

A Friend to the idea

2016

Scripted introductory address, microphone, chair

20min

Performed by Gabriëlle Scheijpen

Performed at the Dutch Art Institute on the occasion of the inaugural presentation for ‘The Kitchen Not the Restaurant’, 2016. The task of commencement was allocated to Isabelle Sully on request from Gabriëlle Scheijpen, director of the school, and was thusly performed by Gabriëlle Scheijpen on request from Isabelle Sully, student of the school.

[The following script should be performed with the use of a cordless microphone and, at times, a chair.]

If the script is ever interrupted with a request to ask a question from the audience, acknowledge the request but insist that questions wait until the end. Time is being measured and complied to. If you feel you want to, you could emphasise this with a gesture toward your watch. Following this potential disruption, continue seamlessly with the script.

At certain points between speech, there will be an instruction for you to do a stretch. Take your time to read the instructions if needed, consider it to be a moment when the performance is paused. Please follow the diagrams imbedded within the script. Again, take your time and consider comfortability. While you are of course 'performing', the actions are considered and intended to be ergonomic. The performance of these actions is to appear nonchalant and instinctual.

To begin, take a standing position on the stage at exactly the time my presentation is scheduled to begin. This should be in close proximity to the chair that will also join you on stage. Wait a moment for silence to ensue. Vocalise a request for silence if needed, while looking at your watch to check the time. Appear surprised at the lateness, then say...]

Ah, well, the time has already gotten away. I should be introducing Isabelle Sully, second year at the DAI, who will present first today.

[Look to me, outstretch hand as if to introduce and welcome me to the stage. Continue uncertain]

But I have a little bit to say to just introduce proceedings...

[Raise script and shake it as if to frame it as notes, and then quickly hesitate, as if making a decision]

But yes, I will do that. Isabelle, the stage is yours.

[Take two or three steps toward your seat in the audience, meanwhile I will stand up in a gesture of getting ready, then you will turn around suddenly with a change of heart. I will apathetically return to seat]

Actually I will just quickly mention these few things, then they're out of the way for the day and we can go on uninterrupted.

[Pause briefly]

Now, ah... considering this is the first, shall we say, iteration of the 'Kitchen Not the Restaurant' this year, there are a couple of things I would like to state so as to introduce the first years and to remind the second years. Of course, usually, the tutor running the course to be introduced would do this, but since this is my own...

[Make the gesture of quotation marks as you say...]

...‘intervention’, to quote Bassam’s course, that task is up to me.

[Put both hands out, palms facing up, as if to gesture toward yourself. Smile and nod goofily while doing so]

For something a little different, and in the spirit of the day, I will start with a question: What is compliance?

[Take your time to casually sit down on the chair located near to you]

Now I say this for a couple of reasons. One is that the structure of this part of the course, while being very, shall we say ‘free’, also asks a certain amount of compliance from you. That is, that you turn up for your scheduled time...

[Scoff subtly while smiling, almost with a recognition of the obviousness]

...that you pose a question and that you present something strictly within the time frame of twenty minutes.

[Pause briefly]

Ruth Noack made a joke last week in her presentation about DAI time, saying that it runs on a different clock. This has been known to happen, but especially on days like today, I stress the importance of

arriving on time and being present, both when presenting and when being in the audience.

[Pause briefly]

I say this both to the students and also the respondents, who, by the way, I would very much like to welcome to the DAI today.

[Gesture toward respondents presumably in the front row. Nod and smile with thanks]

And just quickly for them I will say, even though we have already spoken earlier, that every DAI week, one full day is dedicated to lectures and lecture-performances by a small group of students. This format, coined in 2003 and moulded and sculpted ever since, offers individual students the possibility to present their independent research and share updates, proposals, experiments and interests.

[Pause briefly]

But yes, anyway... I also want to say that the second reason I ask the question, 'What is compliance?', is because...

[Say the following line with a substantially more formal, if not automated voice...]

'...we have become aware that due to the increasing number of regulations and the need for operational transparency, organisations are increasingly adopting the use of consolidated and harmonised sets of compliance controls.'¹

[Pause briefly. Continue with same tone...]

Compliance controls have broad application or impact throughout the university across colleges, schools, institutes and operating units, including policies whose subject matter or budgetary impact requires

1 Peak Consultants, *What is Compliance?*, <https://peakconsultants.co.uk/what-is-compliance/>.

review and approval. They seek to ensure compliance with applicable laws, ethical norms, accepted best practices, promotion of operational efficiencies, enhancement of the university's mission and reduction of institutional risks, and they are designed to mandate or constrain *actions*.

[Pause briefly. Return to usual voice]

‘This approach has been known to be used to ensure that all necessary governance requirements can be met without the unnecessary duplication of effort and activity from resources.’²

[Still while seated, casually place script on your lap and pause to seemingly naturally perform the first stretch: Hold arms out in front of you, bent at the elbow, face palms out and fold fingers down, while pushing back on the wrist until you feel a stretch.

Fig. 1. Hold for five seconds, repeat three times



After completing the stretch, pick script up from your lap and continue reading]

Now, universities and members of the university community operate under many laws and regulations. These can range from international or federal, to state, local and administrative, and apply at an institutional level as well as at an individual level based on areas of responsibility and activities. And these legal requirements are incorporated into university policies.

[Pause briefly]

I bring this more formal moment in, because this form of

2 Crowe Horwath International, *Compliance: How it Works*, <https://www.crowe.com/af/services/audit/compliance>.

compliance is what I believe to be ‘a systematic approach to governance, designed to ensure than an institution meets its obligations under all applicable laws, regulations, best practices and standards, contractual obligations and institutional policies.’³

[Pause briefly]

Now, this form is aimed at producing a ‘culture of compliance’ among the individuals that make up the university. And this form is from where I would like to depart. Even though our aims as a school are probably already well known within our group here, I feel it necessary to state this.

[Pause briefly]

And on the direction of Isabelle, if it is okay with her, I will take up a tiny...

[Press thumb and index finger together slowly, as if to gesture to something miniscule]

...bit more of her time.

[Look to Isabelle for approval, Isabelle nods, continue...]

It is my belief that education should be a process of constant negotiation between *all* involved. This means that we are all working to find out more about how learning takes place, so that as educators, and also as students, we can direct our energies into approaches that are more likely to be in the spirit of this negotiation.

[Still while seated, casually place script on your lap and pause to seemingly naturally perform the second stretch: Hold arms out in front of you, bent at the elbow, face palms out and stretch fingers as straight and as wide as possible.

Fig. 2. Hold for five seconds, repeat three times

3 National Association of College and University Attorneys, *Building an Effective Compliance Program: An Introductory Guide*, November, 2015.



After completing stretch, pick script up from your lap and continue reading...]

And it is also a hope that as students you come to the DAI for this fruitful two years and leave having acquired techniques and approaches to be progressive practioners and thinkers in the world.

[Pause briefly]

We are aware at the DAI that education isn't always how we have envisioned and hope for it to be here. The thought behind this school began with the factual knowledge that power relations being the way that they are cannot solely be attributed to economics and discipline, as power relations are also learned. To us, learning is therefore both a discursive and performative praxis.

[Still while seated, casually place script on your lap and pause to seemingly naturally perform the third stretch: Lean slightly back in your chair while adjusting your posture. Then, raise your hands to rest on the back of your head, with your elbows sitting at a roughly 45° angle. Once hands are in place, proceed to push shoulder blades toward each other while keeping hands and elbows in position.

Fig. 3. Hold for five seconds, repeat two times



After completing stretch, pick script up from your lap and continue reading...]

‘From both a teaching and learning perspective, engaging with power

relations in order to change them is an equally unglamorous and necessary task for current critical educational practices.’⁴

[Pause briefly]

‘Despite this, there are a number of anti-discriminatory approaches in education that personalise social phenomena and in turn make it impossible to analyse the real relations of power and dominance.’⁵

[Pause briefly]

Alongside, but also in the process of acquiring techniques and this learning, people also learn, at school, the...

[As you did earlier, make the gesture of quotation marks as you say...]

...‘rules’ of good behavior. That is, the properties to be observed by every agent in the division of labour, depending on the past they are ‘destined’ to hold in it.

[Pause briefly]

‘Therefore, grasping education as a practice that can bring about change means that we must also consider ways to negotiate and transform the sayable and thinkable, challenging dominant ways of thinking and acting within the vast and amorphous arenas of struggle within civil society.’⁶

[Pause briefly]

‘It not only has to do with ideology critique, but also with going through the slow—sometimes strenuous and painful, other times invigorating and exciting—processes of transgression in undoing the certainties we have been *trained to embody* that also convey

4 Nora Sternfeld, *Learning Unlearning*, CuMMA Papers #20, Aalto University, Helsinki, 2016, 7.

5 Sternfeld, *Learning Unlearning*, 8.

6 *ibid.*, 10.

power relations.’⁷

[Still while seated, casually place script on your lap and pause to seemingly naturally perform the fourth stretch: Casually adjust posture and place your left hand on your right shoulder. Then, take your right hand and hold your left elbow, pushing gently until you feel a stretch in your left tricep.

Fig. 4. Hold for ten seconds, repeat with other arm.



After completing stretch, pick script up from your lap and continue reading...]

In this sense, education is also ‘an exercise where we slowly and gradually attempt to break with learned practices and habits of making difference based on dominant power relations that are already inscribed in our habits, bodies and actions.’⁸ It problematises whether resisting against structural power relations pertains to infrastructure or social relations, or to the institution or the conversations in it.

[Pause briefly]

‘Even in moments when we can hardly imagine a form of pedagogy capable of changing and not stabilising these power relations—spaces of agency still open where political work becomes possible. When this happens, we recognise that power structures are not one-dimensional blocks, but fields of contention where learning and teaching also become “terrains of struggle”.’⁹

7 ibid.

8 Sternfeld, *Learning Unlearning*, 10.

9 ibid.

[Pause briefly]

To me, the establishment of a school infrastructure is not only a way to keep minds and ideas malleable, but a way in which to keep borders malleable also—a way to make this transgression possible, to be tactically situated within and strategically outside the system.

[Pause briefly. Say the following line with increasing emphasis, and a hint of irony, for the difficulty of the task at hand...]

I say all this, and now I face the task of bring it back around to what relevance it could possibly have to today.

[Pause briefly, emphasise 'one' by stretching the word as you say it, and raise one finger as you say...]

And to this I will say just one-eee more thing.

[Still while seated, casually place script on your lap and pause to seemingly naturally perform the fifth stretch, which should be performed in the spirit of stretching to prepare: With a straight back put both arms out in front of you and on an angle where your hands are at the level of your face. Connect your hands together through linking your fingers, and with your palms facing out stretch your arms as straight as possible while pushing forward.

Fig. 5. Hold for ten seconds.



After completing stretch, pick script up from your lap, stand and continue reading...]

What can compliance mean within such conditions?

[Pause. Change tone to very casual, read the following lines with a poetic rhythm]

For I had mistaken her lack of interest for compliance. Her assent to consent, a concession.

[Pause briefly]

How do we as feminist teachers use power in a way that is not coercive?

[With script in hand pause to seemingly naturally perform the sixth stretch: Put your arms by your sides and raise shoulders as if shrugging.

Fig. 6. Hold for five seconds, repeat once.



After completing stretch continue reading...]

Grounded in an engagement with materiality,
This is an empirical question as much as it is a theoretical one.

[Drop head and then slowly roll it in full circle three consecutive times to stretch the back of your neck. Continue with script while stretching...]

Breaking with learned practices means rethinking how to behave.

[Pause briefly]

But how can an institution misbehave?

[Casually stand and place script on your chair, step forward and then pivot from your right foot so that you are facing the wall to your right. Then pause to

seemingly naturally perform the fifth stretch: With both feet at arms length apart and with a straight back, raise your left arm and then bend at the elbow, to eventually place your hand palm down on the back of your right shoulder. Lean to your right from your hip as you push down gently until you feel a stretch.

Fig. 7. Hold for five seconds.



While stretching continue to say slowly....]

Mall-e-a-bility

[Now perform the same stretch, though facing the opposite way and stretching the opposite arm. Say slowly while stretching...]

Ply-a-bility

[Pick up script and turn to face the front. Continue...]

The complier is complicit in the act of compliance.
Complicating complications at a mutual rate.

[Pause briefly]

If we agreed to agree that we are mutually responsible,
The agreeable agreement is now two fold.

[Pause briefly]

A task was set by one to the other,
Accepted willingly and then the task returned.

[Pause briefly]

Leaving us complicit by association, or associatively compliant.
A submissive submission no longer present.
Instead, both, a friend to the idea.

[Take a step forward with script still in hand. Pause to seemingly naturally perform the seventh stretch: Bending from your waist and with your arms by your sides, slowly lower your upper body, hold the stretch at a 90° degree angle for five seconds and return to upright position. Conclude with...]

Thank you

[Following possible applause, return to seat in the audience. I will take up the now vacant seat on the stage, resuming my scripted role as student ready to receive feedback from the respondents]