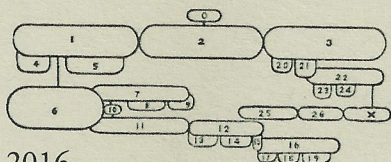


See Tony Conrad,

“Paul Sharits:
Prescription and
Collapsed Temporality”
(2014); or,
How not to keep score

by Avi Alpert



2016

A Present Tense Pamphlet

It is important that you have no interest in keeping score.

Given that you have such an interest, some preparations are required.

First we must be clear that no opposition to keeping score as such is being advanced. To the contrary, the point is to arrive at the logic of the phenomenon of score-keeping. The result will not be reintegration, nor will it be a deeper understanding. It will be unknown. If the result were known in advance, after all, we would not need to keep score. But since keeping score as we know it means win/loss/tie, there is no real indeterminacy of interest...yet.

There are methods. One is suspension, or bracketing. That is to say, you might put aside the attitude by which you normally keep score (competition, say). Philosophers in the room may be familiar with this as the suggestion of Descartes, amplified by Husserl. Non-philosophers may generally be familiar with the process of objective decision-making. Let's put aside interest, we say, and simply ask what is best for the situation. The problem is that one may just as well do this in one's mind as one may imagine oneself flying, but while such operations are necessary to the flourishing of a human soul, neither will do much by way of achieving our stated goal.

Another method is scoring itself. Here not in the sense of keeping a score, but rather of an activity of score-making. Avant-gardists in the room will be familiar with the history of pamphlets. Non avant-gardists will simply

recall those times when they prescribed themselves to act differently. Call this CBT, or mantras. Call the avant-garde version a more disquieting method for a more quiet goal.

(Pause. Remember that keeping score, the inscription of writing, is the beginning of the economy of debt.)

1st Act. Form a complete mental image of your favorite sport(s). If you do not have one, imagine another person's.

scene 1. Imagine explaining it to a child or a foreigner with no such sport in their country. Explain it so extensively, with so many repetitions and examples of possible occurrences, that they will easily be able to follow the first time they watch.

scene 2. Perhaps you can recall a specific match of interest. Recall every detail of the match. Spare no details. Preferably, act out the entire game. (See J. Henry Waugh.) Or a favorite pitcher/iceskater/bowler. Picture their body, face, and clothing. Spare no details. (See Funes.)

scene 3. Imagine what the sport would be like if there were no keeping scoring.

2nd Act. Form a complete mental image of your workplace(s). If you do not have one, imagine another person's.

scene 1. Imagine describing your workplace to someone who has never worked in that type of business before. Explain it so extensively, with so many repetitions and examples of possible occurrences, that they will easily be able to perform their duties the first day of work.

scene 2. Perhaps you can recall a particular difficult task that surprised you one day. Recall every detail of that task. Spare no details. Preferably, re-enact the entire task, even if it was traumatic. Or picture a co-worker. Picture their body, face, and clothing. Spare no details.

scene 3. Now imagine what your workplace would be like if there were no hierarchy, no competition between employees, and not even (*pace* Freud) competition for sexual satisfaction. Imagine that it made no sense to score your sales, nor to say that you had 'scored' with an officemate. Nor even to say that you had outscored the competition elsewhere, at some other place of business. Indeed, dredge all the follicles and spiracles of your mind. Eradicate all trace of the idea that work is competition for survival, and attractiveness competition for reproduction.

3rd Act. Form a complete mental image of your lover(s). If you do not have one, imagine another person's.

scene 1. Imagine describing your lover to someone who has never met them. Explain them so extensively, with so many repetitions and examples of possible occurrences, that they will recognize them across a crowded room or ten years in the future.

scene 2. Perhaps you can recall a particular physical feature or personality trait of your lover. Recall every detail of that feature or trait. Spare no details. Preferably, build a sculpture or moment of or to that feature or trait. Or picture an object that you share and that has symbolic resonance for your love.

scene 3. Now imagine that your lover has left you for another. And that you, in turn, have found a new lover who just left another. And now imagine this process repeated till the end of your days.

4th Act. Before leaving the theatre of your mind, you must decide: do you prefer this world, or this other, without competition?

Exeunt all.

Mashinka Firunts & Danny Snelson, eds.
The Block Museum | Northwestern University
Department of Art History | Mellon Dance Studies
The Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities
<http://sites.northwestern.edu/present>