

ANXIOUS AFFINITIES: HOW THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE CAN GENERATE A PLATFORM FOR INTERPERSONAL DIALOGUE



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Abstract: The article combines both philosophical and psychological approaches to argue that art and theatre performance especially can be grasped as a revelation of the universal and basic human concern, which is existential anxiety. The author presents an opinion, that via performative acts on stage, spectators and performers/actors are interconnected in hermeneutic situation (Hans-Georg Gadamer), in which they play their existential experience. Therefore, the universal death anxiety (Irvin D. Yalom) can be understood as a possible platform for interpersonal and intercultural dialogue (Martin Buber). The article concludes, that archetypes (Carl Gustav Jung) are such a place for mutual understanding, representing both mental and physical answers to the basic existential experience of humankind.

Key words: Embodied mind, theatre performance, dialogue, existence, death anxiety, representation

Archetypes are settled deeply in our unconscious structures of mind.¹ In my essay I would like to argue, that they represent the collective experience of answering fundamental existential questions, such as are death, existential isolation, freedom and *raison d'être*.² They manifest themselves in art and theatre in the form of archetypal representations and they irrevocably bind an artwork with human existentiality. My thesis is, that they are not semiotic representations of universal human concepts. Instead of that approach, I would like to argue, that the archetypes themselves are embodied, non-linguistic representations of our struggle with existentiality and as such they are not culture-bound. They give us universal platform for mutual understanding, in which we are able to identify our individual life with humanity and confront ourselves properly with the crucial existential question of death. As lately as they are articulated in some linguistic or figural form in an artwork, they receive particular and specific utterance seizable as a sign. To understand an artwork means for the most part to read a sign, to decode the linguistic structure of the piece. But under this reasoned (logical – logos) experience we are able to catch sight of the embodied, physical memory of humankind, which is universal and is tightly bound to the empirical fact, that every live being has to die. Albeit in religion and philosophy we experience a quest of redemption, on the physical level of our existence the death is the only unavoidable certainty. This embodied archetypal basis of artwork is a platform

¹ JUNG, Carl Gustav. Über die Archetypen des kollektiven Unbewussten. In *Gesammelte Werke: Neunter Band: Erster Halbband: Die Archetypen und das kollektive Unbewusste*. Düsseldorf : Walter, 1995, p. 15. ISBN 978-3530400847.

² YALOM, Irvin D. Existential Psychotherapy. In *The Yalom Reader*. New York : Basic Books, 1998, pp. 172 – 173. ISBN 978-0465036103.

for both interpersonal and intrapersonal understanding. The art has a power to heal our existential despair.

The collective unconsciousness and the fear of death

In his seminal essay *On the Archetypes and the Collective Unconsciousness* Carl Gustav Jung presented archetypes as those psychic contents, which have not been processed by the consciousness yet.³ As A. Stevens elucidated in his book *Archetypes Revisited*, archetypes are mediators of experience, shaping it to the individuality on the ground of evolutionary memory:

"The environment *activates* the archetype which *mediates* the experience and the behaviour. Archetypes are intermediate between genes and experience: they are the organizing schemata by which the innate becomes personal."⁴

Evolutionary psychology understands the psychic unity of humankind, acknowledging the theoretical value of archetypes. We can understand archetypes as "[...] psychic structures and functions, [...] strategies and goals, which we all have in common by virtue of our humanity."⁵ They serve as nuclei of psychic complexes. The archetype functions as a magnet: attracting experiences it forms a complex. "After gaining sufficient strength from the addition of experiences, the complex can penetrate into consciousness. It is only by being the centre of well-developed complex that the archetype can find expression in consciousness and behaviour."⁶ Birth, re-birth, death, power, magic, the hero, the child, the trickster etc. are some of those "prototypes" of psychic complexes, the primordial images we share in our collective unconsciousness.

If we accept the basic existential truth, that all humans are destined to death, we are able to explain the process of archetype production in the terms of our shared finitude. We have learnt from social construction theory,⁷ that cultures and ethnic groups are inevitably diverse in their experience, ethnomethods and behaviour. But we still have to admit, that death is the universal destiny of humankind. Being living creatures we know that we are heading to our doom, we are aware of our mortality and fragility, and our shared destiny is to put up with it.

I would like to call that experience "existentiell", with a reference to phenomenological hermeneutics. Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* defined existentiell as the fact that the question of human existence "[...] never straightened out except through existing itself."⁸ For me the existentiells are those situations, in which we experience our existence as such – they are boundary situations of human life. And per

³ JUNG, Carl Gustav. Über die Archetypen des kollektiven Unbewussten. Ibid, p. 15.

⁴ STEVENS, Anthony. *Archetype Revisited: An Updated Natural History of the Self*. London : Brunner-Routledge, 2002, p. xii. ISBN 978-1138824690.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ HALL, Calvin S. – NORDBY, Vernon J. *A Primer of Jungian Psychology*. New York : Mentor, 1973, p. 43. ISBN 978-0451613349.

⁷ BERGER, Peter L. – LUCKMANN, Thomas. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York : Anchor Books, 1966. ISBN 0-385-05898-5.

⁸ HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Oxford : Blackwell, 2001, p. 33. ISBN 0-631-19770-2.

existentiells we can strengthen our personality and individuality, grasp deliberately our freedom and perform our humanness.

Behind our comfort consciousness there is always the fear of death, lurking, at any time ready to hit the target: *raison d'être*.

We should not conceive the fear of death as a mere reaction to a direct threat. People acquire fears indirectly through social transmission as well, through observation or instruction.⁹ Not only limbic system, but also prefrontal cortex can be involved in the production of fear. This is what differs human experience from animal behaviour: humans are able to worry excessively about the future.¹⁰ Even children can fully accept the inevitability, universality, irreversibility, cessation and causation of death only after several years of mind development, i. e. between five and ten years of age.¹¹

This means, that the death anxiety (as it is conceived in this essay) is an issue of at least partially grown human individual, capable to understand their mortal self as a part of deathward society. Existentiell requires a consciousness of self, or (as Martin Heidegger defines), capacity to ask the question of Being (so we can call the person "Dasein").¹² The bodily death is considered by semiotic mind, i. e. the question of death unites human as embodied mind.¹³

It is not possible to understand our mortality as a mere abstract, philosophical problem. There is a little consolation in concepts and ideas, when we are experiencing anxiety physically, when we are confronted with the senescence, mortification or injuries of our body. But we cannot grasp this condition without higher cognitive skills of our mind, without semiotic faculties of brain. There is no *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, there is only entire, particular, living creature, experiencing itself in its life-world, destined to disappearance. That is why Heidegger alerts, that we can answer the question of Being only in our existence itself, not as an abstract philosophical problem. Dasein is Being-towards-death exhibitable in our everydayness.¹⁴

Psychodynamic theories of mind understand this problem principally as a conflict of consciousness and unconsciousness. But this conflict is produced by our modern cultural paradigm. As we can say with Bruno Latour, there is no disruption between culture and nature, free will and laws of nature.¹⁵ The modern myth of the two purified realms (culture/nature) is indefensible. Rational animus is using language, concepts, words and signs to rule the world, emotional anima with her tactile sensibility, sensuality and corporeality inhabits the world.¹⁶ Together they are constituting human existence in both its articulated and unutterable experience.

⁹ OLSSON, Andreas – PHELPS, Elizabeth A. Social learning of fear. In *Nature Neuroscience*, 2007, Vol. 10, No. 9, p. 1095. ISSN 1097-6256.

¹⁰ BERKOWITZ, Rachel Lisa – COPLAN, Jeremy D. – REDDY, Dorothy P. & GORMAN, Jack M. The Human Dimension: How the Prefrontal Cortex Modulates the Subcortical Fear Response. In *Reviews in the Neurosciences*, 2007, Vol. 18, No. 3 – 4, pp. 191 – 207. ISSN 2191-0200.

¹¹ HOFFMAN, Leon – JOHNSON, Eileen – FOSTER, Michelle & WRIGHT, Josephine. What Happens When You Die? Three-to-Four-Year-Olds Chatting about Death. In *The Wound of Mortality: Fear, Denial, and Acceptance of Death*, ed. Salman Akhtar. Plymouth : Jason Arosen, 2010, pp. 25 – 26. ISBN 978-0765706997.

¹² HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Ibid, p. 27.

¹³ ROWLANDS, Mark. *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0262014557.

¹⁴ HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Ibid, p. 296.

¹⁵ LATOUR, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1993.

¹⁶ BACHELARD, Gaston. *La poétique de la rêverie*. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1968.

This is a new approach to universality: there is no essence in human existence, no essentially human form. We participate on the construction of social norms through our performative behaviour.¹⁷ But all of the behaviour has its existential horizon of death. The death anxiety is universal.

This fact manifests itself in all human work. Human can create nothing without nature, by mere activity of mind. Even language requires vocal tract or pen to articulate the words. Our sensuous world is the material of our work, as we can agree with Karl Marx's theory of labour. A realization of human being means to work, to create things or art, to talk or write, to produce. We are shaping our sensuous world and transforming it into our means of life. The problem known from the Marxism is, that this process in modern society is estranging human from him or herself, and nature.¹⁸ This should be discussed in other essay, but the estrangement of labour in artworld is an important issue, influencing our topic. We can not dismiss this dimension of artistic work, because an authentic art requires the creative act being realization of human.¹⁹

The problem of human autonomy

If we can say that it is (undivided cultural and natural; semiotic and bodily) human existence, which is forming a material to become artwork, it is possible to assume, that through the shape of the piece there is apparent the existential structure of human experience. Every artwork as a realization of human existence brings its horizon of death and question of freedom, existential isolation and *raison d'être*. That is why do we ask, whether particular abstract painting has any meaning. Because we are anticipating a sense in it as a product of human realization. Humankind is transforming nature into meaningful account, in artworld especially. And even if we are confronted with artworks which are breaking semiotic mechanisms or avoiding to say something, we understand them as a realization of existence.

From this point of view, we can say, that an artist can hardly be fully autonomous in his endeavour. His work is not a production of autonomous reason in Kantian sense of meaning. The unconscious is also in the play and as a painter is working on his piece, it is also the archetypal structure of his psyche, which is involved in the artistic effort. This is often depicted as "the inspiration", and we can read about it even in Plato's dialogues. In *Ion* Socrates instructs, that poets does not make their art by their reason, but mere by inspiration – they are not "in their minds" (ouk emphrones).²⁰ This shrilly negative and sarcastic comment is a part of Plato's critique of art. But in the basis of this portrayal we can read the information about unconscious resources of human endeavour. It is both individual and collective unrecognized substratum

¹⁷ BUTLER, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York – London : Routledge, 1993, pp. 2 – 3.

¹⁸ MARX, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*. New York : Prometheus Books, 1988, p. 72.

¹⁹ I assume, that the estrangement of labour (e. g. in media, fine art business etc.) inhibits the transmission of existentiality into the work process and *artwork* in the end. That is why we rarely see the mass media production as a platform for an in-depth experience.

²⁰ Plato, *Ion*. In *Plato in Twelve Volumes*: Vol. 9. Cambridge, MA – London : Harvard University Press – William Heinemann, 1925, sec. 534a.

of psyche, which is involved in every decision-making and imagination. Every artist who is struggling for the form of his artwork is struggling with the obscure and fathomless self. He is a hermeneut (hermeneus) of the inspiration, as Plato (with his characteristic scepticism) shows in *Ion*.²¹

Our hybrid freedom

The problem of autonomy leads us to one of the basic concerns of human life (and the key element of artistic ethos): freedom, i. e. the issue of decision making. As Irvin D. Yalom argues, freedom does not mean mere abandonment, autonomy, but it confronts us with groundlessness. "In its existential sense 'freedom' refers to the absence of external structure," says Yalom in his *Existential Psychotherapy*.²² We as humans are fully responsible for our actions and decisions (socially, metaphysically), but we are confronted with the fact, that there is nobody and nothing what can be the indefeasible ground for our resolutions. Freedom means, that "[...] beneath us there is no ground – nothing, a void, an abyss."²³ From Jungian point of view, this abyss is scary upwards: the bottom is incognisable, because unconscious.

In a naive existentialist thought we can rely on our reason. But from the times of psychoanalysis we know, that there is nothing like a hard disruption between heteronomy and autonomy, between senses, world and nature, and reason. Latour's critique of modern philosophy shows us, that there is no nature-culture contradistinction, rather we should speak about hybrid reality.²⁴ Hybrids we are, as both conscious and unconscious, reasoned and embodied, individual and social beings. There is nothing entirely "ours", in the sense of rational autonomy as well as there is nothing entirely "alien", in our feelings, instincts, archetypal fears and fascinations.

Gabriel Marcel puts the argument as follows:

"My life, considered in the totality of its implications – suppose that this could be done – does not seem to me to be something that can be administered (either by myself or by someone other than me). And to this I grasp it as unfathomable [...] Between the administrator and the administered there must exist a certain proportionality, which is here lacking. In order of *my life*, administration implies mutilation [...] And so we are led to the opposition autonomy-heteronomy. For heteronomy is administration by another, but still administration; it is on the same level. In the realms of love or inspiration, the distinction loses all meaning. At a certain depth within me, and in a zone where practical specialisations melt away, the terms autonomy and heteronomy become inapplicable."²⁵

The human existence is fundamentally mysterious and we are not able to grasp it entirely by reason. Our autonomy does not mean, that we are coherent, continual and consistent, rather we are disrupted, fragmentary and incomplete. We are autono-

²¹ Ibid, sec. 534e.

²² YALOM, Irvin D. *Existential Psychotherapy*. Ibid, p. 173.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ LATOUR, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Ibid.

²⁵ MARCEL, Gabriel. *Being and Having*. Westminster : Dacre Press, 1949, p. 131.

mous to the extent that we are able to accept ourselves, not in the sense of rational administration of self.

Death and the meaning

The most elusive rupture of our existence is death. I have spoken on this topic early, now I would like to focus on its implications for the creation of artwork. Irvin D. Yalom assumes, that the fear of death is a primal source of anxiety.²⁶ In our lives, we observe a downfall of things, nations and humans, we experience havoc and ruin, as we can read already in Hebrew Scriptures: “havel havelim, hakol havel” – vanity, vanity, all is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:2) This is the primal experience of humankind, discoverable presumably in all cultures, even ancient. In China we can find a concept of “wu”, nothingness, nonexistence, Buddhism depicts human life as “dukkha”, painful, because all things are conditioned (sankhara). The core human experience is that nothing is eternal, even our relationships or ourselves are not perpetual. To understand fully our human existence and accept ourselves requires to recognize the fact of decay:

“Recognition of death contributes a sense of poignancy to life, provides a radical shift of life perspective, and can transport one from a mode of living characterized by diversions, tranquilization, and petty anxieties to a more authentic mode.”²⁷

Martin Heidegger presents the authentic mode of human being, Dasein, by the primordial ontological basis, which is temporality. “In terms of temporality, the articulated structural totality of Dasein’s Being as care first becomes existentially intelligible.”²⁸ It means, that Dasein is characterised as Being towards Death (Sein zum Tode). We are authentic humans, when we are consciously living in the shadow of death. An unauthentic mode of existence is anxious, automatic and full of psychological defences (addiction and dependence, obsession, illusions, heroism etc.). We can say that this unauthentic life is pathological in the sense of psychopathology – it is an ineffective defensive mode, which avoids the primary reality of decay.²⁹

If there is no eternality in existence, if our lives are fated by fragmentarity and rupture, it implies that there is no definitive meaning. This finding is fully consistent with poststructuralism. Ever since Jacques Derrida presented his assumption, that meaning is always deferred, “[...] perhaps to the point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification,”³⁰ we know that speech and text are not just media of some impersonal reality, but that the meaning is constructed by them in a play of signification. “Il n’y a pas de hors-texte”, there is nothing outside the text, says Derrida in his *On Grammatology*. It also means, that proper reading does not involve an effort to reproduce the intentions of writer.³¹

²⁶ YALOM, Irvin D. *Existential Psychotherapy*. Ibid, p. 192.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁸ HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Ibid, p. 277.

²⁹ YALOM, Irvin D. *Existential Psychotherapy*. Ibid, p. 203.

³⁰ NORRIS, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. London – New York : Methuen, 1982, p. 32. ISBN 978-0415039826.

³¹ DERRIDA, Jacques. *On Grammatology*. Baltimore – London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 158. ISBN 0-8018-5830-5.

Writing (and speaking, of course) is a construction of meaning, never exhaustive, never finished, never secured. This is a fundament of quest for *raison d'être*, as well. There is no final meaning of human existence, which is impersonal, objective and eternal – every human is reaching their own understanding in their conscious, authentic struggle in their life. It is one of the ultimate concerns, which is often described as meaninglessness of existence. Instead of possessing any universal, essential end, every person is a meaning-seeking creature.³²

We can conclude: humankind is destined to be confronted with decay and death. From this fact ensues the existential anxiety, which is universal and it goes along with considerations on freedom or meaning of life. But we are not able to overcome this rupture, because we are not only rational and conscious. We are not fully autonomous creatures, but we are also possessing unconscious experiences. They are not only sources of our imagination and behaviour, but also they are a cache of our conscious experiences. In its collective dimension, this unconsciousness is archetypal, meaning that it stores the memory of humankind and its struggle with existentiality. As temporal beings, we are destined to the perennial quest for meaning. This structure of human existence reflects itself in the mechanism of signification, i. e. our language is always deferring the meaning. Every artwork is therefore deferring to the extent it is involving signs, and every artwork is archetypal to the extent it is tactile, physical and non-linguistic.

Performativity as a manifestation of existence

Now I would like to present my argument, that this is not any vice, but rather a virtue of art. The artwork is therefore no artifact in the sense of fixed, stable material entity. There is no theatre performance as a durable text. I would rather follow Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of play and explain the ontology of artwork (and theatre performance especially) in the terms of existential situation.

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, play in the sense of art is not any concept of spectator's subjectivity (as it was in Immanuel Kant's aesthetics). Rather the notion of play is used to reveal the mode of being of the work of art itself.³³ As the crucial concept of artwork's ontology, the notion of play is relieved of any gamesomeness. We do not use any ludic psychology to explain the theatre performance, nor we would like to argue, that theatre has risen from human playfulness and/or ritual. The artwork has a nature of situation, in which both author and recipient are played by the structure of artwork, instead of being mere players. Artist as a human existence, as *Dasein*, shapes his piece with his own experience based on the inevitable death anxiety (whether it is conscious or not). The artist arranges rules of play, which can be described by formalism. He chooses matter and forms it, struggling with a topic of artwork and/or desired form. I would like to remark, that this form does not mean only traditional concepts of construction (lyric, epic, drama). Even using decomposition principles or process art involves some notion of form, albeit undesirable. Because human is inevitably *zoon echon logon*, artists (and recipients) are unavoidably in a situation of perennial quest for meaning, i. e. form of statement ("content").

³² YALOM, Irvin D. *Existential Psychotherapy*. Ibid, p. 173.

³³ GADAMER, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. London : Bloomsbury, 2004, p. 106. ISBN 978-0826476975.

These rules of play are most often in the focus of theatre scholars, because they are easily visible, being a surface of play. The whole semiotics of performance is based on inquiry into the mechanisms of signification. But this scholarly attitude requires a distance. The scholar has not to be played. And therefore the play itself is silent. In the formal analysis of artwork we grasp it as an object, not as a situation. We have enter in, to let the play gain victory over ourselves. We have to be played to properly understand the artwork. If and only if we are part of the situation we can ask questions about the meaning.

Hans-Georg Gadamer argues, that aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics.³⁴ What does it mean in the logic of my argument? Any artwork is produced by human existence(s) and is perceived by human existence(s). It means, that the play is inevitably a transmission of existential experience. This does not mean any particular communication of meaning. The theatre performance is not mere announcement. The author constructs the rules of play based on their particular experience with the *raison d'être* and therefore they insert the awareness of limitation, rupture and decay into it. They use the archetypal structure of their psyche to articulate the unconscious memory of humankind, which provides a common platform for understanding. We are able to be played, because it is human play. The situation "smells of human existence".

The performers (I would rather use this notion, instead of narrow "actors") are not only performing according the rules of play, but they are also performing their own existential experiences. This performativity of the players means that they shape their appearance, gestures and language according to their embodied experience of human existence. It is useful to remind, that the universal and underlying experience is the Being to death (temporality, corporality). The performers as well as spectators are facing the perspective of decay of both their bodies and lives. This anxiety is transformed into the formal structure of artwork, being the ground of mutual understanding.

The possibility of dialogue

Our common collective unconsciousness enables the possibility of dialogue. We can ask performers (meaning in the performance of spectatorship), what does their performative acts mean, not only in the semiotic sense, but also as embodied (and not mental) representations. Mark Rowlands explains this kind of representation as deed in *Body Language: Representation in Action*:

"The idea of a representation is, I think, too closely tied to the model of the word. Rather, the central claim of this study is that certain sorts of deeds form part of the activity – the deed – of representing the world. And, crucially, the part they form of this process is as genuinely representational as any other part – the formation of internal configurations included. Deeds can represent the world to no lesser (and no greater) extent than internal representations traditionally construed."³⁵

³⁴ Ibid, p. 164.

³⁵ ROWLANDS, Mark. *Body Language: Representation in Action*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2006, pp. 12 – 13. ISBN 978-0262182553.

Consider those representations to be archetypal in the sense of Jungian unconsciousness. We can not reduce them to signs, they are tactile and they represent the physical, empirical experience of existential struggle in its inarticulateness. They are both meaningful and meaningless, presenting the borderline of existentiells. To answer the question “what is this”, means to set bounds to existence and to lay demand on total understanding. But that is not possible. The unconscious substratum of artwork confronts us with limits of our understanding, constituting this experience the universal platform for mutual understanding at the same time.

Martin Buber presents this situation as an indispensable condition for a living word, for dialogue. Only during such present and situational act there can be the word as something between human beings, the mystery of question and answer.³⁶ We can experience an encounter, fully human, fully existential, only in the case of embodied situation, only if we are not only receivers of information, but we are taking part in the play. This is possible only if we can link ourselves to the universal, collective unconscious experience present in the artwork.

Performativity in this sense does not mean mere shaping of stage characters. This is “magic”, illusion, as Martin Buber argues. The fully accepted human existentiality requires accepting not only the occurrence of mental representations (logos, signs), but also bodily manifestations of the archetypal experience. Then we can say, that the play of artwork, the theatre performance is open to dialogue,³⁷ both interpersonal and intercultural. But also we are able to open the intrapersonal dialogue, confronting ourselves with the ultimate concerns of human existence.

Towards the project of mutual understanding

Traditionally, we see artworld as a kind of artistic business and/or a place for aesthetic experience. We conceive artwork as an artifactual entity, which has its formal (structuralistic) and contentual (semiotic) layers. Respecting the value of the domains, we have to say, that the layer attitude can not catch an artwork in its full operation. I propose a theory, which sees any artwork as a situation, as an event of encounter.

There are many persons engaged in the event: author, actors, audience, painter, director... But not only real life individuals participate on this gathering. Any artwork is a “collective”³⁸ of all agents of the situation. Included non-human actors (e. g. scenography or lighting design). When we see an abstract painting, we are acting towards its shapes and colours, when we are watching movie, we encounter the ambience of action, etc. But artwork is a product of human being’s work, which is perceived by another human being, so we can say that all of the actors/agents, no matter

³⁶ BUBER, Martin. The Space Problem of Stage. In *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, ed. By Maurice Fredman. New York – Harper & Brothers, 1967, p. 69 – 70. ISBN 978-1573924764.

³⁷ BUBER, Martin. Drama and Theatre. In *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, ed. By Maurice Fredman. New York – Harper & Brothers, 1967, p. 63. ISBN 978-1573924764.

³⁸ “When it is no longer possible to define a single nature and multiple cultures, the collective has to explore the question of the number of entities to be taken into account and integrated, through a groping process whose protocol is defined by the power to follow up.” LATOUR, Bruno. *The politics of nature: How to bring the sciences into democracy*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 2004. ISBN 978-0674013476, p. 238. It is necessary to grasp this concept as a tool for political reform of scientific and technological reason, see also: GROSS, Matthias. The Public Proceduralization of Contingency: Bruno Latour and the Formation of Collective Experiments. *Social Epistemology*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2010, pp. 63 – 74. ISSN 0269-1728.

whether real life or not, human or not, are shaped according to the universal human experience. In all of the elements of artwork there is an innate existentiell experience, and thanks to our collective unconsciousness we are able to recognise it. According to our cultural and ethnic environment and history we shape this experience in our consciousness and semiotic representations. These are specific, individual, ethnic. But underlying, tactile, non-linguistic, bodily understanding is shared and universal. I state, with all the frangibility of a hypotesis, that the artwork can be a platform for mutual understanding, both interpersonal and intercultural. We, as actors of the situation of a particular artwork, are performing (or we should perform) a dialogue, trying to understand elements of the artwork, trying to grasp the meaning of it, trying to grasp the *raison d'être* hidden in the play of the event. So we are not only accommodating to other's experience (which is possible, because we share the universal temporality of human existence) and recognising other people as mortal and therefore the same as we are, but we are shaping our own sense of being, re-shaping according to our artistic experience.

The most important innovation of this concept is, that the ground of the dialogue, the main source of mutual understanding is unconscious, bodily, tactile. And that is why we call the event art and not discourse – we are involved not only in semiotic (i. e. diverse, deferring), but also in bodily, archetypal, unconscious (i. e. shared, universal, ancestral) manner. And there is always “you”, where is “I”, when spoken – as we learnt from Martin Buber. This relation is not only communication, but it is affinity, it is generic and existential bond.

Postscriptum: a few methodological remarks

In my book *Dialogue through Art*³⁹ I have elaborated more accurately this theory of performativity. For the purposes of this essay it was necessary to provide a deeper explication of death anxiety phenomenon, which is quite new issue in my theoretical approach⁴⁰. My intention was to sketch the key outlines of the new, syncretic theory of performativity as the embodied existential situation. It is rather a starting post than the final word and the structure of this essay is in suit with the fragmentarity of “the state of the art”. In conclusion I would like to point out crucial issues exigent of further elaboration:

1. The multinaturalistic approach transgressing mind-body, culture-nature and conscious-unconscious paradigm prevailing in theatre studies.
2. The acknowledgment of performativity as an execution of human existentiality.
3. Overcoming the problem of cultural relativism by new acceptance of the universal, collective experience of humankind, based on the fact of temporality (death, rupture, limitation).
4. The postponement of traditional semiotic approach towards theatre as communication based on sign, rather to understand the artwork as the situation of embodied play.

³⁹ MOTAL, Jan. *Dialog uměním*. Brno: JAMU, 2016. ISBN 978-80-7460-106-4.

⁴⁰ I am very grateful to the reviewers for their comments and suggestions, which helped me to improve the text.

5. Attention to the dialogic possibilities of art and its facilities to generate mutual understanding (interpersonal and cultural).

These issues are not quite new in the field, but they have not been interconnected yet. As I have shown in this essay, it is possible to overcome traditional emulation and try to seek for interconnections between natural, existential, psychoanalytic and hermeneutic approaches. This multinaturalism I am offering to the scholars of theatre as a new remedy for nowadays theoretical hesitance. Aware of its limits, I would like to give support to the further research into the topic.

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