



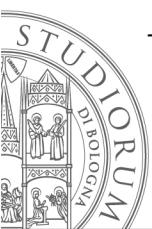
ARTICOLO

Theatricality before the theatre. The beginning of theatrical expression.

di Theodoros Grammatas

Drama genealogy and the start of the theatre have been the subject of research in various ways for more than a century, following the emblematic study of Sir James George Frazer «*The Golden Bough*» (1870). A number of approaches have since been applied and an equal number of answers have been given by anthropologists (Malinowski 1926, Van Gennep 1960, Eliade 1970), religiologists (Durkheim 1912, Eliade 1963, Callois 1959), philologists (Cornford 1914, Harrison 1913, Csapo-Miller 2007), historians of culture (Murray 1912) and other scientists (Ridgeway 1915), who tried to address the problem from the point of view of their own particular disciplines (Turner 1982, Schechner ²2002). The theatre as perceived by the Western world, a product of certain historical, social and cultural conditions in Ancient Greece, is interpreted as the result of a centuries long developmental period, the start of which is traced in the prehistory of human civilisation and the rituals that took place at that time known as ritual (Kirby 1975, Efron 1941). In more recent years more interpretations have been added to the traditional ones connected to modern disciplines such as Neurophysiology (Lex 1979), Social Anthropology (Schechner 1985), Cultural Studies (Turner 1969), Theatrical Studies (Rosik 2002, Dupont 2007) and so on, which have shed light on and have interpreted this phenomenon in its many dimensions. Our own contribution lies on the fact that we address the questions in purely theatrological terms and conditions. We base our approach on ten fundamental points which, though common in both forms examined, the theatre and the primitive ritual, they are presented with their diverse contents and a different orientation, thus contributing to the widening and enrichment of the general scientific discussion on the genealogy of the theatre. In our effort to delve deeply into the issues raised and analyze the parameters of the theatre as a concept, we have to start with setting an initial framework and a determination of the contents, corresponding to the particular characteristics and special features of each category.

By “theatre” we mean the complex artistic and at the same time social incident, which,



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

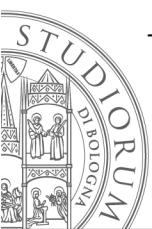
based on the repetitive mimic function and role, that is the iconic representation of real or imaginary actions and situations, constitutes a meta-lingual communication as well as diachronic universal cultural phenomenon.

Although it is a consciously illusionist reality, for both those who realize it on stage (actors) and those who receive it at the stalls (audience) as its sole receivers and absolute critics, it is still perceived as real, within a constant mutually communicative game between sender and receiver, stage and stalls. This live projection and formulation of symbols with literal or metaphorical content takes place via speech and verbal communication amongst the actors, either in the form of dialogue, most commonly, or in the form of internal monologue. In every case there is always a real or potential receiver of the spoken word, either the actor or the viewer or both of them, who is the end receiver of the spectacle.

Within its multiplicity of semiotic potentialities, the "*theatre*" also means the actual acting and the role, the conscious and intentional transformation of a real person (or actor) into a dramatic persona (hero of the play), which takes place during the performance and only in front of the audience. It also means the open or closed space, the spacial building or structure in which the stage act takes place. Equally important is the parameter of the complex artistic event (performance) combining more artistic forms such as literature, painting, sculpture, music, design and video art.

Moreover, it is a social and societal phenomenon with a great cultural dimension which concerns and is concerned with society in its entirety being a valuable educational good and a very special system of mutual interactive communication. Finally the "*Theatre*" can also mean the dramatic text itself as a particular category of literary text, which is addressed to the viewer and not the reader, comprising specific structural features (dialogue, action, conflict, dramatic situations), morphological features (description of persons, "teachings") and stylistic features (open text with eleptic speech, gaps, silences which will be fulfilled in the performing process).

Its "*theatricality*", in itself a basic ingredient of the theatre, although it can very well exist off stage, is a complex semiotic potentiality made up of aural-oral stimuli, of movements and physical actions, of place-time interchanges and kinetic alterations, which take place in front of the audience and constitute a proposal for a spectacle to be watched.



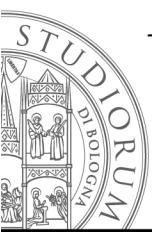
ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

This is a complex picture comprising bodies and objects in the physical space classified according to multiple levels of meaning. The body on its own is a basic semiotic unit, which with its hidden potential motion and the correspondence between the real and the imaginary, tension and relaxation, it liberates all its hidden inner powers (Bernard 1976), gives meaning to space and from neutral put it into a synergy aiming at the creation of the intended message perceived by the viewer's conscience. Space exists only because it is filled with the motion of the bodies producing various stimuli, such as optical data and situations, acoustic incidents which all together constitute theatricality. The viewer is lying willingly thus entering via the senses the projected iconic space and is emerged into it without really touching it. In this meaning, theatricality acquires its own "poetics", expressing a multidimensional interpretation of the suggested picture, which, as a self-contained microcosmos, it enforces a thorough reading, with the help of which all its inner hidden potential is revealed.

It can thus be argued that "*theatricality*" is a complex communicative potentiality of optically representing a situation or a reality, which receives imagery mediated by the body and the movements of a physical actor, their expressions and postures consciously selected and suggested for viewing with the synergy of other communicative codes, such as dance and music. Consequently, "*theatricality*" exists and functions outside the text, beyond drama and literature, the narrative structure of speech and the sequence of its parts, within a broader dimension of iconic symbols and optical messages.

According to this view, the concept in question does not obey any kind of logical expression, is not part of a dialogue in its dramatic or narrative dimension. It therefore becomes synonym to "*spectacular*" to "*spatial*", to creating a picture out of an internal situation, an abstract idea or a theoretical conception of the subject, without the mediation of any kind of written or spoken word (Ubersfeld 1982: 19).

Equally powerful, the opposite view accepts that "*theatricality*" is contained in the text itself, it constitutes its primary "*performing mould*", which, in turn, additionally and consciously offers the possibility of the text formation and enforces its stage performance through speech ("*teachings*" dialogue, punctuation) (Barthes 1964: 41-42, Durand 1975: 117). In this case, "*theatricality*" means the possibility of experiential repetition of the author's written text



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

and its optical representation through the stage act, which is a projection in the world of the senses of images and situations constituting the internal obvious or elusive world of the play.

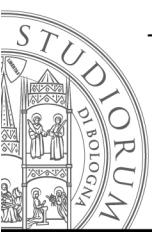
Although seeming opposite, both these interpretations are well founded and not necessarily contradictory, since they both seek to determine the potential of performance that can be realized either in a verbal/imaginary way or a performing/visual way (Ertel 1977: 127). Subsequently, “*theatricality*” can be meant not just on stage, during the dramatic performance, addressed at a particular audience, but out of it, in every day life, in friendly encounters, in festive or entertaining events, religious or social ceremonies, political gatherings, sports events, massive protests and generally wherever individual or collective human activity, intentionally projected for viewing by others (Burns 1972).

In all these occasions a kind of spectacle develops, transforming their role, mission and character from a primary literal to a secondary conceptualizing of the reality, resulting in the “*theatricality*” existing both within and outside the text, thus becoming a fundamental ingredient for the organization and structure of the category called “*Theatre*”.

Attempting an “*archaeology of knowledge*”, that is an effort to trace the beginnings of theatrical expression and the possible “*first performance*” we will soon see that our effort is not feasible and the issue in question a false dilemma. This is because the question about the origin of the theatre and tracing it in the prehistory of human civilization, is not convincingly answered in one single way, as attempted in the past by the “*Cambridge School*” Jane-Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray and Francis Cornford, but in many other ways both in tandem and in contradiction with each other (Csapo – Miller 2007: 2-3).

Essentially, it all starts with the tendency and the innate ability of the human being to mime and repeat the real and the imaginary, the existing and the dreamlike, the physical and metaphysical world, with the aid of body motion and expressions, dance and music, painting, sculpture, as these appear in the whole world in the prehistory of human civilization. For this to be achieved the ritual develops, as a magical-religious ritual with both religious and secular content, which dramatizes concepts and situations of metaphysical, social or entertaining character.

Starting with miming the voice, the posture and motion of an animal, intending on a



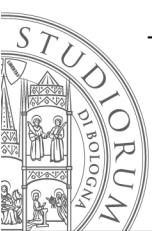
ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

shamanic equalization which will help acquire its characteristics, this primitive instinctive mimicry develops into a ritual through which the primitive man attempts to communicate with the invisible world of the spirits and they supernatural powers which control their lives (Eliade 1970).

These ritual actions with the intense theatricality have been approached in very way up to now and have been analyzed by various disciplines (anthropology, religious studies, neurophysiology, history of civilization, theatrical anthropology) as conceptualizations and processes and experiences, as phenomena and functions, directly linked with the sacred and the secular (Moore – Mayerhoff 1977). They have also been seen as part of human evolution in relation to preceding forms of life, as structures with particular values and predetermined relationships, as symbolic systems and performing processes, as potential complex experiences comprising special codes of expression and communication (Schechner 1995: 228).

This primitive category of ritual activity, known as ritual in its religious, social and later aesthetic dimension, constitutes the triple categorization and conceptualization of the same original or developed need and ability of humans (Schechner 1995: 80-81). Consequently, theoretically, it can be argued that the “first performance” is but a human “condition” as a living organism and not at all a distinct genre or type of expression. It is derived from the need to “see something happening” for psychological, existential, social, metaphysical and religious reasons.

This repetitive mimic representation taking place with the direct participation of the actor's body brings about a total equation of the projected picture and its symbol, enabling the primitive human being to “*go out of the self*” and safely return to it. Go into somebody else's shoes, acquiring, even if it is for a very limited time, the capacities of the other, thus tasting experiences completely different and foreign to one's own. They are also given the right to overcome the place and time of their own presence, transferring the “*somewhere else some other time*” of invisible cosmic principles and powers to the “*here and now*” giving them a form and an entity even though temporary through their own body. This way, they are turned into mediums, they communicate the divine, they carry it into the real world and make it conceivable to those watching. Finally, through mime and role they try the previously



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

unknown experience of diversion, which can be presented to others, causing admiration, making an impression obtaining the respect and the recognition they need while they themselves “play” and enjoy themselves with the means of a relieving and risk-less “role play”, also offering joy and entertainment to those watching. Through these primary “theatrical” situations, the primitive human being becomes aware of their “identity” and the “otherness”, their presence in place and time, realizes the unity of nature and humans with the universal cosmic principle which provides an inner link to all, honours and worships gods and impersonal cosmic powers, becomes sociable, aware of the self, and entertains the self and the others (Turner 1982: 20-60).

These are known as rituals, magic-religious ceremonies which take place with an aim to bring about a wanted outcome: the liberating impact of the mythical past on the present and the restoration of the relationships of the particular group with the invisible powers ruling life and death, and reassuring and securing the continuity and cohesion of the particular community guaranteeing its future (Turner 1969). Theatrical rituals were used in a similar way in order to manipulate and settle possible conflicts regarding the position of the individual in social hierarchy and authority as well as to help individuals overcome critical moments of transition from a previous to a following phase of their lives, thus contributing to the sustaining and recording of the past (Van Gennep 1960).

Based on the desire for communication with ancestors and pleading for help from higher personal or impersonal forces, in pursuit of fertility and well being as well as the repulsion of the evil and finally entertainment and enjoyment this type of ritual express the mental, psychological and biological needs of the primitive man not as abstract ideas but as experiential realities. Gradually moving away from the magical content, they are transformed from shamanic ritual to a beneficial one, some kind of secular eucharist to the gods, with a mixture of religious and aesthetic contents (Schechner 2002: 87), which, in a historically determined period, leads to the detachment of the religious from the secular and to a gradual development of the concept we know as “theatre” (Schechner 1977).

An attempt to approach these primitive rituals in theatrological terms and to pinpoint their theatrical elements long before they were transformed into “*theatre*” will lead to the tracing



of the following particular characteristics:

i. place

It is sacred, not common, “*totemic*”, not used for any other purpose but for the specific ritual. Even when this uniqueness is lost and it becomes a lot more common, it undergoes cleansing via a particular ritual so that it can acquire the required sacredness. The choice of place is determined by certain criteria of geodesy, cosmology and geography which match data and parameters of the magnetic and energy field of the area, its particular geophysical characteristics which make it unique and different, sufficiently supported by mythological narratives, always relevant to the ultimate “sacred” time of cosmic creation.

ii. time

It is equally different, not everyday, “exceptional” in relation to the generally obscure picture the primitive human being had about the same notion, through the course of sun and moon, the alteration between day and night, the succession of seasons. Such not common time is that connected to astronomical and meteorological phenomena (course of planets, winter and spring solstice, moon phases) and other date immediately visible and perceived by the senses.

Equally different, however, is the “scenic” time, that is the duration of the action performed, as far as the objective time when the ritual actually takes place. It is a “timeless present”, that is bringing the nonexistent notion of time into being, which bares the primitive human being as an actor as well in a mythological hyper-reality beyond any objective dimension of time whatsoever.

iii. the aim

It is a performance of a ceremony, a ritual with contents of catharsis and relief, for both those acting with their bodies and those viewing the action. The intention is healing, a shield against all evil, a correcting effect of whatever may harm the community, the pursuit of what is good and beneficial, the communication with the past and showing respect to ancestors and gods. The return to the initial sacred moment of creation («*illo tempore*»),



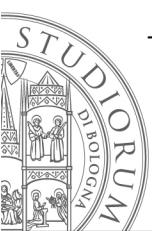
when it all occurred for the first time, representing the exclusiveness of meaning, which will never be repeated (Eliade 1963: 26-31). The primitive human being, when getting in contact with this initial source of creation via the myth and ritual, they acquire the ability to control these powers and use them creatively for their own best interest. Finally, it aims at teaching and creating role models capable of guaranteeing the continuation and cohesion of the community as well as pleasure, entertainment and enjoyment for all those participating in the ritual.

iv. the character

It is magic and religious. It stems from the belief in unity between the human being and nature, in the existence of one life-giving cosmic beginning which unites all animate and inanimate, plants, animals and humans, as member of the same unity. The actor can exit their own objectively measurable space and time and be transferred to the initial time of cosmic creation, when the incident performed occurred for the first time. This way the mythical heroes, known to the community, become current persons, directly approachable, whereas the impersonal cosmic powers are inscribed physically receiving a body, thus having a great catalytic impact on the whole community. At the same time, through disguise and role play, the primitive human being becomes capable of exiting the self, even if temporarily, embracing the “otherness” and act in a relieving way not only on a religious and metaphysical level but also on as social and psychological level. With this content, ritual obtains a teaching character, which affects the community bringing it closer to the sacredness of the initial cosmic energy and controls those participating and watching, transmitting knowledge and information necessary for its survival in a pleasant and entertaining manner.

v. the theme

It starts as magic and religious, later changing into mythological, differentiated and adapted each time according to the needs and requirements of the specific community at which it is addressed. The myth always provided the basic canvas on which action and representation of the narrative account develops as this is what those viewing share. This is



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

tied in to the contents, though, and remains within its ceremonial limits, unable to change and develop further, thus caging the ritual within the frame of a repetitive spectacle. Actors and action appear single dimensional, unable of inner change and elevation, permanently attached to the archetypal form and therefore not allowing the occurrence of anything unexpected or different, which are basic features of drama.

vi. the communication

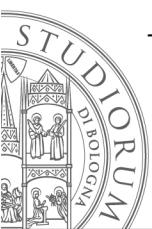
It is experiential, direct and collective. Both actors and viewers are at a completely identical conscience level with the action and the sacred past time to which it refers. This results in a virtual reality through which the intended outcome is achieved: developing a hyper-reality which will serve as a relief and will be beneficial for the current reality.

vii. the means

It is a “*qualisign*” (“*sinsign*”) (Peirce 1958), the spectacle which is presented as the living representation of a certain action. It comprises an autonomous communication system, with no reference to the surrounding space, but, on the contrary, getting its meaning in relationship with it as it depends on it and is addressed at it. In this meaning it is understood that the projected picture lies within a complex audio-visual frame, inside which bodily motion and actions are classified at multiple levels of meaning. The human body fills the space with tension and relaxation, movement and expression, thus offering a multiplicity of stimuli, which, as a whole, comprise theatricality as the differentiating feature of the ritual. This in its turn changes into a complex communicative potentiality of visualizing a situation or a concept, which turns into a picture, mediated by the body of the acting subject, as well as other aiding codes, such as music and dance, impressive costumes and masks, which all build the audio-visual outcome so that it can be perceived and grasped by all viewers.

viii. the actors

They are both participants and mediators in the communication with the unspeakable and metaphysical, bearers and manipulators of the message through very bodily existence, which becomes the content and the container at the same time. They act spontaneously



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

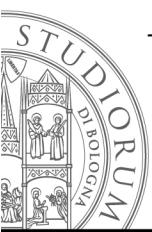
and instinctively, formulating the essence of the ritual with their action with no correcting interventions or aesthetic intentions. Therefore, bodily expression is extremely intense and motion is ceaseless and orgiastic, leading to ecstasy and bringing the actors to a state of transcendence.

Actors do not act the role, but experientially completely acquire the role performed. Aided by masks and costumes, strictly codified movements of a mimic and ceremonial nature they acquire the features and the very existence of the person they act as, getting into a state of total identification with them, this way achieving the realization of their actions. Hence the symbolic reality is not reproduced in a credible way, but even more than that the mythological past is formulated and by being repeatedly reproduced this past is reconstructed and recurs. The actors are transformed into "heroes" of the myth realizing their feats and actions, leading to the salvation and relief of the community.

ix. the technique

It is expressed by the instinctive, innate ability appearing primarily on the part of the actor as imitation of sound, voice, posture and bodily movement responding directly to those of animals initially, other living beings later, specific mythological and real powers and persons finally, with which the person taking part in the action tries to identify. The intense bodily movement, dance, group utterances, codified movement, rhythmic music, comprise the various parts which consist of complex audio-visual stimuli, bodily actions, motional alterations and time-place alternations, which take the form of a spectacle to be watched by an audience which has gathered exactly for this reason. The actors put all their physical talents into good use, reaming strictly attached to the level of repeatedly imitating the same, which preserves the sacredness of the mission of the ritual and does justice to the fact that it is a ceremony with an unaltered content through time, weakening and rejecting any possibility of transformation and differentiation, which will lead unavoidably to the end of any former tradition.

Although theatricality is intense, through the extreme impact of expression and communication techniques and the aid of other audio-visual codes, the code of verbal communication and dialogue amongst the actors or between actors and audience are



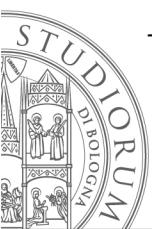
completely absent, which is the most essential differentiating element of the later developed form of drama.

x. *the receivers*

They are the members of a community, who have a homogenous psychology and cosmic perception, have similar hopes and expectations and receive the spectacle presented in similar ways. They know the mythical story presented as well as the actors do, they expect but “the faithful response to the promised”, the materialization of what is meant to be through the specific ritual, in which they participate experientially, perfectly identifying themselves to the actors.

The reactions of the spectacle projected are similar and common, in perfect harmony with the action being represented. Surprises and unexpected actions are out of the question, giving their place to typical repetition of the same, which weakens any possibility of any subjective expression or individual judgement. There is no differentiation between actors and viewers. All, irrespective of their position in the community, share the same trust in the indisputable values and practices of the ritual system in which they participate with their defined role from which they cannot part. Consequently, what the audience expect is the complete adherence to the rules of the game, the completion of the roles which “have been announced” from the very beginning, as the real value only lies on the optical happening itself, responding to a direct reading which everybody can comprehend. The “*speech of the image*” is identical to what it signifies in a way that the purely pictorial message, the spectacularity of action, monopolizes the action and classifies any other category as a “mistake” or “not acceptable”. Everybody recognizes the common actions and situations which take the form of spectacle in front of them and are equally relevant to all of them, developing a collective conscience which rejects any individuality. Any differentiation or rejection of the individual by the community automatically brings about exclusion and excommunication and carried a very heavy impact on the self on multiple levels (Turner 1982: 112).

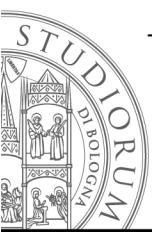
From ritual to drama



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

The “*Theatre*”, as known in the Western world, is a product of cultural conditions like the ones developed in ancient Greece in the 6th century B.C and are expressed through the Dionysian ritual and the Dithyramb. Still, long before Thespis and the Great Dionysea 534-533 B.C., a centuries long multiform tradition of dramatized events was in progress, preparing the conditions for the appearance of Drama. The basic characteristics mentioned in the former phase of the ritual continue to exist, equally comprising some of the theatre characteristics as well. Still, some of them develop and are re-defined, whereas others are restructured or completely rejected, giving their place to a new reality, which, in its own turn determines a novel cultural creation.

Avoiding any arguments for or against any of the views that have been supported over time regarding the origin and appearance of drama and theatre in ancient Greece, we can point out that the pre-existing genetic material cannot be placed in a straight line of development, but can be traced widespread in more forms and appearances directly or indirectly relating to the religious and the secular character of former tradition (Rosik 2002). For the first time, though, a qualitative differentiation can be observed, a structural evolution, which puts an end or supersedes the stereotypical repetitiveness of the ritual and transforms into a secular spectacle, closely related (via the mythical account) to the former culture creation analyzed as “*dromeno*” (ritual). But even if we accept a different origin of drama, not solely from Dionysean rituals, but also from other types of secular performing events, such as the narrative poetry of the rhapsody singers, the music and athletic competitions, the banquets and the comic accounts centered around mirth and wine (quite representatively depicted in the rich relevant vase painting and the corresponding mythological tradition), drama and theatre comprise unique cultural products of the ancient Greek intellect. The verified contribution of Arion in the transformation of the antique “*Dithyramb*” into the “*circular dance*” and from there to the drama chorus, which took place in Corinth, in the court of the tyrant Peisistratos at the end of the 7th century B.C., as well as the convincing argument about the “*komos*” and the “*komistes*”, which from the phallic dromena and the testimonies of Solon, Archilochos and Herodote, preceding the “*Poetics*”, lead to the satiric drama and from there to Drama in general, analyze the issue thoroughly and pinpoint its possible or real parameters (Csapo-Miller 2007:10-12). Still, beyond the problem of the historic origin of



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

drama and theatre, our research focuses on defining the differentiating characteristics of the concept which separate it from any other preceding from, whatever this may be called. Expanding our thought on the very same ten axles as above, we can point out the following:

i. place

It is the necessary condition for the theatre to exist. After all, initially, the etymological meaning of “*theatron*” denotes the means through which viewing (*thea*) is achieved. Consequently, the development of one performing outcome is not enough but this has to be performed in a specific place in public view, in front of an audience who have particularly gathered to watch it. Mass transfer to the place in question is not a duty or obligation derived from some kind of religious or other need, but it is the product of free personal choice, which meets with spontaneous response, this is why participation is so numerous. Its character continues to be not common, not everyday, but it loses the sacredness of the ritual, which remains as a distant echo, verified in the presence of an altar or sometimes a temple of Dionysus, as in the case of the homonymous Athenian theatre. The nature of the place also changes, since the natural space receiving the performance (a low hill) is transformed by human intervention and an architectural construction is created, with a massive volume and great capacity capable of receiving a great number of viewers. It has an aesthetic character as an autonomous building enriching its former mission with artistic elements of high aesthetic value, which turn it into a monumental structure, while technological prerequisites aim not only at the mere function of mass communication, but also at causing a sensory outcome (acoustics). There are well defined architectural features, (stage, proscenium, orchestra, tiers, seats), which comprise its physiognomy and do justice to its mission as common space of secular, social gathering with particular characteristics.

ii. time

Though objectively located in a historic present, the “here” and “now” of the performance, it essentially defers from the primitive ceremony of the “*dromeno*” (ritual) and its relieving effect on those watching. It keeps the notion of “exceptional”, not everyday



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

event, linked directly to specific religious celebrations in honour of the god Dionysus, which, in turn, are closely related to crucial points of change and transformation of the cosmic time (season succession, survival of pagan customs), which eternalize its ritual character, referring to the prehistory of human civilization.

The dramatic time of the action performed remains to a great extent stuck in the mythological past, common property of the community, but the historic time of the viewers' experiential reality comes up quite strongly, especially in comedy, but sometimes in tragedy as well. This last bit happens to be the main difference between the "dromeno" and the theatre, as far as the parameter in question is concerned. This is due to the fact that the viewer's time does no longer refer to the cloudy "timeless present" of the preceding ritual, but to the historic present of objective reality, which is always present, either contextually or inscribed in the stage event and implied, or experientially perceived by all the the viewers who are watching. They, via internal participation ("methexis") in the staged action, they transcend to a time-wise nonexistent level of mythological reality, but aided by the conscious influence of the theatrical convention, they become aware of the illusion in such a way, that their presence in the "here" and "now" is never doubted.

iii. the aim

It is greatly different than that of the ceremonial and relieving effect of the ritual in benefit of the community. Even if its religious character remains as a leftover or an elusive far back point of reference, the determining role it used to have gets gradually displaced, giving its place to elements of social, philosophical, existential and metaphysical thinking related to the general cosmology of the ancient Greek viewer. Its reference is still universally potential and concerns the collective, but at the same time it acquires an personalized content, which differentiates the perception of the very spectacle from the viewer's separate individualities. Everybody acquires education, culture and aesthetic pleasure through the performance, which brings about the ultimate outcome, the Aristotelian meaning of "*katharsis*" with the psychoanalytical, sociological, existential, metaphysical or any other content it may have.



iv. the character

Its social and secular, removed from religion. It is the result of the verbally inscribed speech of the author, which is filled with meaning and implication, which the citizen/viewer is called to decode and interpret based on the psycho-spiritual background and a suitable theatrical education. Through the play, and most importantly its staged performance, the world of values of Greek antiquity, with its diachronic universal notions are projected, becoming points of reference and giving meaning not only for the viewers of the 5th century B.C., but for every viewer in any period.

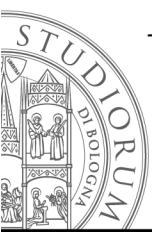
v. the theme

Its the human being as an individual existence and a social entity, in their relationships with the transcendental and the impersonal cosmic powers controlling and directing life ("heimarmene", "moira") but also their attitude toward the others within a culturally defined environment.

Moreover, it is the notion of a moral entity and behaviour, free will and personal responsibility, contrary to any form of internal or external oppression and compelling, which may lead the human being to their greatness or their destruction, the transcendence or obedience.

The bearers of the action, the people or heroes, their actions and their impact, are derived from known mythological narratives, which comprise the common possession of the viewers. Nevertheless, although their expectations are predetermined and the end is known, there is no stereotypical repetition of the same, as it appears in the ritual. On the contrary, every instance, based on a text written by a particular individual author (the dramatic poet) it is never identical to some other, even if it has the same theme and the heroes are the same. The author's creative conscience intervenes and reformulates the basic canvas or the play, based of course on the generic characteristics of drama, such as dialogue and action, plot and conflict, dramatic situations and characters.

This way and with not only teaching and exemplification as the ultimate goal, but also pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment, drama is produced with its multiplicity of potential significations and the unfolding of the hero's personality. Emphasis is placed on the



development of speech and verbal communication amongst the acting characters, leading to the uniqueness and exclusivity of the character, who becomes a symbol and archetype in later creations.

vi. communication

It is conventional and illusionist. This is the essential difference between "dromeno" (ritual) and drama, since the indisputable identification and experiential participation of the actors (and those watching them as well) in the represented action ceases to exist. The identification of the actor with the action performed by the hero (role) on stage still functions. But its relationship as a real person with the stage persona is imitative and not experiential. In the theatre a conscious acceptance of the fact that what is being performed is not real develops. In fact it is perceived as such by both the actors performing the roles and those watching them.

This differentiating factor of the "theatrical convention" provided the theatre with the uniqueness that no other communication system has and allows the development of a reciprocal and interactive relationship between stage and stalls, actors and audience, which functions as a schema of constant feedback. Because the actors transmitting their message from stage at the same time they receive the response from the stalls, subsequently being transformed into receivers and so readjusting themselves according to the intensity and the quality of the stimuli they get from the audience. At the same time, the audience are not passive receivers, but respond to the challenges coming from the stage and are transformed into transmitters sending signals to the actors. This way, as a unique and unrepeatable medium, the theatrical performance becomes an extraordinary illusionist phenomenon and theatrical communication a once only incident.

vii. the medium

It is the stage act with all its set structured and strict hierarchy, which comprises a complex communication code comprehensible and interpretable by the audience. This code depends on the particular play performed each time and is the content of the stage act and the separate communicative elements such as the actor, acting, costumes, space structure,



relationship between protagonists and members of the chorus, the stereotypical entrance and exit of the stage characters. They all have a functional autonomy and an aesthetic target, which, in combination with the communicated signals, make the theatre an artistic product of high value with a particular educational mission. Movement, physical expression, masks, rhythm, dance, music, all ingredients of the dromeno, still exist in the theatre. However, not only do they develop and acquire characteristics of an autonomous artistic expression, but they also combine in units of special semiotic significance, allowing unimpeded communication of the viewers with a highly complex spectacle.

Distinguishing between stage and orchestra and the defined position of the participants, the codified entrance and exit, the structured sections combining lyric and dramatic parts, are products of essential transformation and development of civilisation, which never before and under no circumstances had they appeared.

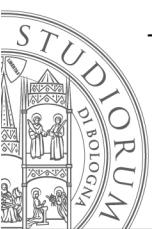
viii. *the actors*

They are conscious mediators in order for the authors word to reach the audience as its final receiver. They are real people, who, through acting, they abandon their own personality and adopt the theatrical role, transforming into "*dramatic personas*", heroes of the specific play.

Although they appear to identify with their role and give the audience the impression that they participate experientially in the action they formulate on stage, essentially they know that they are but mediums and bearers of signals, which differentiates them greatly from the actors in the pre-theatre forms of ritual. Therefore, the physical part of their expression never reaches the height and exaggeration of the previous case, but it becomes effective via subtle acting codes, leading to an artistic outcome, clearly codified and semantically predetermined based on principles governing the particular type of art (acting codes).

ix. *the technique*

It is a developed form of expression, as it evolved through suitable preparation preceding the performance (rehearsal) and aims on the one hand at the best possible representation of the "role", based not only on internal qualitative features of the character



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

played by the actor and on the other at the image projected to the audience.

Elements of the contextually inscribed elements of theatricality, that is codes of the drama activated on stage, such as verbal exchanges, first person speech, plot and dramatic situations, as well as the scenic development of action formulated by the three actors on stage and the chorus on the orchestra lead to this end.

This is exactly the novelty and differentiation of drama from all pre-theatre forms of expression. Actors do not limit communication between themselves and the audience only to their physical acting, but exchange verbal utterances and engage in dialogue, which in turn makes it possible for the heroes to develop thoughts and ideas allowing the characters to evolve into multi-dimensional autonomous entities with individualized archetypal content. This way, although many of the elements comprising the theatricality of acting continue to exist and form the link between the theatre and the “*dromeno*” (ritual), the innovations established bring about a qualitative transformation, which allows us to speak of a “new genre”, a new form of performing art and expression.

x. *the receivers*

The theatre comes into being at an instance when a separation between actors on stage and viewers watching the action takes place. Viewers are free to participate or not in the action that is being represented in front of them. They can be carried away by it or not. The theatre as a concept and situation does not change and is not transformed in any sort of way. On the contrary, during the ritual, the experiential participation in the ceremony represented comprises an obligatory condition for those watching. In case one stays away from the action or differentiates themselves from the likewise perception of the spectacle, they automatically get rejected by the group and is expelled from it as a whole.

As a result, a completely different communication relationship evolves in the theatre. The viewer participates in the performance looking at everything with a critical mind. The projected outcome is assessed both subjectively and objectively. Based on the “theatrical convention” the viewer knows that what happens on stage is illusionist and unreal, therefore they pursue a creative assessment rather than an instinctive identification. Collective perception is naturally indisputable. Individuality of communication, nevertheless, comprises



ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

and undoubtedly point of reference of the spectacle. This lack of a homogenous audience, which gives rise to different psycho-spiritual and historic-social expectations, is to a great extent the particularity of the cultural creation called "theatre". Starting from the citizen/viewer of the city-state, it reaches in our times the viewer/consumer of the globalized metropolis.

It is thus concluded that the theatre is a product of a long course of development, the stages of which are not always distinct and cannot be restored for the current viewer or scholar, since the time distance and the consequent mental, psychological and sociological deviations hinder the formation of a complete and clear picture. Nonetheless, its relationship with magic, ritual, religion and other forms of representation expressed by human beings in prehistory as well as in the history of civilization is indisputable and expresses the entirety of a globalized cultural heritage going beyond the limits of "*West*" and "*East*".



Direttore responsabile:
Giuseppe Liotta

Direttore scientifico:
Giovanni Azzaroni

ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

Bibliography

BERNARD, MICHEL

1976 *L'expressivité du corps: Recherches sur les fondements de la théâtralité*, J.I.Delange, Paris.

BRUNEL, PIERRE

1992 *Mythocritique. Théorie et parcours*, Puf, Col. «écriture», Paris.

BURNS, ELIZABETH

1972 *Theatricality: a Study of Convention in Theatre and Social Life*, Harper and Row, New York.

CAILLOIS, ROGER

1959 *Man and the Sacred*, Glencoe: The Free Press.

CSAPO, ERIC and MILLER, MARGARET C.

2007 *The Origins of Theatre in Ancient Greece and Beyond. From Ritual to Drama*, University Press, Cambridge.

CORNFORD, FRANCIS

1914 *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, Edward Arnold, London.

DURAND, RÉGIS

1975 *Problèmes d'analyse structural et sémiotique de la forme théâtrale*, in «Sémiologie de la représentation», éd. Complexe, Bruxelles.

DURKHEIM, ÉMILE

1912 *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en australie*, Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris.

EFRON, DAVID

1941 *Gesture, Race and Culture*, Mouton, The Hague.

ELIADE, MIRCEA

1963 *Aspects du mythe*, Gallimard, col. «Idées», Paris.

1970 *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

ERTEL, EVELINE

1977 *Eléments pour une sémiologie du théâtre*, in «Travail Théâtral» 28-29, Éditions La Cité, Lausanne.

HARRISON, JANE ELLEN

1913 *Art and Ritual*, Henry Holt, New York.



Direttore responsabile:
Giuseppe Liotta

Direttore scientifico:
Giovanni Azzaroni

ISSN: 2039-2281 | Registrazione al tribunale di Bologna n. 8105 del 1/10/2010

KIRBY, ERNEST THEODORE

1975 *Ur-Drama :The Origins of Theatre*, New York University Press, New York.

LEX, BARBARA

1979 *The neurobiology of ritual trance*, in D'Aquili, Eugene (et.al.) *The Spectrum of Ritual*, Columbia University Press, New York.

MALINOWSKI, BRONISŁAW

1926 *Myth in primitive psychology*, Norton, London.

MURRAY, GILBERT

1912 *Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

PEIRCE, CHARLES SANDERS

1958 *Collected Papers*, University Press, Harvard.

RIDGEWAY, WILLIAM

1915 *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

ROSIK, ELI

2002 *The roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and other theories of origin*, University of Iowa Press, Ames.

SCHECHNER, RICHARD

1977 *Ritual, Play and Performance*, The Seabury Press, New York.

1985 *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

1995 *The Future of Ritual Writings on Culture and Performance*, Routledge, London/New York.

²2002 *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, Routledge, London/New York.

TURNER, VICTOR

1969 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti- Structure*, Aldine, Chicago.

1982 *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of play*, PAJ Publications, New York.

UBERSFELD, ANNE

1982 *Lire le théâtre*, éd. Sociales, Paris.

VAN GENNEP, ARNOLD

1960 *The Rites of Passage*, Routledge, London.