

**An Investigation of Political Performance Acts: A Possibility of Constructive Action
Through Collaborative Performance**

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Abstract

In this research, I investigate political performance acts which are collaborative from a phenomenological perspective. Collaborative performances alter the audience's position to an active participant, inviting them to explore their own experiences while suggesting a subversive openness where a shift in perspective can emerge with political intervention. Performative politics suggests an active resistance to normative performativity as well as aides in creating a space that can potentially subvert social boundaries where participants' experiences are shaped with and by each other. The thesis questions constructive possibilities through collaborative performance pieces; and their political potential compared to classical forms of demonstrations and other art forms.

Nowadays, creative forms of protests are prominently employed for political actions. I argue that participatory political performance acts have a privileged position for conducting examples of activism. They are shaping opinions through creating lived experiences for the agent and affecting them. To prove this, I look at collaborative performance art pieces which have oppositional political aims; and political protest acts that the Populist Right undertook. Through this unorthodox contact, I dismantle how performative acts can achieve political ends as a strategy. Phenomenological methods of Heidegger, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty are incorporated for analyzing subject's lived experiences during the collaborative performance pieces. Furthermore, the works of Gould, Arendt, and Mouffe aid in creating a theoretical framework to explain protests of Turkish Right. Through analyzing them, I aim to dismantle the dominant nationalist discourse.

Key Words: Phenomenology, Performance, Activism, Art, Right-Wing Populism

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Chapter 1- Introduction

This research aims to investigate usage of performative means for political activism by using phenomenological approach from a feminist vantage point. How collaborative performance pieces and performative protest acts could be strategically useful for politics will be the main focus of the study. The thesis looks at the possibilities of alterations and ruptures in the political realm through political performance acts, as well as its transgressive effects on the agent's experiences by means of bodily experiences created in the collaborative pieces. The main philosophical challenges that would be addressed in this work are: how participatory performative acts can be constructive for subjects and politics, and why collaborative political performance acts are more potent than classical forms of demonstrations.

Usage of performative means for political ends is stronger and more successful against authoritarian regimes, since it generates emotional states through the bodily actions and lived experience, which gives space to the agent for expression autonomy and authenticity. In the collaborative performance, the artist and participants create an alternate setting within the realm of performance. This is transgressive for the dominant regime of truth and it results in capacity for political intervention to the dominant discourse. Authoritarian regimes aim to control public and private affairs according to rules and norms they impose. Opening and transforming spaces with alternate rules and structures while aiming to create meaningful change in subjects is politically subversive. Engaging people into this process by means of collaboration is transgressive both on a subjective and political level.

In today's world, political resistance has different shapes and forms. Protests are increasingly incorporating creative means to their repertoire. Even then, usage of performative

means for political purposes is an understudied area in philosophy & social sciences, and right-wing performative protest acts are even more overlooked. Though there is some work on particular pieces of performative protests within anti-government movements in Turkey, there is no recourse about the state's Populist Right's usage of performative means for their political aims. In this project, I bring together phenomenological approaches to analyze how performative means affect the agent's experiences and Populist Right's use of performativity within the context of Turkish state authoritarian discourse to disclose how these tactics can be used to propagate certain ideology while appealing to emotions. This is an unorthodox three-legged research that brings together performance analysis, phenomenology and political theory. I aim to prove that using performative protest acts which involve free space for collaboration could bring sincere changes in subjects and create political intervention to the dominant discourse. Incorporating performative acts more in the protests is my suggestion for praxis in this thesis.

In this introductory chapter, I will define the key terms and concepts that I will assume for the rest of the thesis, such as performance, collaborative or participatory performance (art), performative protest acts, phenomenology, socially constructed subjectivities, subjective knowledges, regime of truth. Within this thesis, I look at political performances and performance art pieces through incorporating a method in which I look at the experiences in the performance and analyze them through employing scholarly works. This chapter aims to answer a few philosophical questions, some of which I will address in the following chapters as well. Namely, these questions are: What is subjectivation and how can collaborative performance art challenge the internalized norms?; Why should we prioritize subjective and subjugated knowledge instead of objective knowledge?; How can art be constructive while avoiding being didactic?; How could

performative means be employed by any political ends? What about performance allows wide usage? These questions are discussed briefly in this chapter.

1.1) Performance and Performative Protest Actions

Doing a performance could be used for describing a lot of actions that agents can do, in accordance with appropriate conditions of the event, such as doing performing arts, sports; attending to juror duty, rituals or a funeral; giving a speech; dressing up for a concert and so on. On another level, Judith Butler restricts the explanation of performativity to “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects” (Butler, 2011, p.2). In this sense, performance is the set of everyday practices that shape subjectivities. Their repetitive embodiment results in identification of the subject in the way that general discourse desires the subjects to be. However, in this thesis, I restrict the meaning of performance to deliberate actions of the agent with which they engage directly and bodily. The two types of performances I use in the thesis are through participation in the performance art and political performance acts. Performance art is an interdisciplinary art form that is rendered through activities of the artist. Sometimes these actions are executed with the participation of the audience within participatory or collaborative performance art pieces. In these collaborative pieces, the audience becomes part of the execution and determination of the work through the actions she carries throughout the work.

By performative protest acts, I mean the theatrical demonstrations of opinion of the agent which is done through bodily actions and enactments. It's in contrast to political demonstrations, which may consist of speech by political representatives and crowd participation by stating their political position through singing, chanting, and voicing a demand. Performing opinions is

different from voicing, as people are enacting it. For instance, if the protestors start acting like a political figure by enactment, mimicking, putting on the same costume, resembling her with make-up; it would be a representative example of doing politics through performative protest acts. The agent moves beyond the text and picture to performance and embodiment, as in, performing protest acts.

Henry Abelove defines political actions “Unlike a demonstration ... an action expresses a felt need to create a wholly nondomestic site of excitement, and interest. An action is .. response to an experience...” (Abelove, 1993, p.39-40) These transgressive sites of action are motivated by desires and feelings of the body as a response to encounters of the agent. They centralize the body and the actions of the body which demonstrates the political position. In protests, performative methods are utilized to increase engagement while also raising empathy, cooperation, and participation. As a result, rather than persuading the public with reasoning as within speech, the goal is to appeal to common emotions and sentiments. Hence, in this thesis, I look at different ways of using performative actions that aim to shape opinions of agents either in the form of performance art or performative protest acts.

1.2) Construction of Subjectivities

In this thesis, I build my views on subjects, assuming ‘subject’ is a social construction. I am rejecting essentialist approaches to subjects, as in, the views that accept human beings to have an underlying true nature or essence that can be discovered. To illuminate what subjectification means, I will rely on Butler's respective views, which claim subjectivities are socially constructed and internalized through the repetition of certain performative and bodily acts and rituals (Butler,

2011 a). They¹ also recognize human agency and potential for an authentic existence despite the effects of power on the subject.

Construction of subjectivities results from reiterative acts subjected upon the body, which needs a constitutive exterior to determine the realm of what is produced as the normative (Butler, 2011 a). Butler denies that human beings have an internal essence and claims that there is no pre-existent subject prior to subjectification. The ‘subject’ is produced through the interplay of power relations. They argue that power is exerted on the body starting with the assignment of gender at birth by the doctor's speech act: “baby is a boy” or “baby is a girl”. This assumption becomes a normative claim as if there is an essence in the ‘interior’ of the subject which is the basis for justification. However, in effect, the interior is produced through bodily acts, prohibitions/limitations, and the disciplining of bodies. Subjectivation works by incorporating regulatory power exerted over the body with consciousness, resulting in internalization at the psyche of the individual (Butler, 1997). Heteronormative disciplining of the body generates desire for certain acts and enactments, assigns arbitrary gender roles and sexual identities to subjects.

The subjectification process and constructions of the body do not only shape the subject in the desired way within the realm of power relations², but it also paves the way to different means of perceiving the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1982). Nevertheless, Butler sees potential for the agency of the subject and for exercising authenticity since the construction process is never complete and requires reiteration of certain acts through the active involvement of the subject. In this thesis, I argue that political interventions through queer feminist collaborative performance pieces are a strategy of resistance. This flux incorporates the potential to deconstruct spaces,

¹ Judith Butler uses she/her and they/them pronouns.

² as understood by Foucault

power relations, discourses, and the normativity in opposition to the regulatory forces encrypting the subject (Foucault, 2008). Performative means could make these regulatory forces visible, which are constructing subjectivities and disciplining bodies into 'docile' ones by virtue of their invisibility. Norms, like gender roles, sexual identities, nationalism, etc. stays inviolable as long as they are held as essential or universal laws. Questioning norms makes the invisible forces of subjectification visible. Once it is evident that these positions of the subject and norms are historically and socially constructed, it is visible that they are contingent. Hence, this power of performative means can bring about meaningful change in subjects by disclosing processes of subjectification through dominant discourse.

1.3) Constructing Knowledge Through Investigation of Experiences: An Account Against Objective Knowledge

In this thesis, I focus on subjective and subjugated knowledge. The subjective knowledge of bodies, individuals, artists is prioritized throughout this thesis. I avoid employing universalizing epistemologies in my analysis. As I investigate performative approaches in art pieces that are politically charged and in political protests which have an artistic aspect, my focus is on subjective knowledges. My analysis is also not unitary, and I do not claim to give a universal, all-encompassing theory for the use of performative means. I argue that 'global, all-encompassing theories' do not provide us tools that we need for criticizing discourses, industries, practices, and tools. As Foucault claims, autonomous and noncentralized 'local critique' is employed as a tool of investigation for subjugated knowledges masked by systematic organizations (Foucault, 1970, p. 6-8). Unitary approaches filter and organize knowledge

hierarchically and disqualify 'knowledge from below' to build a unitary scientific approach (ibid., p. 9). On the contrary, I look at the knowledge of bodies, of marginalized people, and 'outcasts' that discourses of truth leave out.

In the last chapter of this thesis, I analyze populist right-wing performative protests in Turkey. My critical approach attempts to dismantle discourses produced by the 'regime of truth' around these protest acts. A regime of truth indicates the predominant ways of veridiction and acceptance of knowledge and discourses in society at a particular juncture. It elevates certain ways of discourse production and circulation and modes of knowledge to a position of power that shapes behaviors and subjectivities. In this sense, a regime of truth is a concept that focuses on how knowledge exerts certain power on social realities, the constructive aspect of knowledge, regardless of its factuality. As I discuss in the third chapter, populism relies on the circulation of certain knowledge while subjugating and silencing others. These protest acts accepted and circulated through media are channels of knowledge that cultivate nationalistic political ideologies. They work as repetitive rituals for embedding certain acts and knowledges into the subject in order to construct the social reality of the citizen within these hegemonic ideologies.

Against the knowledge produced by the 'regime of truth,' in the thesis, I centralize the body and prioritize the knowledges through experiences of the body. Human beings experience their surroundings through bodily interactions. Bodies give meaning to the sensations that we gather from the surrounding world, which are imbued with meaning. Our perceptions are 'lived', which makes 'lived experiences' a necessary part of our awareness in the world. For this reason, I suggest that performative means are potent political tools, and I investigate the phenomenology of performance pieces in the second chapter. The phenomenological method investigates the subject's contact with the world through consciousness, 'directedness' and experiences. While

natural sciences emphasize that external material conditions determine subjectivity, phenomenology focuses on the subject's ontological primary contact with the world through her awareness which is the non-cognitive relationality to the world (Hetterley, 2018, p.4). Phenomenology prioritizes the first-person experience to construct an understanding of subjectivity through directedness and intentionality of consciousness. I question what happens to the subject in relation to performance pieces through the methods and knowledges of different phenomenologists. In this process, I will look at subjective and specific meanings that performances can induce.

Another objection to scientific knowledge which claims objectivity is from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a famous phenomenologist who focuses on the body and bodily aspects of experiences. In "Eye and Mind", he argues that science treats everything as if they are its object-in-general with mere use-value, and they do not have any specific meaning. It looks from above, operates with objective standards, and constructs itself as the independent and ultimate source of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.159). However, the scientific thought claims of objectivity do not correspond to the lived experience of things. Merleau-Ponty claims that treating the world as an object of our knowledge on which we can conduct operational thinking is a misunderstanding of the world. By doing this, we let ourselves be ignorant of what the world is. Thinking operationally is absolute artificialism and it turns 'man into a manipulandum' with a sleep of ignorance (Ibid, p.160). We know about the world, history, and human beings through our situatedness. Our situation in the world is vital for us to have a clear understanding of things around us. We make sense of the world by virtue of our lived experience of our socio historically situated bodies. It would be mistaken to think that things in the world have objective meanings within themselves. Insisting on the objectivist approach would only lead to misunderstanding of

the world, which would cause an era in which people can easily be directed and manipulated. I also posit how manipulation through politics and the construction of the truth functions in the third chapter. In this critique, I employ respective literature by Hannah Arendt.

In "Cezanne's Doubt", he also argues against realist, objectivist understanding of the world and art; and he insists on looking at the experience itself, which is neither objective nor scientific (Merleau-Ponty, n.d.). The world of perception has a prior sense to objective articulation. Objective things are constructs, and their status is shaped by lived experience. Therefore, bodies' directedness, needs, desires are primordial in our experience of the world, and not objective standards of scientific thinking. Thus, in this thesis and particularly in the second chapter, I construct my philosophical approach through the phenomenological method of the experiences of living bodies.

1.4) Intervention Through Artistic Means

Although activist art practices have a long history “as old as modern ideas of art”, it emerged with the bourgeois revolution (Marchant, p.16). In this thesis, I will not elaborate on the historical background, due to space limitations. Instead, I will focus on analysis of several political performance practices in detail. By activist art, I refer to any art practice that is critical and has a political aim. This could be done by various means and projects in art, and in many forms (i.e. political films, documentaries, theater of the oppressed, posters, sculptures, music with a political message and so on). These forms and practices differentiate themselves from the non-political art through their direct engagement with current politics. Most of the time, artists practice this not through offering counter-arguments or writing essays about the political situations, but through doing direct interventions about the politics with their artwork.

Art's engagement with society has been problematized by philosophers of art and artists while some have heavily criticized this. Problematizing social disturbances, needs and troubles as its topic have been questioned. Socially engaged art is delegated as simplistic, shallow and "low art". There is an understandable worry against political art's falling into didacticism by leaving aesthetic worries and solely focusing on dictating or propagating ideas to the viewer. I definitely agree with the anxieties against didactic art; and nowhere in this study, I will defend such a form of art. Asymmetrical and hierarchical relations created by means of didacticism in art highly contrasts with the egalitarian and participatory aims of this thesis. I argue that there is a possibility for art being constructive, effective and aesthetic without being didactic.

When I say, political art is effective, it does not mean that art necessarily would create a revolution, because politics itself functions on many levels and spheres. Political effectiveness of art should not necessarily mean "defeating that which political art is critical about" (Asavei, 2013, p. 8). Asavei argues that political art would achieve its purposes if it makes the viewer conscious about the mechanisms of oppression and domination (Asavei, 2013, p. 10). In my opinion, art shows different possibilities, gives room for imagination, kindles emotional responses and empathy, endorses face-to-face interaction with the Other³, creates spaces for discussion and dialog, and challenges the dominant narratives. These are also ways that political art can be constructive and effective. While these outcomes can be kindled by employing various mediums of art, this study focuses on collaborative performance pieces since it has a privileged position compared to the other art forms.

³ The Other as a Levinasian term refers to other people who are not me. Levinasian phenomenology will be explained in the 2nd chapter.

1.5) Performance Art is Privileged

Beginnings of conceptual art and radical turn in the history of modern art can be traced back to Duchamp and his monumental piece 'Fountain' (1917) in a very rough sense. He challenged conventional understandings by claiming that ready-made objects can also be pieces of art, since the important thing is 'the idea' behind the work (Sretenovic, 2004, 159). Performance art is a more contemporary practice that emerged within conceptual art in the sixties. It is an interdisciplinary practice in which the artist uses her body as the art piece directly or indirectly, whether with or without an audience. I argue that performance art is privileged against other art forms and usage of performative means is a strong tool for political ends, through contrasting it with two other types of engaging with politics. First way to convey a political message could be giving a speech, a lecture where the audience is offered arguments. But if we follow Foucault and Arendt, the idea of 'truth' is contested and constructed. In the authoritarian regimes, reason is undermined repetitively which makes doing politics only through offering arguments impotent⁴. Another way could be representing a problematic situation through narrating it in movies, novels, stories, plays. The viewer would be affected by what she viewed and derive a lesson from it. Although this artistic way is good and effective for the viewer, here again the audience witnesses something outside of her. The audience is stuck in 3rd personal engagement with someone else's story. On the other hand, in the case of performance art, direct interventions are stronger, as it creates a live confrontation with the situation wherein the artist wants to open the discussion. It directly engages with the viewer herself. This gives the 2nd person position to the viewer in which the viewer is not only an observant of something outside of her, but experiences something actively. Performative means are more radical than the first two types

⁴ I will explain more on Arendt in the 3rd chapter.

of doing politics as they make the viewer go through the experience itself, and face the political problem that is being stated through their bodily engagements.

A subgenre of performance art is collaborative performance art, in which the artist and audience participate in interactive ways for the art to be executed (Attarian & Marasy, 2018, p.272). I argue that collaborative performance art is the most effective way to achieve political ends through artistic means. Asavei also argues in favor of collaborative art when she discusses organization and production of the critical art pieces:

Critical art acts politically mostly when it is produced as a genuinely collaborative piece. A genuinely collaborative piece is an intersubjective type of collaboration in which the artist is not the one who dictates and directs the action and the message of those who perform. The others (public) have to be involved in a dialog, giving them a voice of their own and not speaking for them or using them to communicate the artist's "political" message (Asavei, 2013, p.20-21).

As Asavei argues, critical engagement with the hierarchies in the production and circulation of the artwork while ensuring egalitarian participation should be a major responsibility of the political art. Giving opportunity and space for free expression should be an important aim of political collaborative art. Enabling free responses and reactions of the participants, is also giving power, autonomy and a chance of authenticity. The artist should position herself as the facilitator of the art piece to avoid reproduction of hierarchies and to leave room for exercise of freedom of the participants. It should be also noted that this is a unique way of addressing the viewer compared to the other art forms. The viewer generally expected to remain passive against the art piece, and only to contemplate on it which restricts the process of being affected by art mentalistic. On the other hand, collaborative performance pieces create direct confrontation with

a situation through generating lived experiences of the viewer. Participation in artwork makes the viewer engage with the art piece in a bodily sense. In this fundamental sense, it is different and privileged compared to other art forms which keep the viewer in a passive position such as film, painting or music.

Baz Kershaw argues that “totally passive audience is ... a practical impossibility” since audience always has a role in the meaning produced in the performance (Kershaw, 1992, p.136). The collaborative performance pieces not only activate the audience deliberately, but the meaning produced at the end depends on the participation of the viewer with the artwork and on the processes amongst other audiences. The meaning of the work is produced within this participation. The viewer becomes part of the production of art. In this practice, I argue that different people with various backgrounds meet at the same level and have a chance to engage authentically with the Other. The collaborative performance pieces puts the agent in a unique position in which the artwork is determined and altered through the intersubjective relations that is carried out between the performer and the participants (Phalen, 2017). The participants also have a chance to exercise autonomy and free participation in the arts and politics.

1.6) Use of Performativity in Politics

Protests, demonstrations, and political mobilizations are an integral part of political life, and they require a clear representation of their identity, manifestation, and political position (Marchart, 2019, p.18). Linguistically speaking, in order to send the correct message to the receiver, clarity of position in political action is necessary. Thus, the forms and means of action that convey the message have the utmost importance; creativity in the form serves to bring more

attention and effectiveness in some instances. Instead of 'classical' forms of demonstration (solely marching, singing or chanting for a cause in a public space), creative forms of protests are deployed at a rising rate by the protesting groups. Since the occupation movements and revolts that are experienced in 2011⁵, means of activist art started to be employed increasingly by the protesting groups (Marchant, 2019, p.12)⁶. Political activism and social movements require the involvement of people, and the activation of masses and individuals. Collaborative performance art has the power to activate people similarly and I investigate conditions for this phenomenologically in the second chapter. Performative means can be used by everyone. About this capacity, Schecher argues:

Performance is amoral, as valuable for tyrants as to those who practice guerilla theater.

This amorality comes from performance's subject, transformation. The startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become – for worse or better - what they ordinarily are not (Schecher, 2003, p.1).

There is no morality in the performance itself. There is autonomy and freedom in the process of performance. The act of performance itself is a process of transformation for the subject in question through her free actions. It makes the performance void of morality, outside of good or bad morals. It can be interpreted or executed in any possible way. Performance itself is a powerful way to convince people and convey ideas. For Kershaw, performance can most functionally be defined as ideological transaction (Kershaw, 1992, p.136). People who have various political views could use it in their capacity to motivate, persuade, convince others, and implant some opinions. Performance can be applied to any set of situations or relations.

⁵ The choice of this date will be explained in Chapter-3.

⁶ Oliver Marchant argues this in his book “Conflictual Aesthetics” and I will discuss this in more detail on the 3rd chapter.

Application of the performance could bring success, whether it is employed by left-wing, centrists or right-wing. Performance can be politicized in any capacity due to the extent of its freedom. In the third chapter, I look at examples from populist right wing groups in Turkey who appeal to affect in their politics by using performative means in their protests. However, even though most of the performances I exemplified are collaborative, the modes of participation are not free. As I discuss in the 3rd chapter, populist ideology is against possibilities of free discussion and common grounds that people could share things and contemplate. The means of protest also reflect these tendencies. The ideology which works with annihilating the Other does not want freedom of expression either. There is a code for participation, and the audience are expected to follow the 'proper' role. The audience is not left for taking a stance with their own judgement and authentically engaging with work with the possibility to alter the meaning of the work as in the art pieces I exemplified in the 2nd chapter.

1.7) Conclusion

In this chapter I aimed to provide explanations of the concepts and background information about the ideas I defend throughout the thesis. Also, I claimed that the coalition of politics and artistic means are not only compatible but also their intersection leads into meaningful and fruitful pieces as well as practical possibilities. Employment of performative means brings out strong political tools compared to other forms of political activism. Political art can be effective in addressing social problems, re-kindling one's heart, mobilizing people, encouraging empathy or confronting people with hidden power mechanisms of dominant discourse such as racism, sexism and nationalism. For these consequences, I suggested that

collaborative art is privileged since it is constructed through intersubjective participation of autonomous and authentic agents and it turns the spectator of art to the maker who engages.

As I claim that usage of performative means is a strong political tool, I will investigate the conditions of the performative experiences in the next chapter. I will conduct a phenomenological investigation to understand how exactly performance affects the subject.

CHAPTER 2- Phenomenology of Performance

In this chapter, I engage with three different collaborative performance pieces and three different philosophers of phenomenology school; Heidegger, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty. I engage with phenomenology because I want to understand subjective experiences of the participants in collaborative performance art. As phenomenology provides the tools and methods to analyze experiences of the subject, it is my methodological lens to analyze particular performance pieces of Kamran Behrouz, Maria Lai and mine. Another reason for choosing these philosophers for this project is that all of these philosophers are engaging an analysis of the subject within her lived experience in the world; and they are against Cartesian accounts and objectivist understandings of the subject and the world. Following Husserl, who claimed that philosophy should give priority to a subject's experiences, they investigate the experiences of the subject from different and equally important perspectives.

The views of these three phenomenologists are incorporated to provide answers to several questions I am answering in this section. I seek an answer to the unspeakable thing that moves both the performer and the participant at the moment of the performance- the lived experience of the initial moment when the performer and participator face each other, that questions the agent. Further, I ask how performative means open the hearts and minds of people and how can it dismantle norms that the agent accepted through socialization. Ultimately, I discuss the value of political interventions in subjective and local levels and argue for its subversive potential.

To be historically coherent, I start from Heidegger. His account provides an understanding of how subjects internalize norms through socialization. I analyze Behrouz's performance which focuses on research on homophobia in Iran and a queer feminist intervention through Heidegger's

views. Then I engage with Levinas to give an account of ethical intersubjective relations, using his views to explain Lai's participatory performance which creates corporation possibilities. Lastly, I incorporate Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenology of the body. I use all the theories to analyze my performance piece, "Circles", though I engage with Merleau-Ponty mostly.

2.1) Heidegger's 'The They' and 'Phenomenology of the Third Body'

Heidegger, Husserl's⁷ student and follower, constructed his own phenomenological method, which gives importance to the authentic lived experience of the Being-in-the-world. He criticizes the tradition of philosophy for not engaging the most important question of philosophy, "the question of the meaning of Being" (Heidegger, 1962, p.19). Heidegger suggests that philosophical investigation should start with the question of Being, whose Being is an issue for herself; with the inquirer - Dasein (Being - there).

Heidegger's Dasein is not an isolated subject from the world; on the contrary, there is no Seclusion from the world for him. Sylvie Courtine-Denamy notes that Heidegger "...by defining existence as Being-in-the-world, escapes traditional obstacles of philosophy which limit man too strictly to the status of 'pure subject' to which the 'world' and the 'other' would then add themselves" (Öge et. al., 2002, p. 118). Here, Courtine-Denamy emphasizes that against the tradition in philosophy that separates subject and world, Heidegger does not portray a secluded subject with Dasein. I posit that Heidegger does not trap Dasein within the traditional subject-object and subject-world dualisms.

⁷ Edmund Husserl, also known as the founder of phenomenology, claimed that we should look at the experience itself to search for the truth.

On the contrary, Dasein is within the world, dwells in the world, and shares the world with other Daseins. Dasein's Being-in-the-world is a state of Being-with-others, "The world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]. Being-in is Being-with others" (Heidegger, 1962, p.155). Heidegger does not construct a Cartesian thinking subject distanced and detached from the world and the other subjects. He names all the ordinary people who do not have an authentic philosophical engagement with the Being as 'the They.' Dasein is also part of 'the They' in her everyday self:

By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me - those against whom the 'I' stands out.

They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too; By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others (Heidegger, 1962, p.154–5).

The 'They' affects the way Dasein acts, sees, and dwells in the world. The first, primary characteristic of Dasein is to be the they-self. It shapes Dasein's understanding and absorbs Dasein into the they-self, to everydayness; consequently, Dasein finds herself distanced from her authentic I-self. The 'They' are anonymous and interchangeable aspects of ourselves who follow the rules and social norms without being authentic. The State of the 'They' is conformism that abstains from the engagement with the most fundamental question, the question of Being. Following the norms, being normal through compliance to the social roles and norms is a conformist behavior, and the self is conformist at the first instance, for Heidegger.

The domination of the They-self in everyday life creates what Heidegger calls distantiality (Ibid, p.164). The 'They' determines the average way of living in society for Dasein; it determines the social norms and usual way of acting, how someone is supposed to be, feels, acts, and so on. Dasein measures herself according to the 'They'; it is a state of constant comparison of I to the

'They' norms. Others close possibilities of Dasein, and this averageness came as an act of leveling down the possibilities of Being. Dasein tries to compel the 'They' norms and constantly checks herself on whether she succeeded; she compares herself with others to see whether she is like them or superior/inferior to them. Although Dasein's constant questioning of herself could also be seen as a possibility for growth for her betterment, Heidegger focuses on the loss of authenticity that comes with embracing the They-self. In my opinion, distantiality inherently possesses the potential for cultivation and growth of the subject as it creates a constant state of evaluating and questioning oneself. This is a vibrant position that can initiate communication with other Daseins and the cultivation and growth of Dasein. However, for Heidegger, in the everyday Being of Dasein with others, Dasein became subjected to others; the 'They' take the Dasein over, imprisoning her in the social norms. The 'They' decide how the world will open itself to Dasein and how she will interpret, think, and like.

Heidegger's initial question concerning the 'who' of Dasein is fruitful since, in my opinion, it contributes to dismantling the effects of socialization upon the individual. Although Heidegger stops his project at describing the effects from a neutral position, reading such a description is valuable for the reader. This leads one to observe such effects of 'the they' on herself and endeavour to find the authentic 'I'. Following my interpretation, a person in her everydayness (Dasein in her relaxed attitudes) is not a unique individual, but a slave of social norms and regulations. Reaching to the I-self of Dasein and becoming authentic requires a process of dismantling the effects of society upon the body. Political performance art also aims to do this. Heidegger posits a good illustration of how a person internalizes opinions through socialization, constructs the normal, and becomes part of it since it is a relaxed state.

Political performance art also tries to challenge conformist states by putting the undoubted and accepted norms into question. It puts the subject out of her comfort zone to the State of authentic questioning through creative means. Kamran Behrouz, an Iranian queer visual artist, gives an excellent example of this. They posit a critique to society's norms and the institutions that uphold racist, fascist, sexist regulations through the means of visual activism of their art. In their lecture-performance "Phenomenology of the Third Body" at Zürich, Behrouz mentions (a) the process of creating the motion avatar 'Breathe'; (b) the role of the avatar in their participatory ethnographic research in Iran; and (c) the performative roles of avatars in terms of queer feminist activism (Behrouz, 2019). Behrouz wanted to research in Iran to reflect on what kind of language and words homophobic people use in Farsi. This research aimed to question how and where the homophobia in Iran stems from and why homophobia and transphobia are integral parts of 'normal' social life in modern Iran especially since historically Iran comes from an ancient homoerotic culture indicating that homophobia was not part of the 'norms' of everyday life. Behrouz explains experiences with their third body in its course of action.

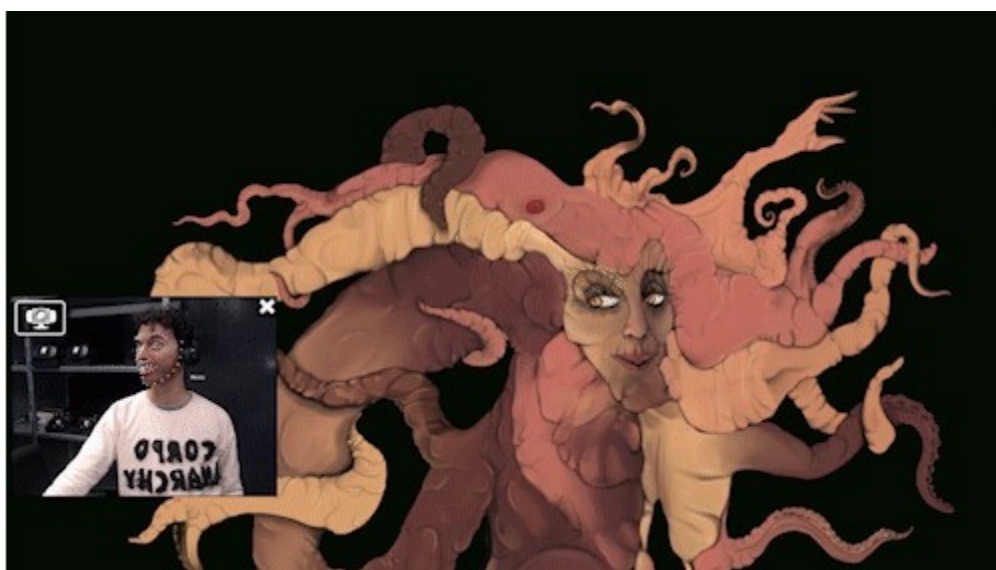


Figure 1 'Breathe' Avatar (Behrouz, 2019)

During this research, Behrouz received death threats and so they decided to continue the research using the animated character- 'Breathe'. Behrouz transferred their movements, gestures, and expressions to this motion avatar through coding language. The avatar became the live communicator of this ethnographic performative research. Behrouz did not want to share a pre-recorded video that cannot communicate. Breathe functions as 'the third body' of Behrouz, displaying a political intervention in Iran while also protecting Behrouz from hatred. Behrouz explains having three bodies as follows: (i) material body with flesh and blood, (ii) the performative body as an artist, and (iii) the performative avatar, Breathe, in the virtual reality. Behrouz translated queer feminist statements to Farsi and published these online, reading them with their third body, 'Breath'. They narrate that "slightly homophobic or traditional" people started to respond in a less homophobic language when they were asked about their phobia by the virtual body of Breathe instead of Behrouz's lived-body (Behrouz, 2019). They explained the drastic change in the responses of the same group as the mediator and the sphere of the communication changed:

The virtual is not the reality for what it is allowed to achieve, and it is not the imaginary for the possibilities of action. Then, the subject is not the same in the real and virtual. But it could be feasible in virtual reality... to manipulate the content of tools and induction of specific answers...Perhaps, it is because the avatar breaks the rules of real. Avatar is a metaphor. However, it is a live-functioning metaphor. Which enables the subject of the experiment to break through the constructed reality (Behrouz, 2019).

Even though the avatar is acknowledged as a metaphor, Behrouz also acknowledges it is a live representation of a person and has a world view like the natural person it represents. Behrouz's constructed reality (in the quote above) could be interpreted as the social reality that

individuals experience⁸. Behrouz explains how subjects shift in responses to the statements when it comes from the avatar is an intriguing phenomenon. Firstly, I believe Behrouz had more opportunity to intervene and manipulate the conversations by using the third body. The feeling of security is necessary for free speech. Thus, ironically or not, Behrouz can be more of their authentic self and express their mind freely when they are in their third body and not under the threat for their life. This brings them the possibility for questioning the norms of "the They" in a Heideggerian sense and disturb people's comfortable state through the queer feminist political intervention of the performance. Avatar as a metaphor is intriguing, questioning, and potentially pushing subjects out of their 'everydayness' comfort zone.

As I argued before, Heidegger's distantiality can nourish the improvement of the subject since it produces a perpetual state of self-evaluation. Behrouz is taking the position of questioning to pave the way to the authenticity of Dasein. They engage with homo-phobic people and question their position, which (could) stem from being part of the they-self and following the social rules of the they in the homophobic social context of Iran. Through the avatar, Behrouz can

⁸ I would like to explain the notion of constructed reality by referring to Louis Althusser. Althusser is a Marxist philosopher who claims that production and maintenance of the capitalist ruling ideology is regulated through apparatuses of the state, namely, through Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). In his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", he explains RSA are the institutions that have direct power to use violence or coercion against the bodies, such as 'the police, the courts, the army, the prisons' (Althusser, 2006, p.10). ISA functions through the immense usage of ideology to shape and discipline the minds and bodies of the citizens. Although both RSA and ISA depend on the same ideology of the ruling class and all state apparatuses function through the usage of repression and ideology: RSA mostly depends on violence and repression, while it also creates political conditions for the functioning of ISAs. ISAs significantly depend on ideologies and they secure the continuation of the sovereign rule (Althusser, 2006, p.17-21). ISAs could be schools, religious institutions, media, family, cultural groups etc. They shape the individual by imposing his thoughts, planting ideas, promoting certain types of living and existing, and ultimately by constructing the norms of the society. Through the ISAs, social reality is constructed in accordance with the ruling ideology. Subjects are also constructed with these tools and relationships.

dismantle imprisonment to the social norms via the conversations they uphold with the participants in this collaborative work.

In addition to protection and freedom available for Behrouz, virtual reality allows other subjects to be part of another reality. This is performative reality in virtual space. The subject who is temporarily part of the performative reality is not acting in the same way "in the real and virtual" (from the previous quote), according to Behrouz (Behrouz, 2019). Although both the subject and the world surrounding the subject are products of social construction with its embedded rules and structures that one needs to follow to be an individual, i.e. one needs to be the they-self during her everydayness in Heideggerian terms; performative reality offers an opening away from this. It offers even more capacity for deviation from the subject's socially constructed reality. When Behrouz talks with the audience, answers their questions during the performance, they are still in performative reality, where rules and conditions are drawn by Behrouz. Thus, the audience and Behrouz can interact in a more accessible realm while Behrouz also has the power and opportunity for a political intervention in the performative reality. Although Heideggerian phenomenology is fruitful for explaining the subject's relation to her society, he does not explicate ethical responsibility towards the Other. Hence, to explain ethical intersubjective relations and to analyze Maria Lai's performance, I employ Levinas.

2.2) Levinas and Maria Lai

Levinas criticizes Heidegger and takes a different approach to analyze relations of the subject with other people. He is against all totalizing approaches to the Other in Western philosophy and Heidegger's ontology. Heidegger immensely works on who Dasein and Being are

in his philosophy. However, he does not concentrate on other people or ethical intersubjective relations; Levinas criticizes this and investigates the proper relation to the other people who are not me. Departing from the Heideggerian approach, he thinks that others are not a source of inauthenticity. To the contrary, intersubjective relations with the Other can transcend our consciousness and make us reach an authentic self.

Levinas conducts an existentialist search for the conceptions of subject, interpersonal interactions, and ethical relationship that the subject establishes with the Other in his classic work 'Totality and Infinity'. Levinas thinks that the 'I' cannot see the other as another ego like the self; the Other is inaccessible to the 'I'. He claims that the Other is radically other than me; she is altering. The Other comes as a pure surprise to the subject, incomprehensible, unattainable, and unpredictable. As in the case of death, the relationship with the Other is inherently mysterious and out of the powers of 'I'. For Levinas, "... the stranger also means the free one. Over him I have no power" (Levinas, 1969, p.39). The Other cannot be absorbed or possessed like an object; treating the Other like the same as the 'I' would be an attempt to possess the Other, which is inherently violent. Thus, the 'I' should initially enter the relationship with the Other by accepting 'irreducibility of the Other' (Levinas, 1969, p.46-47).

The intersubjective relationship of the 'I' with the Other is fundamental, primordial, and transcendental. Although the subject experiences the unpredictable nature of the Other always as a source of bewilderment, the 'I' can relate to the Other. They can communicate with each other through discourse. Through the relatedness of this relationship the 'I' made with the other, the 'I' escapes solitude. In her encounter with the Other, the Other questions the 'I' in a way that the 'I' cannot do within the confinement of her ego using interrogation and questioning (Ibid, p.203). The alterity of the Other strikes the self and paves the way to construct subjectivity. The Other

gives the self the ability to challenge what she had previously accepted without questioning. The distinction between the self and the Other profoundly impacts the self, striking the 'I' and causing the self to rethink things.

The immediate face-to-face relation when the 'I' encountered the Other is a lived experience that opens the infinity and transcendence of consciousness. The otherness of the Other is provocative and unmediated. Encounter with the face of the Other is a provoking experience for the self; the immediacy of this contact disrupts all possible mediations such as 'laws, rule codes, rituals, social roles' that could come in between (Critchley & Bernasconi, 2008, p.63). The expression of the face triumphs over the qualities we observe in the face in the moment of dialogue- "The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me..."; the expression of the face surpasses any attempt that the 'I' could have to grasp or understand the face (Levinas, 1969, p.50-51).

Levinas argues that the 'I' has a total responsibility towards the Other. He believes that the ground of existence is ethics, and it is the first philosophy (Ibid, p.46). Therefore, the fundamental relation of the 'I' and the Other is an ethical relationship. The 'I' reads the 'the primordial expression' of the face, which commands "you shall not commit murder" (ibid, p.199). This commandment places a responsibility on the self that she cannot refuse. Formation of the subjectivity and opening of possibilities for the 'I' depends on carrying this responsibility. When the self accepts this unconditional obligation, the self's subjectivity is formed.

"You shall not commit murder," the self sees in the face "the basic look" (ibid, p.199). This responsibility that came with the face is infinite. One cannot choose whether or not to follow the first instruction; she has already done so. The fraternity we have with the Other and the face-to-face speech bind the 'I' to an unlimited amount of duty- "Multiplicity in being which refuses

totalization but takes form as fraternity and discourse is situated in a "space" essentially asymmetrical" (ibid, p.216). This responsibility relationship with the Other is asymmetrical and altruistic. A balanced relationship with the Other based on mutual and reciprocal interests would lead to egoism rather than transcendence. Furthermore, it would mean behaving towards the Other as if they were the same as me; this would be inherently violent since it is an act of totalizing the Other.



Figure 2 Maria Lai, Legarsi alla Montagna, Ulassai, 1981. Photo: Piero Berengo Gardin (Ricci, n.d.)

Maria Lai's seminal 1981 piece *Binding to the mountain*⁹ is considered the first example of relational art (Farina, 2019). It is a monument in the form of a collaborative performance work which is also a site-specific land art. The artist is asked to build a war memorial by the municipality of Ulassai (Lai's hometown) (Ricci, n.d.). However, Lai rejected this and said she

⁹ original name *Legarsi Alla Montagna*

would instead do an art piece for the living people rather than the lost ones. When the artist was contemplating the piece, she aimed to contribute to the place and community by engaging its residents (Pali, 2015). Before she decided on the artwork she would offer as the monument, she talked with the villagers. The legend she heard during these discussions inspired her. According to the legend, a little girl was miraculously saved from a landslide of the mountain hovering from a blue ribbon that she was trying to catch as it was flying in the air. This story from the village's collective memory excited Lai, and she decided to engage with it. In this work, she suggested tying every house in the village with a blue ribbon and eventually connected the ribbon to the mountain rising above the village.

The work is participatory in every stage, from planning to its execution. The villagers were always in close contact with the artist and were involved in the decision-making process. However, many villagers did not want to participate due to animosities between them. The idea was for children, youngsters, adults, and older adults of the village to work together to create thin, long ribbons from massive textile pieces. They make a circle around the cloth piece and move in different directions while they hold the piece to break the big cloth into small pieces. Then they bind their houses with the ribbons collectively until they tie the whole village together from the nearest to the furthest home. Afterward, they go to the mountain and surround the mountain with the ribbon as far as they can hike. Mountaineers take over the ribbon to the peak of the mountain and complete this piece by tying the mountain to the village, which is both shelter and threat for the villagers. Eventually, all the villagers agreed to participate but did so on their own terms. That is, they used different types of knots to indicate their relations, either of amicability or animosity- when neighbors are hostile, the ribbon would be straightened; if things

were pleasant, a knot would be tied to the ribbon; a bow would be tied for companionship; a typical celebration bread would be knotted for representing love (Vukadin, n.d.).

Through this work, Lai offered a way to work together with the Other for all the villagers in the Levinasian sense, in spite of varying terms of relationship. The ribbon, the straightforward but contextually charged object of her art, paves the way to contact and reconnect with the Other through communication or discourse. Participation in the work with the object relates one to the Other. The art historian Filiberto Menna explains the power of the work by stating that:

...Has the wonderful daydream of modern art changing life come true, even if only this one time, right here in this distant place where the prestigious names of the artistic avant-garde are nothing but names? I like to think so. It seems that here art has been able to do what religion and politics have always failed to do. Moreover, it took Maria Lai's ability to truly listen and give back speech to an entire town, creating a connection with the memories and ghosts of the place, helping them put aside destructiveness to open up, be available to new conversations and solidarity (Farina, 2019).

Face-to-face relations between the one and the other that Maria Lai rekindled through this participatory art piece restarted communications between formerly hostile neighbors. Lai, in her work, respects all the differences and suggestions, and introduces alterations. She incorporated ideas coming from the Others into her piece without trying to totalize the Others. People chose how they would like to express their feelings amongst each other. They are given free space for representing themselves, their expressions, reactions, and creativity in this participatory performance which is a sign of respect for the Other in the Levinasian sense. During the process, they start doing something together, and share a lived experience. Hence collaboration to the art practice can mediate relations in a way 'religion and politics failed to do'. The communication

started not because they were doing avant-garde artwork but because of the mere fact that they were participating and collaborating freely in a performative piece. Furthermore, Maria Lai, as an artist, donated most of her work to this town which led to the opening of a modern art museum. This act and her willingness to contribute to her hometown and to the Others could be seen as the signs of infinite responsibility or altruistic feelings (in a Levinasian sense) that the artist was feeling towards the Others.

2.3) Merleau- Ponty and Lived Body Experience

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (MP, hereafter) is a famous phenomenologist who investigates the phenomenology of the body. In order to analyze my performance *Circles*, which relies on bodily interactions, I employ MP's phenomenology. Influenced by Heidegger, MP also argues that the subject is a being in the universe whose relation to the world constructs by virtue of this State and not through thinking about the world (Attarian & Marasy, 2018). Investigation of the fundamental relation of the agent to the world through her body is his central problem. He tries to overcome both subject-object and matter-mind dualisms in the philosophical tradition. The subject-object dualism is an epistemological dualism that suggests that the knowing subject is distinct from the known object. As I argued in the 1st chapter, he is against objectivist epistemologies.

Matter-mind dualism is a metaphysical dualism, and it argues consciousness is immaterial and separate from the material body. MP, however, looks for a fusion between the body as a locus of experiences and reasoning. Our lived experiences with the things through our perception in our living bodies give meaning to the things which do not have objective meaning. According to MP,

the primordial and direct relation to the world is constructed through sense experiences embedded in the body; these experiences are about the physical activities and positions of the agent-

...our body sustains us throughout the world, and without it, we could not be in the world; therefore, the body facilitates our most basic access to the world and is thereby the most basic context for our experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1982, p.239).

For MP, subjectivity, and perception of the subject is embodied; they are immersed in the living body of the subject and cannot be separated from the body. He argues against the mentalistic understanding of perception, which describes perception as a solely mental event. In the mentalistic view, perception is seen as gathering and sorting the sense data through the sense organs. These data are meaningless in themselves and only through mental processes in the agent's mind, they acquire meaning. This is the Cartesian idea that detaches the subject from the world as if the subject comes across with a static world that she should interpret through her mind (Attarian - Mary, 2018, p.266). However, MP argues that what we sense is always imbued with meaning. A perception is a physical event in which the body is the center and it is active. The subject gathers sensations to which her body gives meaning. Through the bodily interactions that the subject encounters in the world, she can make meaning in the world; she may position and orient herself in the world while opening herself to new possibilities (Hetterley, 2018, p.5).

The movements and activities of the body in the world are interconnected with the sense experiences. Through the initial interaction with the world, the subject acquires the conceptual grasp of the world. Since the subject's primary interaction with the world is bodily and her perception is physical, the comprehension and interpretation of the world are "pre-reflexive and pre-conscious" for the subject (Attarian - Marasy, 2018, p.276). This means that the subject

engages with the world through physical states and uses her senses before making a conscious idea of the world.

2.4) The Performance Circles and The Background

The performance, “Circles” , was written and conducted by me in 2018. My performance work focused on investigating the possibility of interacting with the Other on an ethical ground by accepting that the Other is unknown. It was an investigation for an interpersonal face-to-face relation based on responsibility to the Other in a Levinasian sense in which subjects do not know nor question any social or political affiliations of the Other. The ideologies, stands, labels, or thoughts of the participants rendered irrelevant throughout the performance since that would be a totalizing approach. The work consisted of 7 random people taken from the audience and eight performers, including me. Fourteen people (7 participants and seven performers) were sitting in a circle and holding hands. They were sitting on a specific spot in the woods where they would not be disturbed. Each performer was sitting between two people; the performers held and caressed the participants' hands gently while I stayed in the middle of the circle. Before we started, I told them that I would be touching them (asked for their consent), and they are also free about what they would like to do to me. They could touch me back, caress me, push me away. Basically, they could do what they want. I was present there, open to any reactions I could receive. After we had talked about these, other performers covered the participants' eyes with a scarf. During the performance, we listened to live music of percussionists and singers playing a mantra which contributed to the setting of the mood and atmosphere. The rhythmic and circulating features of this music also helped create boundaries of the performance while signaling the piece's duration, dwelling, and liveliness. After some time, the participants relaxed with the music, touch of hands

and caresses. I went next to one of them and took her hands from the other performers; then I started to caress her. I took her hands, held them, fondled them; sometimes, I put her hands to my face and let her hold me. If I felt like the participant was comfortable with my touching, I caressed her arms, back, face, and hair. After completing this process within a few minutes, I gave her hands back to other performers and continued to caress her hands.

Meanwhile, I went to another participant and repeated the same process with her. I caressed each person in the circle in a way that they could feel they were loved and cared for. Also, other performers and I were constantly reassuring them that they are in a safe space with our actions and the atmosphere we created there. In the performance, I was interacting with participants in a “pre-reflexive” way in a Merleau-Pontian sense. We were feeling the effects of the touch in a physical sense during this state of affairs with all the sense capacities, which are prior to contemplative engagement with this state. The lived experiences created through the perception with the body and their freedom of reactions lead the agents to respond in a primordial, intimate way. The participants had various reactions to my touch. Some caressed me back, some cried, some felt fear, some cuddled me, some went back with repulsion. Through this attempt, I tried to alter the subject’s perception of the Other by creating new perceptions for the body. The reversibility of touch opens a channel for intimacy with the Other¹⁰. The body I touch could also touch me, feel me, be affected by me; I too experienced these. By virtue of

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey are quoting Merleau-Ponty, “While each monocular vision, each touching with one sole has its own visible, its tactile, each is bound to every other vision, to every other touch; it is bound in such a way as to make up with them the experience of one sole body before one sole world, through a possibility for reversion, reconversion of its language into theirs, transfer and reversal... Now why would this generality, which constitutes the unity of my body, not open it to other bodies? The handshake too is reversible; I can feel myself touched as well at the same time as touching” (Ahmed & Stacey, 2001, p.275). Here MP emphasizes reversible character of touch and vision. Touching and being touched are the ways that our bodies hold conversations with other bodies. Our bodies are sites that open us to other people, allowing us to have a relationship.

interconnectedness¹¹ in Merleau-Ponty, the body feels and reacts to the intentions of the Other which has a potential to change the way that an agent experiences the world. These interactions could even create changes in the embodied subjectivities as the body is exposed to new types of interaction with the Other. I could see that every person, including me, has gone through indescribable feelings¹² which left a residue of heaviness on our chests.

The story of this work stems from a personal issue that I wanted to work on myself and investigate its limits in terms of interpersonal relations in light of specific events¹³ in my

¹¹ Mahdi Atarian and Mohsen Marasy argue on interconnectedness through its connection to art piece as “The subjective role of the audience in perceiving the work of art through embodiment and corporeality is the cause of its physical tension with the world and others. This means that my body and others are exposed to each other’s intention and movement before the thought process. The body plays both as a viewer and as an object that can be seen...Receives by another while receiving. My body as a sensory receptor is only part of the world complemented by another complementary vision. Therefore, neither I, nor the other has a definite and unchangeable identity, because they are constantly changing in nature” (Attarian & Marasy, 2018, p.275). I use the notion of “interconnectedness” in this sense as I argue subjects can be changed through interpersonal relations through the means of performance art.

¹² In the third chapter, I will argue that these inarticulable feelings are affects which are “unstructured bodily sensations” that are invoked through lived experience of the agent and causes the agent to feel specific emotions (Gould, 2010, p.26-27).

¹³ In March 2018, the Turkish State’s operations in Afrin came to an end with the triumph of the State against locals. This event was celebrated by the supporters of the state intervention amongst the university student body at Boğaziçi University. They distributed lokum for the victory on the campus. Against this act of celebration, a group of people conducted an anti-war protest at the university. The protestors aimed to condemn this celebration of the State’s act by students since Afrin operations were considered an occupation and massacre in Kurdistan by the Turkish state. The protestors were holding a poster saying that “there cannot be Lokum for occupation, nor massacre”. This peaceful protest and the banner were considered as terror propagation, and mass campaign of black shipping started through media channels.

Consequently, the State took action and started targeting and arresting the students of Boğaziçi University who were (allegedly or not allegedly) part of the protest. The protesters, who are classmates and friends, were getting arrested one by one with dawn operations, and excessive police interventions. Some were facing torture during or after their detention. Arbitrary arrests by the police supported by espionage and cooperation of some university students put opposing students in an even more precarious position. They were facing the constant threat of being arrested, scapegoated, and targeted by the State and its repressive apparatuses. Notwithstanding, they also had to endure

University. I wanted to deal with this emotional baggage while producing a political performance piece. During this time, I have observed many people despising others because of their beliefs and political thoughts. Through this performance work, I tried to work on these negative feelings of mine and people while creating a schism in the domination of polarized public space. This action is inherently political since it creates an opening for face-to-face interaction with the Other without totalizing her. I believe these spaces are significant when polarization¹⁴ causes closure of all spaces to connect or interact with the Other. Without spaces of communication, neither political nor ethical intervention is possible. Moreover, to communicate, one should be ready to accept that the Other is different from me, and to respect the differences of the Other. Populist movements strive to close the free spaces of discussion and interaction. Within such an environment, I believe this performance and any performative acts that endeavor to reactivate areas of intersubjective encounter are politically valuable.

In this safe space of the performance, we have experimented with stripping from social-political affiliations and having interpersonal communication as mere agents. I was trying to invite the participants to a safe space within whose limits they have autonomy while I was trying to challenge the preconceptions both within me and in the participant. These are constructed in the society we have brought up and newly created by the light of the current political environment. This practice also posed a challenge to participants as it invites people to leave their

feelings of distrust and suspicion from their colleagues, severely damaging the space of academic freedom in the university. Fourteen students stayed in prison for more than two months, while some had to flee at that time. These events turned the atmosphere of opposition between students to visible polarization fueled with hatred. Many people were rightfully enraged at the position that we found ourselves in especially with collaborators of the state being amongst our cohorts.

¹⁴ Authoritarian populist regimes work through fueling the hatred and polarization in the society to annihilate the demonized Other. I discuss this thoroughly in chapter-3.

comfort zone and engage in an unfamiliar practice that accelerated bodily estrangements (Bleeker, 2015). They engaged in a practice that was strange for their body which is leaving the comfort zone of 'they-self' in a Heideggerian sense. This action suggested the occupation of the space and the possibility of its alteration as the authorship of the dominant discourse was subverted.

2.5) Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at examples of collaborative art pieces through the perspective of phenomenology. I argue, here, that through performative means, substantial changes in subjects can be kindled. Interpersonal relations are important tools and means for political intervention. Using this with an artistic approach is even more effective. In none of the examples the artist dictates such change. But rather, position herself/themselves as assisting the opening. In the execution of the artworks, the artist meets with the Other on an equal level, leaving room for the exercise of freedom of the Other and create such settings for this. Open, voluntary and free participation and interaction with the artist by creating a work paves the way for an intimate and transgressive realm of politics which is promising for creating substantial alterations in subjectivities through interpersonal relations.

Since the artist is the one still determining the conditions of the art work, some might argue that this is not meeting on equal grounds. However, artistic intervention and innovation is also needed to some extent for the exercise of aesthetic capacities of the artist in the artwork. This could also be done collectively, but that would be another aesthetic choice that the artist should decide. I emphasize in this chapter by explaining phenomenological methods from different

philosophers that it is possible for the artwork to intervene politically on the subjective and collective levels. These acts are local, personal and intimate, and these are partly the reasons that they are effective. They are not generalizing people under certain encompassing theories. They are engaging with intersubjective local critique to and for individuals. These are practices of politics on subjective levels and they are subversive. Usage of collaborative performance art creates the most suitable way for this engagement with politics through subjective interactions and in this chapter I prove this through analysing theories of phenomenologists who worked on the subject's experiences. In the following chapter I will look at usage of performative means in politics.

CHAPTER 3- Methods of Populist Discourse: Weaving the Future with the Past

In this chapter, I engage with the politics of the performative protest acts while elaborating on the dimension of 'affect' through artistic means. To this end, I analyze three performative protests done by people who support right-wing populist parties. Since politics has more than one side, I believe engaging with performative protest acts that have been executed by people who are in support of the status quo is important, besides the protests of people who position themselves in opposition, to have overall analysis of usage of performative means for political ends. Furthermore, while there have been numerous works about the performative protest practices in the left and the movements against the government, there is almost no recourse about such practices that the right-wing use. In this chapter, I address this gap in the literature.

I also engage with political context and background that give rise to these performative protest acts to posit an overall explanation. To limit the political context of the analyses, I look at performative protests only in Turkey. Since the target is right-wing people in Turkey, I present a short analysis of nationalism, populism, and what the populist right means in Turkey. Furthermore, I engage with Deborah Gould to posit the importance of constructing political positions by the consideration of the human both as an emotional and rational being and thus I elaborate on affect. Later I analyze Chantal Mouffe's views on the ineffectiveness of politics which strips itself from employment of affects. For Mouffe, the left has constrained itself to the rationalist understanding of human beings which causes its loss of power globally. To develop

my point on the importance of politics only in terms of arguments, I refer to Hannah Arendt and her notion of Post-Truth. When the truth is contestable and constructed within the social realm through the repetitive mechanisms of power, using only the means of argumentation become incompetent. Meanwhile the populist authoritarian regimes are shaping identities, and creating the dominant discourse and social realities through repetitive engagements with affective methods. Any political opposition attempting to defeat this must also engage with affects dominantly. As I argued in Chapter-2 participatory political performances are potent tools to create subversions and to make political interventions which are also used by Populist Right-Wing. In this chapter, I aim to show the power of shaping opinions of participatory performance acts and I claim that they create changes in the agent.

I first present a brief argumentative section illustrating the interconnections between protest, activism and performance. This is followed by background of the political atmosphere of Turkey and an insight on the manner of Turkish right's protests and their political position. Then I analyse the specificities that the Right manages to engage through their performance acts and finally I explain the theoretical interconnections between these performances and the politicization of the subject. Through this analysis I explore the larger discourse on why performative protest acts are more potent relative to classical forms of demonstration and how using collaborative performance acts affect subjects, mobilize people, and achieve political goals.

3.1) Protests and Activist Art

Political activism and social movements aim to mobilize people; they need activation of the masses not only by rational arguments but also by emotions. Activist art and participatory

performance art similarly motivate people with direct interventions to the public spaces. Causing a lived experience to the body by artistic means is an entirely different method from debating with arguments as a journalist would do. Like I argued in the previous chapter, questioning the agent, having an emotional effect on her, causing a lived experience while creating a space for confrontation is important phenomenologically and politically.

In her speech "Reasons for Hope", Chantal Mouffe argues that affects¹⁵ and desires play a very fundamental role in the construction of political identities, and she claims that these are the moving forces of political action (Mouffe, 2019). Right-Wing Populism has been using affects as a mean and addresses the emotions of the masses to mobilize people strategically. According to Mouffe, this is one of the main reasons for their success; while abstaining from an affective dimension of politics and restricting themselves to rational and deliberative procedures causes the left wing to lose their power (Mouffe, 2019). One of the aims of this thesis is to offer something to the praxis; through this overall analysis. I suggest incorporating affective and participatory performative means more as a political strategy to conduct political interventions since performative means are potent tools for local critiques¹⁶. Hence, investigating the affective dimension of protests done by right-wing populist party sympathizers and acknowledging how they are cultivating nationalism while raising empathy amongst citizens is essential for constructing a strategy for protests and engagement with people.

The performative protests that I look at are not artworks nor claim to be called art pieces. However, I argue in this chapter, what these are called is not important for the analysis. These acts (i) propose a representation of protestor's opinions through performative means; (ii) bring people to a particular spot or politicize a public place by employing performativity; (iii) offer an

¹⁵ Affect as a notion is discussed in section 3.5 of this chapter

¹⁶ I argued why performative acts are potent in the previous chapter.

intellectual, sensory experience for the viewer; (iv) call for action and engage with people's emotions, like in collaborative performances which I investigated in chapter-2. Through these engagements with people, protestors have a chance to create political interference in the agent's opinion. The effectiveness of these protests through engaging with affect is a crucial point for our focus.

Thus, by integrating performative protest acts in politics, I posit an understanding of the subject's experiences within the protest culture. This analysis is vital since it is hard to analyze experiences of a subject who lives in this world and not consider the socio-political conditions this subject faced. As I stated in Chapter-1, I choose to prioritize bodily, subjective and subjugated knowledges while criticizing dominant discourses of truth. 3.2. Background Analysis

In these two sections I give an insight on background information on political protest acts and right-wing positions in Turkey; rather than analysis. Engagement with populism and nationalism in a philosophy thesis may be unusual; however, I argue, phenomenology is based on the living body's experiences. The subject who is living in the world as a socially constructed existence is the primary concern of phenomenology and this thesis. The politics of nationalism and populism that is demonstrated and performed via political protest acts are of a bodily nature, and in this sense there is an integral connection amongst phenomenology and these actions.

Neo-liberal economies, populism, and nationalism are the rising trends in the world we are living in. While these ideologies reign globally, the uprisings, occupations, protest movements, revolts, and revolutions that we have witnessed all around the globe, are also there as the reactions against these politics. They have emerged everywhere "from Cairo to New York, from Barcelona to İstanbul, from TelAviv to Santiago de Chile," from Colombia to Myanmar, from Nigeria to Argentina (Marchart, 2019, p.10). According to Marchart, although many of

these uprisings and movements seem to be suppressed, struggles continue within different forms and shapes. The long-term effects of these movements are apparent in contemporary politics and activist art, even if these are hard to detect (Marchart, 2019, p.10). In Turkey, there has been a consensus that Gezi Protests¹⁷ in 2013, which are interlinked with the global occupy movements, is a focal point of the contemporary history of protest culture and turning point in Turkish politics. Verstraete argues that the aesthetical intervention¹⁸ of Gezi affected Turkish protest culture drastically, and protesters have employed performative protest practices as a tactical mean since then. (Verstraete,(n.d), p. 3). He claims that Gezi is the starting point of deploying various expressive and performative awareness in the protests (Ibid, p.20-21).

At Gezi Protests, the creative forms of activism greatly impacted creating affect, mobilizing people while empowering the protests. It is argued that creative 'aesthetical political acts'¹⁹ employed in Gezi Protests helped bring a diverse range of social /political groups together for a political goal against the neoliberal politics of the AKP²⁰ government (Jenzen & Erhart &

¹⁷Gezi Park Protests are civil protests which were initiated on 28 May 2013 by 50 activists from several ecological groups against the government's planned demolition of Gezi Park. Gezi Park is one of the last few green areas in the city center of Istanbul and the AKP government planned a project to construct a replica of the old Ottoman barracks, a shopping mall and luxurious apartments. The protests attracted a wide range of groups- leftist fractions, LGBTQI+, feminists, socialists, anti-capitalist Muslims, Kurds. They all gathered together against the government's authoritarian policies. The protests started with environmental reasons, but turned into anti-government protests against AKP government's authoritarian, patriarchal, political Islamicist, anti-secular rule and neo-liberal urban policies.

¹⁸ During Gezi Protests means of activist art i.e. graffiti, music, drawings, portraits, dance, performance art were prevalent.

¹⁹ Some of the performative protests held during Gezi “Gaz Maskeli Derviş” (Whirling dervish with a gas mask) by Ziya Azizi, “Ağaçların Soyundanım” (I am descendant of trees) by Zeliha Demirel, “Direniş Gezi” (Resist Gezi) by Şükran Moral, and Duran Adam (Standing Man) by Erden Gündüz.

²⁰ AKP stands for Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party). AKP has been the ruling party in Turkey since 2003.

Eslen-Ziya & Korkut & McGarry, 2021, p. 414-437). Duran Adam²¹ (Standing Man) performance attracted a wide range of attention and mobilized thousand of people. Ever since Gezi, performative protest actions have become a growing part of the visual activism and creative actions in the protests culture of Turkey. Integrations of performative actions to the repertoire of protests also appropriated by Turkish Right²². The search for creativity and performative actions can be traced in the protests of Turkish Right following Gezi, even though these are mostly overlooked in social movement studies.

3.3) Turkish Right and Protests

The protests that Turkish Right enacts can be called reactionary answers with the aim to protect and continue the status quo. The symbolic reactions against the real or imaginary threats to the nation, values, and beliefs by the demonized 'Other' who could be foreigners' with a thread of imposing Christianity and Europeanism, corrupt elites who pave the way to “westernization”, ethnic or religious minorities, 'some women', LGBTQI community and other marginalized communities. These can be counted as the reasons for the protests. Performative tactics in protests are used to 'raise empathy, solidarity, and support while increasing mobilization' (Roda

²¹ The performance was held after the police forcefully cleared the Taksim square from protesters and banned gatherings and/or protests in public spaces. During the performance, Gündüz stood alone silently in the center of Taksim square, facing the Atatürk Culture Center. Within a few hours people learnt about this performative action. Following this, thousands of people started to protest the government's arbitrary bans by passively standing in public places for days. This collaborative performance suggested a creative solution against the ban on assembly with its performative intervention to the public space, enabling masses to protest in an alternative way.

²² By Turkish Right-wing, I mean two major populist right-wing parties that formed an electoral alliance composed of the ruling party Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the opposition Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). This analysis excludes the center right since in Turkey, they position themselves opposed to these parties and form the other major electoral alliance with the center left for elections. When I say something is done by AKP supporters, I refer to both these groups.

& Puga, (n.d.), p.103). Thus, the aim is to appeal to the shared emotions and sentiments instead of convincing the crowd with arguments which is a populist strategy. This tendency is apparent in the chauvinist performative protests that the right undertook. Thus, the hegemonic social structure of the Turkish- Islamicist right is defended with reactionary actions and by utilizing the means of symbolic violence in the performances.

According to Antony Smith, nationalism is an active ideological movement that aims to "attain and maintain autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population" (Smith, 2009, p.61). He defines the core characteristics common in all nationalisms as 'autonomy, unity, identity, authenticity, the homeland, dignity, continuity, destiny' (Ibid, p. 62-63). In the ideology and the actions of Turkish Right, given importance to these common elements are visible with the dominance of two determining factors: Turkishness (in its cultural sense) and Islam.²³ The dominant element of this Turkish- Islamicist synthesis varies according to contemporary politics. However, the common ground of these two elements is the Ottoman legacy, whether it is a relatively more secular Turkish Islam, or a synthesis of Islam and Turkishness with a predominantly Islamic tone, as has become the case recently. The Turkish right defines itself on the Ottoman expansionist nostalgia and world domination. Therefore, the tendency to conquer, annihilate and destroy "the dangerous other" is the defining characteristic of the Turkish right. The step-by-step loss of the Balkans and the Middle East, especially since the end of the 17th century, is a "trauma" that the Turkish right has not yet overcome. This trauma itself feeds these

²³ In the process of re-establishing the concepts of homeland and citizen imposed by modernism in the 19th century, first, a nation was tried to be established with the dominance of Islam by excluding non-Muslim elements. Later, this scope was narrowed, and it was stipulated that the desired citizen should be assimilated into Turkishness as well as being a Muslim. Barış Ünlü defines this as the replacement of the Islamic Convention with the Agreement on Turkishness (Ünlü, 2019). Therefore, Islam has a prominent place in Turkishness for the right even if the dominance and the emphasis on Turkishness is a sign of secularism.

trends and tendencies of representative conquest and annihilation of the enemy. In the performative protest acts of right, an aim to satisfy these tendencies is evidently visible.

3.4) Analyzing Performative Actions of Turkish Right

In the last days of 2016, a group of young men who are part of Alperen Ocakları²⁴ in İzmir made a reactionary protest to demonstrate against Christmas celebrations. They came to a busy public marketplace, which was full of shops with decorations for Christmas, with Efe²⁵ Costumes and they brought another person dressed in Santa costume. They beat Santa symbolically and held a gun to his head in front of people at the market. They ended their protest with the traditional Efe Dance which is a symbol of heroism and nationality. The head of Alperen Ocakları in İzmir stated their aim is to react to the Christian customs and celebrations, which is not appropriate for the Turkish Muslim nation. He said (and I translated):

Our aim is to return people to their essences. We are the Muslim Turkish nation that has been the flag-bearer of Islam for a thousand years. Our customs and religious and national holidays are not paid the attention that is given to Christians' customs by shop-owners. We organized such a protest to show that we are totally against the celebration of Christian customs and to remind people how we should celebrate our own national holidays (IHA, 2017).

²⁴ Alperen Ocakları is the provincial organizations of Turkish nationalists with the agenda of Turkish-Islamist far-right nationalism. They are known as 'Grey Wolves' in Europe.

²⁵ Efe is the name of the traditional soldier leaders in the locality of İzmir and its surroundings. They are not part of the army of the state but rather national guerilla soldiers and leaders. Nevertheless, they used to have an impact on the rule of the locality even if they do not have an official place in the governance, and they are known for their bravery, fearlessness, and non-compliance to the rules.



Figure 3 Interesting Santa protest in Aydin. (2017, January 01)

One of the foundational beliefs of nationalism is a shared kinship, the myth of origin that legitimizes the essence and authentic partnership. Efe, a Turkish, Sunni Muslim, cis-hetero man, is the ideal masculine hero that the Turkish- Islamicist right seeks. This image also clearly sets the boundaries of who belongs to the nation and its values while defining the outsider. Anthony Smith, in "The Formation of Nations," calls the practices that promote to draw self-image of the nation through the series of repetitive rituals and acts as 'symbolic cultivation' (Smith, 2009, p.48). These acts enforce a national essence that comes with sharing a common ethnicity by deploying means of symbols, dresses, cultural codes, values, and heroic acts. In this context, the hero of nationalism (Efe) defeats the enemy- Santa. Santa is symbolically the thread of Christianity and more profoundly the thread of westernization that degenerates masses and leads them to forego Muslim religious values. In the synthesis of religion with nationalism imposed by neo-traditionalists, it is common to see an endeavor to strip the nation from western assimilation

by returning to the conservative religious value sets (Ibid, 75). By engaging in a political act and doing politics, the protest performers also aim to mobilize and engage the publics' emotions. They would like to change people's minds by bringing more attention and calling to action to conserve national religious values.

It is also a socially-oriented form of protest with its turn to people. The aim could be seen as educating people who have fallen for the propaganda of westernization. Showing the right way that 'Turks do not celebrate Christmas, we are Muslim' is the purpose that the Grey Wolves of İzmir attends to achieve. They are reminding the forgotten values to the nation while also threatening and showing the power of the nation to the West through the act of beating and holding a gun to Santa's head, to the dangerous missionary of the Western values. The Santa, in this performative protest, abjectified, humiliated, ridiculed, and annihilated with enactment of conquering against the enemy with the help of the national heroes. The symbolic violence employed in the set and structure of this performative protest act helps to satisfy the collective tendencies of the Turkish right, which is to conquer and destroy.

Another performative protest act happened in March 2017 due to tension between Turkey and the Netherlands due to a diplomatic crisis²⁶. AKP government desired to uphold rallies in the Netherlands for the upcoming referendum in Turkey, but the Netherlands barred the entrance of Turkish officials. Even after the ban, the Turkish Minister of Family and Social Policies tried to enter the country via land and was expelled by Dutch authorities. This act “against Turkey”, and the AKP government in specific, fueled outrage and protests of the Turkish diaspora in the Netherlands and the protests of AKP supporters in Turkey. On March 12, a group of men from AKP Youth Organization protested in the Netherlands by stabbing oranges, cutting and drinking its juice, in Kocaeli. Oranges symbolically represent the Netherlands and Dutch people.

²⁶ For more information about this crisis: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39264536>

Protestors accused Netherlands of being fascists and Nazis. Quoted from Emre²⁷, head of AKP Youth Organization in Kocaeli, "Holland which does not have the value of an orange peel, they took a step that they will regret." (DHA, 2017)



Figure 4 They protested the Netherlands by squeezing oranges. (2017, March 12)

Here, similar to the 'it is a peanut' saying in English, he means that the Netherlands is worth nothing. He claims that the Netherlands exploits the Turkish diaspora there, and since AKP protects their nationals, Netherlands is frightened by AKP. He argues that hostility between Turks and Europe started with Turk's occupation of Anadolu a thousand years ago, and Europe still has their resentment, "Europe has made us forget who we are, but they have not forgotten us. When we rise, the oppressed will have a shelter" (DHA, 2017).

It is important to note that the Conservative nationalist Turkish right has an expansionist agenda and a nostalgia for the glory of the past. In this case, too, they do not feel the need to hide its expansionist agenda; as Tanıl Bora has said, this agenda is not about returning to the past, but weaving the future with memories; it is about the future (Bora, 2017). Nationalism has this

²⁷ Translated by me.

sentiment to occupy people's minds with past glories, by self-aggrandizement as a helpful tactic to distract people from current political, economic situations. The legitimization of actions can depend on having/sharing the "essence" of Turkishness as this essence includes being bold, impulsive, and self-righteous. The overcoming of the rational mind in everyday life is described as the characteristic of a heroic Turk with the ability to change the world. Therefore, the performative actions of the Turkish right have an aim to transcend the rational mind.

They conveyed symbolic violence by using oranges as a symbol; they try to restore the "honor" of Turks. The resentment is expressed in this performative protest with revengeful acts and non-hidden threats. This act is recognized as a return to the local and national essence. The feeling of being morally just and right that comes with nationalism is cultivated and signaled with the performance (Searle, 2001, p.87). Furthermore, this 'creative' protest attracted many mobilized masses who put a performative statement in factual and virtual public spaces by cutting oranges. Being able to post threats to the Netherlands through symbolic violence while also pleasing the status quo by showing their political support to AKP was appeasing many agents.

Local authorities hold the last performative protest I will look at in 2017 January at Adıyaman, who supports AKP. In the first months of 2017 Turkish Lira drastically devaluated against the Dollar. The protestors claimed that the rising trend in Dollar and Euro occurs due to "dirty games" of the West, "Our economy is under pressure, now. We give our lives, but we do not sell our homeland. No matter how hard they try and attack the country's economy, we will never and never sell our homeland for dollars"²⁸ (Borsagündem, 2017). The protestors sneeze on dollars, burn them, and called the public to act by converting their dollars to Turkish Lira to restore the economy. The essential elements in this protest are scapegoating and an attempt at the

²⁸ Translated by me.

devaluation of the West. Instead of taking responsibility for the state of the economy, being a victim of Western games gives these agents a moral legitimacy in their action (Searle, 2001, p.93). Moreover, they devalue foreigners and make them abject by spitting and sneezing on the dollar notes to restore the “honorable position of Turks”.



Figure 5 Sneezing in Dollars. (Adıyamanlı muhtar dolara Sümürüp, yaktı, [The headman from Adıyaman blew into dollars and burned it] 2017, January 17)

The act of sneezing in dollars is demeaning and is a participatory, performative action. It invites others to join, to participate in this act annihilating the other. The action protestors and the audience that he calls to participate decides the destiny and continuation of the performance. He reconstructs the public space beyond a fixed spatial boundary and makes the whole political, through the performance. Performative acts of protests in these cases are not passive; they invite action with their provocative sense. When you burn the dollars, spit on them, you embody the protest. The performing act itself, burning or blowing into dollars, results in 'to do politics.' The act marks the position of the agent and makes him take action upon it. Through his performance, the protestor does politics; gives quality to his life, as Arendt argues (Marchart, 2019, p.80).

3.5) Politics of Emotions and Affect

"On Affect and Protest" (2010), Deborah Gould posits an articulation of politics of emotions in contentious politics. She criticizes the traditional approach in social movements theory that equates being emotional with irrationality. Before the emotional turn in the social movement studies, emotional responses of protestors were seen not as signs of political discontentment but as an outcry of unthinking masses that acted upon impulses (Gould, 2010, p.18-22). According to these understandings, the protesters should be rational actors who can take strategic, intellectual, well-thought actions to achieve their ends (Ibid, p.22). However, with the emotional turn in the social movement studies, political emotions are regarded as motivating forces of politics since, for Gould, affects and being affected are an integral part of human beings; hence, it is also an integral part of social movements and protests. Gould argues that giving attention to affect can empower social struggles and movements as it is a powerful emotion-

As an unspecified and unstructured bodily sensation, affect is bursting with potential... affect colors nonlinguistic sensory experience by giving it a quantity of intensity, and thus force, which prepares the organism to respond to that which is impinging on it, *but in no predetermined direction*. As a body's registered sensation of a moment of existing relationally, interactively in the world, affect in an effect of being affected, and an effect that is itself a preparation to act in response, but in no preset or determined way. An affective state, in other words, unfixed and polygenerative (Gould, 2010, p.26).

By the term 'affect,' Gould and I refer to 'unfixed, unstructured, unattached, nonlinguistic, free-floating and mobile energies' that have a capacity to have an emotional impact on the agent (Gould, 2010, p.26-27). Emotions are felt by the agent as a result of affect and affective states at

a specific time and context. Affect exceeds semiotics, linguistics, and any cognitive or rational articulation; they generate within the lived experience through the body's relationality to its surrounding world. Although manifestation and generation of affect and affective states through the diverse sensory experiences of the body are undeniably entangled and concern a person's social and cultural surroundings, affect transcends the socio-cultural realm (Ibid, p.31). Gould differentiates from earlier scholars of social movements, who equate being emotional with irrationality, rendering the whole act or protest as irrational. Gould however recognizes that as human beings, one cannot ever be either rational or emotional. Rather, these two are components that feed into the action simultaneously, and it is not a basis to reject an act because subjects have the capacity to induce affect and be affected.

Chantal Mouffe also criticizes the left from a similar point in her speech "Reasons for Hope" (Mouffe, 2019). According to her, the left is unable to understand the crucial role of affect in politics since they picture the subject only as a rational agent who acts in pursuit of her interests or moral concerns. For Mouffe "...lack of understanding of the affective dimension in the process of identification is one of the main reasons that left stuck in rationalist framework unable to grasp dynamics of politics" (Mouffe, 2019). However, affects and desires are moving forces for the agent and they lead the individual to act in one way rather than another. As I argued earlier, I take the subject as the product of identification processes, a social construction with no essence nor essential identity. Mouffe also argues that the construction of political identities is also a product of socialization processes, and they necessarily have an affective dimension (Mouffe, 2019). Thus, the employment of affects by political bodies has utmost importance to achieve political goals.

Limiting the scope of doing politics to rational deliberations is considering only rational capacities of human beings while denying the "irrational components of human motivation and action" (Gould, 2010, p.35). Channeling people's emotional energies paves the way for movements to engage with people as emotional beings and in these examples, the Right does this successfully i.e. channelling the anger and hatred towards the demonized Other to acts of symbolic violence. Mouffe believes that this is the fundamental difference between the left and right and the main reason that the Populist Right-Wing is more successful at reaching people, understanding them, talking with them (Mouffe, 2019). The rise of right-wing populism globally also signals that people are thinking that the populist right-wing is answering the needs and demands of people. Ruth Wodak mentions her conversation with a taxi driver in her book 'Politics of Fear'. The taxi driver has voted for right-wing populists even though he has always been voting for leftist workers' parties until that time; he says that the party leader is 'someone like him who is talking to him, not talking about him or talking down to him' (Wodak, 2015, p. 125). These feelings of talking with your equal, engagement with the public through empathy, perception of being seen and heard are significant in politics and political acts. Simple engagements with people, as in the participatory performances and artistic interventions, have the potential to mobilize people, affect people, and to create shared emotions. In my opinion, one of the main reasons for the success of Populist Right Wing is that they successfully interact with the people from an equal level and kindle their emotions.

3.6) Populist Regimes and Irrelevance of Truth

Mouffe argues that Right-Wing Populism posits its aim as bringing power back to people (Mouffe, 2019). However, when the category of people is defined within this framework, Right-

Wing Populism uses politics of immunization and politics of denial. Although Populism is about people's sovereignty, it does not have a concern to address a demand for equality. On the contrary, it would like to eliminate the dangerous Other, who cannot be considered as a part of national sovereignty, from the socio-political. Right-Wing Populism constructs its position by feeding the real or imaginary threads by the others to the nation and nativist body politics integrated into the border policies (Wodak, 2015, p.2).

Firstly, the main object of Right-Wing Populism is bodies; bodies of citizens, bodies of nationals; and deciding who and which bodies can be part of the nation. The dangerous 'other' is defined by the context, which means it could be anyone easily. Some of the discursive strategies Right-Wing Populists use are scapegoating, victim-perpetrator reversal, construction of conspiracy theories,(Wodak, 2015, p.4) and also appropriation or mimicking strategies that the left utilizes as in the case of performative protests I exemplified. Within the use of such methods, a Holocaust victim can be compared to the perpetrator²⁹; a businessman can be imprisoned for more than three years for plotting Gezi Protests³⁰; journalists are scapegoated when they write about the crimes of state, and they forced to flee³¹.

Furthermore, Populism does not only feed the already existing fears of the nation; it also creates a constant state of distrust and aims to suppress all means of rational discussion. Uniting around a leader is more appealing when the truth is contestable. Arendt argues that deception in

²⁹ Cultural commissioner of Hungary famously said that: "Europe has become the gas chamber of George Soros". Soros is a Holocaust survivor ("Hungarian official says Europe is 'gas chamber' of Soros the 'liberal Fuhrer'", 2020).

³⁰ Osman Kavala, a businessman, and philanthropist, is accused of plotting Gezi and imprisoned for 3.5 years ("Home - Solidarity with Osman Kavala", n.d.).

³¹ Can Dündar had to flee Turkey after being accused of disclosing the secret of the state after he documented about the help of Turkish National Intelligence Organizations to jihadists in Syria ("The Case of Can Dündar and Erdem Gül - Global Freedom of Expression", n.d.)

politics never conflicts with the reason "lies are often much more plausible, more appealing to reason than reality since the liar has the great advantage of knowing beforehand what the audience wishes or expects to hear" (Arendt, 1972, p.7). Populist leaders today unite people around them not with the reasonable arguments they offer to the public, but with the things that they said, where they said and how many times they have said it until those things become the truth. Arendt refers to the notion of Post-Truth that we use today, which indicates that the difference between truth and falsity gets blurred, and an objective standard of facticity disappears. Arendt says:

There always comes the point beyond which lying becomes counterproductive. This point is reached when the audience to which the lies are addressed is forced to disregard the distinguishing line between truth and falsehood altogether in order to be able to survive. Truth or falsehood—it does not matter which anymore if your life depends on your acting as though you trusted; the truth that can be relied on disappears entirely from public life and with it the chief stabilizing factor in the ever-changing affairs of men (Arendt, 1972, p.7).

With the disappearance of the stabilizing factor of objective truth, political life became less an area of rational discussions and more of affects, appealing to emotions. If the agent feels a survival need to follow the leader, which is constantly cultivated by feeding the public's fears, whether this leader is lying or not loses its significance since he is a savior as 'one of us' (Wodak, 2015, p.126). In this state, the notions of truth and fiction juxtaposed for the agent and lost their importance. Thus, it is not helpful for the left to answer right-wing populist strategies by only the means of arguments when the objective standards of truth disappeared from public life. As the construction of political identities takes an affective dimension, so should the left.

3.7) Conclusion

Some of these protests of right-wing supporters are heavily mocked by the opponents in Turkey and Europeans. However, as the Standing Man performance attracted participation, so did cutting oranges or spitting in Dollars. Thus, I believe it is essential to examine elements of these performative protest acts in depth without neglecting their place in the history of Turkish protest culture. Even if it is understandable to mock right-wing protest, neglecting their potential to call for action, and affect mobilization by using performative means would be a futile denial.

Chapter 4 - Conclusion and Final Remarks

In this thesis, I investigated the possibilities of politically constructive action through deploying performance acts. Political performance acts are used to shape the opinions of the agent both by the writers of the dominant discourse and its opponents. Performance acts have unique sites partially autonomous from the conditions of constructed social reality as they can determine their own requirements and possibilities within their settings.

I argue that collaborative performance acts are more impactful than other forms of politics that centralize rational discourse. If the usage of affective tools is potent for political intervention through performative means, then the opposition should also put them into effective use. Arendt argues that being politically active gives quality to life and collaborative performance art provides that opportunity. It makes the agent engage in political activities by doing bodily acts. Collaborative performance acts are a mechanism to challenge the social and political structures through enhancing people's understanding and bringing meaningful change in them by exposing them to new encounters, creating bodily experiences, prompting them to question norms and structures. It need not bring immediate revolution in order to be effective, but political performance acts can be politically subversive, transgressive, and constructive for the subjects. These practices could enhance freedom and offer new possibilities in how the subject exists in the world. Thus, they work as potent tools for political intervention, and as elaborated in this thesis, they are a common tool for the populist right-wing as well.

It is vital to acknowledge right-wing populist performative protest acts because they reiterate certain discourses to protect their dominance and power. Thus, investigating the affective

dimension of protests done by right-wing populist party sympathizers and acknowledging how they are cultivating nationalism while raising empathy amongst citizens is essential for constructing a strategy for demonstrations and engagement with people. It is not that important if these performative acts are considered art or not. It still plays a significant role in shaping opinion; forming new mechanisms and forms to elaborate politics using politics and performance is one way to do so.

In this thesis, I try to answer why we value doing politics through subjective interactions. I look into how performative means can be constructive for a subject's value building; how performance art can dismantle the existing dominant structure and knowledges; why do different forms of politics employ performance and its means; why subjective subjugated knowledges are important. It can be understood that doing politics only through the means of rational argument isn't enough. Collaborative performance allows for a capacity of political intervention to the dominant regime.

Free collaboration opportunity is a fundamental difference between performative acts in the second and third chapters. The practices I exemplified in Chapter-3 do not desire to challenge nor change the status quo; these are populist right-wing examples who hold the political power now in Turkey. As these practices want to transmit an already in effect ideology, they also do not want to create free discussion spaces.

Moreover, the participating agent of the protest is expected to perform a certain act to be part of that performance space. However, in the examples in Chapter-2, elements of the artwork are determined through free discussions, and agents are accessible in the ways that they would respond. Also, methods of Turkish right in performative acts can pertain to being violent and threatening. It aims to eradicate the Other in Chapter-3 while examples in Chapter-2 cultivate

interpersonal relations based on cooperation with the Other. Thus, the practices I exemplified in the second and third chapters are fundamentally different in whether they leave room for free reactions, how they use symbolism, and how they portray a relation with the Other.

In collaborative performance actions, not only the author, or the artist in the case of performance art, the audience also has a possibility to share participation in this setting. As a result, they have a chance to exercise autonomy and authenticity. The formal structure of the collaborative work, involving reiteration of certain acts within a particular setting and time, also creates alterations in the agent's bodily and collective experiences by creating a sphere of shared feelings, experiences, and solidarity. The transgressive intimacy and formal structure formed within the realm of performance could have resulted in these examples of interpersonal relations, which transgress societal boundaries and shape the agent's experiences.

Mouffe argues that there should be several objectives of populist left strategy for succeeding against right-wing populists (Mouffe, 2019). Some of these create a popular majority to achieve electoral success, establishing a new hegemonic formation that can provide recovery for the radicalization of democracy; taking account of diverse demands of workers along with feminists, the LGBTQI community, social-ecological activists, achieving intellectual or moral freedom. These are only several suggestions to show that manipulating or cultivating public fears is not the only way that affects can be strategically employed in politics. Even if right-wing populists are using it to cultivate nationalist sentiments, there is also the possibility and potential to use effects to empower marginalized communities, address democratic demands, and strengthen participatory politics. Through analyzing performative protest acts of populist right-wing, I aimed to dismantle and deconstruct the ideological components of these protests. This is also an aim to

reconstruct performative protests for egalitarian causes in politics for subverting the dominant discourse of truth.

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