

Jondi Keane / AGxK2022 / Presentation NOTES:

How-to Know-how:

The Taskings and Askings of Arakawa and Gins Towards the Realisation of Living.

My talk will focus is on the notion of practice attempt to tease out the way persons can develop a **how-to know-how** gleaned from a selection of taskings and askings that I have selected from across AG's project.

Arakawa and Gins constantly ask us - if the glass is half full or half empty?

In posing the question, they are asking us to consider how "blank" permeates both halves (half full half and half empty half), affecting how we select features of the environment and specific orientations to the perceptions from which facts arise.

DRAWING 1. Glass ½ full / ½ empty and Mitaka Loft horizon

There is no doubt it is accurate to describe and assert that the glass *is* half full or *is* half empty. What is important is not that description of what is the case can be made, rather it is that *both facts are true but incomplete*. It is this incompleteness that allows other orientations, contexts, histories and dispositions to become available.

My concern is to investigate practices that enable persons to deal with the impact of a declaration such as "We have decided not to die" and enact the in the extended, embedded, enactive and embodied actions through which a co-construct our environment. My aim is to develop a **how-to know-how** that applies prompts (**taskings and askings**) proposed by AG towards the realisation of living.

I have selected several prompts from across AG's project (which include procedures, key descriptions and concepts of process) to discuss specifically in relation to how they contribute to an understanding of Reversible Destiny.

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It is important to note that AG were never drawn into arguments but proposed a practice-led project building another kind of knowing and life on new terms. They proceeded not though critique or refutation despite their thorough and rigorous engagement with the history of ideas.

They engaged with objects and events of history as one would engage with environmental objects—in terms of how they support the potential for action. I would characterise this approach intuitionist and suggest it is evident in their performative and dynamic enactments of tactically posed and closely argued, built questions.

As Don has pointed out, they opted for the coordination of incoherent events rather than chasing the myth of invariance. It is in the spirit of coordination that I have selected a set of taskings and askings to consider because they enable **how-to know-how** >>

TASKINGS AND ASKING TOWARDS *HOW-TO KNOW-HOW*

- CLEAVING AND BLANK
- FORMING BLANK AND COORDINOLOGY

- ATMOSPHERIC INTRICATENESS (Engineering atmospherically intricate domains of Reversible Destiny)
- NON-IRONIC IRONY
- PARLAYING INDIRECTNESS

- TERMINOLOGICAL JUNCTURES
- SPLITTING AND BOTTOMLESS
- HYPOSTATIZING DISTANCE

- PROCEDURES:
 - DISPERSE TO CONTRAST
 - (TENTATIVE CONSTRUCTING TOWARDS A HOLDING IN PLACE)
- DIRECTIONS FOR USE

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Arakawa and Gins' is a practitioners' project in which all actions coordinated so as to contribute to the configurations that form the features of the shared environment.

Therefore, the whole spectrum of action from thought, feeling, attention and perception as action to movements and tentative constructing towards a holding in place – so too, theorising should be considered and action that contributes actively to dynamics of body-environment intra and inter actions.

Mackenzie Wark comments on theory as a practice in relation to her book ***Molecular Red***:

“I want to make a distinction between theory and philosophy. ... I want to use the term theory ... for something that arises out of situations rather than institutions. Theory is the practice of forming and using concepts in situation that can arise in everyday life.” (Wark, M. (2015) *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*. Brooklyn NY: Verso Books)

Similarly, Pauline Oliveros asserts that practice leads to theory:

“The practice generates theory. Theory is perceiving structure - analysing and explaining structure so that testing and experiments (practice) can be done. Theory directs practice and creates culture to practice practice. Practice is a way of action - a set or sets of ways of doing or responding to gain experience. (“Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)” 1999: 18,19)

AG ask that person desist from foreclosing on any possibility and that would include all modes of action across the organism-person-environment.

AG give us an indication as to the kind of intricateness this openness to processes of which they speak:

“If we overflow with a sentient tentativeness (read awareness), then transcendence is here and now (non-dualistic and anti-teleological) and can and should be constructively and crisis-

ethically continually reworked –the spiritual and the critical become one. *A person who is held in the grip of language alone will have lost touch with many other scales of action vital to her existence*” (2002 :81-2) [emphasis added].

How-to Know-how

AG provide many provocations and challenges to the boundaries of and thresholds between systems and processes. While their procedures name the activity or conceptualize the process to be undertaken or carried out, it is not immediately obvious how one enacts the processes of dismantling, undoing and reconfiguring the organism-person-environment relationships—into the activities of a person.

In order to know *how-to*, we must consider their indications that AG give regarding the living atmosphere. AG describe a world bubbling with segments of awareness (a panpsychism), that joins and separate segments through active and deliberate co-configuration. They confirm the sentience of the world using descriptions such as: atmospheric intricateness (2003: 25), distributing sentience (2002:9) and segments of awareness (“Architectural Body Hypothesis”2002:50).

Panpsychism takes many forms, but it can be characterised in two broad categories: 1) that conscious experience is fundamental and ubiquitous and 2) that thought is fundamental and ubiquitous to the world / universe.

AG avoid prior formulations in preference of their own. In *The Mechanism of Meaning*, in the “Reversibility” section (panel 9.3), they offer: “a portrait of a thought which bypasses everything”. For AG, each concept of process, each procedural guide to moving within and across modes of sensing and scales of action leads us to ask about, the process the mode and the “how-to know how”, the complex practice of cleaving, forming blank, and never foreclosing on any aspect of the atmospherically intricate.

Key prompts for taskings and askings

“Cleaving” (1987) stands out as the most important action that informs practice and is the core activity for engaging with and coordinating segments of awareness

While blank appeared in Arakawa’s paintings from the 60’s, cleaving first comes into view in “To Not To die” (1987). **Blank** is a reservoir of potential that draws on the fullness of nothingness/emptiness understood in Eastern tradition as potential.

Cleaving as a process that brings about, literally builds the features, structure, system and processes that become persistent and changing material configurations.

From “To Not To Die” - In the opening pages, AG set out the notion of “blank”:

“Part of doing is always blank. Even those states, actions or [that] which leads us—move blankly. These are commonly called thinking and feeling. As well as providing a place for a << forming blank >>, these configurations of energy themselves move though blank to make varying degrees of awareness or sometimes to remain in it, completely blank.” (1987:10)

They introduce cleaving as a way to indicate how (the) cleaving(of) blank forms the conditions to build textures, distances, and volumes that, through repetitive nuanced actions, become dimensionalized as an environmental feature.

“Shifting point blank:
forming focus of distance,
area of focus, surface,
modulating and cleaved, as if mentioned,
Accidentally shapes volume.

This distance which is a texture,
how is it formed so that it can form?” (1987: 40)

Then the importance of cleaving to blank is the condition of forming blank:

“Even before there ever was the property of blank...
lacking spacetime.
The act of cleaving [to cleave: to adhere (to) / to divide
(from)]: forming blank properties.” (1987:44)

Cleaving is clarified in this capacity and out of blank (nothing) something arises through joining and separating:

“Everywhere is cleaving: massenergy cleaves itself,
cleaves to and from itself. In this way, it makes from and of
itself dimensions and turns itself gradually into various tissues
of density. (1987: 48)

“Coordinating” is introduced as an agent of cleaving:

“As it is coordinating diverse tissues of density, an agent
of cleaving, a proto-sense, develops partially into a means of
sensing and remain partially in an indeterminate forming
state of blank.” (1987: 58)

They go on to add:

“A combined atmosphere of blank and fiction of place is
generated by the cleaving agents through their coordinating of
the various textures of density.” (1987: 60)

In these passages of *To Not To Die*, AG outline the interrelationships between blank (the condition of potential that pervades the environment); forming blank (the ongoing process through which the world persists); cleaving (the deliberate actions for constructing environmental features) and; coordination (acting upon the order and context in which meaning occurs). Key to the coordination of these conditions, processes and deliberate actions is continuous requirement to learn “how is it [something] formed so that it can form”. It is “cleaving” of blank initiated by an “organism that person” (2002:1) into proximity with forming of blank already part of segments of awareness and their doings.

Cleaving is the core activity of reversible destiny and the way an organism-that-persons builds toward an architectural body

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Next notion I would like to discuss is
Atmospheric intricateness (2003: 25)

[** note in the video presentation - Jondi suggested that there was not time to discuss **non-ironic irony (2003: 20)** and **Parlaying indirectness (2003: 21)** which forms a set of understandings through which to act upon the cleaving of segments in the environment. These key terms might be part of the discussion in the Q&A session during the conference program.]

Atmospheric intricateness is a way of describing how blank and cleaving operate inside and environment by “engineering atmospherically intricate domains of reversible destiny”.

I would like to approach atmospheric intricateness by discuss a painting of Arakawa’s, made in 1980 that I see as foundational to the thinking that went into *To Not To Die*, and I see the painting and the text as related and Madeline and Arakawa would have worked on this notion together and separately in their own ways during this period.

What interests me is the painting itself in terms of how a practitioner might go back through and re-draw / recompose and reconstruct the kinds decision-making is required when engaging with the viewing of or re-enactment of the diagram.

The painting has a long and complicate title suggesting in the already the living atmospheric is being invoked and enacted. The full title is:

“Or Detail/ Of the Model/ Hypostatizing of Distance and/ Or Embodying Weight / Call of” (1980).

The hypostatizing means to attribute actual or personal existence to x to an abstract thing regarding it as a separate substance.

Whereas by contrast reification is regarding something abstract as if it were a concrete, (material) thing.

However, the two can also be conflated to mean the same thing suggesting that any attribution of sentience to entities, substances, systems or relational networks is simply an “as if” proposition substituting fictional or magical thinking for actual or inherent qualities.

I see this as indication of their (AG’s) intuitionist engagement with the world, in which one is inside the world while constructing it as it goes along, making it happen. I see evidence of this approach at Yoro and Nagi and in all of their build works.

DRAWING - Atmospheric intricateness – Arakawa’s painting “Hypostatizing Distance” (1980) in relation to AG’s book “To Not To Die” (1987). Diagram depicting ontological perspectives and centres of action – the horizon and mounds at Yoro / and Ubiquitous Site at Nagi [see also <https://vimeo.com/557617907>

Drawing the diagram in the painting and talking through the decision that get made as I draw.

What is interesting about this diagram is also of valuable when drawing another person’s work—the activity does not need to be about the artefact or the resemblance to the work, (it can be.) More importantly, it is about understanding the decisions that get made while making the drawing—as I am making decisions and viewing the decisions that would have occurred when Arakawa drew the image, and how I might understand these decisions as they are happening for myself.

When drawing a circle or an oval it is necessary to decide if the oval is a circle in 3D space or if the oval is a shape in 2D space. It could also be a spiral in 3D space. We are not in a position where this can be determined definitively. When that decision is made, then I am (a person is) engaging with the work in a particular way and in which I am required to think of which spatial qualities the diagram has and engage with it. This means also from a position / a positioning of myself, drawing of my attention/focus, and bodily orientation—such that there is a connection (that is constructed) between the 2D aspects of the diagram (work) and the 3D aspects or dimensions of the my (any person) making the drawing.

When these points of conjunction occur, and decisions have to be made, the decisions are entirely about developing an orientation toward what is happening and constructing the space and relationship between two dimensions and oneself. This includes the space of thinking and feeling and understanding and the enactment of these multiple enlivened aspects of engagement. It is possible to think of it (the relationship) in 2D, 3D or 4D—with time becoming a factor through the way drawing on the blotter pad requires me to refresh my thinking and requires me to refresh my understanding of what is happening in order to build these tissues of density and connection.

Cleaving, it is the way I can dimensionalise density and distance. It is possible to create density that I understand and relate to as a volume or that I understand as a (flat) shape. I am able to understand it as a moving trajectory/vector that is spiralling or as a figure that is holding (itself) in-place, in a way that opens out onto things (connects to other features of an environment) or temporarily, tentatively is a holding in-place.

All these ways of engaging and understanding allow me to practice what AG set up in cleaving—the bringing “cleaving” and “blank” into proximity to affect each other. This allows “forming blank” to inflect the way cleaving happens: its sequences and consequences of the segments joined and separated; its concurrent specificities; its ways of enacting the world. All of which brings about the futures of the world—literally dimensionalizing and producing texture and volume that stem from a “fiction of place” (1987:6) cleaved to blank (potential) at any one moment.

I am quite certain that AG would have known of the “reification fallacy”, which suggests that qualities of agency are falsely attributed to abstract things [*the reification fallacy of ambiguity suggests there is a mistake of reasoning at work when an abstraction is treated as if it were a concrete real event or physical entity*]. However, in a world in which we are centres of action and everything/event is its own centre of action, that is coordinating and moving and making things happen. And as a centre of action are joining with parts of the environment, they create association with one another to become part of a dynamic enactive system, which then dissipates.

In this way, the joining of segments of awareness and of agency are viable actions because they enable new agencies to arise from joining and separating of the environment’s possible futures. These connections are not reifications they are consistent with the expanded, embedded cognitive systems in which objects, such as tools, processes, other human and non-human entities partake in a enactive operationally closed system. In AG words from the Architectural Body Hypothesis / Sited Awareness Hypothesis, “Any site at which a person finds an X to exist should be considered a contributing segment of her awareness” (2002:50). Cleaving, understood in this context is nothing less than “tentative constructing towards a holding on place”, the co-originating and co-constructing of shared environmental features.

Reversible Destiny, reversibility, has to do with the incredible (fictive force) that attention brings to attenuation, making everything tentative by pulling and stretching out all the thresholds to become visible. In turn this allows blank to move through the newly opened spaces. It is not simply the

slowing down of the amplification of the events of the world, its opening of the events of the world to the other things those events have adjacently possible inside of them.

The “Directions for Use” on which I have focused to make the videos contributed to the conference exhibition add another layer or level—another scale of action which allows us to re-enter the practices that AG build (in-place/ in-situ) as well as the practices that a person might bring to those built environments. In this, way it feels as though all of these levels, although they do not form a unified system, need to work in coordination with each other and when working in different configurations, bring about (enliven) different aspects of the world.

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