

1. Thanks to the organizers:

- a. I want to thank Brandon Joyce of PIFAS (Philadelphia Institute For Advanced Studies)
- b. Thanks also to TDAR (Temporary Department of Academic Research): to James Weissinger, Sarah Jacobi, and Oliver Wunsch, with whom I've had the pleasure to work at Haverord College, and also the other members of
- c. I've been in Philadelphia for a year now and have been excited to find such a vibrant contemporary art culture here.

2. My assignment:

- a. Am I to perform the role of "resident expert" or as a specimen? Do I know something? Or do I play the part of one who is supposed to know something? This is almost what a professor looks like, how one sits, how one talks, how one talks and talks.
- b. Can teaching do without this supposition? Can teaching do without the other before whom I am ignorant, stupid, a failure? Wanting to know means not knowing, not even knowing how to know, how to learn. Teaching may not be possible—which doesn't mean it doesn't happen. Occasionally.
- c. But of course, to the degree I have been given an assignment, and have, simply by showing up here, simply by keeping the appointment, *I have said yes to a test*. I have said yes to the execution of someone's critical evaluation. You will see what I'm made of. I am the one being judged, and thus I am the idiot here.
- d. Here was my assignment: to craft a test, a pop quiz, which I will pop in a moment.
- e. And as I thought about this assignment with the help of provocative prompts from my colleagues at TDAR, I realized that to give you a quiz, to quiz you, requires that I attribute to you something about which you're supposed to know. The quiz, the test, presupposes a dark continent of shared understanding.
- f. But though we don't share a text, a discipline, a method, we do share the form of the test itself. We share a long apprenticeship in these academic rituals, rituals of torture and humiliation for some, rituals of jubilation for others, rituals of boredom and mere mechanism, *mere ritual* for still others. That's the question and the answer. Hint.
- g. And so you shouldn't be surprised that I'm about to go meta: there will be a test *on testing*, about testing, both the academic essay (what do you know? what *are* you?) and the scientific experiment which seeks to corroborate and/or falsify and/or revise a hypothesis. We're testing testing.

- h. This is neither Job nor Kafka: by which I mean: not only do you *know* you're being tested, but this test will have a material support, will be more or less legible, will begin and end, will fall from your hands into others, will prove your worth. And there's even the chance that you will be proven worthy, good, and beautiful.
- i. In that regard, I cheat you: does my homeopathic dose protect you from the more ontologically fundamental question of the test? If you understand your life to be a test, then these bits of petty bookkeeping risk confusing things: passing this test may be part of a failure. You may here *pass* as a success and thus be a failure in the eyes of God, of Daddy and Mommy, of the State, of your Principles.
- j. So here it is. My bundles of joy.
- k. You have 20 minutes.