

THE QUEST FOR THE UNPROGRAMMED HUMAN BEING

Preamble

The Cologne symposium revealed one clear fact: the very usage of the term “Collective Creation” itself is limited. Its geographic extension is restricted – most speakers present affirmed it is not a term used in their respective countries. Where, then, it is used, its application appears limited.

Investigating what may be in that term, this paper firmly holds that *“ ‘collective creation’ clearly emerges as an inadequate term – it neither manages to articulate what the 20th Century masters were reaching for, nor to describe the fruit of that search”*.

In discussing that, a clear focus emerges: in the way of life we are designing for ourselves and our children, there is an urgent need to raise a true awareness of what theatre-making is really all about, a consciousness crucial not only for theatre and theatre-makers but for the human being *per se*.

There is, the paper proposes, an urgent need for a Philosophy of Theatre.

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This paper’s key tasks are:

1. To show that **whenever** theatre-making sought true creativity, theatre-makers necessarily yearned to create collectively.

2. To show that, very possibly, the term itself only came to be coined *precisely* at a point when, as a consequence of its steadily degenerating ethos and values, theatre had been brought to lose sight of its intrinsic nature of collective creativity.

3. To discuss – in the light of theatre-making’s millennial history – two key statements by Grotowski:

- “There can be no collective unless there are first individuals.”
- “ ‘Collective creativity’, a term born at a time when the tyranny of the director was being resisted, only transfers the tyranny to the ‘collective’.”

These statements originate in (a) the praxis and writings of the master director-pedagogues of the first half of the 20th century – Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Copeau, Craig, Decroux and (b) a unique context – the Poland of the second half of the 20th Century.

Closing his *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*¹, Prague philosopher Vilhem Flusser argues: “the last form of revolution which is still accessible for us” is to generate a philosophy of photography whose task would be “to analyse the possibility of freedom in a world dominated by apparatus; to think about how it is possible to give meaning to human life in the face of the accidental necessity of death”.

This paper strives to plead for the urgent recognition of a similar need it identifies – an urgent need for a Philosophy of Theatre. The last lines of the paper’s closing section, “**A Postilla on Death**”, hold that:

Collective Creation wasn’t at the starting point of the masters’ avid search.

¹ Flusser, V., *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, European Photography, (Göttingen) 1984, p 59

Neither was it *the* starting point. It wasn't the aim. It wasn't even intended.

It was, however, inevitable.

It was, also, necessary.

"Theatre does not interest me any longer. I am only interested in what I could do leaving theatre behind me," says Grotowski, in *Swieto – Holiday, the Day that is Holy*.

Should what is truly hidden behind the term "collective creation" ever cease to be considered necessary, it would signal the nearing of the Human Being's demise.

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1. The Ebb and Flow of the Performer Dramaturg –

A Historical Excursus

In his, *O teatro* (1912), Meyerhold reproduces a fragment from one of his notebooks: "It is often said that nowadays directors haughtily ignore dramatists. Playwrights may perhaps feel this has liberated them of directors, but they would do well not to believe they can avoid being slaves to actors. Indeed, the lessons of history will not be in vain if, when facing actors, today's dramatists take their cue from Euripides." He then reproduces the words Euripides is reported to have said when, during a rehearsal, some persons watching his work, together with the actors, unanimously declared they disagreed with an idea of his, saying it offended the gods and insisting Euripides would change it. Beside himself with rage, Euripides leapt into the acting area, shouting: "Shut up, you idiots! It is not for you to judge what of my poetic work the gods may find acceptable and what, if anything, they might be displeased with. You understand absolutely nothing; when I give you a tragedy of mine to act, it is not you who can teach me something – it is I who has to instruct you!"² We can recognise the early Meyerhold here, desperate at not having creative actors at his disposal to realise his directorial dreams and the revolution he yearned for. What is pertinent to my argument, however, is the head-on clash Meyerhold's highly dramatic image presents: this open, dramaturgical confrontation between author-cum-director Euripides and, on the other hand, actors and observing audience.

The phenomenon of theatre as the West knows it – actors, theatre space, audience, text – sees its origins in Greece, as we say. By the polis giving him funds to appoint and rehearse the chorus, the author may be considered to have fulfilled, at the same time, a function that in the West would much later be called "Director".

In the Middle Ages each guild was assigned the task of preparing individual scenes in the Mystery plays that triumphed throughout Europe. The monumental scale of those performances, incarnating

² In citing Euripides, Meyerhold gives his source as Mikhail Kuzmin's *Opyt istorii teatra* (*A tentative history of theatre*), published in Moscow (1899) by Gauthier. See the Italian version of Meyerhold's *O teatro*, in a collection of Meyerhold's writings edited by Crino, G., (*La Rivoluzione Teatrale*), Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1975, p 97.

the boisterous ebullience of that celebratory period, reached its epitome in events as the Mons passion plays, reportedly involving large thousands of performers. One cannot even conceive of someone single-handedly directing something of such proportions. Indeed, each guild was totally responsible for designing, preparing and generating its own section of the performance, with the inventive magnificence those performances were renowned for.

After the Italian Renaissance, when all aspects of theatre (buildings, comedy, tragedy, theoretical writings) were reinvented from a philological viewpoint with intent to imitate and restore classical antiquity's values, as well as to impart a grounding in rhetoric, through academic exercises aimed at enabling the acquisition of a mastery of public speaking and of the gestural corpus which future orators, ambassadors and Church dignitaries could not do without, the *Commedia* troupes' magnificent actors and actresses researched profoundly theatre art's true nature. Incredibly revolutionary in many ways, the actors set up companies by notarial deeds which entrenched illness security, equitable takings distribution, schooling for their children. Women acted, bravely breaking taboos. Actors included famous former palace courtesans, determined to defend their good name when a ban virtually sent them on the streets, and mercenaries who decided to no longer risk death fighting wars of others. The revolutionary nature of their democratic structures and the channelling, into the new *Commedia*, of the amazing techniques they had mastered for their various prior practices, resulted, by extension, in their having no director. What they had was a *capo-comico*, a brilliant lead actor or actress as pivot for the entire company and its other brilliant Performers. But – they had no director remaining outside the performative act, generating the dramaturgy, seeing, judging, guiding and directing from outside. Each Performer had a brilliant repertoire of actions, scenarios, incidents, a musicality, a vast gamut of performative material, including impressive quantities of memorised texts, carefully chosen from a range of literary sources. Each evening, the *capo-comico* decided which sketch (*canovaccio*) the troupe would elaborate in performance. Then: they used to play – to “improvise”, as we say – around and inside that sketch... a unique improvising, however. Isabella Andreini, who often improvised entire monologues (as did Vittoria Piissimi, Vincenza Armani...), affords us an insight into

their approach. Apparently she knew all Dante's *Divina Commedia*, all Petrarca and all Boccaccio by heart. Indeed – these were truly brilliant Performers, amazingly profound in their search into what constituted the Performer's art, refining their capabilities beyond what seem to be the human being's limits. In generating their own performances, they neither resorted to playwright nor director.

These legendary beings' brilliance helps us understand Craig's words: the actors in Shakespeare's company should be jointly credited with him for the creation of those splendid texts, with the actors creating their own dramatic material together with Shakespeare – by improvising at various stages of the process, *including* during performance. In his famous *Shakespeare's Collaborators* (1913), Craig spells it out crystal clear:

“How is it that the manuscript of Shakespeare's plays – over thirty plays – has never been found? How is it that not a page of his manuscript has been found? How is it that the manuscript has never reached us of a single page out of the thirty odd plays? In my opinion the dramas were created by Shakespeare in close collaboration with the manager of the theatre and with the actors; in fact, with practically the whole company, who invented, produced, and acted them; and I believe that a glimpse of the plays' manuscript would reveal a mass of corrections, additions, and cuts made in several handwritings. I believe the improvisators – and the comedians of that day were great improvisators – contributed a great deal to the comedies, and not a little to several of the tragedies. I believe the plays *grew* to their present literary perfection, three distinct periods marking their development. The first saw them sketched out; the second saw them acted – and at this period many speeches and even scenes were added from week to week, at rehearsal and after performances – and the third period saw them handed over to the poet for revision before being printed.”³

³ Craig, E.G., *Shakespeare's Collaborators*, in Walton, M.J. (ed) *Craig on Theatre*, Methuen (London) 1983, p 155-6

With Wagner, something fundamentally different appears... and we need to ask why. Wagner spoke of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, bringing all arts together, and the reason is clear: by his time theatre-making had degenerated, its quality in disrepute. Before Wagner, Diderot castigated the paucity of various actors' work, whilst Von Kleist derided renowned contemporary actors. In *On the Theatre of the Marionettes* Kleist lambastes ridiculous stances, poses, clichéd mannerisms: "Madame P, when she plays the part of Daphne, her soul lies in the vertebra in the bottom of her spine" whilst "when young F performs Paris, horror of horrors, his soul is in his elbow!" Only a few years after Wagner, Stanislavski would plead that actors clean themselves of coquetry and narcissism. For Gordon Craig, theatre's prime material is the human being; human flesh cannot discipline itself into a material for making art; theatre cannot be an art form, therefore; in those rare cases when human beings attain that discipline, they would then fall prey to uncontrollable emotions, drives, urges resulting in uncontainably swollen egos, laments Craig, fuelled by the incident of Duse and his beloved screens – for theatre to be saved all actors should die of the plague. Decroux would insist "If solely the actor's art can give birth to pure theatre, then our art is dying under the ruins."

The recurring, constantly emerging theme becomes one: with the degeneration and collapse of theatre's ethic and values, actors and actresses act only to show off – their mastery of clichés, their beauty, their "talent", their "uniqueness".

Wagner, theatre maker first and foremost, before being a composer, sought to resolve that. The actors of his time lacked what his vision required: creativity, artistic endeavour, a true calling. Born into a family whose livelihood, scope and vision were solely theatre, he realised he had to generate situations for the actors, interesting situations charged with values, ideals, a spirit of renewal. He had to write the text for them, apart from having to design their scenery, their costumes ... a far cry from *Commedia dell'Arte*'s individual and collective creativity and inventive genius. He then wrote music for them, to make them move exactly to his rhythms, tempi and measured dynamics. Author, composer, stage designer, director – Total Artist. For them to obey Art's foundation: Rhythm. In Wagner we get the first hint of the phenomenon that would dawn forcefully

upon Western Theatre, its sun seemingly destined never to set – the Director. Why is it at *this* point in time that it happens? The obvious answer would be the denaturing of theatre and its “material” by the socio-cultural context of the times – and Wagner’s struggle to concretise his visions notwithstanding.

Von Kleist’s essay, *On The Theatre of the Marionettes*, argued clearly that consciousness and man’s self-centredness undermine that organic rhythmicity which alone could, perhaps, help Performers transcend the limitations crippling their efforts. For Craig, those limitations are unavoidable, they are intrinsic to human flesh, self-willed, lacking the “selfless” discipline any art medium requires. Wagner’s strategy resonates with his times: as consummate Total Artist, he designs relentless *Gesamtkunstwerk* frameworks firmly holding Performers in a discipline they could not otherwise find in themselves.

A question arises however. Why didn’t Wagner envisage pedagogising performers as his solution? Only a few years after him, the great masters would do exactly that, guiding performers to discipline “human flesh” – Jaques-Dalcroze’s eurhythmics, Meyerhold’s biomechanics, Copeau’s interdisciplinary school, Laban’s colonies. Above all, however, Stanislavski’s life-long insistence on rhythm: “he who does not master rhythm cannot master the method of physical actions”⁴.

For 20 years, Wagner and Stanislavski were contemporaries, till Wagner died in 1883. But it is not by designing firm, relentless performative frameworks like Wagner’s that Stanislavski revolutionises theatre-making completely. He does it, instead, strictly by laying unique pedagogical foundations in his Studios. Those foundations gave birth to what Cruciani identifies as a new phenomenon, which he calls “director-pedagogue”. Toporkov too identifies Stanislavski’s revolutionary change with crystal clarity – no more learning clichés, like the ones theatre schools always taught him. Stanislavski’s approach, on the contrary, seeks to empower apprentices to *learn how to learn*. This is a radically new reality – an

⁴ Toporkov, V.O., *Stanislavski alle prove, gli ultimi anni*, Ubulibri (Milan) 1991, p118 (my translation from Italian).

encounter between pedagogue, performer and apprentice, where all collaborate and learn. There is no teaching of “things”. This is why, after calling his first book *My Life in Art*, Stanislavski calls his second one *The Actor’s work upon himself*.

Three years before he dies Stanislavski launches the open-ended *Tartuffe* work with a famous speech. “Do not think of the performance, but only of the Studio” – surprising words... but their implications are stunning when considered in the light of a passage in his 1918-1922 Bolshoi lectures:

“If creative art is so individual and impossible to repeat, what is it then, or rather, what *should be* common to all who wish to free their frozen talent so that it could work creatively? I am not speaking of those who come to the Studio to learn how to play this or that part. The Studio is not the place where to learn parts. The Studio is for life, for living life. It is for those who want to free their nerves and body centres from constrictions, in order to establish powerful, spiritual links with each other and with each spectator. The stage can make the best spiritual energies of men converge, bringing about a union based on beauty – the Studio has this as its aim. Its apprentices – the actors – become instrumental in uniting all humanity in beauty.”⁵

A new vision is emerging.

2. A Pedagogy for Creativity – Beyond “Impersonation”, “Interpretation”, “Representation”

Stanislavski requires much more than a mere “disciplining of human flesh”. It would have been sad had that truly been Craig’s sole objective! That could, yes, result in actors not being irresponsible, capricious, undependable in their work... and that would be desirable, indeed... but those actors might merely end up being “sufficiently disciplined material” for other artists to make use of in

⁵ Stanislavski, K.S., in lecture 14 to the Bolshoi, in Cruciani, F. & Falletti, C., (ed.) *L’Attore creativo*, La Casa Usher (Florence) 1989, p 87 (my translation from Italian).

their own works of art. It need not necessarily result in a Performer empowered to *generate* – of himself – a work of art. Nor need it result necessarily in Performers living “their life in art”, persons, therefore, to whom Stanislavski need not ask: “Of what use is it to create beauty on stage... to then go out in your life and destroy it?”⁶.

Our question, however, still hangs – why was Stanislavski’s course so fundamentally different to Wagner’s? The answer is the advent of the great revolution in education: Pestalozzi, Dewey, Montessori. Puer-centrism struck, and with it an entire re-reading of what pedagogy is. Moreover, the “body and mind” split, Descartes’s dualistic heritage to the West, ruling its thought for 400 years, started becoming suspect – Stanislavski himself fought it on many fronts. The dramatic shift is rooted in those two factors. What does start emerging, however, is not a way of generating performances “collectively”. That would turn out to be a consequence, yes, but of something very different that emerges. What does start emerging is: a growing awareness of one incontestable fact –

The Performer is “the body” of nobody’s “mind”.

With it emerges, moreover, a consuming urge for that awareness to spread.

The Performer is “the body” of nobody’s “mind”. If the Performer can be an artist – and few doubted it – then he *will* be creative. “Today they impersonate and interpret; tomorrow they must represent and interpret, and on the third day they will create.”⁷ Craig’s brilliant words. He asks Ellen Terry

“What is all this driving at, do you think? The Liberation of the Actor. Have I suggested too little for him? Will it all be too fragmentary? Would he rather have us demand from him a perfect, a completed work of art in the first years of his trial? How can a child be asked to race like a man, or even to walk like a youth? Always, and now here, again, *I ask only for the*

⁶ Note 3 in Stanislavski’s unfinished book of Ethics, in *ibid*, pp 164-166 (my translation from Italian).

⁷ Craig, Gordon., *On the Art of the Theatre*, 1911, reprinted Heinemann, (London), 1980, p61

*liberation of the actor that he may develop his own powers, and cease from being the marionette of the playwright.”*⁸

Decroux’s words are similar: the literary dramatic text is “the most perfidious concubine” amongst all the arts that leave their own studios to invade the Performer’s. When two arts collaborate in a creative work, one must stay in the background. Authors of dramatic literature have no idea of Performers’ potential, so “no author can write words which, while seeking to be poor, are also good”. Decroux explains: the poverty dramatic texts need has to be proportional to the richness Performers envisage. He proposes a strategy to rehabilitate theatre – a 30-year war. All the arts must be banned from theatre, including the text... no vocal sound for the first 20 years; inarticulate vocal sounds in the next five years; in the last five, the word would be allowed... but only if Performers generate it. “After this 30-year war, stabilisation, with performances created this way:

1st A sketch of the action will be written, serving as a base for the work.

2nd Actors mime the action; then they accompany it by inarticulate sounds; next they improvise words.

3rd The writer is brought in, to translate the words into good form, adding nothing.”⁹

Stanislavski’s strategies for the actor to achieve autonomy were many, varied and complex. “Ta-ta-ri-vanje” was one. In directing Turgenev’s *A Month in the Country* (1909) he tried another strategy; cutting big chunks of text, he asked actors to think them, silently, as other actors dialogued. “Subtext” was another one, aiming to make dramaturgs of Performers: during *Othello* rehearsals he tells actors that the text captured very few of the vast tapestries of images bubbling in Shakespeare’s mind as he was writing. Nobody could ever hope to recover *those* lost images – but the dialogue’s words remain dead unless each actor generates abundant, equivalent images, rich, meaningful, personal dramaturgies

⁸ In a 1917 letter, cited in Walton M J, ed, *Craig on Theatre*, Methuen, 1983, p.101. Craig’s italics.

⁹ Decroux, E., in Falletti, C., (ed.) *Parole sul Mimo*, Dino Audino Editore (Roma) 2003 p 47

More provocative is the collaboration he discussed with Gorki (1911, when they met in Capri); Gorki proposed sketching a short story, giving it to the actors and departing; the actors would start improvising on the situations; Gorki would return, note down their improvisations, and return them, refined, to the actors, who work on them again, for Gorki to return again etc., till the work is considered ready. It was never seen through. A year later Stanislavski proposed to Nemirovich-Dancenko¹⁰ that they should together create a *canovaccio*, a scenario on which the actors would improvise. Interestingly, he proposes to base the scenario on the life actors live in rented rooms – the actors would thus create a work based on their own way of life, truly performing “their life in art”¹¹. Could Stanislavski have been envisaging some such collaboration with Chekhov – Chekhov writing a scenario, the actors improvising upon it, and Chekhov developing it? It is interesting to speculate on such a hypothetical collaboration, possibly thwarted by Chekhov’s death, contributing, perhaps, to Stanislavski’s “rock in Finland” crisis¹².

Cartesian dualism’s twilight, Puer-centrism, the revolution in education ... the swell was there. In its wake, theatre masters intuited that this art form had something absolutely unique: in theatre, the artist, his work of art, his laboratory, the art-form’s medium, all these were not, as in the other arts, separate elements. What elsewhere is separate, in theatre comes together – in the

¹⁰ By the provisions of the 1898 Slavyanski Bazaar meeting, Nemirovich-Dancenko’s main role in the MAT, it is worth recalling, was that of literary expert, responsible for play text quality and value.

¹¹ Alexander Blok, cited in Stanislavski’s *Il Lavoro dell’Attore sul Personaggio*, ed. & trans. Malcovati F., (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1988), pp. xviii-xix. Blok says Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Dancenko also worked like this on a Molière text, the actors inventing dialogues and speeches.

¹² This speculation is fed by the chapter describing Chekhov’s 1903 process in writing *The Cherry Orchard*, providing great insights into the several forces collectively contributing inputs to Chekhov. Highly illuminating is the incident of Moskvina’s cabbage party improvisation on Chekhov’s first draft of a Yepikhodov speech, which made Chekhov rethink and rewrite his developing work. C.f. G. Ivanov-Mumijev’s translation of *My Life in Art*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow (circa 1961).

Performer. Unlike other artists the Performer needs no media to create with – he generates opuses by means of **himself**, this splendid conglomerate of matter he is. This clearly amounts to his reorganising that matter he is for it to become recognisably artistic, elevated to the level of a work of art. He, artist, agent, Subject, is, at the same time, *objet d'art* – too. What the Performer works upon is the stability and flux of his very being present, upon what it is that makes Hamlet exclaim “*What a piece of work is man!*”.

An incredible awareness dawns. This is the only art form whose very praxis has for millennia denied it the one thing nobody imagines an art form may be denied – autonomy for the artist practicing it.

Nobody would ever think of insisting that the only way for a painter to create a painting (or a sculptor to create a sculpture, a composer to compose music, an author to write a book, a poet to write poetry) is for him to interpret *another artist's* picture. Naturally, any artist *may* draw inspiration from another artist's work, but nobody would insist it always *has to* be so. Ironically enough, only in *this* art form has such an aberration held sway: its artist, the Performer, has, for three centuries, been held to be a mere interpreter, incapable of generating and composing... and this – in an art form where man is artist, laboratory, medium and opus in one!

Early 20th century masters strove for *this* autonomy in their context, driven by the awe this understanding generated, this new vision of the Human Being – a “complete being”, no longer a “body/mind” split.

3. For Creativity to Be, it must Emerge from an Ethic Committed to the Human

This revelation begets another unique insight, jettisoning another “split”: theatre's aesthetic and its ethic are necessarily one, neither separate nor separable.

Stanislavski had made it clear: the Studio is not for learning roles, but for living life. In there, actors must “thoroughly spring clean

accumulated grime, for example narcissism, or coquetry.”¹³ On his death-bed he regrets not finishing “perhaps the most important book of all”, his *Ethics for the Performer*, where in a 31-point footnote¹⁴ he proposes “it is worth sacrificing egoism, unpleasantness, hard-headedness, resentment, impatience for the common cause and the common objective”. In that footnote, too, he asks that fundamental question – whether it is worth creating a beautiful illusion on stage, only to then go out in one’s life and destroy it. The Stanislavski smiling out of every single photograph is this man. He is also the author of letters as powerful as those he wrote to Stalin, Lunacharski, Angarov.

That insight made Copeau stop writing in order to do theatre. Against all advice he opened Le Vieux Colombier away from where Parisians went to their theatres; then, under ministerial pressures to enlarge his successful theatre or accept a larger one, he closed it down, moving into the Bourgogne countryside.

That insight made Decroux, trade union anarchist, agit-prop activist and member of the 1930s Popular Front, say: “being into mime means being a militant – a militant of movement... in a world that has sat down.”¹⁵ This swelling wave launches, precisely, a militancy, spurred by its momentous context: the world Decroux says “has sat down” is far from being a world wallowing in some plush armchair.

On the contrary, what slithers out from beneath the debris of romanticism and idealism is a world seemingly gone mad, where tremendous forces strike mortal blows at humanity’s heart, crippling Man’s militancy, his efforts for true betterment. The context the masters operated in was no longer vibrant with Enlightenment’s visions, replete with ideals, “liberté, fraternité, égalité”. Instead, the West’s entire edifice of unshakeable, time-hallowed structures creaked at the seams; the framework of a centuries-old social fabric reeled as the industrial revolution’s failed promises choked streets

¹³ Toporkov, V.O., *op. cit.*, p 107 (my translation from Italian).

¹⁴ note 3 in Cruciani, F., & Falletti, C., *op. cit.*, pp 164-166

¹⁵ As quoted by Corinne Soum, in M. de Marinis’ preface to the Italian translation of Decroux’ *Paroles sur le mime*, Falletti, C., (ed.) Dino Audino Editore (Roma) 2003, p17 (my translation from the Italian.)

with workers marching and suffragettes chanting. Façades collapsed with stock markets in clouds of choking dust. Empires tottered like senile lechers, and the hounds of war they unleashed barked and wreaked utter havoc; the canons of the arts trembled and collapsed, the pillars of metaphysics crumbled, evolution cast shattering doubts upon our pride of pedigree, revolutions sent rights and wrongs reeling in a frenzied gavotte, in freedom's name bathing everything in gore... and the face of fear began peering out from behind the mask of each individual and collective past, to look with naïve horror into the true unknown being born monstrously amidst such racking pangs. "It seems we have the capacity to be wrong in rather creative ways – so wrong that this world we cannot understand may become one in which we cannot live" says Bateson.¹⁶ Our "scientific" calculatedness makes us, alas, often fall prey to a coldness that out of the Human Being that is us, engenders nothing but the inhuman.

In such a scenario, can one truly imagine the masters striving merely for "collective creation"? Its tentative feelers were emerging, yes – but only as a consequence of an infinitely richer objective: a new way for the human-being-Performer to relate to others creatively, *neither* dominated (by authoritarian authorship or directorship) *nor* dominatingly, unlike the forces engulfing him in tragic doings.

Human beings were being told to their face they were "disposable": cannon fodder, carrion, in the mud of World War I trenches, in revolutions and counter revolutions, in the Wall Street crash suicides, in Stalin's blood bath, in the frenzy of World War II. Defying that bedlam by "militantly" persisting in "radiating beauty", this human being strove to "draw others to radiate beauty too."¹⁷ By seeking to enable Performers to radiate beauty, the masters found themselves necessarily generating a potent pedagogy that would give Performers the status of creative artist. That status had to be creative and autonomous, as the creative status always is. Still, though the outcome was inevitable, the search took a twist that may surprise some: that autonomy could only be fulfilled by breaking – once and

¹⁶ Bateson, G., Bateson, M.C. *Angels Fear. Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred*, Macmillan (NY) 1987, p 200.

¹⁷ To use Decroux' term and the phrases Stanislavski repeats without respite in the Bolshoi lectures.

for all – the human-being/Performer's millennial dependence upon Authorship and Authorial authority.

"The theatrical act must be worked out before it is written; the theatrical act is the art of the actor", postulates Decroux, in a 1962 postscript to his 1931 "30-year war" article.

The times and context added a dimension to that struggle for creative status and its consequent breaking of author-dependence – it manifested an escalating desire for Man to break the stranglehold of overt abuse of Power and Authority. The door would then open, it was hoped, for each Human Being to launch a personal, open-ended search into his individual sense of Being, a search to be shared with others who, like him, search open-endedly.

In retrospect, one may mistake that as a knowingly planned route to "Collective creation". It was not. "Collective creation" was a (perhaps inevitable) consequence, but just a tangent to the true road.

4. Performance is a Category of Human Thought

"Physical action" (Stanislavski), *"design of movement"* and *"biomechanics"* (Meyerhold), *"eurhythmics"* (Jaques-Dalcroze), *"pure mime"* (Decroux), *"Übermarionette"* (Craig), *"marionette theatre"* (von Kleist). The masters' key terms restore Human Action's primacy.

Action is founded in Intentionality. Man's brain developed supremely refined processes to handle the complex passage Attention/Intention/Action. David Premack, explains how only humans can observe another's action and strive to reproduce it as a model. Many species can copy a role model's choice (of object, or location). Only Man (including the infant) can form a mental representation of a visually perceived action and then try to act similarly, to "produce an action conforming to the representation". Man's brain equipped itself for this second (much higher) level of "imitating". Asks Premack: "Could language evolve in a species in which the young cannot imitate the action of the speaker?" Speech is man's great invention. Recording speech by complex symbolic systems is another. The Masters' genius restored Action's primacy:

those inventions are *necessarily* analogic developments *from* Action¹⁸.

The Performer's doings reform and redesign the memory and learning processes that he is. The masters' brought those unique processes into heightened play, recursively accelerating them. Pavis speaks of "the Performer's physical diary"¹⁹. Man can do. Moreover, when he does (something) he knows it. Furthermore, he can reflect upon his doing, refining himself further. Man can also observe others doing, note shortcomings, guide their improving – an increasingly potentiating recursiveness, more so as it largely precedes the symbolic²⁰. Action's refined possibilities are awe inspiring.

The masters focused on this awareness, seeing ever more clearly that the Performer's uniqueness lies here. He takes this extraordinarily complex process with which he, *as Human Being*, handles Attention, Intention and Action – this reflecting, doing, knowing, self-observing, self-refining and self-redefining – and from it, *now as Performer*, he shapes a sophisticated instrument to safely play, learn, grow, refine and re-define himself further... and so: to learn how to learn.

The passage attention/intention/action – infinitesimally short, infinitely long – makes the Human Being accommodate the mind of an other in his own, weighing potential consequences of possible

¹⁸ This section builds on various neuroscientific discoveries; W. H. Calvin (1994) says that improbable as it may seem, the brain's planning of ballistic movements (fast, precise actions that once initiated cannot be modified, e.g. hammering a nail) may have promoted language, music and intelligence. Premack discusses recursive learning in *Is Language the Key to Human Intelligence?* (*Science*, 303, Jan 2004, pp 319-320). Grammatical structures for voluntary action (and, by analogy, those for music and speech) are considerably innate. Subtending Memory and learning, motricity often proceeds unbeknown to us; Rizzolatti (1996), Gallese (2000) discuss mirror neurons: when we observe intentional actions, specific pre-motor cortex sectors become active – those that are active if we perform those same actions – we participate *actively* in observed actions of others. Schlaug & Steinmetz (1994, 2000) showed brain plasticity in pitch perfect professional musicians: the left planum temporale and the cerebellum increase in size (by up to 30% and 15%) due to demands training places on the brain. The discourse is too vast to be tackled here.

¹⁹ Barba, E., *L'azione reale*, in *Teatro e Storia*, a. VII, n. 2, October 1992, p 189

²⁰ The discourse on Mirror Neurons is now making this more evident.

actions, upon oneself, upon others. It is a “dance” with otherness, capable of assuming supreme beauty – if the æsthetic emerges from an ethic committed to the Human; if it is engaged with honesty, openness, sincerity. It can (does) make relations thrive in joy, fulfilling wishes, hopes, constructing the possible. It may, however, if intentions, energies, rhythms and tempos are ill harnessed and orchestrated, result in the opposite.

This “dance” Attention/Intention/Action is at the foundation of all. And it truly *is* a dance – memories and the present dance to the rhythm of “inner” feelings: feelings of retained or applied energy, of tightened or relaxed muscles, held or released breath, stilled and voiced sound. “Listen to your muscle tones”, Stanislavski advises, and elsewhere: “in our language, to understand is to feel!” This dance is at the foundations of our every decision, taken knowingly or not. Appropriately translated, it determines the noise we generate, its dynamic organisation into sound, and then (by further elaboration) into symbolic speech. Performance orchestrates all this – with Action perseveringly at its roots and foundations.

Performance, in the human being, is a category of thought. Just as mathematics is.

An inability to handle any one of the two makes one fail to be what we think of as “human”.

Without at least a basic grasp on arithmetic, one would be unable to carry out various tasks, cooking, for instance: one would lack a sense of quantity, proportion, duration. In the human being arithmetic is a category of thought. Lacking a basis of it, one lacks something fundamental to Man.

Performance is like that. Speaking in monotone, at one pitch, inflectionless, at one volume, without pauses, silences, at one tempo/rhythm, continuously legato/staccato, without, therefore, a performance quality to verbal utterances, without an arithmetically measurable *form*, one would soon lose listeners. The same applies were one not to alter one’s presence visibly, remaining motionless, not gesturing, gaze fixed. One would lose others’ attention – perhaps because one would render one’s feelings, one’s Humanity,

inaccessible to perception. Human beings cannot not perform. To demonstrate “not performing” one must perform non-Performance. And the reason *why* we have to is simple: *in no way can we not perform presence*. Even one’s walk is a constructed performance. Though unique, it is *chosen – cultivated* – from walks prevalent in a culture, in a community, in a time-frame.. Goffman’s analysis of our “presentation of self in everyday life” is lucid.

The sophisticated “dance” of Intention and Action makes human responses to stimuli and impulses unique. By choosing to work upon this “dance”, theatre-making, I propose, *appropriated the very recursiveness of performativity* – carrying its uniqueness to a higher plane.

Performance could be thought of as an instrument designed to refine its user. Its user being the Human Being, it necessarily refines itself constantly. Theatre’s structured, deliberate performativity utilises and works upon life’s fortuitous, undeliberating performativity, enabling the Human Being qua *Performer* to potentiate his capabilities qua *Human Being* – a recursiveness that is truly vertiginous.

It does this by a sophisticated discipline comprehending a structured grammar and a structured syntax researched and designed *knowingly* to organise the Attention/Intention/Action process. Consider the grammar of Action we are born with. From it developed, analogically, the grammars of speech and music.²¹ Consider, then: a mother cannot teach grammar to her infant²² – born with the disposition for grammar, one acquires it further by assimilation, by “deuterolearning”, as Bateson puts it, cybernetically.²³ The miracle of performance starts emerging: the performer knows he somehow (unknowingly) has a grammar of Action. Fragmenting it, he relearns it knowingly now, in a structure

²¹ See, Calvin, W.H., *The Emergence of Intelligence in Scientific American*, Oct. 1994, pp. 79-85

²² See, for example, Gold, M.E., *Information Control* 10, 447 (1967) and Nowak, M.A. & Kornarova, N.L., in *Trends in Cognitive Science* 5, 288 (2001)

²³ Bateson, G & Bateson M C, *op cit*, p. 13, pp 46/49, where Bateson, considering epistemology via cybernetics, discusses “learning to learn”.

he constructs *knowingly* for himself – aiming to elevate himself to the plane of generating beauty with it. Language works similarly – by relearning the grammar we already (unknowingly) know, we become able to (knowingly) try writing poetry. Craig's "*human flesh cannot be disciplined*" stands challenged.

Consider that part of *The Actor's Work upon Himself* where the fictitious "Torzov" (Stanislavski) tells apprentices that their morning Studio work would be on walking. The fictitious "Kostja" asks "Why?! We know how to walk. Do we walk badly, in life?" Torzov replies sharply "Yes, in life we walk badly." As they work, the apprentices lose the self-confidence of their clichés. Kostja's diary goes "In the end I was totally confused, no longer knowing what I was doing. But Torzov said he noticed an improvement."²⁴ Stanislavski's "in life/in theatre" polarity cannot be transposed to other art-forms – it is nonsensical telling a painter he does not paint "as he paints in life"! Stanislavski's juxtaposition dramatically reveals the recursiveness of the category of thought "Performance".

Meyerhold's "Theatre is the Art of Man," is of one logical type as "Music is the Art of Sound". It shows Theatre as the art where (a) Man *tackles all aspects of* Man, and nothing but such aspects, (b) he tackles them *by means of* the Human Being as *materia prima*, thus (c) *elevating his very beingness* to an Artistic plane: "Theatre is the Art of the Aesth(-)et(h)ic Organisation of Man". In Stanislavski's fictional example, this "Art of Man" helps refine the way man walks (literally). The Studio being "for Life", that "walk" rises (metaphorically) to a higher plane: theatre helps Man refine the way he "walks" through the ONE life he has. Torzov's words, coming from Stanislavski's pen, assume great meaning.

²⁴ A cursory glance will not reveal these words' great complexity. Dreaded by actors, Stanislavski's "that's not how you do it in life – I don't believe you!" is often misinterpreted as implying he expected them to imitate the way things appear "in life". Here he insists that walking, our most mundane activity, is something we do badly! What does he want – that actors do things "as they seem in life", or that they do things better (and so – differently) than in life? His "in life" is a key, referring to the miracle of flow, but I suggest we leave that great complexity aside; what is important for our topic is his insistence that "in life we walk badly", that the actor's work needs to take that into consideration, and that "in theatre" actors need to "walk better than they do 'in life'."

Acknowledging Performance as a category of thought means recognising that each of us has it within him to use its possibilities without any support structures from others – apart from pedagogical guidance. The Performer had to urgently become aware he needed to shed his millennial dependence upon Authors. For millennia, authors had generated structures (“plays”) whose grasp held and led Performers where Authors thought fit. Performers urgently needed to ensure nobody pre-programmed their feelings, attention, intentions, actions. Quite as each Human Being needs to ensure no “author(ity)” ever scripts his life.

5. “In Life...” and “In Theatre...”

Man lives his life aiming precisely for that. The fundamental difference is that the Performer works to organise his human nature so as to be able to *play* human nature – his fears, despairs, wishes, aggressions, hates, loves, angers, joys, pains, hopes, his misery, his glory, his triumphs, his terrors... those in my soul when I walk into the street out there... to find all the horrors of whatever it is I see, out there.

By working upon himself the Performer aims to be able to *play* all that. On the contrary, in living his life man does not play all that, he *lives* it. The Performer, moreover, inquires how to play all that *beautifully*, for a change, i.e. he seeks to *make beauty* of it – and **that** is a profound difference! Moreover – it is *knowingly* that the performer seeks to do all this.

That difference is crucial. In life, we blunder our way through, fortuitously, nearly in blind hope, making plans and forecasts, yes, but with no tools for assessing failures (common as they are), no true instruments to gauge, control, check and evaluate our actions’ dynamics of execution. If we drop a cup for example, we don’t review the event with another cup, risking breaking it in trying to analyse what may have gone wrong. We merely take another cup

and – hope for the best²⁵. And so... we go about life hoping never to break another cup, never to tear another jacket on a nail, never to let another glass fall, never to make another tear fall, never to break another relationship, another heart, another person.

Certainly, in such situations we often struggle to allow the other person to gain access to how we read his action, to the true intentions we believe spurred our own action, charged our words and their enunciation... at best, we try protestations like “what I meant was...” “what you said wasn’t that, but...” “but your tone of voice was...” We lack what the masters sought for the Performer – the means whereby, with beauty, one may allow intentions to be manifest. In asking “how to refine his humanity to *play* his humanity”, the Performer arrives at *knowingly* asking exponentially deeper questions, fusing his aesthetic and ethic: “How can I learn what I am and what my potential is? How can I learn this ‘I’?” Those questions open flood gates. They converge into a crucial question:

How may one accelerate the reflective process so as to be able to arrive faster at the optimal alternative for the just action in relation to the other and, consequently, in relation to oneself?

6. A Matter of Consciousness

In the arts, the Performer’s difficulty is unique. Painters scrutinise the media, grounds, brush effects, of nascent paintings – *not* their hand movement but the recorded trace that movement leaves. The opus is “out there”, facing one, available for reflective analysis, not “in here”. One can stop painting, distance oneself – literally, metaphorically – scrutinise what one did a moment ago, a day, week, year, decade. One can judge past results with insights accrued since; one’s technique is in front of one’s analysing eyes, often revealing discoveries developed unawares.

²⁵ Or, as Stanislavski puts it, referring to the old style acting, “pot luck” – *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Moscow 1951-64, quoted by Benedetti J. N. in *Stanislavski, an Introduction*, Methuen Drama, 1982, p37

In the musician, things already become different. He studies his “out there” instrument, seeing how it gives sound, seeking to control problems of its component parts’ possibilities. But the “in-time” nature of his work requires more. And like the actor, he has nothing “left there” to scrutinise, evaluate, judge, if necessary refine, alter... learn. Of course, one can listen to one’s recorded performance, but that doesn’t help one to really *see how* sounds captured in recordings were actually produced. We are closer to the actor.

Singers and dancers face many of the actor’s difficulties. Proprioception even allows one to perceive, analyse and give meaning to actions of one’s own that one cannot see. A myriad actions, however, are utterly inaccessible to such analysis: one can say, in part, how one lifts a hand... in the end, however, can one *say* how/when one *decides to* and *starts* “pumping blood” into muscles to “make them do” something? How little one knows this “piece of work” which Shakespeare eulogises through Hamlet’s mouth!

There are over 200 bones to a skeleton; then joints, muscles, ligaments, cartilages, the nervous system, metres of intestines, veins my blood flows in. “My” blood. What do I mean, “my blood”? Does the word “my”, there, function as in “my spectacles”? “My spectacles” is right – they are extrinsic to me. I can remove them, put them down, distance myself, point and say it. To say “my blood” in that same sense I would need to be able to remove “my blood”, distance myself and say “I had blood. That was my blood”. The blood flowing through this vascular system is me, it is I. I may point at 20cc of it extracted from me, saying “that was my blood”, but this I simply can’t remain in existence were all the blood constituting me to be shed as spectacles can be. What remains could never say “I”.²⁶

²⁶ Linguistically, this use of the possessive is clearly correct: we speak that way to refer to our body or its named parts. Bateson warns us (p 190-2), as does philosopher Roger Scruton: we need a new semantics and a new syntax to break out of Descartes’s stranglehold. In theatre discourse this assumes great importance, especially in this image industry era of façadism, where, from the linguistic phrasing of “the body” as a possession (“my body”) one “progresses” to believing it possible for the “I” to “construct” to any image “the body” “it possesses”. Stanislavski’s lifelong work is diametrically opposite – it aimed at helping the performer to “fabricate” (or rather, “liberate”, “discover”, “allow to surface”) manifestations of

Learning how Man functions is considerably difficult. A Performer must “train his material (the body), so that it is capable of executing instantaneously those tasks dictated externally (by the actor, the director)”: Meyerhold’s 1922 words identify difficulties of technical readiness, proficiency, ductility, Craig’s “disciplining human flesh”. To become a work of art, how do I organise my actions beautifully – displacing a finger or my totality, attaining a vocal pitch, texture, volume? Such difficulties are partly shared by all performers.

Theatre Performers face unique and greater difficulties. Meyerhold wrestles with concepts in his more famous (intensely dualistic) formula: “ $N = A_1 + A_2$ (where N = the actor; A_1 = the artist who conceives the idea and issues the instructions necessary for its execution; A_2 = the executant who executes the conception of A_1).”²⁷ Here, however, the difficulty is not only proficiency and ductility. We have moved onto a new plane. Meyerhold assigns actors the task of “conceiving the idea” – the actor performs *about* the Human Being. This necessarily implies generating meaning and feeling, allowing both to be read into his work. One may bypass that in music, dance, song, going to abstract, purely formal, non-thematic dynamics.²⁸ Theatre, however, is not only *by means of* but also *specifically about* Man. That is why Meyerhold’s “Theatre is the Art of Man” is meaningful... which is why “Song (or Dance) is the Art of Man” cannot be equally meaningful. Theatre is *about* Man²⁹. It discusses him, narrates him, plumbs his depths, tracks his heights – and it does that *by means of* Man. How can *this* I talk *with* this “I”

unknown aspects of himself, which in turn wake up to his own cognition and come alive, enabling him to see himself anew, apart from being seen anew.

²⁷ Meyerhold, V. E., in Braun, E. (ed), *Meyerhold on Theatre*, Methuen (London), 1991, p.198. Meyerhold’s formulations are notoriously dualistic. Today’s scientific (poetic!) discourse on the brain helps resolve linguistic traps that had long obscured the insights one so badly needs for thinking clearly on the Performer’s work.

²⁸ Indian performance, subdivided into Natya, Nritya and Nritta, brings this out clearly, with Nritta described as pure dance, not relating to any psychological state, the movements of various parts of the body not suggesting any particular mood or meaning, its purpose being to create beauty by patterns and lines in space and time.

²⁹ Though *about* Man, it’s not made to be “abouted”, mere narrative, alimnet for social discussion. Its soul lies far deeper. But that’s another story.

about this “I”, capturing essence? How to weave beautiful narratives about this “I” by this “I”, creating them, being in them, *being them*?

Performer is all about Consciousness.

There are two levels of discourse on that –

1. There is the state of the Performer working solely by means of and upon himself with one sole intent – that of constantly refining and redesigning himself into a disciplined force, feeling reasonably reassured that, whenever he wishes, he would manage to generate a creative activity of excellent aesthetic quality – and to depend for that solely on his Human potential.
2. There is the state of the Performer working by means of and upon himself with intent to constantly refine and redesign himself into an artistic force channelling itself into a structured doing that is accessible (at precisely defined times, in precisely defined spaces) to the perception of others who behold it as a meaningful action that is fully about Man. In other words, what we call “performance”.

“Collective creation” would refer to the second state, where that force called “Performer” is – by analogy – at once paint and canvas, the paint wilfully spreading itself on the canvas, being one with and in the nascent opus, with and in the force giving it birth, unable to stand away from or outside it, composing and recomposing itself each instant, unseen and unseeing, and yet – generating a supreme act by means of, about and by paint itself. An impossibility – paint can do no such thing. In the Human-Being-Performer, it is a remarkable event of supreme reflectivity and action, recursive beyond what is normally considered possible – beyond what, for millennia, one considered impossible.

That second state defies definition.

It marks a supreme attainment of consciousness, where, at the same time (no: where “time” is meaningless), one is intention’s fulfilment in action as well as *assessment* of that action. Not *result* – that would be much less difficult, a matter of hindsight, bringing “time” back in. Nor *judgement* – the event is non-judgemental (though to a good

extent it does entail constant evaluation). It is, rather, a supreme act of Faith. It is Belief that the yearned for can truly occur. It is Faith that all that was honed and enabled by the "other" (first) state of Performer can now bear fruit. It is an attainment of consciousness where all arbitrary frontiers – those between object and subject, between form and content, for instance – cease to hold. It is a manner of being and becoming where space permeates and is permeated, where beginnings and ends flow to the point of losing definition.

7. "Collective Creation" – an Inadequate Term?

"Collective creation" emerges as a clearly inadequate term – it manages neither to articulate what the masters were reaching for, nor to describe their search's fruit.

The analysis being made here defines also a research theatre phenomenon emblematic of the Colloquium document's concepts: the Solo Performance. And yet – one cannot, manifestly, call a solo performance "collective creation".

Though the creativity the masters envisaged for the Performer is autonomous of other artists' work, still most theatre is, undoubtedly, fruit of artists collaborating. It is their doings however, their actions, that must seek confluence in time and space, not their thoughts, concepts.

That confluence must ensure, moreover, that the conditions the masters fought against do not infiltrate the liberating context they developed specifically to defy those conditions. Abuse of power and authority, arrogance, domineering attitudes, imposition – these are as much at the roots of human tragedies now as when they exploded in the early 20th Century's cataclysms. They are, too, as much as they were in Stanislavski's mind when, heavy heartedly, he listed them in his unfinished book of Ethics – "egoism, unpleasantness, hard-headedness, resentment, impatience", elsewhere adding coquetry and narcissism. The masters' methodologies, affecting both their aesthetics and ethics, set out to circumvent these cancers, which they assiduously (and painfully) list for us.

The emphasis of today's masters is on Intentions being allowed to be manifest, accessible to beholders' readings, open to construction of meaning – whether by “witnesses” (as spectators start being called) or by fellow Performers. The desire is for an increasing devolution of authority, power – diametrically in opposition to our ethos's crippling norms, where levelling of difference and oversimplification of meaning are amongst the most insidiously hidden instruments of dominance and abuse of power by those believing they are (or wanting others to believe that they are) a cut above.

In 1972, responding to a question on “collective creation”, Grotowski said

“The idea of a group as a collective person must have been a reaction to the dictatorship of the director, i.e. someone who dictates to others what they are to do, despoiling them of themselves. Hence the idea of ‘collective creation’. However, ‘collective creation’ is nothing but a collective director; that is to say, dictatorship exercised by the group. And there is no essential difference whether an actor cannot reveal himself – as he is – through the fault of the individual director, or the group director. For if the group directs, it interferes with the work of every one of its members, in a barren, fruitless way – it oscillates between caprices, chance and compromise of different tendencies and results in half-measures.”³⁰

I propose “collective creation” could apply (mostly conceptually) only where individual Performers can singly generate the forceful, revealing creations I here try to articulate – where they can juxtapose individual creations, such that the whole becomes infinitely larger than the sum of the parts. As in jazz, in a way, but fully *about all* that the Human Being is, in a way in which music can not be.

I return to my analogy: several colours, not one, choose to spread themselves with and inside the opus nascent on that canvas, each penetrating each others' boundaries, creating a myriad hues, not

³⁰ Grotowski, J., in *Swieto [Holiday]*, in Schechner, R., and Wolford, L., *op. cit.*, p 222

losing sense of its integrity, however, composing and recomposing itself constantly, unsupervised by any outside artist, unseeing that opus's constantly shifting stages, yet generating this supreme event vibrant with beauty.

What the masters sparked off is this empowering, spiralling journey into self-potential, challenging consciousness' limits. Neuroscience tells us we start an action an extraordinary 0.8 second before we come to know we shall execute it. "One cannot work creatively and, at the same time, observe oneself."³¹ Stanislavski anticipated neuroscience by 70 years when he said that in his 1918/22 Bolshoi lectures. The profoundest level of the Performer's work is to be sought there.

Observing his own actions from outside his painting, a painter's consciousness lags by 0.8 second. In creating the opus that he *is*, the Performer, this "body" of nobody's "mind", defies the seeming limits of Human potential. Crystallising the centuries-long force irrevocably spurring theatre research, Grotowski's words reach out beyond frontiers:

"the looking presence of the teacher can sometimes function as a mirror of the connection I-I (this junction is not yet traced). When the channel I-I is traced, the teacher can disappear and Performer continue toward the body of essence."³²

8. The Director – an Interim, Designing Itself for Self-Deletion

The masters designed themselves to liberate the Performer. Texts had long offered him the beguiling security of a supporting embrace – hiding an unrelenting, steel grip. Loosening that grip entailed losing that embrace's security. Losing that security meant facing the instability of flux. The advent of the Director's role is translatable as a gradually developing, stabilising force, replacing the longstanding one whose trajectory, in a drastically changing context, was waning.

³¹ Stanislavski, K.S., in Cruciani, F. & Falletti, C., (ed.) *op. cit.*, p 115 (my translation from Italian).

³² Grotowski, J., *Performer*, in Schechner, R., and Wolford, L., *op. cit.*, p 376

The masters fashioned their role to serve the Performer as a fundamentally different guide: not by feeding him texts to interpret, as authors had done for millennia, but by “seeing from the outside” and giving him feedback, seeking to help him “see” the nascent opus which, being “inside it”, he otherwise could not **see**.

They thus set in motion a powerful spiral of pedagogical processes, seemingly dancing between two poles: “formation” and “creativity”. Neuroscience reveals these “poles” as but two ways of seeing and describing one thing: brain plasticity, Man’s potential to creatively re-create himself continually.

The concept “Director” posited itself as a mere interim – a function bridging the void bound to occur between the Performer rejecting the text’s security and his coming to generate opuses. Which is the gap between one state of consciousness and a higher one. Which is the gap between one stage of being Human ... and the next...

The question posited earlier returns: *How can I accelerate the reflective process so as to be able to arrive faster at the optimal alternative for the just action in relation to the other... and, consequently, in relation to myself?*

It is a question asked at the level of theatre-making: for each action the Performer does, for its effects on his colleagues’ actions; then on his own work, by rebound. It is, also, a question asked at the level of living life: for each action I take in my encounters, with its spiral of consequences and effects, upon others and upon myself, recursively.

“The Art of Man” finally roots its foundations in the recursive “dance” of Attention/Intention/Action. Consequently, and because of brain plasticity, the human being raises his very beingness to the level of a work of Art. The living Performer is the agent generating the living artistic event. As Subject, therefore, he generates himself as “*objet d’art*”. No “artist, medium and product”, but one, undivided – Subjectobject. If, therefore, each performative manifestation is to be creative, a work of Art, it has to remain always alive, in flux.

Truly – “the Studio is for Life”, as Stanislavski said.

It is “for life”: in the sense that it is a work upon oneself that **must** be lifelong.

It is “for life”: in the sense that it is not for death, not for stasis, not for the deadly fixity of repetition, not for “coquetry and narcissism”, as Stanislavski labelled the sterility of his time.

It is “for life”: in the sense that the *Commedia dell’Arte* revolution was “for life”.

*

A Postilla on Death

The plague of our times is no longer millions of bodies rotting in trenches, fed to cannon, but the (equally deadly) “fixity of repetition”.

Vilhem Flusser, in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, traces a complex journey from the image as a tool for Man to come to grips with reality, to the image’s idolisation, to symbolic writing and, gradually, to the photograph – which, he argues, drives many into “mistaking the map for the territory”, making them succumb to the power of the image. Worryingly, he parallels the camera (referred to as “the apparatus”) and the many “Apparatuses of control”. The artist-photographer constantly challenges the camera, striving to do with a particular model something it was not designed for... only for the industry to then “update” the model with a more sophisticated, automatic programme, which takes the market’s unqualified users by storm, enabling them to obtain “automatically” the *result* the artist-photographer obtained creatively, making them prey to illusions of being engaged in creativity.

Flusser’s techno-era variant of Weber’s discourse on bureaucracy shows it is nonsensical to speak of “Masters of the Apparatuses”: although apparatuses were originally produced and programmed to serve human intention, the latter is now vanishing off the scene of ‘second and third generation’ apparatuses. These now function ‘automatically’, solely for their own sakes, with the aim of perpetuating and improving themselves automatically. They function independently of human decision, intervention. Nobody

can rule them. On the contrary, human decisions, now taken on the basis of apparatus' decisions, have degenerated into being 'functional'. Human intention has evaporated.

It is this stupid automation, involuntary, repetitive, functional, which constitutes the real essence of criticism of the apparatuses. Flusser pleads for a Philosophy of Photography, identifying the task beckoning it: "to show that there is no room for human freedom in the realm of the automated, programmed and programming apparatus; and having shown this, to argue how, despite apparatus, it is possible to create room for freedom. The task of a philosophy of photography is to analyse the possibility of freedom in a world dominated by apparatus; to think about how it is possible to give meaning to human life in the face of the accidental necessity of death. We need such a philosophy, because it is the last form of revolution which is still accessible for us."³³

*

Collective Creativity wasn't at the starting point of the masters' avid search.

Neither was it *the* starting point. It wasn't the aim. It wasn't even intended.

It was, however, inevitable.

It was, also, necessary.

"Theatre does not interest me any longer. I am only interested in what I could do leaving theatre behind me" says Grotowski, in *Swieto – Holiday, the Day that is Holy*.

Should what is truly hidden behind the term "Collective Creation" ever cease to be considered necessary... it would signal the nearing of the Human Being's demise.

³³ Flusser, V., *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, European Photography, (Göttingen) 1984, p 59