism, reintegration and the like. To my mind, this stress is the ‘postmodern turn’ in anthropology" (Turner 1982: 76).

3. RICHARD SCHECHNER

Victor Turner was an anthropologist whose interest in the connection between theatre and ritual led him towards a study of theatre theory and contemporary performance art. In contrast, Richard Schechner is a man of the theatre whose interest in contemporary forms of theatre has led him to the study of ritual and cultural performance activities. The works of Turner and Schechner are therefore complementary. Moreover, both make extensive use of each other's theories and concepts in their attempts to establish the connection between social drama and theatre.

a) Restored Behaviour

Perhaps one of Schechner's most influential concepts is that of "restored behaviour". Marvin Carlson refers to it from the very start of his overview of the various approaches to performance:

> "Pretending to be someone other than oneself is a common example of a particular kind of human behaviour that Richard Schechner labels ‘restored behaviour’, a title under

> which he groups actions consciously separated from the person doing them, - theatre and other role playing, trances, shamanism, rituals. Schechner's useful concept of 'restored behaviour' points to a quality of performance [that involves] a certain distance between self and behaviour analogous to that between an actor and the role the actor plays on stage" (Carlson 1996: 4).

Restored behaviour is "twice-behaved behaviour" (Schechner 1981: 84), pointing to the process of repetition involved in certain kinds of acts - acts that are performed for an audience. In emphasizing the notion of restored behaviour in performance, Schechner underlines a peculiar state of continued awareness, or "double consciousness", on the part of both the actors and the audience. It is a perception of some "original" behaviour (however distant or corrupted by myth or memory), which the performed action relates to, but from which it necessarily differs.[33] To perform restored behaviour (i.e. as an actor in a play, or a priest in a religious ritual) as well as to understand and interpret it, requires a curious form of double existence: to be in two mutually exclusive frames, both here and now, as well as elsewhere. This notion of suspension, or of being *in-between* relates, in performance, to Turner's liminal transitional phenomena. (It also sheds an interesting light on the nature of *entertainment*, which stems from "*entre tenir*": to hold between.[34])

The notion of restored or replicated behaviour is clearly analogous to the concept of citationality, as emphasized by Derrida. There is also a clear link between Schechner's "restored behaviour" and Goffman's notion of framing and keying. Moreover, all these interconnected concepts, whilst relating to notions of repetition, imitation and creation, imply a typically postmodern challenge to the classical concept of *mimesis* and its tradition.

b) The Relation between Social Drama and Aesthetic Drama

The concept of mimesis is most commonly associated with the traditional vision of theatre (and art) as that which *imitates* life. Not only does such a view imply a clear separation between the realms of "art" and "life", it also assumes a clear hierarchy between the two: the "real" world above its mere imitation.[35] Schechner's work on the relation between social drama and aesthetic drama reveals, however, that *the boundaries between life and art are much more fluid* than the traditional stance would allow. He proposes an infinity symbol bisected through both loops to illustrate the relationship between performances "in real life" and performances "on stage":

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[33] See Carlson 1996: 51.

[34] See Turner 1982: 121.

[35] Plato's notion of mimesis, and its implications for the relationship between theatre (art) and philosophy are discussed in Part Two, pp. 66-67 below.

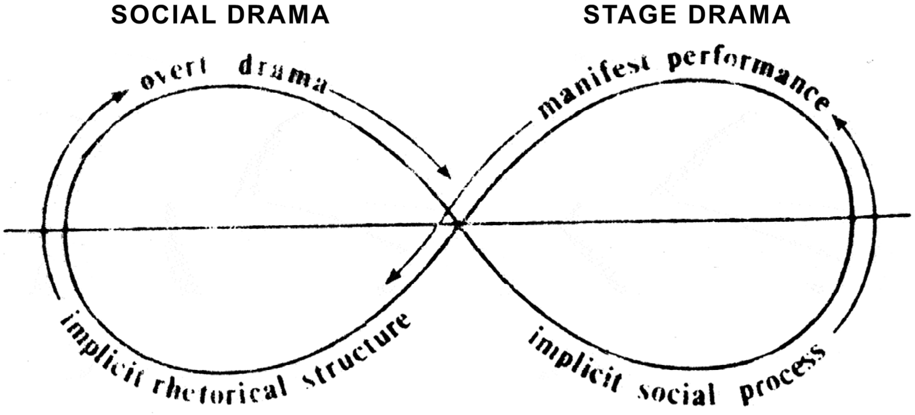

Diagram 1: Schechner's illustration of the relationship between social drama and stage drama [36]

This diagram reveals the two-way interconnection between social and staged drama: the theatre person uses the actions of social life as raw material for the production of aesthetic drama, while the social activist uses techniques derived from the theatre to support the activities of social drama, which in turn refuel the theatre. A consequence of this vision, which can be seen as representative of the "performative turn" in all its dimensions, is that the boundaries between "real life" and "staged drama" are destabilised, thereby allowing room for a host of new theories, questions and performance experiments that have permeated the realm of performance and performativity studies as well as the field of experimental theatre and performance art.

IV. Performance Art

No overview of the general dimensions of performance and performativity theory, however fleeting, would be complete without reference to the vast and complex phenomenon of performance art. The nature, diversity and ubiquity of performance art defies any unifying definition. Furthermore, it is far beyond the scope of this paper to do justice to the complex historical origin and development of performance art, or to the array of interconnections between its theories and practices and the other domains of performance/performativity theory I have mentioned.[37] What follows here should therefore be understood as a preliminary attempt to grapple with the vast field of performance art, and identify certain general characteristics that are relevant to our present purpose.

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[36] Schechner 1977: 144.

[37] Carlson 1996 provides an impressive and comprehensive overview of the development of performance art and its relation to contemporary theory.

1. ORIGINS OF PERFORMANCE ART

Performance art emerged as a form of artistic expression in the 1960s and 1970s. Marvin Carlson traces the roots of performance art on one hand to *modernism* and the avant-garde theatre experiments of the early twentieth century, and on the other hand to *postmodern and post-structuralist theory*, and certain new approaches to the visual arts and dance ("environments", "happenings", live, conceptual art) that developed in the sixties and seventies.[38] This account of the origins and influences of performance art is interesting for it underlines the complex and *ambiguous* character of performance: Whilst the modernist strain[39] would account for the *non-narrative*, *non-discursive*, *non-mimetic* tendency, as well as for the central preoccupation with the concept of *presence* that characterises the work of many performance artists,[40] the post-modern, post-structuralist influence would explain the (anti-modernist) *fusing of boundaries* between painting, sculpture, theatre, music and events, as well as for the tendency in much performance art to *focus upon* "*process - the producedness, or seams-showing quality of a work*"[41] and the *impossibility of presencing*[42]. Indeed, part of the difficulty in defining and analysing performance art is that it fuses both modernist and postmodernist impulses, and thus, in a sense, embodies the hugely complex and problematic relation between these two closely connected movements, the unravelling of which no doubt constitutes one of the "hottest" philosophical challenges of our present time.[43]

Before returning in more detail to certain theoretical aspects however, let us consider a concrete example in order to highlight some of the practical characteristics and tendencies of performance. Rather than face the bewildering task of choosing an appropriate "case-study" amongst the mass of most often cited performances, I would like here to recount an experience I had *by chance* one day coming out of the London Underground at Liverpool Street Station.

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[38] See Carlson 1996: 101, 125-127.

[39] By "modernist" I mean the *anti-theatrical*, *essence-seeking* movement epitomized in the theoretical works of Greenberg 1962 and Fried 1968 as well as in the "metaphysical" theatre concept of Artaud 1958.

[40] Carlson refers in this context to the works of Richard Foreman as well as to examples of Body Art which seek "the ‘essence’ of performance in the operations of the body in space", Carlson 1996: 126-127.

[41] Marranca, *Theatre of Images*: xv, quoted in Carlson 1996: 126-127 (my italics).

[42] The complex tension between the modernist search for presence and the post-structuralist (or deconstructionist) position is well exemplified in Derrida's treatment of Artaud in the essays "Le Théâtre de la Cruauté et la Clôture de la Représentation" and "La Parole Soufflée" in Derrida 1967.

[43] For insight into the differences and tensions between modernism and postmodernism and their relation to performance see Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994).

2. A FIRST-HAND EXAMPLE: THE PERFORMANCE AT LIVERPOOL STREET STATION

I came out on to the large open area in front of the information screens that tell you which platform to go to. Lots of people were standing waiting; others were rushing by. As usual, the station was bustling. As I sauntered through, gathering my bearings (I'm not often in London) and vaguely looking for the exit, my eyes caught sight of an awful scene. Right in the middle of the bustle of people, a young man appeared to be having a violent epileptic fit. It was horrible. His face and body contorted in spasm, physical jerks kept throwing him on the ground. A friend was with him, trying to hold him and calm him, whilst frantically looking around for help. I felt a sense of panic: "Where was a doctor? Was there anything *I* could/should do?" I felt embarrassed for being there, for looking; I wanted to turn my head and go away, yet at the same I was arrested by the spectacle of someone out of control. I felt ashamed for staring at the man's helplessness and I became uncomfortably aware of my own. I began to make my way towards the exit, yet I kept looking back: "Would he be alright? He must surely be injured" (The force that kept slamming him on the ground was terrifying); "Why wasn't anyone doing anything to help; is this what London has come to?"

A good five minutes, perhaps ten or more, went by, and an array of emotions, thoughts, and questions passed through me - as well as all sorts of revelations/reminders about myself and my fears, about the difficulty of *acting* in public - until I realized that there was something strangely beautiful and graceful about this "disabled" man's behaviour. On close scrutiny his "uncontrolled movements" seemed unnaturally repetitive and uncannily controlled… Suddenly, I realized I had been fooled: this was in reality a performance! The "epileptic man" whose life I had feared for yet not been able to help, was in fact a remarkable dancer!

I walked away feeling somewhat relieved, and then differently embarrassed ("How could *I* have been fooled!"), feeling a sense of outrage ("How dare they!"), as well as admiration ("What skill! What courage!"), and a range of thoughts and questions about life and art, about society and people, about illness and self-consciousness, shame and London, accompanied me all the way home.

3. ANALYSIS: PERFORMANCE ART VS. TRADITIONAL THEATRE

a) Characteristics of Traditional Theatre

What stands out in this example, and is perhaps the most universalisable feature of all performance art, is its contrast to - one might say "desacralisation" of - certain traditional characteristics of theatre. Of these, the most salient are the Western tendencies throughout history a) to privilege the "referential function" of theatrical performance - the signifying content of a play - above its "performant function"[44], that is, its artistic form and/or entertainment quality; b) to consider theatre as a primarily literary form that is based on a pre-existent, stable, written text; c) to distinguish clearly between the actor and his/her role; d) to mark a clear boundary between the realm of the stage and that of the audience.[45]

b) Characteristics of Performance Art

My experience at Liverpool Street Station illustrates several typical features of performance art:

a) *Contingency*. I came across the performance by chance. Of course, other performances are more intentional and do not necessarily build upon "fooling the audience" as to their nature.[46] However, it is characteristic of much performance art that it takes place in spaces that are not specifically intended for the purpose of theatre. The notion of contingency also refers to the chance and spontaneous character of the performance. In this particular case, an epileptic fit was "staged"; but the "content" of the performance could have been anything else. In contrast to traditional theatre, there is less a sense of the performance conforming to a pre-planned and rehearsed model: it is unclear throughout the performance, both for the "audience" and the performers, how the "show" will develop or end (someone from the public could intervene…). In performance, there is more scope for spontaneity and improvisation. Moreover, the "audience", particularly in my example, is perfectly contingent: it consisted of random people who just happened to be there. This, again, differs radically from the exclusive character of the ticket-buying audience in more traditional theatre.

b) The "*audience*" is not, like in classical theatre, clearly separated from the activity of the performer and essentially passive. On the contrary, not only is the performance fundamentally open to the public's active intervention[47], but the content of the performance is constituted, to a large extent, by what goes on in the onlooker's mind. How I perceived the performance on Liverpool Street Station had to do with my personal state of mind at the time, my particular capacity to interpret a situation and a horde of personal complexes and fears. Everyone else will have had their own impression of the event. There was nothing in the event itself that "told you what it was referring to" or "what it was supposed to mean." This is the *self-referential* character of performance art: it does not mimetically tell a story, or point to something outside of itself, *it just happens.* Thus, performance art is liberated from the mimetic, narrative strain that traditional theatre is bound to. This also accounts in part for a certain physical "closeupness" that performance events tend to allow scope for. The spectator's mind is not constantly directed towards another level that the performance refers to; what the performance "means" is no more than what it "is": the physical perception of a physical movement in a physical space.

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[44] "Referential function" and "performant function" are terms used by Alter in *A Socio-semiotic Theory of Theatre* (1990) and referred to in Carlson 1996: 80-81.

[45] Other characteristics of theatre will be discussed in Part Two.

[46] In fact, as already mentioned it is often characteristic of performance's anti-mimetic streak to emphasize the constructed nature of performance or at least not to aim at "seeming real".

c) *Direct Physical Experience*.[48] The performance at Liverpool Street Station was integrated into normal life, that is, the setting was not set apart from ordinary life in terms of space and time (in the middle of a weekday afternoon, in a bustling station). This fact certainly contributed to the "direct physical experience" that the event was for me (and no doubt for others who witnessed it). In a traditional theatre experience on the other hand, not only is one prepared and expecting to see something happen, but the stage is clearly distanced from the audience (I don't have to worry about "having to do something") and I know from the beginning that what happens on the stage "is not really real"[49].

d) *Life vs. Art: Actors and roles*. Performance art tends to thematize or indeed break down the traditional distinction between actor and role. Even in my Liverpool Street example, although the actor/dancer was "staging" an epileptic fit, he was not necessarily "pretending to be someone else", he was not acting a role.[50] Indeed, it was, in fact, an essential component of this particular performance that onlookers were not at first sight able to identify the scene as art at all: I "mistook" for life what was in fact art. Thus, in a mood analogous to the sociological approach described with Erving Goffman,[51] where the boundary between life and theatre is disrupted and social behaviour is seen as staged, performance art, in its own way, *shakes and blurs the distinction between life and art*.

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[47] A poignant example of public implication in performance is the famous case of Marina Abramovic's performance in which she invited the audience to manipulate her body with a variety of torture instruments including a loaded gun.

[48] This term is used by Jean Alter in *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (1990): 32, and quoted in Carlson 1996: 82.

[49] In classical theatre, "suspension of disbelief" is a condition for the cathartic effect of tragedy to succeed.

[50] This does *not* mean that the performer was necessarily being, or playing at being, himself. Consider Josette Féral 1982: 174: "When he refuses to be a protagonist, the performer no more plays himself than he represents himself. Instead, he is a source of production and displacement."

e) *The vernacular*. One other connected aspect, symptomatic of the "deconstruction" or "desacralisation" of theatre in performance art is that rather than concern itself with the sophisticated mythological motifs of classical theatre, where actions carry certain consequences and "mean" things, performance art likes to explore the *vernacular*: ordinary, everyday "meaningless" routines, like "brushing your teeth, getting on a bus, washing dinner dishes, squeezing oranges" (Sayre 1989: 188).

There are of course many more characteristics to performance art that a more comprehensive study of the phenomenon would have to take into account. Amongst the most important would be the particular use within performance art of the *body* as well as the notion and utilization of *media*. However, both are beyond the scope of this present work and what we have stated above must suffice as an introduction.

Relevant to our purpose however, and that remains to be underlined is how the relation between performance art and theatre sheds light on and raises questions about the relation between contemporary, deconstructive theory and philosophy on the one hand, and between philosophy and theatre on the other. Josette Féral's essay "Performance and Theatricality. The Subject Demystified", serves to illuminate this connection.

4. PERFORMANCE AND DECONSTRUCTION: JOSETTE FÉRAL

a) The Hidden Face of Theatre

In addition to several of the features of performance art that we have already noted, Josette Féral underlines the way in which performance art attempts to exclude theatricality by rejecting illusion and by calling to attention elements and objects that the theatre would normally ignore or suppress.[52] In performance, marginalised or fragmented elements that are always present in theatre but rarely acknowledged - say, for instance, a part of the body, the fragment of a gesture, or a particular sound - are brought to the foreground, isolated, magnified, and turned into central independent wholes, in a word, *decontextualised*, thus presenting the spectators "with an experience *in vitro* and *in slow motion* of what *usually takes place on stage*" (Féral 1982: 172). Indeed, instead of constituting merely the carrier or the context for an intended signification, the body and space *are themselves* the meaning of the performance:

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[51] In *The Object of Performance* (1989), Sayre refers to the explicit connection between Allan Kaprow's performance Happenings in the sixties and the work of Erving Goffman.

[52] See Féral 1982: 171.

> "… space becomes existential to the point of ceasing to exist as a setting and place. It no longer surrounds and encloses the performance, but like the body, becomes part of the performance to such an extent that it cannot be distinguished from it. It *is* the performance" (Féral 1982: 172).

In avoiding (theatrical) narration, and in turning into the very "subject" of presentation what are otherwise the *mechanisms* or *tools* of theatre - Féral speaks of the *accessories*, or even more significantly, of the *competencies of theatre* -, performance "explores the under-side of that theatre, giving the audience a glimpse of its inside, its reverse side, its hidden face" (Féral 1982: 176).

b) Différance made perceptible

This strategy of "making visible" that which usually remains behind the scenes of traditional theatre, that which enables what takes place on the stage to signify, Féral sees as analogous to the strategy of deconstruction indicated by Derrida's notion of *différance*. Indeed, more than that: Performance is not only analogous to the movement of deconstruction, it is, as Féral contends, *"différance made perceptible*" (Féral 1982: 173 my italics).

This suggests an understanding of the activity of performance as something that *makes visible* that which is by its very nature *invisible*, namely the *movement behind* signification which is the *condition for* signification (*différance*). Seen in this way, it becomes clear that performance (were it to succeed, that is!), in making perceptible the very force that enables signification, does not *re-present*, but *presents*, that is, reveals a process constantly coming into being, in a mode where "there is neither past nor future, but only a continuous present - that of the immediacy of things, of an *action taking place*" (Féral 1982: 173).[53]

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[53] Consider also the following: "Presence is temporality, and essentially what interests us in contemporary art is this criterion of temporality, this coming into being. The characteristic presence of performance could be called presentness - that is to say, performance unfolds essentially in the present time. (…) Performance presents; it does not re-present. This distinction throws some light on the distance which can exist between classical presence, which is dependent on the problem of representation, and this new form of the presence/situation", (Pontbriand 1982: 155). Note also how this notion of past and future dissolving into a constant *now*, presents similarities to Turner's

c) Implications

Féral's vision of performance is, to my mind, immensely interesting, for in establishing a connection between performance and theatre, as well as between performance and deconstruction, she is in fact implying a parallel set of connections both between philosophy and theatre, and between deconstruction and philosophy. This network of interconnections is best illustrated in a circular diagram:

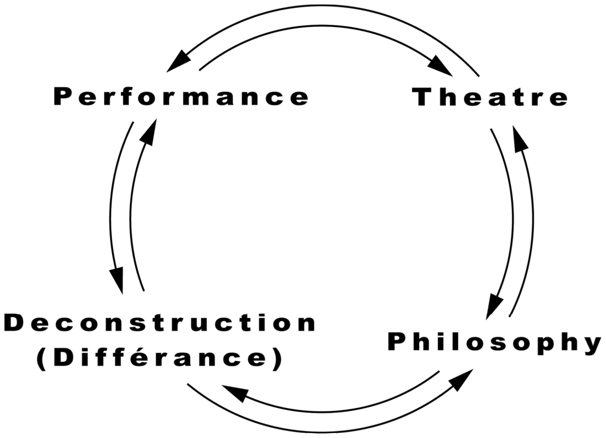

Diagram 2: Interplay between theatre, performance art, deconstruction and philosophy[54]

Following Féral, performance art emerges as an artistic activity that "does something" with the accessories, the competencies of theatre, just as deconstruction "does something" with the tools and premises of traditional philosophy. In the same way as deconstruction (and also, through connection to deconstruction, many aspects of contemporary theory, including performance/performativity theories) destabilises the foundations and assumptions of traditional philosophy, so, performance poses a challenge to theatre "and to any reflection that theatre might make upon itself". It "reorients such reflections by forcing them to open up and by compelling them to explore the margins of theatre" (Féral 1982: 179).

Moreover, performance actually makes visible the instrument and subject of deconstruction: the movement of *différance*. What does this suggest about the relation between philosophy and theatre? and about the relationship between performance theory and philosophy?

These are questions to which we shall return in more detail later. But first, moving away from the special subject of performance art - lest we forget the broader connections that we set out to investigate -, let us recapitulate.

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ture dissolving into a constant *now*, presents similarities to Turner's description of the liminal flow experience (see pp. 32-33 above).

[54] Diagrams 2, 3 and 4 by Max Zeitler (do4D).

V. Performance and Performativity: a Bird's-Eye View

1. SUMMARY AND DIAGRAM

> "Performance is no longer easy to define or locate: the concept and structure has spread all over the place."
> Richard Schechner

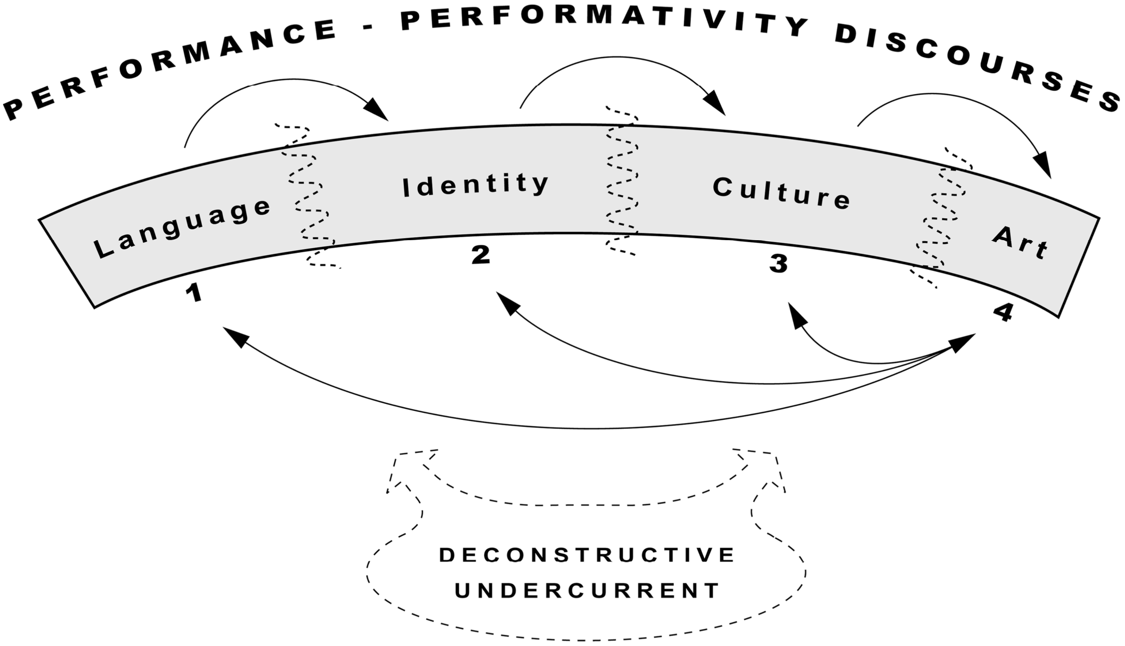

Diagram 3: Performance and Performativity Discourses

The diagram illustrates what we have outlined so far: the four distinct areas of discussion that constitute the performance and performativity current, and what may be considered the general direction of their interconnections. To recapitulate, the four realms of performance discourse are:

1) The issue of the performativity of language, which, at its core, concerns the relation between human language and the world: discourse is seen to create the subject it makes out to describe;
2) The question of social identity in terms of performance, challenging the essentialist notion of the subject whilst pointing to the structures of repetition that define identity, society and social behaviour;
3) The anthropological study of the performative aspects of rituals and cultural performances, drawing attention to the liminal, to notions of process, restored behaviour, in-betweenness and flow;
4) The specific analysis of the contemporary phenomenon of performance art particularly in its relation to traditional theatre.

To study the notions of performance and performativity is to engage simultaneously with all these areas of thinking. For the boundaries between them are porous and they are all interlinked. Whilst, for instance, aspects of Butler's theory of the performativity of society and subjectivity draw on the Austinian notion of performative language, Turner and Schechner rely heavily on Goffman's concept of social behaviour in terms of theatre. Moreover, the theories and practices of performance art thematize the postmodern, deconstructive thrust - calling special attention to structures of repetition and movement that constitute the foundation of all signification - that permeates much performative thinking. Indeed, I suspect that it is precisely this postmodern mood, characteristic of the "performative turn", that accounts for the distinctive ambivalence that can be sensed in all performance/performativity notions: striving, on the one hand, *away* from traditional notions of "essence behind"; drawing attention to the human constructedness of discourse and social/cultural structures, to margins and seams; yet on the other hand, through a fascination with states of transition, with *forces* of transformation and the stretched limits of body, appearing to be searching, perhaps yearning, for a lost sense of origin.

2. OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF THE PERFORMANCE/PERFORMATIVITY CURRENT

We have suggested some of the ways in which particular notions relevant to performance and performativity research overlap or are borrowed from one area of the discussion to another, thus engendering new meanings and adding significance to the interdisciplinary claim of performance studies. But what, from a bird's-eye perspective, would perhaps best characterise the performance/performativity movement as a whole?

Two general tendencies appear to stand out: the use and relevance of the paradigm of theatre, and the position of challenge that the "performative turn" constitutes for philosophy.

a) A Turn *Towards* the Paradigm of Theatre

Common to all the "sets" of performance discourse we have described is a preoccupation, in one way or another, with theatre. The theatrical paradigm is most abstract or only indirectly present (suppressed perhaps?) in the realm of language performativity (Austin); it is used metaphorically in the realm of the social performance of identity (Goffman); and is most explicit and concrete in the anthropological study of ritual and theatre practices (Turner, Schechner), as well as of course in the field of performance art.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that the contemporary interest in notions of performance and performativity is simply characterised by an interest in theatre and an exploitation of theatrical metaphors. For it also embodies a deeply problematic position in relation to the traditional Western concept of theatre as representation. Indeed, if anything, the performative mood marks a clear rejection of the representational characteristic of theatre, and a novel interest in or emphasis on the *other* dimensions of theatre, on the elements that defy, or cannot be accounted to, representation. This is exemplified in the drive to draw theatre away from its structural (and traditional) dependency on a pre-existent text (e.g. the anti-narrative impulse in performance art); in the merging of boundaries between the world of the stage and the world of real life dramas (Turner, Schechner); as well as in the emphasis on the primary sense of the performative, creative effect of theatre and ritual practices, as that which "brings something about".

b) A Turn *Away* from "Philosophy"

i) The Anti-Metaphysical Thrust in Performance

This urge away from the representational notion of theatre runs parallel to the anti-metaphysical impulse within the performance/performativity paradigm. Indeed, the various performative perspectives all seem to mark a certain break away from the traditional metaphysical tendency to prioritise a presence "behind" perceptual phenomena. This anti-metaphysical stance is exemplified, for instance, in the fact that for performative theories there is no pre-existent subjectivity that it is the purpose of each individual to attempt to express. It is also clear in the performative tendency to regard language/discourse as creating the very subject that it traditionally imagines itself to be describing.

In fact, insofar as it has been the traditional truth claim of philosophy to hold privileged access to the reality that lies behind the world of appearances, *nothing could be more fatal for philosophy* than a theory that crumbles the notion of metaphysics and situates the source of creation not behind performance but within it.

ii) The Crisis of Philosophy in the Field of Performance/Performativity Discourse

The emergence of the performative stand-point marks a serious crisis for philosophy that is poignantly illustrated on several levels. It is visible in the anti-metaphysical stance described above. It is also perceptible in the relative *absence of philosophers* within the debate surrounding performance. For indeed, although the "performative turn" raises questions that could hardly be more philosophically relevant (the relation between language and the world, the position of humans in relation to creation, the nature of subjectivity/individuality, the connection between art and life - to name but a few of the most flagrant!), it is, despite this fact, striking that several of the most influential theories of performance and performativity have *not* originated from within departments of philosophy, but from sociology, anthropology, linguistics, or theatre and performance studies. It is, moreover, a telling fact that philosophy, which not only traditionally, but, to a certain extent, by its very nature, claims to stand above other disciplines, finds itself, within the interdisciplinary field of performance/performativity studies, "knocked off its pedestal", merely a discipline amongst others. Furthermore, where philosophers *have* played an important role, they have themselves tended to be idiosyncratically anti-philosophical.[55]

All these anti-philosophical aspects combine perhaps to explain - to a certain extent, at least - the present marginal status of the notions of performance and performativity within departments of philosophy. However, to the extent that there may be truth in the idea of thinking being in terms of performance, - that is, amongst other things, to think in terms of movement, and *being for*[56] - if philosophy is still interested in revealing the nature of being, ought it not to be eagerly interested in the performative paradigm? If, on the other hand, performance has dealt the final blow to a philosophy at odds with being, should we not say good riddance?! Ironically however, perhaps, within the paradigm of performance lies the rebirth of philosophy…

3. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION, QUESTIONS AND OUTLOOK

And so, from a bird's-eye perspective, we see two central forces at work in the performance debate: an interest in theatre, involving a struggle with the traditional conventions thereof; and a turn away from the traditional metaphysical nature of philosophy, as that which stands above all other disciplines whilst looking for a stable, unchanging reality behind the perceptual world.

What are we to make of these two seemingly interconnected developments? Should we welcome them? Or do they present a threat to the nature and purpose of philosophic inquiry such that we ought perhaps to raise an alarm?

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[55] Of the thinkers that have been mentioned this applies in particular to Jacques Derrida, and also, to a certain extent, to Austin. Amongst other philosophers who have contributed explicitly to notions of performance/performativity, but who have not been dealt with here, the same anti-philosophical stance applies, in different ways, to Nietzsche, Foucault, Cavell et al.

[56] Goffman's theory makes this quite clear in relation to social behaviour: being is *being for* an audience.

In order to grasp what exactly is at stake in the performance/performativity stance, and thus begin to position ourselves in relation to it, it seems to me that we ought to consider more closely the nature of the relationship between theatre and philosophy. Not only might this serve to explain the interest in performance as a contemporary phenomenon in the history of ideas, but also to shed light on what is to be gained or lost under this perspective.

PART TWO

The Relation Between Theatre and Philosophy

In order to understand the relation between theatre and philosophy, I propose to consider the issue from two different, though connected perspectives. These can be summed up respectively in two sets of questions:

Firstly, what has been the *historical relationship between theatre and philosophy*? How have both activities evolved in relation to one another, and what does this reveal about the nature of philosophy and theatre? In considering this set of questions I shall rely largely on Nietzsche's portrayal of the breach between tragedy and philosophy in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as well as on the classical reception of the dramatic arts by Plato and Aristotle.

Secondly, what is it about the very nature of theatre that relates to philosophy? In other words, *what do both activities have in common* and what does this commonality reveal? In examining the similarities between theatre and philosophy, I shall be following to a large extent the ideas put forward by Aldo Tassi in two recent essays published in the *International Philosophical Quarterly*: "Philosophy and Theatre: An Essay on Catharsis and Contemplation" (1995), and "Philosophy and Theatre" (1998).

VI. Theatre and Philosophy: The Ancient Quarrel[57]

The relationship between theatre and philosophy is as old as the venerable activities themselves are. Every age has had its own conception of this relation; indeed, all the major philosophers down the ages have had something to say about theatre. However, the relationship between theatre and philosophy has rarely been harmonious. The roots of the struggle between them reach back to the origins of philosophy: to Plato's notorious condemnation of the dramatic arts, as well as to Aristotle. Before considering Plato and Aristotle directly, however, I would like, to outline the main elements of Nietzsche's conception of what went on just before the dawn of our philosophic culture, when tragedy emerged as a form of artistic expression.

1. NIETZSCHE'S ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGINS OF TRAGEDY[58]

Nietzsche's understanding of the emergence and nature of attic tragedy is intrinsically bound up with his metaphysical vision of the aesthetic nature of reality. In order to comprehend what this means and what is at stake in the Nietzschean view of the relation between art and the world, we must consider the conceptual foundation of Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy, that is, the duality of the Apollinian and Dionysian art forces to which all phenomena, in his view, relate.

a) The Apollinian and Dionysian Duality

> "The continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollinian and Dionysian duality" (*BT* 1: 33 [59]).

According to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), two contrary, interdependent artistic forces of nature, the *Apollinian* and the *Dionysian*, have struggled throughout history for power over each other. Moreover, all true art is either Apollinian or Dionysian or a combination of both:

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[57] Plato refers to the "ancient quarrel" between philosophy and poetry/dramatic art in *The Republic*, 607b.

[58] References to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (abbreviated henceforth as *BT)* are from Walter Kaufmann's translation (1967). Quotations from the original German text, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste Der Musik*, (abbreviated henceforth *GT*) will be provided in the footnotes and are taken from the latest Insel Verlag edition, 2000. Before the relevant page numbers from the respective sources, I shall state the number of the section in *GT* from which quotations are taken.

[59] "...die Fortentwickelung der Kunst [ist] an die Duplizität des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen gebunden", *GT* 1: 27.

i) General Characteristics of the Apollinian and the Dionysian

Apollinian energy is characterised by a striving to lay defining boundaries between objects, a tendency Nietzsche refers to, with Schopenhauer, as the *principium individuationis*. Light, order, measure and comforting pictorial illusion are further typical attributes of the Apollinian, which, inspired by Apollo, the shining sun-god of higher civilisation, is manifest, in an unconscious form, in dreams[60], and in a consciously artistic form, in the arts of sculpture and epic poetry.

A further characteristic of the Apollinian art drive is a certain *conscious distance* that is necessarily created and maintained between the artist and the artwork. Indeed, such distance is a prerequisite for the descriptive quality that characterises the Apollinian tendency, whereby the artist attempts to project or give shape (i.e. individuality) to an internal vision in order to contemplate it outside of himself. Thus, the Apollinian artist does not typically identify himself, that is, his personal subjectivity, with the artwork.

The central characteristics of the Dionysian art drive, on the other hand, are the dissolution of subjectivity, the merging of identity, and the absence of measure, restraint and distance. Indeed, in starkest contrast to the Apollinian mood of controlled contemplation, the art inspired by Dionysus, the god of nature and orgiastic uncivilised worship, is art inspired by the *dark force of excess*.[61] The Dionysian breaks through boundaries, dissolves individuation, brings human spirits together in revelry, and is associated with intoxication[62] and the power of music[63].

The Dionysian is referred to as "titanic", "barbaric", "destructive"; yet at the same time, it is the source of the utmost pleasure that results from man's sense of enchantment when "everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness"(*BT* 1: 36 [64]). For indeed:

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[60] Dreaming and dream-interpretation are associated with the Apollinian insofar as they are related to *illusion* and provide the sense of there existing a deeper underlying reality. In this, the dream, according to Nietzsche is analogous to reality itself, that is, "to the ordinary individuated reality in which we, as individuals, live." See Silk/Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, 1981, chapter 4.

[61] See Sallis 1991, chapter 2.

[62] In a state of intoxication, an individual loses himself. This is the basis of the Dionysian experience: the collapse of individuation.

[63] Nietzsche also refers to examples of Apollinian music, which existed in Greece prior to the introduction of Dionysian music. Apollinian music was played on the lyre and characterized by regular rhythm and overall restraint. The highest form of music however is clearly Dionysian. See *GT* sections 2, 17, 19.

> "Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man" (*BT* 1: 37 [65]).

Therefore, whereas the Apollinian stands for the superficial world of comforting appearances and individuality, the Dionysian points to the hidden reality behind those appearances: a reality of untameable energy, chaos and contradiction, but also of primordial oneness, and the unity of all things. This fundamental difference between the Apollinian and the Dionysian not only accounts for the constant struggle between them (Nietzsche interprets the various epochs of early Hellenic history and culture in terms of which force had the upper hand, or how they managed to find compromise with one another[66]); it also suggests a certain metaphysical relationship between them in which, of the two, the Dionysian is the more fundamental.

ii) The Relation between Apollinian and Dionysian Art Impulses

For Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the "true nature of reality", the "ground of being", that which lies behind mere appearance, is Dionysian in the sense that it cannot be made sense of; it is not controlled or controllable; it is not comprehensible or in any way predictable or reliable, but rather, a bottomless pit, a gulf of terrifying nothingness. The Greeks, Nietzsche conjectured, were aware of this terrible reality of existence. They had glimpsed "truly into the essence of things", they had experienced the nauseating knowledge of the "terror and horror of existence".[67] This, Nietzsche claims, is apparent in the dark side of their mythology, in the Titanic wars, in the agonies of Prometheus, Oedipus and Orestes, as well as in the old folk myth of Silenus, in which, when asked by King Midas what would be the best and most desirable of all things for a man, the satyr companion of Dionysus answers:

> "Not to be born, not to *be*, to be nothing. But the second best for you is - to die soon" (*BT* 3: 42[68]).

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[64] "...erwachen jene dionysischen Regungen, in deren Steigerung das Subjektive zu völliger Selbstvergessenheit hinschwindet", *GT* 1: 31.

[65] "Unter dem Zauber des Dionysischen schließt sich nicht nur der Bund zwischen Mensch und Mensch wieder zusammen: auch die entfremdete, feindliche oder unterjochte Natur feiert wieder ihr Versöhnungsfest mit ihrem verlorenen Sohne, dem Menschen", *GT* 1: 32.

[66] See pp. 55-56 below.

[67] See, in particular, *BT* sections 3, 7.

[68] "Das allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu *sein*, *nichts* zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich - bald zu sterben", *GT* 3: 39.

Interestingly, the Dionysian glimpse of the futility of life, as expressed in this folk tale, is, according to Nietzsche, precisely what inspired the Greeks to invent, and interpose between themselves and life, the "Olympian middle world of art". The shining Apollinian images of the Gods were created, Nietzsche conjectures, to protect humans from the horrifying knowledge of reality, in other words to "veil and withdraw"[69] from their sight the terrifying truth behind things. Thus, in Nietzsche's system, the Apollinian stands for the *primordial human desire for mere appearance* (which, according to him, explains why dreaming - the mere appearance of mere appearance - is most pleasurable). The Apollinian artistic energy springs forth, therefore, from the unbearable Dionysian essence of truth, because of man's will to live and to make life possible. In fact, the Apollinian drive to create illusion, that is, to conceal reality - which results in what Nietzsche refers to with Schopenhauer as the veil of Maya - succeeded, he claims, in reversing the Greek wisdom of Silenus, so that henceforth:

> "To die soon is worst of all for them, the next worst - to die at all" (*BT* 3: 43[70]).

However, Nietzsche describes how the artificial safety of the Apollinian world of illusion and moderation, epitomized by the naive world of Homer's Olympians, was progressively challenged by the tones "ever more bewitching and alluring" of the "ecstatic sound of the Dionysian festival" (*BT* 4: 46). On some occasions, when the Apollinian managed to successfully hold sway, this led to the Delphic gods imposing their supremacy more rigidly than ever. This, for instance, is how Nietzsche interprets the period of Doric art which he sees as a reassertion of the Apollinian in sculpture and architecture as a result of the infiltration into Greece of "barbarian" Dionysian practices. But the Dionysian impulse could not be permanently repressed:

> "The muses of the arts of "illusion" [the Apollinian] paled before an art that, in its intoxication, spoke the truth. The wisdom of Silenus cried "Woe! woe!" to the serene Olympians. The individual, with all his restraint and proportion, succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states, forgetting the precepts of Apollo ["know thyself" and "nothing in excess"]. *Excess* revealed itself as truth" (*BT* 4: 46[71]).

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[69] "Der Grieche kannte und empfand die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins: um überhaupt leben zu können, mußte er vor sie hin die glänzende Traumgeburt des Olympischen stellen", *GT* 3: 39; *BT* 3: 42.

[70] "'das Allerschlimmste sei für sie, bald zu sterben, das Zweitschlimmste, überhaupt einmal zu sterben'", *GT* 3: 40.

[71] "Die Musen der Künste des "Scheins" verblaßten vor einer Kunst, die in ihrem Rausche die Wahrheit sprach, die Weisheit des Silen rief Wehe! Wehe! aus gegen die heiteren Olympier. Das Individuum, mit allen seinen Grenzen und Maßen, ging hier in der Selbstvergessenheit der dionysischen Zustände unter und vergaß die apollinischen Satzungen. Das *Übermaß* enthüllte sich als Wahrheit, der Widerspruch, die aus

To sum up, therefore, there is a metaphysical and psychological connection between the Apollinian and the Dionysian artistic impulses: whilst in order to be needed, the Apollinian depends on human perception of the Dionysian ground of existence, the Dionysian, in turn, requires the visionary illusion that the Apollinian creates, in order to find "redemption" through the sublimation of suffering into beauty.

b) A Nietzschean Chronology of Pre-Dramatic History

As already mentioned, Nietzsche interprets history in terms of the balance of power between Apollinian and Dionysian forces. Up until the era that saw the emergence of tragedy and thus the beginnings of dramatic art, Nietzsche seems to distinguish four main epochs. Attempting to write in Dionysian style, that is, in an urge against the Apollinian drive of science, Nietzsche does not provide dates for any of these periods. His lack of scientific rigour in this respect has often been held against him, though such criticism, in my view, is not justified since it is obviously not Nietzsche's primary purpose to provide a detailed historical account, but rather to suggest with the notions of the Apollinian and Dionysian art impulses something like a swing of alternating moods throughout human collective experience. In their interpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy*, M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern (1981) have however attributed approximate dates to the periods Nietzsche refers to, and although I believe one ought not to insist on chronological precision in this context, their account does help us somewhat to understand Nietzsche's conception of the development of history and culture prior to the emergence of attic tragedy with which he is most centrally concerned. The four main periods that constitute this "historical" background may thus be identified and summarized as follows:

1) The pre-Hellenic Dionysian world with its dark mythology and the austere wisdom of Silenus (second millennium B.C.);
2) The Apollinian world of Homeric naïve epic which reverses the pessimistic wisdom of Silenus (X-VIII B.C.);
3) The influx of Dionysian worship into Athens (VII B.C.);
4) The Doric reassertion of the Apollinian in sculpture and architecture (VII-VI B.C.).[72]

Between phases three and four moreover, Nietzsche describes how gradually a certain mode of compromise was found between the struggling forces of

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Schmerzen geborene Wonne sprach von sich aus dem Herzen der Natur heraus", *GT* 4: 45-46.

[72] See Silk/Stern 1981: 66.

Apollo and Dionysus. Thus, whereas, "the Dionysian cult was established throughout Greece and a symbolic reconciliation with Dionysus was effected in Apollo's chief cult at Delphi; at the same time, Dionysus's cult in its Greek shape lost the wildness of its Asiatic equivalents, although its other features - above all its song - were retained" (Silk/Stern 1981: 64). This mood of compromise and mutual accommodation between such contrary impulses lay the ground for what Nietzsche considers to have been the most wondrous miracle of human artistic creation ever: attic tragedy, as the unique combination of Apollinian *and* Dionysian art.

c) The Miracle of Tragedy

Tragedy is the highest art in Nietzsche's view because it combines both the Apollinian and Dionysian perspective within one art form. The mysterious union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian is said to have first appeared in Greek lyric poetry.

i) The Roots in Lyric Poetry

Nietzsche considers Greek lyric poetry to have constituted the "new germ which subsequently developed into tragedy and the dramatic dithyramb." He emphasizes the close connection between ancient lyric poetry and music: the Greeks, he claims, identified the lyrist with the musician. This fact is greatly significant to Nietzsche, for in identifying the lyrist with the musician, he is underlying the essentially Dionysian character of the lyrist. Indeed, as a Dionysian artist, the lyrist has "already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process", he has "identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction" (*BT* 5: 49) and now reflects that true metaphysical reality in music. However, the genius of lyric poetry is not simply the Dionysian quality conveyed through music, but its combination with the "Apollinian dream inspiration", which produces through the words of the poetry, a specific image or story, thus "[embodying] the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere appearance" (*BT* 5: 49[73]).

Nietzsche makes a strong distinction between the lyrist's creation and that of the epic poet. Whereas the epic poet (e.g. Homer) is associated with the Apollinian drive, and thus, by a "mirror of illusion", is "protected against becoming one and fused with his figures", the "I" of the lyrist, on the other hand, "sounds from the depth of his being", in other words: it expresses *not* the poet's personal identity, his subjective will - for this has been dissolved in the Dionysian revelation - but rather, "the only truly existent and eternal self resting at the basis of things, through whose images the lyric genius sees this very basis" (*BT* 5: 50[74]).

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[73] "[Der Lyriker] ist zuerst, als dionysischer Künstler, gänzlich mit dem Ur-Einen, seinem Schmerz und Widerspruch, eins geworden und produziert das Abbild dieses Ur-Einen als Musik...; jetzt aber wird diese Musik ihm wieder, wie in einem gleichnisartigen Traumbilde unter der apollinischen Traumwirkung sichtbar", *GT* 5: 49.

In "tuning in" to the Dionysian chaos of primordial being, in losing his own individual will, and in reflecting that musical mood through Apollinian images (i.e. words and images) that spring forth out of the Dionysian, the lyrist is in fact a "medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance" (*BT* 5: 52). What emerges, therefore, is a curious parallel or analogy between the workings of lyric poetry and the metaphysical structure of reality. Indeed, the synthesis of Apollinian and Dionysian forces in lyric poetry reveals that our individual existence *is itself an aesthetic phenomenon*; something that has sprung forth out of the chaos of primordial being to redeem us from primordial pain through the Apollinian illusion of individuality. The world is thus revealed as an artwork of which we individuals are not the true authors. We and the world, so Nietzsche assumes, are in fact "merely images and artistic projections" which the "sole author and spectator of this comedy of art" creates as a "perpetual entertainment for itself" (*BT* 5: 52).

In simultaneously representing the Apollinian and the Dionysian drives, lyric poetry constitutes in Nietzsche's eyes, therefore, the *first art form to express most completely*, that is, in both its duality and ambiguity, *the aesthetic metaphysics of reality*. For it is not simply a human art form, that is, an example of human artistic creation, but an art form that reveals the nature of being *as itself an art form.* As Nietzsche states:

> "..it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified"* (*BT* 5: 52[75]).

What is true of lyric poetry, in terms of the crossing of Apollinian and Dionysian impulses and the reflection of the metaphysical aestheticism of reality, is, in Nietzsche's eyes, all the more true of the highest art of tragedy which it gave rise to. Here, instead of the lyrist being at the centre of the merging of metaphysical and transfigurational powers, we have the chorus as the Dionysian hub of primal unity from which all else derives.

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[74] "nur ist diese Ichheit [des Lyrikers] nicht dieselbe, wie die des wachen, empirisch-realen Menschen, sondern die einzige überhaupt wahrhaft seiende und ewige, im Grunde der Dinge ruhende Ichheit, durch deren Abbilder der lyrische Genius bis auf jenen Grund der Dinge hindurchsieht", *GT* 5: 50-51.

[75] "denn nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt", *GT* 5: 54.

ii) The Dionysian Satyr Chorus

Nietzsche emphasizes the significance of the satyr chorus as the origin and Dionysian heart of tragedy. Indeed, the chorus can be seen to have possessed - at least in its original form - all the attributes of the Dionysian force described above:

1) It is *original*. Indeed, Nietzsche underlines the fact that to begin with tragedy was made up of "chorus and nothing but chorus"(*BT* 7: 56). Thus, in Nietzsche's view, the chorus is analogous to the metaphysical Dionysian origin and nature of reality (i.e. prior to the Apollinian process of individuation).
2) It is *fundamental*: everything else that occurs on the stage - the characters and actions depicted in the scenes - necessarily *comes out of* the chorus. Thus, the way in which the chorus creates the images that are produced on the skene is analogous to the way in which, for instance, the Apollinian visions of the Olympian gods are born, according to Nietzsche, out of the darkness and suffering of Dionysian reality.
3) It is *eternal*: whatever goes on outside of the chorus, regardless of the twists and turns of the hero's fate:

> "…the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization *remain eternally the same*, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations" (BT 7: 59, my italics[76]).

4) The chorus *breaks the boundaries of individuation*, both within and outside of itself. Indeed, not only is the chorus a hybrid mass within itself: composed of a group of primeval beings half in disguise - the traditional chorus consisted of men "dressed as semi-animal creatures" (May 1990: 13) - who have lost any sense of their own individuality through being in a state of ecstasy induced by music, chanting and dance. But also, one of the central purposes of the chorus, according to Nietzsche, is that it can nullify the sense of individuality of the spectator so that:

> "…state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature" (BT 7: 59[77]).

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[76] "...als Satyrchor, als Chor von Naturwesen, die gleichsam hinter aller Zivilisation unvertilgbar leben und trotz allem Wechsel der Generationen und der Völkergeschichte ewig dieselben bleiben", *GT* 7: 64.

[77] "Der Griechische Kulturmensch [fühlte sich] im Angesicht des Satyrchors aufgehoben: und dies ist die nächste Wirkung der dionysische Tragödie, daß der Staat und die Gesellschaft, überhaupt die Klüfte zwischen Mensch und Mensch einem übermächtigen Einheitsgefühle weichen, welches an das Herz der Natur zurückführt", *GT* 7: 63.

5) The chorus' *mode of vision is Dionysian* in the sense that, instead of being associated with the (Apollinian) distancing (i.e. descriptive) process that goes along with a strengthening of individuation, it involves *active transformation*, or what one might even call *contagious metamorphosis*. Indeed, according to Nietzsche's account, not only did the members of the dithyrambic chorus lose their own personal identities and become one with the primal force, suffering and chaos, in other words, *identify themselves with the god Dionysus himself*; but also, their function was to provoke the same process of identity-dissolution and metamorphosis in the audience: Overlooking the world around them, the listeners/spectators were led to identify themselves with and merge with the satyr chorus[78], and thus, by extension, with the chorus' visions as well.

Nietzsche considers this process of metamorphosis, or "magic transformation", as the "dramatic proto-phenomenon", or "the presupposition of all dramatic art" (*BT* 8: 64). However, tragedy is the merging of Dionysian *and* Apollinian impulses, and therefore not complete without the *exteriorisation in vivid images* of an internal vision that stems from music and oneness.

iii) The Merging of Dionysian and Apollinian Forces

Whereas lyric poetry combines both Dionysian and Apollinian forces by expressing *in words*, that is, evoking *in phantasy*, visions originally conjured up in music, the development of tragedy, in Nietzsche's view, takes this process further, by creating *visible images* presented as the scene produced on the proscenium through the introduction of a masked actor. Originally, the masked figure on stage, whether in the guise of Oedipus, Prometheus or any other tragic hero, represented the god Dionysus himself, conjured up out of the "musical womb" of the chorus to appear like an Apollinian dream image to the spectators/listeners in their ecstatic Dionysian trance. This exteriorised pictorial vision constitutes a comforting Apollinian complement to the Greek's Dionysian knowledge of the horror and absurdity of existence. It reflects the illusion which is necessary to cancel the inaction that arises from such knowledge and affirm the beauty of life through aesthetic sublimation[79]:

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[78] It seems that originally, in the "pre-dramatic" form of tragedy, there was in fact no distinction or separation between the satyr chorus and the "spectators": all were participants in the ritual of worship to the god Dionysus. Part of the evolution of tragic drama involved the eventual separation between chorus, actors, and spectators. However, even then, the particular architectural shape of the Greek theatre encouraged the audience to see itself as one with the chorus performing in the orchestra immediately below them, and ignore the reality of the real world around. ("The Greek theatre appears to have been originally designed for the performance of dithyrambic choruses in honour of Dionysus", *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*: 422f., quoted by Kaufmann in *BT*: 62.)

> "… the bright image projections of the Sophoclean hero - in short, the Apollinian aspect of the mask - are necessary effects of a glance into the inside and terrors of nature; as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night" (*BT* 9: 67 [80]).

In sum therefore, the miracle of tragedy, in Nietzsche's eyes, is that it reflects most completely and accurately his conception of the complex interconnection between the contrary natural art impulses associated with the figures of Apollo and Dionysus. Moreover, since the relation between the Apollinian and the Dionysian clearly constitutes, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, not only the structure of artistic reality but the *metaphysical foundation of all reality*, what we have in tragedy, according to Nietzsche, is nothing less than a visualized projection of the Dionysian essence of existence, in other words, *unconcealed universal reality*.

Now if it is true to say that the practise of philosophy is concerned with the study of universal reality, then what, we may wonder, does Nietzsche's conception of the essence of tragedy suggest about its relation to philosophy?

d) Tragedy and Early Greek Philosophy

Given the metaphysical nature that Nietzsche attributes to art in general, and - as the highest form of art - to tragedy in particular, it makes sense to imagine that for Nietzsche the object of philosophy and the spirit and performance of tragedy are intimately connected. Indeed it would seem plausible to assume that for Nietzsche, insofar as tragedy discloses the metaphysical foundation of reality, what it reveals must in fact constitute precisely the object of philosophy. Conversely then, if philosophy were to come anywhere close to revealing the foundations of reality it would have to express the primal confusion, suffering and nothingness that constitutes the Dionysian essence behind the realm of shiny appearances.

Our "guess" as to the close relation between philosophy and tragedy within Nietzsche's perception is explicitly confirmed in *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche's description of the "tragic spirit" of the original philosophers whose thinking developed at the same time as tragedy around the 6th century B.C..[81] Nietzsche clearly imagines the original philosophers[82] to have been inspired by the same Dionysian spirit that gave rise to tragedy.[83] John Sallis has described this common ground as follows:

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[79] "Die Erkenntnis tötet das Handeln, zum Handeln gehört das Umschleiertsein durch die Illusion", *GT* 7: 65 ("Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion", *BT* 7: 60).

[80] "...umgekehrt sind jene Lichtbilderscheinungen des sophokleischen Helden, kurz das Apollinische der Maske, notwendige Erzeugungen eines Blickes ins Innere und Schreckliche der Natur, gleichsam leuchtende Flecken zur Heilung des von grausiger Nacht versehrten Blickes", *GT* 9: 75.

> "In tragedy and in the thought of the early Greek philosophers the phenomenon is the same: it is that phenomenon that, strictly speaking, is no phenomenon at all but rather the unpresentable abyss that tragedy lets shine in the distance as sublime. (…) Not unlike lyric poetry and tragedy, early Greek thinking is propelled by the power of phantasy: just as the phantasy of the poet or of the chorus sets forth image upon image, so the phantasy of the early philosophers leaps from possibility to possibility, illuminating similarities with lightning speed, drawing on toward that proposition that Nietzsche says is to be found in every philosophy, together with the ever renewed effort to express it more appropriately, the proposition: all is one" (Sallis 1991: 102).

Moreover, since in Nietzsche's understanding, the "unpresentable abyss" is only truly accessible through the spirit of music, what tragedy and philosophy have in common is therefore their attempt to reflect or "translate" (Sallis 1991: 103) in images or concepts what they originally sense in their deepest ground as music. In Nietzsche's own words:

> "The philosopher seeks to let echo within himself the full sound of the world and to set it forth in concepts. (…) What verse is for the poet, dialectical thinking is for the philosopher." [84]

Thus, at the apogee of Hellenic culture according to Nietzsche, when tragedy attained its highest form as the Apollinian projection into images of the Dionysian quality of truth, philosophy and tragedy were closely connected, kindred spirits with a common source and an analogous purpose.

This essential commonality between tragedy and philosophy was not, however, destined to last. A historical event, resulting in the gradual but fatal disconnection of tragedy from its Dionysian source, led to the sharp separation between the activities of theatre and philosophy. This event was the emergence of a new kind of philosophy, disengaged from the spirit of music and manifest most clearly in the at once godly and monstrous figure of Socrates...

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[81] See e.g. *GT* section 11. For more detailed reference to the "tragic" Presocratic philosophers see e.g "Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen", in Nietzsche 1973.

[82] In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche refers in particular to the early Greek philosophers Anaxadoras, Heraclitus and Pythagoras. Elsewhere he includes Anaximander, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Democritus among the "tragic philosophers" who he sees as the "incarnation of philosophy and of its various forms" (Nietzsche 1978: 409, trans. Sallis). See Sallis 1991: 101-104.

[83] See Nietzsche 1973: 302-3.

[84] "Der Philosoph sucht den Gesamtklang der Welt in sich nachtönen zu lassen und ihn aus sich herauszustellen in Begriffen (...) Was hier der Vers für den Dichter ist, ist für den Philosophen das dialektische Denken", Nietzsche 1973: 311 (Eng. trans. from Sallis 1991: 193).

2. DEATH OF TRAGEDY AT THE HAND OF PHILOSOPHY

a) Nietzsche's Interpretation of Socrates

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes how with the advent of Socrates - "the most questionable phenomenon of antiquity" (*BT* 13: 88) - and under his enormous influence, philosophy began to uproot itself from the spirit of Dionysus and turn towards, in Nietzsche's eyes, a fundamentally distorted optimism in the powers of reason. Moreover, the originally close connection between philosophy and tragedy meant that when philosophy turned against and lost touch with the Dionysian essence of reality, the repercussions for tragedy were fatal. But what was it about the philosophy introduced by Socrates that was so different to that which had come before?

i) "Aesthetic Socratism"

According to Nietzsche, Socrates' eye "was denied the pleasure of gazing into the Dionysian abysses" (*BT* 14: 89). He was not able, says Nietzsche, to appreciate tragic art in its Dionysian form because it made no sense to him: he "did not comprehend and therefore did not esteem the Old Tragedy" (*BT* 13: 86). Tragedy seemed "unreasonable" to Socrates, "full of causes apparently without effects, and effects apparently without causes" (*BT* 14: 89); he considered it "repugnant to a sober mind", an art which seemed to "‘address itself to those who are not very bright’" and which certainly did not "‘tell the truth’" (*BT* 14: 90).

The reason for Socrates sceptical view of tragedy has to do with his profound faith in the power of a philosophy governed by reason to reveal the nature of reality and to do so better than any other human activity. At the basis of the Socratic point of view is the assumption that:

> "‘To be beautiful everything must be intelligible’ as the counterpart to the Socratic dictum ‘Knowledge is virtue’" (*BT* 12: 83-84[85]).

These two maxims constitute the foundation of what Nietzsche calls *aesthetic Socratism*. In accordance with them, Socratism announces an "engagement in *unlimited uncovering*" (Sallis 1991: 132). What matters henceforth, that which is most virtuous and beautiful, is to consciously reveal, understand and explain the nature of reality.

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[85] "‘Alles muß verständigt sein, um schön zu sein’, als Parallelsatz zu dem sokratischen ‘nur der Wissende ist tugendhaft’", *GT* 12: 98.

Of course, such an outlook must necessarily be based on a conception of reality as something that "can be stripped down to [its] naked truth" (Sallis 1991: 132) and *explained.* Such is the assumption that gave rise to what Nietzsche interprets as the *fundamental optimism of Socratic dialectics* and the philosophic dialogues of Plato. Nothing, in his view, could be further removed from a Dionysian intuition of reality. Nietzsche refers to the guiding principles of Socratism as a *Wahnvorstellung*, a profound illusion,

> "the unshakeable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it" (*BT* 15: 95[86]).

What the Socratic confidence in knowledge thus heralds is the introduction of *a new kind of metaphysics*. At the basis of this new metaphysics, instead of the pessimistic wisdom of Silenus being overcome through sublimation in art (i.e. tragedy), it is overcome by a fundamentally optimistic belief in the powers of reason; a belief, that Nietzsche considers to be profoundly *at odds with the true Dionysian source of art*. Indeed, on the Socratic scale of human capacities, instinct - which Nietzsche considers to be the source of all true art - is far inferior to reason, for it cannot be trusted or explained.

To Nietzsche, Socratism constitutes the grounding mode of all scientific theory. To the extent that "all science [is] directed towards shining, [is] firmly attached to individuation and never acknowledges the essential unity" (Nietzsche 1978: 166[87]), Socratism is sometimes associated with an excessive Apollinian drive. Thus, Nietzsche refers to Socrates as "the mystagogue of science" (*BT* 15: 96), "the Apollinian individual, who…comes forth against Dionysus" (Nietzsche 1978: 165[88]). However, this connection between Socratism and the Apollinian only goes so far. To the extent that the Apollinian is always implicitly (metaphysically) linked to the Dionysian, indeed, to the extent that it is in essence an *artistic instinct*, both the fundamentally *non-Dionysian*, and *non-artistic* character of Socratism would imply that Socratism is equally *non-Apollinian*. Thus, Nietzsche insists that the "cool rationality" of Socratism is neither Apollinian nor Dionysian "but an altogether newborn demon" (*BT* 12: 82).

Nietzsche considers Socratism to have dominated the history of Western metaphysics henceforth. Moreover, its fatal effects on the character of tragic drama were soon to be noticed[89], and were most notable, in Nietzsche's eyes, in the developments brought to the character of tragedy through the dramatic works of Euripides.

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[86] "jener unerschütterliche Glaube, daß das Denken, an dem Leitfaden der Kausalität, bis in die tiefsten Abgründe des Seins reiche und daß das Denken das Sein nicht nur zu erkennen habe, sondern sogar zu *korrigieren* imstande sei", *GT* 15: 115.

[87] Trans. Sallis 1991: 128 n. 14.

[88] See Sallis 1991: 128 n. 14.

ii) Repercussions in the Art of Tragedy: Euripides

In dramatic tones, Nietzsche describes the death of tragedy as a tragic death by suicide. In other words, something was to occur *within* tragedy, that led to its disintegration and which divorced the performance of tragic drama from its Dionysian essence and origin.

Nietzsche identifies Euripides as the voice through which "aesthetic Socratism" most clearly spoke. Ancient writers are said to have associated Socrates and Euripides: tradition has it that although Socrates disapproved of tragedy, he personally assisted Euripides in writing his plays and would only go to the theatre if it was to see a new play by Euripides.

Nietzsche considers Euripides to have corrected "all the separate elements of the drama: language, characters, dramaturgic structures, and choric music" (*BT* 12: 84) according to the principles of aesthetic Socratism. For instance, in accordance with the new demand for intelligibility, plausibility, and simplicity, Euripides rewrote Aeschylus' classical tragedy, *The Libation Bearers*. Instead of the choral songs at the beginning of *The Libation Bearers* which, in Nietzsche's eyes, reflect an incommensurable, Dionysian depth that defies rational understanding, Euripides had his *Electra* open with a prologue. This was clearly designed to explain to the audience from the outset what the drama was about, what was going to happen and what it meant. By this device, Euripides brought "everyday man" (*BT* 11: 77) onto the stage; thus withdrawing tragedy from the abyss and bringing it back towards the everyday. Images of the mediocrity of ordinary life now came to be shown on stage, "displacing those images capable, in their shining, of making manifest the Dionysian" (Sallis 1991: 116).

In making the scenes more truthful to everyday reality and more plausible, Euripides was responding to an impulse to make tragedy more *reasonable*. Nietzsche attributes this urge to Euripides's thoroughly *inartistic critical spirit* that led to the downfall of sublime tragedy as it had been known at its heights in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Unlike the works of these Dionysian poets, Nietzsche considers Euripides' plays to have been conceived with a certain rational plan in mind[90] such that forbade the Dionysian element to appear:

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[89] In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche identifies manifestations of an anti-dionysian principle in tragedy before the time of Socrates: e.g. in Sophocles' alteration of the position of the chorus. But this tendency is clearly seen to have "received in [Socrates] an unprecedentedly magnificent expression", (*BT* 14: 92).

> "Euripides is the first dramatist who consciously follows an aesthetic. He deliberately seeks what is most intelligible: his heroes really are just as they speak. But they also express themselves completely, while the Aeschylean-Sophoclean characters are much deeper and fuller than their words: they really only stammer about themselves. Euripides creates his figures by dismantling them at the same time: because of his anatomy there remains nothing concealed in them" (Nietzsche 1973a: 31[91]).

With Euripides therefore, a new form of drama began to emerge that was dislocated from the musical origin of tragedy. Instead of the chorus - the musical cause of tragedy - playing the central, generative role that Nietzsche considers to be so important, now the characters, their "sentiments, passions, and experiences" (Nietzsche 1973b: 76) become the focus of attention. By making the events on stage comprehensible to ordinary spectators the new "optimistic dialectic" that Euripidean drama expresses "drives the music out of tragedy with the scourge of its syllogisms" and turns the chorus into "something accidental, a dispensable vestige of the origin of tragedy" (*BT* 14: 92).

Nietzsche considers Euripides to have paved the way for the New Attic Comedy[92] of Meander and Philemon, wherein "the degenerate form of tragedy lived on as a monument of its exceedingly painful and violent death" (*BT* 11: 76).

Whether or not the historical details of Nietzsche's account of the birth and death of tragedy are plausible has been a matter of contention amongst classicist scholars. Walter Kaufmann, for instance, believes that Nietzsche was wrong to single out Euripides as responsible for the decline of tragedy.[93] However, there seems to be general consensus that the influence of Socratic/Platonic philosophy contributed to profoundly changing the nature of drama. The nature of dramatic performance which had been originally festive, religious, and emotional was to become more rational: a consciously constructed event imitating a pre-conceived theatrical model as well as aiming to teach the public or provide spectators with a carefully controlled occasion to release and purge emotions. This development traces the historical connection and parallel evolution of philosophy and theatre and simultaneously points to the substance of their traditional conflict. It is best described in two steps: firstly, Plato's condemnation of the dramatic arts; and secondly, Aristotle's attempt to reconcile philosophy and tragedy.

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[90] "Euripidean tragedy is, just like French tragedy, formed according to an abstract concept", (Nietzsche 1978: 35)

[91] Quoted in Sallis 1991: 115 n. 3.

[92] "The New Comedy began to prevail about 336 BC; its characteristic features are the representation of contemporary life by means of imaginary persona drawn from it, the development of plot and character, the substitution of humour for wit, and the introduction of romantic love as a theme. It resembles the tragedy of Euripides (the 'Ion' for example) more than the comedy of Aristophanes [so called Old Comedy about 448-380 BC]. Of the chorus no more remains than a band of musicians and dancers whose performances punctuate internal in the play. The New Comedy is in fact and obvious progenitor of the modern drama. But the moral standard is surprisingly low…", *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*: 116, cited by Kaufmann in *BT*: 76.

[93] See Kaufmann 1968, chapters VI-VIII.

b) Plato's Condemnation of the Dramatic Arts

In the *Republic*, Plato dismisses the dramatic arts from the ideal state.[94] He provides two kinds of argument for this rejection. The first is *metaphysical* and directly connected to Plato's evaluation of the nature of artistic production. The second is *moral/political* and concerns Plato's perception of the potentially *negative effects* of drama on the spectators. What follows is a brief and therefore much simplified sketch of the two kinds of argument.

i) The Metaphysical Argument

Platonic metaphysics centres on the idea that every set of things called by the same name has a single essential nature or Form.[95] The essential Form or Idea of an object is an abstract, unique, and divine entity, that contains what is common to all the particular examples of that object that exist in the world. Any particular physical object is a representation, an *imperfect copy of an essential Form*. Thus, for instance, a carpenter builds a table from the idea of a table that exists in his mind.

In Plato's understanding, the purest, most true, most essential level of reality is *not* the world that we perceive with our eyes, *not* the world of visible tables and chairs. For not only is our perception unreliable and misleading, but in relation to the realm of eternal forms, concrete phenomena are at best but representations, imitations, mere appearances. True reality is the realm of the Forms; and it can be accessed by humans solely through the training of reason. Indeed, according to Plato, to reach as clear and full an understanding of the Forms/Ideas as possible is the highest object of reason, and the essential purpose of philosophy.

Thus, Platonic metaphysics is based on a clear hierarchy in which reason and the abstract world of eternal ideal forms are at the top, while the perceivable world of crafted things below. Moreover, just as the phenomenal world - the carpenter's table - is removed from the "real" world of Ideas, artistic creation (be it painting, poetry or drama) is similarly removed from the world of phenomena, insofar as it merely represents, that is, copies and creates but semblances of the visible world. Art, poetry and drama are therefore thrice removed from true reality:

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[94] Although references to art and drama are found throughout Plato's works (see Partee 1981, chap. 1), and not all of them are necessarily consistent with the negative evaluation portrayed in the *Republic*, Plato's most extensive, and therefore arguably most reliable discussion of art and drama is to be found in the *Republic*, chapter X, to which I shall be referring exclusively in my discussion.

[95] *Republic* X, 596a.

> "'So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature at third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative art'" (*Republic* X, 597d).

Since the main thrust of Plato's thinking is to identify and work towards improving our capacity to conceive "the throne of truth", the fact that the arts are so far removed from it, is reason enough for the philosopher to be wary of them and treat them with disdain and distrust. However, the metaphysical argument against art and drama does not end here. Whereas the carpenter, in order to build a good table, must have some knowledge of what a good table is - its function and best characteristics - an artist, Plato claims, need know nothing of the practical significance or usefulness, of the best properties of that which he represents; for all he reproduces is the superficial appearance of the object of his art. Plato thus counters or reverses the traditional assumption held in ancient Greece that of all men, the poet (and of all the poets, Homer) was the wisest and most knowledgeable for as the "master of all forms of skill, [the poet must] know all about human excellence and defect and about religion; for - so the argument runs - a good poet must, if he's to write well, know all about his subject, otherwise he can't write about it" (*Republic* X, 598e). On the contrary, Plato shows that:

> "The art of representation is a long way removed from truth, and it is able to reproduce everything because it has little grasp of anything, and that little is of a mere phenomenal appearance" (*Republic* X, 598b).

Finally, whereas in order to gain a "correct belief" about the merits and defects of his creation, a craftsman (e.g. harness maker, smith or flute manufacturer) relies on information from those who, because they use it, *know* about how the particular object should be, the artist, in contrast,

> "has neither knowledge nor correct opinion about the goodness or badness of the things he represents" (*Republic* X, 602a).

Plato concludes therefore that,

> "the artist knows little or nothing about the subjects he represents and that the art of representation is something that has no serious value; and this applies above all to all tragic poetry, epic or dramatic" (*Republic* X, 602b).

All these arguments combine to explain why poetry and the dramatic arts are banished from the ideal state. However, although connected to the arguments portrayed above, the "gravest charge" against poetry and drama still remains to be stated and explained.

ii) The Moral/Political Argument

Plato's central argument against admitting drama and poetry into the Republic is moral/political to the extent that it has to do with what he conceives to be the negative effects of such art on the people. Poetry and drama, Plato contends, are morally, and therefore also pedagogically, condemnable for they have a "terrible power to corrupt even the best characters" (*Republic* X, 605c). Indeed poetry, he claims,

> "wakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason, which is like giving power to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements" (*Republic* X 605b).

For whereas reason, "the best part of us", demands restraint when it comes to expressing personal emotion, the "irrational and lazy" part of us, the "recalcitrant element", is "inclined to cowardice" and "never tired of bemoaning our sufferings" (*Republic* X, 604d). Poetry however, and above all, tragedy, to the extent that its essential purpose is to make a public performance of emotions, necessarily speaks out of as well as addresses precisely this lower, less rational part of our nature.

When the public views a representation of the sufferings of a tragic hero therefore, it is necessarily forced into a potentially dangerous and irreconcilable conflict: tragedy induces the spectator to become "carried away" by emotions that he ought normally to restrain. What's more, if the performance is "successful", the spectator will find himself admiring on the stage "a man [he] should [himself] be ashamed to resemble" (*Republic* X, 605e). And although the spectator may perhaps justify relaxing control over his emotions on the grounds "that it is someone else's sufferings [he] is watching", Plato warns against such an impulse:

> "Very few people are capable of realizing that what we feel for other people must infect what we feel for ourselves, and that if we let our pity for the misfortunes of others grow too strong it will be difficult to restrain our feelings in our own" (*Republic* X, 606b).

Plato is therefore unequivocal: reason demands that poetry and art, and above all tragedy be banished from the ideal state, and allowed in only under the strictest of control, for such practices are far removed from the realm of truth as well as morally questionable and dangerous.

And yet…could it be that on a closer hearing, the voice that appears to so clearly condemn art, and that warns against the deceptive powers of poetry, may in fact be the vehicle for a very different message?

iii) The Irony of Plato's Condemnation

Plato makes no secret of his love for poetry and drama. If art, he says, could only prove its benefit to the state, it would be gladly welcomed[96]. Indeed, it is clearly with some regret that he feels obliged to dismiss the poets in this way, for his love and admiration for Homer run deep. In fact, tradition has it that Plato himself began his career writing tragedies.[97] Only under the influence of Socrates is he said to have abandoned poetry for philosophy. But did he really ever abandon poetry? Is there not a clearly artistic and dramatic strain in the style and beauty of Plato's dialogues that undermines what it describes as philosophy's superior position in relation to art? Whilst in Plato's texts the figure of Socrates is the voice of the philosopher who looks down on art and poetry with disdain, Plato's own hand, in recounting the Socratic argument, in fact modifies its force. Indeed, Plato's dialogues can be seen as a kind of compromise between art and dialectics: an entirely new form of expression[98], which, at least in its undertones, cannot but concede the importance and beauty of art.

Apart from the significant issue of style and undertone in Plato's writing, there is, however, within the dialogues, an even more revealing indication of the close struggle between the powers of art and philosophy. It is the account of how at the end of his life, in prison, Socrates is pursued by a recurrent dream which bids him to "create and practice music", that is, to be an artist.[99] Socrates is baffled by the dream. Having dedicated his whole life to what he considers to be "the noblest and best of music", why, when faced with death, should his dreams suddenly be calling him to practice the other, lower form of music? Nietzsche interprets this scene as a manifestation of a seed of doubt in Socrates' mind as to the real superiority of philosophy over art.[100] The fact that Socrates in fact obeys the dream and begins to compose a hymn and some poetry would suggest that art and Socratic philosophy are perhaps not as incompatible as was assumed, or that, on the other hand, that where science and philosophy reach their limits, a space reopens for that which is more fundamental still: music, art, and the spirit of tragedy.

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[96] *Republic* X, 607c.

[97] See Nussbaum 1986: 122, 453 n. 5.

[98] See Nussbaum 1986: 123, 453 n. 3.

[99] *Phaedo* 60c-61b. For an explanation of the phrase "create and practice music", including comments on the issue of its correct translation, see Silk/Stern 1981: 395 n. 9.

[100] "Jenes Wort der sokratischen Traumerscheinung ist das einzige Zeichen einer Bedenklichkeit über die Grenzen der logischen natur: vielleicht - so mußte er sich fragen - ist das mir Nichtverständliche doch nicht auch sofort das Unverständige? Vielleicht gibt es ein Reich der Weisheit, aus dem der Logiker verbannt ist? Vielleicht ist die Kunst sogar ein notwendiges Korrelativum und Supplement der Wissenschaft?", *GT* 14: 112.

Perhaps there is in fact no real contradiction between the Platonic/Socratic condemnation of theatre, and the text's implicit admittance of the powers of art. For if philosophy had not conceived poetry and art as arch rivals in the quest for truth, surely it would not have been so keen to argue against them. In other words, perhaps Plato's outspoken dismissal of the dramatic arts is already an implied recognition of the proximity between philosophy and theatre. Nevertheless, following Nietzsche, what remains significant to us is the breach between Socratic/Platonic philosophy and the *kind* of philosophy that came before. If we assume that the development of theatre runs parallel to that of philosophy, then theatre too must have separated from its origins. And indeed, this is what appears to have happened. We have described with Nietzsche the first steps of this evolution: the deformation of tragedy under the influence of Socrates. We have, moreover, described the background of this influence: the main thrust of the Socratic/Platonic argument against art and dramatic poetry. The second major development, culminating theatre's dislocation from its origin, was brought about by Aristotle. I am only able to mention very briefly at this point the details most relevant to my subsequent argument. Further explanations and a more detailed analysis will have to be reserved for a later study.

c) Aristotle's Attempt to Reconcile Theatre and Philosophy

Whereas Plato dismisses theatre - but does so with an undertone of acknowledgment and love for the arts -, Aristotle's approach and style are quite different: he appears to want to reconcile theatre and philosophy, to save theatre from Plato's condemnation; but he wants to do so rationally and scientifically. Indeed, if there is anything artistically remarkable about Aristotle's language in the *Poetics* then, in contrast to Plato, it is surely his sober simplicity, his unambiguous, surgical approach; his conscientious, unwavering quest to classify, define, order and evaluate the potential of each form of poetic expression or "mode of mimesis" identified as "epic poetry, and tragedy, as also comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most of flute-playing and lyre-playing" (*Poetics* i, 1447a14).[101]

i) Arguments in Favour of Tragedy

In brief, Aristotle's main arguments in defence of tragedy are: a) that it resembles philosophy more than it does history to the extent that it seeks to *portray*

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[101] On the contrast between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*, see e.g. Gellrich: 102ff; on the *Poetics* as a response to Plato, see e.g. Else 1963: 304-6.

the universal as opposed to the particular[102]; b) that it is grounded in "a good and serious" action: the tragic agent is basically a good and pitiable person foiled by an unwitting error or tragic flaw (*harmatia*)[103]; c) that there is much to be learned by the spectators from the actions depicted in tragedy[104]; d) that the emotional effects of tragedy, culminating in *katharsis*, are beneficial: the spectator goes away feeling purged and clarified.[105]

Even such a fleeting overview of a few of Aristotle's key concepts serves to show the radical difference between his reception of the significance of poetry and theatre and that of Plato. But although, at first sight, it would appear that Aristotle's intention was to reinvest poetry and drama with philosophic significance, there is, I believe a very different way of conceiving his achievement and legacy. For, we must ask ourselves, what kind of philosophy and what kind of theatre/tragedy was Aristotle in effect attempting to conjoin? And in applying the principles of his rational philosophy to drama could he not be seen to have in a certain sense dealt the final blow to a theatre that was in tune with a vision of reality behind that which is accessible to reason?

ii) The "Final Blow" to a Dionysian Vision of Tragedy

Despite Aristotle's obviously high opinion of tragedy, despite his desire to counter Plato's criticism of it, several elements in Aristotle's *Poetics* reveal, to my mind, a profoundly "anti-theatrical" understanding. They can be summed up as two main gestures or thrusts:

1) Aristotle's systematic attempt to ground tragedy in a rational principle, a *logos*. This is most apparent in his persistent endeavour to define and classify the conditions for a most successful tragedy: how its "plot, characters, diction, thought, spectacle and melody" are best to be crafted.[106]
2) The fact that he ultimately reduces tragedy to its written, narrative, i.e. literary form.[107]

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[102] *Poetics* ix, 1451a36ff. See pp. 74-75 below.

[103] *Poetics* xiii, 1453a9-10.

[104] "People enjoy seeing the reproductions: because in their viewing they find they are learning, inferring what class each object belongs to…", *Poetics* iv, 1448b15-17.

[105] *Poetics* vi, 1449b28. See e.g. Martha Nussbaum's discussion of *katharsis* in Nussbaum 1986: 388-90.

[106] *Poetics* vi, 1450a10.

[107] Tassi (1998) considers Aristotle responsible for "obscuring the nature of the distinction between performance and narration" (see VII below). He draws on the following remarks from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "The spectacle, though an attraction, is the least artistic of all the parts, and has least to do with the art of poetry. The tragic effect is *quite possible without a public performance and actors*; and besides, the getting-up of the spectacle is more a matter for the designer than the poet", *Poetics* vi, 1450b16-20; "The plot

With Aristotle the practice of theatre seems to have been finally therefore completely dislocated from its Dionysian, ritual origin. Instead of it being something that develops essentially out of, or *from within* the people (as a manifestation of a metaphysical reality which, according to Nietzsche, can only be borne aesthetically), it becomes a *conscious craft*: to be manufactured *for* the people by qualified professionals according to strict principles. Indeed, from Aristotle onwards, theatre came to be seen not primarily as a performative social/religious event but as a narrative, literary genre at the centre of which lies a text to be analysed and criticised by expert readers, and if performed at all, then according to set rules, essentially as a kind of accessory to its reading.

3. RECAPITULATIVE DIAGRAM AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

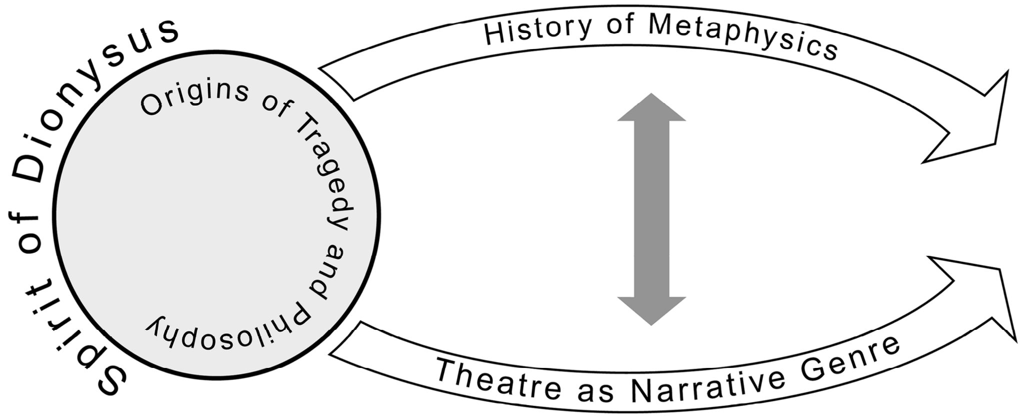

Diagram 4: The Development of Philosophy and Theatre

The diagram illustrates our account of the relationship between theatre and philosophy so far: the historical development of the two activities in relation to each other. Born - as Nietzsche would have it - of the same artistic origin, both philosophy and theatre became disconnected from the spirit of that origin as a consequence of the emergence of Socratic/Platonic metaphysics. At the centre of this approach to philosophy lies the principle of reason and a firm belief that that which is true must necessarily be beautiful and comprehensible. Nietzsche considers this position to have dominated the history of meta-

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should be so framed that, *even without seeing the things take place*, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity", *Poetics* xiv, 1453b3-5; "tragedy may produce its effect even without movement or action in just the same way as epic poetry; for *from the mere reading of a play its quality may be seen*", *Poetics* xxvi, 1462a11-13 (my italics).

physics henceforth which would largely explain why philosophers have traditionally held a sceptical view of theatre and the arts (illustrated in the diagram by the subordinate position of theatre). On the other hand, Socratic/Platonic philosophy had a strong impact on the nature of dramatic artistic expression, which ultimately led to the distortion of theatre from an originally live, communal performance event to something essentially narrative and literary. So whilst the advent of Socrates can be seen to have brought about a clear separation between theatre and philosophy, the two rival activities still appear to have followed a parallel development.

What begins to emerge with this schematic account of the evolution of theatre and philosophy is a sense of there being essentially *two kinds of philosophy* corresponding to *two kinds of theatre*:

1) representational, narrative-based theatre centred around a text (a pre-existent model, an author's intention etc.) is seen as clearly separate from but also as a somewhat mischievous complement to Socratic/Platonic-influenced philosophy oriented towards reason and logos and otherwise referred to as the "metaphysics of presence"[108];
2) an *other* kind of theatre, in which the borderlines between it and an *other* kind of philosophy are blurred.

What exactly is this *other* kind of theatre, what is this *other* kind of philosophy? We have already described the elements of a Nietzschean answer: in clear opposition to the Socratic/Platonic model of thinking and creating are an art/theatre and a philosophy which spring from the spirit of music and are in tune with the natural forces of Dionysus and Apollo. However, Nietzsche's idiosyncratic terminology at this point gets in the way of a more sober understanding of what is at stake in this issue. Therefore, with the purpose of highlighting the nature of and relationship between the *other* kind of theatre and the *other* kind of philosophy we have made space for, I propose a closer look not this time at the historical differences between theatre and philosophy but at their more intimate structural similarity.

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[108] For a discussion of the notion of a metaphysics of presence see e.g. Dillon 1993.

VII. Correspondence Between Theatre and Philosophy

Aldo Tassi's account of the relationship between theatre and philosophy strikes me as particularly interesting because instead of looking at the nature of theatre from the standpoint of philosophy (as most philosophers have done), his purpose is to show what philosophy is revealed to be from the vantage point of theatre. Tassi's strategy is to focus on what constitutes the essential nature of theatre and to show that theatre and philosophy are in some way analogous with each other. This allows us to regard the nature of the philosophic quest in a way that challenges the Socratic/Platonic metaphysical model. But before stating and analysing his conclusions let us recount the main elements of Tassi's argument.

1. THEATRE AND PHILOSOPHY: SEEING AS REVEALING

a) Universal vs. Empirical Reality

In "Philosophy and Theatre: An Essay on Catharsis and Contemplation" (1995), Aldo Tassi draws on Aristotle's remark in the *Poetics* that theatre more closely resembles philosophy than it does history to the extent that it is more interested in universals than in particulars as such. According to Tassi, this is reflected in the fact that a play is usually less concerned with portraying "what has in fact happened" than with "what is likely to happen" (Tassi 1995: 471). The purpose of theatre, like that of philosophy, is not to reproduce or describe what occurs on an empirical level (that is the object of science) but to *reveal the concealed nature* of what occurs, that is, to reveal what "remains obscure or hidden in our perceptual dealings with things" or "to give voice to what has not been said after science and technology have said all they have to say about the world" (Tassi 1995: 472). Indeed, what in fact happens "usually reveals very little" about its nature. If philosophy aims to disclose that nature it cannot therefore be content with reproducing events as they appear in nature:

> "The representation of things which takes place on the stage of the mind is in no sense a replication of what already exists in nature. It is, rather, the latter's unconcealment. (…) Philosophy directs its efforts to bringing before our eyes what remains invisible, so to speak, in the perceptual field of vision" (Tassi 1995: 472-474).

Similarly, we look to the theatre, not in order to see a reproduction of what we can just as well see elsewhere, but to gain a more profound understanding of that reality:

> "The point of the performance is to show or bring to sight what is not visible, so to speak, offstage" (Tassi 1995: 473).

Following Aristotle, Tassi argues that this more profound level of understanding, which is both the object of theatre and of philosophy, comes about as a result of two respective natural human dispositions: the desire to know[109] and the instinct to imitate.[110] Both natural impulses involve a kind of seeing that reaches beyond the superficial level of appearances. Thus, there is a *structural similarity* between theatre and philosophy:

> "Each is an activity whose fulfilment consists in the achievement of a "seeing" state of affairs. In the theatre we call this end state 'catharsis', in traditional philosophy, 'contemplation'" (Tassi 1995: 474).

A close analysis of the notions of catharsis and contemplation sheds further light on the precise nature of the "seeing" that theatre and philosophy aspire to. It also reveals further similarities between the two activities.

b) Catharsis and Contemplation

In Tassi's view there is a clear analogy between the resultant states of consciousness to which theatre and philosophy respectively give rise. Catharsis and contemplation are both experiences or results of a revelatory kind of "seeing": that which occurs in the *theatron*, "the place-for-seeing"; and that which results from the knowledge acquired through theoria.[111] Moreover, both catharsis and contemplation are concepts which Tassi believes to have been traditionally misconstrued:

Catharsis is popularly thought of as an emotional release which results in a certain purification brought about by the audience identifying with the characters and events onstage. The spectators are thought to go out of the theatre having "got something out of their system" (Tassi 1995: 474). But this view, Tassi claims, merely "reinforces Plato's criticism of the theatre as a deficient activity that caters to the emotions and thereby produces a satisfaction that hinders the pursuit of truth" (Tassi 1995: 474).[112] According to Tassi, Aristotle's description of *katharsis* signals more than just an emotional release. Indeed, he suggests that part of the thrust of Aristotle's argument against Plato is to show that the emotional state of pity and fear that the theatre gives rise to is not just any emotional state but in fact a kind of *clarification* or *recognition*. For, according to Aristotle, the most effective means of achieving *katharsis*, is through a reversal of situation (*peripeteia*) which leads to a recognition (*anagnôrisis*), that is, a "change from ignorance to knowledge".[113] Moreover, the "knowledge" that the theatre makes space for corresponds to a recognition not simply of the events that take place on stage, but of something "that comes from the very ground of being itself" (Tassi 1995: 475). What Tassi suggests is that in the theatre, not only does Oedipus, for instance, come to recognize something about himself, and not only do we as spectators perhaps come to recognize something about ourselves, but *being comes to recognize itself*:

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[109] "All men by nature desire to know", Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980a22.

[110] "Imitation is natural to man from childhood...he learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in the works of imitation", Aristotle, *Poetics* iv, 1448b5-6.

[111] "The Latin *contemplatio* […] corresponds to the Greek *theoria*. *Theoria* can also be understood as 'knowledge', which means to understand or to 'see' something in the light of its truth", Tassi 1995: 476.

[112] The notion of catharsis has become highly relevant in the context of the discussion on performance and performativity. See e.g. the essays by Andrew Ford and Elin Diamond in Parker/Sedgwick 1995.

> "In the catharsis experience, then, an unconcealment has taken place. The masks onstage have unmasked us. Better still, they have unmasked that which uses us as its mask, namely being. Being is that which we, along with everything else that exists, partake of. In our case we partake of it consciously, for we are conscious beings. The catharsis experience, the theatre event, puts us back in touch with our status as conscious partakers of being. And it is here at this deepest level of ourselves that we find ourselves undergoing a recognition. We feel ourselves participants in a seeing that has us in its grip (…) Something - I call it 'being' - has come to see itself *through our eyes*" (Tassi 1995: 475).

In the case of philosophic contemplation, the popular misunderstanding is that the knowledge which is the object of theory "establishes a distance between the one who sees and that which is seen, the distance that is needed in order accurately to report what stands in front of us".[114] But, in Tassi's mind, to conceive of philosophical understanding in terms of a distancing process is singularly inappropriate:

> "When the philosopher speaks of the mind seeing something, he finds himself naturally gravitating to expressions like 'grasping the essence of a thing' or 'intuiting (which means 'inscribing oneself into') the nature of an event" (Tassi 1995: 476).

Tassi draws here on a tradition reaching back to St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle according to which at the height of philosophic understanding there occurs a touching or merging between subject and object or between the knower and the known such that:

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[113] Aristotle, *Poetics* xi, 1452a31; Tassi 1995: 474.

[114] We may here be reminded of Nietzsche's differentiation between the Apollinian and Dionysian models of thinking in terms of distancing. See pp. 52-53 above.

> "The kind of seeing involved in the *theoria* that we call contemplation entails an identification of sorts. (…) To know is to 'undergo' that which constitutes a thing's form, or intelligibility, freed from the conditions of matter" (Tassi 1995: 476).[115]

What this suggests is that the kind of recognition that takes place in philosophy is different from that to which science aspires. (The difference is analogous to that between wisdom and knowledge[116]). For, at the climax of the contemplative experience it is not my individual self that has come to recognize the individuality of the object under scrutiny, but rather, insofar as my being merges with the other, what comes to be recognized is being itself, *what comes to recognize itself is being*. Thus, as in the case of the catharsis experience, so too in the contemplation experience "we find ourselves in the grip of something coming to see itself through our eyes" (Tassi 1995: 477).

How does Tassi arrive at this conception which may at first sight seem somewhat obscure, and what does it signify? To understand the thrust of the argument we must follow him and look again at the nature of theatrical expression.

2. WORLD OF THE STAGE AND STAGE OF THE WORLD: THRESHOLDS OF BEING

a) Enactment vs. Narration

In "Philosophy and Theatre" (1998), Tassi draws attention to the fact that theatre is generally considered to have originated in ritual practices, specifically, in Dionysian rites. This fact, he says, is of "paramount importance because of the light it throws on the nature of theatre" (Tassi 1998: 45). Indeed, in contrast to the nature of myth or epic, the central characteristic of ritual activity is that it is *performed not narrated*; in other words, "it is a doing and not a telling" (Tassi 1998: 45). Furthermore, it is important to note that the primary function of words in ritual is not descriptive but performative. Words in ritual do not "tell a story" but rather "assist in the process of making something present" (Tassi 1998: 46):

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[115] Tassi refers to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII 9, 1075a2ff; *Metaphysics* IX 10, 1051b23ff; *De Anima* III 4, 430a2ff.; *De Anima* III 7, 431b16ff. ; *De Anima* III 8, 431b20-21; *De Anima* III 10, 433a26; and to St. Thomas Aquinas' *De Veritate* 1,1; 1,2; 2,2.

[116] Science aspires to knowledge which is driven by *curiosity*, that is, "directed at what stands in front of us, what we are able to see and understand because it remains at a distance", (Tassi 1995: 479). In principle the search for knowledge can be brought to closure. Wisdom, on the other hand, is the object of philosophy which is driven by *wonder*, that is, directed at that which encompasses us, at the performance that is constantly going on: "The questioning that lies at the core of the desire for wisdom can never be silenced", (Tassi 1998: 53).

> "The so-called ‘mumbo jumbo’ that accompanies ritual is in fact just that: it is not a primitive discourse intelligible to those who engage in the ritual. The point of such words is a doing and not a narrating" (Tassi 1998: 46).

This same quality is true of theatre. Whatever a play may want to describe or represent, it must first and foremost perform, that is, *enact*. This is supported by the fact that the word drama stems from the Greek word *dran*, meaning "to do". Unlike a story, which when read or narrated has to be recreated in the mind of the reader or listener, theatre does not primarily refer to something outside of the world that it itself creates. And even though there are words in theatre, and these may well narrate stories, still it is important to underline that:

> "The words in theatre reach us from the ground of what we see. They issue from a presence that has already been constituted as being present to consciousness. We do not, as is the case in the narrative situation, find ourselves required to constitute this presence out of the words" (Tassi 1998: 47).

Theatre therefore engages with presence in a much more direct way than epic or narrative. This is confirmed by the nature of the experience of metamorphosis that any good actor necessarily undergoes on stage.

b) Full-Blooded Presence vs. Imitation: "Being-For-the-First-Time"

Tassi embraces the twentieth century approach to theatre epitomized in the theories of Artaud, Grotowski and the method acting practices of Stanislavski and Barba.[117] Central to their approach and in sharp contrast to the traditional Platonic assumption is the view that *true acting has nothing to do with imitation or pretence*. For whereas imitation or impersonation may only ever succeed in achieving a quasi-presence of the person referred to, the best actors are those who manage to present their characters and the events of the drama "in the mode of *full-blooded presence*" (Tassi 1998: 48 my emphasis). This means that on stage an actor must leave his own individuality behind and literally "become someone else". This transformational character of drama is clearly supported by the traditional function of the actor's mask which while concealing the actor's own individuality serves to "project to the audience the identity of the one who is undergoing the events of the play" (Tassi 1993: 201). But how, especially without a literal mask, is such a metamorphosis possible? Drawing on contemporary acting theories, but also on the 1796 account of the experience of acting by David Garrick ("the greatest actor of the 18th century"[118]), Tassi explains how for a performance to be successful it must go beyond the level of a pretence; it must surpass the quality of a repetition and present the characters and events of the drama in the mode of "being-for-the-first-time" (Tassi 1998: 50). In order to achieve this an actor must "forget" what he has practised in rehearsals: he must create on stage a new and unique basis or "energy" (Tassi also uses the Aristotelian term "actuality") from which the events of the play can emerge as natural possibilities. It is not therefore a question of copying or representing something that already exists in the world but of imitating or rather, of *performing the way in which the things in the world come into existence*. That is to say:

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[117] See e.g. Artaud 1967, Grotowski 1968, Stanislavski 1963, Barba/Savarese 1991.

[118] Tassi 1998: 58.

> "The imitation that makes something present on stage is *an enactment*, *not a replication*" (Tassi 1998: 49).

It follows that what occurs on the stage must achieve a manner of being that far from being subordinate to, is rather, analogous with that which occurs off-stage. Indeed, the revelatory dimension of the practice of theatre suggests even more: drama makes visible the act of presencing that is in constant motion in reality, for:

> "To be, whether onstage or in nature, is to be constituted by a process which is bringing something forth. Onstage the process is called performance; offstage it is called being" (Tassi 1995: 478).

Thus, like Plato, Tassi draws attention to a correspondence between the world of the stage and the stage of the world. Yet his position is crucially different from that of Plato. For what theatre and life have in common is precisely *not* that they are both replications of an ideal form (which is the reason why for Plato theatre is necessarily less true than life). Instead, in Tassi's view, what theatre and life have in common is that they both constitute thresholds through which being comes to take shape, that is, becomes. Moreover, if an actor is good, if he manages to tap into and generate the energy of becoming that brings forth something necessarily constantly new, then what occurs on the stage will be no less authentic, no less true than that which takes place in nature: full-blooded presence.

With this in mind we may now turn to the particular nature of philosophy that the theatrical perspective sheds light on.

3. BEING AS PERFORMANCE

We have already described certain elements of a structural similarity between theatre and philosophy: both activities seek a kind of revelatory seeing that reaches a climactic moment in the analogous experiences of catharsis and contemplation. Aldo Tassi's emphatic distinction between the modality of narration, imitation or replication and that of enactment, full-blooded presence and "being-for-the-first-time" now come to shed significant light on the nature of the philosophic enterprise. For indeed, if theatre does not merely present an imperfect copy of what exists in the world (as the Socratic/Platonic tradition would have it) but rather, is seen to thematize and make visible the energy flow that drives the performance of being, then what the theatre enacts turns out to be precisely the traditional subject of philosophy: being *qua* being.

> "The theatre as such, in retaining its continuity with ritual, is an activity that enacts what turns out to be the subject-matter of philosophy" (Tassi 1998: 52).

The theatre reveals being to be an activity that brings forth that which is present. There is here an important distinction to be made between that which is present and the activity that brings it forth. Whereas the thing that is present is a concrete form that can, as such, be pinpointed, described and reproduced, the activity that makes present that which is present cannot be held still in the present. Indeed, it cannot be made present for it is something that is necessarily in constant movement and hidden behind what is present, behind our descriptions of the world:

> "That which is present in the world, be it an entity or an event, is something that has taken shape and which stands before us. As such, it is open to being replicated. (…) The taking shape, however, the act that presences what has come to be present, cannot be replicated. It is something that has to be done, performed, enacted" (Tassi 1998: 49).

From the vantage point of theatre, in other words, being qua being "turns out to be a performance, the performance which presences what is present and which, as such, cannot itself be brought to presence" (Tassi 1998: 50 my italics). To the extent therefore that philosophy, like theatre, aims to thematize the act of presencing,

> "this similarity between philosophy and theatre reveals that *philosophy is in essence metaphysics*; that is to say, it is an activity which in responding to wonder goes beyond what is present, beyond the entities and entitative stages of affairs that stand before us. The object of its desire is the presencing act by virtue of which these things come to be present. And what is more important for us who find ourselves doing philosophy in the era of postmodernism, the link between theatre and philosophy reveals that *metaphysics,* properly speaking, is not (and on penalty of deformity *cannot be*) *a metaphysics of presence*" (Tassi 1998: 50, my italics).

Tassi's account of the nature of philosophy from the perspective of a certain view of theatre gives rise to an idea of philosophy that is very different from the metaphysics associated with the Socratic/Platonic tradition. Philosophy is still in essence metaphysics, that is, an attempt to get behind the appearance of things that constitutes perceptual reality. But it is not a metaphysics of presence. For it is less interested in observing from a distorting distance the finished-off product of a creative power that has already moved on (were there to be such an impossible thing!), than in *immersing itself into* the continually *live performance of being*, which cannot be brought to presence because it is forever on-going and incessantly new. Where there is presence there is in fact no longer being. Drawing on Tassi we may thus conclude that the philosophic quest to touch (which means also *to be touched by*) the act that presences the world involves a *metaphysics of performance*.

This, it would appear, is the *other* kind of philosophy of which we sensed a notion earlier and for which Nietzsche laid the conceptual ground. Closely associated with this philosophy, and which Tassi has even called "philosophy's other face"[119], is a theatre not primarily concerned with the sterile replication of a pre-defined plan or form, but which, at the height of its power of revelation, enacts the presencing of being.

With these tools at hand for a clearer and more differentiated understanding of the complex relation between theatre and philosophy, it is time now to return to our starting point, the performance/performativity debate, in order to draw out in that context some of the conclusions that the relation between theatre and philosophy has allowed scope for.

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[119] "Philosophy in effect [attempts] to transform the world into a place for seeing, into the theatre of the world. (…) In the theatre what becomes visible is the human condition, the performance that produces human beings who are characters in the world of the play. In the theatre of the world what becomes visible is the condition of being, the performance that produces the things that are in the world of nature. Theatre is, if you will, philosophy's other face", Tassi 1995: 480.

PART THREE

Metaphysics of Performance

To what extent is what we have gathered about the relation between theatre and philosophy relevant to the debate surrounding the notions of performance and performativity? Indeed, how does the relation between theatre and philosophy shed light on the "performative turn" as a whole, as well as on certain issues pertaining to the different branches of performance/performativity discourse?

We shall begin by considering the general characteristics of the performance/performativity debate as defined at the end of Part One in juxtaposition with the relation between theatre and philosophy. In the light of what we have discovered about the similarity between theatre and philosophy a number of critical arguments will emerge that may be seen to challenge certain "performative" assumptions.

VIII. Performance/Performativity, Theatre and Philosophy

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE "PERFORMATIVE TURN"

At the end of Part One we underlined two general characteristics that reflect the "performative turn" in the various disciplinary contexts in which it can be observed. As a reminder, these were:

1) Thinking in terms of performance and performativity presents a serious challenge to philosophy to the extent that it is "anti-metaphysical". (The term "anti-metaphysical" in this context means a scientific approach that does not assume reality - an individual, a culture, a language, a play etc.- to be the expression of a fundamental, naturally underlying essence.)
2) The "performative turn" in all the relevant disciplines marks *a growing interest in ritual and theatrical practices*, as well as *an exploitation of theatrical metaphors* in order to explain the functioning of language and social reality. At the same time however, a clear *distancing from representational, text-based theatre* can be observed.

These two general observations constituted the initial motivation for our inquiry into the relation between theatre and philosophy (Part Two). The question we must now consider is this: in what way do our insights into the study of theatre and philosophy shed light on the performance/performativity stance? Or to put the question differently: what are the results of the juxtaposition of performance/performativity discourses with the relation between theatre and philosophy? The answers are multiple and complex. On the one hand, the relation between theatre and philosophy *confirms* our conclusions about the "performative turn"; on the other hand, it calls for these to be *modified*.

a) Confirmation

Our study of the historical development of theatre and philosophy from the perspective of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (chapter VI, summarized in the diagram on page 72) confirms and adds weight to the conclusions about performance/performativity discourses recalled above. For indeed, Nietzsche clearly believes tragedy (generally considered to have been the original form of theatre in our culture) to have been at odds with the Socratic metaphysics which has defined the history of western philosophy. With this in mind it is therefore utterly plausible that a position that breaks with the classical metaphysical stance can be open for a notion of theatre that is in line with Nietzsche's conception of true theatre. Furthermore, such a theatre is defined in contrast to a representational, narrative, text-based theatre. Thus, from a Nietzschean perspective, the relation between theatre and philosophy, in its historical context, confirms our conclusions about the nature of the contemporary performative stance. Moreover, it sheds light on those conclusions to the extent that it helps explain the connection between them: why an "anti-metaphysical" position may go hand in hand with a heightened interest in the ritual aspects of theatre, whilst distancing itself from a representational, narrative form of theatre.[120]

b) Modification

Our study of the relation between theatre and philosophy must however lead us to modify our conclusions on the performativity stance. For both Nietzsche's conception of tragedy as well as Tassi's emphasis of the similarity between theatre and philosophy point to a notion of metaphysics that *is* compatible with the ritual aspect of theatre. It is in fact only insofar as *theatre is essentially metaphysical* that both Tassi and Nietzsche see any human interest in it. We are therefore dealing with *two different kinds of metaphysics*.[121] As a consequence, it does not suffice to call the performative stance "anti-metaphysical" without further qualification. Even more importantly, we must ask ourselves how this other kind of metaphysics, which I have called *metaphysics of performance*, relates to the performativity discourses. To what extent does such a notion of metaphysics support, elucidate or challenge the premises of performativity? But before we apply it to the issues of performativity, we must make clear what is meant but this notion of the metaphysics of performance.

IX. Metaphysics of Performance

1. DEFINITION

What we call the *Metaphysics of Performance* can be defined in contrast with a metaphysics associated with the Socratic/Platonic tradition, the so-called

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[120] The alignment here between the characteristics of the performance/performativity stance on the one hand, and Nietzsche's conception of tragedy in opposition to science on the other, calls for a *closer analysis of the relationship between Nietzsche and performativity*. Such a study would no doubt provide fruitful material to situate historically performance practices (i.e. performance art) and the performative theoretical stance by embedding them in the evolution of the 20th century.

[121] See pp. 32-33 above.

"metaphysics of presence". We have drawn this notion of an *other kind* of metaphysics from both Nietzsche and Tassi. Although neither of them use the term "metaphysics of performance", they both conceive of *a natural force that gives shape to reality* and is in *constant activity*. Whilst Nietzsche emphasizes the *aesthetic quality* of this force (manifested in the Apollinian and Dionysian drives), Tassi underlines its *on-going performance*, which constantly gives rise to "*being-for-the-first-time*".

To allow for the existence of this natural force, to incorporate it into any scientific approach to reality, and to recognise that the ultimate goal of human experience is to witness this performing force is what we understand as the metaphysics of performance. Drawing on Nietzsche and Tassi, what follows is a brief attempt to summarise some further characteristics of the force that gives rise to a metaphysics of performance.

2. FURTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Human beings are of course subject to this naturally performing energy. Nietzsche calls it the aesthetic ground of existence; Tassi refers to it as the performance of being. In Nietzsche's eyes, *conscious knowledge of this condition is unbearable* because it goes against the Apollinian drive to identify, compartmentalize and control. Tassi, on the other hand, sees *human beings as the world's unique witnesses to the energy that is being*. We are, he says, "by nature 'the eyes' the world uses to see itself" (Tassi 1995: 480); or, stated differently, "'being' comes to see itself through our eyes" (Tassi 1995: 475). Tassi and Nietzsche would no doubt agree that the force in question defies presencing because it is *in constant motion*. It can only be approached through sublimation in art (Nietzsche) or by being witnessed live e.g. in a theatrical performance (Tassi).

Both Nietzsche and Tassi can be seen to describe the force as a guarantor of *authenticity*. That is to say that where a conscious human effort has been made to represent, i.e. reproduce this energy of being, the performance (whether on stage or in "real life") tends to fail. For "the presencing act is something that either is or is not taking place" (Tassi 1998: 51). The energy that successful art or drama evokes is therefore no more or less authentic than the energy that "makes the world go around": it is the same force. There is no mid-way between an authentic performance and a mere copy; there are not two ontologically different worlds of existence. In fact, here we are furthest removed from the Platonic vision of art as thrice-removed from truth.

To speak of a metaphysics of performance, therefore, is to refer to a dimension of existence that it is *not within the power of humans to create*. We can witness the energy of being, we can fine-tune our awareness to sense its activity; but we ourselves are not its source. However, through our artistic capacity, which is perhaps epitomized in the ritual aspects of theatre and language, *we are capable of enacting the performance of being*, that is, of revealing it, making it visible, bringing ourselves to witness it. In this sense the artist or actor, as well as perhaps the participants in a religious ceremony, or indeed, any form of concentrated activity[122] become the vessels through which being is made "almost-tangible". On such occasions the performance of being seems to *coincide* with the language or ritual form or activity in which it is expressed. But in such "performative" cases in which the energy of being seems to be evoked, it would not be accurate to say that the activity either *describes* the force, *or* that it *creates* it. The ritual aspect of drama, involving a skilled and emphatic play between repetition and difference, in which the actions performed must be repeated (in order for their signification to be recognized) yet must appear *as if* performed for the first time (in order to be powerful and authentic), draws our attention to the activity of being that is everywhere and constant but most often invisible, taken for granted or ignored. To speak of performativity in this context is therefore indeed to speak of a curious phenomenon in which for instance world and medium, essence and appearance, spirit and body merge. But it is *not*, (and on penalty of deformity cannot be!) *to deny a reality that pre-exists* any human formulation or construction, for we are ourselves but the "masks of being".[123]

Finally, if the "metaphysics of presence" or the Socratic/Platonic tradition is characterised by a clear hierarchy in which reality, or the realm of truth or forms, hangs above language or any human attempt to describe that truth, then a metaphysics of performance *does not constitute a reversal of the metaphysics of presence*. Language and art are not considered "superior" to reality, in the sense that reality would be seen to originate in them (this would correspond to the basic performative tendency). Such a position would surely constitute the end of metaphysics altogether. Rather, the metaphysics of performance is situated *in between* a metaphysics of presence and its reversal. It is an approach to explaining the world that privileges neither truth to the detriment of language, nor language to the detriment of truth. In focusing on occasions in which the very distinction between word and world seems effectively to collapse, we are seeking to draw out the characteristics that essentially define both: the nature of drama - or the mystery of *being as doing*.

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[122] I have in mind sporting as well as meditation activities, in fact any activity which can lead to a loss of the ego in the sense encompassed by Turner's notion of flow or liminality (see pp. 32-33 above).

[123] See Tassi 1993; 1995: 475 and pp. 95-97 below.

X. Performance/Performativity Reconsidered

Of the four branches of the performativity debate described in Part One, I would like here to focus my application of the metaphysics of performance to the first two:

a) the issue of performative language; and b) the question of the performance/performativity of identity.

1. PERFORMATIVE LANGUAGE

a) Language and Drama: The Difference Between a Wedding and a *Wedding*

i) Austin re-imagined

J. L. Austin originally defined performative language as a particular kind of language that brings into existence what it pronounces. He considered ritual, ceremonious situations, like a wedding or a baptism, to be typical contexts in which performative language occurs. Austin attempted to define the linguistic rules that govern the use of performative language. The fact that Austin eventually abandoned this endeavour is of course significant, but I propose to consciously disregard this fact for the time being and *imagine* that Austin had been successful in laying out the rules that define performative language. Let us focus on the concrete example of a wedding. The archetypal performative utterance in this context is the priest's or registry officer's final declaration: "I hereby pronounce you man and wife". As a performative utterance it is this sentence alone that has the curious, quasi-magical power to literally transform if not the physical appearance then at least the social status of the couple to be married and indeed perhaps even the nature of their relationship to each other. When the couple walk out of the church or registry office after these words have been pronounced, their position in the world is different to what it was when they walked in. Now imagine that there were indeed a sufficient linguistic rule to define the conditions of success for the marriage pronouncement. Let us, for instance, imagine that such a rule defined a) the grammatical structure/precise formulation of the priest's or registry officer's statement, and b) the context in which the performative language was to be stated. Although such a rule would suffice for the wedding to succeed on a *purely formal or legal level*, it would not guarantee the success of the ritual on a more *fundamental level*, on the level of a successful theatrical performance, on the level, that is, that *requires the conjuring up of something otherwise not visibly present*.

ii) On Law and Ceremony

What I am drawing attention to here is the significant difference between what counts as a successful marriage in the eyes of the law, and what counts as a successful marriage in the eyes of the audience. Most of us have surely experienced this. In cases in which the registry officer or priest merely blindly follows the instructed wedding procedure, parroting the words in his/her everyday voice, although the marriage "succeeds" and the couple are officially wed, *nothing else happens*. When, on the other hand, a certain concentrated mood is evoked, and this is usually achieved a) by a careful combination of stillness and language spoken with a particular emphasis (i.e. an acting skill), and b) by a certain level of involvement on the part of both the master of the ceremony and the audience, then, even if but for a moment, something like a spirit of togetherness descends upon the gathered community and the whole congregation seems moved.

I suggest that this difference is analogous to the gap between a theatre play that never "lifts off the ground", in which the actors are merely automatically regurgitating for the umpteenth time a script that means nothing to them, in which their movements seem perhaps too rehearsed to be properly credible, and a successful piece of acting which, at its climax, mesmerizes the audience by a degree of intensity that can only be the effect of something entirely, convincingly new.

If I insist on underlining the difference between a merely successful marriage and a really successful ceremony it is not to pass judgement on the various ways in which people go about getting married. My point is not to lament a supposed lack of ceremoniousness in certain wedding practices. Far from it! My purpose, rather, is to raise *a fundamental question about the nature and origin of language*. A starting point is this: which is the more fundamental, the success of a marriage on paper, i.e. in the eyes of the law, or the success of the ceremony in terms of a successful theatrical performance? At first sight it would appear that the former is the more fundamental. Compared with the force of the written word of law, the dramatic/metaphysical success of the ceremony is surely at best but an accessory, no doubt an important one (considering the effort people tend to put into organising and rehearsing their special day!), but still merely a bonus, a much hoped for *supplement* to the most important fact that the happy couple are wedded in law. But on closer analysis is this really true?

iii) Dramatic Conditions

We have underlined the proximity between ritual and theatre practices. It is therefore justifiable that in order to elucidate the functioning of the wedding ceremony, we should turn again to the theatre. Why do people go to the theatre? Following (in different ways) Aristotle, Nietzsche and Tassi, my answer throughout this paper has been that people go to the theatre in order to see revealed on stage that which is usually concealed or hard to see in everyday life (in a complex and ironic way this is, I believe, confirmed by the popularity of television[124]). Successful disclosure of this kind on the stage is of course painfully hard to achieve. But if it were absolutely impossible, would we still go to the theatre? I think not. If you were sure to always be absolutely bored at the theatre then there would be no reason to go! All the other reasons why people go to the theatre - to pass the time, to get out of the house, to socialize, to be seen in public etc. - are unlikely to be fundamental. Instead they are surely derived from a more essential, original interest or natural need which, although not always satisfied, must *in principle be satisfiable*. I suggest that the same is applicable to ritual, and indeed, by extension, to the nature of language in general.

What this means is that in the case of rituals like the wedding ceremony the intensity of dramatic performance that sometimes accompanies the act of marriage *is not a derived supplement* that is essentially superfluous in comparison to the formal requirements defined by law. On the contrary: tentatively, in the light of our discussion of theatre and the metaphysics of performance, I suggest that the minimum requirements that the law defines for a successful marriage must in fact themselves have been derived from an originally perfectly *dramatic* ritual performance which in concentrated ceremoniousness drew upon every human artistic and spiritual, physical and imaginative resource in order to evoke and make tangible a primal force fundamental to being. In this original ritual process, the participants were/are brought to witness the awesome solemnity of this manifestation. This is what confers reality and meaning to the transformation that marriage stands for. Every subsequent performance of the wedding ceremony whatever its style - whether it re-enacts the highly dramatic dimension of the ritual or keeps this to a bare minimum (so as to suffice in the eyes of the law) -, functions only to the extent that there is something like a *common memory* of the originally dramatic/magical, indeed, *metaphysical* dimension of the event.

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[124] The major difference between theatre and television is of course that theatre takes place live, here and now and requires the simultaneous physical presence of actors and audience, whereas the images on television are rarely live and always filtered and manipulated through being cut and edited. Television can not therefore achieve the same degree of intensity of being as theatre occasionally can. Whereas theatre hopes to reveal concealed truths about life that are otherwise by nature invisible, television draws in the masses by showing images that are otherwise merely inaccessible. On the problem of the nature of theatre in the age of media, see e.g. Samuel Weber's "Vor Ort" available on-line under: http://www. hydra.umn.edu/weber/art1.html

b) On the Functioning of Language

i) *Repetition and Difference*

Applied to language in general, the significant notion of memory that has crept into our analysis of ritual clearly echoes and relates to the issue of *repetition* as a fundamental factor in the communication of meaning.[125] My point however, is that a study of the experience of successful drama, as that which necessarily transcends mere repetition by bringing about what occurs on stage in the mode of being-for-the-first-time, suggests that a concept that often accompanies and complements repetition, namely *difference*, turns out to be the more fundamental.[126]

I grant that we tend to make generous allowances for language that fails to transcend the level of repetition. We do not insist that every ritual necessarily achieve a metaphysical level of intensity, or that every spoken word shake the universe with the power of its god-like performativity. It would of course be absurd! But it seems to me to be plausible, and implied by what we have said about theatre, that the very possibility of *language spoken with difference*,[127] in other words, the force of performance, *is inherent to language*, and without it even the most trivial of communication would be bereft of meaning. This, I believe, is even confirmed by the way we use language in everyday life. We go about using language to state facts, make promises, and announce plans most often without much dramatic emphasis. We tend to express ourselves approximately, usually without much worry about accuracy, indeed most often without too much care about how precisely we are understood. And we receive and understand the words of others in much the same way: without much effort, approximately, for most often we recognize what we hear before we've really heard it, that is, we constitute meaning through a kind of remembering; we draw short cuts between what we hear and what experience tells us to expect to hear. But when a misunderstanding or indeed a difference of opinion occurs, particularly if it is a matter of some importance, we immediately resort to dramatic skills in order to clarify our intentions or strengthen our positions. We use gestures, grimaces, tone and intonation of voice, and all the devices of drama and rhetoric to mark and clarify the moment.

Short cuts and codified forms of communication are only possible *because* and *so long as* there is a *common ground of experience* that extends far beyond purely linguistic structure. There is nothing symbolic or abstract or conventional about this experience. It is not something that can be simulated or replicated: it involves the live, personal, *physical witnessing* of an event that is communally conceived to have "changed the world".[128] The notion of witness here is intriguingly complex. In order to begin to elucidate it, I shall focus briefly on a different example of performative language: promising.

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[125] See Part One, pp. 23-25; 26 above.

[126] To what extent, we may ask, is the relationship between repetition and difference analogous to that between Nietzsche's apollinian and dionysian impulses? This is a question for further research that would complement the one described under footnote 117.

[127] When I speak of difference here I do not only mean the slight shift in context that necessarily occurs whenever the same word or expression is used again. By difference, I mean a kind of dramatic uniqueness, or *resonance*, that calls everyone present to bear witness to the passing moment.

ii) Language and Witness: The Example of Promising

Promising is often cited as an example of performative language because one can generally say that for a promise to "succeed" in the Austinian sense (irrespectively of whether the promise is subsequently held, that is) the words "I promise" must be spoken. But when someone makes a promise - let's say a friend promises to keep your secret -, when he/she utters the words "I promise", how do you know that it really is a promise, how do you know whether or not to believe him/her? How you interpret your friend's promise will of course have to do with your experience with that friend, i.e. how trustworthy she/he has been in the past. What the words "I promise" constitute will thus depend a) on what the words mean to you and b) on your knowledge or intuition of what they mean to your friend. If, for instance, I know of my friend that she only believes in "living for the day" and that she doesn't believe in binding herself beyond the moment, then although her words might technically amount to a "promise" I'd be a fool to take them too seriously. But what if I have no personal experience to rely on when evaluating someone's "promise"? Would it be true to say that when there is nothing else to go on only the words uttered count? Surely not. For there is more than one way of uttering the words "I promise" and it would be ridiculous to presume that they all spelt authenticity! I can, for instance, say the words whilst grimacing, I can say them tongue-in-cheek or with my fingers crossed…

How does one have to say "I promise" for it to ring and be true? Firstly, it would seem plausible to assume that the words "I promise" only make sense or are valid when directed towards a particular person or people: there must be an *audience* (the audience may be the same as the speaker if, say, I promise myself something). Secondly, the speaker of the words must at least *appear to be in good faith*: he/she must look sincere, and show *through body language and tone of voice* that he/she takes his/her words seriously and is in earnest. If the performance turns out to be a sham, if he/she turns out to have been in bad faith, this will not affect the validity of that promise (though it might affect one's faith in that person's words in future); and if, moreover, he/she does not hold the promise, the dupe may be challenged in consequence. Thus, there is more involved in successful promise-making than just words. What is needed is an all round *successful dramatic performance*. (Perhaps this explains why it is practically impossible to make a sincere promise in any other tone of voice than a rather emphatic, dramatic one.) When a person - friend or stranger - looks me in the eye and convinces me of his word (irrespectively of whether he is in good or bad faith, or of whether he turns out to hold his promise or not), what has happened is more than that I have simply heard and registered his utterance. His voice, and whole body language must have engaged my attention and drawn me to witness, and moreover, *to be seen in the other's eyes to have witnessed*, both my and his consciousness of the significance of his word. For a promise is only a promise insofar as I can reasonably call the speaker's conscience back to his promise, that is, insofar as there is a sense of our having *commonly witnessed* the statement of commitment.

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[128] This explains why codified language is most common amongst close net groups of friends, families or sub-cultures which are often referred to as "having a language of their own".

c) Conclusion

What is it that actually creates the reality of a promise? What constitutes the success of a wedding ceremony? Is it really the words themselves - mere sounds uttered in a context? Is it not rather the very fact and recognition of a moment having been somehow - through a combination of language *and other means* - dramatically suspended in order to be personally witnessed? From the perspective of drama and a metaphysics of performance, it is not sufficient for language to merely be the uttering of structured sounds in conventional contexts. Authentic communication depends on consciences being moved in the mode of being-for-the-first-time, that is to say, *on risks being taken*. Once this common ground of witnessed experience has been acknowledged, perhaps then certain conventions - short cuts - can be established that define the minimum requirements for a performative utterance to succeed in the eyes of society. But to conceive of conventions as the fundament of language is surely analogous to considering grammatical rules as its source. To base communication in convention, or language in grammar, is to conceive of a dead language, a computer language, a technical jargon which, although it may programmatically fulfil certain functions, is so far abstracted from people's personal witness and physical experience that it may *do things*, but can *say nothing*.

Gradually, we are approaching an understanding of performativity as a characteristic of language that *does something conventional* (makes a promise, declares a marriage) whilst at the same time *says something* deeply, emphatically, uniquely *personal* ("*I* hereby pronounce *you*…"; "*I promise you*..."). Language, according to Austin, has traditionally been wrongly conceived as purely descriptive/expressive. In speaking of language from a performative perspective however, it seems we ought to be wary of over-rectifying this mistake, that is, of conceiving language as purely functional. A study of language from the point of view of drama reminds us that the mystery of the performative is in fact that language is or can be precisely, paradoxically, *both functional and expressive*, indeed, that in order for it to really succeed, it must, at least as far as possible, be simultaneously both.[129] But for something to be "expressive" must there not first and foremost be something to express?

2. PERFORMANCE/PERFORMATIVITY AND IDENTITY

In Part One, drawing on the theories of Erving Goffman and Judith Butler, we referred to the "performative turn" in relation to conceptions of identity construction. From a performative viewpoint identity is regarded not as a natural given, but as the product of social role-playing (Goffman) or the result of behaviour patterns, naming and interpellation processes drawn from and repeated in society (Butler). In the light of our discussion of theatre and philosophy, in the light, that is, of a metaphysics of performance, I would like to draw attention briefly to two closely related aspects that I believe a performative approach to identity should not fail to consider. The first regards the relation between being and acting. Drawing on a further essay by Aldo Tassi entitled "Person as the Mask of Being" (1993), my thesis here is that although it is certainly fruitful to regard being in terms of acting, there is an important difference between the two which must not be obscured. The second point raises the question of true vs. inauthentic identity and is related through Anne Fleche's commentary (1997) on Donna William's books, *Nobody Nowhere: The Extraordinary Autobiography of an Autistic* (1992) and *Somebody Somewhere: Breaking Free from the World of Autism* (1994).

a) Being and Acting

In "Person as the Mask of Being" (1993), Aldo Tassi explicitly draws attention to the contemporary tendency to regard identity and personhood in terms of role-playing. The analogy between being and acting is of course nothing new. In fact, the very word "person" stems from the ancient Latin word "persona" meaning *mask*, thus referring directly to the proximity and structural similarity between being and acting. There is, however, according to Tassi, an important distinction between being and acting that must not be disregarded. Referring explicitly to Goffman's study of "the dramaturgy of everyday life", Tassi points out that paradoxically,

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[129] This somewhat ambiguous quality of language, simultaneously "passively" expressing whilst "actively" doing is curiously analogous to the ambiguity at work in the concept of witnessing. To witness is "be present at some event", perhaps by chance, as an arbitrary onlooker, spectator, observer. On this level a witness is passive. But to witness is also to partake, that is, play an active role in what occurs: to attest the "authenticity" or "truth" of something, to "serve as evidence", to "state one's belief in". See: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, first edited by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, eighth edition by R. E. Allen, London: BCA, 1991.

> "it is by suppressing the difference between acting and living that these analyses drive into the shadows the deeper similarity that exists between the two, thereby depriving us of metaphysical insight into the nature of personhood" (Tassi 1993: 203).

The distinction between being and acting has to do with the nature of mask[130]. On stage the actor uses a mask in order to *conceal his or her personal identity* and thereby *reveal the character* in the play. For the character in the play to "come alive" the actor's personal identity must really be effaced, that is to say, a metamorphosis must occur: on stage the actor must literally *become* someone else. Thus, in the life of an actor, there is a clear distinction between "onstage" and "offstage":

> "Onstage is where he is someone else, the character in the play; offstage is where he is himself, in the ordinary sense of being an everyday self" (Tassi 1993: 204).

Tassi underlines the fact that this distinction is absent in the life of the non-actor, and its absence "must not be obscured":

> "When the actor goes offstage, he is not like the teacher who in the classroom has ceased to play the role of the father. The actor offstage and the actor onstage are not the same person, whereas the teacher and the father are. (…) In assuming a role we do not become another person. Our situation is one where we are, in effect, always 'onstage'" (Tassi 1993: 204).

In Tassi's view, if there is an analogy between the world of acting on stage and the world of being in reality, it is *not* to be sought in the relation between actors and people, but in the relation between characters and people. Just as a character in a play is the product of a performance that takes place in the theatre, so people are the product of a performance that takes place in the world. On stage the actor is the source of the performance that gives rise to an energy from which the character in the play can emerge. But what is the source of the performance that gives rise to people in life? Tassi's answer is being. Being is the performance that gives rise to a dimension of consciousness from which a person then takes on the different roles that life calls on him/her to play. The "e-vent" of being, or the source from which the "advent" of person emerges must be distinguished from a particular being in a similar way to that in which the possession of knowledge is distinct from the "actuality that corresponds to the exercise of knowledge" (Tassi 1993: 205).[131] That is to say that this basic mode of being cannot be equated with a particular role or even a sum of roles, for it is rather, the condition or ground from which individual beings and their various roles emerge:

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[130] Mask is thought here in the widest possible sense: both as actual physical disguise, as well as in the shape of patterned behaviour (gestures, expressions) that an actor makes use of to create his/her character.

> "We are 'more' than, not reducible to, these roles because the sense of self that constitutes our person is not derived from playing these roles but is, rather, the 'source' of these 'selves', just as the possession of knowledge is the source of the acts of knowing" (Tassi 1993: 207).

Thus, although there may be much to be gained by applying metaphors of the theatre to personhood and identity, *the emergence of person and identity cannot be reduced to the playing of roles on the "stage of social reality"*, nor would it be right to deny the existence of a sense of self that pre-exists the performance of any such role. For were we to do so, we would have no basis from which the playing of roles could emerge. That there must be such a basis is confirmed again through analogy with acting:

> "To say that being is like the actor and we are like the characters created by the actor is to illuminate a very important point about ourselves. We are not the person we are by virtue of consciously becoming that person, the way for example, that we can say we become consciously the father or the teacher we are. In a very real sense we 'find' ourselves as we are and make ourselves our 'own'" (Tassi 1993: 207).

What Tassi is suggesting is that we must have already been granted a fundamental capacity to become, that is, to transform into the roles that we play before we actually do so. This pre-existent sense of self is the shape that being has transformed itself into, like the actor transforms himself into a character on stage. It is the prerequisite source from which, like an actor, I create the various roles I play and with which I can never fully identify. As such we constitute the "masks of being":

> "We already exist as the projection of being. It is the way we participate in being. And the conscious being we find ourselves as is being's sense of itself. This is the reason we cannot give ourselves an identity. Whenever we attempt to do so, we end up finding ourselves pretending to be who we are. We can only be who we are as being's sense of itself, as the mask of being" (Tassi 1993: 207-8).

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[131] Tassi makes explicit reference here to Aristotle's distinction in *De Anima* between two grades of actuality. See *De Anima* II, 1, 412a 22-29. Tassi's argument also relies heavily on Aristotle's metaphysical notion of the "last differentia". See *Metaphysics* VII, 12, 1038a19; 1038a25-29.

How the actor creates and becomes the character in a play therefore sheds light on what being does in creating a person. Interestingly, an actor is essentially "someone who remembers" (Tassi 1993: 208). The actor's remembering is, moreover, not only a reaching back and recalling of information. This kind of memory is perhaps necessary for reproducing the character's lines in the play, but it is not sufficient to bring those lines alive and make them real (i.e. in mode of being-for-the-first-time). The actor's memory is not merely a recalling but "a calling forth and, as such, is a giving form to, an articulation" (Tassi 1993: 208). The actor must remember and recreate the energy of being out of which the character will exist in its own right. If he were to remember just a string of words or a sequence of movements, his character's actions would be empty. Indeed, for the character to be authentic (that is, authentically inauthentic) the character itself must achieve a "sense of selfhood" from which its actions emerge. This sense of selfhood corresponds to the fundamental dimension of memory which allows one to draw identity from a mass of different experiences, and from all our different roles. Where this dimension is lacking, we may have actions, but not the corresponding identity (which anyway is always more than the sum of a series of actions); we may have stacks of information (consider the mind of an amnesiac) but we will have no knowledge.

Thus, it is pertinent to speak of identity in terms of performance. But to do so is not to deny the metaphysical dimension that belongs to all performance to the extent that it is considered the realisation of a potential. Just as an actor's identity cannot be equated with the character that he/she performs on stage, neither can a person's identity be equated with the roles that he/she plays in life. But before drawing a final conclusion, I should like to illustrate this point with the vivid and complex example of an absent identity paradoxically created through performance: the case of Donna Williams' autistic identity.

b) Donna Williams' Autistic Identity

i) The case

In "Performance, Performativity and the Writing of Donna Williams", Anne Fleche interprets the Australian autistic, Donna Williams' autobiographical work in the light of performance and performativity theory. The case of Donna Williams is extremely complex. I do not intend to delve into the intricacies of the problem of autistic identity but simply to use William's example to raise a few important points about performance/performativity theory, identity and the issue of authenticity.

In her autobiographical works, Donna Williams describes her experience of life as an autistic. She describes how as a child and youth she was clearly different to everyone else because she had no sense of self. She could not, for instance, recognize herself in the mirror. She lacked any sense of personal unity and continuity and would use different names for the different characters within her who played different roles socially. For although Williams was perfectly able to mimic the behaviour, gestures and expressions of the people around her, she was unable to sense the emotion or state of mind that were supposed to be their source. When called upon in public to behave in a certain way, to put on a certain "face", Donna felt like she was wearing an empty mask. She describes how her autism meant that she was *unable to experience the things she was able to perform* (Williams 1994: 214). Periodically everything around her would overcome her and she would lapse into a state she refers to as "total shutdown", a locked-in state of death-like, expressionless nothingness, in which she "loses all sense of self, identity, body, connection" (Fleche 1997: 3) and words become meaningless carcasses (Williams 1994: 175).

The mysteries and medical complexities of autism set aside, Williams' experience of being perfectly capable of producing the "faces" or gestures of social behaviour whilst being unable to sense their meaning presents a serious challenge to notions of performativity. For if identity is thought to be the effect of patterned behaviour, that is, if one assumes that exterior presentation is what gives rise to interior states, then how come this process doesn't work for Williams? Granted, there may well be known or unknown medical reasons that account for this peculiarity. However, Williams' case is relevant to performativity theory on yet another level. This time, her experience would appear to *speak for* a notion of performative identity construction.

ii) Performing a Self

Williams' project is to "become a self, not to perform at all" (Fleche 1997: 6; Williams 1992: 188). As she grows up her aim becomes to get rid of the performing, puppet-like characters (for which she has a variety of different names) that she perceives to live inside her, and learn to properly integrate and connect with the world "outside". She wants to become "normal" which to her means being "present as a person and not 'performing'" (Fleche 1997: 6). The fact that this does not come naturally or easily to her makes Donna Williams a particularly interesting case from which to follow "in slow motion" as it were, the process of identity acquisition. Her narrative is meant to give her the logic of a continuous self (Williams 1992: 188). And indeed, it is *through the very writing of her memoir* that she manages, in a sense, to "overcome" her autism. Writing, that is, *projecting* herself in a way that is comprehensible to the outside world, *naming* her experiences, allows her to acquire a self that she previously lacked.

> "The memoirs construct the very notion on which they are predicated, the notion of an I, a true self prior to its dissimulation" (Fleche 1997: 6).

Moreover, through the success of her books, Williams' autistic identity becomes recognized socially:

> "Donna Williams instantly becomes a name, her book becomes a best-seller, she is interviewed, she is famously, real. And she discovers the power of identity" (Fleche 1997: 3).

Donna Williams' case is clearly paradoxical. She begins with no sense of self, locked out of the world of sense and meaning. Through the experience of writing, through projecting herself into "our" world she acquires an identity. In a sense, that is, her autism is "cured". To the extent that this is true, her experience confirms the performative stance: only through repeating behaviour that is meaningful to society is identity *acquired.* Yet there is another level on which Donna Williams' testimony clearly challenges the performance/performativity theory: Donna Williams may indeed have acquired a sense of self which she lacked before. But she does not consider this identity to be "really her". Although this may seem a contradiction in terms, Williams clearly senses that her "true self" remains the inaccessible, withdrawn, autistic lack of self (Williams 1994: 200). Curiously, from a situation in which she was unable to "perform" her true self (which is equated with the "condition" of lacking a sense of self) she is projected into the inverse situation in which having acquired an identity, she is now constrained to perform it!

> "Exposed to the enemy, what I had known as 'my world' would never again be free from the contamination of its exposure" (Williams 1994: 3).

What/where is Donna Williams' real identity? It was obviously not present, before the exposure of her autism, in the empty performances that she (or her "characters") could act out but which she could not relate to. Neither is it present in the forced enactment of an exposed, embodied autistic self. Even though Williams' sense of self may be a sense of un-self or a lack of self she still clearly senses a distinction between on the one hand an identity or personhood that is *absent, intangible but authentic and true*, and on the other hand one that is *present, recognizable but somehow unreal and fake*.

There is a sense in which Williams' testimony expresses what we probably all experience: the discrepancy between what we are, or feel ourselves to be, and what we do, or how we appear in the eyes of others.[132] A perfectly "performative" simultaneity between being and showing is no doubt always an illusion. The interesting, and perhaps even liberating aspect about this is that our identity can therefore never be completely in the hands of others to define, nor totally in our own.

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[132] Williams' definition of autism in terms of a hypersensitivity or hyper-responsiveness (Fleche 1997: 3) would indeed suggest that we are in fact all to a certain degree autistic…

iii) Being "In between"

Where does this leave the performance/performativity theory and what can we conclude about the construction of identity and personhood? One thing at least seems clear: neither a theory that posits the existence of personhood before its performance (metaphysics of presence) nor one that explains personhood as the consequence of performance (basic performative stance) is satisfactory. For Williams locates her most authentic self *neither* in the locked-in state of non-identity prior to her capacity to express herself in writing, *nor* in the product of that writing which gives rise to an identity that exists for the world but is not her own. Williams' experience perhaps reveals that the nature of identity and personhood is situated somewhere *in between* these two positions: not before or after but *in the very process of writing,* that is, *in the performance itself.* Interestingly, it is in the act of writing that she seems the least aware of herself. Williams' description of the state in which she writes is remarkably similar to Victor Turner's analysis of the *flow experience*[133]:

> "When I write, it's not with any … thinking. Do you understand? (…) It happens without thinking, just comes out. My thinking is on the page. It's not in my head" (Fleche 1997: 10).

Like the character in a play, she exists most fully neither before nor after the performance but *during it*, that is to say, in her own enactment. Locating identity in this in-betweenness highlights the relevance of a theory of performativity - in the Austinian sense of an activity that brings about what it names - to explain the nature of identity and personhood. But it also means acknowledging the limitations of such discourse to the extent that thinking is always either ahead or behind the actual, present-tense *unfolding of being*. Moreover, as we have shown through our analysis of drama, to recognize the "performativity of the in-between" is surely to describe a movement which corresponds to a metaphysics of performance. For action reaches the dimension of "flow" only through tapping into and enacting a perpetual force of movement. Thus, although Turner may have had an essentially physical/psychological phenomenon in mind with the concept of flow, he was in fact, perhaps unwittingly, touching upon a truly metaphysical dimension.

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[133] See p. 33 above.

3. OUTCOME

a) Approaching the "Grey Zone"

Both in terms of the nature and functioning of language, and regarding the origins and emergence of identity and personhood, to speak of performativity is to be approaching a dimension of reality that in fact defies pinning down in discourse. This difficulty is largely due to the defining (and confirmation) of performativity in terms of simultaneity, the correspondence between functional and expressive aspects of language; the simultaneity of doing and being with regard to identity and personhood. Consciousness of this simultaneity amounts to an awareness of the existence of an object of thought that is, paradoxically, unthinkable: an in-between state, *a grey zone*. Recognition of this in-between state is fundamental if we are to understand the functioning of language or the emergence of identity. Denying it would catapult us either into a metaphysics of presence that cannot account for the live fact of being and is condemned to stumble against the problem of representation, or into the impossible position of an anti-metaphysics which whilst positing humans as the source of creation in fact denies them the capacity to fully participate in being: they would become merely puppets.

From the perspective of a metaphysics of performance, the study of performativity reveals itself to be deeply philosophical. Indeed, at its core lies the fundamentally philosophical question of the nature of being. Moreover, the analysis of philosophy from the vantage point of drama shows that being is itself a performance. Thus, philosophy, to the extent that it is interested in being, should welcome the "performative turn" as an important conceptual opportunity so long, that is, that thinkers of the performative do not lose sight of the "grey zone", the metaphysical dimension of performance, which although it can be sensed and perhaps approached conceptually, can never be fully grasped *except in performance*. Only an awareness of the in-between, suspended, nature of performance can guard us from over-stating the importance of rules and conventions, that is, constantly reorient the study of performativity beyond the issues of structure and method (important though these may be) towards more person-focused issues such as a) what it means to be a *witness*; b) what it means for something to be *authentic*; and c) the precise nature of the *memory* and especially the notion of a *common memory* that appear to play an essential role in the functioning and performativity of language.

b) Performativity Redefined: The Question of Competence

This paper began by describing the performative stance in opposition to a Chomskian conception of language which delineates two separate worlds: the abstract world of linguistic competence and the concrete world of linguistic performance.[134] Performative thinking, we said, went against the structuralist tendency to prioritise, like the Platonic hierarchical system of forms which posits an abstract ideal realm above phenomenal reality. Indeed, it was the rejection of this notion of a "world behind" that constituted the anti-metaphysical strain of performative discourse. However, through our analysis of theatre and philosophy, we have come to develop a metaphysical notion that does not posit two separate worlds: there is only one world, that of being as performance. Indeed, from the perspective of a metaphysics of performance, what goes on in life, or on the theatrical stage, is not considered a lesser copy of anything higher or more true: being, wherever or however it *is*, is being-for-the-first time. Moreover, we have emphasized the fact that this "other" metaphysical notion with which performativity is compatible, does not constitute a reversal of the traditional metaphysics of presence. Rather, it is a metaphysical "grey zone", a notion of the in-between, of the simultaneous etc.

With this in mind, I believe it is justifiable, and indeed important that we reformulate the performative position with regard to *competence*. For just as there is a notion of metaphysics that does not necessarily rely on "two worlds", so there may be a concept of competence that does not imply an abstract ideal realm. Inversely, in the same way as we have found that an accurate characterisation of the functioning of performance requires the notion of a metaphysics, so I would suggest that successful performativity requires a certain acknowledgement of competence. For just as without the notion of a metaphysics we would have no way of discerning between repetition and difference (i.e. authenticity), so without competence, there would be no way of accounting for the difference between successful or unsuccessful performances, we would be stuck in blind, directionless action.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate this thought any further, so let us conclude by tentatively re-locating the performative debate as one which should not be seen as a quarrel with or an argument against metaphysics, nor as a notion set in opposition to the idea of pre-existent competence, but rather as one which lies in-between the abstract and the "real", at the juncture of what it means to be and what it means to do. This mid-point is what I have termed the "grey zone". From this perspective, the performative stance reveals itself to be perfectly performative: performing what it describes. For in launching an investigation of the in-between, of the "grey zone", we have found that the metaphysics of performance is situated at the point at which *word* meets *world*.

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[134] See page 19 n. 3 below.

Conclusion

The terms "performance" and "performativity" point to a profound and widespread change of orientation in the study of human nature and culture. Whether in the field of language philosophy and linguistic research, regarding concepts of identity construction, anthropological accounts of cultural practices, or the study of theatre and performance art, we have moved away from the long-standing assumption that things are the way they are because of some essential, universal, nature- or god-given pre-condition. Instead, performance, that is, the physical acting out and repeating of an activity, is what defines the quality of that activity. There is no longer such a thing as language distinct from the actual context in which a particular language is spoken; there is no longer such a thing as culture or identity apart from the concrete expression in space and time of a particular culture or identity. Broadly speaking, instead of conceiving *doing* as an expression of *being*, we have become increasingly aware that it is in fact through doing that being is created, sustained and transformed.

At first sight it seemed reasonable to consider this new concentration on the productive nature of performance in terms of an "anti-metaphysical" thrust. For the tendency to assume a pre-existent essence (of language, identity, culture etc.) in contrast to which the "performative turn" stands out, corresponds to the traditional metaphysical schema that posits the existence of abstract, eternal forms from which all phenomena are seen to derive. Moreover, seeing the performative stance in the light of an "anti-metaphysics" helped situate the discussion within the wider historical context of such 20th century "anti-philosophical" developments epitomized by the deconstructive tendency to deny the existence of stable signification. The anti-metaphysical strain of performative discourse is further confirmed by the relation between theatre and philosophy, considered from the point of view of the "ancient quarrel" between them. This struggle between theatre and philosophy is illustrated most vividly by Plato's rejection of the dramatic arts from his ideal republic. The reason for philosophy's traditionally disdainful attitude towards theatre has to do with the nature of Socratic metaphysics. Thus, positions such as those encompassed within the performative stance which are clearly pre-disposed to holding up theatre as a positive, and productive social device are indeed likely to stand against the Platonic/Socratic model of metaphysics.

However, seen from a slightly different perspective, the relation between theatre and philosophy calls us to modify our characterization of the performative attitude as anti-metaphysical. The gist of the argument here is that there is something profoundly metaphysical about the activity of drama. But the metaphysical insight to which acting gives rise to is very different from the Platonic/Socratic so-called "metaphysics of presence", for it is *not* based on the assumption of two separate worlds, one high and abstract, the other low and concrete. Indeed drama is inherently metaphysical to the extent that it thematizes and attempts to make visible *through enactment* the performance here and now that is being. This is suggested both by Nietzsche's vision of the origins of tragedy descending from religious/ritual festivities in honour of Dionysus, as well as by Tassi's account of the structural resemblance between theatre and philosophy as activities that aim to bring about a certain kind of revelation. From the perspective of a vision of drama that is *not representational*, that is, *not* oriented towards copying a text, restoring an intention, or repeating an action, but that strives to *enact* its subject in the mode of *being-for-the-first-time*, there emerges the notion of a metaphysics, not of presence, but *of performance*.

Related to the discourses of performance and performativity, the notion of a metaphysics of performance is useful on several accounts. Firstly, it enables us to tackle certain problems that a purely anti-metaphysical performative stance could do little to explain: the question, for instance, of *authenticity*, or why identity cannot be explained merely in terms of role play; the importance of the dramatic dimension of ritual performance, or why repetition alone is not sufficient to perpetuate the power and function of conventional practices. Secondly, it serves to locate the "performative turn" in a wider historical context than that of the 20th century alone. For, through the metaphysics of performance, which is situated *in-between* a metaphysics of presence and an "anti-metaphysical" alternative, the "performative turn" emerges, one could say, as the *synthesis* of the struggle between theatre and philosophy, opening the way for a *new* kind of theatre, and a *new* approach to philosophy.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

HINTERGRUND UND ZIEL DER ARBEIT:

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist das Ergebnis meines persönlichen Versuches, einen Überblick über den Umfang und die Bedeutung der zeitgenössischen "performativen Wende" zu gewinnen. Als Ausgangspunkt dient folgende Frage: was hat die Debatte um die Performanz mit der Beziehung zwischen Philosophie und Theater zu tun, bzw. inwiefern ist es hilfreich, die Thematik der Performativität durch den Blickwinkel der Beziehung zwischen Theater und Philosophie zu betrachten?

VORGANG:

Die Arbeit ist in drei Teile strukturiert. Der erste Teil (I-V) untersucht die Diskussion um die Performanz/Performativität in vier verschiedenen Gebieten:

1. Linguistik/Sprachphilosophie (Performanz und Performativität der Sprache);
2. Soziologie/Psychologie (Identität und Performanz);
3. Anthropologie/Kulturwissenschaften (Performativität von Ritualen und Theater);
4. Kunst (bes. die Beziehung zwischen traditionellem Theater und Performance Art).

Die verschiedenen Diskurse werden in ihren Zusammenhängen erläutert und unter zwei Hauptmerkmalen zusammengefasst. Die "performative Wende" charakterisiert sich durch:

a) eine Orientierung gegen die klassische Metaphysik und
b) ein besonderes Interesse an Theater- und Ritualpraktiken und ein Gebrauch von theatralischen Metaphern, um soziale Ereignisse zu analysieren.

Um das Verhältnis zwischen diesen zwei Merkmalen näher zu erläutern bedarf es einer Untersuchung der Beziehung zwischen Theater und Philosophie (Teil 2). Aus der Perspektive von Nietzsches *Geburt der Tragödie* wird die historische Kontroverse zwischen Theater und Philosophie dargestellt (Kap. VI). Sie zeigt sich als ein Streit über das *Wesen der Metaphysik*. Die oben genannten Hauptmerkmale, durch welche sich die Performativitätsdiskurse "gegen" die Metaphysik und "für" das Theater positionieren, werden damit zunächst erklärt und verstärkt.

Ein Blick auf die Beziehung zwischen Theater und Philosophie aus einem anderen Winkel, nämlich dem ihrer strukturellen Ähnlichkeit, wirft dagegen ein neues Licht auf dieses Verhältnis (Kap. VII). Es stellt sich heraus, dass Theater eine eigene metaphysische Dimension beinhaltet. Sie tritt in Erscheinung bei der Analyse von erfolgreichen Ritual- und Theateraufführungen im Vergleich mit Handlungen, die rein repräsentativ bzw. wiederholend sind. Von der traditionellen platonischen/sokratischen "Metaphysik der Präsenz" ist sie allerdings stark zu unterscheiden. Das metaphysische Element des Theaters beruht *nicht* auf der konzeptuellen Trennung zwischen zwei Welten, in der die Ebene der abstrakten, essentiellen und idealen Formen über die der phänomenalen Ereignisse gestellt wird. Vielmehr zeigt eine erfolgreiche Theateraufführung genauso wie eine erfolgreiche rituelle Zeremonie - soweit sie über reine Repräsentation hinausstrebt - das Sein in seinem ständigen Aufführungsmodus, d.h. im Modus eines ständigen "Zum-ersten-Mal-Erscheinens". Hier kristallisiert sich ein Begriff der Metaphysik heraus, der keine Metaphysik der Präsenz bedeutet, sondern eine *Metaphysik der Performanz*, eine *Metaphysik der Aufführung*.

Der dritte Teil der Arbeit (Kap. VIII-X) kehrt mit diesen Erkenntnissen zur Performativitätsdebatte zurück. Performative Sprache und die Auffassung, dass Identität performativ entsteht, werden mit der Perspektive einer Metaphysik der Performanz konfrontiert.

ERGEBNIS:

Die "Performativitätswende" kann als eine *Synthese* der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Theater und Philosophie betrachtet werden. Sie situiert sich *zwischen* einer Metaphysik der Präsenz und einer "Anti-Metaphysik", in der "*Grauen Zone*" zwischen Wort und Welt. Um die Bedeutung dieser Zwischenzone genauer zu erforschen, könnte die Idee einer Metaphysik der Performanz als Schlüssel dienen.

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In diesem Band

Im Horizont der Frage nach dem ambivalenten Verhältnis von Theater und Philosophie klärt Alice Lagaay, was "Performativität" als gemeinsamer Bezugspunkt sprachtheoretischer, kulturtheoretischer und theaterwissenschaftlicher Debatten bedeutet. Hierzu werden zunächst Diskurse der Performativität und der Performanz (*performance*) in ihren aktuell relevanten Bezügen diskutiert. Ein zweiter Teil widmet sich der weit zurück reichenden Auseinandersetzung zwischen Theater und Philosophie. Die hier gefundene “Metaphysik der Performanz” erweist sich als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der gegenwärtigen “performativen Wende”.

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