

In Search of the Performer's Way:

The Work of Jerzy Grotowski from the Perspective of Daoism

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Song, Jong Hyuk, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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May 2019

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Words cannot express my gratitude to the people who have stayed close beside me all the way in this insanely tedious process. Nevertheless, I have nothing but words at the moment. Thus, I should be cautious not to make an overdone tirade, which often trivialises the invaluable.

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Abstract

The work of Jerzy Grotowski is investigated within the perspective of Daoism as it is discoursed in the classical Chinese text, *Dao De Jing*. In identifying its connection with the intellectual achievements of Grotowski's contemporary Europe, i.e., Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity in quantum physics and Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* in deconstructionism, Daoism provides an illuminating framework for comprehending Grotowski's praxis. The philosophical notions of Daoism may be seen as underpinning Grotowski's two most important principles, *conjunctio oppositorum* (conjunction of opposites) and *via negativa* (way of negation), whose implication can be encapsulated as the interaction of opposite pairs in the unceasing process. With these principles, the actors of the Theatre Laboratory accomplished the 'total act', an act of *the body-text* that embraces both one's self and one's cultural heritage, in the Poor Theatre in which novel actor/spectator relationships were also tested. In his post-theatrical work, Grotowski deepened his investigations of the performer's body, which was finally identified as the body of essence of 'the doer'. Grotowski's lifetime research, in short, involved a persistent process of searching for the genuine body of the performer, which is clearly comprehended in the Daoist perspective that the world exists in the constant process of interplay between the fundamental pair of opposites, being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*).

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Introduction

1. A Guru

Jerzy Grotowski was often seen as a guru, and still is one in the minds of many theatre people, a sage who envisions the spiritual realm of the art. At the same time, his adversaries have sometimes called him a guru with a different connotation, in this case, implying a sort of a charlatan who performs pretentious mystical mumbo jumbo. To them, Grotowski was just a pompous alchemist who dazzled people by pretending to turn stone to gold. However, regardless of its positive or negative association with him, the label of guru threatens to hinder our understanding of how Grotowski's ideas work in practical terms.

In 1965, when his articles, 'Towards a Poor Theatre' and 'The Exposed Actor', were published in Polish magazines, Grotowski was faced with merciless criticism. Jozef Maslinski, a critic, denigrated the words of the article 'Towards a Poor Theatre' as 'lyrical whinings' (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 90). Another critic, in ridiculing Grotowski's language in 'The Exposed Actor', stigmatised him as a devotee of "magic" and "witchcraft" (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 90). What one can notice in these criticisms is nothing but a disapproval of the statements, which must have been beyond the critics' understanding. For the critics who were not able to understand Grotowski's principles, phrases like 'resigns from not doing it' were just worthless gibberish, or at best, the pretentious words of a young theatre director who wanted to draw attention to himself. Especially, the word 'witchcraft' seemed to prefigure future accusations levelled at Grotowski of being a fake guru.

In 1969, during the New York tour of the Theatre Laboratory,¹ Eric Bentley, a prominent critic, expressed acrimonious hatred towards the Laboratory's performances of *Akropolis*, *The Constant Prince*, and *Apocalypsis cum figuris* in his article 'Dear Grotowski: An Open Letter'. Besides the bitter criticisms of the troupe's performances, Bentley also commented on Grotowski's recently published book, *Towards a Poor Theatre*:

... but this, surely, must be a bad book in any language. If there is a new theatre, it deserves a properly articulated description, if not a grandly conceived theory. You have made the mistake of publishing a bundle of scraps and pretending that it is a worthy manifesto. A book that oscillates between the trivial and the grandiose. (Bentley, 1969, p. 167)

Bentley's criticism originated not only in his rejection of the rebellious character of the Theatre Laboratory that looked to overthrow conventional Western theatrical tradition but also in his inability to understand Grotowski's ideas in the book. In attacking *Akropolis* as 'over-aesthetic' and 'distressingly abstract' (Bentley, 1969, p. 166), Bentley mentioned the victims of the Nazi extermination camps and their relatives who still lived in New York. *Akropolis*, to him, denigrated the historical significance of Auschwitz to a level of 'technical interest to theatre students' (Bentley, 1969, p. 166). Jennifer Kumiega later corrected him in her book *The Theatre of Grotowski* by pointing out that since the Theatre Laboratory had resided within 'only sixty miles from the original Auschwitz' (1985, p.

¹ Grotowski's theatre troupe, whose first title was the Theatre of 13 Rows, had changed its name several times until its dissolution in 1984. For the convenience of discussion, I will use the Theatre Laboratory in addressing the troupe if it is not necessary to specify the other names of the troupe.

63), they must have been more aware of the atrocities in the historical location than Bentley gave them credit for.²

During the Paratheatre phase in the 1970s,³ when he stopped presenting public performances and had already earned international reputation, even more derisive denunciations from his homeland were published. In 1975, when the Research University II project continued in Italy, Maciej Karpinski, in an article 'Anti-Grotowski', attacked the descriptions of the 'beehives', an activity among Grotowski's paratheatrical experiments, as 'the ugly word of "mystification"' (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 156). Antoni Slonimski, another critic, in an article 'The Talkative Couch', scorned Grotowski as a 'guru' making 'raving' and 'murky statements' (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 156). These hostile criticisms were mainly directed at Grotowski's rhetoric in explaining what he wanted to achieve in the theatre rather than the quality of his productions. These critics could not grasp Grotowski's different way of thinking and approach to the theatre, which might be seen as absurd from the viewpoint of conventional Western culture.

In the meantime, the image of Grotowski as an enlightened guru had also been created. In this case, an exemplary anecdote is narrated by Thomas Richards, who was one of Grotowski's collaborators since 1985 and continues to work at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera, Italy. In recollecting his experiences at the workshop of the Objective Drama programme in 1984, Richards describes an event when he and a group of students were asked to do an improvisation:

² According to Magda Romanska (2009), this kind of misunderstanding also originates from the negligence of the Western scholarship. With the lack of effort to understand Polish text, the Western scholars excessively emphasise the physicality of the Laboratory's performances and often castrate the historical and cultural context from the appreciation of the productions.

³ This thesis will follow the classification of *The Grotowski Sourcebook* edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford when indicating the distinctive periods of Grotowski's lifetime career.

Feeling pretty primal, we ran into the desert without our shoes on. The sharp desert shrubbery cut up our feet. Grotowski then interrupted our improvisation and asked if we had all recently had tetanus shots. Three of us who had not were sent to the hospital to have our shots renewed. (Richards, 1995, p. 20)

In spite of the wounds inflicted by ‘the sharp desert shrubbery,’ Richards still ‘felt happy with [himself] and [felt he] had accomplished something really good’ (Richards, 1995, p. 20). However, as opposed to Richards’ feeling of accomplishment, Grotowski’s response to the improvised work was a harsh criticism, saying that it was nothing but ‘all the cliché of “paratheatrics”’ (Richards, 1995, p. 20). Richards emphasises that this has happened as a common result of people misunderstanding Grotowski when he spoke of spirituality, transcendence, total act, and so on. In fact, although many American theatres claimed to be influenced by the Theatre Laboratory, it was only the Open Theatre’s production of Jean-Claude van Itallie’s *America Hurrah* directed by Joseph Chaikin that Grotowski recognised as a truly innovative work among the productions he saw during his stay in New York City in 1967 (Osinski, 1986, p. 109). Shallow followers of Grotowski usually repeated the ‘cliché of paratheatrics’, which Richards admits that he once did as well.

In a seminar in 1988 at the University of California, Irvine, Charles Marowitz and J. Ndukaku Amankulor gave very different opinions about the way in which Grotowski articulated his thought. Marowitz disparaged Grotowski by claiming that there was no connection between his research and the theatre practice; thus, Grotowski covered himself by employing ‘semantic variations disguised as original concepts’ (Marowitz, 1988, p. 352). On the contrary, Amankulor reported that the manner of the presentation

of the event itself had a meaning, which he paralleled with a ‘divination consultation’ often witnessed between the diviner and the devotee in African traditional rituals. From Amankolor’s viewpoint, Grotowski’s activities were the spiritual search for ‘God or a similar being’ (Amankolor, 1991, p. 361).

While the image of Grotowski as a guru was growing, some considerable discussions on the issue were generated. In reviewing two recently published books, *The Theatre of Grotowski* by Jennifer Kumiega in 1985 and *Grotowski and His Laboratory* by Zbigniew Osinski⁴ in 1986, Kazimierz Braun pointed out that in spite of their precise chronological report and information about Grotowski and the Theatre Laboratory, there was a lack of critical attitudes in the books, and that the two scholars seemed to show ‘some kind of servility toward Grotowski’ (Braun, 1986, p. 231). This servility came about because the two scholars based their study on what Grotowski wanted to reveal about himself, not on their own independent analyses of Grotowski situated in the cultural and political circumstances of Poland and Europe (Braun, 1986). According to Braun (1986, p. 235), the consequence is that ‘a reader receives quite an abstracted picture of Grotowski and his theatre, hung in mid-air’, which might lead to the formation of Grotowski’s image as a guru regardless of positive or negative connotation.

Halina Filipowicz (1991) took Braun’s ideas further and pointed out that his criticism on the Grotowski scholarship actually questioned the whole concept of ‘*Gurutowski*’. In addition to the failure of theatre scholarship that Braun observed, Filipowicz, by examining Peter Brook’s comments on Grotowski’s work in ‘Grotowski, Art as a Vehicle’, claimed that Brook’s portrayal of the director was that of a mystic and questioned whether his viewpoint was valid in terms of Grotowski’s work in the theatre at

⁴ This book by Osinski was translated in English from its original Polish version published in 1980, which was seriously abridged in its English counterpart. Therefore, Braun’s criticism of Osinski’s book is in part directed to the American scholarship that is dominated by commercial pressure. See Braun, 1986, pp. 228–231.

that moment. Filipowicz argued:

Grotowski's current work is more unusual than before, but the theatre may still hope to find something for itself in his laboratory. Such a conclusion⁵ decenters the claim about the spiritual search. If Grotowski's new work indeed falls within the long tradition of mysticism – and this is what Brook seems to imply – then its potential for serving the theatre's practical needs of the moment is really beside the point. (Filipowicz, 1991, p. 406)

What Filipowicz indicated was that Brook, as a theatre practitioner himself, also failed to clarify what other practitioners could gain from Grotowski's research. However, Brook would not have agreed with Filipowicz and would have refuted that the aim in his article about Grotowski was not to explain him but to draw the attention of audiences to 'let[ting Grotowski] speak for himself' (Brook, 1995, p. 384). Even so, the same problem as Braun mentioned about the two books written by Kumiega and Osinski occurs again in Brook's case, which is the domination of Grotowski's voice feeding the legend of him as a guru.

Here, Filipowicz raised a fundamental issue:

Perhaps, then, rather than lament the “incompetence” of theatre scholarship or the inability of the current linguistic practice to keep pace with Grotowski, we should adopt new

⁵ This indicates Brook's comment on Grotowski's work as “a spiritual search” grounded in “the need of the beyond”. See Filipowicz, 1991, p. 405.

critical approaches that would correspond to his own disruption of the ruling paradigm. ... Does Grotowski's lifetime project involve the invention of forms that would change the way in which we order reality? Or does it seek the recovery of alternative forms of awareness – from the past, from non-Western cultures – that might allow us to renew a world fragmented, unstable, incomplete? (Filipowicz, 1991, pp. 407–408)

Her request for the 'new critical approaches' is fundamental in a sense that it pinpoints the limitation of the existing viewpoints, which creates the image of Grotowski as a guru. Filipowicz suggestively indicated to the fact that Grotowski's ideas had been based on 'alternative forms of awareness from the past and non-Western cultures', which were a deviation from the conventional way of Western thinking.

Among other possible 'alternative forms of awareness,' this thesis proposes one of the ancient Chinese philosophies, Daoism, as a prism through which to understand Grotowski's works as a clear and logical endeavour towards the actor's art, more specifically, the philosophical perception discoursed in the classical Chinese text, *Dao De Jing*.⁶

2. Daoism as a Rationale

Along with his claim that he '[had] studied all the major actor-training methods of Europe and beyond' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 16), Grotowski was omnivorously interested in diverse cultural traditions all over the world and appropriated them as his creative

⁶ Dao and *Dao De Jing* will be indicated without Chinese four tones.

materials. Let's enumerate only some of them. He was born and raised in the tradition of Polish Catholicism. His political activism in his early years was strongly grounded in communist Poland. The great tradition of Polish Romanticism, needless to say, enormously influenced him. Stepping out of the tradition of his own country, the tendency of his thought showed some similarities to Gurdjieff's mysticism despite his denial of any direct influence from the Armenian thinker (Schechner, 1997a, p. 478). Additionally, he adopted the magnificent tradition of Russian literature and theatre in his theatrical productions and research. Sufi dancing and songs from Arabic mysticism were technical sources during his post-theatrical research. Since his early years, Grotowski had also been interested in Eastern philosophies and cultures. He adopted yoga practices into his actor's training programme during the Theatre of Productions phase; in addition, he visited India several times during his life and in the end, wanted to have his ashes sprinkled on the Indian holy mountain of Arunachala after his death (Campo, 2010, p. 166). Moreover, he had some knowledge of ancient Chinese philosophies as well as Japanese Zen Buddhism and presented a series of lectures on them alongside ones on Hinduism. African and Afro-Caribbean ritual songs were used in the Art as Vehicle phase (Wolford, 1996b, p. 12). It can be seen that Grotowski was hungry for cultural diversification throughout his life. Then, on the premise that the work of Grotowski is established in the cultural traditions listed above, a new approach could be either to connect Grotowski to one of his many interests or to construct a balanced composite of them as long as it can provide an adequate explanation for his lifetime's work with a logical continuity.

When talking about Grotowski's interest in the 'East', most Western theatre scholars, in general, tend to think of Indian culture being represented by Hinduism and Buddhism much more than those of the Far Eastern parts. It is not surprising because

Grotowski frequently mentioned Indian traditions when explaining his activities and experiences and because he, above all, used yoga techniques in the early actor's training exercises of the Theatre Laboratory. In addition, the production of *Shakuntala* in 1960 clearly connects Grotowski with Indian culture. According to Osinski, Grotowski's earliest exposure to India goes back to his childhood when his mother, who was a school teacher and very much interested in Eastern religions, brought him a book *A Search in Secret India* written by an English journalist, Paul Brunton. Another major contribution to his knowledge about Indian culture is Eugenio Barba, who traveled throughout the country in the 1960s and informed Grotowski of the diverse cultural traditions and performing art forms of India. This interest of Grotowski in Indian culture coincides with the issue, which Kazimierz Braun pointed out in 'Where Is Grotowski?' and Halina Filipowicz brought up again in 'Where Is Gurutowski?', as explained earlier. Thus, Grotowski becomes naturally identified with the image of a guru, a name for a religious mystic in Indian origin, which may lead people to either ignorantly denounce or blindly admire Grotowski's paradoxical and elevated language; as a result, they might not be able to appreciate the practical lessons that his praxis offers for the actor's art.

In addition, the tendency of theatre scholarship to eagerly associate Grotowski to Indian culture might originate from the historical and cultural familiarity between India and the West. First of all, historically, Western society has contacted India since Alexander the Great's campaign to the region. Furthermore, Europeans were informed far more about India in comparison to other parts of the East through the Age of Exploration when new trade routes to India were searched for in the fifteenth century. More importantly, India is culturally very much linked to the West. Together with European languages, the languages of India are linguistically categorised as the Indo-European family of languages (Hanson, 2000, p. 14). Naturally, both Europe and India

share a somewhat common cultural heritage. For example, Buddhism, one of the diverse progenies of Hinduism, echoes many ideas found in ancient Greek thoughts.

Like the Greeks, therefore, Indian philosophers drew on a contrast between reality and mental appearance. ... The result was the striking assumption that Greek and Indian rationalism share: reality is permanent. Anything that changes is to that degree, unreal. (Hanson, 2000, p. 17)

This common background of Indian culture is likely to be more understandable to Western theatre practitioners and scholars alike than any other cultural traditions of the Far East.

In this Indo-European culture, a follower of a spiritual path aims at escaping reality in a subjective meditation instead of confronting it.

Spirituality is the product of his unwillingness to submit to the laws of nature and biology. Aware of the limitations on his existence and powers imposed by these, man has persistently refused to submit to them, and has tried to circumvent them by creating a subjective world in which his existence will be eternal and his aspirations unobstructed. (Chaudhuri, 1979, p. 312)

This Indian religious attitude towards life and nature is ‘a systematic disparagement of the whole world as illusion’ (Zimmer, 1969, p. 13).⁷ The bodily agony is a delusion that should be overcome by spiritual transcendence. Indian thought inevitably falls into the problematic dualism of the body and the mind, which produces both the crisis of Western epistemology and the actor’s paradox.

Studying Grotowski in the frame of Indian culture, in reinforcing his image as a guru, obscures a proper understanding of his works because he never hid behind transcendental spiritualism when encountering the actor’s dilemma; rather, he confronted it and always searched for a solution not with the meditative contemplation of the spirit but with the concrete action of the body. In fact, he never blindly adopted Indian cultures although it is true that he was certainly inspired by the ‘Eastern’ traditions. For instance, in an interview conducted in December 1967 in New York, in spite of the fact that he had once incorporated yoga techniques into the actor training of the Theatre Laboratory, Grotowski rejected the fundamental effect of yoga by saying ‘... it was introverted. This concentration destroys all expression; it’s an internal sleep, an inexpressive equilibrium: a great rest which ends all actions. ... it’s not for actors’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 252). In consequence, Indian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism do not seem to provide a sufficient frame to embrace Grotowski’s whole work.

Instead, Daoism can be a productive framework in terms of its concrete and non-mystical understanding of the world and life. Daoism, nevertheless, has not been related to the work of Grotowski in a comprehensive manner in a thesis or even a journal article although there is clear evidence that he was very familiar with the classical Chinese philosophy. As Osinski reported (1986, p. 23), Grotowski gave a series of lectures on

⁷ A pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Parmenides (515 B.C.E – 450 B.C.E.) is the representative of this view in Western philosophical tradition. Parmenides upheld the changelessness of ‘reality’. Thus, in his view, what changes is not reality but illusion, which led to Plato’s idealism.

Eastern philosophies from 1957 to 1958 in Krakow, and Daoism was one of the subjects that he dealt with. No one knows how profound his knowledge about the classical Chinese philosophy was; however, it could be assumed that his understanding of Daoism must have been well beyond that of the general audience at that time in Poland. Jennifer Kumiega (1985, p. 123) also pointed out a strong parallel between one of the principles of Daoism, non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*) and Grotowski's *via negativa*. In addition, when talking about his Theatre of Sources project, Grotowski recalled:

Later when I began to know something about Taoism, I could better comprehend what I said before, that my dealings with the apple tree were transporting me somewhere else. In the Taoist tradition there exists a motif discriminating between what is natural and what is of source, ... (Grotowski, 1985, p. 253)

Here, Grotowski stated that Daoism inspired him to appreciate an incomprehensible experience in his childhood and that it was now immanent in his current research, Theatre of Sources.

As such, Grotowski not only had fairly abundant knowledge about Daoism but also was aware that Daoism covertly pervaded his life. These facts show that there must be a trace of Daoism in his lifetime research even though he never claimed a direct connection to the Chinese philosophical tradition in his practical work. The trace is, in fact, quite rich and prevails in his works.⁸

⁸ Surely, Grotowski was not the only Western theatre practitioner who was interested in the Eastern culture in the twentieth century. Already Russian directors like Stanislavski, Meyerhold, and Vakhtangov were aware of the Chinese and Japanese traditional performing art forms such as Peking Opera, Noh, and Kabuki;

3. The Structure

In spite of Grotowski's unpredictable changes of direction from the theatre to the post-theatre, Richard Schechner claimed 'Grotowski never 'left theatre' because he was never in it' (1997c, p. xxvi). Schechner would mean that there is something consistent in Grotowski's works regardless of where he was. Moreover, Robert Findlay found a similarity of the working process in Grotowski's last phase, *Art as Vehicle* to that in his first phase, *Theatre of Productions* as the works towards 'performance precision' (Findlay, 1996, pp. xii-xiii). Although Findlay (1996, p. xiii) made it clear that Grotowski never returned to where he had started, he seemed to allude to a kind of common ground between Grotowski's beginning and end. In other words, the 'performance precision' in the last phase must have been a fruit growing from the same root as the 'performance precision' of the early phase. Based on the observation of the two scholars, Grotowski did not have to return anywhere because he had his own realm for his own persistent quest in the first place. The structure of this thesis aims to uncover the meaning of Grotowski's persistence.

During the *Theatre of Productions* phase, Grotowski tried to establish a new actor/spectator relationship by rearranging the theatre space. The purpose of the rearrangement was, in fact, to confirm the efficacy of the performance of his actors. In his theatrical works, Grotowski expected that the actor's dedicated work on her/his self would make spectators confront their true selves underneath social masks. However, contrary to his expectation that the spectator would have passionately joined the actor's process, the spectator's reaction was that of an onlooker, who abstains from being a part of the process. In this sense, Grotowski must have thought that his attempt in the theatre

it is also not necessary to mention Artaud's zealotry about the physicality of the Balinese performers. And, especially, Brecht was very much influenced by the formalisms of the Eastern performance traditions and implemented them into his productions in creating *verfremdungseffekt*. Later generations, such as Brook, Barba, and Schechner, also tried to make useful methodologies for the performer in Eastern perspectives.

was essentially a failure regardless of the public success of the Theatre Laboratory. Thus, Grotowski pursued his quest in a non-theatrical setting, where the conventional actor/spectator relationship was removed.

Even though Grotowski moved from the theatre to the post-theatre, his quest in search of one's authentic encounter with others as well as with her/his true self continued until the end of his life. What had been consistent in Grotowski's works is his interest in the human being itself, which is expressed through bodily existence. Furthermore, what had developed in his lifetime research is his perception, or the performer's perception, of the human being as an organic entity with the body and the mind intermingled. In short, Grotowski had persistently adhered to the body in the process of renewing his perception of its essence. It is the premise on which this thesis is constructed in association with the perspective of Daoism.

Before directly examining Grotowski's work in the Daoist perspective, the thesis looks at one strand of twentieth-century European philosophy and science. Early twentieth-century Western society saw a radical change in epistemology provoked by new philosophical insights and scientific discoveries. In science, Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity in quantum physics undermined the long-standing authority of Newtonian physics. Quantum physics entered the subatomic world and questioned the ultimate confidence in human reason supported by classical physics. Following the change in the perception of the physical world, a new philosophical movement called deconstructionism in the late 1960s destabilised the tradition of Western philosophy. Jacques Derrida, with his neologism, *différance*, criticised the logocentric tradition of Western metaphysics, which had first begun with Platonic binarity. Chapter 1 of the thesis examines the relationship of these philosophical and scientific notions with Daoism,

sees how Grotowski could be situated in his contemporary intellectual milieu, and thus, locates the point where Grotowski meets Daoism.

Two subsequent chapters examine one of the central concepts of Grotowski's works, *conjunctio oppositorum*, in relation to Daoism, seeing that everything in the world exists in tension between a pair of opposites. The concept first appeared as Grotowski's actor training principle, which expects the actor to maintain spontaneity in the performance by means of rigorous discipline and to disclose inner impulses through a precise score of actions. The actor's existence, which is manifested in the two opposite qualities, is further constructed into a being both as an independent individual and as the archetypal representation of a society, a being that Grotowski called the holy actor, whose body, I would term, is *the body-text*. In addition, the concept expanded its significance as the thematic base of the theatrical productions of the Theatre Laboratory. In other words, the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* can be understood as Grotowski's worldview, which embraced his entire works. Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis take a close look at the implementation of the concept into the actor training exercises and the theatrical productions of the Laboratory during the Theatre of Productions phase. In doing so, I would like to shed light on the fundamental ground of Grotowski's works in Daoist perspective.

The next chapter is dedicated to the principle of *via negativa* that shows the clear association of Grotowski's works with the peculiar paradox of Dao in *Dao De Jing*. The significance of Dao reverberates in the spirit of *via negativa*, which is a process of eliminating superfluous elements from the theatre. *Via negativa* indicates the actor's everlasting process towards the core of humanity. Chapter 4 of the thesis explores how the principle of *via negativa* developed and helped Grotowski in transferring his interest

from the actor/spectator relationship to the individual actor's search for her/himself as well as how it led him from the theatre to research outside the conventional theatre.

When abandoning the framework of the theatre, Grotowski must have recognised that all the imaginable clichés of theatrical convention permeated not only the established theatre industry but also his own Theatre Laboratory. Based on such recognition, the paratheatrical activities attempted to drag the body of the performer out of theatrical clichés. In Chapter 5 of the thesis, the significance of the Paratheatre phase in Grotowski's post-theatrical works is evaluated as a period of initiation to transmute the theatrical body to the body of 'the participant', which is to unlearn the clichés of the conventional theatre, to regain the awareness of the instinctive body, and to prepare a body for ongoing research in the future. It was the process of recovering the essence of the human body, which is paralleled with the essence of nature that *Dao De Jing* repeatedly suggests in its discourse.

After passing through the initiation, Grotowski developed novel forms of the performer's body in the subsequent phases. Chapter 6 of the thesis examines the body of 'the man (*człowiek*)' in the Theatre of Sources and the Objective Drama phases and the body of 'the doer' in the Art as Vehicle phase in association with the perspective of *Dao De Jing*. In the process, Grotowski seemed to return to the point of departure from which he had had to leave the theatre, the problematic impossibility of communion between the actor and the spectator. However, at this time, he reached a body of the performer in which the split between the observer and the observed was dissolved.

In the course of the discussion on the development of Grotowski's research on the performer's body in association with Daoism, this thesis will reach out for the two points. Firstly, although Grotowski used different names, which are the holy actor, the participant, the man (*człowiek*), and the doer, to indicate the bodies of the performer in each phase,

they were all together in the traces of Grotowski's enduring research, which was an effort to understand the body of the human being. In other words, to Grotowski, the body of the human being was the entirety of art, culture, tradition, and thus, human existence, which is a thought reverberating in *Dao De Jing* that considers the body of an individual human being worthy of the whole world (Ch.13).⁹ Secondly, this series of the transformation of the performer's body reveals that Grotowski had always been in the open-ended *process* of constant self-reformation as he noticed in the artistic life of Stanislavski. A body was transmuted to another body as the performer overcame her/his limit in perception and physicality. Thus, the process, more significant than the result in Grotowski's research, was a state upon which his utmost principles, *conjunctio oppositorum* and *via negativa*, converged as the mode of the existence of the world appearing in *Dao De Jing*.

Grotowski asserted that his research was the continuous process of the performer's self-reformation, which cannot be taught. Then, what Grotowski can hand down to artists of next generations is not a method or a form of performance but *knowledge* that one should keep her/himself on such a process. In following Grotowski's journey in the Daoist perspective through this thesis, I hope to clarify a truth that an artist can find her/his art by looking at her/himself in most direct relation to her/his surroundings without any barrier between her/him and the world. In this way, one can notice what Grotowski had left for his *disciples* as well as what *Dao De Jing* has hidden in its lines.

4. A Note on Translation

There is one thing that should be noted concerning the translation of *Dao De Jing* in this thesis. This thesis is written in English and needs an English translation of *Dao De*

⁹ I will indicate the chapters of *Dao De Jing* in the form of Ch.1, Ch. 2, etc.

Jing. Translating a text from one language to another means to give the text a specific interpretation, which supports the translator's perspective on the text. Strictly speaking, translation is an act of interpretation. There are numerous English translations of *Dao De Jing*, each of which contains the specific intention of its translator.

With this point in mind, I have taken the interpretation of Choi, Jin-Seok, a Korean scholar of Daoism, as described in his book, *Dao De Jing Narrated with the Voice of Lao Tzu*, as my point of reference. As Choi's interpretation is not yet available in English, I have translated *Dao De Jing* into English based on Choi's scholarly approach. Along with Choi's interpretation, I refer to two English translations, one of which is translated by Chad Hansen, whose interpretation of *Dao De Jing* appears in some respects to share Choi's point of view, and the other is done by Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo, a translation that I use for its succinct style – even though their interpretation is somewhat different from those of Choi and Hansen.

The poetic and metaphorical style of the terse sentences of *Dao De Jing* gives various possibilities for a translator in the interpretation of meanings that are often hidden in the text. This has caused many translators to read *Dao De Jing* as a mystical teaching rather than a philosophical text with its own logic. Moreover, the possibilities are multiplied by the peculiarity of the ancient Chinese writing system that does not have any punctuation. In such a system, the same sentence can be interpreted in different ways according to different readers' punctuation at various junctures. Thus, even a comma can totally transform the meaning of a sentence. In the case of *Dao De Jing*, many translators' punctuations make the text confusing and illogical. When refuted, they often respond with the feeble excuse that Dao is something too great for words to describe.

According to Choi (2006, pp. 29–31), one of the most misleading punctuations of many interpretations is situated in a part of Ch. 1, which reads in the original text:

故常無欲以觀其妙 (*gù cháng wú yù yǐ guān qí miào*),

常有欲以觀其徼 (*cháng yǒu yù yǐ guān qí jiǎo*). (Ch. 1)

In the Chinese writing system, a letter acts as all the parts of speech depending on the contexts. The underlined letter 欲 (*yù*, desire) in the phrase above can be used as a noun (a desire) or a verb (to desire) according to an interpreter's intention where to put a comma. When a comma is placed after the letter 欲 (*yù*, desire), it acts as a noun; in this case, the translation of the phrase is as below:

Empty of desire, perceive mystery.

Filled with desire, perceive manifestations. (Lao-tzu with translation of Addiss and Lombardo, 1993, Ch. 1)

In the translation, Addiss and Lombardo make two noun phrases, 無欲 (*wú yù*, empty of desire) and 有欲 (*yǒu yù*, filled with desire). Such a translation alludes to human perception that is limited by the existence of desire. If one has a 'desire', s/he can only see the superficial 'manifestation' of the world. Abolishing such a desire, one can see the true world by grasping even the transcendental 'mystery' of it.

In doing so, a hierarchical relationship between 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being) is created; the former is related to the invisible, i.e., spiritual and higher values, and the latter is concerned with the visible, i.e., earthly and lower values. Thus, ideas related to 無 (*wú*, non-being) are more fundamental than materials related to 有 (*yǒu*, being); in other words, tangible materiality (有, *yǒu*, being) is controlled by ineffable

spirituality (無, *wú*, non-being), i.e., Dao. It is an ontological mentality that simply considers Dao as a transcendental entity or an ultimate ‘thing itself’. In the ontological point of view, Dao produces 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being), which compose the world; or, 無 (*wú*, non-being) is itself the substance of Dao that creates 有 (*yǒu*, being). Such interpretations cannot be consistent with the later discussion in *Dao De Jing*, which deals with 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being) in equal measure (Choi, 2006, p. 31).

On the contrary, when a comma comes before 欲 (*yù*, desire), it is used as a verb, which predicates the function of 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being). Different from Addiss and Lombardo, Choi translates the phrase as below:

Thus, non-being always desires to reveal enigmatic sphere.

Being always desires to show corporeal sphere. (Ch. 1)

Choi claims that this part, rather than contrasting the transcendental values with the earthly values, introduces two of the most important philosophical categories of *Dao De Jing*, 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being), which constructs the logic of the classical Chinese text. In Choi’s translation, the phrase shows how the pair of opposites, 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being), constantly coexist as well as cooperate. Dao is the mode of such cooperation of the pair (Choi, 2006, p. 31). This way, *Dao De Jing* reveals itself as a logically consistent text (Hansen, 2000, p. 222).¹⁰

¹⁰ With the similar interpretive notion to Choi’s, Hansen, too, argues:

Looking at the whole book [*Dao De Jing*] we confirm that the *you-wu* [being and non-being] reading is most consistent with the rest of the book. Pairing or contrasting of *wu* [non-being] and *you* [being] is a common theme in the *Daode Jing*. ... Focusing on either *you* [being] or *wu* [non-being] constitutes having different desires or attitudinal points of view. We associate *wu* [non-being] with desire for mystery and paradox We associate *you* [being] with the desire to understand objects and events – manifestations. (Hansen, 2000, p. 222)

It is a critical precondition of this thesis to find the ‘right’ translation and interpretation of *Dao De Jing* in order to clarify misunderstandings of it as an incomprehensible mystical text or a fragmentary collection of old sayings full of enigmatic ‘Oriental’ wisdom. The ‘right’ translation should reveal the classical Chinese text’s impeccable logic and exquisite consistency.

Chapter I: Grotowski's Conversation with His Contemporaries

1. The Performer: The Progeny of the Times

Grotowski had always focused on the actor, or the performer in claiming at the earliest phase of his career that '[he] consider[ed] the personal and scenic technique of the actor as the core of theatre art' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 15). His research on the performer was unique; yet it could still have been posited in the tradition of Western acting theories, which can be expressed as the history of debates on the actor's duality in the form of body/mind, emotion/expression, the actor/the character, etc.

Joseph R. Roach, in *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*, surveys the history of the debates in relation to the scientific and philosophical awareness of each historical period. Acting theorists and practitioners alike have offered their own answers to this problematic duality of the actor, and it has usually resolved into the conclusion that one was superior or prior to the other. According to Roach's survey (1993), it can be assumed that Cartesian dualism and Newtonian mechanics set the terms of this onerous debate. Both of these theories envisaged human beings as machines operated in accordance with mechanical principles under control of a superior soul.

Under these terms, nobody could break away from the dilemma. At best, Denis Diderot who conceptualized the actor's paradox is one of earliest thinkers who escaped this mechanistic dualism. Indeed, Diderot fled from Cartesian epistemology, saying that '[i]f once I were to accept those two distinct substances of yours [body and soul], there would be nothing more you could tell me. For your certainty does not know what the thing you call soul is, still less how the two substances are united' (Diderot, 1875, p. 271). Nevertheless, Diderot showed the limitation of his perception observing the superiority of the actor's expression to her/his sensibility by asserting that '[e]xtreme sensibility makes

middling actors; middling sensibility makes the ruck of bad actors; in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of a sublime actor' (Diderot, 1883, p. 17).

Acting theory and practice had finally found a possible way to be free from mechanistic dualism when Konstantin Stanislavski pointed out that his System was an effort to reach the unconscious through the way of the conscious. Probably being alerted with intellectual circumstances at the time, which were constructed by the new discoveries of scientists such as Charles Darwin in biology, William James in psychology, and Ivan P. Pavlov in physiology, Stanislavski realised that the human being could not be separable into the body and the mind, but was instead an organic entity with both elements intermingled.¹¹ This realisation led Stanislavski to the establishment of his System, more precisely the Method of Physical Actions whose core insight was the actor's work on the self, which became Grotowski's credo.

Yet, apart from being inspired by Stanislavski's works, Grotowski went in a different direction from the master (Grotowski, 1968, p. 16). While Stanislavski's aim in his System was the actor's psychological identification with the character, Grotowski pursued the psychological transformation of the actor by which the actor was led to reveal her/his true self in front of the spectator. In the Theatre of Productions phase, he tried to connect the psychology of the spectator with the psychologically transformed actor. This psychological connection, or confrontation as he called it, between the actor and the spectator in a performance was a kind of ritualistic communion that had long ago disappeared in Western society. Similar to the trance of the performers and the active participation of the members of the tribe in the shamanic performance of the Balinese

¹¹ Along with Stanislavski, Jacques Copeau was one of the directors who were aware of the actor as a psychophysical entity. It is noteworthy that Copeau moved to the countryside in search of independence from commercial pressure of the mainstream theatre industry. His legacy was inherited to his disciples such as Michel Saint-Denis and Charles Dullin. Moreover, their teachings greatly influenced such theatre theorists and practitioners as Antonin Artaud, Etienne Decroux, Marcel Marceau, and Jacques Lecoq whose works, generally speaking, focused on the actor's body.

theatre observed by Antonin Artaud, the pursuit of the psychological confrontation between the actor and the spectator was based on an entirely different insight from the traditional Western concept of the theatre that had been subordinated to dramatic literature. Moreover, Grotowski later went further to the extreme and eliminated the division between the actor and the spectator.

Grotowski's direction was most eccentric; however, it did not totally disconnect from his contemporary intellectual environment in Europe. Roach (1993, p. 13), as mentioned earlier, observes Western acting theories in the scope of the scientific and philosophical awareness of each period in drawing attention to the concepts of 'episteme' in Michel Foucault and 'paradigm' in Thomas Kuhn, which denote the spirit of the age predicated by human experiences in philosophy and science. In appropriating Roach's view on acting theories, I believe that Grotowski also could not deviate from the spirit of his contemporaries. The twentieth century saw the formulation of the principle of complementarity by Niels Bohr in science as well as the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida in philosophy. These intellectual achievements were, among others, the visions that played an important role in determining the episteme or paradigm of twentieth-century Western society.

Before further discussing Grotowski's works in relation to Daoism, this thesis connects the epistemological aspects of the two branches of human knowledge with the philosophical notion of Daoism described in the classical Chinese text *Dao De Jing*. In the course of presenting scientific discovery and philosophical proposition in association with Daoism, the thesis erases the image of Daoism as an enigmatic mysticism, and thereby, clarifies the validity of the classical Chinese philosophy as a logical framework to understand Grotowski's works. As Grotowski (1987) clearly articulated that we are 'someone's son', he was, in the same manner, a son of his contemporaries.

2. Niels Bohr: The Principle of Complementarity

It is well known that Grotowski paid special attention to the way in which the Bohr Institute, established in 1920 by the Danish theoretical physicist Niels Bohr, worked in terms of its persistent research towards ‘the unknown’. Leszek Kolankiewicz, as many Grotowski scholars do, claims that Grotowski’s fascination with the institute was instigated ‘not by the subject of the research [in the institute] ... but by the way it was organized’ (Kolankiewicz, 2004, p. 58). It is beyond question that Grotowski admired the institute’s way of working in collaboration with scientists from all over the world. Grotowski believed that the working spirit of the institute should be required by anyone seeking for something beyond what was already known, no matter what discipline it was. He wanted to follow the spirit of ‘laboratory’ on which the work of the institute was founded.

Yet, there arises an important question for this thesis, which is at first sight trivial. Why did Grotowski specifically designate the Bohr Institute as his model? After all, there must have been other laboratories with a similar ethos to the Danish institute. What drew his attention definitively to the Bohr Institute? Maybe, it was by accident; he knew the institute because his older brother once worked there. And, by paralleling his theatrical laboratory with the scientific institute, he might have wanted to ‘demystify the creative process, seeking to define a methodology of performance training that would free the actor to accomplish his or her work without ... waiting for random inspiration’ (Wolford, 1996b, p. 3).

My assumption, however, is that Grotowski must have had more reason in addition to the generally known ones; in other words, I suggest, adopting a different point of view from that of Kolankiewicz, that Grotowski was also provoked by ‘the subject of the research in the institute’ in addition to its working spirit. As stated above, it is a well

known fact that his older brother, Kazimierz who was 3 years older than him, once worked at the Bohr Institute. Grotowski probably heard from his brother about not only the system of the institute but also what had happened a couple of decades ago and was happening now in the institute, which was the development of quantum physics based on, essentially, Bohr's principle of complementarity and Werner Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty. In fact, Grotowski's knowledge of physics was sufficient to talk with his brother about physics without any difficulty (Kolankiewicz, 2004, p. 59).

Essentially, the early twentieth century was a revolutionary period in physics. Along with the achievements of the Bohr Institute characterised by the principle of complementarity and the principle of uncertainty, ground-breaking theories derived from new discoveries in physics such as Einstein's theory of relativity shook the foundations of Western scientific epistemology that had been firmly supported by classical physics for more than three hundred years. The new discoveries in physics were so subversive that Einstein¹² said in shock:

All my attempts to adapt the theoretical foundation of physics to this knowledge failed completely. It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with one firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built.

(Einstein quoted in Capra, 2000, p. 53)

¹² I will not discuss the relativity theory of Einstein, although it is absolutely important in understanding modern physics, because my discussion regarding the scientific awareness of Grotowski's contemporaries is not concerned with a detailed understanding of the entire modern physics, but is interested in only the early twentieth century scientific milieu in relation to Grotowski's recognition of the Bohr Institute. In addition, Einstein rejected the principle of complementarity, as he thought it was an incomplete description of the physical world. For more details of this, see Folse, 1988, pp. 143–153.

Einstein was startled by what his contemporary scientists and he had found out about the physical world. Grotowski was born in 1933 and started his professional career in 1957. In the period of Grotowski's early years, Bohr's principle of complementarity was being refined in the course of heated debates with, among others, Einstein, along with the progress of scientific upheaval. Grotowski must have been excited by this scientific revolution in one way or another. This perception of Grotowski's contact with quantum physics could offer a fresh insight to understand his lifetime research.

Before the epistemological change in Western science in the early twentieth century, classical physics based on Newtonian mechanics had dominated the understanding of the phenomena of the material world. From the premise that space and time were absolutes not affected by anything outside them, the material world was viewed as a mass composed of indivisible and solid elements, atoms. And, the world obeyed the law of gravity, which is mutual force between bodies made of atoms. The universe, therefore, was a huge machine, a definite structure whose movement could be predicted by human knowledge with precise mathematical terms. Pierre Simon Laplace, a nineteenth-century French mathematician, thus ambitiously declared that, if he were given all the conditions such as the forces on and positions of an object, he would be able to foresee its future (Capek, 1961, p. 122). This kind of confidence in the capability of human beings to take full control of nature with accumulated scientific knowledge was strongly based on the Cartesian philosophy that observed the world from the perception of dichotomous division between human reason and material nature; in turn, the philosophical notion was reinforced by the evidence produced by scientific research. In short, nature became an object that could be analysed empirically by the intellect of human beings, who were superior to the material world. It was thought that classical

physics sufficed to explain all the physical phenomena of the universe. It is, of course, still useful to understand everyday life even today.

However, when the physicists of the early twentieth century investigated the minuscule level of the subatomic world, classical physics proved an inadequate model to apply to it. The nature of atoms started being uncovered by the experiments of atomic physicists, and quantum physics was born. All the new discoveries in atomic physics and quantum physics at this time were the results of enduring collaboration of physicists from all over the European countries such as Niels Bohr from Denmark, Louis De Broglie from France, Erwin Schrödinger and Wolfgang Pauli from Austria, Werner Heisenberg from Germany, Paul Dirac from England, etc. (Capra, 2000, p. 66). These scientists respectively had a working relationship with the Bohr Institute, which included sharing their new findings, adopting the theories of others to theirs, and sometimes contending with one another. The aspect of the Bohr Institute that Grotowski was 'fascinated' by must have been this spirit of collaboration and process amongst these physicists who carried out 'the most audacious' experiments towards the 'no man's land of their profession' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 127), resulting in a new kind of knowledge in physics, quantum physics. An epistemological revolution in science was inevitable.

As the history of physics shows, the discovery of the electron was followed by that of the proton, and soon by that of the neutron. The atom, regarded as an indivisible building block of matter, turned out to be composed of several subatomic components. For example, a hydrogen atom, the smallest atom, is described as a structure in which an electron is rotating in circular orbits around a nucleus. In the structure, the electron jumps from one orbit to another corresponding to the change of its energy state. This

description of an atom is called the Bohr model.¹³ This atomic model shows that an atom is not a solid building block but has enormous void space, enormous compared to the size of the subatomic components, between a nucleus and electrons that are bound to each other by electric charges balanced between the negative charge of electrons and the positive charge of a nucleus. Moreover, a positively charged nucleus, the centre of an atomic structure, is further divided into neutrons with no electric charge and positively charged protons. By adding neutrons and protons to the nucleus of the lightest atom, hydrogen, with the corresponding number of electrons, the property of an atom is determined as in the periodic table of elements. Thus, the classical notion of an atom as an indivisible elementary building block of matter became no longer valid.

Along with the revelation of the atomic structure, there was found a strange but important aspect of the subatomic unit. At the turn of the twentieth century, the particle-like aspect of light was discovered, which seemed incompatible with its already proven aspect of electromagnetic wave. Like a particle, light is emitted not in the continuous form of wave but in the form of an energy-packet that was first called 'quanta' and that Albert Einstein later named 'photon'. It was contradictory and impossible for physicists to accept this duality of light, which is particle-like as well as wave-like at the same time, as physical reality because it did not fit the frame of classical mechanics; however, it was also impossible for them to reject the evidence of the fact that light behaved as a particle as well as a wave because precise and repeatable experiments clearly demonstrated it. Later, the duality proved to apply not only to photon but also to all the subatomic units such as electrons, protons, and neutrons.

¹³ Bohr's atomic model was not the finalised structure of the atom. For the detailed discussion regarding the development of the atomic structure model in this era, see Ch. 3 in Guillemin, 2003 and Ch. 4 in Gribbin, 1991.

It is important, furthermore, to remember that these two aspects of a subatomic unit are mutually exclusive in terms of experimental settings. That is to say that the particle-like aspect of an electron appears only when an experimenter sets up a particular experiment to see the particle-like aspect; in turn, the wave-like aspect of it appears only when the experimenter conditions an experiment to watch the wave-like aspect. Never is an experimenter able to observe both the particle-like and wave-like aspect of an electron in one experimental setting at the same time.

In unveiling the structure and behaviour of the atomic world that is one of the two major quests in mechanics, physicists at the same time studied the other quest, which is the motion of the atom. From the perspective of classical mechanics, as seen in the statement of Laplace earlier, a subatomic unit, if it was a particle, should occupy a specific position with a specific momentum at a given moment, so an observer would be able to predict the future of it. For the physicists in the quest, however, it was not possible for an observer to measure the precise position and momentum of a subatomic unit at a given moment but only to estimate the approximate position or momentum by means of statistical probability. This notion of the impossibility of measuring the physical quantities of a subatomic unit is called the uncertainty principle, proposed in 1927 by Werner Heisenberg who worked in close relationship with Bohr and stayed at the Bohr Institute from 1924 to 1927. According to the purely theoretical and mathematical formalism of Heisenberg, the more accurately an observer tries to calculate the position of a subatomic unit, the less information the observer gets about its momentum, and vice versa. The observer, therefore, is only able to predict the position and the momentum of a subatomic unit by the law of probability (Guillemin, 2003, p. 94). The belief of Laplace in the deterministic mechanism of the physical world collapsed.

In addition to the immeasurable behaviour of the subatomic unit, in explaining his principle, Heisenberg postulated an experimental model that one observes, say, an electron with the most technologically advanced microscope. In this experimental model, the observer has to make at least one photon, a light particle, colliding with the electron and bouncing from it because the act of seeing, after all, is to look at the light particle, the photon, reflecting on the observed object, the electron. There arises a dilemma. In order to observe an electron, the observer cannot help affecting the electron and changing its position and momentum. It does not mean that the subatomic unit has a precise position and momentum at first, and the act of observing disturbs the accurate measurement of it; on the contrary, there are no such things as the definite position and momentum of a subatomic unit but only the position and momentum created by the interaction between the act of observing and the observed subatomic unit (Guillemin, 2003, p. 98). Thus, Heisenberg concluded, 'What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning' (Heisenberg, 1958, p. 58).

This idea of Heisenberg's was phenomenal. And, Niels Bohr encompassed these new findings in his renowned principle of complementarity, also known as the Copenhagen interpretation. Introduced in 1927, the principle of complementarity considers, first of all, that the particle-like aspect and the wave-like aspect of the subatomic unit are not only exclusive properties but also complementary. Only when both aspects of the subatomic unit are considered in totality, although it is impossible to observe both aspects at the same time, can the structure and behaviour of the subatomic unit be successfully recognised.

Second, the subatomic activity can only be described in the laws of probability of quantum physics, not in the laws of causality of classical physics. Even though an experimenter sets up an environment for a multiple number of the same experiments with

extreme care, the results vary. That is to say, the experimental setting of A to examine the position of an electron does not always produce the result of B. Results yielded by the same setting of A sometimes are C, D, or even more variations. The position of the electron, therefore, can be only described in relation to the laws of probability, saying that the position of the electron is B in some cases, C in other cases, and D in yet others as Heisenberg's mathematical formula claims.

Thirdly, the most important and fundamental point in the epistemological sense in quantum reality is that it is impossible to divide the material world into the system of observing and the observed. The system of observing includes the human observer and the technical apparatus used for the observation. As shown in the experiments to see the dual features of light, the observer's manipulation of the experimental apparatus decides the appearance of light as a particle in one experiment as well as a wave in the other. Moreover, in Heisenberg's experimental model to examine an electron with a microscope, the very act of observing it inescapably affects the state of the electron. The principle of complementarity, thus, indicates the meaninglessness of saying that the subjective observer objectively examines observed nature. Here, the classical epistemology was deprived of its absolute status.

During the early twentieth century, the fundamental ground of Western science was undergoing unprecedented turmoil. Bohr's principle of complementarity played a critical role in elucidating the strange and mysterious discoveries of the subatomic world. It would be hard to overestimate the tremendous impact of this scientific revolution on Western intellectuals in every part of the society. In philosophy, there appeared distinctive thoughts subversive enough to compare with this revolution in physics. The Western tradition in philosophy, having been based on the idealism of Plato, started being challenged by Nietzschean idea of human desire and was faced with the notions of

radical thinkers in the twentieth century. One of those notions was deconstructionism, which doubted old values and tried to construct new ones. The next few pages are dedicated to this challenge against the old values in the philosophical arena by focusing on the notion of *différance* in Jacques Derrida's thought.

3. Jacques Derrida: *Différance*

Derrida published his major works such as *Of Grammatology*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Writing and Difference* in 1967, when five years had passed since Bohr's death and the Theatre Laboratory was preparing its last theatrical production, *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. It was a critical period for Grotowski in a sense that he at the moment was probably undergoing 'inner changes' by 'questioning ... his commitment to an artistic and creative path' (Kumiega, 1985, p. 87), which led him to a new journey in his artistic research outside the theatre. In this period, by giving up the conventional setting of the theatre, Grotowski was about to begin his new research in aiming at 'not a new wave of theatre but rather something that [would] replace it' (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 120). His endeavour to replace the theatre meant to search for a body of the performer in a forgotten communal memory, which had been shared by all humankind once in the past but had now fallen into the abyss of oblivion. Grotowski made an effort to approach this forgotten memory by eliminating the predicament of traditional conventions that prohibited the theatre from being aware of its core. In this aspect, he was a radical supporter of the avant-garde. Yet, in trying to excavate what had been forgotten in humanity, rather than inventing a totally new aesthetics that no one had ever experienced before, Grotowski can perhaps be posited not so much as an avant-gardist as a traditionalist. Overlapping these two tendencies, Grotowski wanted to

‘replace’, not to destruct, the theatre and to (re)construct ‘something’ inherent in the collective experiences of humanity by deconstructing the Western theatrical tradition.

Although Grotowski never connected his work with Derridean ideas, they unavoidably shared the ‘episteme’ or ‘paradigm’ of their contemporary intellectual circumstances. The link between them could be hinted at in the relationship between Derrida’s work and Bohr’s discovery. Arkady Plotnitsky, in examining these two thinkers in his book *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*, points out the deconstructive characteristic of the principle of complementarity, which he calls ‘anti-epistemology’ referring to the ‘deconstruction of classical or metaphysical theories’ (Plotnitsky, 1994, p. 10).¹⁴ Plotnitsky focuses on their deconstructive perspective and what they deconstruct. Both Bohr and Derrida carried out the ‘deconstruction’ of their own counterparts, which are the deterministic causality of classical physics and the hierarchical tradition of Western philosophy. As a result of deconstruction, they could (re)construct new models of reality. In this sense, the goal of Derrida, like that of Bohr who aimed at ‘broaden[ing] ... our understanding of nature’ by ‘revis[ing] the presuppositions’ (Folse, 1988, p. 16), was, in reassessing the philosophical achievements of the previous generations, to shed light on the fundamental fallacy of them and to expand human perception beyond what had been ignored. As Bohr attempted to establish ‘a new framework for describing atomic systems’ to “generaliz[e]” the classical framework’ (Folse, 1988, p. 66), Derrida anticipated ‘destabilization of philosophical positions and hierarchies in the hope of creating a new perspective’ (Reynolds and Roffe, 2004, p. 3).

¹⁴ Plotnitsky considers the philosophical perspectives of both Bohr and Derrida as general economy in contrast to restricted economy, which are concepts referred to by Georges Bataille. See Plotnitsky, 1994, pp. 1–2 for the definition of general economy and restricted economy.

Derrida was concerned with the broad range of intellectual edifices such as literature, art, politics, and so on in challenging the Western philosophical tradition. In the course of Derrida's venture on these diverse subjects, it is his celebrated notion of *différance* that occupies a special position within his entire philosophical project and offers a particular interest in relation to Daoism. In the strictly Derridean sense of emphasising its pictorial manipulation, the neologism, or 'neographism' (Derrida, 1982, p. 3), *différance* drawn from the French word *différer* connotes both to differ and to defer. By taking advantage of the intentional misspelling in replacing 'e' in the word difference with 'a', Derrida set out his deconstructive scheme. On one hand, because language is constructed on the basis of difference between words, what determines the meaning of a word is a signifier differing from other signifiers. '*Différance*', says Derrida, 'is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other' (Derrida, 2004, p. 24).

On the other hand, it is thereby impossible for a signifier to be identified with a signified; instead, the meaning of a word is constantly deferred. A signifier cannot stay with a fixed signified because it realises itself only in relation to other different signifiers, which engenders an endless chain of signifiers. The signifier consequently never arrives at the signified; the signifier inevitably keeps chasing after the signified. Deferral is brought up by difference that causes 'spacing' among signifiers; in turn, difference among signifiers is perceptible because of the role of deferral in 'temporizing'. Derrida further explains:

This is why the a of *différance* also recalls that spacing is temporization, the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation – in a word, the

relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a *being* – are always *deferred*. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces.

(Derrida, 2004, p. 25, italics in original)

In this sense, *différance* manifests in itself Derrida's ambition, which is to deconstruct the entire 'logocentric' tradition of Western philosophy 'under the name of writing' (Derrida, 1974, p. 6).

Because its pronunciation is the same as that of 'difference' in French, *différance* is only distinguishable from 'difference' in the form of writing (Norris, 2004, p. 20). The deliberate coinage of *différance*, in noticeably pinpointing the fallacious dogma that believes in the superiority of speech to writing, exposes the ideological hierarchy of the Western philosophical tradition. For Derrida, the binary opposition is the most problematic in the Western philosophical tradition, which is summed up as 'metaphysics of presence'¹⁵ established on the system of language. Since Plato's condemnation of writing as pharmacy (*pharmakon* in Greek) that implies remedy as well as poison,¹⁶ speech, the audible presentation of the ideal, has taken a superior status to writing. Writing is deemed a derivative means for communication as opposed to the pure and intelligible speech of divinity. It is, therefore, always seen as the ambiguous and inaccurate counterfeit of the ideal. The Western tradition of metaphysics has reinforced

¹⁵ 'Hegel ... summed up the entire philosophy of the logos. ... [H]e assembled all the delimitations of philosophy as presence. ...' See Derrida, 1974, p. 24.

¹⁶ Plato's story about *Pharmakon* leads to the notion of the undecidability (uncertainty) of language. See Derrida, 1981, pp. xxiv-xxvi and pp. 95-117.

the binarity in organising the hierarchical order as shown between speech and writing; the latter is always subordinate to the former.

Yet, the iterability of writing offers a dimension that speech cannot have. It is the iterability that makes it possible for writing to function even in the situation of the absolute absence of the users (Derrida, 1988, p. 17). Writing itself is essential from the beginning because it is ‘the only way of keeping or recapturing speech’ (Derrida, 1974, p. 142). There is, hence, no pure ideal of a thing represented by speech without the intervention of writing. Writing is, as Derrida deduces from Rousseau’s account, the ‘dangerous supplement’ to speech, the supplement that is ‘compensatory and vicarious’ (Derrida, 1974, p. 145). Writing is ‘supplement’ because it augments what is deficient in transient speech, and it is ‘dangerous’ because it reveals the deficiency of speech, which cannot be ‘plenitude’ in itself without the help of writing. *Différance* plays on this premise that undermines the substratum of the Western philosophical tradition. The fact that *différance* cannot be differentiated from difference in speech demonstrates that writing is not at all inferior to but rather supplements speech; therefore, the hierarchical binary opposition is no longer valid. *Différance* discloses ‘the strange unity’ (Derrida, 1974, p. 144) in the relationship between writing and speech.

The awareness derived from the relationship between writing and speech expands to the extent that everything exists with and justifies itself by its complementary opposite, which is ‘strange’ but inevitable. *Différance* is a mode of understanding this interplay of opposite pairs. It appears throughout ‘all the relationship between the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed’ (Derrida, 1982, p. 17). The so-called metaphysics of presence stands on the fabricated hierarchical system that is composed of the pairs of opposites such as intelligible/sensible, subject/object, and mind/body. Among these pairs in the system, the first is seen as essential as opposed to the second that is seen as

superficial. This binary opposition produces ‘a violent hierarchy’ (Derrida, 2004, p. 39).

Derrida, through the notion of *différance*, verifies the interdependence of these opposite pairs, which means the possibility of their coexistence. Thus, he claims:

... to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same (the intelligible as differing-deferring the sensible, as the sensible different and deferred; the concept as different and deferred, differing-deferring intuition; culture as nature different and deferred, differing-deferring; all the others of *physis – tekhnē, nomos, thesis*, society, freedom, history, mind, etc. ...). (Derrida, 1982, p. 17, italics in original)

These opposites are interconnected with each other by ‘the “active,” moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces’ (Derrida, 1982, p. 18). They intermingle with each other, become the ground of existence for each other, and hence coexist.

The Western philosophical tradition is constructed on the firm ground of violent binarity such as Plato’s idealism and Cartesian dualism. Superior reason subjugates the material world to its dominance. It is the history of metaphysics of presence, which is the system of the iterable text constructed by the iterability of writing. Derrida, with his notion of *différance*, strips the veiled face of the logocentric tradition of Western society and deconstructs it by noting that the hierarchical binary is a misleading illusion.

4. The Connections

The principle of complementarity of Bohr and the notion of *différance* of Derrida, in undermining classical thinking in science and philosophy, played a noteworthy role in the epistemological flux of the early twentieth century. First of all, the shortcomings of the deterministic rigor of classical physics and the hierarchical binarity of the Western philosophical tradition were exposed by the critical challenges of Bohr's principle of complementarity and Derrida's notion of *différance*. As a result, the relationship of human reason with the physical world became perceived not in the deterministic and hierarchical separation between subjectivity and objectivity but in the endless process of the reciprocal interplay between opposites or contradictories. In these respects, both the principle of complementarity and the notion of *différance* show their affinity with Daoism to which this thesis aims to relate the work of Grotowski.

In spite of the enormous gap in time and space, Daoism is closely connected with the thoughts of Bohr and Derrida. This connection, above all, is most obviously assumed when Bohr encountered the enigmatic reality of the subatomic world. In search of an answer to the question raised by the contradictory nature of the subatomic world, Bohr found that his thought was directed towards a totally different cultural tradition from his own. It was probably because he was not able to find an adequate answer in the Western classical heritage, which would have believed that the contradiction appearing in the subatomic world would be resolved in another law of deterministic causality soon to be found. It, however, proved impossible. Bohr willingly accepted the facts displayed by nature, and thus, said:

For a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory regarding the limited applicability of such customary idealizations, we must

in fact turn to quite other branches of science, such as psychology, or even to that kind of epistemological problems with which already thinkers like Buddha and Lao Tsu have been confronted, when trying to harmonize our position as spectators and actors in the great drama of existence. (Bohr, 1961, pp. 19–20)

In this statement, Bohr tried to parallel his principle of complementarity with the Eastern religious and philosophical traditions. When he was awarded the Order of the Elephant, the highest rank of nobility, by the Danish government, Bohr designed his own coat of arms with the ancient Daoist symbol of *tai chi*, which is composed of intertwining *yin* and *yang*. Together with the symbol inscribed was *Contraria sunt complementa* meaning in Latin that opposites are complementary (Capra, 2000, p. 160).

In the case of Derrida, as with Bohr, opposites are indispensable ‘supplements’ for each other. *Différance* indicates the impossibility of the hierarchical binarity. The effect of *différance* implies that writing, as having been considered as the secondary derivation of speech, is not an inferior communicative tool but a ‘compensatory’ supplement that completes the deficiency of speech; and, this can also be applied to any binary opposition like body/soul and object/subject. The absolute standpoint from which to interpret or criticise a ‘text’ cannot possibly exist. Thus, Derrida declares, ‘*there is nothing outside of the text*’ (Derrida, 1974, p. 158, italics in original). The structure of writing as a *dangerous* text keeps being referred to by philosophers like Rousseau and Husserl who claimed the superiority of speech to writing. Derrida tackled their claims by pointing out that their recurring denunciation of writing in emphasising the priority of speech rather proved that writing was not a mere secondary element but essential. No

interpretation or criticism from the ‘outside’ is possible. Writing is ‘originary’ as much as speech. *Différance* discloses the effect of the difference between these two opposites. Deconstruction is the movement functioning in this effect of *différance*. From the awareness described above, both Bohr’s principle of complementarity and Derrida’s *différance* are essentially connected with the notions of Dao in *Dao De Jing*.

In the Chinese philosophical tradition, Daoism is positioned as a contender against Confucianism, or, in short, ‘anti-Confucianism’ (Park, 2001, p. 375), which is analogous to the anti-epistemology of Plotnitsky in defining the work of Bohr and Derrida. In the flavour of the prefix ‘anti’, Daoism, as opposed to Confucianism that proclaims orderly civilization, education, and humanism based on the heavenly Dao,¹⁷ is likely to be interpreted as suggesting anti-civilization, anti-education, and anti-humanism, etc., which is why Daoism is often misunderstood as an esoteric mysticism. Daoism, however, is not a naïve rebellion against Confucianism but a pre-eminent philosophy that offers a broader perspective, grasping what Confucianism overlooks, and overcomes the limitation of Confucianism by proposing another type of civilization, of education, of humanism, and so on (Choi, 2006, pp. 10–11). This caution regarding Daoism is important because Grotowski is also misunderstood as being a mystical guru and his theatre productions are often labelled as ‘no theatre’ and ‘non-theatre’ (Bentley, 1969, p. 168).

The detailed parallels between the principle of complementarity, *différance*, and Dao are, as mentioned above, can be presented in two aspects. First is their recognising the coexistence of opposite pairs that are relative to, complementary to, and differing-deferring from each other. In the same way as Derrida’s approach with *différance* to Western logocentrism, Dao in *Dao De Jing* deconstructs Confucianism by rejecting its

¹⁷ Dao is a term used by almost every ancient Chinese philosophical school, but the implication of it was interpreted in different connotations in each school.

hierarchical doctrines. Confucianism claims that there is the heavenly Dao, a signified ideal that can instruct people how to pursue the ideal society and the best condition to live according to the right path by regulating the order of the social and political system. On the contrary, Daoism questions Confucianism by positing that it is controlled and controlling systematisation that produces the disorder in a society; therefore, people should reject artificial systems and follow the law of nature, or Dao, by recognising the relativity, complementarity, and *différance* of opposite pairs.

Confucianism is based on the rule of binary opposition, as is metaphysics of presence. In a similar way to the hierarchical order, for instance, ideal/material in Plato, mind/body in Descartes, and mastery/slavery in Hegel, Confucianism, in order to deal with irreconcilable opposites such as noble/peasant, benevolence/malevolence, righteousness/wickedness, etc., proposes a hierarchical social system. Daoism, on the other hand, presents another way of looking at the problem by stating its awareness of the relativity of opposite pairs:

When the entire world regards beauty as beauty,

It is already ugly.

If all treat good as good,

It is already not good.

Being and non-being invigorate each other,

Difficulty and easiness establish each other,

Long and short compare with each other,

High and low determine each other,

Sound and tone harmonize each other,

Before and after follow each other,

This is the way it is. (Ch. 2)

Very often the first phrase of this chapter is misinterpreted as a saying that the ‘ugly’ as a necessary evil must exist in order for ‘beauty’ to be appreciated; however, at the same time, ‘ugliness’ should be reduced in accordance with the social norm because it is *evil* anyway. It is an act of ‘rul[ing] out the other’ (Hansen, 2000, p. 210). What this chapter of *Dao De Jing* tries to convey, however, is that there is no ultimate beauty or ugliness because these concepts are dependent on each other. If a thing is designated as ugly according to the social norm, it is done so in contrast to something else that is thought to be beautiful. A thing thought to be ugly could be regarded as beautiful in a different situation; and conversely, the very thing thought to be beautiful in the situation again could be considered ugly in another situation. Such an idea defining a thing as permanent beauty or as permanent ugliness is only an ideology constructed by the hierarchical social norm. In terms of the notion of *différance*, ugliness as a signifier is defined by its difference from another signifier, beauty. Something signified by the concept of ugliness can never be fixed permanently ugly. This ugliness could turn out to be beauty in another context; thus, the meaning of ugliness endlessly differs and defers. Instead of appreciating the relative correlation of opposites, Western logocentric metaphysics and Chinese dogmatic Confucianism decide that, given a pair of opposites, one takes a higher position than the other in a hierarchical order. The latter thereby is marginalised as trivial and is subject to the idealised former. *Différance* in Derrida’s deconstructionism and Dao in *Dao De Jing* disassemble the ideological state of the hierarchical order by indicating that one of the pair is the different face of the other. One is interconnected with and enmeshes with its opposite pair.

Bohr's principle of complementarity makes this point as well. When the subatomic unit is observed as a particle in an experimental setting, its other aspect as a wave is ruled out and vice versa. The act of ruling out one aspect for the sake of the other, however, does not add up to a total description of the subatomic unit. In the act of ruling out, the 'presence' of the particle-like aspect means the 'absence' of the wave-like aspect. The complete description of subatomic phenomena can be discerned only by means of acknowledging the contradictory pairs as the complementary properties of the phenomena. In terms of *différance*, 'presence' is 'absence' differed and deferred. Everything exists in relation to everything else without one aspect subjugating the other.

Dao in *Dao De Jing* is one of the most important and controversial 'concepts' in the history of Chinese philosophy. It is important because the whole text of *Dao De Jing* is actually devoted to explain it, and it is controversial because it is in reality not a 'concept'. It is impossible for Dao to be grasped in a word as it is impossible for *différance* to be described as a word or a concept, as Derrida clearly remarks. As Derrida does not define *différance* (Norris, 2004, p. 19), *Dao De Jing* does not define Dao; instead, it illustrates what is not Dao and how Dao plays:

If Dao can be told, it is not constant Dao.

If name can be named, it is not constant name.

Non-being indicates the beginning of heaven and earth,

Being indicates all things in the world.

Thus, non-being always desires to reveal enigmatic sphere,

Being always desires to show corporeal sphere.

These two emerge together, but have different names,

That they are being as one is called fathomlessness.

Fathomlessly fathomless.

The door for everything to come and go. (Ch. 1)

In the first phrase, Dao is disclosed in the negative utterance as ‘what is not’ instead of ‘what is’ because it is impossible to be defined in words. It is impossible to define Dao in words not because it is an ineffable or mysterious being like God but because it is a way, mode, or process; in other words, it is a principle of existence, not an existent being as *différance* ‘derives from no category of being’ and ‘is ... irreducible to any ontological or theological reappropriation ...’ (Derrida, 1982, p. 6). Dao sees the world operating itself in the interconnection or interdependence between the opposite states of ‘non-being’ and ‘being’. As a way of existence in relation to opposites that are differing and deferring each other, Dao perceives the state of the world as an endless process between opposites. It never denotes a fixed moment of itself.

Thus, Dao has no name. ‘Non-being’ indicates the enigmatic, and ‘being’ indicates the corporeal. Non-being is empty, and being fills the emptiness. Being cannot exist without the emptiness of non-being; non-being is meaningless without being filling its emptiness. They exist interdependently. Non-being is being ‘different and deferred and differing-deferring’, and vice versa. Dao is the call for this principle of interconnectedness and of the endless process, so it is impossible to fix it in the frame of ‘concept’, therefore, impossible to be named. Naming it as Dao is only a ‘forced conceptualisation’ (Choi, 2006, p. 222) in order for the author of *Dao De Jing* to convey the significance of it. *Dao De Jing*, therefore, confesses:

Something established in the chaotic appearance,

Has lived before the birth of heaven and earth.

...

I don't know its name.

Forced to assign an ideograph to it, saying, Dao,

Forced to assign a name to it, saying, great. (Ch. 25)

By the same token, Derrida elucidates the namelessness of *différance*:

“Older” than Being itself, such a *différance* has no name in our language. But we “already know” that it is unnameable, it is not provisionally so, not because our language has not yet found or received this *name*, or because we would have to seek it in another language, outside the finite system of our own. It is rather because there is no *name* for it at all, not even the name of essence or of Being, not even that of “*différance*,” which is not a name, which is not a pure nominal unity, and unceasingly dislocates itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions. (Derrida, 1982, p. 26, italics in original)

Hence, both Dao and *différance* are not the presence of the ideal but the play of, as Derrida puts it, ‘the disruption of presence’ (Derrida, 2002, p. 292), just as Bohr’s principle of complementarity as a subversive notion is dedicated to disrupting classical physics.

Along with their namelessness, from the two quotations of *Dao De Jing* and Derrida above, it is noticeable that both Dao and *différance* are regarded as something outside ‘heaven and earth’ and ‘Being’. They are even ‘older than Being itself’ and

‘have lived before heaven and earth’. Both Dao and *différance*, as Derrida puts it, are ‘a non-origin which is originary’ (Derrida, 2002, p. 203). It is the unceasing play of differing and deferring, of differed and deferred. Thus, Derrida says:

... *différance is not*, does not exist, is not a present-being (on) in any form; and we will be led to delineate also everything *that it is not*, that is, *everything*; and consequently that it has neither existence nor essence. ... In the delineation of difference everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field. ... a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, ... it no more follows the lines of philosophical-logical discourse than that of its symmetrical and integral inverse, empirical-logical discourse. (Derrida, 1982, pp. 6–7, italics in original)

In this sense, such forms of questions as ‘what is [*différance*]’? and ‘who is [differing or deferring]’? are not valid because the questions presume ‘a present being as a *subject*’ in concrete terms like ‘some thing, a form, a state, a power in the world’ (Derrida, 1982, p. 15, italics in original). Thereby, it is often misconstrued ‘as a mysterious being, in the

occult of a non-knowledge or in a hole with indeterminable borders' (Derrida, 1982, p. 6) just as Dao in *Dao De Jing* is similarly misinterpreted.

In positioning *différance*, Derrida resists the hierarchical order of metaphysics of presence. *Différance* is a strategic tool that is used to deconstruct the hierarchy by not taking the position as 'a present being', which is something 'excellent, unique, principal, or transcendent' (Derrida, 1982, pp. 21–22). Derrida clarifies:

[*Différance*] governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority. It is not announced by any capital letter. Not only is there no kingdom of *différance*, but *différance* instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. And it is always in the name of a kingdom that one may reproach *différance* with wishing to reign, believing that one sees it aggrandize itself with a capital letter. (Derrida, 1982, p. 22)

Différance does not acknowledge any kingdom, a hierarchical structure in which the subject rules over the object. The violent kingdom of the Western tradition of metaphysics collapses at the feet of *différance* that refuses to be a kingdom.

Dao in *Dao De Jing* proposes, in such rejection as *différance* does, to abandon the self and to do non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*). It says:

As such, the sage does non-doing,

Performing a teaching without words.
 Seeing all things grow well, but not attributing it to her/himself,
 Making them copious, but not possessing,
 Doing something, but not forcing with her/his intent.
 Accomplishing something, but not dwelling on it.
 For not dwelling, not being forsaken. (Ch. 2)

In such non-doings as ‘not attributing’, ‘not possessing’, and ‘not dwelling’, the sage is ‘not being forsaken’. By the same token, *Dao De Jing* also says:

...
 As such, the sage puts her/himself last,
 Therefore, comes first.
 In treating her/himself indifferently,
 Therefore, s/he preserves her/himself long.
 Is this not that s/he abandons her/his own benefit?
 Therefore, it is possible for her/him to complete her/himself.
 (Ch. 7)

In putting one’s self last, one can come first. One can achieve something by abandoning the self. Through the practice of non-doing, nothing remains undone (Ch. 48). The idea of subjectivity wanting to have authority over objectivity naturally does not last if one adopts this perspective.

As such, Derrida and Daoism disrupt the rigid hierarchy produced by the binary opposition in metaphysics of presence and Confucianism, which generate the problematic

division between subjectivity and objectivity. Just like Derrida and Daoism, Bohr, in explaining the principle of complementarity, also establishes a new relationship between scientific subjectivity and objectivity by ‘recogni[sing] that the interaction between the measuring tools and the physical systems under investigation constitutes an integral part of quantum phenomena’ (Bohr, 1961, p. 74). Revealed in Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, the interaction between the observer and the observed defines the very act of observation. Thus, Bohr concludes:

In quantum physics, ... we must, so-to-speak, distinguish between subject and object in such a way that each single case secures the unambiguous application of the elementary physical concepts used in the description. Far from containing any mysticism foreign to the spirit of science, the notion of complementarity points to the logical conditions for description and comprehension of experience in atomic physics. (Bohr, 1961, p. 91)

This is a remarkable perspective as opposed to the classical epistemology presupposing that the sovereign subject observes and analyses the passive object; in other words, it is the notion of giving up the absolute superiority of subject to object.

Bohr’s position regarding the irresolvable question raised by the contradictory nature of the quantum world offers a fresh perspective to study the work of Grotowski. Even if strictly positioning himself as a scientist, Bohr was not hesitant to accept the ‘mystical’ nature of the physical world. Rather, he (re)constructed his own logic by actively interpreting the contradiction of quantum reality. As did Bohr’s principle of

complementarity, Derrida showed in the contemplation of *différance* that there is a critical rupture in the Western philosophical tradition itself. Their intense correlation with Dao in *Dao De Jing* allows the classical Chinese philosophy to escape from the label of religious mysticism that preaches indecipherable transcendence at best or that just drivels incoherent nonsense in the worst case.

The new awareness in quantum physics and deconstructionism brought about a significant change of Western epistemology, shaking the society in which Grotowski worked. As in the case of Bohr who had realised his affinity to Daoism and in the case of Derrida whose thought shared much with *Dao De Jing*, Grotowski's work would be appreciated more thoroughly in the framework of the classical Chinese philosophy. In the light of Daoism, Grotowski appears not as a mystical guru but as an artist in action who attempted to search for authentic human existence, which is the performer in the everlasting process of moving between 無 (*wú*, non-being) and 有 (*yǒu*, being).

5. The Way of Grotowski

As seen in the discussion so far, Bohr's principle of complementarity, Derrida's notion of *différance*, and Dao in *Dao De Jing* are keenly related, and the relationship can be classified in three aspects. First is their deconstructive relationship to their counterparts, second is their acceptance of the reciprocal interdependence of opposite pairs, and third is, as a result, the disappearance of the idea of subjectivity and objectivity in their notions. In the work of Grotowski, these three characteristics shared by Bohr, Derrida, and Daoism are apparent.

Grotowski's main concern in his earliest phase had been the reconciliation of the actor's split between the body and the mind, which led to the accomplishment of 'the total act'. The actor, since the birth of the art of acting, has had the dual aspects that

constitute ‘one’s own organism, both physical and psychological (the two forming a whole)’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 128). In addition, deeply related to the process of overcoming the actor’s duality of body/mind, Grotowski was also concerned with the split between the actor and the spectator. He tried to establish a new relationship between the two.

Grotowski wrote:

The actor’s accomplishment constitutes a transcendence of ... the internal conflict between body and soul, intellect and feelings, physiological pleasures and spiritual aspirations. For a moment the actor finds himself outside the semi-engagement and conflict which characterize us in our daily life. Did he do this for the spectator? The expression “for the spectator” implies a certain coquetry, a certain falseness, a bargaining with oneself. One should rather say “in relation to” the spectator or, perhaps, instead of him. It is precisely here that the provocation lies. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 131)

Here, there is already a hint of his evolution in later research, which is the eradication of the division between the actor and the spectator, or the consolidation of the spectator with the actor.

In the course of Grotowski’s lifetime research, the concept of the performer evolved from ‘the holy actor’ in the theatre into ‘the doer’ of Art as Vehicle who is not lost in the division between the actor and the character, between the actor and the spectator, between spontaneity and discipline, between emotion and expression, between the body and the mind, and so on. What the doer does is the revelation of her/himself,

which is an act of embracing those opposite pairs as the ground of her/his own existence, just as the subatomic unit is able to be described fully only by being recognised in the complementary perspective of Bohr, and the hierarchical system of metaphysics of presence is deconstructed in the notion of *différance* of Derrida.

By attempting to dissolve the dualism of the conventional theatre, Grotowski tried to deconstruct the old theatre, to construct the poor theatre, and to reconstruct the concept of the theatre itself. In the process, Grotowski's concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* and principle of *via negativa* played the most important role. They acted as Grotowski's worldview, disposition, tool, rhetoric, and more in his endeavour to resolve the problems of the actor's duality in the way of the creative process and to realise the wholeness of the doer. In further discussion, the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* and the principle of *via negativa* possess the central position to understand the work of Grotowski in relation to Daoism.

At work, Grotowski asked one to do in her/his artistic journey:

Why are we concerned with art? To cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness – fulfil ourselves. This is not a condition but a process in which what is dark in us slowly becomes transparent. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 21)

The subsequent chapters follow the 'process' in which Grotowski always stood at 'frontiers', thereby, left a lasting influence on the theatre and beyond.

Ch. II: The Actor's Being in Contradiction

1. The Immanency of *Conjunctio Oppositorum*

The notion of *différance* and the principle of complementarity share a common view that the world is established and sustained based on the rapport between pairs of opposites – the relationship of writing/speech remarked by Jacques Derrida and the coexistence of particle/wave phenomena in the subatomic realm by Niels Bohr.¹⁸ These are paralleled with the philosophical perspective of *Dao De Jing* articulating that the world exists in the relationship between being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*), mutually interdependent on and complementary to each other. Despite their immense impact on Western culture, the subversive insights of quantum physics and deconstructionism, as opposed to traditional Western thinking that praised the omnipotence of human knowledge over nature, showed a humble acceptance that human rationality was possibly not the authoritative arbiter but a part of the system. The humbleness is the plane where the new thought of twentieth-century Western science and philosophy meet a vision from the Far East, Daoism that acknowledges the limitation of human reason. Grotowski, who shared the atmosphere of his contemporary scientific and philosophical notions and was interested in the classical Chinese philosophical notions, also claimed that ‘the decisive factor in [the actor’s] process is humility, a spiritual predisposition: not to **do** something, but to **refrain** from doing something’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 37, bold in original).

¹⁸ Although there have been diverse scientific and philosophical theories to challenge the traditions of Western culture, many of them are still based on the framework that there should be one particular theory that is able to explain every single phenomenon or human behaviour. For example, Einstein rejected the uncertainty principle of Heisenberg in saying, ‘God does not play dice’. He believed that there would appear ‘a theory of everything’ clearly encompassing all the physical aspects of the universe. Also, in philosophy, structuralism assumes that there must be a cultural or psychological substratum – such as language – to control human mind and culture. In this sense, Derrida and Bohr take a unique position in their close relation to Daoism from the heterogeneous cultures of East Asia.

In establishing a novel relationship between performance and its beholder, Grotowski always made efforts to search for new terms that captured the contradictory nature of human organism and discovered the essence of the organism hidden in the contradiction. In fact, he was renowned – or notorious to some – for his linguistic ability to create neologism and for his seemingly opaque rhetoric, which used unique phrases in explaining his work and theory.¹⁹ It is also well known that Grotowski was very fastidious about the use of language when transferring his thought onto paper and translating it into another language. For this reason, he has frequently been criticised for the unidiomatic use of languages other than Polish. However, to prevent the possible distortion of what he truly meant, he obstinately retained the words of his choice while verbalising his praxis even though sometimes his expressions were idiomatically wrong and often became the cause of misunderstanding. For example, Grotowski used ‘man’ as an English equivalent for a Polish word, *czlowiek*, which is one of the most crucial concepts in his post-theatrical phases. The Polish word has a very subtle meaning with no gender distinction and does not have an exact English counterpart. ‘Man’, a masculine noun, sometimes raises a gender equality issue for those who want to get rid of the patriarchal convention of the society. ‘Human being’ would be an alternative to avoid the trouble. However, he adhered to ‘man’ and imposed equal measure on the word *czlowiek* that ‘exists beyond gender, personality, identity, and social codes – when one has unveiled oneself’ (Słowiak and Cuesta, 2007, pp. 70–71).

Contrary to his somewhat peculiar insistence on the use of language, Grotowski believed that the core of an actor’s practical work could not be transferred into words on paper; therefore, to understand and learn the essence of the actor’s craft, an actor should

¹⁹ In many cases, Grotowski’s terms are not entirely new; on the contrary, they are the result of his ingenious appropriation of already existing concepts. *Conjunctio oppositorum* is evident in the philosophical tradition of dialectics since Heraclitus, and *via negativa* was the theological methodology of Thomas Aquinas. This indicates Grotowski’s traditionalist disposition discovering new values from old traditions rather than an avant-garde position.

act with her/his own body and soul, not read, talk, or listen to the teachings of others. To Grotowski, the verbalised illustration and interpretation of an actor's practical work would mean absolutely nothing to anyone else. One's experience is solely one's own. His scepticism concerning language, in this sense, seems to be incongruous with his dexterity of coining terminologies. Nonetheless, conversely speaking, it could be understood that his belief in the impossibility of verbalising the actor's experience forced him to dig more into neologism because he was, too, only a person who needed language to communicate with his fellow artists and the world outside.

Thus, it seems that his distrust of language was the origin of his sophisticated terminologies. Such a self-contradictory attitude towards language is one of the key dispositions of Grotowski whose theories and practices can be associated with the perspective of *Dao De Jing*, which criticises the linguistic determinism of the numerous ancient Chinese philosophical theories respectively asserting ultimate and authoritative 'daos' in their own terms (Hansen, 2000, pp. 215–219). Grotowski's obstinacy in refining his terms as well as distrusting the capability of language as a communicating tool for the actor's work is the expression of a resistance to the obsolete values established by the formidable conventions of the society. As seen in the case of translating *czlowiek* to 'man', the attempt to reconstruct the meaning of the English word instead of conforming to its conventional use, Grotowski's research was a profound endeavour to deconstruct the traditional meaning of theatre, not a slick adaptation to a capricious taste bored by outdated convention.

Among the terminologies and ideas brought up by Grotowski, the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum* is particularly significant. It represents Grotowski's worldview, which had developed along with his research. Although he never declared *conjunctio oppositorum* as his definitive worldview, it was always the underlying component of his

thinking in confronting the dilemma of the actor's duality, expanded to embrace the themes of his theatrical productions, and became the foundation for his theoretical and practical experimentation. The term *conjunctio oppositorum* has actually been found in the Western philosophical tradition of dialectics from the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus via Hegel, and to Marx. Grotowski's use of the term, however, is apparently distinguished from the previous philosophers. Briefly speaking, while his Western predecessors considered the contradiction produced by a pair of opposites as a present problem to be overcome in the progress of history in which an existing system is overthrown by a new one, Grotowski enthusiastically acknowledged the contradiction as the existential ground of the world in which one of the pair of opposites is meaningless without the other. Grotowski's stance to embrace the contradiction of the pair of opposites had already appeared at the earliest stage of his career in the theatre.

Before taking over the directorship of the Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, Poland, in an interview conducted in 1958 along with the opening of *The Ill-Fated*, his second adaptation of a play *The Ill-Fated Family* by Jerzy Krzyszton, Grotowski divulged his motivation that had guided him towards theatre:

I have chosen the artistic profession because I realized quite early that I am being haunted by a certain "thematic concern," a certain "leading motif," and a desire to reveal that 'concern' and present it to other people.... I am haunted by the problem of human loneliness and the inevitability of death. But a human being (and here begins my "leading motif") is capable of acting against one's own loneliness and death. If one involves oneself in problems outside narrow spheres of

interests, ... if one recognizes the union of man and nature, if one is aware of the indivisible unity of nature and finds one's identity within it, ... then one attains an essential degree of liberation. (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, pp. 26–27)

This statement well expresses the religious and philosophical meditation of the young Grotowski. In religious terms, the 'thematic concern' about the 'human loneliness' and 'the inevitability of death' echoes with the human condition presumed by Christianity. In Christian mind, preordained by original sin, the existential problems of human beings are the result of the alienation from the world of God. Therefore, the presupposed deficiencies of humanity entail the aspiration of redemption by the covenant of the Absolute Being.

Along with his observation of the human problems from a religious perspective, Grotowski revealed himself as a descendant of the Western philosophical traditions, which believed in the human ability to overcome the predestined burdens with the intellectual free will of humankind. Armed with this ability, the human being can arrive at the 'essential degree of liberation' by 'involv[ing] [her/himself] in problems outside narrow spheres of interests' and 'recogniz[ing] the union of man and nature'. This very much resembles the Hegelian line of thought, which believes in the ultimate manifestation of Spirit by subordinating material nature; thus, a harmony between Spirit and nature means nothing less than a forcible prescription that the latter should be an auxiliary object for the sublime revelation of the former. That is, the truth as the teleological goal of human reason in the world is to be reached through the process of the dialectical development between binary opposites; synthesis emerges through the struggle between thesis and antithesis. In such a Hegelian perspective, the 'essential degree of

liberation' as the goal of humanity in Grotowski's thought can possibly be interpreted as the disclosure of the pure human spirit achieved through the dialectical process in history.

However, unlike the dialectical synthesis of Hegelian thought that is a result of dissolving the tension caused by the contradiction between thesis and antithesis along with a totally different level of entity from those of thesis and antithesis in terms of historical development, 'the essential degree of liberation' to Grotowski is a state that still retains the contradictory tension in the pair of opposites. In other words, it, as opposed to a secure state clear of contradiction, is rather a passionate affirmation to accept contradiction as the ground for the existence of the world. Human beings can achieve 'the indivisible unity' only by accepting contradiction just as it is. Whereas the Hegelian dialectic assumes the final presence of the Spirit, which has appeared as the overriding human rationality exploiting nature, Grotowski's outlook was to acknowledge human existence as a part of nature, not to condemn nature as opaque as opposed to enlightened humanity. This early perception of Grotowski shows a shoot of his later growth. His recognition of the human problems – loneliness and death – was initially grounded in his Western cultural heritage, but simultaneously the way to solve the problems in his thought was clearly distinguishable from it. It is from this point of distinction that he developed his worldview, the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which is analogous to the Daoist perspective in *Dao De Jing*.

Dao is the central subject of *Dao De Jing*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Dao is not a transcendental or ineffable being such as a god or an absolute being. It is not an ontological entity but the mode of the existence of the world. It is not a thing that can be defined as a concept. Thus, the author of *Dao De Jing* keeps saying that s/he does not know what it is; 'I don't know its [Dao's] name. Forced to assign an ideograph to it, saying, Dao. Forced to assign a name to it, saying, great' (Ch. 25). Further, *Dao De Jing*

clearly precludes a possible preconception that could regard Dao as a godlike being; ‘I don’t know whose child it [Dao] is. It seems older than the lord of heaven’ (Ch. 4).

What *Dao De Jing* tells about Dao in the phrases above is that people should break away from two kinds of shackles that are suppressing them in the name of civilisation. One of the shackles is the thought that an absolute being or the command of heaven should reign over the lives of people. By proclaiming that Dao has existed before ‘the lord of heaven’, *Dao De Jing* emancipates people from the mysterious and invisible power of heaven and pronounces that people are the masters of their own fate. The other shackle is linguistic determinism. In times when a god or heaven started losing its authority over people, e.g., the Western Renaissance and the Chinese Warring States Period, human rationality was substituted for the divine authority. Language was believed to be able to offer authority to human rationality as a fine thinking tool like the infallible words of God. It was also believed that, with the help of linguistic accuracy, human rationality could establish a desirable model for a society. Yet, in terms of the authoritative mechanism on which people lean, there is no difference between the divine authority and the authority of human rationality.

Dao De Jing criticises this fundamental predicament. The authoritative mechanism remains the same in only changing its name from God to human rationality. The very first line of the first chapter of *Dao De Jing* argues the point in a somewhat paradoxical way; it reads, ‘If Dao can be told, it is not constant Dao. If name can be named, it is not constant name’ (Ch. 1). Through the very first utterance, *Dao De Jing*, most of all, attacks the theories of its coeval philosophies firmly grounded in the belief of the omnipotence of language. As explained in the previous chapter, Choi (2006, pp. 22–23) pointed out that the phrase should not be read as a description of an ineffable being but as the disclosure of the inability of language to describe Dao. The discriminating

power of language makes people shut off the infinite possibilities of nature presented in the world and pursue false desires imposed by a social value system (Choi, 2006, pp. 36–37). Also, according to the analytical interpretation of Hansen, the phrase implies that there is no such ‘a’ constant and unchanging ‘dao’ – with the indefinite article and the lower case ‘d’ – as opposed to other contemporary Chinese philosophical theories proclaiming that their ‘daos’ are constant. The many ‘daos’ dealt with by the ancient Chinese philosophers are only efforts to theorise ‘a form of discourse that reliably guides behaviour’ (Hansen, 2000, p. 5). Knowing ‘a dao’ is to discriminate an object from others by means of linguistic clarity. The act of discrimination produces a hierarchical value system in pursuing a clear meaning of a thing, and the pure substance of that thing is defined by ruling out other things. It is a violent act. When people designate a thing as pure, everything else is stigmatised as impure regardless of its right to existence. People, through the act of discrimination, internalise a violent hierarchical social system as a model for their behaviour (Hansen, 2000, p. 210). *Dao De Jing* criticises this logical dilemma of the various discourses of ‘daos’ claiming that only their ‘daos’ can cure the ailments of society. However, the ground on which their theories stand is established by linguistic discrimination; for this reason, their ‘daos’ inevitably exacerbate, rather than heal, the problems of society despite their good intentions.

Dao De Jing explicates this ineffable Dao by illustrating how it appears in reality instead of defining it with language. Dao in *Dao De Jing* presents itself as the interplay of the most basic pair of opposites, being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*):

Non-being indicates the beginning of heaven and earth;

Being indicates all things in the world.

Thus, non-being always desires to reveal enigmatic sphere,

Being always desires to show corporeal sphere.

These two emerge together, but have different names,

That they are being as one is called fathomlessness.

Fathomlessly fathomless.

The door for everything to come and go. (Ch. 1)

In a sense, being and non-being seem to respectively designate their own split spheres. Indeed, they are two different categories. However, *Dao De Jing* makes it clear that being and non-being are inseparable by saying that they ‘emerge together’ and are ‘one’. For the clearer understanding of Dao, *Dao De Jing* visualises the concomitant emergence of being and non-being in the shape of a rope (繩, *shéng*) braided with a pair of strings (Ch. 14). Evenly twisted in making a rope, a pair of strings need each other to exist as an indispensable part of a rope. When following the curve that a string draws around a rope, one cannot separate it from the other string. Like a rope with two strings, Dao appears in the image of being and non-being that are twisted and braided around each other. Non-being already subsists at the very moment that being is observed, and being is truly embodied when non-being is perceived. The relationship between being and non-being can be presented simply through a bowl; that is, its contour as being produces the void space as non-being, and together they make a bowl function as a container. It is what *Dao De Jing* means by ‘being and non-being invigorate each other’ (Ch. 2). A thing (有, *yǒu*) can be perceived as a bowl because it already includes a void part (無, *wú*).

However, thinking of being and non-being as split entities is an elusive idea based on the habitual bias inherent in the thought process. It is rather one’s intuition that captures the interplay between being and non-being. People would not be able to see a thing as it is if they could not grasp the concurrence of both being and non-being in the

thing. People do not recognise a bowl by first seeing the seeable, the contour of the bowl, and then being reminded of the unseeable, the void space that the bowl creates. A thing seen by people is already a whole in itself with its established aspects of being and non-being even before they analyse its structure and recognise its unseeable part. This is what *Dao De Jing* means that being and non-being ‘emerge together’, but ‘have different names’, but again are ‘one’. The way of Dao’s emergence, a state of interconnection between being and non-being, is also expressed as a door through which everything not only enters but also exits. Here, Dao is a metaphorical space where a pair of opposites intersects, e.g., life and death, growing and withering, and appearing and disappearing, and so on. It is the mode of the existence of the world, the helper of everything existent, and the space for the interplay of the pairs of opposites. Dao cannot be fixed in a definite term because it is neither a concrete entity nor an abstract concept: thus, ‘fathomless’.

Therefore, *Dao De Jing* challenges the attempt to distinguish between what being is and what non-being is. *Dao De Jing* describes the fathomlessness of indefinable Dao with the expression that Dao is ‘vague and indistinct (恍惚, *huǎng hū*)’ (Ch. 21). Both 恍 (*huǎng*) and 惚 (*hū*) describe a state in which something cannot be clearly discerned. Yet, each word indicates a different reason for indiscernibility. 恍 (*huǎng*) implies indiscernibility caused by too much light; on the other hand, 惚 (*hū*) means to be indiscernible because of insufficient light (Choi, 2006, p. 192). The being of light means the non-being of darkness, and the being of darkness means the non-being of light. Can Dao not be seen clearly due to the being of darkness or the non-being of light? Or, is it the non-being of darkness, the being of light? If there is the being or non-being of light, otherwise the being or non-being of darkness, is it possible for Dao to be seen clearly? From this hazy situation comes an important realisation; the line dividing light and darkness is indefinable. Is the level of one on the scale of a lamp dark or light? How

about level two? This vagueness and indistinctness (恍惚, *huǎng hū*) is one of main characteristics of Dao. An individual, an actor, is a whole in which this vagueness and indistinctness is intertwined, and in which inseparable being and non-being, the body and the mind, should intuitively be perceived simultaneously.

The awareness of the inseparability of the interplay between being and non-being can be paralleled with Grotowski's notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which was the concept drawn from his early meditation on the human problems and the solution for the problems, a mixture of the Western tradition and the desire to escape from it. Grotowski developed the concept in more concrete terms through the works of the Theatre Laboratory. In the simplest sense, the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* required the simultaneous recognition of both spontaneity and discipline in the actor's art. Grotowski clarified the concept in an interview in 1969:

A great work is an expression of contradiction, of opposites.

Discipline is obtained through spontaneity, but it always remains a discipline. Spontaneity is curbed by discipline, and yet there is always spontaneity. These two opposites curb and stimulate each other and give radiance to the action. Our work is neither abstract nor naturalistic; at the same time, it is both abstract and naturalistic. It is natural and structured, spontaneous and disciplined. (Croyden, 1969, p. 86)

As in the case of the Daoist notion that 'being and non-being invigorate each other', discipline and spontaneity in the actor's art are 'obtained through' and 'curbed by' each other. As a result, the action 'radiated' by the actor's spontaneous and disciplined

performance should be both ‘naturalistic’ and ‘abstract’, which do not appear exclusive in the works of the Theatre Laboratory. The naturalistic action, which is the expression of a genuine urge in the actor, is no different from the abstract action, which is the symbolised sign constructed by the actor’s body. Important in this seemingly ambiguous utterance is the point that Grotowski did not consider one as priority over the other. Rather, he insisted on maintaining the balanced tension between naturalistic and abstract, the contradiction between them lingering in the actor as well as in her/his action.

This balanced tension between the pair of opposites in the actor is what ‘gives birth to the total act’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 125). ‘The total act’, by definition of Grotowski, means:

... the act of laying oneself bare, of tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorizing oneself. Not in order to “show oneself off”, for that would be exhibitionism. It is a serious and solemn act of revelation. The actor must be prepared to be absolutely sincere. It is like a step towards the summit of the actor’s organism in which consciousness and instinct are unified. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 210)

This ‘self-revelation’ of the actor is possible through the unification between ‘consciousness (discipline)’ and ‘instinct (spontaneity)’. It is the actor’s ‘contact with himself’, which is ‘not merely a confrontation with his thoughts, but one involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state’ (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 56–57).

The concept of contact in Grotowski's context is crucial because it not only prevents the actor from a narcissistic self-exposure but also expands the significance of the actor's total act to the degree of the entire performance space. Although the total act 'is not intended for the eyes of the world' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 35), the actor should always be in contact with the outer world in the theatrical space. The actor exists in front of the spectator, in a performance space, around scenic materials, etc., whose presence forces the actor's inner and outer state to be adaptive to even very subtle changes that happen every moment (Grotowski, 1968, p. 226). The circumstances surrounding the actor, then, become the essential parts of her/his total act. The actor expands her/his being to the extent of the entire theatrical space. Thus, the total act is not only a matter of an actor's contact with her/himself but also the actor's relationship with her/his outer world here and now. In other words, the extrovert revelation towards the outer world and the introvert penetration towards the innermost realm are not two different events but a simultaneous phenomenon in the actor's total act.

Conjunctio oppositorum is the conceptual core of the total act. It is, however, not a product of an intellectual contrivance but a natural consequence of the practical experiment. Grotowski persistently emphasised the actor's bodily work more than anything else during the Theatre of Productions phase and went even deeper in his post-theatrical phases in asserting that '[k]nowledge is a matter of doing' (Grotowski, 1988, p. 376). Although always focusing on the actor's physical work, Grotowski was at the same time well aware that the physical virtuosity alone could not guarantee the totality of the actor's performance. Rather, the overconfidence in physical techniques could easily turn the actor's work into 'an emotive hypocrisy, beautiful gestures with the emotions of a fairy-dance' (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 45). The actor training programme described in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, which is the record of an effort to reach the total

act, shows how the awareness of *conjunctio oppositorum* in terms of the actor's physicality and psyche was incorporated into the practical exercises of the Theatre Laboratory.

2. *Conjunctio Oppositorum* in the Actor's Craft

In experimenting with the actor's art, Grotowski primarily focused on the actor's physical and vocal dimensions under the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*. The actor's exercises of the Theatre Laboratory formed the practical route to reach the total act, which was 'an expression of contradiction, of opposites'. *Towards a Poor Theatre* elaborates the actor training at the Laboratory in two chapters; one covers the period from 1959 to 1962, and the other specifically reports a work session led by Grotowski in Brussels in 1966.

The earlier version of the exercises from 1959 to 1962 displays how Grotowski constructed the fundamental elements of the actor's physical and vocal exercises. By examining the physical and vocal apparatus, the actor had to discover and overcome her/his physical and vocal limitations that were caused by the habitual use of the vocal apparatus in everyday life. Through the challenging exercises on the apparatus that were almost and always beyond her/his ability, the actor realised that these physical and vocal limitations were the sources of the psychological resistance and the fear of confronting her/his self. The actor's psychological obstacles corresponded to the physical limitations of the actor's civilised body. The actor, through the exercises of this period, was expected to discover her/his enshrouded self by continuously testing the possibilities of her/his physical and vocal abilities.

In this period, the influence of the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum* is most of all perceivable in the physical exercises, which is exemplified by the *exercices plastiques*,

i.e., the so-called psychophysical exercises. The exercises investigate the association between the actor's psychical drive and physical expression through the manipulation of the opposite forces of the body. The *exercices plastiques* are composed of two parts: elementary exercises and composition exercises. The exercises start from the exploration of 'opposite vectors' in the actor's body, which is 'the study of one's own means of expression, of their resistances and their common centres in the organism' (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 139–140). The opposite vectors examined in the exercises are supposed to create an extraordinary tension in the actor's body, which is generally not experienced in everyday life. The effect of the exercises is the banishment of intellectual analysis on the body, which carries out physically challenging movements. In the exercises, the actor discovers not only her/his physical blocks formed by the routine behaviours of everyday life but also her/his psychological resistance, which is the feeling of discomfort developed by the physical challenges. The actor removes the psychical resistance by focusing on the eradication of the physical blocks. The exercises in this manner are an act of 'transforming the body movements into a cycle of personal impulses' (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 42).

Situated in the opposite vectors of the physically challenging body positions and movements such as 'the hand mak[ing] circular movements in one direction, the elbow in the opposite direction' and 'the hand accept[ing], while the legs reject' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 139), the actor's body prepares itself to instantaneously react to inner impulses and to associate with the outer environments. The composition exercises, which comprise the elements of the opposite vectors, lead the actor's body into an 'immediate and spontaneous' flow of 'a living form possessing its own logic' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 142). The continuous flow of physical movements in the composition exercises should be connected with the actor's inner state, which in return stimulates and evokes her/his

bodily movements. The key in the composition exercises for the actor is to capture her/his psychical urges driven by the physical movements. The direct reactions of the urges to the body again spur the next movements that spontaneously follow. In these exercises, the goal of the actor's work is not to accomplish the deft physicality of a pre-formulated set of body movements but to awaken the possibilities of the actor's body and mind, which would lead the actor to discover her/his true self in its entirety to exist as a human being (Grotowski, 1968, p. 146).

The circulatory relationship between physical movements and psychical urges in the *exercices plastiques* makes the actor realise that her/his actions, which evoke following reactions, are themselves reactions to previous psychophysical actions. The distinction between action and reaction is, in this sense, meaningless. A human being always acts by means of reacting to someone, something, or some events. Grotowski articulated:

To act – that is to react – not to conduct the process but to refer it to personal experiences and to be conducted. The process must take us. At these moments one must be internally passive but externally active. (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 42)

In a way that human behaviour is commonly understood, a reaction is a result generated from a conscious and emotional response to interior and exterior stimulations. But, thinking that there should be a conscious thought process and an emotional impulse prior to reaction to stimulation is only a long-standing illusion that human rationality can control senses and emotion. The theories and discoveries in psychology and physiology indicate that there would be no time for consciousness to first analyse a stimulus at a

moment and then to react according to the analysis. Further, emotion is, in fact, something that is produced by a (re)action.²⁰ Likewise, what is discovered through the *exercices plastiques* is the actor's organism thinking and (re)acting through the extraordinary body with its own logic. It is to prepare a preliminary condition in which the actor obtains the 'active' body, a body of resilient plasticity spontaneously adapting to any stimuli given by the actor's inner state as well as the surroundings, and at the same time in which the actor's psychology maintains 'passivity', a silent readiness awaiting to react. It is a tension between the actor's body and psyche that is formed through the exercises.

Such a tension between the 'active' body and the 'passive' mind can be compared to a certain state in which Dao is embodied in reality. *Dao De Jing* proclaims:

In between heaven and earth,
Is like a bellows!
That is empty but inexhaustible,
More it moves, more it produces vitality
Longwinded speech is exhausting,
Better to keep up the centre. (Ch.5)

The empty space of a bellows is where its function originates from and what produces liveliness – wind. *Dao De Jing* perceives this emptiness of a bellows as a state of 'keeping up the centre (守中, *shǒu zhōng*)', which means not to lean over on one side.

To 'keep up the centre' is also a way to stay in between. An act of being in between

²⁰ William James (1884) claimed, with his famous analogy of the sequence of the reactions when one is confronted with a ferocious bear, that emotion is a reaction itself, not a product of intellectual analysis of an event followed by a reaction to the event. Also, Ivan Pavlov's discovery of conditioned reflexes tells that an animal does not react with intellectual analysis to its environment at the fundamental level.

emptiness might appear to suggest being idle in a void space. But, in fact, what maintains the state of such emptiness is a dense tension and lively movement in which a pair of opposites, being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*), are persistently confronted with each other (Choi 2006, p. 69). Between the action and the reaction as well as between the bodily movement and the emotional impulse in the *exercises plastiques* exists such tension and emptiness, which is described as ‘passive silence’ analogous to non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*). Therefore, an actor carrying out the *exercises plastiques* should be extremely vigilant as if standing on the sharp blade of a sword, the border between all the pairs of opposites; such an actor in the eye of the spectator looks empty and as though s/he is doing nothing.

Along with the *exercises plastiques* that are explicitly associated with the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, the vocal exercises of the Laboratory engage with the notion in a more implicit and theoretical manner. The earlier version of the exercises covering the actor training programme from 1959 to 1962 included vocal exercises, which were mostly concerned with the vocal apparatus in search of effective respiratory techniques for the actor by locating various resonators of the body. The actor examines the vocal system, aiming to enhance the ‘carrying power’ of her/his voice. In demanding that the actor’s vocal quality should impact the spectator as if it were permeating her/his heart (Grotowski, 1968, p. 147), Grotowski seems to require the actor’s voice to become a corporal extension of the body, which should be able to create as solid a contact with the spectator as the sensible interaction produced by the physical proximity between the actor and the spectator. He suggests that the actor visualise the action of the voice:

Vocal actions against objects: use your voice to make a hole in
the wall, to overturn a chair, to put out a candle, to make a

picture fall from the wall, to caress, to push, to wrap up an object, to sweep the floor: use the voice as if it were an axe, a hand, a hammer, a pair of scissors, etc. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 166)

Here, Grotowski demands an almost tangible quality of voice, which vibrates in the actor's body, reaches the entire performance space, and further touches the spectator's soul. In this view, the goal of the vocal exercises is not to produce an elegant and euphonious sound. Instead, the actor should concentrate on how her/his voice relates to the outer environment, i.e., the spectator, the performance space, objects, and so on in the space. In this period, although realising the necessity of developing the actor's vocal ability to the extent of her/his voice as a concrete action, Grotowski seemed as yet not to be aware of the vocal exercises in association with the physical exercises. He approached the vocal exercises as an effective tool for the actor to develop the 'respiratory and vocal apparatus according to the multiple demands of the role' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 165).

After the temporal gap of four years between the earlier version and the later version, Grotowski's approach to the vocal exercises significantly changed their status in the actor training programme of the Theatre Laboratory. In the later version of the exercises, which is the documentation of a work session presented in Brussels in 1966, Grotowski puts more weight on the vocal exercises in comparison to other exercises by beginning the session with the vocal exercises as opposed to placing them at the end in the earlier version. Based on the results yielded from the previous experiments that establish the actor's voice as a concrete action, Grotowski pushes the vocal exercises further to the extent that the entire body should be a vocal apparatus as well as recognising that 'the voice is something material' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 184). To do so,

Grotowski attempts to incorporate the vocal work into physical movements. The actor is requested to carry out most physical exercises whilst examining closely how her/his bodily positions are related to the vocal effect. For example, in Tiger exercise, King-King exercise, and La-La exercise, the actor investigates all the possible vocal effects of diverse intonations, pitches, and volumes while moving continuously (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 177–180). In this way, the actor could detect whether her/his larynx is open as well as which part of the resonator is in action for different bodily positions respectively. By being closely associated with physical movements, the vocal exercises became an integral focus of the entire actor training programme in the Theatre Laboratory. The perception underlying the association is fundamentally correlated to the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which is essentially parallel with the philosophical bases of both Derridean deconstructionism and Daoism.

The voice, by means of which speech is delivered, has been considered as a mechanical tool for conveying pure ideas in the Western philosophical tradition. By the same token, in the conventional Western theatrical practice, the actor's voice is the medium of the expression for the thought of a play. Therefore, the goal of the actor's vocal work is to create a beautiful speech to convey the dramatic literature of an author. In examining Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, Derrida pointed out the role of the voice in relation to dramatic literature and revealed how the voice on the stage has been moulded by the Western philosophical tradition:

The stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech, by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance. The stage is theological for as long as its structure,

following the entirety of tradition, comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter *represent* him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters who represent characters who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the “creator.” Interpretive slaves who faithfully execute the providential designs of the “master.” Who moreover – and this is the ironic rule of the representative structure which organizes all these relationships – creates nothing, has only the illusion of having created, ... Finally, the theological stage comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of “enjoyers” – as Nietzsche and Artaud both say – attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to their voyeuristic scrutiny. (Derrida, 2002, pp. 296–297, emphasis in original)

The only voice reverberating in the Western conventional theatre is that of an author. It is an aberration that trivialises all the essential relationships between constituents that make theatre possible. In this conventional approach, the theatre becomes nothing but a place of (re)presenting the solipsistic words of a mastermind who is not present at the

site of action. The logocentric tradition of the West fails to recognise the most essential element of the theatre, i.e., the actor. The absence of the essential entity in the theological theatre is compensated by a kind of omniscient being, the author who is non-existent on the stage but establishes the frame of a performance. It is a perverse theatre for which Artaud discovered a cure from his experience of the Balinese performance, which exhibits ‘the absolute preponderance of the director (*metteur-en-scène*) whose creative power *eliminates words*’ (Artaud, 1958, p. 53, italics in original).

In place of words, Artaud demands an alternative language, the ‘language of *signs*’ and ‘a directly communicative *language*’ (Artaud, 1958, p. 107, italics in original), which involves the actor’s total organism. It is an immediate language constituted by the primordial action of the actor’s physical and vocal process, with which Artaud was struck in the Balinese performance:

... what is striking and disconcerting for Europeans like ourselves is the admirable intellectuality that one senses crackling everywhere in the close and subtle web of gestures, in the infinitely varied modulations of voice, in this sonorous rain resounding as if from an immense dripping forest, and the equally sonorous interlacing of movements. There is no transition from a gesture to a cry or a sound: all the senses interpenetrate, as if through strange channels hollowed out in the mind itself! (Artaud, 1958, p. 57)

Unlike the actor’s speech conveying the author’s text in the conventional Western theatre, the Balinese performers are ‘inventing a language of gesture to be developed in

space, a language without meaning except in the circumstances of the stage' (Artaud, 1958, p. 61), which, as if bestowed by supernatural beings, arises with the voice of the extraordinary power and ability to manipulate their vocal organs beyond the limits of ordinary people (Artaud, 1958, p. 60).²¹ In doing so, the Balinese performers appear as an entirety in which 'all these sounds are linked to movements, as if they [are] the natural consummation of gestures which have the same musical quality' (Artaud, 1958, p. 59). The theatre can restore its authenticity by means of the presence of the actor on stage, which is unmediated by words.

The immediate and visceral expression of the Balinese performers to Artaud's interpretation seems parallel to the vocal and physical work of the Laboratory's actors. However, there is a subtle but clear difference between Grotowski's actor and the Balinese performer. While acknowledging the 'fruitful' influence of Artaud's theory, Grotowski recognises that Artaud's analysis of the Balinese performance makes certain 'mistakes and misunderstandings' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 120). Artaud's theory is definitely 'fruitful' in the way of emphasising the necessity of a theatre, which is not trapped in the literary text of an author but stands alone with its own vitality coming from the live presence of the actor. At the same time, though, Artaud's somewhat extreme fascination with the Balinese performance leads to the complete denunciation of the dramatic literature in the Western theatrical tradition, which is a typical inclination of a blind admiration towards an exotic culture. Furthermore, Artaud, in being mesmerised too much by the primitive corporality of the Balinese performance, fails to understand that it is a collective creation of a different form of text, which is the performer's body. The performer's body is a text per se, which is a product of a unique cultural tradition;

²¹ Artaud's dismissal of the text of the Balinese performance could possibly originate from his inability to understand Balinese language. In this sense, it echoes Romanska's criticism on Grotowski scholars, who have focussed much more on the physicality of the Laboratory's productions than their literary text because the scholars are not able to understand Polish. See footnote 2 in this thesis.

thus, a new perception is necessary to grasp the meaning of text as well as its relationship with the actor's craft.

3. The Body-Text

As a matter of fact, contrary to Artaud's hostility towards the domination of the literary text in the theatre, Grotowski professed that he was an admirer of the time-honoured European literary tradition. For Grotowski (1968, p. 58), the legacy of the Western dramatic literature offered fertile resources for his artistic creation that was in need of 'confrontation' between the past and the present as well as between an artist and her/his self. The predicament of theatre being subordinate to literature does not just occur from the privileged text itself. It originates from the negligence of theatre artists who seek easy solutions for artistic issues presented in the theatre, the issues related to the unique characteristics of theatre as an art form happening in front of the spectator here and now. Even during his post-theatrical research, Grotowski (1987, p. 294) maintained such an attitude in positioning his experiments as a process to discover the 'secret' that the great authors of the Western literary tradition had left behind. Grotowski believed that the total rejection of literary text in the creation of a theatrical performance was as much a delusion as the 'theological theatre'. Thus, he asserted:

Faced with this literature, we can take up one of two positions:
 either, we can illustrate the text through the interpretation of
 the actors, the **mise en scène**, the scenery, the play situation ...
 in that case, the result is not theatre, and the only living
 element in such a performance is the literature. Or, we can
 virtually ignore the text, treating it solely as a pretext, making

interpolations and changes, reducing it to nothing. I feel that both of these two solutions are false ones, because in both cases we are not fulfilling our duties as artists, but trying to comply with certain rules – and art doesn't like rules (Grotowski, 1968, p. 56, bold in original).

Although he was already aware that it had been practiced for 'thousands of years', Artaud, in his excitement, overlooked the fact that the Balinese performance was the result of the distilled experiences of Balinese people expressed through their unique verbal and gestural language since their existence in the world. The repeated and time-consuming process of forming the performance leads the Balinese performers to establish their own sign system for their performative tradition, which only the people in their very society can understand. Such sign systems, as those found in ancient classical performative forms like the Chinese Opera and the Japanese Noh, embody unique symbols only known to the specific peoples, which are rigidly fixed according to the cultural convention of the societies. The sign system of the Balinese performance is a customary practice formed under 'a common sky of belief' in which the religious awareness is not separate from the everyday life.²² The fixed symbols, the abstract but rigorous codes for communication among the participants of the Balinese performance as well as between the participants and their religious objects in the special occasion, are the outcome of the enduring process of the transmission of the performative tradition for generations. This process of transmission requires the performer to transform her/his body into a cultured body by copying her/his master's body with extreme precision.

²² I Wayan Lendra explained the relationship of the Balinese artistic perception to their life in respects. For more details, see 'Bali and Grotowski: Some parallels in the Training Process' (Lendra, 1991, pp. 315–316).

It is the body of the performer that preserves a performative tradition.

Preservation means to fix the body, not to allow its spontaneous possibilities but to inscribe coded signs onto it. There is essentially no difference between a preserved body and a written text in terms of their function as a medium to hand down a value system of a society to next generations. It is a different form of fixed record that is as precise as words on paper. There is no chance for a performer to interpolate her/his urge into such an established text because it is not an individual's personal work but a collective ritual transmitted through the generations of masters according to the will of a god. What the performer can achieve in the process of transmission is the graceful skills of her/his body on one hand and, if lucky enough, the spiritual enlightenment raised by self-devotion to religious belief on the other. These kinds of achievements, in Grotowski's context observing the theatre of the contemporary society where the 'common sky of belief' is missing, do not have anything to do with the modern acting practice. Therefore, Grotowski (1968, p. 119) could not accept, as a substantial guide for the current European actor, the concept of 'the cosmic trance', which Artaud considered as the proof of the Balinese performer's authentic presence in communication with an absolute being of their belief.

Despite his dismissing the cosmic trance in the contemporary theatrical context, Grotowski, from Artaud's observation on the Balinese performance, grasped an efficacy of the fixed body, which offered a possibility for the actor to reach the goal of retaining her/his spontaneity. Grotowski (1968, p. 118) found in the fixed body of the Balinese performer a preliminary condition for creativity and spontaneity, 'a precision instrument' that makes it possible to perceive what is 'imperceptible'. The fixed bodies – the bodies with precisely coded movements – of Balinese performers, from their early ages, are established by the repetitive training guided by the masters; likewise, Grotowski's actors,

to be prepared with the precise line of scores, went over and over the same bodily movements. The difference between the act of the Balinese performer and that of Grotowski's actor is that the former is carried out in a particular cultural context of the Balinese, whereas the latter pursues to discover a universal significance from an individual's specific experiences. On the other hand, what matters in both the acts of the Balinese performer and Grotowski's actor is how the fixed body makes relationships with the spectator, thus, whether the performer can share 'the common sky' with her/his spectator. Even though the Balinese performative techniques cannot be used for modern European actors and spectators, the Balinese performer can be spontaneous in their cultural context as long as the role of the ritualistic performance maintains its function as a liturgical text that shapes the Balinese identity. Hence, the performer in the ritual acts as a priest who is the transmitter of the culture and becomes the cultural text her/himself by learning the art form. All the Balinese participants, both the performer and the spectator, can see through and in the performer's fixed body the presence of their gods during the performance. Being led by the power of the gods, the performer faithfully carries out every physical action and vocal incantation in the way in which her/his master taught her/him in believing that the gods will respond to her/his acts and voices. In the same way, the spectator experiences the gods' voice echoing from the performer's body, the same spiritual encounter with the gods as their ancestors have gone through. In this sense, the Balinese performance under their 'common sky of belief' is not a representation of an event but an event of the gods' presence itself that is experienced freshly in every occasion, which makes it possible for the act of the performer's fixed body to appear spontaneous. The Balinese performer's fixed body is the recorded decree of the gods. The gods are always present at the ritual whenever the sacred announcement is presented through the performer's actions. The Balinese performance is a vocal and

physical text that both the performer and the spectator can read and enjoy together anew. The spontaneity is possible in the Balinese performance because the Balinese people “‘know the liturgy’ well’ (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 49).

Unlike Artaud, Grotowski did not view the Balinese performance as an ideal because the Balinese performer’s body would have become fixed and sterile if it had been bluntly grafted on another cultural context. Nonetheless, the Balinese performance gave most instructive insight into how the actor’s spontaneity could be accomplished through the fixed and disciplined body. In short, the reasons that the Balinese performer could be spontaneous resulted from two conditions. First, it was ‘the common sky of belief’ shared by all the Balinese participants of the performance. And, second, it was the Balinese performer’s fixed body as another form of text, the rigorously disciplined body, that illustrated the Balinese common sky as having been established from generation to generation. In this sense, the fixed body of the Balinese performer is a *textualised* body, the inscription of their spirit constructed by the thoroughly refined body. Grotowski (1968, p. 125) concisely quotes from Artaud, ‘[c]ruelty is rigour’, emphasising that the actor is in imperative need of a disciplined – textualised – body.

Then, what is needed for the actor’s spontaneity in the theatre is a communal association among the participants of a performance and the actor’s textualised body. The textualised body in the theatre, as opposed to the fixed body that is petrified in being valid only in a specific context, is the precondition for spontaneity. Thus, an actor with the textualised body is:

The man who makes an act of self-revelation is, so to speak, one who establishes contact with himself. That is to say, an extreme confrontation, sincere, disciplined, precise and total –

not merely a confrontation with his thoughts, but one involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 56–57).

‘The man of self-revelation’ is an exceptionally susceptible being that is ready to accept and respond to all the internal and external incitements, especially coming from the spectator. When the actor in such susceptibility approaches, the spectator would also be willing to step forward with her/his innermost self. Then, the participants of a performance here and now encounter one another in a circumstance that is shrouded with a temporary common sky during the very moment of the performance. If the actor proposes something that penetrates the heart of the spectator, a common sky can be created between the actor and the spectator. In addition, to suggest the penetrating issues, the actor should possess a body as much textualised as – or as rigorously disciplined as – the body of the Balinese performer. Through the textualised body that is the bodily inscription of the actor’s personal narratives in association with her/his historical and cultural heritages recorded in literature, folklore, memory, etc., the spectator would be provoked and would respond with her/his true self. In other words, the empathetic resonance created between the spectator and the actor about the issues presented in the performance is the last and indispensable element to accomplish the textualised body.

It is somewhat ironic that spontaneity should be found in the textualised body, i.e., in the evolved form of the fixed body. Though, it is the strong affirmation of the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* that is to be understood in the irony. The actor’s disciplined body is the source of a performance as the body of the Balinese performer is a text containing their religious tradition. What can guarantee the actor’s spontaneity on stage is the rigorously disciplined body, which is a textualised body. In turn, what can

guarantee the actor's textualised body not to remain as a fixed and sterile hieroglyphic record is the actor's spontaneous encounter and direct confrontation with diverse texts, i.e., the cultural, social, and historical sources. With the textualised body of spontaneity attained through discipline, the actor possibly becomes 'representations collectives [*sic*]', which is a concept generated by various pairs of opposites such as 'fascination and excessive negation, acceptance and rejection, ... profanation and worship' (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 42–43).

I would call this textualised body the *body-text*. It is the consequence of the actor's effort to absorb text as a product of human civilisation that, once existing outside, becomes a part of the actor. The body-text is a biological edifice through which human experiences as a whole are reactivated. The body-text contains all that is necessary for creative work in a theatrical performance. An actor who actualises the body-text is the one who 'is reborn – not only as an actor but as a man' and gets others to '[be] reborn' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 25). The body-text, then, is an abstract world as well as a concrete individual, both of which are the material for construction, the spirit of operation, the warmth of blood, the cool of reason, and so on. In this sense, the body-text echoes the self of a human being from the Daoist perspective, a being who is worth the entire world.

Respecting your body as the world,

You can be given the world,

Loving your body as the world,

You can be entrusted with the world. (Ch. 13)

It is the body that is not confined to the desire imposed by the society but connected directly to the nature's vitality away from the artificial institutionalisation (Choi, 2006, pp.

114–115). One who cherishes her/his own body can retain in her/himself the principle of the world, Dao. Thus, if I may be allowed to appropriate the Derridean remark, ‘*there is nothing outside the text*’, it could be said that *there is everything inside the body-text*.

Consequently, Grotowski’s dealing with text as a ‘springboard’ for the actor to create her/his performance should be understood in a new perspective. Contrary to the already established understanding that Grotowski considered text as a subordinate material to the actor’s physical endeavour, text, to him, is such a springboard without which the actor cannot jump high enough. In this sense, text is not just printed words on papers but the extended part of the body that the actor should comprehensively explore as her/his physical body is investigated. In Flaszen’s testimony:

[Grotowski] takes liberties with the text. He cuts, he transposes. But he never indulges in personal interpolation. He lovingly preserves the charm of the words and watches carefully to see that they are spoken (Flaszen quoted in Barba, 1965, p. 76).

For this reason, the ‘textual montage’, the way in which Grotowski collaged literary texts from diverse sources according to his needs, is not an arbitrary adaptation of text. In Grotowski’s theatrical context, the actor selected literary sources to project her/his own experiences, which means to ‘build bridges between the past and [her]/himself’ (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 53). In other words, the textual montage was a way to create the body-text, a process that a written text imbued into the actor’s body and became an element of forging the actor’s true self. In this relationship, any attempt to separate body and text misses the point. It is impossible to draw a fine line between them.

Thus, it is not text that creates the theological theatre. But, the artists who willingly give up their responsibility hide behind the sham authority of an author.

In the process whereby the actor's body is being ingrained with text, the vocal exercise of the Laboratory was given a central role. The actor's voice transforms dead words into tangible actions that come alive in her/his body. It is the integrated channel of expressing her/his body-text. Grotowski claimed:

... when an actor does externalize his biological or physical impulses, the last phase of it, the apex of it, is expressed through the text – through words. I ask actors for total expression of this process of physical and biological impulses. “The total act” is total self-revelation in a moment of extreme honesty. When that happens, there is room for words. At that point, words are unavoidable; what is produced then is a supra-language, the base of which is derived from the biological and the physical. We cannot say, therefore, that we are for or against language, just as in life, we are not for or against language. We live with language, but not only with language.

(Croyden, 1969, pp. 85–86)

Text, which has been considered alien to the actor, becomes a part of the actor in relating itself to the actor's innermost self. When the actor intimately associates a text with her/his experience in the physical action and the psychological impulse, the text turns into a materialised voice and springs out as the most truthful revelation of the actor's being, which is the action called the ‘total act’. From this perception on the relationship of the

actor's total act to the body and text, Grotowski (1968, p. 183) drew one of the important principles in the actor's vocal training, 'Bodily activity comes first, and then vocal expression. ... First you bang on the table and afterwards you shout'! This principle does not simply emphasise the primary importance of the physical action prior to speech. Rather, it indicates that speech is the final manifestation of the actor's body; therefore, text expressed through the actor's voice is nothing but a physical action.

While reconstructing the relationship of the actor's voice to the body and text in embodying the materiality of the voice and animating text, Grotowski paid attention to the phenomenon that is the exact opposite of sound, silence. In the documentation of the actor training in 1966, Grotowski emphasised silence in the 'vocal' exercises before getting into the actual exercises. Whenever silence was infringed during the exercises, repeated emphasis was placed on it. Although Grotowski (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, pp. 43–44) related the necessity of silence to the ethical responsibility of the actor in the work with her/his colleagues, silence meant more than the obligatory attitude of seriousness in the creative work. Thus, Grotowski further elaborated:

There is also the problem of creative passivity. It's difficult to express, but the actor must begin by doing nothing. Silence. Full silence. This includes his thoughts. External silence works as a stimulus. If there is absolute silence and if, for several moments, the actor does absolutely nothing, this internal silence begins and it turns his entire nature toward its sources. (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 45)

Grotowski considered silence as a decisive aspect of the actor's creative process and expanded the external silence of the working environment to the silence of the actor's inner state. If the art of acting is a sublime journey in which the actor is confronted with her/his true self at the deepest level and the process of discovering the body-text that mobilises the spectator's psychological transformation, the actor's work is to grasp the sources of her/his being that lurk in the flesh and blood. The body, in this sense, is the seed of creativity, which inherently retains the potential of the body-text. The actor can actualise the potential of the body-text in renewing the smallest and subtlest physical senses slumbering in her/his body. This process requires the most definitive silence, which, in Grotowski's context, produces 'a trance of concentration' (Barba, 1965, p. 81), 'the ability to concentrate in a particular theatrical way and can be attained with a minimum of goodwill' (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 37–38).

As opposed to Artaud's mystical concept of the 'cosmic trance', Grotowski perceived 'trance' as the actor's psychological state to be able to associate with and to establish contact with her/his internal state and external circumstances. Trance is not a state of transcendental ecstasy in the communication with a supernatural being but the actor's psychological and physical concentration accomplished in association with the concrete 'points of reference' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 119), i.e., the outer stimulations around her/him and her/his impulses. Grotowski argued:

The true pivotal point of an actor's ability to act is his readiness for trance or rather concentration. I mean a concentration that has nothing to do with a confused application to the tasks of his work, nor with a generic excitement generated by 'stage fright', nor with a cold and

calculating technique. The actor should introduce his scenic actions into a ‘hot’, ‘soft’, and nearly passive mental attitude out of which grows his active score. [...] It is untrue to say that it is impossible to reach this kind of concentration and that one does not need to practice it. The truth is that it requires systematic and precise exercises, always linked to a concrete task (it is impossible to concentrate in general, one is always concentrated on something specific). (Grotowski quoted in Ruffini, 1998–99, p. 100, parenthesis in original)

In this trance of concentration, the actor acts and reacts in the most elementary and instinctual level without filtering anything, arousing the body’s spontaneous responses to inner and outer stimulations. The trance of concentration is a state of taut equilibrium in which the actor keeps her/his mental and corporeal condition alert and ready to react. Then, trance is the actor’s state that Grotowski called a ‘passive readiness’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 17). The creative passivity is the actor’s optimum state producing authentic action, the total act, which is finally expressed through words by the actor’s voice. In this process, silence functions as the entrance to step forward to the hidden possibilities of the actor’s body and mind. Through silence, the actor’s voice can be manifested. Grotowski’s awareness of *conjunctio oppositorum*, in this way, is related to the phrase in *Dao De Jing*, ‘The great sound has no voice’ (Ch. 41).

In the actor training constructed on the perception of *conjunctio oppositorum*, the *exercices plastiques*, which focus on the opposite forces inside the body, elevate the actor’s bodily sensitivity up to the level of immediately turning the ‘inner impulse’ to the ‘outer reaction’ by means of diminishing ‘the time lapse’ between them (Grotowski, 1968,

p. 16). And, the actor's body performing the 'series of visible impulses' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 16) builds a strong connection with the spectator by the voice through which text, once considered as the opposite of the actor's physicality, is transformed into a part of the actor's body. The actor with this transformed text is the body-text, a paradoxical being who is an inheritor of her/his cultural traditions, on one hand, and an individual emancipating her/himself from the social mask imposed by the cultural and traditional conventions, on the other.

The actor as the body-text in the performance reveals her/himself in another conjunction of the opposites, which comprises the structures of the bodily expressions disclosed to the spectator and the evanescent psychological urges running underneath the structures. Ryszard Cieslak testified in his own experience about how the two opposites work in an actor's performance:

The score is like the glass inside which a candle is burning.

The glass is solid, it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night. The flame is what illuminates the score, what the spectators see through the score. The flame is alive. Just as the flame in the candle-glass moves, flutters, rises, falls, almost goes out, suddenly glows brightly, responds to each breath of wind – so my inner life varies from night to night, from moment to moment. The way I feel an association, the interior sense of my voice or a movement of finger, I begin each night without anticipations. This is the hardest thing to learn. I do not prepare myself to feel anything. I do not say,

“Last night, this scene was extraordinary, I will try to do that again.” I want only to be receptive to what will happen. And I am ready to take what happens if I am secure in my score, knowing that, even if I feel a minimum, the glass will not break, the objective structure worked out over the months will help me through. But when a night comes that I can glow, shine, live, reveal – I am ready for it by not anticipating it. The score remains the same, but everything is different because I am different. (Cieslak quoted in Schechner, 1988, p. 47)

The score is the mainstay preventing the actor from an emotional chaos possibly occurring from arbitrary impulses during the performance. In the chaos, the actor loses the spontaneity of the body-text and fails to perform as ‘representations collectives’. It means that the actor degrades the body-text to the level of a self-indulging individual, who cannot establish any connection with the spectator. Thus, Grotowski claimed that *conjunctio oppositorum* is:

... knowledge that spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves; that what is elementary feeds what is constructed and vice versa, to become the real source of a kind of acting that glows.

(Grotowski, 1968, p. 121)

The concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* was the principal perception, which shows how Grotowski’s research on the art of acting is related to the notion of *Dao De Jing*.

Grotowski approached the art of acting in excavating the diverse contradictory aspects of the body and its association with the elements of theatre art. Contradiction is where the vitality of the theatre arises. Grotowski did not try to evade the conflict between pairs of opposites by forcefully harmonising and unifying them; instead, he passionately accepted that contradiction was the source of an actor's creativity. The collision between opposites is what makes the art of acting able to touch the soul of a human being. The concept of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which is derived from Grotowski's very personal disposition, also became the backbone of the theatrical productions of the Theatre Laboratory. The themes and characters of the productions during his Theatre of Productions phase were built on the struggle between opposites, which *Dao De Jing* appreciates as the mode of existence of the world.

Ch. III: The Worlds Created in Contradiction

1. Grotowski in *Conjunctio Oppositorum*

The body-text is the totality of the actor's being, on which the collective values shared by all the participants of a performance are engraved, and which appears through the actor's intense communication with her/his innermost self. It is also established through the actor's physical and psychological endeavour in which s/he tries to permeate into the cultural and traditional heritage transmitted from her/his ancestors. Provided that the body-text is what Grotowski's experiments on the actor's craft has built with the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, the theatrical productions of the Theatre Laboratory are its embodiment conducted in the presence of the spectator. Thus, the body-text is not only the outcome of the actor's technical venture but also the manifestation of the thematic issues of the Laboratory's theatrical productions.

In search of the body-text in collaboration with the actors of the Laboratory, Grotowski enduringly worked with the Western heritage and literary traditions in making his theatrical productions. In totally rejecting the role of theatre as the literary reading of dramatic works on stage, Grotowski dealt with literature as a springboard for the actor's artistic creation. Despite considering it as a secondary element in theatre, Grotowski was well aware that literature is a quintessential product of the whole human experience, the accumulated heritage that forms the actor as a social and cultural being and, at the same time, the indispensable springboard for the actor to leap beyond her/his limitation framed in the hierarchical society. Thus, when it is said that the actor is put to the test through a performance, it means that the values presented in a literary work are also re-examined through the act of the actor. Conversely speaking, the textual montage and modification of the works of the eminent authors in the performances of the Theatre Laboratory are not

only a subversive critique of the old values but also an effort to reconfigure the actor's body and mind that may have been fettered by them; in doing so, the performance could also offer the spectator an opportunity to rediscover her/his true self buried under such outdated values.

In questioning the validity of the existing values manifested in the Western literary classics, which has been based on Cartesian dualism and Newtonian determinism, Grotowski found an inevitable discrepancy between the past and the present. Grotowski said:

In my work as a producer, I have therefore been tempted to make use of archaic situations sanctified by tradition, situations (within the realms of religion and tradition) which are taboo. I felt a need to confront myself with these values. They fascinated me, filling me with a sense of interior restlessness, while at the same time I was obeying a temptation to blaspheme: I wanted to attack them, go beyond them, or rather confront them with my own experience which is itself determined by the collective experience of our time.

(Grotowski, 1968, p. 22)

Grotowski was hovering between his fascination about the literary masterpieces and temptation to defy the values championed by them. He believed that one should reflect on the past to be here and now. The honest face of human existence could emerge from the conflict between the present and the past, both of which are the essential constituents of a being. Grotowski confronted the reality of human existence through this inner

conflict, which would never be resolved in harmony but would continue in a painful encounter.

Consequently, Grotowski's career during the Theatre of Productions phase, even though recklessly challenging the moral values inscribed in traditional conventions, appears to a considerable extent to be based in the Western traditions whose religious and philosophical notions were established according to a deterministic worldview. In fact, the theatrical productions of the Theatre Laboratory in the 1960s, with only one exception of *Shakuntala* from the Indian origin, were mostly based on the literary works of either Poland or Europe where the life and death of people could not be imagined without Christianity. The Laboratory's productions were repeatedly related to such Biblical themes as the conflict between good and evil or the life of a martyr voluntarily sacrificing her/himself for saintly causes. It is more than natural that an artist like Grotowski, who thought that an individual is never detached from her/his cultural background, focussed on the themes originating from one of the most pervasive legacies of the Western culture.

However, what the moral teachings from the Western cultural heritage gave Grotowski was unavoidable questions, which were expressed in his desire to know the meaning of human existence institutionally reified in Western consciousness and the self-deception enforced by rationalism, scientism, Christianity, etc. He was suspicious of the values established in the topoi of the great literary and religious works of the West. Grotowski refused to reiterate the authoritative preaching of the prevailing moralities on the surface of the literary works; instead, he tried to disclose the subversive underlying values that the authorities of Western consciousness ignored and suppressed in their moral didacticism. The heroic acts and the victorious justice praised in the Western classics were put on the surgical table and dissected. The meaning of the triumph of good

over evil and the holy sacrifice of a martyr were re-evaluated in the context of the present situation, in which the individual conscience was substituted for Christian moral codes.

When Grotowski problematised the predominant values of the Western society and sought alternatives in other cultural traditions, the Daoist notions, which he had acquired from his personal curiosity and maternal influences, must, wittingly or unwittingly, have entered his works and intermingled with his cultural heritage. Daoism is a philosophical view and principle of life that he came across as a child and rediscovered from his familial legacy in his artistic research on theatre. *Conjunctio oppositorum*, which was born from the mixture of the heterogeneous traditions, was the structural pillar of the productions of the Theatre Laboratory. Under the perspective of *conjunctio oppositorum*, the themes of the Laboratory's productions are expressed in two ways: the ambivalent appearance of the world that cannot be grasped in definite terms and the existential dilemma of the human being who drifts in such a world.

2. The Philosophy of the (Un)resolvable Problem

In their first season in Opole, Poland, Grotowski and his collaborators were in a hurry to stage a performance to inaugurate the Theatre Laboratory. Ironically, this hectic situation allowed Grotowski to reveal, in most conspicuous way, his perception of the macroscopic structure of the ambivalent world that could be observed from the perspective of *conjunctio oppositorum*. It is well known that the Laboratory's first production, *Orpheus* by Jean Cocteau, premiered on 8 October 1959, was prepared in a limited rehearsal time of less than three weeks, and Grotowski planned every detail of the performance before the beginning of the rehearsals. The situation provoked scornful criticism considering the production as a 'statement of intent' and 'a short philosophy course' (Mykita-Glensk quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 20). As the criticism points out, the

production explicitly shows Grotowski's attempt to create a world in tension between the pairs of opposites in various ways. However, this thematic point was not entirely Grotowski's original invention but something that was actually inherent in the play. Grotowski merely accentuated it and emphasised it above the original intention of the author. Instead of emphasising the 'absurdity of life' that the playwright is most concerned with, Grotowski seemed to be rather interested in the root from which the absurdity originated.

Jerzy Grotowski's (and through him the theatre group's) staging aspires to show a contemporary audience the complexity of the world, the continuous battle between chaos and order, how the blind powers of the elements are organized by the human mind; the pulsation of human life between tragedy and the grotesque, between seriousness and ridiculousness. ... The performance speaks to this in the motif between the Horse of Absurdity and Heurtebis, the personification of rational order; it speaks to this in the whole motif of death, the destroyer of power which is itself powerless in the face of human courage, reason and love ... (Flaschen, 2010, p. 58)

The absurdity of the world does not have a singular root that causes the existential problems. It could rather be said that it is an inevitable appearance of the world in the perpetual process of the encounter and struggle between the pairs of opposites. To Grotowski, the perception that the process of the clash between opposites is the world

itself can offer a clue to understand the absurdity of the world, which is the awareness that accepts the world as absurd, and that 'hope can be found somewhere between the two extremes of reality: the tragic and the grotesque' (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 21).

From the subsequent production, *Cain* by Byron, which opened on 30 January 1960, the world again appears with no solution for the grave experience of disorientation and despair. The world exists in all its problems and contradictions. But, there is always the yearning for the human capability to realise the mode of existence of the world as nothing but the confrontation between opposites. Thus, the performance is the arena for polemical instigation raised by the confrontation.

The issues in Byron's drama deal with religious mutiny, but Grotowski's production treats them on purely secular grounds. God is replaced by a blind and ruthless Alpha, personification of the elements and the automatism of nature's powers. Instead of Lucifer there is Omega, personification of reason, the anxiety of the human consciousness. Forms of a cult and cultish ethics are brought to the level of the absurd.

Grotowski's attitude towards the issues of Byron's *Cain* and, as a result, his attempts to solve them, differ from the poet's approach. For Byron, human existence is tainted with an absolute condition of 'no-exitness'; there is only a tragic pathos. Grotowski processes this tragic aspect of human life through the filter of derision and self-irony. This seems to be the result of knowing our own relativity, and understanding the

fact that a human cannot live isolated from the powers of nature and interpersonal relationships. Thus the pathos of absolute pessimism, just like the pathos of absolute optimism, deserves derision. Therefore the form the staging takes is unstable and changeable, moving from seriousness to mockery, from tragedy to the grotesque. (Flaszen, 2010, pp. 60–61)

Realising that there is no solution is the solution. Grotowski saw, in the character of Cain who is treated as a ‘tragic fighting humanist’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 60) in the original, both the heroic act against and the derisory fear of God’s order, which are the hidden and restrained desire of the ordinary people. The genuine confrontation between these bare facts of human existence is the only ‘hope’, whereas Byron’s original play declares ‘no-exitness’ and goes towards the existential destruction of humanity.

The confrontation of opposites continued to appear in the subsequent productions, *Mystery-Bouffe* by Vladimir Mayakovsky premiered on 31 July 1960 and *Shakuntala*, an ancient drama by an Indian poet Kalidasa, premiered on 13 December 1960. Grotowski, in treating *Mystery-Bouffe* as ‘popular forms of folk art by interweaving horror and the grotesque’, displayed ‘the dialectic collisions of reality’ and ‘the world in a state of constant flux and becoming’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 64). *Shakuntala* also showed ‘some duality to contrast matters of love with their dialectical opposite’ in the clear confrontation between the ‘sublime love poetry’ and ‘the blunt prose of rituals, moral norms and sexual prescriptions’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 65). As Grotowski (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 49) remarked, the process of putting the Indian drama on stage was ‘the construction of opposites: intellectual play in spontaneity, seriousness in the grotesque, derision in pain’. The confrontation of these diverse opposites is not the source of an

acrimonious struggle in which one expels the other, but it is the disclosure of the fact of their coexistence: how they perceive themselves and their opposites, and how they accommodate each other. There is no clear discrimination between the two. One is reflected on the other. Or, one's true face is being somewhere on the road towards the other. Or, even one is another name of the other. It is a world based on the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which 'is complex and pulsates between pitch-blackness and brightness' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 61). The world in 'pitch-blackness and brightness' reverberates, as explained earlier in the previous chapter, in the indiscernible appearance of Dao, which reveals itself in vagueness (恍, *huǎng*) caused by too much light and indistinctness (惚, *hū*) caused by insufficient light.

In addition, *Shakuntala* provided the Theatre Laboratory with some important momentums for its future research. It was the first production of the Laboratory that the stage architect Jerzy Gurawski joined in. In collaboration with Gurawski, Grotowski broadened his experiment on the possibility of utilising the performance space to construct various levels of the actor's contact with the spectator. Also, it was during the rehearsal of *Shakuntala* that, according to Flaszen (quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 31), the Laboratory became aware of the needs for actor's exercises apart from the rehearsal and performance. Particularly, Grotowski (quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 51) mentioned that during the preparation of *Shakuntala*, in its performative nature alien to the European actors, arose the need for the actor's vocal exercises, which later evolved into an integral part of the actor's exercises of the Theatre Laboratory as well as the principal element of the post-theatrical research.

Even though they were to derive from the period from 1959 to 1962, the actor's exercises illustrated in the first documentation among the two in *Towards a Poor Theatre* were virtually developed during the three productions after *Shakuntala*. In the period

extending from its second to fourth season, the Theatre Laboratory carried out the most radical experiments on the actor training and its performance strategies. As Kumiega (1985, p. 38) pointed out, the Laboratory's awareness of the necessity of the actor training and exercises was accompanied by a shift of thematic issues, which resulted in the so-called 'collision with the roots', 'the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis', and 'religion expressed through blasphemy...' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 22). It was a logical move entailed by the Laboratory's experiments on the actor's art and the reestablishment of the actor/spectator relationship, the bases of the true human interaction in the theatre to which the Laboratory aspired after all.

3. The Contemporary Ritual of the Romantic Trilogy

Having manifested his 'philosophical intent' about the world in conjunction of opposites during the earliest period of his career, Grotowski investigated the elements of ritual in the three productions subsequent to *Shakuntala*, which could be called *the contemporary ritual of the Romantic trilogy – Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)* by Adam Mickiewicz premiered on 6 June 1961, *Kordian* by Juliusz Slowacki premiered on 14 February 1962, and *Akropolis* by Stanislaw Wyspianski premiered on 10 October 1962, all of which were written by prominent Polish Romantic authors. These Romantic dramas portrayed the Polish national pride of the patriotic resistance against foreign oppressors and of the majestic cultural achievements, which are fundamentally based on the idealised values of the Western culture. In staging the plays, however, the Theatre Laboratory tried to re-examine those values and to cast a light on the changed implication of the values to its contemporary spectators. In drawing attention to human beings whose noble causes are betrayed by their people and who are destroyed in the crematorium created by the so-called civilised society, the three productions of the

Laboratory pinpoint the vanity of the lofty values upheld by the long-standing moral systems. Behind the brilliance of the Western civilisation, which the traditional moral systems proclaim as their achievement, its bare face is in fact nothing but the disintegration of humanity, which is shown in the tragic failure of the heroes and the horrific gas chamber. Grotowski, in reconsidering the tradition of Polish Romantic idealism, asks his compatriot Poles – and other audiences as well – a question about the validity of such values in the contemporary society and provokes them to face the other side of their cultural achievement.

Along with his reinvestigation on the established values of the Western society in the productions, the earliest development of the body-text began from this trilogy, in which a ritualistic communion between the actor and the spectator can easily be found. In fact, what at first sight distinguishes the three productions of this period most from the previous productions is the arrangement of their performance spaces, which transform the dramatic actions of the original plays into ritualistic events. In the ritualistic settings, two likely effects could be expected in terms of the spectatorship. First, it unifies the conventionally separated spaces of a theatrical event, the stage and the auditorium; thus, the contact between the actor and the spectator occurs on the most personal level. The extreme physical proximity between the actor and the spectator offers the possibility of a more intimate emotional exchange. Second, being situated closer to the actor and the action of the performance, the spectator becomes more conscious of her/his fellow spectators interacting with the actors; thereby, a spectator could find her/himself to be more engaged in the action of the performance. Under the effects of the ritualistic performance space, the issues brought up in the performance tackle not only the life of the characters of the fabricated story but also the life of the spectator in reality. In this process, the actor's proposition and the spectator's response to the proposition create the

temporary 'common sky', which is established by the textualised body, the actor's body in which the past and present coexists as a tangible reality of the collective experiences of all the participants in the performance.

The Theatre Laboratory's early development of the body-text as the modern actor's mode of existence is derived from the assumption that theatre was engendered from ritual (Flaszen, 2010, p. 67). The Laboratory tested the hypothesis through the Romantic trilogy, which in retrospect functioned as preparatory works for a deeper investigation of the actor/spectator relationship later. Through each production of the trilogy, the ritualistic is clearly submerged under the theatrical. In the modern theatre where an authentic ritual congregation is impossible, Grotowski searched for a theatre that makes the impossible possible.

In the first production of the trilogy, *Dziady*, by restoring the classical Romantic play to 'a peasant ritual' that is the playwright's original motif (Burzynski and Osinski, 1979, p. 20), Grotowski moved back and forth between the metaphorical and the actual, as a shamanic organiser of a ritual adeptly possesses as well as releases the physical and psychological state of the spectator. In the performance, the spectators were located at seemingly random places throughout the performance space. Some were seated surrounding space like the onlookers of an attraction in a market square, and others were put in the middle of the square as if accidentally intermingled with a street parade. The actors freely moved throughout the spectator-filled space, trying to directly involve the spectators in the action. In such a spatial environment, the spectators were forced to deal with the direct confrontation with the actors. Accordingly, the physical proximity generates a psychical encounter between the actor and the spectator on the most intimate level. The spectator's psychological vulnerability set up by the structural condition of the performance space offers her/him a completely different experience as opposed to the

somewhat godlike power of the conventional spectator with the omniscient point of view over the performance. The spectator of *Dziady* spontaneously senses the presence of the actors, who are not so much fictitious characters of a story as fellow human beings with flesh and blood.

Faced with the request for her/his active participation in the performance, the spectator of *Dziady* directly confronted the predicament of the protagonist, Gustav-Konrad, who is tortured because of his romantic heroism to sacrifice himself for the fate of his nation. This heroic act, however, is presented with the playful parody of the most sacred, which turns the tragic writhing into a quixotic recklessness. For example, when Gustav-Konrad walks about amidst the audience with a broomstick on his neck metaphorically signifying the cross of Christ, he drips off virtual blood that is actually the actor's sweat. Grotowski explains the aim of such an allegorical juxtaposition in the performance:

Gustav-Konrad's monologue was made similar to the Stations of the Cross. He moves from viewer to viewer, like Christ His pain is supposed to be authentic, his mission of salvation sincere, even full of tragedy; but his reactions are naïve, close to a childish drama of incapacity. The point is to construct a specific theatrical dialect: of ritual and play, the tragic and the grotesque. (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 54)

The parodied portrayal of the hero reveals that the Christ-like sacrifice of Gustav-Konrad could be the folly of an over-confident fool. Along with the hero's tragic fate, the most

sacred event in the European mind is also unreservedly questioned. And, the questioning is finalised in Gustav-Konrad's denunciation of God, calling Him 'Tsar of the world' 'whose gospel will not become the foundation for any church' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 82). The aim of the profanity is not to insult the sacred but to suggest a perception that 'truth can never be found in an ultimate form' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 68). The only certain truth is that there is no absolute truth, but the truth acknowledging the existence of the world as it is without the help of a transcendental force.

The subsequent production, *Kordian*, played a variation on the theme, which elaborates how the truth reveals itself to the world. The production of *Kordian*, as *Dziady* did, also depicts the downfall of a hero, who is labelled as a madman due to his reckless yearning for truth that is impossible to be realised. In his effort to reach an ultimate truth, the protagonist, Kordian, decides to sacrifice himself for the fate of his people, and therefore, attempts to assassinate the Tsar. He fails, is sent to the insane asylum, and is finally condemned to death. While the original intention of the author might investigate the psychological struggle of an individual between the pursuit of moral perfection and the scepticism about it (Kumiega, 1985, p. 55), the production of the Laboratory unhesitatingly expresses that the protagonist with the adamant determination is 'either a childish hero or a heroic madman' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 85). The oxymoronic adumbrations disclose the way in which the truth emerges in front of the world:

Romantic madness is not a falsity that deserves nothing but laughter; it is an odd form of the truth – just like the strict limitations of common sense are another odd form of the truth. The grotesque is the aesthetic equivalent of this oddness. Our staging of *Kordian* is a grotesque tragedy – or a tragic

grotesque – about the misery and the greatness of human striving. (Flaschen, 2010, p. 85)

The romantic morality of the headlong heroism exposes the frailty of humanity rather than the spiritual strength of the noble hero; thus, the sacrificial penance of the protagonist is not only tragic but also grotesque. *Kordian* is a paradoxical being in conjunction of both ‘misery and greatness’. His uplifting sacrifice comes along with megalomaniac psychosis. Hence, Grotowski expanded a specific scene of the mental asylum in the original play into the basic concept to construct the performance space for the entire production.

By constructing the performance space of the entire action of *Kordian* as a psychiatric ward, Grotowski revised the implication of ritual in the modern theatre, moving away from the straightforward adoption of the ‘peasant ritual’ in *Dziady*. Basically, *Kordian* follows the concept of the ritualistic spatial arrangement of *Dziady* – the elimination of the distinction between the stage and the auditorium. Yet, the specific indoor psychiatric ward in *Kordian* ensues a different actor/spectator relationship from that of *Dziady*, which is established by the random openness of a village square. In *Kordian*, the spectators are scattered throughout the entire performance space, which is furnished with the chairs and the bunk beds of a hospital. The spectators are seated on and around the furniture and unwittingly assume such roles as patients for psychiatric treatment, the doctors and nurses of the hospital, or even witnesses of the treatment. Intermingling with the actors, the spectators are expected to go through the same experiences, indirectly though, as those of the actors of the performance (Temkine, 1972, p. 87).

In such structural arrangement of the performance space, the actors and the spectators are put into unusual circumstances. The actors, who must interact with the inexperienced and involuntary dramatic characters – the spectators – in the extreme physical intimacy, are at every moment obliged to adapt themselves in accordance with the spontaneous (re)action of the spectators. In the intimate confrontation with the actors' challenge, the spectators are also more conscious that they directly influence as well as are influenced by the actors in the performance. More importantly, the spatial arrangement of *Kordian* requires the spectators to perform a dual task as both the observer and the observed. A spectator is invited to observe others (re)acting to the actors' performance; at the same time, the spectator's (re)action to the actors' performance is observed by others.

In this sense, the performance space is a ground for the spectators of *Kordian* to experience 'a mutual game between reality and fiction' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 75). Flaszen continues:

Theatre is the reality on which the first level of fiction grows: all those present in the room are patients from the psychiatric clinic. Yet it is not a fiction that is faithful to the hospital reality in any literal sense; the hospital is intentionally weird, as if seen in a nightmare. The acting – 'artificial' in its dancing and gymnastic character – is supposed to intensify this mood of unreality. Out of the hospital reality a new fiction grows: *Kordian's* actual plot, presented as a collective hallucination that reveals the truth of human misery and greatness. (Flaszen, 2010, p. 75)

‘The game’ is multilayered. The theatre is a tangible reality, where the dramatic fiction of the psychiatric ward is set. The fiction of the psychiatric ward is transposed into a reality in which the spectators, at the moment and place, are experiencing the dramatic action as the imposed dramatic characters of clinical personnel or patients. Also, through the spectators’ participation in the dramatic action, the peculiar reality of the deluded hero creates another reality, a reality of the ‘collective hallucination’ of both the actors and the spectators. The realities of the performance are created from the spectators’ spontaneous reception of and reaction to the fictions that the actors present here and now.

The arrangement of the performance space and the transposition from the fictions to the realities resulted in a unique spectatorship, which Flaszen (2010, pp. 74–75) described as ‘a necessary contemporary “distance” and a modern tragic dimension’. The contemporary distance in the spectatorship of the production is achieved by the spatial configuration composed of both the ritualistic and the theatrical elements, which stimulates the spectators’ psychophysical reality in the theatre. The spatial arrangement of *Kordian* not only generates the physical intimacy of ritual by merging the stage and the auditorium but also preserves a certain psychological detachment between the actor and the spectator in the conventional theatre by interposing the scenic structure of the hospital furniture in the integrated space of stage/auditorium. This spatial arrangement is a condition in which the contemporary tragic dimension is presented as the multilayered transposition from the fictions to the realities. Thereby, the experiences of the protagonist whose sublime cause ends up falling into madness reaches the spectators as an authentic reality.

The constructing of the ‘contemporary distance and tragic dimension’ is a process in which the elements of ritual are fused with the conventions of the theatre. The process

is an effort to maintain the conventional theatrical setting, which is the accepted custom to the modern theatre audience, and, at the same time, to keep the ritualistic spontaneity. In the process, the spectator keeps adjusting her/his perspective on the production, in which s/he would associate the dramatic fictions with her/his present life in the performance. This entire process of constructing the production of *Kordian* could be called the pseudo-ritual of theatricality. It is a process of reciprocally alternating between ritual and theatre, which transforms the modes of the performance according to the spectator's perception. In the pseudo-ritual of theatricality, ritualistic elements are theatricalised in the spectator's 'gaze' who is preoccupied with a theatrical performance space; in return, theatrical fictions become palpable realities – ritualistic spontaneity – to the spectator affected by the ritualistic environment.²³ Therefore, through their spontaneous experience – the experience of the game between fiction and reality, the spectators of *Kordian* are expected, rather than to feel pity or to be purged by the protagonist's agony, to discover their true faces, which are no different from the protagonist's contradictory existence vacillating between high integrity and pathetic naivety.

In their discovery, the spectators would realise that their own frailty is what makes a human being as human being, who 'could identify the suffering with the object of our constant searching' (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 54). Grotowski stated:

The essence of this play is that he who is the most sick, that is,
Kordian, is sick by virtue of the fact that he is noble. The
person who is least ill, the Doctor who handles the treatment, is

²³ Josette Féral (2002, p. 97) tentatively defined theatricality as 'a *process* that has to do with a "gaze" that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, from which fiction can emerge'. In this perspective, the reciprocal transformation between ritual and theatre can be viewed in association with the spectator's gaze.

one who is reasonable and full of common sense, but insidiously healthy. Of course, this is the paradox or contradiction we often encounter in life: whenever we want to directly realize great values, we become mad, crazy.... Yet if we want to remain sensible, we are not in a position to realize great values. Therefore, we walk the seemingly right path with our common sense. We do not become madmen; we remain healthy and are pleased with our good health. I believe that when we ask basic questions, or even one basic question because perhaps only one really exists, it is easy to end up being considered a madman, just as Kordian is in the play. And maybe we will be madmen, which is what happens to Kordian, in spite of his loftiness. (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 64)

The inexorable paradox is the true nature of life. This paradox of life echoes to Dao's appearance as 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*, vague and indistinct). Dao, as discussed in the previous chapter, reveals itself in the two opposite qualities: the vagueness in too much light and the indistinctness in insufficient light. Yet, the adjective phrase 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*) also means enchanting, ecstatic, in the state of trance, etc. in everyday language of the East Asian cultures sharing the Chinese character. The phrase describes someone or something mesmerising people into a state of rapture. When it is said that life is 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*), it means that life is indescribably captivating and great. Thus, life, which is governed by the principles of Dao, is enchanting because it is in such contradiction as 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*) – vague and indistinct.

The enchanting life in the paradoxical nature is given a bizarre eulogy in the next production, *Akropolis*, which was the last Polish Romantic play in Grotowski's Theatre of Productions phase. Wyspianski's tribute to the Western cultural accomplishment, which is also an expression of the Poles' national pride, is reinterpreted in the actors' compulsive chant of the phrases, 'our Acropolis' and 'the cemetery of the tribes'. Despite the obsessive chant, the glorious culture ends up in the crematorium of the Auschwitz extermination camp. The Romantic author's praise of the liveliness of his people turns into a dirge for the victims of the atrocity. One of the most brutal human experiences in history is revealed as the other face of the splendid Western culture.

'Our Acropolis' is a question mark over our heads – a question about us and the nature of humankind. What becomes of mankind when confronted with absolute violence? Jacob's struggle with the Angel – and hard labour; the love between Paris and Helen of Troy – and the roll call of prisoners; the Resurrection – and crematorium ovens. A hideous and demoralized civilization.

... The luminous apotheosis, towards which the historiosophical vision of the poet aimed, has been juxtaposed with a tragicomedy of dishonoured values. It was not just horror but also the ugliness of suffering that was presented; not only solemnity, but also bitter ridiculousness. Humanity is reduced to primitive, between the role of executioner and the role of victim. In this picture, there is no one who can be associated with the executioner, with the spontaneous power

that is separated from the community of prisoners. ... (Flaschen, 2010, pp. 88–89)

The past glory coincides with the present ugliness. Yesterday is not a bygone but today, and the past is perpetually hovering around us in the present. The grotesque juxtaposition between the past and the present leads the spectator to look at her/himself and to ask questions about her/his own morality.

The result of the introspection is the awareness of the most terrifying truth that the crematorium of Auschwitz is not built by grisly monsters but by ordinary people and that the morality has been infused into those people by the very ‘glorious culture’. Western civilisation is no better than the rustic edifice built with the scrap metals at the junkyard in *Akropolis*. Thus:

There are no bright points in the performance’s core material:
there is no image of hope – hope is blasphemously mocked.
The performance can be understood as an appeal to the
spectator’s moral memory and moral subconscious. Who
would you be at the hour of the ultimate test? Just a wreck of a
man? Or a victim of the collective delusions of self-
consolation? (Flaschen, 2010, p. 89)

One would already know, according to the moral code prescribed by society, some pedantic answers to the question: ‘who would you be at the hour of the ultimate test?’ But, one’s living up to the moral standard is still another matter. If remaining as an abstract idea without action ‘at the hour of the ultimate test’,

morality could be only an awful excuse for evading the responsibility of the total destruction of humanity. Morality, then, is a dreadful disguise for an ugly face. The magnificent feat of the Western civilisation masks the face of hopeless despair behind it.²⁴

The way to restore humanity should not be to bolster such an ideal as morality but to confront the pointlessness of it. Therefore, Grotowski declared:

... the theatre must attack what might be called the collective complexes of society, the core of the collective subconscious or perhaps super-conscious (it does not matter what we call it), the myths which are not an invention of the mind but are, so to speak, inherited through one's blood, religion, culture and climate. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 42)

Despite proposing to 'attack the collective complexes of society', Grotowski definitely admitted that humanity – built with 'one's blood, religion, culture, and climate' – is firmly associated with 'the collective complexes'. It is a contradictory situation that we have to undermine what has built us as we are. Grotowski further clarified the contradictory relationship:

If we start working on a theatre performance or a role by violating our innermost selves, searching for the things which can hurt us most deeply, but which at the same time give us a

²⁴ Grotowski differentiated conscience from morality by saying, 'If you break the moral code you feel guilty, and it is society which speaks in you. But if you do an act against conscience, you feel remorse – this is between you and yourself, and not between you and society' (Grotowski, 1988, p. 377). Thus, morality acts according to the demands of society, therefore, does not always coincide with the human conscience.

total feeling of purifying truth that finally brings peace, then
 we will inevitably end up with **representations collectives**
 [*sic*]. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 42, bold in original)

The consequence of the attack is renewed ‘collective representations’²⁵ – renewal as a permanent process. Remedy can only be discovered in ‘hurt’. ‘Violating our innermost selves’ is to release a unique individuality as a human being from the authoritative command of the society. The individuality of the human being is the essence of the system. An individual is not a fragmentary part of the sum of ‘the collective complexes of society’ but a sovereign entity that itself is the system of the complexes. Each and every individual human being in search of truth within her/himself is ‘collective representations’. In other words, such an individual is the embodiment of the body-text that retains the collective consciousness of a culture in her/his experiences. The process of embodying the body-text is the ‘**confrontation**’ in which one ‘perceive[s] the relativity of [one’s] problems, their connection to the “roots”, and the relativity of the “roots” in the light of today’s experience’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 23, bold in original). An individual in the confrontation is aware of the contradictory nature of all the collective experiences, which appear both as the invaluable legacy for the establishment of the individual and as the sterile relic that the individual must challenge to be spontaneous in her/his time and space.

In the confrontation with the contradiction, *Akropolis* displays before the contemporary spectators the hideous present lurking in the glorious past. Contrary to the

²⁵ Although Durkheim’s concept of ‘collective representations’ emphasises, over the individuality, the role of the group consciousness as the most decisive force to make a social and religious system that the individual human being identifies her/himself with (Reese, 1996, p. 188), Grotowski views the concept not only as a substratum on which an individual is established but also as an obstacle that the individual should challenge to restore her/his individuality erased by the collective consciousness of the social and religious system.

protagonists of the previous productions who commit themselves to the ultimate truth and mobilise the spectators' psychical transformation in the ritualistic congregation, the characters of *Akropolis* are a group of anonymous people without differentiation of age, nationality, sex, social status, and so on in uniformed costumes of ragged potato bags and grey berets. They are the nameless inmates of the concentration camp as the spectators are also the nameless ordinary people who would never be recognised in the history of the great civilisation. The everymen of the present are confronted with the unidentified victims of the past in 'the Acropolis,' which is the symbol of the majestic tradition of the Western culture.

Regarding the actor/spectator relationship, the actors of *Akropolis* do not encourage the spectators' direct participation in the performance although the physical closeness between them remains similar to the previous productions of the trilogy. Rather, they deliberately attempt to be detached from the spectators by 'provocatively ignor[ing]' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 89) the presence of the spectators. The dead (the inmates of the concentration camp) – the actors – wander around the living (those who alienate themselves from the atrocity) – the spectators – throughout the action of the performance.²⁶ The actors and the spectators exist in different worlds that never intermingle with each other. The actors' close approach to the spectators amplifies the sense of the detachment; thus, the emotional separateness between them becomes deeper. The psychological detachment between the actor and the spectator is reinforced by means of the physical closeness between them.

In the Romantic trilogy, the thematic interest of Grotowski is directed towards the problematic nature of humanity. The archetypal protagonists of *Dziady* and *Kordian*

²⁶ In dealing with the theme of the Holocaust, Tadeusz Kantor also creates the coexistence of the living and the dead in *The Dead Class*, which is, as Magda Romanska (2012) points out, a hint of Judaic sentiment related to *The Dybbuk*. See Romanska, 2012, p. 225, pp. 260-1.

reveal their virtuous morality as nothing but the sadomasochistic oppression of the Western society that reduces them to either heroic madmen or foolish heroes. The last production of the trilogy, *Akropolis* asks the spectators to re-examine their schizophrenic existence, which has appeared as the total destruction of humanity in the history of magnificent, splendid, majestic Western civilisation. This indicates that Grotowski's concern moved from metaphysical narratives to concrete human actions.

As for the actor/spectator relationship, Grotowski, first, tried to construct the seamless integration between the actors and the spectators in 'the peasant ritual' of *Dziady* and second, to invite the spectators to transform the theatrical fictions into the realities of their experiences with ritualistic spontaneity in 'the pseudo-ritual of theatricality' of *Kordian*. In *Akropolis*, Grotowski attempted to completely fuse the ritualistic into theatricality by refraining from the effort to construct the direct contact between the actor and the spectator. Through this development of the actor/spectator relationship in the trilogy, Grotowski became aware that the manipulative incorporation of the ritualistic elements into the modern theatre was ineffective for its spectators because they were not living in the world of primitive ritual. The spectators come to see a theatrical performance in a conventional sense, not to participate in a ritual. With the awareness, Grotowski focused more on the actor's craft and explored alternative relationships between the actor and the spectator in the Laboratory's subsequent productions.

4. From the Archetype to the Individual

Through the Romantic trilogy, Grotowski's concern moved from the grand narratives of the Western society to the problems of the archetypal human beings and from the discursive understanding of the world to the concrete human action. This

inclination became deeper in the subsequent productions in contemplating the psychological dimension of individual human beings; thereby, the archetype does not remain as a universal discourse, but it becomes a ‘scalpel’ that excavates the innermost self of the individual, of both the actor and the spectator. The first production with such an orientation after the trilogy was *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* written by Christopher Marlowe, premiered on 23 April 1963, a classical myth that Grotowski had directed in Goethe’s version in 1960 at the Polski Theatre in Poznan. The original play by Marlowe is concerned with one of the most fundamental cases of binary opposition in the Western civilisation, God vs. the Devil or the saintliness vs. sin. In the original play by Marlowe, the destructive fate of the protagonist in aspiring to the ultimate truth is predestined when he decides to make a contract with the Devil in the early part of the play. The protagonist in the end falls into eternal damnation.

However, the production of the Theatre Laboratory rearranged the original text in what is called a textual montage, beginning with Faustus’ confession, which is made just an hour before his eternal damnation. The confession is about his awareness of ‘the inhumanity and indifference of God who does not care about the human soul’s salvation’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 98). It is a subversively blasphemous attack on the ideal values of the Western society. The subversive attack consequently blurs the demarcation between virtue and sin:

What we usually call virtues, he calls sin – his theological and scientific studies; and what we call sin, he calls virtue – his pact with the Devil. During this confession, Faustus’ face glows with an inner light. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 81)

With this confession, Faustus' journey begins in a flashback. The rearrangement of the text draws more attention to Faustus' inner conflict between the values established by the social – religious – belief system and the values supported by his own personal experiences. The whole journey of Faustus in the production of the Laboratory justifies his determination to willingly accept eternal damnation rather than functioning as the proof of the protagonist's arrogant self-confidence – hubris – leading to his tragic destruction in the original play.

In the Laboratory's production, Faustus travels along with Mephistopheles who appears as two split beings: one male and the other female, which shows a hint of the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum*. The double Mephistopheles acts as 'the Good Angel and the Bad Angel' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 83):

He tempts Faustus to sin and mutiny against the Creator, yet at the same time he delivers righteous opinions and praises the creature [of the Creator]; he appears like an angel at the Annunciation, but after a while he hellishly puffs out brimstone fumes. Maybe he is just another trap set by the Creator to sentence Faustus to eternal ordeals? (Flaszen, 2010, p. 97, my brackets)

This duality, however, is not a typical binary opposition in which good should defeat bad. The role of Mephistopheles dynamically changes in accordance with situations and is not fixed as the Devil as per the traditional myth. Thus, the double Mephistopheles is more than the double angels. S/he is placed in the diverse variations of opposites: the tempter/guide of Faustus' desire, the priest of the last supper/the businessperson of a

commercial contract, and the creator/destroyer of Faustus' world. S/he is an incarnation of the interplay of the opposites, which recalls the relationship between being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*) in *Dao De Jing*.

In other words, Mephistopheles in the Laboratory's production is not an indubitable evil spirit as in the original play by Marlowe. S/he, with her/his double existence – physically male/female as well as psychologically positive/negative, represents the uncertainty of human existence, which is the reflection of Faustus' innermost self. After swaying between religious decency and earthly desire, Faustus finds himself aspiring for freedom from the moral obligation commanded by the religious supremacy. Thus, he eagerly signs the pact with the Devil against God and unreservedly accepts his destiny if it is the consequence of what he has done, and faces eternal damnation:

Ah Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually!

(V, ii, 130-131)

In the original text, this monologue expresses Faustus' regret for having sold his soul to the Devil; he offers to return to God. In the production, this is an open struggle, the great encounter between the saint and God. Faustus, using gestures to argue with Heaven, and invoking the audience as his witness, makes suggestions that would save his soul, if God willed it, if He were truly merciful and all-powerful enough to rescue a soul at the instant of its damnation. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 85)

It turns out that Faustus' 'arguing with Heaven' is of no use. His struggle only proves that there is no such merciful God who could save his soul.

When encountering heaven, *Dao De Jing*, too, rejects such an absolute being controlling the fate of a human being by saying that '[h]eaven and earth have no benevolence (天地不仁, *tiān dì bù rén*)' (Ch. 5) and 'Dao of heaven has no favoritism (天道無親, *tiān dào wú qīn*)' (Ch. 79). Benevolence (仁, *rén*) is a priori value of Confucianism with which every human being is inherently equipped. It is like a seed that makes a human being distinct from an animal in the philosophical theory of Confucius. This benevolence is most fundamentally observed in the relationship between parents and children, who give unconditional love and respect to each other. This relationship is called favoritism (親, *qīn*). Confucius asserts that it is a natural inclination that one loves her/his parents and children more than others. In this premise, the Confucian dao is an effort to expand this familial benevolence to the extent of universal benevolence in the society. *Dao De Jing* criticises that from the partial dao as in Confucianism start all the social value systems from which the hierarchical binarity arises as observed in the relationship between father and son, master and slave, good and bad, etc. (Choi, 2006, pp. 66–67). Contrary to Confucianism, *Dao De Jing* refers to the impartiality of nature that people should take as the model for their behaviour. This impartiality means the dismissal of a priori value that organises the violent order of morality.

In the same sense, '[Faustus] refuses "the categories of Heaven and its compensations beyond the earth", which are deceptions' (Temkine, 1972, p. 127); thus, his 'glowing face with an inner light' is possible when he finds out that the moral code imposed by the religious ideal is ridiculous and meaningless:

If the saint is to become one with his sainthood, he must rebel against God, Creator of the world, because the laws of the world are traps contradicting morality and truth. . . . Whatever we do – good or bad – we are damned. The saint is not able to accept as his model this God who ambushes man. God's laws are lies, He spies on the dishonor in our souls the better to damn us. Therefore, if one wants sainthood, one must be against God. (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 79–80)

As shown through the inner affliction of Faustus caused by the conflict between religious belief and personal desire, which is one of the most archetypal oppositions in the Western tradition, Grotowski moved its thematic focus from the archetypal significance of human being as a whole in the Romantic trilogy to the most personal and psychological realm of an individual.

The thematic change in the Laboratory's work was intensified by a new approach in terms of the construction of the performance space. Different from the sentiment of a collective congregation constructed with the ritualistic performance spaces in the trilogy, Grotowski after the trilogy tried to build a performance space in which the individual spectators would relate themselves to the performance and the actors on a personal level. In harmony with Faustus' personal confession, the performance space of *Dr. Faustus* is organised as a dinner table in a monastery refectory, a place where, generally speaking, private conversations of people prevail. The performance space is composed of two big tables on the sides and a small head table perpendicular to the big ones around which the spectators are seated and on which the actors perform. In this setting, the production turns the religious myth of the archetypal character into a private dialogue about Faustus'

life between the protagonist and the spectators. Therefore, it is expected that the spectators are to be emotionally and psychologically stimulated by the contact with the protagonist at the most personal level. The spectators are assumed to be Faustus' guests invited for the last supper before his eternal damnation. In alluding to Christ's final communion with His disciples, Faustus' dinner table is a sacred place. The guests, however, find themselves involved in Faustus' blasphemous complaints against God. Ironically, the act against God turns out to be the most sacred undertaking. The spectators come face to face with Faustus at the personal dinner table, a blasphemous saint who does not expect recompense for his sacrifice just as a Daoist sage does not anticipate reward from what s/he accomplishes (Ch. 2).

The subsequent production to *Dr. Faustus* was *The Hamlet Study*, which was presented on 17 March 1964, based on the play of William Shakespeare and the analysis of Stanislaw Wyspianski on the play. The performance of *The Hamlet Study* was considered *a rehearsal* presented for the public, a work in progress in the need of external feedback, rather than an official production. As Flaszen (2010, p. 99) indicates, it is 'a study of a motif'. The production is concerned with the motif of the 'outsider', which represents Hamlet as a Jew, a symbolic outcast in the European consciousness, alluding to the ever-present prejudice that should be overcome (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 72–73). *The Hamlet Study* is a reinvention, not representation, of the original play by the Polish actors who discover the meaning of the play from their own experiences. By showing 'how they see *Hamlet*', the Theatre Laboratory 'tells who they are' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 101). The creators of the production attempt to revisit their individual selves through the window of the masterpiece that has become an archetypal legacy. Sharing Wyspianski's perspective (quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 72) that 'the inner purity, truth and commitment of the actor are in general the condition of the existence of an authentic theatre', the

Theatre Laboratory is in the production devoted to ‘a study of the acting method and of collective directing’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 99).²⁷

It had been around a year since *The Hamlet Study* was presented to the public in 1964 before *The Constant Prince* was premiered on 25 April 1965, a production based on Juliusz Slowacki’s adaptation of the work of Pedro Calderon de la Barca. If *Hamlet Study* is not counted in the repertoire of the Laboratory due to its being performed as an open rehearsal, the interval extends to two years since the opening of *Dr. Faustus*. This two-year hiatus allowed the Laboratory to take the qualitative leap in their research conducted on the art of acting. The production of *The Constant Prince* is considered the first production of the Theatre Laboratory in which the efforts of Grotowski and his collaborators finally achieved the total act embodied in the performance of Ryszard Cieslak. The total act was accomplished by means of focusing on two aspects – the thematic interest in the complex psychological dimension of the individual human being and the actor’s expressive craft to embody the human being.

From the previous productions, especially *Akropolis*, *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Hamlet Study*, the Laboratory had already emphasised the importance of the actor training independent from the rehearsals.²⁸ Grotowski and his collaborators enhanced and extended the actor training as the individual self-investigation on her/his body and mind. It should be noted that the Laboratory’s emphasis on the autonomous actor’s training coincided with the change of the theme in the Laboratory’s works. The thematic change in the Laboratory’s productions was closely connected with research conducted on the actor’s craft, which was believed to be the tool for the actor to exhume what slumbered in

²⁷ Although rarely referred to as a part of the repertoire of the Laboratory, *The Hamlet Study* has a significant importance in the course of the development of the Laboratory’s artistic endeavour (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 72–73). The work is most significant in the development of the actor’s craft towards the total act, which is discussed more in the next chapter dealing with *via negativa*.

²⁸ The Theatre Laboratory became aware of the necessity of exercises during the rehearsal for *Dr. Faustus*, the exercises totally separate from the preparation of a performance, which is discussed in the following chapter.

her/himself as well as the stimulus for the spectator to return to their own selves. In short, Grotowski's attention in this period was centred on the individual human being, that is the actor, the spectator, and even the director himself: a human being that should be expected to be 'reborn' through reviving the self both as an entity having been moulded through the accumulative tradition and a living organism breathing here and now.

The storyline of the Laboratory's *The Constant Prince* is simple. The production portrays a noble man, Don Fernando who is captured by the Moors and is forced to give up a Spanish island as a ransom for his life. Fernando, however, decides to sacrifice himself rather than begging for his life at the cost of his people. With firm determination, he resists, dies, and becomes the Constant Prince. The noble act of the Prince is highlighted by his paradoxical strategy confronting the deadlock situation. As Flaszen describes it:

The performance is a specific study on the phenomenon of 'constancy.' Here constancy is not manifested in strength, dignity and courage. The Prince opposes the actions of the courtiers (who perceive the Prince as an odd and strange creature, almost another species) with passivity and gentleness, fixated on a higher spiritual order. He seems not to argue with the rules of their world. What he does is much more: he ignores their rules. Their world, industrious and cruel, has no way in fact of getting to him. They have sole power over his body and his life but at the same time they cannot do anything to him. The Prince submissively accepts the courtiers' sick

procedures and at the same time he stays independent and pure
 – to the point of ecstasy.” (Flaschen, 2010, p. 110)

The Prince’s ‘constancy’ is generated not from furious resistance but from his docile impassiveness in confrontation with violence. It neutralises the Moors’ apparently absolute forces of life or death authority on him. Such an aspect of the Prince’s constancy overlaps with phrases from *Dao De Jing*, which read:

A human being is soft and weak when alive,
 Becomes stiff and strong when dead.
 All things like plants and trees are soft and tender when alive,
 Become stiff and strong when dead.
 Therefore, the stiff and strong are the body of the dead,
 The soft and weak are the body of the living.
 Therefore, the strong army gets defeated.
 The strong tree gets broken.
 The strong and great sink down,
 The soft and weak rise up. (Ch. 76)

What seems like the softest and weakest object in nature is water. The image of water is one of the frequent motifs resembling Dao in *Dao De Jing*:

The greatest virtue is like water.
 It benefits all things but does not contend,
 It dwells where people disdain to stay,

Therefore, it is close to Dao. (Ch. 8)

Thus:

Nothing in the world is soft and weak as water,

But, even the hardest and strongest cannot defeat it,

Therefore, this principle must not be depreciated.

The weak defeats the strong,

The soft defeats the hard. (Ch. 78)

The Prince, who seems the weakest, is in fact the strongest because he is the most constant of all in the story. He is constant because he fades away as water flows down into the lowest of places, which is how Dao appears in the world.

The paradoxical power drawn from the protagonist's weakness is elevated by the diverse visual settings. The Moors wear black cloaks, breeches, and long boots, which epitomise a world of merciless ferocity. On the contrary, the Prince is in a white shirt and loincloth that symbolise his purity and innocence. Towards the end of the performance, the protagonist gets stripped down to his loincloth. Defenceless, the Prince is thrown on the altar like a sacrificial animal and shrouded with a dazzling red cloak of a martyr.

The performance space is composed of four walls separating the actors from the spectators who are seated on the benches outside the walls. The vulnerable protagonist is totally quarantined from the outside world by the surrounding walls. The walls, which are built a little higher than the spectators' eyes, function as the barriers forcing the spectators to peep into the torture room by slightly raising their hips from their seats. The stage architecture manipulates the spectators to become the tacit accomplices of the

Moors, voyeurs witnessing an act of torture but doing nothing (Temkine, 1972, p. 30). It would be shameful for the spectators who became aware of their unconscious involvement in the crime as a part of a cruel system. In that sense, Grotowski must have intended that the voyeuristic spectators of *The Constant Prince* provokes a strong shock in a different way from the shock of the spectators of *Akropolis*, who, in the completely disconnected from the victims, witness the atrocity of Auschwitz.

The extremity of the opposing images reaches the highest point at the moment of the Prince's death. The atmosphere of utmost brutality suddenly turns into an awkward mourning of the persecutors at the death of the protagonist. The Moors praise the superior spirit of the Prince; whereas, the king and the brother of the Prince do nothing for his sake but surrender their territory to the Moors. The fraternity of the Prince's Christian compatriots is intrinsically no different from the brutality of the heretics because both parts share the same hierarchical value system, which tramples on the fate of an individual in the name of a bigger cause:

Moors and Christians merge because they belong to the same order, the temporal persecutor of the spiritual. ... it is not the reign of the crescent that is flouted but much more that of the cross. Christ against the Church, the individual against society. The weapons: the resistance to the conquering and limited fanaticism, the immovable serenity. (Temkine, 1972, p. 135)

The Prince is constant in resisting 'the same order', which destroys the human soul. He is the personification of constancy, which is the most important attribute of Dao. His

constancy is ‘immovably serene’ as ‘constant Dao cannot be told’, (Ch. 1) and ‘the great sound is not heard (Ch. 41)’.

5. *Apocalypsis cum figuris*

The Theatre Laboratory had to prepare itself for about four years for its last theatre production, *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, which officially premiered on 11 February 1969. As well noted, the Laboratory’s productions, from its inauguration until *The Constant Prince*, had been much associated with the religious motif of Christianity, particularly in juxtaposing the protagonists with the image of Christ. From the treatment of the Christian legacy of the Western culture, Grotowski established a kind of aesthetic strategy called ‘the dialectic of apotheosis and derision’. The Laboratory, through the image of the protagonists, revealed the discrepancy of human condition, which was depicted in an individual’s spiritually pursuing divine perfection and obviously failing. From the failure of the sublime spirit of the protagonists arose a question whether the divine pursuit was worth one’s total devotion at all; thereby, the protagonists’ sacrificial acts turned into a ludicrous anguish or a tragic travesty.

Apocalypsis cum figuris was the first and last production directly concerned with the myth of Christ. This was not, however, the original intention of Grotowski and his collaborators when they started preparing for a production after *The Constant Prince*. Their first idea was *Samuel Zborowski* written by Slowacki, which deals with ‘the contemporary term “archetype” ... as the collective experiences of humanity, housed in the individual subconscious’ (Guszpit, 1976 quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 89). This motif was exactly what the Laboratory had been dealing with step by step since the ritualistic trilogy. And, Grotowski must not have wanted to repeat the same motif after the Laboratory clearly saw the embodiment of the motif through Cieslak’s total act in *The*

Constant Prince. Slowacki's play was dismissed. In the place of the abandoned work came the theme of *The Gospels*, which Grotowski first mentioned as 'the New Testament ... planned as a new, theatrical *Life of Jesus* of the kind written by Renan' that portrayed Christ as a human being rather than the incarnation of God (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 89). It again seemed reminiscent of the Christ-like image of the sacrificial heroes in the previous productions.

Yet, there arose a possibility of the theme of *The Gospels* during the rehearsals, which were totally dependent on the improvisation with no textual material (Kumiega, 1987, p. 90). According to Grotowski, the improvisations seamlessly led the actors' work under the title of *The Gospels* to the emergence of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (Morawiec, 1973 quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 90). Stanislaw Scierski, an actor in the production, states the goal of the improvisational work was to 're-discover the Gospels ... as they were present in each of us, not in a literary or religious sense, but as they were alive in essence in us, just as time is alive in us, in a human way' (1975 quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 91). The Laboratory's actors construct the line of the action of the performance, which Jan Kott, who was 'struck ... at once with its Polishness'²⁹ (Kott, 1970, p. 135), observes as redolent of a Polish marketplace:

The village women unfold large colored kerchiefs right on the marketplace, on which they set great loaves of home-baked bread. The men pull flat bottles of vodka out of their pockets, drink straight from them, and then pass them on to the women.

The action of *Apocalypsis* begins with this scene. A woman

²⁹ As for this Polishness, Grotowski seemed very much influenced by the works of Witold Gombrowicz, whom Flaszen calls 'one of [Grotowski's] secret masters' (2010, p. 211). The performance setting of the market place of *Apocalypsis* could be seen in relation to Gombrowicz's notion of 'human church', which breaks away from 'divine church' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 308).

places a loaf of bread on a white kerchief. A man reaches with his hand above his belt and offers the half-closed hand to the woman. He then raises it to his lips. His Adam's apple moves up and down – he pours the vodka straight down his throat in the time-honored Polish way. (Kott, 1970, pp. 135–136)

The actors' improvisational work is to connect their own personal, historical, and cultural experiences with the religious myth. It is the actors' personal lives on which the production is based. Thus, 'without the actors who perform it, it ceases to exist' (Kumiega, 1985, p. 90).

At the very last stage of the development of the production, short written texts from the Bible, *The Brothers Karamazov* of Dostoyevsky, T. S. Eliot, and Simone Weil were incorporated. The result was a playful imagining of the Second Coming of Christ, which was not merely a repetition of thematic motifs of the previous productions or a reinterpretation of the life of Jesus, but an authentic examination of the human reaction to an event that was happening during the performance.

The performance turns the playful imagining into a temporary reality. In the Christian myth, it is expected that the Second Coming of Christ would be the most enchanting (恍惚, *huǎng hū*) event if it ever happened. But, no one would know what would happen when the myth becomes a reality. The reality would seem likely to be a phrase from the Gospel, saying, 'I have come and you haven't recognized me' (Flaschen, 1978 quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 91). The presence of the returned Christ would be something that cannot be perceived; therefore, it would be 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*) – mysteriously vague and indistinct, at the same time, indescribably enchanting.

This opaque reality is definitely found in the Simpleton, the figure of Christ, whose name is *Ciemny* literally meaning ‘the Dark One’ in Polish. In association with the label of the Simpleton, the Polish name indicates a person who is “sightless” – incapable of seeing the real world; or “benighted” – unable to comprehend life as the “enlightened” can’ (Puzyna, 1971, p. 94). However, the name might suggest more than the apparent metaphors when it is closely looked at in relation to Dao in *Dao De Jing*.

The second half of the first chapter of *Dao De Jing* says:

Thus, non-being always wants to reveal enigmatic sphere,
 Being always wants to show corporeal sphere.
 These two emerge together, but have different names,
 That they are being as one is called fathomlessness.
 Fathomlessly fathomless.
 The door for everything to come and go. (Ch. 1)

The word ‘fathomlessness’ is the translation of a Chinese character, 玄 (*xuán*) that is, in colloquial language, used as black and dark.

Here in the phrases above, however, the character 玄 (*xuán*) implies a more subtle meaning indicating a dusky and dim state in which one is indiscernible from the other (Choi, 2006, p. 32). It is, not a state of total blackout, so blurry and dark that a thing, although it can be seen, cannot be distinguished in a clear way. 玄 (*xuán*) is the expressive mode of Dao’s existence, echoing with a state of vagueness and indistinctness (恍惚, *huǎng hū*). In the underlying thought of Daoism, the truth never reveals itself as a form of purity; but its appearance is always the form of hybridity and murkiness. 玄 (*xuán*) is such a state of hybrid and murky darkness rather than pitch blackness. In this

sense, *Ciemny* – the Dark One – is more like the ‘one who has some mysterious contact with higher powers’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 121). When it comes to the reincarnation of Christ, He would appear with a murky mixture of a ‘fathomlessly fathomless’ saint and a ‘benighted’ fool?

Grotowski, later during his post-theatrical period, mentioned the human being in this ambivalent quality in relation to an Indian sage introduced in Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India* that he had read in his early years as well as the figure of Christ in the Slavic tradition, *yurodiviy* translated as holy fool:

In the same book by Brunton is a description of a meeting with some solitary Sufi hermit living in total isolation. He explained to the visitor that the normal stream of thoughts related to the “I”-feeling can be compared with a cart pulled by oxen into a long dark tunnel. He suggested: “Turn the cart back and you will find a light and the space.” The event with the report of Brunton happened when I was maybe ten years old. Much later, I met the tradition of some other *yurodiviy*, also living in India, who was transcending any limitations of exclusive religion and who was at the same time behaving often in a totally crazy way. His craziness was full of meaning. (Grotowski, 1985, p. 255)

This type of a human being looks for an answer to a question thrown by life in some odd place where ordinary people never give a glance. When one has a goal to escape a long and dark tunnel, s/he has no time to look back in a hurry to get out of there. However,

there must be a way out in her/his back. To look back seems a ‘crazy’ act; though, it is an act of the Daoist sage who always finds a way in the other side. *Dao De Jing* says:

Others have enough and more, I alone am left out.

I have the mind of a fool!

Foolish and foolish!

Others are bright, I alone am dim.

Others are intelligent, I alone am dull.

Tranquil and profound like the ocean,

Unfettered like the wind.

Others have plans,

I alone am useless.

I alone am different from others,

Cherishing bread and mother. (Ch. 20)

Nevertheless, the difference between *yurodiviy* and the Daoist sage is apparent. The former is a hermit who literally abandons the desire in the earthly world for his aspiration of the higher values of spirituality; on the contrary, the latter has a clear purpose in wanting to have nothing remain undone by doing nothing (Ch. 37).

Dao operates in the form of doing nothing but guarantees the result in infinite possibilities, which accomplishes everything.

... Doing nothing is justifiable not because it is a romantic or transcendent action but because it has powerful efficacy to bring nothing to be undone. (Choi, 2006, p. 300)

In this sense, the Simpleton, *Ciemny* the Dark One, is closer to the Daoist sage than the Slavic holy fool by disclosing a powerful influence on the actors and the spectators alike in the performance.

When the actors first meet Christ reappearing as the Simpleton, they laugh at him. A moment later, they think that he might be Christ. But they are still in doubt. In confusion, they implore and attack him at the same time. As Puzyna (1971, p. 104) argues, this reality, which is the state of a 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*, vagueness and indistinctness) and of the other 恍惚 (*huǎng hū*, enchanting), prompts debates concerning the religious values and institutions of Christianity. Depending on whether the Simpleton is the true Christ, the actors' attitudes towards him can be judged in various ways: one that protects the religious tradition from the sham, another that defies the true teachings of Christ for earthly desire, yet another that clings to the fossilised institution of the Church, and so on. However, in the given situation that no one can absolutely be convinced whether the Simpleton is Christ, none of the arguments can claim for exclusive legitimacy. Therefore, at the last moment, Simon Peter's utterance at Christ-the Simpleton, 'go and come no more', sounds like an expression of the ambivalent emotion towards the possible returned Christ or charlatan.

Apocalypsis cum figuris was the transitional production between Grotowski's Theatre of Productions phase and the post-theatrical research periods. The symptom of Grotowski's artistic transition was evident in the production. Among other things, the production never ceased to evolve until its last performance along with the Theatre Laboratory's development beyond conventional theatre practice. Especially, as the experiment on the actor/spectator relationship was ongoing through the production, 'there was a gradual move towards greater physical and psychological closeness with the

audience, closeness between the actor and the spectator as well as between the spectator and the spectator' (Kumiega, 1985, p. 102). This evolution of the production already alluded to Grotowski's post-theatrical research, in which was carried out in the complete eradication of the actor/spectator division. Also, during the earliest stage of the Paratheatre phase, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* functioned as an invitation to people who were interested in the Laboratory's work and its vision beyond the theatre – the post-theatrical research. The Theatre Laboratory included the performance of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* in the programme of conferences or 'meeting' in which a new performative possibility would be discussed.

The concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* was Grotowski's worldview in his creative works. The concept resonates with the philosophical notion of *Dao De Jing*, which perceives that the world manifests itself in contradiction between the pair of opposites. Grotowski not only established the Laboratory's theatre productions in the worldview but also carried out his unique experiment on the actor/spectator relationship under the guidance of the concept. Along with the experiment, Grotowski, in observing human existence with the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, reached the total act in which the actor discovers and reveals her/his self to have an authentic encounter with the spectator. This contradictory tension in *conjunctio oppositorum* was not a dissonant obstacle to be vanished but the artist's creative force. And, the paradoxical nature of *conjunctio oppositorum* gave birth to one of Grotowski's most renowned ideas, *via negativa*, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: *Via negativa*

1. *Via negativa*: The Actor's Dao

As examined in the previous two chapters, the productions of the Theatre Laboratory during the Theatre of Productions phase were substantially rooted in the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* that is correlated to Daoist principles. It functioned primarily to indicate the relationship between the actor's spontaneity and discipline, which had long been a subject of argument in the Western theatre tradition. The acumen of the concept was to locate the fundamental mode of existence in the contradictory relation of the opposite pair. In the course of the experiments, Grotowski had evolved *conjunctio oppositorum* to the extent that it constituted the epistemological foundation of the Laboratory in creating theatrical productions as well as, more importantly, in developing the actor training exercises.

In the meantime, when he went further with the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which was expanded to the worldview of the Laboratory's productions, the concept gave birth to one of Grotowski's most renowned principles, *via negativa*. *Via negativa* is a practical principle that makes it possible for the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* to become a reality in the actor's body; in other words, it is the principle of the actor's discipline, which enables her/him to be spontaneous in a performance. Grotowski defined *via negativa* as 'a state in which one does not **"want to do that"** but rather **"resigns from not doing it"**' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 17, bold in original). The opposite qualities of action, which are 'resign' and 'not doing', constitute the drive of the actor's creativity and enable the actor to eradicate accumulated clichés from her/his actions. The tension between two opposite forces is an altered, yet more condensed, example of *conjunctio oppositorum* in the core of the theatre art, which is the actor. This

negative approach to the art of acting and the theatre making remained as the fundamental principle even in Grotowski's post-theatrical research.

Via negativa is Dao of Grotowski's work. In this chapter, the principle of *via negativa* is discussed in two ways, one of which is, in relation to *Dao De Jing*, to analyse *via negativa* as a critical viewpoint of Grotowski embracing the whole work of the Theatre Laboratory during the Theatre of Productions phase. Although the parallel between *via negativa* and non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*) of Daoism was noticed in some cases (Kumiega, 1985, p. 123), it has not been investigated to the degree of Grotowski's entire work in the theatre productions and the actor training programme of the Laboratory. *Via negativa*, in fact, shares with *Dao De Jing* more than the simple similarity of the philosophical notion of non-doing. Being analysed in an etymological sense as well as in a philosophical aspect, *via negativa* shows the relationship of Grotowski's theatrical praxis to Daoism and reveals itself as a principle offering the actor the practical lessons of Grotowski's entire work.

The other way is to follow the evolution of *via negativa* in Grotowski's activities during the Theatre of Productions phase. Tracing the emergence and development of *via negativa* shows what Grotowski went through to reach the formulation of the principle, as it is the essence of the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum*. In every experiment that Grotowski made, there were logical pathways that led him to his own consistent course. Exploring these pathways discloses the significance of *via negativa* in his art. Thereby, *via negativa* is understood as not just a small part of Grotowski's theory and practice but his core that is also implemented into his later activities in the post-theatre.

2. The Significance of *Via*: The Process

Via negativa is a principle that explicitly as well as implicitly dominates the entire work of Grotowski. It shares a paradoxical nature with Dao in *Dao De Jing*. Both *via negativa* and Dao in *Dao De Jing* are paradoxical in an etymological sense. ‘*Via*’ in Latin means a way or route. The Latin word has a subtle implication. A way is, by a common sense definition, only meaningful when it leads to a destination. The act of walking on the way is a process carried out in order to arrive at a destination. For Grotowski, however, a way is justified by its own existence. Even if his ultimate goal in the actor’s art was to reach or arrive at a ‘total act’, the way or the process to reach this totality was no less important than the goal itself. Rather, Grotowski and his collaborators put great emphasis on the process in their actor’s training and exercises more than any other theatre artists had done. This emphasis on the process required the actor to train her/himself with daily and regular exercises besides rehearsals for a performance and the performance itself. Grotowski and his collaborators considered these demanding activities as the actor’s obligation, an idea that had first been acknowledged by Konstantin Stanislavski. The seriousness of this process is described in Eugenio Barba’s recollection that illustrates the somewhat ritualistic mood of the daily training and exercise among the members of the Theatre Laboratory:

The actors of the Theatre Laboratory in Opole ... meet every morning at ten. The day begins with three hours of “basic” exercises: gymnastics, acrobatics, breathing exercises, rhythmic dance, plastic motion, concentration, mask composition, and pantomime. When it finished, they start rehearsing the play which is currently in preparation and keep

at it until show time in the evening. (Barba and Flaszen, 1965, p. 172)

Here, the training and exercise, the process, were assigned the same weight as the performance, the result. The basic exercises were not directly related to and not the warm-up for the rehearsal and the performance that they were going to do that night. The process existed in its own right.

In addition, Grotowski's respect for the Bohr Institute is deeply related to his unique focus on the process. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, he was inspired by the Bohr Institute and believed in research as a way in which one could explore the unknown. In his words:

It is a meeting place where physicists from different countries experiment and take their first steps into the "no man's land" of their profession. Here they compare their theories and draw from the "collective memory" of the Institute.

This "memory" keeps a detailed inventory of all the research done, including even the most audacious, and is continually enriched with new hypotheses and results obtained by the physicists

The Bohr Institute has fascinated me for a long time as a model illustrating a certain type of activity. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 127)

In this statement, Grotowski draws his attention to the two aspects of the Bohr Institute. The first one is its role as a meeting place where scientists with diverse cultural and social experiences build the 'collective memory'. This collective memory is the institute itself. In terms of performance, the collective memory is 'the myths which are not an invention of the mind but are... inherited through one's blood, religion, culture and climate' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 42). This collective memory shapes the human being in the form of civilisation. When the actor finds the truth of her/himself in the training and exercise, which is the process of research, the performance of the actor, in turn, becomes 'representations collectives [*sic*]' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 42).

The second aspect of his attention is directed to the continuous activity of the Bohr Institute that keeps transferring what it has done – its 'collective memory' – to the next step. In the theatre, Grotowski insisted on ceaseless activities that continued to be carried out by a group of people. Such activities disclose the unexplored dimensions of the art. An achievement resulting from the activities of the group is their ground for the next piece of research. Grotowski's belief that '[a]ny method which does not itself reach out into the unknown is a bad method' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 130) led him to the incessant journey towards what he didn't know. This is what *via negativa* aims at; in other words, it entails ongoing research through which the actor should find her/his own core in the archetypes and myths of her/his culture. The researchers of the Theatre Laboratory never stopped researching just as those of the Bohr Institute never did.

Furthermore, in relation to his fascination with the unending research of the Bohr Institute, Grotowski believed that there was no such thing as a prescriptive and completed method for the actor. If there were a method for the actor, it would be a method for an individual actor to discover a way of getting rid of her/his own psychological and physical obstacles. Even this individual method should be renewed as the individual actor

develops. And, such a method established for the individual actor is not a thing that someone can teach. The actor, therefore, should train her/himself by recognising the importance of *via*, the process that involves unceasing individual research. Thus:

In the final analysis there are no prescriptions. For every individual one must discover the cause which impedes him, hampers him and then create the situation in which this cause can be eliminated and the process liberated. (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 111)

One of the virtues that Grotowski learned from Stanislavski was his continuous ‘self reformation’. He believed that ‘Stanislavski was always experimenting himself and he did not suggest recipes’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 206). He thought that Stanislavski had always been developing himself until the moment of his death. Grotowski regarded that his work on physical actions at the Workcenter in Pontedera, Italy was ‘not Stanislavski’s “method of physical actions,” but what is after’ (Richards, 1995, p. 93). He started from the point where Stanislavski had stopped. The word *via* implies this ‘continuation’ of the process.

Dao (道) in *Dao De Jing* literally has the same meaning as *via*, a way. It is not a destination itself but a route on which everything in the universe comes and goes. The first chapter of *Dao De Jing* starts with a phrase saying, ‘If Dao can be told, it is not constant Dao; If name can be named it is not constant name’ (Ch. 1). In a clearer interpretation, the phrases say that a dao that can be conceptualized is not true Dao; a name that can definitely designate a thing is not the true name for it. This is one of the most renowned and important phrases of *Dao De Jing* because the main subject of the

classical Chinese text is stated here. It does not define Dao; instead, Dao's way of existence is described. These phrases imply the two dispositions of Dao in *Dao De Jing*. One of them is the scepticism towards language. Conceptualising is an active function of language excluding others in order to define something. In the viewpoint of *Dao De Jing*, which sees that everything in the universe exists in relation to its opposite, defining something is to go against natural laws, therefore, impossible. Dao as a signifier is a forced name, so *Dao De Jing* says, 'I don't know its name. Forced to assign an ideograph to it, saying, Dao' (Ch. 25). Language is a tool to create a social order and to define the numerous elements of the universe. However, it is not only unable to portray all the diverse phenomena of the universe but also confines people in a rigid hierarchical oppression. As soon as a thing is defined by one of its characteristics, its true substance is lost because other characteristics of the thing are excluded.³⁰

More important, in relation to the significance of *via*, is the other disposition that focuses on the way in which the universe operates in motion. The second phrase of Chapter 1 of *Dao De Jing* reads, 'Non-being (無, *wú*) indicates the beginning of heaven and earth; Being (有, *yǒu*) indicates all things in the world'. In the mainstream interpretation,³¹ non-being is usually interpreted as 'the origin', from which the universe is produced. The concept of being, in the mainstream interpretation, represents those all things created out of non-being. A kind of hierarchy is established between non-being and being. Non-being is the origin of being; being is the offspring of non-being. Therefore, non-being is fundamental, and being is subordinate.

³⁰ This disposition of Dao can be compared with Derrida's *différance* discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The act of defining a thing always causes the deferral of the meaning of the thing in search of differences between words. Language cannot grasp a definitive meaning for the thing; thus, Dao cannot be grasped in words and does not attempt to define others.

³¹ Hansen analyses the traditional interpretations in detail, see Hansen, 2000, pp. 219–222.

However, Choi, Jin-Seok disagrees with this interpretation and argues that *Dao De Jing* does not say which one is first or fundamental between non-being and being (Choi, 2006, p. 31). The mainstream interpretation regards non-being as the fundamental idea because it is abstract, ineffable, and mysterious as opposed to being that is concrete and tangible. The indescribable likely seems to have a higher value than the tangible. As such, the mainstream interpretation explains that Dao is indescribable because it is the highest concept in the universe. On the contrary, Choi (2006, p. 23) claims that it is impossible to describe Dao because it is the way of nature's existence in motion, not because it is an ineffable being. *Dao De Jing* sees both being and non-being as the two indispensable aspects of the universe in concurrent relation. In other words, Dao expresses itself through these two opposite concepts, which are directed towards each other in the endless motion. Non-being and being are interdependent on each other, and the interdependence is the way in which the universe operates.

Moreover, in interpreting the second phrase of Chapter 1 of *Dao De Jing*, Choi gives special attention to the word 'beginning (始, *shǐ*)' to reveal what *Dao De Jing* means by the concept of non-being. An ancient Chinese etymological dictionary (《說文解字》, *shuō wén jiě zì*) refers to the word beginning (始, *shǐ*) as first stage of action (初, *chū*), which can be divided into two hieroglyphic words, cloth (衣, *yī*) and scissors (刀, *dāo*). The word (初, *chū*) interpreted as the first stage of action illustrates the appearance of a pair of scissors cutting cloth. A paradoxical situation occurs here. In a sense, as soon as cloth starts being divided with the scissors, one has already been in the progress of cutting; one does not stay in the state of beginning of the action. In the other sense, if the cloth does not split, one has not even begun to cut yet (Choi, 2006, p. 27). This is a paradox that shows how *Dao De Jing* means non-being. The meaning of beginning (始, *shǐ*) is a point at which doing and non-doing encounter each other. There

is only a liminal state between doing and non-doing. Non-being implies the state of this liminality, which cannot be caught in concrete terms. This is what is meant by the phrase, ‘Thus, non-being always desires to reveal enigmatic sphere’ in the third phrase of Chapter 1 in *Dao De Jing*.

In spatial terms, non-being is void or empty. Being, as the opposite of non-being, resides in this empty space. Being means all the things that fill the emptiness of non-being. To simply put it, there must be an empty space for something to exist. Non-being loses its reason for existence without being. For being to exist, in turn, non-being needs to be there. In order for a thing to be, an empty space is necessary. The two opposites are interdependent. Chapter 2 of *Dao De Jing* further discusses this issue of the relationship between being and non-being:

Being and non-being produce each other,
 Difficulty and easiness establish each other,
 Long and short compare with each other,
 High and low determine each other,
 Sound and tone harmonize each other,
 Before and after follow each other,
 This the way it is. (Ch. 2)

Also, Chapter 11 of *Dao De Jing* reads:

Thirty spokes join one hub,
 Which is empty,
 The wheel’s use comes from the emptiness.

Clay makes a pot,
Which has an empty space,
The pot's use comes from the emptiness.
Windows and doors are cut to make a room,
Which is empty,
The room's use comes from the emptiness.
Therefore,
Being leads to profit,
Non-being leads to function. (Ch. 11)

In the phrases of Chapter 2 of *Dao De Jing*, the various themes are dealt with in the same structure in which the relationship between being and non-being is treated. The phrases of Chapter 11 of *Dao De Jing* explain how being and non-being are intertwined with each other; one exists based on the other. The opposites are compared and contrasted. Dao is expressed in these opposites, which open themselves up towards each other. The universe is in the endless process of the opposites moving towards each other. This is how Dao sees the universe.

Analysing the significance of *via* in relation to Dao offers a clue to a further exploration into the relationship between Grotowski and *Dao De Jing*. Both *via* and Dao have the same literal meaning and put a strong emphasis on the process. What is more intriguing is to see how they move in the process and what force makes the movement. As seen above, Dao in *Dao De Jing* contains in itself the source of the moving force, which is the tension between opposites as well as their leaning towards each other. Grotowski's *via negativa* asks the actor to act in the same manner as Dao. The moving force of *via negativa* comes from the pair of the opposites, which is to 'resign from not

doing’ – the doing of resigning and the non-doing of doing. The actor realises the core of her/himself by the way of negation, *via negativa*.

3. *Via negativa*: A Way of Being in the Process

Grotowski’s clarification of *via negativa* – a state of resigning from not doing – indicates a process of negation. To do, one, first of all, should not do; to obtain, one should abandon; to envision, one rejects. Elimination is the way to gain, not addition. Yet, ‘not doing’ does not mean to do nothing. The action of ‘resigning’ is still in motion. In this sense, negation is another form of affirmation. *Via negativa* is, therefore, an open process between action and non-action. In Ch. 40, *Dao De Jing* points out the process motivated by the tension between opposites in saying, ‘Towards opposite is Dao’s intention’. This is what *Dao De Jing* employs as its main principle. ‘Non-doing leaves nothing undone’, says *Dao De Jing* (Ch. 48). Non-doing means here to reject social norms and prescriptive doctrines that confine people in restrictive laws and ethics while doing would ‘leave everything undone’ by attempting to establish such norms and doctrines.

This open process of *via negativa*, which is associated with action and non-action, is practical, not mystical. Grotowski and his collaborators work like ‘a shoe maker’ who is ‘looking for the right spot on the sole in which to hammer the nail’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 27). The actor should be looking for the ‘right spot’ every moment. Here is an apprentice of a craft. For the apprentice to achieve craftsmanship in a given field, there must be specific and special techniques that the apprentice must acquire to arrive at her/his goal. This is a common logic of how craftsmanship develops.

However, Grotowski proposes, conversely, that the art of acting can reach its highest level through subtraction, not accumulation of skills. The actor should not be

looking around for skills and techniques that could function as an easy solution for her/him on the stage. On the contrary, he says:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction.... Ours then is a **via negativa** – not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks. (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 16–17, bold in original)

This is a process of being empty. The actor removes the unnecessary. This is a process of being empty of resistance. At the same time, it is also a process of being filled with freedom. Emptying and filling are occurring simultaneously. The state of 'passive readiness' is required when these opposites work together all the time. A crucial condition of *via negativa* is the passive readiness, which is 'resigning from not doing it'.

Dao requires the same virtue as *via negativa*. It asks people to be empty in order to be filled. *Dao De Jing* says:

Pursue knowledge, gain daily.

Pursue Dao, lose daily.

Lose and again lose,

Arrive at non-doing. (Ch. 48)

Dao De Jing emphasises ‘non-doing’, and proposes that one should not want to ‘gain’ but want to ‘lose daily’. At the end of non-doing remains nothing undone. According to Chad Hansen, this is an action of ‘abandoning knowledge’, which ‘mean[s] [to] give up or forget prescriptive doctrines - no knowing deliberation, no models, sages, or worthies. Do not abide by prescriptions, but let things take their course’ (Hansen, 2000, p. 209). The emptiness resulting from the abandoning of knowledge is filled with the natural law, Dao that is oppressed and hidden under prescriptive doctrines.

The notion of abandoning knowledge³² in *Dao De Jing* can be paralleled with Grotowski’s rejection of a ‘system’ or a ‘method’. Instead of formulating a fixed set of acting techniques, the actor should carry out her/his own individual research on her/himself. Grotowski, indeed, arranged some sets of exercises during the Theatre of Productions phase. However, he also insisted that the exercise by itself does not make an excellent actor. The actor should go beyond the exercise by searching for her/his personal core in the body and the soul. The exercise is a process in which the actor finds her/his own physical and psychological blocks and resistances. And, it should also be a process in which the actor overcomes her/his limitation by eradicating the blocks and resistances. In the actor’s empty body and soul already exist the sources of new techniques, which have been hidden behind social masks and behaviours. In the process of the actor’s search for the sources within her/him, s/he takes steps towards her/his infinite possibility. In this way, *via negativa* seems paradoxical because the action of

³² ‘Abandoning knowledge’ does not mean the naïve rejection of or the primitive ignorance of knowledge as mentioned in p. 47 of this thesis as Daoism pursues ‘another type of education’. In Daoist notion, knowledge is rather a regulative system of a society through which people associate themselves with the world. Abandoning knowledge means, therefore, that people should remove sterility generated by social institutions, and directly connect themselves to the world with their own body and mind. The direct contact with nature only guarantees to access Dao, which is a state of nature-ness. By the same token, Grotowski’s *via negativa*, the way of elimination, means to get rid of the actor’s personal obstacles, sterility, engendered by her/his mundane habits, social status, traditional conventions, etc. Thus, the process of elimination does not mean a total rejection of exercises but focusses on the individual actor’s active engagement in exercises. In other words, there could exist a set of beneficial exercises; however, they could be useless if an individual actor would not adapt them to her/his own necessity. This act of elimination is to associate the actor with her/his self as well as the world outside her/him in the ceaseless process.

emptying has to do something called filling and vice versa. Though, this paradox has a contradiction on its surface, but in deep down it is complete in itself.

In this paradoxical process of being empty and filled, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there cannot be a universal method that can be taught. For this reason, the individual actor should put her/himself in exercises built to overcome her/his personal obstacles and go through the process of *via negativa*. Here, the rehearsal as a process is more important than the performance as a result.

... rehearsals have always been the most important thing for me. There, this something was taking place between one human being and another human being – the actor and myself – and that something could touch this *axis*, this axiality, out of sight, outside of any external control. And that remained in my work, meaning that the performance has always been less important than rehearsals. The performance had to be impeccable, very well made, but I was always going back to rehearsals. Even after the opening night, even when we had performed the play a hundred times, two hundred times, we always went back to rehearsals, because it's rehearsals that have been the big adventure. (Grotowski quoted in Ahrne, 1993, p. 220).

This is the rehearsal, as Grotowski categorises later, 'not quite for the performance' as opposed to 'rehearsals for the performance' (Grotowski, 1995, p. 119). It is *via negativa*

that foresees Grotowski's post-theatrical research, as everlasting rehearsal without a public performance.

Via negativa is an arrow that is never concerned with a mark in order to arrive at the mark. The fleeting flight of the arrow draws behind it a trajectory that should be a beautiful one. The principle of *via negativa* expands to govern every aspect of making a theatrical production. Lighting, costume, music, scenery, and even a text are superfluous elements. For the theatre to be the theatre, there only remain the actor and the spectator. The actor takes primary significance because s/he is the initial force that creates what happens in the theatre. For Grotowski, therefore, the actor and her/his art are everything from the beginning to the end of the theatre. *Via negativa* is for this essential of the theatre art.

4. The Emergence and Development of *Via negativa*

i. 1965

The year 1965 is a milestone in the Theatre Laboratory. First of all, the Theatre Laboratory officially transferred its residency from Opole to Wrocław on 1 January of that year. On 10 January, a performance of *Akropolis*, one of the staples of the Laboratory's repertoire since its premiere in 1962, was staged as an inaugural event for the new home. When the proposal to move was made by Professor Boleslaw Iwaszkiewicz in the summer of 1964 (Osinski, 1986, p. 80), the group did not need to think twice because the circumstances of the Theatre Laboratory were getting harder than ever in Opole. Along with the lack of support from the city authority of Opole, a kind of 'a boycott of the theatre' from the city's theatrical community, including the local press, aggravated the condition of the Laboratory's survival (Osinski, 1986, pp. 69-70). The

uncertainty of the future of the Theatre Laboratory grew to the extent that its members ‘had no guarantee they would receive their next month’s salaries’ (Osinski, 1986, p. 77). In this situation, the move to Wroclaw, where the Laboratory could find more financial support and a bigger theatre community, was a refreshing opportunity for Grotowski and his collaborators to be able to keep on doing their research.

In April 1965, just a few months after the Laboratory’s settling into Wroclaw, the production of *The Constant Prince* was premiered, which was considered to finally embody the ‘total act’ through the performance of Ryszard Cieslak playing the title role. This emblematic production of the Theatre Laboratory, in retrospect, seemed a signal that Grotowski had almost approached the end of the first phase of his lifetime research. Now, there remained only one more task for Grotowski to undertake in the theatre. According to Zbigniew Osinski:

The Constant Prince, which proved the impossible possible, began a long period of research. The goal of this research was to be the attainment of the “total act” not simply by one actor but by the entire troupe. (Osinski, 1986, p. 86)

As the continuum of the ‘long period of research’, in December of the same year began the rehearsal for the next production *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, which was going to be not only the pinnacle of the productions of the Theatre Laboratory but also ‘almost unquestionably, one of the great theatrical productions of the twentieth century’ (Kumiega, 1985, p. 87). It was the production of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* that showed the ‘total act by the entire troupe’, which probably led Grotowski to have nothing more left to do in the theatre and to end the first phase of his lifetime research.

In September 1965, Grotowski published one of the most pivotal articles in his life, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', which seems a kind of a manifesto. In this manifesto, unlike an ordinary manifesto that announces what one will do in the future, Grotowski elucidated what he and his collaborators had done and achieved with their research in the past. In this article, Grotowski proposed a firm aesthetic creed of the Theatre Laboratory: 'poor theatre', a term which had been first coined by Flaszen in an article on *Akropolis* in 1962 (Barba, 1999, p. 30) and already elaborated by Grotowski himself in the article 'The Theatre's New Testament', written in the form of an interview with Eugenio Barba in 1964 and published in Italy in 1965.

Furthermore, in relation to the aesthetic credo of the Theatre Laboratory, the memorable term *via negativa* appeared for the first time in the article 'Towards a Poor Theatre'. Although 'Towards a Poor Theatre' is the first document mentioning *via negativa*, Grotowski had conceived this idea well before the publication of the article. In the 1964 interview, 'The Theatre's New Testament', Grotowski, without using the term, classified the characteristics of *via negativa* that belonged to the 'holy actor' employing 'an inductive technique' as opposed to 'the courtesan actor's deductive technique' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 35).

Now that *conjunctio oppositorum*, initially indicating the actor's ontological responsibility for discipline as well as spontaneity, became the worldview of the Theatre Laboratory in making theatrical productions, it made another transformation into a practical principle of *via negativa*, which actualised the worldview of *conjunctio oppositorum* in the acting practice of the Theatre Laboratory. It is the way of negation, elimination, and unceasing research, which is seemingly paradoxical, yet for this reason, coherent. The actor's duality, which had been exposed in such conflicts as that between the mind and the body, between the performer and the character, and between expression

and emotion, saw a possible resolution in *via negativa*. By means of this principle in the art of acting, the aesthetics of ‘poor theatre’ of the Theatre Laboratory located the actor as the essence of the theatre. The actor is in the centre and approaches her/his essence by eliminating supplementary elements of the conventional theatre practice, which made another expansion from *via negativa* to ‘poor theatre.’ In its movement between expansion and contraction, *via negativa* can be posited in the middle between *conjunctio oppositorum* and ‘poor theatre’. The position of *via negativa* in this succession of Grotowski’s perceptions of the theatre demonstrates the evolution of his artistic journey, which started from the radical experiment with the actor/spectator relationship, moved onto concentrating on the art of acting, and finally proceeded into research outside the theatre. In short, *via negativa* was the axis on which Grotowski had based his research.

As such, the year 1965 was the major turning point in the first phase of Grotowski’s research. At this moment, he, as might be seen in retrospect, was probably standing on the threshold between his past activities in the theatre and further research beyond the stage in the future. In publishing ‘Towards a Poor Theatre’, he summed up a tentative result of the research carried out by the Theatre Laboratory, a provisional outcome that was also presented through the performance of *The Constant Prince* a few months before the publication of the article. *Via negativa* appeared in the middle of these circumstances, and the term might have been coined around this time of the year 1965.

It, however, is not really important when he spoke of the term *via negativa* out of his mouth. What is important is the process that he underwent in shaping the principle. The significance of *via negativa* resides in what the process means in the actor’s art, which is concerned with the attitude or the ethics in the work of the actor’s self-revelation. It is the process, *via*, upon which Grotowski put more value than on the result. The meaning of learning practical lessons from *via negativa* is to seriously acquire this

attitude that must have been quite alien to the Western theatrical convention at the time. The work of Grotowski during the first phase of his lifetime research was in itself passing through the process of attaining the insight of *via negativa* and of embodying it on the stage. In order to understand the principle of *via negativa*, therefore, one should take a close look at the path on which Grotowski walked to reach it. In doing so, one would be able to notice that Grotowski's attitude towards the process was his logical determination, which is deeply related to the notion of Daoism.

ii. Before 1962: From *Orpheus* to *Kordian*

In the season 1958/59, the last season before he accepted the directorship of the Theatre of 13 Rows, Grotowski clearly stated what he wanted to do in the theatre, saying that '[he] will fight against emotionalism on stage and in the audience, if it does not serve our understanding' (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 27) in an interview directly after the opening of *The Ill-Fated*, which he directed for the Theatre of 13 Rows as a guest director. This production was another version of Jerzy Krzyszton's *The Ill-Fated Family* that had already been adapted and directed by him four months earlier under a different title, *Gods of Rain*. In 1959, Ludwik Flaszen wrote a review of one of Grotowski's works for that season, Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, which opened on 14 March, pointing out that Grotowski removed the characters' 'emotional charm and their lyricism', which, Flaszen thought, was the mood that the play should have retained in the performance (Flaszen, 2010, pp. 50–52). Thereafter, Flaszen, when the Theatre of 13 Rows proposed him its directorship, quickly offered Grotowski the position of the director of the theatre and became his foremost collaborator as literary director. Although criticising Grotowski for having missed the Chekhovian mood, Flaszen must have seen 'the Lion' in the man who was a 'brave [beast] openly roaring' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 33) and

who aspired to revolutionise the ‘traditional and institutional theatre’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 43) that was a naturalistic theatre based on the misunderstanding of the Stanislavski System, the only official acting technique at the time in communist Poland (Flaszen, 2010, p. 42).

By becoming the director of the Theatre of 13 Rows, Grotowski obtained a home for his own experiments. In the first season 1959/1960 at the Theatre Laboratory, Grotowski sought to ensure his position as a director, a position in which he would be able to realise ‘the neo-theatre’ (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, pp. 30–31). However, Grotowski was confronted with a hostile Polish contemporary theatrical atmosphere, which was confined in, on the one hand, the authoritative view of socialist realism and, on the other, the new influence of the Western avant-garde, both of which, according to Flaszen, had some negative effects on the contemporary Polish theatre (Flaszen, 2010, pp. 29–31, pp. 115–119). Ironically, these two undesirable components of the Polish theatrical scene of the time affected the two major figures of the Theatre Laboratory in a constructive way. Flaszen, who was tired of the naturalistic representation of the conventional theatre, found in the Western avant-garde a possibility of revolutionising the dull Polish theatrical life although it tended to ‘reduce the actor to the status of puppet’ (Kumiega, 1985, p. 11). Grotowski likewise learned essential lessons such as the emphasis on the awareness of the actor’s work on the self and the continuous ‘self-reformation’ that are essential parts of Stanislavski’s teachings, which at the time were considered the part of the outdated canon of socialist realism.

In this season, Grotowski mounted three productions with his collaborators of the Theatre Laboratory, which were *Orpheus* by Jean Cocteau, *Cain* by Byron, and *Mystery Bouffe* by Vladimir Mayakovsky. In addition, he directed *Faust* by Goethe outside the Laboratory. Although Grotowski’s unique dramaturgical approach based on the

worldview of *conjunctio oppositorum*, which is related to the Daoist viewpoint, was already noticeable in terms of the themes of the productions, the procedure of staging the plays was different from what he would do in experimenting with the actor/spectator relationship and the art of acting in later years. The productions were rather the results of the determined textual manipulation of the plays based on his philosophical inclination, which became typical of his treatment of literary texts. For example, the production of *Orpheus*, as mentioned earlier in Ch. 3, due to lack of time for rehearsal, was presented in a realistic stage with sloppy costumes (Kumiega, 1985, p. 13), which were not ‘poor’ at all. In the next production, *Cain*, the situation did not change much. Osinski reported, ‘*Cain* was based on rich visual elements and technico-theatrical tricks rather than on the craft of the actor’ (Osinski, 1986, p. 40). When the Theatre Laboratory was on tour with *Orpheus* and *Cain*, the productions received some severe denunciation because of their lack of quality in the acting. A critic said that the Laboratory was ‘in the direction of technical amateurism’ and needed to ‘perfect the acting’ (Zagorski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 40). Zofia Jasinska, who, Osinski considered, gave a thoughtful criticism of the productions, singled out a point regarding the acting and the source of the productions:

Cain is definitely the more interesting production [than *Orpheus*]. Why? The acting had nothing to do with it, because the acting was pretty much the same in both productions. This theatre is “upheld” by the ideas of the director, not by the acting, which still seems quite raw and undistinguished. This is partly owing to the youth of the troupe (Jasinska quoted in Osinski, 1986, pp. 40–41)

As shown in Jasinska's review, the productions of the Theatre Laboratory were only distinctive in the sense of Grotowski's radical 'ideas'. The responsibility for mounting a series of productions for the newly established theatre did not allow Grotowski to work on experimental research on the art of acting. As a matter of fact, it seems that he, at this time, did not have any specific idea regarding research on the actor's art. As he mentioned later, the first season was rather the moment in which he concentrated on 'more an exorcism aimed against the conventional theatre than the statement of a new counter programme' (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 40). Grotowski did not have either the time or the insight to explore the art of acting with a serious commitment yet. The 'exorcism', however, was about to lead him to an astounding path towards the unknown territory.

The Theatre Laboratory began its second season 1960/1961 with the production of *Shakuntala*, an ancient Indian drama by Kalidasa. It was in this production that some new discovery regarding acting practice alongside Grotowski's radical attempt in reconstructing the spatial relationship between the actor and the spectator. It first happened during the preparation of *Shakuntala*. Ludwik Flaszen described the situation in retrospect:

At that time we were at a cross-roads. Something crystallized then – we were looking for a purer theatre where one could not tell content from form. We wanted pure form – movement. This change was of tremendous consequence. The need of exercise suddenly appeared: just in order to be able to do it!
(Flaszen quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 31)

Although, according to the tone of Flaszen's recall, it was seemingly fortuitous that the Theatre Laboratory was aware of the need of exercises, it could be considered as a somewhat anticipated consequence from Grotowski's ambition that attempted to challenge the conventional theatre practice by turning his attention into heterogeneous performance traditions in search of an antidote for the European theatre.

Shakuntala, having already been produced by Grotowski as a radio drama in the season 1957/1958, must have been chosen again because it was 'the antithesis of the [Western] theatre of illusion' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 65), which seemed to continue the idea of the 'exorcism' that had begun in the previous season. The performance space of *Shakuntala*, the first work of the stage architect Jerzy Gurawski in the Theatre Laboratory, was unusual in having the stage set up in the centre of the space and in seating the audience on the two sides of the stage. On the stage was a phallic symbol. The actors presented the action of the performance mainly on the centre stage and moved back and forth among the audience through the corridors in the middle of the auditorium (Osinski, 1986, p. 50). Grotowski had children design the costumes for the production so that the effect was 'extremely colourful, a little primitive, somewhat Oriental' (Flaszen quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 31). In this physical setting of the production, Grotowski constructed 'pseudo-Oriental theatre' and 'a parody of popular notions about Eastern theatre' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 66). His aim was to establish a 'ritualistic' performance in employing a means alien to the convention of the Western theatrical tradition.

The Theatre Laboratory's awareness of the needs of exercises emerged while incorporating the performative sources from the heterogeneous culture into the production of *Shakuntala*. In the process, Grotowski paid attention to a codified physical language of a ritual performance that was exclusively appreciated by a people in a specific community or culture, which still existed in such Eastern theatrical forms as the

Indian Kathakali, the Chinese Beijing Opera, and the Japanese Noh Drama, but which no longer remained in the contemporary Western theatre.³³ Through the production of *Shakuntala*, he wanted to ‘study the possibility of creating similar signs in the European theatre’ and ‘discover a system of signs appropriate to the European theatre’, (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 51) whose tradition had been dominated by the verbal and written dramatic text. To discover a non-verbal sign system meant to search for a ‘pure form – movement’, which consisted of ‘vocal and gestural signs’ (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 51) producing “‘actor-music”: rhythmic clapping of the body, echoes of footsteps, etc.’ (Osinski, 1986, p. 50). To carry out these physical ‘pseudo Indian signs’, the actors of the Theatre Laboratory needed special exercises for their tasks in the performance, as Flaszen remarks, ‘just in order to be able to do it’. Grotowski recalled in 1968:

After *Sakuntala*, we undertook a search in the domain of organic reactions of people, in order to be able to structure these. This opened the door to the most fruitful adventure our group has had; that is, research in the field of acting.

(Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 51)

The awareness regarding the need of exercise resulted from the effort to overthrow the Western theatrical convention, which was followed by a new insight on the actor training.

The exercise at this time, however, remained as a way of executing the needs and ideas for performances that were emerging during rehearsals. Specific exercises for a particular production were used in the rehearsals for a production and abandoned after the

³³ It is the fixed body observed in the Balinese theatre, which evolves into the textualised body and the body-text discussed in the Chapter 2 of this thesis.

rehearsals ended. Grotowski's perception on the restricted use of exercises continued in the next two productions, *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)* by Adam Mickiewicz and *Kordian* by Juliusz Slowacki (Barba, 1999, p. 57). Although Grotowski stated, as in the quotation above, that the Theatre Laboratory became involved in research on the art of acting after the production of *Shakuntala*, he and his collaborators were not quite aware of the significance of open-ended exercises independent from rehearsals for performances until the rehearsal for *Akropolis* began.

Although he got the new insight in terms of the actor's exercise, Grotowski still focused more on the relationship between the actor and the spectator in the two productions after *Shakuntala*. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Grotowski attempted to establish direct physical interactions between the actor and the spectator in *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)* and *Kordian* by completely removing the separation between them. In the performance of *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*, for example, the actors 'attacked directly many times' the audience members and made them 'take defined roles according to the needs of the action' (Flaszen, 2010, p. 79). In the production of *Kordian*, similar to *Dziady*, the spectators were treated like the patients of the mental hospital on occasion and frequently threatened for not following the actors' instructions (Flaszen, 2010, p. 86). In doing so, Grotowski tried creating a contemporary ritual in which the spectator no longer remained as an individual entertained by a representational performance but engaged her/himself as an active participant in the ritual.

Along with the effort to draw the active participation of the spectator by integrating the stage and the auditorium in the two productions, there was a slight change in terms of the acting style of the Theatre Laboratory between *Dziady* and *Kordian*. It probably resulted from the lesson of *Shakuntala* in spite of the certain limitation, which considered exercises as a supplemental means for theatrical expressions in a performance,

not as the way of the actor's research on her/himself. Having seen *Dziady*, his first experience of the Theatre Laboratory's work in the summer of 1961, Eugenio Barba remained 'indifferent' to the Laboratory because he saw no fresh originality of the scenic arrangement of the production with the immature acting style of the actors (Barba, 1999, pp. 20–21). Yet, Barba, in terms of the acting style, responded differently to *Kordian*, his second experience of the Laboratory:

The tenderness aroused by his [Zbigniew Cynkutis who played Kordian] youthfulness and the melodious quality of his voice clashed constantly and surprisingly with his acrobatic vitality. The metal bunk-beds were perforated structures on which the actors climbed, assuming daring positions as if to display their frenzied ravings. This physical intensity gave the performance a suggestive force that I did not remember from *Dziady*. (Barba, 1999, p. 27)

The change of Barba's attitude from indifference to excitement appears to come from 'the physical intensity' of the acting in *Kordian*, which was not found in *Dziady*. In another testimony of a Polish critic on *Kordian*:

This is a cast of striking efficiency and physical fitness: the mastery of memorized material when one considers the frenetic pace of the actors' speeches: the unusually complex staging situation: the scaling of the voice from shout to song to whisper: the incessant alterations in color and intonation; the

certainty and freedom apparent in attacking problems and risky situations; and finally the concentration it takes to create character – these are rare demands and unusual achievements to be found in the theatre today. (Kudlinski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 65)

The physical and vocal quality of the actors in *Kordian* was to some degree distinguished from that in *Dziady*. In this change of the acting style, the Theatre Laboratory demonstrated their continuous evolution from the search for ‘pure form’ to the awareness of ‘the need of exercises’, and to the actor’s accomplishment of the ‘striking efficiency and physical fitness’. Grotowski, however, did not arrive at the awareness of *via negativa* at this point, yet. He explained his perception on the actor training at the time:

During this time [from 1959 to 1962], I was searching for a positive technique or, in other words, a certain method of training capable of objectively giving the actor a creative skill that was rooted in his imagination and his personal associations. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 133)

As he admitted in this statement, the actor training of the Theatre Laboratory was still ‘a positive technique’ as opposed to the negative one of *via negativa*.

Less than a month after the opening of *Kordian*, there was an event that alluded to Grotowski’s developing thought. On the first of March 1962, the Laboratory changed its name from the Theatre of 13 Rows to the Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows, using the word ‘laboratory’, implying the work of ‘research’, for the first time. The term laboratory, by

Barba's definition, 'just[ified] research into what was "essential" in theatre craft, the lengthy process involved in the preparation of a production, and the restricted number of spectators' (Barba, 1999, p. 45).

In the meantime, Grotowski travelled to China in August 1962. During his stay in China, he saw the Beijing Opera and noticed that the actors of the Chinese traditional theatre took a move in the opposite direction before advancing to a place where they wanted to arrive, which Grotowski and Barba named 'the Chinese principle'. He also met a Chinese vocal specialist, Dr. Ling, who showed him how the larynx worked when the actor was speaking, a technique that became an important part of the vocal training in the Theatre Laboratory (Barba, 1999, p. 53). 'The Chinese principle' is particularly interesting because it is reminiscent of the definition of *via negativa*, which is an act of 'resigning from not doing it'.

During the three seasons from 1959 to 1962, Grotowski brought out the specific direction of his research, which was towards the actor/spectator relationship and the actor's art. Grotowski was now about to plunge into the direction further and to undergo an arduous process of research on the art of acting and the spectator's reception of it. In the process, he would come across as well as develop the principle of *via negativa*.

iii. After 1962: From *Akropolis* to *The Hamlet Study*

From the fourth season 1962/1963 until the production of *The Constant Prince* in 1965, the Theatre Laboratory made the most decisive development in their actor's training approach. Franco Ruffini (1998–99, p. 105) points out, in his article 'The Empty Room: Studying Jerzy Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre*', that Grotowski highlighted his most valuable achievement by excluding the work of the Theatre Laboratory in the period from 1963 to 1965 from his book *Towards a Poor Theatre*. The achievement that

Ruffini discusses is the actualisation of the actor's trance, the 'total act' in Grotowski's terms. Ryszard Cieslak, in most intimate collaboration with Grotowski, accomplished the extraordinary state of concentration in the process of acting in *The Constant Prince*. Ruffini finds that Grotowski *eliminated* this working process of the particular period from his book because of his paradoxical situation induced by Cieslak's achievement. First of all, 'the inner process', which Cieslak underwent to bring about the total act, was not something that could be taught; at the same time, however, he still needed to write *Towards a Poor Theatre*, a book aiming to 'teach' something impossible to teach (Ruffini, 1998–99, p. 110). Ruffini assumes that Grotowski, in not writing about it, chose to make the big 'empty room', which, he might have hoped, would attract the reader's attention. To sum up, the process of creating the 'total act', the impossibility of writing about the process, and the strategic omission of the process from his book in order to emphasize it are the consequences of Grotowski's experiences in the specific period, which were converging into one principle, one of the most exquisite notions in his research, *via negativa*.

In the season of 1962/1963, the Theatre Laboratory underwent a significant evolution regarding its attitude towards the actor training and exercises. The evolution came about with a change in the earlier experiment of the Theatre Laboratory. In *Dziady* and *Kordian* in the previous seasons, Grotowski had aggressively pushed forward in experimenting with the possibility of the spectator as an active participant of the performances by forcing her/him to directly interact with the actor. However, the attempt to manipulate the spectator by means of direct confrontation with the actor proved ineffective due to the psychological resistance of the spectator who habitually identified her/himself as one of crowd detached from the performance. Grotowski recalled:

Gradually we abandoned a manipulation of the audience and all the struggles to provoke a reaction in the spectator, or to use him as a guinea pig. We preferred to forget the spectator, forget his existence. We began to concentrate our complete attention and activity on, above all, the art of the actor. (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 54)

After the two productions, Grotowski dropped the attempt for the artificial unification between the actor and the spectator and moved on to focus more on the actor's craft. Though, it did not mean that he totally forsook developing the actor/spectator relationship; rather, he kept on experimenting with it in more subtle ways.

Akropolis based on the text by Stanislaw Wyspianski was thought of as the most faithful to the principles of 'poor theatre', the concept that was mentioned for the first time in the programme of the production. The action of the performance metaphorically 'represent[ed] the sum total of a civilization and test[ed] its values on the touchstone of contemporary experience' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 62), which was the extermination camp of Auschwitz.

In the production, there was no set in the conventional sense. Only scraps of metallic junk were piled on a lifted platform in the centre of the performance space from the beginning of the performance and used to 'build the civilisation' as the action progressed. The uniform costumes for all the cast members were simple patched sacks with holes through which the actors' skin could be seen. These almost identical costumes erased the personal qualities of an individual character. Furthermore, the actors expressed their emotions and unique characters only through facial masks that were produced by the manipulation of their face muscles. The sound and music were only

produced from the actors' vocal and bodily manipulation such as singing, screaming, clapping, footstep, and so on. Every element of the performance worked for the absolute need of the action of the performance, not as decoration (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 61–77). Nothing was brought from outside during the performance, and everything remained in the theatre at the end (Osinski, 1986, p. 68). Even the text of Wyspianski was drastically altered; therefore, the poet's original work was unable to be traced in the Laboratory's production (Grotowski, 1968, p. 61). As stated above, in *Akropolis*, the actor/spectator relationship was created in subtler ways without the forced participation of the spectator. The audience members, given a role of the living, were totally ignored by the actors, who represented the dead. The world of the dead did not affect that of the living although they were present all the time in the same performance space.

More importantly, in terms of the development of the actor training and exercises, Grotowski made a further advance from the awareness of the need of exercises for specific productions towards the more sophisticated demand for autonomous exercises, which were meaningful in their own right without any direct relation to rehearsals and performances. Before *Akropolis*, the actor training and exercises were only associated with the needs of a specific production. In the productions from *Shakuntala* to *Kordian*, Grotowski and his collaborators devised training and exercises as a means of realising each production and forgot them after the end of the rehearsals of that production. During the rehearsal of *Akropolis*, however, the autonomous actor's training began to emerge. Some of the exercises not directly related to the production were kept and developed for the ongoing actor training programme of the Theatre Laboratory (Barba, 1999, p. 57). Barba recalled:

A particular time was established, during rehearsals, for creating the 'masks'. Then it was extended to allow the actors to practise the gaits and positions of imbalance which were to characterise the behaviour of the prisoners. New elements began to be included that were only indirectly connected with the performance: acrobatics, composition, respiratory and vocal exercises. This particular time, which was separate from the rehearsals, was called *cwiczenia* (exercises). The amazing thing – which had profound historical consequences – was that these continued even when the rehearsals ended, acquiring an autonomy of their own. (Barba, 1999, p. 56)

The production of *Akropolis* was yet a transitional phase from 'the particular exercises for a production' to the autonomous exercises. In rehearsals of *Akropolis*, Grotowski still borrowed from established theatrical forms such as classical mime and facial exercises, which he threw out when he saw that they proved 'sterile' (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 117–118). Nevertheless, during the work on *Akropolis*, Grotowski realised the urgent need of self-sufficient exercises independent from performances and rehearsals, and the actors of the Laboratory continued their daily exercises even after the end of the rehearsals and performances of the production.

In December 1962, the Theatre Laboratory began rehearsals of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* written by Christopher Marlowe. It was this production by which the Theatre Laboratory first introduced itself to the Western European audience, who were the delegates of the Tenth International Congress of the Theatre Institute (ITI) that was held in Warsaw in 1963. The performance space was reminiscent of a

monastery refectory, consisting of two long tables in opposite sides and a shorter table at the head. The tables were the main platform for the action of the performance.

Following the principles of 'poor theatre' as in *Akropolis*, the props and costumes of *Dr. Faustus* were minimal; there were literally no props at all, and the costumes were simply monks' habits. The sound and music were the visceral effects produced by the actors' own bodies.

In addition to the continuous application of 'poor theatre' to the performance, Grotowski more discreetly treated the actor/spectator relationship in *Dr. Faustus*; there was less direct contact between the actor and the spectator than in *Dziady* and *Kordian* but more interaction between them than in *Akropolis*. As the host of the last supper, Faustus welcomed the spectators who had all been given the role of guests at the banquet as they entered the theatre. Among the spectators, there were two actors in the disguise of audience members, who, at the beginning of the performance, provoked Faustus into telling the spectators about his life. The performance, thus, turned out to be a form of confession, and the spectators became the unwitting confessors (Kumiega, 1985, p. 69). This subtle way of drawing the spectator into the performance resulted from the awareness of the creators of the performance that they were unable to control the psychical state of the spectator by means of direct provocation. Instead, Grotowski, as quoted above, determined to 'concentrate his complete attention and activity on the art of the actor', which was based on the expectation that the psychological change of the actor, the trance, could affect the spectator's psychical state, or at least the spectator's attitude towards the performance.

At this stage of evolution of the actor training and exercise in the Theatre Laboratory, the term *ćwiczenia* (exercise), from Barba's recollection above, was

especially indicative. The term was for the first time printed and given a special significance in the programme of *Dr. Faustus*. In it, Flaszen wrote:

Doubtless the term THEATRICAL EXERCISES is not a particularly impressive one, but it has its positive sides. It emphasises the concrete character which distinguishes our method. It helps us to underline the fact that for us this method is similar to a road or a springboard, and has absolutely no doctrinal value; that the system of work cannot be separated here from the actor training; that for us every role, every production, should not be an objective in itself but rather an exercise, the preparation for an even more complex exercise, the penetration into hitherto unexplored regions. What is more, the term THEATRICAL EXERCISES also permits a parallel that we find amusing – an allusion to the ‘operationes spirituales’; but that is already anecdote. (Flaszen quoted in Barba, 1999, p. 58, emphasis in original)

Here, on the one hand, as Ruffini pointed out, Flaszen presented ‘theatrical exercises’ as the way towards the ‘operationes spirituales’ (trance); on the other, he put ‘theatrical exercises’ in parallel with ‘operationes spirituales’, which confirmed that every activity of the Theatre Laboratory, even including its completed productions, was considered a kind of ‘theatrical exercises’.

The performance as a process was immediately experimented with in *The Hamlet Study* based on the works of William Shakespeare and Stanislaw Wyspianski. *The*

Hamlet Study was not staged as a completed production because mainly of the excruciating hardship of the Theatre Laboratory at the time. For the same reason, there is less information about *The Hamlet Study* in comparison with other productions of the Theatre Laboratory. However, ironically, this reason gave a particular significance to the work in the sense that the piece was presented as ‘an open rehearsal’, not as a finalised theatrical production. Without considering the result, Grotowski, through the work of *The Hamlet Study*, was able to examine the possibility of an open-ended process of the actors as well as of the director himself in the presence of the spectators. It was not successful as a theatrical production and was not even intended as one in the first place; however, *The Hamlet Study* was ‘an exceedingly important experience’ because it was ‘the first attempt to create what Grotowski has called a “total act” with the participation of the entire ensemble’ (Osinski, 1986, p. 78). The work of *The Hamlet Study* was not only a story about Hamlet but also ‘a study of the acting method and of collective directing’ (Flaszen, 2010, p. 99). *The Hamlet Study* itself was one of the exercises that the Theatre Laboratory carried out during this period in the process of developing their perspective on the art of acting. The emphasis on the process was now becoming the characteristic of Grotowski’s research.

iv. *The Constant Prince and Apocalypsis cum figuris*

Grotowski’s dedication to the notion of the process became visible through Cieslak’s performance in *The Constant Prince*, based on Juliusz Slowacki’s adaptation of the work of Pedro Calderon de la Barca. Again, with the collaboration of Gurawski, the architectural arrangement of the performance space was experimented afresh on the actor/spectator relationship. As mentioned earlier in Ch. 3, the performance space for the action was set at a lower level than the audience. In addition, separated by the high

fences, the spectators could only see the action over the fences by slightly standing up from the seat and leaning towards the fences. There was no possibility for the spectators to see the performance by staring straight ahead. This scenic arrangement generated an uncanny mood. In Grotowski's words:

The spectators are removed from the actors and placed behind a high fence, behind which one can only see their heads. From there, from above, from this especially crooked perspective, they follow the actors as if they were animals in a runway at the zoo. They are like spectators at a *corrida*, like medical students who watch an operation, or, finally, like those who eavesdrop and thereby impose a sense of moral transgression onto the action. In *The Constant Prince*, the spectators are relegated to the role of students carefully observing an operation, a mob watching a bloody spectacle, collectors of impressions, tourists demanding sensations, or eavesdroppers on some secret ritual which they watch from a safe corner and to which no intruder is allowed access. (Grotowski quoted in Osinski, 1986, pp. 84–85, italics in original)

The effect of the scenic arrangement of *The Constant Prince* demanded the psychological involvement of the spectator in an indirect and subtle way, which was prompted by her/his bodily posture.

Yet, this indirectness and subtleness were even more powerful than the physically direct confrontation between the actor and the spectator attempted in previous

productions. This subtlety of the actor/spectator relationship created by the scenic arrangement had the spectator unconsciously choose her/his position in the performance regardless of whether s/he wanted to remain as ‘an eavesdropper’ or to plunge her/himself into the performance as a spiritual participant of a ritual. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Grotowski still kept on manipulating the spectator’s emotional response. It was already an irreversible fact that his primary focus in research moved from the actor/spectator relationship to the actor’s craft. Grotowski must have well realised from his experiences in the previous productions that it was not the creators of a performance but the spectator her/himself who chose her/his way of responding to the action of the performance. Grotowski gave up on the intention to control the spectator’s decision; though, he still offered options that the spectator could choose from, whether participating in the ritual or not.

As a result of the lessening of Grotowski’s concern with the actor/spectator relationship in creating *The Constant Prince*, the art of acting instead became the focal point of the experiments of the Theatre Laboratory. Specifically, it was the actor’s process in confrontation with her/his own self by locating and eliminating physical and psychological obstacles. The creative endeavour undertaken by Grotowski and Cieslak in *The Constant Prince* was a process during which they exchanged their deep personal experiences in an intimate communion and in which finally ‘[t]he actor [wa]s reborn – not only as an actor but as a man – and with him, [Grotowski was] reborn’ (Grotowski, 1968, p. 25). Such a process of transformation was the most valuable experience to Grotowski and Cieslak. The working process of *The Constant Prince* was ‘a kind of exercise that ma[de] possible the verification of Grotowski’s method of acting’ (Flaszen, 1965, p. 99).

This kind of work required a long period of time. The Theatre Laboratory spent about a year on rehearsing *The Constant Prince*, which was considerably longer than the rehearsal time of the previous productions of the Laboratory. Further, by the time when the rehearsals for the production started, Grotowski and Cieslak had already been individually working on *The Constant Prince* for a year. During the work between Grotowski and Cieslak, they tried to recollect something truthful from the personal experiences of Cieslak's adolescent years, such as his first love, instead of building the character of the title role of the production. In this way, Cieslak, in his performance, was able to establish a spontaneous flow of the emotion and passion that he himself had once experienced, which did not at all have a direct association with those of the constant prince, but which in a way could be expressive of the prince's emotion, passion, pride, courage, and luminosity.³⁴

Such a performance of Cieslak was linked to Grotowski's realisation that only the actor's individual research was viable, not a universal method. Grotowski, in his letter sent to Barba on 21 September 1963, probably during the preparation of *The Hamlet Study* and the individual work with Cieslak for *The Constant Prince*, illustrated 'a radical reform of the exercises' (Grotowski quoted in Barba, 1999, p. 122):

[T]he individualisation of the exercises starting out from a defect that cannot be eliminated, from errors that can be eliminated and from the capabilities belonging to a particular person, and this in every domain of the exercises. *Everyone becomes their own instructor.*

³⁴ Cieslak's process could be misunderstood as a similar method to the Stanislavski's affective memory. It is, however, totally different from the affective memory in a way that Cieslak brought up his memory not to identify with the character's emotion but to relive his own authentic past on stage. The identification of Cieslak with the prince happened only in the mind of the spectator not in Cieslak.

...

It is such a concrete form of knowledge *that it can be studied and verified on one's own organism*. (Grotowski quoted in Barba, 1999, pp. 122–123, italics in original)

It was a way of reaching “‘technique 2”, the moment of individual transcendence which occurred through “‘technique 1”, the actor’s craft’ (Barba, 1999, p. 99). In another letter, sent to Barba on 1 September 1964, Grotowski wrote about his ‘tendency towards individuation’ leading him to ‘[s]trange experiences’ (Grotowski quoted in Barba, 1999, p. 131), which alluded to the successful accomplishment of the ‘total act’ by Cieslak. It was an arduous work in search of the self in the actor as a human being.

The next and last production of the Theatre Laboratory, *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, needed even more time to be realised, about four years, than *The Constant Prince*. Long before getting on the track of shaping *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, the Laboratory underwent many phases in the preparation for its final theatrical production. At first, the Theatre Laboratory started rehearsing for *Samuel Zborowski* by Juliusz Slowacki in 1965. After a lengthy period of time, it was dropped, and a new plan with the working title of *The Gospels* was proposed. Finally, on 19 July 1968, the Theatre Laboratory gave an open rehearsal of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* to the public and spent seven more months preparing for the official premier of the production. The activities of the Theatre Laboratory at this time was seemingly wavering especially to the eyes of the adversaries of the troupe, some of whom said that Grotowski ‘ha[d] stopped irritating his greatest opponents, but he ha[d] nothing to offer his supporters. ... He [was] exploiting what he ha[d] already created ...’ (Czarminski quoted in Osinski, 1986, p. 109). However, as Osinski (1986, p. 110)

pointed out, the sequential activities of the Laboratory from *Samuel Zborowski* to *The Gospels*, and to *Apocalypsis cum figuris* were the essential process of ‘transformation’ in the continuous evolution of the production into the final form of the performance.

Furthermore, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* continued being in the process of the evolution even after the premiere. The structures and ethos of the production, as Kumiega pointed out, kept transforming until the close of its public presentation so that ‘an objective, definitive description and interpretation of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* is not possible’ (Kumiega, 1985, p. 92). There was going to be no fixed and completed version of a production any more in the Theatre Laboratory; only human beings in search of their selves and their effort to communicate with others would persist.

At this point, the priority of the process over the result raised an ethical issue. The inevitable clash between the result and the process was brought about. If the process is so important, what becomes of the result? In clearly grasping what would come after his decisive emphasis on the process, Grotowski clarified himself:

You must not think of the result. But, at the same time, finally, you can’t ignore the result because from the objective point of view the deciding factor in art is the result. In that way, art is immoral. He is right who has the result. That’s the way it is. But in order to get the result – and this is the paradox – you must not look for it. If you look for it you will block the natural creative process.... (Grotowski, 1968, p. 245)

Also, by emphasising the ephemerality of the theatrical result, he advised Barba:

Well, allow me to tell you [Barba]: you never see concrete results. Concrete results (particularly in such a fleeting art as theatre) are born and die in the twinkling of an eye, and I believe it is a mistake to tie oneself down to these. Believe me, I have the moral right to speak to you like this. You only really possess *that which you have experienced*, and therefore (in theatre) that which you know and which can be verified in your own organism, your own concrete and daily individuality. (Grotowski quoted in Barba, 1999, p. 123, italics in original)

A result is only meaningful as a process, in which one experiences something through her/his own true self that consists of the body and the soul. In addition, what can be deduced in Grotowski's notion about the ethics of the relationship between the process and the result is his imminent departure from the theatre.

Grotowski's leaving the theatre is also deeply related to the experiments with the actor/spectator relationship. The fundamental working strategy of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was the actors' improvisation, which was conceived without a literary text at the outset. In this improvisational nature of the rehearsal, the problem was the clichés used by the actors from their experiences in the previous productions. Because the themes of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* were similar to those of former productions, the 'Judaeo-Christian myth', the actors came up with typical reactions that they had done so many times before (Kumiega, 1985, p. 90). Flaszen recalled their way out of the predicament at that time:

I think the problem was that we had escaped from ourselves. We had allowed the myth its own autonomy. By presenting the Gospel, we had withdrawn ourselves. The solution was to depart from the myth to discover a point of reality – this being the awareness of the consequence of the myth. What would have happened to Christ if he revealed himself nowadays? In a literal way. What would we do with him? How would we see him? Where would he reveal himself? Would he be noticed at all? With the help of these questions, the crisis was resolved. And then it turned out there is a passage in the Gospel: ‘I have come and you haven’t recognised me.’ (Flaszen quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 91)

When the actors built up some things from their own personal reality or experiences regarding the theme of the production, as had Cieslak in *The Constant Prince*, in return, Grotowski gave comments and constructed structures for them. It was the work that attempted to make the entire group achieve what Cieslak had done in *The Constant Prince* (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 89–90).

In the production of *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, Grotowski pushed the concept of ‘poor theatre’ to the limit. The performance space was a literally empty room, and there were only two spotlights lit against one of the walls of the room. The spectators entered this bare space, being seated on the floor or just standing against the wall (in another version of the production, though, there were benches around the room). In the centre of the room, the bare space surrounded by the audience naturally became the place for the action of the performance. The costumes were just everyday clothing. There was no

sonic effect except for the words uttered by the actors and the sound made by their body. The props were also minimal with only the most basic objects being used. At the end of the performance when the actors had left, there again remained the empty space.

Grotowski's experiment on the actor/spectator relationship saw its final stage of evolution in this production. As shown in the quotation from Flaszen above, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was about Christ's second coming, but His revelation was not completely accepted or absolutely denied in the performance (Kumiega, 1985, p. 93). The choices were left to the spectator. Which one would you choose? Depending on the decision of each individual spectator, s/he became 'an individual who still [wa]s in some part a spectator, and the individual who still [wa]s in some small part an actor' (Kumiega, 1985, p. 104). One of the most powerful myths was brought here and now in front of both the actor and the spectator. The individuals in the same space, the actors and the spectators together, experienced the same event. Nobody knew whether they accepted or denied it; regardless of their decision, Grotowski had done what he wanted to do in the theatre in expecting:

... the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself. ... [the spectator] who undergoes an endless process of self development, whose unrest is not general but directed towards a search for the truth about himself and his mission in life. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 40)

Then, there was only a way for him: 'exodus'. In 1970, Grotowski announced his departure from the theatre into a new terrain of his quest.

5. *Via negativa*: Dao towards a Poor Theatre

The principle of *via negativa* had been immanent in Grotowski's thinking from the very beginning of his career. His thinking, first shaped through the notion of *conjunctio oppositorum*, became more and more concrete in the course of his research during the Theatre of Productions phase in the 1960s. When his thinking resulted in the principle of *via negativa*, his research drastically changed its direction. He plunged himself into an unprecedented experiment in the history of the theatre.

Via negativa is foremost in Grotowski's research on the actor's art. When being examined in association with Dao in *Dao De Jing*, *via negativa* can be understood in more concrete terms. The meaning of *via* signifies the endless process in Grotowski's research as Dao indicates the intrinsic principle of the ever-changing universe. A way, the literal meaning of both *via* and Dao, is a realm where one can find how to live, how to improve oneself, and how to be oneself. A way is itself full of meaning without any final destination. Grotowski did not intend to concentrate on the result, and *Dao De Jing* tells no ultimate truth. You know that you are alive because you keep on moving and changing. *Negativa* gives a motif for the moving and changing life. Non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*) and 'resigning from not doing' shares an attitude of emptying the self to learn how to flow in the process. Sceptical in language, both *via negativa* and Dao obtain their wisdom by operating in the corporeal world. Knowing is doing by non-doing, which is to follow the way (Dao) of nature without artificial manipulation as well as to eliminate obstacles blocking the organic flow of the actor's impulse.

With the notion of *via negativa*, Grotowski declared that the Theatre Laboratory pursued the 'poor' while people of the world actively chased the rich. The somewhat rebellious implication of the word not only established the character of Grotowski and the Theatre Laboratory but also vindicated the philosophy of the Laboratory's practice and

aesthetic position. In the aspiration of Grotowski and the Theatre Laboratory to rediscover the meaning of the theatre through *via negativa*, there arises the 'poor theatre'.

Via negativa as the essence of *conjunctio oppositorum* again expanded itself to the aesthetic point of view that encompassed the productions of the Theatre Laboratory. In answering the question about the uniqueness of the theatre art and how it was different from the TV and the film, Grotowski succinctly described a theatre that he wanted to achieve as 'poor theatre'. It was a theatre without all the auxiliary constituents that had been considered essentials in the Western theatrical tradition. The eradication of rather than the accumulation of skills, which is the nature of *via negativa*, is in return applied to the concept of 'poor theatre' that is the result of removing the unnecessary components.

Grotowski's Theatre of Productions phase at the Theatre Laboratory from 1959 to 1969 ended with his announcement that he would no longer produce performances. He moved on to his next phase in search for the possibilities of performance, ritual, and culture. His leaving the theatre reminds one of the phrases in *Dao De Jing*, which says, 'accomplishing something, but not dwell on it. For not dwelling, not be forsaken' (Ch. 2). By leaving the acclaimed works in the theatre behind, Grotowski did not stay on what he had achieved. He kept on going with his research in a new territory outside the theatre. The notion of *via negativa*, though, prevailed in his post-theatrical research.

Chapter V: Towards the Self-So (Nature-ness)

1. A Dilettante

The experiments of the Theatre Laboratory in Grotowski's Theatre of Productions phase were a process of searching for an authentic actor/spectator relationship and the actor's spontaneity in her/his disciplined body in the performance. The basic strategies of the Laboratory in the process were based on the concept of *conjunctio oppositorum* and the practical principle of *via negativa*. They are closely related to the perspective of *Dao De Jing*, which succinctly claims that Dao's intention has a pair of opposites move towards each other (Ch. 40). With such strategies related to the Daoist perspective, the aim of the Laboratory during the Theatre of Productions phase was to abolish the traditional conventions of theatre as a mimetic entertainment, of the actor as an imitator, and of the actor/spectator division as the imperative structure.

When Grotowski found the limitations of the experiment of the Laboratory in the conventional theatre, he did not hesitate to leave the theatre in accordance with his own principle of *via negativa*, which insists on the eradication of obstacles. In doing so, Grotowski pursued some knowledge that possibly (re)constructed performance practice as a way in which human beings stimulate their vitality, thereby discovering their true selves. In other words, he attempted to explore the core of human psychology and physicality outside of the theatre, which was a long journey starting from the so-called Paratheatre phase.

There is a problematic concern regarding the status of the Paratheatre phase in Grotowski's post-theatrical research. Richard Schechner (1997b, p. 207) stated that 'Paratheatre [is] the logical extension of the Theatre of Productions and Theatre of Sources point[s] to Objective Drama and Art as vehicle'. In the statement, Schechner

seems to consider the Paratheatre phase as the necessary consequence of the Theatre of Productions phase by presenting the respective phases in the linear flow of a cause-and-effect relationship. Thereby, he involuntarily overlooked the substantially discrete dimension of the Paratheatre phase. When leaving the theatre, Grotowski attempted to refute the Laboratory's experiences of the Theatre of Productions phase, which had been achieved in the conventional framework of the Western theatrical tradition. Although it should not be entirely dismissed,³⁵ Schechner's perspective would hamper the understanding of the critical meaning of the Paratheatre phase in Grotowski's entire career. Flaszen recalled the moment of transition from the Theatre of Productions phase to the Paratheatre phase:

In general, in that period, the question of whether we'd manage to survive, or whether we'd continue our lives as grand and meritorious corpses, was a big problem. Because by then the group had a tremendous output, which had gained world renown. It was such a nice temptation merely to continue. One could prosper for many years on the principle of a lovely museum. There was a time when we had three shows in repertory (the ones we took to New York: *Akropolis*, *Constant Prince*, and *Apocalypsis*). And then, threatened by the possibility of turning into a museum, our group began, gradually, to renounce its development. First, we stopped

³⁵ Richard Mennen (1975, p. 60) also described that Grotowski's transition from theatre to paratheatre was 'inexorable logic'. He pointed out that Grotowski's work with his actors in the Theatre of Productions phase was a process of eliminating the theatrical elements that alienated the actor from her/himself. But, such theatrical elements are necessary as long as there is the spectator. Thereby, *logically* in a sense, Grotowski had to eliminate 'the last division' between the actor and the spectator, which is one of the fundamental properties of the theatre (Mennen, 1975, p. 60).

playing *Akropolis*. Then, *Constant Prince* was removed.

Apocalypse, only remained. Soon, even this will be removed.

There comes a moment when one must renounce one's

previous achievement in order to start again at the "zero point."

It was, for us, a matter of life and death, and I mean it.

(Forsythe, 1978, p. 323)

The Paratheatre phase was a period of advancing forward the 'zero point'. It was an approach aiming for a total rupture from the theatrical configurations in which the Theatre Laboratory had been immersed during the last decade, which is a process of breaking off the engagement with the previous work environment. In other words, it could also be said to be a process of initiation, a liminal stage between the theatre and non-theatre, to enter an unprecedented research rather than a continuing work evolved from the previous experiences. During the initiation, the members of the Laboratory were expected to purify their body and mind tainted by the theatrical convention of the Western tradition, in which their previous works had been carried out even if they tried to break through the convention. Then, the Theatre of Sources phase, after the process of initiation, started from scratch.

In his work during the Theatre of Productions phase, Grotowski was mainly concerned with two issues – the actor/spectator relationship and the actor's craft. In concentrating his experimentation on these two concerns, Grotowski kept shifting his focus. The shifts occurred whenever Grotowski and his collaborators pushed the possibility of their experiment to the limit, reassessed the result of it, and reoriented the direction of the next experiment. It was a procedure constantly flowing between awareness and reassessment in which preceding works provided the ground for the next

experiments. It could be said that Grotowski's experiment was an empirical method to fight against being a dilettante in the art.

A dilettante by definition is 'a person who takes up an art, activity, or subject merely for amusement, esp. in a desultory or superficial way; dabbler' (Random House, 1997, p. 368). Based on the dictionary definition, people use the word in association with non-professionalism or an act of an amateur. However, the meaning of the word is totally different from that of the dictionary in Grotowski's context. According to Grotowski (2008c, p. 33), 'Dilettantism means lack of rigor. Rigor is an effort to escape illusion'. To Grotowski, the significance of the word dilettantism extends beyond an amateurish activity. In other words, dilettantism includes all the inclination to search for 'an easy solution' with a deceptive superficiality. It is a mask under which the performer conceals her/himself in resisting the honest communication with others. In this sense, dilettantism does not have anything to do with non-professionalism either. Rather, a professional could be another kind of dilettante, who uses her/his knowledge and technique as a slick way of hiding her/himself. Grotowski (1968, pp. 28–31) bitterly criticised theatre professionals such as academics, producers, and actors, who were only interested in satisfying personal ambition, wanting to be acknowledged by others. Yet, he employed the term dilettantism not only as a criticism of the pretentious attitude of others but also as a provocation and warning to himself.

The Grotowskian notion of theatrical dilettantism can be categorised in three ways. First, dilettantism prevails in the stereotypical idea of the conventional theatre in general, which conceives a theatrical work as a commodity for public consumers seeking entertainment. Such theatre aims at drawing attention from as many people as possible for profit. The result is likely to be a patchwork collage of eye-catching sensations borrowed from other art forms in competing with attractive media such as TV and film supported by

more advanced technologies. It is the theatre of a dilettante, an absurd denial of its own reason of existence as a unique art form.

Poor Theatre tried to recover the forsaken identity of the theatre art in challenging dilettantism of the commercial theatre. Grotowski (1968, p. 32) defined theatre as ‘what takes place between spectator and actor’, which is the spiritual communion by means of the physically close contact between them. A theatre only needs the actor and the spectator; the rest is superfluous and even detrimental obstacles, which are only embellishment to produce a fancy commodity. Therefore, in a theatre of this kind, there was no place for a dilettante pursuing commercial profit. Theatre, to Grotowski, should be an authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator, a meeting of people without their habitual social masks. The spectator should become an equally significant counterpart of the actor. The actor in theory only functions as a half of the performance event, and the spectator ought to play a role as the other half in the performance.

To achieve his idea of theatre, Grotowski in the early period of his career set up more direct and intimate contact between the actor and the spectator in the expectation that the authentic encounter between them could happen by means of the actor’s encouraging the spectator to actively partake in a performance. After a few productions such as *Dziady (Forefather’s Eve)* and *Kordian*, Grotowski dropped the coercive attempt to engage the spectator in the performance. He realised that the forceful challenge was not very effective. Grotowski explained:

... we ignored the obvious fact that the spectators are anyway playing the role of spectators – they are observers! And when we put them in the role of madmen, we simply disturbed their natural function as observers – or, in the best case – as

witnesses; in consequence their reactions were not natural.

The unity of place, time, and action was not accomplished.

(Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, pp. 49–50)

Contrary to his intention, Grotowski's radical proposition on the actor/spectator relationship provoked the wary estrangement of the spectators rather than their genuine participation. Thus, to overcome this predicament, Grotowski shifted his research focus to the actor's craft, which was, he believed, the core of the theatre as well as being under the control of the artist.

By shifting the focus of his experiment, Grotowski unavoidably had to deal with another kind of dilettantism, which was the commonplace description of the actor as an imposter in the conventional theatre practice. In comparing 'the holy actor' with 'the courtesan actor,' Grotowski asserted that the actor's art should not be a profession to show off her/his skill accumulated through habitual convention but must be a sacrificial undertaking to invite the spectator's psychological transformation. Grotowski expected in the process that the actor should strip away her/his social masks through the 'total act,' an act of opening up her/his self to the spectator who would, in turn, acknowledge the actor's self-revelation and 'find' her/his (the spectator's) self in the actor. This expectation was based on Grotowski's experiences of working with the actors, which he described as 'a total acceptance of one human being by another' (Grotowski, 1968, p. 25). Grotowski thought that what happened between the actor and him in rehearsals could happen between the spectator and the actor in the performance too. The spectator's psychological transformation is initiated by the actor's performance, but it solely belongs to the spectator: her/his response to the actor's performance, her/his experiences recalled by the actor's

performance, or her/his opinion on the issue brought up by the actor's performance. The total act requires the actor's complete submission of the self:

It is the act of laying oneself bare, of tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorizing oneself. Not in order to "show oneself off," for that would be exhibitionism. It is a serious and solemn act of revelation. The actor must be prepared to be absolutely sincere. It is like a step towards the summit of the actor's organism in which consciousness and instinct are united.

(Grotowski, 1968, p. 210)

Although Grotowski (1968, p. 25) admitted that his description was 'clumsy', the total act was widely approved with Cieslak's performance in *The Constant Prince* as the first example of the kind in the theatre.

While putting more emphasis on the actor's craft, Grotowski refocused the experiment with the actor/spectator relationship. By giving up the direct and aggressive provocation towards the spectator, his treatment of the spectator became subtler as seen in the productions of *Akropolis*, *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, and *The Constant Prince*. In these productions, instead of being expected to directly interact with the actor, the spectator passively played a role given by the creators in the action of the performance as the living watching over the dead in *Akropolis*, as the guests of Faustus' last supper in *Dr. Faustus*, and as the curious observers who peep at the spectacular event over the high fences in *The Constant Prince*. The spectator, therefore, could be spontaneous in the event happening in front of her/him (Schechner and Hoffman, 1968, p. 50).

Nevertheless, no matter how, directly or indirectly, the spectator was confronted by the actor, Grotowski's primary idea to incorporate the spectator into the action of the performance was maintained by placing the spectator in the cunningly constructed performance spaces. Although the latter scheme of the Theatre Laboratory alleviated the discomfort caused by the actor's somewhat manipulative effort to have communion with the spectator, it was essentially based on the same premise as the earlier one, which conceives the spectator as a participant in the ceremony created by the performer to affect the spectator's psychic disposition. Here, the third kind of dilettantism existed in the determination of the Laboratory to control the spectator. Grotowski later acknowledged:

... we tried to secure a direct participation of spectators. We wanted to have it at any price, as it happens now with other groups. We compelled spectators to "perform" with us, to come out among us, sing with us, perform gestures, or movements suggested by us. We reached a point where we rejected these kind of proceedings, since it was clear that we were exerting pressure, tyranny of sorts. After all, we were putting the people who came to us in a false position, it was disloyal of us: we were prepared for this sort of encounter, while they were not. We were doing it because we wanted to do it; they were doing it because we forced them to do it: no, the spectators should simply be as they are, that is to say witnesses, witnesses of a human act. (Grotowski, 1973, p. 129)

Theatre as an authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator without the social mask cannot intrinsically be in accord with the artificial manipulation of the spectator. In this sense, manipulating the spectator for the purpose of drawing her/him to participate in a performance is a sheer fabrication that imposes another mask on the spectator. It is exactly the opposite of what Grotowski wanted to realise in the performance: one's breaking out of 'the life-mask' by revealing oneself at the innermost level (Grotowski, 1968, p. 23). It was impossible to make the authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator through the enforced participation of the spectator in the performance.

Upon identifying the danger of the third kind of dilettantism, the Theatre Laboratory attempted one last reorientation of the experiment on the actor/spectator relationship in its last theatrical production, *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. Grotowski, in the production, did not give the spectator a specific role as in the previous productions and took her/him out of the narrative of the action of the performance in a sense that the presence of the spectator did not affect the performance structure. For example, mainly due to its extremely 'poor' space setting – only a bare space for the actor and spectator together with two lighting instruments against the wall, a performance of *Apocalypsis* would have been possible with only the actors without the spectators, whereas in *Dr. Faustus* and *The Constant Prince*, the spectators, as Faustus' guests in the former and the voyeurs at a surgical operation in the latter, were essential elements completing the narratives of the performances. If the spectators had not been there in the two productions, all the architectural settings in the performance spaces such as the refectory tables in *Dr. Faustus* and the prisoner's cell like a surgeon's operation room in *The Constant Prince* would have no meaning at all. The spatial settings of the two productions were devised to experiment with a new actor/spectator relationship on the premise that the spectator had a role. Further, in *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, there was

neither an attempt to have the spectator be a part of the action of the performance nor an exactly designated place for the spectator in the performance space. The continued obsession that the actor's honest act should turn the spectator into an active participant of the performance with an equally truthful reaction was dropped. The spectator remained as spectator who witnessed what was happening at the time and in the place of the performance. It was now solely dependent on the spectator's individual decision whether and how s/he experienced her/his psychological transformation through the performance in being inspired by the actor's process of self-revelation.

Nonetheless, one could dispute that imposing a 'role of witness' on the spectator was another way of manipulating the spectator. It was the limitation of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* with which Grotowski faced in passing the threshold between theatre and non-theatre. The Theatre Laboratory was in a process of self-denial. *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was, in this sense, 'theatre' that rejected 'the theatre'. In other words, the production showed the Theatre Laboratory's struggle to get away from the dilettantism brought about by the problematic existence of the spectator, who was supposed to be the actor's partner in communication, but at the same time, unwittingly served as an obstacle to communication. The production of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* appears to have been Grotowski's confession of failure. His ten-year experiment with the actor/spectator relationship might have been based on the false premise that an authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator was possible in theatre.

The confession of the failure and the self-denial was evinced in the ongoing changes of the performance's structure and contents from 1968 to 1980. Flaszen recalls the motive for the changes as such:

The source of this change was not an aesthetic premise or assumption ... it was a situation in which it was no longer necessary to establish a wall in relation to others by being an 'artist' behind objective structures. A factor of *direct* human communication appeared, and we stopped being against those who were coming to us and against those not coming to us. And *then*, *Apocalypsis* began its evolution. With the new sense of directness, we began to remove all that still seemed artificial and theatrical and formal; all that was ready-made beauty; all that was distant, or remote. (Forsythe, 1978, pp. 326–327, italics in original)

The 'evolution' of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* came along with Grotowski's early post-theatrical experiments from 1971 to 1973, the period when the Laboratory worked in seclusion. The most notable feature in the evolution of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was the use of the benches originally placed for audience seating, which were removed in 1971. Then, there were two versions of the performance: one with the benches and the other without them. In 1973, the benches were permanently eliminated from the performance. The gradual eradication of the benches resulted in the changes in the intimacy between the actor and the spectator as well as between the spectators. The physical proximity among the people in the performance space increased the psychical and emotional intensity between them; thus, the conventional demarcation between people during the performance blurred (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 101–102). The performance of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was the testing ground on which Grotowski and his collaborators conceived a new performative form outside the theatre based on their failure in the theatre.

In addition, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was utilised as an introductory statement of Grotowski's experiment outside the theatre to recruit new allies. Just before the early paratheatrical works from 1971 to 1973, Grotowski published 'Proposal for Collaboration' in several periodicals in September 1970 (Kumiega, 1985, p. 100). Grotowski (quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 100) called for the youth 'who – because it is quite simply a necessity for them – leave their inner comfort, and seek to reveal themselves in work, in meeting, in movement and freedom'. The young artists responding to Grotowski's call came to see the performance of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* and to share the experiences of the Laboratory in their post-theatrical research. In the process, *Apocalypsis cum figuris* first gave prospective participants a hint at what the Laboratory and Grotowski were seeking after leaving the theatre, and thereby second introduced them to Grotowski's new vision. As a result, the Laboratory accepted a limited number of new members and withdrew to work in Brzezinka, a small town in the countryside about forty kilometres away from Wrocław. There, the members of the Laboratory worked in a building that the city authority allowed for their use. They came back and forth to Wrocław and Brzezinka to work until 1973 when the first paratheatrical event happened.

In a sense, it was a moment of crisis to Grotowski when he was aware of the failure at the end of the headstrong experiments of the previous decade.³⁶ Grotowski must have believed that the overcoming of this crisis should start from the humble, yet fearless, acceptance of his own deficiency. Grotowski, thus, contemplated:

One thinks that the fear is caused by external events, and no
doubt it is they that release it, but that something we cannot

³⁶ Flaszen talked about Grotowski's 'creative deadlock' in recalling an occasion when Grotowski visited his parents in Krakow. Grotowski told Flaszen's parents about his difficult situation in preparing the new work, which was finally shaped as *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (Flaszen, 2010, p. 242).

cope with flows from ourselves, it is our own weakness and the weakness is the lack of meaning. This is why there is a direct connection between courage and meaning. (Grotowski, 1973, p. 114)

This statement again implies that dilettantism is the ‘weakness’. Finding ‘meaning’ needs ‘courage’, the courage to stand face to face with one’s own weakness. The dilettantism that Grotowski confronted at the final stage of the Theatre of Productions phase was an ontological dilemma of the conventional theatre. As long as one is working in the theatre, one cannot avoid the dilemma. Grotowski admitted this fact. And, he decided to leave the theatre.

Grotowski instantly felt ‘a need to abandon force, to abandon the prevailing values and search for other values on which one could build life without a lie’³⁷ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 114). Grotowski’s research following the Theatre of Productions phase needed to be carried out in a totally different domain from the traditional frame of theatre, a realm where the delusive ‘force’ and ‘the prevailing values’ supporting the dilettantism of the conventional theatre were to be discarded. In Grotowski’s new research, such words as show, performance, theatre, spectator, etc. became lifeless not because they were simply outdated but because they were obstacles to authentic communion between people (Grotowski, 1973, p. 113). The theatre, which was supposed to be a place for communication, now became the trouble for its own existence. Grotowski, therefore, proposed to replace the established force and values of the conventional theatre with a

³⁷ The quotation is from Grotowski’s assumption to describe the life of Jesus Christ. In juxtaposing himself and his collaborators with Christ and His disciples, Grotowski tried to intensify the meaning of his post-theatrical works.

new vision, which would bring up an ‘adventure and meeting’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 113) of the authentic communion.

Despite the radical decision to abandon the traditional form of theatre, Grotowski’s turn from the theatre to paratheatre, in retrospect, was not an entirely unpredictable surprise in terms of his relationship to the philosophical notion of *Dao De Jing* during the previous experiments, which has been discussed in this thesis. The period referred to as the Paratheatre phase from 1969 to 1978 was the time during which Grotowski and his collaborators tried to transcend their dilettantism, a period of finding an antidote to the dilettantish work during the previous phase to prepare them for the forthcoming research. Grotowski somewhat extremely evaluated his works in the Theatre of Productions phase as a ‘curse’ because the period was dominated by the aim of constructing ‘theatrical means’, which prevented the Theatre Laboratory from comprehending the essential awareness that ‘one is as one is’. He now felt that he should be ‘unavoidably disloyal’ to himself as well as his supporters in rejecting his way of working in the Theatre of Productions phase (Grotowski, 1973, p. 134).

2. The Participant

When starting his new journey, Grotowski (1973, p. 134) proposed ‘meeting’ as a performative structure. The implication of ‘meeting’ gives a sense of a more contingent encounter than ‘confrontation’, which Grotowski had emphasised during the Theatre of Productions phase. The ‘meeting’ is a spontaneous encounter in which people would discover the unpredictable possibilities of the human existence. What Grotowski aspired to in the ‘meeting’ was to utterly purify everything tainted by the conventional theatre practice. Grotowski’s new experiment was to be carried out devoid of premeditated and precise calculation although it should have the minimum of a skeletal structure to avoid

chaotic disorder. The ‘meeting’ would literally be a meeting without any artistic consciousness. It was going to be a process in which one’s life became viable through the awareness of ‘such as one is – whole’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 119). The phrase of ‘such as’ indicates a state that already exists before a deliberate contemplation about life. It is just to realise ‘I am as I am’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 120). No one can, in definite terms, be sure of what s/he is, where s/he comes from, why s/he should live, and how s/he arrives at the present, but one can certainly know that s/he exists as a concrete entity here and now. Likewise, the ‘meeting’ is a very clear act to confirm one’s being as it happens here and now. One meets the other because they are there ‘as such’. In other words, *they meet; therefore, they are.*

Grotowski’s use of the phrase ‘such as’ in his talk has a certain relation with the discursive structure of *Dao De Jing*; the phrase ‘such as’ is a core link that shows how Grotowski’s Paratheatre phase can be looked at in the perspective of *Dao De Jing*. *Dao De Jing* regards Confucianism as an unnatural dogma that causes the disorder of a society, a dilettantish regulation that hides the true nature of the universe under its hierarchical ideology. *Dao De Jing* elaborates its primary notion in opposition to the political ideology of Confucianism, which could be considered as a kind of dilettantism. According to the discourse of *Dao De Jing*, Confucianism misleads people to veil their true selves behind socialised decorum. *Dao De Jing* finds a remedy for the dilettantism of the Confucius-oriented society in the nature’s way of existence or the Dao (way) of the universe. To identify the cure, *Dao De Jing* consistently uses a rhetorical tactic that divides a chapter in two parts. In the first part, it displays things in nature by presenting how they exist or shows how the Dao of the universe works. Things in nature appear as what they are; in other words, they reveal themselves without any external manipulation, existing in their own right under the guidance of Dao. Then, the next part discusses how

people should act in accordance with the principle of non-doing, which is the existential mode of the things in nature, Dao. These two parts – the former presenting things in nature existing under the guidance of Dao and the latter suggesting human behaviour in accordance with the things in nature – are connected by an adverbial phrase 是以 (*shì yǐ*), which literally means ‘as such.’ For example, *Dao De Jing* says:

Heaven and earth are perpetually enduring.

The reason that heaven and earth can be perpetually enduring
is,

Because they don’t try to flourish themselves.

Therefore, they can be perpetual.

As such, the sage puts her/himself last,

Therefore, comes first. (Ch. 7, my italics)

Here, ‘as such (是以, *shì yǐ*)’ is linking the perpetually enduring character of the heaven and earth to the behaviour of the sage. Human beings, in order to be perpetually enduring, should follow the way in which the heaven and earth exist.

This narrative structure constructed by the phrase ‘as such (是以, *shì yǐ*)’ is a critical point, which decisively differentiates *Dao De Jing* from Confucianism. In its discursive methodology, *Analects*, one of the major Confucian Scriptures that is the collection of Confucius’ words in the form of the dialogues with his disciples, is predicated by a verb, 曰 (*yūē*) whose literal meaning is ‘to say’. When his disciples ask a question on a subject, Confucius ‘says (曰, *yūē*)’ the answer to it. The Confucian model for human behaviour is what the sage ‘says (曰, *yūē*)’ while *Dao De Jing* proposes that

people behave ‘such as (是以, *shì yǐ*)’ the mode of nature. Confucius’ answer is usually drawn from the social decorum established by tradition and transmitted by precedent sages. Confucius’ teachings, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, are based on the preordained ethics of the hierarchical tradition that the artificial force of human beings had accumulated in the form of civilisation (Choi, 2006, pp. 41–43). In the Daoist perspective, the words of Confucian sages rooted in the hierarchical system are a contrivance that oppresses the very nature of human beings. *Dao De Jing* overturns the social values accrued in the name of the so-called wisdom of sages by establishing nature as the model for human behaviour.

The existential mode of nature, which *Dao De Jing* tries to apply to human act through ‘as such’, is articulated in the concept of 自然 (*zì rán*). Generally, the word 自然 (*zì rán*) is used to indicate nature in everyday languages of the Northeast Asian countries sharing the literary tradition based on Chinese characters. Yet, strictly speaking, the literal translation of 自然 (*zì rán*) is ‘self-so’. *Dao De Jing* does not use 自然 (*zì rán*) to signify nature. Instead, when referring to nature, *Dao De Jing* always appropriates concrete things in nature such as ‘heaven and earth (天地, *tiān dì*)’, ‘under the heaven (天下, *tiān xià*)’, ‘all things (萬物, *wàn wù*)’, water, tree, etc. In *Dao De Jing*, the word 自然 (*zì rán*) indicates not nature itself but the state of ‘self-so’ that is the state of nature. Thus, the phrase ‘self-so’ alludes to the comprehensive mode of nature; that is to say, nature is being ‘self-so’. Interestingly, the cultures of the Northeast Asian countries using ‘self-so (自然, *zì rán*)’ to indicate nature in everyday languages seem to innately perceive the intrinsic affinity of nature to the literal signification of ‘self-so (自然, *zì rán*)’. The mode of nature exposes itself through the forms of things in nature such as sky, earth, river, plants, etc., which are being out there as themselves for no reason but for their own existence. The

state of ‘self-so’ is the mode of nature’s being that embraces all the aspects of the dynamic of Dao. *Dao De Jing* suggests that people should not naïvely copy the appearance of nature but prudently penetrate into nature’s ‘self-so’, an act that I would call *nature-ness*.

Nature-ness is what the teachings of *Dao De Jing* are predominantly concerned with. It is an act of performing the dynamic of Dao. The dynamic of Dao, as examined in the previous chapters of this thesis, manifests itself in the notion that Dao apprehends the universe in the complementary pair of opposites, in their interplay towards each other, and in the endless process of the interplay. The dynamic of Dao is not something that can be described as the origin of the universe or the nature itself. It only predicates the way of existence of the universe. It is a principle on which the universe itself operates. In life, the dynamic of Dao does not reveal itself explicitly but is innate in nature.

The manifestation of the dynamic of Dao expressed as nature-ness (self-so) in *Dao De Jing* is implicitly correlated with Grotowski’s paratheatrical experiments. Grotowski’s intention throughout the ‘meeting’ inferred in the phrase ‘such as’ was to attain one’s state not manipulated by the force of social masks but founded on one’s essence. Grotowski summarised what he envisaged such as:

And what remains, what lives? The forest. We had a saying in Poland: *We were not there – the forest was there; we shan’t be there – the forest will be there.* And so, how to be, how to live, how to give birth as the forest does? I can also say to myself: I am water, pure, which flows, living water; and then the source is *he, she*, not *I*: he whom I am going forward to meet, before whom I do not defend myself. Only if *he* is the source, *I* can be the living water. (Grotowski, 1973, p. 115, italics in original)

Grotowski's vision described in analogy with nature was often misunderstood as a naïve primitivism, which is reinforced by the fact that most paratheatrical activities took place in the rural worksite. Some participants criticised that the paratheatrical activities were just 'absurd survival game', which reminded of 'the pastime for the eighteenth-century aristocratic fantasy towards Utopias' (Kumiega, 1985, pp. 194–195). However, Grotowski never wanted to 'return to nature' in the nostalgic ethos that aspired to a pastoral utopia existing before the civilised mores.³⁸ He explained the reason why he chose a rural environment for his paratheatrical experiments as such:

In order to approach the "impossible," one must somehow be a realist. In life, can one not hide? It is better if we do not hide, but let us imagine a situation in which you will reject all means of concealment, but others will not ... *Maybe one must begin with some particular places; yes, I think that there is an urgent need to have a place where we do not hide ourselves and simply are, as we are, in all the possible senses of the word.*

Does it mean that we remain in a vicious circle – that life is different here, and different there? No, In order to begin,

³⁸ The working environment of Grotowski's paratheatrical experiments could be the source of the misunderstanding that Grotowski yearned for a primitive life similar to idyllic Rousseauism whose binary opposition considers nature as the cure for civilisation. Grotowski seemed very cautious about the kind of misunderstanding and said that the participants' 'retreating into the forest' for paratheatrical works was 'not a return to nature', and actually the members of the Theatre Laboratory regularly took time off by 'return[ing] to the town, towards [their] own private life, family and personal affairs' (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 166). The working site in nature to Grotowski was a place to realise his idea in breaking away from the mundane rhythm of everyday life. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2 in association with Derridean deconstructionism and the Daoist perspective, Grotowski never rejected civilisation – tradition and culture – as a necessary evil in favour of pure nature. It is clear that Grotowski's use of natural environment as his work site did not have anything to do with pastoral life when one sees how Derrida criticises Rousseau's self-contradiction in his theory of education as well as language. For more details of Derrida's criticism on Rousseau, see Derrida, 1974, pp. 141–164.

one needs a beginning, somewhere, sometime; so, this begins
with a certain place, let us begin, we have a place, and then
we'll see ... (Grotowski, 1973, p. 118, my italics)

Grotowski went to the forest because he was a 'realist' who had a practical need: a secure place for his experiments where he did not have to 'hide' himself. There, he, without the intrusion from outside, wanted to look directly into his own existence in meeting with others by adapting himself to a different 'rhythm' from that of everyday life (Osinski, 1986, p. 140) – the disarmament of the self that is the act of performing nature-ness (self-so).

A project commonly referred to as *Meditation Aloud*, which was led by Flaszen from 1974 to 1979 and changed its title from *Group Dialogues* to *Meditation Aloud*, and later to *Voices*, well illustrates the aims and processes of the paratheatrical experiments. Flaszen pointed out that nature is not concerned with the social value system:

Do you debate with a tree and about a tree, with grass and
about grass, that it grows in the wrong way, that its green
colour is not right, and that rustling in the wind is a big mistake?
You accept a tree and grass as they are. And you have a
grudge against a man and you debate with him and about him,
as if his being wasn't equally unquestionable, unique and
necessary like the being of a tree or grass. (Flaszen, 2010, p.
139)

As the things in nature cannot be judged right or wrong, one should not judge people in a meeting. He continued:

You may say that grass, or a tree, are not a partner. You may say that they are just what they are. Yes, exactly. If you acknowledge that something is what it is, you acknowledge it as worthy of veneration. With a man therefore, a being who can be the subject of a debate, is it that they shouldn't be worthy of veneration? Thus to debate – is it not to venerate something, to have the basic veneration which causes us to respect a creature in its creatureness, as it is? (Flaszen, 2010, p. 139)

The impartiality of nature emphasised by Flaszen corresponds to a perspective that *Dao De Jing* maintains in declaring, 'Heaven and earth don't have the core virtue of humanity (天地不仁, *tiān dì bù rén*)', which points out the nature-ness (self-so) of heaven and earth (Ch. 5). As opposed to Confucianism trying to lead people towards 'the core virtue of humanity (仁, *rén*)', which judges the degree of intimacy between people according to their social status and their relationship to others,³⁹ *Dao De Jing* looks for an impartial relationship between people as following nature's impartiality. The authentic encounter between people through meeting is possible only when they can find their essence in

³⁹ Roughly speaking, Confucius' entire theory is established to cultivate 'the core virtue of humanity (仁, *rén*)' supposedly innate in the human being. It is, according to Confucius, most clearly manifested in the familial relationship like one between father and son, which is extended to the social system at large. Therefore, 'the core virtue of humanity (仁, *rén*)' is partial, selective, and discriminatory because your father and son cannot help being more favorable to you than others. This micro-relationship is applied to the macro-relationship. You should discriminate in accordance with the degree of familiarity in your relationship to others, which engenders a hierarchical system to identify who is closer or more distant than others. See, Choi, 2006, pp. 66–68.

ceasing to judge their value in search of the existential mode of nature, i.e., nature-ness (self-so).

In June 1973, Grotowski launched the first paratheatrical project – initially called *Holiday* and later changed to *Special Project* – that for the first time embodied the orientation of the paratheatrical experiments in Brzezinka. By locating the working space of the Laboratory in a rural environment, Grotowski tried to create a rupture that would break from the mundane rhythm of everyday life. The recollection of Tadeusz Burzynski, a Polish journalist having participated in a *Special Project* in 1975, shows the simple but intense experience at the culmination of the paratheatrical activity:

Everyone was to be alone in the woods. ... We knew also that the terrain was difficult, a little dangerous but not to the extent of making us fear for our lives. ... Loneliness was something very hard at that time. At first I heard cracks of branches, sounds of steps going away, after a while I was left on my own with the forest.

On the way back, I ran headlong and impatient in the direction signaled by the horn.

... Inside – absolute darkness. I entered it. I felt the presence of people. ... I encountered hands held out to me. At last. We waited together for the next people to arrive. More and more came in. Reactions, mutually strong. The feeling of closeness reached its highest point, I think. Had all come back? Ryszard called our names in the darkness...

(Burzynski and Osinski, 1979, p. 122)

Alone in the dark forest without the awareness of time, the participant heard the sound made by the forest and felt a kind of fear, which resulted in the hasty running on his way back. Arriving at the camp, he realised the warmth of people. This experience of Burzynski is very straightforward. There is nothing mystical or religious about it. It, however, overwhelmingly awakens the participant's physical and emotional sensations of the 'feeling of closeness' to others around him.

The way towards this kind of physical and emotional experience of being with others was tested in more deliberate and challenging settings as the paratheatrical experiment was being developed. Jennifer Kumiega recalled her experiences of a paratheatrical project in 1977, *The Way* – a part of the larger project of the *Mountain Project* that consists of *Night Vigil (Nocne Czuwanie)*, *The Way (Droga)*, and *The Mountain of Flame (Gora Plomienia)*:

July 25, 1977, 2:00 a.m.

Water scornfully invades and takes possession of every part of the body.

The thread of human forms, like a lurching, drunken centipede, makes a hesitant path through the forest growth. From any and every angle it looks pathetic and uncomfortable and insignificant. From inside an individual body it is a massive experience. Robbed externally of all vision, the alternative perception is not completely reliable. The blackness pressing against the face

and body has sharp edges and extrusions, skin-ripping electric neck-snapping sensations of pain which catapult without warning against the flesh. There is no way of preparing the organism against these assaults. To withdraw, to close up, to clench the muscles ever so slightly, detracts from the priority occupation: maintaining contact with the organism ahead. It is this which demands meditational concentration from every cell in the body. (Kumiega, 1978, p. 240, italics in original)

After undergoing the physically and emotionally assaulting activities, Kumiega reached an unexpected realisation of serenity of the body and the mind:

July 25, 1977, 3:00 a.m.

I am not really cold. Neither am I tired.

I feel indefatigable.

So when there is an unexpected halt, I am shocked to realize that we are stopping for the night. Paradoxically, after prior fears of incapacity in the face of physical endurance, I now feel like breaking down.

Shelter is efficiently erected between the trees from the huge sheets of polythene. We crawl under the canopy and sit in a circle.

*Suddenly it is cold and wet and very weird,
enclosed within the plastic membrane.*

*The rain tattoo brings memory of childhood
shelter.*

*For a long time, the bodies shift and surge in
a slow, blurred, amoebic dance, burrowing one
into each other and the earth.*

*Finally, there is peace and warmth. Of its own
accord the group has become a balance of
yielding and support. (Kumiega, 1978, pp. 242–243, italics in
original)*

In this description, what Kumiega finally felt was the ‘peace and warmth’ of the group that turned into ‘a balance of yielding and support’. The experiences of both Burzynski and Kumiega were the palpable awareness, in which, as Grotowski suggested in his call to Holiday or ‘meeting’, one would ‘not be alone’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 114).

During the process of the physical and emotional fluctuation, the participants experienced the awakening of their body and mind, which had slumbered in everyday life – being conscious of what they are and how they exist in a concrete sense. Then, with the physical and emotional recognition of their selves, they felt consolation offered by the existence of others, who might also be full of self-awareness. It was a different level of communication between people that could not be seen in ordinary relationships. Understanding the possibility of such communication with others is the process of recovering the nature-ness immanent in one’s body and mind. Thus, the paratheatrical experiment was directed to the discovery of the subtle senses of the body and feelings of

individual participants in recognising themselves such as they are: a process in which a participant becomes absorbed in the rhythm of the dynamic of Dao as displayed in nature.

The participants' experiences in the paratheatrical activities can in no way be classified into a training method transferable to others because the physical and emotional experiences of the participants solely belonged to the individuals' inner realms. It was a process of initiation, or a rite of passage, which prepared the participants to take a step toward another realm from the institutionalised theatrical convention. The process aimed at purging the Laboratory's inertia, which was unconsciously derived from the previous works in the theatre as well as from the conventional concept of performance. The purgation through the initiation in the 'meeting' intended to bring a determined rupture from the previous works rather than to continue in the continuum of the past achievements.

The Paratheatre phase reached its peak with an event, the University of Research in Wrocław, which was a part of the Theatre of Nations festival held in Warsaw from 14 June to 7 July 1975. Through the event, the Theatre Laboratory widely opened up its enclave to the public. This event gathered an unprecedented number of people in the small city of Wrocław. According to an article from a Polish periodical, there were more than five hundred participants from twenty-three countries, who shared their works in lectures, talks, performances, films, classes etc. and also had opportunities to experience the paratheatrical activities of the Laboratory (Osinski, 1986, pp. 151–152). It seemed a big communion.

The paratheatrical experiences gave birth to a new kind of human being who refused to be a dilettante and regained her/his own 'nature-ness' at last. S/he should be authentic as if being a newborn baby. The newborn baby needed nourishment, the 'sources' of life that the baby would experience for the first time in *this* world outside of the theatre as opposed to in *that* world of a dilettante confined in the Western theatrical

convention. Along with the process of initiation and rupture in this liminal period of the paratheatrical experiments, Grotowski was already moving on to another phase for future research, which turned out to be Theatre of Sources.

Ch. VI: In Search of Another Body

1. The Man (*Człowiek*)

In 1970, after his declaration of the departure from the theatre, Grotowski toured nationally and internationally with the Theatre Laboratory's last production, *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, which served as a precursor to a talk about his ideas of paratheatre. Also, Grotowski personally took a six-week trip to Kurdistan and India during which his appearance drastically changed so that 'even his closest associates did not recognize him ... a different person from the one whom they had known under that name before' (Burzynski and Osinski, 1979, p. 95). If the Paratheatre phase was a period of purgation, as discussed in the previous chapter, in which Grotowski and his collaborators broke free of any trace of dilettantism of conventional theatre, thereby giving birth to a new kind of being, the next phase, the Theatre of Sources phase sought 'sources' that had formed individuals, sources that exhibited the uniqueness of each culture and, at the same time, exhibited certain universal traits common to diverse cultural traditions.⁴⁰ By reaching out to an individual performer's innermost memories inscribed in her/his body and mind, Grotowski hoped that s/he could find her/his archetypal root lurking in her/him. An individual performer should go back to her/his cultural roots as far and deep as possible not because the ancient tradition held an ultimate truth, but because the act of returning

⁴⁰ The processes and details of the Theatre of Sources research have remained untold to a considerable extent. Halina Filipowicz (1991, p. 405) attributes this to Grotowski's linguistic disposition, which 'conceal[s] rather than reveals [his] ideas'. In addition to agreeing with Filipowicz's viewpoint, Kermit Dunkelberg (2009a, pp. 23–24) observes that Grotowski's linguistic habit would be an inevitable consequence resulting from the political milieu with which Grotowski had been confronted – living in an authoritarian socialist country that declared martial law in 1981. In relation to Dunkelberg's point, I assume that Grotowski simply did not have a chance to disclose to the public his work of Theatre of Sources due to the exigent political circumstances in Poland, which forced Grotowski to seek an asylum in the United States and later in Pontedera, Italy. Theatre of Sources, before having been fully investigated, might have been hurriedly closed in the exacerbating political circumstances of Poland. Thus, it seems that the Objective Drama phase, as the 'continuum' of Theatre of Sources, became the period of concretising his publicly 'unknown' work of the Theatre of Sources phase. And, the works of Objective Drama, although not much deviating from Grotowski's reclusive inclination, were sporadically presented to invited guests in seminars and conferences as opposed to Theatre of Sources that rarely had such opportunities.

offered an opportunity for her/him to carry out an inwardly focused investigation on her/his self.⁴¹ On the way back to the roots through the execution of actions inspired by traditional performance practices from diverse cultures, the goal was to distill ‘primary’ performative elements (Grotowski, 1985, pp. 258–259), which were the core of the human behaviour that offset all the differences of heterogeneous cultures. Although the Theatre of Sources phase was described as ‘alone with others’ (Grimes, 1981, p. 271) in contrast with ‘not [to] be alone’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 114), which was the premise of the Paratheatre phase, the two periods shared in common the notion of ‘the work on the self’, which was expected to lead the participant to psychophysical rebirth through the paratheatrical experiences in the latter and to the rediscovery of the foundation of the participant’s existence in the former.

By returning to the root, one can find sources in the interaction with others from different cultural backgrounds. Yet, to discover the sources, which is ‘a kind of work on one’s self’ (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 231), means that one obtains a new perception of her/his own self. Therefore, the meaning of returning to the root is after all to rediscover the self, a particular being with ‘an organic impulse born in the body of the doer, here and now’ (Dunkelberg, 2009a, p. 24). With regard to returning, it is not incidental that Grotowski recalled his childhood memories when talking about Theatre of Sources. When listening to the casual chats of adults on an occasion, Grotowski (1985, p. 256) came to realise that the conversations between people were nothing but absurd gibberish, which did not have any meaning for true communication. As opposed to the

⁴¹ Some terms like ‘cultural root’ here are often the cause of a suspicious look towards Grotowski as a mystical guru. However, when talking about such concepts as culture and root, Grotowski did not deal with the terms in an anthropological sense, but strictly regarded them as a matter of the performer’s body and mind. As discussed in Ch. 2 in this thesis, the body-text is not achieved from the anthropological knowledge but from the actor’s research on her/his self, which is already the entity constructed by her/his cultural and social background. Thus, when a performer carried out research on her/his ‘cultural root’ in the Theatre of Sources phase, s/he did not perform research on the history of a traditional song but on how the song resonated in her/his body and mind. This point of Grotowski’s research will be dealt with later on in this chapter.

absurdity of the adults who used nonsensical language, Grotowski (1985, p. 260) requested people to ‘return to the state of the child’. Returning to the state of child means to get lively spontaneity full of vigour drawn from the bliss of life (Grotowski, 1985, p. 265). This child was born – or reborn – from the paratheatrical experiences, which were the acts of ‘*cleansing*’ (Grotowski, 1973, p. 119, italics in original) the tainted body and mind. Flaszen says:

Our inner child has been killed. It obviously still exists, but awfully entangled crippled, crushed by the multiplicity of learnt, imposed mechanisms. Now a child who is perceived like this is not something regressive, *for the child is the mover inside a human being*. A human being who asks himself such questions is a child, a human being who seeks something, is a child. Because an adult does not seek, an adult knows.

(Flaszen, 2010, p. 153, italics in original)

Thus, the returning to the child means to revive the child innate in a human being. It is an act of restoring an institutionalised body into an ‘untamed’ (Grotowski quoted in Kumiega, 1985, p. 229) body with a possibility for future performative research. The research in the Theatre of Sources phase would be carried through this ‘untamed’ body and mind of the child, the body that *Dao De Jing* considers as the indispensable condition to perceive the world ‘as such (是以 *shì yǐ*)’.

Thus, the returning to the starting point of one’s life, the state of the child, is also an allegory employed in *Dao De Jing*. The state of the child in *Dao De Jing* expounds the

existential mode of a human being, who perceives the essence of life in grasping the principles of Dao:

In embracing spirit and body together as one,
 Can you keep them inseparable?
 In being plastic by converging vitality,
 Can you be like a baby? (Ch. 10)

And, in another chapter *Dao De Jing* concretises the significance of the body of a baby:

Someone with virtue (*德*, *De*),
 Who is like a baby.
 ...
 Bones weak, muscles soft, but its grasp is tight
 Although it does not yet know the union of male and female,
 Its penis is formed,
 Because it is full of vital essence.
 It can scream all day and not get hoarse,
 Because it is full of harmony. (Ch. 55)

In the phrases of Chapter 10, the traits of the baby are compared with someone who realises the principles of Dao. The plasticity of the baby originates from the instinctive guide that the body and the mind, a pair of opposites, are ‘inseparable’. Further explained in Chapter 55 is how the body of the baby functions. The traits of the baby’s body are ‘weak’ and ‘soft’ but have a capability of ‘tight grasp’, a paradoxical consequence of a

Daoist principle that the opposite parts of a pair lean towards each other. Thus, *Dao De Jing* repeats the relationship between the state of the baby and Dao:

Knowing masculinity and maintaining femininity,
 Become the valley of the world.
 Becoming the valley of the world, the constant virtue (德, *De*)
 never leaving,
 Return to the state of a baby. (Ch. 28)

Masculinity and femininity, a pair of opposites, constitute the world. To understand the relationship of the opposite values means to become the valley of the world, which indicates a place where everything and everyone is guided. To return to the state of a baby is an act to regain the constant virtue (德, *De*), which means to maintain the dynamic of Dao (Choi, 2006, p. 243).

The act of returning to the state of a baby reverberates with the manifestation of the ‘sourcial’ body or the body ‘of source’ (Grotowski, 1985, p. 253). Grotowski recalled some texts from his memory:

The light of the nature sends back its brilliancy on the
 sourcial, the original.
 The imprint of the heart planes in the space; the brightness of
 the moon gleams in its purity.
 The boat of life reached its shore; the light of the sun shines
 dazzlingly. (Grotowski, 1985, p. 253)

Grotowski grasped a message from the texts that ‘what is natural is sending us toward what is sourcial’ (Grotowski, 1985, p. 253). ‘What is natural’ could be rephrased into ‘what is self-so (自然, *zì rán*)’ whose act is formulated as ‘nature-ness’, the act of performing the dynamic of Dao, as discussed in the previous chapter. The nature-ness (self-so) is the way of reaching the root. Then, the state of a baby means the body of a human being reaching her/his ‘sources’. This sourcial body is the perceptive body whose senses are capable of interacting with nature as it is. The typical conceptualisation of bodily senses is limited to a few categories, which cannot possibly represent the indefinable diversity of nature in fixed terms as *Dao De Jing* describes:

Colors classified in the five categories

Make people blind,

Tones classified in the five categories

Make people deaf,

Tastes classified in the five categories

Make people lose palate. (Ch. 12)

The fossilised conceptualisation of colour, for example, reduces tens of thousands of reddish hues in nature to one classification, i.e., red. This is nothing but an act by a blind person. Such categorisation cannot seize the countless gradation of red. To be successful in appreciating the diversity of reddishness, you should not label something reddish as ‘Red’ but accept respective colours as they are presented in nature. It is the body of the baby that perceives the self-so of nature. Likewise, Grotowski (1985, p. 260) proposed the perception of the child, which is the innate capability to perceive ‘the world full of colors, sounds, the dazzling world ... in which we are carried by ... experience of the

mysterious, of the secret'. The progress towards 'the state of the child,' therefore, involves the 'deconditioning of perception' (Grotowski, 1985, p. 259), which is an act of returning to 'the original' (Grotowski, 1985, p. 262).

Further, in being applied to concrete action, the perception of the child is elaborated as the 'movement which is repose' (Grotowski, 1985, p. 263). When one carries out an action to the degree of extreme artistry, s/he acts as if in complete repose without premeditated calculation (Grotowski, 1985, p. 264). It is a perception that is never blocked by any socially imposed bias and reacts to the world with 'direct and immediate' spontaneity, which is 'most touching in the child' (Grotowski, 1985, p. 265). Thus, 'movement is perception' (Grotowski, 1985, p. 263). Or, action is perception. In correlation with Grotowski's notion of movement and repose, *Dao De Jing* says:

Things are flourishing,
 But, each goes back to its root.
 Going back to the root is stillness,
 This means to recover the will of the universe,
 Recovering the will means to understand the constant principle,
 Understanding the principle means enlightenment. (Ch. 16)

That 'going back to the root is stillness after flourishing' resonates with the paradox of 'movement which is repose'. The paradoxical notion is the working principle of Theatre of Sources, which is in line with *via negativa* indicating the work in the endless process of tension between the opposite forces. The act of going back to the root leads to 'enlightenment', which is a result of perceiving the world as the conjunction of opposites. Therefore, the root here does not indicate the origin of a thing but denotes tranquillity that

precedes as well as follows the commotion that the current extravagant thriving of the thing causes (Choi, 2006, p. 152). It means that regression is always immanent in a thing even during its flourishing period and vice versa. It is the process of life and death in the integration of movement and repose, which Grotowski's experiments aimed to capture.

In the relationship between the notions of *Dao De Jing* and Grotowski's ideas of Theatre of Sources, such concepts as 'the techniques of sources' and 'the sources of the techniques of sources' can comprehensively be understood. There should be many techniques as diverse cultural traditions exist in the world.⁴² Out of various traditional techniques, Grotowski suggested two conditions for the source techniques in his research. Along with the first condition that the techniques should be dramatic – performative in quality, which is discussed below, the second condition is that the techniques should be:

in the human way, ... ecological. ... Ecological in the human way means that they are linked to the forces of life, to what we can call the living world, which orientation, in the most ordinary way, we can describe as to be not cut off (to be not blind and not deaf) face to what is outside of us. (Grotowski, 1985, p. 259)

The second condition simply says that 'the techniques of sources' are the ways in which the people from a specific culture have survived their environment such as geography,

⁴² Between the summer of 1979 and early 1980, Grotowski, with his collaborators, visited five places – Haiti, Mexico, Eastern Poland, Nigeria, and India where he established direct contact with diverse people and their performative forms rooted in their traditions. Grotowski's encounter with the Saint-Soleil of Haiti, a country of the voodoo culture, was noteworthy regarding meeting new collaborators: Maud Robart and Jean-Claude (Tiga) Garoute. Probably in hoping to know more about the voodoo tradition, he went to Ifé, Nigeria, the cultural origin of the voodoo tradition. In Mexico, Grotowski witnessed the ecological life of the Huichol tribe. Also, he met members of Bauls, a cult of the minstrels, in Bengal region, India. See Dunkelburg, 2009b for more details.

climate, neighbour, resources, etc. In other words, ‘the techniques of sources’ are some unique acts representing how the people in a culture relate themselves to nature.

Yet, Grotowski’s intention was not to practice ‘the techniques of sources’ but to search for some fundamental elements embedded in ‘the techniques of sources’ of all the cultures in the world, which he called ‘the sources of the techniques of sources’.

Grotowski says:

But what we search for in this Project (Theatre of Sources) are the sources of the techniques of sources, and these sources must be extremely unsophisticated. Everything else developed afterwards, and differentiated itself according to social, cultural or religious contexts. But the primary thing should be something extremely simple and it should be something given to the human being. Given by whom? The answer depends on your preferences in the area of semantics. If your preferences are religious, you can say it’s the seed of light received from God. If, on the other hand, your preferences are secular, you can say that it’s printed on ones’ genetic code. (Grotowski, 1985, p. 261, my parenthesis)

‘The sources of techniques of sources’ are something core in the human behaviour that has existed before ‘Tower of Babel’ (Grotowski, 1985, p. 258). Therefore, by performing an action, which is deeply grounded in one’s intimate cultural legacy, ‘the techniques of sources’, one could approach something true in oneself. Again, in finding the true self,

one could reach the universal core of human beings, which is ‘the sources of the techniques of sources’.

In search of the sources, as briefly mentioned above, Grotowski pointed out that ‘the techniques of sources’ should be ‘dramatic’, which ‘means related to the organism in action, to the drive, to the organicity; ... they are performative’ (Grotowski, 1985, p. 259). Thus, the focal point in Grotowski’s research was, most of all, the body in action. What Grotowski wanted to do with performative sources provided by one’s cultural root was after all to discover the essence of one’s own body. One should focus on simple acts such as ‘walking’ and ‘greeting’, which are the core of the human behaviour common to all the heterogeneous cultures. It seems, in a sense, like anthropological attempts to look for the universality of the human condition. Yet, being different from the approach of the academic branch, the works of Theatre of Sources were interested in palpable human acts ‘*hic et nunc*’, not in the abstract concepts of the academic investigation on humankind (Grotowski, 1985, p. 257).

Ronald Grimes (1981, p. 276), from his participation in a Theatre of Sources work in the summer of 1980, attested that his experience with the Haitian performers, who temporarily moved to Wrocław for the Theatre of Sources work, was an ‘introduction to, or greeting of, the sources’. He recounts:

One did not merely repeat a convention of greeting like handshaking or hugging but searched anew for the source of greeting. ... We and they expected to discover a mutual greeting that neither had brought to the ritual interface. We could neither retreat to gestural cliché, imitate, demand imitation or deny that we bore our cultures in the very marrow

of our bones. We were thrown back on our cultural resources and yet had to find new resources among ourselves. (Grime, 1981, p. 276)

By means of the investigation on the act of greeting, a skeletal action common in different cultures possibly executed in different forms, the participants could have an opportunity to take a fresh look at ‘their own cultural sources’ and to get an insight on ‘new resources’ from others’ cultural traditions.

In working on the performative techniques of various cultural sources, one could be aware of her/his true self in liberating her/himself from the hierarchical split between the body and the mind because something ‘*not-bodily*’ inevitably happens along with a bodily occurrence (Grotowski, 1985, p. 261). There appeared the ‘man (*czlowiek*)’, who obtains the perceptual ability of the child to be able to see something ‘of the mysterious’ and ‘of the secret’. This man (*czlowiek*) is one who ‘precedes the differences’ – a being who exists beyond the body/soul dichotomy (Grotowski, 1985, p. 259).

The man (*czlowiek*), who already attains the perceptive body (the sources of the techniques of sources) by executing an action discovered from the primal sources in his cultural genes (the techniques of sources), gets refined in the Objective Drama phase⁴³ that emphasises the extreme precision of the repeatable performance structure. The man

⁴³ Zbigniew Osinski (1991) excluded the Objective Drama phase, which dated from 1983 to 1986, from the common classification (according to *The Grotowski Sourcebook*) of the four phases of Grotowski’s lifetime work, positioning it as ‘an interim period’ between the Theatre of Sources phase and ‘the Ritual Art’ (the Art as Vehicle phase). Osinski’s point might first be drawn from a concern about a suspicious look that the Objective Drama programme could be considered as Grotowski’s ‘return’ to the theatre. In fact, the suspicion could be valid in a sense that Grotowski’s work at U.C. Irvine, California, which was conducted in a traditional academic setting involving ‘acting student’ participants, had some aspects ‘correspond[ing] to a conventional Western understanding of theatre art’ (Wolford, 1996c, p. 52). In addition to the suspicion, according to Wolford’s testimony, Grotowski himself was reluctant to accept the label of Objective Drama for his work during his stay in California. He considered the label as ‘bureaucratic terminology, official language for grant proposals and public documents’ and ‘a blanket term to cover a variety of elements that interested him during a certain period’ (Wolford, 1996c, p. 103). Nevertheless, the Objective Drama phase was a critical period in which Grotowski continued to work on his ideas developed from Theatre of Sources.

(*człowiek*), in precisely conducting an action that is a core behaviour shared by diverse ancient traditions, rediscovers his ‘reptile body’ existing innately in the body (Grotowski, 1987, p. 298). The reptile body is ‘an ancient body’ (Grotowski, 1987, p. 298) that has been forgotten in the civilised society where the reason of the human being engulfs its animal instinct. Thus, the man (*człowiek*) is one who ‘stand[s] up’ (Grotowski, 1987, p. 300), which means to allude to a being with the perceptive body in preserving both instinct and consciousness.

It means “to be in the beginning,” to be “standing in the beginning.” The beginning is all of your original nature, present now, here. Your original nature with all of its aspects: divine or animal, instinctual, passionate. But at the same time you must keep watch with your consciousness. And the more you are “in the beginning,” the more you must “be standing.” It is the vigilant awareness which makes man [*człowiek*]. It is this tension between the two poles which gives a contradictory and mysterious plenitude. (Grotowski, 1987, p. 300)

The man (*człowiek*) is ontologically a ‘contradictory and mysterious plenitude.’ In other words, the man (*człowiek*) grasps the meaning of his existence in the moment of ‘standing in the beginning’.

This understanding of the man (*człowiek*) is reminiscent of the way in which *Dao De Jing* explains the ‘mysterious’ liminality of non-being (無, *wú*). As discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, *Dao De Jing* elucidates that non-being (無, *wú*) reveals the beginning (始, *shǐ*) of the heaven and earth (Ch. 1) whose significance can only be reached

by accepting the ‘contradictory’ or complementary state of the liminality of non-being (無, *wú*).⁴⁴ This liminality is the essence of non-being (無, *wú*), an aspect of the universe that interacts with being (有, *yǒu*) that is the other aspect indicating the concrete matters of the world. Through this perspective of *Dao De Jing*, the very abstract notion of the man (*czlowiek*) can be understood as a tangible entity. The man (*czlowiek*) is a being, who is ‘standing in the beginning’. He is vigilant by returning to her/his root (beginning). Yet, this beginning is not really the origin of the man (*czlowiek*), but an unclassifiable moment when both the animal instinct and intellectual consciousness are awake and vigilant. These two dispositions of the man (*czlowiek*) are not simple ingredients staying side by side but essences that are intertwined with, interdependent on, and leaning towards each other. Thus, it is impossible to say which one defines the man (*czlowiek*) properly. There is only the liminal ‘tension’ between them. To be standing in the beginning or to be vigilant means that one is always grasping the liminality of the man (*czlowiek*). Therefore, the man (*czlowiek*) himself is the beginning and the source of his existence.

The perceptive body of the man (*czlowiek*), who is established in the liminality of non-being (無, *wú*), can obtain its meaning in a concrete action, i.e., being (有, *yǒu*). In Grotowski’s research, the awakening of the man (*czlowiek*) can be seen through a repeatable action refined with rigorous precision, which is identified by means of an exercise called Motions. The exercise began to develop during the Theatre of Sources phase and formed as an established structure around the beginning of the Art as Vehicle phase. Motions shows an extreme degree of the bodily accuracy. The slow and exact movements of the stretch exercise, which is of about forty minutes duration, starts with a position called the ‘primal position’, which is:

⁴⁴ The liminality here indicates the state of ‘beginning’, which cannot be grasped as a definite moment. See pp. 147-8 in Ch. 4 of the thesis.

... executed standing. The feet are placed parallel, about one fist apart. The knees are slightly bent and the body weight rests on the balls of the feet, as if the performer is ready to move. The torso and the head and chin are gently pulled in, so that energy travels from the bottom of the spine up to the head. The torso and the head are tilted forward, which allows a light contraction and pull at the bottom of the torso. The pelvic region is tucked in, the abdomen lifted, and the chest and the shoulders relaxed. The arms are straight, placed at either side of the body, and the base of each thumb touches slightly the section below the hips. The palms face backward, and the fingers, touching each other, are slightly curved in. The eyes see in a panoramic view. In this “primal position” the body should be alert and ready for action. (Lendra, 1991, p. 325)

During the intense movements of Motions, the performer repels emotional responses to the external surroundings in appreciating nature as such (是以, *shì yǐ*), which is a deliberate ‘contradiction that creates alertness and awareness of physical impulses’ (Lendra, 1991, p. 322); in other words, in this physical work with ultimate precision from head to toe, the performer, in flowing with the movement, should arrive at the state of acceptance of her/his surroundings as they are (nature-ness, self-so), i.e., the state of the man (*człowiek*) who is to ‘[s]ee that [he is] seeing and hear that [he is] hearing’ (Lendra, 1991, p. 325). What the performer can discover from such nature-ness is ‘a position of

readiness from which the body can move immediately in any direction' (Richards, 1995, p. 53).

'The readiness' cultivated from 'alertness and awareness of physical impulses' is the state observed in the 'reptile body', which Grotowski articulated in analogy to the hunter's 'certain position of body' shared by 'the African hunter of Kalahari, the French hunter of Saintonge, the Bengali hunter, or the Huichol hunter of Mexico' (Grotowski, 1987, p. 297). The universality of the hunter's posture, the reptile body (non-being as is standing in the beginning), is an outcome of the authentic interaction of the body with nature that surrounds the body. It is the 'objectiveness' in the human bodies hidden behind cultural diversity.

Grotowski (1987, p. 301) compared the reptile body of the man (*człowiek*) with *yantra*, which, in ancient Sanskrit, means a very fine instrument such as a surgeon's scalpel or astronomical apparatus. The image of the surgeon's scalpel was at first picked up by Grotowski to explain how the actor should deal with her/his theatrical role in the performance during the Theatre of Productions phase, a role as 'a trampoline, an instrument' to investigate her/his own self behind the social masks and, in turn, to reveal her/himself to the spectator (Grotowski, 1968, p. 37). Whereas the instrument of the actor in the earlier phase had indicated a fictional persona through which the innermost psyche of an individual actor is disclosed, it was now an embodied entity in reality; in other words, the *yantra* – the surgeon's scalpel – as the reptile body in the Objective Drama phase is the objective human body that is discovered through a performer's research towards her/his root in the precise action.

In addition, Grotowski also observed another form of *yantra* in such edifices as Indian temples and medieval churches:

In ancient times in India, temples were constructed as yantra, that is to say, the building and the spatial arrangement was to be an instrument capable of leading people from sensual excitement to affective emptiness, which erotic sculptures outside leading into an interior which empties, making you vomit up everything inside you. The same precision was used in the construction of cathedrals during the Middle Ages; in this case it was much more closely related to the problems of light and sound but the facts are extremely precise in this case too. (Grotowski, 1987, p. 37)

The precise arrangement of the architectural elements of the religious buildings raises the transcendental quality of awe, which is a result of the ardent devoutness to divinity through the accumulative experiences of a society for generations. Thus, an architectural artifact is an objective condensation of a culture.

Osinski points out the probable reference of Grotowski to Juliusz Osterwa regarding architectural objectiveness. Osterwa, the founder of the Theatre Reduta of Poland and one of the most influential figures for Grotowski, considered architecture as ‘the most objective of the arts’ (Osterwa quoted in Osinski, 1991, p. 386). Osterwa relates the objectiveness of the architectural art to the theatre art in saying:

Suppose theatre is like architecture. [...] Architecture is the most refined ... moves experts and the observer to a state of rapture – while it affects everyone in such a way that they are

not even conscious of it. (Osterwa quoted in Osinski, 1991, p. 386)

As Osterwa perceived that the objectiveness of the architectural structure produces an unconscious effect on the observer, Grotowski, in his research in the Objective Drama phase, concentrated on the structure or form of a performative action, which should be established with ‘elements of the ancient rituals of various world cultures which have a precise and therefore objective impact on participants’ (Grotowski quoted in Wolford, 1996c, p. 9). Grotowski then posited two types of *yantras*, one of which is the micro scale of *yantra* – the body of the performer – and the other that is the macro scale of *yantra* – the structure or form of the performer’s action. The two types of *yantras* reciprocally influence each other in an endless relationship; the performer constructs the form, which in turn, affects the performer in the process of the construction.

According to the documentation of the Objective Drama programme in 1989 recorded by Lisa Wolford (1996c, pp. 48–57), the works of the programme focused on building a performance structure called Action. There were two types of Action: the Action of the individual performer and the collective Action by a group of performers. The individual Action was dedicated to creating the performer’s personal ethnodrama with the materials handed down from her/his cultural sources. The individual Actions of performers were then combined with one another, which established a kind of a group work by adjusting the individual Actions according to a larger storyline. The group Action, on the other hand, was collectively constructed from the beginning under the direction of a leader, who outlined the storyline of the Action in advance. Once a structure got shaped to a score of basic actions, it was repeated and polished until the most

essential elements remained in a precise form without surplus, which was the process that required the most arduous work in the development of the Action.⁴⁵

In the construction of the Action, the use of songs with religious and traditional origins in diverse cultures occupies a significant position in the Objective Drama research. First, as a starting point to construct the Action, ancient songs offered the central ground that ‘helps the movement of the body’ in an ‘organic’ and ‘structured’ manner (Grotowski, 1987, pp. 298–299). Because verbal dialogues were usually minimised in the Action, the performer was asked to transform the verbal texts to the form of a song (Wolford, 1996c, p. 49). The performer, in both the individual and group Action, began her/his work by finding, learning, and perfecting the song.

More importantly, ancient songs functioned as a basis for the performer to be aware of her/his physical existence as well as the space in which s/he existed in recognising ‘the quality of the vibration, the resonance of the space, the resonating chambers in the body, the way in which exhalation carries the voice’ (Grotowski, 1987, p. 299). The man (*czlowiek*) with both the animal instinct and human consciousness is discovered through ancient songs as they are through physical actions such as Motions. Because ancient songs are the most collectively created sources transmitted in oral tradition from generation to generation, they contain a clue to the connection between the

⁴⁵ This kind of arduous work is well shown in the process of creating performance structures based on the Shaker tradition, which was documented by Lisa Wolford in her book, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research*. Under the direction of James Slowiak who was very intrigued by the Shaker traditional materials, performers first worked on the Shaker songs, learning the basic melodies of the songs and trying to master the vibratory quality of them. Then, the songs were accompanied with movement structures also based on the Shaker traditional dances. Along with the works on the songs, but as separate works, the performers created narrative structures based on an established text produced at the time of the peak of the Shaker movement, which was *Feathertop*, a short story written by Nathaniel Hawthorn. When the narrative structures of Hawthorn's story were constructed, the performers associated the Shaker songs and movement structures with the narrative structures of *Feathertop*. This investigation on the American traditional materials lasted until 1992 when all the Objective Drama Project were completely closed, and even after the closure of the Objective Drama research, Slowiak continued this investigation in his performance troupe: New World Performance Laboratory. Although Wolford's Objective Drama experiences (from 1989 to 1992) did not belong to the official period of Objective Drama that dated from 1983 to 1986, the works during her stay in Irvine were carried out under the influence of Grotowski, who now resided in Pontedera, Italy for his new research and visited U.C. Irvine intermittently to guide the remaining participants.

present and the past. Research on ancient songs from one's cultural tradition means taking a journey towards both her/his own body and the cultural tradition in which the body is born. Thus, Grotowski reflects:

... who is the person who sings the song? Is it you? But if it is a song from your grandmother, is it still you? But if you are discovering in you your grandmother, through your body's impulses, then it's neither "you" nor "your grandmother who had sung": it's you exploring your grandmother who sings. Yet it can be that you go further back, toward some place, toward some time difficult to imagine, when for the first time someone sang this song.

...

Finally, you will discover that you come from somewhere. As one says in a French expression, "Tu es le fils de quelqu'un" [You are someone's son]. You are not a vagabond, you come from somewhere, from some country, from some place, from some landscape. There were real people around you, near or far. It is you two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, or one thousand years ago, but it is you. Because he who began to sing the first words was someone's son, from somewhere, from some place, so, if you rekindle this you are someone's son. If you do not rekindle it you are not someone's son; you are cut off, sterile, barren. (Grotowski, 1987, pp. 303–304)

What Grotowski looked for in ancient songs was an objective form that would open the door to the understanding of the human being. After all, the objectiveness already resides in the performer's body, which is revealed through the investigation on her/his self as the presence of the forgotten ancestors.

The performer acquiring the objectiveness is the man (*czlowiek*), who is the integrity of the human experience as a whole and who returns to her/his root by perceiving the Daoist principles of nature-ness. The performance structure – the Action – plays a role as an instrument with which the man (*czlowiek*) further explores the essence of human existence before cultural differentiation. By the end of the Objective Drama phase, Grotowski had established the *yantra* of the man (*czlowiek*) and of the Action as the forms for the subsequent research, which would investigate the human existence further.

2. The Doer: An Epistemological Leap

Grotowski's research during the Theatre of Sources phase and the Objective Drama phase together discovered the man (*czlowiek*), who is the embodiment of the objectiveness of humanity. The man (*czlowiek*) is established with the belief that the structural preciseness of the performer's action without any superfluous representation ensures the manifestation of his true self. The establishment of the man (*czlowiek*) underlies the works of the subsequent research: Art as Vehicle.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The term 'vehicle' suggestively shows the influence of Indian philosophical tradition on Peter Brook who first described the last phase of Grotowski's research as Art as Vehicle. There are two major branches in the Buddhist tradition, 'Great Vehicle' (Mahayana) and 'Small Vehicle' (Hinayana), which are categorised according to their ultimate objectives and practical strategies: the enlightenment of all beings by means of the self-sacrifice of a Buddha nature for the former and the enlightenment of an individual through isolated ascetic practices for the latter (Fung, 1976, pp. 243–244). Brook might have seen, in Grotowski's work of the Art as Vehicle phase, a parallel with the Buddhist self-cultivation that was an effort to escape from the agonising cycle of birth and death to Nirvana although the doers in *Action* seemed to accept the endless cycle as it was and to realise that there was no such a thing as Nirvana.

Although mostly carried out in seclusion, the research of Art as Vehicle work can be observed through a performative opus, *Action*⁴⁷ created by a team of performers led by Thomas Richards. The images and metaphors presented in the opus must have reflected what the performers had been through in the course of developing the opus as well as their spontaneous experiences at the very moment and place of its execution. What the witnesses saw in the opus was a series of actions composed of images and metaphors. As the performers carried out the opus, their experiences were manifested in the images and metaphors of the physical actions. A witness might be able to assume the content of *Action* – the performers’ awareness – by recognising the form of it – the physical actions.

Among the images and metaphors, particular attention should be paid to the portrayal of the baby in the life cycle of a human being in *Action* in association with the perspective of *Dao De Jing*. At the beginning of the opus, a performer, Bidaux, presents a sequence of life from the birth of a baby to the death of an old man as a matter of course (Wolford, 1996a, p. 412). Then, a life cycle occurs once more, this time performed by Thomas Richards, in reverse from being born as an old man to getting younger, and to finally becoming a baby (Wolford, 1996a, pp. 414–418):

Richards, now a little child, begins a lullaby, a soft Creole song. ... Richards sits on the floor and unwraps the bundle, revealing a dried gourd that he shakes as a rattle. (Is it a ritual rattle? A toy rattle?) His reactions are those of an infant, almost too young for speech. Richards finds within his body the impulses of the child-body, the infant-body, and along with this comes the sound of the child. He does not “perform child”

⁴⁷ See Wolford, 1996a for a detailed description of the score of *Action*.

in the sense that term might normally be understood; rather, what the witness perceives is a physical act of re/membering, a search for the exact details of his own child-body in a particular circumstance. (Wolford, 1996a, p. 418)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Grotowski found, in the baby (child), the sources of spontaneity and vitality of the man (*czlowiek*) during the Theatre of Sources phase. By the same token, *Dao De Jing* claims that such spontaneity and vitality of the baby is the state of a sage, who ‘embrac[es] spirit and body together as one’ (Ch. 10), who is ‘with virtue (德, *De*)’, and who is ‘full of vital essence’ (Ch. 55). Thus, in revealing the infant in himself, Richards delivers:

... a very special text – paradoxical, impossible to comprehend in a linear way – about the conditions that must prevail within the human being in order to enter this special “place.” He describes a condition in which the greatest differences are cast into doubt: high confounded with low, male with female, inner with outer. All this said through the child-voice, the child-body, but with a wisdom that combines the child’s simplicity with something other. (Wolford, 1996a, p. 419)

The figurative child in *Action* and the allegorical baby in *Dao De Jing* are the beings with ‘wisdom’, the wisdom perceiving that the ‘confounding’ state in opposite values such as ‘high/low, male/female, and inner/outer’ is the genuine condition of human existence.

Finally, the wisdom awakens the performer, Bidaux, who just experienced a cycle of life at the beginning of *Action*. At the epilogue of the opus, Bidaux once again goes through another round of an ordinary life that ends up with the typified death of Jesus, i.e., Crucifixion:

The words he speaks are attributed to Jesus, and yet, the actor seems to ask, if this is the way his life ended, what good did such wisdom do him? Bidaux sits, facing forward, looking at his “wounded” hands. His face is twisted in an ironic smile – a small sound of laughter, followed by a single syllable of rejection: “No.” Refusal of this way, of this fate, refusal of all that has gone before (even the whole of *Action*). And then the answer arrives: the same words, the exact same text, evoking the union of End and Beginning, repeated by Richards and others as incantation. Simply, without pretension, without any externalized doings. (Wolford, 1996a, p. 420)

Bidaux’s total rejection is towards what has been built up in the Western civilisation, which is represented especially by Christianity. The uncompromising adoration of Christ has been the dichotomy of good/evil upon which all the institutionalised structures of the Western civilisation were justified. Bidaux’s smile alludes to a resolute declaration that Jesus is not the Messiah but a man. ‘He was a man’ (Grotowski, 1987, p. 305). He was *the man (człowiek)*. He is a *yurodiviy* (a holy fool), who has awkward stubbornness as well as noble dignity. The awareness that *you* exist in conjunction with such opposite

nature (*conjunctio oppositorum*) makes *you* the man (*czlowiek*). Thus, an imperative question follows, ‘Are you man (*czlowiek*)’ (Grotowski, 1987, p. 305)?

Such scepticism about the Western civilisation in *Action* could already have been observed in Grotowski’s Theatre of Productions phase. The image of Christ had repeatedly been depicted in the protagonists of the Theatre Laboratory’s productions. For example, Kordian in *Kordian* and Don Fernando in *The Constant Prince* are such a *yurodiviy* who resembles the religious divinity resisting the brutal power of the oppressors by means of sacrificing himself for his people. The man (*czlowiek*) as an archetypal being was not only the result of Grotowski’s inspirational work during his post-theatrical experiments but could also be considered as the revelation of Grotowski’s innate view on human being since the beginning of his career.

However, the subsequent research during the Art as Vehicle phase, based on the discovery of the man (*czlowiek*), represents another step forward from the previous research. Although being the embodiment of human essence, the man (*czlowiek*) still remained in ‘a limitation – that of fixation on the “horizontal” plane (with its vital forces, prevalently corporeal and instinctive) instead of simply taking off from it, as from a runway’ (Grotowski, 1995, p. 121). Instead, the work of Art as Vehicle, *Action* that was supposed not to be a performance for the public presentation, came up with the concept of ‘verticality’, which describes the state of the performer’s body exalted from the horizontal plane of the man (*czlowiek*):

The question of verticality means to pass from a so-called coarse level – in a certain sense one could say an “everyday level” – to a level of energy more subtle or even toward the *higher connection*. ... then there is also the question of

descending, while at the same time bringing this subtle something into the more common reality, which is linked to the density of the body.

... all [our nature] should retain its natural place: the body, the heart, the head, something that is “under our feet” and something that is “over the head.” All like a vertical line, and this verticality should be held taut between organicity and *the awareness*. *Awareness* means the consciousness which is not linked to language (the machine for thinking), but to Presence. (Grotowski, 1999, p. 11)

The performer in ‘Presence’ is a being in the ultimate state of existence. There appears a totally novel being evolving from the experiences of the man (*czlowiek*), i.e., the doer. As discussed earlier in this chapter, nature-ness (self-so, 自然, *zì rán*) is the existent mode of the man (*czlowiek*). Now, the doer not only exists in the mode but also perceives the fact that s/he exists in the mode. In *the awareness*, the doer’s *subjective* perception becomes no different from the *objective* reality of the world. In other words, the ‘objectiveness of source’ is the doer’s subjective act. The vertical energy flow of the doer from the horizontal plane of the man (*czlowiek*) is a process of obtaining such ‘*awareness*’. The process of such transformation from the man (*czlowiek*) to the doer can be juxtaposed with the procedure through which the utmost perception is attained in *Dao De Jing*:

Going back to the root is stillness,

This means to recover the will of the universe,

Recovering the will means to understand the constant principle,
 Understanding the principle means enlightenment. (Ch. 16)

Dao De Jing describes the ideal development of human perception. A level of human perception evolves step by step from ‘stillness (靜, *jìng*)’ to ‘the will of the universe (命, *mìng*)’, to ‘the constant principle (常, *cháng*)’, and finally to ‘enlightenment (明, *míng*)’, which is the ultimate level of perception. In *Dao De Jing*, the root as the objective source of an individual being does not signify the origin of the individual. But the root is the antipode of the flourishing in the course of life. Allegorically speaking, the root represents a state before the sprouting of a seed as well as a state of returning to a seed after the full blossom. Therefore, enlightenment is not the final awareness of the ultimate truth but the awareness of the endless process in which opposite pairs move towards each other (Choi, 2006, p. 151). Likewise, Grotowski, having purified the vigilant body in the paratheatrical experiences in rejecting the dilettantism of conventional theatre practice, had reached similar awareness as to the ideal of *Dao De Jing*. The child in the man (*człowiek*) who is ‘standing in the beginning’ is discovered in the experiment of ‘going back to the root’, which means to get ‘stillness’, i.e., the act of ‘recover[ing] the will of the universe’. This leads to the construction of objective *yantras* with the man (*człowiek*), which is the act of ‘understand[ing] the constant principles’. At last, ‘the enlightenment’ is a process of attaining the awareness of the concurrence of subjectivity and objectivity.

Through this development in perception, Grotowski formulated ‘*Performer*, with a capital letter, ... a man of action. ... A man of knowledge’ (Grotowski, 1997a, p. 376, italics in original). Grotowski (1988, p. 376) emphasised that because ‘[k]nowledge is a matter of doing’, *Performer* cannot be understood in words and ideas but only through her/his doing as *Dao De Jing* describes one with Dao in her/his action:

In old times, one who well followed Dao,
 Penetrates the mysterious and enigmatic,
 Cannot be known her/his depth.
 Because s/he cannot be known,
 We can only describe her/him forcibly as follows.
 Careful as if crossing a winter stream,
 Discreet as if looking out all directions,
 Prudent as if being a guest,
 Melting as if being thawed ice,
 Plain as if being an untrimmed log,
 Empty as if being a valley,
 Blurry as if being muddy water.
 Who can calm the muddy water and make it clear,
 Who can move the inert and make it lively?
 One who keeps Dao,
 Does not wish to fill.
 Because not to fill,
 Does not complete oneself in a fixed form, but maintains
 oneself lithe. (Ch. 15)

The action of one with Dao is ‘careful, discreet, prudent, melting, plain, empty, and blurry’. Because s/he perceives the wholeness of the universe in the relation to the pair of opposites, s/he refuses to choose one side of the opposites (Choi, 2006, p. 137). The one with Dao grasps the subtle liminality of the relation between being (有, *yǒu*) and non-

being (無, *wú*). This Daoist action can be paralleled with the vertical energy flow in the doer in which ‘the higher connection’ is always linked with ‘more common reality’. *Performer*, or the doer who is ‘an organism channel through which the energies circulate, the energies transform, the subtle is touched’ (Grotowski, 1988, p. 378), is ‘the door for everything to come and go’ (Ch. 1).

In an effort to articulate the discrete status of *Performer*, or the doer, from such beings in action found in his previous research as the holy actor in the theatre, the participant in the paratheatrical experiences, and the man (*czlowiek*) in search of sources and objectiveness of human action, Grotowski brought up a concept of ‘I-I’ relationship, which clearly demonstrates his ‘awareness of concurrence of subjectivity and objectivity’:

It can be read in ancient text: *We are two. The bird who picks and the bird who looks on. The one will die, the one will live.*

Busy with picking, drunk with life inside time, we forgot to make live the part in us which looks on. So, there is the danger to exist only inside time, and in no way outside time. To feel looked upon by this other part of yourself (the part which is as if outside time) gives another dimension. There is an I-I. The second I is quasi virtual; it is not – in you – the look of the others, nor any judgment; it’s like an immobile look: a silent presence, like the sun which illuminates the things – and that’s all. The process can be accomplished only in the context of this still presence. I-I: in experience, the couple doesn’t appear

as separate, but as full, unique. (Grotowski, 1988, p. 378,
italics in original)

Grotowski, through the notion of the I-I relationship, tried to elucidate *Performer's* identity, as that of the doer whose *Action* is analogous to 'a very primitive elevator: it's some kind of basket pulled by a cord, with which the doer lifts himself toward a more subtle energy, to descend *with this* to the instinctual body. ... the basket moves for those who do the *Action*' (Grotowski, 1995, pp. 124–125, italics in original).

It was an *epistemological leap*. This epistemological leap in the I-I relationship was 'the point of arrival' (Grotowski, 1995, p. 121), which Grotowski reached in the pursuit of authentic encounter between the observer and the observed. The problem of conventional theatre that made Grotowski abandon the theatre was the impossibility of the authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator. The participant of the Paratheatrical phase, roughly speaking, was posited as a performer who simultaneously witnesses other performers in the meeting; in other words, the participant was both a performer and a witness at the same time. In the Objective Drama phase, probably the Theatre of Sources phase as well, Grotowski admitted the necessity of 'some sort of observer', who could act as a preventer of the performer's self-indulgence (Wolford, 1996c, p. 116). However, in the work of Art as Vehicle, the doer's performance no longer needed the outside observer whatsoever. The I-I relationship in the doer, in which the doer becomes her/his own observer, resolves the problematic segregation between the observer and the observed. The I-I relationship declares that an individual human being should embrace both the objectivity (the observed) and the subjectivity (the observer) simultaneously in her/himself. The embodiment of the I-I relationship is elaborated as 'the seat of the montage in the *doers*, in the artists who do' whereas 'the seat of the

montage is in the perception of the spectator' in a theatrical performance (Grotowski, 1995, p. 122, italics in original). A narrative score of the doer's actions – a montage in the doer – is in itself the process of searching for her/his own essence as opposed to the actor's narrative score – a montage in the perception of the spectator – that conveys a dramatic story to the spectator.

Thus, the doer's process in the I-I relationship is to transform '*body-and-essence*' to '*body of essence*' (Grotowski, 1988, p. 377), which is a process of discerning that the two are one. The relationship between body and essence is first noted in the holy actor of the Theatre of Productions phase. In the total act, the actor discloses her/his impulses in a series of physical actions. The series of the actor's physical actions establishes 'the montage in the perception of the spectator', which does not have anything to do with the actor's impulses (Grotowski, 1995, p. 124). This is well explicated in Cieslak's performance in *The Constant Prince*, whose actions told a story of a heroic martyr portrayed with the actor's impulses associated with his adolescent memory. Cieslak analogised his performance to an ever-changing candlelight – the actor's impulse (essence) – that is burning inside a glass – the score of bodily actions (body). In the body of essence, the doer exists as both the observer and, at the same time, the observed in her/himself. There is of course the witness in the presentation of *Action*, but the position of the witness is rather secondary as compared to the observer in the doer. The doer concentrates on her/his physical actions, psychical changes, and internal energy transformation in *Action* that are created for the creator. As Grotowski (1988, p. 377) conceives it, the body and essence are what come from one's own self, not from social compulsion. This is the core of the human being, which remains when the human being is stripped down until only her/his essence is left. It is a recognition reached through *via negativa*, or the process of elimination. When the doer reaches this awareness, the

epistemological leap, these two are inseparable in the I-I relationship that ‘does not mean to be cut in two but to be double’ (Grotowski, 1988, p. 378). The body and essence are intertwined with each other like the relationship of being (有, *yǒu*) with non-being (無, *wú*) in *Dao De Jing*:

Thus, non-being always desires to reveal enigmatic sphere,
 Being always desires to show corporeal sphere.
 These two emerge together, but have different names,
 That they are being as one is called fathomless.
 Fathomlessly fathomless.
 The door for everything to come and go. (Ch. 1)

Non-being indicates something invisible but absolutely existent, which is like the vertical energy flow in the doer. Being is what appears in a concrete form as the body of the doer carrying out the opus of *Action*. The significance that the body-and-essence becomes the body of essence is to grasp this relationship between non-being and being, which the doer’s performance does not need to separate her/his actions from the sources of her/his impulses. *Performer*, or the doer, is the one with Dao, who embodies the body of essence.

Grotowski (1988, p. 376, italics in original) posited himself as ‘a *teacher of Performer*, ... someone through whom the teaching is passing’. It is not a teacher in the ordinary sense that indicates someone ‘guid[ing] us to make the same choices that our social models (teachers) do’ (Hansen, 2000, p. 212, parenthesis in original) with ‘the machine for thinking’ – language. The teacher of *Performer* is her/himself a *Performer* too. A *Performer* transmits knowledge to another *Performer*. Grotowski (1988, p. 376) says that the transmission of knowledge from *Performer* the teacher to *Performer* the

disciple is achieved by *either* initiation *or* theft. In the process of transmission, *Performer* the disciple undergoes initiation that *Performer* the teacher has done before and steals what the teacher knows. Because ‘knowledge is a matter of doing’, both initiation and theft are ways of *doing*. Initiation is a *doing* to be born as a man of knowledge, and theft is a *doing* to get knowledge for growth. Therefore, it is not a matter of choosing *either* one way *or* the other because one should go through the initiation of *Performer* to do *Performer’s* act of theft. The two means of learning are not separable but concurrent. No teacher can do the *doings* for a disciple. At best, the teacher can just watch the disciple grow by ‘willing[ly] giv[ing] up control and allow[ing] the apprentice to develop toward full autonomy’ (Wolford, 1996c, p. 137). Thus, as a teacher of *Performer*, Grotowski (1999, p. 12) rejected his authorship of *Action* although it is generally acknowledged that the performative opus belongs in the list of Grotowski’s works.

It is the way of teaching claimed in *Dao De Jing* (Ch. 2) saying that one with Dao ‘performs a teaching without words, seeing all things grow well, but not attribute to her/himself,’ In these phrases, ‘words’ are a means of the forced teaching that leads to socially recognised norms. In the process of initiation and theft, the teacher of *Performer* is almost invisible and finally fades away. It is the fate of the teacher of *Performer* just as it is of the Daoist ruler:

At the highest level,

People only know that there is a ruler.

When the work is done,

The people say that they have always been themselves so. (Ch.

17)

The most virtuous government can be found when people are not aware of their ruler. They feel that they are their own autonomous rulers. Cultural traditions that Grotowski always invoked are transmitted in this way from generation to generation. At the time when he was reaching his end, Grotowski saw himself as a transmitter of the sources that should be kept, excavated, and rediscovered by young generations in their independent search for what they are and how they exist in this world.

From his theatrical experiences, Grotowski concluded that the authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator was impossible in conventional theatre where the ‘holy actor’ could not find a ‘holy spectator’. Thus, he left the theatre. At the outset of his post-theatrical experiments, he found himself in ‘Holiday (*swieto*)’, which is spelled out as ‘the day that is holy’. The Polish word *swieto* implies a special time and place where and when all the social preconceptions and moral standards – including the conventional concept of the theatre – are eliminated. In the environment of ‘Holiday’, the holy actor had gone through several stages of transformation: ‘the participant’, ‘the man (*czlowiek*)’, and ‘the doer’. Such an evolution of the performer was based on Grotowski’s worldview of *conjunctio oppositorum* as well as his practical principle of *via negativa*, both of which appeared to reflect a Daoist perspective. The fundamental points of the Daoist perspective repeatedly emphasised in *Dao De Jing* are two-fold. First, the world is established in the relation of the opposites: being and non-being. Second, the opposites move towards each other, and the world exists in such movement; thereby, endless change ensues. The movement is what makes the world exist as it is. In short, the world is in an endless *process*. And, Grotowski was always being in the process during his entire life.

Conclusion

This thesis is an attempt to remove the mystical image of a guru over Jerzy Grotowski by examining his works with the perspective of Daoism.

1. *Conjunctio oppositorum, Via negativa, and Dao*

By proposing to act according to the notion of non-doing (無爲, *wú wéi*), the paradoxical way of Dao as discoursed in *Dao De Jing* challenges social systems based on such hierarchical ideals as Confucianism, which try to ‘do’ something to control people’s behaviour in the name of ethics. In doing so, *Dao De Jing* opens up a possibility that individual human beings discover their true selves, who, then, make a genuine contact with the world.

While his contemporary theatre practitioners became increasingly extravagant in accumulating all forms of arts and technologies on the stage, Grotowski searched for the core of the theatre, which, he thought, was the authentic communication between the actor and the spectator. His search demanded the elimination of superfluous components from the theatre until there remained the absolutely necessary elements, i.e., the actor and the spectator. This act of elimination was not proposed as an aesthetic concept like minimalism or in association with the transcendental austereness of emptiness. It was not the endeavour of a radical artist to build a pure theatre. As *Dao De Jing*, with the principle of non-doing, aspires to the emancipation of true humanity from the hierarchical social systems, Grotowski’s elimination aimed to liberate people from the socially and aesthetically fixed system of the conventional and avant-garde theatre, which mutilated their creative inspiration.

Being looked at in the historical context that the art of acting has developed along with the scientific and philosophical awareness of the time, this intrinsic rapport of Daoism with Grotowski's work, and thus, its validity as a framework to understand Grotowski's lifetime research, is confirmed by the investigation on the intellectual achievements of Grotowski's contemporary Western society, which are, among others, Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* and Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity. The scientific discovery of Bohr and the philosophical proposal of Derrida, which had overthrown the long-standing Newtonian determinism and the Cartesian dichotomy, share two profound insights in common with *Dao De Jing*. First, the world exists in the interrelationship between pairs of opposites, which is, in the case of *Dao De Jing*, expressed with the relationship between being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*). Second, the constant tension between opposites – being and non-being – is the source of the world's movement, which never stops but is in the endless *process*.

These insights pertain to the main subject of *Dao De Jing*, Dao, which is deeply associated with Grotowski's worldview of *conjunctio oppositorum* and the principle of *via negativa* throughout his lifetime work. *Conjunctio oppositorum*, which observes the world in conjunction of opposites, resided in the centre of the themes of the Theatre Laboratory's productions during the Theatre of Productions phase. As *Dao De Jing* rejects the beauty/ugliness dichotomy, in the worlds of the productions, binary value judgment such as good/evil, justice/injustice, hero/fool, sanity/insanity, etc. was meaningless, but the opposite values obtained their own right to exist, as they are the essential parts of humanity. The performances of the Theatre Laboratory were also presented according to the principle of elimination, *via negativa*, which led Grotowski and his collaborators to concentrate on the encounter between the actor and spectator, to experiment with rearranging the theatrical space, and to create the Poor Theatre.

More importantly, the acting practices of the Theatre Laboratory significantly developed based on *conjunctio oppositorum* and *via negativa*. The actor's exercises of the Laboratory such as *exercices plastiques* and vocal exercises were conceived in the perception of opposite conditions of the body, e.g., reciprocal influences between bodily senses and inner impulses, the use of vocal apparatus against bodily obstacles, and so on. Through the exercises in the perception of *conjunctio oppositorum* and *via negativa*, the actors of the Laboratory achieved the spontaneous act in the disciplined body; the total act was realised in *the body-text* of the holy actor. In these actor's works, Grotowski became aware that the actor's art is to continuously search for her/his own psychophysical obstacles and her/his own way of overcoming the obstacles. Thus, the rehearsal, as a process of creation, is particularly significant in Grotowski's work. Rehearsal, to Grotowski, is not a mere transitional stage but a goal itself.

Grotowski's awareness of the significance of the process drastically changed his direction when he was confronted with the failure of his experiments to create an authentic encounter between the actor and the spectator in the theatre. Grotowski left the theatre for a place where only the process was meaningful without the consideration of the result.

2. The Body, the Rehearsal, and the Process

When Grotowski abandoned all the theatrical elements, the one and only subject of his work turned out to be the performer's body, which is the foundational demand of life beyond anything else, as *Dao De Jing* values the body (Ch. 13). Thus, Grotowski's post-theatrical endeavour was the process of the evolution of his perception regarding the performer's body in the perpetual 'rehearsal'.

The Paratheatre phase was a process of cleansing the performer's psychophysical state tainted by the 'dilettantism' of the conventional theatre. To overcome the dilettantism, the performer should redefine the nature of performance by eliminating the conventional split of the actor/spectator relationship. In addition, Grotowski attempted to reawaken the performer from the theatrical slumber by putting her/himself into unaccustomed circumstances such as a night in the forest and a long-time work in a closed building isolated from the city. The performer, in concentrating solely on her/his innermost self without the disruption of onlookers but with the participating eyes of fellow performers, revitalised her/his bodily senses and psychological awareness. In terms of the Daoist perspective, it was a process for the performer to gain a psychophysical sense of 'self-so (nature-ness)'.

In the Theatre of Sources phase, with the psychophysical awareness achieved in the paratheatrical purgation, the performer searched for the sources of human performativity existent prior to cultural differentiation. Through the work on the self with diverse performative sources, the performer discovered her/his own 'sourcial' body, which was called the 'reptile body' embodying 'the movement which is repose'. Such opposite forces of the body as 'movement' and 'repose', interacting with each other in tension, were again confirmed as the foundation of the performer's existence in action.

It is through the physically visceral and psychologically intuitive body, the reptile body, that Grotowski found the objectivity of the performative art. Objectivity in art is manifested as awe-inspiring rapture generated through such works of art as ancient religious architectures, e.g., Indian temples and medieval churches, which are the expression of human aspiration for generations to build a bridge from the worldly existence towards an absolute truth. Similarly, the performer as the 'sourcial' body can reach such a degree of objectivity by creating precise performance structures. Working

on the self in association with ancient songs and dances, the performer rediscovers her/himself as a sublime body that establishes a channel between the ancestral body and the body of here and now. It is the body of the man (*człowiek*) born from the research carried out in the Theatre of Sources phase and the Objective Drama phase. The body of the man (*człowiek*) is the entirety of human experience in perceiving the Daoist principle, i.e., the *conjunctio oppositorum* of being (有, *yǒu*) and non-being (無, *wú*).

To put it in another way, Theatre of Sources and Objective Drama were attempts to objectify the performer's subjective experiences of diverse cultural heritages. Objectification of subjective experiences means that one examines oneself from a distance as if the self is another person. This work of objectification further developed and brought the performer's body into a totally different realm of perception from that of the previous phases. During the Art as Vehicle phase, the performer's awareness of the body grew to the extent that s/he sees her/himself doing an act. The performer's body is internally divided into the observer and the observed. The division, however, is not a split of the actor/spectator relationship in the conventional theatre but a double of the performer's perception as the seer and the seen. Thus, the doer, a particular being who integrates the body and its essence (*the body of essence*) and who observes her/himself acting (the I-I relationship) simultaneously, performs not for passive bystanders outside but for her/his own self, as one with Dao acts in the awareness of her/his existence in the interaction of opposite pairs.

3. The Transmitter, the Disciple, and the Betrayer

In the spirit of *via negativa*, Grotowski's lifetime work can be epitomised as the process of searching for the body of the performer, who, Grotowski believed, is the transmitter of culture. And, he saw himself as one of the transmitters by calling himself

the teacher of *Performer*. Naturally, he wanted his own legacy to be transmitted to next generations as he himself inherited Stanislavski's legacy.

In contemplating the tradition of Stanislavski, Grotowski made it clear about what he inherited from the Russian master's legacy:

I have a great, deep, manifold respect for Stanislavsky. This respect is based on two things, first his permanent self-reform, his constant questioning of the previous periods in his work. ... The second reason I have a deep respect for Stanislavsky is his effort to think on the basis of what is practical and concrete. How to *touch* that which is *untouchable*? He wished to find concrete paths to secret, mysterious processes. Not the means – against these he fought, he called them clichés – but the paths. (Grotowski, 2008c, p. 33, italics in original)

What Grotowski learned from Stanislavski – Stanislavski's legacy that he transmitted – is not the System but an artist's ethical commitment to the art, and thus, her/his existential demeanour as an artist. Grotowski did not look for 'the means' – method, but he was in 'the paths' – process. On that account, in following Stanislavski's teaching, Grotowski was not afraid of 'reach[ing] opposite conclusions' to those of the master (Grotowski, 1968, p. 16).

Then, to Grotowski, the implication of transmission by means of being in the process is an act of subversion:

I once said (which is not original, by the way) that a true disciple betrays his master on a high level. And so, if I looked for true disciples, I sought those who would betray me on a high level.

A low betrayal is spitting at someone with whom we were close. A low betrayal is also a return to what is untruthful and unfaithful to our nature, what is more in agreement with what others (our environment, for example) expect of us than with ourselves. Then, we fall back into all that moves away from the seed. But there exists a high betrayal – in action, not in words. When it emerges from faithfulness to one's own path. No one can prescribe this path for someone else; no one can calculate it. One can only discover it through enormous effort. (Grotowski, 2008c, pp. 38–39)

The act of betrayal makes one go forward in her/his own way. It is how one realises her/himself in the principles of Dao, whose intention is towards the opposite (反者道之動, *fǎn zhě dào zhī dòng*) (Ch. 40). The ethical sin of the descendant becomes the highest level of respect to the ascendant as 'true words sound like their opposites (正言若反, *zhèng yán ruò fǎn*)' (Ch. 78). Grotowski transmitted Stanislavski's legacy by betraying the master at the highest level.

Grotowski must never have thought of the last phase of his career, Art as Vehicle, as a finished work. However, at the same time, he knew that his research would inevitably stop at the end of his life as Stanislavski had been forced to stop by death (Grotowski, 2008c, p. 33). Quite possibly, he aspired to overcome such inevitability by

selecting a successor who could continue his research. Grotowski authoritatively designated Thomas Richards as his artistic heir by adding Richards' name to the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in Pontedera, Italy; thus, it is now the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and *Thomas Richards*.

The Workcenter says and is said that it continues Grotowski's research. Its current research is to:

... [involve] both extremities of what Jerzy Grotowski described as “the chain” of performing arts: “Art as vehicle” at one end, and “Art as presentation” at the other. The core distinction between these two poles of performing arts is that in “Art as vehicle”, the work on performance structures has as its aim the artist's work on him/herself, while in “Art as presentation”, as in theatre for example, the performance opuses are by means of the way in which they are structured, oriented towards, the perception of the spectator. The current Workcenter research in its totality explores the living ways in which influences can shuttle back and forth between the two extremities of the “chain” of the performing arts, discovering new meanings and content in performing. (Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards, 2018)

Without fail, the Workcenter seems to be doing its job in ‘shuttl[ing] back and forth between the two extremities of the performing arts’, as Grotowski suggested that his next

research would have been the issue regarding if the two extremities could possibly be applied to a performance at the same time (Grotowski, 1995, p. 132).

Yet, to me, it is the most inexplicable decision that Grotowski had ever made. This whole procedure, from designating a specific artist as his heir to interpolating the heir's name along with his name into the title of the Workcenter, and to having his unexecuted assignment carried out in the heir's current research, seems far from the ever-changing process of 'betrayal' in which Grotowski had always been ready to move to somewhere that even he did not know. It would be an absolute honour for an artist to be designated as the legitimate heir of such a great master as Grotowski; however, at the same time, it could be a tremendous burden to the artist in a sense that the now-gone master overshadows her/his artistic endeavour.⁴⁸

Consequently, Grotowski, in contradiction to his discourse of betrayal, is frequently – actually almost always – summoned anytime to expound the current work of the Workcenter. For example, Kris Salata (2013), a theatre scholar who now works in the intimate relationship with the Workcenter, posited the current work of the Workcenter as the 'unwritten' part of Grotowski's research. Salata asserted:

But even when Grotowski's collected works become available simultaneously in several languages, and his project receives an adequate critical commentary, Grotowski scholarship will

⁴⁸ I have had several contacts with Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini, which were not intimate but close enough to read their faces. Especially, in 2009, at the Zero Budget Festival, 'a multidisciplinary arts event' organised by the Workcenter in Wrocław, Poland, there took place a conversation arranged by Professor Maria Shevtsova between a group of students from Goldsmiths College, University of London and Thomas Richards. The conversation was mostly casual and was concerned with the previous and current works of the Workcenter, which were the performances presented at the festival and their long-term projects such as *The Bridge* and *Horizons*. When questioned about the meaning of the convergence of 'the two extremities of the performing art', Richards, instead of answering the question, responded with a moan about the current situations of the Workcenter, which were their financial hardship, the misunderstanding of their current work as a return to the theatre, the significance of Grotowski's name in supporting the Workcenter, etc. In his response, I felt the burdensome shadow of Grotowski on him.

not become complete without access to the Grotowski-established practice. From this perspective, the existence of the Workcenter and the continuous work by Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini become determinedly important. (Salata, 2013, p. 16)

Although he sees that Richards has already moved on to his own research by ‘betraying’ the work of Art as Vehicle having been done together with Grotowski in the period from 1987 to 1999, Salata still needs to incarnate Grotowski in Richards’ current work by emphasising ‘the spirit of radical continuity’, which is expressed in ‘the gesture of transmission encoded into the name ... as a reminder of the originary questioning and of the necessity of onward movement’ (Salata, 2013, pp. 2–3).⁴⁹ In this sense, Salata’s book, *The Unwritten Grotowski: Theory and Practice of the Encounter*, which is allegedly a study about Grotowski, is, in fact, dedicated to investigate Richards’ current work in relation to the master. Thus, Salata, unlike his intention, exposes Grotowski’s shadow over Richards. Notwithstanding, it could surely be a phenomenon of the transmission of Grotowski’s legacy.

On the other hand, there could be another phenomenon of the transmission. In late fall of 2004,⁵⁰ I had a chance to see a performance, *Poor Theater: A Series of Simulacra*, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte of the Wooster Group at the Performing Garage in New York City. The title of the production clearly indicated that it would talk

⁴⁹ In postulating that the authorship of the work of the Workcenter in the period from 1987 to 1999 when Grotowski was still alive belongs to neither Grotowski nor Richards (Salata, 2013, p. 2), Salata seems to somewhat romanticise the current work of the Workcenter as a work created by not only the current members of the center, mainly Richards, but also the spirit of Grotowski who has gone for 13 years – now it has been almost 20 years in 2018.

⁵⁰ The performance that I saw was maybe a work-in-progress because there is no clear record of a performance at the Performing Garage at the time on the Wooster Group’s website.

about something in relation to Grotowski.⁵¹ As they had always done, the Group used, without hesitation, all the technological devices such as TV monitors, cameras, headphones, microphones, etc. on the stage. The actors of the Group presented the procedure of mounting their production in coming back and forth between the real stage in the Performing Garage and the virtual stage of the Performing Garage on the TV screens, showing the video clips of their travel to Wrocław, replaying the interviewed voice of a Grotowski scholar, etc.

Finally, the performance started recapitulating the Theatre Laboratory's production of *Akropolis*. The actors of the Group mockingly imitated the filmed acts of the Laboratory's actors being displayed on the TV screens. In addition, they, on hearing the voice of the Laboratory's actors through the earphones, even clumsily tried to follow the recorded lines and vocalisations of the Polish actors in Polish together with a confused and confusing translator. At the end of all the fuss – it is what I felt at the performance that night, the actors of the Group, as the Laboratory's actors had done through the crematorium in the centre of the stage, disappeared under the auditorium.

I was perplexed but excited at the same time.⁵² Retrospectively speaking, my mixed reaction seemed to originate from a strange entanglement between the internationally acclaimed theatre production of almost half a century ago and the audacious dissection of the classic in the twenty-first century theatre, which was (re)constructed with newest electronic devices. It was strange because, while 'blasphemously' breaking through the legendary principle of the master, *via negativa*

⁵¹ The production also dealt with, in addition to Grotowski, William Forsythe, an American choreographer associated with the Ballet Frankfurt disbanded in 2004. For the sake of relevant discussion, I will talk about only the part related to Grotowski.

⁵² The production of the Wooster Group was followed by considerate analyses and criticisms, which mostly focused on the impact of Grotowski on the theatre of the U.S. David Savran (2005) considers the production as a lament for the end of the American avant-garde that had been incited by the Theatre Laboratory in 1960s and 1970s. Kermit Dunkelberg (2005) analyses the production in the perspective of the historical significance of Grotowski's work in the U.S. However, I do not attempt a thorough analysis of the Wooster Group's production but present my personal impression of the production in tracing back in my memory of it to understand what Grotowski meant by transmission.

demanding the elimination of the nonessential from the stage, the Group, whether or not being aware, envisioned the emergence of another body, which is an expanded body simultaneously existent in the overlapping space and time between the real and the virtual by means of the ‘superfluous’ technological media.

As discussed throughout this thesis, Grotowski’s lifetime research was to conceive, or to discover, a new body in each phase of his research, which was the process of responding to the social, political, cultural, and artistic demand of his time. He created the bodies of the holy actor, the participant, the man (*czlowiek*), and the doer not because those bodies were something absolutely immortal of the human being but because he believed that they were corresponding to the mode of human existence of his time. However, time has passed, and a novel body will inevitably emerge. The body of the contemporary society is dominated by the system of the technological reproduction, which Walter Benjamin foresaw a century ago.⁵³ The body of the human being is transforming. And, the body that I saw in the performance of *Poor Theater: A Series of Simulacra* could be one of the possible transformations, which connects an individual fifty years ago in Wroclaw with another individual in the present in New York City.

In this sense, the Wooster Group’s production was their honest and genuine ‘reply’ to the issue that Grotowski had raised, as Grotowski himself said that his work was his personal reply to the issue that Stanislavski had raised. Or, the Group unconsciously showed the highest respect to Grotowski by ‘betraying’ him as Grotowski, in this case consciously, did to Stanislavski. For their production, the Group must have deliberately selected *Akropolis* among others for it was ‘the least faithful to the original’ in the Theatre Laboratory’s productions. As Grotowski, by radically dissecting the original play of Wyspianski, converted the tribute to the glorious European civilisation into the

⁵³ The current condition of life is observed in ‘the digital reproduction’, which is far different from ‘the mechanical reproduction’ of Benjamin’s time.

traumatic review of the horrifying event rooted in the civilisation, the Wooster Group, by painstakingly deconstructing the production of the Laboratory, reconsidered the meaning of Grotowski's legacy that seemed to become an iconic dogma.⁵⁴ Elizabeth LeCompte says:

I saw the breakup of everything that Grotowski would do, with his own deification and Cieslak's deification. The community that had made the work was gone. And, I suppose, it was natural that I would avoid what had happened. So we actually made the piece more about trying to find out why we were making the piece, which seemed truer to me, more honest. Something about Cieslak and Grotowski, the two big egos. Originally I had been interested in asking, why was he deified? But I just got more into the polity. More into the community. More into the process of how you make a community. How you make something work in a community. (LeCompte quoted in Savran, 2005, p. 25)

Deification is what Grotowski was most cautious about throughout his life. And, community is *raison d'etre* of the ritual, which Grotowski saw as what the human performative act is all about.

However, a typical response to the Group's attempt to appropriate the name of Grotowski was not unimaginable:

⁵⁴ *Poor Theater: A Series of Simulacra* was not the only deconstructive work done by the Wooster Group. In such a way of deconstruction, the Group flipped over several plays of famous playwrights like Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, which raised controversial debates at the time of the opening of each production.

In the final scene of Part One (as seen in the spring),
 See/Director converses with the video image of “a theatre critic
 and good friend of Grotowski’s”:

SEE/DIRECTOR: I want to do *Akropolis*. In Polish.

CRITIC: You want to do *Akropolis*? Why would you want to
 do that?

SEE/DIRECTOR: I don’t know.

CRITIC: Well, I don’t get that at all.

On the video screen, we see images of Wooster Street in the
 snow. There is something unbearably sad and nostalgic about
 these falling snowflakes. As though from the window of a cab,
 we see images of people on the sidewalk, going about their
 daily business. We hear the Critic’s voice. In increasingly
 angry terms, she expresses her consternation with the Wooster
 Group’s attempt to create “their” *Akropolis*, concluding: “That
 was one great piece that was done. Just leave it alone. Don’t
 try to imitate it, don’t try to revive it. Just leave it alone.”

(Dunkelberg, 2005, p. 48)

It is an understandable rage against a seemingly insulting act to something that, one
 believes, is invaluable. However, it also inevitably reminds me of Eric Bentley’s fury
 against the Laboratory’s *Akropolis* when it was presented in New York City in 1969.

The way of transmission could vary. Some would do it purposefully, and others would do it without knowing that they are doing it. Or, the two would always coexist in each other's work. Grotowski obviously knew that he transmitted Stanislavski through his own consistent and independent research, and thus, his own existence. In such a process of transmission, Grotowski clearly revealed his thought about the meaning of disciple:

... I repeat that I don't want disciples. I want comrades-in-arms. I want brotherhood-in-arms. I want kinsmen, even those who are far away, who perhaps receive impulses from me, but are stimulated by their own nature. Other relations are barren. They only produce either the type of tamer who tames actors in my name, or the dilettante who hides himself behind my name.
(Grotowski, 2008c, p. 32)

As Grotowski (2008c, p. 32) also asserted that '[t]rue disciples are never disciples', one would not need Grotowski's designation in order to be his heir. Anyone can be Grotowski's heir as long as s/he is here and now walking in 'the path' – process – of 'self-reformation', which is an effort to search for the genuine body interacting with her/his society and people. It is one of the most critical teachings of *Dao De Jing*.

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