

# OVERCOMING THE METAPHYSICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: BEING/ARTAUD

DANIEL JOHNSTON  
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

*It would be possible to describe everything  
Scientifically, but it would make no sense;  
it would be without meaning, as if you described a Beethoven  
symphony as a variation of wave pressure.*

Albert Einstein (in Nyberg 1993, 32)

*When I live I do not feel myself live. but when I act,  
it is then that I feel myself exist.*

Antonin Artaud (1976, 275)

## **Introduction: Theatre and Consciousness**

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEATRE AND CONSCIOUSNESS is a difficult area of inquiry partly because there is by no means consensus over what this slippery term ‘consciousness’ is exactly. In his 1997 book, *In the Theatre of Consciousness: The Workspace of the Mind*, Bernard Baars employs the theatre as a metaphor to describe the way consciousness functions in the human brain. For Baars, “consciousness appears to be the major adaptive faculty of the brain” (1997, 166). His invocation of a theatrical model for explaining how we experience the world is revealing. But just as Einstein (in the epigraph above) articulates the impossibility of comprehending a symphony in purely physical terms, it may well be that ‘the mind’ resists being pinned down by material or functional analysis. Of course, this is not to say that understanding the biological mechanisms governing the brain are not valuable and important. Nevertheless, accounts offered by the physical sciences still struggle to bridge the gap between experience and explanation as Baars’ theatre metaphor indicates. But what if the investigation were turned on its head? Might performance hold a valuable tool for understanding and exploring consciousness? In other words, what if the theatre is considered not merely as a metaphor but a mode of investigating consciousness?<sup>1</sup>

The firm conviction that consciousness can be returned to itself through performance is key to Antonin Artaud’s *The Theatre and Its Double* (*TD*) and his famous conception of ‘The Theatre of Cruelty’. Pre-empting any poststructuralist critique of linguistic dualism, Artaud sought to demolish words

and the things for which they stand. He wanted to overcome the dominance of literature in the study of drama because he saw literature and the written word as alienating and ossified compared to the living, breathing world of performance. It is no mistake then that Artaud has been appropriated as a corner-stone thinker in performance studies, in spite of the sanity or even possibility of his hopes for theatre.<sup>2</sup> Artaud felt that his true self had been stolen at birth due to the eternally changing and unfolding nature of time, yet he felt that the theatre could provide a totality and unity to life that has been otherwise lost. In this sense, the Theatre of Cruelty is an attempt at overcoming of the conception of consciousness as an internal representation of the external world.<sup>3</sup> This denunciation of dualism—a division between mind and matter, word and sign—is firmly based in the field of metaphysics.

A re-thinking of this subject-object relationship is at the heart of phenomenology—the investigation of the way that things show themselves. In his most renowned work, *Being and Time (BT)* (*Sein und Zeit*; originally published in 1927), Martin Heidegger sought to approach the concept of ‘Being’ through a destruction (*Destruktion*) of what he claimed was an historical misunderstanding of the term (1962, H22).<sup>4</sup> In *BT*, Heidegger claims that *Dasein* (Being-there, the human subject) is maintained by a radical continuity with the world in which it exists. Because human subjects are ‘absorbed’ (*aufgehen*) in the world of practical activity, projects, tasks, and equipment they tend to misrecognise themselves as just another ‘thing’ in the environment (1962, H54). Heidegger thought that the historical understanding of the word ‘Being’ had thus been rooted in a dualistic, ‘metaphysical’ conception of consciousness separated from the world (1962, H20). In other words, consciousness has been mistaken as a ‘thing’ like other entities in the world. Likewise, the ‘self’ which is self-evident for Baars in his book, is exactly what is up for question in Heidegger’s project.

This paper will consider these three threads: the metaphor of theatre in explaining consciousness, Martin Heidegger’s critique of consciousness and Antonin Artaud’s description of how we might re-think consciousness through performance. In Heidegger’s opinion, consciousness is not even the right word for human existence and experience of the world. For Heidegger, the task of philosophy is to investigate the *meaning* of Being. This suggests an alternative methodology to the scientific model of understanding consciousness, a methodology founded in experience.

Both Heidegger and Artaud sought to overcome the idea of consciousness as a fragmented thing separated from the world. Artaud wanted to return a sense of Being through the potency and force of theatre. Heidegger wanted to uncover Being—the experience of *Dasein* as intimately entwined with the world. In this sense, one might well interpret Artaud’s vision for the theatre as a practical investigation of Being. Both called for a radical return to experience—the phenomenological (Husserlian) catch-cry “to the things themselves”.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, both Heidegger and Artaud failed in their projects of apprehending Being. Nevertheless, their respective explorations of ‘fundamental ontology’ in philosophy and theatre have inspired many since to engage with the problem of Being.

The upshot of this reconsideration is that theatre poses an important way of investigating consciousness not through abstract philosophical contemplation, but through concrete experiences in a special mode of practical activity—performance—in which we encounter a heightened awareness of Being. Furthermore, the viewing and creating of performance does not fall into the trap of understanding the ‘self’ as separate from ‘the world’ because it is based in experience itself. So rather than construct a scientific model to explain consciousness, theatre can allow consciousness to show itself from itself. In this way, the stage has the capacity to overcome the dualistic metaphysics inherent in the history of Western philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

**Heidegger's rejection of the metaphysics of consciousness**

For Heidegger, metaphysics is the misunderstanding of the meaning of Being propagated in Western philosophy, a tradition he hoped to radically re-think. He claims that the meaning of Being has historically been overlooked:

[i]f the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking the *question of Being as our clue*, we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since (1962, H22; emphasis in original).

In *BT* Heidegger presents a view of human existence that refuses to begin with a 'metaphysical' understanding of the world.<sup>7</sup> Although there is not space here to do justice to the impact of *BT* on twentieth century philosophy, at the very least his revisionary moment changed the humanities by rejecting all forms of dualism as the starting point of philosophy. He abandoned Descartes' separation of the 'knower' from the world together with Husserl's 'transcendental ego' and turned the inquiry of consciousness on its head. Heidegger claimed that Being is not encountered primarily in the subject-object relationship of 'knowing' but rather in practical activity. Only in our dealings with the world can anything like 'understanding' arise. And to wipe away the erroneous dualistic conceptions of the past, Heidegger introduced a new term—*Dasein*—to stand in for consciousness, life and the human being.

Heidegger's compound term 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-sein*), which is an indispensable characteristic of *Dasein*, emphasises the fundamental unity between what is called the self, the world and time. Worldhood is essential to the conditions for the possibility of all experience and consciousness (1962, H53). For Heidegger, the problem with metaphysics is that it fails to recognise the fundamental characteristics of Being ultimately because it does not return to "the things themselves" as its starting point (Husserl 1970). This is the key failing of the history of ontology. Heidegger suggests a radical return to experience in order to understand the unique kind of Being-in-the-world that *Dasein* has. He criticises the term 'consciousness' as metaphysical (which he used as a term to denote deficiency). All approaches that fail to come to terms with Being also misunderstand the nature of *Dasein*. This is not because a biological or psychological understanding of the body is not without its use and application, but because any such explanation falls short of what *Dasein* most fundamentally *is* (Heidegger 1962, H46ff).

*Dasein* is not simply an object that can be placed under the microscope and dissected to reveal its Being. It is not even a 'thing' present at hand that can be observed. In fact, it is not even enough to consider *Dasein* in its physical context. The second and important revisionary claim of *BT* is that *Dasein*'s Being is always temporal—it is thrown through time. *Dasein* is not only present actuality. More than that, it is *possibility*. *Dasein* is its possible ways of being. Heidegger claims that the debate between realism and idealism is mistaken in its premise (1962, H200): it is not that there is no external world independent of human experience. For Heidegger, the question is misguided in the first place. All human experience of 'being there' is necessarily from an embodied perspective—all human activity is involved in the world and cannot be thought of as separate from that world and from within time.

Heidegger's phenomenology has been attacked for being expressed in obscure and difficult language. Indeed, *BT* is, in many respects, a failure in that Heidegger only published the first third of the intended work. Furthermore, the book ends with the same question that it posed in the first place:

Furthermore, the book ends with the same question that it posed in the first place: “[w]hat is the relation between Being and time?” (Mulhall 2005, 207-8). But the struggle to release metaphysical thinking from the sedimented history of metaphysics and philosophy demands a reinvention of language in Heidegger’s opinion. After this foray into phenomenology, Heidegger developed different vocabulary to talk about Being when he turned more towards an artistic-poetic description of Being. Nevertheless, *BT* represents a significant force in twentieth century philosophy and has influenced many modern views concerning subjectivity and for this reason should be considered as an important perspective on consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

The wider connection between phenomenology and performance will perhaps have to wait for another time—with questions like: how might one write a phenomenology of performance? What elements of phenomenology are enacted in performance. How might philosophical phenomenology inform theatrical practice? I simply suggest here that various theories of acting might be viewed as phenomenologies of the world—engaged with the practical activity of theatre production. This thought elevates theatre and performance from simply being a trivial pastime to being (at least in part) an investigation of what it means to be: theatre is an important mode in which humans can uncover Being. Rather than provide an in depth analysis of Heidegger’s phenomenology here, I simply reiterate his point that Dasein’s understanding of the world and of Being is more than from the stance of knowing. Only through our practical transactions with the world does the Being of the world and of Dasein show itself. And taking this emphasis on practical activity to its limit, a philosophical investigation might not be reached in words, language or even systematic analysis. I suggest that performance can offer an embodied form of the investigation into Being.

### **Artaud and the cruelty of Being**

One artist who explicitly articulated the idea of a philosophical theatre was, of course, Antonin Artaud. He actively sought to address the problem of consciousness in his prescriptions for the future modes of performance. Artaud sought to escape an intellectual, metaphysical and dualistic view of consciousness, that would be replaced by a return to experience. His emphasis on the physical, embodied and transformative elements of theatre are no doubt key to his influence on the discipline of performance studies, but also expose an underlying unity between his theatre and phenomenology. Artaud’s vision of the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ provides an inquiry into consciousness in that he saw theatre as a way of uncovering Being. Again, rather than go into a detailed analysis of Artaud’s theatrical vision, the point to stress here is Artaud’s call radical return to experience in artistic practice. For him, this was also the overcoming of metaphysical thinking.

In her introduction to Artaud’s *Selected Works* Susan Sontag, points out that the relationship between theatre and consciousness is dynamic, mutable and changing. She suggests that

not only does consciousness resemble a theater but, as Artaud constructs it, theater resembles consciousness, and therefore lends itself to being turned into a theater-laboratory in which to conduct research in changing consciousness (Artaud 1976, xxxviii).

This is precisely the argument I put here. Artaud wishes theatre to return to material experience in order to force Being out into the open. This uncovering of Being is not merely carried out by abstract contemplation, but through bodily processes which he saw as the pure possibility of performance.

This philosophical and phenomenological bases of his work are hard to overlook. Sontag, for instance, describes Artaud’s writing as a “phenomenology of suffering” (Artaud 1976, xx). She goes on to consider his conception of theatre that ‘will serve consciousness by “naming and directing shadows”

and destroying “false shadows” to “prepare the way for a new generation of shadows,” around which will assemble the “true spectacle of life” (Artaud 1976, xxxv). In everyday life, Being was something that forever escaped his grasp and expression in words for Artaud. His understanding of ‘reality’ seems very much to have been influenced by the Platonic distrust of appearances and the deception of our senses which are nothing more than shadows cast on the cave wall.<sup>9</sup> For Heidegger, Artaud’s view would most certainly be convicted as metaphysical in that he sees his own self as separated from the world. Artaud thinks that his true being was stolen from himself at birth and he had since been deprived of his real existence by an evil god:

[t]here is something which destroys my thought; something which does not prevent me from being what I might be, but which leaves me, so to speak, in suspension. Something furtive which robs me of the words *that I have found*, which reduces my mental tension, which is gradually destroying in its substance the body of my thought, which is even robbing me of those idioms which one expresses the most inseparable, the most localized, the most living inflections of thought. I shall not go on. I do not need to describe my state (1976, 43; emphasis in original).

Nevertheless, Artaud wanted to go past the traditional understanding of Being as a stable substance or form and explore the possibility that it could be uncovered in the theatre space through experience itself. Theatre for him is not about words separated from experience, but words that are founded in the experience of Being. In this sense, his project is the task of ‘staging consciousness’ and can overcome the charge of ‘metaphysics’ because he sees theatre as ‘true’ Being, rather than the traditional understanding of Being as static and atemporal.

In *TD*, Artaud sets out visions for a new and revolutionary theatre in a series of essays and manifestos. In an often quoted passage from the work, he expressed outrage with the with the passivity of contemporary Western theatre:

[i]n the Oriental theatre with its metaphysical bent, as opposed to the Western theatre with its psychological bent, this whole compact mass of gestures, signs, postures, and sounds that makes use of the language of production and of the stage, this language that develops all the psychical and poetic consequences on all levels of consciousness and in all directions, inevitably leads the mind to adopt profound attitudes which might be called metaphysics in action (1976, 237).

Theatre is exactly the place for an *active metaphysics*. Remembering the context of Artaud’s writing, we should note that *TD* was largely a reaction against contemporary Parisian theatre in the early twentieth century which was dominated by realism, naturalism and older text-based conventions. Artaud mixed with the influential group of surrealists, although he eventually broke with their movement. He did, however, continue the surrealist motif of art that would open up consciousness (and the subconscious workings of the mind) to its audience. Evidently he almost believed in the ‘reification’ of consciousness on stage. In his strange conception of theatre, Being is incarnated not through empty words and metaphors, but through forces and impulses—through *cruelty*.

For Artaud, consciousness is ‘cruelty’—the term that he saw succinct summation of his vision for theatre and art. But, the term was not meant in the sense of blood, gore and pain—though these may well be particular manifestations of the idea. Cruelty is anything that displays itself as an ‘implacable necessity’. There are forces in the world that are beyond our control and the theatre is a place where we can release those forces to alter life itself.<sup>10</sup> Artaud claims that there is no differentiation between art and life—indeed ‘life’ is synonymous with cruelty, the plague, painting and metaphysics, alchemy

and other metaphors he uses to describe the power that theatre needs to harness in its transformation of the world in TD—including consciousness (Singleton 1998: 21-2). Artaud claims that “moreover when we say the word life, we understand this is not life recognised by externals, by facts but the kind of frail moving source forms never attain” (1976: 7); his conception of consciousness is not something that can be scientifically uncovered; it is rather a powerful and insatiable impulse that needs to be found and released through theatre.

The very title *Le théâtre et son double* suggests that there is an unseen counterpart to life that can be reignited in the theatrical experience. But this force needs to be discovered and unleashed. Inspired by performances such as a visiting Balinese dance troupe to Paris, by various Eastern philosophies and mysticisms, and the by exoticism of his travels including a trip to Mexico, Artaud hoped to return theatre to its ritual origin. This is precisely what contemporary society and sensibilities had lost touch with in his opinion. His understanding of consciousness is framed in this term ‘cruelty’. For the most part, society flees consciousness and prefers the sleep world of safety, social norms and morality. But according to Artaud, theatre can transform of consciousness as a practical and visceral philosophy setting to understand the meaning of Being in a bodily experience—thought made flesh.

The paradigmatic moment where cruelty is most apparent for Artaud is in the instant of expressing language itself:

I suffer from a horrible sickness of mind. My thought abandons me at every level. From the simple fact of thought to the external fact of its materialisation in words. Words, shapes of sentences, internal directions of thought, simple reactions of the mind—I am in constant pursuit of my intellectual being. Thus, as soon as I can grasp a form, however imperfect, I pin it down, for fear of losing the whole thought. I lower myself, I know, and I suffer from it, but I consent to it for fear of dying altogether (1976, 31).

In fact, he shares this struggle with language to express Being with Heidegger—both felt that words failed to express Being. Artaud’s criticised contemporary bourgeois theatre which was largely text-based. In many respects, the performance did not even come from the actor’s own body but was given to it from the outside both by the playwright and the prompter in the middle of the stage who fed the actors their lines.<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning of his literary career, Artaud claimed a constant inability to express himself using the forms of language. Instead, he reached for the force of expression, sound and the materiality of words rather than get bogged down in meaning and construction. Artaud constantly called for a theatre that was free from the restraints of a pre-established form of writing. Actors should create the text of performance only once at which point it vanishes with the moment. This ‘overcoming of literature’ is central to almost all of Artaud’s writing from his earliest attempts to express himself artistically.<sup>12</sup> For Artaud, theatre is a singular event, not a dramatic text that can be reproduced and therein lies its connection with Being. As expressed in *TD*, the theatre is the unique moment of expression felt not by the intellect in clear and rational thought, rather it is experienced in a bodily and sensuously immanent way in the theatre space itself. So in a similar movement to Heidegger who sought to struggle against language and metaphysics, Artaud rejected language as traditionally conceived—meaning in separation from the thing represented. Theatre is thus the scene for the overcoming of metaphysics for him:

[t]his lack of connection to the object which characterizes all of literature is in me a lack of connection to life. As for myself, I can truly say that I am not in the world, and this is not merely an attitude of the mind (1976, 43).

Nevertheless, Artaud wanted to go past the traditional understanding of Being as a stable substance or form and explore the possibility that it could be uncovered in the theatre space through experience itself. Theatre for him is not about words separated from experience, but words that are founded in the experience of Being. In this sense, his project is the task of ‘staging consciousness’ and can overcome the charge of ‘metaphysics’ because he sees theatre as ‘true’ Being, rather than the traditional understanding of Being as static and atemporal.

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Artaud felt that language was cruel because it denies the ability to express Being. The Theatre of Cruelty turns language round on itself and forces expression to its limits, according to him. Although it is almost impossible to say exactly what the Theatre of Cruelty is, it is mode of performance that destabilises the everyday, contemporary, tranquillising use of language separated from the speaker. The theatre becomes uncomfortable, and ‘dangerous’ in being reunited with the body and not subject to interpretation. That is the theory. In practice, it seems Artaud was largely met with an unsympathetic audience or his attempts simply did not convey the effect he had hoped for. Interestingly, despite his protests that he is not able to express himself clearly, Artaud writes with considerable clarity and conviction—no doubt one of the reasons why he has been one of the most influential source of inspiration for twentieth century theatre.

Finally, it is worth noting the tendency towards poetry over regular speech in expressing Being. As with Artaud, Heidegger also looked to poetry for an understanding and engagement with the whole human organism in the experience of Being. Artaud felt that we need to move away from an understanding of our Being in terms of what is intellectually graspable towards the body as a site of knowledge which is why the physical nature of the theatre was so crucial to him. The importance of the body has been subsequently taken up by other phenomenologists since Heidegger (most notably Maurice Merleau-Ponty). Indeed, performance studies at the University of Sydney, my own department, has taken on the study of embodied experience as an integral aspect of approaching performance as a cultural phenomenon.

So Artaud called for a radical return to the things themselves not in a detached philosophical treatise but in the power and force of theatre itself. He wanted to overcome the study of consciousness as a 'thing' and insert the primal impulse of feeling to be found in the theatre experience itself. The subtitle of this paper, 'Being/Artaud' hints at the idea that Artaud felt separated from his own existence. The '/' might well be read as a point of rupture in which he was torn from his own Being. Yet he was adamant that theatre could restore consciousness to the experience of his own self: in the theatre, existence can be felt. Such lack of 'feeling' is precisely the absent from an approach to consciousness in terms of the physical sciences. This is more than simply the problem of language but an identification of all forms of metaphysical dualism in Western philosophy. A 'feeling for life' permeates the concept of consciousness and is integral to our understanding of the world.

### **Theatre as overcoming the metaphysics of consciousness**

Einstein's observation that describing a symphony in terms of wave pressures fails to understand it, ties in closely to both Heidegger's phenomenology of Dasein and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. All three reject the thought that consciousness can be apprehended simply by describing it in scientific terms; it can be understood only by returning to 'the experience of being aware' itself. As with the practice of philosophy, such a heightened awareness of consciousness is found in performance.

Although a much deeper elaboration is required to explore the connection between phenomenology and theatre more fully, this proposition of an 'embodied investigation of consciousness' addresses the separation of language and thought, metaphor and meaning, science and consciousness, experience and explanation in a different way. Performance is such a site where we can add to our understanding of the mind's relation to the world not in a conceptual sense, but through experience itself. From a philosophical point of view, Heidegger's resistance of metaphysics in *BT* reaches towards a new way in which we can grasp a truthful understanding of existence. For him, consciousness as a 'thing' that can be understood 'scientifically' is a mistake that needs to be overcome. We cannot get from an understanding of physical processes to the complex, meaningful world of human. Perhaps this is asking a little too much of 'explanatory' power of science as Daniel Dennett (1991) argues. On the other hand, perhaps this is the insertion point for the importance of art in gaining and understanding of our Being. Such an overcoming of metaphysics is an inversion of philosophy from trying to construct systems of thought to allowing experience to reveal understanding—or as Artaud wrote, to "cause thought."

Artaud wanted to get from the rich complex and meaningful world of language, back to a primal connection with Being through what Victor Turner (1982) later called 'liminal states'. Artaud desired to bring the mind into the presence of physical matter and actually experience unity with the world, loss of self, and an enhanced state of consciousness. For Artaud, philosophy and science will always fail to get at Being because they must translate thought into something that it is not:

[e]very true feeling is in reality untranslatable. To express it is to betray it. But to translate it is to conceal it. True expression hides what it manifests. It confronts the mind with the real emptiness of nature by creating as a reaction a kind of fullness of thought (1976, 269-70).

Some kinds of performance, then, could be seen as a way of investigating consciousness using consciousness itself as both the medium and object of enquiry. By the same token, Heidegger emphasised in *BT* that the basic mode of human interaction in the world is not 'knowing' or even articulating in spoken language (1962, H142). We 'are' most fundamentally in our practical engagement with the world. In this sense, theatre is an investigation of this practical, intermeshed, 'primordial' relation

between our Being There and the world. The mere metaphor of theatre is does not explain these relations, but rather they must be seen and experienced in and of themselves.

One step from this ‘return to experience’ advocated in phenomenology may be that performance offers an alternative to contemplation, introspection and biological investigation because it uses the experience of being to investigate Being. This is more than simply a pre-reflective state or what Heidegger calls ‘average everydayness’. Performance, as Richard Bauman (1984) points out, brings out a ‘heightened awareness’ of the act of performance itself—Being. Like Heidegger, Artaud takes the step away from intellectual engagement with consciousness towards a physical exploration.

This is not to say that describing experience (using language, metaphor and writing) is not worthwhile—in fact we spend a great deal of our lives communicating and commenting upon the world using words. It is not that gaining an understanding of how the brain works is not important. But that there is something in our experience of being that escapes articulation whether in scientific, philosophical or any other academic discourse (see “Art as a Cultural System” in Geertz (1983)). Unlike Wittgenstein (1953) who in his early work arrived at the conclusion, ‘whereof one cannot speak thereof on should be silent’ perhaps a solution is to turn to artistic practice in order to find a language of the unspeakable.

The argument presented here is not that theatre can discover the totality of what consciousness ‘is’. The stage does not offer a definitive laboratory for understanding the physical and neurological bases for consciousness. Theatre does, however, approach the meaning of consciousness in so far as both spectators and performers become attuned to their own conscious states and place them under scrutiny in so far as they are meaningful. Furthermore, the theatre is precisely a place for making meaning from experiences whilst giving value, pleasure, insight and potential transformation to our everyday lives. In such a process, we (humans) come to see ourselves not as ‘things’ but as beings with unique qualities of Being and existence. This also happens to be the task of phenomenology.

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## Notes

1. For a similar investigation from a psychoanalytic perspective, see Kubiak (2001).
2. For two collections of essays dealing with critical theory and Artaud see Scheer (2004 and 2001).
3. Indeed, the scientific and artistic discourses seem to be at odds with one another as is evidenced in Sylvère Lotringer’s interview with Artaud’s psychiatrist, Dr Latrémolière, in Scheer (2004).
4. Page numbers from *BT* marked ‘H’ refer to the pagination in the later German editions, marked in the margins of the translation.
5. Edmund Husserl, Heidegger’s teacher and mentor, is widely regarded as the founder of the phenomenological method which ‘brackets off’ the ‘true nature of reality’ and concentrates on phenomena as they are presented to consciousness (Husserl 1970). For Husserl, all experience is ‘intentional’; that is, directed towards an object. The consciousness of any individual is always revealed by their activity in an environment. For a general overview of the phenomenological movement, see Moran (2000).
6. Of course, this is not to say that all theatre necessarily does this. I would argue that it is at least possible that Being can be approached through performance, a thought expressed by Artaud. An exact description of such a theatre(s) will have to wait for another time, as the essence of Being.
7. Agamben’s *The Open* (2004) also offers an inspiring consideration of the rejection of the ‘essence’ of humanity. It is also a critique of traditional ontology, continuing Heidegger’s destruction of metaphysics

and 'man' as the essence of Being.

8. For a short summary of Heidegger's influence, see Moran (2000, 245-7).

9. In particular, see Artaud's essay "Metaphysics and the Mise-en-scène" in TD and my own exposition in Johnston (2004).

10. See Derrida's famous essay on Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (1978).

11. Derrida points this out in "*La parole soufflée*" (1978).

12. For instance, see "No More Masterpieces" (Artaud 1970, 55-63).

13. Some works influenced by Artaud include 'the happenings' of the 1970s, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and indeed the concept of Performance Studies itself as foreseen by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner at the intersection of theatre and anthropology.

14. See Ian Maxwell in Schechner (2006, 5).

15. One might be wary of limiting the ways in which consciousness can be apprehended in practical activity. Art, religious experiences, and even extreme states of sport and physical exertion often bring about a heightened awareness of being.

16. What Merleau-Ponty called "intepredication" (1984 [1962], 11).

17. Bauman, an oral communication theorist, notes that "performance . . . calls forth a special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and the performer with special intensity" (1984, 11).

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**Daniel Johnston** has recently completed his Ph.D. in Performance Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. He has received an affiliated degree in Philosophy from the University of Cambridge in 2002, honours in Performance Studies at the University of Sydney 1999 and a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communications at Macquarie University, Australia in 1998. He has presented at the International Federation for Theatre Research (F.I.R.T.) New Scholars Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia, 2004 and Maryland, U.S.A. 2005 and at the 'Performance Consciousness' Panel for the Federation in 2006. He published his paper, 'Manual Metaphysics' in the University of Sydney online journal, *Philament*, in 2004