Varoza's Anti-Aesthetic Amendment

Varoza, Fen Spinner white papers

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Abstract

Zombo's Discourse on the Metaphysics of Pen Spinning raises interesting thought about the nature of what defines pen spinning. Here, an amendment is suggested that changes the definition of Zombo's answer to the question "What is pen spinning, precisely?" to no longer require artistic and aesthetically pleasing qualities.

1 Preface

In 2010, Zombo released a philosophical text he had been working on that outlines his theory on the Metaphysics of Pen Spinning. Specifically, he aimed to answer the metaphysical question of "What is Pen Spinning, exactly?". His base answer to the question was "the artistic manipulation of a pen in an aesthetically pleasing fashion". Interestingly, aesthetically pleasing is specifically mentioned, and the manipulation is described as needing to be artistic. This text aims to make the argument that these two elements of the definition are overreaching and not reflective of the current state of the hobby.

He then breaks his reply down into three key segments: "Manipulation", "Pen" and "Aesthetic", which are considered to be mandatory for a given act to be considered Pen Spinning. Zombo does not expand upon the use of the term "artistic" in the article, so the examination of this is to be brief. "Aesthetic" on the other hand is described in detail, and even some potential counter examples are listed, but are not taken too seriously.

2 Does the manipulation of the pen need to be "artistic"?

The term "artistic" could refer to several things in the context of Zombo's answer, so can be considered ambiguous. It could be used to refer to the manipulation being "aesthetically pleasing", which we will examine at the next section. Another interpretation could be "having or revealing natural creative skill", which is often considered a positive characteristic in the hobby, but is not necessarily a requirement. Copy combos, which demonstrate no creative skill, are unequivocally considered to still be pen spinning.

It seems that the adjective here is either a duplicate or contradicted, so it can be removed from Zombo's suggested answer without harm.

3 Does the manipulation of the pen need to be "artistic"?

Zombo wrote a large section about what constitutes 'aesthetic' in relation to pen spinning. To provide a rough overview, he starts by aiming to differentiate pen spinning from writing, stating that the difference is that the aesthetic is in the moving of the pen itself when spinning, but that the aesthetic is in the words and characters produced in writing. Some additional elements of pen spinning aesthetic are mentioned, including tactility, gestures, hand aesthetics and beautiful movements. Additional mention is made to pen tapping, and how the production of sound is different to the visual effect of pen spinning itself, which means that it does not fall into the aesthetic of the moving pen.

It is important to note that Zombo's article could be considered a product of its time. Although continuous tricks had been coming to the forefront, they were still relatively new and their difference

to the rest of the hobby was not yet set in stone. In modern pen spinning, there exist extremes within categories that observe little to no aesthetic appeal, and absolutely no aesthetic intention. Namely in competitive spinning the field of technical spinning has expanded to where raw difficulty is the only key aim, and the methods in which this is obtained do not appear to have hard limits on what can still be considered technical spinning. Continuous tricks have also greatly changed the playing field, as world record spinning has become more popular and the act of performing a single trick for minutes at a time has appeared.

It is difficult to make a case for the performing of as high a number of a trick as possible being aesthetic in nature. This is because neither the technique, creativity, presentation or otherwise is at all important, only how many are done. World record spinning has taken the subjectivity out of the equation, and provided only an objective metric for determining which comes out on top. This cannot be called aesthetic. It appears then that the inclusion of aesthetic in the definition of what pen spinning is can be considered optional, along with many similar optional statements that could be used to describe a certain type of pen spinning. Pen spinning could be aesthetic, it could be creative, it could be performed on a stage, but none of these things are required.

4 Conclusions

With these observations I would like to make a suggestion that Zombo's answer be amended to the following: "the manipulation of a pen outside of writing".

The amended "Outside of writing" I include only for now, as I believe it is not yet conclusive that writing could not be included in or considered a part of pen spinning in the future, but within the modern bounds of our hobby it is currently not considered to be pen spinning. An additional thought I have is that pen spinning may require the reaching of some specific goal; either to be aesthetic, or perform the highest numbers of continuous tricks, but I am not yet sure if there may also appear some variation of spinning that rejects having a hard goal in mind.