On the idea of Action in Davies' Performance Theory of Art

Aitor Izagirre & Igor Petralanda

Institute for Logic, Cognition, Language and Information
The University of the Basque Country

<aizmad@gabone.info>

Intuitions are always required to establish the reality of our concepts. If the concepts are empirical, the intuitions are called examples. If they are pure concepts of Understanding, the intuitions are called schemata. If we desire to establish the objective reality of rational concepts, i.e. of Ideas, on behalf of theoretical cognition, then we are asking for something impossible, because absolutely no intuition can be given which shall be adequate to them.

Kant, *Critique of Judgement*

Abstract
Research in topics on ontology of art in anglophone traditions have been prolifically developed in the last decades offering a myriad of positions. David Davies' Performance Theory of Art has been, in our opinion, one of the most striking and innovative framework so far. His main original thesis is that art is the action whereby an artistic content is articulated via a vehicle through an artistic medium. In that process there is a specification of what he calls a "focus of appreciation", which is the object that traditionally has been identified with the artwork. Section one is devoted to outline two of the main precedent theories he discusses, namely, the Action-Type Hypothesis by Gregory Currie and artworks as Indicated Structures Theory by Jerrold Levinson. Having presented the above theses we can proceed then, in section two, to the explanation of some fundamental features of Performance Theory. We will start from the criticism to the mentioned positions and then stress its most important contributions. The aim of the last section is to introduce some basic critical remarks to the Davisian theory concerning action. In fact, the main purpose of this paper is to set forth the Davisian idea of action and then point out some existing problems from the viewpoint of Philosophy of Action and, to some extent, from Aesthetics as well.

Keywords: Ontology of art, action, Action-Type Hypothesis, Indicated Structure Theory, Performance Theory.

During the last forty years, aesthetic theory has become an important field in anglophone philosophical traditions. Some relevant topics have been introduced with a new force in the centre of the field, such as, interpretation, epistemology and definition of artworks. In our opinion, ontology of art is, probably, the one that has deserved more attention and discussion. The driving ontological question is "What kind of entities are artworks?", and among the variety of the answers to this question, neo-representational, expressionist, aesthetic or formalist theories can be considered as the more influential (Carroll 1989). These proposals try to give a definition, and even if the problem of definition must not be immediately identified with ontology, there is a clear interdependence between them; the main difference being one of degree. An ontology of artworks can be built up without giving a definition of them, but the contrary is not possible; if you can offer a definition you are explicitly or implicitly assuming an ontology. That's why theories of art

involved in its definition are particularly interesting for philosophers worried about ontology. Ontologies are not in general as precise as definitions, but often enough, the ontological answers had been so indefinite such as the following ones: "artworks are empirically accessible entities" (Aesthetic Empiricism), or "artworks are abstract structures" (Structuralism). All these ontological proposals assume that artworks have to be identified with substances; consecuently, the answers to the question "what kind of entity is an artwork" were usually kept in the realm of physical objects or substances (with some exceptions like Collingwood's or Dewey's proposals, see Collingwood 1938 & Dewey 1934)

Nevertheless, from the late seventies and early eighties of the last century some theories made an ontological turn taking action more or less explicitly as a primitive category; and, as a result, developed some proposals giving to action a relevant role in the ontological clarification of the special entities that artworks are (Livingston 2012). David Davies' *performance theory of art* (Davies 2004) has been the most striking and innovative framework until now. In his view an artwork is precisely an action, which doesn't mean that there is an action that is important for the adequate understanding of the artwork, but this action in itself is the artwork. In his own words "[...] the work itself, as the unit of criticism and appreciation, is to be identified not with a specified focus, but with a performance whereby a particular focus is specified [...]" (Davies 2004 p. 81). This innovative approach forces us to violently change the way we usually talk about artworks, according to the revisionist critics. For the performance theory of art (PTA) "some features of provenance are constitutive of the work" and then we need to distinguish between works (as a whole action) and 'work-focuses', where the latter is just a part of the artwork considered as a whole. The way we traditionally speak about artworks corresponds only to 'work-focuses' in the new terminology and not to the new idea of works for the understanding of which, we need to take into account the generative-process or the history of production of the 'focus'. We will proceed to the examination of these details later.

Basically, Davies' conception is that "an artwork is a performance which articulates a content through a vehicle via an 'artistic medium'"(Davies 2004, p. 253). When speaking of 'performance' he is really speaking about action, and it must not be confused in any sense with "performance arts" (even if the latter is included as a particular case in the former). But what is his conception of action when he identifies 'performance' with artwork?, What kind of action is that performance that is considered the artwork? These are the questions we want to introduce here. To get satisfactory answers to them, it is completely necessary to go back to other provenance-sensitive ontologies like Currie's *action type hypothesis* (ATH) and Levinson's *indicated structure theory* (IST). So far as Davies himself claims that "a work is not, as Levinson might argue, a work-focus as specified by such a performance, or as Currie maintains, an action-type that is instantiated by that performance" (ibidem, p. 147). Those two are the main theories Davies is seriously discussing, and that's why they are taken into consideration in this paper. After an overview on these theories we will try to schematically characterize Davisian theory of art. We basically agree with the outline of the PTA but we aim to introduce at the end of the paper some critical remarks that, in our opinion, should be taken into consideration in order to reinforce it.

I. Currie's ATH and Levinson's IST

Action-type hypothesis (Currie 1989) basically claims that artworks are ontologically something belonging to action-types which are very general entities that can be instantiated by different agents at different times. Supported by ideas on individuation of events (and therefore of actions as a subset of events) from Jaegwon Kim, he considers an event (action) as having "three constitutive elements; an individual, a property and a time". Some events (with at least two objects)

are constitutively relational. For example *Jon imitates Gorka's behaviour*[1] is an event with the constitutive relational property *x imitates z*. The form of the Currian idea of artistic action-type relies on this basic conception of events as primitive ontological category. It basically consists of an agent discovering a structure by means of a heuristic path at a time *t*. The notion of heuristic path comes from Lakatos' methodology of research programs explaining the history of the sciences. Currie uses this idea analogically but he does not distinguish (for example) between positive and negative heuristics, and he simply uses the term in a broad sense. Thus, to adequately appreciate an artwork the observer needs to appreciate "[...] the artist's achievement in arriving at that pattern or structure" (p.68). The task for anyone criticising or evaluating any artwork is to:

> "[...] understand, by means of historical and biographical research, the way in which the artist arrived at the final product. He must show us in what ways the artist drew on existing works for his inspiration, and how far that product was the result of original conception. He must show us what problems the artist had to resolve in order to achieve his end result, and how he resolved them. His job, in other words, is to trace, as closely as he can, the artist's heuristic path to the final product." (Currie 1989, p.68)

Therefore, to *do* art is to achieve some outcome that can be obtained only following a particular (heuristic) path. It is up to the artist and her original capacities to reach that outcome. That 'achievement' is what we evaluate from an specific artwork, following ATH conception. In order to clarify this idea we could use the following example. In a piece composed by a musician, the constitutive elements in this ontology are: the author or agent, the sound structure, and the heuristic path to that structure, that is, the path the author needs to cross in order to discover that structure. Curries formalizes this as follow:

Beethoven's composition of the Hammerklavier Sonata

as

[*B,S,H,***D**,*t*]; *B* is Beethoven, *S* is the structure of the work, *H* Beethoven's heuristic path to *S*, and **D** the relation *x discovers y via heuristic path z,* and *t* the time of occurrence.

(Currie 1989, p. 69)

In this picture the composer (artist) *discovers* a structure. It seems relevant to stress (because of the metaphysical implications it has) that the type of performed action is a *discovery*. First of all, it implies that the structure has an independent status and that it's not created but a pre-existent entity. It's existence precedes the author's activity and seems eternal. *Symphonie pour un homme seul* was not created by Pierre Schaeffer & Pierre Henry but simply discovered by them following some heuristic path. The author and the time of production of the work are variables and therefore "[...] the composer's identity and the time of composition are such inessential elements" of the work. (p. 65). In contrast, the structure, the discovery and the heuristic path are *constitutive elements* of the work.

Currie in his book develops, in parallel to the argument in favour of the ATH (and with "relative independence from one another"), an additional argument that, as he insists, does not entail the ATH; they merely complement each other. With the *Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis* (IMH) of artworks he claims that the idea that some kinds of artworks are 'multiple' while some others are 'singular' (p. 8) is nothing more than a theoretical illusion. He is referring here to what Nelson Goodman (Goodman 1968) labelled *allographic* artworks (literature, music...) and

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1 Between * indicates an event.

autographic artworks (painting, drawing...). There is no such division but, on the contrary, ontological unity in that respect: all of them belong to the same ontological category of action-types. Consequently what the agent discovers is in fact a structure-type which can be instantiated in different times and by different agents, because agent and time are, recall, variable and non-essential properties. Anyone who discovers the same structure through the same heuristic path is instantiating the same work, or, in other words, performing the same action-type. The structure-type is understood in the sense of pre-existing patterns (textual, audible, visual, etc.) that appear in the action-token of the artist. So, there seems to be a correlation between action-type and discovered structure-type, in a way that, it is not possible for different artists to discover the same structure-type instantiating different artworks.

One of Curries' main criticism goes against what he himself called "aesthetic empiricism", the view in art theory defending (see, for instance, Beardsley 1958 and Bell 1949) that art works are reducible to empirically accessible objects, and this direct contact exhausts all their aesthetic and artistic properties. In Currian ontology the artist performance "[...] must be seen as integral to the work itself. What is visible in the picture does not, even when properly weighed, exhaust the work" (p. 42). A serious problem appears when he tries to reach directly an ontological level while his methodology and even his epistemology don't allow to make such enormous jump. The triple criticism by Davies to Currie's basic ingredients of his theory, namely "action-types", "structure" and "heuristic path" (see II.1 on this paper) seems to be right and makes clear the difficulty of maintaining Currie's claims, specially when he has apparently abandoned discussions in that field of research, i.e. ontology of art. It is important to remark that this attack to "aesthetic empiricism" is common to every provenance-sensitive ontology of art at least to the most influential theories like Currie's, Levinson's or Davies'. The source of the dispute comes from the basic conception of the value of artworks. For the empiricists the value of an artwork is in the aesthetic experiences that the product, as an empirically accessible substance, elicits to the observer. As all these experiences can be reduced to the perceptual properties of the work, without any consideration of context or history of production, every aesthetic and artistic property should be searched for in the object as an isolated and static entity. A strong criticism to this position comes from action sensitive approaches to art interpretation and evaluation. In Levinson's own words:

> "the pleasure proper to an object of art is one that is fully cognisant of the background from which a work emerges, the process whereby it came to have the exact shape that it does, the challenges inherent in the medium and material employed, the problems with which the work is wrestling, and so on. The proper pleasure of art is an *informed* pleasure, and ampersands that its object – unlike the beauties of nature – is an artefact, has a history, and represents something done and achieved" (Quoted by Davies 2004, p.257)

Jerrold Levinson has been, certainly, the developer of another important provenance-sensitive approach to ontology of art. Sharing a basic interest in action with Currie he develops his views in different works, but mainly in his famous article 'What a Musical Work Is' (Levinson 1980). Even though directly concerned with "pure music" (*fully notated classical composition of western culture*) his main thesis has been generalized into every genre of art. In his view, a musical work is a structure as indicated by an agent at a determined time. Levinson's position comes as a reaction against the platonic view claiming that musical works are pure and simple sound structures. Taking as a starting point the question 'what a musical work is?' he tries to give an answer which preserves the intuition that a piece of music although is a non-physical object is at the same time subjectively shareable. He settles three requirements for this. The first one (*Creatability*) claims that a musical work must be created, it has no existence prior to the musicians activity. The second one (*Fine Individuation*) claims that different musicians (and generalizing, any artist) determining the same

structures in different musico-historical contexts might create different musical works. The last one (*Inclusion of Performance Means*) demands that for every musical structure, specific means of production must be constitutive of it, which implies what can be named "performing-means structure as a parallel sequence of performing means specified for realizing the sounds at each point". It is clear how the position determined by these requirements derived conflicting conclusions to Currie's ATH and IMH. In a more contextualist vein, the same structure indicated by different individuals gives different artworks, and the same thing happens with the time of indication: the same structure indicated in different times gives different artworks. Both appear now as constitutive properties of the artwork.

Following these requirements a musical work is compounded by a basic structure that is not a pure abstract entity, but a structure determined by the means of production used for making the structure audible (visible...). Thus, a musical work could be outlined as follows: (MW): *S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-X-at-t*, where X is a particular agent and *t* the time of composition. A composer indicates an S/PM structure ψ (a structure and its correlative set of performance means) bringing into existence something that didn't exist previously to the composers creative activity *ψ-as-indicated-by-X-at-t*. To compose a MW presupposes the establishment of a new relation between X and ψ. And this last element is one of the most important aspects of the Levinsonian view on musical (artistic) creation: what is being revealed as a key concept is an intentional relation in the act of creation of W by X. For example, *Poème électronique* is a structure *S* and the structure of performance means (which include the acoustic characteristics of the Philips Pavilion created in Brussels by the architect Le Corbusier, the spatialization of sound projections, telephone dials, and so on), indicated by Edgard Varèse in 1958.

In this framework, features of provenance or the genealogy of production appear crucial and unlike Currian view, features like the author and the time are included as constitutive elements. That could be clear observing the way in which we confer artistic and aesthetic properties to artworks. Let's consider, following an example by Levinson, a musical structure identical to one by Brahms but indicated by Beethoven. Because depending on the different features of provenance (author, historico-cultural context...) in the instantiation of the same structure-type we ascribe different artistic properties to them. The one by Beethoven should be considered 'visionary' while the one by Brahms should be "strongly Liszt-influenced". We have instances of different works with the same structure-type, while in a structuralist framework like ATH we have different instances of the same work. Between these two main ontological positions, David Davies is going to open a new space for an original and more reinforced ontology.

II. Davies' Performance Theory of Art

David Davies starts his research from the consideration of several distinct authors in the domain of the philosophy of art, but as pointed at the beginning of the paper, he specially discusses these two previous provenance-sensitive positions. His main original thesis is that art is the action whereby an *artistic content* is articulated via a *vehicle* through an *artistic medium*. In that process there is a specification of what he calls a *focus of appreciation* which is the object that traditionally has been identified with the artwork. He starts building up his performance theory from a critique to the *common sense theory of art*; a theory that claims that "Instances of works are the kinds of things we encounter in galleries, concert-halls, libraries, theatres, and cinemas. […] To properly appreciate a work, it is both necessary and sufficient that one have a direct experiential encounter with an instance of the work […]. Such an encounter is *necessary* [...] and *sufficient* in that any properties of a work not accessible in an experiential encounter with one of its instances have no bearing on a work's artistic value, and no bearing on its artistic appreciation […] the experiences in question are

taken to be valuable and not generally available in other ways"(Davies 2004, pp. 6-7). The construction of his own theory goes reconsidering some features from ATH and IST; basically dismounting ATH and, in a sense, trying to reinforce Levinsonian view.

II. 1 Criticism to ATH and IST

The aim of the PTA is to dismantle the common sense view that entails what he calls an epistemology, an ontology and an axiology of artworks, while he tries to fill the epistemological gap between traditional and late modern art production (p. 8). Following Currie and Levinson, empiricist epistemology is particularly attacked. Firstly, because there seem to be 'non-manifest' properties in artworks that we regard as constitutive of them. These properties depend on the knowledge the skilled observer has about "the history of a work, the influences upon it, its influence on other works, its place in the development of pictorial style, the aims and intentions of the artist who painted it" (Currie, p.18) and so on. Some of these properties are counted among the most important properties of the work, but are, according to his view, 'context sensitive', which means not reducible to perceptible properties, but provoked by contextual relations of them. To adequately grasp those properties one needs to put the object in relation with the features of provenance, like the historical development of art, time of production, etc.

So, artworks are entities with properties conferred by provenance conditions, i.e. what the artist did, in which historical context, and so forth. It is in considering these provenance features of the artwork when he sets forth strong criticism to Currie's view and some less strong critical remarks to the Levinsonian view. Artworks cannot be action types in a Currian sense for different reasons. The criticism is triple; against heuristic path, against his idea of structure, and against his idea of types applied for artworks. The notion of heuristic path has not simply the sense given by Lakatos, with an epistemological concern, but introduces it into the individuation and identity of artworks, and this collapses with some assumptions of the ATH (Davies 2004, p. 134). For Davies, the Currian idea of structure is problematic particularly when we try to extend it to visual arts. In his view, a structure is a 'pattern' but is not clear at all the way someone can determine the visual pattern of a painting, when paintings have, as Goodman terms it "syntactic density" (Goodman 1968). He finally observes that the category of action-type is not so innocent as appears to be, but problematic. The notion could be understood in a realistic manner where these types exist independently from their tokens, or nominalistically only existing when they are tokened. Realistically construed our interest in tokens of artworks might disappear, and nominalistically construed action-types are like natural kinds and the discovery of an action-type is only possible if the artist "[...] perform(s) an action-token that satisfies a hitherto unsatisfied action-type description, thereby bringing the action-type into existence" (Davies 2004, p. 137). Therefore, Davies concludes that, in art, we have just tokens. If art is an action, it can not be an action-type, but an action-token.

After these three criticisms, a last (this is in fact a fourth criticism) problematic issue arises from modality. Before presenting it, it is convenient to briefly insert some elements about what means for us to individuate and confer identity on artworks. The question is how we determine which are (in an artwork) the constitutive elements that allow us to distinguish and identify an entity as a singular artwork among other entities. Or, in other words, the question is how do we know that we have an X and how do we know if it is the same X or there are different X's. When the observer is trying to evaluate and interpret an artwork, she follows her modal intuitions (Could be possible for this work to exist under different circumstances?, Could be possible for it to exist in the same manner?, and so on) and make modal judgements on this background. Modal judgements on artworks are, then, a very familiar kind of judgements we usually do when evaluating any artwork. For example, when in an exhibition we judge a canvas conservative because it was produced in 1968 but judging an almost identical painting innovative because it was produced in 1789, we are judging in relation to our modal intuitions. Or consider a mask painted by an

American outsider painter, we evaluate it as shocking in the American cultural context of the 50's but a traditional artefact if we think of it as produced in a determined African traditional culture.

Following open debates in ontology of art concerning these topics (and on a background of Kripkean metaphysics), there is a proposal of what he calls *the modality principle.* Modality Principle establishes that all and only the constitutive properties of a work are its essential properties, taking into account that the constitutive properties are given, in the order, by the individuating conditions and the *sortal* appropriate for the work. The problem is to discover how to know "[…] *which* aspects of provenance serve as individuating conditions for, and are therefore constitutive properties of, those works" (Davies 2004, p.105). Here comes a criticism to the IST. For Levinson *every* aspect of the historico-cultural context enters in the adequate appreciation of the artwork. But this is not possible as, Davies notices, offering strong contra-arguments (p. 106). Because for individuating, by definition, you need to select and determine only few elements among the vast myriad of available features. The art-historical context as a generalization of Levinson's "musico-historical context" is:

> "The total music-historical context of a composer P at a time t can be said to include at least the following: (a) the whole of cultural, social, and political history prior to t; (b) the whole of musical development up to t; (c) musical styles prevalent at t; (d) dominant musical influences at t; (e) musical activities of P's contemporaries at t; (f) P's apparent style at t; (g) P's musical repertoire at t; (h) P's oeuvre at t; (I) musical influences operating on P at t. (Levinson 1980)

As this includes so many different historical facts that can vary in different possible worlds, and as Levinson does not give us means to determine which features to pick up from that broad context, finally, only time, structure and agent remain as constitutive features of the work. This is problematic because very often, concrete elements of the cultural context are constitutive of artworks.

II.2 Performance Theory of Art
The solution Davies gives to this problem is that elements of provenance determine "our modal judgements with a variable force that reflects our overall sense of what is to be appreciated in a given work" (p. 112). To know if a feature of provenance is constitutive or not "[...] depends upon the particular *work* in question [...]" or, as he says, is *work-relative* (p.107). In this sense, for adequately appreciate an artwork, the observer needs to properly reconstruct the generative action which brought into existence the focus of appreciation.

> "[...] we can expect many of the relevant aspects of the context of creation to be implicated in a description of the performance in virtue of their being implicated in a characterization of the intentional states guiding that performance." (Davies 2004, p. 114)

In IST there was an intentional relation in the act of creation (indication) of any work, and that relation was crucial. Levinson, however, didn't exploit its consequences as Davies does in his PTA. In Davisian schema artistic intentions help us to individuate and identify artworks, and we can do that from a reconstruction of the action starting from the focus of appreciation. The focus of appreciation appears, then, as a starting point for our evaluation of the artwork. This concept of focus comes to substitute the Currian notion of structure, that is problematic when translated into visual arts as we have seen before. The artwork is not the object or final product, but the action that brought it into being. Nevertheless, the role of the work-focus remains decisive in so far as it is the material departing point for any adequate reconstruction of the action as a whole (the artwork). That

reconstruction should be done by following the traces of *doings* until we reach the intentions, that constitute the core. The reconstruction can be definitive only under the consideration of those artistic intentions of the agent, and depends on these intentions that our modal judgements can be adequate to the artwork. Artistic intentions possess an ontological centrality which corresponds with the basic category of action.

Thus, we have an artwork that is a token-action that consists in the articulation of an artistic content, but the articulation of that content is not identical to the focus of appreciation. Not at least if we consider it as a mere material entity with some patterns (visual, audible, textual, etc.). We need to consider it as a material thing that refers to intentional features of provenance, and those intentional features occur in a medium that enable them to be properly articulated as 'artistic'. In the concept of focus of appreciation, unlike Currian view, any presupposition of eternity or pre-existence disappears. An artistic intention is satisfied through the action which specifies a focus. A content can be articulated only thanks to the *artistic medium*. He distinguishes between 'vehicular medium' and 'artistic medium', the former being a "generalization of Margolis' notion of a *physical medium* in order to accommodate such works" (Davies 2004, p. 59), and the latter, the *shared understandings* in the light of which the artist acts "[...] in manipulating a vehicular medium with the goal of articulating an artistic statement" (Davies 2004, p. 60). This is crucial to understand how the mentioned epistemological gap between traditional and late modern art happens, and it is because of that, that some people are unable to 'understand' late modern art, and fail identifying "[...] either the vehicle, or the artistic medium" (Davies 2004, p. 59).

III. Performance and action: What is lacking?

Let's consider now some basic remarks about Davies' contribution. A first one should be made concerning methodology. The process of *cumulative argument* seems to fall into a progressive accumulation of criticism and arguments just putting one after another. A problem with this is that it seems to be lacking a clear argumentative articulation capable of offering a conclusive synthesis of his own position. The need for more stuff to be accumulated seems to force him entering in so many discussions that all in all seem to be unnecessary. This is the case with all the resources devoted to the problems of modality and identity. One problematic consequence of that is that Davies enters deep into modal metaphysics commitments when he has to give, for giving a solution to the problem of individuation and identity, an explanation of the *Modality Principle* in terms of a Kripkean semantics. If art is action the required ontology might not be so much centred in substance dependent approaches, but in an ontology of events. If actions are particular kinds of events, then, what an ontology of art as action needs is just an ontology of events i.e. an ontology of actions *qua* events. A good enough characterization of what is the artwork as an action could be obtained by introducing n-tuples including the artist as an agent, the goal, the sorted intentions, time, space, and the context(s). The questions of individuation and identity of artworks, then, might rest over a theory of individuation and identity of events (Davidson 1969). Another consequence of this cumulative strategy can be observed with metaphysics of types. When he attacks ATH he does it defending a perspective where artworks are action-tokens. However, this is is problematic because tokens are always relative to types. Every token has a dependency of a type. There are no tokens without types, and types without tokens are superfluous. A relevant question corresponding to the tokens that are artworks, then, should be ask about the type(s): Is there any type that covers all the tokens that are artworks in Davisian sense? If there is any, we should figure it out. Speaking in terms of events as a primitive category for the actions that artworks are, and under the schema *individual, property, time*, we should ask if a common property could be postulated for every artwork.

An important question remains at the end of Davies' book. He has characterized a special action that brings into existence special entities usually identified as artworks. But what makes different that action from other actions such as the writing of a term-paper, decorating a bedroom or many others similar non-artistic actions? A circularity problem appears because what makes an artistic statement artistic is the medium, but what makes the medium artistic? The solution offered by Davies is twofold. First he appeals to the Goodmanian notion of "the symptoms of the aesthetic" (syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness, exemplification and multiple and complex reference). And, secondly, he proposes a sort of 'institutional' notion for artistic medium, which confers artistic status to actions occurring in that medium. But there are problems originated from those solutions.

Artistic intentions have a central role in his theory; it is depending on them that we can properly appreciate and evaluate an artwork. It is not clear, however, what is exactly Davies' idea of intention. An intention, since the appearance of Anscombe's work (Anscombe 1956-7) can be considered as a mental state that is only satisfied by an action, in such a way that when the action finishes the intention disappears. There can be multiple intentions that are satisfied by the same action. We don't know if there is room in Davies' view for more than one type of intention in the artwork-action. We don't know, for instance, if there is room, in parallel with artistic intentions, for aesthetic intentions. He does not explicitly speak about aesthetic intentions in artistic action.

There is neither a Davisian view on the aesthetic component of an artwork. Borrowing from Goodman the vague idea of the "symptoms of the aesthetic", Davies remains within the parameters of substances with aesthetic properties. But, as Goodman himself said replaying a criticism by Alan Nagel years ago (Goodman 1984) his characterization of the "symptoms of the aesthetic" are nothing more than "an early stage in a search for a definition that will derive from and yet must drastically reform an especially chaotic usage" (p.135). Therefore there is not any attempt, taking into account specifically the role of the aesthetic intention, to theoretically develop the role of *the aesthetic* within that special action that is art production. When we speak about sorted intentions we are taking at the same time an artistic intention and an aesthetic intention, clearly stating that the formation of the former requires the formation of the latter. Our intuition is that the circularity between artistic statement and artistic medium can be resolved after the construction of a theory of aesthetic intentions and articulating them within the structure of performance theory of art. Thus, what qualifies an artistic statement as artistic, should be, the role of the aesthetic intention in artistic action. Without forgetting that there is, as Davies maintains, an institutionalization of an artistic medium in such a way that this enables any content articulated in that medium to be socially recognized as artistic. This consideration can not be forgotten, and aesthetic intentions have to be considered within a system of social action.

Davies theory of art is an attempt to develop provenance-sensitive ontologies of art to a higher level, reinforcing and reconstructing many ideas of his direct predecessors. It's curious however, that he uses the term 'performance' instead of directly 'action'. Whatever the reason for this option, any critical reader is compelled to ask if the terminological difference has more deep corresponding consequences. As the author himself notices in another place (Davies 2011) not every action is a performance, even if every performance is a kind of action. In his recent work *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, he introduces a preliminary difference between mere actions and performances, where:

> "Thus the performer differs from the mere agent whose behaviour is subject to evaluation in that she *intends* for her actions to be appreciated and evaluated, and thus is consciously *guided* in what she does by the expected eye or ear of an intended qualified audience" (p.6)

Presented in the context of a research on artistic performances, this basic characterization is valuable enough for raising a concern. Reading it literally, the quote is referring to performances made in front of an audience, referring to actions that will be examined in every detail by, and happening in front of, an audience. Remember that in PTA to appreciate an artwork one needs to adequately reconstruct the generative action. So, virtually, any form of art production could be considered as a performance, because it is intended for an audience that needs to reconstruct it. When, in the last chapter of his *Art as Performance*, Davies remarks the institutional character of the artistic medium (criticising Dickie's strong institutional view and more sympathetic with Danto's view. See Dickie 1974, and Danto 1964), but, being the artistic medium a constitutive bridge between the agent and the articulated content, it is quite astonishing that he doesn't conclude that artwork as action is genuinely *social action*, which means action socially oriented. No doubt, relevant consequences would be drawn from that point of view. The social scope of PTA should be enriched with the analysis of sociological studies of the art world, taking as a reference, for instance, the analysis made by Howard Becker (Becker 1982) about the art worlds as systems of social action.

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