Words

END (2020)

"end"

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Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki
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Welcome everyone. Welcome again, to the Debut Professorial Lecture by Tero Nauha. The first appearance, but still it seems like a rehearsed repetition, and therefore not the original, and at least not raw. Nevertheless, it is a debut appearance, with an end in view.

In this lecture, we will not encounter a cavalcade of the highlights of Tero Nauha's artistic explorations, or recapitulations of the most well-formed academic achievements. It seems that such things have been omitted and obliterated. It seems that this lecture hovers more around the topic of performance art than around making a clear visionary statement on what performance art should be in the twenty-first century. Instead, this is a lecture on the noise — in French, *bruit* — that surrounds our clear and nuanced thoughts, and that deforms our focus. Like the uninvited apparitions of the night: mistmares and the unsought crowd.

Each past moment is present in the present, whilst each past moment is still present in itself, with another past moment being present in that past present to our contemporary, shared moment. That past is ever so partially reiterated as past in our present moment, and yet none of it will ever be obliterated or forgotten. It is all in the pure past, Henri Bergson would say.

This is at least a slightly disconcerting or even obscure idea of the present and the past. As if nothing has ever happened, or as if everything would all happen at once. It seems so nonsensical and irrational, and disturbing to common and good sense. We are here, now. There are no ghosts or apparitions in the room. You may ask yourself: Why all this philosophizing? Wasn't he supposed to talk about performance art, the art of presence and pedagogy? Or you may wonder about the slightly

gloomy title of the lecture: “the end”. Will this be a lecture about the Anthropocene or the End of Capitalism?

The anthropologist Marilyn Strathern asks in her essay “Property, Substance and Effect”:

“[What] time is the anthropologist in? […] One of the times Euro-Americans may find themselves in has so to speak only just happened for them. But it may have ‘happened’ long ago in Papua New Guinea. I wonder if some of the considerations […] might not *anticipate* certain future economic directions in Euro-American quests for ownership.”[1]

Her point is not to claim that the Hagen people in Papua New Guinea would have some amazing capacity to foresee later markets, but rather to ask how we conceptualize the past, present and future. How many futures are there? Are there multiple futures, or is the single future a multiplicity? Our quest for life, culture and survival seems as apocalyptic as ever, and presses us not to think about what we have in common but rather to wonder, as Patrice Maniglier puts it: “how do we differ in the way we identify what we have in common”? Maniglier answers: “The truth is that human beings differ precisely in the way they identify what they have in common! The common is the point of division and misunderstanding.”[2]

LIFE OF TERO

What, then, might you have in common with Tero Nauha? How to identify, if at all, with those commonalities, with this ordinariness? Maybe it’s the birthdate, May 16, or the decade, the 1970s, or maybe the birthplace, Hyvinkää. Could the common be what you assume about Tero: gender, ethnicity, class? Maybe it’s the education to become an artist, in Finland, Poland and the Netherlands — or, for those with a more specific commonality, in Lahti, Poznan and Amsterdam. Could it be the very defining principle of the academic career of the doctoral degree in the arts? There are so very few of them in Finland that this could be a rather determinative common denominator. At the same time, all these points in common can instead be points of division.

Or in a more performative and also more playful way, we could look at the noise around Tero Nauha. Should we have an autobiographical perspective? Maybe the noise could define the divisive common or the common division more clearly.

Like “8 Million Stories” by Kurtis Blow and Run DMC from 1985, or

“Let’s Dance” by David Bowie from 1983, or maybe it’s this one

“Levoton tuhkimo” by Dingo from 1984.

Or maybe it’s “Le Freak” by Chic from 1979?

Yet it makes us wonder if the point here is rather to regard the significant propositions for performance in the field. When did the performance begin?

If it didn’t start here, at least it’s clear that some of the most performative common protocols appear through popular culture. In a scathing manner, you can regard how popular culture appropriates more radical movements — literally — with eighties musicals like *Break Dance*, *Beat Street*, *Fame*, *Flashdance* and *Footloose*. Then all that weird British synthpop from that period: was that all just “commercialization” of the radical youth movement? Those kids in Hyvinkää — and those other small-town boys who tried to learn by imitation the B-boy moves from the VHS tapes — were they just suckers who gobbled up a bleached and etiolated version of the *original* performatives from elsewhere? The suburb of Paavola in Hyvinkää wasn’t the Bronx or Alphabet City. If we look at the contextual differences, we can quickly conclude that the reiteration is for the duped duplicators, the dupes.

And truly the search for the common or the original is the key to etiolated cultures. But all that bleach, hairspray, eyeliner and graffiti — all those DIY piercings, legwarmers, faux spandex and VHS tapes — all those trips to the Decadence shop in Helsinki — nuclear fear, peace demonstrations, the moment of the end — yes, all these things were both common identifications and points of misunderstanding. Then mix all this with splatter films, mopeds, brawls, anxiety, heat. It wasn’t merchandise, popular culture or noise that were etiolated and bleached but any search for the original that might manage in the act of the search to create an extra twist for the performatives. Never having attempted this search, all those stillborn performances forewent the increasing cadaverousness of etiolation. A cadaver isn’t cadaverous — it’s not deathlike but dead.

So we shouldn’t put together only scaling maps or lineages. Even now, we should create cuts where the parts don’t add up.

We’ve never been dramatic.

ILLUSIONS OF THE FINITE

Referencing noise, Tara Rodgers notes how the “boundary between fiction and lived reality can be an auditory illusion that masks the real struggles over life and death.”[3] This noise bothers us because it’s

not a sign of the infinite but the sound of heat, troubles, partial experience, immaturity, amateurism and enthusiasm. It is never "that" thing it seeks to suggest, and it hides what it tries to evoke.

A fixed assumption, however, serves as a variant for artistic education and artistic practice. This is the assumption that the "raw materials" need to be "cooked", need to grow mature, in order to become more elaborate in the context of present temporalities.[4] Some people say that this process of "handling" the materials helps bring the artist into being. If this is so, it's largely because the invariant concept of "art" is fixed, even though it may accept a certain amount of variation. From this mature point of view toward the objects, events and performances of life, even the feigned, distorted, doomed and fabulated materials are necessarily in a process of supersession. In this practice, an artist makes sense as a figure coming to terms with the finite consciousness of subjectivity confronted with the infinite and invariant position of the "art", "performance" or "knowledge". I presume there are at least a few people in the room right now who don't disagree with this progression-based concept of art.

Inadvertently we feign, because we don't know what we don't know. We don't perform this way because we lack some understanding of the truth but because we rather sustain a posture — since postures are what matter in the arts. Truth or art are not invariants, but only some of the variants at play. The call for cooking the raw materials is the call for the refinement and rendering of those materials — when, explicitly, rendering is the process that not only signifies the mimetic act of making a copy, but also "the industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains,"[5] as Nicole Shukin writes in *Animal Capital*. It is cooking and recycling the remains of the raw material — all that noise.

Or to test another register, let's consider how we may create a culture, or the concept of a human, through "fabricating slaves and monsters,"[6] as Jean-Paul Sartre writes in the preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* — or as Louis Chude-Sokei writes in *The Sound of Culture*, through fabricating slaves, monsters and robots.[7] They arrive like alien visitors — like *grave robbers* from outer space. They need me to fabricate them a ventriloquist doll — but for whose voice? The illusion of a voice is both the rendered voice from the fabricated ventriloquist doll and the "scapegoat-carrier of all alternative potentialities that are repressed in the system […] the representation of all desire that flows outside the normal order," as Sylvia Wynter writes of American minstrel shows.[8] The ventriloquist position, if artists would take it, is like the position of a joker — that heretic of truth — and yet it wouldn't be enough, because it would be nothing but a fabrication in the machine.

WASTE OF TIME

All that noise, however, those errant signals, that spurious information in artistic practice and in culture, are easily read through a dialectics of finite and infinite, Apollonian and Dionysian, discord and

harmony, orthodoxy and heresy. Noise is violence and stains the fabric. It is the improper. But is it only so because there is an invariant of *dialectical* or *dual* in place? This is how we can distinguish an etiolated performance — rumor, hearsay, gossip — from information. The proper practices are, from the viewpoint of the administrative performance, regarded as a waste of time. This is when the consultants are called in (no offense).

Yet it's exactly these miasmic discords, rumors and partial educations that we're explicitly working with when we're doing artistic practice — explicitly, when we *do practice* and not when we're *doing art*! Before the development of the modern study of germs, illnesses were thought to travel through a bad smell, *mal aria,* like noises in the urban environment, like gossip, rumors, violence and bad language. In the 18thand early 19th centuries this theory led to the excessive attempts to cover foul air with strong perfumes, scents and smoking tobacco. Ill people were sent away from the "noisy" and foul cities to the fresh and calm air of the countryside — to the pastoral Arcadia stylized into a mad rigidity centuries earlier by that very embodiment of refined distinctions, Sir Philip Sydney.[9] Later artists would put more emphasis on the noise and the smell, which relies on Arcadia even when Arcadia is unnamed: the urban dust heaps of *Our Mutual Friend*, the "Unreal City" of *The Waste Land*, the terror-haunted rectilinear prospects in Bely's *Petersburg*.

In our contemporary understanding of artistic practices, such dialectics should have no place. We shouldn't pinkwash, bleach or avoid certain topics, because we then retract into the practice of acquiring a refined taste, sensitive nostrils for *mal aria* and for the acute sense of the meaningful. At the same time, in rebuking these dialectical positions, the invariant position of the "revolutionary noise" will have no foundation either.

No performance or event is a waste of time. Not that everything would be holistically and equally meaningful. And not that anything can be regarded as performance in the sense of all things in the world being flattened out on a field, but in the sense that anything can be invented as performance. Anything, even speculative things, like the joke that Wittgenstein tells where a man is saying "5, 1, 4, 1, 3 — finished!" and then claims he has just finished reciting the complete decimal expansion of π backwards — or the other version, where he says, "'I'm just writing down the last digit of π and it's a 2'".[10]

TAKING PEOPLE SERIOUSLY

Now I would like to look at the context of performance pedagogy. I will do this through a viewpoint of "invention". In his book *Invention of Culture,* Roy Wagner writes how the invention of culture is the event when an ethnographer aims to rework his concept of "culture" through taking account of the

discrepancies in what he witnesses people doing. Specifically, he isn't regarding "what" the people are doing but "why" they're doing it. This reworking continues "until its analogies seem more appropriate or 'accurate'" so that "the idea of 'culture' will eventually assume a sophisticated and articulate form."[11] We could find some similarity between our thinking on how we invent artistic practice and our thinking on how we invent the future.

We regard culture through our assumptions of "cultivation" and conventions. Writing about Wagner in their book *The Ontological Turn*, Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen note how "people order and makes sense of themselves and the world around them."[12] We apply similar conventions and ordering principles to "man", art, practice, work and so forth. Holbraad and Pedersen go on to define anthropology as "the study of man 'as if' there were culture."[13] Culture is the convention that organizes and stabilizes the world, often in contrast with nature. But what if, as Wagner argues, culture is an invention? The meaning of culture is the precondition for expression in the conventional manner, but for Wagner this is turned upside down: the meaning is created in departure from our assumptions. Meaning doesn't add up to what is already there. Rather, it is the process itself that does the inventing. For instance, if we consider thinking, where we surely have assumptions and conventions, we might regard performance as an expression of thought preconditioned by thought. But to follow Wagner's propositions, it is performance that invents thinking, or rather performance-thinking.

What follows is that we soon realize we haven't been taking these inventions seriously, but only proceeding through assumptions and conventions. We're blinded by the difference concealed within equivocality. We silence people when we don't take them seriously. For instance, when we call some practices systems of "belief" or when we ask questions like "why might Cuban diviners 'believe'" things described in the Holbraad field studies on Ifá diviners. For these diviners, certain powder is power, and the power lies in the powder.[14] If we regard this through "belief", we're not taking seriously what people say and do but merely correlating those acts with our assumptions.

So in the context of performance, performance pedagogy and practices, what if we would take people seriously? And if we already do, then when do we encounter the limit, where we see only "beliefs"? How does performance think? How could a thing equal a concept, instead of all concepts equaling a specific thing in the world? Holbraad and Pedersen conclude that in order for us to take people and things seriously, we should regard how things (powders) are motions — the inventions are motions.[15] One practice is to direct these particles and motile things, which we might call performance thinking.

INFINITE PARTICLES

In the 1920s Arthur Compton and Louis de Broglie performed their concurrent early experiments on the behaviour of electrons and photons, and concluded that light behaves as both a particle and a wave. For quantum physics this proposed a dual aspect of particle and wave being present simultaneously in matter and in radiation. A quantum particle doesn't fit the classical system of physics. Small things don't behave like smaller versions of larger objects. Subatomic particles don't behave like waves, billiard balls or anything else we might have seen. The *real* world doesn't behave like the *everyday* world we're experiencing.

I'm not proposing an analogue of quantum physics with the consciousness or mind — not suggesting that with some mental technique we could control dust or powder as if reality were a massive quantum computer, waiting for our intervening invention of a new world. Rather, we might use quantum mechanics as a paradigm. The real world doesn't follow a classical model of cause and effect, but is rather complementary with different perspectives. An electron in the experiment cannot be traced: all that can be said is where it is *likely going to be*. Even in principle we cannot predict the position of a particle. Still, as Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw write: "What we can predict, with absolute precision, is the *probability* that a particle will be found in a particular place if we look for it."[16]

But when Werner Heisenberg writes his assumption that particles are real in the materialistic sense, this will always lead us astray.[17] The particles don't have the ontology of ball, microphone or cloud. Here, the fault lies in the connection between a concept and the thing that the concept supposedly equals. Without some apparatus, we can never trace a thing that would equal a concept. We can never, for instance, trace a subatomic particle that would equal a concept such as a ball, a microphone, a cloud. The apparatus is the key: the manner of framing, administrating, managing and instituting. Yet it's never a question of a belief. We're dealing with unending motility: "things" are motions. These motions are "infinitions", which doesn't mean that they're infinite, but that things are in *infinitive* forms. Even their conceptualizations are motility. The concepts and things have a capacity for motion. What then are the relations and exchanges, and what are the tokens? The centralized and standard equivocations lose ground. Here we could see the connections with peer-to-peer networks, without a centralized hub, though these connections were already partly visible in the first Arpa networks and internets.

APOCALYPSE NOW!

In one of the most famous films on finite-infinite relationships, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, most of us recall the beginning of the movie and the images of helicopters, the Doors song "The End" and the word "horror". An "artistic" scene that speaks of war and political terror in Vietnam, where we could say the theme is to "master the art of being finite": a drop in the ocean, or a "face drawn in

sand at the edge of the sea."[18] Isn't this what good art is about, dealing with the paradox of finitude in life? Facing the endless change? Facing our own trash.

Why are such statements of truth, art and life so limited? Because they assume too much, and because they present a totality where we fail to regard that all finite things keep returning differently. All truths are variants. "The single truth is simply false," writes the poet Heather McHugh; "the truth is never more than an example."[19] Artistic practice is closer to lying and partial truths than to wisdom. This practice is partially refined ignorance — a posture if you like, and not a totalizing position.

While I write this short lecture, I listen to some noise from my headphones, which I often do when I need to build an artificial space — or hold a posture, if you like. Yes, I'm rather addicted to popular culture, and my mind isn't very sophisticated. I reference here the melancholia of the End via the voice of Jim Morrison, and then the noise in my ears with the voice of the performance artist Cosey Fanni Tutti and the distorted electronics of CoH, aka Ivan Pavlov. "Fuck it," she says. Repeatedly. At the same time, when *Apocalypse Now* was released, those words defined the whole generation: Fuck it! Or No Future! It was Maggie. It was Ronnie. There Is No Alternative. Fuck It! Afghanistan. IRA. Khomeini. Fuck It! Muppets. *Charlie's Angels*. *The Love Boat*. *Little House on The Prairie*. Fuck It!

It's the horror of being human. But if there's anything we can learn from the post-humanities, it's that partially cooked questioning begins where we don't know what a human is. We can have a full certainty of the *probability* of what a human is, but only in a particular condition and reality. We can then say that in certain conditions — such as a theatre stage or a performance in a situated context — we can *invent* and *create* certain probabilities for what *humans* are, for what other beings may perform, for what kind of posture they may have. This I regard as *artistic practice.* An expression of ignorance, privilege and partial truths that may invent what *artistic practice* is. Not a potential invitation, but *infinition*: a motility. *No future!* is not a conclusion, but an *infinition*.

HERESY

Do we have a proper view to the future? To that future which we can render in protocols, calibrations, maps and prognoses? It's surely something unforeseen, but some things remain more probable than others. With certain concepts and tools we can define our relationship with and distance from the future; we have a map with some uncharted territories in it, but still we have a map and a purview of the days to come.

In the studio, on the workbench, in the archives, a room with a closed door, or with a few invited guests, an artistic practice doesn't render a map, but it's moving. Some may tolerate vast territories of

dormant ignorance, like burnt forests and islands, where others want to focus all their practice on defining precisely only a street corner, or even fungi. All of these are a purview of the future. The future isn't there, but it's already here, we're living it — and not even creating it. It really isn't something we imagine or render utopic, but in the artistic processes we *are* in the futures — always in the pluriverse. Bergson would say: "Your perception […] in truth, every perception is already memory. Practically, we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future."[20] We can add that the pure past — which is more than my singular memories — is already in the future, driven by the weight of our past, which precisely is not the generalized past. Artistic practice is in that past of the future, which has been customarily called a fabulation or practice for the people to come. Deleuze writes: "It is […] the future as such […] man without a name."[21] He continues, in a slightly more enigmatic manner, to describe how the present is the repeater, like a passive habit: the past is the "repetition itself", or the pure past of memory. It is the "ground which causes the passing of one present and the arrival of another," but then it is "the future that which is repeated", where the present is destined to be effaced — in the final end of time.[22] Furthermore, Deleuze writes: "We do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat. Moreover — which amounts to the same thing — we do not disguise because we repress, we repress because we disguise, and we disguise by virtue of the determinant centre of repetition. Repetition is no more secondary in relation to a supposed ultimate or originary fixed term than disguise is secondary in relation to repetition."[23]

So what we can gather for artistic practice here is that the future is not necessarily the weight of habit, past, history or truth. Rather, the future is its "totality" and so, in the end, the future is without identity. It is not our destiny — it is the practice, and the practice is the future. It is for the people to come, and we can't foresee its identity: no identity is proclaimed for it. In practice, we are in a future that has no name.

CONDUCT

Institutions need protocols so they can function, or so they can institute. Protocols, then, are forms that create cultures. Writing on the ECSA, the Economic Space Agency, Akseli Virtanen says we need to rethink the "economic conventions as protocols, and thus as a design space […] we are creating *a language for new economic expression* […] a peer-to-peer value creation system […] These protocols — this language — allow their participants to set the terms of finance, of economic interaction, and valuation […] the most difficult thing to understand about a cryptoeconomy is that it has the potential to cause an irreversible change in what we understand as 'the economy': making the economy *itself* a design space." [24]

Why does this matter for performance, or for practice? Here, at this moment, the performance is in the text and in the utterance of this text. It is a design of space, but not only through linguistic design of space—also through performatives, or speech acts. The economy of practice is the space. The practice as an invention and infinition, where value is created through peer-to-peer protocols.

For the early capitalist, the rule of conduct is articulated by Erasmus in the *Education of a Christian Prince* from 1516: "raise your children for future rule as if it were your desire to be succeeded by a better prince".[25] Today, even as we often continue to accept this rule, we have a still greater incentive to disregard it. We don't have a necessary succession, merely a prediction of the probability of whether an artistic practice will be valued by our "successors" at all. Moreover, what is the value of a child, anyway? Or, is it priceless? As Viviana Zelizer write on the social meaning of money, there are special monies, or token, an not only one — not all dollars are equal.[26] Money is like powder, also. It is not indifferent to values, and therefore Zelizer asks rather, which money than how much money?[27] In this topic, you may want to look more deeply into the writings of Zelizer on the relationship between money, power, sex and the purchase of intimacy.

The probability is the protocol for the practice, and allows us to take seriously the powder of power in each value creation system. Each protocol will design a space for a particular powder to act, but each protocol will also need that space for the peer-to-peer value creation system. I cannot ever define if there will be any successor for my acts, since each peer-to-peer system is bound by its own probabilities and economies. It's a creative act of administration of space. One key to success for the early capitalist and bureaucratic organizations, such as the Dutch Admiralty boards, was in the innovative management of time, space and relations. This introduction of new hierarchies for work, time, leisure, property and consumption developed the working class, and remains the basis for modern businesses and institutions, as Pepijn Brandon writes on *War, Capital, and the Dutch State*. This is why the question of protocols, value creation and peer-to-peer creations hold the utmost importance here. [28]

The context for artistic practice is not only in decolonizing the practice itself, but designing a space and protocols that are no longer maritime or territorial, but instead act in the infinitive to invent culture and expression. What is being used in the practice, who are the designated users, in which allocated system that controls the expressions, tokens and infinitives; and what are the sources of these in the practice.

NEW FUTURES?

It is customary to think, in our everyday circumstances, about the end of the world, extinction, post-capitalism, the death of the author, and so on. Now it is close to the moment when you'll think about the end of the lecture — unless you've thought about it for some time now. I would say that despite all of these weighty issues, the most crucial concern for artists and artistic practices is the concern for the end of thought. Not even the end of the human. I do not mean, at all, the end of "philosophical thought" or academic culture, but simply the end of variance of thought.

What follows are protocols, tactics and practices, where the thinking may seem to presume that the end had already happened — flat thinking, as Georges Perec has proposed for the writing practice. The wish for a good and meaningful life may have already passed, and yet the Japanese noise band The Boredoms has produced for over two decades materials that definitely aren't boring. This is the long aftertaste of the apocalypse, which releases practice from hopelessness.

Because the end is not the start of something new. It's only a point of indeterminacy. A point of invention with a multiplicity of variants and perspectives. It's like the particles, whose location can be known only as to where they *approximately* may appear, where the black swans may dwell. We don't only invent the future: we invent the concept of the future itself, again and again, in our practices, in our events and in our performances.

Then what about that dust and hairspray and powder? Those moves that invent, those things that are motile concepts? The performance that doesn't assume? How to take it seriously, that indeterminacy? What, in fact, is our powder?

FINISH

Let's cut the story short. The question lingers, and should. Is this the end, properly speaking? Or just an eclipse or fadeout from one type of performance to another type? To another mixture or melange of things that matter and stuff that's too noisy?

Now I invite you to join the next part of the Debut Professorial Lecture, and come with me to Tori.

Please, follow me.

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[1] Strathern 1999, 150-1

[2] Maniglier 2017, 116

[3] Rodgers 2010, 8

[4] See Virginia Woolf’s 16 August 1922 diary entry complaining that Joyce’s *Ulysses* is an “illiterate, underbred book” by “a self-taught working man” whose writing is therefore “raw,” a conclusion that leads her to dismiss the entire novel: “When one can have the cooked flesh, why have the raw?” In fairness to Woolf, she wrote this after reading only the first 200 pages, and noted that she wasn’t really in a position to judge yet. (Woolf 1978, 189).

[5] Shukin 2009, 20

[6] Sartre in Fanon 2004, 26

[7] Chude-Sokei 2016, 3

[8] Wynter 1979, 154-55

[9] See, Dobson 2007

[10] Wittgenstein quoted in Moore 2019, 42; Wittgenstein 1975, 166

[11] Wagner 2016

[12] Holbraad and Pedersen 2017, 76

[13] Ibid., 79

[14] Ibid., 221

[15] Ibid., 225

[16] Cox and Forshaw 2012, 44

[17] Heisenberg 1971, 119

[18] Foucault 2002, 422

[19] ”Letter,” McHugh 1977, 22

[20] Bergson 1991, 150

[21] Deleuze 2004, 113

[22] Ibid., 117

[23] Ibid., 130

[24] Virtanen 2019

[25] Erasmus 1963, 141

[26] Zelizer 2011, 93

[27] Ibid., 98.

[28] Brandon 2015, 192

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