

Nothing in Common.

Collaborations, Relations, Processes and the Actuality of Artistic Labour¹

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There is no doubt that today we are witnessing a discursive fetishisation of the concept of *collaboration*. My first aim here will be to shed some light on the reasons of this phenomenon. In the last decade, in Europe at least, we witness a massive attempt for discursive articulation of the notion of collaboration in the frame of art events, festivals, as well as symposia, publications, and various formats offering platforms for experimental artistic and critical work, as well as for debate between artists and theorists. Of course this discourse is corresponding to and entangled with a set of collaborative practices, undoubtedly involving new horizons of expectation and new forms of regulation of artistic labor (in projects, workshops, labs, works in progress) while being related to the reemergence of philosophical and (quasi-)political concepts like community and collectivity.²

¹ The first draft of this essay was presented at the conference *The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labor*, organized by Bojana Cvejić, Stefan Apostolou-Hölscher, and Bojana Kunst at Frankfurt Lab in June 2014. A longer version of the essay was developed under the title „The Collaborative Turn in Contemporary Dance: Performance Capitalism and the Emancipation of Artistic Production“, in Noémie Solomon (ed.), *DANSE: A Catalogue*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2015. I express my gratitude to Noémie Solomon for her precious comments and suggestions, which also affect some aspects of the present version.

² Authors like Bojana Cvejić, Bojana Kunst, Ric Allsopp, and Claire Bishop formulated critical accounts on the rise of the practices of collaboration, especially in connection to other modalities of the common, like the concept of “collective,” dominant in the 1960s and 1970s. See Bojana Cvejić, “Collectivity? You mean collaboration?“, http://republicart.net/disc/aap/cvejic01_en.htm; Bojana Kunst, “Prognosis on Collaboration,” <http://www.howtotothingsbytheory.info/2010/05/13/bojana-kunst-prognosis-on-collaboration/>; Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” in *Artforum* (2006). On her turn the philosopher Gesa Ziemer introduced the concept of

I shall start with observing the question of collaboration on the level of its etymology: from the Latin verb *collaborare*, “work with,” (from *com-*, “with” and *labore*, “to work”), the term “collaboration” relates to two crucial questions for actuality: on the one hand, the question of labor and, on the other, the question of artistic subjectivity. It is clear that the term “collaboration” implies common labor and from that point of view we need, before even approaching the issue of collective creation, or, even more, of collective subjectivity, to consider and reflect upon the structural transformations of labor, or more generally of work, in neoliberal era. Of course, these questions are central not only for contemporary art discourse and practice, but more generally for contemporary political philosophy and economic theory. However, in this essay I will focus my attention mostly on the questions of artistic production in the field of performance.

When issues of artistic collaboration are discussed, they often are extracted from their economical reality. For that reason I will try to extend the scope of the discussion on collaboration to the horizon in which the main conceptual operators are subjectivity, labor, community, but also, implied through them, the questions of power as well as that of organization, control, regulation: regulation of labor force, regulation of modes of production, and financial regulations. In this short essay there is no need to go back to the classical texts of Marxist theory in order to clarify the conceptual aspects of my proposal. Let me only remind a common place of critical Marxist tradition, namely the fact that the modes of artistic production were directly related to and influenced by modes of economic production. The emblematic examples for such connection, at least after Walter Benjamin’s proposals in the 1930s, are the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century.

The performative utopias of the common

“complicity” in direct connection to artistic labor: Notroff, Oberhänsli, and Ziemer (eds.), *Komplizenschaft – Andere Arbeitsformen. (K)ein Leitfaden*, Zürich: Institut für Theorie (ith), 2007, while the dance scholar and choreographer Martina Ruhsam published a monograph on dance as collaborative praxis in 2011: Martina Ruhsam, *Kollaborative Praxis: Choreographie*, Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2011.

Obviously, the discourse of what I call the “collaborative turn” is connected to the attempt for experimentation with new forms of subjective organization – with new forms of subjectivity – clearly in dialectical connection with a new concept of community, of the common. There is no need of much analytical inspiration in order to assert that the actual and somewhat symptomatic value of the discursive and practical interest in artistic collaboration is related to the necessity of experimentation with new modalities of the common, of “co-labor,” of “co-operation” (in co-operation we also hear the Latin term for work, “*opus*”), as well as with new modes of practices, new modes of production. Undoubtedly, this is the most powerful aspect of the discursive premises of collaborative practices.

The experimentation with new forms of subjectivity and community was at the very heart of the utopian drive of the early performance art, body art, theater, and dance in the 1960s and the 1970s. In fact, in the last decades, precisely because of this experimentation with new techniques, modes of subjectivation, and forms of production, critical to the dominant mode of production of subjectivity and to the dominant modes of economical production, a sophisticated frame and conditions of possibility of different modes of production, including production of subjectivity – of artistic subjectivities – were established. The discourse of collaboration or cooperation in particular could be seen precisely as one of the major attempts in this direction of experimentation with modes of production, but also with new forms of organization, of creation of techniques and subjectivities.

However, in the same decades, we have also seen contemporary art running the risk of becoming one of the emblematic figures of what I call *performance capitalism*,³ whose distinctive feature is precisely the attempt to monopolize the production of subjectivity, of modes and forms of life. It reduces forms of life to commodities. Thus, what was at stake in contemporary art and especially in the fields of performance and dance – because of the fundamental premises of potentiality of the body for today’s new biopolitical forms – is that we witnessed a curious parallel with processes in contemporary capitalism and its dominant regimes of production and consumption. Therefore, since the standardized notions of organization of work and production collapsed, the critical necessity of this moment is to think this

³ See Boyan Manchev, “Transformance: The Body of Event,” in M. Hochmuth, K. Kruschkova, and G. Schöllhammer (eds.), *It takes place when it doesn't*, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver Verlag, 2006; Boyan Manchev, *The Body-Metamorphosis*, Sofia: Altera, 2007.

situation of radical transformation of modes of production and exchange, but also of power: of power regulation, leading to the transformation of modes of subjectivation.

Hence, we should be aware of the commodification, the reduction to commodity of the utopian visions of collective, related to the experiments in question: namely the reduction of the ideas of new communities to creative lifestyles, inseparable from the tendency of progressive generalization of precarious labor in the new model of creative or, more adequately, *performance* capitalism. As a result, we have at stake the sharp contrast between, on the one hand, the late utopian idea of collaboration, the creation of new “eventful” communities, according to Giulia Palladini’s concept,⁴ believing to step beyond the traditional patterns of modern subjectivity and collective, and, on the other, the embodied economic reality, imposing these new forms.

Connecting People. Relational aesthetic and creative lifestyle

In this context it is difficult to avoid the return to the dominant discourse of the last decade on relations (or to what was so appropriately named “relational aesthetics”).⁵ Of course, Nicolas Bourriaud, who coined and promoted the term, was aiming to formulate a critical tool in order to understand or stimulate a self-explanatory set of contemporary artistic practices. What happened instead, and what very often happens in this tension between theory and praxis, is that this tool became a normative discourse, authoring – and authorizing – new topics for artistic work. As a result, many artists confused the critical instrument with the subject of the critical operation and ended up in *staging* or *performing* relations: doing nothing less but reducing relations to products, or reproducing crypto-substantialist operations. Thus, something that was articulated as and believed to be a critical tool was progressively reduced in the last decade to a new norm – a quite dominant one, if not hegemonic.

In the original phrasing of Bourriaud, relational aesthetics was a paragon of discursive and political eclecticism, very much complying to the taste of the “post-historical” decades after 1989: for instance taking inspiration and referring along the

⁴ Giulia Palladini, “Towards an Idle Theatre: The Politics and Poetics of Foreplay,” *The Drama Review* 56:4 (2012): 97-105.

⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998.

same lines to radical Marxist like Louis Althusser and to crypto-religious philosopher such as Emmanuel Levinas. The ontological, ethical, and political grounds of the project of relational aesthetics remained unclear. Not surprisingly, at the end its discourse was institutionalized as a soft liberal understanding of art as a positive, socially valuable practice: art as social prosthetic, compensating social deficiencies, re-establishing inter-subjective relations, thus bringing a new therapeutic understanding of political action.

The problem is that all this discourse, praising connections and inter-subjective relations, appeared first in the theories of new “creative” capitalism. Such guru of contemporary capitalism as Richard Florida – inspirational figure of what he designated as “creative class,” presented as the emerging class, the emancipatory force inside capitalism – is exalting qualities that were exactly present in the relational discourse.⁶ Bourriaud’s theses on relational aesthetics are – rhetorically at least, and thus discursively – disturbingly close to the ideal of “creative capitalism”: exalting mobility, flexibility, plasticity, fluidity, open connections, networks, leisure productivity, experimentation with the techniques of the subject, etc. Being already flexible and inventive, “creative” capitalism has started to appropriate the potentiality of life to invent new forms in order to inscribe it in the circuit of production. From that point of view, performing capitalism could be seen as the appropriation and the universalization of alternative models of experience developed in the last decades across artistic practices, and in performance art and dance in the first place.

Then the paradox lies in the fact that in the world of performing capitalism, (performing) art risks not only to see its critical potential weakening, but also to find itself, against its will, in the position of the exemplary figure of performing capitalism. Apparently performance in the traditional sense of the term could not accomplish any longer its critical function, which brought it to life as a pioneer artistic practice a few decades ago. It is clear that the discourse of collaboration is something that is strategically elaborated and staged against these realities. However, if it was initially articulated and fostered as discourse of the resistance, today we are undoubtedly witnessing its progressive transformation in a discourse of acceptance. The critical phase is reached when the premise of the discourse and practice of

⁶ Richard Florida, *The Rise Of The Creative Class. And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community And Everyday Life*; New York: Harper Business, 2005.

collaboration is reduced to the dominant structure of production and therefore exploitation.

Structural transformations of the artistic production

What are the reasons of this transition from collaboration being subversive, generative, to being appropriated by capitalist regulations? In order to approach a possible answer to this question, I will present here three crucial aspects of the economic and structural determinations of the collaborative turn:

1. On the one hand, the development of the system of art education, normalizing and making normative creation and modes of artistic production, resulting in excessive number of qualified artists, in a quantitative boom of the market of cultural producers, and accompanied by an ongoing reduction of means. In relation to that, we observe the tendency of a general precarization of artistic labor covered with the comfortable metaphors of nomadism and relationality, and structurally contributing to contemporary art's "process orientation," "project orientation," "collaboration orientation" – to quote some of its language. Hence, generalized precarity is fundamental for understanding the interest in collaboration: the "hard core" economic reality of precarity and structural self-precarization no doubt represent the structural condition of the collaborative turn. In this, neglecting or undermining this dependency is more than naïve: it is cynical.⁷

2. The progressive professionalization, specialization of artistic functions, particularly labor, which represents the major structural premises for the processes of cooperation. However, the opposite is also true: the progressive specialization is in turn dependant on the ongoing tendency of establishing an economy of flexible "cooperative" clusters: clusters of management-production as aesthetic-economic subjects. As a result, we witness the development of jobs supposing not only multiple technical potentialities – specific "virtuosities" – but also multiple, hyper-technological potential: potential for connectivity and translatability, for operation in variable landscape of tasks, experiments, and production.

⁷ See Isabell Lorey, *Die Regierung der Prekären*, Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012; Isabell Lorey, "Governmentality and Self-Precarization. On the normalization of cultural producers," 2006, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en>

3. The transformation of artistic units, collectives and institutions, as well as of the legal status of the artist and the artistic collaborators.

Because issues of collaboration are usually discussed outside of the economic reality, there is a lack of systematic discourse on the artistic units – the artistic group formations, symptomatically called “companies” (term symptomatically replacing “school” or “group”) – theatre companies or dance companies. The companies are not only ensembles of artistic subjectivities, or even *common* subjectivities; they are also and before all economic and legal units. This question is not important only in terms of economy or jurisdiction; it is also crucial for the understanding the structural transformations of artistic subjectivity in relation to artistic production and artistic labor.

Is the production entity traditionally called “the company” the equivalent of the modern factory? Respectively, are the “great artists” of modern dance and theater, from Martha Graham to Pina Bausch, the embodiment of the “big” Romantic artistic subjectivity, the founder and/or the leader of the company as well as the masters of technique, the masters of the forms and the means of production, or, later, the conceptual monopolists of the enterprise, while the members of the company or the performers are the hard-workers, the proletarians of the common work? Are the artists working for the company the structural analogues of the factory workers for the production unit? Or are they artists who work for the super-unit of the Super-artist, the super-subjectivity of the director of the company? These questions cannot be answered by fast analogies and superficial examples; on the contrary, they require in-depth analysis of economic forms and dynamics within modern and contemporary artistic formations, quasi-institutions and institutions, their legal status, the public background of their functioning, etc. What matters here is to emphasize once more the complex grounds of the phenomena of collaboration, as well as to reveal them both as economic reality and field of political-economical forces.

The work of art in the age of its performative (re)production

This raises our awareness of the conditions of the discourse as well as of the practice of collaboration. The discourse of collaboration is something strategically

elaborated and staged against the realities of modern forms of optimization of artistic production. The discourse on collaboration is fostering the idea of encounter of subjectivities: not on individual subjects, agendas, sets of tasks, etc., but on what is happening *between* them. For that reason it implies the idea of contesting the end product. Overcoming the logic of the end-product would mean overcoming the homogeneity, the fake autonomy of the individual-centered production. The discourse on collaboration is with no doubt set as resistance to the demand of constant production, which axiom is: should you exit the circuit of production, you find yourself in the non-being. Therefore discourse on collaboration is responding to the desire to step beyond the patterns of subjective creation, respectively modes of production, established by late modernity. Precisely in this perspective it focuses on the process rather than on the end product. Thus it is part of the dominant trend of contemporary art, reacting to the logic of product orientation, of the “creation of an oeuvre.” The idea of collaboration expressed a very strong will to resist this demand. Nevertheless, instead of repeating critical common places, we should raise our awareness of the conditions of this practice: the awareness of structural determinations that are conditioning it.

Clearly, this orientation is based upon today’s obvious critical accounts on economic and political conditions. More precisely, on the naïve belief that processes, unlike products, have ontologically different position to the circuits of exchange. While the “oeuvre” is clearly there, at hand, while it is present and available and therefore it can and will enter the market circuit in the form of a product, the process would be ungraspable by the circuits of exchange and therefore couldn’t be commodified. Such a belief is very much related to some high points of early performance art theory, especially to Peggy Phelan’s proposals on performance art.⁸ As we know, according to Phelan, because of its ephemeral character, which makes it irreducible to a stable oeuvre and therefore a product, the performance art “piece,” or rather action or practice, has the structural chance to essentially resist its marketable appropriation.

Not surprisingly, today we witness the failure of this theory; however it was fair, in an utopian way, to its objects in the 1960s, 1970s or even in the early 1980s. With a somewhat bitter critical consciousness we could observe now how

⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York: Routledge, 1993.

posthumously the ephemeral, processual performances, not reduced to product or marketable forms and traces, are coming back as ghosts from the past. However these ghosts, the phantoms wandering in the performance venues and contemporary art spaces, are recuperating or even growing anew their flesh, but in the immaterial and inorganic form of capital. We are witnessing an ultimate spectacle: the Last Judgment of value, where there is no value lost. And we understand: what was ephemeral, what was somewhat heroically wasted long time ago, was indeed invested in the future, consciously or not. Rather not. At this point of looking-like-impossible reversibility, capital reaches the level of intensity of performance: *performance capitalism*. In performance capitalism we are close to infinity: it is a mode of production pretending that there is no loss, no waste – no waste of value whatsoever. Yes, here value augments through risk. Hence, the performance capitalist is becoming a Hegelian Master of value: the one who risks finitude in order to acquire value in the infinite.

You know too well what I refer to here; it would be grotesque to even evoke an example which haunts the global cultured society. No, it is not only Marina Abramović at MoMA; much before and throughout Europe, series of important exhibitions, projects, and performances based on the patterns of re-enactment took place. However, in a broader context this tendency acquired publicity, especially in the U.S., through Abramović's re-enactment work, going back to 2002, but mostly through her MoMA retrospective in 2010 as well as the controversial attempt to re-enact scenes from Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) for a fundraising event at LA MoCA in 2011 (criticized in an open letter by Yvonne Rainer). While in the case of the new generation of European and American artists the form of re-enactment expressed the interest in the choreographic and performance structures and techniques from the past, in questions of history, memory and archive, and therefore in forms of subjectivity⁹, in the more spectacular institutional appropriations the re-

⁹ In European context one may think, among other influential works, of important performances and dance pieces like *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupileck* (2006) by Emil Hrvatin alias Janez Janša; the reconstruction of Allan Kaprow's „18 Happenings in 6 Parts”, directed by André Lepecki (2008); *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* (2009) by Fabián Barba; or “ANARCHIV#3: Songs of Love and War” (2011) by deufert&plischke, “reformulating,” according to the artists' term, Wagner's *Nibelungen*. Along the same lines could be quoted important exhibitions like “History Will Repeat Itself. Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary Art” at KW, Berlin (2007-2008); “Moments. A History of Performance in 10 Acts” at ZKM, Karlsruhe (2012); or the project “re.act.feminism – a performing archive” (2011-2013) curated by Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer. These strong proposals were followed by or indebted to theoretical proposals like Rebecca Schneider, *Performing*

enactment became a tool for an ‘Eternal return of the Same’, for performative re-production of ‘classics’ of performance and dance. Thus the trend of the re-enactment, which started as artistic gesture, critical to the tradition of historical re-construction, and used as powerful instrument to deal with complex issues of history, memory, archives, and production of value, progressively became a self-referential activity, reduced to “purely” aesthetic questions. However, in those cases including the spectacular retrospective at MoMA, all the remnants that remain and re-enact are far from being repetition of past actions. Rather, they are an *actual* action: a(n) (re-en-)act in the actuality of the present. This is the actuality of a new mode of production, which radically destabilizes retroactively the thesis of in-appropriability, of the irreductibility to marketable cultural goods not only of performance art but also of the very form of art as performance: of *the work of art in the age of its performative (re)production*.

This complexity lies on a simple account: there are new forms of organization of labor and of value production, which allow this appropriation.

The totalization of artistic production

The desire for stepping out of the necessity of constant production risks totalizing production itself. This is so precisely because of the conditions in which the practices in question are happening, the conditions of performance capitalism, where every form of production, which in this transformed biopolitical condition means every form of life, is subject of commodification, and where every aspect of work and/or life could be commodified. We could witness today, in multiple facets of contemporary art, such substitutive or compensatory transformation.

In that way the process of production acquires production value. This is a fundamental problem, which all “process-oriented” discourse, including the collaborative one, needs to face. In this new condition of not only production but also of evaluating production and work and therefore sanctioning the production of social value, all formerly private activities – the preparation for work, the work for

Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment, New York: Routledge; 2011; or Andre Lepecki, “The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and The Afterlives of Dance,” *Dance Research Journal* 42:2 (2010): pp. 28-48.

guaranteeing conditions for work (household, maintenance, health and aesthetic condition of body) – are valued as productive work.¹⁰

However, paradoxically, they are not valued; as a matter of fact they face the impossibility of evaluation, or in other words of application of the forms of control society such as described by Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault.¹¹ For one simple reason: today nothing is valued as work any longer.

We all know too well the condition which is predominantly, even if not by necessity inclusively, “ours” today: who are the chosen ones who haven’t lived yet the literally *ec-static* experience of making “projects” and fulfilling all sort of “evaluation/self-management” formats? Formats, imposed as a second “social nature” by the self-managerial turn of contemporary institutions and even more, of the forms of social production as such; formats that are not valued as work, but are necessary condition for work. This statement goes far beyond André Gorz’s distinction between “labor-for-society” and “autonomous work,” where the first would secure the emancipatory condition of the second.¹² Beyond any dialectics of labor, the self-managerial condition imposes on us the condition of production – management and sanction – of “work-for-society” itself, of the very convention of labor as participation in social organization. The “events” of the 70s are replaced by *projects*; products by processes. Thus what is called “process” appears at the end as privileged form of commodification of life in the form of (fluid) production instead of end-product. As a result, the tiny line, separating public and private spaces is progressively blurred, and this makes the instrumentalization of the private space as part of the social capital possible. That is how today labor power is becoming commodity itself. Statistically speaking, the fact that the percent of material production is less and less important today wouldn’t be a surprise for anybody. What is crucial in this situation is not the replacement of one sphere of production with another, but their qualitative transformation.

Hence, the affirmation that the process is not a product is false. It is an ideological mystification, coherent with the new social-economic realities of production. It perfectly responds to the “social turn,” to the new “community-

¹⁰ See Bojana Kunst, “The Project Horizon: On the Temporality of Making,” Projected Temporality, ed. Kunst, *Maska* 149-150, vol. XXVII (Autumn 2012).

¹¹ See Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (1992).

¹² André Gorz, *Strategy for Labor. A Radical Proposal*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

building” processes via creative industries, life-style, social networks – the production of sociality as last refuge of “creative” capital. Productibility, the potential of production, receives today the name of sociability. Exploitation of potential as such only means the establishment of the regime of pure sociality. Social existence is “pure” work.

Hence, there is no possibility of communicating a “work” without reducing the process; without mediating the process (process is no longer work but “meta-work”: a constant mediation through self-presentation of work itself). And in this act of mediation any process appears already as a product. As far as the process is mediated, it is a product. The *ontomedialisation* of the social world tends at establishing a sphere of total mediation, in which the substance of the product is reduced to “fake” substance, while process itself, the form of human doing, becomes paradoxically impossible. In the age of “creative” labor, everything is a product.

The emancipated production. Conclusion

Time has come for contemporary art and performance discourse to operate complex critical account on economical process and on the notion of production in general. The first consequence of such will for critical complexity would be to step beyond the reductive opposition between process and result – or product. Today the negative discourse on production is becoming counter-productive. The tools of metalinguistic self-legitimatory description of contemporary dance, borrowed by the powerful French philosophical discourse of the 70s and the 80s (first of all, by the line of Bataille-Blanchot’s concept of *désœuvrement*, or inoperativity), which had radical critical potential twenty years ago, today risk to operate against their initial intentions.¹³ The radical critique of function and activity, operated by Georges Bataille, Alexandre Kojève, and Maurice Blanchot, followed by Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben, had as horizon the elaboration of alternative concept of activity, work and economy, and was never falling in the trap of “simple” negativity, as the academic doxa later reduced it. Similarly, in the field of contemporary dance the emancipatory discourse on the withdrawal from the modern notions of function,

¹³ See Frédéric Pouillaude, *Le désœuvrement chorégraphique*, Paris: Vrin, 2009.

activity, work, product, characteristic for the theorists of early “conceptual” dance, appears at the end as extension of Phelan’s idea on the ephemerality of the performance event as resistance to the marketable appropriation of the products. André Lepecki, the author who contributed greatly to the establishment of the ideological discourse and vocabulary of contemporary dance in the last decade, was affirming and maintaining, through complex conceptual argument, the distinction with Phelan’s proposal, thus opening a proper sphere for conceptual but also for aesthetic and political operation for contemporary dance.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in the last decade this clear opposition was progressively blurred mostly by the needs of institutional simplification. The institutionalization of “relational discourse”, which had as logical consequence the collaborative turn, accounted for transformed idea of artistic activity or labor, thus transforming also the economic substance of the artistic “product.” The product became flexible category – “work in progress,” “project” – and precisely as the critique of product, the very production process became normative horizon. As a result, today the critique of production becomes counter-productive itself. The paradigm of negative concepts – absence, impossibility, impotence, inoperativity – which are important in order to think dance in ontological terms, become more and more problematic in regard to the material consistence of this art practice. These concepts progressively became the vehicle of negative fetishization of set of newly baptized normative features of contemporary dance, thus displacing and reducing the material consistence not only of the practice, but of labor itself. But this tendency is ambiguously synchronic to performance capitalism, which today is doing precisely that: it simulates “no-products” – relations, cultural forms, experiences – as ultimate goods, as new types of immaterial products.

Therefore, to take position against production is neither mature nor reflected political claim. We cannot imagine any social existence or artistic activity without production. Therefore, we should be at the level of the necessity of production. Yet, we shouldn’t misunderstand this proposal by homogenizing it with the constant and pressing demand for production, where the disguising of products as “no-products” is becoming normative. On the contrary, our task today is to think art, performance and

¹⁴ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

dance precisely as action – on the side of actuality, on the side of action, on the side of *energeia*.

The Greek word “*energeia*”, elaborated as major philosophical category by Aristotle in opposition to potentiality [*dunamis*], derives from “*ergon*” – work, labor, function – which will result in the Latin “*opus*.” We could also translate it as “effect.” Effect should be understood as something which is opposed to a cause: something which has an outcome, without being a product. Thus, we need radicalization or extension of our understanding of the work as *energetic effect* instead of a product.

Contemporary art should face the necessity of new concept of production, related to a new concept of action, of activity, and contribute to its elaboration. It has the chance to confront the risks at stake by growing meta-critical awareness and strategies, and experimenting with new forms of labor and production, of production of value and exchange, alternative to the standardized marketable forms. There is no emancipation possible without invention of new modes of production, and therefore of new forms of life in common.

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Manchev has lectured widely at European, North-American and Japanese universities and cultural institutions. He curated the exhibition *Out of Time* at the Sofia City Art Gallery (March – April 2011). He has participated as theorist, dramaturge or performer in theater and contemporary dance projects, including Tim Etchells and Adrian Heathfield's *The Frequently Asked*, Boris Charmatz's *expo zero* and Poster session "Mouvement" for the Festival d'Avignon and Ani Vaseva's *Frankenstein* and *A Dying Play*.

Manchev is the author of seven books and more than hundred book chapters, catalogues and other publications in various languages. In the last years appeared *Logic of the Political* (Sofia: Critique&Humanism, 2012), *Miracolo* (Milano: Lanfranchi, 2011), *L'altération du monde: Pour une esthétique radicale* (Paris: Lignes, 2009); *La Métamorphose et l'Instant – Désorganisation de la vie* (Paris: La Phocide, 2009); *Rue Descartes 64: La métamorphose*, ed. by B. Manchev (Paris: PUF, 2009) ; *Rue Descartes 67: Quel sujet du politique?*, ed. by G. Basterra, R. Ivekovic and B. Manchev (Paris: PUF, 2010). His book *The Body-Metamorphosis* (Sofia: Altera, 2007) deals extensively with contemporary art, performance and dance.

