

Corporal Action and Philodrama in Philosophical Practice

Comments about ICPP 2021

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Both of us have participated as listeners and as presenters at the 16th ICPP II online in 2021. Mike Roth wanted to report in his seminar week on PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE at the University of Konstanz about David Sumiacher's well visited workshop (28.07.2021) Philosophical practices with CORPORAL ACTION. It was an online session without slides but with 2 glasses and water.

At the beginning of the workshop we had time for a short welcome. David Sumiacher took his time to welcome almost everyone who appeared on the screen of the meeting. Then he gave a quite short introduction: movements of our bodies come into being before we can do speech-movements, play language-games.

David Sumiacher pointed to the 3 dimensions (aspects) of Subject, Inter-subjectivity and Materiality, and he combined that with 3 ways in which corporal activities play a role for us.

1. We perceive corporal actions when others act
2. We express ourselves in corporal action and performing them we impress others
3. We interact with corporal actions

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Incorporating exercises with corporal action will give more life to philosophical practice.

PRACTICE

The participants were asked to have 2 glasses ready before them. Also water (or something else).

To survive long online meetings many of us had something to drink in reach anyway. Place the two glasses before you and think, "Who am I in the world?" Make a corporal action with the glasses and the water to express your thought! Andrè showed an empty glass and a full glass. In dialogue with David, who opened the exchange up to the audience, Andrè declared: the empty glass is the past and its content is gone. During ongoing conversation– he states that there is no need to go back to the past. With an argument that he might need some "water" in the future he is moved by Taisiya to pour some water of the glass representing the present time into the empty glass.

Irina drank one glass in one go, turned it upside down and showed everyone that this glass is empty now. Pia proceeded to fill the water from one glass to the other. David turned to Yamini from New Delhi. It turned out that she had a "glass" of (cold?) milk and a glass of water, warmer than the milk. She would not mix it. One she connected with ratio. One with emotion. "Both nourish" David: "What do you think will happen, if you mix (ratio and emotion)"? "Feel free just to mix a very little bit of the water into your milk!" She did this (for the first time) – with a tiny bit. David laughed and she responded, "It's enough". David: "You like your emotions". Pia commented, "...there are these two, but you are 1 being" David would come back to this remark later when he suggested to Yamini to try to fill all the water – taking her time – into the milk. During the time of the workshop she did so and asked about it she said: "Yes, I drank it all – it tasted very thin!". Taisiya gave this meaning to her 2 glasses. She pointed to a glass with more content and declared, "I for myself" (closer to her) and the other glass in more distance to her body, "I for others" Elena comments: "Taisiya considers her resources."

Very positive feedback in the discussion. The power of the metaphor. Hope to use them better now in one's philosophical practice. Little symbols may lead to big questions. It's good to do this in a group

bigger than 2. Acting with glasses like this is a good exercise – in philosophical practice. (End of report)

David Sumiacher to Mike Roth: "Thank you very much for that wonderful summary of my workshop. I hope I have answered your question about "what role or part did corporal actions have in what we did". Sometimes we think of corporal actions and we consider that to work with them there has to be a great movement but this is not always the case. What I think is that they must have great significance even if they are subtle, they must incorporate a great tension, involve a strong magnitude of the process even if they are mere "movements with the hands." This also leads us to think that there are more critical and other more creative corporal actions (the drama that you work with, for example, is more creative and, in general, that is why it may involve "broader" movements). When the work is more critical (more like a group philosophical consulting, more prickly, less "loose", let's say), then sometimes the movements are more determined, specific, etc. For me both forms are good and have a lot of potential and of course they can be combined."

Was this a practical exercise on CORPORAL action?

In his reply David first made the point that perceiving is also corporal action (see 1 on page) and admitted that in live meetings there would often be more "corporal action", also in the sense of acting as interacting (cf. no. 3 above). Doing something with our glasses gave points of departure for philosophizing about us and "the world".

For a panel organized by Lydia Amir in July 27th 2021 at ICPP event, with title: ***Philosophical Practice and the Arts***, Mike Roth had put together this contribution.

PHILODRAMA in philosophical practice?

Drama happens at the beginning of the European philosophical tradition. The death of Socrates is the kernel of a tragedy and the comedy of Aristophanes, *THE CLOUDS*, - starring: the philosopher - is a stepping-stone to it.

The German word for >drama< is SchauSpiel. Let us start with the second half. >Spiel< as in Wittgenstein's SprachSPIEL (language-game) refers to an interaction, and in turn, >acting< can be used as a translation

for >Schauspielerei<, what actresses / actors do in the theatre (im Schauspielhaus) or in a film. The first part of the compound word >Schauspiel< bears similarity to (a) “show”. Most of this seems to be relevant to some degree to philodrama as a philosophical practice. My example in the following snapshot and its connection to a quote from a famous painting (The Death of Socrates, DAVID 1787) may also be understood as a TALKING SOCIAL SCULPTURE.



I propose the format of philodrama to re-liquefy philosophy (its history primarily as a collection of written texts) in shared philosophizing. Re-enacting the image as a living sculpture:



Jo Magrean observed this through the lens of his video-camera and directed our set-up so that everyone playing a role was "in the picture".

This is clearly visible in the first part of the video. Setting the stage and recruiting participants go hand in hand here. The cameraman gives the signal and the PHILODRAMA WITH SOCRATES begins freestyle (transcribed & translated in the next extracts, from <https://streaming.uni-konstanz.de/talks-und-events/2018/philodrama/>):

"Flee shall I, O Kriton?

Flee, while there is time!

We are in no hurry. Look: here is the cup. The Athenians want me to leave this life.

But you know you still have a chance --the chance to drink this cup. That is the law. [...]

But your fellow citizens, they still need you!

You have listened to me a lot, O Kriton. Did I not say that one must think of one's own soul? To strive for a good life? Think of yourself!

O Socrates, but here is the last possibility.

Sure, the law speaks for you and against you.

But we need you here in Athens - even longer!

O friends, why did I send away this Xanthippe and my son that we might not complain but philosophise?

Only now do I understand you, O Socrates!"

About Authors:

David and Mike had met 2016 at the 14th ICPP in BERN, Switzerland. As a member of philopraxis.ch, Mike and the co-ordinator of the mainly German speaking network (of Swiss, German & sometimes Austrian philosophical practitioners) Detlef Staude, chaired the meeting in which the person, who was responsible for the 15th ICPP should be elected. And the winner was – David Sumiacher of America Latina (Mexico/Argentina). Both of us have participated as listeners and as presenters at the 16th ICPP II online in 2021.