

# Poetics of the Actor's Art

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**The Analysis of The Stage Process**

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by Ion Cojar

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# I. Foreword

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The reasons that made it necessary for a subject called The Analysis of the Actor's Stage Process (There is no unique method, as we know, but?):

1. The need for a free manifestation of the diversity of the artistic and pedagogical personalities from within the same drama school implies a meeting point.

It doesn't matter where, at what stage of the propaedeutic journey this point is. What matters is for it to exist, to define the goals that are to be followed and to lead towards the same ends.

2. It was born out of the much-needed reaction against isolationism, against the lack of communication in matters of essence between the groups that trained in the actor's art and the rupture between the highly academical theoretical disciplines and the practical, technical ones. The actor's art, an evolutionary phenomenon - inextricably linked to the spirit of the times - cannot go without a theoretical device through which the dynamic principle, which ensures "unity" within "diversity" as well as constant renewal, is correctly defined in order to eliminate eclecticism, the greatest danger posed by dilettantism in art and particularly in artistic pedagogy.

3. Situated in a converging point of "major" cultures (Mediterranean, Western, Eastern), the Romanian theatre imposes itself, beyond its fundamental tendency to take different shapes through its effort of (periodically) assimilating

influences and elements from other schools of theatre, as well as through its striving to surpass dogmatism, which lingers in all types of education.

Tricky histrionics and doubtful sobriety as an expression of the balance between “Dionysian” and “apollonian”, the art of acting excels through its paradoxical quality, through the revealing of this bizarre phenomenon which unites incompatibilities and transforms, under our amazed gazes, the affirmation or the negation within their clash, as a last and imprescriptible specific of the dramatic genre.

The genius of the actor is the only instance which reveals the premise and the essence of this art: that which is not paradoxical is not truly dramatic, it is a mere illustration in the form of a soliloquy and an epic narration. In order for the student to become aware of this axiom there needs to be a theoretical discipline in which, just as in the study of the secrets of music through the subjects of “theory and solfeggio”, “counterpoint”, “harmony” etc., the study of acting must be taken out of the blind empiricism and dilettante eclecticism, through the apprehending of the founding principle and the objective rules of this specific art.

Other than the capacity to fulfill in a practical way the objective of their art, the theatre and film actor of the twentieth century, the alumni of an academy must be prepared to approach the problematic that is typical of their art in a theoretical manner.

Mocking skepticism and sobriety, denial and renewal, immanence and transcendence, blocking and surpassing, hiding and revealing, the art of the authentic actor carries with

itself the general and particular characteristics of a line that has the vocation of paradoxicality, forged along a series of tough and complex cultural and historical experiences which began at the dawn of time and carry on today still.

The echo of the nowadays mute work, of the greatest actors of the Romanian theatre, from Millo, Brezeau, Baltăţeanu, Vraca, Finteşteanu, Giugaru to Cotescu, George Constantin, Cozorici and Caragiu, from FrosaSarandi to Sonia Cluceru, Eugenia Popovici and Aura Buzescu, generate certain answers within the conscience of those that lived to see them and were witness to their amazing artistic performances, certain answers that, though partially at times, provide a reply to the question that keeps coming back with the first steps of each new generation of artists? What is, in fact, the art of an actor?

## II. Introduction

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An institutionalized art school is a tense space of contradictions generated by the objective condition of reuniting within a professional formation of some very different individualities, strong artistic personalities, professing a great diversity of philosophical and esthetical ideas, as well as

practical ways of creating, which naturally leads to an equally great diversity of pedagogical concepts and methods.

The formation process converges only in appearance and, unfortunately, in its less significant aspects.

In the reality of institutionalized acting schools that follow the model of academic education in science or humanities (philology, law, philosophy, medicine, etc.), the common spirit of uniform professional formation proclaimed and pursued by analytical programs, or rhetorically flattered in occasional pedagogical speeches held at the end of term or end of year, is a fake ideal that nobody believes in anymore. It is more advantageous to acknowledge the rupture between theory and practice, between the operational principles and objectives of year 1, subsequently betrayed in years 2, 3, and 4.

The practical study, through the force of concrete circumstances, in reality becomes a sort of occult “ritual”, hides within the enclosed space of the “dramatic art” workshop, with no communication even between the groups of the same year of study.

The diversity of the personal styles of the masters implicitly leads to a diversity of “rituals”, to a diversity of methods and thus the same discipline practically becomes something else from one class to another. What remains common is the name of the subject. Sometimes not even that, because “acting” is not and does not mean the same thing as the actor’s art, interpretation is not the same thing as creation, such as learning how to act on notes or learning the solutions that the master shows does not mean acquiring a method.

A method means a path, a road, a technique, or an ensemble of techniques through which one can get to know the goal, to discover one's own solutions to any situations and problems, to one's own truths, be they objective or subjective, about things.

Art education, and especially dramatic art education, can be found permanently in every-day practice, through its specific nature face to face with the complex and extremely delicate - sometimes insolvable - aspects that are generated by the opposition between the functions of education and that of science, which were revealed by the great French atomist Louis de Broglie in the conference titled *Research and Education*: the fundamental opposition between the attitude of the scientific researcher who, by the very nature of their spirit, is constantly preoccupied with discovering yet unknown things and prefers to question those that had previously passed for well established, and the attitude of the professor who, teaching that which is known or that which is believed to be known, following a curricula which is imposed or which they drafted themselves, has a tendency, which results from a natural impulse, towards a certain dogmatism<sup>1</sup>.

Uttered back in 1959, this important statement is based on an idea phrased by Ch. Péguy half a century earlier.

Even though the matter of incompatibilities between the principles of institutionalized education, particularly the one in the creative field, in which it is not "specialists" that are

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<sup>1</sup> Louis de Broglie (the discoverer the rays associated with moving particles), *Certitudinile și incertitudinile științei*, Ed. Politică, București, 1986, p. 233.

formed, but creative personalities, even though it was denounced a century ago, the reactions of rethinking and reorganizing these institutions have been sporadic and lacking in major effects.

In the teaching of dramatic art, it was only schools that were able to maintain a certain autonomy and were able to organize themselves according to specific criteria, starting with the space, the specific ambient, and ending with the principles, ideas, theses, concepts, criteria and techniques, in one word the methods which were appropriate to fulfill a pedagogical ideal which was clearly defined and ultimately esthetical, it was only these that managed to overcome the chronic incompatibilities that still afflict, with moments of acute crisis, the schools which are institutionalized according to the old ways.

The decision-making bodies and the inexperienced professionals who also lack in pedagogical experience do not yet understand, unfortunately, that the study of the actor's art requires a specific climate, an adequate ambiance, that this pedagogy is not teaching and apprehending (learning per se), but research and discovery, a process of self-discovery and self-knowing, it is a process of initiation and of un-specializing in conventional common behavior acquired within one's family, school, society, dominated by preconceived ideas, especially ideas about theatre and acting.

Formation is a delicate process of recovering the human wholeness, of the whole individual potential, a formative collection of new habits, typical of an activity which

requires physical and spiritual performance, of surpassing the limits of the common human.

The class of the actor's art is an experimental workshop of recovering the five senses, of recovering all types of memory and imagination, as well as all mental processes of taking things in in a real way, as opposed to a superficially symbolical way of mimicking information of the senses obtained through interacting correctly and honestly with static objects and dynamic, living subjects, as well as with events from the surrounding world, within the permanent relationship with the dynamics of "objective" and "conventional" situations, and through the strict observation of the specific mechanism of the actor's creativity, that of turning the convention (the proposed theme) into a mental reality in an objective process which generates the appropriate behaviors in a natural and organic way.

In other words, it means research and practical experimentation, in order to first acquire the specific mechanism through which the transformation of fiction is achieved, of the convention within the concrete, objective psychological reality.

The themes of the exercises, the part, are conventions, semiotic systems (texts) which are communicated literally, which the actor adopts and, through substitutional imagination, turns into material systems, into concrete, objective and dynamic reality, expressed in a behavioral manner. This is, put simply, the first level of the stage miracle, which constitutes an object of experimentation in the actor's art workshop. "It is only the perception of phenomena that

renders creation possible”<sup>2</sup>, as Henry Wald warns. This means that the importance of theoretical knowledge cannot be minimized.

The most conclusive example in this respect is offered by the “divine” Leonardo Da Vinci, who, even though he was in the habit of stating that “*La sperienza non falliamai*” (“*Experience never deceives me*”) and even though he considered himself to be “a man without training”, he was convinced of the prevalence of theory over practice: “One must first describe theory, then practice”. “Science is the leader, and practice represents the soldiers”. “For practice must always be constructed on a good theory”<sup>3</sup>.

And this is why, no matter how difficult it may be, the venture of gathering within a work ideas, hypotheses, definitions - even incomplete - which serve the coagulation of a possible coherent theory of the actor’s art, with the purpose of surpassing the empiricism which still dominates drama schools, constitutes the motivation of the risk that was taken for this theoretical project.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Wald, *Expresivitatea ideilor*, Ed. Cartea Românească, București, 1986, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> *Apud* Ian Bielostocki, *O istorie a teoriilor despre artă*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1977, pp. 31, 36-37.



### III. What the Actor's Art is

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The difficulty in answering stems from the imposture of the question.

The way of thinking which generated that question does not suit the logical principle on which the object of the question is founded.

While seeking an explanation to the observation that the attempts to obtain a correct and comprehensive answer to the questions "What is theatre?" or "What is the actor's art?", thus phrasing a definition, a conceptual construction about the essence of these things, were unsuccessful, we discover in the last chapter of the work *The Aesthetic Modality Of Theatre* by Camil Petrescu, an informed answer: "At the end of this research in which we have followed the essence of theatre from a historical point of view, we must admit that we have been unable to obtain a validly phrased concept, which would truly translate this essence. On the contrary, the impression is rather that we have been left with the feeling that such a concept is not even possible, at least as far as today's scientific thinking is concerned"<sup>4</sup>.

After analyzing the points of view of an impressive number of creators, estheticians, theatre historians, philosophers, amongst whom Shakespeare, Goethe, Lessing,

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<sup>4</sup> Camil Petrescu, *Comentarii și delimitări în teatru*, Ed. Eminescu, Thalia Collection, București, 1983, p. 193.

Joseph Gregor, Max Dessoir, Diderot, Bremont, Julius Bab, Chronegk, Reinhardt, Stanislavski, Hagemann, Hartmann, Bergson, Husserl, Paul Valery, Gordon Craig, M. Geiger, Piscator, Tairov, Kierbuel-Patersen, Meyerhold and others, Camil Petrescu's conclusion is definitely skeptical: "Perhaps the uncertainty of the results, shown through the present critical research, also comes from the fact that the judgment is undifferentiated. We will observe thusly that the question as to, on the one hand, what the art of theatre must become - What is theatre? - such as it would exist at the end of an essential evolution, for here we must repeat that we are not interested simply in what it has become historically, but in the evolution of the intuition of the essence, and on the other hand the question - What is the art of theatre? From a strictly theoretical point of view, we were unable to do this either, as in the General Science of art, for instance, we would be recommended the opposite solution"<sup>5</sup>.

The above conclusion is not unique. There are other open abandonments, with the same scholarly probity, and others disguised through a shrewd change in the direction of the research towards goals which are easier to attain, such as describing the varieties, historicizing, essayistic, memorial writings, etc. The utility of this type of works cannot be minimized either, for the purpose of a more thorough knowledge of the field, but the erudite knowledge is different from the essential knowledge which Camil Petrescu was searching for and which the practitioner needs, especially the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

one in the course of formation and who, on top of skills, passion, and a desire to learn, also experiences an immense hunger for knowledge, both practical and theoretical.

But, certainties cannot be founded on “enthusiastic divagations about art (and on) great sudden flights in the zenith of imprecision”. They are not obtained through “lazy reverie”. Competence itself is formed through “clear notions, chained in a systematic order”<sup>6</sup>.

But doubt about the value of theoretical systems is, unfortunately, quasi-general, particularly in the field of theatrical practice.

This status quo has been made more serious within cultural environments in which certain theories and systems, such as Stanislavsky’s, were imposed by force, as unique ways of solving problems which are typical to a field as diverse as theatre.

The dogmatization of a theory causes, amongst other adverse reactions, distrust in any attempt at systematization. But, although Stanislavsky’s system has many principles that drama schools located in geographical zones where freedom of creation did not suffer from an ideological theory have adopted and applied to great methodology benefits, here with us, be it the fault of inadequate translating of the terms and simplistic or incorrect applying, be it due to the instinctive resistance to something which is imposed, the ideas of the system have been adopted in form.

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<sup>6</sup> Quotes from T. Vianu, *Studii de filozofie estetica*, Ed. Casa Școalelor, București, 1939, p. 136.

The principle of Organic Unity between the inner life of the human psyche and the exterior one of the body, as the method of physical actions or the magical what if constitute fundamental theses of this system, which have greatly overpassed a particular, narrowed aspect of pedagogy of the actor's art, and have had an important part to play in the knowledge and evolution of the theatrical art in the twentieth century.

The doubt about the validity of a system also stems from the fact that, as Tudor Vianu explains, "The system is a closed theoretical creation which obviously contrasts with the movement and variety of life" and that "life proves itself to be a rebel to any attempt of systemizing", that "any system shows itself to be careless for a certain aspect of things, about which a new systematic synthesis is attempted, also meant to be replaced in time" and above all because "the old Cartesian optimism no longer belongs to our time. Reality no longer seems entirely rational, reducible to a few simple principles and recompilable from them. For us, the zone of the irrational exists and seems quite broad. That which is given is also un-analyzable, the originality of various aspects of reality has, for us, increased in importance so much, that the possibility of rationally controlling a whole field of it, that is, the very thing that guarantees a system, has become entirely problematic"<sup>7</sup>.

But the great professor reestablishes the balance in the appreciation of the validity of the system, warning us about the collective and historical character of science: "The temporary

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<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, pp. 136, 137, 138.

quality of systems cannot be a serious proof against their validity. The fact that the truth of a system is at some point replaced shows at most that its role has ended, rather than that it had no role or no value”<sup>8</sup>.

Coming back to the very categorical conclusion of Camil Petrescu: “Such a concept is not even possible”, the question is imposed whether the explanation of the causes of this impossibility stems from an equally rigorous research, or whether or not this was not possible either since the assumption of “the angle of view” that the research was started from, which was unsuited to the nature of the object of study, led to this failure, recognized as the impossibility to “foresee the essence”.

Either way, the absolutizing of the impossibility to phrase a concept is, in our opinion, as unacceptable as the absolutizing of a point of view.

We find ourselves faced with two types of motivations, each resulting from a different way of thinking. A logical inconsistency is revealed, from which it is only natural that only impossibilities will result.

The first motivation refers to the ontology of the object, which due to its nature will never be able to know, and a second motivation results from the research from a historical point of view (on temporary criteria, with limited value in time), on which the knowledge of a certain field is built, for example on the principle of determinism, of immediate causality,

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<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 138.

which, as we shall see, is completely inadequate to the specific nature of the object of interest.

It therefore follows that the reason why a validly phrased concept needed to truly translate this essence could not be obtained, is not because of the phenomenon per se (the object being “the actor’s art”) and is not defined by its nature, but simply by the mismatch between the mentality and the logical mechanism with which one has operated on it.

In other words, the inconsistency between the assumption and the nature of the object can constitute the cause of the “impossibility” of obtaining a satisfying definition of this object.

The continuity of the theses and ideas of philosophers and aestheticians who sought to methodically clarify the nature of a work of art and its creation is based on the conviction that in art there must also exist, as in science, “objective structures”, in opposition with those that maintain that theory is not creative etc., ideas which have birth to a whole spoken literature which is disparaging and ironical about theory in other fields. Passed down from generation to generation, sewing confusion in common thinking and, even more seriously, in specialized fields, “creates, in all of these circumstances, a confusion between object and research, between the type of value of one and the other, which is typical of the state of primitivism of all subjects. To all amateurs and fanatics one can respond that research in art is not the same thing as art itself and in order to raise the

reflection on art to the level of its object, it must be developed up to the ultimate targets of any theoretical reflection”<sup>9</sup>.

But, according to some recent opinions, the actual knowledge, in all fields but above all humanities, must be content with “now and forever, with probabilistic, relatively brute approximations”<sup>10</sup>, since “that which is accessible to conscience are the results of thinking, rarely the processes themselves”<sup>11</sup>, and for us the processes are the very object of interest.

As far as arts are concerned, the same author believes that “it appears ridiculous to be talking about an axiomatic approach of any practical art”<sup>12</sup>.

The ruthless realism of this point of view may appear to be closing definitively the access to our objective, by presenting itself in the form of a definitive statement, which cannot be contradicted because the creation processes have, therefore forever (as in the conclusions of Camil Petrescu), the components, moments, their hidden, impenetrable aspects.

What’s more, the creators being particular and inhomogeneous cases, unmistakable individualities, unique entities which will never repeat themselves, will also never be able to repeat their own experiences. The mental processes are never repeated exactly, cannot be the same, cannot be rendered typical or formulaic, as they never come to be identical.

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<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Suppers, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 324.

The very strict limits of a unique form which can be 'generalized' "would hinder the natural, usual course of the inner processes and within this type of creation they cannot be programmed, as any limitation inhibits the spontaneous processes and "Limits of the form terrorize the spirit".

But what interests us here in the highest degree and what encourages the process of systemization, even that of some limited, partial moments and aspects with different degrees of importance for the wining of elements of knowledge and competence in the provoking and maintaining some authentic processes in the stage creation of the author - despite these obstacles, of the existence of which we have been warned - is the idea with which professor Suppes continues his sentence that we quoted earlier on: "...this way of expression is rational for its part of for the psychological and physical component of this type of action"<sup>13</sup>.

As far as we are concerned, all we aim to achieve is "probabilistic, relatively brute approximations", being aware of the fact that through the theoretical apparatus that we can use - as professional practitioners rather than theoreticians - we would not satisfy the standards and scientific rigor were we to aim for more.

The confessed inability to achieve the elaboration of a "concept" from which a coherent, comprehensive theory of the phenomenon can be attempted, which would be able to explain both the nature of the actor's art, in its specific uniqueness, no matter which variety of its formal diversity it

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<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, p. 24.



manifests itself in, is joined by the impossibility to define the causes that hinder the access to the essence of the phenomenon and its objective laws. This is not defined by the nature of the phenomenon itself, but rather by its methods of approach and more specifically by the assumption, the angle of view from which one has started and which was not suited to the nature of the object of research.

The logical framing, a priori, of the object in a category of unspecific objects is nothing else but a preconceived idea which compromises, from the very beginning, any intention of knowing, rendering any effort useless. Thus, the framing of the actor's art whether in the category of the impenetrable objects, or in the one of cognoscible objects from the perspective of the strict determinism and the applying of their nature based on classical logic, remains without a result because the nature of the actor and the specific phenomenon of the stage creation does not allow itself to be explained through the mechanisms of classical binary logic.

Returning to the initial question (what is the actor's art?), one might be able to give an answer, or even more than one, as one has, in fact, throughout the history of theatre.

These would, however, prove to be just as unsatisfactory to the one asking the question, as they are awkward for the one who is being asked, because, as strange as it might seem to us, the actor's art does not allow itself to be explained, in its totality, by reasoning according to classical logic, as, in our opinion, "this overruns the principle of the identity and

noncontradiction: a thing is what it is, unable to be and at the same time not be”<sup>14</sup>.

The consequence is clear, the research of the actor's nature and of the essence of their art based on Aristotelian logic does not lead to satisfactory results. Another way must be found.

Referring to the logical mechanisms of primitive civilizations, prof. Anton Dumitriu points out that these emphasize surprising and strange things for our mentality.

Would these not constitute the starting point towards another path?...

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<sup>14</sup> Anton Dumitriu, *Istoria Logicii*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1975, p. 19.

## IV. The Actor's Art And The Logical Mechanisms

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Unfortunately, the mentality, the logical mechanisms, have played a less relevant role in the vision and research of those who wrote about actors and their art. As such, even in the cases in which the functions of thinking were not avoided, these were approached from a perspective which, oddly, even though it was meant to give them a maximum importance, reduced them to the condition of instrumental components, to the condition of means, of mere tools.

Situated in the opposition “sense - sensibility”, in one of the most important theoretical writings on dramatic art, *Paradox of the Actor* by Denis Diderot, sense becomes one of the terms of an alternative, from which it results that this could be replaced by “something else”, of an equal importance and value.

In other words, by approaching the problematic of thinking within the phenomenon of the creation of the actor from the perspective of classical logic, or sense, or sensibility, means that, in those cases only, depending on necessity or taste, therefore according to certain options, at the base of the stage act lies sense alone, and other times this founding function can be fulfilled by sensibility. Not only can one of the two terms not be absent, but what's more, classic binary logic

cannot even accept that one thing can be both terms at the same time.

It is through this logic that the nature of things which exist is explained: the rigor of philosophical thinking of Diderot framed by default, *a priori*, therefore by logical thinking, the whole problematic of the actor's creation, because the laws of logic made them opt for one of the terms of the alternative: the actor's art could only be either sense or sensibility, since "A thing is what it is", as the principle of identity requires, and the one of noncontradiction decrees that a thing cannot "be and at the same time not be"<sup>15</sup>.

Therefore, the actor's art is enough for Diderot - very much because of logical rigor and theoretical excess - either sense, or sensibility, the third solution being nonexistent. "*Tertium non datur*".

The time in which Diderot lived was the time of the triumph of clear and demonstrable ideas, of the small perceptions, of the principle of certainty, of the immediate causality, of strict determinism, and for the great encyclopedist things and phenomena the nature of which cannot be explained today through other logical forms, unleashed from the shackles of the "excluded third", would have been considered as being outside of logic, aberrations.

To delay the rethinking of the whole theoretical apparatus starting by framing the actor and their art in other possible logical mechanisms the validity of which has been experimentally and mathematically tested and the laws of

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<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, pp. 18, 19.

which explains and stabilizes atomic and subatomic phenomena which correspond to the concepts of limited relativity, of contradictory dynamic logic, of the probability of theories, of uncertainty and incompleteness, and which are best matched, as scientists argue, with psychic and spiritual phenomena, would mean to be content with the conclusion that Camil Petrescu formulated and we would therefore have to “admit that we have been unable to find a validly formulated concept, that truly translates this essence”, thereby also being left “with the feeling that such a concept is in fact not possible”.

Through scientific conquest, today it is not only possible, but compulsory that we consider logically the fact that the actor’s art can certainly be several things at once, that now logical mechanisms are known which explain the nature of certain things which were inconceivable through classical binary logic.

Today it is known that there are logical mechanisms the principles of which accept for one thing to be what it is while at the same time not being, to be something and at the same time something else, to be something which is neither a concrete presence, neither an absolute absence, therefore being two or more things at once, therefore, contrary to classical logic, for there to be a third logical solution, and the fourth, and the fifth, etc. For us, the actor’s art is two things at the same time: both sense and sensibility. During the authentic creation, the actor is a person with two or more identities.

A simple conclusion follows, which gets one to think: the actor has always founded their faith naturally on another type of thinking as well, on a different logical mechanism than classical binary logic, on a particular mentality, which made it possible to surpass the limits imposed by formal logic, without this fact necessarily being acknowledged and verbalized.

## V. The Actor's Art and the Logical Structure of Primitive Mentality

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Scientists have shown that the evolution of human intelligence was neither unique, nor linear.

Different types of mentality correspond to humankind, in accordance with the space, the stylistic horizon within which human communities developed.

Starting from the ideas of the French sociological schools, its notorious representatives E. Durkheim and then L. Lévy-Brühl believe that “different mentalities will correspond to different mentalities”<sup>16</sup>. Even though they find this name unsuitable, the great logics professor Anton Dumitriu defines primitive mentality as an “intellectual structure of the human

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<sup>16</sup> *Idem.*

living in primitively organized societies”, showing that the “*logicity*” of the primitive mentality “is itself governed by certain logical ideas and rules, albeit not explicit ones”, that “the primitive thinking uses collective representations in which a great number of emotional and motor elements come into play” and that these elements form a certain habituality “which becomes a mental structure and makes the very perception of primitive humans orient itself differently to our own”.<sup>17</sup> The characteristics that Lévy-Brühl deciphers in the manner of functioning of the mechanism of the primitive logical structure constitute benchmarks of a particular importance for a new way of access towards knowing the nature of the actor and their creative process.

Lévy-Brühl introduces the notion of participation mystique, according to which things and phenomena are not linked to each other merely through exterior, visible, “collateral” bounds, but also through that which is common to all things, while being invisible and “reflected in common presentations”<sup>18</sup>. The notion of participation mystique is difficult to explain. Socrates in the Parmenides dialogue by Plato, confesses, swearing on Zeus, that it would not be easy for him to explain it.

How does the participation mystique work?

Using the example offered by the discovery of a tribe from the Brazilian jungle, Lévy-Brühl shows that explorers were very surprised when the members of the “Bororó” tribe

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

declared that they were Bororó, but affirmed with the same conviction that they were “Arara”, namely red parrots that live in the same region.

It has been observed, explains professor Anton Dumitriu, that “they affirm that they are in fact, essentially and literally, Arara parrots”<sup>19</sup>. This is not at all about symbolic speaking, about a totemic link between them and the parrots, as we would tend to explain it, but about a substantial one.

Lévy-Brühl explains the way of conceiving logical relationships of this kind, incomprehensible and bizarre to us, through the concept of participation mystique which he states in “*Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*”, thusly: “In the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena, can be, in a way that is incomprehensible to us, both themselves and something else at the same time”<sup>20</sup>.

On the second characteristic of primitive thinking that Lévy-Brühl defines as “prelogical”, professor Anton Dumitriu shows that: “the mentality of the primitives is not antilogical, as it functions in general the same way as the civilized people’s, but the mechanism of their thinking sometimes functions on the basis of elements which are completely alien to our mentality”.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the mental functions of primitive people are based on “a different material which does not appear within the mental functioning

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.



of the civilized individual”, that “the primitives do not form abstract concepts per se, in certain fields, but rather images, and these are saturated by psychological elements which define certain rather bizarre stances”<sup>21</sup>.

The third characteristic of primitive mentality is “thinking through images”. It is also within this characteristic that we can find sufficient elements to allow certain associations with the actor’s way of thinking during the stage act. In comparison to our concepts which are surrounded by a sort of logical potential, the elements on which the primitives rely are surrounded by a very variable psychic atmosphere, capable of deforming images at any time. “Drawings, sculptures in which fragments of beings and different things are combined in a fantastical manner, while still giving the impression of forming a whole, which is often highly suggestive, people with hawk heads, people covered in feathers, reveal a fertile imagination and one of great inner psychological tension, which generates artistic objects”<sup>22</sup>.

It is also from professor Anton Dumitriu that we learn that in the languages of some Native American tribes there is a great richness of nuance that language can achieve. Even the numeric system depends on what is being counted. Some languages have a term not for “three”, but for “three reindeer”, “three fish”, or there is a great number of words to denote different types of walking (33 ways of walking and stepping, in

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<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, pp. 22-23.

the Ewe tribe, quoted by the German ethnographer Westermann)<sup>23</sup>.

The need for concrete expression, for expressing the particularities of actions, corresponds to the need for expressing oneself in images as through painting or drawing, for placing something in space and time.

Professor Anton Dumitriu quotes the conclusion of Schoolcraft which is useful to our thesis: "It therefore results that the languages of inferior societies always express their ideas on objects and actions in the way that they are presented to the eyes and ears"<sup>24</sup>.

Moreover, the general conclusions of professor Anton Dumitriu on the thinking of people living in primitive societies are conclusive for the differences in the mental elaboration of material within the conscience of the civilized ones: the primitive human relies "rather on images than on abstract concepts. This means that they are much more directly articulated by the surrounding reality, as they are directly linked to it through their senses. Their reality is reflected in their spirit as it would in a mirror"<sup>25</sup>.

The mirror effect, of reflection, is the psychic process which is typical to "the vulnerability potential" of the human and understood as raw material for the actor's work.

In comparison to the civilized human who "through the continuous rendering abstract of what is real, pushed to the

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem.*

maximum in mathematical symbolism, has moved away from the immediate reality”...“the primitive is directly attached to the world of the senses, by living it, whereas the civilized one is attached to the world of the senses by thinking it”<sup>26</sup>.

This means that if the civilized one, thinking in concepts, is capable of rendering reality abstract, to transpose it into symbols, to calculate it, to reach such intellectual development as to be able to phrase concepts, the primitive one has, in return, “a grasp of matter, an intimate connection to it, which gives a knowledge of things that can appear surprising, such as certain medical or meteorological knowledge”<sup>27</sup> and which make them predisposed to the creation of some objects of art of rare beauty.

Whoever grew up in the country and knows the structures of peasant life from the inside understands them differently to a city person. They understand the rituals differently, such as, for instance, the beginning and end of certain types of activity, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, understands the quality of the relationship between humans and plants, grains of wheat and corn, with fruit, with tools, the very special relationship with animals, with the horses that aid them in their work, with the sheep that feed and dress them, with the colors of the sky, with the clouds, with the direction and intensity of the wind, with the color of leaves, with bread and water, with their taste, with the change of the seasons, and not lastly with the events which take place in their family,

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<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

close relatives or the whole community, with wedding ceremonies, childbirth and death. Between the real wine maker and the vine, for example, there is an affective relationship similar to that between the parent and their child. The pathos of the peasant, their power to toil in heat or rain, to die for their land, as the need to shout when overwhelmed with joy, or to wail mixing words and images, are expressions of a specific way of thinking, in which “the participation mystique” manifests itself in each gesture.

The corollary of all these observations is made up of the last and most important characteristic that prof. Dumitriu defines as “The polyvalent logical structure of primitive mentality” which also constitutes the clearest explanation of the way of functioning of the mechanism of primitive thinking and the “participation” mystique.

In order to more easily understand the bizarre participation mystique through which a Bororó states that they are, at the same time, an Arara parrot, Lévi Brühl considers this to not be “normal”, as it violates the principles of identity and of the contradiction of classical binary logic. Prof. Dumitriu offers us an example from modern physics. It has been noted that the electron – the electrical element which is one of the constituents of matter – behaves in certain experiments literally like a wave, and in others effectively like a corpuscle, thereby proving that it in fact has a dual nature, that it is both wave and corpuscle, which, of course “cannot be accepted in classical logic, therefore polyvalent logic had to be

resorted to, thus applying to these phenomena a trivalent scheme”<sup>28</sup>.

Thus, we know that certain physical phenomena, which do not fit bivalent schemes, can be perfectly fitted into polyvalent schemes, to which the “excluded third” no longer applies. In bivalent logic one thing either is or is not, the third possibility does not exist, “*tertium non datur*”.

As we saw, in trivalent logic this principle no longer applies, as such a system or sentence is either true or false, or it can have another value, which is neither true nor false.

Professor Anton Dumitriu explained the way of functioning of the mechanisms of polyvalent logic, thereby making it possible to surpass the limits of understanding imposed by the logical incompatibilities between the beliefs and behaviors which appear in the mentality of the primitive and the classical binary logic of the civilized. “The solution that consequently appears as the most natural to me in the research of primitive mentality is, therefore, to consider this mentality as having a polyvalent structural form. The nature of some things in the primitive conception can have a duality which is essential, just like the electron in physics”<sup>29</sup>.

Why have we insisted so much on knowing the logical forms of primitive mentality?

Because between the problematic of primitive mentality and that of the mentality of the authentic actor, there are common characteristics. This is a natural thing if we

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<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

consider that between the two there is a fundamental bond of continuity. Reminiscences of “thinking in images”, of “concrete thinking with a given object”, in images which are “saturated with psychic elements”, in which “affective logic” prevails and which manifest themselves in the thought process of the actor during the authentic stage act, lead towards the necessity of accepting other realities and variations in forms of thinking, others than those that govern the thought process of a person accustomed to thinking only through formal binary logic.

Compared to regular logic, this way of thinking presents itself as a “meta-logic” which is neither “pre-logic” nor “antilogic”, but rather a “different” logic – as the master says – through the spectrum of which things and phenomena are endowed with new, unexpected meanings.

## VI. The Actor’s Art is a specific logical mechanism

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For people of archaic societies, explains Mircea Eliade, things are what they are, a tree, a stone, a thunder, but at the same time they are something else, namely the materialized meaning of the force that created them, which means that, for them, the objects of reality have another dimension, invisible at first sight, hidden, mysterious, from the deciphering of

which stems what is the most important aspect for those things, “their essence”, the “more real” meaning of their existence, the truth of the totality which they represent and that they are part of.

Under these circumstances, the explanation of these things is always closely linked to their origin. This implies a different way of being in the world, it means seeing things from the perspective of a specific experience, of the belief and a mentality which gives people a new dimension. Thus, any action of people of archaic societies is preceded by symbolic acts, by the reiteration of the genesis myth. “Medicine people” (healers), before applying any treatment, in order to ensure their success, would recite the history of the genesis of disease. The texts that shamans – the chosen ones – would speak follow the same procedure. It is a way of people of faith, of religious people, to give substance and meaning to each thing, to each action, to each gesture. Faith is a path towards substance.

According to Mircea Eliade, the difference between sacred and profane consists of the very presence or absence of meaning. Sacred is everything that has meaning, and profane is everything that does not. The mystery with which objects are thus imbued is a form of endowing them with attributed that could be concretized at any point, were the necessary conditions met. It is a way of thinking that we can also encounter within the collective representations of rural communities which have preserved their myths, customs and beliefs by which they order their cycles of life and give meaning to their actions and behavior.

The objects of visible reality have, as we saw, an invisible dimension as well. Rilke said: "*In Jedem Ding ist ein Gefangener*" (within each object there is a prisoner). This "prisoner" is in fact the invisible dimension of things which form a virtual potential, a POSSIBILITY.

"What is the greatest interest of the authentic artist?"

"To free the *prisoner*."

"What meaning and what final objective should a good drama school fulfill?"

"It should fulfill all the necessary conditions in order for that which is possible, the vital force of each student become reality, and real-ize themselves, actual-ize themselves."

The French philosopher Henri Bergson believes that the common person only sees that which they are interested in, that which is necessary to them (when one needs a coat, for example, we see all the coats that "strut" around us, we look for coats in all windows).

The nature of the artist also "sees" things it does not necessarily need, a sunrise or a sunset, a cloud, a color, it sees or even "hears" the grass grow or a leaf fall. According to this hypothesis, the greatest artist is the one that misses nothing, the one that sees "everything".

A stone is a mere stone until it becomes "a weapon", says Martin Heidegger. Therefore, the stone can become "something else" as well, the stone can be two things at once. But the stone can become, through use, therefore through human action, and three actions at the same time: stone, an artistic object (sculpture) as well as a common object (an ashtray or a candlestick etc.) or a weapon (crime evidence).



This way of thinking, which contradicts common, bivalent logic, and which uses a polyvalent logical scheme, corresponds to the actor's mentality. They believe and can themselves be two things at once. Themselves and somebody else.

Consciously or not, the actor does not operate with polyvalent logic all the time. They also use the classical, Mediterranean, bivalent logic scheme, but, without the conviction that within themselves there is a prisoner (their double) or even several prisoners (their multiple alter egos), their mania (their sacred madness), their genius, would not be fulfilled.

So, the initial point which contains everything and which all stem from, the founding principle of the actor's art is this mentality which works on the basis of the polyvalent logical scheme which accepts and explains logically, coherently, the multiple polyvalent nature of the authentic actor. They are the artist and their work, at the same time. They are the artist and the character, citizen X and character Y. Throughout the authentic stage act, the actor is both their own (civilian) self, as well as Hamlet or Richard, the concepts of whom, their way of thinking, they have adopted.

From this stems necessarily a sentence – our hypothesis – which contains the whole truth about the phenomenon of the specific creation of the actor and which can be demonstrated at any of the key points of the authentic creation process:

THE ACTOR'S ART IS A WAY OF THINKING.

THE ACTOR'S ART IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A SPECIFIC LOGICAL MECHANISM.

It is only secondarily that the actor's art is a way of "doing".

## VII. A necessary redefining

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In the light of these statements which represent the foundation of our thesis, the meaning of the notion of actor – “someone who acts” – learned from the old textbooks and offered by dictionaries, originating from the Latin terms *actio-actionis* – “to act”, and *ago-agere* – “to do” – the one that does, is vague and superficial, since it does not explain the specific type of action that the creative actor undertakes. This etymological explanation is insufficient, incomplete, it does not correspond to the phenomenological meaning of the act that the actor performs during the stage process. An operation of rethinking the relationship between the notion and its meaning is therefore imposed.

The common language is teeming with approximations. Speaking in general is something that dominates common speaking.

Specialized language cannot allow itself a semantic inaccuracy such as actor – the one that acts, released by the “Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary”<sup>30</sup>.

In theatre, the authentic “actor” creates, achieves (brings to the sphere of reality that which is only potential), therefore the actor actualizes latent virtualities from the sphere of the possibility of their own polyphonic individuality.

“The character” of the dramatic text is a possible model which is communicated to us through literal signs, thereby only being a semiotic system. In order for it to become a material system, a live one, it must be created, embodied, brought into actuality, realized, actualized.

The actualization is the specific action, the process created or not by the actor, more specifically, the phenomenon which takes place in its own being.

Therefore, any possibility is closed as to within the notion of actor we continue to consider that any kind of action which takes place on stage can be associated with the fulfillment of the specific part of the actor, least of all with authentic creation. The meaning of the notion of “actor”, which starts from the etymological *actio - actionis* – the one that acts relationship, remains a weak, vague meaning, which circulates in common language and, through uncritical processing, in specialized language.

The ultimate meaning, the ROLE that the actor fulfills on stage is that of creating, of bringing within reality, from the sphere of that which is possible, the vital forces, the virtual

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<sup>30</sup> *Dicționarul Enciclopedic Român*, vol. 1, Ed. Politică, București, 1962.

potentialities, the meaning of freeing the prisoner from their own being and from the things which surround them.

The philosopher Constantin Noica explains the “vital force”, the meaning of which Eminescu was preoccupied with, showing that this is a possibility which awaits the proper conditions in order to enter the realm of reality. “In his understanding (Mihai Eminescu), the vital force is a structure or a packet of structural possibilities, which are waiting to cross into the bosom of reality, should it provide favorable conditions for their realization. And that which deserves to be emphasized is its strength of being that *and only that*”<sup>31</sup>.

All of these cannot be accomplished, cannot “cross” into objective reality if they don’t subsist in the actor’s identity, at the bottom of the drawer of their mind, within the matrix of their thinking, in their zone of expectation, a place from which it happens, in some hour of crisis of the spirit, that the offended vital force appears all of a sudden within the perfectly organized reality if the proper conditions for their appearing have been created, proving that they are not mere improvisations of reality<sup>32</sup>.

The actor’s art exists within a direct and strict relationship with the being, with existing, with becoming, a relationship controlled by “an awareness of the awareness”. (the expression belongs to St. Lupasco)<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> C. Noica, *Introducere La Miracolul Eminescian*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1994, pp. 339-340.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*, p. 340.

<sup>33</sup> St. Lupasco, *Logica Dinamică a contradictoriului*, Ed. Politică, București, 1982, p. 361.

The actor's art, in its true meaning, when the phenomenon is authentic, is the experimentation of becoming a being, according to the phrasing of C. Noica, which offers itself to sight and within the globality of which one cannot distinguish real from possible, actual from potential, concrete from abstract, conscious from intuitive, rational from irrational. That is when the totality of the contradictory human nature of the actor spills into a processual, probabilistic globality, which renders futile any attempt at self-observation, at control and censorship which is usually performed by discursive reason, since, as Tudor Vianu shows, "the subject cannot observe itself while working"<sup>34</sup>.

"Acts cannot be described because one cannot describe what one cannot observe. However, one can only observe either objects (static configurations), or acts (processes) the unraveling of which is slower than the act of observation itself. The movement of a wheel having a superior speed to perception, it cannot be observed", and therefore discursive reason cannot get involved in an attempt to impose a solution, a preconceived alternative, elaborated previously, unless at the risk of ruining the whole gearing of spontaneous self-tuning, of the "becoming" of the creative process.

Unlike the views which consider the interpretation of the line, of the word, tone, gesture, attitude and movement as the matter of the actor's creation, the great schools of dramatic art of the twentieth century, starting with

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<sup>34</sup> Tudor Vianu, *Introducere în teoria valorilor*, Ed. Cugetarea - Georgescu Delafras, București, 1942, pp. 18-19.

Stanislavsky's system, or Lee Strasberg's "Method", just like the explorations of Tairov, Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Kedrov, Gorceakov, Knebel, Michel St. Denis, Charles Dullin, Luis Jovet, Michael Redgrave, Grotowski and many other theatre practitioners and pedagogues, placed at the foundation of the actor's work the principle and the method. Thus, the principle of organic unity between the psychological and the physical life of the actor phrased by Stanislavsky, was taken over and developed by all of those that sought to discover the paths towards that unique center of the actor's creativity which, once activated, triggers naturally, without speculative efforts, the miraculous phenomenon through which all aspects of creation and recreation of the live character are fulfilled, as a result of natural processes of endogenous tuning and self-tuning, influenced and maintained by a founding principle which is correctly formulated in a concept which is specific to the character that the actor takes on.

The problem, therefore, is not what the actor does or how they do it, but what happens to them in essence throughout the stage act.

Between "something happening" and "nothing essential happening" lies the difference between truth and fake, between the authenticity and the artificiality of the stage act. The actor that acts like an actor all the time experiences nothing important from a human point of view. They do not create, they do not discover anything that had been unknown and unpredictable up to the moment of creation, they pre-do and pretend\* (Translator's note: Ro *preface* = *pretend*; *pre* = previously, *face* = *do*) based on something which is already

known. Their stage action therefore has nognoseological, formative value, as a new value would.

The mentality, the logical mechanism which is typical to the character, the concept which the actor adopts are a possible dynamic founding principle, capable of triggering the substitutive imagination as the first condition of the actor's creativity. Once the concept is adopted, the actor cannot proceed in any way except at the risk of falling into the compromises of the dilettante, for whom the sole procedure is the eclecticism, which is the opposite term to specificity.

"The concept" being, in fact, the way of thinking of the character that has been undertaken, it constitutes a risk at the same time.

The artist - once they have offered themselves the instruments of thinking and feeling, the whole sensory apparatus, through the transfer of concepts from them to the character with the help of substitutive imagination - practically has nothing left with which to operate in order to correct, better the acts, gestures, behaviors, which the whole existential itinerary of the undertaken character, except at the risk of breaking the chain of the creative process.

There is a great and therefore very obvious difference between that which is true and that which is false, that which is authentic and that which is artificial, acted. Most times the artifice, the falsehood, are consequences of an erroneous understanding of the concept of "act".

Authentic creation is unique, undividable and unrepeatable. Any retake is different, but in an equally unique way. This is a consequence of the manifestation of "globality",

of the spontaneity as a specific syncretic phenomenon through which the momentary genius is revealed which manifests itself in each person when they are in a situation of crisis, when, without them being ready, something from within them pushes them to do, or to say, exactly what they must in order to get themselves out of an extreme situation. "... the older psychological theories of meaning, built entirely on principles of association, have been responsible for the degradation of the importance ascribed to the probabilistic processes of association from the mental life of each of us. (...) in the same way as most of our thinking processes, the production and the receipt of verbal statements is not under conscious control. They can be controlled consciously only temporarily and thanks to some great efforts of concentration. I cannot observe myself during the process of recognition of a familiar face, of a known perfume or the voice of a person that is dear to me... That which is accessible to the conscience is the results of thinking, rarely the processes themselves... the unconscious mechanisms which guide our thinking processes use in an essential way the principles of association, principles which have an intrinsically probabilistic character"<sup>35</sup>.

Repetition in a similar, identical, congruent manner of behaviors is impossible. Each retake is a new journey. The actor who trusts repetition, stereotyping, is deluding themselves, is lying to themselves and is in fact denying their own talent.

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<sup>35</sup> Patrick Suppes, *Metafizica probabilistică*, Ed. Humanitas, București, pp. 260-261.



There is a semi-unanimity in the idea that we cannot foresee our inner development.

“The intentions and actions float over a sea of random events... To act is in many ways the same as to speak, most of the time we do not phrase in a conscious and premeditated manner the sentences that we speak. They roll about in irregular configurations and dimensions. Just like the ones listening to us, we usually do not know what we are about to say until we have heard that which is being said. It is the same with actions and decisions. We are directed by our past and our hormones in a way that we have no hope of understanding consciously. The recognition of this fact is part of a realist theory of rationality. The conscious intentions can form restraints over that what we do, but it is wrong to believe that this simmering cauldron of our unconscious impulses could be temperate through introspection... we do what we do as an expression of some impulses which are in part random and which we will never be able to fully understand in a conscious manner”<sup>36</sup>.

Authentic creations are normal, natural, as they are generated by their founding principle, as they become under the action of the laws of unity and globality of syncretic phenomena, they are contradictory, dynamic human TOTALITIES, indivisible and unmistakable.

The phenomenon of the actor’s creation is a line of unique unrepeatable processes which can be neither reduced, not bonified through will, as the “artisans” and dilettantes

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<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, pp. 332-333.

believe, except at the risk of provoking some collapses which are always fatal for living systems.

In some languages, the theatre artists is not called “actor”. Translated, the equivalents add to the meaning the first significations which derive from the functions which the theatre artist must fulfill.

In German they are *der Schauspieler* (*Schau* from *schauen* - to watch and *der Spieler* - the player, the player that one watches).

In French, along with *acteur*, the version *comédien* is also used. In the view of the great actor and theatre pedagogue Louis Jouve, *acteur* is “the personality artists” who creates characters “according to their own soul”, namely, as it is said in theatre, “they bring all the parts to themselves”, and a *comédien* is that type of changeable artist who eclipses their own personality in order to emphasize the character, the actor who changes from part to part to the point where sometimes they are unrecognizable.

Some Slavic languages also have alternatives to the word *aktior*. In Serbian, they are a *glumač*, the one that plays, they do not say *teatr* like in Russian, but *pozorište* - place with a stage, a place where attention is captured.

In Croatian, theatre is called *kazalište*, place for speaking, for articulating, or in Slovenian, *gledalište*, place for watching.

Particularly instructive for us European, for the more nuanced understanding of the functions of the actor in the stage space, are the associations of meanings of words from the theatrical vocabulary of the Far East.

In Japanese, *NO* means *brain, skill, talent, art, craft*. Acting is called *ghei*, and *gheino* means *masterfulness*, *gheika* = *artist*, *gheikidan* = *company of actors*, *dan* = *act*, *kidan* = *anecdote*, *ghekameans* *nourishment*, *ghekijo* = *theatre building*, and *ghekido* means *anger, fury, destruction*, *ghekirestu* – *obstinacy, vehemence, violence*, *ghekiretsuna-vehement, drastic, unstoppable, violent*.

In the language of origin of European theatre, ancient Greek, actors were called *IPOCRITES*, according to the *Modern Romanian Dictionary*<sup>37</sup>, a hypocrite is someone who “feigns feelings that they do not have; deceiving, fake”.

Therefore, playing, transposing, thinking, masterfulness, craft, art, brain, color, hypocrisy, anger, obstinacy, fury, vehemence, severity, defeat, obliteration, drama, violence, are meanings which are implied in the understanding and defining of the notion of ACTOR.

Through their own being, the actor puts to trial the human’s capacity to experiment life situations and therefore their capacity to stand the tensions of elevation and fall, they test behaviors of heroes and monsters, titans and pigmies placed in extreme situations, in order to know human nature in all its contradictory complexity and in its unpredictable diversity.

But the actor’s art is not unique and unitary.

Just like intelligence, art did not have a linear evolution, throughout time a great diversity of ways have been developed. And we are not talking only about the differences

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<sup>37</sup> Ed. Academiei R.P.R., 1985, p. 392.

created by cultural spaces and horizons, “stylistics” within which specific mentalities were produced and therefore specific forms of thought and expression, unlike the differences between artistic individualities from within those very communities, of the force of personalities which were imposed as diverse models of the same timeframe.

The diversity of the forms of expressions in acting is enriched with each great actor.

The actor’s art is reinvented with each great personality, and personalities are unrepeatably. It is usually said that anyone is replaceable. Nothing further from the truth when it comes to creative personalities. Along with the disappearance of a great actor, the specific type of actor art disappears from theatrical diversity. Consolation is to be found in rebirth, in the continuous reinventing of ways, in the inexhaustible renewal of the generations of artists.

But, beyond theoretical idealisms, theatre is confronted in its daily practice with a prosaic reality within which, put simply, two categories of actors face each other: authentic actors and false actors, just as beyond the diversity of forms, types, kinds etc., ultimately there are only two types of theatre: “good” theatre and “bad” theatre. The arithmetical rapport between these is, more often than not, unfortunately, unfavorable to good theatre.

The tendency of common judgment is to explain this reality only through the presence or absence of “talent”, of natural vocation, or, in some exceptional cases, of genius.

But beyond this first level of judgment, the highest degree of responsibility for this state of things lies with drama

schools, and the precarity, in many cases, of the formative education of the servants of theatre. “Too often does it occur that actors build their work over doctrine waste and that is not their fault, but the fault of mortal schools which have sprung all over the world”<sup>38</sup>.

## VIII. Unity and diversity in the Actor's Art

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As part of his trial of dogmatism, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers shows that “Truth is nowhere else but in the multitude of truths”, that “each point of view becomes false at the point when it considers itself to be the only valid one, trying to explain everything through its own perspective”<sup>39</sup>.

However, the multitude of truths is confusing, just like the multitude of the ways in which objects and phenomena manifest themselves.

The diversity of each field is troubling, among other reasons because it encompasses, along with authentic models, the heap of degraded forms, byproducts, imitation,

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Brook, *Immediate Theatre*, A.T.M. Collection.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Texte filozofice*, Ed. Politică, București, pp. 12 and 16.

replacements, fakes. Imposture is legitimized, usually, as the right to diversity. The need for success, the chase for originality, amplifies the otherwise permanent tendency of the principle of diversity to eliminate the opposite term, the one of unity, from the concept of "Unity in Diversity" on which the subjects and objects that are part of the same species are defined.

In theatre practice, for instance, the confusion between the actor's art and the inauthentic forms, which only imitate the exterior characteristics of this artistic species, has led and is leading to the widespread mentality, even in the ranks of, we might as well say it, professionals and some theoreticians, with no specific training, for whom each action that any given person on stage performs in approximate accordance with the collateral attributes of acting can be assimilated within the actor's art and is often appreciated as such with more leniency than in music, the practice of which everyone agrees that solid training is required. Theatre is the artistic field most easily taken on by amateurs, as certain sports games, as their objectives are relatively simple and widely accessible.

Practiced for leisure and disinterestedly, theatrical amateurism constitutes itself in a useful and specific form of culture which deserves interest and respect for its sincerity. The awkwardness and naivety of expression become qualities through which specific manners of communities have been perpetuated, where artistic forms of great beauty, originality, and richness of meaning, have been distilled from ancient times, combining types with no borders, distinct from each other, keeping and prolonging up to present time the beauty and mystery of sung, danced and spoken rituals, which reach

the sublime more than once through the purity of faith, through simplicity, through impeccable aesthetic taste, through the laconism and density of ideas, as well as through rigor of expressions.

The fir tree, the Fates, the sung dances of the Căpâlna girls, the dialogues of wedding participants, the lamentations, the shouting dances of lads, “căiuții” (Regional version of the words *căluții*, meaning *little horses*), “the goats”, the mask dance of the “*uglies*” from Neamț and not least the wonderful Unscripted Theatre from the town on Șanț (Bistrița Năsăud), are examples of performances through which common people, amateurs, access the most refined forms of art, which shows itself to be on of the paths to the sublime. The human-made thing is sanctified through sincerity and faith and above all it shows us how one can unshackle the grace and light that is carried by the spirit, the “ghost” of an entire race.

However, as soon as it loses the initial motivation of the artistic gesture, it loses its candidness, its naivety, its purity of sincerity in expression, the amateur becomes a pretender, they become the dilettante who professes the illusion that they “know” and they “can” do something. Imitating professionalism, but lacking competence, knowledge of principles, rules, and specific criteria, the dilettante will always find themselves at the periphery of art. They are a stranger to meaning, to aesthetic rigor. Their only way of “footing it” in the courtyard of art, which in fact constitutes, as is well known, the main characteristic of dilettantism, remains eclecticism (the random mix, with no specific criterion, with no principles, with no ordinating point of view, with no premises, compiling,

adjusting procedures and means, without knowing or observing objective rules of a specific field).

It is also through the right to diversity that these byproducts are legitimized, which, despite the evidence, are sometimes acclaimed with loud jubilation as “originalities” and even preferred by the consumers of one-day trends.

Not re-establishing the interest in maintaining a relative balance between the two terms of the concept “Unity in Diversity” leads, sooner or later, to crises with grave consequences for the fields in which they occur.

The history of humankind is full of examples in which tragedies of gigantic proportions took place or take place currently, triggered by the hypertrophy of the function of diversity up to the complete elimination of the opposite term from within the concept “Unity in Diversity”, which is definitory for the human species.

The authority of the principle of human Unity, from which the concepts of Humanism and human rights stem, is simply pulverized by the ideas and concepts for which what is of utmost interest are the characteristics that separate and distinguish individuals of the human species from one another. The Holocaust, pogroms, ethnic, racial, religious, political cleansing, are the deadly victories of the principle of diversity.

Unprotected by the opposite term, by the principle of Unity, a human is enough for another human, even now, at the end of the twentieth century, despite so many organisms and



international forums for protecting human, animal, dog, rat, and even “excrement”<sup>40</sup>.

It is in art as well that the exacerbation of the authority of one of the two terms of the concept “Unity in Diversity”, in any artistic type or category, leads to specific crises.

But, at the same time, the hypertrophy of the principle of Unity to the damage of the term Diversity would irremediably lead to leveling, homogenization, and ultimately to annihilating stereotyping. Humankind also performed this type of experiments. Their promoters were, in turn, or concomitantly, all forms of totalitarian lay power as well as religious fundamentalism, through the suppressing of all forms of manifestation of diversity.

The hypertrophy of the principle of Diversity, to the detriment of the one of Unity, leads, in acting, to a type of crisis, the most widespread one, namely where one is no longer able to find in all varieties of the forms of manifestation of actors’ diversity those essential particularities, through which the very unmistakable specific of this artistic species, humanity, which ensures the authenticity of organic unity between the psyche and the physical, between the spiritual and the material features of humans. In other words, there are many such stage appearances which have nothing that defines humanity to substantiate the stage act, on the one hand, or anything that defines the actor, as a creative subject, on the other hand. They, the actor human, cannot be a mere symbolic

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<sup>40</sup> The study “Unitatea omului”, Edgar Morin Massimo Pattell, from *Interdisciplinaritatea și științele umane*, Ed. Politică, București, 1986, p. 274.

presence, because their presence is effectively-objective, and that which defines the process of creation in the actor's art is a dynamic and unmistakable phenomenon of surpassing the one-dimensional limits of their person.

That which has always constituted a live reality of theatre is not only the variety of dramaturgical content, of the means and forms of expression, which can thusly be defined according to genres, styles, schools, currents etc., as well as a great variety of quality, of the performance of the actor human. The diversity of effective and essential modifications that the actor is capable of.

Diversity is not only in content and form, but also in the quality of exercising and evaluating the fulfillment (or unfulfillment) of the functions of acting.

The excess of diversity reactivates the need for unity.

The practitioner feels permanently the need for a different knowledge other than the one of diversity, which, no matter how well ordered scientifically, (as in fact it is in classifications which have been compiled in libraries according to eras, styles, genres, currents and schools, which remain an order or the varieties of diversity, of contents and forms of expression, serving erudite knowledge very well), does not satisfy that way of knowing which leads the practitioner to the competence of producing and reproducing the psychic processes typical of the phenomenon of authentic stage creation. For this, an essential knowledge is needed, which the spirit of the practitioner feels diffusely as a permanent need of "totality".

In other words, there is a need for the global knowledge of the uniqueness which is hidden, dynamic and contradictory, but compulsory present in all forms of artistic diversity.

The actor's art begins and perishes with each great actor. In theory, the actor's art is the same thing for all actors, but practically, it is a different thing for each of them.

Unlike other arts, or professions, the giant fund of forms accumulated throughout two millennia of European theatre can be useful to them only to a limited extent, as information and orientation, in order to distinguish possible landmarks of an own way through which they can rediscover that which was formerly not existent: the profoundly original image of the world and of life, as it is felt, perceived and expressed by their own subjective personality, critical and changeable. As mentioned previously, the actor's art is reinvented and redefined by each authentic actor.

Imitation, adaptation and mechanical reproduction, following previous models, do not satisfy any general or particular necessity. The spiritual phenomena cannot be known in their essence except through own experimentation. The one who wishes to be an authentic actor has no choice. The sacrifice of experimenting on oneself must take place each time, with each exercise, because the discovery of other identities or human structures, which they are called upon to undertake and embody, are not achieved except, paradoxically, through their own individuality, through their own psychosomatic "totality", through their own identity.

In other words, the authentic art of the actor is only tested through experimentation undertaken by each creative subject capable of actualizing a virtual otherness, the double or the multiples (the vital forces of their own personalities, through real as opposed to mere symbolic taking on of some possible and unpredictable ways of existing). And this depends to the highest extent on how they learned to think about themselves, about their unsuspected resources, as well as about what is, in fact, the actor's art, in the school where they were formed.

Any drama school is a minefield, with traps, constantly threatened by great jeopardies.

The good intention of learning is constantly mined by the bad tendency to mechanically and hurriedly adopt things by the student, as well as the tradition of directly, practically and empirically teaching certain fragments of masterfulness by the coaches.

The superior institutionalized drama school remains, though, in most cases and despite renewals brought about by the evolution of knowledge, through the evolution of vocabulary, of styles, in accordance with the general evolution of human society, a delayed expression (sometimes well masked by rhetoric statements) of some mentalities, customs, and medieval doctrines, of learning crafts through imitation and being told off, not surpassing the status of some traditional arts and crafts schools in which one is mainly taught: how to speak, how to stand and how to do.

There are numerous expressions of the main incompatibilities between the didactic mental structures built

on the old principles of uncertainty, of direct causality, of the model and indication, as expressions of mechanical, scholastic thinking, which “has taken upon itself the mission of explaining all things created”<sup>41</sup>. Because these were necessary from the perspective of dogmas that had a ready-made answer for each question.

The final objectives of pedagogy of the modern post-Stanislawsky actor’s art, even though they apparently pursue the same ideals, have been modified to such an extent that they have become a completely different thing, and since their objective has changed, naturally the methods through which they are reached could not remain the same. Whether we like it or not, we must admit that the superior institutionalized drama school maintains, through its organizational and doctrinal structure, at least seven expressions of incompatibility that we can define and which are opposed to the principle that was expressed all the way back to the eighteenth century by Lessing, a principle which should become – the essence of modern pedagogy of modern art, “More precious than truth I find the path to truth”.

1. The school and the old methods impose through “notes” constraint and obedience, instead of free expression.

Without freedom there is no creation. Constraint leads to self-censorship of behavior, to duplicity. Sincerity is demanded, but in reality, the contrary is encouraged: lie, hypocrisy, falsification.

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<sup>41</sup> Charles S. Pierce, *Semnificație și acțiune*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1990, p. 67.

Constraint destroys live and spontaneous processes.

2. The criteria of the institutionalized school are focused on the marking system, of prematurely placing students in categories of value which become a malady of the creative climate. The climate is realized with difficulty within a working environment. It is not understood that theatre is always “WE” and never “I”, as the American coach Viola Spolin stated, and the first condition of the creativity of a group is “free cohesion”, mutual trust.

The hierarchization of good and bad and marking help to sharpen vanity, selfishness, competition (often unfair), harassment, envy and inhibition, the feeling of frustration.

Knowing that the winners, as in sport or other performance fields, are not always the same, because the subjects do not start from the same natural endowment and do not develop uniformly, marking is not compatible with the creativity or the psychology of the subject who finds themselves in the course of initiation.

Trust in oneself and in their peers is the main ingredient of cohesion within a team.

3. The cultivation of the model and molding according to an ideal model overturns the meaning or preoccupation from assimilating a method of creation to imitating an exterior behavior.

With the “idealized” person, with people in general, “as they should be”<sup>42</sup>, one cannot satisfy the need for a particular

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<sup>42</sup> Viola Spolin, *Curs de improvizație*, typed text, UNATC library.

subjective truth of a person, and lest of all of the student in the actor's art atelier.

The model and the molding are incompatible with originality, with self-discovery, with live acts, with the self-tuning of natural, spontaneous processes, with self-regenerating phenomena, therefore with the appearance of the unpredictable behavior of the human nature which is dynamic and contradictory.

The moulding which constricts inevitably leads to the sensation of discomfort, generated by the rupture between the object that is being molded and the subject who molds and who should be governed by the principle of "organic unity" and interior, psychic life of the soul and of the physical life of the human body. (The principle which is fundamental both to Stanislavsky's system, as well as to the Method of Lee Strasberg, which is in fact an enriched continuity of "The System").

In circumstances of constraint and physical and psychic discomfort, intuition, subconscious, even discursive reason, will, all psychic processes specific to the Alive are alarmed, blocked, generate inhibition and therefore the "momentary genius" of any human being is no longer able to manifest itself.

4. The principle of the model presents another, extremely serious shortcoming: mechanical thinking and learning, instead of dynamic thinking and learning.

Mechanical mentality demolishes the "whole" into "parts", which it then analyses in their inactive state, because movement does not come naturally to it.

This mentality is interested in what the object is LIKE. What are its features and details LIKE?

The answers to the question “what are they LIKE” are descriptive, typical of epic narration.

A different principle corresponds to the DRAMATIC genre, which can be revealed by answering the questions WHAT? and WHY?, which are defined by the miracle of MOVEMENT.

What is imposed, therefore, is Knowing the live human subject in their continuous dynamic, the main characteristic of which is instability, uncertainty. The behavior of the live subject is always merely probable, depending to a great extent on chance.

It is clear that we are faced with two fundamental ways of thinking.

The first one is concerned with OBJECTS and tends to transform even that which is dynamic into static, passive, to deaden that which is alive, and the second one is concerned with SUBJECTS and is typical of research and knowledge of the dynamic structures which are permanently in motion and changing.

We come, thus, to the well know theory of Hegel about the separation of genres, according to which, as the aesthetician G. Lukacs explains in his work “The Historic Novel”, the specific feature of the epic genre “of large proportion” is “the totality of objects”, and the one of the dramatic genre is



“the totality of motion”<sup>43</sup>. The actor can exercise creativity just as well without a text which has been written especially for the stage.

The exercises on simple themes which are done in the drama ateliers prove that high levels of creativity can be reached, often higher than in many of the pseudo creations of some experienced actors throughout an entire show. Great actors playing important parts have been known to succeed nothing more than to mime, to perform like actors, without experiencing anything that was humanly important, no essential change throughout an entire show.

The authenticity of the stage actor, the quality of the psychic mechanisms, the phenomenon of convincing changes do not depend and are not expressly defined by the literary material, but by the capacity and the competence of the actor to trigger and maintain the processes of ACTUALIZATION of virtues hidden within the depth of their own polyphonic personality.

The phenomenon of ACTUALIZING one of the unknown but possible Is of the creative actor constitutes the miraculous component of the authentic stage actor.

This is the paradoxical phenomenon specific to the art of the authentic actor, creativity, through which it is fundamentally distinguished from common, derelict forms of the dilettante theatrical practice, of the “tradespeople”

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<sup>43</sup> Georg Lukacs, *Romanul istoric*, vol. I, Biblioteca pentru toți Collection, Ed. Minerva, București, 1978, p. 138.

professionalism, of institutionalized routine, of the commerce with effects and trivialities from the periphery of art.

Theatre is a convention, a play, therefore an artifice. The situations proposed are fictional, but, through the art of the authentic actor, these are transformed under our very eyes into objective psychological realities and what's more, into significant realities.

These processes do not depend in any way on the literary component or on the aesthetic project of the theatrical act, but exclusively on the creative potential and the actor, on the degree of AUTONOMY and psychological independence that they are conceptually prepared to secure within the ensemble of interdependencies of the mechanism which constitutes the theatrical show, in order to be able to resolve the tensions of (often paralyzing) contradictions between the actor and the literary character, in their favor, meaning in favor of organicity, originality, and psychological complexity particular and specific to their own personality. Who defeats whom? Does the actor "defeat" the part or does the part crush the actor? And what would be the simplest way of assessment in order to establish – even on an initial level – who the winner is? Jerzy Grotowski establishes two simple criteria:

"On the initial level, DO I OR DO I NOT BELIEVE what I see. On the second level, DO I OR DO I NOT UNDERSTAND"<sup>44</sup>.

The theatre critic Valentin Silvestru achieves a remarkable definition of the key issue of the rapport between

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<sup>44</sup> Jerzy Grotowski, *Teatru și ritual, Dialogul neîntrerupt al teatrului în secolul XX*, vol. II, Biblioteca pentru toți Collection.

the actor, the written text and the performance, of the problem of the limits of the actor's freedom, of the specific way in which the actor's freedom within the stage act manifests itself. "...it can be claimed that the actor is a creator with full rights in the realm of arts. Their art has a dual character: it is organically independent, but it only becomes autonomous in the organic ensemble of interdependences which make up the theatrical performance. This autonomy does not dent their originality, however. The stage reality imposes the actor as a "unique" proxy of all literary creators, artists and technicians that create the theatrical act with them"<sup>45</sup>.

The text of the play is not the reality of a dramatic universe, but a reduction of it, which the author communicates through literal marks. The text is, therefore, a codified semiotic system.

The mere act of transposing it, as is often claimed, is nowhere near enough for the stage image to come into being, to become convincing reality.

The stage image, the theatrical act, is a completely different thing to the text, it is a dynamic material system. In order for it to be authentic, convincing, it is necessary that it become a LIVING material system. But neither is the stage image reality itself, but a mere reduction of it. All arts are a reduction of theatre. The actor's art, however, is an exception. It constitutes an IREDUCTIBLE UNIT.

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<sup>45</sup> Valentin Silvestru, *Personajul în teatru*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1966, p. 110.

The actor includes themselves within the ensemble of theatrical conventions, precisely in order to interrupt the chain of all kinds of reductions, in order to fulfill, through the presence of their (bio-psycho-socio-cultural) IREDUCTIBLE ORGANIC UNITY the function of the OPPOSITE TERM of all forms of reductionism of the components of the theatrical convention and through which they are objectified, they become possible, not merely objective realities, but also SIGNIFICANT.

Therefore, that which fundamentally separates the old didactic optics by that which is necessary to all types of performance in accordance with the demands of theatre and film, TV and modern day "video" industry is not a question of merely replacing certain models and schemes verified in time, as one might think, with some new, more ingenious ones, and neither of replacing certain techniques and methods with other, more advanced ones. What this is a bout is a fundamental contradiction, within the depth of a whole system of thinking and acting in the field which is so specific to the pedagogy of the actor's art which has become, in time, incompatible with its own object, with its own definitions, with its actual final methods and objectives. The examples of this incompatibility can be numerous, more or less obvious, but the one that jumps out the most is the definition itself, the name of the basic discipline, which has functioned up until recently in all programs of theatrical teaching and which has remained deeply inscribed in the general mentality and language: "The study of *dramatis personae*".

It is, in a certain way, the same situation which Immanuel Kant had to clarify in “Prolegomena”: “The one who enters a new science, entirely isolated and unique in its own way, with the prejudice of being able to appreciate it with the aid of the knowledge that they claim to have previously acquired – even though they are the very ones whose reality needs to be completely doubted – will not achieve anything more than the impression that they see everywhere only things that they already knew because the phrasing sounds similar; except everything will probably appear unappealing, devoid of meaning and sense, since it does not originate in the thoughts of the author, but only in its own way of thinking, which, through extensive practice, has become second nature to them”<sup>46</sup>.

This subject does not teach one “characters”, “parts”, “personae”, fixed structures, as it is customary, for example, in a music conservatory through the study of opera scores, in order for the alumni to leave carrying a repertory of studied parts.

As for the Personae, they are not given once and for all, but they are in constant formation, as is speaking, which, as semiologists claim, even though it is a finalized process, “it gets reinvented with each use”.

Thus, in this subject one studies processes, methods, ways of producing and reproducing live dynamic structures, using the principle of taking on and adopting conventional

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<sup>46</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomene*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1987, p. 53.

themes which, under our very eyes, through the actor's psychology, become objective realities.

In other words, the main subject is defined as a specific action of virtual possibilities, typical only to the actor's art, not influenced by literature.

The old name of the basic subject - "the study of *dramatis personae*", recently changed, would praise dramaturgy, the semiotic system, more precisely a certain component of it, thereby switching attention from the processual and phenomenological nature of creation which is typical to the actor's art to something else, for instance, to the exclusive study of "*dramatis personae*", which existentially remain and act of philological "interpretation".

The text of a play is a much richer structure, which encompasses, along with *personae*, environments, relations, conflicts, events, ideas, rapports, etc., making up stylistic universes of great complexity, which during the stage act surpass the interest for a certain character.

Like any written message, the text of a play is full of signs, connotations, it is an ample codified semiotic system, through which complex dramatic universes are conveyed.

The stage act is a material system, dynamic and contradictory, a concrete, live reality, which also includes the actor's semiotic system, but without overtaking it.

The main subjects, the actor's art or stage improvisation, are not limited to the study of the semiotic system, to the study of dramaturgy. Their main objective is the initiation and formation of creative personalities, knowing and assimilating the mechanisms and laws of the stage creation,

adopting the principle and methods which are the most efficient in triggering phenomena and processes which generate living material systems which are typical of the actor's creation.

The name *dramatis personae* belongs to a mechanical understanding of the subject, dating back to the classical period of fixed rules, when parts and actors had to fit the clichés, the fixed frames of the "types". Appearance, gestures, behavior, had to correspond to the characteristics which were fixed once and for all to each type: "the noble father", "the comedy father", "the *gris comic*", "the male hero", "the young hero", "the drama leading man", "the comedy leading man", "the intriguer", "the *raisonneur*", "the coquette", "the lady", "the soubrette", "the dramatic ingenue", etc., or of the fixed types of *Commedia del' Arte*. The model would be passed on from generation to generation and would be applied with the maximum of strictness. Thus, along with the definition of *dramatis personae*, gestures were adopted which were specific to each type. The prescription develops, from the very definition, a spirit which comes in opposition to the freedom which is necessary to the creation and the effort of emancipation of the actor's art from other artistic categories, such as literature, plastic art, dance etc.

The old definition "study of *dramatis personae*" reveals a pedagogic mentality which subordinates the actor's act of creation to the principle of literature, instilling within the student's conscience the idea that playing is a secondary activity and that this is only achieved based on preexisting material, without taking into account the fact that the object

of the actor's art is the realization of a product which is yet to be created.

In other words, the old definition would establish from the very start a status for the actor that was derived from the principle of interpretation, which is typical of the philologist, thereby blocking access to the principle of dynamic creation dominated by probability and uncertainty and, therefore, the process of actualization of certain things which do not yet exist. More simply put, the principle of "interpretation" stops the creative process halfway, basing itself only on things which are unknown, gathered through philological information, before this practical experimentation of the situation proposed by the text. Then, what good is talent which discovers in the practical action, through improvisation and intuition, that which through rationality, through philological study, one could never discover?

With a view to accomplish a part, the actor also goes through a period of philological preoccupations, they study, they research, they collect information, they form their own point of view, they interpret, therefore, the literary material, but do not stop there. They surpass the principle of the interpretation of something which is already in existence, in order to achieve their specific objective, founded on another creative principle, to discover something which is yet to be created and the characteristics of which nobody can predict. The actor and the character are in an identical rapport with the parents of an offspring that they have no information about, no certainty before they are born.



If for the theoretician, the “interpretation” of a text is a final objective, for the actor it constitutes an intermediary moment, admittedly with important consequences on the quality of the aesthetic project and the final product, but with no direct connection to the competence and capacity of the materializing of this project. These are part of a different kind of training and action than “the study of *dramatis personae*” and their “interpretation”, they are part of the competence to concretize the aesthetic project, of the capacity to transpose in concrete and objective fact the intentions which do not necessarily come with the text, but with the availabilities for triggering, developing, and maintaining the processes which are specific of the psychic phenomena and the actualization of virtualities, they are part of the competence to take over and adopt the mentality of a different person, thereby being the capacity to substitute and effectively live a different identity.

With regards to the idea of interpretation, many cases are known in theatrical practice of artists who, when they talk about what the part or the show is to be, seduce us with the quality of their profoundly original ideas, but the realization, the concretizing of these ideas is disappointing, containing nothing of which they stated in the project.

With each such experience on of the possible definitions of the “artistic” is revalidated, which consists of the degree of adequacy of artistic ideas listed upon their realization into a concrete image. “The artistic”, according to some, consists of the very rapport between the aesthetic project and its concretizing.

Therefore, the acquiring of the competence of concretizing the aesthetic project of any kind and from any stylistic category of theatrical diversity, imposes itself as the fundamental Object of the main subject.

The principle of the ORGANIC UNITY IN ALL FORMS OF STYLISTIC DIVERSITY of the vast phenomenon of acting, of the varied ways of its manifestation, and its engaging in the mechanisms of the theatrical performance constitutes the OBJECT OF STUDY OF THE SUBJECT OF THE ACTOR'S ART and not just "the interpretation of dramatis personae", as it was defined in the old curricula.

The defining of the fundamental principle, the development of ideas and themes that represent the foundation of a specific coherent and comprehensive theory about the stage act and their methodical applying in various concrete situations constitute the CONTENT OF THE SUBJECT.

The old name of the main subject, The Interpretation of Dramatis Personae, denies from the very start the creator status of the actor. Borrowing vague terms from current, journalistic language, an inadequate, diminishing status is imposed upon the actor from the very beginning, that of an interpreter, thus deprecating their central function of a creator in artistic theatre.

In other words, we should understand that, within the limits of certain variations in intensity and expressivity, whoever tackles a part, be they amateur or professional, interprets, therefore fulfills an act of commentary, of representation and symbolizing, of mere illustration of the conclusions drawn over a pre-existing object, and that this type of "play" can only be a

secondary act in the hierarchy of values, compared to the creation per se, as all it does is render, re-cite, re-present that which is already in existence and well known.

The question therefore arises: can one know what a part, a character is like or at least what they could be like, as long as they are nothing more than a semiotic system, a literal image, an abstraction, an assumption, a mental draft, a literary enounced theme, before they are accomplished, actualized by the actor, that is, before they become a living material system?

In art theatre, the performances of great artistic personalities, of actors struck by genius, as well as of those whose talent has been substantiated by good training, capable of performance, prove that each success is something more than interpreting something already known, and thereby surprising even the most erudite of specialists through that which they discover and invent, through that which they “create”. It is a unique, living reality, a “building” which had not existed up until the accomplishing of the stage act and ceases to exist once that ends. Beyond the stage act, this building is nothing more than a virtuality, a possibility, a quiet and yet unaccomplished VITAL FORCE.

Great actors carry it within themselves.

Through the power of this life-giving probability, on top of the author’s plot, but starting from it, the authentic actor discovers their own plot, different in matter to the author’s.

The dramatic text is an object the destiny of which is separate from that of its creator and which can lie between

covers ad shelves, it can be preserved, as M. Heidegger said about Beethoven's quartets, "like potatoes in a cellar"<sup>47</sup>.

But the dramatic text has a different destination than that of being the object of reading. Its genetic material does not end and is not fulfilled in the library of through the act of reading, but in the theatre, through its "migration" on stage, in the concrete, dynamic, living image.

Viewed from the perspective of the Mimesis principle, the character and the plot of the author have, for the actor, the value of a seed, within the embryo of which we know the future plant lies, but what it will look like, whether and how it will develop we cannot know. It is all but assumptions, promises, potential beginnings.

Just like the seed, the destiny of which is to die in order to give birth to the new plant and offer it its body as nourishment during the first phase of its existence, the dramatic text fulfills the role for which it has been created only if it surpasses its condition as a literary object. The chance for fulfillment, for completion of the dramatic text is its "disintegration" as a coherent and compact literary object and its transformation into something else. And this is also a type of "sacrifice", a type of death and rebirth, a type of "eternal return".

It is necessary for the new plant, the existence of which we can only suspect within the embryo, to sprout, to reveal itself, to "emerge from its lair", that it begins to live under a different form, that it shows itself as a specific phenomenon

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<sup>47</sup> M. Heidegger, *Originea Operei De Artă*, Ed. Univers, București, 1982, p. 33.

which by no means consists of reciting, interpreting, illustrating (the same way that by speaking and “movement” one does not only mean the transposal which many stage professionals and critics seem to be satisfied with).

In order for us to get to know it, the future “plant” must live its own cycle. This will be developed as a new subject, which will in none of the cases be the mere known subject of the author, nor will it be an opinion, an “illusion”, but a new concrete, individualized, objective existence perceived with the senses all throughout the stage performance.

But this new cycle, the necessity and objectivity of which one cannot doubt, is only possible if it fulfills the fundamental condition that the author’s subject, the “seed”, fall on the fertile ground of an authentically creative actor, willing to take the risks of a whole human experience, in order for it to become meaningful. Becoming is a complex and paradoxical phenomenon within the stage act as well, a phenomenon of great depth which dramatically solicits the whole being of the authentic actor. It is a phenomenon that perfectly matches the definition given to the tragic genre by the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu: “A phenomenology of limits and surpassing”, within which all characteristics of both subjects, the author’s and the actor’s, coexist in a paradoxical simultaneity, but they will not be noticeable except with the natural progression of time, which will reveal them alternatively and in just one direction, from the moment of “sprouting” up to the one of “maturing” and “yielding fruit”.

In order to understand the phenomenon of becoming, let us try to free ourselves from the idea of the evolution in the

unique direction on which time elapses and of the limits imposed by immediate causality. Within the spirit, neither the direction nor the duration of time can constitute criteria of stable and definitive value. The direction may be unique no longer, from past to future, but the other way around as well. The spirit can circulate without obstacle in all directions, it can know its future without having moved on from the present or, being in the present, it can relive its past. Also, events can take place without an immediate cause, or at least without a cause that we can know.

Excluding the criterion of time and immediate causality, the whole cycle of development of the new living subject – with all its natural progressions, the sprouting, the development, the budding, the blossoming, the maturing and the fruit yielding, all predetermined within the embryo – can occur instantaneously and not necessarily following an order of the causal evolution imposed by a materialist understanding. The new plant, the actor's character, can be in a relative simultaneity; at the same time, actor and character, literary subject and living subject, as well as the plant in all its states, embryo, bud, flower and fruit, therefore a strictly individualized living system, carrying in each segment and in each moment all the general and particular characteristics of the species that it belongs to.

Like any living system, this is a coherent ensemble of components that are also systematically organized, that are part of each other while at the same time overtake each other, all of them endowed with information and intelligence, with the ability to communicate, with the availability to send and

receive signals, with their own systems of tuning and self-tuning of their behavior, in a state of finding, in other words the attempts must allow themselves the luxury of failure. This tension of the spirit must be compensated through agreeable factors that would render it bearable and productive. This is how the inherent play of creation is born, just like the wave is inherent to swimming. The thought process moves on, through playing, from known to unknown, from predictable to unpredictable, from certain to problematic, from haphazard to strategy, playing does not associate itself to the facile or to the lack of seriousness, but to creation and sensitivity<sup>48</sup>.

According to some definitions, there are four categories of games: competition, luck, simulation, vertigo. According to the opinion of scientists, the degree of importance of the four aspects, agreeable, unpredictable, problematic, and strategical, “differs from one game to another, it depends on the person and the circumstance”<sup>49</sup>.

Unpredictability, the problematic and the strategic are features of a high degree of interest to science, IT, artificial intelligence, the mathematical theory of games, in their contacts with “psychology and engineering, biology and linguistics, thus developing EURISTICS – the study of the activity of solving problems, of discovering solutions”<sup>50</sup>.

The theory of games tackles the making of decisions in situations of competition, “in this theory, the game is defined

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<sup>48</sup> Solomon Marcus, *Artă și știință*, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1966, pp. 74, 75.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

as a situation in which a multitude of rational elements, called PLAYERS, who, successively and independently, in an order rather than in CONDITIONS SPECIFIED through an ensemble of RULES, choose a certain decision out of a given number of possible options. The way of choosing decisions constitutes a STRATEGY”<sup>51</sup>.

Solomon Marcus believes that games can also be appreciated from the point of view of the type of thinking that they require and stimulate: “Logical, combinatory, probabilistic, algorithmic, inductive, analogical, linguistic, and many other types of thinking lead, in various combinations and proportions, to various games, some attested, some virtual”.

According to other opinions, there are three main classes of games<sup>52</sup>:

I. Verbal games, imitative and “magical”, games of initiation.

This category includes children’s games, of all ages, individual and collective entertaining, social games, party games, hazard games, artistic and technical creations, rituals, “magical” games, imitations, etc.

II. Force and competition games, which include acrobatics, rhythm, gymnastics, and sports.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> Translator’s note: the Romanian “joc” translates as “game”, “play”, “playing”, and in certain contexts it is used to describe an actor’s performance; hence, in the original text, the terms “game” and “acting” are expressed through the same word, which could potentially be relevant to the author’s intention in this chapter.



III. Intellectual games – memory games, farcical and quick thinking games, hiding games, geometrical and combinatory games<sup>53</sup>.

Placing theatre and the actor's art in the category of games of simulation or in the category of those of imitation seems natural and satisfactory. But, as soon as we discover that there are other classes and categories which include games of memory, of quick thinking, those of hiding, of farce or of competition, of acrobatics, of luck, etc., from which artistic creation, theatre, acting, are absent, their place being a priori set within the category of simulation and imitation, one can express doubt on the criteria according to which these phenomena were thusly classified.

Setting theatre, the actor's art in the category of games of simulation, or in that of games of imitation, shows a much too shallow knowledge, a reduction in their complexity to their collateral aspects, to that which common mentality thinks about these fields of human action.

One might think that placing them in the class that includes, among others, artistic creation and technique better corresponds to the degree of complexity of these games. But, as long as intellectual games are part of a different class which also contains games of farce, of memory, or quick thinking, but not the ones of creation, it becomes clear that both schemes are influenced by criteria which, at least as far as theatrical

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<sup>53</sup> Solomon Marcus, "*Jocul mereu în discuție*", *Invenție și descoperire*, Ed. Cartea Românească, București, 1989, pp. 149-152.

creation and especially the actor's creation are concerned, do not go beyond the information which is typical to the most superficial experience of a spectator.

It is no great surprise if we consider that theatre, and particularly acting, did not always have their art status recognized throughout time, but were rather seen as minor, trifle occupations, unworthy of "honorable" people.

The responsibility for the way they were or are still regarded today lies not only with the precarious knowledge of the general opinion which has no insight into the secrets of these forms of human manifestation, but also with the precariousness of theatre itself, through its inauthentic forms. The imposture in each specialty puts the whole field in a bad light, and in theatre, unfortunately, the coefficient of imposture is great and the consequences are as expected.

Theatre and the authentic actor's art are games, just as, following the same trail of thought, seen from a different angle, all professions and functions which are considered honorable are, also, games, with specific objectives and rules.

All professions originate in conventions which take form through the "player" subjects to the extent to which conditions, rules and final goals are fulfilled, and they achieve specific performances. The soberest magistrate, surgeon, high prelate or high official plays a game, the rules of which take years of instruction to master, and which they play with more or less talent and success.

Imitators, pretenders, imposters appear in these fields too, miming the collateral, exterior gestures, that only serve to "generally" identify the type of game. But, just as in theatre, it is

also in these types of activities that the costume (white gown, uniform, clerical wear), the instrument, the props do not define the quality of the “player” subjects, but rather that is done by the degree of knowledge, of correctly adopting and applying the specific rules, and by the final result, the specific objective performance.

“Simulation”, “imitation” do not have a good reputation in any field and are sanctioned. Why would it be different in our field?

Is it only because the old errors of the term “Mimesis” have been passed down, a term which has been sitting at the base of classical art ever since ancient times? Errors perpetuate the confusion and compromise between authenticity and imitation, between “playing” (that is, miming) and actually living, verified through real psychological processing done by the actor who takes on the risk of complete substitution – not merely “symbolical” - of another person in order to experiment their behavior in all possible situations that the author proposes.

What would best distinguish the playing actor, the spy or the undercover police officer, who in order to fulfill their mission play a game of hiding, of intellectuality, of luck, etc.? Or the high official who descends incognito among the citizens in order to check the true state of the reality that they govern? These people are also caught in a game that is built on a process of substitution through which the same type of rupture between the destiny of the player and the played, each with their own path, different from each other.

In all these cases we are looking at a process of doubling an identity, both working simultaneously and in quasi total symbiosis, facing unpredictable events which generate problems, to which the player must find momentary solutions which have to be credible and operational from the perspective of the played adopted identity, in order not to reveal themselves and interrupt the game before the desired purpose for which the whole game was “played” is achieved.

The energy which animates all these processes depends on the stakes of the game, on the quality of the motivation, on the WHY of the game and at the same time on the WHAT: what kind of game is being played?

These first questions must be answered not by the actor, but by the “game” through its very nature and unraveling. Therefore, in these situations also we are dealing with two types of realities: the objectivereality of continuity, of which the player themselves are part and an invented, conventional reality of discontinuity, which is the played identity and which paradoxically becomes, through the very game, the more real as the game is taken seriously and played correctly. Thus, the second reality becomes an object – it becomes a concrete reality through the very material, living, present concreteness of the player, who uses their own senses, reason, intuition, memory, emotions, therefore their whole living system.

On the same topic, speaking of the condition of the player, each embarking on the ship is yet another instance for the crew to redo, remake a previously known script. In order to fulfill their responsibilities during the flight or cruise, each will

resort to a compulsory behavior, having to interrupt the behavior on the “terra ferma” and fulfill their “part” with no compromise, particularly in critical situations. Thus, sports accidents, work accidents and even death “on duty” are consequences of “the game” in which the “civilian” turned player, by taking on the “part”, went, as they say, “all the way”.

Had “the game” not been played and had the discontinuous activity of the player been interrupted on a fateful day, as it so often happens, on the quay or the flight strip of the destination airport, the two destinies would have separated again until the next boarding. Even though between theatre and objective reality there are numerous and fundamental differences, which function on different levels, without authentic emotional psychic processes, embodying, substitution, one cannot expect authentic actor creativity.

The quartering of the game that is specific to the actor within the class or the category of games of imitation and of simulation stems from some old errors, through which only results of the corresponding quality are obtained, namely simulacrum.

Many actors, not to mention people outside the field of theatre, allow themselves to be tricked by the terms “imitation” and “simulation” to which, as we have seen, the idea of “playing” is often reduced. They harbor the conviction that imitating feelings or self-deluding in order to achieve a certain mood of being “troubled” and ebullient, or aggressive, in general.

There is a lot of analysis on the theme of the theatre “of state”. The biggest flaw of this way of understanding the idea

of “playing” is the refusal of comparing the honest with the real, with the reality which generates human actions. These are of the opinion that the artificial quality of the theatrical convention allows for not everything within the stage act to be true, or even believable, so as not to enter into a conflict with the idea of “playing”. In these cases, instead of following situations, events, relationships, the idea of playing is transferred to a generic stage behavior, to the playing of the lines, to the word game with sung vocal inflections, with studied and memorized tones, with so called tonal accents, with no connection to what is going on around them.

If correctly understood, the idea of “playing” activated intuition, sets the actor’s talent or genius in motion. Through playing, starting from what we know about the play and the characters, we come to knowing what we do not know, and what we in fact could discover in no other way (analytical, rational, philological, etc.) about the universe of the play, about life, about ourselves and about human condition in general.

Otherwise, what good would the actor’s talent or genius and in fact, theatre, do?

In other words, the most important thing that the actor must achieve on stage is to transform conventional situations proposed by the author into objective psychological realities. And this is not possible without complete embodying, without an authentic psychological process. The ideas and the philosophy are born and are conveyed through psychology, through psychological processes.

In order for it to become a convincing stage reality, “the character” and the literary subject must go through the

processes of concretizing by the actor endowed with the skills and specific abilities to provoke and maintain a cycle of natural processes which constitute a new subject, different from the one of the author.

A literary subject encompasses an infinity of possible themes and subjects, but these become realities only to the extent that the author reveals them by playing correctly.

The energy which turns “convention into psychological truth”, thereby creating the phenomenon of “empathy”, typical of the authentic stage act, through which the actor recognizes themselves into “the other” (the one on stage) and ultimately motivating the stage act, depends on the actor only, on the availabilities and limits of their own nature and professional training.

Thus, through tricks, clichés, preparation, anesthetizing bonifications, expressions of effect, the “playing” goes beyond its own rules, it violates the principle of “natural creations” from which the authentic actor’s art stems, it loses its meaning, it fails into grimace, it remains a false verging on prostitution.

What weak actors or actors trained in bad schools do not do, because they cannot or they don’t know how, or should they sometimes succeed, that is merely through chance, but what is done with constant regularity and refined subtlety by great actors, is the fact (truly quite simple, but as yet unacknowledged and unincorporated in the theory of the actor’s art), a fact that has already been stated above, that starting from the subject and the situations that the author proposes, they do not place themselves in an imaginary space and do not “speak” from the first or the second reading as

“somebody else”, imagining themselves “characters”, but on the contrary, they start from themselves, from their own identity, and they even strive to maintain it in order to be able to “feel” with their senses, in order to judge with a sober mind and in order to be able to feel with their whole “potential of vulnerability” all that could happen to them throughout the itinerary that the author proposed.

Through this simple procedure, implicitly using themselves, the genius of true actors knows how to discover and develop their own subject. This seems to be the paradox of depth of the actor’s art.

The way to the other (to any “character”) goes through myself. Only by being myself can I be any potential others that lie within me.

By accepting the risk of taking on the experimenting of other destinies, through deviating from their own destiny, throughout the experimentation of life situations that playwrights prescribed to the characters involved in the scripts that they imagined, the authentic actor reveals with admirable stillness and self-control and with no self-censoring, all the psycho-physical consequences of this embodiment.

According to our thesis, “all characters are within us”, “the climbing” from myself to the character has three crucial moments:

1. Myself in given situations;
2. The discovery, the purpose, the role that I have in the stage convention;
3. Taking on the concept, the logical mechanism of the character, the substitution, I, the part, the character.



The psychic events, rational and irrational, the metabolic exchanges that occur in the depth of the components of human structure, starting with the system of the senses, the one of perception and intellectual processing and up to the mysterious processes from the most hidden areas of the subconscious, of the mechanisms from the microcosms of the cells which make up the great closed system of the actor's individuality, these events – which take place as a result of actual, not merely symbolic embodiment – are nothing more than a unitary act, of taking on and embodying a different mentality and a different logical mechanism, in accordance with other interests, goals, generated by causes and objective as well as subjective necessities, of an individual structure which evolves on another existential orbit than that of the actor's, constitutes itself into a process of contradictory continuities and discontinuities, all of them within a unitary synergetic phenomenon. These events from the intimacy of contradictory human nature constitute the matter of the new subject, the actor's subject, which is the unpredictable, miraculous component of creation and which takes place spontaneously in the simultaneity of the stage act with the actor who relies on "their own potential for vulnerability"<sup>54</sup>.

The potential for vulnerability is in natural order the second instance, after the way of thinking – after the specific

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<sup>54</sup> "Potențialul de vulnerabilitate" ("The Potential for Vulnerability") or "Potențialul de leziune" ("The Potential for Injury") that each person has. The definition belongs to Stephane Lupasco, *Logica dinamică a contradictoriului*, p. 387.

logical mechanism - which is responsible for the quality of the stage act, for the quality of the actor's performance.

Activating this potential which influences the truth, ease, unpredictability of behavior, events and changes that comprise the actor's subject, their dynamic, living character, is only possible through understanding and correctly applying the idea of "playing".

The actor that starts off with idea that they "know", or think they know what the "character" is like, with the illusion that by pretending that they fulfill the condition of player, by miming what they think and how they think the way of talking, of feeling, and of actioning of the character is, according to a wrong logic, namely that the character is not themselves, but "somebody else", misses the very fact exists within them and that might save them from the discomfort of artificiality, of false playing - in general and in itself, could save them from cliché and mortification and could lead them effortlessly, naturally, towards authentic acting performance.

But, in institutionalized schools, through the large number of tutors, one cannot reach a unitary point of view on these specific matters which in reality are no more than problems which are to do with knowing the rapport between the correctly defined OBJECT and the METHOD through which it can be reached. The consequences can be serious not through the "diversity" of points of view, but through the avoidance of these processes, through transferring school work methods without differentiation: INDICATION, TELLING OFF, IMPOSED PATTERN, "DRILLING", which undermine the student's individuality, destroy their trust in their own

personality, in their own creative potential, and turn them from a virtual creator into a mere executant.

The old school overturns the fundamental meaning of art pedagogy: it homogenizes instead of stimulating the heterogeneous creative energy of the student, it approaches the student not as they are, but as they ought to be, thereby forcing them to pretend and hide, instead of helping them to develop their intimate sensations, which have become the fundamental objective of the most advanced schools in the world. It, therefore, imposes on the student illusion and imitation as unique methods of working.

Through the specific type of exercises in accordance with the illusionist method – imagine that you are in... (and then various locations are suggested: an orchard, an airport, a train station, a park, etc.) and that you are... (and then various professions, statuses, etc. are proposed) the obligation of miming an illusion is imposed upon the student. One eliminates, therefore, any actual connection to the real – concrete – environment which the student's sensorial apparatus would perceive through honest connection, "feeling" with their sight, their hearing, their smell, real objects and subject, that they are part of and rely upon. The student cannot lead themselves, cannot discover real problems and solutions, in a void, in an inexistent, imaginary world.

Therefore, instead of learning truth, honesty, sincerity and objective necessity of establishing rapports and acting spontaneously in accordance with real goals that derive from observing conventional rules of a specific game, through the

old methods one learns to pre-prepare, pre-tend, when it is well known that “reality comes first, ideality is recessive”<sup>55</sup>.

## IX. Object and method in the pedagogy of the Actor’s Art

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Like any science, the pedagogy of the actor’s art is evolving. The angle of view on things changes in time, according to the diversity of cultural information, of the evolution of scientific knowledge.

The subject of the actor’s art can be a ritual of constraints and subordinations to rigid canons, drilling, in which censoring and self-censoring of individual and collective components have the main part.

The fear of making a mistake inevitably leads to duplicity and a sensation of individual and collective discomfort.

The same subject can be an agreeable game, generating pleasant surprises, as well as discoveries about one’s own and others’ possibilities. It can also prove itself to be pleasure or torment, generating contractions, blockages,

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<sup>55</sup> Mircea Florian, *Recesivitatea ca structură a lumii*, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1987, p. 12.

inhibitions, or maybe, on the contrary, it can bring the satisfactions that only becoming aware of the possibility to surpass any obstacle through one's own forces and well-placed effort can bring.

It is only within a climate of freedom and freely consented to discipline that personality can be developed, an attribute without which there is no such thing as "great actor"<sup>56</sup>. One can, therefore, talk about such different approaches up until the moment in which the way of approaching leads irreversibly to the total change of the object of the discipline.

What is our subject? Craft or art, stereotyping or creation? What can be taught and what cannot?

From what has been shown above and from the questions that are asked derives the particular importance which must be granted, on the one hand, to defining the object of the discipline, and on the other hand, to establishing as fair a rapport as possible between OBJECT AND METHOD of approach.

Treaties, classes, actor formation courses, even though they clarify many specific aspects and problems, some in a rigorous scientifically way, do not answer the essential question "What is the actor's art?". They do not define it except in sporadic, sometimes surprising statements, such as for example the one of the Briton Clive Swift in *The Job Of Acting*, who begins his work with the sentence "Acting is a sport" and who, despite denying the necessity for any method in the

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<sup>56</sup> Radu Beligan, *Luni, marți, miercuri*, Ed. Eminescu, 1978.

beginning: “How can one teach someone to do things that either come naturally or do not come at all”<sup>57</sup>, later reaches the conclusion: the greatest plight that can befall a beginner is to fall into the hands of a bad teacher, who practices old methods.

Beyond this type of “unusual” answers, a formation program in an undergraduate school needs rigorous answers, as well as specific contexts and definitions.

The study “Metodă și obiect”, published by Tudor Vianu in 1939, shows that Francis Bacon and René Descartes believed that “the cause of past errors lies in the false methods which thinking had adopted and that amending these can speed up the conquering of truth”<sup>58</sup>.

From the perspective of this reasoning there are at least two main directions in which the “false methods” in an actor’s training and formation most evidently manifest themselves.

The first one fragments the unitary and complex phenomenon of the creative act by reducing it to a mechanic of the components of the human organism, on which one can act through will (movement, speaking, gesture, attitude). The second one – the refusal of any method, a refusal motivated by the conviction that: “art is the intangible object of a high cult” and that every effort of “knowledge is a useless profanation of the mysteries of the sacrament” (1 - *Idem*).

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<sup>57</sup> Clive Swift, *Job of Acting*, Harrap, London, 1976, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> T. Vianu, *Studii de filosofie și estetică*, Ed. Casa Școalelor, București, 1939, p. 27.

The first one reduces art to a job, to a craft in which everything is known previously and solved through the application of a technology in which thinking and behaviors are rendered typical, ordered in drawers, but that eliminate the essential – the process of the creative act, the phenomenology of the living (neglecting the functions of intuition, of unpredictable psychological processes, the subjectivity of individual human nature, understood as the dynamic and contradictory irreducible totality), which grants originality to personality, without which there is no “actor’s art” or art in general.

The second direction, just as harmful, maintains the actor’s art under the incidence of a medieval mentality, prolonged up to us through oral tradition and which excels through resistance to any effort of theoretical emancipation, which aims to systemize creative processes.

This is where the methodological eclecticism which affects most theatre schools stem from, this is where the confusion in choosing approaches stems from, this is where the “poeticizing” practices, digressed rhetoric instead of explaining certain principles, clear definitions and general rules, stems from.

The problem that arises is not the one of a simple act of choosing between one method or another, between one good method and a less good method, as we often say, to choose according to our own convictions or tastes, it is not even about a choice, because we are not faced with choosing between “something” and “something else”.

When an Object is correctly defined, or when there is a specific system with principles and rules which are correctly defined, then no preferential criterion from outside can intervene. The principles either are or are not correctly defined, and that is when they operate in all directions and all moments of the processes and phenomena, and everything occurs coherently, logically, or they are wrong, faultily understood, and that is when objects become something else.

Through different approaches, the same objects become different objects.

The traditional confusion between theatre and theatre school<sup>59</sup>, which are in reality two different objects, with different founding principles, stemming from completely different conclusions, results, in fact, from the lack of any principle. When one judges eclectically, like a dilettante, objects lose their specificity.

Mimetic empiricism, the endemic disease of theatrical education, has lead and is leading to the transfer – very guilty through the seriousness of its consequences – of methods, processes, language, and criteria of mentalities which are impregnated by the pragmatism of immediate success, from theatre to school.

On the level of unspecified common thinking, things are judged simplistically: “the ones who enroll in an acting

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<sup>59</sup> Translator's note: in Romanian, the word "drama" ("dramă") is mainly used to refer to a theatrical genre or an emotionally charged human situation; in terms of discipline of study, the word "teatru" ("theatre") is preferred; hence, "theatre school" and "theatre" are more accurate translations, in this context, than "drama" and "drama school".



school are the ones who will practice theatre, therefore in an acting school one must do theatre". Brief! "What is so hard to understand? Why must we theorize so much? Let us do theatre, because that's what an acting student prepares for", the irritated empiricist shouts, thinking that they have, once and for all, hit the nail on the head.

Even though theoretical thinking has deciphered the subtle mechanism of the rapports of determining, in a double meaning, between object and method, the pedagogy of the actor's art has still remained, in many cases, under the incidence of this common mentality, undifferentiated and unspecific, through which one perpetuates the elementary confusion between the object of the discipline of the actor's art, as a specific object of training – more correctly, of initiation and formation – and theatre as a specific object of the art of performing.

## X. The defining of the two specific objects: theatre and the theatre school

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The object of theatre is the finished work, the show.

That which presents interest is WHAT is obtained and not the MANNER in which it is obtained by those who help accomplish it.

“Science”, as professor W. Helpach from Heidelberg University shows, “is made up of what the great researchers obtain, not from the MANNER in which they obtain these results. Researchers, just like artists, or like states people, entrepreneurs, apostles, thinkers, are legitimized by the RESULT, not the procedure”. And then further: “The enduring value is decided only through the work, the result, the object”.<sup>60</sup>

Theatre belongs, then, to the philosophy of the object. It does not feel any guilt for methodological reasons, for submitting and even sacrificing the human who serves the object, in order to attain the general purpose, the Show.

The discipline of the actor’s art as an object of study within the theatre school, through the fundamental meaning

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<sup>60</sup> W. Helpach *apud* T. Vianu, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

of the propaedeutic, formative act, belongs to the “philosophy of method”.

The essence of any pedagogical formative act, corresponds to the point of view of this philosophy, which is interested in the problem of manners, means and thought processes, since for this philosophy, whose peak is represented by Immanuel Kant, “The object is nothing other than the result of ways and means with which we come closer to it”<sup>61</sup>.

If we agree with the principle that the object of the actor’s art is the HUMAN, in their irreducible totality, and their dynamic, contradictory behavior, in pedagogical thinking and practicing of a method which is specific to another object, theatre, which includes the actor’s art, eliminates the human from the center of its preoccupation and replaces them with other objects, which we consider minor in rapport to the Human, their specific object. Therefore, instead of the individualized and irreducible human we would then be interested, for example, in the “expressivity”, “the image”, “the formal rigor”, the physical acrobatics, “the lucidity”, “the spectacular” etc.

A great artist is not compulsorily or implicitly a good theatre professor as well, except on condition that and to the extent to what their genius and their culture lead them to becoming aware of the fundamental distinction between the two specific objects: theatre and theatre school: the philosophy of the object or the philosophy of the method?

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

A good theatre school does not teach the truths of past generations, but rather methods, ways, towards the yet undiscovered truths of generations still in formation.

Future artists will be legitimized by the “objects” that they will create, the quality and the originality of their works, the value of their own truths and critical and subjective subjectivity.

Who is the master who could know these truths before they have been discovered in order for them to be “taught”? They would sooner be the first beneficiary of the truths discovered by their apprentices, but if they learned to correctly apply the good methods of their master, their procedures rather than their solutions.

Lessing’s statement about the greater price of the way to truth than the one of truth has an axiomatic value for the pedagogue who is aware of the extraordinary importance of the direct rapport between the object of the discipline of the actor’s art and the methods that they use.

This idea encompasses the motivation for which theatrical practice is not one and the same thing as theatre pedagogy. One could understand, up to here, as it will become even more obvious from the following quote – from the same study as T. Vianu, that: “The philosophy of the method makes things dependent on the human (...) the philosophy of the object overturns this equation by making the human dependent of things (...) in the philosophy of the method culminates the humanist position (...) who does not know that the politics of the executive affirms in all occasions the conception about humans of the anti-humanist philosophy,

where the human is not the measure of things, but the mere servant of objective settlements, which surpass them? The object in service of the human and the human in service of the object”<sup>62</sup>.

Any school, especially the one of the actor’s art, any institution that claims to be formative, must keep a constant sharp eye on the human who is continuously evolving, and to subordinate everything to the process of actualization of the potential that is hidden within each possible creator.

School is in service of the human and therefore undoubtedly belongs to the philosophy of the method.

## XI. Delimitations and principles

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“Reality dominates, ideality is recessive”<sup>63</sup>

Mircea Florian

Practice shows that the drama school is a territory under constant threat from empiricism and routine. The good intention of “learning” is constantly undermined by bad habits, generated by the lingering in education of common, unspecific mentality about theatre and actors.

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> Mircea Florian, *Recesivitatea ca structură a lumii*, Ed. Eminescu, București, p. 12.

Open or masked resistance to theoretical knowledge is an attitude which is only interested in sensorial, empirical perception, and it settles itself in those fields in which the practical exercise tends to remove theoretical knowledge and install the thesis according to which only practice, only actual, direct exercising, without “theoretical complications”, constitutes the most certain and the most direct way to performance.

Amateurism, generally limiting itself to mimicking exterior, mechanical behaviors of certain types of activities, can allow itself to be limited to those aspects that cause pleasure, immediate satisfaction, in this case performance is due to chance, constituting the exception rather than the rule.

School, regardless of its field of expertise, must ensure the regularity of the performance.

The diversity of the points of view on theatre and the actor’s art motivate the great diversity of programs and ways of professional formation. It is only the concept of diversity from the perspective of artistic education, and especially of the actor’s art, can become a “trojan horse” through the means of which school can be visited with the greatest ease not just by ideas, theses and procedures, let’s call them “honorable” (pedagogically efficient), but also by primitive ideas, dilettante, volitury-focused emanations, accumulated on the basis of the most summary “spectator experience”. The degraded models are also legitimized with the right to diversity.

The need for success, the hunger for originality, continuously increase the affluence of modalities, expanding the extremely elastic borders of diversity.

The same phenomenon takes place with the ways of formation and instruction of artists.

On a certain level of understanding the opinion circulates according to which any of the countless processes or methods leads, sooner or later, with small and insignificant differences, to the same ends.

Both in theatre and in school, a typically dilettante opinion can be heard, disguised into an “old-fashioned” judgment, thereby compulsorily wise, which stifles any theoretical controversy and renders futile any effort to search for rigor: “That way works too, that way works too”, “a thousand ways work too”.

The unforgiving truth is that such thinking cannot work “neither this way”, “nor the other”. Action without a founding and guiding principle cannot be “in any way”, and the performance, should it take form, is merely the result of chance.

“Dilettantism as refusal to know and respect a certain “paradigm”, a certain “angle of view”, is usually inseparable from a certain eclecticism. The tendency of the dilettante to overlap different things inevitably attracts eclecticism”.<sup>64</sup> To the conviction that the greatest wrong in any field is caused by the interference of the dilettante in matters of specialty, we associate that according to which the consequences of the dilettante are the more serious, if overlooked, in the specific problematic of undergraduate and graduate art education.

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<sup>64</sup> Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Filozofia limbajului și limbajul filozofiei*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, p. 278.

“The dilettante, though, has the impression that everything is possible (because they cannot exactly perceive intellectual engagements that are made compulsory by a certain perspective, the essential assumptions, the angle of view, the indispensable idealizations); by ignoring the main internal conceptual stringencies and necessities of the undertaking, the dilettante forces things in order to obtain a hybrid combination”<sup>65</sup>.

In order for it to become a rule, the performance in education leans on competence, on the knowing of the principles, of the general rules, on a coherent theory on phenomena from the specific field and on the specific patience of the one who searches and wishes to know.

It is easy to remark the coefficient raised by smattering or “natural stupidity” which are exhibited by the exponents of certain fields where performance does not involve a strict and compulsory connection with the intellectual exercise. Sports, crafts, certain arts, more precisely certain areas of these, “gigging”, have become proverbial in the matter of the coefficient of ignorance and disinterest for study, of scorn for the cultural information and theory.

This sad reputation of the majority of sportspeople, of ballet dancers, of gig players, is also extended on a category of actors. The ones incapable of expressing themselves with minimum coherency about their own profession are not few, or about their own way of working, and that is when the impression of intellectual marasmus, even though this is not

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 279.



always real – because the disputes that occur during rehearsal sometimes reveal knowledge and information of rare subtlety and intellectual finesse of actors – depend of the climate through which the coalition of mediocrity, always majoritarian, in any field, imposes the primitive motto: “talent does not need school” or “books need those who do not have talent”.

In other words, talent would feel better in ignorance. The names of some great talents have been used: such as Frosa Sarandi (or more recently Mihăilescu-Brăila, VasilicaTastaman) or variety artists, who started off as amateurs, in order to support the thesis of the uselessness of artistic education.

Who has any use today, on the verge of the third millennium, for THE MYTH OF THE ILLITERATE ACTOR, considered superior to the cultivated one? The cultivated actor often becomes the black sheep, the target of the ironies of “backstage comedians”, of the jaded craftsman who knows everything not from books, but from practicing on the “wood plank”<sup>66</sup>.

At the same time, it is equally true that the excess of theorizing sometimes leads to dismantling mechanisms and natural processes until it becomes impossible to find unity which generates initial spontaneity, that the submission of acts which are born naturally, spontaneously, easily, to excessive censorship of reason can de-calibrate the endogenic quality of living phenomena, of fixing and self-fixing of behavior up until

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<sup>66</sup> Translator's note: in Romanian theatre terminology, “wood plank” is used as a metaphor for “stage”.

the loss of subjectivity, of naturally specific particularities, which ensure the originality, the uniqueness of each individual.

The example of the myriapod is conclusive on this matter (an example given by Stanislavsky to his pupils) who, wishing to become aware of the order in which it moves its thousand feet, after succeeding in becoming aware that the first one to step is the first, then the 759<sup>th</sup>, then the 26<sup>th</sup>, then the 572<sup>nd</sup>, and so on, realizes with outrage that the rest of its feet get tangled and it cannot move forward.

But as the student is no myriapod, but a human being, endowed with reason and spirit, situated on the highest level of evolution, and as afterwards the field that they study is not exclusively concerned with the natural component, the example becomes the more operative as we will understand it as an irony towards those tendencies that, when there is no authentic talent or genius, to include exceptional cases as well, seek to transform the complex and miraculous phenomenon of artistic creation into a mere “technology”, into a mechanical scheme, resulted from shrewd speculations.

Any human act is an expression of the complex manifestation of the phenomenon of its original bio-socio-cultural components. “Humans are cultural beings by nature because they are natural beings through nature”, “culture dominates and corrects nature...because culture is capable of shaping the human being’s biological component”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> E. Morin, Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini, *Interdisciplinaritatea științelor umane*, Ed. Politică, București, 1986, pp. 286, 278.

Drama schools place in the center of their preoccupations the processes and phenomena which are typical of human creation. These can become the cardinal points of orientation in the search and establishing of didactic principles, which, in any form of theatrical diversity would form students, must permanently keep an eye of the biological natural component, as well as the cultural one of human nature. "Humans live in the environment of their own creations and they are, in reality, ever more, the product of what they created themselves"<sup>68</sup>.

From these sentences of axiomatic value one can easily deduce the idea that from the perspective of any variety of forms of theatrical diversity we were to approach the actor and the problems which are specific to their creativity, we cannot violate that founding, initial principle of human individuality and therefore in order to correctly understand and know them under their fundamental aspects, we cannot avoid the need to become informed about the points of view that are professed today by certain scientific discipline about the concept of HUMAN. "The great dilemmas which condition the understanding of culture" (therefore also of the theatrical phenomenon and the actor's art) "come from the fact that this understanding itself is divided and fragmented in its very nucleus, because it must, simultaneously or alternatively, become aware of both that which belongs to culture and that which is in contrast with it: the world of nature"<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Daia Crisha, the study "*Cultură*" ("*Culture*"), from the same volume, p. 317.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem*.

But the multitude of the factors and above all of the partial points of view of the discipline specialized in the study of these as factors cannot conceive “the system as a whole, or even the way it is organized”, as Massimo Piatelli - Palmarini demonstrates: “It is not the juxtaposition, but the organization of the partial points of view from different discipline which allows the understanding of the complex unity of the phenomenon which we called COMPLEXLY ORGANIZED UNITY”<sup>70</sup>.

The HOMO ensemble system is from the very start mutilated and disarticulate: biology refers to an organism (an invariant reproduction system), while human sciences look at them rather as spirit (psychology) and a social atom (...). *The HOMO system is a “trinity” reality the terms of which are indissociable because they are interdependent*: According to the opinion of these authors, “the central problem is, therefore, organization” and “we must call human this very “trinity” system and not a partial aspect (individual, species, society). A bio-cultural being through its very nature, the human is not alternatively defined through corporal reference or cultural reference, they are defined in a “whole” manner, that is, bio-psycho-socially”<sup>71</sup>.

Before being an object of aesthetics, the actor is an object and a subject of the sciences that deal with the HUMAN. And the object and the subject of any stage act in

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<sup>70</sup> E. Morin, Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 303.

which an actor is present is the HUMAN, under all its particular and general aspects, Actual and Potential.

It is the more surprising that we keep coming across, in professional discussions, in theatrical reviews, in interviews, even in talks and conferences in theatre schools, and workshops, ideas and theses about the actor and their art, which prove to be incontestable evidence of a way of thinking which is completely opposed to this concept of “complexly organized unit”, and which completely decompose the totality of the human being and reduce it to movement, speaking, gesture, attitude, and mimic.

The largest part of practitioners do not pay any attention to this reality, believing that “theorizing” could, rather, present an obstacle to the free manifestation of talent and that, consequently, definitions and concepts, which are instruments typical to science, are not operative in artistic creation either and are therefore not worthy of any time being wasted on them.

The following question becomes imperative: what is the importance for the actor’s creativity, which has manifested itself through great performances and up to the first theoretical definitions, of the general mentality is or is not dominated by concepts defined as mechanical or systematic, dialectic, dynamic contradictory, determinist-causal, or probabilistic etc.? What connection, what practical effect does it have for work on the “wood plank” if the actor knows that what they do is called one thing or the other? The importance of this, let’s call it detail, which can be considered by some a useless pedantry, is gigantic, because everything that they feel

from the inside to do and how they do it is the direct consequence of a way of thinking, the ground of which is a certain founding principle, which does not belong to them alone, but to a whole category, and which bears a name that if one knows, one can recognize and localize on the screen of their conscience, they can follow it, at least in some of its modifying processes in the practical exercise. And what is the most important, according to the quantity and quality of the information that is either genetically inherited or acquired through own experience, they can establish and correlate the itineraries of their own thinking, they can connect and disconnect circuits and even change, if needed, the principles of the logical mechanism, they can establish codes, they can discover general rules, they can institute a mental prophylaxis, they can decipher and, therefore, they can know the objective nature of processes and phenomena which take place, not only in their own conscience, but also in that of a whole category, in which they include themselves, by their own will, due to this precise difficult to accept theoretical knowledge.

Just like blood circulation or the genetic miracle maintained the life of the species of the great living system even before they were discovered and defined, the same way the miracle of creation, ever since it began to reveal, little by little, its mystery, did not “disarray” the processes and phenomena because of knowledge, but it became, in time, conceptual knowledge and method, which was taken over and processed by the most important personalities and drama schools in the world, by elaborating rules, techniques, procedures ordered into coherent systems of preparation and

their applying in the pedagogical practice have shown the most spectacular formative performances.

In general, the common opinion, as we have already mentioned, is that “talent” is also the unique, sole “competence” of the artist.

Stanislavsky, in his school M.H.A.T in Moscow, Lee Strasberg in the “Actor’s Studio” in New York, Michel Saint Denis in England, Boleslavsky in America, Tairov, Meyerhold in Russia, Michel Checkhov, Michael Redgrave, B. Brecht, Grotowsky, and many other pedagogues of dramatic art demonstrated that between “talent” and “competence” there are great differences. The confusion between these two terms, which a whole category of “bad teachers”, as Clive Swift calls them (in “The Job Of Acting”), who do not perceive this distinction, continue to practice the model of learning skills “through imitation”, with pre-established answers to any question, thus prolonging the practical – artisan mentality of apprenticeship from medieval guilds, dominated by clichés. They cannot fathom the “complexly organized unit” and thus they hinder the free and unpredictable manifestation of dynamic and contradictory human nature as it appears from the unique possible rational realistic perspective: ACTOR = HUMAN.

This logical couple is irreducible, no matter from what perspective or assumption, and therefore, form of artistic diversity, we were to approach the actor’s art.

Neither is the surpassing of this logical couple possible through eclectic additions, in order to “complete” or “improve”

it, as long as the “support matter” of the actor’s work, the human, is correctly defined.

There is, however, in theatrical diversity, points of view that propose certain alternatives, which replace the concept of HUMAN from this logical couple, such as for instance the ideas according to which the actor is a priest, a puppet, a buffoon, an acrobat, a mime, etc. From these alternatives spring other logical couples in which the HUMAN can no longer be found, but rather a form of them that is reduced to a certain variety of human, to a specialization of them which meant a restraint of their complexity, of the paradigm-like globality to a model, to a cliché-ing of it, defined by a function of a fact-like nature.

In other words, if the actor is not considered “human” first, they should, logically, be replaced by something else, according to the way of viewing the specific nature of the actor’s art in its totality.

For example, the definition which created the strongest echo in the whole breath of universal theatre was Gordon Craig’s “SUPER-PUPPET”.

But the career of this term did not found only on what Edward Gordon Craig himself thought when he decreed “to hell with bad actors”, preferring in their stead the “super - puppet”, but on the very reinterpretations and ulterior speculations, which could not be limited even by the clarifications that Gordon Craig himself made in the preface of his book “On the Art of Theatre”.

*“We mean to say simply: go, therefore, and feel the fires of hell a little and return healed!”*



This is what I wanted to see actors do, certain actors, at least, the bad ones – when I said that they should leave, that it would be more advantageous to have them replaced by the super - puppet”<sup>72</sup>.

And then even more clearly: “The super - puppet is the actor with more fire and less selfishness: with sacred fire, with the fire of the gods and of the devils, but without the smoke and the steam that mortifies them. The ‘positive’ spirits believed that I wanted to talk down about the pieces of wood. This idea irritated them: they spoke for years as they would have about the idea of a madman or a pervert, of an offender of actors and theatre”.

Replacing the term HUMAN from the founding logical couple Actor-Human with anything else from the multitude which exists in the table of universal values, or with any one of the varieties of the specific values which are offered by the diversity of the forms of manifestation of the theatrical phenomenon, implicitly means taking the actor out from the realm of the “human” and placing them either in the super-human (where they are placed by the ones speculating on the theoretical idealism of E.G. Craig) or in the sub-human (where those who tend towards transcendental, mystical visions about the actor, lower them), thereby neglecting the fundamental concept of unity of the human.

The examples offered by the history of theatre and of humankind in this latter matter are conclusive: “It is enough for there to arise conflicts between nations, individuals, in order

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<sup>72</sup> Gordon Craig, *Despre arta teatrului*, Ed. Lievtier, Paris, 1910, pp. 7-8.

for the other, the enemy, to be labelled dog, (...) rat, viper, parasite, disgusting animal, (...) if not even excrement. These prove that throwing a human outside of humanity is tightly linked to the phenomenon of enmity, conflict, scorn”<sup>73</sup>.

All forms of racial segregation culminating with the horrors of national-socialism and communism of the twentieth century have shown the serious consequences that instituted mentalities can have on a logical couple from which the idea of the “unity of the human species” has been eliminated.

An example of a false logical couple that the general mentality leaned upon for a long period of history – and which bothered none of the consciences of those times – because formal logic was satisfied, was slavery.

In order to explain the alleged inferior nature of the slave as opposed to the free human, ruler of the ancient world, a logical solution was resorted to, which formally satisfied both the human condition of the slave, in the biological sense, and their inferiority, in a psychological sense. The couple, the logical purity of which is in conformity with the principle of unity and of non-contradiction was paid for with a heavy, tragical tribute by all those considered “a living tool”.

Thus, the most numerous part of the people of ancient times were placed “outside humanity”.

And when judging an actor, according to the rigor of classical logic, they are left with the alternative: are they to be considered a HUMAN or not a HUMAN, anything else, a dummy, a clown, a mask, “a third solution” being impossible.

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<sup>73</sup> Morin, Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini, *Unitatea omului*, pp. 276-277.

In fact, the consideration and treatment that actors have enjoyed throughout history fully demonstrated that deprecation, sometimes just as humiliating as that of slaves, is a consequence of a logical couple which implacably operates “by itself” in all directions and that any attempt to “improve”, “correct”, “complete” a point of view with the attributes of another point of view, is nothing but a “fall” in a definite dilettante compromise.

In other words, according to Aristotle’s logic, the actor either is or is not a HUMAN, and the consequences of any of the alternative become irreversible. And yet, we are witnessing an ever more acute process of usurping the authority of the principle of unity, which helps to maintain the base of authenticity of the specific species and categories.

For instance, the invasion of replacements, of surrogates in the field of everyday goods, corresponds has an equivalent in other fields which consists of the same tendency of increasing diversity - which could be positive and enriching, were it not for its implicit producing the contrary effect, that of diminishing, sometimes up to complete elimination of the idea of unity from within the same category or species. In this tendency there inevitably comes a critical moment, a crisis of the rapport between the concept of DIVERSITY and that of unity in all arts. The stage, like paper, can take a lot. A person obsessed with writing is an impostor in the field of literature. The individual dressed in a white robe who walks among the beds of a hospital imitating the gestures of a doctor, without having the qualifications to heal the sick, is an impostor usurping the characteristics of the medical field. If someone

who, having got up on a stage, imitates behaviors and speaks lines, “actions” like the actors, but without managing to “actualize” virtualities which are hidden in the depth of their person, therefore without achieving essential modifications in their own life and that of the audience, incapable of realizing the specific processes of substitution, of empathy, they are, equally, an impostor.

Approaching such a discipline involves theoretical study, following the path of a specific thinking built on founding principles, on correct assumptions, on all fields of dialectical transformation, thesis – antithesis – synthesis, in order to be able to establish the origin, the object, and the limits of a discipline.

Something that has become quite obvious during the last century for any type of pedagogy is above all the “premises of change” of discipline, the relativity, the evolutive probability, not just of methods, but of the content of those discipline, since “No discipline can endlessly remain changeless: it can only lose ground to others, but change its concepts radically - its categories and methods of study, which raises the question whether, other than its name, this discipline has remained the same”<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Patrick Suppes, *Metafizica probabilită*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1990, pp. 315, 316

## XII. The content of the discipline of the Actor's Art

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From the perspective of general aesthetics and art pedagogy, the actor's art is considered to be an important component, perhaps the most important of the theatre show, defined as a synthesis with autonomous value, encompassing and at the same time surpassing values that originate in artistic fields such as: literature, plastic art, dance, mime, music, poetry etc.

Studied from the perspective of interdisciplinarity of humanities and science (biology, philosophy, genetics, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, statistics, physics, logic, etc.) the actor's art would necessitate a more adequate definition than that of OBJECT, a status that is frequently attributed to it, as a consequence of the univocity of the perception and the evaluation by schools dominated by the concepts of mechanical didacticism, typical of the nineteenth century, as well as by some medieval practices still widespread today in institutionalized schools, which lingers explaining the world "based on the principles and laws of mechanics, reducing the whole qualitative diversity of phenomena and natural processes to phenomena and mechanical processes... denying the internal source of movement"<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> Dicționarul Enciclopedic Român, vol. III, Ed. Politică, București, 1965, p. 303.

In other fields of art – plastic, literature, music – THE CREATOR, though part of their work and represented through it, remains outside their work, and this, as anything that is created, has a different destiny from that of the artist and can be defined as an object because it can be kept “like Beethoven’s quartets (which) are sitting in the deposit of publishing houses like potatoes in a cellar”, according to Heidegger’s example<sup>76</sup>. It is clear to anyone that theatre and the actor’s creation do not have this opportunity: THE ARTISTS INCLUDES ITSELF IN THE WORK, therefore it can be mistaken with the created object.

The actor and their work have a common destiny: transiency. The actor’s creation does not last, it cannot be kept “like potatoes...” (except in an incomplete form, as image and sound recorded on film, tape, or video).

A different distinction from the other arts consists of simultaneity, the fact that the actor’s art is syncretic, THE PRODUCT IS THE PROCESS ITSELF, THE WORK IS ACHIEVED TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY BECOME A TRUE PRODUCT OF CREATION.

From this reality stem aspects and particularities which condition and define the unmistakable SPECIFIC, one of the numerous paradoxes of the actor’s art.

The means of expression and non-verbal communication form the base of the actor’s art. The word endowed it with culture, but moved it away from its own essence.

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<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă*, Ed. Univers, București, 1982, p. 33.

The specificity of the actor's art is not in speaking, but in substitution and actualization of distinct characters, clearly individualized and with a behavior (bodily and psycho-intellectually) which is raised to the power of significance.

Unlike the conceptions according to which the actor's art and the art of theatre is an exclusive expression of the art of the word or a conventional amalgamation "of spoken words, of the face, of the voice, of movement, of gesture, to an ideal model which represents "the conforming of actions (...) to a model that has been imagined by the poet and often exaggerated by actors" (as Denis Diderot answers the question "What is the truth of a scene" in his important work "Paradox of the Actor"<sup>77</sup>, where they reject the thesis of "spontaneous expression" and "sensitivity" in the stage act), our program naturally and necessarily incorporates the traditions which are typical of the Romanian drama school and the acquisitions of modern universal theatre, it bases itself upon the PRINCIPLE OF UNDIVIDEABLE HUMAN TOTALITY, DYNAMIC AND CONTRADICTIONARY.

As opposed to the opinion of the philosopher that the actor "is not the character, they play them, and they play them so well that you think it is real; the illusion is only yours; they, themselves, know well that they are not..."<sup>78</sup>, our point of view about the actor is based on the fundamental thesis of the UNITY IN DIVERSITY OF CONTRADICTIONARY HUMAN NATURE.

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<sup>77</sup> D. Diderot, *Paradox despre actor*, typed copy UNATC, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem*.

Is it possible that the philosopher missed the importance that faith has in the act of creation? How could we be, without believing that we are what we actually manage to be?

For us, the stage act of the actor is at the same time spontaneity and elaboration, incorporating both sense and sensibility and authenticity and artifice, and objective truth and fiction, because the human and all their creations, which include them, are at the same time nature and culture.

The principle of UNITY IN DIVERSITY, naturally stemming from the all-encompassing concept of the great principle of HOMO – of the vast actor phenomenon, of varied particular ways of manifestation – constitutes itself into the main OBJECT OF STUDY OF THE DISCIPLINE “ACTOR’S ART” AND “IMPROVISATION”.

The principle of TRUTH, placed at the foundation of the pedagogical act in the actor’s art, derives from the natural order of the concept NATURE – CULTURE.

Inverting this order in the initiation process in the actor’s art, that is, following strictly aesthetical objectives, before having fulfilled the objectives of the preparation of the natural component, can lead to the irremediable compromising of the whole program of formation of the creative personality.



## XIII. The need for the imaginary

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“Imagination governs the world”

Disraeli

The desire to be “somebody else” or “something else” follows humans all throughout their lives.

The ones who are happy with their own condition are few. Children are definitely not. In their games, they are what they imagine to be: police officers, sword people, justice heroes, drivers, pilots, astronauts, soldiers, judoka, fairies, princesses, mummies. Children do not make their peace with their condition, they want to be older than they are.

Adults have their own games, but their “Playing” is usually a form of denial and surpassing of their own condition. The human has the capacity of miming feelings and behaviors, as well as of actually surpassing their own condition. This does not only take place with those who are endowed, but with all people, on a macro-social level.

Between that which a person “is” and what they “would like to be”, between “what they are like” and “what they could have been like” there lies a space which hides the greatest dowry of the human: the imaginary.

In this realm of the imaginary one can live to the fullest all of which is not offered by reality. It is the space of hope and absolute freedom. It is the lair of supreme personal instance, of

a portable God that each human creates according to their own strength. Here reside angels and demons, the space of creativity, of the capability of the human to imagine, to form themselves and to forge a way of being.

The logic professor Anton Dumitriu shares the opinion of the French philosopher Théodule Ribot in that “the essential, fundamental element of creative imagination is the ability to think through analogy, that is, through the partial and often accidental resemblance”<sup>79</sup>.

Without imagination there is no creation, artistic or scientific. “Imagination can be unleashed from the slightest resemblances, based on vague or extravagant similarities, it can create new objects and images”<sup>80</sup> and “it is no wonder if imagination, according to the conclusion of the great French philosopher, is often a substitute and, as Goethe used to say, an *avant - coureur de la raison*”<sup>81</sup>. At the end of his study, Anton Dumitriu reaches the conclusion that “from imagining something to it being possible, the consequence is valid”<sup>82</sup>.

All corrections brought about by civilization, culture, science, art, knowledge of initial human nature – are consequences of the freedom of spirit and imagination. All that humankind created was at first imagination. Everything that humankind created was at first imagination, and our behavior is the expression of the image that we harbor about ourselves.

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<sup>79</sup> Anton Dumitriu, *Retrospective*, Ed. Tehnică, București, 1991, p. 205.

<sup>80</sup> *Idem*, p. 205.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 208.

People became “specialized” in behaviors, they regimented themselves in categories of conduct. We recognize the bosses, the subordinates, the winners and the losers, the attributes of a profession and a function.

The discovery of a specimen that has retained its complexity causes a sensation, a specimen that “steps out of the box”, whose behavior is not typical. “Specializing” is a safe solution, of minimal resistance and, in some cases, of degeneration, of robotizing, of dehumanizing.

“Deep down we are as much as we wish to be, or, better said, as much as we imagine ourselves to be”, says Anton Dumitriu in his study “Creative freedom”, showing that “we are in the world as great as our ideal” and that the power of a human lies only within the freedom of their spirit because the important thing is not “just being free, but that this freedom is creative, that it gives you a place and a function in the world, that it creates a destiny, that it attributes a functional role to you in the whole mechanism of existence”, because each human is “called to do some self-searching”<sup>83</sup>.

In the history of theatre there are many examples of extraordinary relevance of the performance that can arrive at the transgression of the imaginary, of fiction, of the conventional fact in concrete, objective reality.

The pagan actor Genesius, an interpreter of the part of the Christian from *athelan* comedies (a comic type very much narrowed by the audience in the first century), played with such faith that, at some point, he ended up understanding the

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 92, 93.

meaning of a new doctrine and believe so strongly in Christian precepts that, in front of the imperial tribunal that judged Christians as enemies of the empire and condemned them to death if they did not renounce it, he preferred martyrdom, but did not renounce.

His example was followed by other actors, among whom an actress named Pelaghia. Her sentence was commuted into exile. She lived as a hermit in a cave on the holy land. She was canonized, becoming Saint Pelaghia, the patron of actors.

The tragedian Polos, performing in Sofocle's "Electra", used to carry with him on stage the ashes of his son, in order to be as authentic as possible in his suffering.

From the examples above we can draw a simple conclusion regarding the change of a person's behavior or that of a group of people, namely that these are the direct and unmediated consequence of certain ways of thinking, the result of a change in the value of the objects of reality, and that adapting only takes place after a process of becoming aware of certain needs, which stem from placing oneself in a new rapport with reality and therefore in a first and last instance according to new mental representations, according to new criteria.

From the most complex instrument of perception and processing of information, which is the human brain, with its whole cortical -neural brain, up to the infinitesimal changes in the balance of the electric field at the level of cellular membranes and their system of indicating, it can be claimed that the whole process of tuning and self-tuning of each cell

from the complex structure of the human body lies in the quality of the communication system (emission, reception, recognition of signals, decoding and processing them) and then in the quality of the modifications of the whole body in accordance with messages received on all levels.

This whole complex informational system which crown the natural behaviors of human nature, considered a closed system, cannot not enter as a prime factor into the equation through which the obtaining of a new understanding and a new definition of the unmistakable specific of the actor's art is pursued.

## XIV. Imagination<sup>84</sup>

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According to the study of Alex. F. Osborne, "Constructive Imagination", the most noble form of imagination is the "substitutive imagination" and its "golden rule" is "to do good onto others"<sup>85</sup>. Osborne is of the view that sympathy makes us put ourselves "in other people's shoes", and, according to the observations of doctor Paul Moody, the mere change of the place in which we are generates a "change of role".

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<sup>84</sup> All quotes and ideas.. p. 112.

<sup>85</sup> Alex. F. Osborne, *L'imagination constructive*, Dunod, Paris, 1971, p. 29.

“A change of place allows one to imagine that one changes the role”. For example the summoning a student to the teachers’ room, an employee entering the director’s office etc., the church, the tribunal, the restaurant, etc. The differences in behavior, in different places, of the same person, are an effect of imagination.

“The human owes themselves the place that they have on Earth” thanks to this psychic process. Imagination “made them evolve”. Einstein believes that “imagination is more important than knowledge”.

*Factors which tend to paralyze creativity.* According to the work of Al. F. Osborne, the mechanism of thinking carries two components:

1. Judgement, which analyses, compares, and chooses.
2. Creative spirit, which examines, foresees, and gives birth to ideas.

The first one maintains imagination on the right path. Imagination helps to illuminate (clarify) judgment. Judgment “generates common points, requires analysis and synthesis” (needs conclusions). Imagination “is content with facts, knowledge”.

With the common, average individual, “judgment develops with age”, while their “creativity progressively decreases”. Imagination makes one work.

### *The critical and the creative spirits*

The critical is negative. The creative spirit has a positive mental attitude – trust, enthusiasm, encouragement – and tends towards total perfection if ideas are not choked.

Preconceived ideas are only an obstacle factor in finding solutions to problems. Education, experience, give birth to new inhibitions which tend to make our way of thinking ever more rigid.

Inhibitions generally diminish the ability to attack new problems and to open our imagination wide. Frank Hix from General Electric describes these obstacles as “functional fixations”.

Stanford University published the reports of Robert Adamson and Dr. Donald Taylor (in “Journal of Experimental Psychology”) in which it is demonstrated that: functional fixations to the solutions of some problems are in direct connection to our personal past (mental attitudes).

### *Rendering things mechanical - blockages*

Dr. Harry Fostick, while talking about the incapability of controlling imagination, used to say that “thinking is the human” (the human is their own thinking), and that which prevented them is “anxious fear”.

The types of imagination that Al. F. Osborne establishes:

1. “Visual imagination” is “the ability to see with the eye of the spirit” (Fostick Harry).
2. “Speculative imagination”, in which memory does not have a very important part.
3. “Reproductive imagination”, which tackles the past, reconstitutes and reconstructs.
4. “Structural visualization”, an instinctual ability of creating through the spirit, starting from a drawing, the representation of the volume, the precise contour of an object (for example

the aviator who executes a flight without visibility, or loading the camera with film in a black sac, scientists, geometers, etc.). (They work with their imagination "like a camera with exact mathematics").

5. Substitutive imagination: "feeling like another".

The secret of the actor's acts: "putting oneself in another's shoes".

### *The creative forms of imagination*

1. Artificial imagination. Its most pleasant and stimulating form is the game (ball game).

2. Creative expectative which has two forms that must not be separated:

A) "Going hunting" (preparation, lying-in-wait, search)

B) "Changing what has been found" (mixing known things creates new things).

Osborne shows that the psychologist R. W. Gerard described creative imagination as "the action of the spirit which produces a new idea, discovers a new way of understanding".

The key word of this definition is ACTION.

The creative effort of imagination, "which looks ahead, foresees, fuels, completes, plans, invents, solves, advances, gives birth to". It is important to note, shows A. F. Osborne, that in all this list put together by Joseph Jastrow there is no passive verb.

ACTION is also the key word of any stage act. On the importance and the meaning that is given to it depends the quality of the rapport between the theoretical and practical



understanding of the actor's art, between the artistic project and its concretizing, its accomplishment.

On this word, like on a pivot, leans the whole of Stanislavsky's "System" and in its enriched extension, Lee Strasberg's "Method".

Action is the magic word, the rhizome from which stem all ways of actor creation, from the elementary symbolizations from primitive rituals and processions, or of "street" theatre, and up to the monumentality of the rigorous structures of artistic theatre.

According to Osborne's study, "enemies of imagination" come from two main sources: external and internal. Exterior sources, extra individual, that all elements of environment and behavior belong to (social, cultural, political, religious, etc.), family education, school, specific types of professional activity through which an individual is forced to behave like everyone else, therefore to adapt (the army takes this performance of uniformized behavior to the highest level, and the spontaneous gesture would mean "stepping outside of the rank", a mistake worthy of sanctioning).

From birth, the individual must face a terrible battle between the forces of heterogenization and homogenization.

Birth itself is a victory of heterogenization. Each seed that sprouts, each offspring of a bird or a bug, each fish egg in which an embryo develops is a gigantic victory of heterogeneity over factors through which the forces of homogenization manifest themselves, the tendency of which is to level, to uniformize any distinction, any differentiation in

intensity, potential aspect, up to the instauration of a general peace which death installs in the universe.

*Enemies of imagination:*

1. Vanity (paralyses creativity).
2. Functional fixations - mechanization, rigidity.
3. Anxiety - self-decomposing, timidity.
4. critical spirit - negative.

## XV. The Mimesis principle and the Actor's Art

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The idea according to which Camil Petrescu believed that “the limits of scientific knowledge” represent the motivation of the impossibility to foresee the essence is not convincing; the ancients, having access to a much poorer scientific knowledge, managed to elaborate concepts the validity of which cannot be denied even today.

The MIMESIS principle, for instance, laid at the foundation of arts over two thousand years ago, having passed through various interpretations and tough confrontations, such as the great romantic crisis of the eighteenth century, reaffirms its validity here as well.

Having dominated the aesthetical thinking of classical art, the mimesis principle imposes itself in the theory and practice of art today with the same authority as “closed theories”<sup>86</sup>.

“...I do not know how far one can go in describing nature with the help and measure that can grasp phenomena with the help of its concepts remains in a way uncertain”<sup>87</sup> (“It therefore clearly follows that a closed theory can no longer be perfected through small modifications”<sup>88</sup>; “An authentic philosophy is “A closed conceptual construction”, in a rather similar way to a “Closed theory” in Science).

The great spirits of Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer, adopted it as a basis of their artistic and didactic doctrine, developing it in their textbooks, “*Trattatodellapittura*” and “*Untericht der Malerei*” respectively (The Food of the Painter Apprentice).

The Aristotelian principle of art is a specific metaphysical statement: Art is Mimesis (“mimesis” in ancient Greek means “imitation” - “miming”). Arts, just like exact sciences, are in need of concepts and “closed theories”.

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<sup>86</sup> The famous physicist Werner Heisenberg showed that “A great scientific theory such as Newtonian mechanics is ‘a closed theory, meaning that it is a strictly coherent description of human nature everywhere where its concepts cannot be explained’ - *Pași peste graniță*, Ed. Politică, București, 1977, p. 87 - and therefore in those fields where experience will be described using notions of this theory, be it even in the furthest future, its laws will always prove to be correct.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>88</sup> C. F. von Weizsächer, *Unitatea fizică în istoria științei și reconstrucția ei conceptuală*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1981, p. 54.

Professor Suppes remarked that, in general, "Aristotle's metaphysics is a model of descriptive metaphysics, an attempt to organize the most general and at the same time most significant aspects of experience"<sup>89</sup> which, can, in general, accept "a continuous progression from sophisticated common sense to the most recent scientific discoveries", because "one of the most important roles of descriptive metaphysics is that of supplying a synthesis of common sense and of contemporary science"<sup>90</sup>. In other words, this means that, albeit metaphysically, the MIMESIS principle surpasses its dogmatic frame, as a practical statement and progressive scientific knowledge "having a, ability to synchronize with philosophical thinking and artistic ways typical of the eras they cross, always revealing new meanings, all of them conquests of actual sciences"<sup>91</sup>.

The strength of a principle proves itself through its "hiding". Only when implicit, therefore in the depth of the phenomenon, does it have a founding power. That is why actors who do not manage to "cover" their desire to be truthful always remain duplicitous. The intention being more obvious

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<sup>89</sup> Patrick Suppes, *Metafizica probabilistă*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1990, p. 62.

<sup>90</sup> Some theoreticians denied it in the most direct way: "Art is not imitation", or "Any art is realized (entwirklicht) not only by chance, but intentionally. This fact alone should be sufficient for the opinion that art is imitation to disappear", Theodor Lipps, *Estetica, contemplarea estetică și artele plastice*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1987, pp. 71 and 80.

<sup>91</sup> Wladislaw Folkierski, *Între classicism și romantism*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1989, p. 83.

than the realization, the expression remains a constant and embarrassing expression of discomfort.

The actor's art cannot be separated from the "mimesis" principle. Correctly understood, this term constitutes itself in a firm point of support, a "center" that is absolutely necessary to the orientation of thinking and the practical action of the creator. In order for a potential, something virtual to become actualized, to become real, concrete, it is absolutely necessary that the principle be not only understood but adopted.

In order to correctly understand this truth, it is imperative that we make a minimum effort of separating the initial global sense of the word *mimesis* from reductionist interpretation, particularized on narrowed aspects of artistic diversity, which sometimes reduces up to annulling the strength of this founding principle, its function of *primum movens* in the creative process.

In order to understand this, let us refer to the theoretical inheritance left by the great spirits of the eighteenth century in order to see how the *mimesis* principle did not mean the same thing for everyone. The differences in meaning, through the differentiated translation of the term, led to great controversies, known under the generic term of "romantic crisis" of the eighteenth century.

It is clear today that this did not mean a crisis of the Aristotelian principle, as it appeared then, but the "end" of this principle, as the philosopher J. E. Schlegel believes (who stated that the principle of imitation "leads to absurd") or Schelling (who put the principle of the beautiful ahead of the *mimesis* principle), or Novalis (who proposed replacing the principle of

the “tyranny of imitation” or the one of “expression”, in order for art to fulfill its function of “impressing” to a higher degree). It is the crisis of the old ways of understanding, the crisis of partial judgments, the crisis of old restricted meanings of the great principle.

The reference to the eighteenth century appears necessary for at least two reasons: the first, because, as the historian Wladislaw Folkierski states, “the eighteenth century gradually reaches the true understanding of the beautiful, namely that in which pleasure consists of a contemplation completely autonomous from desire, reason, and will”<sup>92</sup>.

The second reason, because, as the same author states, “We can therefore see that in the eighteenth century everyone finds something to object to regarding the principle of imitation. There obviously exists here a certain thing that theoreticians avoid and that they wish to be rid of, using all methods in the absence of a good one”<sup>93</sup>.

And despite the fact that all spirits, the most special ones of the century, were engaged in the “polemics” about the origins, the rules, and the meaning of arts, the same historian believes that: “eighteenth century thinking in fact made it impossible for a new poetic art to appear. If the rule exists, it only has a relative value and does not truly help anyone except second-hand talent. If it exists, it perhaps only exists for a

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<sup>92</sup> *Idem*, p. 139.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*.

limited theory and a certain age. Therefore, rules and schools are not idolatrized either”<sup>94</sup>.

If a new poetical art could not be achieved, the writings of the eighteenth century discuss and exhaust the elementary ideas that derive from the interest for the phenomenon of artistic creation in general and of the types of manifestation in specific fields, in particular, from the perspective of various degrees of loyalty towards the MIMESIS principle, which “was present in the theory of arts from its very origin (but above all starting with Renaissance) and that had known countless transformations throughout history... and the ending of whose reign is linked to the appearance of Romanticism”, as Tzvetan Todorov states in his study “The misfortunes of imitation” from the volume *Theories of the Symbol*<sup>95</sup>.

“It (the principle of imitation) is incompatible with the romantic point of view through the fact that it subjects the art sphere to an instance that is exterior to it (anterior, superior): nature. From the very nature of the power to understand it seems to result that the beautiful in art cannot be comprised of the elements of the beautiful in nature”. But then a new fundamental question arises: “then, if there is no absolute independence, what is the autonomy of art, could it be that it does not exist at all?”<sup>96</sup> “Could it be that the human can do nothing more than copy?” “And if they copy it, do they do so consciously, that is. Do they imitate nature?” Rightly wonders

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195.

<sup>95</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Teorii ale simbolului*, Ed. Univers, București, 1983, p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

Folkierski, because “this question, as we know, is one of the ones that fascinated aesthetics in all centuries. This question is very far from being a formalist and scholastic issue: it is closely linked to aesthetical thinking, which is inconceivable if one does not find where one stands in relation to it”.

The attempts at an answer by Folkierski to these questions go via explaining the theory of “The Mimesis”, in its own interpretation, in the sense that Aristotle, “even though he proclaimed imitation to be a procedure in art, also says that truth here is less necessary than the verisimilar. He was thinking of the limits of our credulity. Understanding that any art involves the necessity of an illusion, he noticed that validity is sometimes damaging to the illusion, effectively, it consists of a conformity with what we have known previously. When we are too amazed, we cannot be made to experience an illusion: illusion decreases as amazement increases. (...) When in reality something too unexpected happens, we protest by saying that it belongs to the field of the fantastical and that it looks like a story; how is it that the same case, by reproducing itself through art, could present for us real aspects in order to offer an illusion? On the contrary, the verisimilar consists of conformity with something known and is, thus, particularly capable of generating illusion”<sup>97</sup>.

We must understand, therefore, that Aristotle did not do, in Folkierski’s view, anything other than to identify, very briefly, the preference that he had for the verisimilar in art, “a verisimilar that is, in his opinion, more philosophical than

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.



reality". Up to here Folkierski's opinions help us to understand certain aspects and details of the Aristotelian concept about art, without it completely taking them over, such as, for example, the case of the thesis of the compulsory nature of illusion in art; "Aristotle did not tell us where the verisimilar ends and where convention begins. It would appear that he was right, firstly because everything depends more on the artist's tact than the theoretician's reasoning, and secondly because it varies according to era". And above all because "Artists and critics embraced each other in the narrow causeway of this verisimilar imitation; some grew closer, in the name of validity, to a servile imitation, others in the name of the verisimilar, to a conventional idealism; then there are others, it is needless to mention, who knew how to maintain an equal distance from the two extremities. In their conviction of remaining faithful to Aristotle, contradictory currents often occur."

A great service to clarifying the general problematic regarding the variety of the meanings in which the Aristotelian principle has been interpreted is offered by the aesthetician Tzvetan Todorov in the study "The romantic crisis", in which a synthesis is made of the aesthetic concepts of the most important theoreticians beginning with St. Augustine, Herder, Rousseau, A. W. Schlegel, Schelling, Diderot, Lessing, Batteux, Shaftesbury, Mendelsohn, Humboldt, Novalis, Croce, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, and others, in connection to the thesis "The End of Imitation", which constitutes a subchapter of the study, in order to demonstrate that above all these philosophers of Western culture there are ideas and theses of an exceptional

thinker, but one who is nonetheless obscure in comparison to the ones that have been quoted, outshined by Goethe, his great protector, as well as of those who praised him, giving him the central part in the interpretation of the principle of imitation “in its highest meaning” and which “make certain reserves as though there was a fear that a limitless admiration would cast a shadow on the merits of the one who phrases it”<sup>98</sup>.

That philosopher is Karl Philip Moritz, about whom A. W. Schlegel, in the notes for a course in 1801 about “The Doctrine of Art”, once all past theories have been mentioned, notes Tzvetan Todorov, and after they have all been criticized, after exposing their own perception, or rather the one of the Athenaeum, adds: “There is only one author, as far as I’m aware, who has used purposely, in the highest sense, the principle of imitation in art; that is Moritz in his little work *On the Formative Imitation of the Beautiful*’. The downside of this writing consists of the fact that Moritz, despite his truly speculative spirit, being unable to find any point of support in the philosophy of the time, got lost as a lonely one on the erroneous (*Irrungen*) mystical paths”<sup>99</sup>. Todorov cannot hide his revolt when drawing our attention on the “weirdness” of the duplicitous attitude, meant to deprecate the scientific merit, which “becomes truly suspicious”, “The Philosophy of Art” by Schelling (notes for a course in 1802), which he even quotes: “A great merit for Moritz is that of being represented the first

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 216.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 216, 217.

amongst Germans, and, in general, mythology with a poetic and absolute character which is typical of it"<sup>100</sup>.

Therefore, as Todorov remarks, "Schlegel and Schelling grant Moritz, to his honor, the first place on different fields", but then, in the statements that follow, both try to diminish his merits. "So much coincidence deserves an explanation", decides the author of the study "The Romantic Crisis" and proceeds to make confessions.

Alongside its scientific side, the socio-moral and ethical aspect becomes sensational: "As far as I am concerned I will look for it (the explanation) with the great benefactor of Moritz, and of so many others, with the one whose immense shadow rendered negligible for a long time, especially Moritz Goethe. Goethe meets Moritz in Rome in 1786: he conquers him, he becomes his inspirer, he makes Moritz his spokesperson"<sup>101</sup>. He invites him to Weimar, Moritz is introduced to high society, then he is found a teaching post in Berlin, where he spends his last four years of life. Tzvetan Todorov believes that in order to diminish his merits and leave the impression that the ideas in fact belonged to Goethe, Moritz is remembered in general opinion as a mere spokesperson of the master.

But Moritz's essay which contains all the important ideas dates back to 1785. His meeting with Goethe took place one year later, in 1786. Todorov demonstrates that the false, namely Moritz being a mere spokesperson of Goethe, was started by Goethe himself.

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 217.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

“In the summarized review that he dedicated to Moritz’s book about imitation, he states that he was present when the author was writing his work. In “Italian Journey”, speaking about the same book, he is more brutal: “it was born from our conversations which Moritz used and elaborated as he saw fit” (A. 39 p. 29). Thirty years later, in a note entitled “*Einwirkung der Neueren Philosophie*” (1820), he again feels the need to affirm: “I have had ample discussions with Moritz, in Rome; a small printed volume is even today the testimony of the fruitful hesitations of the past”<sup>102</sup>.

“If this is what the written version sounds like, what can be believed about the verbal appreciations that, undoubtedly heard by Schlegel and Schelling, Goethe’s intimate friends, during the very first years of the century?”<sup>103</sup>, TzvetanTodorov wonders, disgusted by the injustices that the great ones commit, unwilling to admit that there is room for others in the general admiration and in the pantheon of national or universal culture.

In the next subchapter of the study “The End of Imitation”, this researcher demonstrates that “by interpreting the principle of imitation in a new way”, Moritz demonstrates that “if there is imitation in art, it is the activity of the creator: it is not the work that copies nature, but the artist, they copy it by creating the work” and, more clearly said, “The one that imitates is no longer the work, but the artist”<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 222.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem*.

But is this meaning truly new? It is, as Todorov maintains, a “radical invocation” or a discovery, or, more correctly put, a rediscovery of the initial integral meaning of Aristotle’s thinking? The principle was disabled by its initial all-encompassing significance; in small, mean, limitative judgments, stereotypical thinkers felt the need to add to the term Mimesis an adverb that would also qualify what exactly needs to be imitated (“the beautiful nature”, “the ideal”) “The artist imitates nature to the extent to which this is a producing principle”.

“The born artist, writes Moritz, is not happy with observing nature, they must imitate it, take it as a model, and form (*bilden*), create like it”, Tzvetan Todorov shows us. The work of Moritz is entitled, significantly: “*On the Imitation that Creates Beauty* (1788)”<sup>105</sup>.

The idea of the closeness between the creator God and the creator artist existed before with some theoreticians of the eighteenth century, with Shaftesbury in England, with Lessing and Herder in Germany, but starting with Moritz “in romantic aesthetics, the emphasis will not fall on the rapport of representation between work and world, but on the rapport of expression: the one that connects the work to the artist”<sup>106</sup>.

Particularly from the perspective of the actor’s art one should remember the remark of Tzvetan Todorov on Moritz’s general conception about “Mimesis”: “the moment of formation will take precedent over the formed result, any

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<sup>105</sup> *Idem*, p. 222.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 223.

validated term will be attracted on the side of the process of production”, as well as the idea that “within this new frame the Work and nature have in common the fact that they are closed totalities, total universes – since the creation of works is in no way different from that of the world”<sup>107</sup>.

Here is the argument of our definition: “the actor’s work is the very process of creation”.

For Moritz, the work of art is a “totality”. This is the central concept of Moritz’s aesthetics: TOTALITY, even though “he prefers to give it the name of “beautiful”, “the beautiful totality created by the artist is therefore a result of the beautiful superior left on the great totality of nature”<sup>108</sup>.

The human spirit is a complete whole. The aesthetical conception of Moritz greatly surpasses the ideas of his time. If the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were still dominated by mechanical conceptions on art, especially on the actor’s art, and a good part of the ideas about this branch of art continues today to pay tribute to the belief according to which the actor’s art is an art of “speaking” or of “movement”, of gestures and mimics, in the eighteenth century Moritz launches the dynamic conception of the totality of the world and of human nature. But, unfortunately, this radical conception has not yet penetrated the thinking and understanding of theatre practitioners.

“The more the parts of a beautiful thing are in a rapport with their ensemble, namely with this thing, the more it is

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<sup>107</sup> R. F. Moritz, *Gotterlehre*, p. 74.

<sup>108</sup> *Idem*.

beautiful”, wrote Moritz over 200 years ago: “finding a purpose in itself”, “being endowed with a systematic character” to think on the idea of “internal coherence”, these are ideas that seem to belong to the most modern theories of actual sciences, about systematic thinking, about entropy and holography and about living systems.

The law of art according to Moritz’s conception, “the conversion of the external finality within the internal finality”<sup>109</sup>, is being adopted as the clearest explanation of the essence of the actor’s art. “The internal coherence, considered to be characteristic of the work of art, finds itself in all strata that comprise it, therefore also within the material and spiritual aspect, as well as in its content and form. But form and content, matter and spirit, are different; one can therefore characterize thusly the work of art by saying that it creates a fusion of contraries, a synthesis of the opposite”<sup>110</sup>.

Or, in other words, the Work of art “is something that signifies itself”<sup>111</sup>.

We started off from the “imitation of things in nature”, which sits on one pole of the understanding of the principle of “mimesis” and ended up on the opposite end, where synthesis lies, “the formative spirit, a creator of nature”.

Therefore, the principle of “mimesis” is a genetic principle, it focuses on the “totality”, it focuses on the “living” as a specific product of the act of actor’s creation, understood as

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<sup>109</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Teorii ale simbolului*, Ed. Univers, București, 1983, p. 228.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 229.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 233.

a specific phenomenon of the becoming of the dynamic universe, of self-regenerating systems, in which everything coexists in any unit of time.

The philosopher Mircea Florian explains in his philosophy course the term of becoming, associating it to the idea of totality; it is exemplified through the leaf that contains at any given time of observation all characteristics all the characteristics that we habitually only know in time. In other words, the leaf is at the same time green and yellow and red and grey, it is at the same time a bud and crumbly cellulose. To understand all at once, putting together all information about the characteristics of the things that we think, means to understand them in their totality. This perception is absolutely necessary for a “character”, this global perception in order for all parts to always represent the whole, the TOTALITY.

Without the criterion of totality, without the compulsory condition of the correct understanding of becoming, the term MIMESIS could not be correctly understood as a founding principle of the creative act. As a consequence, neither would it be possible to have a perception of the actor’s art, in total adequacy with its own condition as a complex phenomenon.



## XVI. Identity and Alterity

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“Contrary to current opinion,  
the concept is the essential material  
of the soul. It is the essence,  
one might say the quintessence of the psyche,  
the psyche in the highest degree  
of its energetic existence”.  
St. Lupasco<sup>112</sup>

“The concept is in the brain (...). The concept is in me and outside of me; I summon it and act with it. The concept of dog, tree, etc. Means all dogs, trees, etc. which are possible in the identity of the dog, the tree, etc. And all diversities, all heterogeneity of each of them. The concept of protein means all possible existing protein and all varieties of protein, because none are identical to another”<sup>113</sup>.

“The concept” adopted by the actor constitutes itself in the founding principle of the new “person” (of the character).

“Concept” is a term that has come about with exercises and pedagogical texts borrowed from British schools of acting, used for practicing substitutive imagination. Even though the term is, in its turn, from exact sciences, in the actor’s art it describes the mentality, the specific logical mechanism of the character, made up of the totality of genetic and accumulated

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<sup>112</sup> St. Lupasco, *Logica dinamică a contradictoriului*, Ed. Politică, p. 310.

<sup>113</sup> *Idem*, pp. 315-316.

information of a human type, features, human nature. The concept becomes a mental “grid” through which to any question that they are the actor answers, without speculation, from the perspective of the substituted person.

The interview is also a type of exercise through which one can “control” the degree to which one adopts the person substituted by the actor.

The genetic pattern of the character is the CONCEPT, the specific intimate logic of the character into which the author’s logic has converted.

The actor can be two subjects at the same time. They can have two identities. They will be – the artist with their identity, and at the same time the character. They will be simultaneously an I and the other from within them, their double. How much exactly from their behavior belongs to them and how much to the other cannot be precisely established, it even becomes a unity, an irreducible totality, which can no longer be taken down.

Is that even possible? Are those not strange things and speculations that have very little in common with the stage practice?

Here we are in the situations of asking ourselves, just like professor Anton Dumitriu, before finding the logical explanation with reference to that member of the Bororó”that he is “in fact” at the same time also an Arara parrot: how is it possible that a normal human thinks this way? What logical scheme do they apply in such a statement and what does it

mean?”<sup>114</sup>. In order to make the explanation easier to understand, Anton Dumitriu gives the example of the electron from modern physics (namely that physicists remarked that the electron had a dual nature, it is a wave and a corpuscle) and as this idea cannot be accepted by classical binary logic, as we have seen in the previous chapters, because it violates the principle of unity and of noncontradiction, one has resorted to polyvalent logic, applying a trivalent logic to this phenomenon.

This also constitutes the unique logical solution for the “dual nature” of the actor in the authentic stage act, because in that case, the actor is two things at once: identity and alterity.

The explanation of this paradoxical phenomenon through polyvalent logic, which physicists and mathematicians applied to the electron, remains the only solution in order for us to understand how the actor thinks, in order to be able to actualize their potentialities, their virtualities.

A significant coincidence: the electron is, as we know, the electronic component of matter. It is the one that produces light.

The actor, when they become two things at once, in the stage act, produces light, it sheds light on meanings, “they render visible the things that are merely intelligible” (Anton Dumitriu).

From amongst all the particularities of human nature, the one that causes the most serious complications and individual or collective crises, is the unstable character of

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<sup>114</sup> A. Dumitriu, *Istoria logicii*, p. 24.

psychic life. The psychic phenomena do not have linear development, they do not always have motivations, causes, which we can define. "Yes, the concept is essentially contradictory, as it contains within it the identity and non-identity, at the same place and time. And it is essentially dynamic and antagonistic, even though its dynamism appears as a static cerebral entity... it is essentially moving... if I were to think of a dog, if the concept were to come to light in my brain, I don't only see a dog, the dog species, the biological type called dog, but also CERTAIN dogs that I have known, different from one another; I see them unintentionally, both in their identity, and in their diversity; the same dog does not appear to me as the stereotype of a dog, in general, but in its own diversity, with the shape of the snout, the body, the paws, the hair etc."<sup>115</sup>.

The subtle or obvious oscillations of behavior, the pendulations between extreme polarities, the sudden changes, with or without reason, of the individual conduct, make the efforts of the psychologists necessary, but they raise questions over the existing theories about the concept of character.

Writers, poets, playwrights, but above all actors, in the most significant moments of their creative activity, catch themselves torn into several potential alterities, and notice that their person is divided, that their thinking and their feeling, up until then unitary, is modified in such a manner that their behavior, consistent up until then, tends to become another, almost as if belonging to other people, that they only begin to

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<sup>115</sup> St. Lupasco, *Logica dinamică a contradictoriului*, p. 316.

discover then, having the strange sensation that they are coming, whether from outside of them, or from the unknown depths of their individuality, and begin to recognize fragments of “biography” of these phantoms, that some of the events and situations already lived at one time repeat themselves identically, but when exactly they were lived, under what concrete circumstances, they remain obscure, despite the images that keep returning and despite a sustained effort of clarifying, of recalling. It is just like the effort to relive a dream in which two processes overlap, two consciences, one of which is in full “anamnesis” (recalling), while the other one is in an intense effort of “representation”, of appreciation, of becoming aware, of placing itself in rapport to something well known, “The whole becoming of the psyche is a becoming of conceptualization”<sup>116</sup>.

Even though a person’s behavior in general is more or less equal to itself, being “specialized” in precise activities and despite the desire to “be” and to remain “themselves”, consistent with a certain character model, even the opaque and rigid matter of the body “fixed” in the pattern of an unmistakable biological and physical entity, in certain circumstances, obtains an unsuspected availability for change, experiencing a extraordinary need to step outside its own pattern. The tension between “what I am like” and what “I would like” to be like, or even what “I could” be like is permanent, sometimes reaching critical intensities, jeopardizing the psychic balance.

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<sup>116</sup> *Idem*, p. 319.

St. Lupasco offers an explanation for this phenomenon. It takes place through the manifestation of the third state of matter, which he defines as “heterogenous”, “psychic energy”.

St. Lupasco categorizes matter in three states: “physical”, “biological”, “psychic”, all of them being based on the same elements from the periodic table but organized differently. These interact, still in a relative balance, in order to maintain the normal state of the system, with the “homogenizing” energy on the biological and physical system when “motricity and action are inhibited by the state of sleep, or by meditation and contemplation (...). Art is not, as is sometimes believed, an escape, the journey into a different world, into a shelter from real life. On the contrary, it is an interference in the biological universe, which gets mixed up with the physical universe, in order for both to be subjected to the psychic universe. That is, to the soul itself, that wishes to enter anything and replace it. Hence the impression and even the hypothesis of a divinity of art (especially of music, as for example, of a Mozart), unless the psyche is dependent on a supreme psychic universe, of a soul of souls”<sup>117</sup>. St. Lupasco finds the explanation in the fact that this form – the highest – is the minority psyche in our macro-physical and biological universe: “art often seems like a luxury, an entertainment which is of too little interest to the person of action, the politician, the businessperson, even the scientist. While it is, in

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<sup>117</sup> *Idem*, p. 30.

every form, a real nourishment of the psyche: the brain swallows the show, the book, the paintings...”<sup>118</sup>.

The instability of the spirit relativizes all things that we know, what we know about ourselves and about others.

The stability of the human characters, even of the proverbially rigid ones, proves to be relative, with too little resistance to the action of the energy of the “psychic heterogeneity”. And even though the body is not available to subtle, structural modifications, the changes that occur in the spirit are only recognizable in the body.

This is the fundamental paradox – perhaps the first of a series of paradoxes that form the base of (and ultimately motivate) the actor’s art as a specific phenomenon of the manifestation of the being, within the limits of a determining materialization. It is the phenomenon generated by the manifestation of the contradiction between the freedom of the spirit and the limits of the matter that contains it.

This is where our conviction starts, the conviction that the real actor’s art which is fundamentally different from its hybrid forms (which only imitate the actor’s art), stems from a naturally objective phenomenon.

Even though it debuts as a “procedure”, it ends up being a “phenomenon”, even though it starts from a “convention”, it becomes an “objective act”, even though it begins as artifice, it achieves authenticity.

The actor’s art is invention and discovery, it is fiction and truth at the same time. The genius of the actor does not

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem.*

merely invent, but it discovers, it does not put parts together, it does not arrange, it reveals, it actualizes preexistent and inexhaustible potentialities from within them.

The true actor rediscovers an elementary truth every time, namely that the human carries within themselves, through their dual and contradictory form, on all levels, psychic, biological, and physical, in the contradiction between matter and spirit, the premises of theatricality, the source of a natural phenomenon, which in the lower stratum is the expression of the processes generated by the continuous manifestation of the tensions between the unfettered freedom of the spirit, of the permanent aspiration towards “something else” and the limits of the matter which sets them in the pattern of an individualized body.

The restlessness of thinking, ideas, the necessity to adapt, in order to establish new rapports with concrete and assumed reality, the capacity for imagination, for representation, the power to make analogies and deductions, the power of analysis and synthesis, therefore of conceptualization, of rendering things abstract, constitutes a continuous flux of heterogenous energy which obligates individuality to constantly discover new things about itself, to discover the “alterity”, namely that possible option of their own person which is different from identity and which, in certain objective circumstances, substitutes identity.

We are not talking here of “doubling” (in a paranormal sense), but simply of the actualization of a potential virtual version of one’s own person.



In other words, we can discover that in certain concrete circumstances there can “come out” from within us that human that we could not even have suspected lies in the depths of our person, and that we could actually be “different” than what we became accustomed to, “specialized” in being.

The most common expression of this “alterity” functions within the ruptures of the individuality of the creator of literature in the form of the three version of personal pronoun “I”, “You”, “He”, “She”, called “you-ness”, “them-ness”, which the person of the creator takes on in their condition as a “character” with whom they are confronted, or that they share with their own identity. Phrases such as “*Madame Bovary, c’est moi*”, that Flaubert said, or “*Je est un Autre*” (“*I is Another*”), Rimbaud’s statement, or “*I am Otilia*”, the favorite statement of George Călinescu, have imposed the acceptance and familiarization with the idea of the transfer and the taking on of the identity.

In order to understand this strange and contradictory phenomenon we will resort to the study “The Logic of Art or Aesthetic Experience” of St. Lupasco.

“... The logic of aesthetics must be oriented in a direction which is contrary to ethics; contrary to a rational or irrational process contrary to a non-contradiction process. The logic of aesthetics must step from non-contradictory to contradictory; that which looks towards contradiction”<sup>119</sup>. “In order to attempt aesthetic experience, as a creator or a spectator, one must step away from action, be content to

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<sup>119</sup> *Idem*, p. 361.

contemplate (...), it means to stop the developing of one or another of the two antagonistic dynamisms, precisely of the two *becomings* of the logic, a development that represents action itself. And how can one stop it if not through a contradictory becoming which is waiting to be developed. Thus, that process which we called “quantic” is born, which leads to contradiction. But to step away from action and trigger a contradiction process means, as we know, to inaugurate the process of knowing knowledge (...) and indeed, is not any aesthetic event a conscience of conscience or a knowledge of knowledge? “

In order for the identity of the writer to take over the you-ness and them-ness and talk from the position and the perspective of the logic of the characters, one is supposed to have known them so well, or to have guesses, “thanks to talent, that type of enigmatic inspiration which brings (...) in the heart of our complicated logical or existential configuration”, to the extent that they become autonomous, that they are radically different from their own identity, that they no longer retain anything from the thinking and expressing of their own person, but they achieve that quantic profess of being truth – a person with their own identity – and fiction – you-ness or them-ness at the same time.

In other words, the premises of “the actor’s art” are also, according to all ideas that we have so far presented, in tight connection with the un-unitary and dynamic structure of the human being, with ever more advanced and more contradictory characteristics, as we descend deeper in the structure of the person, who, in their general, exterior aspect,

seen from outside, seems unitary, perfectly individualized, but that in reality is a universe full of enigmas, of alternatives and possible discontinuities, because it is not just the contingent reality of the person that is real, but also that which is in or beyond the body.

The analysis of the phenomenon of the “polyphony of the person” has so far been undertaken rather from the perspective of the ruptures which take place within the person of the creator of literature and less from the perspective of theatre, of the moment of the transformation of the literary character, communicated through the “semiotic” system, in a “material” system.

But in the stage act, the actor cannot remain in a “state of meditation” or “contemplation”, in order for, as St. Lupasco maintains, the “psyche” charged with the elements of the imaginary character would spill through inspiration over the biological and physical identity, in order to inhibit and dominate them, in order to occupy the whole territory of the person of the creator and thus to change their identity. On the contrary, the actor is called to act, to fully manifest the potential of physical and psychic energy in order for it to become support matter of creation and through which the actualization, the embodying, the materialization of the character can be produced.

Therefore, if with a writer the character that has been created can only remain “an interior image”, projected in the imagination of the creative person and which can be communicated through a random system of communication – through spoken or written words, through sound or graphic

symbols, whether the painter or sculptor, using colors and canvas, the support matter of the painting and the sculpture, marble, wood, stone, communicate an instantaneous, a unique attitude which can suggest all our characteristics: “We are unique up to biological level”, beyond which “we are double”<sup>120</sup>. Bahtin maintains that “the double” is, according to Dostoyevskyan optic, always “perfidious they are the one that “resist”, that are opposed and deny the statements of identity, of the I, and sometimes, then the I is inhibited, the “double” takes over the command of the endogenous tuning and self-tuning of the acts of the person, as it happens with the humble civil servant, the silly Ejevikin, who, after being thrown out of the ball that he went to without being invited, and while he embarrassedly puts on his coat in the cloakroom, “he feels pushed by an irresistible force” in the salon and finds himself asking to dance the daughter of the general and only then does he realize that all eyes are on him and, in the general laughter, is overcome by shame and revolt mixed with the sensation of collapsing, which causes the crisis in which the idea of suicide looks like the only solution.

In light of such an experience, the characterization of M. Bahtin becomes convincing: “The human is never identical to themselves, which is why the formula A equals A cannot be applied to them (...). According to the idea of Dostoyevsky, the real life of the personality only takes place in at the stage of this inconsistency of the human with themselves”<sup>121</sup>. Near the

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<sup>120</sup> Constantin Noica, *Devenirea întru ființă*.

<sup>121</sup> M. Bahtin, *Problemele poeziei lui Dostoievski*.

end of his life, Dostoyevsky wrote: "I remain perfectly realistic, to find a Human from a Human... People call me a psychologist; it is not true, I am only a realist in the highest sense of the world, that is, I present all the depths of the human spirit"<sup>122</sup>.

From his first book, titled "The Double", Dostoyevsky followed his principle: "Any phenomenon lives in the immediate vicinity of their antipode: love - hate, faith - atheism, nobleness - decay"<sup>123</sup>. All ancient heroes have this fundamental experience of modifications of the "character" and of behavior, starting with the satires of Menip of Hadara (third century BC), who used to "kill" his heroes in order for them to be able to discuss as equals in the afterlife (the soldier with the emperor, the mortal with the god), then moving on to the Greek tragedians, whose heroes, thanks to the errors that their ancestors committed and those that they commit themselves, all experience several ways of behaving, such as, for example, Oedipus - a royal offspring, his childhood spent amongst primitive shepherds, a young man trying to find himself, a murderer, a king, husband to his own mother, father to his own sisters, blind beggar. Jocasta and Electra and Medea and Antigone and Creon and Ajax also live with modified characters. Antigone affirms herself through kindness, but imposes herself through strength.

"The character" can no longer be considered an exponent of a "unique" way of behaving as a result of a

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<sup>122</sup> *Idem*, p. 85.

<sup>123</sup> *Idem*, p. 238.

consistent “character” equal to themselves, as we used to be taught in the 50’s: “the character is a monomaniac” (A. Pop Marțian).

The writings of the Renaissance, culminating with Shakespeare’s works, enrich knowledge through art of the complex and contradictory human nature, a knowledge denied by some theoreticians.

Theatre and above all the actor’s art constitute a real school of initiation in the secrets of the “double” and of “multiplicity” of the alterities which “lie hidden” in the enigmatic and contradictory depths of human nature.

In great works, identity is proven to always be an epiphenomenon, only the visible part of the “iceberg”.

Among the many examples of revolt of the great creators against the idea of “unicity of the identity”, the ones that are offered to us by the work of Mihai Eminescu do not necessitate any more comments: “How many people are there within one single person? - As many as there are stars in a drop of dew under the clear night sky. And were one to see that drop again, to look deep within it, one could see again the thousands of stars of the sky, each a world, each with its own countries and peoples, each with the history of their own heroes written on it – a universe in a passing drop”<sup>124</sup>. The idea of multiplicity of alterities continues in the comments of the philosophers from “Archaeus”.

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<sup>124</sup> Mihai Eminescu, “*Sărmanul Dionis*”, in *Opere*, critical edition supervised by Perpessicius, vol. VII, Ed. Academiei RSR, București, 1977, Literary prose, p. 100.

In his book, "The Polyphony of the Person", Alexandra Indrieş reaches the conclusion that "the polyphony of the epic person is a completely different one from the polyphony of the lyrical person", that this difference stems from the fact that the personality of such a great poet as Eminescu, is much too strong "to be able to be something else too". "He remains the absolute poet of the Romanian literature. (...) Whereas with a poet, as we know, the dominant factor is the I"<sup>125</sup>. Regardless, Eminescu's Eu was often also She and You. Let us carefully read again his Epistles, his plays, and Lucifer.

*And while she is in slumber gone  
She murmurs through her sighs:  
'Come down to me beloved one,  
Fair prince of the clear skies.  
Come down, good Lucifer and kind,  
O lord of my aspire'  
And flood my chamber and my mind  
With your sweetest fire!  
'Down from the spheres do I come  
Though dreadful the commotion,  
My father is the vaulted dome,  
My mother is the ocean.*

*For I have left my realm to keep  
Obedience to your command;*

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<sup>125</sup> Alex. Indrieş, *Polifonia persoanei*, Ed. Facla, Oradea, 1986, p. 13.

*Born of the zenith and the deep  
Here I before you stand.  
O come, fair child of royal birth,  
Cast this your world aside,  
For Lucifer has flown to earth  
To claim you as his bride.  
And you will live till time is done  
In castles built of sky,  
And all the fish will be your own,  
And all the birds that fly.’  
‘O, beautiful you are, good Sire,  
As but an angel prince could be,  
But to the course that you desire  
I never shall agree.  
Strange, as your voice and vaster show,  
I live while you are dead;  
Your eyes gleam with an icy glow  
Which fills my soul with dread.’*

Judging from the perspective of the thesis proposed by the author of the book, “the polyphony of the actor’s person” is the more different from the other types of creative persons as they are called to be each time “somebody else”, “something else”, and not only in order to express themselves on one level only, the linguistic one, but encompassing in their creation the totality of their organic nature, their body, the I of their whole identity, which, in its turn, will have to become “another”, the concrete, material, living expression of “the other” from within them. The phenomenon of substituting the person of the actor



into that of the “character” takes place according to different laws than those of the writer, who works in solitude and quietness and in accordance with another principle, leading up to another type of performance, and takes place “in full sight”, in front of the spectators.

The prime criterion of the homologations of the acting creation is the AUTHENTICITY of the processes and dynamic phenomena of the “living”. The authenticity constitutes the capital problem of the actor’s art, answering the question “Do I or do I not believe it”, asked by J. Grotowski. The second: “Do I or do I not understand it”.

Even though authenticity is a general criterion of appreciation of values, in all fields of human life and action, for the actor it becomes a specific criterion, because it represents the unique way of objectification of the stage convention. Without authenticity, there is no actor’s art, it is anything else, mime, pantomime, society game, imitation, grimace, trick, being silly etc.

Unfortunately, “success” is only rarely proportional to authenticity. Ignorance, dilettantism, bad taste, vulgarity, frivolity and cheap popularity damage the rapport between authentic and false. Compared to other fields, in which the false circulates through hidden channels, because substitution is sanctioned, in the actor’s art, the false circulates undisturbed, imposture always being legitimized with the right to diversity.

In a general context of confusion of values, the condition of authenticity becomes critical and mocked by the snobs.

The chase for immediate success, for spectacular, often imposes “the expression” (of effect) in the foreground of preoccupations, eliminating the idea of authenticity from the system of criteria, from the practice of creation and from the one of critical appreciation. That is why, it is strange to say the least that, when it reappears in a true creation, “authenticity” is taxed as a “discovery” and as a “novelty”, when in fact it should constitute the NORMALITY of any actor’s act.

Humans have found many ways of denying their condition which was imposed onto them by the irreversible sentence of the “banishment from Paradise”.

The first forms of resorting to this conviction are the games of children, who order and change their identity at will, honestly, without “preconceived” ideas. The change is included in their genetic dowry, Homo-Sapiens take advantage of intelligence to diminish the effects of their condition, through various forms of dialogue and conciliation with the supreme instance in order to grab, with all sorts of tricks, a different condition. The first forms were the magical ones, then art and religion, then science. Through culture, humans have managed to modify their condition. The performance of the actor is one of the most ambitious forms, animated by the ideal of the negation of the limits of the unique condition of identity and is a form of “rebirth” under a different appearance and a different destiny.

Carefully analyzed, great acting performances prove to be possible through the actor’s capacity to change their way of thinking, of commuting their own logical system and their

own criterial system of values, professed by the character that they embody.

In general, people do not use their full potential. We only function on one part (about 5% for the common human, and 7 - 8% for great creators, geniuses, according to the opinion of scientists) of our capacity, in different "fields of expertise", we strictly fulfill that which is strictly necessary, according to a program or a "concept" which is formed in time, on different types of activities, on ways of fulfilling needs and desires.

It happens sometimes that the productivity of certain days is surprisingly great. We manage to do so many things for which, normally, we would need 3 - 4 days. The actor is capable, in the stage act, to render this exceptional productivity. But they also end up being "specialized", forming a set of clichés, in certain roles. That is why, one can say that one of the particularities of talent is the ease for "de-specializing", and, of course, the ease to "re-specialize" on a different type of "concept", on a different way of thinking and therefore on a different way of "being".

All of these availabilities, which lean on the richness of genetic information (inherited and acquired), including the multitude of "alterities" ("of prisoners"), which subsist within them, constitute the real potential of "creation" of the actor, who, by adopting a "good theory" and a good method, can reach the competence to "actualize" without the difficulties and the tormenting discomfort which other ways of acting practice generate due to their formalism and artificiality. "Formalisms empty culture", concludes Noica.

All versions in which our personality could have been formed on the ground of a different way of thinking, on a different system of criteria, in different environmental, family, social, cultural conditions, other than the ones in which we lived and formed, were we to have attended other schools - with other types of education, we would have ended up practicing other professions, therefore fulfilling "other roles" in society. All these options of possible "roles" are within us.

Tudor Vianu, studying the heteronomy of artistic creation, reaches the conclusion that "Practical existence impoverishes not only individuality, but our environment as well" and that "each of us is less than they could be. The being that accomplishes itself chokes, within each individuality, a few other beings could become accomplished. The artistic creation takes these out of the vague domain of the public, giving them the illusion of a concrete existence, particularly in the case of dramatic and epic creation, the artist accomplishes themselves in all their multiple possibilities. The forging of tragical or epic characters is often the fulfilling of an unaccomplished destiny for the poet"<sup>126</sup>.

The only aspect of this global judgment, which I consider must be amended, is that with the other types of creators - of literature, epic and poetic, musicians, plastic artists etc. - can be about remaining in the realm of illusion through their creation, "thus giving them the illusion of a complete existence". For the actor, not because "the objectification" of their creation is not realized except on the

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<sup>126</sup> Tudor Vianu, *Estetica*, Editura pentru Literatură, 1979, cap. VI, p. 187.

level of imagination “in their fantasy world”. “Embodying” is an effective phenomenon, the coherent, concrete, and dynamic being of their material living structure which is modified under our very eyes.

Even though there are certain resemblances which occur with all types of creators, psychic processes and of the same nature and with the same functions, in order to become finalized, the actor’s art implies the fulfilling of a condition both elementary and complex at the same time, namely that of managing to express through the body all the changes that occur in the spirit. “The corporealization”, the “physicalizing” of all modifications from the spirit constitutes the unmistakable specific of this art.

If all people are able to imagine, to represent for themselves “in the fantasy world” images, sensations, states, which would render “the illusion of a concrete existence”, as they possess the capacity to imitate feelings and pre-tend, the phenomenon of the “embodiment” of a person constitutes a performance which is only accomplished through the observation of the law “of the organic unity between the interior life of the psyche and the exterior life of the physic”, as the fundamental principle of the Stanislavsky’s system states.

But performance is not always possible.

Not being of a mechanical nature, this type of phenomena has a strong discontinuous and unpredictable character, as they are dependent on a series of variables and determinations, just like any other natural phenomenon, in which the aleatory and the probability play a determining role. “...Contrary to the beliefs from the times of Laplace, when

probability was seen as a purely subjective matter, it is rational to maintain (...) that there is no exact theoretical value to be measured and, as a consequence, no theoretical point of view, there is no hope in the possibility of refining approximations up to the level of an exact value – a fact which constituted one of the wrong ideals of classical physics (...), the increase of demand and of philosophical sustainability will make it necessary for there to be new conceptual refining (...) what we teach our students or ourselves about decisional practice cannot be completely reduced to an algorithm or explicit axioms, even though, on the other hand, we can perfect Aristotle for the very reason that we are capable of applying axioms and adequate procedures. The use of modern quantitative methods of deciding is necessarily limited, but efficient when adequately applied”<sup>127</sup>. In other words, the performance of the actor, the creation itself, is a natural phenomenon which springs from an ensemble of conscious, intentional actions, but which do not constitute anything else but a preparation of conditions for the natural phenomenon of the “accomplishment of virtual potentialities” to come into being.

Thus, that which is of the highest degree of interest is not what the actor “does”, their exterior actions, but that which could result from the ensemble of their acts, namely that if while they act, while they play the part, authentic psychic phenomena occur to them, to extents capable of activating their intuition, the subconscious, their whole potentiality of

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<sup>127</sup> P. Suppes, *Metafizica probabilistică*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1990, p. 349.

awareness, capable of putting in motion functional modifications in their whole human globality, in their metabolism, hemostasis, cardiac rhythm, to provoke a disorder on a cellular level and in hormonal exchange etc., to change the whole kinesthesia and therefore to change their behavior and thereby to constitute itself in an unexpected and unique life experience, in order to be left with an important benefit of knowledge, not just of their own person, but of all those taking part in this “miracle”. This means that the finality of the actor’s act consists in the capacity to trigger the phenomenon of “empathy”, in which we can all recognize ourselves and through this have the experience alongside the actor on stage.

Between what they “do” and that which is actually happening to them, in the stage act, there is a fundamental difference. That which they “do” can be programmed, thought in advance, planned, rationalized, speculated and ordained at will. That which is “actually happening” to them in the stage act cannot be foreseen, the psychic events cannot be pre-established.

The actor’s creation per se consists of these unpredictable processes. That is why it cannot be programmed, pre-established. It either happens or it does not. The preparation of the most favorable conditions possible in order for these processes to take place must become the fundamental preoccupation, in the accomplishing of any stage act of the actor, as well as in the general problematic of creation. This problematic therefore imposes itself to be well known both by those practicing the art of theatre, as well as by those called to organize and appreciate it.

The simplistic understanding of the idea of “transposing oneself into the character” has always led to the overlooking of this important, perhaps the most important element of the stage act. The contingent reality, the physical and psychic nature of the actor, as well as the materialization of objects that make up the medium that they effectively lean upon during the stage act make it possible for them to leap into “ideality”, into the superior plan of the significance of a stage act.

Terrorized by the idea of being “somebody else”, most of them believe that that which prevents them from becoming “the character” is their own corporal and psychic reality and then, from the moment of receiving the part, they resort to the well-known procedure of “alienation” from themselves, through the replacement of their natural, habitual behavior with an artificial, invented, contrived one, replacing the action of the apparatus of the senses, through which humans establish effective real rapports with the medium in which they exist, with false actions (they pretend to see, to listen and to hear, etc.), falsifying and blocking the receiving of impulses and real signals, which come from the surrounding reality; the eye stares into distance, the ear no longer hears, the limbs lose coordination, the body contracts, the breath ceases to be a normal act, speech, like movement, becomes mechanical, the natural rapport between the psychic and the physical is interrupted, the sensation of total discomfort completely overtakes the whole body which goes into a state of alarm.



The escape from one's own individuality in order to make room for "another", that of "the character" - (who in truth does not yet exist) - is beyond a doubt the consequence of a false and all too rudimentary understanding of the idea of "transposing" oneself into the character.

This happens not just to beginners, but also to professionals who start from the premises that they are not the character that we are talking about, that the character is "somebody else" than themselves, therefore they cannot use the data of their own individualities.

In other words, they believe in the illusion that the actor must change their way of being, that they must "pretend", that they must empty all spaces of their own data and processes and leave room for the "new inhabitant" (see the opinions of Louis Jouvet), who merely "rents" some of the elements of their identity.

The consequence of this way of thinking is an annulment of their own being, a sort of chasing away of the person from the actor, of the "human", a sort of robotization of the actor.

The character demands life, human complexity, dynamics and contradiction, they claim existence as an intelligent and sensitive human being, they demand a body, they demand verbalization, with one word, they demand to be "a totality" that lives, a bio-psycho-socio-cultural "complexly organized unit".

Is it enough that out of the whole structure of the miracle of complexity which is always psychosomatic to the living human nature, the actor lays at the disposal of "the

character” only certain “parts” (such as “vocality” and “motricity”), and everything that raises the human species above all creations of nature, all that determines performances typical to humans, spirit, conscience, intuition, senses, affectivity, data through which the limits of their own condition are surpassed and through which the human ends up correcting their own nature, being excluded throughout the stage existence of the actor?

The prolonging in any of the theatre schools of such a view cannot be motivated by any theatrical aesthetics, for the exultation of a certain formal modality, nor by the guilty ignorance of the craftsman “who knows” from the start “what” and “how” it must be done?

The human in the actor does not disappear under any circumstance, except when they are murdered by imposture.

The problem of leaning on the specific abilities of one’s own personality in any stage task, on the performances of one’s own spirit and of one’s own body, on the whole sensorial potential, the one of conscience and of intuition which one is based upon in their objective existence, in their everyday life, and which is “prolonged” in the most natural way possible, as well as in the existence of the stage, which is only initially conventional, is the problem, the key of the actor’s art.

The problem lies in “what” the human does, and not the actor, acting-wise. That which happens to the human within the actor, the rapports in which the human is placed towards the stage reality. They are involved, or hidden, effectively manifested, or “neutralized”, they are imposed or self-eclipsed, they take upon themselves a responsibility in

their actions and reactions, subtle or violent, according to circumstance, in favor of the character that they do not “represent” merely symbolically, but to whom they only substitute themselves and take them on in all aspects and circumstances?

“The character” therefore has two possibilities: either they remain a draft, a “representation” “in general”, “a symbol”, a mark that mechanically “reproduces” gestures mechanically, movements, pre-established actions, or they “remain” a concrete human being, undivided, who take on and “effectively live” the whole complex of events and acts and reacts according to necessities imposed by situations of life which, although conventional, invented and proposed initially as a “game” with specific rules, for the actor and through the actor these become situations which are at least verisimilar, if not objective realities.

Between the authentic actor and the authentic character there is no distance, no rupture. The human actor is the one that is always the center piece of any stage situation, in any dramatic situation, they think and feel effectively, they “rise”, they “fall”. The totality of their nature is the source of unpredictable reactions, the source of the miracle of the “living”, which needs the theatre of art.

The authentic actor does not remove anything from the organic process of nature during “playing”, they do not reduce anything from the phenomenon of their objective existence.

The stage demands of the actor an “atypical” behavior - a “specialized” behavior, a phenomenality with maximum productiveness, of the whole psychosomatic potential. Their

performance is also life, but one that has the force to develop “the essence of the real”, it is life raised to a certain “strength”, to the strength of signifying, of “revealing essences”. “Art reveals the essence of the real”<sup>128</sup>, according to the definition of C. Noica, and the stage acts that “lack this fundamental characteristic”, according to the opinion of the same philosopher, are below standard, because they do not have “an appropriate content for the human...they do not serve a clear purpose, rather they become purposes in themselves and are therefore to be repudiated, as they mystify the idea of human purpose”.<sup>129</sup>

Through the actor, a stage reality considered “fictional”, which is forged in front of our very eyes, becomes the more coherent and concrete as the reality of objective existence.

For the actor, the stage situation is a reality in which, once they have accepted the convention, they have become engaged and can no longer take action as an “actor”, but they are compelled to manifest themselves as a real person, with their whole psychosomatic potential. And even though stage reality is “conventional”, the psychological principles cannot occur except within full coherence and authenticity, without “that correction of form which is artificial, or plain damaging to art, as expression has no truth nor beauty, but it is rather a concrete totalitarian intention”.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> C. Noica, *Sentimentul românesc al ființei*, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1979, cap. VI, p. 187.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>130</sup> Camil Petrescu, *Modalitatea estetica a teatrului*, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 1971, p. 38.

This means that the expression has not only “truth” or “beauty”, but their opposites as well, that the actor’s art is not “the imitation of beautiful nature”, but the expression of complex and contradictory nature as it is presented in the form of a specific phenomenon of human totality.

Any specific activity starts from a specific reality and constantly leans on it.



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# Contents

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|   |     |
|---|-----|
| I. Foreword.....  | 3   |
| II. Introduction.....   | 5   |
| III. What the Actor's Art is.....   | 11  |
| IV. The Actor's Art and The Logical Mechanisms.....                                 | 21  |
| V. The Actor's Art and the Logical Structure of Primitive<br>Mentality.....         | 24  |
| VI. The Actor's Art is a specific logical mechanism.....                            | 32  |
| VII. A necessary redefining.....  | 36  |
| VIII. Unity and diversity in the Actor's Art.....                                   | 47  |
| IX. Object and method in the pedagogy of the Actor's Art....                        | 86  |
| X. The defining of the two specific objects: theatre and<br>the theatre school..... | 92  |
| XI. Delimitations and principles.....   | 95  |
| XII. The content of the discipline of the Actor's Art.....                          | 111 |
| XIII. The need for the imaginary.....   | 115 |
| XIV. Imagination.....   | 119 |
| XV. The Mimesis principle and the Actor's Art.....                                  | 124 |
| XVI. Identity and Alterity.....   | 139 |
| Bibliography.....   | 169 |

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