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VIA NEGATIVA IN THE LABORATORY THEATRE AND THE AVANT-
GARDE THEATRE JERZY GROTOWSKI- EUGÈNE IONESCO

- summary -

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Key-words, concepts: theatre, via negativa, director, Jerzy Grotowski, word, dramatic text, playwright, Eugène Ionesco, body, actor, way of expression, verticality, conjunctio

oppositorum, total act, liberation, denial, Yoga, Hatha yoga, absurd, human condition, movement, interior, impulse, reaction, dream, elimination, purification, block, living body, liberated body, clichés, Self, new, image, psychic, physical, being, conscience.

Structure of the thesis: The thesis is structured into four chapters: *The Perception of the „new” and the contempt of the traditional expression axioms, Via negativa, a way to a new form of theatre, Eliminating the thinking blockages. Exceeding the limits of the WORD, Eliminating the body expression blockages. The Discovery of the LIVING BODY*

The work is structured in such way as to reflect the bridges, connections that can be traced between the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski and the playwright Eugène Ionesco; between the concept of Body and the concept of Word; between the expression through the Body and the expression through the Word.

The purpose of the research is represented by the analysis of the *via negativa* concept in these two ways of expression, Body and Text/Word. The argument prefacing the work discloses the common territory between Jerzy Grotowski and Eugène Ionesco, between the two great concepts, Body-Word.

Presentation of the Thesis:

Chapter 1. The Perception Of the „New” And the Contempt of the Traditional Expression Axioms

The first chapter of the thesis contains an analysis of the nature of the Ionesco and Grotowski negativism and an analysis of the essential expression vectors in the Ionesco and Grotowski art Word/Text, Image and Body. For both the discovery of a new „form” of theatre is born out of the rejection of the cliché of any kind.

I analyse in this chapter the resorts of the mechanism in the dramatic art of Eugène Ionesco and in the art of Jerzy Grotowski, the „core” from which the entire vision shall „grow”

The Ionesco theatre was born out of the need for authenticity which the playwright experiments already in his Romanian period. I refer here to his youth publishing materials, the literary or artistic critic articles, published in Romanian magazines between the years 1930-1945. The youth publishing materials, *At War With Everybody*, *NO*, can be viewed as the core from which the Ionesco work has later developed.

I planned to discover the resorts of this „need” to oppose and to refuse the models.

The Romanian culture and literature are accused by Eugène Ionesco of non-authenticity, caused by the borrowing of methods, techniques, themes, trivialized precisely through taking, through imitation. This positive directing towards the authenticity comes from an obsessive negative dimension of triviality.

For Eugène Ionesco, the concept of triviality becomes an obsession. The existential triviality represents „living through others”, „false inner feeling”, and the aesthetic triviality means using a technique already used and worn-out, expired.

The trivial is defined as the common, the ordinary, and Eugène Ionesco proclaims the perpetual need of new, unprecedented and experimental. His dissatisfaction results in his part-taking as antagonist to the construction of a usual aesthetics.

Publishing, this creation of negation, allows the discovery of the *new*, the innovation, regarding the means of expression. As we could observe earlier, the author's preoccupation towards a negativism addressed generally towards the artistic creation represented a first step towards deconstruction.

Jerzy Grotowski's entire vision was born from a negation, that of accepting the cliché of any type. His work method with the actor presumed abandoning all known methods. It implied stepping on *via negativa*, the rejection and purification way. Jerzy Grotowski spoke many times about rejection of some expression boundaries and the principles of the *Poor theatre* come to support this. I tried to emphasize these directions traced by Jerzy Grotowski to create a *Poor theatre*. In order to sketch the great directions I used Jerzy Grotowski's seminars in Skara, from 1966. It is interesting to notice here the way in which the main directions of the *Poor theatre* are presented. Everything starts with a negation, a rejection of already clichéd principles. Jerzy Grotowski presents what should be avoided in theatre and exemplifies the way in which this process might be possible. Practically we notice a few rules and advices which Jerzy Grotowski imposed for the actor's work but also after that.

The next concepts I have analysed are: the Avant-garde in the Ionesco art and the „beginning” in the Grotowski art. Eugène Ionesco and Jerzy Grotowski are interested to achieve a high degree in freedom of expression on the artistic act.

In Ionesco's vision, the playwright is forced to fight a battle with himself in order to be able to say something new or something that hasn't been said right.

Eugène Ionesco urges to a refusal of traditionalism in order to rediscover tradition. He urges to invention, to the imaginary, to an expression beyond classes, expressing fundamental obsessions, to a deep humanity, to spontaneity beyond all barriers imposed on a *pure*, purified expression.

The theatre needs a place like the scientific laboratories, sheltered from the superficiality of the wide public. In theatre one needs experiment to discover novelty. The Avant-garde theatre presents that what regards us all, only, as Ionesco said „that what regards us all in fundamental manner is curiously less accessible.” (Ionesco Notes and Counter Notes 82) The artistic Avant-garde works have the role to retrieve, to say the forgotten truth, to reintroduce it in an out-of-date manner in up-to-date. Of course, these works are not understandable, they can't be included in the preset norms; they are not popular and get rejected most of the times. In Jerzy Grotowski, but also in Eugène Ionesco we find that desire to rediscover the freedom of expression in the „purest” form of the theatre. A theatre coming from within, eliminating all that is artificial. Through this kind of theatre the rediscovery of the idea of theatre and of the Self can be achieved.

Jerzy Grotowski desires the discovery of the „beginning”. By means of the theatre works and of the projects following this period, Jerzy Grotowski tries to rediscover the fact that he is „somebody's son” and that he can remain in the state of the „beginning”. In other words, he desires a rediscovery of the essential source underlying the artistic act: the human being, in its entire inner complexity. The artistic act becomes a means of rediscovering the „state of the beginning”, a means of revealing the most hidden and profound questions regarding the human being.

The thing that draws Jerzy Grotowski and Eugène Ionesco nearer is exactly that desire to explore new theatre forms as a means of searching for the truth. And where can more truth be found than within us?

The writing of Eugène Ionesco had announced a new tendency to „disinhibit” the writing, a corporalization of the writing, a reversal of the body-soul relationship. In this case we talk about a body that is condemned to death, subject to an implacable end. The body is the place of the *truth* and what Eugène Ionesco does is an „X-ray” of the *body* without sense, naked in front of a passing existence.

The human body is examined just like at an autopsy to find an answer to the questions: why are we subject to this ending and why does the body become a prisoner of the soul? Why do we have the hope of liberation only after death?

The comparison of the playwright Ionesco and the director Jerzy Grotowski with coroners seemed appropriate to me taking into account the fact that the study of the two aims towards searching the meaning of the literature life and the meaning of the theatre act.

The last part of the first chapter wishes to analyse the main means of expression in the Ionesco and Grotowski theatre: *Word/Image-Body*.

The playwright Eugène Ionesco is not preoccupied with finding a new „body” for the dramatic text, but with finding a textual body connected to the own body, the creative act being the expression of a personal live act. He wanted the text to become a transcript of the complexity of the inner world and of the playful language. The image his dramatic text creates can't be descriptive, narrative, explicit, rather it takes the form of an abstract image, an image better coinciding in the end with the Being.

In Eugène Ionesco's playwriting the word suffers some obvious transformations from the meaning to new valences. The word tends not to represent, but to be part of a visual and resonant structure, having the purpose to liberate from a preset, stylistically smoothed mechanical system. It was important for the playwright to find the form of expression nearest to the Being.

Eugène Ionesco's texts deny a series of communication postulates. This logical inconsistency of the Ionesco text derives from the denial of some conventional communication postulates between the sender and the receiver. By refusing all „normal” communication postulates, refusing the inherent components of the dramatic genre (intrigue, character, dialogue), the playwright discovers new resources of theatricality: rhythm, movement, surprise, verbal acceleration, gestural acceleration, image acceleration, object proliferation, as an expression form of the interior. The analysis of the main denied postulates is developed starting with the analysis of the two Russian semiotics researchers Isaak Iosifovic and Olga Revzine.

In the Ionesco work the diary becomes a means of expression for the interior and a source for Ionesco's dramatic texts. Eugène Ionesco's work is a complex structure meant to surprise life in its complexity, yet it does not refer to the aspect of general life, but to the inner universe. The diary has become a model and the diary-type confession shall form an important part of the Ionesco playwriting. The diary becomes the expression of a live, raw artistic act, spontaneously originating in the most inner thoughts and feelings. Many confessions presented in his journals, *Fragments of a Journal*, *Present Past*, *Past Present*, *The Intermittent Searching* are taken and inserted in the dramatic text. The Ionesco journals have as components the most intimate confessions, sentiments and thoughts. The playwright does not offer in his journal dates, experiences belonging to the facts and spicy events in the professional or social field, rather his journal is composed of confessions regarding the personal fears, obsessions and dreams. In writing these confessions we can observe the playwright's wish to keep the rough, coarse, crude form of his thoughts and feelings. The Ionesco journal is one „of fragments”, the confessions are fragmented, characterized by a transcript of the writer's individuality, lacking artifice and tricks.

To analyze the concept of the Body as an essential vector of expression in the Grotowski art, I offer arguments from the 20th century, highlighting the fact that Jerzy Grotowski's art subordinates a series of ideas present in exploring the body of that time, but also opens new roads towards exploration.

The most obvious preoccupation of Jerzy Grotowski regarding corporality is freeing the body of the expression clichés accumulated in time and exploration of the body as an expressive vehicle of interiority. The body becomes a living proof of the inner state. In Jerzy Grotowski can't be said that only one generating centre is found, an initiation centre of the expressive movement. In his working method the entire body becomes an energy centre for movement.

The Polish director wanted to find a way in which the body feels comfortable, to find the expression without going through a form of artificial expression, a deformity of the initial expression. This can also be found today in the most unusual quests in the field of dancing.

In the analysis of the physical, plastic and composition exercises of Jerzy Grotowski can often be found exactly this quest for an initial and personal expression. In his work Jerzy Grotowski did not use „formulas”, he rather tried to remove the obstacles, encouraging a complete freedom.

Chapter 2. *Via Negativa*, A Way to a New Form of Theatre

The second chapter is devoted to analysing the concept of *via negativa* in Jerzy Grotowski's theatre and the way in which this „way” can be found in Eugène Ionesco's playwriting.

The first three subchapters contain a presentation of the main research directions in the *Laboratory Theatre*. I was preoccupied by the analysis of the theoretical concepts, of the research and experiment steps that form the groundwork of the *Poor Theatre*, in relationship with the concepts, objectives, and principles in Yoga. And towards the end of the thesis I analysed the ritualic dimension of the Grotowski art, the resources, elements and conditions of the ritual taken into the Grotowski art.

Searching the sources of the concepts of *Poor theatre*, I found many similarities between his method, the concepts used by him and the concepts appeared in Yoga, Yoga Sutra, Hathayoga, Balinese rituals, Kathakali dances and the Nō theatre.

After researching these similarities I can say that there are four main theoretical concepts developed by the *Laboratory Theatre* and which form the groundwork for the *Poor Theatre*: *conjunctio oppositorum*, *via negativa*, *verticality and total act*. The first three concepts become methods, the means of reaching the fourth concept, that which becomes the goal of Jerzy Grotowski's art – the total act. Between all these concepts there is a strong connection

and without this symbiosis that special moment of profound dialogue with the self, that complete mastery of the body leading to a mastery of the entire space around, is not possible. In my research I observed that the most concepts were borrowed from Patañjali's Yoga Sutra, an ancient Indian philosopher, and from Hatha Yoga.

The Yoga techniques and purpose were taken by Jerzy Grotowski and used for outlining his method. More obvious is the resemblance between the three main conditions imposed by Jerzy Grotowski in the actor's art (self-revelation, coordinating this process and elimination of the physical and psychical resistances) and the orientation directions in Yoga called Hatha Yoga (self-revelation, the desire to master the body and the physical and psychical purification). The objectives present in Hatha Yoga not only seem to me to resemble, but are also completely found in the purpose of Grotowski's performance art. These are: the desire to master the body, to purify it and to free it in order to live a sacred experiment.

To the three conditions imposed in the actor's art of Grotowski, the three directions in Hatha Yoga the Yoga objectives should also be added. The Yoga techniques are meant to lead the yogi to liberation. All liberation stages have as goal the de-conditioning, the stopping of the fragmenting of the human conscience.

The purpose of Yoga being the total de-conditioning, the liberation. Yoga has a few clear objectives: *abstinences, discipline, practice of breathing, concentration, renouncing, meditation and ecstasy*, which become the means of achieving the goals in Grotowski's art of the actor.

In the thesis I have analysed the four concepts providing a basis for the *Poor Theatre: via negativa, conjunctio oppositorum, verticality, total act*, showing the existing connection between their definition by Grotowski and the means and concepts taken from Yoga and Hatha Yoga.

After this concentrated analysis of the main concepts of the *Poor Theatre*, I propose the analysis of the ritualic dimension of Jerzy Grotowski's art.

At Jerzy Grotowski we can talk about an experimental form of ritual, not a traditional form. Besides the already mentioned concepts, the *Poor Theatre* is based on ritualic resources and elements.

In Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre we can identify a few important resources pertaining to the Balinese rites and incantation, the voodoo rites (belonging to the Haiti community), dances and songs from Japan and Yoga practices. Grotowski's attraction for these cultures helped him discover the possible sources in order to achieve the "poor" but expressive form of theatre.

The Polish director borrowed the means of expression from traditional cultures and the principles that formed the groundwork of traditional culture.

The work of Grimes, L. Ronald, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, has helped me discover that there are imposed resources and conditions in every ritual and Jerzy Grotowski used them in his work with the actors. The main elements of the rite are: song, dance, incantation, meditation, painting, and the conditions of the rite are: „sacralise” the space in which you work, learn to see without looking, free yourself from the burden of „believing, explaining and playing”, increase the gestural and corporal language, cultivate reciprocity, weave the singular into plural, the concrete into the transcendent.

Besides these necessary conditions for executing a ritual, we also find the usage of the principles of the ritual, principles used by the Polish director for the actors’ training: establish contact; avoid mental repetition and planning; insist towards the concrete; associate an image during the execution; adapt the entire body and psychic to every move; act from the centres of the body to the outside, to the extremities and voice; surpass tiredness, noise, chatting, indulgence and masks for the sake of revelation.

Jerzy Grotowski examines the potential of the performing arts to generate the supreme conscience, as it is generated in the Balinese rite and imposes rules similar to those.

During the Balinese rites the body becomes free from resistance, free from under the resistance of a used, cliché like language.

The body enjoys its implication in a dimension located beyond the limits of the senses, beyond the body dimension.

Grotowski uses the intensity and attraction the ritual emits and takes it beyond the space of the action towards the viewer. The spectators can’t remain passive in front of a sacrifice made under their eyes.

The condition of the dialogue between the public and the actors can be just the self knowing, the knowing of the other.

Grotowski believes in the idea that if there is truth, an act of revelation in theatre, then the spectator feels it and he/she will be attracted on the same road and the reaction can be a „magical” one. Magic not meant as a trick, a scam, but as a meeting of human beings in the most profound way.

In the *Poor Theatre* the accent falls on the body and the expressivity of the actor, the purpose of the theatre performance being a discovery, a total revealing of the self. Jerzy Grotowski’s theatre becomes a challenge for the actors but also for the spectators. For the actor it becomes a challenge in self discovery, in noticing the degree of his/her anchorage in the everyday and

cliché and in discovering the physical and psychical endurance. The public is subject to another type of dialogue, more profound, like it had come from another dimension in which it is invited to take part with the same sincerity as the actors.

To achieve this „type” of dialogue, Grotowski also has in mind the placing of the public in such a manner, that it can feel like more than a witness in this process. Jerzy Grotowski's performances give the public the possibility of being an active or passive witness to this process.

After this analysis of the concepts on which the vision of Jerzy Grotowski is based, I questioned the definition of the „poverty” concept in Eugène Ionesco's playwriting.

What I think *poverty, via negativa* means in the playwriting of Eugène Ionesco? At first sight, considering such an aspect in connection with the dramatic work of Eugène Ionesco seems to be something abstract. What does *poverty* actually mean in theatre? And how much good can it do to expression? It is the method used by the playwright of eliminating that what is not essential to theatre and implicitly presumes the elimination of the writing canons of a dramatic text. *Via negativa*, Jerzy Grotowski's method of elimination, can also be applied to the dramatic text of Eugène Ionesco. We can, therefore, talk about the elimination, the removal of some clichés and blockages regarding thought, writing and expression.

When we talk about Eugène Ionesco's theatre, we talk about a different kind of theatre, an Avant-garde theatre, a „poor” but at the same time expressive theatre. A theatre in which the poetic tone is not conveyed by the spoken language, but by the language of the images. In it, the language is not articulated; it is the support of the expression of derision.

It is a theatre of confession in which dreams are used because these represent the essence of his thoughts and his feelings. They are like his theatre, a combination of thoughts, states, concerns, fears, anxieties which, if transformed into images, become that which we call absurd. Or, how Ionesco liked to say, *unusual*, just like our existence.

Ionesco writes what he thinks, what he feels; he writes to increase the understanding of our existence, to increase the understanding of our soul and to achieve a perpetuation in this world, at least through his name, if it is impossible otherwise. From here stems also his state of revolt against his impossibility to do anything, to understand the human being, to change anything, to knock down that wall that limits his existence. His impossibility to gain certainty, maybe even the certainty that we will never die, that there is another world.

In Ionesco's playwriting one can observe the desire to remove the clichés and blockages of any kind. We can talk about the elimination, the chasing of the literality, the removal of the coherent thought, the elimination of the daily conscience, of the writing canons of the

dramatic text, the elimination of the discursive logic and the desire to maintain the extra-conscious logic of the dream, all to achieve a spontaneous artistic act having as role the knowledge, not the recognition.

In my opinion, Eugène Ionesco's theatre is a weaving. It functions on the scheme of the connection of the „expression of life in its complexity and incoherence (DREAM) with the „expression of the intuitive thinking, of the awake conscience, maintained through the feeling of awe and through the continuous searching of the interior truth, formulated into images (LUCIDITY).

It is interesting to track how Eugène Ionesco came to write in this form and why. In his case, creation appears as an instinctive, extra-conscious necessity, because to imagine, to invent, to discover, become functions like breathing. „Writing in a moving thinking form.”, he writes. Through creation a revealing of the author is produced and the essential quality of the work is formed the most spontaneous part, the confessions, which seem to be spontaneous acts.

The authenticity of Eugène Ionesco's theatre, his writing, comes from the expression of awe and the confusedness in front of the existence. The questions become his starting point towards an exploration, a route unknown in the beginning. The work, the creation is a live being and is important for it to remain alive even when it is read or represented. The work is a live organism containing antagonisms that maintain it alive. The more complex and numerous are the oppositions, the force lines, the passions, the more important is the work; it is invention, discovery, imaginary, real, useful, objective, non-objective, logic, illogic.

The creative act transmits its own experience making another being feel what the author or the actor himself has felt. As well in case of the Eugène Ionesco theatre, as well as in that of Jerzy Grotowski, the idea is that the public, the reader takes part in the revelation act through a self revelation and therefore, the art of the actor in Jerzy Grotowski's manner and in the dramatic art of Eugène Ionesco become the „invitation” towards a self revelation and are meant to stimulate the act of discovery in the public or in the reader.

At the beginning of the thesis I reminded the conditions imposed by Jerzy Grotowski in the actor's art, applicable also to Ionesco's playwriting. These are the conditions by means of which Jerzy Grotowski has come to a *Poor Theatre*, poor only if we regard it from the angle of the richness of thought, construction and expression clichés; in other ways it is an expressive and *holy* theatre. As a first condition, Grotowski imposed a stimulation of a self-revelation process, reaching into the depths of the subconscious, channelling then this stimulation to achieve the desired reaction. In Ionesco we find the same desire of self

discovery, confession through writing, entering the most hidden place of the subconscious through dream, memory, and personal experience. Writing becomes a means of self discovery and of searching for answers regarding our purpose in life. The process is not easy neither in Grotowski, nor in Ionesco, because it implies a confrontation with oneself, a battle, a courage to let oneself free in the act of creation.

The second condition depends on knowing how to articulate this process, to discipline it and to convert it into signs. Grotowski calls this stage „give and take.” In Grotowski it is about the stage in which through spontaneity and discipline one can make the self-revelation „visible” at a body level and can therefore find the necessary means: concentration, meditation, breathing practice, all to achieve a mastering of the body. In Ionesco it can be the stage in which he writes on paper the images built in the act of revelation. In this case, the act of self-revelation becomes an act of knowledge expressed through signs or a succession of images. The images can be „translated” using the daily conscience. It is important during writing for reason not to intervene. Normally, the dreams that Ionesco mentions in the *Fragments of a Journal* to have transposed in the dramatic texts, were described accurately in writing, immediately after waking up, without any kind of interference. In Ionesco, the act of writing becomes a free act, with associations apparently without any connection between them, but which come from the subconscious. The playwright has learned to discipline his act without intervening with prejudice or through exercising of reason.

The third condition imposed to the actor’s art in Jerzy Grotowski, but which can be applied to Eugène Ionesco, is that of eliminating from the creation process the resistance and the obstacles due to the own organism, physically as well as psychically.

Eugène Ionesco transforms the theatre into an instrument by means of which he transmits human situations and profound and complex interior experiences. Of course, the traditionalist theatre, which Ionesco denounces, is and has been a communication instrument of the fundamental experiences of mankind, but he had to fulfil other functions, like the telling of a story and the discussion of ideas. The playwright Eugène Ionesco detests the well-written, rationalist play, constructed based on scenes performed in a logical form, by means of which, therefore, the final scenes represent the logical conclusion of the introductive scenes. Therefore Ionesco rejects the play that tells a story.

It is remarkable how Eugène Ionesco comes to this *Pure Theatre*, how he isolates the essential from the theatre. This process is possible through: the banishing of the text’s literality; through the removal of the „status” of traditional character; through elimination of the daily conscience, appealing to two procedures: spontaneity and contradiction; through

eliminating the writing canons of the dramatic texts; the elimination of the conventional language; through the appeal to all forms of language; through the removal of the discursive logic and the desire to keep the oniric extra-conscience.

All these procedures lead to the creation of an artistic, spontaneous act, with the role of knowledge, not of recognizing.

The following research stage was tracing the ancient traditions that have influenced the evolution of the absurd theatre. The route is very complex, but I tried to synthesize the most important traditions to be found in the physiognomy of the absurd theatre of Eugène Ionesco, as they appear at Martin Esslin in *Teatre of the Absurd: pure theatre*, respectively the abstract scenic effects, the way it happens at the circus, in the revue performances, in the acrobatic, juggling, bull-fighting, pantomime numbers; clowning, gags and virtuosity solos; verbal nonsense; dream and fantasy literature, often with allegorical importance (292). To these we can add: the use of the mythical, allegorical models of thinking. The proximity to the matrix of the subconscious thought. The play becomes a succession of images, phantasms, hallucinations, a projection in concrete terms of the psychological realities, beyond reality: the surreal becomes concrete, not the pure realism; rejection of the psychological theatre; rejection of the discursive and narrative elements and the image concentration of the internal reality.

I considered absolutely necessary the tracing of this research line of the possible influences in the absurd theatre in order to be able to mark off the specific elements of the Ionesco creation.

In the following I will highlight the specificity of the Ionesco creation.

Chapter 3. Eliminating the Thinking Blockages. Exceeding the Limits of the Word

The chapter proposes to analyse the transgression ways of the logical thinking from the dramatic writings of Eugène Ionesco and exceeding the boundaries of the Word towards the Image.

In the Ionesco playwriting we can talk about the removal of dramatic writing canons. The normal question would be: why is a removal of dramatic writing canons necessary? I tried to answer this question in the following chapters. The simplest answer would be: out of the need to discover a way of expressing outside the cliché. I mean an organic need to talk to the Self through writing, to understand yourself through the others, to understand a world by the means of your inner world.

How is this removal done? What remains in order to call it a dramatic work? There are questions we ask in front of such an abstract process like the Ionesco dramatic writing.

Analysing the dramatic texts I was drawn to discover the mechanisms of writing and, from my point of view, in the Ionesco work the removal of the dramatic writing canons is done by accepting an absolutely surprising model for a process like that of dramatic writing. This model is the dream process with everything it contains: formation, structure, language, thought, and rhythm.

Eugène Ionesco trusted two methods of knowledge: during dreams and intuition and less in logic. This trust can clearly be seen in the theatre plays; these are formed of fragments from the own dreams, emotions, memories, personal experiences that can be found in his journals. Theatre becomes hereby a subjective one.

What is most interesting, and it strengthens even more my belief in the resemblance and the analogy of the dream with the theatre of Eugène Ionesco, is the fact that the images are dynamic and sometimes one gets the impression that they are not at all connected among each other; even the text suffers a change, becoming often absurd, one having the impression of not understanding anything. But all these aspects hide a sole idea, a sole theme, a sole anxiety allowing such a strange, complex or maybe even trivial representation. The final representation of the images is made based on an intuition, not on a cliché of thought of the dramatic construction. Eugène Ionesco's theatre can start from an image that can give birth to other images or from an image that can be obtained from overlapping other images.

If we were to apply the method of analysis used by Sigmund Freud in analysing the Ionesco's dreams from *Fragments of a Journal*, but also from his plays, we will see that behind an absurdity hides something deep, his world. Regarding this, J.-B. Pontalis said in his work *The Dream Attraction* that: „in dreams everybody goes towards his own world, while awake, people only have one world, common to all”.

I made the analysis of the dream based on pieces of information from fields like psychoanalysis, medicine, image study, psychology, philosophy, literature. Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, Paul Valéry, Gilbert Durand, Émile Benveniste, Martin Heidegger, dr. Liviu Popoviciu, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger are those who helped me „decipher” the structure of the dream, the language and the dynamics of such a process. Their studies have helped me find that which I consider to be the mechanism on which the Ionesco dramatic works are based.

Sigmund Freud handles in detail the subject of dreams. The Viennese Doctor analyses the mechanisms, the way in which one comes to the dream that is remembered or not upon waking up. The dream becomes the product of a detailed process of passing, transforming and combination of latent ideas in the manifesto content (the represented final product).

Freud calls the transformation process of the latent dream into manifest dream, the dream work and the opposite work that leads to a transformation in the reverse direction, the labour of analysis. The manifest content of the dream always refers to another content, more profound, hidden, unconscious; on the other hand, the dream is produced to satisfy an unknown, unconscious desire.

Freud discovered four stages in the creation of a dream *condensing* – which presumes the process of gathering the materials for the mozaic of ideas and images of the dream; *figurability* – which implies the selection and transformation of the thoughts presented in the dream, into images; *displacement* - Freud imposes this notion of the *displacement* in order to explain the formation of symptoms, symbols, all substitutions in the passing from the latent to the manifest, from the projection of the primary into the secondary; the process of *secondary elaboration* implies a reshuffling of the dream, for the purpose of presenting it under the form of a relatively coherent script.

These dream creation stages can be found in the way the Ionesco dramatic texts are written. In case of the dream we can talk about two main processes:

- *the dream work*, which we have defines by means of the four processes (condensing, displacement, figurability and secondary elaboration) analysed by Sigmund Freud. This process represents the transformation of the latent dream into manifest dream, the creation of a coherent ensemble, an orderly representation
- *the labour of analysis*, this process implies the crossing from the manifest dream to the latent dream, a decomposition of the message, a deciphering of the final image in order to achieve the content that determines this image

In my opinion, Eugène Ionesco applied the dream creation process in the dramatic writing process. From here stems also the abstract, illogical and incoherent character, the fragmentation of the „script” and the difficulty of understanding the dramatic text.

How did I come to such a statement? By using exactly the dream labour process indicated by Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud.

In Eugène Ionesco, not having the possibility of being guided by words, or their meaning, I continued by analysing the most complex and powerful image of the dramatic text. By analysing in this manner a body of dramatic texts, I observed that the final image of the plays is the most powerful, the most visually complex and contains a powerful symbolic composition.

So, in a subchapter I followed these development stages of the manifesto content in the play *The Chairs* by Eugène Ionesco, and in another subchapter I analysed the process of the *labour analysis*, proposing an analysis of the play from the end to the beginning, from the „manifesto” image to the „latent” content of the text. This transition from the manifesto content to the latent one implied a deciphering of the image in its smallest details. In this case, I discovered a *text body* that is *alive* and full of meaning, being „covered” by a *dead body*, full of nonsense and cliché. Therefore, the live text was hardly accessible in the semantic level until the removal of the *dead body text*.

The last two directions in this chapter imply an argumentation of the tight connection existing between the Ionesco dramatic text and the personal dreams and experiences of the playwright and an analysis of the concept of lucidity in the Ionesco work.

The entire dramatic work of Eugène Ionesco is based on the presence of a great number of emotions, dream fragments, lived emotions, personal experiences. The originality of his style is noticeable in their manner of combining and selection.

Upon reading *Fragments of a Journal*, I discovered twenty-seven descriptions of dreams and a multitude of thoughts and questions regarding the problem of human existence. After this lecture I realised the subjectivity and profoundness of Eugène Ionesco’s theatre, his sincerity, the courage of this dramatic author in expressing his thoughts and inner feelings. Eugène Ionesco has no ideas before he starts writing. For him the artistic act is spontaneous and can be born out of an image, a feeling, a dream, a thought, an anxiety, a torment. From the dreams presented in *Fragments of a Journal* arise the most profound thoughts, the themes of his future plays. The dream becomes the product of a „laboratory of thoughts, the product of a soul apparatus”, how Paul Valéry calls it, being the result of a labour. (Pontalis Dream Attraction 21)

I made the analysis of the connections between the dream – dramatic text, personal experience - dramatic text by reviewing all the playwright’s journals in order to find this „laboratory of thoughts” and feelings. I searched for the descriptions of dreams and experiences, which he reproduced exactly in the dramatic text.

Eugène Ionesco catches two manners of function of the conscience: the daily conscience and the nightly conscience. He considers the nightly conscience more adequate, more profound and he trusts that what it presents. Ionesco says this is what a coded language of the dream hides. Paul Valéry once said something that is also supported by Sigmund Freud, which is that anything that is formal in the wakeful state can tend to have a meaning in a dream. A vague concern in the wakeful state comes true in a dream. This, let’s call it oniric adventure

can be interpreted as being a search for the self, a quest for answers, of explanations, of understanding of ourselves and our existence. In dreams everyone goes towards an own world, but in the wakeful state we all connect with the same world.

Ionesco urges us to keep our conscience alive, to maintain the conscience that offers importance to the human existence, a conscience maintained by not forgetting the fact that we are mortals and by putting us in a state of permanent interrogation. This is what Ionesco is trying to maintain, to find: that simple but superior conscience that is kept by the existential awe.

The awe without response is the reaction of the most profound conscience. The awe is the state of mind in which a certain conscience is shattered and another one appears or is about to appear.

What does the state of awe regarding our existence mean? It means that moment, when one becomes fully aware, in which one realises he/she is surrounded by things, by people, and if in that state we watch that certain thing, we are under the impression of seeing it for the first time; it is like we would be born again in that moment and not entering the routine and that forgetting that we are alive and even more, that we live for a limited amount of time. The fact that we live for a limited amount of time should make us have more conscious moments, not forget and not cease to be amazed by the beauty and complexity of this life. This moment was felt by the playwright when he had that *enlightenment* he wrote so much about in his works. Actually this was the moment of *enlightenment*, when he found that childhood of the soul, that pure way of looking, as if it were for the first time. Why did I refer to the childhood? Because Eugène Ionesco considers that that beautiful period does not exist the moment things stop being amazing.

In the last part of the chapter I analysed the way this moment of *enlightenment* is presented and described in his journals and plays. The playwright needed the two states, of awe and *enlightenment*, to keep the conscience alive, to understand the world and to not fall into the trivial and the cliché.

Chapter 4. Eliminating the Body Expression Blockages. The Discovery of the Living Body

The last chapter proposes a research of the possibilities of eliminating the *pure* body expression resistances and the definition of the *live body* concept in the art of Jerzy Grotowski.

The Polish director did not theorize much the concepts and principles he used in the training of the actors' body expression. In the actors' training during the period of the *Production Theatre*, Jerzy Grotowski introduced and then elaborated numerous exercises for the development of the body expression, facial exercises, physical exercises and composition exercises based on contrast, verticality and dynamism of the impulses.

I was very interesting in discovering the source of these principles and concepts, also from the desire to better understand them and to apply them in the work with the acting students.

The research of this subject implied appealing to the definition of other concepts, from many directions, which come to support in theory the Grotowski endeavour of eliminating the cliché of expression.

In Jerzy Grotowski we notice a new perception of the concept of *live body*, plastic. In his vision, the body is the only essential element in the dramatic work. The actor's body is not analysed and researched in relationship with the other spectacular elements. The only relationship the Polish director is interested in is the *meeting*, the relationship between the actor and the spectator, especially in the energy exchange among these. When we have a work of this type, a great question mark appears regarding the relationship between the dramatic text and the interpreting act. The question is: what is the role of the dramatic text in an artistic act in which the body becomes the main medium of expression? Jerzy Grotowski says that „the author's text is a sort of scalpel which allows us to open ourselves, to exceed our limits in order to find what is hidden in us and to carry out the act of meeting the others; in other words, to transcend our loneliness”. (Towards a Poor Theatre 35) Therefore, theatre becomes a personal experience of opening oneself to the others, in which „we are confronted with them in order to better understand ourselves [...] in the elementary and human way”. (Towards a Poor Theatre 37)

Jerzy Grotowski is interested in the Body in relationship with his interiority, to be able to create the relationship with another body. As I said before, I believe that the entire vision of the Polish director was built on the type of relationship „I-You”-, „Ich-du”, the way Martin Buber has called it.

The dynamics and the „life” of the actor's body were stimulated and maintained by the working contrast, by the location of the body between opposite forces, between opposite poles. The harmony a *live body* needs is coming from a precise structure and from spontaneity. By this harmony one can reach verticality. Verticality contains the sense of the vertical line through the body, the line that crosses the main energy and emotional spots. The body will have a continuous and dynamic activity, if it will subject itself to a route between

discipline and spontaneity and if it will maintain the action in the interior of the body, even when the action ends. Every stop is actually a new beginning and the body's dialogue with its interiority can be surprising and revealing.

In order to find the definition of the *live body* in the Grotowski art, I appealed to the definition of other concepts. For example, Zeami analyzed two main concepts for the Nō theatre, which can be found in another form in Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba. The concepts I am talking about are the concept of Flower and the concept of Grace.

In Jerzy Grotowski the organic character is linked to the image of the child. The solution for maintaining this „freshness”, this natural character of expression would mean a fight with the habits, eliminating the gradually accumulated clichés and mannerisms. The solution for resisting the routine and the restraint in a used expression is to „always question and fight yourself”; this way you have a chance to maintain the freshness, to be in contact with yourself, to keep the „flower of youth ”. In Zeami, organic character is linked to the flower image but the meaning is similar to the child image used by Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba. In order to keep the „flower” alive and fresh, the Nō theatre technique uses the two described concepts as part of the concept *conjunctio oppositorum*: spontaneity and discipline. Without these two concepts an accumulation of things and clichés happens; nothing in the substance of creation shall ever represent a novelty.

The flower is the soul which the actor instils the character and the techniques are the seeds from which the flower grows. The seed is the continuous training, the exercise, the repetition full of obstacles, challenges and abysses. If the seed is well kept, it will flourish on stage in a surprising manner. Discipline and freedom (spontaneity) are the way to maintaining the „flower”. The body will have a continuous and dynamic activity, if it will be subject to a route between discipline and spontaneity and if it shall keep the action in the interior of the body even after it ends. The charm of the flower, that feeling this charm instils is, as Zeami said, „a state of mind beyond thoughts and words, another type of intelligence and it needs a calm and free mind, capable to see reality”.(79) This would be the state of Grace, of enlightenment which Jerzy Grotowski wishes to achieve through his work.

Another problem for the actor is the composition of a „score”, the necessity of an action process to guide the energy flow through the body. Eugenio Barba calls it *sats*. It is that which we would define in the physical behaviour as the transition from intention to action, it means being ready for action.

Sats is the moment in which the action is thought by the entire body, and the reacting through tensions and even in stillness. In Jerzy Grotowski this route of the energy has an important

role in the awareness of every interior movement (impulse) and it is revealing at the level of the body.

The line of my research goes further towards analysing the concept of *plastic language*. I follow the relationship of the body with the verbal and non-verbal expression in society and in the art of Jerzy Grotowski.

In Jerzy Grotowski's theatre the act of communication is perceived as a meeting between the actor and the spectator, as a reciprocity, a need of fulfilment through the other, as an organic necessity. In this case it is neither important who the spectator and the receiver of the actor's message is, nor where the interlocutor is when he receives the message, nor what he wants to know and to find out, nor what method of communication would be appreciated. What matters the most in the Grotowski theatre, as I have stated before, is the meeting between the actor-self, actor-actor, actor-director and actor-public.

In this type of communication the verbal and non-verbal language are melted to form a unified message. In Jerzy Grotowski's theatre the word loses its power in front of the body expression and the non-verbal language is the pure expression of that what happens in the interior, in the self. The non-verbal language is more powerful and, besides the fact that it supports the verbal message, it often replaces it. The actors' training in the *Laboratory Theatre* implied a detailed study of every verbal and non-verbal method of expression. If we take, for example, the non-verbal language, it would imply a study regarding the information gathered from the analysis of the facial expressions, the gestures, the postures, from spatial and temporal administration and the paralanguage.

During the research I exemplified the way this body and vocal study was done in the art of Grotowski, in order to be able to talk about a plastic, expressive language.

For Jerzy Grotowski the actor's *body* is no longer an instrument, but also the major possibility of searching, research and experiment. The methods used in the work with the actor, irrespective their source, have only one goal: to allow to transcend the transient condition and to reduce the artistic act to the idea of meeting.

In Jerzy Grotowski we can talk about a route, a physical and psychic itinerary process, but less spiritual (in the sense of communication with the Divinity). Through the training he initiated in the work with the actor, he wanted to achieve a state of *enlightenment* like in Yoga and Hatha Yoga. I think that the great difference would be that in Yoga that spiritual quest, the communication with the divinity (characterized by the lack of any mental fluctuation, of the imagination and of any exterior change) is more accentuated, while Jerzy Grotowski borrows the means and techniques of initiation for the spiritual search, but with

the purpose of realizing this process of abandonment and renouncing a cliché „self” and the search for a pure state, unbound from the thought.

Also in the yoga techniques we can find this tendency towards „unification”, „totalizing”, with the purpose of exceeding the human condition. The yoga techniques also represent stages of the physical and spiritual itinerary at the end of which lies liberation. There are eight yoga techniques: Abstinenes (*yama*); Disciplines (*nyama*); Body attitudes and positions (*āsana*); Breathing rhythm (*prānāyāma*); Liberation of the sensory activity from under the influence of the external objects (*pratyāhāra*); Concentration (*dhāraṇa*); Yoga meditation (*dhyāna*); Divine ecstasy (*samadhi*).

A few of these techniques have been taken and developed into exercises, which Jerzy Grotowski used in his work with the actor. The yoga techniques have become means of liberating the actor’s body from clichés and blocks.

I have tried to define these yoga techniques and to locate them in the work principles of Grotowski. For this I used *Yoga Sutra* by Patañjali and a few works by Mircea Eliade.

All yoga techniques have as goal a similar ending as that proposed by Jerzy Grotowski: unity, the conscience of the body’s „totality”. The extreme simplification of life, the calm, serenity, the static body position, breathing rhythmic, concentration – all these techniques have the same purpose, that is to remove fragmenting and to reintegrate, unify and totalize. The more the yogi withdraws from the profane human life the more he discovers the life of the Cosmos. I must mention, that the state of grace is also found in Zeami’s system and implies a similar route to that shown by Jerzy Grotowski in his work with the actor and to that shown by yoga. The route I refer to is called *sarugaku*.

What does *total act* imply? It implies a reunion of Body and Mind, of matter with the spirit. This reunion is perceived as an act of communication between the Self and the surrounding world. The concept of *enlightenment* (*grace*) is difficult to explain in words. In the subchapter in which I have analyzed the concepts forming the groundwork of the *Poor Theatre*, I showed some impressions and descriptions of that what *enlightenment* means in the theatre of Jerzy Grotowski. I tried to discover how we can physically define this act. How can such an act be achieved? In Jerzy Grotowski’s theories this process is not very explicit. It only appears as an act in which the invisible is made visible, an act of the highest realization, of revelation and self control. It is described as being the result of a long process that implies eliminating the obstacles, the clichés of any kind. The total act, also called *grace*, has many meanings. The most powerful are: a moment with talent, like prayer; a moment in which the Self is connected through energy to everything surrounding it, thus creating a moment of

maximum revelation and awareness. Upon trying to better define this process, I discovered a great resemblance between this one and other processes and principles coming from other research paths. I decided to gather these concepts in order to indirectly create an analysis of the enlightenment process in the theatre art of Jerzy Grotowski.

The concept of *enlightenment* (*grace*) is to be found also in the Nō theatre and in Yoga. In Yoga, as I said before, it bears the name *samādhi* (divine ecstasy). I think Jerzy Grotowski borrowed this concept from the Nō theatre and from Yoga, elaborated it and adapted it to the art of theatre. I say this because there is a great resemblance between these concepts.

To define this concept of *enlightenment*, at a physical level, I have defined and exemplified some concepts and principles absolutely necessary to this process. In order to achieve a self-control, a unity between body and mind, the actor's action needs: a *score* (organic coherence), a *decided body* (a detachment from the „daily practices, the actor frees himself from the handcuffs of the „decision to act, he reacts), the principle of *jo-ha-kyu* (a mastering of the action and the state it triggers), awareness, the Japanese principle „*10 in the heart 7 in movement*” (which implies that the experience be revealed in the self-control with which the movements are executed, allowing only 7 tenths of the entire capability to be seen), *sats* (by working with these *sats*, the separation between the thought and action can be eliminated) and the Japanese principle *io-in* (implies prolonging the action on the inside even after it ends).

Of course that besides the analysis of these concepts, I also present the vision of Jerzy Grotowski regarding the concept of *enlightenment* (*grace*). He talks about this concept stating the stages and the experiences his favourite actor, Ryszard Cieślak, went through in the performances directed by him. At the end of the thesis I analysed the Grotowski „performance text” by means of the dynamics of the *unlocked body*. The starting point in this analysis is represented by the Grotowski performance *Akropolis*. The performance is based on the play written by Stanislaw Wyspiański. The action of the play takes place in the night before Resurrection, in the Wawel Cathedral, the Polish Acropolis located in Krakow. The text is formed of Bible fragments and fragments from the Homer epic. In the play, death is necessary to reborn the essence of Easter. The triumph of Resurrection at the end of the play represents the metaphorical expression of the political liberation of the Polish nation.

In Stanislaw Wyspiański's *Akropolis* tensions and moments are explored, which are based on oppositions present in the human existence, but also in the conscience of a nation, life – death, reality – dream, past – present. Jerzy Grotowski replaces the accents given by Stanislaw Wyspiański, life, love and creativity, with death, destruction and stasis. This is

possible due to the location of the action in the Wawel Chapel from a Nazi concentration camp. The characters are prisoners in the concentration camp, building the crematorium during the representation. Jerzy Grotowski has an antithetical vision than Stanislaw Wyspiański's vision regarding Easter and Resurrection.

In Jerzy Grotowski „our acropolis” becomes Auschwitz. The prisoners of the concentration camp present with intensity the uselessness of life in the camp and by using the words (text) of Stanislaw Wyspiański the characters effect a passing through the human history, resurrecting the past, the reality of Auschwitz. This „tribe cemetery”, like Stanislaw Wyspiański calls it, is in Jerzy Grotowski literally „a cemetery”.

Jerzy Grotowski borrows themes and texts from the *Akropolis* and the Bible, which he then adapts to the interior reality of the camp prisoners. In some parts, the „performance text” is brought into the camp atmosphere through the dream method. The interpreters have fantasies or see in the person of the camp colleague legendary characters of humanity. The manner of „representing a text” in an absolutely personal context is remarkable.

In Grotowski's performance, corporality becomes an essential method of making visible the interior reality of the man on the verge of the superior suffering, at the limits of his condition. Movement and voice are the means of expression taken to the extreme. When I say this I mean that we are dealing with an unlocked body, liberated from its daily expression, a body located itself at the limit of its expression. The unlocked body is the one that masters a self-revelation process in the context of extreme suffering. During the entire duration of the performance, the actor's body is covered by suffering, fear, illusion and animal instincts. The body seems to build a more profound text than the one enunciated. Practically, all language forms have been used.

The vocal and body expression in the Grotowski theatre exceeds the limit of a natural expression, because new limits are tested. The actor's expression becomes a method of profound interiority.

To exemplify the method of transgressing these expression limits in the Grotowski theatre, I analyzed the scene from Chapter 32 *Genesis, Jacob's Battle with the Angel*. The scene surprises the moment in which Jacob, left alone, is surprised by another man that fights him until dawn. Realising he can't defeat him, the man hit Jacob during battle in the thigh, but Jacob didn't give up. The man asked him to set him free because it is dawn already, but Jacob didn't let him go until he didn't receive his blessing. Moreover the man changed his name from Jacob to Israel. That man proved to be the *Angel*.

The analysis I made is based on the relationship text – body, text - corporality.

Regarded from outside, the scenes of the *Akropolis* performance can be seen as images in which the actors seem to be crazy, absent and in another world. The camp prisoners want a removal from a much too hard existence; they wish to stay alive, to save themselves. The images of the *Akropolis* performance seem to be detached from the *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* carvings of Albrecht Dürer. The prisoners from the concentration camp live the apocalypse. They live the apocalypse of their world, as if the four riders from Albrecht Dürer's work would gallop over them without offering them a chance to save themselves.

The means of expression in the Grotowski performance are taken to the extreme exactly by means of comprising the harsh reality. Without special training and without a long process of unlocking a pure expression, the actors' expression could not have achieved such a level.

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