

TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE

Jerzy Grotowski

TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE

Preface by PETER BROOK
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Jerzy Grotowski created the Theatre Laboratory in 1959 in Opole, a town of 60,000 inhabitants in south-west Poland. Co-creator was his close collaborator, the well known literary and theatre critic, Ludwik Flaszen. In January 1965, the Theatre Laboratory moved to the university town of Wrocław which, with its half a million inhabitants, is also the cultural capital of the Polish Eastern Territories. It was here that it attained its present status of Institute for Research into Acting. The activities of the Laboratory have been continually subsidized by the State through the municipalities of Opole and Wrocław.

The name itself reveals the nature of the undertaking. It is not a theatre in the usual sense of the word, but rather an Institute devoted to research into the domain of the theatrical art and the art of the actor in particular. The Theatre Laboratory's productions represent a kind of working model in which the current research into the actor's art can be put into practice. Within the theatre milieu, this is known as the method of Grotowski. In addition to its methodical research work and performances given before an audience, the Laboratory also undertakes the instruction of actors, producers and people from other fields connected with the theatre.

The Theatre Laboratory has its own permanent troupe whose members also function as instructors. Students, many of them foreigners, are also accepted on a short term basis. Close contact is maintained with specialists in other disciplines such as psychology, phonology, cultural anthropology, etc.

The Theatre Laboratory is coherent in its choice of repertoire. The plays performed are based on the great Polish and international classics whose function is close to the myth in the collective consciousness. The productions which testify to the progressive stages of Grotowski's methodical and artistic research are the following: Byron's **Cain**, Kalidasa's **Shakuntala**, Mickiewicz's **Forefathers' Eve**, Słowacki's **Kordian**, Wyspiański's **Akropolis**, Shakespeare's **Hamlet**, Marlowe's **Dr Faustus** and Calderon's **The Constant Prince** in the Polish transcription by Słowacki. At present a production is in preparation based on themes from the Gospel. The 4 of this method in his role as the Constant Prince.

TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE

PREFACE* **by Peter Brook**

Grotowski is unique.

Why?

Because no-one else in the world, to my knowledge, no-one since Stanislavski, has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science of its mental-physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski.

He calls his theatre a laboratory. It is, It is a centre of research. It is perhaps the only avant-garde theatre whose poverty is not a drawback, where shortage of money is not an excuse for inadequate means which automatically undermine the experiments. In Grotowski's theatre as in all true laboratories the experiments are scientifically valid because the essential conditions are observed. In his theatre, there is absolute concentration by a small group, and unlimited time. So if you are interested in his findings you must go to Poland.

Or else do what we did. Bring Grotowski here.

He worked for two weeks with our group. I won't describe the work. Why not? First of all, such work is only free if it is in confidence, and confidence depends on its confidences not being disclosed. Secondly, the work is essentially non-verbal. To verbalise is to complicate and even to destroy exercises that are clear and simple when indicated by a gesture and when executed by the mind and body as one.

What did the work do?

It gave each actor a series of shocks.

The shock of confronting himself in the face of simple irrefutable challenges.

The shock of catching sight of his own evasions, tricks and clichés.

The shock of sensing something of his own vast and untapped resources.

The shock of being forced to question why he is an actor at all.

* This article by Peter Brook has been published in Flourish, the newspaper of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Club (winter 1967).

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The shock of being forced to recognise that such questions do exist and that - despite long English tradition of avoiding seriousness in theatrical art - the time comes when they must be faced. And of finding that he wants to face them.

The shock of seeing that somewhere in the world acting is an art of absolute dedication, monastic and total. That Artaud's now-hackneyed phrase 'cruel to myself' is genuinely a complete way of life - somewhere - for less than a dozen people.

With a proviso. This dedication to acting does not make acting an end in itself. On the contrary. For Grotowski acting is a vehicle. How can I put it? The theatre is not an escape, a refuge. A way of life is a way to life. Does that sound like a religious slogan?

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It should do. And that's about all there was to it. No more, no less. Results? Unlikely. Are our actors better? Are they better men? Not in that way, as far as I can see, not as far as anyone has claimed. (And of course they were not all ecstatic about their experience. Some were bored.)

But as Arden says: For the apple holds a seed will grow,

 In live and lengthy joy

 To raise a flourishing tree of fruit,

 Forever and a day.

Grotowski's work and ours have parallels and points of contact. Through these, through sympathy, through respect, we came together.

But the life of our theatre is in every way different from his. He runs a laboratory. He needs an audience occasionally, in small numbers. His tradition is Catholic - or anti- Catholic; in this case the two extremes meet. He is creating a form of service. We work in another country, another language, another tradition. Our aim is not a new Mass, but a new Elizabethan relationship - linking the private and the public, the intimate and the crowded, the secret and the open, the vulgar and the magical. For this we need both a crowd on stage and a crowd watching - and within that crowded stage individuals offering their most intimate truths to individuals within that crowded audience, sharing collective experience with them.

We have come quite a way in developing an overall pattern - the idea of a group, of an ensemble.

But our work is always too hurried, always too rough for the development of the collection of individuals out of whom it is composed.

We know in theory that every actor must put his art into question daily - like pianists, dancers, painters - and that if he doesn't he will almost certainly get stuck, develop cliché, and eventually decline. We recognise this and yet can do so little about it that we endlessly chase after new blood, after youthful vitality - except for certain of the most gifted exceptions, who of course get all the best chances, absorb most of the available time.

The Stratford Studio was a recognition of this problem, but it continually ran up against the strain of a repertory, of an overworked company, of simple fatigue.

Grotowski's work was a reminder that what he achieves almost miraculously with a handful of actors is needed to the same extent by each individual in our two giant companies in two theatres 90 miles apart.

The intensity, the honesty and the precision of his work can only leave one thing behind. A challenge. But not for a fortnight, not for once in a lifetime. Daily.

Towards a Poor Theatre

This article by Jerzy Grotowski has been published in: **Odra** (Wrocław, 9/1965); **Kungs Dramatiska Teaterns Program** (Stockholm, 1965); **Scena** (Novi Sad, 5/1965); **Cahiers Renaud-Barrault** (Paris, 55/1966); **Tulane Drama Review** (New Orleans, T35, 1967). Translation: T. K. Wiewlorowski.

I am a bit impatient when asked, "What is the origin of your experimental theatre productions?" The assumption seems to be that "experimental" work is tangential (toying with some "new" technique each time) and tributary. The result is supposed to be contribution to modern staging - scenography using current sculptural or electronic ideas, contemporary music, actors independently projecting clownish or cabaret stereotypes. I know that scene: I used to be part of it. Our Theatre Laboratory productions are going in another direction. In the first place, we are trying to avoid eclecticism, trying to resist thinking of theatre as a composite of disciplines. We are seeking to define what is distinctively theatre, what separates this activity from other categories of performance and spectacle. Secondly, our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship. That is, we consider the personal and scenic technique of the actor as the core of theatre art.

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It is difficult to locate the exact sources of this approach, but I can speak of its tradition. I was brought up on Stanislavski; his

persistent study, his systematic renewal of the methods of observation, and his dialectical relationship to his own earlier work make him my personal ideal. Stanislavski asked the key methodological questions. Our solutions, however, differ widely from his - sometimes we reach opposite conclusions.

I have studied all the major actor-training methods of Europe and beyond. Most important for my purposes are: Dullin's rhythm exercises, Delsarte's investigations of extroversive and introversive reactions, Stanislavski's work on "physical actions", Meyerbold's bio-mechanical training, Vakhtangov's synthesis. Also particularly stimulating to me are the training techniques of oriental theatre - specifically the Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, and Japanese No theatre. I could cite other theatrical systems, but the method which we are developing is not a combination of techniques borrowed from these sources (although we sometimes adapt elements for our use). We do not want to teach the actor a predetermined set of skills or give him a "bag of tricks." Ours is not a deductive method of collecting skills. Here everything is concentrated on the "ripening" of the actor which is expressed by a tension towards the extreme, by a complete stripping down, by the laying bare of one's own intimacy - all this without the least trace of egotism or self-enjoyment. The actor makes a total gift of himself. This is a technique of the "trance" and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of "trans-lumination."

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses.

Ours then is a via negativa - not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.

Years of work and of specially composed exercises (which, by means of physical, plastic and vocal training, attempt to guide the actor towards the right kind of concentration) sometimes permit the discovery of the beginning of this road. Then it is possible to carefully cultivate what has been awakened. The process itself, though to some extent dependent upon concentration, confidence, exposure, and almost disappearance into the acting craft, is not voluntary. The requisite state of mind is a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not **"want to do that"** but rather **"resigns from not doing it."**

Most of the actors at the Theatre Laboratory are just beginning to work toward the possibility of making such a process visible. In their daily work they do not concentrate on the spiritual technique but on the composition of the role, on the construction of form, on the expression of signs -i.e., on artifice. There is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice (articulation of a role by signs). We believe that a personal process which is not supported and expressed by a formal articulation and disciplined structuring of the role is not a release and will collapse in shapelessness.

We find that artificial composition not only does not limit the spiritual but actually leads to it. (The tropistic tension between the inner process and the form strengthens both. The form is like a baited trap, to which the spiritual process responds spontaneously and against which it struggles.) The forms of common "natural" behavior obscure the truth; we compose a role as a system of signs which demonstrate what is behind the mask of common vision: the dialectics of human behavior. At a moment of psychic shock, a moment 'of terror, of mortal danger or tremendous joy, a man does not behave "naturally." A man in an elevated spiritual state uses rhythmically articulated signs, begins

to dance, to sing. A **sign**, not a common gesture, is the elementary integer of expression for us.

In terms of formal technique, we do not work by proliferation of signs, or by accumulation of signs (as in the formal repetitions of oriental theatre). Rather, we subtract, seeking **distillation** of signs by eliminating those elements of "natural" behavior which obscure pure impulse. Another technique which illuminates the hidden structure of signs is contradiction (between gesture and voice, voice and word, word and thought, will and action, etc.) - here, too, we take the **via negativa**.

It is difficult to say precisely what elements in our productions result from a consciously formulated program and what derive from the structure of our imagination. I am frequently asked whether certain "medieval" effects indicate an intentional return to "ritual roots." There is no single answer. At our present point of artistic awareness, the problem of mythic "roots," of the elementary human situation, has definite meaning. However, this is not a product of a "philosophy of art" but comes from the practical discovery and use of the rules of theatre. That is, the productions do not spring from **a priori** aesthetic postulates; rather, Sartre has said: "Each technique leads to metaphysics."

For several years, I vacillated between practice-born impulses and the application of **a priori** principles, without seeing the contradiction. My friend and colleague Ludwik Flaszen was the first to point out this confusion in my work: the material and techniques which came spontaneously in preparing the production, from the very nature of the work, were revealing and promising; but what I had taken to be applications of theoretical assumptions were actually more functions of my personality than of my intellect. I realized that the production led to awareness rather than being the product of awareness. Since 1960, my emphasis has been on methodology. Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I had begun: What is the

theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: poor theatre, and performance as an act of transgression.

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth, of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our usual ideas about theatre. It challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines - literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting (under the direction of a **metteur-en-scene**). This "synthetic theatre" is the contemporary theatre, which we readily call the "Rich Theatre" - rich in flaws.

The Rich Theatre depends on artistic kleptomania, drawing from other disciplines, constructing hybrid-spectacles, conglomerates without backbone or integrity, yet presented as an organic artwork. By multiplying assimilated elements, the Rich Theatre tries to escape the impasse presented by movies and television. Since film and TV excel in the area of mechanical functions (montage, Instantaneous change of place, etc.), the Rich Theatre countered with a blatantly compensatory call for "total theatre." The integration of borrowed mechanisms (movie screens onstage, for example) means a sophisticated technical plant, permitting great mobility and dynamism. And if the stage and/or auditorium were mobile, constantly changing perspective would be possible. This all nonsense.

No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television. Consequently, I propose poverty in theatre. We have resigned from the stage-and-auditorium plant: for each production, a new space is designed for the actors and spectators.

Thus, infinite variation of performer-audience relationships is possible. The actors can play among the spectators, directly contacting the audience and giving it a passive role in the drama (e.g. our productions of Byron's **Cain** and Kalidasa's **Shakuntala**). Or the actors may build structures among the spectators and thus include them in the architecture of action, subjecting them to a sense of the pressure and congestion and limitation of space (Wyspianski's **Akropolis**). Or the actors may play among the spectators and ignore them, looking through them. The spectators may be separated from the actors - for example, by a high fence, over which only their heads protrude (**The Constant Prince**, from Calderon); from this radically slanted perspective, they look down on the actors as if watching animals in a ring, or like medical students watching an operation (also, this detached, downward viewing gives the action a sense of moral transgression). Or the entire hall is used as a concrete place: Faustus' "last supper" in a monastery refectory, where Faustus entertains the spectators, who are guests at a baroque feast served on huge tables, offering episodes from his life. The elimination of stage- auditorium dichotomy is not the important thing - that simply creates a bare laboratory situation, an appropriate area for investigation. The essential concern is finding the proper spectator-actor relationship for each type of performance and embodying the decision in physical arrangements.

We forsook lighting effects, and this revealed a wide range of possibilities for the actor's use of stationary light-sources by deliberate work with shadows, bright spots, etc. It is particularly significant that once a spectator is placed in an illuminated zone, or in other words becomes visible, he too begins to play a part in the performance. It also became evident that the actors, like figures in El Greco's paintings, can "illuminate" through personal technique, becoming a source of "spiritual light."

We abandoned make-up, fake noses, pillow-stuffed bellies - everything that the actor puts on in the dressing room before performance. We found that it was consummately theatrical for

the actor to transform from type to type, character to character, silhouette to silhouette - while the audience watched - in a **poor** manner, using only his own body and craft. The composition of a fixed facial expression by using the actor's own muscles and inner impulses achieves the effect of a strikingly theatrical transubstantiation, while the mask prepared by a make-up artist is only a trick.

Similarly, a costume with no autonomous value, existing only in connection with a particular character and his activities, can be transformed before the audience, contrasted with the actor's functions, etc. Elimination of plastic elements which have a life of their own (i.e., represent something independent of the actor's activities) led to the creation by the actor of the most elementary and obvious objects. By his controlled use of gesture the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner, etc. Elimination of music (live or recorded) not produced by the actors enables the performance itself to become music through the orchestration of voices and clashing objects. We know that the text per se is not theatre, that it becomes theatre only through the actors' use of it - that is to say, thanks to intonations, to the association of sounds, to the musicality of the language.

The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of art-form.

Why are we concerned with art? To cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness - fulfil ourselves. This is not a condition but a process in which what is dark in us slowly becomes transparent. In this struggle with one's own truth, this effort to peel off the life-mask, the theatre, with its full-fledged perceptivity, has always seemed to me a place of provocation.

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It is capable of challenging itself and its audience by violating accepted stereotypes of vision, feeling, and judgment - more jarring because it is imaged in the human organism's breath, body, and inner impulses. This defiance of taboo, this transgression, provides the shock which rips off the mask, enabling us to give ourselves nakedly to something which is impossible to define but which contains Eros and Caritas.

In my work as a producer, I have therefore been tempted to make use of archaic situations sanctified by tradition, situations (within the realms of religion and tradition) which are taboo. I felt a need to confront myself with these values. They fascinated me, filling me with a sense of interior restlessness, while at the same time I was obeying a temptation to blaspheme: I wanted to attack them, go beyond them, or rather confront them with my own experience which is itself determined by the collective experience of our time. This element of our productions has been variously called "collision with the roots," "the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis," or even "religion expressed through blasphemy; love speaking out through hate."

As soon as my practical awareness became conscious and when experiment led to a method, I was compelled to take a fresh look at the history of theatre in relation to other branches of knowledge, especially psychology and cultural anthropology. A rational review of the problem of myth was called for. Then I clearly saw that myth was both a primeval situation, and a complex model, with an independent existence in the psychology of social groups, inspiring group behavior and tendencies.

The theatre, when it was still part of religion, was already theatre: it liberated the spiritual energy of the congregation or tribe by incorporating myth and profaning or rather transcending it. The spectator thus had a renewed awareness of his personal truth in the truth of the myth, and through fright and a sense of the sacred

he came to catharsis. It was not by chance that the Middle Ages produced the idea of "sacred parody."

But today's situation is much different. As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of Intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers hind the life-mask. Group identification with myth - the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth - is virtually impossible today.

What is possible? First, **confrontation** with myth rather than identification. In other words, while retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the "roots," and the relativity of the "roots" in the light of today's experience. If the situation is brutal, if we strip ourselves and touch an extraordinarily intimate layer, exposing it, the life-mask cracks and falls away.

Secondly, even with the loss of a "common sky" of belief and the loss of impregnable boundaries, the perceptivity of the human organism remains. Only myth - incarnate in the fact of the actor, in his living organism - can function as a taboo. The violation of the living organism, the exposure carried to outrageous excess, returns us to a concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth.

Again, the rational sources of our terminology cannot be cited precisely. I am often asked about Artaud when I speak of "cruelty," although his formulations were based on different remises and took a different tack. Artaud was an extraordinary

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visionary, but his writings have little methodological meaning because they are not the product of long-term practical investigations. They are an astounding prophecy, not a program. When I speak of "roots" or "mythical soul," I am asked about Nietzsche; if I call it "group imagination," Durkheim comes up; if I call it "archetypes," Jung. But my formulations are not derived from humanistic disciplines, though I may use them for analysis. When I speak of the actor's expression of signs, I am asked about oriental theatre, particularly classical Chinese theatre (especially when it is known that I studied there). But the hieroglyphic signs of the oriental theatre are inflexible, like an alphabet, whereas the signs we use are the skeletal forms of human action, a crystallization of a role, an articulation of the particular psycho-physiology of the actor.

I do not claim that everything we do is entirely new. We are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to be influenced by the traditions, science and art, even by the superstitions and presentiments peculiar to the civilisation which has moulded us, just as we breathe the air of the particular continent which has given us life. All this influences our undertaking, though sometimes we may deny it. Even when we arrive at certain

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theoretic formulas and compare our ideas with those of our predecessors which I have already mentioned, we are forced to resort to certain retrospective corrections which themselves enable us to see more clearly the possibilities opened up before us.

When we confront the general tradition of the Great Reform of the theatre from Stanislavski to Dullin and from Meyerhold to Artaud, we realize that we have not started from scratch but are operating in a defined and special atmosphere. When our investigation reveals and confirms someone else's flash of intuition, we are filled with humility. We realize that theatre has certain objective laws and that fulfillment is possible only within them, or, as Thomas Mann said, through a kind of "higher obedience," to which we give our "dignified attention."

I hold a peculiar position of leadership in the Polish Theatre

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Laboratory. I am not simply the director or producer or "spiritual instructor." In the first place, my relation to the work is certainly one-way or didactic. If my suggestions are reflected in the spatial compositions of our architect Gurawski, it must be understood that my vision has been formed by years of collaboration with him.

There is something incomparably intimate and productive in the work with the actor entrusted to me. He must be attentive and confident and free, for our labor is to explore his possibilities to the utmost. His growth is attended by observation, astonishment, and desire to help; my growth is projected onto him, or, rather, is **found in him** - and our common growth becomes revelation. This is not instruction of a pupil but utter opening to another person, in which the phenomenon of "shared or double birth" becomes possible. The actor is reborn - not only as an actor but as a man - and with him, I am reborn. It is a clumsy way of expressing it, but what is achieved is a total acceptance of one human being by another.

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The Theatre's New Testament

Eugenio Barba, made this interview in 1964, adding the **title The Theatre's New Testament**. It was printed in his book **Alla Ricerca del Teatro Perduto** (Marsilio Editore, Padova 1965) as well as in **Teatrets Teori og Teknikk** (Holstebro, 1/1966) and **Théâtre et Université** (Nancy, 5/1966). Translation: Jörgen Andersen and Judy Barba.

The very name "Theatre Laboratory" makes one think of scientific research. Is this an appropriate association?

The word research should not bring to mind scientific research. Nothing could be further from what we are doing than science **sensu stricto**, and not only because of our lack of qualifications, but also because of our lack of interest in that kind of work.

The word research implies that we approach our profession rather like the mediaeval wood carver who sought to recreate in his block of wood a form which already existed. We do not work in the same way as the artist or the scientist, but rather as the shoemaker looking for the right spot on the shoe in which to hammer the nail.

The other sense of the word research might seem a little irrational as it involves the idea of a penetration into human nature itself. In our age when all languages are confused as in the Tower of Babel, when all aesthetical genres intermingle, death threatens the theatre as film and television encroach upon its domain, This

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makes us examine the nature of theatre, how it differs from the other art forms, and what it is that makes it irreplaceable.

Has your research led you to a definition?

What does the word theatre mean? This is a question we often come up against, and one to which there are many possible answers. To the academic, the theatre is a place where an actor recites a written text, illustrating it with a series of movements in order to make it more easily understood. Thus interpreted the theatre is a useful accessory to dramatic literature. The intellectual theatre is merely a variation of this conception. Its advocates consider it a kind of polemical tribunal. Here too, the text is the most important element, and the theatre is there only to plug certain intellectual arguments, thus bringing about their reciprocal confrontation. It is a revival of the mediaeval art of the oratorical duel.

To the average theatre-goer, the theatre is first and foremost a place of entertainment. If he expects to encounter a frivolous Muse, the text does not interest him in the least. What attracts him are the so-called gags, the comic effects and perhaps the puns which lead back to the text. His attention will be directed

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mainly towards the actor as a centre of attraction. A young woman sufficiently briefly clad is in herself an attraction to certain theatre-goers who apply cultural criteria to her performance, though such a judgement is actually a compensation for personal frustration.

The theatre-goer who cherishes cultural aspirations likes from time to time to attend performances from the more serious repertoire, perhaps even a tragedy provided that it contains some melodramatic element. In this case his expectations will vary

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widely. On the one hand he must show that he belongs to the best society where "Art" is a guarantee and, on the other, he wants to experience certain emotions which give him a sense of self-satisfaction. Even if he does feel pity for poor Antigone and aversion for the cruel Creon, he does not share the sacrifice and the fate of the heroine, but he nevertheless believes himself to her equal morally. For him it is a question of being able to feel "noble". The didactic qualities of this kind of emotion are dubious. The audience - all Creons - may well side with Antigone throughout the performance, but this does not prevent each of them from behaving like Creon once out of the theatre. It is worth noticing the success of plays which depict an unhappy childhood. To see the sufferings of an innocent child on the stage makes it even easier for the spectator to sympathize with the unfortunate victim. Thus he is assured of his own high standard of moral values.

Theatre people themselves do not usually have an altogether clear conception of theatre. To the average actor the theatre is first and foremost himself, and not what he is able to achieve by means of his artistic technique. He - his own private organism - **is** the theatre. Such an attitude breeds the impudence and self-satisfaction which enable him to present acts that demand no special knowledge, that are banal and commonplace, such as walking, getting up, sitting down, lighting a cigarette, putting his hands in his pockets, and so on. In the actor's opinion all this is not meant to reveal anything but to be enough in itself for, as I said, he, the actor, Mr. X, is the theatre. And if the actor possesses a certain charm which can take in the audience, it strengthens him in his conviction.

To the stage-designer, the theatre is above all a plastic art and this can have positive consequences. Designers are often supporters of the literary theatre. They claim that the décor as well as the actor should serve the drama. This creed reveals no wish

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to serve literature, but merely a complex towards the producer. They prefer to be on the side of the playwright as he is further removed and consequently less able to restrict them. In practice the most original stage-designers suggest a confrontation between the text and a plastic vision which surpasses and reveals the playwright's imagination. It is probably no mere coincidence that the Polish designers are often the pioneers in our country's theatre. They exploited the numerous possibilities offered by the revolutionary

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development of the plastic arts in the twentieth century which, to a lesser degree, inspired playwrights and producers.

Does this not imply a certain danger? The critics who accuse the designers of dominating the stage, put forward more than one valid objective argument, only their premise is erroneous. It is as if they blame a car for travelling faster than a snail. This is what worries them and not whether the designer's vision dominates that of the actor and the producer. The vision of the designer is creative, not stereotyped, and even if it is, it loses its tautological character through an immense magnification process. Nevertheless, the theatre is transformed - whether the designer likes it or not - into a series of living tableaux. It becomes a kind of monumental "camera oscura", a thrilling "laterna magica". But does it not then cease to be theatre?

Finally, what is the theatre to the producer? Producers come to the theatre after failing in other fields. He who once dreamed of becoming a playwright usually ends up as a producer.

The actor who is a failure, the actress who once played the young prima donna and is getting old, these turn to production.

The theatre critic who has long had an impotence complex towards an art which he can do no more than write about takes up producing.

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The hypersensitive professor of literature who is weary of academic work considers himself competent to become a producer. He knows what drama is - and what else is theatre to him if not the realisation of a text?

Because they are guided by such varied psycho-analytic motives, producers' ideas on theatre are about as varied as it is possible to be. Their work is a compensation for various phenomena. A man who has unfulfilled political tendencies, for instance, often becomes a producer and enjoys the feeling of power such a position gives him. This has more than once led to perverse interpretations, and producers possessing such an extreme need for power have staged plays which polemicize against the authorities: hence numerous "rebellious" performances.

Of course a producer wants to be creative. He therefore - more or less consciously - advocates an autonomous theatre, independent of literature which he merely considers as a pretext. But, on the other hand, people capable of such creative work are rare. Many are officially content with a literary and intellectual theatre definition, or to maintain Wagner's theory that the theatre should be a synthesis of all the arts. A very useful formula! It allows one to respect the text, that inviolable basic element and furthermore it provokes no conflict with the literary and the philological milieu. It must be stated, in parenthesis, that every playwright - even the ones we can only qualify as such out of sheer politeness - feels himself obliged to defend the honour and the rights of Mickiewicz, Shakespeare. etc., because quite simply he considers

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himself their colleague. In this way Wagner's theory about "the theatre as the, total art" establishes **la paix des braves** in the literary field.

This theory justifies the exploitation of the plastic elements of scenography in the performance, and ascribes the results to it. The same goes for the music, whether it be an original work or a montage. To this is added the accidental choice of one or more

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well known actors and from these elements, only casually coordinated, emerges a performance which satisfies the ambition of the producer. He is enthroned on top of all the arts, although in reality he feeds off them all without himself being tied to the creative work which is carried out for him by others - if, indeed anyone can be called creative in such circumstances.

Thus the number of definitions of theatre is practically unlimited. To escape from this vicious circle one must without doubt eliminate, not add. That is, one must ask oneself what is indispensable to theatre. Let's see.

Can the theatre exist without costumes and sets? Yes, it can.

Can it exist without music to accompany the plot? Yes.

Can it exist without lighting effects? Of course.

And without a text? Yes; the history of the theatre confirms this. In the evolution of the theatrical art the text was one of the last elements to be added. If we place some people on a stage with a scenario they themselves have put together and let them improvise their parts as in the Commedia dell'Arte, the performance will be equally good even if the words are not articulated but simply muttered.

But can the theatre exist without actors? I know of no example of this. One could mention the puppet-show. Even here, however, an actor is to be found behind the scenes, although of another kind.

Can the theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance. So we are left with the actor and the spectator. We can thus define the theatre as "what take place between spectator and actor". All the other things a supplementary - perhaps necessary, but nevertheless supple-

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mentary. It is no mere coincidence that our own theatre laboratory developed from a theatre rich in resources - in which the plastic arts, lighting and music, were constantly exploited - into the ascetic theatre we have become in recent years: an ascetic theatre in which the actors and audience are all that is left. All other visual elements - e. g. plastic, etc. - are constructed by means of the actor's body, the acoustic and musical effects by his voice. This does not mean that we look down upon literature, but that we do not find in

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it the creative part of the theatre, even though great literary works can, no doubt, have a stimulating effect on this genesis. Since our theatre consists only of actors and audience, we make special demands on both parties. Even though we cannot educate the audience - not systematically, at least - we **can** educate the actor.

How, then, is the actor trained in your theatre, and what is his function in the performance?

The actor is a man who works in public with his body, offering it publicly. If this body restricts itself to demonstrating what it is - something that any average person can do - then it is not an obedient instrument capable of performing a spiritual act. If it is exploited for money and to win the favour of the audience, then the art of acting borders on prostitution. It is a fact that for many centuries the theatre has been associated with prostitution in one sense of the word or another. The words "actress" and "courtesan" were once synonymous. Today they are separated by a somewhat clearer line, not through any change in the actor's world but because society has changed. Today it is the difference between the respectable woman and the courtesan which has become blurred.

What strikes one when looking at the work of an actor as practiced these days is the wretchedness of it: the bargaining over a

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body which is exploited by its protectors - director, producer - creating in return an atmosphere of intrigue and revolt.

Just as only a great sinner can become a saint according to the theologians (Let us not forget the Revelation: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth"), in the same way the actor's wretchedness can be

transformed into a kind of holiness. The history of the theatre has numerous examples of this.

Don't get me wrong. I speak about "holiness" as an unbeliever. I mean a "secular holiness". If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it. He repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness. If such acting is not to be something transient and fortuitous, a phenomenon which cannot be foreseen in time or space: if we want a theatre group whose daily bread is this kind of work - then we must follow a special method of research and training.

What is it like, in practice, to work with the "holy" actor?

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There is a myth telling how an actor with a considerable fund of experience can build up what we might call his own "arsenal" - i. e. an accumulation of methods, artifices and tricks. From these he can pick out a certain number of combinations for each part and thus attain the expressiveness necessary for him to grip his audience. This "arsenal" or store may be nothing but a collection of clichés, in which case such a method is inseparable from the conception of the "courtesan actor".

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THE THEATRE'S NEW TESTAMENT

The difference between the "courtesan actor" and the "holy actor" is the same as the difference between the skill of a courtesan and the attitude of giving and receiving which springs from true love: in other words, self-sacrifice. The essential thing in this case is to be able to eliminate any disturbing elements in order to be able to overstep every conceivable limit. In the first case it is a question of the existence of the body; in the other, rather of its non-existence. The technique of the "holy actor" is an **inductive technique** (i. e. a technique of elimination), whereas that of the "courtesan actor" is a **deductive technique** (i. e. an accumulation of skills).

The actor who undertakes an act of self-penetration, who reveals himself and sacrifices the innermost part of himself - the most painful, that which is not intended for the eyes of the world - must be able to manifest the least impulse. He must be able to express, through sound and movement, those impulses which waver on the borderline between dream and reality. In short, he must be able to construct his own psycho-analytic language of sounds and gestures in the same way that a great poet creates his own language of words.

If we take into consideration for instance the problem of sound, the plasticity of the actor's respiratory and vocal apparatus must infinitely more developed than that of the man in the street. Furthermore, this apparatus must be able to produce sound reflexes so quickly that thought - which would remove all spontaneity - has no time to intervene.

The actor should be able to decipher all the problems of his body which are accessible to him. He should know how to direct the air to those parts of the body where sound can be created and amplified by a sort of resonator. The average actor knows only the head resonator; that is, he uses his head as a resonator to amplify his voice, making it sound more "noble", more agreeable to the audience. He may even at times, fortuitously, make use of the

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chest resonator. But the actor who investigates closely the possibilities of his own organism discovers that the number of resonators is practically unlimited. He can exploit not only his head and chest, but also the back of his head (occiput), his nose, his teeth, his larynx, his belly, his spine, as well as a total resonator which actually comprises the whole body

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and many others, some of which are still unknown to us. He discovers that it is not enough to make use of abdominal respiration on stage. The various phases in his physical actions demand different kinds of respiration if he is to avoid difficulties with his breathing and resistance from his body. He discovers that the diction he learnt at drama school far too often provokes the closing of the larynx. He must acquire the ability to open his larynx consciously, and to check from the outside whether it is open or closed. If he does not solve these problems, his attention will be distracted by the difficulties he is bound to encounter and the process of self-penetration will necessarily fail. If the actor ~ conscious of his body, he cannot penetrate and reveal himself. The body must be freed from all resistance. It must virtually cease to exist. As for his voice and respiration, it is not enough that the actor learns to make use of several resonators, to open his larynx and to select a certain type of respiration. He must learn to perform all this unconsciously in the culminating phases of his acting and this, in its turn, is something which demands a new series of exercises. When he is working on his role he must learn not to think of adding technical elements (resonators, etc.), but should aim at eliminating the concrete obstacles he comes up against (e. g. resistance in his voice).

This is not merely splitting hairs. It is the difference which decides the degree of success. It means that the actor will never possess a permanently "closed" technique, for at each stage of his self, scrutiny, each challenge, each **excess**, each breaking down of hidden barriers he will encounter new technical problems on higher level. He must then learn to overcome these too with the help of certain basic exercises.

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This goes for everything: movement, the plasticity of the body, gesticulation, the construction of masks by means of the facial musculature and, in fact, for each detail of the actor's body.

But the decisive factor in this process is the actor's technique of psychic penetration. He must learn to use his role as if it were surgeon's scalpel, to dissect himself. It is not a question of portraying himself under certain given circumstances, or of "living" a part; nor does it entail the distant sort of acting common to epic theatre and based on cold calculation. The important thing is to use the roles a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask – the innermost core of our personality - in order to sacrifice it, expose it.

This is an excess not only for the actor but also for the audience. The spectator understands consciously or unconsciously, that such an act is an invitation to him to do the same thing, and this often arouses opposition or indignation, because our daily efforts are intended to hide the truth about ourselves not only from the world, but also from ourselves. We try to escape the truth about ourselves, whereas here we are invited to stop and take a closer look. We are afraid of being changed into pillars of salt if we turn around, like Lot's wife.

The performing of this act we are referring to - self-penetration, exposure - demands a mobilization of all the physical and spiritual forces of the actor who is in a state of idle readiness, a passive availability, which

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makes possible an active acting score.

One must resort to a metaphorical language to say that the decisive factor in this process is humility, a spiritual predisposition: not to **do** something, but to **refrain** from doing something, otherwise the excess becomes impudence instead of sacrifice. This means that the actor must act in a state of trance.

Trance, as I understand it, is the ability to concentrate in a particular

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theatrical way and can be attained with a minimum of good-will.

If I were to express all this in one sentence I would say that it is all a question of giving oneself. One must give oneself totally, in one's deepest intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives oneself in love. Here lies the key. Self-penetration, trance, **excess**, the formal discipline itself - all this can be realized, provided one has given oneself fully, humbly and without defense. This culminates in a climax. It brings relief. None of the exercises in the various fields of the actor's training must be exercises in skill. They should develop a system of allusions which lead to the elusive and indescribable process of self-donation.

All this may sound strange and bring to mind some form of "quackery". If we are to stick to scientific formulas, we can say that it is a particular use of suggestion, aiming at an **ideoplastic** realization. Personally, I must admit that we do not shrink from using these "quack" formulas. Anything that has an unusual magical ring stimulates the imagination of both actor and producer.

I believe one must develop a special anatomy of the actor; for instance, find the body's various centres of concentration for different ways of acting, seeking the areas of the body which the actor sometimes feels to be his sources of energy. The lumbar region, the abdomen and the area around the solar plexus often function as such a source.

An essential factor in this process is the elaboration of a guiding rein for the form, the artificiality. The actor who accomplishes an act of self-penetration is setting out on a journey which is recorded through various sound and gesture reflexes, formulating a sort of invitation to the spectator. But these signs must be articulated. Expressiveness is always connected with certain contradiction

and discrepancies. Undisciplined self-penetration is no liberation, but is perceived as a form of biological chaos.

How do you combine spontaneity and formal discipline?

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The elaboration of artificiality is a question of ideograms - sounds and gestures - which evoke associations in the psyche of the audience. It is reminiscent of a sculptor's work on a block of stone: the conscious use of hammer and chisel. It consists, for instance, in the analysis of a hand's reflex during a psychic process and its successive development through shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers in order to decide how each phase of this process can be expressed through a sign, an ideogram, which either instantly conveys the hidden motivations of the actor or polemizes against them.

This elaboration of artificiality - of the form's guiding rein - is often based on a conscious searching of our organism for forms whose outlines we feel although their reality still escapes us. One assumes that these forms already exist, complete, within our organism. Here we touch on a type of acting which, as an art, is closer to sculpture than to painting. Painting involves the addition of colours, whereas the sculptor takes away what is concealing the form which, as it were, already exists within the block of stone, thus revealing instead of building it up.

This search for artificiality in its turn requires a series of additional exercises, forming a miniature score for each part of the body. At any rate, the decisive principle remains the following: the more we become absorbed in what is hidden inside us, in the excess, in the exposure, in the self-penetration, the more rigid must be the external discipline; that is to say the form, the artificiality, the ideogram, the sign. Here lies the whole principle of expressiveness.

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What do you expect from the spectator in this kind of theatre?

Our postulates are not new. We make the same demands on people as every real work of art makes, whether it be a painting a sculpture, music, poetry or literature. We do not cater for the man who goes to the theatre to satisfy a social need for contact with culture: in other words, to have something to talk about to his friends and to be able to say that he has seen this or that play and that it was interesting. We are not there to satisfy his "cultural needs". This is cheating.

Nor do we cater for the man who goes to the theatre to relax after a hard day's work. Everyone has a right to relax after work and there are numerous forms of entertainment for this purpose, ranging from certain types of film to cabaret and music-hall, and many more on the same lines.

We are concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself. We are concerned with the spectator who does not stop at an elementary stage of psychic integration, content with his own petty, geometrical, spiritual stability, knowing exactly what is good and what is evil, and never in doubt. For it was not to him that El Greco, Norwid, Thomas Mann and Dostoyevsky spoke, but to him who undergoes an endless process of self-

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development, whose unrest is not general but directed towards a search for the truth about himself and his mission in life.

Does this infer a theatre for the élite?

Yes, but for an élite which is not determined by the social background or financial situation of the spectator, nor even education. The worker who has never had any secondary education can undergo this creative process of self-search, whereas the university

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professor may be dead, permanently formed, moulded into the terrible rigidity of a corpse. This must be made clear from the very beginning. We are not concerned with just any audience, but a special one.

We cannot know whether the theatre is still necessary today since all social interactions, entertainments, form and colour effects have been taken over by film and television. Everybody repeats the same rhetorical question: is the theatre necessary? But we only ask it in order to be able to reply: yes, it is, because it is an art which is always young and always necessary. The sale of performances is organized on a grand scale. Yet no one organizes film and television audiences in the same way. If all theatres were closed down one day, a large percentage of the people would know nothing about it until weeks later, but if one were to eliminate cinemas and television, the very next day the whole population would be in an uproar. Many theatre people are conscious of this problem, but hit upon the wrong solution: since the cinema dominates theatre from a technical point of view, why not make the theatre more technical? They invent new stages, they put on performances with lightning-quick changes of scenery, complicated lighting and décor, etc., but can never attain the technical skill of film and television. The theatre must recognize its own limitations. If it cannot be richer than the cinema, then let it be poor. If it cannot be as lavish as television, let it be ascetic. If it cannot be a technical attraction, let it renounce all outward technique. Thus we are left with a "holy" actor in a poor theatre.

There is only one element of which film and television cannot rob the theatre: the closeness of the living organism. Because of this, each challenge from the actor, each of his magical acts (which the audience is incapable of reproducing) becomes something great, something extraordinary, something close to ecstasy. It is therefore necessary to abolish the distance between actor and audience by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers. Let the most

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drastic scenes happen face to face with the spectator so that he is within arm's reach of the actor, can feel his breathing and smell the perspiration. This implies the necessity for a chamber theatre.

How can such a theatre express the unrest which one has a right to assume varies with the individual?

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In order that the spectator may be stimulated into self-analysis when confronted with the actor, there must be some common ground already existing in both of them, something they can either dismiss in one gesture or jointly worship. Therefore the theatre must attack what might be called the collective complexes of society, the core of the collective subconscious or perhaps super-conscious (it does not matter what we call it), the myths which are not an invention of the mind but are, so to speak, inherited through one's blood, religion, culture and climate.

I am thinking of things that are so elementary and so intimately associated that it would be difficult for us to submit them to a rational analysis. For instance, religious myths: the myth of Christ and Mary; biological myths: birth and death, love symbolism or, in a broader sense, Eros and Thanatos; national myths which it would be difficult to break down into formulas, yet whose very presence we -feel in our blood when we read Part III of Mickiewicz's "Forefathers' Eve", Slowacki's "Kordian" or the Ave Maria.

Once again, there is no question of a speculative search for certain elements to be assembled into a performance. If we start working on a theatre performance or a role by violating our inner-most selves, searching for the things which can hurt us most deeply, but which at the same time give us a total feeling of purifying truth that finally brings peace, then we will inevitably end up with **representations collectives**. One has to be familiar with this concept so as not to lose the right track once one has found it. But it cannot be imposed on one in advance.

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How does this function in a theatre performance? I do not intend to give examples here. I think there is sufficient explanation in the description of "Akropolis", "Dr Faustus" or other performances. I only wish to draw attention to a special characteristic of these theatre performances which combine fascination and excessive negation, acceptance and rejection, an attack on that which is sacred (**representations collectives**), profanation and worship.

To spark off this particular process of provocation in the audience, one must break away from the trampoline represented by the text and which is already overloaded with a number of general associations. For this we need either a classical text to which, through a sort of profanation, we simultaneously restore its truth, or a modern text which might well be banal and stereotyped in its content, but nevertheless rooted in the psyche of society.

Is the "holy" actor not a dream? The road to holiness is not open to everyone. Only the chosen few can follow it.

As I said, one must not take the word "holy" in the religious sense. It is rather a metaphor defining a person who, through his art, climbs upon the stake and performs an act of self-sacrifice. Of course, you are right: it

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is an infinitely difficult task to assemble a troupe of "holy" actors. It is very much easier to find a "holy" spectator – in my sense of the word - for he only comes to the theatre for a brief moment in order to square off an account with himself, and this is something that does not impose the hard routine of daily work.

Is holiness therefore an unreal postulate? I think it is just as well founded as that of movement at the speed of light. By this I mean that without ever attaining it, we can nevertheless move consciously and systematically in that direction, thus achieving practical results.

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Acting is a particularly thankless art. It dies with the actor. Nothing survives him but the reviews which do not usually do him justice anyway, whether he is good or bad. So the only source of satisfaction left to him is the audience's reactions. In the poor theatre this does not mean flowers and interminable applause, but a special silence in which there is much fascination but also a lot of indignation, and even repugnance, which the spectator directs not at himself but at the theatre. It is difficult to reach a psychic level which enables one to endure such pressure.

I am sure that every actor belonging to such a theatre often dreams of overwhelming ovations, of hearing his name shouted out, of being covered with flowers or other such symbols of appreciation as is customary in the commercial theatre. The actor's work is also a thankless one because of the incessant supervision it is subject to. It is not like being creative in an office, seated before a table, but under the eye of the producer who, even in a theatre based on the art of the actor, must make persistent demands on him to a much greater extent than in the normal theatre, urging him on to ever increasing efforts that are painful to him.

This would be unbearable if such a producer did not possess a moral authority, if his postulates were not evident, and if an element of mutual confidence did not exist even beyond the barriers of consciousness. But even in this case, this nevertheless a tyrant and the actor must direct against him certain unconscious mechanical reactions like a pupil does against his teacher, a patient against his doctor, or a soldier against his superiors.

The poor theatre does not offer the actor the possibility of overnight success. It defies the bourgeois concept of a standard of living. It proposes the substitution of material wealth by moral wealth as the principal aim in life. Yet who does not cherish a secret wish to rise to sudden affluence? This too may cause

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opposition and negative reactions, even if these are not clearly formulated. Work in such an ensemble can never be stable. It is nothing but a huge challenge and, furthermore, it awakens such strong reactions of aversion that these often threaten the theatre's very existence. Who does not search for stability and security in one form or another? Who does not hope to live at least as well tomorrow as he does today? Even if one consciously accepts such status, one unconsciously looks around for that unattainable fire which

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reconciles fire with water and "holiness" with the life of the "courtesan".

However, the attraction of such a paradoxical situation is sufficiently strong to eliminate all the intrigues, slander and quarrels over roles which form part of everyday life in other theatres. But people will be people, and periods of depression and suppressed grudges cannot be avoided.

It is nevertheless worth mentioning that the satisfaction which such work gives is great. The actor who, in this special process of discipline and self-sacrifice, self-penetration and moulding, is not afraid to go beyond all normally acceptable limits, attains a kind of inner harmony and peace of mind. He literally becomes much sounder in mind and body, and his way of life is more normal than that of an actor in the rich theatre.

This process of analysis is a sort of disintegration of the psychic structure. Is the actor not in danger here of overstepping the mark from the point of view of mental hygiene?

No, provided that he gives himself one hundred per cent to his work. It is work that is done half-heartedly, superficially, that is psychically painful and upsets the equilibrium. If we only engage ourselves superficially in this process of analysis and exposure -

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and this can produce ample aesthetical effects - that is, if we retain our daily mask of lies, then we witness a conflict between this mask and ourselves. But if this process is followed through to its extreme limit, we can in full consciousness put back our everyday mask, knowing now what purpose and what it conceals beneath it. This is a confirmation not of the negative in us but of the positive, not of what is poorest but of what is richest. It also leads to a liberation from complexes in much the same way as psycho-analytic therapy.

The same also applies to the spectator. The member of an audience who accepts the actor's invitation and to a certain extent follows his example by activating himself in the same way, leaves the theatre in a state of greater inner harmony. But he who fights to keep his mask of lies intact at all costs, leaves the performance even more confused. I am convinced that on the whole, even in the latter case, the performance represents a form of social psycho-therapy, whereas for the actor it is only a therapy if he has given himself wholeheartedly to his task.

There are certain dangers. It is far less risky to be Mr. Smith all one's life than to be Van Gogh. But, fully conscious of our social responsibility, we could wish that there were more Van Goghs than Smiths, even though life is much simpler for the latter. Van

Gogh is an example of an incomplete process of integration. His downfall is the expression of a development which was never fulfilled. If we take a look at great personalities like for example Thomas Mann, we do eventually find a certain form of harmony.

It seems to me that the producer has a very great responsibility in this self-analytic process of the actor. How does this interdependence manifest itself, and what might be the consequences of a wrong action on his part?

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This is a vitally important point. In the light of what I have just said, this may sound rather strange.

The performance engages a sort of psychic conflict with the spectator. It is a challenge and an excess, but can only have any effect if based on human interest and, more than that, on a feeling of sympathy, a feeling of acceptance. In the same way, the producer can help the actor in this complex and agonizing process only if he is just as emotionally and warmly open to the actor as the actor is in regard to him. I do not believe in the possibility of achieving effects by means of cold calculation. A kind of warmth towards one's fellow men is essential - an understanding of the contradictions in man, and that he is a suffering creature but not one to be scorned.

This element of warm openness is technically tangible. It alone, if reciprocal, can enable the actor to undertake the most extreme efforts without any fear of being laughed at or humiliated. The type of work which creates such confidence makes words unnecessary during rehearsals. When at work, the beginnings of a sound or sometimes even silence are enough to make oneself understood. What is born in the actor is engendered together, but in the end the result is far more a part of him than those results obtained at rehearsals in the "normal" theatre.

I think we are dealing here with an "art" of working which it is impossible to reduce to a formula and cannot simply be learnt. Just as any doctor does not necessarily make a good psychiatrist, not any producer can succeed in this form of theatre. The principle to apply as a piece of advice, and also a warning, is the following: "Primum non nocere" ("First, do not harm"). To express this in technical language: It is better to suggest by means of sound and gesture than to "act" in front of the actor or supply him with intellectual explanations; better to express oneself by means of a

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silence or a wink of the eye than by instructions, observing the stages in the psychological breakdown and collapse of the actor in order then to come to his aid. One must be strict, but like a father or older brother. The second principle is one common to all professions: if you make demands on your colleagues, you must make twice as many demands on yourself.

This implies that to work with the "holy" actor, there must be a producer who is twice as "holy": that is, a "super-saint" who, through his knowledge and intuition, breaks the bounds of the history of the theatre, and who is well acquainted with the latest results in sciences such as psychology, anthropology, myth interpretation and the history of religion.

All I have said about the wretchedness of the actor applies to the producer too. To develop the metaphor of the "courtesan actor", the equivalent among producers would be the "producer souteneur". And just as it is impossible to erase completely all traces of the "courtesan" in the "holy" actor, one can never completely eradicate the "souteneur" in the "holy" producer.

The producer's job demands a certain tactical **savoir faire**, namely in the art of leading. Generally speaking, this kind of power demoralizes. It entails the necessity of learning how to handle people. It demands a gift for diplomacy, a cold and inhuman talent for dealing with intrigues. These characteristics follow the producer like his shadow even in the poor theatre. What one might call the masochistic component in the actor is the negative variant of what is creative in the director in the form of a sadistic component. Here, as everywhere, the dark is inseparable from the light.

When I take sides against half-heartedness, mediocrity and the easy-come-easy-go attitude which takes everything for granted,

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It is simply because we must create things which are firmly orientated towards either light or darkness. But we must remember that around that which is luminous within us, there exists a shroud of darkness which can penetrate, but not annihilate.

According to what you have been saying, "holiness" in the theatre can be achieved by means of a particular psychic discipline and various physical exercises. In the theatre schools and in traditional as well as experimental theatres, there is no such trend, no consistent attempt to work out or elaborate anything similar. How can we go about preparing the way for and training "holy" actors and producers? To what extent is it possible to create "monastic" theatres as opposed to the day-to-day "parochial" theatre?

I do not think that the crisis in the theatre can be separated from certain other crisis processes in contemporary culture. One of its essential elements - namely, the disappearance of the sacred and of its ritual function in the theatre - is a result of the obvious and probably inevitable decline of religion. What we are talking about is the possibility of creating a 'secular sacrum in the theatre. The question is, can the current pace in the development of civilization make a reality of this postulate on a collective scale? I have no answer to this. One must contribute to its realization, for a secular consciousness in place of the religious one seems to be a psycho-social necessity for society. Such a transition ought to take place but that does not necessarily mean that it will. I believe that it is, in a way, an ethical rule, like saying that man must not act like a wolf towards his fellow men. But as we all know, these rules are not always applied.

In any case, I am sure that this renewal will not come from the dominating theatre. Yet, at the same time,

there are and have been a few people in the official theatre who must be considered

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as secular saints: Stanislavski, for example. He maintained that the successive stages of awakening and renewal in the theatre had found their beginnings amongst amateurs and not in the circles of hardened, demoralised professionals. This was confirmed by Vakhtangov's experience; or to take an example from quite another culture, the Japanese No theatre which, owing to the technical ability it demands, might almost be described as "super-profession", although its very structure makes it a semi-amateur theatre. From where can this renewal come? From people who are dissatisfied with conditions in the normal theatre, and who take it on themselves to create poor theatres with few actors "chamber ensembles" which they might transform into institute for the education of actors; or else from amateurs working on the boundaries of the professional theatre and who, on their own achieve a technical standard which is far superior to that demanded by the prevailing theatre: in short, a few madmen who have nothing to lose and are not afraid of hard work.

It seems essential to me that an effort be made to organize secondary theatre schools. The actor begins to learn his profession too late, when he is already psychically formed and, worse still morally moulded and immediately begins suffering from **arriviste** tendencies, characteristic of a great number of theatre school pupils.

Age is as important in the education of an actor as it is to a pianist or a dancer - that is, one should not be older than fourteen when beginning. If it were possible, I would suggest starting at an even earlier age with a four year technical course concentrating on practical exercises. At the same time, the pupil ought to receive an adequate humanistic education, aimed not at imparting an ample knowledge of literature, the history of the theatre and so on, but at awakening his sensibility and introducing him to the most stimulating phenomena in world culture.

The actor's secondary education should then be completed by four years' work as an apprentice actor with a laboratory ensemble

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during which time he would not only acquire a good deal acting experience, but would also continue his studies in the fields of literature, painting, philosophy, etc., to a degree necessary in his profession and not in order to be able to shine in snobbish society, on completion of the four years' practical work in a theatre laboratory, the student actor should be awarded some sort of diploma. Thus, after eight years' work of this kind, the actor should be comparatively well equipped for what lies ahead.

He would not escape the dangers that threaten every actor, but his capacities would be greater and his character more firmly moulded. The ideal solution would be to establish institutes for search which again would be subject to poverty and rigorous authority. The cost of running such an institute would be a half of the amount swallowed up by a state aided provincial theatre. Its staff should be composed of a small group

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of experts specializing in problems associated with the theatre: e. g. a psychoanalyst and a social anthropologist. There should be a troupe of actors from a normal theatre laboratory and a group of pedagogs from a secondary theatre school, plus a small publishing house that would print the practical methodical results which would then be exchanged with other similar centres and sent to interested persons doing research in neighbouring fields. It is absolutely essential that all research of this kind be supervised, by one or more theatre critics who from the outside – rather like the Devil's Advocate - analyse the theatre's weaknesses and any alarming elements in the finished performances, basing their judgements on aesthetical principles identical to those of the theatre itself. As you know, Ludwik Flaszen has this task in our theatre.

How can such a theatre reflect our time? I am thinking of the content and analysis of present-day problems.

I shall answer according to our theatre's experience. Even though often use classical texts, ours is a contemporary theatre in

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that it confronts our very roots with our current behaviour and stereotypes, and in this way shows us our "today" in perspective with "yesterday", and our "yesterday" with "today". Even if this theatre uses an elementary language of signs and sounds - comprehensible beyond the semantic value of the word, even to a person who does not understand the language in which the play is performed - such a theatre must be a national one since it is based on introspection and on the whole of our social super-ego which has been moulded in a particular national climate, thus becoming an integral part of it.

If we really wish to delve deeply into the logic of our mind and behaviour and reach their hidden layers, their secret motor, then the whole system built into the performance must appeal to our experience, to the reality which has surprised and shaped us, to this language of gestures, mumblings, sounds and intonations picked up in the street, at work, in cafés - in short, all human behaviour which has made an impression on us.

We are talking about profanation. What, in fact, is this but a kind of tactlessness based on the brutal confrontation between our declarations and our daily actions, between the experience of our forefathers which lives within us and our search for a comfortable way of life or our conception of a struggle for survival, between our individual complexes and those of society as a whole?

This implies that every classical performance is like looking at oneself in a mirror, at our ideas and traditions, and not merely the description of what men of past ages thought and felt.

Every performance built on a contemporary theme is an encounter between the superficial traits of the present day and its deep roots and hidden motives. The performance is national because

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it is a sincere and absolute search into our historical ego; it is realistic because it is an excess of truth; it is social because it is a challenge to the social being, the spectator.

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Theatre is an Encounter

In June 1967, during Expo 67 in Canada, Jerzy Grotowski attended an international theatre symposium held in Montreal. During his stay he had the following interview with Nalm Kattan which was published in *Arts et Lettres, le Devoir* (July 1967). Translation: Robert Dewsnap.

In one of your texts, you have said that the theatre can exist without costumes or scenery, without music or lighting effects - and even without a text. You added: "In the development of the theatrical art, the text was one of the last elements to be added." There is, in your view, only one element with which the theatre can not dispense, and that is the actor. Since the Commedia dell'Arte, however, there have been playwrights. Can the producer of today disregard the theatrical traditions of several centuries? What place do you, as a producer, give to the text?

It is not the core of the problem. The core is the encounter. The text is an artistic reality existing in the objective sense. Now, if the text is sufficiently old and if it has preserved all its force for today - in other words, if this text contains certain concentrations of human experiences, representations, illusions, myths and truths which are still actual for us today - then, the text becomes a message which we receive from previous generations. In the same sense, the new text can be a sort of prism which reflects our experiences. The entire value of the text is already present once it has been written; this is literature, and we may read plays as part of "literature". In France, plays published in book form are given

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the title of **Theatre** - a mistake in my opinion, because this is no theatre but dramatic literature. Faced with this literature, we can take up one of two positions: either, we can illustrate the text through the interpretation of the actors, the **mise en scène**, the scenery, the play situation... In that case, the result is no theatre, and the only living element in such a performance is the literature. Or, we can virtually ignore the text, treating it solely as a pretext, making interpolations and changes, reducing it to nothing. I feel that both of these two solutions are false ones because in both cases we are not fulfilling our duties as artists but trying to comply with certain rules - and art doesn't like rules. Masterpieces are always based on the transcendence of rules. Though of course, the test is in the performance.

Take for example Stanislavski. His plan was to realise all the intentions of the dramatists, to create a literary theatre. And when we speak of the style of Chekhov, we are really alluding to the style of Stanislavski's productions of plays by Chekhov. As a matter of fact, Chekhov himself protested about this when he said: "I have written vaudevilles and Stanislavski has put sentimental dramas on the stage." Stanislavski was a genuine artist and he realised, involuntarily, his Chekhov and not an objective Chekhov. Meyerhold in his turn proposed, in all possible good faith, an autonomous theatre vis-à-vis literature. But I think his is the only example in the history of the theatre of a performance so deeply rooted in the spirit of Gogol, in his deepest

meaning.

Meyerhold's **The Inspector General** was a sort of collage of the texts of Gogol. Consequently, it is not our fine ideas but our practice which constitutes the test.

What is the task of the theatre in respect to literature?

The core of the theatre is an encounter. The man who makes a act of self-revelation is, so to speak, one who establishes contact

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with himself. That is to say, an extreme confrontation, sincere, disciplined, precise and total - not merely a confrontation with his thoughts, but one involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state.

The theatre is also an encounter between creative people. It is I myself, as producer, who am confronted with the actor, and the self-revelation of the actor gives me a, revelation of myself. The actors and myself are confronted with the text. Now, we cannot express what is objective in the text, and in fact it is only those texts which are really weak that give us a unique possibility of interpretation. All the great texts represent a sort of deep gulf for us. Take Hamlet: books without number have been devoted to this character. Professors will tell us, each for himself, that they have discovered an objective Hamlet. They suggest to us revolutionary Hamlets, rebel and impotent Hamlets, Hamlet the outsider, etc. But there is no objective Hamlet. The work is too great for that. The strength of great works really consists in their catalytic effect: they open doors for us, set in motion the machinery of our self-awareness. My encounter with the text resembles my encounter with the actor and his with me. For both producer and actor, the author's text is a sort of scalpel enabling us to open ourselves, to transcend ourselves, to find what is hidden within us and to make the act of encountering the others; in other words, to transcend our solitude. In the theatre, if you like, the text has the same function as the myth had for the poet of ancient times. The author of **Prometheus** found in the Prometheus myth both an act of defiance and a spring-board, perhaps even the source of his own creation. But his **Prometheus** was the product of his personal experience. That is all one can say about it; the rest is of no importance. I repeat, one can play the text in its entirety, one can change its whole structure or make a sort of collage. One can, on the other hand, make adaptations and interpolations. In neither case is it a question of theatrical creation but of literature. Brecht has given examples of treatments of other authors, and so did Shakespeare. As for me, I wish to make neither a literary interpretation

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nor a literary treatment, for both are beyond my competence, my field being that of theatrical creation. For me, a creator of theatre, the important thing is not the words but what we do with these words, what gives life to the inanimate words of the text, what transforms them into "the Word". I will go further: the theatre is an act engendered by human reactions and impulses, by contacts between people. This is both a biological

and a spiritual act. Let us be quite clear that I don't mean making love to the audience - that would involve making oneself into a sort of article of sale.

All the same, to put plays on stage you still have to choose texts and authors. What is your method of procedure? How do you choose one play rather than another, or one playwright rather than another?

The encounter proceeds from a fascination. It implies a struggle, and also something so similar in depth that there is an identity between those taking part in the encounter: Every producer must seek encounters which suit his own nature. For me this means the great romantic poets of Poland. But it also means Marlowe and Calderon. I should make quite clear that I am very fond of texts which belong to a great tradition. For me, these are like the voices of my ancestors and those voices which come to us from the sources of our European culture. These works fascinate me because they give us the possibility of a sincere confrontation - a brutal and brusque confrontation between on the one hand the beliefs and experiences of life, of previous generations and, on the other, our own experiences and our own prejudices.

Is there, in your opinion, a relationship between a dramatic work and the age in which it took shape?

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Yes, there is indeed a relationship between the historical context of the text, between the age and the text itself. But it is not the context which decides our inclination and our will to confront ourselves with these works. It is the context of my experiences today which decides my choice. Let us take an example - Homer. Why do we study the Iliad and the Odyssey nowadays? Is it to acquaint ourselves with the cultural and social life of the people of that age? Perhaps, yes - but that's a job for the professors. In the perspective of art, the works are always alive. The characters of the Odyssey are still actual because there are still pilgrims. We too are pilgrims. Their pilgrimage is different from ours, and it is for this reason that it throws a new light on our own condition.

One should not make too many speculations in the field of art. Art is not the source of science. It is the experience which we take upon ourselves when we open ourselves to others, when we confront ourselves with them in order to understand ourselves - not in the scientific sense of re-creating the context of an epoch in history, but in an elementary and human sense. And in the long procession of suffering mothers it is not the historical context of Niobe which interests us. Of course, the past is present inasmuch as we can still hear and understand its voice. Niobe's voice may seem to us a little strange. It is doubtless rather different from that of the mother weeping over her children at Auschwitz, and this difference constitutes the whole historical context. It is hidden; and if we try to separate it, to underline it and accentuate it, then we lose everything since artistic experience is an open and direct one.

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He Wasn't Entirely Himself

This article by Jerzy Grotowski has been published In **Les Temps Modernes** (Paris, April 1967) and **Flourish**, the newspaper of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Club (Summer 1967).



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Stanislavski was compromised by his disciples. He was the first great creator of a method of acting in the theatre, and all those of us who are involved with theatre problems can do no more than give personal answers to the questions he raised. When, in numerous European theatres, we watch performances inspired by the "Brecht theory," and are obliged to fight against utter boredom because the lack of conviction of both actors and producers takes the place of the so-called "Verfremdungseffekt", we think back to Brecht's own productions. They were perhaps less true to his theory but, on the other hand, very personal and subversive as they were, they showed a deep professional knowledge and never left us in a state of lassitude.

We are entering the age of Artaud. The "theatre of cruelty" has been canonised, i.e. made trivial, swapped for trinkets, tortured in various ways. When an eminent creator with an achieved style and personality, like Peter Brook, turns to Artaud, it's not to hide his own weaknesses, or to ape the man. It just happens that at a given point of his development he finds himself in agreement with Artaud, feels the need of a confrontation, **tests** Artaud, and retains whatever stands up to this test. He remains himself. But as for the wretched performances one can see in the theatrical

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avant-garde of many countries, these chaotic, aborted works, full of a so-called cruelty which would not scare a child, when we see all these happenings which only reveal a lack of professional skill, a sense of groping, and a love of easy solutions, performances which are only violent on the surface (they should hurt us but do not manage to) - when we see these sub-products whose authors call Artaud their spiritual father, then we think that perhaps there is cruelty indeed, but only towards Artaud himself.

The paradox of Artaud lies in the fact that it is impossible to carry out his proposals. Does this mean that he was wrong? Certainly not. But Artaud left no concrete technique behind him, indicated no method. This was surely an expression of Artaud's personality and is partly the result of lack of time and means to put the things he glimpsed into practice. It also comes from what we might call Artaud's mistake, or at least his peculiarity: as he probed subtly, in an a-logical, almost invisible and intangible way, Artaud used a language which was almost as intangible and fleeting. Yet micro-organisms are studied with a precision instrument, the microscope. Whatever is imperceptible demands precision.

Artaud spoke of the magic of the theatre, and the way he conjured it up leaves images which touch us in some way. Perhaps we don't understand them completely, but we realise he was after a theatre transcending discursive reason and psychology. And when, one fine day, we discover that the essence of the theatre is found neither in the narration of an event, nor in the discussion of a hypothesis with an audience, nor in the representation of life as it appears from outside, nor even in a vision - but that the theatre is an act carried out **here and now** in the actors' organisms, in front of their men, when we discover that theatrical reality is instantaneous, not an illusion of life but something linked to life **only by analogy**, when we realise all this, then we

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ask ourselves the question: wasn't Artaud talking about just this and nothing else?

For when in the theatre we dispose of the tricks of make-up and costume, stuffed bellies and false noses, and when we propose to the actor that he should transform himself before the spectator's eyes using only his inner impulse his body, when we state that the magic of theatre consists in this transformation **as it comes to birth**, we once more raise the question: did Artaud ever suggest any kind of magic?

Artaud speaks of the "cosmic trance". This brings back an echo of the time when the heavens were emptied of their traditional inhabitants and themselves became the object of a cult. The "cosmic trance" inevitably leads to the "magic theatre". Yet Artaud explains the unknown by the unknown, the magic by the magic. I do not know what is meant by the "cosmic trance" for generally speaking. I do not believe the cosmos can, in a physical sense, become a transcendental point of reference for man. The points of reference are others. Man is one of them.

Artaud opposed the discursive principle in theatre, i. e. the entire French theatre tradition. But we can't accept him as a pioneer in this. Many central European and Eastern theatres have a living tradition of non-discursive theatre. And how do we rate Vakhtangov or Stanislavski?

Artaud refused a theatre which was content to illustrate dramatic texts; he claimed the theatre should be a creative art in itself, and not just duplicate what literature was doing. This was a sign of great courage and consciousness on his part, for he wrote in a language in which the complete works of playwrights were not entitled "Plays" or "Comedies" but "The Theatre of Molière", or "The Theatre of Montherlant". Yet the idea of an autonomous theatre came to us much earlier, from Meyerhold in Russia.

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Artaud intended to suppress the barrier between actors and audience. This seems striking, but note that he neither proposed to abolish the stage separate from the auditorium, nor to seek a different structure adapted to each new production thus creating a real basis for confrontation between the two "ensembles" formed by the actors and the spectators. He simply proposed to put the audience in the centre and play in all four corners of the room. This is no elimination of the stage/audience barrier, but the replacement of the classical dolls' theatre by another rigid structure. And years before all these ideas of Artaud, decisive steps in this direction had already been taken by Reinhardt, Meyerhold in his production of the Mystery plays, and again later by Syrkus in Poland with his already elaborated conception of a "simultaneous theatre".

Thus we have withdrawn Artaud's supposed merits in order to restore them to their true fathers. It might be thought we are preparing a scene of martyrdom, stripping Artaud of his rags just as he stripped Beatrice Cenci in his production. But there is a difference between stripping someone to torture them, and doing so to find out who they really are. The fact that others have made similar suggestions in other places cannot alter the vital fact that Artaud made his discoveries himself, through his own suffering, the prism of his personal obsessions, and that as far as his own country goes, he virtually invented everything.

Must it be repeated yet again that if Artaud had had at his disposal the necessary material, his visions might have developed from the undefined to the defined and he might even have converted them into a form or, better still, a technique? He would then have been in a position to anticipate all the other reformers, for he

had the courage and the power to go beyond the current discursive logic. All this could have happened, but never did.

Artaud's secret, above all, is to have made particularly fruitful mistakes' and misunderstandings. His description of Balinese

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theatre, however suggestive it may be for the imagination, is really one big mis-reading. Artaud deciphered as "cosmic signs" and "gestures evoking superior powers" elements of the performance which were concrete expressions, specific theatrical letters in an alphabet of signs universally understood by the Balinese.

The Balinese performance for Artaud was like a crystal ball for a fortune-teller. It brought forth a totally different performance which slumbered in his depths, and this work of Artaud's provoked by the Balinese theatre gives us an image of his great creative possibilities. As soon as he moves from description to theory however, he starts explaining magic by magic, cosmic trance by cosmic trance. It is a theory which can mean whatever you require.

But In his description he touches something essential, of which he is not quite aware. It is the true lesson of the sacred theatre; whether we speak of the medieval European drama, the Balinese, or the Indian Kathakali: this knowledge that spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves;-that what is elementary feeds what is constructed and-vice-versa, to become the real source of a kind of acting that glows. This lesson was neither understood by Stanislavski, who let natural impulses dominate, nor by Brecht, who gave too much emphasis to the construction of a role.

Artaud intuitively saw myth as the dynamic centre of the theatre performance. Only Nietzsche was ahead of him in this domain. He also knew that transgression of the myth renewed its essential values and "became an element of menace which re-established the derided norms" (L. Flaszen). He did not however take account of the fact that, in our age, when all languages intermingle, the community of the theatre cannot possibly **identify** itself with myth, because there is no single faith. Only a **confrontation** is possible.

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Artaud dreamed of producing new myths through the theatre, but this beautiful dream was born from his lack of precision. For although the myth forms the basis or framework for the experience of entire generations, it is for the subsequent generations to create it and not the theatre. At the most, the theatre could have contributed to the crystallization of the myth. But then it would have been too similar to current ideas to be creative.

A confrontation is a "trying out", a testing of whatever is a traditional value. A performance which, like an electrical transformer, adjusts our experience to those of past generations (and vice versa), a performance conceived as a combat against traditional and contemporary values (whence "transgression") - this seems to me the only real chance for myth to work in the theatre. An honest renewal can only be found in this double game of values, this attachment and rejection, this revolt and submissiveness.

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Nevertheless. Artaud was a prophet. His texts conceal such a special and complex web of forecasts, such impossible allusions, visions which are so suggestive and metaphors which seem, in the long run, to possess a certain soundness. For all this is bound to happen. No one knows how, but it is inevitable. And it does happen.

We shout with triumph when we discover silly misunderstandings in Artaud. The sign which, in oriental theatre, is simply a part of a universally known alphabet, cannot - as Artaud would have it - be transferred to European theatre in which every sign has to be born separately in relation to familiar psychological or cultural associations, before becoming something quite different. All his divisions of breathing into masculine, feminine and neuter are just misinterpretations of oriental texts, and in practice, so imperceptible they cannot be distinguished. His study of the "athletics of feelings" has certain shrewd insights, but in practical work would lead to stereotyped gestures, one for each emotion.

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Yet he does touch on something which we may be able to reach by a different route. I mean the very crux of the actor's art: that what the actor achieves should be (let's not be afraid of the name) a total act, that he does whatever he does with his entire being and not just one mechanical (and therefore rigid) gesture of arm or leg, not any grimace, helped by a logical inflection and a thought. No thought can guide the entire organism of an actor in any living way. It must stimulate him, and that is all it really can do. Without commitment, his organism stops living, his impulses grow superficial. Between a total reaction and a reaction guided by a thought there is the same difference as between a tree and a plant. In the final result we are speaking of the impossibility of separating spiritual and physical. The actor should not use his organism to illustrate a "movement of the soul", he should accomplish this movement with his organism.

Artaud teaches us a great lesson which none of us can refuse. This lesson is his sickness. Artaud's misfortune is that his sickness, paranoia, differed from the sickness of the times. Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia, which is a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul. Society couldn't allow Artaud to be ill in a different way. They looked after him, tortured him with electro-shock treatment, trying to make him acknowledge discursive and cerebral reason: i. e. to take society's sickness into himself. Artaud defined his illness remarkably in a letter to Jacques Rivière: "I am not entirely myself". He was not merely himself, he was someone else. He grasped half of his own dilemma: how to be oneself. He left the other half untouched: how to be whole, how to be complete.

He couldn't bridge the deep gulf between the zone of visions (intuitions) and his conscious mind, for he had given up everything orderly, and made no attempt to achieve precision or mastery of things. Instead he made his chaos and his self-division objective. His chaos was an authentic image of the world. It wasn't a therapy but a diagnosis, at least in the eyes of other people.

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His chaotic outbursts were holy, for they enabled others to reach self-knowledge.

Among his successors, the chaos is in no sense holy, nor sufficiently determined: it has no reason for existing save to conceal something unfinished, to hide an infirmity. Artaud gave this chaos expression, which is quite another matter.

Artaud puts forward the idea of a great transgression of conventions, a purification by violence and cruelty; he affirms that the evocation of blind powers on stage ought to protect us from them in life itself. But how can we ask them to protect us in this way when it's obvious they do nothing of the kind? It's not in the theatre that dark powers can be controlled; more likely that these powers will turn the theatre to their own ends. (Although I don't think they are concerned about the theatre, since they have massive means of domination already at their disposal.) The theatre in the end neither protects us nor leaves us unprotected. I don't believe that the explosive portrayal of Sodom and Gomorrah on a stage calms or sublimates in any way the sinful impulses for which those two towns were punished.

And yet when Artaud speaks of release and cruelty we feel he's touching a truth we can verify in another way. We feel that an actor reaches the essence of his vocation whenever he commits an act of sincerity, when he unveils himself, opens and gives himself in an extreme, solemn gesture, and does not hold back before any obstacle set by custom and behaviour. And further, when this act of extreme sincerity is modelled in a living organism, in impulses, a way of breathing, a rhythm of thought and the circulation of blood, when it is ordered and brought to consciousness, not dissolving into chaos and formal anarchy - in a word, when this act accomplished through the theatre is **total**, then even if it doesn't protect us from the dark powers, at least it enables us to

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respond totally, that is, begin to exist. For each day we only react with half our potential.

If I speak of "a total act", it's because I have the feeling that there is an alternative to "the theatre of cruelty". But Artaud stands as a challenge to us at this point: perhaps less because of his work than his idea of salvation through the theatre. This man gave us, in his martyrdom, a shining proof of the theatre as therapy. I have found two expressions in Artaud which deserve attention. The first is a reminder that anarchy and chaos (which he needed as a spur for his own character) should be linked to a sense of order, which he conceived in the mind, and not as a physical technique. Still, it's worth quoting this phrase for the sake of Artaud's so-called disciples: "Cruelty is rigour".

The other phrase holds the very foundation of the actor's art of extreme and ultimate action. "Actors should be like martyrs burnt alive, still signalling to us from their stakes". Let me add that these signals must be articulated, and they cannot just be gibberish or delirious, calling out to everything and nothing - unless a given work demands precisely that. With such a proviso, we affirm that this quotation contains in an oracular style, the whole Problem of spontaneity and discipline, this **conjunction of opposites** which gives birth to the total act.

Artaud was a great theatre-poet, which means a poet of the possibilities of theatre and not of dramatic literature. Like the mythical prophet Isaiah, he predicts for the theatre something definitive, a new meaning, a new possible incarnation. "Then Emmanuel was born". Like Isaiah, Artaud knew of Emmanuel's coming, and what it promised. He saw the image of it through a glass, darkly.

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Statement of Principles

Jerzy Grotowski wrote this text for internal use within his Theatre Laboratory, and in particular for those actors undergoing a period of trial before being accepted into the troupe in order to acquaint them with the basic principles inspiring the work.

Translation: Maja Buszewicz and Judy Barba.

I

The rhythm of life in modern civilisation is characterised by pace, tension, a feeling of doom, the wish to hide our personal motives and the assumption of a variety of roles and masks in life (different ones with our family, at work, amongst friends or in community life, etc.). We like to be "scientific", by which we mean discursive and cerebral, since this attitude is dictated by the course of civilisation. But we also want to pay tribute to our biological selves, to what we might call physiological pleasures. We do not want to be restricted in this sphere. Therefore we play a double game of intellect and instinct, thought and emotion; we try to divide ourselves artificially into body and soul. When we try to liberate ourselves from it all we start to shout and stamp, we convulse to the rhythm of music. In our search for liberation we reach biological chaos. We suffer most from a lack of totality, throwing ourselves away, squandering ourselves.

Theatre - through the actor's technique, his art in which the living organism strives for higher motives - provides an opportunity for what could be called integration, the discarding of masks, the revealing of the real substance: a totality of physical and mental

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reactions. This opportunity must be treated in a disciplined manner, with a full awareness of the responsibilities it involves. Here we can see the theatre's therapeutic function for people in our present day civilisation. It is true that the actor accomplishes this act, but he can only do so through an encounter with the spectator - intimately, visibly, not hiding behind a cameraman, wardrobe mistress, stage designer or make-up girl - in direct confrontation with him, and somehow "instead of" him. The actor's act - discarding half measures, revealing, opening up, emerging from himself as opposed to closing up - is an invitation to the spectator. This act could be compared to an act of the most deeply rooted, genuine love between two human beings - this is just a comparison since we can only refer to this "emergence from oneself" through analogy. This act, paradoxical and borderline, we call a total act. In our opinion it epitomizes the actor's deepest calling.

II

Why do we sacrifice so much energy to our art? Not in order to teach others but to learn with them what our existence, our organism, our personal and unrepeatable experience have to give us; to learn to break down the barriers which surround us and to free ourselves from the breaks which hold us back, from the lies about ourselves which we manufacture daily for ourselves and for others; to destroy the limitations caused by our ignorance and lack of courage; in short, to fill the emptiness in us: to fulfil ourselves. Art is neither a state of the soul (in the sense of some extraordinary, unpredictable moment of inspiration) nor a state of man (in the sense of a profession or social function). Art is a ripening, an evolution, an uplifting which enables us to emerge from darkness into a blaze of light.

We fight then to discover, to experience the truth about ourselves; to tear away the masks behind which we hide daily. We see theatre - especially palpable, carnal aspect - as a place of provocation, a challenge the actor sets himself and also, indirectly, other people. Theatre only has a meaning if it allows us to

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transcend our stereotyped vision, our conventional feelings and customs, our standards of judgement - not just for the sake of doing so, but so that we may experience what is real and, having already given up all daily escapes and pretences, in a state of complete defenselessness unveil, give, discover ourselves. In this way - through shock, through the shudder which causes us to drop our daily masks and mannerisms - we are able, without hiding anything, to entrust ourselves to something we cannot name but in which live Eros and Charitas.

III

Art cannot be bound by the laws of common morality or any catechism. The actor, at least in part, is creator, model and creation rolled into one. He must not be shameless as that leads to exhibitionism. He must have courage, but not merely the courage to exhibit himself - a passive courage, we might say: the courage of the defenseless, the courage to reveal himself. Neither that which touches the interior sphere, nor the profound stripping bare of the self should be regarded as evil so long as in the process of preparation or in the completed work they produce an act of creation. If they do not come easily and if they are not signs of outburst but of mastership, then they are creative: they reveal and purify us **while we transcend ourselves**. Indeed, they improve us then.

For these reasons every aspect of an actor's work dealing with intimate matters should be protected from incidental remarks, indiscretions, nonchalance, idle comments and jokes. The personal realm - both spiritual and physical - must not be "swamped" by triviality, the sordidness of life and lack of tact towards oneself and others; at least not in the place of work or anywhere connected with it. This postulate sounds like an abstract moral order. It is not. It involves the very essence of the actor's calling. This calling is realized through carnality. The actor must not **illustrate** but **accomplish** an "act of the soul" by means of his own organism. Thus he is faced with two extreme alternatives: he can either sell,
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dishonour, his real "incarnate" self, making himself an object of artistic prostitution; or he can give himself, sanctify his real "incarnate" self.

IV

An actor can only be guided and inspired by someone who is whole-hearted in his creative activity. The producer, while guiding and inspiring the actor, must at the same time allow himself to be guided and inspired by him. It is a question of freedom, partnership, and this does not imply a lack of discipline but a respect for the autonomy of others. Respect for the actor's autonomy does not mean lawlessness, lack of demands, never ending discussions and the replacement of action by continuous streams of words. On the contrary, respect for autonomy means enormous demands, the expectation of a maximum creative effort and the most personal revelation. Understood thus, solicitude for the actor's freedom can only be born from the plenitude of the guide and not from his lack of plenitude. Such a lack implies imposition, dictatorship, superficial dressage.

V

An act of creation has nothing to do with either external comfort or conventional human civility; that is to say, working conditions in which everybody is happy. It demands a maximum of silence and a minimum of words. In this kind of creativity we discuss through proposals, actions and living organisms, not through explanations. When we finally find ourselves on the track of something difficult and often almost intangible, we have "no right to lose it through frivolity and carelessness. Therefore, even during breaks after which we will be continuing with the creative process, we are obliged to observe certain natural reticences in our behaviour and even in our private affairs. This applies just as much to our own work as to the work of our partners. We must not interrupt and disorganize the work because we are hurrying to our own affairs; we must not peep, comment or make jokes about it privately. In any case, private ideas of fun have no place in the
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actor's calling. In our approach to creative tasks, even if the theme is a game, we must be in a state of readiness - one might even say "solemnity". Our working terminology which serves as a stimulus must not be dissociated from the work and used in a private context. Work terminology should be associated only with that which it serves.

A creative act of this quality is performed in a group, and therefore within certain limits we should restrain our creative egoism. An actor has no right to mould his partner so as to provide greater possibilities for his own performance. Nor has he the right to correct his partner unless authorized by the work leader. Intimate or drastic elements in the work of others are untouchable and should not be commented upon even in their absence. Private conflicts, quarrels, sentiments, animosities are unavoidable in any human group. It is our duty towards creation to keep them in check in so far as they might deform and wreck the work process. We are obliged to open ourselves up even towards an enemy.

VI

It has been mentioned several times already, but we can never stress and explain too often the fact that we must never exploit privately anything connected with the creative act: i. e. location, costume, props, an element from the acting score, a melodic theme or lines from the text. This rule applies to the smallest detail and there can be no exceptions. We did not make this rule simply to pay tribute to a special artistic devotion. We are not interested in grandeur and noble words, but our awareness and experience tell us that lack of strict adherence to such rules causes the actor's score to become deprived of its psychic motives and "radiance".

VII

Order and harmony in the work of each actor are essential conditions without which a creative act cannot take place. Here we demand consistency. We demand it from the actors who come to

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the theatre consciously to try themselves out in something extreme, a sort of challenge seeking a total response from every one of us. They come to test themselves in something very definite that reaches beyond the meaning of "theatre" and is more like an act of living and way of existence. This outline probably sounds rather vague. If we try to explain it theoretically, we might say that the theatre and acting are for us a kind of vehicle allowing us to emerge from ourselves, to fulfil ourselves. We could go into this at great length. However, anyone who stays here longer than just the trial period is perfectly aware that what we are talking about can be grasped less through grandiose words than through details, demands and the rigours of work in all its elements. The individual who disturbs the basic elements, who does not for example respect his own and the others' acting score, destroying its structure by shamming or automatic reproduction. is the very one who shakes this undefinable higher motive of our common activity. Seemingly small details form the background against which fundamental questions are decided, as for example the duty to note down elements discovered in the course of the work. We must not rely on our memory unless we feel the spontaneity of our work is being threatened, and even then we must keep a partial record. This is just as basic a rule as is strict punctuality, the thorough memorizing of the text, etc. Any form of shamming in one's work is completely inadmissible. However it does sometimes happen that an actor has to go through a scene, just outline it, in order to check its organization and the elements of his partners' actions. But even then he must follow the actions carefully, measuring himself against them, in order to comprehend their motives. This is the difference between outlining and shamming.

An actor must always be ready to join the creative act at the exact moment determined by the group. In this respect his health, physical condition and all his private affairs cease to be just his own concern. A creative act of such quality flourishes only if nourished by the living organism. Therefore we are obliged to take daily care of our bodies so we are always ready for our tasks.

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We must not go short of sleep for the sake of private enjoyment and then come to work tired or with a hangover. We must not come unable to concentrate. The rule here is not just one's compulsory presence in the place of work, but physical readiness to create.

VIII

Creativity, especially where acting is concerned, is boundless sincerity, yet disciplined: i. e. articulated through signs. The creator should not therefore find his material a barrier in this respect. And as the actor's material is his own body, it should be trained to obey, to be pliable, to respond passively to psychic impulses as if it did not exist during the moment of creation - by which we mean it does not offer any resistance. Spontaneity and discipline are the basic aspects of an actor's work and they require a methodical key.

Before a man decides to do something he must first work out a point of orientation and then act accordingly and in a coherent manner. This point of orientation, should be quite evident to him, the result of natural convictions, prior observations and experiences in life. The basic foundations of this method constitute for our troupe this point of orientation. Our institute is geared to examining the consequences of this point of orientation. Therefore nobody who comes and stays here can claim a lack of knowledge of the troupe's methodical programme. Anyone who comes and works here and then wants to keep his distance (as regards creative consciousness) shows the wrong kind of care for his own individuality. The etymological meaning of "individuality" is "indivisibility" which means complete existence in something: individuality is the

very opposite of half-hearted ness. We maintain, therefore, that those who come and stay here discover in our method something deeply related to them: prepared by their lives and experiences. Since they accept this consciously, we presume that each of the participants feels obliged to train creatively and try to form his own variation inseparable from him-

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self, his own reorientation open to risks and search. For what here call "the method" is the very opposite of any sort of prescription.

IX

The main point then is that an actor should not try to acquire an kind of recipe or build up a "box of tricks". This is no place for collecting all sorts of means of expression. The force of gravity in our work pushes the actor towards an interior ripening which expresses itself through a willingness to break through barriers, to search for a "summit", for totality.

The actor's first duty is to grasp the fact that nobody here want: **to give** him anything; instead they plan **to take** a lot from him, to take away that to which he is usually very attached: his resistance, reticence, his inclination to hide behind masks, his half-heartedness, the obstacles his body places in the way of his creative act, his habits and even his usual "good manners".

X

Before an actor is able to achieve a total act he has to fulfill a number of requirements, some of which are so subtle, so intangible, as to be practically undefinable through words. They only become plain through practical application. It is easier, however, to define conditions under which a total act cannot be achieved, and which of the actor's actions make it impossible.

This act cannot exist if the actor is more concerned with charm, personal success, applause and salary than with creation as understood in its highest form. It cannot exist if the actor conditions it according to the size of his part, his place in the. performance, the day or kind of audience. There can be no total act if the actor, even away from the theatre, dissipates his creative impulse and, as we said before, sullies it, blocks it, particularly through incidental engagements of a doubtful nature or by the premeditated use of the creative act as a means to further his own career.

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