



FRIENDS OF ATTENTION GATHERING #10 The Twelve Theses 19 June 2020

- 14:17:47 From Sal Randolph : Dates?
- 14:39:29 From Justin Smith : I think at one point “natural beings” was going to be inserted into Thesis I, alongside “things” and “persons”.
- 14:39:46 From helenmiller : Who is speaking?
- 14:40:02 From John (he/him/his) Muse : About 2: 2. Love the poetry of it, but it doesn’t rate as a hypothesis in the end. Walking into a wall repeatedly in the film. Vatic but not? It confuses itself... there are no doors; there is no useful house, no house at all.
- 14:40:08 From Justin Smith : Nature is important too!
- 14:40:11 From Laura Levitt : we also considered some of the issues around “purity”
- 14:40:13 From kristinlawler : it is not the persons/things that are the object of our attention, but their being
- 14:40:18 From John (he/him/his) Muse : About 3. 3. I love this because when you practice and pay attention to an object... harm to letting be, enacts an ethics of interpersonal attention. Practices of attention rehearses ethics of attention to persons... Politics comes in here. Attending to inanimate objects gives attention... Experience with others but also experience of an object that draws on modes of attention
- 14:40:30 From Morley Musick : Kevin spoke of Mere attention building up to pure attention, how moments of mere attention can accumulate into moments of pure attention
- Molly saw cotton woods as if seeing for the first time
Kevin never experienced walking through walls
- Steven sees walking through walls as relating to the imaginative side of attention
- 14:40:39 From Sal Randolph : Alex: I like words. Let's focus on some keywords. Potentiality. Potentiality focuses on what is present but also the flux of what can be done.
- Claudia: What stands out for me is the word personal. Especially in a posthuman context. Can we extend

Sal: the call to agreement always brings up in the rise of disagreement, the desire for contradictory voices. I feel like it needs to be a hundred times longer so that it can hold many contradictions within its body.

Grace: I have the opposite feeling, the wholeness of a text makes me want to swan-dive into its world.

The metaphor in the 2nd thesis bugs me. Walking through walls.

Max: I like it - the observed object is able to diffract the mind.

14:40:43 From Sal Randolph : Jo: The door, the wall, the building's aperture.

A propositional flickering between the workings of attention and the objects of attention.

Alex: I found it interesting to have it in two languages. There's a threshold in language between the two versions. This opens it into a multidimensionality.

[Holds up his amazing multilayered notes on transparent sheets.]

Sal: What if each person translated the document for themselves, into their own idiom. That might give it a multidimensionality, a refraction, without making it longer.

14:40:54 From Adam Jasper : #1

Kirsten: In anthropology we always talk about the discipline of astonishment.

Jeff, Gabriel, Anthony: The etymology of astonishment is connected to the experience of being turned to stone, or at least struck still. If the act of attention requires astonishment, where does the act of attention go, once we move?

14:40:55 From John (he/him/his) Muse : 4. cut the section between the em dashes.

14:40:55 From Khaled Malas : Walking through walls only reminds me of Israeli soldier aggression.

14:41:11 From Adam Jasper : #2

Anthony: The idea of being able to see through, or pass through, space, like an apparition, says something about how we commune with objects.

Kirsten, Jeff: We have gone from stone, to dispersal. From stupefaction to passage. Is this propaedeutic to taking action? If you can walk through walls, can you knock them down?

Gabriel: Sensible in Spanish is not sensible, but sensitive. Both meanings are latent in this text. The door is a quotidian door, a sensible door, but at the same time, the eye is a sensitive door.

14:41:16 From Larry Berger : Someone, in the basements of Zoom Inc., presides over the server with the almost-finished, lost-forever, insights scrawled in the chats of Zoom breakouts.

14:41:23 From Ed Quinnan : The 4 theses remind me of the practice of awareness where the pause in our routine allows the quiet experience to come to expression.

14:41:24 From Sal Randolph : Yeah that Eyal Weizman (sp?) piece

14:41:25 From Adam Jasper : #3

Gabriel, Jeff: recognition of the shared faculties by which attention is possible.

#4

the implicit forms of being together that are emergent within human interaction and which are constantly interrupting...

Jeff, Kirsten: one does well to know the world less well. All this latency recalls talk of pregnancy.

14:41:27 From Catherine Hansen : Our group: We began with the question, "What do people really wish they could do with each other?" Question seems funny at first bc we think we know the answer. One answer: presence, in its various conjugations. See how objects are constituted by attention (singular, collective); recovering made-ness. Why this talk of redemption? Why make the fragments whole, heal the wound, fill the lack, etc.? What does that have to do with recovering the potential or latent?

14:42:07 From Aaron Hirsh : 1. Invitation to think of attention in a different way — attention is usually object-based; this sounds like an atypical way of thinking of attention. It is quite powerful to begin with astonishing, the etymology of which is to stun. Are we paying attention to the ontological status? It's not just their reality, but their astonishing reality. We're being stunned by their reality. It's not quite clear - its appealing for this reason.

14:42:38 From Gage McWeeny : The formal delay and qualification in the structure of Thesis I, with the astonishing reality then qualified via the em-dash, a kind of syntactical delay that enacts the duration of surprise / astonishment that feels important for this account of attention. Later thesis, 2-4, then move from that accessible "astonishing reality" to an interest in latency, moving across thresholds or barriers.

14:43:06 From Kyle Berlin : "Astonishing" is, presumably, drawn from the translation of the text at the beginning, from a Fernando Pessoa (Alberto Caeiro) poem—"A ESPANTOSA realidade das coisas"—"espantosa" in Portuguese as I understand it suggestive of frightening, dreadful, appalling as much as astounding, wonderful, astonishing

14:43:08 From Sarah Ordway : I'd like to know who the intended audience is for the theses

14:43:16 From Aaron Hirsh : 2. Attributes great power to attention. There is a contrast between 'mere' attention and walking through walls. What does it mean? In giving this form of astonishing attention, one is making a brazen attempt at something that is impossible. It might mobilize one to the impossible. When I'm birding, I experience something that goes beyond my body. I take walking through walls to signify the experience of birding.

14:43:23 From Stevie Knauss : I. The astonishing reality of things and person — this is the object of pure attention. Stevie: A re-ordering, a re-assembling of *awareness* The word "Object" makes it into a relationship Alyssa: By saying object, it doesn't tell you that you should use it in a particular way—the fact that it says "astonishing" is a proposal here: you should be astonished. The directive here is that if you were to pay attention, you would be stopped in your tracks. Sarah: It's a valuative term that could be perceived as subjective. II. Julian: instrumentalized attention, and a blueprint for habituated forms of attention Sarah; I saw the use of the word "useful" as relating to marxist idea of 'use value' - having a use relationship. This brings me back to Kant.. this idea that we have a use value for a kind of mere attention, but that there is an ends in itself with pure attention. Stevie: Arendt - thinking without banisters III. Stevie: I love this one. It is associative, rather than dis-associative. What happens

14:43:38 From kristinlawler : it is a refusal of the world and the self as standing-reserve for capital

14:43:54 From Aaron Hirsh : 3. This, as well as 2 - there is something mystical and buddhist about this: The mind lives in a realm that is different from the physical Realm.

14:43:58 From Larry Berger : (Gage's point about the syntax of #1 brings forth the other meaning of latency)

14:44:00 From Aaron Hirsh : There is animism here.

14:55:43 From Adam Jasper : There is a tension around freedom and submission in #5. At the moment, talking about freedom is more troubling than perhaps it was when the thesis was composed. What does a "free attention" mean? The notion of unconditioned freedom does seem a fantasy, but

perhaps one can read it as allowing oneself to drift, to reflect and retrace ones steps. Sequer, the verb following, is a deponent verb, active and passive at the same. It is conjugated as a passive verb, but its sense is active, much like the verb for experience, and the verb for suffering.

The next point, #6, explains and elucidates #5...

14:56:03 From Izik : Kyle Berlin: Thinking about the idea "We no longer want what we want to want"

1

4:56:07 From Laura Levitt : we want to think about the relationship between pure and True. We are also struck by freedom not being free.

14:56:34 From CASEY : The intention of ones attention feels an important part of many of these items.

14:56:46 From Morley Musick : Steven, Molly - following attention paths impossible because maybe it's always just you?

Don't take it for granted

Kevin told a beautiful story of listening to a roommate describe the feeling of running through fields

I told a story about listening to lord of the rings dubstep w my freshman year roommate

14:56:55 From Laura Levitt : Yes, this space as a sanctuary. And also thinking about tracing another's thought as a discipline that is freeing otherwise

14:56:57 From Izik : What is the prerequisite amount of trust for a "submissive" attentional relationship...?

14:56:58 From Kyle Berlin : The role of trust, unspoken but vital

14:57:08 From CASEY : Submitting to another deliberately, as Lane points out, is liberating.

14:57:11 From Khaled Malas : Our breakout room notes:

We miss Daphne (Since the algorithm brought the other three of us together) We only got through 5,6,7 in unconscious honour of that absence.

V. The ontological position of sympathy and the (im)possibility of (re)presenting it. The intriguing quality of how various elements of ourselves appear at different moments.

Submission as uncomfortable yet potentially revelatory.

VI. Deliberate Submission as political/social contract with others.

VII. The revolutionary potential of Boredom as contrastable to Attention. Boredom as radical contemplation.

14:57:29 From Lane Stroud : slash scary.

14:57:40 From Sal Randolph : Jo: I became aware of the language of trap and hunting as you read. It brings to mind Gell's artworks as traps. But now a kind of sham artwork that traps us.

Alex: The word attention comes so many times in the text - are there more specific words we can use? There is a looping tautology in the repetition of the mantra "attention."

Max: It feels like it's about concentration and dilution of attention, its dispersion. There is maybe a way of describing it without referring back to itself.

Alex: Condensation and dispersion of language, as in concrete poetry. Different kinds of movements.

Sal: I've been working on a lexicon of attention which already has about 75 terms in it.

Jo: There are too many prepositions in that section.

14:57:43 From Catherine Hansen : Our group: this group of three theses – seems to explore dialectic as less agonistic and more ethical. This is important. Also, there is a phenomenological commitment here that appears to rule out other things, like maybe - the unconscious? So then we thought: what if there is an “unconscious of attention”? Collective or otherwise. Another thought that came up: is this like someone who won't stop talking about how we need to be quiet and listen?

14:57:47 From Sal Randolph : Claudia: When I think of who is the subject, whose intention is in danger, I found that aspect of it arrogant. There's an anthropocentric ontology behind this. What about when other sentient beings are paying attention to us.

Alex: How can you bring doubt in? Make an active doubt.

Jo: The pure and the true. The true is pure, the pure is true. Forms of attention that are fragile.

Max: There is a kind of heroic attention in this text.

Sal: To follow up on Claudia. When G & taught on attention we used Jane Bennet's Vibrant Matter which talks about the way nonhuman things paying attention to each other (mineral things, as well as animal things). That kind of attention is always present to me. For instance, I'm standing now, and is the carpet I'm standing on paying attention to my feet? It's pressed down in a particular way by the fact that I'm standing here.

14:58:07 From Aaron Hirsh : 5. This one feels off to me, because it needs to be free of submitting itself to someone else's attention. The connotation of political submission feels out of place. -If it were 'yielding', it would not seem so contradictory. -In order to pass through walls, one would have to be at peace with many paradoxes.

14:58:38 From Sal Randolph : We didn't discuss this, but the word submission is always troublesome for me.

14:58:46 From Gage McWeeny : We were unsure in thesis v whether the path is s blazed discursively between you and another person speaking, between you and object, or if it's outside both parties. The problem of narrowing, of isolation, that might attend attention, “lost in a book,” immersed and attentive in an antisocial way as the possible problem to which “socialized attentiveness” is responding. In earlier theses, a kind of almost “mythical” attention—stunning, astonishment—here in 4-8, grappling with & resisting marketplace's monetization of attention.

14:58:46 From Aaron Hirsh : 6. In a typical sociopolitical context, that doesn't feel right. But in the context of not being a hero, it might. Again there is an acceptance of paradox. But perhaps it is only a paradox in traditional western thought.

14:59:07 From Kyle Berlin : The beautiful and the terrible (espantosa)—how “submission” is liberation or its opposite, active or passive, release of the self and entree to the cult

14:59:08 From Aaron Hirsh : 7. I really like that one. This is the call to arms. This doesn't read like a hypothesis. It reads like a war cry.

14:59:23 From Aaron Hirsh : 8. If one thinks of submission of attention as a virtue, one has to know where to submit.

14:59:23 From Laura Levitt : Submission makes me think about Saba Mahmood and what kind of agency might operate outside of liberal autonomous selves choosing

15:09:32 From Sal Randolph : Claudia: Just to continue my train of thought. I question "this is our work" who is us? Who is the subject? I'm thinking of one single entity which is paying a lot of attention and doing a lot of world building, which is the virus.

I agree this work is fundamentally political, and this is the best work we can be doing.

Alex: Thinking of the "our" in reference to this Agamben text where he takes up the singular and the plural. "The tree" or "L'arbre" takes up a passage between the plural and the singular.

Sal: Working on a BIPOC attention syllabus, attention bibliography, even in the most preliminary stages, that there is a much greater interest in the content of attention rather than the modes and ways of attention.

15:09:41 From Sal Randolph : Alex: The meta vs the content.

Jo: What do we make of the proposition that sanctuaries are what is needed?

Grace: Is the interiority of sanctuary at odds with the political moment. White privilege is a kind of sanctuary.

15:09:51 From Laura Levitt : ethics as openness, mystical

15:10:00 From Adam Jasper : Thesis 9... Feels like it is written to account for birdish experience. It could also describe exhibitions, or eros. Or demonstrations, in which people hold up signs that attempt to catch or trigger attention. A good a protest sign is often one that is meant to be understood in a moment, but they are very often laboriously made, they take a lot more time to make, then to look at. This is part of their efficacy. somehow. The structure of time and attention is an interesting problem for the idea of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is not so much a spatial form, as a kind of duration. It is the time of attention that ritual protects. It keeps it consistent, and lightly punctuated, rather than hectic and epiphanic. Duration is a crucial part of the experience.

15:10:12 From Adam Jasper : Slogans lead to.... this thesis made me think about being at a concert. The chanting of marches has a power.

30 seconds on practical mysticism: we know that this would be good, for working out what we are struggling with. It is heightened, and ritualistic, but has no doctrine, and wants to be... presence.

15:10:16 From Sal Randolph : All those in our chat - please do add your own thoughts!

15:10:21 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Not much sympathy for the concluding thesis: Capstone... appalling? We would find SOME work of freedom and understanding despicable. It lets the "air out." Feels modular, cliché. Only "through attention" recalls context. Not enough.

15:10:24 From Sal Randolph : I missed lots of what we talked about

15:10:26 From Aaron Hirsh : 8. If one thinks of submission fo attention as a virtue, one has to know where to submit.

15:10:44 From Kyle Berlin : Is attention just the prerequisite for more specific, vital political work (care, support, advocacy, etc.) or is it an end in itself?

15:10:45 From Aaron Hirsh : 9. Again, somewhat paradoxical. This language of seeking makes sense in teh context of political language.

15:10:50 From Khaled Malas : Group 5 ? : We still miss Daphne.

Are we now in a sanctuary of Attention?

Can we discern a path (or place) of action where we can recognize our better self?

The belief/call/sense of the greater (good) that is pulling 'me'.

The abuse of mystical evocations by various groups. Followed by the knowledge of the outcome that is not 'true'.

(This is a very scattered attempt at summarize..)

15:10:54 From Laura Levitt : we loved the materialization of the breathing in XI. And the idea of being so present, "suddenly" we realize we are there

15:11:08 From Gage McWeeny : Latency and attention. Not a depth to be penetrated, a door to be walked through, but a quality of duration, of waiting. Attention as about creating new spaces, refuges, but also a different relationship to time, to waiting. The question of politics here turns on what one does w/ attention as a modality, versus a modality of attention as itself where the political lies.

15:11:08 From Aaron Hirsh : 10. Emphasis on practice. The concept of purity is uncomfortable. Is attention open to the world, or is it protected?

15:11:24 From Catherine Hansen : Catherine, Hal, Marcos, Sonali: this is a document that wants to rethink power, but the language of power keeps coming back in. Or maybe it's just energy? Sometimes when we say "political" we just mean "ethical." How do we get from one to another? Ethics prepares a space for politics. Politics is agonistic, ethics is about reconciliation (here). "Sanctuary" is a loaded term right now

15:11:51 From helenmiller : 9. The refusal to know could be relevant in regards to one's own realization as well as another's

15:11:52 From Aaron Hirsh : 11 and 12. Very beautiful. But one answer we're still looking for: How do we know if the air is clean? How do we know if we are in the hands of a "pure" mind? How do we tell the difference between sanctuary and not?

15:12:49 From Alexandru Balgiu : materialization of breathing: Irma Blank's poetry!

15:13:04 From Sarah Ordway : Sarah: Avoid language of oppressor, who is the document for?

Sarah: Position of privilege in VIII

Alyssa: Resources and time create the space for attention to exist

Stevie: Using privilege to create sanctuary

Sarah: Could be ethical point since X says an ethic is needed

Alyssa: Speaks to what Julian said about moving outside of blueprint

Sarah: Could be more lucid/edited for brevity in order to be more accessible if we indeed want it to be political

15:13:10 From Sal Randolph : That little cart

15:13:13 From Laura Levitt : Breath as spirit too

15:13:47 From helenmiller : Attention can lead to differentiation, laying the groundwork or providing the necessary material for decision-making

15:13:54 From Leonard Nalencz : "Sanctuary" seems to repeat the metaphor of the house and the walls in II. Does the latter contradict the former? Expand or clarify?

15:14:08 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Disappointed that the "house" returns as a "sanctuary..."

15:14:21 From Sal Randolph : But do we want to persuade?

15:18:08 From Leonard Nalencz : fun!

15:18:08 From Sal Randolph : What does "erase" do?
15:18:16 From Sal Randolph : Should we avoid that?
15:18:22 From Hermione Spriggs : it rubs your own bit out
15:18:26 From Sal Randolph : OK, thx
15:18:31 From John (he/him/his) Muse : I think erase just erases objects that you've placed.
15:24:01 From Sal Randolph : what were those dates?
15:24:02 From Stevie Knauss : If you had trouble pasting into the chat thread (like our group) you
can send me your notes!!!
15:24:19 From Sal Randolph : if you can't paste, then you need to do it a bit at a time
15:24:26 From Sal Randolph : the maximum amount of text is small
15:24:46 From Leonard Nalencz : And merci Graham!
15:25:03 From Sarah Ordway : Thank you so much!
15:25:26 From Sal Randolph : Sorry gotta go to the protests!
15:25:36 From Katarzyna Kasia : THANK YOU!
15:25:39 From Khaled Malas : Thank you Adam and Stevie.
15:25:51 From Khaled Malas : Thank you Graham for this Assembly.
15:25:57 From Izik : Happy to have been a part of this.
15:25:59 From Daniel Bozhkov : Thank you Graham, Adam and Stevie!!!
15:26:01 From Sal Randolph : Thank you all!
15:26:05 From Alexandru Balgiu : amitiés attentionnées
15:26:05 From Anthony Acciavatti : Thank you all!
15:26:06 From Alyssa Loh : Thank you all!
15:26:10 From Ed Quinnan : Thank you, Graham
15:26:13 From Grace Caiazza : <3 bye and thank you all!!!
15:26:14 From Zach McLane : thank you!
15:26:15 From John (he/him/his) Muse : Thanks!
15:26:19 From Gage McWeeny : Thank you everyone. This saved me in many ways
15:26:21 From Gage McWeeny : !
15:26:22 From CASEY : THANKS FOR INCLUDING ME!
15:26:24 From Morley Musick : thank you!