

Attention-training:

Immanence and ontological participation in Kaprow, Deleuze & Bergson

LAURA CULL

Introduction

In this essay I want to look at the works that the American artist Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) referred to as 'Activities', alongside the philosophy of immanence propounded by Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and with reference to the notion of 'attention' developed by Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Less well known than his Happenings, Kaprow's Activities are written scores that act as instructions for volunteer participants to engage in a series of seemingly banal actions and interactions made strange through a variety of compositional devices:

wetting a finger with saliva
holding it up till dry
calling out: now!
walking on¹

driving to airport
with suitcases of packaged sand
(tagged with owner's name)²

A, telephoning B, saying:
 you must be thinking of me
B, replying, unh-hunh
hanging up³

The rationale for constructing this parallel between performance and philosophy is threefold. Firstly, I want to suggest that Kaprow's worldview has much in common with the immanent thinking of Deleuze and Bergson; that is, all three conceive the nature of 'metaphysical' reality in comparable ways: as indivisible change, or what Kaprow calls

'constant metamorphosis' (Kaprow 1966: 169)⁴. Secondly, all can be understood as pursuing the means to establish what I will call 'ontological participation'; namely, an *actual* experience (rather than contemplation or inference) of this metaphysical real, whether we locate this experience in the realm of 'philosophy', 'art' or 'life'. Thirdly, both Kaprow and Bergson, in particular (and, to some extent, Deleuze) emphasise 'attention' as a condition of ontological participation in a manner that allows us to rethink participation in performance beyond any opposition to observation⁵. Indeed, I want to suggest that Kaprow conceives the Activities as a kind of *attention-training* that undoes subjective discreteness in favour of inviting immanent participation in the real as a changing 'whole'⁶. From this perspective, the boundary between what counts as 'performance' as distinct from 'philosophy' becomes increasingly blurred, such that performance can be seen as a philosophical activity and philosophy as a score for performance. Finally, though, I want to argue that neither Kaprow's Activities nor Deleuze's philosophy of immanence should be seen as meditative practices that seek to contemplate the world instead of changing it (as Stephen Zepke has recently proposed in relation to Kaprow, and Peter Hallward in relation to Deleuze)⁷. Rather, by emphasizing their commitment to immanence (rather than transcendence), and specifically to the immanence of mind and matter, I will argue that the call to let go of the self that we find in both Kaprow and Deleuze is not a question of escaping the material world so much as of attending more closely to our participation in it as a world of perpetual change.

Before we begin, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that this account of participation will imply that *all* performance involves ontological participation. That is, whilst I have chosen to focus on Kaprow's Activities as forms of 'performance' that explicitly seek to encourage attention – conceived by Kaprow as a means to take part in the real – participation, as I am defining it, occurs in all forms of performance, whether we attend to it or not. Certain forms of performance and modes of spectatorship may serve to block, ignore or distract us from this participation, but this is not to say that it is not going on regardless, at a pre-subjective level. It is ontological participation that affects us in ways that we might later identify in terms of 'emotion'; it is taking part in the real that forces us to think, producing what we might subsequently locate as new concepts. And it is in this respect that being a participant in a Kaprow Activity can be understood as philosophical in itself.

In relation to this, I would also argue that it would be a mistake to unquestioningly privilege or reify what we might conventionally think of as 'participatory performance' over others forms of performance. Audience participation, for instance, does not guarantee what I

am calling ontological participation, and likewise, there is no reason why so-called ‘observed theatre’ might not equally facilitate us to take part in the metaphysical real. Indeed, I hope that my emphasis on attention as a mode of participation will have the added effect of refuting the false binary between participatory performance and observed theatre, an opposition in which the former tends to be construed as active (and therefore, as having an intrinsic, progressive political value), while the latter is often framed as passive (and correlatively associated with a reactionary or even fascistic politics). Whilst clearly reiterating much that has already been known and said by theatre and performance scholars and practitioners, Jacques Rancière’s recent dismantling of this binary in *The Emancipated Spectator* has, nevertheless, precipitated a welcome return of the issue of the relation between spectatorship and participation to the forefront of the collective academic mindset of Performance Studies. ‘Spectatorship is not a passivity that must be turned into activity,’ Rancière argues; ‘We don’t need to turn spectators into actors. We do need to acknowledge that every spectator is already an actor in his own story and that every actor is in turn the spectator of the same kind of story’ (Rancière 2007: 279).

We will return to Rancière’s account of spectatorship in due course, not least in order to differentiate the nature of the kind of activity I am calling ‘attention’ from the emphasis on interpretation and story-telling in Rancière’s concept of spectatorial action. But first, I want to try to provide an introduction to the complex concept of ‘immanence’ as it figures in Deleuze and to provide some initial observations as to how an immanent perspective might contribute to our understanding of what is at stake in the process of participation in performance. I will also note a connection between the ontology of immanence and Kaprow’s own world-view as that which manifests itself both in his writing and his Activities.

1. Taking part in an ontology of immanence

As many scholars in philosophy have recently emphasized, the concept of immanence is central to Deleuze’s thought⁸. Various defined throughout his oeuvre, immanence is discussed at length in his two books on Spinoza, in which he argues that ‘immanence is the unconscious itself, and the conquest of the unconscious’ (Deleuze 1988: 29). Then, in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?*, for instance, Deleuze and Guattari speaks of a ‘plane of immanence’ (or ‘consistency’) that is characterized by the perception of movement, rather than objects, by those who occupy it (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 282). And indeed, it is

the concept of immanence that dominates Deleuze's last texts, in which he insists that we should not think in terms of immanence as that which is immanent *to* something else (such as phenomenological consciousness), but only of pure immanence. 'We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life... A life is the immanence of immanence: absolute immanence' (Deleuze 2001: 27).

Etymologically, the word immanence originates from the Latin *immanere*, which might be translated as 'to dwell within'. Or as John Mullarkey notes in *Post-Continental Philosophy* (2006), immanence can also be understood to mean "existing or remaining within"; being "inherent"; being restricted entirely to some "inside"; existing and acting "within the physical world" (Mullarkey 2006: 7). 'Most often, though,' Mullarkey suggests 'the equivocality of immanence is linked to the question of ontological monism: if there is nothing "beyond" the world, no "arrière-monde", then there can be no duality, no two-worlds view' (ibid.). According to an immanent or 'monist' rather than a 'dualist' perspective, it becomes possible to say that everything is *x*, whether that *x* is movement (as is the case with Bergson and Deleuze) or, say, number (as is the case with Badiou). There is, according to such views, fundamentally only one kind of being in the world, and nothing – including, one must conclude, these philosophies of immanence themselves – constitutes any sort of 'outside' to this being.

One implication of this affirmation of immanence, in Deleuze at least, is a resistance to any ontological separation of thought and being (or subject and object), which in turn, proffers the possibility of a direct (rather than always already mediated) encounter with the real. More broadly then, an immanent perspective also suggests that there is no ontological basis for a separation or hierarchy between the nature of body and mind, self and others, human and nonhuman, words and things, theory and practice and so forth. In this way, we might suggest that there is something fundamentally participatory about Deleuze's immanent philosophy. Participation comes first, it contends; the organization (or 'stratification') of what is into distinct categories or 'things' is a secondary phenomenon, and indeed a divisive one, that we should seek to undo.

However, it is important to register that Deleuze associates immanence (or monism, or univocity) with pluralism and difference, rather than with homogeneity and sameness. That is, the real in which we might take part is not, for him, a self-identical presence that we recognize, so much as a constantly differing process that actually unsettles our powers of

recognition. Or as Mullarkey describes it, 'the new monism' that we find in Deleuze, 'stems from affect and movement' and 'is a meta-monism or dynamic monism that generates plurality' (ibid., 204). For instance, we might note the emphasis on difference in the following definition of univocity provided by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*: 'Being is said in a single and the same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said *differs: it is said of difference itself*' (Deleuze 1994: 36 – emphasis added). From this point of view, Deleuze wants to retrieve the notion of difference from its lowly position in the Western philosophical tradition, which has tended to conceive it derivatively as opposition and negation in relation to a primary identity or sameness (as the mere difference between 'things'). There may be one Nature to which we all belong, but what characterizes Nature is its autonomous power to differentiate itself or differ from itself in an infinite number of ways. In turn, this difference or creativity of Nature (or what Spinoza also called 'substance') is immanent to us; it is 'involved in what expresses it' (Deleuze 1990: 16): that is, in bodies, be they human, animal, theatrical, or philosophical⁹. Rephrased, we might suggest that Deleuze's philosophy of immanence positions *participation in difference* as what all things have in common. For his part, Bergson argues for the primacy of change and movement (which we might say are synonyms for difference). 'Movement is reality itself', Bergson argues (Bergson 1992: 143). Or again, 'There are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change: change has no need of a support. There are movements, but there is no invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile' (ibid., 147).

As I indicated at the beginning of this article, and will go on to argue throughout, there is evidence to suggest that Allan Kaprow held a worldview comparable to Deleuze and Bergson's: an ontology of change that both informed, but was also arguably *formed by*, his artistic practice. For instance, when speaking of his use of ephemeral materials relatively early on his career, Kaprow argues that,

Change, governing both reality and art, has extended...from the expression of an idea arrested in a painting, to a work in which the usually slow mutations wrought by nature are quickened and literally made part of the experience of it; they manifest the very processes of creation-decay-creation almost as one watches
(Kaprow 1966: 169).

As ephemera, art then offers us the chance to see reality at a different speed; the imperceptible changes of nature's 'slow mutations' are rendered perceptible. Even in the

1960s, then, Kaprow was affirming his philosophical position as one that conceives reality as 'constant metamorphosis', arguing that it is this conception that lies 'at the root' of his work (ibid.). Like Deleuze, Kaprow conceives the real in terms of an ontology of change. Furthermore, Kaprow argues that change and the fleeting need not be *represented* as the Impressionists did (whilst still making lasting works of art); rather, 'If change is to be lived and felt deeply, then the art work must be free to articulate this on levels beyond the conceptual' (ibid.).

This 'lived change' or living of change is, I would argue, another way of describing ontological participation. What there is, is change or difference which we take part in 'automatically', as it were. But art might allow us to feel this participation more deeply, to attend to it and indeed, to its ethical and political implications. In turn, both lived change and ontological participation are fundamentally embodied activities, but crucially, both are also premised on a refusal of any mind/body opposition. Indeed, as we shall see, this association of Kaprow with a philosophy of immanence (rather than transcendence) will become particularly important in relation to the Activities and in order to retrieve these later works from being interpreted as meditative and escapist. With this brief introduction to Deleuze and Kaprow's shared ontology in mind, we should now explore the nature of the Activities themselves in greater depth with a particular focus on *how* Kaprow sought to offer experiences of what I am calling ontological participation, or what Kaprow himself called 'lived change', but also 'experienced insight', 'becoming "the whole"', and 'nonart'. In particular, I want to colour this exploration with a particular concern for Kaprow's relation to the participation/observation binary that Rancière, amongst others, has critiqued.

2. The Activities: beyond the participation/observation binary

From one perspective, it might seem as though the Activities mark a concluding phase of an ongoing struggle by Kaprow to get away from a distanced, observing audience: a struggle that leads him from making paintings to immersing viewers in 'Environments', from choreographing Happenings for a mobile audience (such as *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* in 1959) to orchestrating 'performer only' Happenings (such as *Calling* in 1965 and *Self-Service* in 1967)¹⁰, and then finally to making Activities – participatory events which often took place in private homes. That is, we could tell the story of his artistic development in terms of a move from making things that were clearly 'art' and were for observers, to making things that he

called 'nonart' and which could only be experienced through participation. However, I would be inclined to avoid such an understanding of Kaprow's work in favour of an alternative account of Kaprow's development as departing from a participation/observation binary and moving towards a position which conceives attention as a particular mode of observation in which ontological participation might occur.

One argument against the former narrative is that, although Kaprow began to use the term 'Activity' around 1968-69, he continued to make new 'Happenings' until around 1970, and indeed continued to reinvent past 'Environments' and Happenings *alongside* creating new Activities for the rest of his career¹¹. As such, it is not the case that there is a discrete 'Activities phase' that necessarily constitutes a progression or development from the Happenings. Indeed, the first essay in which Kaprow uses the term 'Activity' – "Pinpointing Happenings" from 1967 – confirms not only a practical, but a conceptual overlap between the Activities and Happenings. Here, Kaprow attempts to describe and define what he calls an 'Activity Happening' or 'Activity type Happening' as a subcategory of Happenings. An 'Activity Happening,' he says, is

directly involved in the everyday world, ignores theatres and audiences, is more active than meditative, and is close in spirit to physical sports...fairs...and political demonstrations. It also partakes of the unconscious daily rituals of the supermarket
(Kaprow 2003: 87).

However, Kaprow then goes on to say that 'The Activity Happening selects and combines situations *to be participated in, rather than watched* or just thought about' (ibid., emphasis added) in a manner that reiterates the very participation/observation binary that he would later undo (and, correlatively, the mind/body or thinking/doing binary). That is, I want to suggest that it is not observation per se that Kaprow ultimately wants to avoid, so much as a particular kind of disembodied watching (and indeed, of distracted or mindless doing) that allows us to forget the participation of matter and thought in one another.

Between the late sixties and 2001, Kaprow scored and enacted more than a hundred Activities¹². In order to provide a general picture of what the Activities were like, we might follow Jeff Kelley in distinguishing between those events that took place in an educational context (which were mostly the US Activities enacted by small groups of students), and those that were commissioned by galleries or art festivals (which were mostly the European

Activities, enacted by invited and volunteer participants from the host cities) (Kelley 2004: 161). Alternatively though, the Activities might also be characterized as operating between two poles: at one of them, inhuman materials take centre stage while people function as attentive workmen (such as *Level* from 1970 and *Durations* from 1976); while at the other, the specific conventions of human behaviour are of primary concern (such as *Take Off* from 1974, or *Maneuvers* and *Satisfaction*, from 1976). At the former pole, the actions Kaprow proposes often involve processes of building, physically demanding labour and the materials of construction (in this sense they are reminiscent of some of the Happenings); for example, in *Tracts*, *Sweet Wall* (both 1970) and *Scales* (1971). At the latter pole, participants are often grouped into mixed-sex couples who enact various forms of exchange and contact with one another – sometimes just using their bodies, and at other times supplementing the relationship with technologies such as telephones, microphones, cameras and tape recorders (ibid., 190). In between these two poles, there are the bodily-experiment works like *Meters* (1972), *Highs*, *Basic Thermal Units* (both 1973), *Affect* (1974) and *Air Condition* (1975). These involve inhuman materials like light, ice and water, but no construction or manual labour. Likewise, although they invite participants to enact forms of contact and exchange, there is less apparent concern with behavioural conventions or body language so much as with the sensory affects of an encounter with such materials.

Existing literature on the Activities has interpreted such works in a variety of ways. Kelley, for instance, notes that *Sweet Wall* – an Activity which involved participants building a wall out of cinder blocks with bread and jam as the mortar – was enacted ‘within sight of the Berlin wall’. As such, Kelley states that ‘The political symbolism of constructing and knocking over a mock wall so close to the Cold War’s most concrete expression of the Iron Curtain was, of course, evident to all’. However, he also acknowledges that although Kaprow ‘was fully aware of the political implications’ of *Sweet Wall*, he was in fact ‘more interested in the actual process of laying out, layering up, mortaring together, sighting, pushing over, and then cleaning up the concrete blocks, which, by then, were smeared with sticky jam and wadded with dirty, wet bread’ (Kelley 2004: 163). Representational implications are not denied, but it is important to note that Kaprow himself explicitly argues against any simple distinction between form and content in order to avoid producing works of art that will ‘remain only an illustration of a thought’ rather than providing participants with what he calls an ‘experienced insight’ (Kaprow 1992: 25). Such works do not represent a preconceived set of concepts, an approach to art making that Kaprow dismisses as ‘not a worthwhile activity’ (Kaprow 1968: 156). That is, although, as Kaprow notes, the form of his works is always ‘simple and clear’,

the actual experience of the event 'is uncertain and unforeseeable, which is why I do it, and its point is never clear to me, even after I've done it' (Kaprow 1991: n.p.).

This resistance to an understanding of the Activities as the mere enactment (by participants) of a pre-existing idea (belonging to the artist) is important for an understanding of *why* participation matters and *what kind of* participation matters to Kaprow. Whether it is achieved through attentive observation or attentive action, Kaprow's pursuit of participation is motivated by the desire to allow an audience to occupy a creative and co-authorial relationship to the work. While some of Kaprow's writing from the late 1960s is critical of the conventional audience in observed theatre, he is equally critical of events, including his own, which attempt to invite participation by giving the audience small tasks to do within a performance or environment – the nature of which is already determined. For instance, speaking of his own earlier Happenings, Kaprow argues that

Tasks on the order of sweeping or reading words remain relatively mindless as long as their context is a loose theatrical event prepared in advance for an uninformed audience (ibid., 185).

Or, in other words, audience participation does not secure the creative or attentive relation to the work that became Kaprow's priority. The task then became how to enable a seemingly 'mindless' action such as sweeping to become an occasion for embodied thought on the part of the participant. In this way, we might suggest that one of the defining characteristics of participation for Kaprow concerns a process of co-authorship through which an audience is actively 'collaborating in the art making and meaning making process' (Kaprow 1994: 52), where 'meaning' is understood by Kaprow as 'lived change' or 'experienced insight' rather than interpretation. Indeed we could say that Kaprow wanted to explore the extreme pole of a *continuum of participation* – at which the authoritative role of the artist in constituting the nature of the work has been reduced to a minimum, and the creative or determining role of the participants has been increased as much as possible.

According to such a definition, in turn, there is no reason to oppose observation and participation. Indeed, many of the Activities involve acts of observation – of one participant by another, or by participants of themselves. For instance, the score for a 1975 Activity called *Useful Fictions*, includes the following instructions:

A and B (close behind)
walking up long hill (or flights of stairs)

A, holding large mirror before face
keeping eyes on B's reflection throughout
B, copying A's movement

And yet, it is important to note that Kaprow does argue that there is a different kind of looking – or ‘attention’ – that takes place when the audience is in the midst of doing and when they are responsible for what is done. While no doubt, all modes of perception are creative rather than merely reflective, Kaprow wants to make a special case for attention in action:

Watching and listening in the midst of doing is very distinct from the specialized observations of a physically passive audience (only the mind is awake for a traditional audience, at best; and it has no responsibility for the actual work. It can only judge) (ibid.).

What is at stake in participation then, for Kaprow, is some kind of ‘genuine’ thought – beyond judgment, and beyond a mind-body distinction. This encounter is also theorised by Kaprow as ‘experienced insight’: an event of embodied thinking by the participant in the act of doing, which is not the same as the recognition of some underlying metaphorical meaning of the Activity determined in advance by the artist. Experience, Kaprow believes, ‘is physical, not intellectual. An experience is thought which has been “incorporated”, on a muscular, neural, even cellular level, into the body’ (Kaprow 1992: 26). Having long since dispensed with the accommodation of a traditional audience, what matters for Kaprow in the Activities, is the ‘direct, physical involvement’ of those who choose to do it: ‘Meaning is experienced in the body, and the mind is set into play by the body’s sensations’ (Kaprow 1986: n.p.).

As well as trying to get beyond the preconception that participants ought to interpret the events as representative of predetermined artistic intentions, Kaprow also faced the problem that the Activities might be experienced as simply routine. That is, just as he wanted to block the participants from identifying the actions as ‘art’ (and behaving accordingly), he also needed to prevent them from recognizing them as ‘life’ (and falling into the habit of inattentive participation that we often occupy in relation to the everyday). To some extent, the actions the participant is invited to perform for the Activity are familiar: blowing one’s

nose, opening a door, or taking a pulse. And this familiarity was important for Kaprow in respect to his concern that the work be democratic and accessible. However, Kaprow then develops a range of practical strategies in order to prevent the participants, including Kaprow himself, from slipping into routine behaviour, and experiencing the Activity as life, rather than what we might call 'art-life' or 'life-art'. For example, Kaprow uses what he calls 'feedback devices' to alter how participants attend to the actions they are performing. In a 'sketch for a possible breathing piece' (1979), for instance, Kaprow refers to a loudspeaker, a mirror, and a tape recorder used in the sketch as 'feedback devices' which produce 'displacements of ordinary emphasis' (Kaprow 2003: 198). The Activity repeats everyday actions, like looking at ourselves in a mirror, but employs feedback devices as a means to draw attention to the ordinarily unattended ('fleeting mist on glass'), and away from the obvious (the recognition of our selves in terms of the reflected image).

Alterations of speed are another method that Kaprow used for preventing the Activities from slipping into conventional behaviour. For instance, in *Rates of Exchange* (1975), Kaprow approached the handshake as an example of a routine that could be forced to break down. As Kelley suggests, 'If you slow down the motion of a handshake enough it becomes impossible to shake hands; some other exchange takes place' (Kelley 2004: 195). What this experiment exposes is that the identity of the action 'to shake hands' only functions at a particular relation between speed and slowness; at another relation, the action becomes imperceptible as shaking hands, and becomes something else which, in turn, can be experienced by the participants as some other kind of contact. Kaprow had been interested in speed as a factor relating to thresholds of perception as far back as *18 Happenings* – in which, at one point, '(light fades imperceptibly over a long period of time...)', and at another, there are sounds 'barely remaining long enough to be heard clearly' (Kaprow in Kirby 1965: 58). The Activities take this interest further by involving the entire body in attempts to slow down 'walking' – to give another example from *Rates* – until it reaches a point of transformation.

At the start of this essay, I argued that the notion of participation as attention must be understood as distinct from Jacques Rancière's account of spectatorial action. That is, while I share Rancière's emphasis on the world-making or creative powers of perception (versus the persistent equation of seeing and passivity), I want to present an alternative to the emphasis on language and narrative enacted by his account of spectators as 'active interpreters' who participate in performance by translating it or making their own stories out of it. Likewise, while Rancière is right to remind us to be skeptical of those 'many spectacles' that boast 'of

being no mere spectacles but ceremonials of community', I am, nevertheless, unwilling to participate in his reinstatement of a clear boundary between words (as 'only words') and things (Rancière 2007: 280). Rather, I will now turn to Bergson's account of attention in an attempt to articulate the specificity of the notion of active observation I am interested in. On this basis, I will then go on to provide an alternative perspective on the ontological and, indeed, political implications of Kaprow's Activities that contrasts with Stephen Zepke's recent critique of them as encouraging mystical transcendence. In this closing section, I then note a parallel between Zepke's critique and the objections Peter Hallward has levelled at Deleuze's thought which must also be disputed.

4. Attention training vs. 'Zen Conceptualism'

In the collection of texts that make up his last published work, *The Creative Mind* (1934/1992), Bergson characterizes ordinary perception as both utilitarian and relative. Our faculties of perception and action are attached to one another, he argues, the result of which is that perception tends 'to turn away from what it has a material interest in *not* seeing' (Bergson 1992: 137 – emphasis added). Already in *Matter and Memory* (1896/2004), Bergson had argued that perceptual action tends to be reductive and immobilizing, insofar as it tends to be determined by interest; we insist on a clear cut distinction between things and their environment, upon the division of matter into objects, in order to be able to act upon it (Bergson 2004: 278-9). 'Life demands that we put on blinders,' Bergson contends; and yet, philosophy can 'lead us to a completer perception of reality by means of a certain displacement of our attention,' away from the merely useful (Bergson 1992: 137). Philosophy needs to provide an 'education of the attention' that removes these perceptual blinders and frees perception 'from the contraction that it is accustomed to by the demands of life' (ibid., 139).

Attention here is not associated with consciousness; indeed, for Bergson, as Howard Caygill has recently discussed, the point is that 'we see much more than our consciousness allows us to see' and we need to find ways to access that extra-conscious perception (Caygill 2011: n.p.). Likewise, Kaprow's Activities invite participants to attend to their (thinking) bodies as a site of lived change and as immanent or embedded in, rather than transcendent to, the world as change. As such, I want to suggest that Kaprow could be understood as enacting one possible version of the relation to the world that Bergson calls for in his philosophy: a

relation to the world that he calls upon philosophers to attempt and indeed to offer to everyone.

However, in contrast to this immanent interpretation, Deleuzian scholar Stephen Zepke has recently framed Kaprow's Activities in a very different light. Zepke begins by celebrating what he perceives to be the Deleuzian nature of Kaprow's Happenings and early Activities as 'self-determining' compositions, that he claims

not only sought to introduce something new into life, but were aimed against the normalized subjectivity of human being itself... The event transforms the *conditions* of experience and in so doing constructs a new form of subjectivity, and a new kind of art (Zepke in Cull 2009: 110 - emphasis original).

But then, Zepke goes on to demote Kaprow's later Activities, for three interrelated reasons: firstly, on account of a perceived 'conceptualism' or focus on meditation rather than (political) action in Kaprow's late Activities; secondly, because of what Zepke calls Kaprow's wish to place the experience of the Activities '*against* art of any sort' (ibid., 118 – emphasis original); and finally, because he sees the first two developments as constitutive of Kaprow's divergence from Deleuze and Guattari (which can only be a bad thing from Zepke's point of view). On this basis, Zepke critiques Activities such as *Scales* (1971) and *Time Pieces* (1973) because they 'take on the character of "work"' in ways that he argues 'can no longer be called "art" or "aesthetics"' (ibid., 119). 'In both cases,' Zepke claims, 'the "work" is a means of attaining a meditational awareness that emerges from, but at the same time transforms, the most banal forms of life' (ibid.). What Zepke seems to want to object to in this, is what he sees as the increasing emphasis by Kaprow (indicated by these two earlier Activities, but particularly problematic in Kaprow's work from around 1978) on a conceptual, rather than actual transformation of life. In his conception of the later Activities as 'Performing Life', Zepke argues, 'Kaprow offers a process of self-reflective meditation on everyday actions and experiences' that does not construct new ways of living, 'but simply promises a mystical transcendence of life'. In other words, no real escape occurs for these Activities' participants; banal life or 'the subjective form of experience' may be conceptually evacuated or superficially coloured through a transcendent experience, but ultimately it is left untouched (ibid.,121).

In part, Zepke's reading here is based on the knowledge that Kaprow had begun to practice Zen Buddhism in 1978, and he supportively quotes Kelley's suggestion that, after this

time, Kaprow's work offers 'secular, operational analogues to the koan' (Kelley 2004: 204). According to Zepke, the koan

was a study form developed mainly within the Rinzai school of Zen...and aimed at intuitive flashes of insight or 'satori': 'cosmic triggers' in which the perspective of the individual ego was overcome and the interconnectedness of the world appeared in its living vitality (Zepke in Cull 2009: 120).

Zepke then goes on to argue that this constitutes a break with Deleuze:

This mystical style of knowledge as self-overcoming, achieved through performance is, Kaprow claims, 'an introduction to right living' (2003, 225). But it is increasingly uncertain that this still bears any resemblance to what Deleuze and Guattari call... art (ibid.).

Some readers of Deleuze (like Peter Hallward and Alain Badiou) would beg to differ. Deleuze, for them, *is* a mystic. Yet for now we can note that Zepke's reading is also partly based on his understanding of Kaprow's relation to Duchamp and the gesture of the Ready-made. It is Kaprow's 'absolute fear of recuperation' by the art market or its institutions, Zepke claims, which leads him to position the experiences of the Activities against or outside of art (ibid., 119). The critique of everyday life is overwhelmed by Kaprow's obsession with fully collapsing art into that mode of life. He argues that from the early 70s, Kaprow reconceives his work, not as art, but as 'Performing Life' which 'is not an aesthetic process, and nor does it produce art; instead, it is an entirely conceptual decision that turns an everyday action such as shaking hands or speaking on the telephone into a performance' (ibid.). In this way, Kaprow is taking advantage of the impact of Duchamp's readymade in a move that relies upon the participant's ability to apply 'the art-bracket' to any aspect of life whatever. Here, Zepke argues, Kaprow gives 'an interesting Zen twist to Conceptual Art's emphasis on intellectual processes as the essence of art [but] nevertheless dematerialises the art-life dialectic by dissolving the first in the second through turning it into a state of mind' (ibid., 120). Art is merely a state of mind conditioned by a conceptual framing device, divorced altogether from the creation of affects. For Zepke, the late Activities constitute a withdrawal of art from the social, and from the task of changing it, in favour of a 'search for a private and meditative awareness transcending the conditions of ordinary perception' (ibid., 122).

Regarding Kaprow's relationship to Zen, I would suggest that we need to follow Kelley here, in terms of his differentiation between the worldliness of what he calls the 'American Zen', disseminated to Kaprow by John Cage, from the transcendentalism of other forms of Zen¹³. 'Cage wanted to be *in* the world...' Kelley argues, 'he was not an enthusiast for transcendence' (Kelley 2004: 200 – emphasis added). Likewise, Kelley proposes that Kaprow was more interested in the notion of 'heightened awareness' associated with the Soto school of Zen, rather than the 'sudden enlightenment of the Rinzai' (ibid.). And while Zepke notes Kaprow's interest in the koan developed by the Rinzai school, Kelley nuances this position by arguing that

To Kaprow, their key feature was that any answers were *worked out in experience, not just in the head*, and were thus different for each devotee. In this sense, koans were very like his works...' (ibid., 204 – emphasis added)¹⁴.

As such, the Activities are only akin to the koan insofar as they were both concerned, not with escaping the world, but with participating in it and attending to it more fully as bodies with unique or individual powers to affect and be affected.

Contra Zepke's argument, Kaprow is very clear that the goal of the Activities (as nonart or lifelike art) is immanent rather than transcendent.

The purpose of lifelike art was therapeutic: to reintegrate the piecemeal reality we take for granted. Not just intellectually, but directly, as experience – in *this moment, in this house, at this kitchen sink*' (Kaprow 2003: 206 – emphasis added).

It does not hold out a 'promise of perfection in some other realm', he insists, but demonstrates 'a way of living meaningfully in this one' (ibid., 218). Living meaningfully, for Kaprow, means rediscovering a 'sense of the whole'; indeed, it ultimately involves becoming the whole by letting go of the self as discrete subject. For Kaprow, the aim of the Activities is a form of 'self-knowledge', not as a strengthening of self-present identity, but as 'the passage of the separate self to the egoless self. Lifelike art in which nothing is separate is a training in letting go of the separate self' (ibid., 217). But at the same time, while Kaprow states that this embodied self-knowledge 'is where you start on the way to becoming "the whole"', he is careful to add that this process might equally take 'the form of social action or personal

transformation' (ibid.). Immanent participation in the whole does not necessarily involve an escape from the public into the private, or the social into the personal, as Zepke suggests.

Likewise, Bergson is very clear in *The Creative Mind* that the perception of the metaphysical reality of which he is thinking does *not* involve a Platonic move of 'breaking away from life' or 'transporting oneself immediately into a world different from the one we inhabit' (ibid., 139) Above all, Bergson argues that one should not try to 'lift oneself above Time' in order to encounter ontological reality in itself, since he wants to seek the real *in* change not beyond it. To challenge the relativity of our perception, Bergson insists:

we should not have to get outside of time (we are already outside of it!), we should not have to free ourselves of change (we are already only too free of it!); on the contrary, what we should have to do is to grasp change and duration in their original mobility (ibid., 142).

It is not change that must be transcended to achieve metaphysics, for Bergson; rather it is our tendency to spatialise time and divide up movement that takes us away from reality, from 'the uninterrupted humming of life's depths' (150).

I would also argue that Kaprow is less interested in the conceptual decision to see life as art, or the idea that anything can be made into art, than he is in what we might call the becoming-Life of art as nonart. Or rather, he appreciates the need to move on in the thinking of the relation between art and life, beyond the linguistic gesture of a subject through which 'nonart can be art after the appropriate ceremonial announcement' (Kaprow 2003: 128). There is nothing radical for Kaprow in the idea that art is whatever an artist, or art-conscious person, says it is, or whatever is placed into a gallery¹. Rather than being a conceptual decision, 'Performing Life' is an aspect of the process of what Kaprow calls 'un-arting': a new mode of research and development in the preparation of works, distinct from the conventional idea of the artist at work in her studio – especially if the studio is a place

¹ Part of the problem, or limitation with Duchamp's gesture for Kaprow, is that by insisting on using the gallery it excludes 'most of life' on account of size if nothing else. One might be able to put a urinal on show, but one cannot exhibit the LA freeway at rush hour, Kaprow complains (Kaprow 2003: 207). Kaprow sees Duchamp as taking nonart and setting it in a 'conventional art context' or what he also calls 'an art-identifying frame' which 'confers "art value" or "art discourse" upon the nonart object, idea, or event'. Despite the forceful effect of Duchamp's initial gesture, Kaprow argues the Readymade strategy later became 'trivialised, as more and more nonart was put on exhibit by other artists' (ibid., 219).

detached from daily routines of eating and sleeping and so forth. Kaprow's concept of 'performing everyday life' names a research process that the un-artist engages in before creating an Activity. Such performance involves a particular kind of *attention* or framing which transforms that to which is attended - the routine or everyday. Attention exposes the artificiality of what appears natural, Kaprow argues, or increases the perceptibility of those aspects of life that have become 'almost too familiar to grasp' (ibid., 188, 190). Imperceptibility, Kaprow suggests, can be the product of perceptual habits. For example, Kaprow discusses brushing his teeth as an act that 'had become routinized, nonconscious behaviour in comparison to his 'first efforts to do it as a child'. Kaprow reports:

I began to suspect that 99 percent of my daily life was just as routinized and unnoticed: that my mind was always *somewhere else*; and that the thousand signals my body was sending me each minute were ignored' (ibid., 221 – emphasis added).

Here, Kaprow alludes to the human capacity to experience thought as disembodied and to fail to perceive the thinking presence of the body. As Kaprow indicates when he refers to 'the thousand signals' sent by the body, the artist's affective presence to the 'here and now' rather than 'somewhere else' does not involve an overcoming of difference per se, although it does reject the artificial distinction between mind and body. Rather, through attention, we gain a heightened awareness of the complexity or self-difference of our body's perpetual variation in relation to its surroundings. The becoming-perceptible of the imperceptible (the 'unnoticed' and 'ignored') need not involve drugs or other extreme forms of experimentation, as Deleuze and Guattari sometimes imply. The transformation of perception, that Deleuze and Guattari theorise in terms of jumping from the 'plane of organisation' to one of immanence, might equally happen through attending to rather than evacuating the body as affect, as 'the variation that occurs when bodies collide or come into contact' (Colman in Parr 2005: 11): tongue-teeth-water-paste-brush-arm.

But is not a question of conceiving toothbrushing, for instance, as art – Kaprow is more interested in the act of brushing one's teeth in itself, than in how we define it. Nor does Kaprow simply stop here: 'performing everyday life' is a research process, which is not the same as an Activity. In this sense, Zepke's reading seems to confuse two distinct aspects of Kaprow's practice in this period: his pre-Activity research process (that he describes as 'performing life'), and the Activities themselves. As the essay "Participation Performance" (1977) makes clear, Kaprow does not conceive of performing everyday life through attention

as an end in itself. Or rather, although performing everyday life will have its own pleasures and insights, Kaprow goes on to suggest that a 'prescribed set of moves' (or what Kaprow also calls *lifelike performance* or an *Activity*) might be 'drawn from' such everyday routines as 'the ways people use the telephone' (Kaprow 2003: 188). The normal, familiar routine is experienced as unknown and strange through observation as part of a preceding period of research or study, but then this action must be treated in a particular way in order to become an *Activity*, that is neither too much like 'Art art' (rather than nonart or lifelike art) or too much like routine life (rather than Life, or lived change).

On the basis of these arguments, I would suggest that Kaprow's *Activities* are best understood as attention-training exercises that affirm our ontological participation in immanence, change and movement. In this sense, the *Activities* enact the 'education of attention' for which Bergson calls and constitute a method for leaping onto what Deleuze calls 'the plane of immanence'. Such ontological participation does *not* involve a dissolution of the material self in order to become the adequate vessel for the passage of a dematerialised thought. On the contrary, it involves paying attention to our capacity to change and be changed by other material bodies, and an experience of 'growing in the midst of things' rather than being irrevocably separated from them (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 280).

¹ Excerpt from the score of *Meters*, an unrealized *Activity* by Allan Kaprow from 1972 (Kaprow in Meyer-Hermann 2008: 225).

² Excerpt from the score of *Baggage*, an *Activity* by Kaprow from 1972, sponsored by Rice University, which took place in various locations in Houston (ibid.).

³ Excerpt from the score of *Satisfaction*, an *Activity* by Kaprow from 1976, sponsored by the M.L.D'Arc Gallery New York (ibid., 261).

⁴ Here, Deleuze and Bergson represent another strand of thinking regarding the 'metaphysical' that is distinct from the Platonic tradition and other forms of transcendent thinking. That is, metaphysical reality does not connote a reality 'beyond' or otherwise 'outside' the physical, so much as one that is fundamental or final in the sense that it does not depend on anything outside of itself for its existence.

⁵ Of course, Kaprow was massively influenced by his teacher, John Cage, in this regard. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the relationship between Cage and Kaprow in terms of the concept of attention, I will do so in my forthcoming monograph *Theatres of immanence: Deleuze and the ethics of performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁶ On the 1st of May 2011, I held an 'attention-training' workshop as part of *GIFT* – Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (see: <http://www.giftfestival.co.uk/>). The workshop invited participants to take part in a series of exercises derived from Kaprow, but also from John Cage. I am hoping to develop this practice-based aspect of my research in the future.

⁷ See Zepke, S. (2009) 'Becoming a Citizen of the World: Deleuze Between Allan Kaprow and Adrian Piper' in Cull, L. (ed.) *Deleuze and Performance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 109-125; and Hallward, P. (2006) *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*.

⁸ See, for example, John Mullarkey's *Post-Continental Philosophy* (2006), Leonard Lawlor's *The Implications of Immanence* (2006), Christian Kerslake's *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy* (2009), and Miguel de Beistegui's *Immanence: Deleuze and Philosophy* (2010).

⁹ Deleuze has a very inclusive definition of what counts as a 'body'. For instance, in *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*, he argues that 'A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea (Deleuze 1988: 127).

¹⁰ One might argue that the labelling of these events as 'performer only' Happenings was arguably aspirational rather than descriptive on Kaprow's part. In particular, we might note the large, if impromptu audience that gathered to watch the aspects of *Calling* that took place in New York's Grand Central Station. Indeed, we might suggest that there is an attention-seeking, spectacular quality to Kaprow's decision to have the cloth-wrapped bodies of participants dropped off at Grand Central and propped up against an information booth. Looking like dead bodies or packages awaiting collection, the mummified participants call out to other volunteers, before unwrapping themselves and leaving the station.

¹¹ There is conflicting evidence as to exactly when Kaprow began to use the term 'Activity' and when the first Activity might be said to have taken place, but it seems to have been around 1968-69. For instance, there is terminological confusion over whether certain events such as *Runner* (1968) and *Charity* (1969) should be called 'Activities' or 'Happenings'. Kaprow's own essay, "The Education of the Un-Artist, Part II" (1972) provides a score for both works which categorises them as Activities (Kaprow 2003: 115, 122). However, in *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, both *Runner* and *Charity* are listed as Happenings (Meyer-Hermann 2008: 197 & 207). The recent and very comprehensive catalogue *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, which draws heavily on the Kaprow papers in the Getty Archive, suggests that several of Kaprow's early Activities remained unrealized, and that the first actually presented Activity was an event entitled *Moon Sounds*, realized in December 1969 at the wedding of Heidi and Richard Blau – son of the eminent performance theorist, Herbert Blau (ibid., 210). In correspondence with the author, Herbert Blau has said of *Moon Sounds*: 'It was a marvellous affair that started at our house in Silver Lake, went out onto the desert landscape between Cal Arts & the Livermore atomic energy research headquarters, and ended with a dinner back at the house' (Blau 2008: n.p.).

¹² According to the timelines published in *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, the last, new Activity Kaprow created before his death was entitled *Postal Regulations* and was realized in June-July 2001 (Leddy and Meyer-Hermann 2008: 330).

¹³ Zepke himself quotes Kelley a number of times in his essay, recognising his expertise on Kaprow's relationship to Zen. However, he still seems to associate Zen in general with mysticism and transcendence rather than immanence and the political.

¹⁴ The koan is a Zen form of study that involves the student being given a 'problem with no logical solution' such as a paradoxical statement or question. Kaprow wasn't interested in the koan because of the Rinzai school belief in it as a means to produce 'instant enlightenment'. Rather, Kelley suggests, Kaprow appreciated Zen for its emphasis on practice, on 'paying attention to what we are doing' rather than trying, purely intellectually, to make sense of what we do from a transcendent point of view (Kelley 2004: 204).