

Grim Feinberg Joseph

Performance and Anti-Performance

standard lecture

In this presentation I explore the nature of what I call “anti-performance.” Performance theory has so far drawn attention to a broad range of phenomena that contain performative qualities, such as the appearance of performers in public, the separation of performers from audiences, and performers’ reflectivity about how they represent themselves to their publics. I would like to draw attention to a countervailing tendency that often accompanies performance: subjects avoid public appearance, act as if they were not performing before an audience, and attempt to act “naturally” or “authentically,” without excessive self-reflection. I will performatively enact this anti-performative principle by giving my paper over a dinner of conference participants (with a nod to the ancient meaning of the “symposium”), as if I were simply continuing the conversation started during the meal, gradually responding to the questions of my fellow feasters as I outline the bases of a theory of “anti-performance.”

Bio:

Joseph Grim Feinberg is research fellow at the Philosophy Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Sociology Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. His dissertation and forthcoming book is an ethnography of performance and anti-performance in the so-called folklore movement in contemporary Slovakia. He has also explored theories of the public sphere and civil society, as well as theories of political subjectivity and social exclusion.

