



The Crisis of Representation, the Performative Turn and Presence: possibilities toward a Performance Philosophy

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ABSTRACT – The Crisis of Representation, the Performative Turn and Presence: possibilities toward a Performance Philosophy – In this paper, the so-called Crisis of Representation is discussed as a hallmark of Western Theatre and Modernity. The key hypothesis of overcoming such a crisis is investigated through the emergence of a performative turn, in which performance is understood in a broader sense derived from Performance Studies. To address this, the paper builds on authors such as Artaud, Derrida, Heidegger, Gumbrecht and Féral for a general theoretical background, and on the work of authors such as Cull, Street and others for a more specific approach concerning the field of Performance Philosophy. This paper argues that a philosophical turn in Performance Studies has happened through a radicalization of ‘Presence’.

Keywords: **Representation Crisis. Theatrum Mundi. Performance. Performative Turn. Performance Philosophy.**

RÉSUMÉ – Crise de la Représentation, Virage Performatif et Présence: possibilités vers une Philo-Performance – Dans cet article, la soi-disant crise de représentation est discutée comme une caractéristique du théâtre occidental et de la modernité. L’hypothèse clé de surmonter la crise par l’émergence d’un virage performatif a été étudiée, dans lequel la performance est comprise au sens large par les études de performance. À cette fin, nous nous référons à des auteurs tels que Artaud, Derrida, Heidegger, Gumbrecht et Féral comme cadre théorique général, et à des auteurs tels que Cull, Street et d’autres pour une approche plus spécifique dans le contexte de la philo-performance. Cet article soutient qu’un tournant philosophique dans les études de performance s’est produit par une radicalisation de la ‘présence’.

Mots-clés: **Crise de la Représentation. Theatrum Mundi. Performance. Virage Performatif. Philo-Performance.**

RESUMO – Crise da Representação, Virada Performativa e Presença: possibilidades rumo a uma Filosofia-Performance – Discute-se aqui a chamada *Crise da representação* como marca do teatro ocidental e da modernidade. Sua possibilidade de superação, como hipótese central, perpassaria a emergência de um novo paradigma caracterizado por uma virada performativa – no qual performance é entendida em sentido amplo, derivado do *Performance Studies*. Como referencial teórico utiliza-se, em caráter geral, a ampla bibliografia de autores como Artaud, Derrida, Gumbrecht e Féral e, em caráter específico, no âmbito da *Performance Philosophy*, de autores como Cull, Grant e outros, evidenciando que explicitar esse novo campo é discutir, também, suas tarefas futuras em direção àquilo que chamamos de uma possível *hermenêutica da presença*.

Palavras-chave: **Crise da Representação. Theatrum Mundi. Performance. Virada Performativa. Filosofia-Performance.**

By way of Introduction...

Let's start from the end: Performance Philosophy. This term, of English origin, would be complex to translate into any Neo-Latin language, such as Portuguese or Spanish¹. While at first it might seem to indicate (to us) something like a 'Philosophy of Performance' ('Filosofia da Performance'), the truth is that its meaning has been more broadly constructed and strengthened over the last decade as a field that, if it does not answer – nor seek to answer – the question 'What is performance?' in its entirety, does nevertheless restate the question so radically that multiple unthought possibilities have gained strength. Possibilities that allow us to think, for instance, of Philosophy itself as a kind of Performance (of thought?) or of Performance as a way of philosophizing (Cull; Lagaay, 2014; Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017 – among others), if only we allow ourselves to go beyond modern logic and traditional categories of so-called rational thinking.

Philosophy and Performance – or performing and philosophizing – can today be seen as inextricably intertwined. In both disciplines, for instance, the question of the relationship between the real and presence remains open. New perspectives are starting to take shape, in which thought is necessarily "embodied", i.e. thinking is profoundly rooted in both the body and the world, inseparable from them. Thus, new questions like 'How does Performance think?'², and so forth, have emerged and defy us to think beyond the dichotomies and structures built in Modernity.

Over the last 10 years, some scholars, originally from Performance Studies, as well as many other expatriates from philosophy, have expanded the concept of Performance (which, as a field, has long shifted away from Theatre Studies, for instance) in a way that means it is no longer possible to think of philosophy simply as a method that would be analytically employed to study performance.

The independence of Performance as a field of study, considered from the perspective that will be developed here, fits into what I consider to be a major paradigm shift, in which the very question What is Philosophy? also needs to be restated.

Such questions imply the birth of a new field – it is not a new kind of a "philosophy of performance", but rather something radically different,

not just an internal turn in Performance Studies, but a new field of scholarship, artistic practice and investigation: Performance Philosophy: Philosophy as Performance; Performance as Philosophy – maybe a “Performosophy”³?

Philosophizing and performing would indeed prove to be so interconnected that I cannot but think of the hypothesis of the emergence of a new perspective, one that could be related to what Josette Féral called Performativity as opposed to Theatricality. In her seminal article, Féral (2002) related philosophy and theatre, or more specifically, phenomenology and theatricality, discussing them through two possibilities: first, from a kind of intentional attitude (the spectator’s gaze) that frames everyday life and displaces it, creating a cleft – as a type of relation of alterity with the real, that divides space into the *outside* and the *inside* of theatrical representation. Through this cleft in everyday life, theatrical representation becomes the space of otherness, a double of reality, that necessarily presents itself as fiction and crisis (of the real). It is this kind of active gaze that establishes theatricality itself, once it constructs a radical fissure that takes place in the metaphorical illusion of the proscenium. Yet, in other writings (2015), Féral also discusses a second possibility, named Performativity, which comes together precisely within the emerging paradigm (in the 20th Century) of Performance Art, in which the performer’s body and the immediacy of art as a work opens a different possibility of relationship within the world, one that, instead of fictionalizing reality, duplicates it, seeks “to bring it into presence” – or “[open] it up in its truth”.

Such immediate possibility of presentification, to be discussed within the theoretical framework of Performance Philosophy, is at the core of this text. After the initial considerations above, we have the necessary scope – through, precisely, such a polarization of the theatrical and performative – to discuss the well-known crisis of modernity (a conception already pointed out and diagnosed by authors such as Husserl, Heidegger and Nietzsche, among many others). This crisis can, now, be repositioned within the perspective that I propose here: as the crisis of a fiction / representation of the world and the possibility of overcoming such a crisis through a broad hermeneutic-phenomenological paradigm that tries to think art beyond Aes-

thetics, a view that got stronger throughout the 20th Century and that can be found in the work of various artists and performers.

The crisis of modernity as the crisis of representation is the crisis of a certain fiction of the world that underlies the crisis itself – a cleft established by an expanded concept of theatricality. As I will explore, it relates to the well-known Baroque metaphor of a *Theatrum Mundi* (the great Theatre of the world), which fables reality by comparing it to a stage. Used by Shakespeare and Calderon de la Barca, amongst others, this idea reflects the modern suspicion of the real, reinforcing the metaphysical impossibility of knowing ‘the truth’ that would be behind the scenes or behind reality.

However, this metaphor (of a *Theatrum mundi*, world as Representation) needs to be revised in light of the performative turn towards ‘presence’ and the possibility of the body as the place for the epiphany of truth – in fact, this is the main hypothesis of this text, now expressed more clearly –, a hypothesis to be developed within the critical fortune already accumulated by studies in Performance Philosophy⁴.

Finished with this long introit, we can proceed further.

About Old Metaphors and the Crisis of Modernity

In a sense, we could say that only now we have reached the beginning of this text. In Modern times, the metaphor of a *Theatrum Mundi* (the Great Theatre of the World), which fables reality by comparing it to a stage, is well known. It is used by Shakespeare, in the play *As You Like It*, 1603

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts (Shakespeare, 1994, p. 622).

The metaphor is reinforced with the Spanish author, Calderón de la Barca, who writes about thirty years later, in 1634, a play literally called *The Great theatre of the World* (1990), in which the Creator, creation and creatures meet before the opening of the curtains, in an exercise of Metatheatre. God then distributes roles to characters as the King, the Beauty, the Rich Man, the Peasant and the Beggar to play their parts in his play of life. It ends when the characters depart to enter the stage – the world. As Luis Fe-

lipe Lima and Ricardo Valle (2008, p.15) warn us, in their introduction to Calderón de la Barca: “Both the dream and the theatre, used as *exemplum*, should alert men about the mistakes of the living world”.

The dream as a metaphor will become increasingly present in modernity. From Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 1605, to *Life is a Dream*, 1635, another play written by Calderón de la Barca, known by its famous verses:

What is this life? A frenzy, an illusion,
A shadow, a delirium, a fiction.
The greatest good’s but little, and this life
Is but a dream, and dreams are only dreams (Calderón de la Barca, 1985, p. 268).

In this sense, then, dreams, in the 17th Century repertoire, are comparable to theatre: both feature a parade of fictional images, *phantasmagorias*, illusions – and even though they may be somehow related to reality, they are not real. Of course, to think of the sensible world as fictitious and misleading, and thus comparable to a dream (and theatre) is not something new: that image has a long genealogy that goes all the way back to Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. But, in a more relevant manner, this image relates mainly to a long Western tradition – Neoplatonist and Christian – that will interpret Plato in the light of their own beliefs, relating “the things of the world” to illusions or deceits of the senses, imperfect reflections of Truth (given that Truth belongs to another order of reality, to ‘another world’, divine – to that one which lies before and after the *opening of the curtains*). From this perspective, what the senses can grasp is not the real world, but its double.

Less than a decade after *Life is a Dream*, such baroque restlessness (the friction between the fictional and the real) would be revisited, now in a definitive philosophical form, by René Descartes in his *Meditations* (1641)⁵:

How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place, that I was dressed and seated near the fire, whilst in reality I was lying undressed in bed! [...] But in thinking over this I remind myself that on many occasions I have in sleep been deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection I see so manifestly that there are no certain indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep that I am lost in astonishment. And my astonish-

ment is such that it is almost capable of persuading me that I now dream....
(Descartes, 1996, p. 13).

However, Descartes' dreaming argument will become a rhetorical stratagem that only seems to lead to a radical scepticism. From the point of view of the history of metaphysics, Descartes is the one who, through the hyperbolic doubt, leads it (metaphysics) into a new level of radicality, thanks to the virulence of his argument, by emphasizing that our experiences are merely impressions of the senses. There is no substantial difference between feeling, imagining feeling or dreaming. Descartes (1996, p. 16) places everything under the cloak of doubt:

I suppose, then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are chimeras. So, what remains true?.

Descartes' solution is his self-awareness as a being who thinks, the famous *cogito* that Saint Augustine had proposed long before, in *The City of God*, but now in a more radical sense. Hyperbolic doubt as a method: although I cannot doubt that there is "a thing that thinks" or "something that doubts" – the famous *cogito ergo sum* – even if I am deceived, then at least I am. I am, indeed, but in a way that even my own bodily and material existence can still be doubted. How would it be possible to get out of such solipsism? How would it be possible to establish with certainty that the outside world also exists, that one has a body and that it is not just a representation of the self? This seems like an impossible task. Descartes, like Augustine, can only accomplish this through the idea of God.

When Descartes (1996) considers the *cogito* as the only certainty of his self-awareness, he turns all things, and even his own body, into ideas or representations of the world, captured by the senses and whose validity cannot be assured without reference to the existence of God – who becomes the "great metaphysical guarantor".

Surprisingly, theatre in modern times will also be affected by this new perspective brought by Cartesian thinking, so that it turns into something structured and hierarchized in a very specific way. As Gumbrecht explains:

It is very interesting to see that during the seventeenth century, especially in Paris, the staging form of Commedia dell'Arte [...] was competing with a

new style of French theatre. [...] The actors in the Corneille's or Racine's tragedies stood on the stage in a half-circle, reciting often highly abstract texts in the heavy verse of the Alexandrine. No Western theatre style either before or afterward was more 'Cartesian'. [...] Descartes [Corneille's and Racine's contemporary], who for the first time made the ontology of human existence, as *res cogitans*, explicitly and exclusively depend on the ability to think and who, as a consequence, subordinates not only the human body but all the things of the world to the mind (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 32-33).

At the other end of modern metaphysics' historical arc, we could situate Antonin Artaud, the avant-garde man of theatre who became famous for re-thinking the relation between theatre and what he would call *its double*, who brings into question, precisely, such a metaphysical perspective as a hallmark of Western theatre. Derrida (1995), in his text *The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, deepens such a problematic when he paints Artaud as the "great diagnostician" of decadence in Western theatre. It would be fair to say that Artaud, in his book *The Theatre and its Double* (1936), reverses the metaphor of the *Theatrum Mundi*, since he does not see theatre as a metaphor of reality, but rather the opposite: modern theatre-making was affected and responds to, and therefore duplicates, the modern worldview. Theatre can be seen as the microcosm of the metaphysical hierarchy of the world (the macrocosm). The modern stage is theological, hierarchical and text-oriented (which is to say, logocentric) and as such – as in a hall of mirrors – it has become a double of the real itself.

The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation [...]. Actors (are) enslaved interpreters who [...] more or less directly represent the thought of the 'creator' (Derrida, 1978, p. 235).

The double of the double, even farther from the real and the truth. Pure phantasmagoria from an unfinished judgment of God – the "Platonic dream comes true". And so, we get to the heart of this article: modern theatre, just like all the other constructions of modernity, is in a crisis because it is, essentially, metaphysical: another "ghostly" double of the real. But we live in times of nihilism: as in *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett (1953), theatre is waiting for someone who is not there – and never will be.

Or as Shakespeare, always contemporary, had advocated in scene V, act V,
of Macbeth

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing (Shakespeare, 1994, p. 882).

The question we must ask here is why does life end up meaning *nothing* in modernity? Why would the history of metaphysics necessarily lead to nihilism, when life has no value in itself?

The 20th Century witnessed the rise of scientific thought as instrumental reason, the massive growth of cities, the advent of the masses and two world wars. Metaphysics, in the Heideggerian perspective, is the great framework of Western philosophy, which although in ruins and in crisis, remains somehow determined by Western worldview. This period of crisis can be best understood through Nietzsche's genealogical diagnosis, from both his fundamental critique of rationalism and his assumption of nihilism. Nihilism is, according to his analysis, an epochal feature of modern times characterized by an enormous loss of meaning and purpose – the heavy loss of all greater meaning. The 'death of God' advocated in Nietzschean thought would be, for Heidegger (1978), a collective experience of the 20th Century.

The crisis of metaphysics as nihilism is a crisis perceived and thematized incessantly throughout the twentieth century, by authors such as Husserl and his heirs, by the already mentioned Heidegger and Derrida, and also by many others, such as Foucault, Badiou and Gumbrecht – and although these authors may have provided different diagnoses (and prognoses) of the contemporary age, they have in common the attempt to understand and think beyond crisis. This is also stated, in the terms previously discussed here, as the Crisis of Representation: a crisis in which the nexus between "the words" (the representation) and "the things" (the represented) seems to have been lost: "This is not a pipe", Foucault would say echoing Magritte (1976)⁶.

However, when speaking of the crisis of representation and its possible overcoming, Gumbrecht (2003, p. 46-47) emphasizes that

No other thinker, in this context, went further in criticizing and revising the metaphysical worldview than Martin Heidegger. Starting with the publication of his book *Sein und Zeit* [Being and Time] in 1927, this effort gained him international attention. Heidegger replaced the subject / object paradigm with the new concept of 'being-in-the-world', which, so to speak, was supposed to bring human self-reference back in touch with the things of the world [...]. Against the Cartesian paradigm, he reaffirmed the bodily substantiality and spatial dimensions of human existence, [and thereby] he began to develop the idea of a 'unconcealment' of Being'.

Therefore, the problem of truth for Heidegger (1997) and his heirs will no longer be the need to transpose the metaphysical gap between subject and object, but rather the emptying of this gap, given that human self-referentiality also points to "life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable" (Derrida, 1978, p. 234) – i.e. the unrepresentable as a necessary and constitutive dimension: a revisited Greek *alètheia*⁷, as I shall discuss next.

The body as Event: the unrepresentable as a constitutive dimension

Gumbrecht also states that

During several decades, scholars from many different fields pointed, with sometimes dramatic gestures of complain or regret, the loss of (belief in) a world-reference. [...] At the same time, [...] wild thinkers and wildly gesticulating artists, such as [...] Antonin Artaud, accused Western culture of having lost touch with the human body (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 46).

Indeed, Antonin Artaud was one of the most iconic figures in the early 20th Century artistic scenario, signatory of the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) and its greatest enthusiast in theatre – despite being expelled from Breton's official movement. His ideas would be both highly fruitful for, and radically transform western theatre-making in the second half of the twentieth century. (Artaud; Sontag, 1998) Artaud wanted to deconstruct the traditional categories and hierarchies of theatre, which he considered emptied of meaning. He wanted to break, for example, with the separation between audience / stage, to remove the audience from its comfortable place of passive spectatorship in favour of a *new theatre*, which he called the *Theatre of*

Cruelty. In the Theatre of Cruelty, more than text or words, it is the scream, the unarticulated voice, the breath and the gesture or, in other words, *the body* as the primordial origin of the theatrical act which sets up the scenic space: the body as the poetic event which inhabits it, an epiphany of the body. Artaud prioritizes, in simple terms, the gesture and the voice in their physical intensity, enabling the human body to produce what he calls “hieroglyphics” – material embodied figures whose meaning can never be exhausted and cannot even be trivialized through a unique interpretation.

But why would life, in its full extent, be unrepresentable, as Derrida (1978) had written about Artaud? This also raises a second question: is it possible to think of an art that might not be representation and, by extension, neither an imitation nor a shadow of something else? An art that does not represent⁸ but turns into presence? May this turn towards presence be a line of flight from nihilism and from the crisis of representation in this contemporary age of technique? This is the direction in which this new field of Performance Philosophy seems to venture. It brings new ways to think the body and its possibilities not only in tradition, as image and representation, but, above all, beyond all metaphysical or dichotomous determinations and towards the possibility of a body that is the very poetic event that pervades it: the epiphany of truth (as *alètheia*) through the body.

Thus, among the many characteristics of performance (art), the central role given to the performer’s body can be emphasized and considered as the founding and indispensable element of every performative act, capable of opening a space and establishing a relationship “between the artist and the spectators, the spectators and the artwork, the artwork and the artist” (Féral, 2015, p. 155). A performance comes to be due to the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, the spatial and temporal relations that it establishes, the hermeneutic topos it shares, and the immediacy of presence. And as Tilottama Rajan puts it (1995, p. 150), “the immediacy of presence is perhaps the immediacy of this rapture, an immediacy whose basis is phenomenological rather than metaphysical”⁹.

It raises the question of how not to connect the immediacy of presence, as epiphany of the body, with the very idea of a performative event? As Féral says,

For this very reason, the artist's relation to his own performance is no longer that of the actor with his role. Refusing to be a protagonist, the performer does not present himself as he does not represent himself. Its presence becomes rather a source of production [Poiesis], of displacement. Converted into the place of passage of energetic flows (gestures, vocals, libidinals, etc.) that pass through it without ever being immobilized in a given sense or representation, its action game is to make the flows operate, capture the networks. These gestures he performs do not result in anything but the streams of desire that put them into action (Féral, 2015, p. 159).

Performance is the coming to be of truth as embodiment, in its very abyssal and contradictory aspects, as a hieroglyph that cannot be reduced to a single representation. To think of a hermeneutics of presence appears, therefore, as a future possibility: the body, matrix of meanings, becomes art – a place of passage, of tensions, of possible epiphanies of sense and meaning; capable of pointing to the unrepresentable and, instead of erasing it or denying it, embracing it in a fight (*Urstreit*) that is also a rapture. A poetic production indeed, but akin to Heideggerian poiesis: the production of meanings, as something open to understanding and interpretation, in a hermeneutic sense (Heidegger, 1977).

Some (inconclusive) considerations

Taking a step back in this discussion, we should note that Performance is taken here as an extremely enlarged concept, strongly marked by the broad-spectrum definition given by Richard Schechner (2002). That is:

The field of theatre studies has undergone a paradigm's shift. The advent of theatre studies was already an innovation beyond the study of drama because it emphasized that theatre's meaning is produced not just through its texts but through all its significations and practices – including training, use of space and technology, performance style and scenography, for example. [...] In this context, Performance studies became an interdisciplinary, crossing over this field with fine art and various other critical fields such as feminism, sociology, and philosophy. Performance studies introduced new critical concerns that were shared by new forms of performance as well more traditional theatre forms. These concerns include liveness and the ephemerality of performance, [the immediacy of presence], and new critical practices such as performative writing [and so on] (Allain; Harvie, 2006, p. 14).

As Street, Alliot and Pauker (2017, p.11) have recently remarked, the very “emergence of Performance Philosophy is itself enabled by the development of performance paradigms and their applications”.

In this brief text, I sought to present the crisis of modernity as the crisis of a fiction / representation of the world and its attempt to overcome it within a broad hermeneutic-phenomenological paradigm that retakes art beyond aesthetics. This paradigm has been strengthened throughout the 20th Century and it is present in the work of various artists and performers – with this essay having chosen to highlight the seminal character of Artaud.

When thinking about the emergence of a new paradigm, old modern dichotomies – between thought and body, language and action, word and gesture, art and reality – lose all purpose. Thus, the epistemological field of the Performing Arts, and the Arts and Humanities in general, might – or indeed need to be radically questioned, in order for such (pre-) conceptions of metaphysical origin to be completely overcome and set aside. John Sallis, in an article entitled *Mimesis and the End of Art* (1995, p. 77), is categorical in concluding that without constantly re-invoking the need and the “demand for presence,” one cannot overcome the old “Socratic warnings about the deceptive and corruptive power of the phantoms produced by art”.

Therefore, a future task should be to delimit the theoretical framework concerning this change of perspective on the body (and art) in the philosophical tradition, while also locating it within the great change that occurred in art theory in the 20th Century: the end of the (modern) conception of art based on the material character of the artwork and on a historical, linear evolution of artistic styles. This perspective has been exhausted while at the same time pointing towards new ways of making and experiencing art, as this paper has sought to discuss. Arthur Danto for instance, in his well-known work *After the end of art* (2006), states that the question ‘*what is art? / is this art?*’ has lost its meaning today, and that we should actually ask: ‘*when is art?*’, or in other words: ‘*under what conditions does art come to be?*’ This discussion echoes and amplifies, albeit without being mentioned by Danto, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1977), a Heideggerian text of 1936, which had long before displaced the question concerning the thingly

character of the artwork in favour of the characterisation of art as an event (*Ereignis*) – i.e., as the possibility of reconfiguration and enlargement of the opening of Being that does not allow it to be sedimented in a single meaning, but remains as an open, a hermeneutic possibility tensioned between what can be represented and the unrepresentable – an abyssal and indomitable trait fleeing from any attempt at (final) representation. If the body is a hieroglyph (as Artaud said), then art is a symbol (as Heidegger reminds us). And the immediacy of its presence, like a rapture, can never be exhausted in any given representational meaning. It is in this freer sense that I use the expression, *hermeneutic of presence*¹⁰.

However, we must move slowly if we want to make sense of a statement such as a ‘major paradigm shift’, regarding a turn towards performance and the body as presence – as previously stated. We need to pause a little longer to understand what this really refers to. In other words, I defend here that what appeared to be just a philosophical turn within Performance studies (which would thus have grown into a new field, thanks to the emergence of a myriad of new publications on the subject), also happened, above all, through a radical shift toward the performer’s bodily presence; to the extent that to think of Performance as a paradigm also replaces the *mise-en-scène* of representation as a metaphor. Theatre ceases to be the mirror of reality and the world also ceases to be a metaphysical reflection of another order of reality. This is the central point discussed in this article and as such, it points to a paradigmatic shift that seems to us, in fact, radical.

And on the other hand, if there seems to be a philosophical turn in performance studies, then a *performative* turn also happens in philosophy and in the humanities in general, since the genesis of Husserlian phenomenology and the last phase of Heidegger’s thought (1994), which points to the Event (*Ereignis*) as the source of *any possibility of understanding and interpretation of the world, or rather of philosophy itself* (Grant, 2019). Pushing further, we thus have the terms *Performance* and *Philosophy* establishing a zone of friction in which each term needs to be paradigmatically repositioned, even if not definitively. I cannot avoid mentioning that there are some risks involved, as Laura Cull (2012, p. 25) points out:

For some, though, to say that performance is philosophy (or experience is thinking) risks rendering ‘philosophy’ a term that means everything and nothing; it is to dissolve the identity of philosophy altogether. [...] Surely, as François Laruelle has suggested, the project is not ‘to think without philosophy but to think without the authority of philosophy’, to challenge philosophy’s right to determine who or what thinks or does not think, where and when thinking is going on and when it is not. That is, it may well be the very engagement with (non-)philosophies like Laruelle’s that encourages us to move away from the application of the theoretical models we already possess and towards an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance’s thinking: its embodied-thinking, participatory-thinking, or durational-thinking – encounters that generate new ideas of what thought is and where, when and how it occurs.

Undoubtedly, addressing the possible intersections between *Philosophy* and *Performance* is to move beyond the narrow definitions of each of these terms, into a whole new interdisciplinary field which has been gaining strength through the writings of forerunners such as Friedrich Nietzsche (who thought of the body as the place of the philosophical event) or Antonin Artaud (who, by suggesting that there were thoughts that cannot be expressed through words, presented us with the ‘still radical’ idea that there is a kind of ‘physical’ language capable of being expressed not only through words, but through gesture and body intensity. And, more recently, the writings of authors such as Deleuze (and his views on the *Theatre of Philosophy*), as well as Alain Badiou, who argues for the independence of art as thought and language, or even as a non-philosophy, as François Laruelle proposes, might help us to think beyond the limits established by tradition for each of these terms (Cull Ó Maoilearca, 2017). The road ahead, however, remains long.

Finally, I have the perception that the field of performance – and of a Performance Philosophy – from the point of view of a hermeneutics of presence, is enriched by a plurality of influences, stimuli and challenges, which are far from being exhausted. Artaud’s position, even in the early decades of the 20th Century, sought to construct a scene whose poetics did not depend on words, and Nietzsche’s signalling that modern categories, such as reason and the emphasis on discourse, as well as the subject, went into crisis, shows a tendency – a turn in the tide – that will prove dominant throughout most of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, a turn towards

embodiment, towards the body as presence. This perception will still be echoed by many other artists and thinkers. This is just the tip of the iceberg. If the performative turn towards presence as rapture or an epiphany of the body (and, consequently, also as the emergence of a new hermeneutic paradigm capable of moving beyond all the old, corroded metaphysical dichotomies and its hall of mirrors) is, indeed, capable of overcoming Nihilism – as a crisis of representation or as crisis of the modern episteme – only time will tell.

Notes

- ¹ In the Portuguese version of this text I make a digression about the impossibility of a direct translation of the term Performance Philosophy and attempt an explanation on why this Special Issue was named *Filosofia-Performance*, purposely written in Portuguese with a hyphen: in order to keep the myriad of possible relationships between both terms open. For a better understanding of the problem, please see note 3. Also, I strongly recommend the introduction to the field written by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, *Performance Philosophy: an introduction*, which opens this issue.
- ² Actually, ‘*How performance thinks*’ was the name of one of the first symposiums organized by Laura Cull on the subject. It was an international, two-day conference, co-organized by the *PSi Performance and Philosophy working group* and Kingston University, in April 2012. More information available at: <<http://psi-ppwg.wikidot.com/london-2012>>.
- ³ Before we move on, a note on translation is still needed. The use of the term *philo-performance*, for example, is already present in some texts in French (Marrou et al., 2015), which is, indeed, another Neo-Latin language. However, I have some reservations about its use, since it emphasizes the *philia* – or the pursuit of a knowledge that one does *not* possess – rather than the *sophia* itself. A more suitable neologism in Portuguese could, on the other hand, be *Performosofia* (or *Performosophy*), since in canonical Latin *performo* refers to something that takes shape / forms through. Philosophy points out to a search for ‘truth’ (the *sophia*) but could it find other forms of expression and unveiling that do not depend solely on the “*nous*” – as the Greeks called the “pure thought”? Although Stuart Grant does not refer to the term *Performosophy*, I would like to recommend for further reflection on the different types of

knowledge (besides such a search for a “pure abstract thinking”), his chapter (Grant, 2019) on Performance and the different types/possibilities of knowledge in the ancient Greek world. There he discusses, for example, the Aristotelian *Phronesis* as a possibility of answering ‘how performance thinks?’. Moreover, I would like to thank Will Daddario and our exchange of emails for the initial suggestion that made me think about the possibility of this neologism in Portuguese.

- ⁴ The critical fortune already accumulated by studies in Performance Philosophy, it is currently concentrated in three main sources: the website of the Research Network for the field of Performance Philosophy, available at <<http://performancephilosophy.ning.com/>>; Palgrave Macmillan's 20-book series on the subject available at <<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14558>>; and especially the *Performance Philosophy Journal* <<https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal>>, an international online journal published since 2015.
- ⁵ Adrien Baillet, his first biographer, refers the origin of the argument to a series of dreams the author had in 1619 and which he recorded in his diaries.
- ⁶ The *Crisis of Representation* is the crisis of modern epistemology as well, manifesting itself in various fields: from metaphysics to aesthetics – as well as politics. We live in the age of Nihilism, i.e.: an indigent and spectacular time when simulacrum seems to have replaced real even through “fake news”, which I cannot help but mention it, although it will not be discussed in this paper. Nonetheless, it is curious to note that modernity, in the age of technique, has tensioned fiction and reality in such an extreme way that, at the maximum height of its crisis – which, rather than being called postmodern, should be regarded as 'hypermodern': the exaggeration and maximization of (the now empty) categories that we have yet not fully surpassed –, fiction reached its maximum power, given that representation no longer “needs” to correspond to anything real. The *great metaphysical guarantor* was not the only thing that disappeared. *The baby seems to have been thrown away with the bath water*, one could say. So, if this age of technique is the age of indigence, is it also the age in which we would have lost the final link between representation and the thing being represented? How to get out of such *Aporia*?
- ⁷ Stuart Grant takes Heidegger's appropriation of Greek *alètheia* as “a revealing example”: “*Heidegger's characteristic phenomenological gesture*” can be reduced “to a performative attitude. [...] It is clear that even in these earliest writings and

teachings, Heidegger, in his redefinition of the Greeks, was attempting to solve the problem of the ontological difference through a turn to the as yet unrealised concept of the performative” (Grant, 2019, p. 77).

- ⁸ It is important to note that there is a Neo-Latin ambivalence (therefore, existing in Portuguese and which we cannot avoid) related to the use of the term representation, which finds its origin in the *repraesentatio* from medieval philosophy. This question has more peculiar nuances in German, since there is a differentiation between *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung*, concepts that can both be translated by representation in Portuguese depending on the context. *Darstellung* is generally related to theatrical making (and the concepts of aesthetics in general) as presentation, whereas *Vorstellung*, in turn, is more restricted to representation as mental or propositional representation, an idea as “representational truth”. Representation here is used, as in Portuguese, either as the theatrical representation or as the propositional representation – the one which stands in the basis of logical truth –, both altogether.
- ⁹ A remark here is necessary: *immediacy of presence* refers to the possibility of understanding in the Heideggerian sense of *Befindlichkeit* (sometimes translated as *state-of-mind*, or *disposedness* or even *affectivity*) and of *Verstehen* (*understanding*): an immersive experience of the world, pre-theoretical (and as so, pre-predicative) – the understanding, “in a grasp”, of the horizon of a shared referential world, a network for intelligibility that he calls a totality of involvements, as an *affective atmosphere* (*Stimmung*) that resonates among those who share them. We *feel* the world before we interpret it, and we live in the twilight of its ambience. In this sense, to think of the immediacy of presence as a rapture distances itself from the modern, dichotomous metaphysical worldview: we are *in* the world, we *feel* the world, and we are as we feel, without separation or possibility other than being this openness that perpass us. Heideggerian philosophy works here as a starting point for us to think of a possibility of *truth* that is not simply representation, but truth as pure appearance or poetic unveiling of being: *alètheia*. To think from what presents itself is to think necessarily from this non-metaphysical horizon, what also allows us to reclaim the meaning of words corroded alongside western tradition, such as *rapture*, *body*, *presence* – words which now point out no longer into some empty transcendence but into pure immanence (Heidegger, 1977; 1984; 1995).
- ¹⁰ And with that we also move away from Gumbrecht (2004) and re-approach Heidegger’s late writings (1977; 1994).

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