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Provocative Idea:

Critical Practical Analogy:
A Research Tool for Reflecting and Making

Dino Alfier
Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London, Merton Hall Road
London SW19 3QA, UNITED KINGDOM
dinoalfier@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

What contribution can visual art practice bring to interdisciplinary research? And how to give an account of practice-led research that acknowledges the need for interdisciplinary intelligibility? I consider these two questions by reflecting on the methodology--which I call "critical practical analogy" (CPA)--that I have developed while investigating the metaethical implications of French philosopher Simone Weil's notion of attention, during my practice-led PhD. In order to address the first question, I consider as a case study a research art project that employs CPA, and I explain how CPA proved instrumental in overcoming the impasse that I reached by purely theoretical investigation of Weil's discourse on attention and how it opened a distinctly artistic way forward in my research. In order to address the second question, I consider a problem posed by the interdisciplinary nature of my research (covering art and philosophy). I show how, through the application of CPA to the case study, I articulated an exegesis of my research that was intelligible across these two heterogeneous fields of investigation. In conclusion, I give some reasons for my hope that CPA may possess some heuristic and exegetical applicability in practice-led interdisciplinary research beyond my own research.

1. Interdisciplinary Incomprehension

As early as 1973, Lucy Lippard raised the issue of communication in interdisciplinary art, framing it as a problem of artists not being taken seriously by the practitioners of other disciplines due to artists' lack of requisite knowledge:

> Conceptual art has not . . . as yet broken down the real barriers between the art context and those external disciplines--social, scientific, and academic-- from which it draws sustenance. As yet the "behavioural artists" have not held particularly rewarding dialogues with their psychologist counterparts . . . . "Art use" of elementary knowledge, already accepted and exhausted, and unsophistication in regard to work accomplished in other fields are obvious barriers to such interdisciplinary communication. (Lippard, 1992, pp. 895-896)

More recently, Victor Burgin reported a similar case of rejection of visual art research by academia, when Jacques Derrida refused the course work of two students who had submitted videos rather than papers. Derrida demanded "as much demonstrative power, theoretical power . . . as there would be in a good paper"; the videos, he argued, should have been accompanied by "a discourse refined according to the norms that matter to me" (Jacques Derrida, cited in Burgin, 2009, pp.77-78).

However, during my practice-led PhD on the metaethical implications of French philosopher Simone Weil's notion of *attention*, I found that the incomprehension ran in both directions: it was as arduous for philosophy-informed audiences to understand how the practical dimension of my research had a heuristic function as for art-informed audiences to grasp the metaethical significance of my research art projects. Here it will be helpful to elucidate the meaning of *metaethics* and *research art project*. As Alexander Miller explains, *metaethics* is a second-order inquiry *about* first order questions regarding moral obligations, the latter belonging to normative ethics (Miller, 2003, p. 1). For instance, normative ethics may ask whether a particular action is good or bad, while metaethics may ask on what basis we can define actions as being good or bad. *Research art projects* are artworks that I developed with a view to addressing specific PhD research questions.

I approached the problem of interdisciplinary incomprehension in my research as a question of adequate discursive representation of research art practice, by devising a methodology that functioned as an interface between the two fields. By *research art practice* I mean the ensemble of my research art projects. I designate this methodology "critical practical analogy" (CPA): an analogy that includes artistic operations for the purpose of critical investigation and that subsumes both theoretical and practical inquiries. As I will show, CPA also proved instrumental in overcoming an impasse that I reached by purely theoretical study of Weil's discourse on attention.

2. Weilian Attention: Impasse

Below I summarise Weil's discourse on *attention*, in order to introduce the context that engendered critical practical analogy (CPA) and the problem it addressed. This introduction is also required by the fact that the case study I consider in Section 4 grew out of some rather specific observations about Weil's philosophy.

Weil articulates a hierarchy of attentive states, at whose summit is a disposition of absolute consent to whatever happens, a contemplative disposition towards what Weil calls inevitable, irremediable, and irreducible contradictions (Weil, 1997, pp. 93-94, 2006, p. 166). The lowest level is "spontaneous" attention, which is uncontrolled: one is prey to emotions, immobilised and rigid (Weil, 1959, pp. 264-265). The intermediate level is "voluntary" attention, which is controlled: it gives rise to reality seen as a web of necessary connections and is thus the basis of all clear ideas and methodical action (Weil, 1988, pp. 122-129). But the reality to which voluntary attention gives rise is only a half-reality, compared to the full, transcendental reality disclosed by the "highest" form of attention (Weil, 2005, p. 188). The most elevated attention contemplates this transcendental reality and the irreducible contradiction that it reveals between all-encompassing necessity and freedom.

Naturally, this is an extremely abridged account of Weil's multifaceted notion of attention. Weil wrote on attention throughout her life, and a fuller exposition of her ideas on this topic is beyond the scope of this article. As I pointed out, the purpose of my outline is primarily to contextualise the case study that I introduce later. However, in order to counterbalance the compressed character of my account, there follow some excerpts from Weil's writings that are representative of her position.

> God produces himself perfectly . . . First of all, God loves himself . . . The love between God and God, which is itself God, is this doubly virtuous bond; this bond that unites two beings to such an extent that they are indiscernible and are really a single one, this bond which extends over the distance and overcomes an infinite separation. (Weil, 2008, p. 353)

> We all know that there is no good here below . . . Every human being has probably had during their life several moments in which they have clearly admitted to themselves that there is no good here below . . . It is up to them to remain motionless, without diverting their gaze . . . If God, after a long wait, gives a vague premonition of his light or even reveals himself in person, it is just for an instant. Once again one must remain motionless, attentive, and wait. (Weil, 2008, pp. 334-335)

> All true good entails contradictory conditions and is therefore impossible. He who keeps his attention truly fixed on this impossibility and acts will do what is good. (Weil, 2002, p. 95)

> *Note*. All translations from French texts are by the author.

In these passages, Weil describes God by a tautology; that is, her definition of God is circular: God is God. As regards Weil's ethics (which she articulates by reflecting on the notion of good) she holds that the good is contradictorily both possible and impossible. Moreover, we can see that the contradiction that Weil sees as irreducible in ethics follows from the tautologousness and absolute goodness that she ascribes to God, because the goodness of God (as the truth of the sentence "God is God") is not contingent, while the goodness of human actions is always contingent. For instance, it might seem non-contingently good to save ten people from dying in an accident, but what if one of those who has been saved turns out to be a mass-murderer who will kill thousands? I do not need to answer this question: this kind of thought experiment is commonplace in discourse on ethics. My point is to illustrate why it is quite natural to think of earthly goodness as necessarily contingent. The crux of Weil's view can be summarised thus: human best is not, and will never be, the absolute best; and we must contemplate attentively this truth. (Note that, in the second excerpt I quoted, the relation between the impossibility of good and attention is stronger that the English translation suggests, because, throughout her writings, Weil stresses the etymological affinity between attention, likewise *attention* in French, and waiting, *attendre* in French, often using the two terms as near synonyms.)

Typically, Weilian scholarship endorses her views on God, the good and attention (e.g., Pirruccello, 1995; Springsted, 1996). That is to say, most Weil scholars hold that:

(1) God is absolutely good and attention is a means to become a good agent.

(2) Since the good is transcendentally revealed, there is no problem in claiming that the good is impossible while at the same time asserting the possibility of good, revealed to those who contemplate attentively the contradiction.

On the other hand, I remained sceptical of these positions, because:

(3) The God Weil describes--and with it the claim that God is good--meant little to me. As a consequence, I speculated that attention may be a mere hypothetical postulate to which Weil has recourse in order to account for the existence of evil within her mistaken metaphysics (i.e., mistaken for someone who, like me, does not believe that God is good).

(4) Since I do not believe in revelation, I found it problematic to say that the good is both possible and impossible.

I experienced my conclusions (3) and (4) as an impasse, in the sense that they precluded the possibility of fruitful dialogue between myself and those who hold the opposing views expressed in (1) and (2). I also felt that my scepticism had made me lose sight of my reasons for undertaking a practice-led PhD on Weil's attention. My dissatisfaction with these conclusions, and with the above-mentioned interdisciplinary incomprehension, led to the development of CPA, by which I hoped to address Weil's notion of attention through distinctly artistic means.

The last sentence stands in need of qualification. Before reaching this impasse, my research had consisted primarily of observational drawing, which I tried to legitimise theoretically with reference to Weil's notion of attention. Now, I saw that the research might benefit from my using art practice to reflect on the notion of attention. It is also important to forestall a possible misunderstanding with regard to my intentions. CPA was not antagonistically pitched against theoretical Weilian scholarship. First, I have made it clear that the dissatisfaction was with *my* scepticism, not with positions (1) and (2). Second, even disregarding my necessarily limited philosophical knowledge (my background is in art), it would simply be preposterous on my part to believe that I could solve, or brush away as spurious, ethical problems with which philosophers have wrestled for centuries and continue to do so. And, third, throughout my PhD, I demonstrated by commitment to dialogue with the Weilian community, by presenting at the annual conferences organised by the French and the American Weil Societies. I have also published on Weil in journals--including the *Cahiers Simone Weil*, the philosophical journal devoted to Weil--both theoretical articles and articles dealing with CPA art projects (Alfier, 2009, 2010). That one such article was positively quoted by a Weilian scholar in a later issue of the *Cahiers* (Boitier, 2010, p. 109) suggests that my artistic approach to Weil's philosophy has (rightly) not been interpreted by Weilian scholarship as a disavowal of their discourse.

3. Critical Practical Analogy

I devised critical practical analogy (CPA) in order to overcome the impasse and the interdisciplinary incomprehension to which I referred above. I achieved this aim by capitalising on the concrete sensible nature of artworks and by abstracting from the content of Weil's metaphysical discourse: I retained only the general idea of the two argument forms to which, as I have indicated, this discourse appeals, namely, tautology and contradiction.

I qualify CPA as "practical" to indicate that such an analogy is to be used in practice, to be used to act, to make something. I use "critical" with its philosophical meaning, that is, as reflective or investigative (Kempt Smith, 2003, p. 1; Mautner, 2000, p. 117). The notion of critical practical analogy derives, albeit not explicitly, from two essays by the art historian Charles Harrison, who, writing on an Art & Language project (the project involved covering figurative images by flicking white paint on them, and I will refer to it as "the snow project"), describes the project as a "practical analogy," (Harrison, 2008, p. 74) and as a "device [through which] a critical account of modernity may be realised or embodied or enacted" (Harrison, 2001, p. 180). For the unfamiliar reader, *Art & Language* is the name of a group of conceptual artists who choose to work collectively; their journal *Art-Language* was first published in 1969. Although Harrison does not use the expression "critical practical analogy," a definition of CPA can be extrapolated by compounding his descriptions: a critical practical analogy is a practical analogy used as a critical device.

At its most general, CPA comprises five elements: (a) an *aim* and (b) an *outcome*. As with any analogy, it is a relation of two analogues, which in CPA, fulfil different

functions: (c) the *objective analogue* represents a state of affairs that is assumed to be the case, (d) the *reflective analogue* is whatever that, for the purpose of the critique (i.e., of reflection), is assumed to be analogous in some respect to the objective analogue, and lastly, in order for the analogy to be practical, there needs to be (e) an *operational principle*, without which the analogy would remain merely the stating of a relation and not a means for action. The artist Sol LeWitt writes that, in his work, "The idea becomes a machine that makes art" and that "all the planning and the decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair" (LeWitt, 1967, p. 79). CPA is also a conceptual machine, but the execution is not perfunctory: the execution leads from the aim to the outcome. If the outcome could be obtained simply by formulating an aim, there would be no justification for undertaking research.

The snow project, by Art & Language, can be interpreted as an instance of CPA by drawing on Harrison's account of it. (References to CPA are mine, not Harrison's.) Harrison (2008) writes that the idea for the snow project was suggested by Lucas van Valckenborch's painting *Winter Landscape*, 1586. In this painting--a typical Flemish winter scene--the representation of a snow blizzard has been achieved by seemingly flicking white paint on the canvas. The aim of the snow project, Harrison says, was to test how far Art & Language could go with modernist reductionism. Its objective analogue was "late-modernism's apparent vacillation between surfeit and erasure," exemplified by "the implosion of modernist reductionism with the advent of the black canvas"; this is the state of affairs of late-modernism that Art & Language assumes. The reflective analogue was the "idea of a composition painted to be snowed on" until "all vestiges of content had been obliterated"; this, according to Harrison, is analogous to late-modernism's vacillation between surfeit and erasure. The operational principle was the carrying to its extreme of the technique that van Valckenborch had employed to create the effect of snow in *Winter Landscape*, that is, by "gradually snowing on figurative compositions with dabs of white paint." The outcome was the marking of "a kind of limit beyond which art cannot really be pressed if it is to remain in any sense a social practice" (Harrison, 2008, p. 74).

Before moving on to the analysis of the case study, it is important to point out that I used CPA in several research art projects. These projects shared the same aim and, collectively, obtained the same outcome. As regards objective and reflective analogues and operational principle, these were, at a very general level, shared by the projects, and I introduce them in the remainder of this paragraph. But the case study had also more specific analogues and operational principle, which I will detail when I consider the case study. The CPA that I developed aimed at finding a way out of the sceptical impasse I reached through my theoretical investigation of Weil's discourse on ethics and attention. The objective analogue was Weil's reliance on the notions of tautology and contradiction, which I described earlier. The reflective analogue was arrived at by abstracting from the particular instances of tautologies and contradictions to which Weil refers and by considering them as immaterial argument forms. The operational principle was the production of images of tautology and contradiction, that is, the representation of these argument forms through their objectification and narrativisation. The outcome was the development of a series of art projects in which the absoluteness of Weil's discourse on

attention is not refuted but rather indirectly questioned by introducing the snag of contingency in tautology and contradiction, which was a result of the process of objectification. But, once again, I stress that these projects were not pursued in an antagonistic spirit against theoretical investigation of Weil's philosophy. On the contrary, as the case study will show, I drew on Weilian scholarship and I reflected on what contribution the project could bring to this field.

4. Case Study: Is Capable of Not Not-Being

I now turn to my case study, *Is Capable of Not Not-Being* (ICONNB). This was an event, including an installation and a performance that took place at the Centre for Drawing, University of the Arts London, in December 2008. The general objective analogue of ICONNB was Weil's use of tautological or circular arguments in her discourse on attention. (The fact that I associate tautology with circularity indicates that I do not use "tautology" in a technical logical sense.) The specific objective analogue was two-fold. First, I considered the following circular argument by which Weil defines voluntary attention: "In voluntary attention, one continuously . . . stops voluntary attention from becoming spontaneous attention" (Weil, 1959, pp. 264-265). It is clear that this definition is circular: What is voluntary attention? It is non-spontaneous attention. What is spontaneous attention? It is non-voluntary attention.

Second, as Weilian scholar Vance Morgan (2005, p. 120) points out, Weil constructs an analogy between the Greek solution to the problem of incommensurables through the use of the circle, which transcends the numerical order, and the problem of the incommensurability of contingent earthly good and absolute divine good, which she solves by appealing to the notion of transcendence. I cannot here expand on this outline of Weil's argument, which she articulates at length and with subtlety. What is crucial for ICONNB is the role attention plays in the argument: by the attentive contemplation of irreducible incommensurability, one does not obliterate incommensurability, but one can reach a higher level of understanding, which is geometrically represented by the circle.

The reflective analogue was the material representation of circularity. As I have argued earlier, Weil maintains that without voluntary attention there would be no thinkable reality. Weil calls this state "the kingdom of Proteus," because in such a state everything would be protean discontinuity ungraspable by thought (Weil, 1988, pp. 122-129). Voluntary attention, in a sense, creates reality as a semiotic tissue. Taking my cue from Weil's reference to semiotics, I decided to use the notion of concrete sensible sign. Concrete sensible signs remain always somewhat recalcitrant to complete and univocal interpretation (Nöth, 1990, pp. 87-89). Most of the time, we use signs with a low degree of sensible concreteness, such as words or numbers; these are signs that we manage more or less seamlessly. The reflective analogue in ICONNB consisted of concrete sensible signs of circularity with a view to emphasising its aesthetic dimension. This strategy is not original: it has been used by several conceptual artists who, as the art historian Thomas McEvilley (2005) argues, have treated arguments and theories as objects with aesthetic presence. A typical example of this practice explicitly referencing tautology is William Anastasi's *Microphone* 1963 (a tape recorder that plays its own sound), or his

Six Sites 1967 (an exhibition of photographs of the walls on which the photographs were hung), or, again, Bernar Venet's *Tube no. 150/30/1300* 1966 (a metal tube exhibited alongside a diagrammatic representation of itself) (McEvilley, 2005, pp. 78-79, pp. 105-135). Many more examples could have been given; tautology is almost an established genre in conceptual art, a genre intelligible to art-informed audiences. What is specific about ICONNB is that tautology was referenced in order to address Weil's discourse on attention and ethics.

The representation of circularity was achieved through the installation, whose operational principle was literally to materialise the abstract notion of circle. This principle may seem vague, but I cannot pretend that my artistic thought was, or typically is, more precise and systematic than this: there comes a point when thinking operates through making, when methodological explanation gives way to description of artefacts, which follows. The installation consisted of 400 pages containing the first million digits of π attached to the wall (Figure 1).
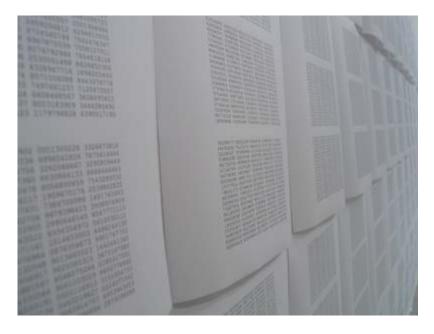

Figure 1. Is capable of not not-being installation, Centre for Drawing, London, 2008:
First million digits of π.

A Post-it note reading "an *infinitely* small portion of the digits of π," and, on the opposite wall, a drawn circle with one of its diameters (Figure 2).
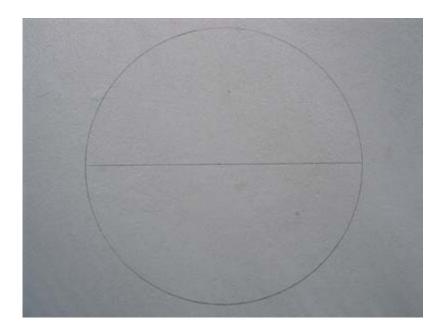
Figure 2. Is capable of not not-being installation, Centre for Drawing, London, 2008:
Circle drawn on the wall.

On the floor, red lines drawn with a permanent marker indicated the halfway point of the length of the room, the half of the half, and so on, until the space became too small to be drawn. A Post-it note placed near the main half-indicating line read "Move on, Zeno" (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Is capable of not not-being installation, Centre for Drawing, London, 2008: Red line drawn with a permanent marker and Post-it reading "Move on, Zeno."

The operational principle was further developed by the performance, which was in the form of a lecture (Figure 4). As the performance lasted over an hour, I can only sketch out its main focus with some examples. Perhaps, I thought, the circularity of Weil's definitions of voluntary and spontaneous attention depends on the fact that one can understand these states only through first-hand experience. Therefore, I tried to show the difference between the verbal description of an occurrence and the experience of that occurrence: for instance, the difference between a description of silence and experiencing silence: I invited the audience to observe a minute of silence; or the difference between Weil's description of spontaneous attention and the experience of it: I banged the table loudly and unexpectedly. In order to ask whether voluntary attention is possible, I invited the audience to try to solve the *liar paradox* ("this statement is false"), pointing out that nobody and nothing had compelled them to judge the statement alternatively true and false, that they had done so, assuming they had, voluntarily. This was also a further intimation of circularity.

Figure 4. Is capable of not not-being performance, Centre for Drawing, London, 2008.

As for the materialisation of the recalcitrant aspect of signs, the almost materially negligible sign "π" becomes slightly more materially substantial in the drawn circle and diameter, and becomes much more substantial in the 400 sheets of the first million digits of π: the wall was not large enough to accommodate them all, so a pile of them was left on the ground; and the ink ran out while printing them (another indication of their materiality) (Figure 5). Furthermore, the Post-it note reading "an *infinitely* small portion of the digits of π" reminded the audience that, no matter how many digits of π one prints out, it will always be an infinitesimal portion of the digits of π: all the paper and ink in the world could not make the statement "This is an infinitely small portion of the digits of π" false. In this respect, this statement shares with tautologies the property of always being true.

Figure 5. Is capable of not not-being, 2008: A4 print-out of the first million digits of π, where the ink is running out.

The lines on the floor materialised Zeno's argument on the infinite divisibility of space, which leads to his famously controversial negation of the possibility of spatial movement. Even in this case, the materialisation brings recalcitrance, and once again there is a gap between conceptual description and actual occurrence: at some point, no more lines can *actually* be drawn.

5. Outcome of Is Capable of Not Not-Being

The application of critical practical analogy (CPA) in *Is Capable of Not Not-Being* (ICONNB) led to the two outcomes that I describe below. Insofar as, as I will show, ICONNB contributed to the field of Weilian studies through distinctly artistic means, these outcomes fulfil my aim: that is, overcoming the sceptical impasse that I reached through my theoretical investigation. In what follows, I outline the nature of this contribution as an example of the kind of contribution art practice can bring to interdisciplinary research and I offer some reflections on the issue of interdisciplinary intelligibility. However, it should be realised that, as ICONNB is only one of several PhD art projects, this is not an exhaustive account of CPA's import in my research.

At first sight, the following outcome may appear to have merely personal value. To be able to use my practice to engage with Weil's philosophy--rather than appealing to the latter to legitimise the former--is a definite improvement for my practice, as I would be very dissatisfied if my work were accessible only to Weil scholars or burdened with a too heavy textual explanation (the ICONNB lecture was not an explanation of the project). However, I believe that, in this respect, my CPA methodological approach could be of interest to other artist-researchers, since, from my experience as an artist-researcher, I gather that many artists engaged in theory-heavy research are troubled by the (very real) prospect of art practice becoming a mere mouthpiece for theory, rather than a critical instrument.

As I explained in Section 3, CPA can be used by artists engaged in research to identify assumed states of affairs, with a view to critiquing those assumptions through analogies mediated by art projects. The objective analogue could be used to represent *any* assumed state of affairs. In the same way that I abstracted from the specific concerns that Art & Language had in the snow project and identified the general schema of critical practical analogy that underlines the project, so the particular set of aim, outcome, objective and reflective analogues, and operational principle that I have devised for my CPA is by no means prescriptive. But although the potential application of CPA in interdisciplinary research is in principle as broad as the ingenuity of the artists who may use it, in practice, I expect that the analogical method would be particularly suited to, and perhaps only applicable in, the less technical branches of philosophy. I do not suppose that CPA could be employed very effectively, for instance, in formal logic or, even less so, the hard sciences, because the rather open-ended, albeit methodologically guided, use of analogy which is constitutive of CPA is, in my view, incompatible with the more stringent research procedures adopted in these fields.

It may seem that, by treating tautology as an aesthetic object, I was able to generate new artwork, but I did not really overcome the impasse: I merely bypassed it (ignored it), while Weilian scholars will continue their discussions regardless. But I would argue that a project like ICONNB could have a beneficial effect on philosophical discussion, acting as a concrete antidote to highly abstract speculation. This argument, I admit, is only moderately persuasive, and some may judge the benefit as modest. Stronger support for my claim that, through CPA, I did more than merely turning my back on the impasse is

given, first, by the aforementioned fact that my research artwork has been referred to (and, in my view, pertinently) in the *Cahiers Simone Weil*; and, second, by the positive contribution to the field, which is the second outcome of ICONNB, and to which I now turn.

ICONNB highlighted the fact that Weil's discourse on ethical attention can sometimes be circular and, more importantly, that she saw the notion of circularity as a means of reaching that higher level of attention which is so central to her ethics. As these observations are new to Weil scholarship, they constitute a contribution to this field and indicate the heuristic function of CPA. But this contribution becomes intelligible to the Weilian community in virtue of the discursive representation of art practice through CPA--of which most of this article is an example--which chronicles how ICONNB evolved out of the objective analogue, that is, out of Weil's philosophical writings (of course, mediated by my interpretations and by those found in secondary literature). On the other hand, art-informed audiences could find an interpretative access via the reflective analogue and operational principle, which, as I pointed out in Section 4, reference an established artistic strategy of conceptual artists: namely, the translation of theories into aesthetic objects. Presenting my work in exhibitions, seminars, and conferences, I have found that indeed the reflective analogue and operational principle afforded this access.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I must stress that there is a price to pay for intelligibility in interdisciplinary practice-led research: explanation seems to run counter to the semantic richness of artworks. In my view, the kind of discursive explanation of art practice afforded by critical practical analogy (CPA) goes some way in addressing this problem, by stressing the heuristic function of research art projects rather than their meaning (notwithstanding the fact that function and meaning are seldom clearly distinguishable), by focussing on the process by which art projects emerge and develop rather than on the final product, and also by overtly acknowledging its limited scope: that of articulating and of making explicit a relation between two very specific theoretical and artistic practices of inquiry. But, ultimately, it is up to artists engaged in interdisciplinary research to remain open to the interpretations of others, especially those at odds with theirs. This is perhaps true for every artist, but it is undeniable that the prolonged, narrow focus required by PhD research turns the possibility of highly biased and skewed interpretations of one's own artwork into an occupational hazard. Breaking down the task of reflecting on my art practice into the components of CPA made it easier for me to see when my interpretations were too farfetched. I therefore hope that other artist-researchers may find CPA useful in this respect.

Whether CPA could be useful for practice-led interdisciplinary research beyond my own can only be assessed empirically by artists actually using it. Naturally, as my PhD focussed on the metaethical implications of Weil's notion of attention, this kind of empirical assessment was not part of my investigation. However, since usefulness

necessarily depends on usability, I can at least adduce two reasons that sustain my confidence in a more general applicability of CPA.

First, through the analysis of the case study that I articulated in this article, I hope to have shown that CPA is a viable alternative model (a model which could also be used complementarily in conjunction with other models) for practice-led interdisciplinary research. In order to reiterate this point, I will outline a conjectured research into Weil's notion of attention, still involving art practice, but which, in my view, would be artistically less coherent and interesting. Such research could, for instance, comprise the following steps: (1) an exclusively theoretical study of Weil's writings and other relevant philosophical discourses, (2) a positioning of Weilian attention within the map of contemporary ethical viewpoints, and (3) a discursive representation of my pre-existing art practice with reference to the results of (1) and contextualised with regard to (2). In this scenario, art practice would have only an exegetic function. On the other hand, in ICONNB and my other PhD art projects, the very fact of establishing critical practical analogies had a strong, and surprising, bearing on the course my practice would take: in Section 2, I described how, as a consequence of CPA, my practice moved away from my initial concern with observational drawing and towards a more conceptual approach. I believe the potential that CPA has for opening up art practice towards new and unexpected directions would appeal to researchers in many different fields.

Second, CPA does not necessarily have to precede practice-led research and drive inquiry, but could also follow the production of research artwork and be used as an instrument for reflection and explanation. This makes CPA particularly suited to practice-led research, because, although practice-led researchers know where their research is heading, it is also true that surprises and subsequent changes of course are of a different order and far more widespread in practice-led research than in other fields of investigation. I suggest that artists could, initially, concentrate separately on the theoretical and practical aspects of their research, proceeding in a rather intuitive fashion as far as art practice is concerned. When a body of work has been created, the task of articulating an appropriate CPA could help artists to identify more precisely those theoretical strands that, in light of the artwork produced, appear now particularly relevant to the research. This would not be a mere "rebranding" of the artwork in question, but would help artists to become progressively clearer with regard to their research questions and aims.

In view of these considerations, I hope that CPA could provide artists and other inquirers engaged in interdisciplinary practice-led research with a heuristic research tool and a template for articulating a discursive representation of art practice that both acknowledges the non-linearity and indirectness of practice-led research and the need for interdisciplinary intelligibility.

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